

# Teaching English Through Literature-Based Instruction: An Integrated Study of Language and Literature

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**Abstract.** The study of language has been increasingly inseparable from the study of literature (Novianti, 2016). Therefore, it is suggested that working with literature in the classroom focus on integrating language and literature for more comprehensive and enjoyable learning activities. Literature-based instruction is one of the teaching language strategies by using literary works that are suitable for teaching English. In line with this, this study aims to explain the integrated study of language and literature in teaching English through literature-based instruction in EFL classroom. This is a qualitative case study conducted in an Indonesian Islamic Junior High School at Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were obtained through interview, observation, and documentation techniques of data collection. The data gathered were analyzed qualitatively through Miles and Huberman stages of condensation, display, and drawing conclusion. The study result showed that the literature-based instruction in teaching English for EFL students in an Indonesian Islamic Junior High School is very necessary to be developed and practiced. This integrated study of language and literature is practically rich of activities due to the teaching purposes, namely (1) reading and literary work, (2) speaking and literary work, (3) listening and literary work, and (4) writing and literary work. Indeed, teaching English through literature-based instruction is an evidence that language and literature can be taught two in one formula as an integrated study to develop the students' ability in both language and literature skills.

**Keywords:** *teaching English, literature-based instruction, integrated study*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries in the world which still uses English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As a result, English becomes a compulsory subject at all educational levels in our country. In line with this, the process of English language teaching and learning has become one of the top priorities of many countries, including Indonesia, to face the globalization era. Particularly on the level of junior high schools, English is very important to be taught based on the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 24/2016 [1]. English,

on this regulation, is categorized as subject A which aims to develop attitude, knowledge, and skill competences of the students as a basis and capacity building in the life of society, nation, and state. The aims characterize the national program of education in Indonesia and support the goal of our government in education to improve the quality of life of Indonesian people through the improvement of the quality of education [2] by mastering English as a foreign language and improving the ability to communicate globally. These realities reveal that English plays an important role in the educational scene of Indonesia.

The dynamic of teaching and learning English improves at any times. Nowadays, the study of language has been increasingly inseparable from the study of literature [3]. Consequently, literature serves a significant role in teaching and learning English, particularly for EFL students [3]. It is an integral part of language learning [3], [4], [5], [6], and the use of literature for language teaching purposes becomes an important issue in language teaching [7]. Therefore, the researchers are interested in exploring the integrated study of language and literature in teaching English, named literature-based instruction in EFL classroom.

According to Eagleton, literature is the kind of writing that uses language in a special way [8]. In relation to teaching and learning language, literature is often said to be the window to the world. It puts students in touch with a range of emotional experiences and expressions that encourages self-reflection and the education of the whole person [9]. Therefore, literature-based instruction involves teaching and learning through the literature component where students are given opportunities to discuss literary elements, such as plot, character, setting, point of view, values, message, and themes [9]. The use of literary works in the sense of literature-based instruction in the classroom treats the students as the social creatures who are studying others social patterns, norms and values. It also provides opportunities for foreign language classes and can appeal the students with various learning style which help them practice the

four skills of language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) [10]. Indeed, literature-based instruction is representational to be implemented in the EFL classroom with rich activities.

### **METHOD**

This study is a qualitative case study which aims to explore the integrated study of language and literature in teaching English for EFL classroom. Qualitative research generally informs a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive in natural settings, material practices that make the world visible and these practices transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self [11], while a case study design principally involves a case within real-life, contemporary context or setting, thus case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes [12]. Through the qualitative case study employed, the researchers explore the integrated activities of both language and literature in teaching English through literature-based instruction for EFL classroom, particularly for students in an Islamic Junior High School at Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data are obtained from interview, classroom observation, and documentation techniques of data collection. Supporting data from some related literature are also considered. At the end, the data gathered are analyzed qualitatively through Miles and Huberman stages of condensation, display, and drawing conclusion [13].

### **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

As mentioned previously that literature-based instruction is very representational to be implemented in EFL classroom with rich activities because of literature is of great significance in teaching language skills, namely reading, speaking, listening, and writing. While it is typical to teach every language skill separately, it should be considered that when using literary works for teaching language, the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) should be taught integrated [10]. Below are the explanations of integrated study of teaching literature and teaching language skills in the classroom.

#### **1. Reading and literary work**

Literature-based instruction which turns to student-centre based learning demands that teacher

should be able to create interesting ways towards understanding the literary works in the classroom. For reading activities, preparing appropriate literary work as reading text for students is very important to be considered by the teacher. Appropriate text is interested for students to be read and motivates them to read more to find comprehensive understanding of the works. Many activities can be performed in reading class by using literary works. In teaching poetry, the class was begun by reading poem loudly or reciting a poem in front of the class. Reading or reciting poem aloud by the students made them feel confident and enhanced their understanding of the poem. Reciting poem in the class was also done by the teacher, which made students to recorrect their misreading or misunderstanding of the work. Unlike with teaching poetry, the class was begun with reading text as a whole in teaching short story and drama. Students' understanding of the text as a whole was checked by giving them questions after reading section. The questions referred to literature elements, such as characters, plot, settings, theme, and messages of the work. These questions generally improved the students' literature skill in gaining their critics, interpretation, or appreciation of the works. Therefore, integrated study of teaching reading and literary works is an evidence that literature-based instruction is necessary to employ in the classroom due to the improvement of students' language skill with confidence of reading poetry, short story, and drama and the comprehensive understanding of literary works through their elements can be found.

#### **2. Speaking and literary work**

Literary works can be a valuable source for teaching speaking. Through literature-based instruction in EFL classroom, many activities were created in particular for teaching speaking. Literary works with rich themes enabled students to talk more and vary in terms of critic, interpretation, or appreciation of the works. Speaking activities performed in both individual and group of discussion. An activity for improving students' speaking ability was performed through storytelling. Storytelling with various themes, for instance, was delivered by making a story timeline. In this activity, students listed the events of the story in order in which they occur. The list of events was managed into storytelling orally in the class. The simple story delivered by the students orally enhanced them to feel confident that they can make the story too and developed their speaking ability. Unlike stories, role play also conducted in improving the students' speaking ability in the classroom. Roleplay is popularly used in teaching drama by adapting the role of characters of the text, and it practically helped students to improve their speaking ability, cooperation ability, and self-confidence. Through students' role play, it is an

evidence that students understood the text on how to act the characters well. It means that literature-based instruction is necessary to be implemented in the classroom due to the students' improvements gained of language and literature skills while teaching integrated speaking and literary works.

### 3. Listening and literary work

Teaching speaking and teaching listening are intertwined because listening activities are something heard from something speak. Through literature-based instruction, literary works are also a valuable source for teaching listening. Classroom activities, such as dramatization or roleplay and discussion were considered as the ways to improve the students' speaking and listening skills. Not only limited to speaking activities with literary works, but teaching listening also close-related to reading and writing activities. Reading aloud, for example, when a student read text loudly in the class, other students focused on listening to the text accurately to find out similarity understanding and interpretation of the text. Due to the similarity understanding of the text which they occurred through listening together, then students put it on the paper as a writing task at the end of the class. Therefore, focus on listening to the text enhanced the students' listening ability and increased their confidence in the classroom. As a whole, teaching listening did not only cover the listening skill itself, but also the three other skills of language, like speaking, reading, and writing. This integrated study of listening and literary works surely stated that literature-based instruction plays an important role in teaching language.

### 4. Writing and literary work

For EFL classroom, literary work is a valuable source for developing writing skills through writing activities. Almost all activities in teaching language process are finally put on writing as evidence. Literary works with various themes inspired students to create a writing, either rewriting another literary work or letter writing as critics, interpretations, or appreciations of the work. Related to the events of the story, literary work helped students to rewriting the story. In this activity, students tried to relate some of the events of the story to similar situations or experiences, then contextualized them into another writing. Generally, rewriting story is one of the most frequent practices for students in teaching writing through literature-based instruction. This activity was given for students after the discussion section. It helped students to record the story that they have read and discussed. In other words, rewriting story was a classroom activity which simply rewrote the text based on their own words.

Moreover, students also produced letter writing based on their understanding of the text. In

this activity, students wrote a letter to the characters as protagonist or antagonist that they like or dislike; a letter to the plot in narration or description style; a letter to settings as they have had in a similar situation, place, or manner; a letter to theme insight or oversight of experiences; and a letter to messages found from the literary work and related them to the reality of life. In sum, an integrated study of teaching writing and literary works develop the students' responses of the text. Consequently, literature-based instruction is very necessary to be employed in gaining many ideas.

The integrated study of teaching language and teaching literature at once in the classroom as previously explained reflects to the development of teaching English dynamically through literature-based instruction. As a valuable source of teaching language, literary works can be formulated as interesting texts to be read, to be spoken, to be listened, and to be written. Literary works are generally delivered to the students at joyful atmosphere from reading the text while others listening, then discussing the text to improve the students' confidence of speaking and gaining a comprehensive understanding of the text, and put it on the paper as writing productive skill of the students. This integrated study of language and literature into single work in teaching English, called literature-based instruction, is very necessary to be practised for EFL students to develop their ability in both language and literature skills. This integrated study relates to some stages of Tumicin's integrative approach which comprises the pedagogical elements of language-based and stylistic approach to improve the students' involvement and appreciation of the literary texts [10].

## CONCLUSION

Teaching English through literature-based instruction in this study is an integrated study for teaching language and literary works. Working with literary works in the EFL classroom focus on integrating language and literature for a more comprehensive and enjoyable learning activities that refer to (1) reading and literary work, (2) speaking and literary work, (3) listening and literary work, and (4) writing and literary work. As an integrated study of language and literature, it is potentially to be more practised and very necessary to be developed. Teaching English through literature-based instruction helps students to improve their language and literature skills, called two in one formula, and most activities generally help students to enhance their self-confidence in all types of teaching language (reading, speaking, listening, and writing). Moreover, teaching English through literature-based instruction is not only limited to be taught as integrated study but also

colours the teaching of language in advance. Therefore, it opens opportunities to be taught dynamically.

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