Writers Biography

Journal of English and Education, Vol. 6 No. 1 Juni 2012

Astri Hapsari accomplished her bachelor degree in English Literature at STBA Prayoga Padang, West Sumatera in 2009. She enjoys reading both canonical and modern literature as her favourite activity in spare time. In 2012, she completed her Master of TESOL (M.TESOL) from The University of Melbourne.

Dwiyani Pratiwi is the lecturer of English Education Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University. She got her S.Pd (Sarjana Pendidikan) from Yogyakarta State University in 2001, and she earned her master degree on Language Teaching from Postgraduate Program, Yogyakarta State University in 2004. Her professional and academic interests are on the students' learning strategies and language teacher education.

Fauzul Aufa is a full-time postgraduate student at University of Queensland majoring Applied Linguistics under Australian Development Scholarship (ADS). Prior to being one of ADS awardees, Aufa was a Teaching Assistant (TA) in English Department of State University of Padang, Indonesia, from 2008 to 2011. Having graduated from the same university with B.Ed. in English Teaching, he started teaching Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Language Testing, and Interpretation course.

Ista Maharsi is an English lecturer at Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta. She earned her bachelor degree from Diponegoro University in Semarang and her Master degree from Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta. She has taught English for undergraduate students of Industrial Engineering, Economics, and Diploma 3 English Program. Her current research interests are classroom practices, learning experiences, English for Specific Purposes, academic writing, academic reading, and translation.

POETIC APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF A DRAMA SCRIPT: ANALYZING THE DISAPPOINTMENTS FACED BY WILLY LOMAN IN ARTHUR MILLER'S DEATH OF A SALESMAN IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXT

Astri Hapsari
Melbourne University

ABSTRACT
This article describes and explains how literary competence for the teaching of literature in English as a foreign language (EFL) context can be achieved by taking Culler's (1997) poetics in the study of literature as a theoretical framework. The implementation of this approach is discussed by using one of the famous drama scripts in American literature: Death of Salesman written by Arthur Miller. Following Culler's poetics approach, the analysis focuses on one of the themes found in the drama script: the disappointments faced by Willy Loman (the main character) which make up most of the plot with a dramatic ending: Willy's decision to suicide. This article aims to encourage EFL teachers who use literature as the object of study to take Culler's side by using poetics as the starting point in a literature study in order to improve the learners' literary competence.

Key words: literary competence, poetic approach, teaching literature in EFL context, the study of a drama script, Death of a Salesman

INTRODUCTION
Literature is important product of a literate society because it is a written text which describes what people do and how people live in a society. Guerin (2005) mention that even though literature has basic stance as art, it must be acknowledged that “art does not exist in vacuum” (p. 17) and it is intended to deliver some ideas that are relevant to the real human experience in history. As a
result, doing literary study enriches our knowledge about human existence. Therefore, the use of literature in English as a foreign language (EFL) context is important because literary works enable the students to learn about different world views, enrich the students’ perspective and indirectly teach them how to appreciate the differences in the real society (Hapsari, 2011). In addition, in EFL context where students rarely use English in their daily conversation, literature is essential teaching source because it provides examples of the language use in a context, such as in reading a drama script, the students know how certain expressions are used in a conversation (Hapsari, 2011).

POETIC APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Culler (2000, 2002) conceptualizes the notion of literary competence which refers to the ability to have an understanding of the meaning beyond what it is literary written in the text which requires the reader of a literary work to comprehend the operations of literary discourse, its implicit semiotic signs and culture. Culler (2000) also highlights the difference between what is called poetics and hermeneutics in the study of literature. Poetics starts with the meaning of literary work while hermeneutics starts with form. He further explains that “the modern tradition of criticism” has submerged in hermeneutics or combined poetics and hermeneutics (Culler, 2000, p. 61). Moreover, he argues that poetics should be taken as “the first track” in linguistic model of literary study (Culler, 2000, p.61). He further argues that it is poetics, which focuses on the conventions that make possible literary structure and meaning. As a consequence, literary competence involves the readers' ability to identify “literary genres, recognize plots, create characters out of the scattered details provided in text, identify themes in literary works, and pursue the kind of symbolic interpretation that allows us to gauge the significance of poems and stories”.

Following Culler's poetic approach in the study of literature, this essay aims to describe and explain the implementation of this approach in analyzing one of the themes found in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman: the disappointments of Willy Loman (the main character in the drama script).
WILLY LOMAN’S DISAPPOINTMENTS WHICH LEAD HIM TO SUICIDE: ONE OF THE MAJOR THEMES IN MILLER’S DEATH OF A SALESMAN

Death of Salesman is a play written by Arthur Miller which focuses on a family as the most important element. This two-act play contains certain private conversations which happen in two days and lead to Willy Loman's decision to suicide. With such decision, there must be some failures in life that Willy has done which makes him feel disappointed. Thus, the disappointments faced by Willy Loman are one of the major themes in Arthur's Miller Death of a Salesman and the following paragraphs will discuss the disappointments which lead Willy Loman to suicide.

Willy Loman is a past sixty years of age salesman. In Act I, it is revealed that Willy has so many things to complain. He does not feel satisfied with his job (p. 9-10), his thirty-four-year-old son named Biff who has not got a stable job and almost always disagrees with him (p. 10), his environment (p. 11), and even himself (p. 21). This complains infers that Willy is mentally unbalance.

There are also several flash-back plots which describe Willy's thought about the past and the way he wishes life must be. From Willy's flash back thought it is revealed that in the past Willy had a good relationship with both Biff and Happy (p. 17-21). This flash back plot also reveals that Willy taught his sons that a person is well-liked and succeeds because of his appearance, not his education.

From this statement, it is revealed that Willy does not pay attention to his sons' education. He thinks that good looking is enough to succeed.
Willy: How-how did you? Why didn't he ever catch on?
Bernard: I wouldn't know that, Willy.
Willy: You were his friend, his boyhood friend. There's something I don't understand about it...nothing good ever happened to him.
Bernard: He never trained himself for anything (p. 51)

From Bernard's statement, it is inferred that Biff has never got a stable job because he is lack of educational background. Biff didn't graduate from high school because he flunked in math exam and didn't enroll in summer school after he'd gone to New England to meet his father.

Furthermore, the flash back thought also reveals that in the past Willy has an affair with a woman (p. 22-23) but Linda does not know about it at all. Biff, who found out that Willy had an affair, felt very disappointment (p. 65-67). For Biff, his mom, Linda, is an obedient and faithful wife so that she deserves to have a full respect from his father. In addition, Biff could not accept the reality that his father who he admires a lot could do such a nasty thing. That is why when he found out that his father was a dishonest person who betrayed his marriage; he was so angry and frustrated that he started neglecting his own life. Biff becomes a loser who failed to graduate high school, stole things, spent some time in prison, has never had permanent job, and constantly argued with Willy. When Willy realizes that Biff's failure in life is part of his mistake, he feels guilty. (p. 74).

Bernard: He wasn't beaten by it all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. And I got the idea that he'd gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then?

Willy stares in silence
Bernard: Willy?
Willy (with a strong edge of resentment in his voice): Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?
Bernard: Well, just that when he came back. I'll never forget this, it always mystifies me... Willy, y'know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers- remember those sneakers with "University of Virginia" printed on them?...And he took them down in cellar, and burned them up in the furnace...What happened in Boston, Willy?

Willy looks at him as at an intruder...
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

This research aimed to reveal the pattern of socio-affective strategies in reading which the college student use and how the strategies facilitate better understanding of the text she is reading. There was only one student involved in this research and in order to identify the socio-affective strategies used, the student was interviewed a couple times about her experiences in reading and was asked to write a personal diary. The aim of writing diary was to add information which might not be stated or confirm the statements given in the interview session, but since there was not any verification regarding her problems in reading it was decided to eliminate the diary. The second student's note showed her personal background and it had nothing to do as well with how she coped her problems in reading unless the fact that it confirmed her affective state.

Analysis of the data gathered from the interviews and student's diary showed that the student applied 13 of 16 socio-affective strategies, about 81%. It is quite impressive since it was weird for her to realize that some actions done during reading or other English activity were regarded as strategy. Using laughter for example, she thought it was merely something silly coming up when she got bored or sleepy. Then, she knew that it one of learning strategies to reduce bad feelings and open the access to reading.

Macintyre (1995) states that there is no doubt that anxiety can be provoked by having difficulty in learning the language, but that is not to conclude that anxiety plays no role in contributing to such difficulties in the first place. In this study, I saw that the students could facilitate their anxiety by having a break and continuing to read whenever she was ready. While having a break she could check emails, making juices, or even just laying on her bad. It made her able to perform better because she could refill her energy or spirit while having a break.

The student involved in this study had a very good self-confidence and it really influenced her performance in learning English. It gave her access to decide what to do to handle her problems. Through this research, it was proven that she had applied a great number of socio-affective strategies. Therefore, this research result could not be used to generalize all students' socio-affective strategies. The limitation of time during the study made the data gathered not thoroughly complete.

Bernard : Well, don't get sore
Willy (angrily) : What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?

From this conversation, it can be inferred that Willy starts to feel he has failed as a father. He finally realizes that his affair has made his son become a loser.

Other disappointment faced by Willy Loman is that he can't give financial security to his wife, Linda. Willy loves Linda very much because she is such an obedient, faithful, and patient wife. He does not want his wife worries about him (p. 11, 22). And somehow, Willy feels so guilty about his affair (p. 23, 41) that he wants to keep working to give financial security to Linda. But the era has changed. His boss' son, Howard, retires Willy (p. 46). When Charley, his neighbor, offers him a job, Willy refuses it because he feels a kind of competition and jealousy to Charley. But Willy keeps borrowing money from Charley (p.53-54).

Furthermore, Willy is disappointment because he thinks he has lost in his competition with Charley. Charley's son, Bernard, is successful in running his career while his son, Biff, is jobless. Charley is stable financially while he has to keep borrowing money to Charley. Willy feels that all his hard work for years is meaningless.

Willy (moving to the right) : Funny, y' know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive (p. 54).

From Willy' statements it can be inferred that Willy starts to feel pathetic about his condition and thinks about death. This statement implicitly gives a sign that Willy plan to suicide.

Other disappointment faced by Willy Loman is that his sons neglect him at the restaurant and prefer to chase for a date. At the restaurant, Happy is more concerned about the opportunity to date Miss Forsythe than about his father's feeling. At that time, Willy has a flash-back thought about the time when Biff went to see him at Boston and found out he had an affair with a woman. Willy somehow compares his condition of being neglected by his sons now (p. 60-65) as the condition in Boston (p. 65-66) which he felt that he had neglected his family for his own pleasure. It is also inferred that Happy inherits Willy's nature to have affair with women. Happy never feels satisfied with one woman (It also mentions in Happy's statement in page 15) and neglects his family (his father, while at the
restaurant), just like Willy who does not feel satisfied with his loyal and obedient wife, Linda and neglect his sons (Biff, Happy).

In conclusion, Willy Loman faces several disappointments. First, he feels he has failed as a husband to be a loyal partner and to give financial security to his wife. Second, he feels he has failed as a father to be a good example for his sons (Biff and Happy) and to guide him to be successful men. Third, he feels he has failed in his competition with his friend, Charley. These disappointments make Willy Loman feel pathetic and decide to end his life in a suicide.

**FURTHER DISCUSSION: HOW POETIC APPROACH IN STUDYING THE THEME IMPROVES THE STUDENTS’ LITERARY COMPETENCE**

From the previous analysis of one of the major themes in Miller’s Death of a Salesman, that is, Willy Loman's disappointments which lead him to suicide, it is clear that the discussion of a theme can lead to a more profound comprehension about the literary text. The analysis of Willy Loman’s disappointments can scaffold the students to be more conscientious with the meaning revealed from the dialogues between the characters in the drama script. For example, in the following script’s quotation (p.74):

*Bernard : He wasn’t beaten by it all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. And I got the idea that he’d gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then?*

*Willy stares in silence*

*Bernard : Willy?*

*Willy (with a strong edge of resentment in his voice) : Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?*

*Bernard : Well, just that when he came back I’ll never forget this, it always mystifies me… Willy, y’know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers—remember those sneakers with “University of Virginia” printed on them?...And he took them down in cellar, and burned them up in the furnace—What happened in Boston, Willy?*

*Willy looks at him as at intruder…*

*Bernard : Well, don’t get sore*

### Table 5 Summary of Ria’s Socioaffective Reading Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioaffective Strategy</td>
<td>Asking Questions</td>
<td>Asking for clarification or verification</td>
<td>Asking clues to the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating with others</td>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>Doing assignment with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>Help one another to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasizing with others</td>
<td>Developing cultural understanding</td>
<td>Being able to see what friends thought and said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lowering anxiety</td>
<td>Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation</td>
<td>Trying to relax by attending a movie or any other entertaining form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using music</td>
<td>Sometimes reading while laying back and listening to favorite songs</td>
<td>Doing other things to refresh her mind, such as checking e-mails, making juices, watching TV, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using laughter</td>
<td>Making jokes when something wrong came up to break the confusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging yourself</td>
<td>Making positive statement</td>
<td>Make herself sure that she could do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking emotional temperature</td>
<td>Taking risk wisely</td>
<td>Doing the task slowly and gradually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding herself</td>
<td>Doing anything like to do</td>
<td>Preparing herself before the class and performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening to her body</td>
<td>Feeling uncomfortable</td>
<td>Feeling dizzy when could not find the answer of her own question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using Checklist</td>
<td>Feeling dizzy when could not find the answer of her own question.</td>
<td>Panic when due date was ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing a language learning diary</td>
<td>*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing feeling with someone else</td>
<td>Sharing with a close friend who felt the same.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*) socioaffective strategies not performed
It was really appreciated that the participant, as a student, was able to keep her spirit on learning and her self-confidence. She knew what to do to her problems with everything she knew and had, and she knew when she had to do it; deciding when to stop and continue reading. She did not push herself whenever she thought she could not handle it more and she tried to do something else and then got back to her reading whenever she was ready. It means she could listen to her body and it made her decide what to do next. A slight conversation led to a better understanding that she did not hesitate to communicate her problems with someone who knows better, to cooperate with proficient users of the new language.

Compare to the first interview, the second one was more colorful. It did not only explore possibilities of her using of socioaffective strategies, but also about her self-confident. It is interesting to find that she could have such a good self-confident. She explained that her senior high school time influenced her development in English. Even reading was not exposed as much as vocabulary; it really built her self-confidence as well as friends with good skills surrounded her. It did not mean that she could not find good English skilled friends at the college where she took course.

Whenever she got an assignment, she tried to solve it and when she could handle it, it made her feel better and then raise her self-confidence. Later, when she found that her friends believed that she had a good ability in English, it also increased her such affective state. She added that her family never talked in English at home, so she just often practiced talking in English with her good friends.

Writing a language diary and using checklist are two strategies that seemed to be out of her mind. She was asked to write on her diary twice. The first one was supposed to be related to her reading activity and might have forgotten to be said at the first interview, while the second one was about herself. The fact that she did not have the habit of writing a language diary might be the reason why her first diary did not really help at all and it was decided not to include it as a document. She usually wrote something on the text paper directly to remind her what to ask to her teacher or friends. She made plans but it was not specifically about reading but English generally, so it is not considered as using checklist.

As the summary of all kinds of socioaffective strategies, which the participant used in reading, a table was provided as the guidelines to the discussion part attempting to the research question posed earlier in this thesis. Table 5 shows the summary of Ria's socioaffective strategies in reading.

Willy (angrily) : What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?

In order to understand how the guilty feeling simultaneously comes to Willy's mind and guide his decision to suicide, the students have to study the plot, the sequence of the story, the cumulative flash back events that motivates Willy's utterance to Bernard,

Willy (angrily) : “What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down. is that my fault?

These conscientious steps are directed from the discussion of the disappointments faced by Willy Loman. Without careful analysis of the events that lead towards the conversation between Bernard and Willy, the students will not be able to reveal the meaning in the conversation. Therefore, in order to achieve the degree of this literary competence, a careful structural analysis of utterance is a must. Misson et al. (1994) refers Culler's literary competence to “structuralist framework” which the readers develop since it involves a thorough analysis of the intrinsic elements in the literary work. Taking Culler’s (2000,2002) stance, poetic approach is indeed a better track to begin a study of literature than hermeneutics approach. However, it does not mean that hermeneutics approach which involves extrinsic elements of the literary work is not valid to guide the study of literature. The point is that a poetic approach which involves a thorough analysis of the intrinsic elements should be the starting point in order to make the students be more focus on and develop their appreciation at the literary work as the object of study. Even though literature has basic stance as art, it must be acknowledged that “art does not exist in vacuum” (Guerin, 2005), extrinsic elements should be used to scaffold learning only if the students have already had enough time to study the structure of the literary work as the object of study first.

In conclusion, taking stance of Culler's (2000, 2002) and Misson's et. al (1994) arguments on how important the study of the intrinsic elements in the study of literature are I shall argue that poetic approach should precede hermeneutics approach in the study of literature. While not taking the conventional formalist view that the literary text itself is self-sufficient, I believe that teaching literature in EFL context should motivate the students to appreciate the literary work first before developing their critical analysis from the extrinsic elements which involve in the making of the literary work.
not show their initiative to ask when they feel confused, so she was in doubt about helping them. It really depended on her feelings. If she thought that ‘the friends’ are close enough with her, it would be alright for her to share everything she knew. But when she saw that ‘the friends’ are not really close and they seemed not to care about what happened during the class, she preferred not to say a word. She was afraid it would hurt them and it made them think that she showed off, while she herself realized that her English was also not that good. She tended to cooperate with peers who seemed to have the same interest in English. It showed her awareness to others’ thought and feelings; even it did not make her help others instantly. It is probably not enough to be considered as a cultural understanding, but I can notice that she respected others’ thought and feelings even she thought that she had to think twice to give them a hand.

Taking risk wisely is another interesting topic in this interview. It seemed to be her main option in order to handle her problem in reading As someone who had a good self confident, she really knew what to do to overcome her problems to avoid panic and stress due to limited time and load of work. Confusion, dizziness, and panic were very common for her life as a student. All she knew was trying to manage her time and ‘reading’ work, and doing the best even she knew that it had not been something perfect. She preferred to prepare herself before class in order to optimize her performance, do it step by step, and make a plan to avoid panic, feeling bored, or stressed. Besides, she tended to take a rest whenever she felt tired and did other things to make her relax before continuing reading.

It can also be seen that she preferred to take a recess whenever she felt tired or bored and continue reading after she relaxed herself. During the recess, she could go to a movie or look for another entertaining thing to reward herself. She also tended to take a rest when her eyes were tired before continuing reading. Even listening to music was one of her choices to relax during reading activity, she said that laying on her bed or checking emails were more interesting to do than listening to music.

To keep herself in a good mood, she sometimes told jokes with friends especially when she and friends were not really in to the material. It can be considered as her effort to lower her anxiety rather than being stressed due to a certain difficult task. She also always tried to raise her self-confidence by telling herself that she could do anything to make her calm down. This positive statement really helped her not to feel anxious.