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# PROCEEDING

Editors:

**Manneke Budiman**  
**Marti Fauziah**



UNIVERSITAS  
SISWA BANGSA  
INTERNASIONAL





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## **MORE EMPHASIS ON STUDENTS' CREATIVE OR PRODUCTIVE ABILITY IN THE TEACHING OF POETRY**

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the teaching of poetry, particularly in the English Department. The purpose of teaching *Poetry* in Indonesia is to enable the students to understand Prosody and to be able to appreciate and to analyse poems. Considering that in some universities students will no longer be required to write a thesis, there must be a substitute for the elimination of the obligation to write a thesis. It is suggested that upon graduation, a literary student majoring in poetry, besides having fulfilled the other requirements, should have composed at least 5 poems of his or her own. Although the students' receptive ability should be maintained, the lecturer should emphasize more on their creative or productive abilities.

**Key words:** *emphasis, poetry teaching, thesis, substitute, receptive ability, creative or productive ability*

### **INTRODUCTION**

A programme about creativity for children on one of our national television channels on the fifteenth inst has instantly inspired me to write this article. A well-reputed company was in the talk-show with an inspiring slogan: '*WATCHING TV IS SO YESTERDAY - TODAY IS MAKING TV*'.

Whereas a student of architecture, for instance, should design a miniature building, and a computer science student should submit a software product containing a computer programme or a robot, what tangible products must a literary student literally create in order to graduate?

'Any change in the learning process is functional; it is applicable and reproducible.' (Syah: 119) The implication is that when a student learns poetry, it is hoped that he will also be able to compose poems. This must be emphasized as the target of a *Poetry* class.

### **DISCUSSION**

What is usually done in the teaching of poetry in faculty of letters? The lecturer usually emphasizes on the students' receptive ability. The introduction of prosody (the theory of poetry), which includes rhyme, imagery, diction, metre, stanza patterns, poetic types or poetic forms, is the main part. The students are then given the definitions of subject matter, theme, and moral lesson. Appreciation of poetry is usually restricted to identification of poetic devices found in certain poems and theme analysis.

In teaching rhyme, for example, the lecturer at first defines what rhyme is. He or she then usually gives examples of rhymes. Finally, the students are to read a poem silently or aloud and to identify the rhymes they find in it. Appreciation of rhymes of a poem is only an activity for a mini quiz.

After explaining various types of rhymes such as masculine rhyme, feminine rhyme, perfect rhyme or full rhyme, pararhyme or half-rhyme, pseudo-rhyme or eye rhyme, identical rhyme, end rhyme, internal rhyme, et cetera and providing them with some examples of each, a more advanced quiz may be given, namely by telling the students to identify the types of rhymes found in a certain poem. For instance,

*O rose, thou art sick!*



*The invisible worm  
That lies in the **night**,  
In the howling storm,  
Has **found out** thy **bed**  
Of crimson joy;  
And his dark secret **love**  
Thus **thy life** destroy.  
(Lewis : 64 – 65)*

It is necessary to tell the students to read the poem pronto and encourage them to mention orally, particularly the type of rhyme in line 1 and line 3. It is also necessary to observe whether the students can figure out the eye rhyme that may deceive the eyes in the word **sick** and **night**. Each of them contains the same letter *i* but they are pronounced differently. Remember that *Poetry* is taught to students who have passed a pronunciation course in an earlier semester so that they should somehow have mastered the pronunciation of at least 1000 basic English words. The lecturer should also check if the students can detect the internal rhymes in line 5 and in the last line. Another question that is also worth asking is whether line 5 rhymes with the penultimate line or not. If they do not rhyme with each other, is the poem a bad one? The lecturer should tell the students that in poetry rhymes count but he or she must assure them that it is not right to count how many words or lines that one encounters rhyme with one another when one accounts for the literary value of a poem. Here is a comment on the poem from Cecil Day Lewis (1904 - 1972), an outstanding literary critic cum poet of the 'Modern' period: '*No one could call the Blake poem simple. It is more mysterious than the most difficult riddle I have ever been asked. But it sends a most violent feeling through me, like the shock of an electric current, even though I don't understand exactly what it means*'. (Lewis: 65) It is essential to explain that in some poems, the lines are scantily rhymed. In spite of that, the students must now be able to compose at least two rhymes of each type of the various rhymes that have been taught to them so far. It should be part of the basic items in the syllabus that will lead them to gain mastery of writing a poem.

In teaching the students alliteration, assonance, consonance, and dissonance, the lecturer should also emphasize on the creative ability. The students' ability to understand the definitions and to identify those poetic devices would not be enough until they are able to create their own examples.

Imagery, which chiefly includes metaphors, similes, and personification, should also be taught in the poetry class. After telling the students the definition of each and providing them with some well-known examples, the lecturer may tell the students to identify the imagery in the following citation:

*Read o'er the **volume** of young Paris' face,  
And find delight writ there with **beauty's pen**;  
Examine every **married lineament**,  
And see how one another lends **content**;  
And what's obscured in this **volume** lies,  
Find written in the **margent** of his eyes.  
This precious **book of love**, this unbound lover,  
To beautify him, only lacks a **cover**.  
(I.iii.75-82)*

Again, however, the lecturer should emphasize more on the students' creative or productive ability than the receptive ability.



Other poetic devices such as repetition, onomatopoeia, symbolism, diction, pun, chiasm, parallelism, anaphora, cathaphora, together with their functions, should be included in the teaching of poetry. The lecturer should expound to the students, for instance, that repetition of a word or words in poetry should never be deemed as verbiage since it effectively depicts what the poet wants to emphasize. A poet may also repeat the whole line; he or she may repeat several lines at regular intervals or even the entire stanza as in a refrain in a song.

A rich combination of reiteration, metaphor, simile, personification, diction, caesura, alliteration, and various kinds of internal rhymes and end rhyme can be found in the 'candle light' scene in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' below. Tell the students to elaborate the poetic devices of this flowery soliloquy prior to providing them with a thorough exegesis.

*She should have died hereafter:  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.*  
(Lott: 219)

Comprehending a poem and appreciating all the imagery and the other poetic devices in it should by now, however, be deemed only as the rank and file staple diet for the students since the main dish should be the concoction of a poem containing some of the poetic devices that they have acquired in class.

Students are also to be able to master scansion (analysis of metrical pattern in poetry) since metre plays a key role in oral and aural English. However, it is the ability to create lines with particular metrical patterns with a certain number of feet that should be emphasized. It is also necessary for students to be fully acquainted with various types of poetic types or forms, namely the external pattern or shape of a poem like ballad, song lyric, elegy, narrative poem, ode, and sonnet. Nevertheless, it is the ability to create a poem with a certain form that should be emphasized in the teaching of poetry.

Subject matter, theme, and moral lesson are important in the creation of poetry. Subject matter and theme are two quite divergent things. Subject matter is the topic discussed whereas theme is the hub and the nub or the gist of a poem. Subject matter is only one of the ingredients, the raw material; it has a very broad scope. With respect to theme, the poet narrows down the scope of the subject matter; it should usually be stated in a sentence. The subject matter of a poem may be pertinent to God, god, ghost, lift, leaf, love, laughter, nature, beauty, beast, etc. In fact, anything we can name as a thing, whether it is concrete or abstract, tangible or intangible, can be the subject matter of a poem. Tell the students to mention the subject matter of a certain well-known poem and then ask them what its theme is.

When coloured with an apt nuance of theme, poems of every hue are apt to be colour-coordinated. With regard to a particular poem that contains a moral teaching, a poet should be more conscientious, especially when he or she is dealing with vice versus virtue. Albeit a poet has the so-called poetic licence, namely boundless liberty to pervert from syntactic, lexical, and even typographical rules, he should stick to the strict principal principle of poetic



justice, viz wise virtue triumphs over vile vice. It cannot be vice versa; otherwise, a poem with such an absolutely absurd theme must be out of sync, no matter how elaborately embroidered all the other poetic components are. This Concept of Nemesis (i.e. justice is fair) has an eternally and **euphoniously**, not ephemerally, nice niche ensconced in the 'Dagger scene' in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth':

*But here upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come. – But, in these cases,  
We still have judgement here, that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice  
Commends th' ingredients of our poisoned chalice  
To our own lips'.  
(I.vii.6-12)*

Since theme is the kernel, the central core or the heart of a poem, find out if the students find it fine enough to find the themes of certain refined poems and survey how the themes are conveyed. After the lecturer is convinced that their ability is conclusively convincing, tell the students to think of a subject matter and then ask them to narrow down its scope to make it become the theme of the poem that each of them will develop into a poem. Being well-primed to make poetic blueprints, each student should then promptly proceed with the next leg of the pilgrimage, namely to utilize their ears, their eyes, and their nighs or nares both to construe and to construct their own original poems that may titilate, satiate, saturate, elevate, not annihilate, the starving psychic paunch.

## CONCLUSION

Now it is my prime time to deduce rather than reduce or abuse what I have duly introduced and adduced earlier. As has been pointed out previously, mastery of the prosody is unquestionably praiseworthy. The ability to identify the rhyme scheme and, in addition, to have possession of sufficient comprehension of scansion also deserves certain appreciation. However, to dedicate to the field of poetry, it is not quite adequate for a delicate graduate of the English department of the faculty of letters to be able to have only those rudimentary skills since all of them, together with the ability to appreciate the imageries and other poetic devices, to state the theme and to analyse how it is revealed only serve like a pretty petty appetizer a la a petite subsistence diet; the substantial prime course to serve in a grand banquet a la carte must be a tangible product in the form of at least five delicious and nutritious poems ready to be nationally or internationally rather than internally released and digested. Such poems should not be such ersatz products of brainless plagiarism; they must instead be such genuine brainchild, brand-new poems that may one day assure a blue chip brandname that may become a braggadocio. Hence, our method of teaching poetry should henceforth be transformed. While the students' receptive capability remains essential, the lecturer should also boost their creative or productive proficiency. In other words, how to create poems must be added in the new syllabus in the spirit of spurring our students not only to analyse and to appreciate but also to notch up those skills with poetic creation.

In 'The English Poets', which covers the cream of the whole field of English poetry from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot, Lord David Cecil, an eminent poet cum critic, firmly affirms:

*'English is a poet's language. It is ideally suited for description or for the expression of emotion. It is flexible, it is varied, it has an enormous vocabulary; able to convey every subtle diverse shade, to*



*make vivid before the mental eye any picture it wishes to conjure up. Moreover, its very richness helps it to evoke those indefinite moods, those visionary flights of fancy of which so much of the material of poetry is composed. There is no better language in the world for touching the heart and setting the imagination aflame.'*  
(Cecil: 7)

Granting that English is a starkly starry language for the creation of poetry, the goal of teaching poetry, that is to enable the students to start writing startlingly stately poems, must manifestly be much more smoothly attained. Ironically, however, however suitable this language is for writing poetry, we may be bereft of hope when we perceive the fact that even poetry teachers and lecturers do not seem to have iron mental zest and zeal to write poems in English. My primary suggestion for poetry teachers and lecturers is not to prim but to primp in front of the prime *Mirror on the Wall*. How can we presently complacently exert pleasurable pressure on our present pleasant students to write leisurely when we ourselves are reluctant to write?

In the meanwhile, while addressing his comment or criticism to 'Creative Experiment', a book that discusses writing and the teacher, our erstwhile literary critic, Frank Whitehead, gives a worthwhile and worthy, not wordy or worthless, succinct, wailing annotation: '*Creative writing is a common feature of English lessons today, but how many teachers have themselves attempted it under the same conditions and in response to stimuli similar to those which they use for their pupils in the classroom?*' (Pendlebury: back cover) Who would disgracefully bear the brutal brunt of such insuperably scrutiny unless we were indigenously indifferent in indelibly invigorating and indefinitely inculcating an in-depth inditing inclination in our intelligent students?

Whilst our counterparts in other disciplines such as in engineering have created drones, pilotless aircraft, and robots, and vocational high school pupils in Solo have solo accomplished their obligatory task to produce such low-cost cars as *Esemka* (and to complement the compliment completely: very vividly avid Indonesian engineers have eventually even invented evidentially, not accidentally or incidentally, high-tech prototypes of electric cars like *Mobira* and *Tucuxi*, in lieu of solely soullessly assembling a type of stereotype of cars), are we then still entitled to plume ourselves on our vintage vantage and advantage as seasoned, not seasonal, literary teachers and claim to be the literally literate literati when we just stay stationary (although we have more than sufficient stationary stationery) without any lust for the creation of even a single archetypal, lustrously lusty, or lush and lusciously plump poem?

This paper is conspicuously not a researcher's recherche research. Still, its stylistic style instills a poetic proem, a stylistic stile to stimulate poetic style, not a stilted style or a stiff stuff to stifle an artist's aesthetic artistry.

May the subsequent poetic piece also entirely enchant, enhance, entertain, ennoble, enlighten, enliven encourage, and entirely ensure, rather than encumber, enfeeble, ensnare, entangle, enslave, and entomb our students' and fellow lecturers' spirit to write:

### **WRITE, WRITE, AND WRITE**

When thou have nothing to bite

When thou will nowhere ride

Just write, write and write

No writhe, no writhe, no writhe

No maliciously tricky or trickery rites

But use thy rightful right



Show that thou art bright  
Reveal thy insight  
Find freedom to write  
    Do not try to write tripe  
    Do not ever cite trite  
    But bring out light and delight  
Even if thou art not a learned knight  
It's alright. It is all right.  
Thou may as well try to be a poet or a playwright  
(Angkasa:127)

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