

## EXPLORING EFL LEARNERS' LITERARY COMPETENCE THROUGH THEIR CRITICAL STANCE IN READING NARRATIVE

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### Abstract

Critical reading has been promoted as the objective of the reading activity in English language learning. However, previous studies have reported that reading comprehension still centres on comprehending the literal meaning and puts aside critical reading as part of their language learning activity. One of the ways to examine EFL learners' critical reading is to enquire into their literary competence. This study, aiming at exploring the EFL university students' literary competence from the perspective of critical reading, was conducted in one of the Indonesian private universities. The participants were required to write an essay containing their critical responses towards a literary text. Content analysis on the essay of each participant was done to explore their literary competence. The findings reveal that the participants were able to demonstrate their literary competence that fell into three categories, namely: relating the literary text to one's experience, empathising with the literary text, and situating the literary text in a wider sociocultural scope. The critical stances reflected in each of the literary competence were respectively accomplished through constructing and engaging; dialoguing and engaging; and reflecting and evaluating. EFL learners' literary competence is reflected on the critical responses they produced, in which they relate the content of the text with wider out-text contexts. In order to promote critical reading ability, EFL teachers can include aesthetic reading and involve literary competence in the reading activity.

**Keywords :** critical reading, literary competence, literary reading, reader response, aesthetic reading

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### INTRODUCTION

While the reading activity in English language learning has been directed at the attainment of critical reading in which the learners are expected to be able to critique the logic of a text to construct arguments based on facts and opinion (Wallace, 2020) and give the arguments on the reading text (Gustine, 2018), the focus of reading comprehension is still on the surface-level text understanding (Iyer, 2007) and literal comprehension (Gee, 1999; Idol, 1987). There is nearly absent of inclusion of

critical reading practices that allows learners to give opinion on certain topics they found interesting in a reading text (Esquivel, 2019). In Indonesian EFL context particularly, the reading activities have emphasised more on the use of schemata and background knowledge (Floris & Divina, 2009) and learning the text structure (Sulistyo & Suharmanto, 2007) to achieve the literal level of understanding a reading text (Kirkpatrick, 2007) rather than encouraging to arrive at epistemic level of reading (Putra, 2014).

As a results, the learners are given little opportunity to be effective text participants as they rarely involves their criticality in reading.

To be effective text participants, readers are required to be actively involved with the text they read. Their reading activity should accordingly be situated in the social and cultural elements adhered to the text and the readers. Based on an assumption that reading is a social practice (Street, 2003), readers have to make relation between the text and their experiences and make inferences (Jones, 2012). To make reading a socio-culturally embedded activity, an authentic text representing realistic socio-cultural delineation is needed. One form of such a text is literary text, one form of narrative text, as it serves a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written (Valdes, 2001) and thus provides learners with vivid socio-cultural portrayal that enables them to make meaning based on their own socio-cultural views. Not only does a literary text enable learners to develop their critical analysis, it also improves their reading-writing skills which is beneficial for them to comprehend and, eventually, produce a range of text types in academic settings (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

Literary text is not widely used in reading comprehension class in Indonesian context as the focus of reading is more on the expository texts (Cahyono & Widiati, 2006). The use of literary text in a classroom is, in fact, encouraged because such a text enables learners to be critical readers as they may interrogate literary text (McKenzie & Jarvie, 2018). By reading literary texts, EFL learners are able to ameliorate their reading skills as they need to not only comprehend the information stated in the texts, but also think critically in order to make meaning, which is part of literary competence proposed by Spiro (1991).

Spiro (1991) argues that literary competence promotes readers' enjoyment in reading literary text. She further explains that when readers enjoy reading literature, readers may be able to relate literature with their own experience, empathise with the text, and relate literature in a wider sociocultural scope. The focus of literary competence seems to be in accordance with that of the critical reading. Critical reading focuses on broader social and ideological milieu of the text (Kubota & Miller, 2017) and highlights the affective orientation of the readers (McKenzie & Jarvie, 2018).

This study is accordingly directed at exploring EFL learners' literary competence by dint of examining their critical responses. The responses are in written essays on how they learners reacted to the reading text. This research area is beneficial towards the development of literary competence in critical reading particularly in the EFL contexts.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section deals with theoretical framework that become the basis of conducting this study. The theories dealing with literary competence and critical engagement in critical reading are discussed further in the following subsections.

### 2.1 Literary Competence in Critical Reading

Literary competence is analogised with Chomsky's linguistic competence by Culler (2002). When a reader does not have sufficient linguistic competence, he or she reads a sentence as a simply meaningless sequence of words since the structure of the language is not known. Analogously, a reader cannot properly read a literary work unless he or she has adequate literary competence. When reading a literary text, particularly in a form of prose, there is a set of conventions that allow a reader to identify the plot, reveal the characterisations of

the characters, recognise the themes, and understand the meaning of symbols presented implicitly in the text..

Not only should learners be familiar with the structure-formed literary works that distinguish them from other forms of written works, but also have a set of skills to analyse and respond to all genres of literary works they read. Culler (1997) argues that in reading a literary work a reader should first go through poetics, a phase of understanding meaning, that leads to hermeneutics, a phase of discovering meaning. Spiro (1991) additionally mentions that in order to be able to appreciate and enjoy reading a literary work, a reader should have adequate literary competence. The literary competence deals with the reader's ability to analyse and provide responses when reading literature by relating literature to one's experience, empathising with the text, and situating the literary context within a wider sociocultural context. By possessing literary competence, EFL learners as literary readers are able to attend meaning to the literary text critically.

Literary reading, in which literary competence is involved, is part of critical reading. Critical reading manifests the assumption that reading is part of social practices that implements critical stances of the readers (Macknish, 2011). Critical reading enables readers to see the text from various perspectives (Iyer, 2007), have reading experience in which the text are able to attend their feeling or memory, (Kadir, Maasum, & Vengadasamy, 2012), and 'read' the text in a wider scope; not solely from the textual context of the text. Critical reading activities functions as an arena for EFL learners to experience a critical sociopolitical process (Sharma & Phyak, 2017) and a socially constructed practice (Pearson, 2017). EFL learners should be given an opportunity to explore their critical reading ability to be able to relate the text with their social, cultural, and personal values they hold

(Park, 2011; Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017). In her study, Prasasti (2020) argues that EFL learners are managed to read a literary work critically by applying their literary competence, particularly by placing the meaning of certain figurative language in wider sociocultural contexts. Critical reading can be applied in a reading class employing a literary text, as such a text may serve as a sphere for readers to do a self-reflection (Dewi, 2021).

## 2.2 Critical Engagement in Critical Reading

The 'reading comprehension' should be redefined so that reading is not only aimed at understanding the literal-level of the texts. The term comprehension should be elucidated further into a constructing reading activity of which one of the purposes is to do meaningful interpretation in which critical reading involving some political, social and cultural particulars is included (Sadoski & Paivio, 2007).

Critical reading in EFL context is intertwined with critical thinking. Critical thinking in reading should not be only associated with the cognitive activities that include evaluation, analysis, and comprehension (Benesch, 1993), but also should include the application on the learners' daily lives (Beaumont, 2010). In critical reading, learners not only use the accumulated knowledge stockpiled from the text as they read, but also include outside information and personal opinions in their responses (Beaumont, 2010). Critical reading facilitates efficient learning in reading specified by the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and generic skills promoted by dialogic and reflective activities (Soto, 2020). By involving dialogic and reflective activities, critical reading enables learners to get engaged critically with the text.

Critical engagement in critical reading deals with how readers critically get engaged with the textual world presented and at the same time relate what they have experienced in their life with the content of the text. The critical engagement concerns how learners need to unravel a certain ideology purposefully represented in texts (Alford & Kettle, 2017) or how learners have to look at how the text interact with power and certain social practices (Hermann-Wilmart et al. 2017). Here, learners as readers get engaged not only with the textual world presented but also with the world in which they live in day by day since the engagements are represented from various critical, disciplinary, and affective perspectives (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017). Further, reading literary text requires a great deal of readers' critical engagement with both the text and the world that necessitates them to sometimes go beyond the information given, seek evidence or even reflect on their own lives and those of others to make sense the meaning of the symbolic language presented (Langer, 1990)

## 1. METHODS

This study implements qualitative research design. Details about the participants of the study, data collection, and data analysis are discussed further in the following sub-sections.

### 1.2. Participants of the Study

The participants were selected purposively to obtain the 'unique contexts' (Miles et al., 2014) of the participants' critical responses towards a fable, one form of literary works, entitled *The Fox and The*

*Crow*. Thirty-two students enrolling in a private university in Indonesia were recruited to become the participants of this study. They speak Bahasa Indonesia and a local language (Javanese) as their daily language. They were EFL university students in their second semester and majoring in English Education. They have been exposed to reading activities since they were in high school. They have also exposed to reading activities of various genres of text from their first semester. The reading activities are mostly dealing with practices in understanding the text cognitively, in which the activities of identifying, understanding, and analysing are included. The participants accordingly found no problem in understanding the text cognitively.

### 1.3. Data Collection

A reading task was administered to collect data in the form of written responses from the participants. The task comprises a reading, *The Fox and The Crow* from Aesop Fable, and a writing assignment in which each participant had to provide an essay containing their responses to the fable. The reading text was distributed in the thirteenth meeting. The participants were required to read the text independently after the class as part of their independent reading activities. They were required to write an essay after reading the text. The content of the essay should have included their stance towards the text and whether they could have related the text to wider scopes closed to their own lives. The leads were given to the participants prior to the reading task was administered to elicit their written critical responses. The writing assignment was conducted at how to allow the participants to get more engaged with the text without having worried about time limit that might have given

pressure to them in providing the written responses.

The focus of the reading task was not on teaching as there was no interaction between the teacher and the students during the reading activity was done. The interaction also did not take place after the reading activity had completed. The focus was on how each of the participants interacted with the text during reading and stated their critical opinions in a form of an essay.

#### **1.4. Data Analysis**

Prior to data analysis, the data from the participants' written responses were organised based on Spiro's (1991) literary competence. The organisation was conducted to ease the proses of analysing the data. Content analysis was conducted since the main data of this study were obtained from the participants' written responses in forms of essay writing (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The data were subsequently read heuristically and hermeneutically to make sense of the meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The reading of the data aimed at exploring the learners' literary competence by way of analysing their critical stances reflected in their written responses to the given reading text

## **2. FINDINGS**

Results of the analysis from the participants' written responses show that the participants attained certain literary competence. They were able to arrive at the competence as they presented their stances towards the reading material as a result of their critical reading. The followings are the findings dealing with the learners' literary competence. Furthermore, the analysis in terms of literary competence falls into three different categories,

namely: relating the literary text to one's experience, empathising with the literary text, and situating the literary text in a wider sociocultural scope. In relating the text to one's experience, the participants presented their critical stances through constructing and engaging. The participants are able to empathise with the text by dialoguing and engaging. In the last category of literary competence in which learners are able to situate the text in a wider sociocultural scope, the participants presented their critical stance through reflecting and evaluating. Each category is described in the next subsections.

### **2.2. Relating the Literary Text to One's Experience**

As the participants finished their critical reading activity, they were required to provide critical written responses. The participants had been familiar with the term critical reading as they had been introduced to critical reading activity in which they have to relate the content of the text with what they experienced in their daily lives. In this category of literary competence, the participants were able to relate the literary text with a person's experiences. The person can be themselves, their family members, their neighbours, or their friends. In the following, we will discuss in detail the analysis of the data about the ways the participants presented their critical stances dealing with their literary competence. The critical stances are classified into constructing and connecting.

#### *2.2.1. Relating the Literary Text to One's Experience through Constructing*

From the written responses, constructing is one of the visible critical stances able to be produced by the participants. Constructing deals with learners' ability to create their own conceptualising characters as they come into the fictional world and get engaged with the character. The written response of participant 4 shows that he was engaged with the characters (the fox and the crow) and built his own concept of the character. As he created his own conceptualisation, he tried to relate the quality of character – the fox and the crow – with that of himself based on his own experiences.

#### Essay 1: Relating the text to one's experience through constructing

I think me personally I can be both the fox and the crow. And I've been both. It's always been a roller coaster being in either role. Whenever I became "the fox" Sometimes I felt genuine regret, i.e. ignoring someone else's need significantly even though it may gave the other disadvantages. But uh, let's just say that it is necessary to be 'evil' whenever it needed. And when I became the "crow", it's obviously frustrating that your needs are being ignored by the others, but often, eventually I got out of "the well" and I just carry on like nothing happened. We can learn from the fox that if we think for ourselves, the possibility of a solution coming across our way, or being able to come up with a solution is going to be bigger. And we can also learn from the crow that we'd have consequences from the choices we've made, and that needs to be always kept in mind.

In his response, participant 4 tried to relate the characterisations of the characters in the text with his own experiences. By constructing his own conceptualisation of the characters, he was able to arrive at a certain literary competence. By providing a response that he 'felt genuine regret' when he placed himself as the fox, he constructed the quality of the fox as an antagonist. He further explained that as human, he might have also acted like the crow. He also constructed the quality of the crow as a creature that is easily deceived and admitted that at one moment in his life, he also once experienced of becoming the crow. The conceptualisation of the characters shows that the participant has an ability to relate the text with his own experience by way of constructing. This emphasises the participant's literary competence.

#### 2.2.2. *Relating the Literary Text to One's Experience through Connecting*

Connecting is one way done by a critical reader as they finished reading a literary text. In connecting, a reader tries to link the text with an occurrence in the real world. Participant 9 related the story of the fable with the experience of her neighbour. She sought the parallel of the story and the neighbour's experience by connecting the message delivered in the fable and the lesson people could learn from the neighbour's experience.

#### Essay 2: Relating the text to one's experience by way of connecting

The story seems to be related to the experience of one of my neighbours. She is a mother of three. She is just a housewife. One time there was an incident. She got a call from a stranger

who claimed to be a police officer. She got information that his brother had an accident which resulted in his brother being seriously injured. She was shocked and the caller asked her some money. She agreed to what the caller had asked for. After that the caller turned off the phone, she was in a hurry to transfer some money to the caller. But in the middle of the trip she met with the head of the neighbourhood called *Bapak RT* who asked her where she was going. She told him what happened and the *RT* forbade her to transfer the money and ordered her to call her brother. Finally the mother called her brother and he was fine. We must use our minds so that we are not easily deceived by others, and we should not easily believe in others.

In her response, participant 9 tells the real occurrence experienced by her neighbour. The critical reading took place as she tried to connect the theme of the short story, a deception, with the experience of the neighbour. By connecting the theme and the experience, she tried to encapsulate that the moral value the story wants to communicate to the readers somewhat similar to the lesson she could learn from the experience. By stating 'we must use our minds so that we are not easily deceived by others', she confirmed that she was able to relate the text with one's experience by connecting.

### 2.3. Empathising with the Literary Text

One aspect that links EFL learners' literary competence and their critical reading is

the learners' ability to empathise with the text. Here, the learners as critical readers are able to 'feel' the text as they get engaged with the text during the reading process. In this category of literary competence, the participants provided their critical responses by way of dialoguing and engaging.

#### 2.3.1. *Empathising with the Literary Text through Dialoguing*

In critical reading, a reader should not only activate their cognitive sphere, but also their affective side. When readers' affectivity is involved, they can get involved emotionally with the text and be able to empathise with what is experienced by the characters. Dialoguing is one of the critical stances the participants presented when they tried to show their empathy. Dialoguing in the reading process involves the reader's going back and forth between the text and the real-life phenomenon. Participant 20 presented her written response showing her literary competence in terms of empathising the text by dialoguing the text with a real-life situation.

#### Essay 3: Empathising with the literary text through dialoguing

The story is very relatable to our life. Compliment itself is a good thing. Compliment itself is valuable. Giving words of compliment to someone can make the person complimented feel more comfortable. Compliment also encourages someone to be better than before. But compliment itself can also be a bad thing because it will make the person being praised feel quickly satisfied with the results he gets. Sometimes a person may feel that he

should always be complimented. If he does not receive compliment, he will be disappointed. Excessive praise can also shape a child into an arrogant person. The child will find it difficult to admit if other children are more accomplished than themselves and easily underestimate others. This story itself actually also tells the ingenuity of the fox. The fox thought of a way how he could get that piece of cheese. but the fox's ingenuity and cleverness are used for bad things because he deceives the crows.

At the beginning of her response, participant 20 explained the reality about giving compliment to other people. She explained that compliment is like two sides of a coin. On one side, compliment can make someone appreciated and boost someone to be better. On the other, compliment is like a poison that can make someone become addicted to be complimented and feel underestimated when receiving none. Compliment may also have a bad effect as someone will be easily satisfied and snobbish for receiving too much praises from others. At the end, the participant encapsulated her response by taking some scene from the text. Here, she went back and forth between the reality happened in daily life with what is pictured in the fable, stating her critical stance. She managed to show her ability to empathise with the text through dialoguing. In the dialoguing process, she put her empathy on a person receiving compliments. She was of the opinion that compliments at the same time could be positive and negative. The dialoguing process continues as she felt the ingenuity of the fox and empathised with what has been experienced by the crow when the crow is deceived. The dialoguing process underlines her literary competence.

### *2.3.2. Empathising with the Literary Text through Engaging*

As the fable was read by the participants, some of them were able to get emotionally involved with the text. Not only they can 'feel' the text, but can also 'feel' the deepest feeling of the character. The responses of the participants in which they are emotionally engaged with what is experienced by the characters refer to as engaging. In giving his response, Participant 32 placed himself on the shoes of the crow who is intimidated by the fox.

#### Essay 4: Empathising with the literary text through engaging

After I read this fable, I felt very sorry for the crow. Because of the cunning act of a fox who was so selfish that he wanted to snatch the crow's food. A fox tries to play with its prey, and tries to persuade its prey. Once he was caught in the fox's trap, then he would get what the fox wanted. And what's even sadder is that its prey is easily deceived by the fox's words.

In his written response, the participant put his shoes on the crow's. He could feel what the crow feel as if he had been the crow himself. The way he empathised with the text is so deep, as he described that it is 'even sadder that the prey is easily deceived by the fox's word'. It signifies that he presented his literary competence by stating his critical stance through engaging; to be in all respects emotionally engaged with the character.

### **2.4. Situating the Literary Text in A Wider Sociocultural Scope**

Critical reading promotes reading activity to go beyond comprehending the literal

meaning of the text. To read critically means to include reading as social practices. One of the abilities that should be possessed by EFL learners is the ability to situate the text in a wider sociocultural scope, The scope can be based on the learners' own sociocultural experiences, others' experiences or sociocultural phenomena commonly take place in the society. The theory of literary competence supports the notion of critical reading. One of the literary competences should be possessed by critical readers is the ability to situate the literary text in a wider sociocultural context. From the participants' written responses, the ability was presented through reflecting and evaluating. The next subsections will discuss each of the them in detail respectively.

#### *2.4.1. Situating the Literary Text in A Wider Sociocultural Scope through Reflecting*

Doing reflection is one of the ways the participants could do when trying to present their critical written responses. Reflection can be done by looking back on what the participants have experienced in the past to find what they could learn from the experience. The response of participant 3 shows that he reminisced about one moment in his life where compliment could be a boomerang for him.

Essay 5: Situating the literary text in a wider sociocultural scope through reflecting

I also have experiences related to socio-cultural experiences which I think have something in common with this fable and that is in terms of using language to communicate. So when I was in junior high school, I was fluent in high-level of Javanese language (*kromo inggil*) and

everyone recognized it. On that day my school had a guest from Jakarta. Because the guest and I both Javanese and because of the compliments from everyone before, I confidently used high-level of Javanese when talking to the guest. But he didn't understand at all and it was an embarrassing experience for me. If they don't praise me maybe I won't be big headed and won't use Javanese manners to communicate with that guest.

The response of the participants shows that he used the reading text as a point of departure for his own reflection. As he situated the context of the reading material in a wider sociocultural context, he realises that he had been lulled by the compliments given for him in his ability to speak fluent high-level of Javanese language. He reflected on his own sociocultural experience when communicated with other using Javanese. He was able to make a reflection that his ability frequently praised by other turned into the cause of the biggest embarrassment he had ever experienced. At the end, he realised his big-headedness. This realisation is the result of his self-reflection after reading the fable.

#### *2.4.2. Situating the Literary Text in A Wider Sociocultural Scope through Evaluating*

In social interaction with others, we cannot avoid critics from others. Sometimes other people may also give us compliments with certain vested interest. The written response from Participant 25 shows her ability to situate the content of the fable with day-to-day phenomenon. She explained that in real sociocultural interaction insincere compliments likely took place just to make the person being complimented feels hurt.

Essay 6: Situating the literary text in a wider sociocultural scope through evaluating

If it is related to socio-cultural experience, maybe for example like, she wears very nice clothes but someone says to her "the clothes are nice and will be appropriate if worn by me, not on your body, unfortunately, you have to be good at finding clothes that suit you". sometimes people always praise themselves excessively so that their words consciously hurt the person they are aiming for.

In her response, the participant judged someone's experience with the text. The judgement somewhat situated the text in a wider sociocultural scope. The judgement established the participant's critical stance. The judgement constructed based on someone's sociocultural experience and what was read in the text refers to as evaluating. In evaluating, the participant determined the occurrence happened in real life as a result of someone's sociocultural interaction to be analogous to the message the fable wants to convey to the readers. As the participant evaluated, the message the fable told the reader was about giving excessive praise and vested interest behind the praise. In her response, the participant brought the result of the evaluation of the text and situated it in a wider sociocultural context she had evaluated before. The establishment of the critical stance through evaluating points up her literary competence.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The findings show that EFL learners are able to attain literary competence particularly in relating the literary text with a person's experience, empathising with the text, and situating the literary text in a wider sociocultural scope. Each category of literary competence is achieved respectively by way of constructing and connecting, dialoguing and engaging, and reflecting and evaluating as presented in their written responses. These written responses are deemed to be the representations of the learners' critical stances as they include aspects of reflection and affect (Sadoski & Paivio, 2007).

In giving written responses to the text, EFL learners as readers can apply their literary competence by way of relating the text with an individual's personal experience. When readers attempt to relate the text with a person's experience, they in the process of viewing the text from a broader critical view as done by participant 4 and participant 9. When they view the text from a broader view, they implicate to explore their critical stance. The process of the exploring readers' critical stances can be done through constructing and connecting. Both constructing and connecting place the text as a cue for the readers to bridge the text with real-life situation and the ideology underlying and constructing events happen in reality (Macknish, 2011). Both constructing and connecting involve the readers' endeavours to look for evidence based on real-life experience (Langer, 1990) denoting critical engagement in critical reading particularly in terms of the engagement between the textual world and the day-to-day life (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017).

Another way to scrutinise EFL learners' literary competence is by enquiring into the way they empathise with the text. When learners as readers put their empathy on the literary text they read, they are actually in the process of presenting their critical stances towards the text. The findings shows that the readers are able to

empathise with the text by way of dialoguing and engaging. Both dialoguing and engaging denotes efficient learning in reading as the reading skills are developed through dialogic activities (Soto, 2020), in which engaging is also involved. The involvement of dialoguing and engaging in critical reading activities signifies that the readers use not only textual information gathered from the text but also extra-textual information they get from their interactions in their daily lives (Beaumont, 2010). Both in-text and out-text information are processed when the learners try to provide critical responses. As the process include critical engagement, the ability to empathise with the text obviously takes place when the text is viewed from the readers' affective perspective (Appleby & Pennycook, 2017). The critical written response, accordingly, is generated from the feeling stimulated by the text (Kadir, Maasum, & Vengadasami, 2012) when learners got emotionally involved when reading.

Finally, EFL learners are capable of applying their literary competence by means of situating the text in a wider sociocultural scope. The sociocultural scope can be based on the readers' own experience when interacting with other people in their society. The results show that in terms of situating the text in a wider sociocultural context, EFL learners as readers are able to show their critical stance when they practiced their literary competence by reflecting and evaluating. Both of them require the readers to contemplate certain occurrence happens in their social interactions with others in relation to the message conveyed in the reading text. Here, there is an engagement in the readers' critical reading as they had to see whether the text interacted with certain social practices (Hermann-Wilmart et al. 2017). As the readers read the text through, they at the same time make a serious thought in a form of critical self-reflection and evaluation – an activity of which the readers need to consider the hidden ideology that might be found when relating the

text with their own sociocultural experiences. The involvement of reflection and evaluation seems to validate that EFL learners are able to employ their literary competence in terms of situating the text in a wider sociocultural scope (Prasasti, 2020) and provide critical written responses as the outcome of their critical reading (Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In applying literary competence on their critical responses, EFL learners deliver their critical stance by way of linking the in-text and out-text contexts, Based on the results of the study literary competence attained by the learners are relating the text to one's personal experience, empathising with the text, and situating the text in a wider sociocultural scope. In relating the text to one's personal experience, the learners present their critical stance through constructing and connecting, both of which require students' ability to find the parallel between the experience and the message conveyed through the characterisations of the characters portrayed in the text and a real person's experiences. In empathising the text, the learners try to feel the text in formulating their critical stance through dialoguing, in which they go back and forth between the text and what they feel as they read the text, and engaging, in which they could put their shoes on the position of the characters in the text. In situating the text in a wider sociocultural scope, the learners provide their critical stance through reflecting and evaluating, both of which necessitate the learners to contemplate and do reflection based on their sociocultural interaction with other people and the message communicated in the text. Each of the literary competence is presented through the learners' critical stance. The critical stance is a result of the retrieval of the learners' knowledge

repertoire and activation of their epistemic reasoning in the process of critical reading. Therefore, in order to encourage EFL learners' critical reading ability, EFL teachers can nurture aesthetic reading and encompass literary competence in the activity so that learners can link the text with knowledge-based, empirical-based, and experience-based matters beyond the text. At the end, the learners can feel the text and construct their sociocultural empathy as the result of their critical reading.

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