

Benefits of poetry: An argument for making poetry a required course for EFL literature majors

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<https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0058>

Abstract

Poetry can be a significant aspect of a person's literacy experiences (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002). It is an excellent genre for learning, but what are the best methods and should poetry be required for English as a foreign language (EFL) literature majors? The main purpose of this study is to determine how effective poetry can be in increasing EFL literature majors' English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, and examine if the learners can reach a higher level of higher order thinking. This study examines communicative language teaching (CLT) and how a CLT poetry course can impact EFL literature majors' language and higher order thinking skills. This article introduces the benefits of such pedagogies and advocates for making poetry classes a requirement for all EFL literature majors. The results of the study indicate that the EFL participants improved all four English language skills, reached a higher level of critical thinking, and also improved their vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, the theory of making a poetry class a requirement for EFL literature majors is sound as long as the class is based on CLT approaches and methods. It is also recommended that more EFL teachers carry out CLT poetry teaching in their courses to benefit their EFL learners' language and critical thinking skills.

Introduction

Poetry can be a significant and pleasant aspect of a person's literacy experiences (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002). It can change the way people talk, the way they think and/or act, but can do so indirectly. This means that there are no translations or explanations given with poetry. It is up to the reader or listener to think about it or evaluate it themselves, if they want to. This is not to say that poets don't write with a purpose. Many poets do have the intention of inspiring or influencing others; however, a person must first read poetry or

hear it before anything can happen. Further, a specific poem can have multiple effects on different people. In a test-based or “traditional” English as a foreign language (EFL) poetry class, it is the teacher who selects the poems to be read, probably because they have a personal meaning for the teacher or because the poetry, or poet, is famous in the literary world. In addition, it is the teacher who tells the students how they should think about the poetry or how it should be interpreted. And, finally, it is expected that the students will know and understand everything that the teacher has told them for a test. In this kind of teacher-centred environment, a lot of the benefits of poetry can be missed.

Poetry can be an excellent genre for students to learn for several reasons. It can allow students to express their emotions and/or feelings in ways other genres cannot (Shah, 2018; Syamsia & Ismail, 2021). It can allow the author the freedom to say as little or as much as they choose. Students can also select topics that are important to them personally. Students might not know it, but poetry can be connected with song lyrics as well (Kong, 2010; Proitsaki, 2019). Once they discover this, students may begin to connect writing classroom poetry to the globe (Proitsaki, 2019). Poetry is important because it is an excellent method of enhancing the students’ reading and analytical skills (Deppa & Ilankumaran, 2018; Donovan, 2022). Students can learn to pay stricter attention to the texts, since the meanings are often hidden within the grammar and/or words selected by their writers (Baki & Behood, 2012; Donovan, 2022; Tillman, 2022).

However, one important aspect of teaching poetry is the experience that classroom teachers bring with them. If it is true that a student’s “appreciation of poetry can be broadened and deepened by a good teacher” (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 44), then what would be the best methods for poetry class teachers to adopt and should poetry be a required course for EFL literature majors at universities?

English as a foreign language context

A broad definition of EFL is when students are learning English in their own country where English is not the primary language (L1). They most likely meet once or twice per week and it would be a part of the local school curriculum. For this reason, they may lack cultural or historical knowledge about the countries that speak English. However, in general, since the EFL students are

learning English in their native countries, it is highly likely that the students' knowledge and experience will be similar with both English and social issues.

Tiedt et al. (2001) claim, "In an assessment-driven curriculum, poetry is not typically given a large place" (p. 259). There are many universities that do not offer poetry in EFL literature programmes. In many EFL literature major programmes that do offer poetry, the test-based curriculum assessing the students' general understanding of poetry is the "tradition" or standard. This is likely because poetry requires more from the teacher, in order to have a greater effect on the students. A teacher would have to re-think and revise the course curriculum, which is an argument made in this article. This basic understanding is considered the lowest level of higher order thinking or the "knowledge" level. Instructors of university poetry courses have reported that this has caused many students to have negative attitudes towards poetry and learning (Hadaway et al., 2002; Lipsett, 2001; Mathis, 2002).

To justify the mandatory inclusion of poetry into EFL literature major programmes, methodologies that improve learners' English skills, enhance their interest in learning English and poetry, and increase higher order level thinking skills must be demonstrated. More evidence, like this study, is needed to justify teachers taking extra measures beyond the assessment-driven curriculum and establishing a level of thinking that goes beyond the "knowledge" level is required. A basic understanding of higher order thinking skills can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1. Higher order thinking skills, moving from the lowest to the highest

Higher order thinking skills from the lowest to the highest
Evaluation
Synthesis
Analysis
Application
Comprehension
Knowledge

Communicative language teaching

This article is situated in an EFL classroom. One of the main goals in an EFL classroom is improving the learners' discourse ability which underscores the need to understand the methods that this teacher/researcher employs in his EFL classrooms, and the methods that he is suggesting teachers adopt. One of the main goals established by this teacher/researcher is communicative competence in English rather than current focuses on forms such as grammar. This pedagogy is called communicative language teaching (CLT). According to Richards (2006), "communicative language teaching, or the communicative approach, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study" (p. 1).

Littlewood (1981) discusses and separates the two major activities or tasks in the CLT classroom as "functional communication activities" and "social interaction activities". During functional communication activities, the goal is to create tasks that develop specific language skills and functions that are geared around communication. Social interaction tasks are different, in that they involve conversation and discussion activities, use of dialogue, and may even involve role playing. The current study is focused on a social interaction activity.

English, in a foreign language classroom, can be a complicated environment. The classroom is full of multi-ability-level students inclusive of students of various educational backgrounds, gender norms, and cultures which reflect wider social, economic, and political inequities. A further complexity arises in relation to the internationalisation of the student population with different primary languages L1s. Understanding some of the students' different social and educational starting points is helpful in exploring the roles, relationships, and issues in EFL classrooms. Further, opportunity to increase the interest in learning poetry and general English and higher order thinking skills can be lost when the content and students' own interests are ignored, and cultural uses of "traditional" methodologies are enacted.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how a CLT poetry course can influence an EFL literature major's English language and higher order skills. In addition, the article outlines the benefits of such methodologies and makes the argument for making a CLT poetry class a requirement for all EFL literature majors.

Literature review

Discourse and learning

The relationship between discourse and learning has already been well established (Department of Education and Science, 1975; Vygotsky, 1962), making discourse in an EFL poetry course relevant. Howarth (2000) summarises that “For some, discourse analysis is a very narrow enterprise that concentrates on a single utterance, or at most a conversation between two people. Others see discourse as synonymous with the entire social system, in which discourses literally constitute the social and political world” (p. 2). Gee (1989) explains his concept of capital D discourse as “ways of being in the world; [which] are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities” (p. 7)

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research on this topic, especially relating to CLT poetry courses using discourse and EFL learners. Instead, the existing research mainly focuses on EFL classes employing elements of poetry. However, these studies occupy a slightly different focus. For instance, Antika (2016) highlights the benefits of using literature to improve EFL learners’ English skills, with poetry being one form of beneficial literature. However, she also points out that “Bringing up poetry in the EFL classroom sometimes is hard for the teachers. One of the challenges is the choice of poetry which suits for each student” (p. 28). Khatib et al.’s (2011) article mainly focused on the pros and cons of using literature in an English as a foreign language / English as a second language (EFL/ESL) classroom, but only one sentence was about utilising poetry.

Van’s (2009) article discusses the relevance of literary analysis to teaching literature in the EFL classroom. Although he states that “the activities that one can apply with literature lessons easily conform to the student-centered and interactive tenets of Communicative Language Teaching” (p. 2), his article’s main focus is on six approaches to literary analysis that include: 1) new criticism; 2) structuralism; 3) stylistics; 4) reader-response; 5) language-based; and 6) critical literacy. When discussing the reader-response approach, he described one example of his colleague doing a pre-reading reading task just before having his students read Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Annabel Lee” that he felt was successful in helping his students better understand the poem’s theme. When discussing the language-based approach, he states that “The point is that literature is an excellent

vehicle for CLT methods that result in four-skill English language development through interaction, collaboration, peer teaching, and student independence” (p. 6), but doesn’t state anything about poetry, just literature in general.

Poetry

There are several benefits of poetry. When students are highly engaged by an enthusiastic teacher, encouraging and carefully nurturing them, students usually respond to poetry in very positive ways (Panavelli, 2011). Expressing feelings through words can have a highly therapeutic effect on the mind (Shah, 2018). However, in contrast with regular literature reading, Elster and Hanauer (2002) discovered that the reading of poetry was a more distinguishable, a more expressive reading style, and led to students’ active participation.

Johnson (2002) discusses several benefits of reading and learning poetry. For instance, the appreciation of sounds and vocabulary choices can create impactful images which poetry can facilitate. A second benefit of learning poetry is higher order thinking as students learn how to analyse and evaluate the merits and weaknesses of poetry. Guerin’s (2019) study examined the ways in which poetry affects people. He contends that poetry changes the form of “normal” grammar and writing, which can slow down reading fluency and/or accuracy of the readers. He also discovered that the length of poetry lines, stress patterns, and rhymes can help maintain the attention of the readers.

The current study

This research investigates if a CLT poetry course utilising English discourse activities can add to the participants’ interest, education, English discourse productivity, and higher order thinking skills with EFL English literature major learners with the same background, culture, and education. The following research questions guide this research:

- 1: Can the introduction of a CLT poetry discourse course increase the participants’ interest and willingness to communicate in English?
- 2: Can the introduction of a CLT poetry discourse course increase the participants’ education and knowledge of the poetry?
- 3: Can the introduction of a CTL poetry discourse course increase the participants’ productivity in higher order thinking?

Design and methods

Context

This research was conducted at an upper-ranked private university with approximately 16,000 students enrolled and located in Taipei, Taiwan. All of the 4-year universities in Taiwan, both public and private, are set up the same way universities in Western countries are. They each have multiple departments and offer a wide variety of 4-year Bachelor of Arts degrees. In addition, one can also earn MA and PhD degrees much the same way as Western universities. The study took place within two separate semester-long courses entitled “Introduction to Poetry” for juniors (third-year students), which is an elective course for English major students. The two classes were each approximately 2 hours long, which met one time each week, for one semester. Both classes had the same teacher/researcher and experienced identical curriculums during this study.

The current study’s course curriculum was designed by the teacher/researcher to ensure the courses adhered to a learner-centred approach. The courses focused on authentic learning, students’ needs, skill levels, and interests, and how the students actually learn best, rather than what others (i.e., administrators or textbook publishers) may want (Mermelstein, 2010).

This teacher’s/researcher’s Introduction to Poetry courses do not use a textbook. Instead, they use a “Student Package” that was designed and created by the teacher with dozens of “open-ended” pair conversation activities, group activities, and co-operative learning activities. Further, during the course, students are to give individual, partnered, and group oral presentations on a variety of poetry selected by the students.

One important aspect of the course is that, every time students are to work with other students, they must change partners or group members, so that they can experience having English discourse with all of the members of the class at the various ability levels. This not only requires the students to negotiate the meaning of their English discourse, but it also means they are introduced to several different ideas, morals, values, and opinions that may differ from their own. Another main course characteristic is for students to learn how to ask “follow-up” questions, which means they have to listen more carefully to what their partner is saying and then think of questions to draw out more information from their partner on any given topic.

Prior to the study, all the participants were asked to voluntarily sign a consent form giving permission to use their data for research purposes. All the participants understood that all the data collected would be used anonymously and that they could back out of the study at any time, for any reason. There was nothing related to the students' grades for participation in the study and this was explained to the participants as well. The course grading system was clearly established by assignments, quizzes, exams, etc. and not by filling in the two anonymous surveys. The participant rate of completing both anonymous surveys was 100%.

Participants

The group of interest was EFL university English major students, so two third year, junior, university classes of EFL English major students were chosen for this research. There were 68 participants, with 12 males and 56 females. The university had already separated the students into different classes with this teacher–researcher designated as the teacher.

All the participants had previously taken 8 years of EFL classes in the Taiwanese public schools, they all took the same nationally required English examinations, and got about the same scores to enter this particular university and become an English major. In addition, they all took 2 years of English “skill” classes at the current university prior to the study.

Communicative language teaching intervention

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that a CLT EFL required poetry course for English majors is more productive and beneficial for the learners than the “traditional” teacher-centred literature course. As previously mentioned, these courses followed CLT and student-centred approaches with the aim of creating higher order thinking skills among the students. From the beginning of the course, poetry-related vocabulary and definitions were given to the students (i.e., metaphor, rhyme, etc.). The course began with children's poetry (i.e., Dr Seuss) and then moved towards adult poetry (i.e., Robert Frost). The teacher/researcher carefully selected poetry to align with students' English language skills and progressively moved towards poetry selections connected to their interests. Some of the CLT methods used were: pair discussions/tasks; group discussions/tasks; co-operative learning; puzzle solving; individual/pair/group

presentations; role-play; and individual/pair/group readings. Higher order thinking skill questions, student discourse, and tasks are listed in Table 2. The goals of some of these questions are to make the students analyse, synthesise, and evaluate the poetry used in the classroom.

Table 2. Higher order thinking skill questions, student discourse questions, and tasks

Pair discussions/tasks
Group discussions/tasks
Co-operative learning
Puzzle solving
Individual/pair/group presentations
Role-play
Individual/pair/group readings
What is the role of the speaker?
What was the intent of the author?
What was the main idea of the poem?
If you could change one aspect of the poem, what would it be and why?
If you were the character in the poem, what would you do differently?
Does this poem reflect on you or your emotions? Why or why not?
What do you think is the criteria for "good" poetry?
What is your opinion of the poem? Explain.
How long do you think it took the author to write this poem? Why?
Who do you think the author wrote this poem for? Why?
What can you learn from this poem?
If you were going to interview the author of the poem, what would ask him/her?
Is there any information that you think is missing from the poem?
If you were going to create a video based on this poem, what would the video look like?
How do you feel when you read this poem?
Is the meaning of this poem more for men or women? Explain.
Create your own children's poem.
Create your own poem on anything you want.
Find a poem that expresses your feelings.

Data

To answer the research questions, two formal surveys were conducted at the beginning of the course and at the end of the course collected students' thinking about their English language use, language skills, critical thinking

skills, and vocabulary usage. The survey questions used a 5-point Likert scale. The data and the effects were calculated statistically using SPSS software. All the questions and the mean scores with English equivalents can be viewed in Tables 3 and 4. In total, 100% of the participants, 68, answered all of the questions on both surveys.

Results

The results of the pre-study study survey questions' means and English equivalencies can be viewed in Table 3. The results of the post-study survey questions' means and English equivalencies can be viewed in Table 4.

Table 3. Pre-study study survey questions' means and English equivalencies

Pre-survey survey questions	English equivalency	Mean
Q1 Do you feel that the required literature courses during your first two years in this program should be required courses for all English majors?	About half of them	3.03
Q2 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your English speaking skills?	No	1.04
Q3 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your English writing skills?	No	1.00
Q4 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your English reading skills?	No	1.06
Q5 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your English listening skills?	No	1.00
Q6 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your critical thinking skills?	No	1.15
Q7 During your first two years in this program, do you feel that the required literature courses improved your English vocabulary?	No	1.38
Q8 During my first two years in this English Literature program, I felt comfortable speaking English in almost every situation or almost every topic.	No	1.18
Q9 During my first two years in this English Literature program, I felt comfortable speaking English with almost every person.	No	1.18
Q10 During my first two years in this English Literature program, I felt comfortable speaking English with my English literature teachers.	No	1.38

Pre-survey survey questions	English equivalency	Mean
Q11 During my first two years in this English Literature program, I felt comfortable speaking English in all of my other English classes if I was asked to speak.	No	1.04
Q12 During the last two years, in my required literature classes I spoke English every week for:	Never	1.07

Table 4. Post-study survey questions' means and English equivalencies

Post-survey questions	English equivalency	Mean
Q1 This course is an elective course. Do you feel that a poetry course like this one should be a required course for all English majors?	Probably	3.82
Q2 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your English speaking skills?	Most of the time	4.38
Q3 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your English writing skills?	About half of the time	3.44
Q4 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your English reading skills?	Yes	4.62
Q5 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your English listening skills?	Yes	4.62
Q6 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your critical thinking skills?	Most of the time	4.06
Q7 Do you feel that this course in poetry has improved your English vocabulary?	Most of the time	4.01
Q8 Do you feel that writing poetry allows you to express yourself better than 'normal' paragraph writing or essays?	Most of the time	4.47
Q9 Do you feel that this course in poetry has inspired you to write English poetry after the course is finished?	If I have the time	3.15
Q10 If there was another more advanced poetry course being offered in your English major program, would you select to take the course?	If I have the time	2.78
Q11 This year, in my poetry class I spoke English every week for:	One hour +	5.00

Post-survey questions	English equivalency	Mean
Q12 After taking this poetry class, I feel comfortable speaking English in almost every situation on almost every topic.	About half of time	3.03
Q13 After taking this poetry class, I feel comfortable speaking English with almost every person.	About half of time	2.82
Q14 After taking this poetry class this year, I feel comfortable speaking English with my poetry teacher.	Most of the time	4.15
Q15 After taking this poetry class, I feel comfortable speaking English in all of my other English classes if I'm asked to speak.	About half of time	2.69

The results of the mean difference between the pre-study survey and the post-study survey questions and their effect size can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Mean difference between the pre-study survey and the post-study survey questions and their effect size

Pre- and post-survey questions	Mean difference	Effect size using Cohen's <i>d</i>	Effect size using Glass's <i>delta d</i>	Effect size using Hedges' <i>g</i>
Pre-Q1 and post-Q1	0.79	0.26	0.26	0.26
Pre-Q2 and post-Q2	3.34	1.11	1.11	1.11
Pre-Q3 and post-Q3	2.44	0.81	0.81	0.81
Pre-Q4 and post-Q4	3.56	1.19	1.19	1.19
Pre-Q5 and post-Q5	3.62	1.21	1.21	1.21
Pre-Q6 and post-Q6	2.91	0.97	0.97	0.97
Pre-Q7 and post-Q7	2.63	0.88	0.88	0.88
Pre-Q8 and post-Q12	1.85	0.62	0.62	0.62
Pre-Q9 and post-Q13	1.64	0.55	0.55	0.55
Pre-Q10 and post-Q14	2.77	0.92	0.92	0.92
Pre-Q11 and post-Q15	1.65	0.55	0.55	0.55
Pre-Q12 and post-Q11	3.93	1.31	1.31	1.31

Research question 1: Can the introduction of a CLT poetry discourse course increase the participants' interest and willingness to communicate in English?

Post-survey questions 9 and 10 listed in Table 4 indicate students' interest in poetry. For both questions, the participants signalled how time was a factor in their poetry writing, and decision to take additional poetry courses. Whether or not the students are more willing to communicate in English after taking the poetry course was explored in four questions on the post-study survey. These four questions probed students' comfort speaking in English on a general level, and more specifically in English class and in a poetry setting. These findings offer a comparison with questions 8–11 on the pre-study survey. All four of the post-study survey questions scored approximately 2–3 points higher on the Likert scale. In addition, the effect size results for all four questions' means when they were compared with the pre-study survey registered medium to high levels of effect size. Additionally, students were asked on both the pre- and post-survey about how much time they spent speaking in English in the study's class in comparison with all their past literature classes. Students in this study scored a 5, the highest score available, whereas in all previous literature courses they scored a 1, the lowest score available. All these measurements demonstrate that the poetry class had improved their abilities and had a positive influence over the participants.

Research question 2: Can the introduction of a CLT poetry discourse course increase the participants' education and knowledge of the poetry?

Similar to the comparison of pre- and post-study questions in the section above, the analysis of questions 2–5 and 7 on both the pre- and post-survey directly answer research question 2. All the post-study survey questions scored approximately 2–4 points higher on the Likert scale and register medium to high levels of effect size. This demonstrates that both measurements show that the poetry class improved their English reading, listening, speaking, writing skills, and their English vocabulary and had a positive influence over the participants.

Research question 3: Can the introduction of a CTL poetry discourse course increase the participants' productivity in critical thinking and higher level thinking?

In line with the pre-post survey question comparison established in response to the first two research questions, this comparative analysis of question 6 in both surveys suggests evidence of some increase in students' critical and higher level thinking. The post-study survey question scored approximately 3 points higher on the Likert scale. The students shifted from "no" to "most of the time" about their opinion of the poetry course's influence on improving their critical thinking skills. When compared, the responses to question 6 in the pre- and post-survey registered a high level of effect size. This result demonstrates how both measurements show that the poetry class had improved their higher order thinking skills and had a positive influence over the participants.

Several studies have indicated that when students are allowed more self-reliance and freedom to select or create materials in school it can create positive effects on their education (Nunan, 1991). Students in this study had significant independence and freedom because they developed their original poetry, selected some of poems used in their classes, and created some of the pair discussion questions. When students can select and create the resources they are utilising in the classroom, it is safe to believe that they are selecting and creating materials and/or topics that they find more engaging and pleasurable. Several researchers (see, for example, Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Day & Bamford, 2002; Krashen, 2011; Mermelstein, 2010, 2015; Mo, 2020) have examined how personal preference towards topics, resources, and classroom activities is a main factor in education. In this study, the CLT methods allowed the students to feel like they had more inclusion and personal involvement in their own learning process and the resources they used. At some points during the semester the students became the co-facilitators and developers of their own learning, which led to more personal interest in the subject of poetry and the greater outcomes.

The results of this study have also uncovered other aspects for further discussion. The first question on both surveys asks students' perspectives about their "traditional" literature classes of the first 2 years in their programme and their thoughts about a mandatory CLT student-centred poetry class. In their

opinion, only about half the literature courses they've taken in the past should be required. In other words, they really didn't enjoy about half of them or felt they didn't learn much. In contrast, the students indicated that the current poetry course should "probably" be a required course. The mean average difference in their answers was approximately 1 point higher on the Likert scale.

The other aspect of this study that deserves mentioning is question 8 on the post-survey which asked students about poetry writing's influence on self-expression in comparison with "typical" academic writing such as essays. There is no comparison question on the pre-study survey, but this question can be directly compared to the 2 years of the required "English Composition" classes that they all took during their programme. The students' response to this question was a score of 4.47 on the Likert scale, with the English equivalent of "most of the time". This means that the participants feel that they are better writers of poetry as opposed to being given a prescribed writing topic.

All this study's findings are directly supported by Mermelstein's (2010) research utilising Taiwanese EFL university students. His study took place at the exact same university. His participants in this study were sophomore, junior, and senior-level students (second, third, and fourth year) and comprised five different non-English major students. His prior study comprised 225 EFL university students and evaluated which teaching approach the students liked more or thought was better for learning English skills (i.e., teacher-centred, curriculum-centred, or student-centred) and which approach they would prefer to have teachers use in their future courses (i.e., "traditional" teaching methods or CLT methods). During the intervention, he used the student-centred approach and the CLT teaching methodology. The results were that the students were able to recognise the difference in the three teaching approaches and the methodologies the teacher used. Their previous English classes were 91% the "traditional" Taiwanese curriculum-centred or teacher-centred approaches. The study's class was a student-centred approach, and the students were able to understand and tell the difference, which they overwhelmingly preferred and believed it was better for learning all four of their English language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). Further, 83% preferred to have their teachers use the student-centred approach in their English learning classes.

In addition, this study's findings also correlate with Chien's (2014) study. Chien sought to compare the effectiveness of the "traditional" teaching approaches in Taiwan with the student-centred approaches, similar to Mermelstein (2010). Chien found that the participants preferred the student-centred approach and student-centred teaching methodologies. The participants reported that they improved their vocabulary learning, listening, and reading skills with the student-centred approach and teaching methodologies.

An argument for making poetry a required course: The benefits

Poetry can assist in developing reading, speaking, and listening skills

EFL students need to continue their English reading skills and can achieve this by reading a variety of texts and poems. One of the unique qualities of poetry is that it can be read aloud, repeated, or read in groups. When students are listening to poetry orally, they can increase their listening skills and pay more attention to the word choices of the author. When students are sharing poems, they can look at them and read them together. This can not only strengthen their reading skills but can also build reading fluency.

Fluency is developed as verses are practised and read several times due to the unique rhythms and rhymes of poetry. Reading comprehension can also develop as discussions about meaning take place. Poetry can create an image in one's mind as they ponder what they hear. Asking students to share what they consider to be a poem's meaning, even line by line, can produce higher order thinking, and they can relate what they see and hear to their own life and experiences.

Teaching the construction of poetry and word selection is the first step in the writing process. Each style of poetry has different components. In poetry, students can learn how to put words together to create different meanings and context. They can learn how to select the correct words to create imagery and/or effect. Learning the rules of writing, and then breaking them while writing poetry, can profoundly change a piece of writing.

Through poetry, students can be exposed to new vocabulary. A discussion about the new vocabulary can be used to reach higher order thinking levels. Teaching through use of poetic devices, like metaphor, simile, alliteration, and imagery can also contribute to vocabulary building and critical thinking.

Love for reading increased by engaging with poetry

Starting with children's poems, such as those by Dr Seuss, can be an engaging way to gain students' interest in poetry and recognise its simplicity and usefulness. Starting EFL learners with poetry by William Shakespeare is a daunting experience where the learners do not understand the vocabulary or language and need to look up almost every word in a dictionary, or depend on their teacher to translate everything. Beginning the course with Shakespeare has consistently been uninspiring to EFL and English L1 students. In comparison, starting EFL learners with something simple and then moving towards something more complex or abstract increases their overall love for reading poetry, and promotes critical thinking by introducing abstract language that is often a part of poetry. Over time, students are more able to see that poetry can be very complex. With the assistance of the teacher guiding them through this process using CLT methods, they likely will avoid feeling intimidated as they would read more advanced poetry alone.

Conclusion

This study's findings support the recommendation for a mandatory CLT EFL poetry class as a requirement for English majors in an EFL literature programme. Further research on this topic is required as this article reports on data from one study in the Asian context. Despite the small scale of the study, its findings offer evidence of how a poetry course can offer the learners higher order thinking or creative thinking skills if the class is designed to reach these goals. Reading and writing poetry can offer learners new ways of thinking, new ideas, and it can additionally change the way one perceives old ones.

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