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# Students' Responses to Literature within Multiliteracies Pedagogy

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to analyze how situated practice in the multiliteracies pedagogy might help students respond to the literature utilizing a reader-response approach. The participants are the 2nd-semester students of the English Education Study Program in UMSIDA who had attended the course of Linguistic and Literature for one semester. In collecting the data, the researcher used Google Meet to invite the students into a forum discussion. Firstly, learning begins with exploring students' knowledge. Then, the teacher gave some statements to recall their life experiences, thoughts and opinions related to a particular topic. The topic addressed was about the students' beliefs and assumptions upon a particular sociocultural issue. Further, in that situated practice, they can give various responses to the theme of the New Boy film. From their responses, the interpretation helped them to connect to the social context, so they may comprehend the story's values. The outcomes showed that students' prior knowledge and reader-response approach work quite well altogether in enhancing students' interpretation of a particular literary work. Learning materials with closer relevancy to students' experiences may also be helpful for students in contextualizing the issues on a certain literature work upon their daily real-life circumstances, which in turn will be useful for students' language learning in advance.

**Keywords:** Literature, Multiliteracies Pedagogy, Students' Responses

## 1 Introduction

By integrating literature into the classroom, students are exposed to meaningful and authentic text, which will turn into something beneficial for their prior knowledge [1]. As part of the English language curriculum, using literary texts may foster creativity and develop students' competencies in higher-order, critical thinking skills. It also includes students empowerment to provide a personal reaction to text and demonstrate understanding of how language is utilized to attain a certain goal [2]. A literary text is a literary genre that conveys a message both creatively and artistically [3]. Different literary text's types can be used as the intermediary of multicultural education in understanding cultural diversity, enhancing language skills and linguistic knowledge. Hence, it promotes reading development and achievement [4].

Reading has long been seen as a communication act between author, text, and readers. These interactions influenced reading experience in response to literature appreciation [5]. Reading proficiency is vital for students' skills to engage in classroom engagement in literature-based language teaching. While reading a literature work in an EFL classroom, students should comprehend the cultural context in which the work was written from the outset to appreciate the text's main themes. Reading literature might be in the form of reflection, critical strength, or the competence to establish social communication, the culture, from the literary value [6]. However,

studies revealed that the reading interest and habits of Indonesian university students are unsatisfactory. They need motivation and models by lecturers that reading and discussion habits are important factors [7].

In response to such urgency, this paper is aimed to create a literature-based classroom activity according to one of the elements of multiliteracies pedagogy, which is situated practice. In a situated practice, by crafting real-life experiences, teachers give relevant and authentic situations for students to participate in their learning. The learning begins with exploring the students' knowledge about a topic before students enter the topic's discussion [8]. The teacher gives some statements that connect to the students' life experiences, thoughts and opinions related to the topic [9]. The discussion is based on the students' beliefs and particular cultures. Here, the teacher guides the students to discuss the topics in general before watching the film as the text. This situated practice engages the students to focus on the specific topic and trigger them to respond. Also, multiliteracies pedagogy enables the exploration of students' thoughts that reflect students' intellectual and emotional response to the literary work [10]. In the multiliteracies framework, students draw on the available framework to construct (meaning discovery and creation) a redesigned (transformed) multimodal text [11]. Multimodal texts are those that mix two or more communication media (i.e., picture, print, video, music, etc.) or semiotic systems (i.e., linguistic, audio, visual, spatial, gestural) to modify or enhance the texts' meaning [12]. Both multimodal texts and multiliteracies are a good combination to enhance critical literacy and social awareness by strengthening multicultural readings of multicultural literature [13][14]. For example, researched the use of the multimodal design on literary texts through the films in English and the students' first language by using aesthetic and critical response approaches. The findings showed that the students can create and present short films in English and their L1. Students are also encouraged to explore outside the text for inspiration in plays and films.

Additionally, the reader-response hypothesis has also been used in the following research to highlight the benefit of drawing on students' cultural and linguistic resources. Analyzed students' portfolio documents with reader-response theory and it demonstrated this by employing the aforementioned theory may evoke students' ideas in writing and get the important points from the story, despite some of their writings still do not relate to the relevant literature. who studied the practice of project-based reading short stories on the reader-response theory, found that the theory drove the pre-service teachers' response to the meaning discovery process to build higher-order thinking skills. These studies revealed that the reader-response theory applies to literacy teaching and learning. This theory provides ways to evoke students' responses by highlighting their responses to their reading so that the meaning they make can be reassessed, negotiated, and revised [15]. These pedagogical practices are interesting because the teacher implements an interactive approach to engage the students in the text.

In response to that, this paper is designed to use multimodal texts (e.g. film). Watching a film can offer new knowledge and shift students' thoughts on the issue and the featured nation as well as gain their empathy about people and issues in various settings [16]. The film used in this paper portrayed a multicultural context, in the form of an experience of being a new kid in school through the perspective of a character named Joseph, a nine-year-old African boy. The reason for using this film is because this film won Best Narrative Short at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival and was nominated for an Oscar, and it can be accessed publicly via YouTube by title New Boy.

Regarding that, appreciating and understanding the impact of literature work is measured by how readers (or viewers) apply thoughts and language to a new circumstance. When readers engage in a text, they engage in three kinds of interactions: a) identification and recall – when

readers learn to recognize the words, they widen their experience. This is an important phase for readers to consider what the author is saying; b) readers discover the cultural context – they analyse the author's style, observe the events and social issues of the time the text was written, or compare the text to another text; and c) readers respond to the text – they consider how to relate their life experience onto the literary text [17][18][19]. The readers' prior experiences, reading aptitude, reading expectations, reading preferences, and narrative concepts are influential to their responses [5]. As a result, the goal of this study is to look at how situated practice in the multiliteracies pedagogy might help students in responding to the cultural context of the film.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Multiliteracies Pedagogy**

Multiliteracies critical literacy and multiple intelligences are combined in pedagogy. Language, visuals, music, synesthetic, mathematics, and spatiality are all used in the curriculum. As a result, multiliteracies is transformed into a variety of opportunities to critically study various text styles and forms. Through the use of numerous text and media formats, students can grasp and respond to the increasing complexity and interaction of distinct modalities of meaning [20]. With multimodal texts, students may comprehend and experience information in both a global and a local context. Consequently, multiliteracies pedagogy is concerned with integrating the multimodal layers of students' worlds into the classroom to engage students with technologies and tools with which they are already familiar.

Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, and Transformed Practice are four aspects of multiliteracies pedagogy developed by the NLG [20]. The situated practice stage of the learning process is crucial. The teacher constructs the student's life experiences to give relevant and genuine experiences that invite them to participate in the learning. This is in line with the K-13 curriculum concept, which requires teachers and students to use students' cultural backgrounds as a basis for studying the present topic in the classroom [21]. The situated practice in multiliteracies education is akin to interactional assistance for second language acquisition [22]. This implies that this practice can inspire students to participate more actively in classroom discussions and help them improve their foreign language skills. Furthermore, a supporting method, such as Transactional Response Approach, is required for teachers to stimulate students' responses in reacting to literary work.

### **2.2 Transactional Response**

The reader-response technique, according to some experts, is one of the most successful ways to teach literature [5][23][24]. Reading literary works necessitates a unique set of skills since it requires various distinct elements and techniques. By discussing ways for implementing an effective literary curriculum, teachers' pedagogical competency will be enhanced, their use of learning resources will be improved, and their classroom management will be aided. Reading skill is critical to a student's capacity to participate in classroom discussions. In this regard, the ability to recognize and understand a symbol is critical since it frequently reflects the underlying meaning of a literary work. Importantly, Rosenblatt's reader-response engages the reader as an active participant in the literary work's interpretation.

Possible interactions include interaction between experience and the text, interaction between the author's culture and readers, and interaction between the reader and other readers

[25]. To appreciate a text as the author intended, readers have to first understand the cultural context in which it was produced [26]. They also need to understand the key principles of the texts. The theory that drives reading comprehension, particularly the parts of interaction that provide a specific interpretation of a book, is the first step toward comprehending a text. In practice, the desired reader-response approach often includes strategies such as engaging, describing, explaining, interpreting, connecting, and judging, which all prompt critical reflection from the reader [27]. The goal of implementing a reader-response technique is to create a thought-provoking literary class in which students are encouraged to investigate alternate interpretations and negotiate their own.

### **3 Method**

This paper employed a qualitative method in presenting the in-depth understanding [28] and exploring how literacy may alter a social context. Researchers used selective sampling to find participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. Since this study focuses on learners, the participants involved are 20 students in the A1 class of the 2nd-semester students of the English Education Study Program. This class is selected since the students are proactive and interested in linguistic issues. The data are the students' responses to sociocultural issues such in the movie as the literary work in this situated practice.

In collecting the data, the researchers conducted an open discussion through Google Meet intending to probe students' prior knowledge related to sociocultural themes, specifically on cultural discriminations since, in the first meeting, there will be an introductory class and material overview in semester one. During the discussion, the researcher then provided cues in form of statements to frame and direct students' personal experiences into their arguments. When assumptions were created from the preceding discussion, the students will evaluate whether their current assumptions are in line with the given theme, or not. Following the mid-term test, they were asked to practice composing a literary interpretation through a reader-response approach. The findings are expected to justify the use of authentic learning material, to effectively support multiliteracy pedagogy into various ELT scenarios. The entire research is done in several classroom meetings.

### **4 Finding and Discussion**

A situated practice is essential to scaffold students' prior knowledge before they watch the film. The teacher had set aside time for them to discuss the topic in general. Through certain statements provided by the teacher, they are able to recollect their life experiences, feelings, and opinions relating to the issue. There are two main things to be explored by them, related to the cultural discrimination in socio-cultural issues and how the meaning-making process of cultural discrimination is based on their experiences.

Here is the question to stimulate students' prior knowledge regarding socio-cultural issues," What do you think about cultural discrimination?", then because the students just give a short answer, the teacher tried to engage their attention with the next question, specifically about cultural discrimination in Indonesia, by asking "Does cultural discrimination happen in Indonesia? Please explain it". Their responses to these questions can direct students' thoughts

on what will be presented in the literary text to be studied. In addition, to protect participants' anonymity, the researchers labelled each students as (S) followed by a number to distinguish each individual. Below are the students' response to the first question:

- Q1. What do you think about cultural discrimination?
- S1 : Different treatment towards a person from a different tribe.
  - S2 : A condition where we see someone from his/her race.
  - S3 : When a certain group feels their culture is better than others.
  - S4 : We live in Java Island where there are majority and minority groups.
  - S5 : When we cannot accept diversity or do not know how to be nice to others.
  - S6 : When a person is treated unfavorably because of the culture.
  - S7 : Unfair prejudicial treatment of people.
  - S8 : When you see someone who has different skin color from you.
  - S9 : When your group is dominant.
  - S10 : When you do not respect other cultures.
  - S11 : Discrimination happens to certain races because of the culture.
  - S12 : A common form of human rights violence and abuse. People may be discriminated against because of age, disability, ethnicity, origin, creed, race, religion, and so on. Discrimination happens because of a lack of tolerance, lack of knowledge, and they cannot see what they cannot have.
  - S13 : Split us apart and threaten our unity.
  - S14 : Inhumanity.
  - S15 : No knowledge about that.
  - S16 : I experienced being treated differently because I came from a minority group in Indonesia.
  - S17 : No comment.
  - S18 : Choosing friends based on skin color, maybe.
  - S19 : Do not respect other religions.
  - S20 : Differing people from where they come from.

Their responses showed that some of them have familiar with cultural discrimination. They assumed that cultural discrimination is one of human rights suppression where a particular person or group received unfavorable treatment because of the cultural background.

That question was given because the film that will be watched is closely related to discrimination. In recognizing the characters and the plot; the film's text captures unfavourable treatment between black and white people in the school. It is shown through the main character's perspective, namely Joseph. Joseph is a new student of colour, dark-skinned people to be precise. Since his transfer from the old school, he must be enrolled in a foreign school that consists of mostly fair-skinned students and teachers.

However, there are two students as S15 and S17 who did not have prior knowledge about discrimination because they have not experienced cultural discrimination yet, it can be seen from their responses. To provide a more in-depth scaffolding then the teacher asked the next question as below:

- Q2. Does cultural discrimination happen in Indonesia? Please explain it.
- S1 : Often. Like in school where we choose a friend based on his/her vernacular language.
  - S2 : Yes, because of many races and religions in Indonesia.
  - S3 : Yes, it commonly happens toward black skin people. Usually Papuans.
  - S4 : Like assuming men are powerful than women. I think it is one example.

- S5 : Yes, between Majority vs. Minority ethnicity
- S6 : Always. Since we have many ethnic groups with special physical appearances.
- S7 : Like in the NGENEST movie, where there is a portrayal of Chinese students getting unfavourable treatment by their classmates or even the teacher.
- S8 : Choosing friends based on skin colour or religion.
- S9 : Surely yes. Because the majority group has a lot of supporters.
- S10 : Yes. When the rest of the class laughed at the dialect of someone who tried to speak a certain vernacular language for the first time.
- S11 : Often, but it should not happen in Indonesia. Our ideology, Pancasila, upholds diversity. If it still happens, the minority people can “dress up” as the majority one just to be accepted and it may cause mental illness.
- S12 : Yes. Because each of us has tolerance feeling and diversity awareness. In this era, discrimination can happen indirectly through social media platforms. They find others’ fault, do racism, or so on.
- S13 : Unconsciously, we choose friends based on religion because we are afraid of losing control of ourselves and following their religious activities.
- S14 : The frequent form of discrimination is bullying toward a particular ethnicity.
- S15 : I do not know about that.
- S16 : Yes. The majority group usually belittle the minority.
- S17 : I am not sure about that.
- S18 : We usually make friends with people who have the same language, character, religion.
- S19 : Yes, like terrorism. A suicidal case of an Islamic person in a church.
- S20 : I think it happens toward a person who has black skin colour and curly hair. Like an Eastern people.

Their responses showed that there are some similarities of a condition such as when there were people from different ethnic groups who were not accepted in Indonesia. They also found that lots of discrimination issues are happening in Indonesia – for example, racism in Papua and bullying to minorities like Chinese people because of their slanted eyes. The reasons can be the discriminators have less empathy feeling, lack of diversity awareness, and feel more superior. Indeed, it can attack the victim’s psychology.

The next step of situated practice is the meaning-making process of the theme. In this case, it is about students’ experiences of cultural discrimination in the class, because the context of the literary work that will be raised as a theme is discrimination that occurs in class. In this stage, all students gave their opinions on each of the following questions, we showed their responses and then we discussed it. The teacher focused on what, when, how, and why to discuss the roles of the participants in the meaning-making process. The following are the three questions to discuss cultural discrimination specifically:

- Q1. Have you ever seen cultural discrimination happen in your class?
- S1 : Yes. Specifically, when there is a new student from Jakarta and her dialect is being talked and became a laughing stock of Javanese people.
- S2 : No, I have not.
- S3 : No, because my classmates are all Javanese people with the same skin colour.
- S4 : Yes, when Madurese talk impolitely toward non-Madurese people.
- S5 : I have. It happens when the new student is quite weird and nerd.
- S6 : Yes. When my friend from a different Island try to speak the Javanese language and my classmates laugh at her dialect.

- S7 : Just in the movie. Never find in real life.
- S8 : No. I graduated from Pesantren and most of the students are Moslem, so there was no discrimination issue.
- S9 : When my friend suddenly wears a hijab in the class.
- S10 : Laughing at someone's dialect and making a joke of it.
- S11 : Bullying.
- S12 : No, I have not. There is no discrimination in my class because we maintain our friendship with tolerance feeling.
- S13 : Never.
- S14 : Do not listen to an opinion that is presented by the minority group.
- S15 : When my friend made a joke about someone who has slanted eyes or a pointed nose.
- S16 : I have experienced that myself.
- S17 : Making jokes from someone who has a special appearance.
- S18 : Yes, I have.
- S19 : I just watch on TV and never experienced or witnessed that myself.
- S20 : Yes, my friend bullied a male student who has curly hair when I was in junior high school.

Most of the responses showed that they have experienced seeing injustice or unfair treatment of people because of their cultural background. However, there is one interesting response that not all bad attitudes can be categorized as discrimination; it is just another form of making a friend by making a joke about his/her uniqueness. The discussion was about the plot of the film, starting from the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The story's beginning starts very clearly, about the arrival of Joseph from Africa to a class at the Irish State School. In the rising action, Joseph's presence is not easily accepted by his classmates. The turning point is in the fight action between Seth Quinn and Christian Kelly. There are two possibilities on why they are fighting; 1) Both Seth and Christian want to show their power in the class to the new students, or 2) The power shift is the symbol of Joseph who is not easily accepted in the society of Ireland

During the discussion, there were five of twenty students had not found discrimination by themselves, they are S2, S3, S8, S12 and S13. The question then goes to the meaning-making of why cultural discrimination happens in the class. Below are the students' responses:

Q2. Why does cultural discrimination happen in your class?

- S1 : Because of the discriminator (maybe) who wants to show the new student about the class environment.
- S2 : We do not know him/her yet.
- S3 : S/he is a new student in the class.
- S4 : Maybe the teacher never advises the previous discriminators.
- S5 : The victim already feels intimidated.
- S6 : They have no experience of being treated unfavourably.
- S7 : Because it has already become a common act.
- S8 : They do not realize that we are created differently by God.
- S9 : Lack of diversity awareness.
- S10 : Do not understand discrimination.
- S11 : Do not have the power to do something or defend him/herself.
- S12 : As long as we maintain our friendship and tolerance feeling, it won't happen in our class.

- S13 : It happens because we have different skin colour and that person do not want to make a friend.
- S14 : Lack of diversity knowledge.
- S15 : Envious, maybe. They had been experienced being talked by others.
- S16 : I do not know. It may be caused by their social life outside class.
- S17 : Lack of confidence.
- S18 : We have not known each other yet.
- S19 : Lack of knowledge.
- S20 : Lack of information.

While the students' responses showed that cultural discrimination exists, they have not known each other yet. None of the students denied this interpretation, they show agreement to the symbolization of Joseph as a discrimination victim. In this case, discrimination happens because the teacher has never warned or punished the discriminator so it makes s/he is braver to redo it over and over, and then it became a common thing happen in the class. They have lack diversity awareness. The interview received different responses; these responses explore the implicit meaning of cultural context in the New Boy film. The film shows the attitude of Joseph's classmates when he joined the class for the first time. One of the female students, Hazel O'Hara, welcomed Joseph's presence and tried to protect him. This act signifies those social distinctions are not made by everyone. Moreover, the New Boy film has a positive contribution to social life through the depiction of how Joseph is finally accepted in the class.

Based on the story in the film, the discussion was continued by asking their opinions about how they would deal with discrimination in class. Below are the students' responses:

- Q3. How do you deal with cultural discrimination that happens in your class?
- S1 : Give warning to those discrimination actors, and make a friend with the victim.
- S2 : Report it to the teacher.
- S3 : I will be more objective. Ask the reason and find the solution.
- S4 : Be calm. Invite them to discuss and try to understand both parties.
- S5 : Make a friend with her/him (the victim).
- S6 : Comfort her/him, warn others, and report it.
- S7 : As long as I know, the majority group will win.
- S8 : I will ask them to be more respectful.
- S9 : The teacher should warn the discriminator.
- S10 : Not all bullying forms are classified as discrimination act. Sometimes, it is just a joke.
- S11 : I'm disappointed with that inhuman action. We are in an educational institution that must uphold respect feeling.
- S12 : The leader of a class should intervene discrimination act because it is a dangerous act. It can attack a person's mental. The discriminator must get a warning to stop doing that.
- S13 : Create a school system that enhances diversity awareness, empathy feeling and improve academic achievement as well as train the teachers and staff to deal with social and cultural discrimination in the school environment.
- S14 : Trying to help by re-present what s/he was said.
- S15 : I give warning to the discriminator who cannot be tolerant and ask them to respect others.
- S16 : Be patient and try to make a friend with the victim.

- S17 : Ask the discriminator to stop doing that. Be friends with the person who is bullied.
- S18 : Trying to make friends with everyone and being more respectful.
- S19 : By enhancing tolerance.
- S20 : Trying to approach the victim and introduce ourselves.

Regarding the students' responses above, it showed that how they deal with cultural discrimination is by giving a warning to the discriminator and reporting it to the teacher, which in comparison to the film, is similar to how Hazel O'Hara gave protection to the main protagonist. Such deeds are a potential factor to overcome cultural discrimination.

From all the questions posed to students in the discussion stage, they can show the discrimination they have faced in their life experiences so that students' answers can vary according to their life experiences. While for those who do not have ideas about cultural discrimination in the first two questions, it turns out that in the next question they can provide solutions for discrimination incidents that occurred in the class, as mentioned by S17. In the last question, S17 gives ideas about discriminators must stop the discrimination act. The response of S17 who had never faced the context of the literary work to be read or seen is very important. The discussion is held before entering the literary work so that an initial understanding of the discussion's results and the ideas delivered during the discussion have already formed. After the discussion, the students watch the New Boy film together with the knowledge of the context that they have already understood through the discussion.

Above all else, prior knowledge about literary work has assisted the students to comprehend the context of a given literary work. Students can easily respond to literary works when they are involved in situated practice in the multiliteracies pedagogy by using the reader-response approach. This clearly showed that the teacher must facilitate the students' needs and interests so that the classroom activities yield benefits for the improvement of both their knowledge and language skills.

## **5 Conclusion**

Interpreting a particular literary work can be a daunting task for most students, especially when the said work came in a language foreign to the learners themselves. However, taking advantage of students' background knowledge on a certain domain may be extremely helpful for teachers to conduct a meaningful classroom activity. Moreover, when students can interpret the given literature by contextualizing its issues that are similar to their prior experiences, a fruitful discussion may occur, which may lead to understanding the meaning of the work's moral values. From the role of Joseph, many lessons can be drawn from socio-cultural learning that can be applied in many socio-cultural contexts around the audience of the multicultural literature text. This also implies that multiliteracies are expected to be one way to a complete comprehension of literary works. This research can be continued at all stages in multiliteracies so that the entire multiliteracies process may assist students in producing works in a transformed practice stage.

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