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I am my Own Voice: The Analysis of Imagery, Sound and Sense and Self-Culture from EFL Mindful Poetry

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Abstract

This research is aimed at looking at poetry as a soul of society. It brings about the representation of self-culture in the poet's life. It is the representation of mindfulness within the poet's process of writing. In this specific article, I want to see how poetry can be seen as a soul of poetry from at least three perspectives, firstly from the imagery, secondly from sound and sense and thirdly from the self-culture. The method used in this research is narrative inquiry and the instruments used are interview guide and poetry writing rubrics. The result shows that the poets in this research used imagery, sound and sense and self-culture in their poetry as the voice of their own. At the same time they also feel that their voice matters, as the part of society.

Keywords: imagery, sound and sense, self-culture

INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a work of art, a product of language that is written with figurative language. Perrine (1984) stated that poetry is a verbal work of art which means it uses the language to make it possible to represent to speak the poet's voice. Poetry is a product of mindfulness in which it is born from the mindful efforts. Mindfulness which was introduced by Ellen J Langer in 1989 is a state of mind to be more aware of new information, new perspectives, new context, and create new categories. Zinn (1995) stated that mindfulness creates a calm and flexible state of mind. Mindfulness is to set the mind to be stable and calm. It does not push the mind, but it trains the mind. To be calmer, to be more peaceful. To be aware of something new. This is relevant to language learning through poetry since poetry enables learners of new language learn something new through metaphors, through the voice that the poets deliver, through the senses that are shared, and through the new perspectives that are offered. Mindfulness in poetry writing process works in a silent way, in the deeper understanding sometimes too personal, that to write it needs more efforts psychologically. In relation to mindfulness and language learning, the learning happens if the learners feel that there are new information, new perspectives, new context, and new categories. Poetry is one of the ways to achieve the mindfulness, or to stimulate mindfulness to happen. However, to some extent, poetry is still rarely used in language learning because it is too complicated to analyze, too hard to understand, and too personal to be revealed.

In fact, the idea of using poetry in language learning is not only to enhance creativity and productivity, it also can enhance socioemotional development and wellbeing. Mindfulness in poetry writing can make learners aware of the new situations, learn new perspective, engage in different context, and create something new. Mindfulness in poetry is a way to know self-culture context better. Hanauer (2012) believed that writing poetry is one of the ways to learn the language better. In poetry the learners create meaning. Mindfulness, poetry and language learning are together in this context, to make us aware to appreciate poetry better. In relation to language learning, poetry is more than just a device to learn new perspective, but also how the new perspective is born. In this study, poetry is used to know the voice of the poets, to know how the poetry is composed, and to analyze the meaning of the poetry from the perspective of imagery, sound and sense and self-culture.

Mindfulness and Language Learning

Mindfulness in education gives one of the best changes especially in promoting wellbeing and socioemotional development. According to Langer (2000) mindful learning has proven to be effective in promoting development of emotional wellbeing. It is also effective to increase creativity and memory. Learning a new language needs creativity, memory, and emotional wellbeing since the new language has new system, new structure, new context, and new categories. Language learners need to be able to adapt themselves in the new context of learning that requires mindfulness. According to Moafian et.al (2019) mindfulness theory works well in language learning since the emphasis is on the invention of new things, new perspectives, new reflections. According to Lin (2019), mindfulness in education builds the students' self-actualization as to maximize their potential to be successful. In 2000, Langer and Moldoveanu defined mindfulness as to create novel distinction. The impacts of creating novel distinction are openness to new things, flexible to context, open to new perspectives, and new categories. In 2011 Sherretz discovered that mindfulness gives freedom of choice to language learners and when it happens, the learners become mindful observers.

Mindfulness has four major principles. According to Langer (1997, 2016). First, the ability to see something from different point of view. Second, see information or phenomena as something new. Third, to be able to understand context. And fourth, creating new categories. Mindfulness and language learning are two related things. Mindfulness makes us learn the new language easily because we can be aware of something new, and aware of the context where they are used. Afterwards, we are aware that there is new category in the language that is used, make it possible for us new learners of language aware of new entry of the language.

Poetry and Mindfulness

Poetry is born from mindfulness. It is the mindfulness that leads poet to hear the voice from within self, and create it as the poetry. Vision and voice are born from the poetry that they write. They cannot write poetry if they do not find the value of poetry. The very important value of poetry is that it can channel the voice that the poet has and it can convey their vision of life. Poetry is the representation of life and therefore it is very important to build their own perspective of life. Every poetry is unique and personal. Every poetry has its own function to represent their real voice and the real values of life.

Poetry is a verbal work of art. Poetry can be defined as the soul of poet written through words. It is the imagination of reality through which the words are used as the representation of the voice. Poetry is the representation of society. The art which is born from the society. And live by its society.

Poetry has the definition as the feeling of society in the form of language. Gustafson (2005) stated that poetry is the balance between self-culture and the representation of feelings. Poetry is not only a compilation of words, but it conveys the message from the society, the poet himself/herself. It brings the voice from within as the representation of the society. In relation to language learning, poetry serves as the language of society. According to Hoffman (1993) language is a tool to communicate emotions, facts, possibilities, fantasies, and many other things. The society voice can be represented through poetry. Therefore, poetry can never be just about words, but voice of the society.

Poetry has vision and voice (Piscayanti and Utami, 2020). The vision of poetry is to represent a reality, as a mirror of society. Second it has voice. It brings the message or values of the poet. It means that vision and voice of poetry makes poetry alive and meaningful. It has destiny and goal to represent the voice of society.

Poetry is useful in language learning because it teaches the poets how to use the language personally and respectfully. Language is not only a means of communication but a means to speak up about opinions of life. It cannot be the stopped, to write a poetry is to write a human history.

In the context of language learning, poetry is very useful to be used as a practice of language development since poetry offers a creativity in using the new words. Poetry is using metaphors, that can be used to represent feelings. Since feeling is very unique and personal, using metaphors can explore imagination of feeling, as the voice from the within. Poetry directly shapes the way of thinking in which it shapes the way the voice is represented and the way it is built and produced.

There are some aspects of poetry that will be discussed in this article namely imagery, sound and sense and self-culture context. These three aspects are analyzed since the voice of the poet and the mindfulness process can be seen through these aspects.

Imagery

Imagery is the part of poetry that can be used to visualize the ideas of the poet. Imagery means the visual representation of the ideas. Such as how the feelings is coloured, shaped and come into reality. The words used to describe the vividness of the feeling of the poet. Imagery has something to do with the visual touch that not everybody is aware of having, so writing them down in the form of poetry is a chance to deliver imagery in the way it is unique and personal nobody can have it. According to Perkins (1983) mental image can give more than just a vividness, but a deeper emotional and sense understanding than a proposition. The image gives deeper feeling than words. In poetry, imagery can deepen and strengthen the feeling of the poet.

Sound and Sense

Sound and sense together make meaning of the poetry. Sound serves as vehicle and sense is how it is meant.

Sound is the way the poetry is heard, the sound of poetry is very distinguished, condensed, and concise. It can be born without careful consideration of the poet. It cannot be just sound without meaning. Therefore, the sound always comes with the sense. Sound is the words that are arranged in such a way that it can be heard. While sense is the meaning of the sound composed. Sound and sense come together to make meaning of a poetry. Perrine (1984) stated that sound and meaning in poetry has function, that is to convey experience. Through sound and meaning the experience is delivered. Kennedy (1983) conveys poetry as something difficult to define. He suggested to study poetry and let it grows in our mind.

Self-culture context

The poetry is born from the self-culture context of the poet. The poet is born with the culture within himself/herself and from the culture within the poet can transfer the idea through the words she/he found. She/he chose the words to best describe their self-culture context.

According to Neisser (1999) self-concept is never fixed, it depends on a perspective. It is constructed through theorizing about self and meaning of life. Therefore, it is never settled.

The poetry does not come alone without context. It has context within and represents the voice inside. It does bring the identity of the poet. The culture that lives within the poet and grow inside.

The voice matters and the choice of the words matters. The choice of the words defines the voice of the poets.

Methods

The method used in this research is narrative inquiry (Webster and Mertova, 2007) and the instruments used are interview guide and poetry writing rubrics. The subjects are three poetry from three poets that will be analyzed from the perspective of imagery, sound and sense, and self-culture context.

Result and Discussion

Poetry 1

I Spread my Arms

By Santi Dewi

On that uphill road,
I spread my arms
Like a beetle hunting for nectar
And my feeling is like a lotus bloom

"Where do you want to go?" you said

I scream in the cold air
My voice is intermittent
But my finger is pointing clearly
The place I want to go
Is the house of your heart
An unlimited road,
Without a stopping line

In this poetry, imagery that can be read is from the first line, about the feelings of freedom, having destiny and choice on her own. The mental image that is set is the uphill road, the struggle to climb, yet the feeling is full and pure and happy. The second stanza also supports the mental image in the first stanza, that the place she wants to go is the house of her lover's heart, an unlimited road without a stopping line.

We can consider that poetry is not only representing self-voice but also what makes the voice a choice.

The sound and sense here represent the meaning of love, freedom, search for unlimited love and passionate dreams. The meaning of the feelings is clearly sensed through the lines.

The self-culture here appears when her voice of identity is written in the lines I spread my arms/Like a beetle *hunting for nectar/and my feeling is like a lotus bloom//*

The lines represent the real voice that honestly spoken out about the feelings of freedom and knowing where to go as seen in the lines *"Where do you want to go?" you said* followed by next stanza *The place I want to go/Is the house of your heart/An unlimited road/Without a stopping line//*

The self-culture as defined above is a transformation of self-understanding on several perspectives. It is never a fixed state of mind. It is a continuing change over time.

Poetry 2

Time flies so fast

By Gede Suadnya

I thought time will be my friend
But it's just nightmare
When I realize it flies so fast
I cannot prepare it well
I just think 11+3=2
That's the limit for me to make jungle in my paper
What I have to do?
It's already 10

Everybody wants to kill me
Everybody calls me
Everybody talks to me
But me? How about me?

But I think I cannot do it
Because I don't have time
Please, give me one minute more or more
But finally, I get five stars.

In this poetry the poet used imagery as time flies. Though the time cannot be clearly seen, however we can sense the time as a mental image in the poetry. There is a tense emotional feeling that can be felt. The poet is in the middle of chaos.

In the second stanza, the poet tried to say that everybody wants to kill him, calls him, but he cannot do it. However, in the last line, the poet seems to be drastically gets the point or gets the luck. It means that the poet gets the achievement though the time is limited and chaotic.

The sound and sense used in this poetry makes us believe that hectic situation really happens for a reason and it can get worse. However, if we trust in the time that can change the condition, it can happen that everything will be fine.

The meaning of the poetry is subjective depends on the perspective but in the self-culture context, the poet might want to represent that chaotic moment is a part of self-context that makes the self learns. Not only the perfect timing that makes self learns but also the worst timing. This is the idea of the poetry.

According to Minsky (1985), mind does not come alone without other minds. Chaotic minds in this poetry comes with other minds too. And the chaotic voice here does not mean anything when it can be solved in the last line. It can happen in life when unexpected result can make a total change in unexpected time.

The last poetry is below.

Poetry 3
The Meeting
By Gitari Paramita

There are thousands of tiny wings at the tips of the ears
On the lips of the day, the eyes meet
Soft beats hug the chest
Until the hum of the sea deceives the power

Drowning dimly by the sky hue
A feeling of reluctance to meet
Face to face at dusk
Who's the longing for the grudge?

Called again my steps there
Special melodic spelled out
Stepping away, paint a taste
Promise to the frame of love

In this poetry the imagery that we can see is the feeling of longing to meet someone. The longing is described in such a way that it can represent the voice of the poet. The universe seems to be lonely and darker but the feeling is closer to the love of life. Trying to figure out what kind of feeling exactly that is, but it is more than just a feeling, it is a sense of emotional growth.

Sound and sense of this poetry represents the meaning of longing and understanding of feeling in the deeper way. We cannot judge the feeling alone without having perspective of the poet. We raise the empathy in order that we understand the way the poet thinks.

Self-culture context on this poetry appears when the poet tries to learn about herself from the universe and from moment to moment. She used the learning process to be aware of the perspective she is using for certain feeling. Her voice is true, she cannot decide what is best for her unless universe shows her to be patient and to wait for the perfect time for love.

From the analysis above we believe that mindfulness works at its best in each poet. Based on the interview with the poets, they are aware of the self, context, perspective, and create new things based on the experience. In poetry 1 for example, Santi Dewi feels that she already knows the destiny in life, she found her love already and therefore she can be free. Her choice of words, her sound and sense and imagery are represented through her works.

This can be very personal and subjective because the choice of words, the choice of perspective is based on the experience of the poets.

From the interview with the second poet, it is revealed that time is precious, mysterious, and somehow tricky, so he can only try his best and finally the expected result appears. This poetry about time is hard actually to be seen from imagery, but the mental image can be sensed from the propositions. It can be felt and valued.

From the interview with the third poet, it is revealed that self-culture can be developed based on the context. It can be lonely, happy, sad, and all at once can create a new feeling.

From the discussion above, mindfulness as the process to create a poetry is very important practice in the creative process. To define mindfulness as a process there are four main principles that needs to be considered.

First. Noticing new things. This is a process where the poet notice something inside himself/herself and needs to name the feeling, welcome the feeling, criticize the feeling or even forget the feeling. However, they notice the things happen. It could be a new form of feeling. In the sense of mindfulness, they try to enhance their awareness to learn about themselves better. They try to learn to hear the voice within and to deliver it outside. Tredinnick (2006) stated that writing is done with integrity and the voice of humanity. Hoffman (1993) explained that language is a bridge to present the realms of meaning. Mindfulness takes place to grow the bridge between meaning inside the poet and meaning created in the audience's mind. Stevenson et.al (2020) stated that mindfulness can make students more aware of the personal growth and wellbeing. Sherretz (2011) also believes that mindfulness in higher education is very relevant to make learning better. Students

in higher education is believed to have more awareness and understanding on life. So, mindfulness is the way to make it even better.

Second principle on mindfulness is welcoming new perspective. As we can see from poetry number 2 time is seen as a chaotic power that makes the poet feel down. However, turns out that time is not that mean. Time heals when perfect time comes, though it comes almost at the end of effort.

Third principle is appreciating the context. Being in the context means language learners always engages in a lively moment after moment. There is never the same context from a mindful experience. Different people will come with different context, different time will create different context too. Even different space makes different context. Language relates to context. The more engaged the learners to the context, the better it will prepare them to be mindful.

In 2016, Wang and Liu found that mindfulness can be cultivated and benefits learners in learning foreign language. In the context of EFL poetry, mindfulness plays important role in the learning process. Mc Kay and Walker (2021) also believes that mindfulness benefits learners since it promotes wellbeing and emotional growth. It also helps to grow positive mental health, personal happiness and positive productive character.

Fourth principle is creating new categories. Mindfulness allows learners to be always aware of something new and not only aware, but process the things and create something new out of it. Poetry is one of the ways to enable learners create new categories. New categories here mean to create the possibility of the new self-culture context that makes the learners grow. In 2017 Cotler et.al found there is a growth of emotional intelligence in mindful learners. The mindful learners will always find things new and build new perspective in different context with new categories. Therefore, they learn better because of mindfulness practice. Writing is one of the ways to keep them mindful, productive, and positive.

Creating new categories is considered as the way how mindfulness can be made into product of writing. It has the ability to grow something within to be shared outside. In this context mindfulness shared the voice as the soul of society.

CONCLUSION

Poetry makes the voice of the poets grow as the soul of society. They are represented through imagery, sound and sense, self-culture context. The process happens through mindfulness practice during the learning process and writing process. It can never be a single and static process, but a dynamic one. It can enhance the awareness of learning the new language, deepen the understanding about self, and broaden perspective of the worlds.

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