

A. INTRODUCTION

It is not an easy task for many university teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to teach literature, mainly American literature. In some universities, it is undeniably true that a few students are only keen on this course. Some problems dealing with motivation, materials and teaching methods are to be significant issues in relation to the students' difficulties in learning literature. Meanwhile, some indispensable factors influencing in students' motivation are such as their interests in and enthusiasm for the materials used in the class and the level of their persistence with the learning tasks.

The study of literature is very crucial because it exposes students to meaningful contexts that are replete with descriptive language and characters. In this case, language has an important role in learning literature. By borrowing the writing of Faninie (2000:25), as a means of communication, language has some functions such as a case of why a certain event happened, a regulation to control a certain event, a representation to describe the event, an interaction and an imagination. Hence the basic need to learn any foreign literature is by learning language skill. The misunderstanding on a sentence will lead the reader to the wrong way in interpreting literary work. That is the teachers' tasks to integrate on language skills with the materials on literary studies. The integrated materials between the language lesson and the literary studies help students to get deep interests in studying literature.

In short, to communicate with others, we use language. Communication itself can be simply defined as the process by which individuals share information, ideas and attitudes. A key word in this definition is 'share' which means to give or receive a part of something or to enjoy or assume something in common. Therefore building activities based on language and literary skills requires the teacher's ability of careful planning and creativity for new ideas to stimulate students' interests and active participation. Moreover teaching literature also appeal to students' imagination, develop cultural awareness, and encourage critical thinking about plots, themes and characters.

In delivering the materials of literature, reading comprehension is the best subject to introduce a piece of literary work. Teachers can stimulate students' interests by offering a piece of short stories from some famous authors. This paper focuses on America's multi-cultural

literature. It proposes to ask the famous 18th century question, "What is an American?" and to search for an answer in American texts written by minority authors. It focuses on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. It also highlights on Native American and Asian American authors. In this way the writer tries establishing a dialogue on American culture between an idealistic, conceptual framework for nationhood and a more subversive record of lived experience.

To get better understanding of American literature, they must comprehend about the social culture of America which is familiar with multiculturalism. By having any knowledge on social culture, it provides students with the background information about the society in literary work, the environment of the author and the social culture of story where it happened. Understanding the people, the society, the customs, the habits and the different languages help students to uncover the black, the dim or the vague part in literary work.

According to Harry Lavin (1973:63), '*Literature is not only the effect of social causes, it also the cause of social effect*'. Related to this idea, one may say that to study a literary work means also study the social and cultural condition. On the other hand, studying social culture along with language in learning literature gives better understanding of the country, the people and their identities. Social culture studies give students a chance to deepen their insights into the country and the people whose language and literature are being learned.

Moreover Langlang and Tom Burns said that '*Literature is an attempt to make sense of our lives. Sociology is an attempt to make sense of the way in which we live*' (1973:9). Exploring a literary work means to question the phenomena emerge in society. Understanding phenomena lead to understand the character. As the alternative world, literature gives a chance to students to explore human beings through the characters in literary work, as Plato said that '*Literature is an imitation of a reality*'.

Unfortunately, some teachers focus mainly on language teaching methodology and offer little guidance on the analytical methods that are crucial to interpreting literature and designing effective classroom activities. This means that both the teachers and the students lose out. They can not open the windows to travel across the world in comprehending the deep meaning of literary work.

This article presents a basic review of approaches to teaching America's multiculturalism literature and literature in general. By

having knowledge of multiculturalism itself, it helps us to get deep understanding about literature, at least we definitely know the authors' backgrounds, their experiences, the spirit of era and some values in relation to ethnicity. Finally we can give our deep perspectives and interpretations toward a literary work.

B. Multiculturalism And America's Multi-cultural Literature

B.1. A Brief Account Of Multiculturalism

Culture is to be a significant value for any society in shaping its identity. It consists of three manifestations as follows: cultural knowledge, cultural behavior, and cultural artifact. A product of culture begins with the existence of idea in the mind of humans then it is followed by any work to produce it. The final product is acquired after completing the process of the cultural work. Every society produces different cultural artifacts based on its historical and cultural background. As simply, culture is a way of life for any society totally. If we study culture, absolutely we had better study the society which produces it. In this article, American culture, mainly American multiculturalism is as cornerstone in discussing America' multi-cultural literature.

There are some questions in our mind in line with the issue of American culture. Some of them as follows: Are Americans White? do they eat bread? do they lead free-sex, are they hard workers?. There is no poverty in America are all shallow generalization people usually make in referring to America. The truth is that it is hard to generalize people of America. In short, almost any generalization about Americans will be true of some group in the country, and as surely not true of many others. Few Americans are aware of the variety of peoples or subcultures that make up the country.

In era of President Kennedy and President Lyndon B. Johnson, the America's immigration gate was opened widely for immigrants of any nationality (including Asian immigrants). Consequently, the rapid and dynamic cultural assimilation during the late 19th century to the early 20th century transformed American classic 'melting pot' into a 'salad bowl' nation. It describes that each ethnic is a unique constituent where ethnic identities are no longer melting into one big pot, but they mix and complete one another composing America as

one heterogeneous nation. Therefore, America is familiar with the country of immigrants. In living among American multi-cultural society, some groups absolutely preserve their ethnics or religious values in several geographical areas, the others are to be a unity into the mainstream society and adopt the norms, values and culture.

Culture is also connected with the type of society. Recently, the term of culture is associated with multiculturalism. The issue of multiculturalism has been broadly discussed on both scientific and public level. During some past decades a multiculturalist perspective has been adopted by public policy framework in order to deal with cultural diversity. In short, it denotes to the word of multi- and culture. America itself is conventionally referred to as an example of various forms of multicultural society. Based on historical background of America, multiculturalism refers to some immigrants who came to 'New World'. The immigrants wanted to bring about their dreams in the new land by bringing their own cultures and keeping their identities in America.

By having good understanding of multiculturalism, teachers can promote cross cultural understanding and students can also respect for cultural differences. To get cultural understanding, it starts by knowing misunderstanding. In addition, education for multiculturalism is used also to promote cultures, strengthen ethnic group identity, and encourage social and political participation of minority group. In addition, John H. Zahank and Raymond Novak (1996: 1-2) said that cultural relevant teaching consists of three elements: academic success, cultural relevance and critical consciousness. It is not enough to make students 'feel good' regarding their minority culture. Teaching that is culturally relevant draws on and uses students' cultural experiences and knowledge (for example, popular culture and their home language). Critical consciousness means preparing students to become involved citizens who have a critical orientation to life.

B.2. America's Multi-cultural Literature

In this session, this paper also encourages the students to tell the differences between literature in its broadest sense and 'serious' literature, they can mention the qualities of good literary writings, and explain American multi-cultural literature. The initial question is often asked that what is American literature. To answer this question, the student should first know the meaning of literature. What is lit-

erature? There are a lot of the definitions of literature. Very often it simply means anything that is written.

Some students are familiar with two types of literature. They are informative literature and imaginative literature. Informative literature presents information and tells us about facts, explanations, history, real great figures life and so forth. Its main purpose is to offer knowledge; Imaginative literature aims to arouse thoughts and feelings. Its author expresses his idea, his feelings and his attitude. He may talk of things, people and so forth. He wants to communicate feelings, not facts; emotion, not information only. Imaginative Literature is in the deeper sense than informative literature. R.J.Rees (1973) defines this second kind of literature is writing which expresses and communicate thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards life

Some students in my university claim that they do not like literature because it is not true, just made up, not real life. Therefore, they would say that there are no good literature. It is NOT TRUE. We must see the very significant differences between truth and fact, then we will see that literature. A fact is a statement of a thing done or existing, for an example, humans and living things will die. A truth is a little more difficult to be fine. What may be true for one person may not be true for another. Truth are what some people believe, whether you agree or not. Commonly, an author of literary work makes his characters to behave in a certain way because he knows certain facts and accepts truths. And he is always concerned about how truth and fact relate to each other.

Generally, literature is divided into three groups, prose, drama and poetry. Prose uses language not in verse form, for examples novels, short stories, novellas, and so forth. Drama is play with its acts and its scenes in dialogues, conversations, asides, tragedies, tragic-comedies, and so forth. Poetry is the art of poets; poems, in verse form, for examples ballads, spics, lyrical poetry, and so forth.

This paper is based on the above sub-title, America's multi-cultural literature. It means that the products used in the works are mainly from the American authors with different ethics and culture. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Thomas King (Native American) and Amy Tan (Chinese American) author are core materials for discussion in this paper

C. Teaching and Approaches to American Literature

Teaching is generally regarded as the process of helping individuals to obtain skills, knowledge, and quality requisite to a good personality. It is very useful for students in facing life problems, technology, chance, and the changing of era. American literature teaching helps students to widen their knowledge and visions to understand more about some great American literary works, their thoughts and ideas, famous authors and so forth. By teaching American literature, it also invite students to be familiar with their feelings, their ideas, their attitudes toward life, God and man nature.

Absolutely, their culture is very different from our culture. Therefore before learning American literature, the students must know their own culture well, they should have a deep motivation and feeling in the sense of belonging to it, a strong hold on it and a sense of self-reliance. We must be proud of our culture but we do not want to be any alien in our home. We are like fish in aquarium, the foreigners can see our activities from outside but we can not see them well. Being selective of other culture is one way to keep our culture alive.

Being selective is very crucial for them to filter and select all elements of foreign culture as some of which may do a lot of destructive effects upon ours rather than give positive things for us. American Literature helps to develop and improve the students' senses, attitudes, religious and social understanding, reasoning abilities, cultural values and thought processes in any society. Moreover, it helps students grow to become a mature member of society and to give some contributions to the revelation of human values, from which they can draw lessons for their own lives.

By teaching literature, it gives students knowledge of other peoples, histories, nations, spirit of era and so forth. Moreover, the students also learn new values, new emotions, new appreciation, new methods of literary analysis, and so forth. It is hoped the students can improve their inter-relationships with others, regardless their ethnics, their beliefs, their religions and their nationalities.

So, American literature teaching also indirectly gives some good guidance to the students cause it is a means of transformation. Sometimes, the students may find good lessons of themselves regardless whatever literary works they are. Moreover, it also encourages stu-

dents be philosophic, moralistic, religious and so forth. The students are indirectly guided to select beneficial lessons they may search for themselves from American literary works, their critics, their experiences by analyzing the work and giving their appreciations to them.

By understanding (American) literature helps students to be realistic, mature, humane and wiser. It also alleviates students to understand human sentiments, human interests, human problems and so forth. It conveys them closer to other human beings of the same or different nationalities, cultures, human values and so forth. We admire their endurance, perseverance, and their remarkable motivations. We learn to appreciate what others appreciate properly. In this way our capacity for feeling and appreciation increases, and so does our capacity for enjoyment. Literature endows us with the vision, from which we can draw our conclusions, perspectives, and interpretations about behaviors, and about what is worth striving for in life, and so forth.

In this paper, literary approaches is no different from any other kind of analysis; it attempts to find truth. The process of analysis begins with dividing a problem into parts. Once the parts are separated and considered singly, it is easier to study their natures, functions, and interrelationships. In very much the same way, you can not talk about everything in a literary work at once, even though the work is an entirety. It is better to narrow the scope of your discussion by dealing with separate topics like point of view, character, or imagery. As you develop materials for your themes, please remember that literary analysis is away of deepening your understanding and appreciation of the work (Robert, 1983:7).

Literary interpretations always reflect a particular institutional, cultural, and historical background. In order to get much participation for the students in class, the writer focus on reader-oriented approaches, mainly reader-response criticism. The principle of Reader-Response criticism includes attention of the role of the reader and a process-oriented approach to reading literature. Reader-Response supports activities that encourage us to draw on our personal experiences, opinions, and feelings in our interpretation of literature. According to Davies and Stratton (1984:3) "*Reader-Response addresses this problem by making the learners "active participant(s) in the learning proceeds"*".

As a reaction to the dominant position of text-oriented new criticism, a reader-oriented approach developed in the 1960s called reception theory, reader-response theory, or aesthetics of reception. All three terms are used almost synonymously to summarize those approaches which focus on the reader's point of view. Some of these approaches do not postulate a single objective text, but rather assume that there are as many texts as readers. This attitude implies that a new individual text evolves with every individual reading process (Klarer, 2004:92).

Still by borrowing the writing of Marion Klarer (2004:92), reader-centered approach examines the readership of a text and investigate why, where, and when it is read. It also examines certain reading practices of social, ethnic, or national groups. With the focus on the effect of a text on the recipient or reader, reception theory is obviously opposed to new criticism's dogma of affective fallacy, which demands an interpretation free of subjective contributions by the reader. This approach assumes that a text creates certain expectations in the reader in every phase of reading. These expectations are then either fulfilled or left unfulfilled. Wolfgang Iser's (1926-) term of the blank refers to this phenomenon of expectation stimulated by the text and filled by the reader. This principle of the blank can be applied to the elementary level of the sentence as well as to more complex units of meaning.

The writer also recognized a positive change in my students' attitudes towards literature when I connected the material with their lives. I saw joy sparkling in the students' eyes, thoughtful reflection in their answers, and interest and curiosity for literature when they came to class, feeling free and relaxed. When I allowed students to interpret and respond to literature within the framework of their backgrounds and life experiences, they were empowered to give opinions without the fear of having different responses, work collaboratively in pairs or groups to debate a topic, perform scenes from plays, which brings smiles, laughter, and contemplation into the classroom.

In this paper, the writer focuses on three America's multicultural literatures. They are Emerson's "*Self-Reliance*" and Walt Whitman's "*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*", "*Borders*" by Thomas King (native American), and "*The Joy Luck Club: Four Directions*" by Amy Tan (Chinese American author). As one example, the writer gave an illumination of American multicultural society with distinctive cul-

tural characteristics. The students with their own backgrounds explored the American cultural values. They were enthusiasm before I gave the readings of literary work. These following paragraphs are the results of discussion based on the above materials.

Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are two canons of American individualism in the era of Romanticism. By comparing and contrasting with those essays, we can know their primary concepts of individualism which differ mutually. In this essay, Emerson focuses on his belief about man himself and about his relation with the universe. Man, Emerson said, must surrender his individual will and intellect, and act any obedience to the instincts of his soul. These instincts were the over expressing itself in him, and were identical with the forces which governed the material universe.

The following his statement, "*whose would be a man must be a non-conformist*" (p.1162). It means that self-reliance itself has a identical meaning to the idea of individualism. In the beginning of the essay, Emerson stated that our soul always hears something, which is original, not conventional, whatever the subject is. Therefore, we have to speak of what we, not what other people think. "to believe your own thought" In that address Emerson would urge his audience to throw off the shackles of tradition and conformity. Emerson says "*to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men, that is genius*" (1160)

In every man, he points out that there is a unique power, which enables him to face his destiny. Man has to do his own best, else this power will loose its strength, and he will have no peace nor can he achieve any success. A man is a being to whom God has given ability or inherent strength to trust himself. "*Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string*" (1161). If a man realizes this and develops self-trust, he will have a new power. On the other hand, if a man is always governed by society in his every action, he becomes weak, turns into a depending person, as well, and will never be satisfied with himself. Emerson writes "*Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members*" (1162).

Emerson believes that conformity makes us false in every way. A person should have a greater trust in his nature and in God, than in the laws made by men or in the opinion of society. Furthermore, Emerson argues for not imitating what other people do. Insist on your-

self, we can do what we like to do with our own gift since we have the whole possession of it, whereas of other's adopted talents, we only get a partial and temporal possession. He takes as an example traveling abroad in order to adopt and imitate what we see and find. It is actually the result of a lack of our self-reliance. Some educated Americans think that American culture is poor compared with that of ancient countries, so that they travel abroad to search for culture, and then imitate what they have found without realizing that their own country has a culture no less than such action, according to Emerson, really shows a lack of self-reliance.

Having pointed out Emerson's main idea in his 'self-reliance'. It concludes that he believes in individualism or non-conformity absolutely. He has a strong belief that a man has to trust himself, since he has his own power, mind, and originality of thought. It is very interesting to compare between Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". Both of them are in Romantic era which their work supports each other. But in Whitman's work, his poem contains wider meaning about individualism dealing with society. He stresses the idea of personality. An individual does not stand alone. An individual has to be a member of society. This membership involves both the rights or duties that accompany freedom. Whitman wants to identify the principle of equality and individuality. He admits his self-identify clearly as the section 7:

*Closer yet I approach you
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you born
Who knows but I am enjoying this*

Based on this poem, It was the idea of transcendence. Walt Whitman is one of American Romanticism's greatest names. So he is also one of transcendentalists like Emerson in that era. Of course most of his writings and poets are still influenced by romanticism such as sentimentality for nature, stress over relentless change, and the domination of all by individual. And one aspect of his poet, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" that adheres to the American Romantics characteristics is the ideas of transcendence. In short, Walt Whitman differs from other Transcendentalists in regard to the fact that he did not take himself out of society like Thoreau, nor did he completely submit to a higher Divine Power like Emerson. The important idea of Emerson's

"Self-Reliance" is the relation between the "Soul" and the "Divine Spirit", which Emerson expresses:

"The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speaketh, he should communicate not one thing, but all things; ... All things are made scared by relation to it" (1168).

In this statement Emerson emphasizes that mankind would build up direct relation with the Creator. No church is necessary. For Emerson, all things in nature became center of thought. All things become sacred. All things in nature become important instruments, bridging the relationship between a human being and his Creator. In applying Emerson's suggestion, Whitman relates an incident from own life in nature, i.e. *"What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my highest name as I approach?"* (Sec.7, line.95), which hastens his communication with God.

By comparing and contrasted with Emerson's essay, in Whitman's poem, we find that he took the human factor and social issues into consideration in his poetry. If we have ever read Whitman's poetry, we can see that in Whitman's poetry can be separated into three modes of transcendence or dialogue : (1) A dialogue between the self and the external world; (2) A dialogue between the self and another; (3). A dialogue between the self and the spirit. They are illuminated in the following stanzas: *"Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?"* (Stanza 8). It describes the communication between the writer and the reader. The writer and the reader to nature *"Flow on, river flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!"* (stanza 9). In stanza 2, *"Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore"*

He uses images of people going from shore to shore on the ferry. All of the people who take the ferry to one side will always take it back again. I think in this case that Whitman tried establishing a relationship with humanity in regard to the circle of life and human existence. His writing style permits inclusiveness of all human beings. Inclusiveness works because it is a poem about me (individualism).

The second material is *"Borders"* by Thomas King (Cherokee). The title *'Borders'* has a deep meaning. It is as a symbol of family value or blended culture, which is very different between Laetitia and her mother. There are two cultures in this family, they are American and

Indian. Which one is dominant, it depends on how long they receive and perceive their culture. Absolutely, her mother hold her culture tightly, meanwhile her daughter, Laetitia who has gotten other culture (American) can receive both cultures "Dad's American, "Laetitia told her mother, "so I can go and comes as I please" (p. 289)

Culture and society have great contributions to influence on who someone receives other culture. Laetitia decided to move to Slat Lake City because she is bored in reservation. In this essay, Laetitia is more tolerant than her mother. Because she grew up on the reservation which offers other style of life, she can receive American culture in her life. Meanwhile her mother is more dominant to Indian culture. See this dialogue when she wanted to look for her daughter and stopped in borders between America and Canada. She was asked by the border guard:

"Morning, Ma'am"

"..."

"Citizenship?"

"Blackfoot, "my mother told him.

"Ma'am?"

"Blackfoot, "my mother repeated.

"Canadian?"

"Balckfoot".

It is normal mainly for parents who still hold their cultures tightly. Commonly, our parents always try to implant our culture. We must respect it. If you go to anywhere, do not leave your identity or family value. They find difficulties how the best way to implant their cultures toward their children who grew up in a different culture.

The last material is a novel by Asian American. "The Joy Luck Club" is a well known novel by Chinese American writer, Amy Tan. And "Two Kinds" is one of chapters in the novel. Chinese are interesting to be discussed, however we almost find Chinese in all of the world. Why could Chinese spread out all of the world? And how can they struggle among American civilization? Even some families keep maintaining their identities but some of them find difficulties to pass the culture and heritage down to their children, who born and grew up in America. So there are some conflicts between the aspirations of a mother and the feelings of resistance from a daughter.

From the theme of the story, Suyuan, Jing-Mei's mother believes in American Dream. In the whole stories, before her death, Suyuan had always seen America as a land of hope and fulfillment. Wanting Jing-Mei to have every advantage in this land of opportunity. *"My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America... You could become instantly famous"* (p. 715). The conflicts start when Suyuan wants the best for Jing-Mei after having lost two daughters in China. She gives her a variety of lessons, both piano and acting, and wants her to excel in her studies. *"Three days after watching The Ed Sullivan Show, my mother told me what my schedule would be for piano lessons and piano practice."* (p. 718).

The conflicts exist when Suyuan pressures Jing-Mei to the point rebellion. Jing-Mei takes no interest in the piano and refuses to practice as her mother wants. She convinces herself that she does not have to do what her mother desires. *"You want me to be someone that I'm not!" I sobbed. I'll never be the kind of daughter you want to be!"* (p.724). And the conflict is more rising, when her mother protested, Jim-Mei shouted that she wished she were dead, just like her mother's two lost babies in China. Sadly, her mother put the piano up and never mentioned it again until Jing-Mei was an adult.

In the last story, it tells when on Jing-Mei's thirtieth birthday, her mother asked her if she would like to have the piano; but Jing-Mei had no interest in it. Ironically, after her mother's death, Jing-Mei claimed the piano and began to play again. Surprisingly, she found out that she had some talent and that she could play still play some of the old songs she had learned in her youth. The first piece she remembered was appropriate called "Pleading Child", the second piece was called "Perfectly Contented". It could be that the two songs refer to the title "Two Kinds" which the first song depicts her youth age, and the second song is as a woman who can understand the two cultures that have shaped her. On the other hand, she begins to understand and accept their dual heritage.

CONCLUSION

Activating students' creativities in reading literature is important and that personalizing the learning experience increases student participation and motivation. In fact, these are core principles that are

known to encourage language learning through student-centered and process-oriented activities. Students with their creativities can see a literary work from their own perspectives and interpretations.

Reader-Response approach makes an important contribution to learning by demystifying literature and connecting it to individual experience. Teachers support making literature more accessible by activating students' background knowledge so they can better predict and decode the language and themes of literary texts

Some who criticize the approach feel that readers inevitably relate to aspects of what they are reading and become subjectively involved *the text*. This can, of course, include the study of literary terms, but it does not make that technique an end in itself but rather a means to discover the beauty and value of a literary work. Some students responded that "Literature concerns the soul. Each person has a distinctive soul that can not be totally identical."

The writer also felt that without a subjective response to the meaning of the text, and with the heavy dependence on the teacher to decipher the literary work, students will not progress in building their language skills. Therefore, the application of the reader-response approach offers students little enjoyment or recognition of the value of literature.

Finally, in order to get better understanding of literary studies, related it to the universe like American literature, it will be much better to integrate the material of language and social culture condition as American multiculturalism society, for an example. The combination of learning foreign with practicing multiculturalism as a cultural identity in teaching American literature is greatly needed to get better understanding of the strong as a whole.

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