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**THE ROLE OF POEMS IN DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING  
SKILL OF LOW ACHIEVING STUDENTS**

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**1**  
**Abstract**

*Critical thinking is always assumed to deal with critical reading and critical writing that also involve scientific materials. Critical thinking is also judged as the thinking skill limited to smart students only, since there are complicated problems involved, namely linguistic, psychological and cognitive problems. For students with such kinds of condition and situation, they need different materials and strategies adjusted to their characteristics to develop their critical thinking skills. This research showed that low achieving students of English as a foreign language (EFL) successfully improved their critical thinking skills after having activities of the poem interpretation and analysis activities in their Reading classes. This research also proved that when they align in pursuit of critical thinking by reading poems completed with the assignments. These lead the students to engage themselves not only in joyful learning activities of reading but also in training their thinking skills. They could perform interpreting and analysing poems with reasonable points of view. By having descriptive qualitative research for several months, there were crucial factors in optimizing the best performance of the low achieving students of EFL in thinking critically, namely well-designed lesson plans, peer-learning activities, and good teacher feedbacks.*

**Key words:** *critical thinking*

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## Critical Thinking Skills

Critical thinking in education becomes a basic need to train students' thoughts. In this case, education institutions are responsible for providing learning tools and learning activities that enable students to develop their critical thinking skills. In learning processes, the students need critical thinking skills to engage themselves in the process of constructing basic ideas, principles, and theories inherent in content. The students will effectively implement all of them since they are relevant to the students' lives. If the students can think critically, they will learn how to explore the basic elements of various things, enrich and improve their creative thinking through the formulation of hypotheses, predictions and questions during analysis and discussing activities.

Indeed, critical thinking is an art of analysing and evaluating thinking with an insight to improve. In details, Paul and Elder (2007, p. 4) add that critical thinking is actually self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking which requires standards of mindful thinking involving effective communication abilities in solving problems. In this case, as critical thinkers, the students are able to raise vital questions and problems by formulating them clearly and precisely. Moreover, they could gather and assess relevant information by using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively, come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions by testing them against relevant criteria and standards, think open-mindedly by recognizing and assessing their assumptions, implications, and consequences, or communicating effectively with others in figuring out solutions for the complex problems.

Unfortunately, most of Indonesian English teachers assume that critical thinking is impossible to be taught within the EFL classroom circumstances because critical thinking is a complex and demanding process. They also believe that critical thinking is something in the human brain which is invisible and impossible to measure. However, other scholars proved that it is possible to teach critical thinking. They are

Brookfield (2005), Buskist & Irons (2009), Connor-Greene & Greene (2002), Cotter & Tally (2009), Dunn et al., (2009) Johanson, (2010), Lawrence et al., (2009), McKeachie & Svinicki, (2006), Paul & Elder, (2006). Also, this skill is said to be measurable as stated by Cuseo, J (2012), Paul and Elder (1996), and Foundation for Critical Thinking (2013). According to these scholars, teaching critical thinking means training students to think critically by using certain learning materials that encourage them to engage in analysing, interpreting, and evaluating information by using their own points of view before formulating, assessing, and concluding their assumptions with logical reasons and proofs. The students will weigh an idea or a thing before accepting or rejecting it. In this case, the students are being involved in analytical and evaluative processes.

To develop students' critical thinking skills, the teacher needs a particular strategy since the best strategy of teaching determine the success level of the teaching itself. The appropriate strategy of teaching will automatically involve particular steps. Consequently, the teachers must create certain teaching designs through lesson plans including measurement tools to assess the students' critical thinking. In applying the teaching strategy, the teacher must base on the main factors of learning, namely the characteristics of the students and learning materials. The characteristics of students in a city, for example, are quite different from the characteristics of rural students that lead teachers to use different strategies. In this case, the city students may have higher motivation, self-confidence, and good English proficiency that need different teaching strategy from the rural students who may have less motivation, low self-confidence, and poor English proficiency.

Thus, critical thinking is the intellectual and active process of conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, observations, experiences, reflections, reasoning, or communications in order to respond critically. According to Scriven and

Paul (2012), in its exemplary form of thinking critically, critical thinking relies on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness. The process of critical thinking requires students to acquire and interpret information carefully before drawing conclusions. In other words, the critical thinking process enables students to analyse, evaluate, explain, and restructure their own thinking in order to reach a critical conclusion.

Regrettably, most students in Indonesia, especially those in rural communities, are not familiar with critical thinking. They are accustomed to memorizing new information without reflecting on its context, meaning, or function. To think critically in English is very hard to do for those students. However, such kinds of students are capable of critical thinking when the teachers use effective teaching methods. One such approach to build critical thinking abilities is by reading English poems.

### **Teaching Reading**

Teaching reading skill is identical to teaching the students to comprehend reading texts. In reading activities, the students will know new information from the texts after they read and understand the texts. Before reading, the students have no prior information served in the text that they are going to read. The role of teachers in teaching reading for senior high school students is stimulating them to be interested in comprehending the texts better using appropriate strategies.

The appropriate strategy of teaching reading that EFL teachers should take is reading with fun. To teach reading with fun, the teacher must use appropriate reading materials. One of the suggested materials is related literature. It is because “...*literature is a performance in words*” (Frost’s quotation in Barnet, 1993, p. 2). It is clear that a pleasure of mental experience of the author is reflected in everything that the students, who act as the readers, see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. Enjoying the experiences

described by the authors, especially through their literary works, is excited for the students.

Beside the appropriate reading materials, teachers must understand several aspects of conducting teaching reading to enable their students to get maximum comprehension towards the reading materials that the students are learning. In this case, the teacher has a significant role to motivate their students to understand. Indeed, the teacher also must be aware that in the process of reading there is a communication between a writer and reader. That is why the teacher should make the students know well that the reading activity deals with the process of decoding and comprehending. It is because the reader in the process of reading tries to catch well what the writer has expressed in the text.

It is clear that critical reading relates to the abilities of students as readers to engage in both literal and interpretative reading. It means that they can master critical reading after they are able to comprehend implicitly and explicitly the text that they are reading. Therefore, teaching reading with poems as learning materials enables the students to be engaged in critical reading which can develop their critical reading skills.

### **Poems as Materials in Teaching Reading**

It is commonly known that poems can bring students not only joy, nourishment and sustainability, but they can help them to develop the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills for success at school. Through poems, the students have many opportunities to express and share their ideas and opinions. It is because **there is no single correct way to interpret a poem**. Consequently, **the** students need to think critically. They need to think beyond the text for the interpretation. It is because thinking critically involves reshaping basic assumptions and applying theories that are relevant to the issues. Indeed, to think critically is to take an intellectual risk. Therefore, according to May (1975), teachers can stimulate students



to think critically using poems due to the <sup>4</sup> understanding and appreciating a poem as a <sup>4</sup> creative work is a creative act itself.

Thus, through reading English poems, students will interact with others to discuss the poems, <sup>5</sup> develop their abilities to see existing situations in new ways, and explore <sup>5</sup> their ideas in English. In discussion, students develop critical thinking as they state and justify a point of view and respond to the views of others. Indeed, through reading English poems, the students critically analyse the opinions, points of view, and unstated assumptions embedded in texts. This research offers as an example of demonstrating ways and steps of how to teach reading using poems can improve students' critical thinking skills.

In order to succeed in teaching reading, especially in attempt to improve the students' <sup>8</sup> critical thinking skills to students, a teaching-learning object must be available. English poems are considered as the appropriate learning objects in reading activities for developing <sup>8</sup> critical thinking skills to students who live in rural areas with low English vocabularies and grammar and with very minimum facilities of English teaching-learning. For students with such conditions, developing critical thinking skills through reading English poems activities is assumed to be needed for their success. Thus, the research focuses on two <sup>12</sup> questions. The first is related to how the teacher teaches reading using poems to develop <sup>12</sup> the students' critical thinking skills and the second deals with how the students' critical thinking skills are after they are taught reading using poems.

Poems pose a challenging cognitive task for the students. Poems make the students try to have the basic understanding of poems before they can develop their own creative interpretation. As a result, the students use their critical thinking skills to construct deep meaning of the poems. It is because understanding a <sup>4</sup> poem involves the construction of meaning since a poem is composed by <sup>4</sup> imagery and choice of the specific words in order to communicate the author's idea as the meaningful content. Indeed, a

poem also <sup>4</sup> often contains unconventional language or unusual treatment of a topic which make the poem interesting as what is stated by Halonen (1995, p. 112). According to him, the element of surprise is a catalyst for the reader's critical thinking to understand the very deep meaning of a poem.

It is agreed that a poem has <sup>9</sup> not only the aesthetic pleasure but also the ability to arouse the sense of surprise. This is in line with the statement of Harrison and Holderith (2009). They viewed that a poem could make both the teacher and students laugh, teach powerful lessons, and renew the souls. A poem helps the students <sup>9</sup> to ponder, observe, ask questions and discover sights, sounds and feelings. Indeed, by using poems, according to McGovern and Hogshead (1990), the teachers can fulfil the basic objectives of <sup>4</sup> promoting learning, fostering analytic and creative thinking, and problem solving. This is because in discussing a poem the students train their problem solving skill, which is essential in constructing their critical thinking skill. In this case, according to Helpem in Nieto, Ana and Saiz (2008), the students have to elaborate the authors' ideas by <sup>4</sup> forming connections and relationships which enhance learning and critical thinking. Through a poem, the students will develop their vocabulary and critical thinking.

However, not all English poems can be taken as learning materials in teaching reading to develop the critical thinking of low achieving students. There are some considerations that must be undertaken in choosing or selecting English poems as the critical thinking materials of learning for those students. In this case, low achieving students are assumed to have similar English proficiency of young learners or children. There must be vast considerations in selecting English poems for them. The teacher can list some questions in terms of language, sensory images, humour, emotional intensity, quality of imagination, substance and purpose within the poems. They must have fun and interesting aspects as the characteristics of children or young learners.



Dealing to selecting poems as learning materials of reading, Fisher & Natarella (1982) suggest some interesting criteria to take into account. They conducted an investigation on the poems which are preferred much by children. They found that (1) most children preferred narrative poems over lyric poems, (2) limericks were also more liked by children than the haiku, (3) children preferred poems with sound patterns or rhymed poems, (4) children preferred poems with regular and distinctive rhythm, and (5) children liked humorous poems, poems about animals, and poems about enjoyable familiar experiences.

According to Kormanski (1992) the most important criteria of selecting poems is that the teachers must enjoy the poem which they decide to present it to their students. If the teacher likes a poem, for example, this poem will be enjoyed by the students. The teacher will totally and successfully deliver the poem in front of the students. This attitude will interest the students to know more about the poem. Finally, this research will take not only narrative poems due to the fact narrative poems can be able to trigger and interest students to think critically when they are engaged in comprehending, interpreting, and analysing the poems.

Thus, the teacher selected the English poems which gave the students ample opportunities to enrich their English learning experience, extend a range of English language abilities, and develop their critical thinking skills through analysing poems and songs. The teacher designed and sequenced the poems as learning materials and reading activities carefully. As a result, they could strengthen the students' skills of understanding and appreciating the themes, structures, features and language in a range of poems and songs, helped the students to respond to and give expression to the imaginative ideas, moods and feelings expressed in poems and songs, and enabled the students to have satisfied progress in thinking critically.

Abraham Panavelil who is a Professor of Literature at the University of Nizwa viewed that in selecting the poems, the teacher had to

take into consideration about the needs of the students, their motivation, interest, and cultural background had to be taken into consideration while selecting a poem for the classroom teaching. It was because the shorter poems were easier to use within the class time available.

There were three principles in selecting the poems based on the characteristics of poems (Fisher & Natarella (1982), Komanski (1992), and Panavelil (2001). They were the poems or songs were not only narrative but also humorous, enjoyable, and familiar experiences in which both teacher and students in this research felt interested in knowing more about the poems. The poems and songs preferred by the low achieving students were in terms of its popularities and funny stories inside them. Indeed the songs and poems had low English barriers to the low achieving students that made them understand well about the content. The poems or songs used in this research led the low achieving students to have various interpretations. In short, the teacher considered much on the level of language used in the poems or songs that might fit to the students' English proficiencies. The teacher did not end up having to explain every single word which could lose the spark of the poems or songs. In this research the students were also supported throughout and were pre-taught some of the vocabularies or given some visual aids like modelling with gestures to help them to be able to tackle more challenging texts than they were used to.

The usefulness of poems in teaching reading was proved successful in developing the critical thinking skills of low achieving students was recommended by Fehl L. Shirley (1983). Shirley saw learning poems as one stage of the process of sharpening thinking skills. According to Shirley (1983), poems helped the students recognize the texts implicitly and explicitly. Indeed, the poems were integrally related to critical thinking. That was why the teacher needed to have deep consideration in choosing the appropriate poems for her students.

In selecting the poems the teacher could also adopt the criteria suggested by Shirley (1983). The first was the language used in the poems.

This meant that the poem used the appropriate and repetition for the beginners. Knowing these helped the teacher guide the students into recognizing and utilizing and using these language techniques when talking about the poems to have good comprehension. The second was how obvious was the rhythm. It dealt to the preference of the students towards the poems whether they were likely to honour the poem with verbal participation, stressing the beat or not.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The pre-reading activity as the warming up consisted of eight activities. The first was greeting and checking the students' attendance. The second one was giving motivation. Next was checking the dictionary. The teacher also asked the students to form groups of two before distributing each of them a poem on a piece of paper. She then played an easy English song to keep their focus and interest or reading a poem aloud together, modelling and explaining the types of reading questions that reflected critical thinking elements, and asking them to go back to their seats to prepare and complete individual activity.

In pre-reading activities the students worked in pairs or in groups to translate difficult words, phrases, and sentences which they found in the poems. The students discussed them in groups of two. Dictionaries were the main tools during this activity. Because of the need for dictionaries, the teacher started each meeting by checking students for dictionaries. It was clearly stated in the field notes written by the observer.

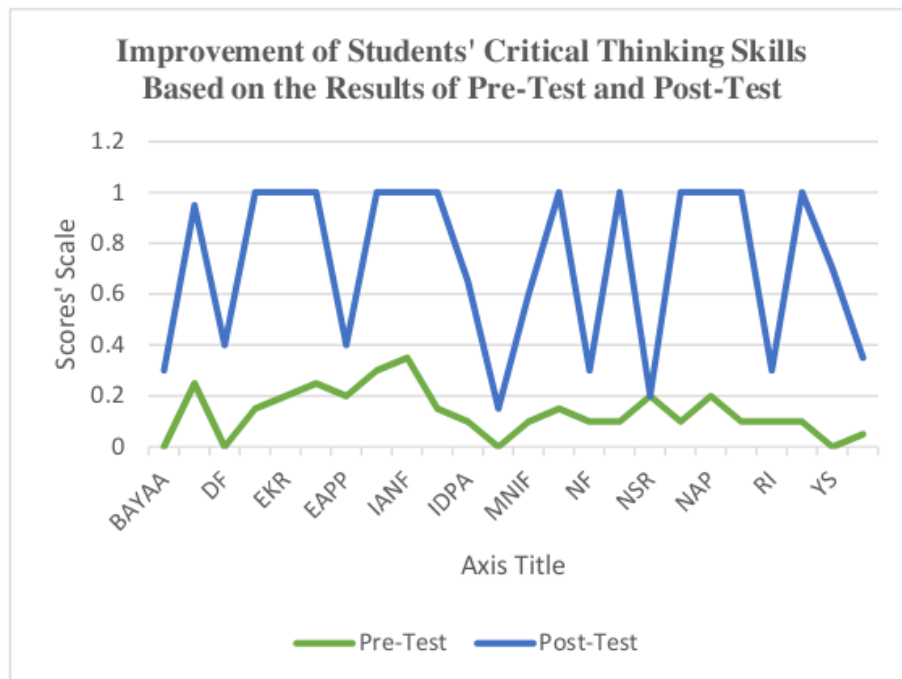
Therefore, pre-reading activities in this research used by the teacher aimed at preparing the students well for the next reading activities. The teacher also encouraged the students to be more interested in and curious about the poem. As stated in the lesson plans, the teacher used different ways of stimulating the students in the pre-reading activities. They were playing songs using audio aids before the students learned to understand poems in the form of song lyrics and reading poems aloud

before the students analysed them in depth in during-reading activities. At the end of the pre-reading activity, the teacher asked the students to translate orally and classically for every sentence that the teacher read aloud from the poem. By doing this, the teacher knew the students understood every sentence of the poem that they would analyse individually in during-reading activities.

In addition, the most interesting fact that was found in the research was that pre-reading activities took the longest period compared with the periods of the during-reading activities and the post-reading activities. The pre-reading activities used by the teacher could overcome not only the language barriers but also the critical thinking barriers of the students. The language barriers of the low achieving students related to vocabularies, while the barriers of critical thinking for the students dealt with the self-confidence in expressing their feelings and opinions. These two barriers were the basic ingredients that enabled them to achieve better critical thinking skills. That was why the teacher made groups to engage the students in discussions and sharing with their friends.

In earliest meeting, most of low achieving students in this research had a very difficult time not only in thinking independently but also in having any depth to their thought process. The students were turned out to have very little ability to process and think beyond the texts. As low achieving students, they had no sufficient background or understanding of basic vocabularies or idioms used in reading texts. This hindered their abilities to comprehend the texts in order to lead them into higher level of thinking.

Surprisingly, this research proved that the critical thinking skills of low achieving students could be developed after they were taught reading using poems for several meetings. This could be seen clearly in the following chart.



The Table informed that there were good progresses of critical thinking skills of low achieving students. The blue line of the chart represented the results of the post-test that the students did. They achieved better skills of thinking critically after they had engaged in reading activities using poems. The students performed low in thinking critically before the reading activities with poems as reading texts. It was clearly shown by the green line. This line represented the results of the pre-test which had been done by the students. In other words, the results of pre-test and post-test featured that the low students were able to have good achievements in critical thinking skills after they were regularly trained through reading activities with poems. This was in line with Fischer (1980) emphasized that the development of complex thinking skills called as critical thinking skills depended on the appropriate experiences. It means that the students succeeded in performing their critical thinking skills because their classroom experiences had provided sufficient support not only for their critical thinking skill development but also for their optimal

performance in thinking critically. As a result, their learning experiences built on the previous experiences, provided proper opportunities for the students to produce better performance, and laid a foundation for further skill development of critical thinking skills.

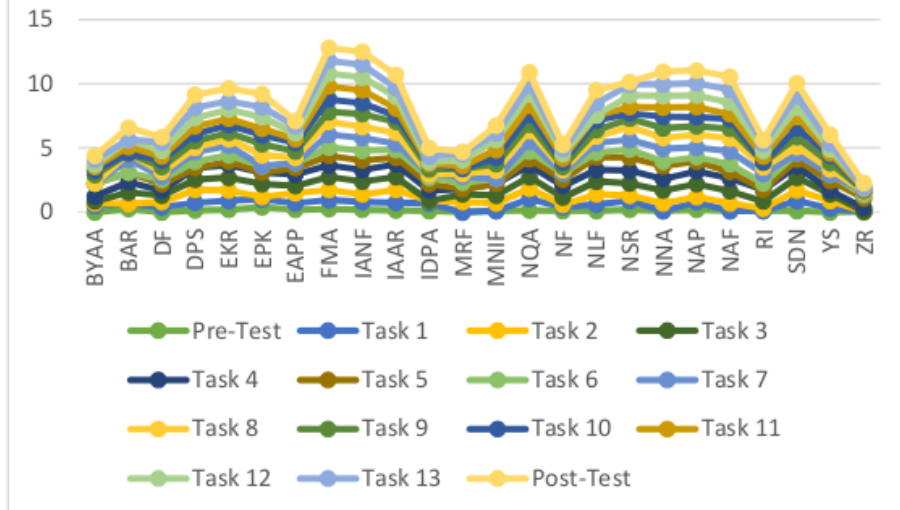
Thus, it was possible for low achieving students to acquire critical thinking skills. The Low Intermediate students could be trained and taught and they could learn in constant periods. This underlined what Helper (1993) believed that critical thinking skills were not only teachable but also learnable as well. The students became better critical thinkers when they acquired and utilized thinking skills to interpret and analyse information served in poems. In this case the teacher might have effective ways of teaching the students to think such as well-prepared lesson plans, funny narrative poems which were adjustable to the characteristics of low students as learning materials, critical thinking assignments, cooperative learning to eliminate the language constraints, direct oral instructions, and the like. This was related to the statement of Fisher (2001) that directs instruction in critical thinking improves students' critical thinking skills. That was why the teacher in this research gave direct instruction orally for every reading activity and assignment in order to eliminate the students' misperceptions.

In general, the students who developed their critical thinking skills in this research were able to achieve better marks, became less dependent on the teacher and textbooks, and were able to create arguments through logical steps. Through several periodically training in critical thinking skills in reading classes using poems as learning materials, the Low Intermediate students could successfully display their critical thinking skills in interpreting and analysing the poems. The systematic employment of critical thinking into the classroom activities through teaching reading using poems helped the students improve their critical thinking skills.

The clearer description of critical thinking improvements achieved by the students in all meetings can be seen as follows:



### Development of Students' Critical Thinking Skills Based on the Results of Assignments of All Meetings



The low achieving students who participated in reading activities using poems as learning materials in groups and individually had been found to have performed significantly better on the critical thinking skills. These students developed their critical thinking skills step by step. They were trained regularly and periodically to interpret and analyse the poems in each meeting. In individually the students had been found to have performed significantly better on the critical thinking skills. It indicated that these students were capable of performing interpretation and analysis towards poems at higher intellectual level that were having logical reasoning in these two critical components.

However, the chart indicated that the classroom activities with poems in earlier meetings were still un-familiar for the low students. They were not accustomed to those kinds of things. This affected their performance and results in reading assignments. Consequently, interventions of the teacher might break up the students' barriers to allow

them to interest, to focus their attention, and to make them more available for learning.

Interpretation and analysis, in this research, were focused on the training of the students to develop their critical thinking skills since both of them were considered as elements of critical thinking. It is in line with the consensus of the Delphi Panel consisting of 46 experts that the researcher cites from Facione (1990, p. 47) which reported that critical thinking is purposeful, self-regulatory judgement that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference.

Thus, all of those activities of teaching reading using poems, especially for low students, proved that critical thinking skills did not automatically and quickly develop by themselves. The critical thinking skills must be developed and required a great deal of teacher efforts in helping the low students to think critically. Consequently the teacher had to learn first about incorporating critical questioning into her class. Undoubtedly the teacher had the power to trigger, stimulate, develop, and shape the abilities of the low students to think critically. It was in line with what Chalupa and Sormunen (1995) believed that the instructors might be prepared to lead the students towards critical thinking skills. The teacher might be totally ready to create proper lesson plans, to choose best poems for low students, and good critical thinking assignments to train and to measure the low students in thinking critically.

The reading activities are done in groups of two students. The groups are organized based on the learning aspects of the students' competencies, the learning objectives, and the learning materials. These enhance the optimal interaction of student-student in discussing every single thing to interpret the poems, analyse the poems, and accomplish the assignments that are resulted from their optimal team building spirit, supportive relationships, and communication skills (Erikson, 1956; Piaget, 1959; Tudge, 1992; Nelson, 1994; Rochelle & Teasley, 1995; Johnson &

Johnson, 2000; Rogoff, Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001; Topping, 2005; Jacobs (2005).

The students in their peer groups solve their language barriers dealing to new vocabularies or new terms that they found in the poems, solve their anxieties in expressing their feeling, and participate meaningfully in their groups. When the students communicate one another, they are involved in face to face interactions which provide one another with feedback, challenged reasoning and conclusions, and teaching and encouraging one another.

The assignments are created in this research not only to assess the critical thinking of the students but also to train the students to think critically. In making the assignments, the teacher considers five dimensions of critical thinking, namely the analysis of thought, the assessment of thought, the dispositions of thought, the skills and abilities of thought, and the obstacles or barriers to critical thought which involve the students in the assessment of thinking (Brownie & Freeman, 2000; Elder, Paul, and Cosgrove, 2013).

The students' critical thinking skills in this research are assessed and trained using critical thinking assessments in the forms of open-ended questions and critical multiple-choices which focus only on two skills of critical thinking, namely interpreting and analysing poems. The interpreting assignments lead the students to figure the content as an argument or point of view of the author which shared in the poem by using their own words. The analysing assignments guide the students to break down the poem into parts of identifications, namely the setting of narrative poems, themes of poems, and messages expressed by the authors. These analysis activities enable the students to determine the relationship between parts, to develop the relationship of cause and effect in the events, and to search out the reasons of why the characters in the narrative poems behave in such a way.

The teacher feedbacks in this research are oral feedbacks given by the teacher in the post reading activities. The teacher provides sufficient time to give oral feedbacks to the students' difficulties of interpreting and analysing the poems. In giving the feedbacks, the teacher applies the principles of giving good feedbacks. The teacher points the students to ways in which they can improve their learning and achievement. She focuses on giving the students opportunities to act on the feedback itself, and uses clear, short, simple, motivating words, clear direction, well-developed, and text specific such as "What's your main point here? If it's that you disagree, put that idea up front and explain", "Consider integrating these ideas", and "Be more specific. Say where and when". She gives the useful feedbacks which indicate how the student can improve, avoids sarcasm, informs, questions, prompts, assesses, encourages and guides the students to achieve the learning outcomes (Ramsden, 1992; Lunsford, 1997; Chamberlain, Dison & Button, 1998; Taras, 2003; Duncan, 2007; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol, 2008; Scholes, 2012).

Those kinds of oral feedbacks improve the students' critical thinking, make the students learn about how to interpret and analyse poems appropriately for similar critical questions, and dig the self-confidence of low students to express their feeling and ideas as the fundamental modal of thinking critically. Thus, the feedbacks are given after assessment tasks in order to give the students sufficient opportunities to use the feedbacks for improving subsequent performance for the next meeting. The feedbacks in this research are given as soon as possible after the completion of the learning tasks. It is because the students also need to see the feed-forward comments in order to improve the quality of their learning ways of how to interpret and analyse the poems.

## **Conclusion**

It was shown in this research that the low achieving students were able to improve or develop their critical thinking skills after several

treatments given by their English teacher using certain strategies. They needed time and multiple opportunities in the form of experiences or training to develop their critical thinking skills described in this research. This research showed that greater gains in students' critical thinking performances could be achieved when the teacher had appropriate strategy to be implemented in the classroom activities.

Therefore, the critical thinking skills for LI students could be upgraded by teaching reading using poems constantly, regularly, and periodically. This meant that critical thinking skills could not be developed instantly. They needed periods of time to train the low achieving students to think critically. This was in line with what Helper (1999) believed. According to her, the critical thinking needed to be deliberately and repeatedly taught at schools.

As explained clearly in this paper that critical thinking was a capacity to work with reasoning to justify a reasonable judgment. In other words, critical thinking implied that the information was not right or wrong or simply a given set of facts. Thus, the students had to involve in a habit of listening and expressing ideas, response in the context, and reasoning that led to a valid interpretation and analysis. Their critical thinking skills might be taught, trained, or guided by the teacher in order to refine and improve their these skills repeatedly although the students had natural ability to think critically (Black, 2005).

There were two skills of critical thinking that were promoted to the low achieving students through reading activities using poems in order to increase their critical thinking skills. They were interpretation skill and analysis skill that the students were trained to perform in answering reading questions of poems which they were learning. In this case, the students as well as the teacher could rely on the critical assignments of poems to promote, to up-grade, and to monitor the students' engagement in critical thinking. Providing the low achieving students with the suitable poems and assignments in reading activities could help them to move beyond

engagement in lower level thinking such as mere description or simply identification. The low achieving students in this research were helped to do reasonable interpretation and analysis by the good choice poems and critical thinking reading questions.

However, the lesson plans of teaching reading using poems including selected poems as learning materials to develop the low students' <sup>12</sup>critical thinking skills and the critical thinking assignments were designed specifically for promoting or upgrading and measuring the critical thinking skills of the low students. All of them could serve as guidance, best practices, and best experiences for fostering the critical thinking skills of low achieving students. In this regard, they could be used by the teacher to provide her with guidance in the selection of poems and critical thinking activities applied to the students, formats of questions in the students' tasks, and instructions provided to the students.

In fact, teaching reading for developing the critical thinking skills of low achieving students was not a simple task. There were many barriers to its implementation such as the poor language barriers, lack of proper poems for fostering critical thinking skills of low achieving students, lack of proper assessments that led the teacher to create them to measure critical thinking skills of low achieving students, and lack of teacher training of teaching low achieving students for critical thinking skills. However, this research was one of alternatives suggested to overcome all of those barriers of teaching reading for fostering critical thinking skills of low achieving students, especially of those who studied in a remote school with very limited facilities of teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Finally, <sup>1</sup>this research proved that when the low achieving students were aligned <sup>1</sup>in pursuit of critical thinking by the teacher through reading activities using proper poems and critical assignments in which both of them were included in the well-designed lesson plans, these students succeeded in improving their critical <sup>1</sup>thinking skills. They could perform interpreting and analysing poems with reasonable point of views. In this



case, the skills of interpreting and analysing indicated as two of skills included in the critical thinking. This referred to what a Delphi study had identified in 1990 that there were six skills included in the critical thinking, namely interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. A Delphi study convened by a group of 30 experts to determine that critical thinking was a process that divided into the six skills and dispositions.

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