

# STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE-RELATED CLASSES IN RELATION TO THEIR EFL NEEDS

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**Abstract.** One component of the curriculum in English Education Study Program in Jambi University comprise of Literature courses such as Introduction to Literature, Prose, etc. This research aimed at investigating students' perspective on Literature-related classes in relation to their EFL needs. In particular, this research attempted to answer the questions: (1) How do students perceive Literature-related classes with their English proficiency?; (2) How do students perceive Literature-related classes with their future career as an English teacher? and (3) What are their expectations of the Literature-related classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University?. This qualitative research uses case study as the main design. The data were collected by interviewing six participants who have passed the obligatory courses of Literature. The data were analyzed by using thematic analysis and the researcher found eight major themes: (1) increase knowledge about grammar, (2) increase vocabulary, (3) develop reading skill, (4) develop listening skill, (5) develop speaking skill, (6) develop writing skill, (7) classroom circumstance, and (8) the lecturers. Some suggestions and implications of the study will be discussed further.

**Key words:** *students' perspective, literature, literature-related classes, EFL needs, proficiency*

## Introduction

In teaching-learning process, especially in English subject, there are four skills taught to the students by teachers in the classroom. Those four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To supports that process, teachers need some passages whether it is from textbooks, e-book, magazines, or else to teach those four skills in the classroom. The passages that will be used in teaching process are not any passages, but it is necessary to see the quality of the passages. In teaching language, some materials related to literature and are often used and given to the students.

Literature plays an important role in teaching English language especially in supporting the teaching process of those four skills. Collie and Slater (1987) stated the inclusion of literature in the language classroom as it provides valuable authentic material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers' cultural as well as language enrichment. Literature and language cannot be separated. It is also used in teaching language. Literature and teaching language interrelated, because literature is initially become the main source of input for teaching in language classes. According to Rahimi (2014), on one hand, language constitutes literature, and literature in turn represents one of the most frequent uses of language.

In English Education Study Program in Jambi University, the students learn some Literature courses, those are, Introduction to Literature in third semester, Poetry and Prose in fourth semester, Drama in fifth semester, and one optional subject in sixth semester that is Literary Criticism. Students are introduced to literature, especially English Literature and the literary works such as poems, novels, short stories, dramas, etc. in different periods. Then, students learn how to analyze some literary works critically, and also tried to create their own works in form of poems and dramas. The researcher found it was an interesting topic to be a research about Literature class' importance toward the students' EFL proficiency and the existence of it in this study program since this study program is under Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and this faculty also study program expected students to be teachers in the future, also the contribution of literature itself in education field especially for teaching learning process in EFL classroom both for teachers and students. So, this study expected to know students' perspective on Literature-related classes in relation to their EFL needs, not only for this moment like solving their grammar problem and increasing their vocabulary but also for their future career as an English teacher to make an improvement in teaching and developing materials, especially for college students that taking English Education Study Program as their major in university and for those who ever have taken literature subjects such as Introduction to Literature, Poetry, Prose, and Drama.

To guide this study, the researcher had formulated the problem into following questions: (1) How do students perceive Literature-related classes with their English proficiency? (2) How do students perceive Literature-related classes with their future career as an English teacher? (3) What are their expectations of the Literature-related classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University? The objectives of this study are to investigate students' perspective on Literature-related classes with their English proficiency, to investigate students' perspective on Literature-related classes with their future career as an English teacher, and to discover students' expectations of the Literature-related classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University.

## **Review of Related Literature**

According to Williams (1976), 'Literature' is a difficult word, in part because its conventional contemporary meaning appears, at first sight, so simple. Williams noted, the term 'literature' came into English from 14<sup>th</sup> century, in the sense of polite learning through reading. Pickering and Hoepfer (1981) state that the creation of literature is a uniquely human activity, born of man's timeless desire to understand, express, and finally share experiences. From that statement, literature is the unique human activity that produces the creative thinking in mind in contain of the human's experience. Human can make literature as a product in their mind thinking. Human often shares their experiences whether it is in written or orally. Moody (1987)

writes that literature springs from our in born love of telling a story, of arranging words in pleasing patterns, of expressing in words some special aspects of our human experience (qtd. in Ade et al, 117). In conclusion, Literature expresses thoughts, feelings, ideas, or other special aspect of human experiences.

According to Bracho et al (2014) in their presentation, literature falls into two major types: written and oral literature. Almost all type of literature available in written form. A lot of oral literature too has been made available in the form of books. Oral literature includes ballads, myth, jokes, folktales, and fable. For written source has drama, novel, poetry and nonfictional literature. Fiction and non-fiction literature are the two major genres in types of literature. Fiction literature consists of drama, novel, poetry, and short story. Non-fiction literature consists of autobiography and biography, essay, journal, and travel literature.

Akyel and Yalçin (1990) have evaluated the state of literature teaching in several English schools in Istanbul, the results of their study revealed that there have been an ignorance toward the students' needs, goals and attitudes in terms of linguistic and literary competence in designing curriculums. By doing so they realized that integrating literature and English language teaching can be a beneficial move if it is done with the consideration of the students' needs, goals and preferences. In his article "*Literature and Language Teaching*", Lazar (1996) states that literary texts are in fact rich sources of classroom activities which can be very motivating for language learners due to the content they have; he believes that literary texts contain human dilemmas and conflicts that can create considerable emotional reflections in the learners. Lazar also proves that literature also takes role in teaching and learning process of language and culture. Nasr (2001) adds some additional points in favor of literary engagement in EFL/ESL classes, those are: it has the potential to consolidate the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening, it requires learners to think out and put into practice special reading strategies to deal with the idiosyncratic characteristics of verse and prose, it broadens intellectual perspectives, and boosts cognitive maturation, and it helps learners develop feelings for the language they are learning. Van (2009) maintains that studying literature in the EFL classroom has a number of merits: it provides meaningful contexts; it involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose; it appeals to imagination and enhances creativity; it develops cultural awareness; it encourages critical thinking; it is in line with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles. According to Carter and Long (1991), there are three main model of approaches to teaching Literature: the cultural model, the language model, the personal growth model.

## **Method**

The research design of this study was descriptive research. Descriptive research involves gathering data that describes events (Glass & Hopkins,1984 qtd in Knupfer & McLellan, 1996). Then, descriptive research consists three types of research, those are observational research, case study research, and survey research. Thus, this research specifically used case study research. A case study is in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals through collection of detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures (Creswell, 2003). To explore it, researcher used qualitative method for collecting the data. According to Johnson & Christonson (2008), to provide detailed account of one or more cases is used a form qualitative, namely case study. It is followed by Creswell's

theory (2012) that to answer a research problem which the variables are not known and need to be explored, qualitative method is suitable.

The location of this study was in University of Jambi, and specifically in English Education Study Program of Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. The location is in Jl. Raya Jambi – Muara Bulian KM.15, Mendalo Indah. The participants of this study are six students who are categorized as required criteria.

In collecting the data, the instruments were demographic profile questionnaire and interview. In this research, there were eighteen questions for interview section. When the process of collecting the data, the researcher asked the willingness of the participants to join in this study. Before giving the demographic profile questionnaire and do the interview, the researcher contacted them first. This research was going by following the procedures to make the data trusted. After collect the data and transcribing, the researcher used member checking to check the accuracy of the data and findings, then analyzed the data to get the answers of the following research questions.

## Findings and Discussions

This section presents participants' answer from interview section related to three research questions. There are three major topics: (1) findings on perspective on Literature-related classes with students' English proficiency, (2) findings on perspective on Literature-related classes with students' future career as an English teacher, and (3) findings on the expectations of Literature-related classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University.

The first purpose of this research is to investigate students' perspective on Literature-related classes with their English proficiency. After the researcher analyzed the data, there were six major themes and twelve sub-themes related to the first research question based on interview analysis;

- (1) Increasing knowledge about grammar; improving grammar, broaden the knowledge about the relation between literary work and grammar.

“ah...Literature class improve my grammar? Yes, a little bit. Yeah...because we have..we...or...I have to read. And then, can improve my...my...my grammar too” [Ciko]

“um...i'm not sure because...uh...when I..learn...Literature...it's not about grammar. Like, poetry..it's not about grammar hahaha. The texts are often ungrammatical.” [Ani]

- (2) increasing vocabulary; by reading short stories, poems, books, and notebooks

”in Poetry and Prose, there are so many words that unfamiliar for me and it's increasing my vocabulary” [Ani]

“because..uh...when...when you are reading umm something in terms of literature, it's..it con..apa..it contains a lot of..uh...low frequency vocab and...uh...yang gak (*that is not*) usually we use in our daily life, so it increasing my vocabulary.” [Bunga]

(3) developing reading skill; understand the passage, more interested in reading

“mengembangkan kemampuan membaca saya iya...heem dari membaca short story trus kaya jurnal, trus kaya artikel artikel yg ada. (*it developed my reading skill by read short story, journal, and articles*)” [Erina]

“ya...dengan Literature saya dapat...apa ya..gambaran kalo membaca itu tidak selamanya...apa...membosankan...jadi sedikit membangun semangatlah kalo itu...(Because of Literature, I got the illustration that reading is not always a boring thing. So, it's a little bit rise my spirit to read.)” [Farhan]

(4) developing listening skill; never focusing on listening, need more audio

“I...think no. Because...I...uh...I don't...drama kan listening, jadi...nggaklah. It could develop my listening skill by giving more audio like..like...poetry...and the..the lecturer should have shown some videos or audio of someone reading a poem” [Bunga]

“because in Literature class.... we only talk about... uh... apa... hanya.. terlalu banyak berbincang-bincang (*speaking*), tidak terlalu ke listening gitu. (*not really to listening*)” [Farhan]

(5) developing speaking skill; in drama, by reading aloud the poem

“yes, of course, in drama you know, we should speak, so...it's improve my speaking skill well. You know, when I learn poetry, I should read it in front of class, we make it and..we read it. In drama class, you know, we should be an actor and..everyone watch us.” [Ani]

“because when ehmm when I have write down my poetry ehm I I think I want I want to tell....tell....tell... to the other people.” [Diana]

(6) developing writing skill; make self-composed poem, short story, drama script, easy in arrange the sentences.

“soalnya sebelum kita...gimana....sebelum kita nulis puisi berarti kan kita juga apa ya harus tau caranya... menulis yang baik.... stanza per stanza gitu. (*because before we start write a poem, it means we should know how to write well like the stanzas*).” [Diana]

“hehe because I...like I said before...by reading we learn the grammar, we learn how they made sentence, and it...reading makes...uh...without reading we cannot improve our writing. Jadi (so), it's balance between reading and writing. And it is easy to arrange sentences when I write something.” [Bunga]

The researcher also asked about their perspective of Literature-related classes with students' future career as an English teacher to answer the second research question. All those six participants dominantly have the same perspectives, and these perspectives are still presupposition, because those six participants have not do the teaching pre-service program yet,

thus, they still have no idea about how they supposed to use literature when teaching in the classroom. Those participants stated that literature can be as a media of entertainment and additional material in teaching.

“you know, uh...we are teacher but...in another time we should make our students interest for us. We should..uh...we can entertain. Like...tell a short story or poem.” [Ani]

“soalnya kan disitu kito belajar membaca, menulis, berbicara, jadi disitu juga kita di..apa..diajukan untuk membuat murid lebih berkarya... untuk lebih memotivasi kita, pemikiran kita, gitu.. (*since we learn reading, writing, and speaking in literature, so we could make students to be more creative... to motivate us and our thought as well*).” [Erina]

Beside the students' perspective on literature-related classes toward their EFL proficiency and future career as a teacher, researcher also investigated their expectations of literature-related classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University. After the researcher analyzed the data, there were two major themes and six sub-themes, those are:

(1) classroom circumstance; more facilitated, more enjoy in teaching-learning process.

“Uh...I hope that our literature-related classes in our study program will be better..and...will....by learning the literature... *mungkin (maybe) someday or kapan ada penulis gitu keluar dari sini jadi dari situ bisa atau ada...yang suka bikin script drama, atau apapun videografer gitu gitu...(when, there will be an author or drama's script writer, or videographer from this study program)*.” [Bunga]

“iya lebih maksudnya kalo poetry kalo kelas literature tu kan cuma yang kayak apa ya gak jadi gak semua orang yang suka literature gak semua orang yang enjoy nikmatin pelajaran itu gitu jadi mau nya...kelasnya lebih enjoy aja. (*for poetry, for literature like not many people likes literature, not everyone that enjoyed the lesson in that classes. So, the classes should be more enjoy*).” [Diana]

(2) lecturers; motivate more, held event or program related to literature, reciting the material.

“hm iyo.. iyo dosenyo lebih baik, tidak galak galak hahaha agar siswa lebih banyak menyukai pelajaran itu (*hm yes... I hope the lecturer is better, not getting mad easily hahaha so there will be more students interest in learning that courses*).” [Erina]

“uh...expectations...we..we have to..to..held any program related to Literature. The lecturer...should...memfasilitasi ini (*facilitated it*) like....make a competition...for short story or...poetry....and perform drama on the stage.” [Ciko]

## Conclusion

The findings of the research has fulfilled the aims of the research that was answering the following research questions that mentioned above. Based on the findings and discussions in chapter four, it can be concluded that literature-related classes help students in improving their

EFL proficiency such as give a broader understanding on grammar in literary work, improving their grammar, increasing their vocabulary, developing their reading skill, listening skill, speaking skill, and writing skill. Literature also can help students in preparing themselves as the teachers in the future. Literature can be a media of entertainment like share story, fable, or poem. And literature can be additional materials to support students in expressing their creativity like ask students to create their own short story or poem.

Finally, this research also reveal students' expectations to literature classes in English Education Study Program in Jambi University also for the lecturers. The participants suggest this study program and the lecturers could more facilitated the classroom and their creativity to be expressed.

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