Cultivating Higher-Order Thinking Skills through Aesthetics and Creativity of Poetry: Pedagogic Motivations and Directions

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Abstract

This paper aims to develop an informed understanding of the motivations that drive English language teachers to exploit aesthetic qualities and creativity of poetry in cultivating Higher Order Thinking (HOT) skills in English Language and Literature (ELL) classrooms. Drawing pedagogic motivation and direction from the literature on creative and critical thinking skills, this paper demonstrates how purposive and persevering practice of HOT Strategies such as fostering enquiry-oriented thinking and encouraging open-ended class discussions can lead to consequent development of HOT skills of students in ELL classrooms. Expressed in another way, the paper provides a clear framework for understanding creativity and critical thinking thereby demonstrating how they can be incorporated into ELL classroom practice using poetry.

Key Words: active engagement and interaction; aesthetics and creativity of poetry; critical applications and individual response; English language and literature classrooms: higher order thinking skills; skill getting and skill using; voice and agency

Introduction

Teaching Language through Literature (TLTL) will not only enlarge the pool of material to meet the demand of the subject but would also add variety and motivation in the ELL classrooms. Any interpretation of a piece of literature is conditioned by three factors: (a) What is in the language itself; (b) What is in the context of communication; and (c) What is in the head of readers, i.e., the assumptions and knowledge they bring to a text. Needless to say, that different readers will inevitably bring different experiences to text, there are neither identical/ideal readers, nor

identical/ideal readings. As Simpson (1997) argues, complex and varied patterns of meaning and interpretation permeate all texts (p. 3). Therefore, literature, one of the most authentic forms of language use, holds a great potential to enrich English Language Teaching (ELT). As Maley (1987, rep. 2000, p. 107) argues, poetry is linguistically and emotionally authentic, which provokes an equally authentic and individual response from the reader(s). Against the backdrop of this argument, this paper attempts to demonstrate as to how the revealing nature: noticeability, reactional language and verbal sensibilities of poetry could be fruitfully exploited for its communicative and critical applications in ELL classrooms in order to promote students' voice and agency' (Nunn and Sivaubramaniam, 2011; Sivaubramaniam, 2015) and cultivate their HOT skills.

Drawing upon a task-based approach, the main purpose of this task-driven paper is to develop an informed understanding of the motivations that drive ELT practitioners to exploit creativity of poetry in developing critical thinking capabilities of students in ELL classrooms. The paper mainly focuses on examining the benefits of using poetry and demonstrating the pedagogic viability and validity of certain carefully designed tasks and activities for making the students increasingly confident in expressing their emotions and ideas with a questioning, challenging, and analytical mind towards the development of critical thinking capacities and capabilities. In functional terms, this paper aims to (a) demonstrate how to make poetry conducive to language learning; (b) expand students' linguistic, emotional, and cultural awareness, stimulate their imagination, and add motivational buzz to classroom activity; (c) develop students' critical thinking abilities; (d) develop successful reading thereby successful readers through active engagement and interaction with authentic texts; (e) make reading and writing intensely interactive activities and develop a desire to write; and (f) enhance learners' personal enrichment.

But before we get down to critical applications of poetry for developing HOT skills, it will be helpful to examine the primacy of independent mind and centrality of integrated interactive framework as necessary pre-requisites to achieve it. Incidentally, *'integrated'* here refers to integration of the four language skills of LSRW (listening, speaking, reading and writing) during teaching and learning and *'interactive framework'* relates to planning, designing, implementing and exploiting classroom tasks and activities that provide maximum opportunities of dynamic interaction to students in the ELL classrooms.

Primacy of independent mind and centrality of integrated interactive framework

Primacy of independent mind and centrality of integrated interactive framework are the hallmarks of higher education. Thinking, in Osho's (2015) view, is a 'moving mind' i.e., not a stagnant mind. Thinking does not and cannot develop from borrowed and accumulated knowledge and thoughts but it generates from the thought process which gives birth to one's own thinking, i.e., one's own consciousness (pp. 70-79). Such an approach and stance will not only promote higher levels of

creative and critical thinking skills and deliver desired pedagogical outcomes but also transform ELT. Lakshmi (2012), discussing the characteristics of critical thinking skills in classroom, emphasizes on the need to adopt the integrated-interactive approach; ensuring learners' participation and response; and creating classroom environment to be open to all discussions (p. 114).

According to Rivers (1976), the notions of "skill-getting' and "skill-using' are very crucial in language development; however, they otherwise remain 'ideals' rather than a 'reality' in English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) classrooms. Employing integrated skills framework and exploiting interactive pedagogical approach in higher education is central to the development of language skills as well as HOT skills for a number of reasons. According to Harmer (2016), it would make no sense to teach and learn each skill in isolation as the use of language skills mostly tends to be multilayered in natural communicative situations and the author further argues that it is also necessary to use the natural process of skill-mixing in order to provide maximum learning opportunities for different students in the class (p. 297-98). In Hinkel's (2006) view, it is necessary for people to employ incremental language skills, not in isolation but in tandem, in meaningful communication (p. 113). Hinkel's and Harmer's views echo River's (2000) argument that "Communication essentially derives from interaction" (p. xiii) and correspond with her view that students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on receiving and conveying authentic messages that contain information of interest to the speaker and listener in a situation that is important to both (p. 4). Furthermore, commenting on the importance of interaction in language development, Rivers (1983) remarks that students' language store is increased through interaction in the classrooms as they are subjected to listen to or read authentic linguistic material, take into account the output of their peers in discussion and joint problem-solving tasks and use all they possess, i.e., have learned or casually absorbed in real-life exchanges. These vital pedagogical lines of arguments are rooted in the Vygotskian (1978) premise that knowledge is co-constructed by individuals when engaging with each other in the learning process, which lends a strong motivation and support to exploit reflective approach, authentic materials, and collaborative tasks and activities in ELL classrooms.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Foundations

The stimuli and synergies for this paper are drawn from the following research and international policy works.

The Geneva World Summit on Information Society (2003) has strongly emphasized on the necessity to develop a knowledge-based society as a global challenge with a call for collective commitment of nations to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society that enables individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting sustainable development and improving their quality of life (p. 1). Logically speaking, HOT skills are crucial to achieve this ambitious mission. In this context, Chaffee's

(1995) line of argument, that main goal of education is not only to help people share information and knowledge but, more importantly, to enable them to make a personal contribution to public life, is in due order which logically requires a desired level of competence in critical thinking. Gough (1991) strongly believes and argues that specific knowledge will not be as important to the workers and citizens of tomorrow as the ability to learn and make sense of new information. Therefore, as Dugar (2012) rightly argues, critical thinking needs to be an integral part of education for it enables educated people to cope with the rapidly changing world (p.110). The main focus of this paper should be then on how to cultivate HOT skills through the creative space that the use of poetry offers. Incidentally, as *thepeakperformancecenter.com* proposes, creative thinking is a way of examining problems or situations from a fresh perspective in order to conceive something original or new. This is due to the fact that creative thinking tries to create something new whereas critical thinking seeks to assess the worth or validity of something that already exists. In this sense creative thinking culminates in '*creation*' and critical thinking leads to '*analysis*'.

Additionally, critical thinking, unlike ordinary thinking, requires implicit as well as explicit instructional practice. If teachers persistently bring real-world discussions in ELL classrooms and practice HOT skills and strategies by encouraging open-ended class discussions and fostering inquiry-based experiments, there is a good chance for a consequential development of critical thinking abilities and capabilities of students (Miri, David and Uri, 2007).

Several researchers such as Atkinson, 1997; Benesch, 1993; Brookfield, 1987; Freire, 1987; Lipman, 1991; Oster, 1989; Siegel,1988; Shor & Fox, 1994; etc. discuss, explain, and argue that critical thinking is a logical means to transform learning and thereby society with a belief that social practice is one of the indispensable components of HOT skills which can be developed and promoted effectively through interactive instructional practices in the integrated skills developmental framework. Now, a logical question arises as to which material(s) can be more suitable and effective for language acquisition and promotion of critical thinking. What follows next is a comprehensive discussion of the 'why' and 'how' aspects of effective teaching materials for promoting HOT skills.

Which material is more suitable for promoting Language Acquisition and Critical Thinking?

Tomlinson (1999) recommends to collect and/or create written or spoken texts which hold the potential of engagement, i.e., experiencing the text in such a way as to achieve interaction between the text and our senses, feelings, views and intuitions. Such texts can stimulate multi-dimensional representation in which inner speech, sensory images and affective stimuli combine to make the texts meaningful (p. 62). Such a representation can achieve the affective impact and deep processing, which are necessary for promoting language acquisition and critical thinking. With this perspective in mind, let us examine why literature in general and poetry in particular have the

potential to trigger affective impact and deep processing of thoughts and thereby promote language acquisition and critical thinking.

Qualities of Literature that make it suitable for promoting Critical Thinking

To quote Ezra Pound (cited in Krishnaswami, Verma and Nagarjan, 1992, p. 133), "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree". As Krishnaswami, Verma and Nagarjan (1992) argue, literature is not just 'ordinary' language; it is a 'language plus' (p. 134). The language of literature is not *cryptic* like the language of science; the language of literature is *delphic* (i.e. obscure, ambiguous, oracular), which is another way of saying that it is poetic or emotive. Therefore, literature, as a special use of language, and its literariness are valid objects of study to sharpen our critical faculties and develop our sensibilities. In Padget's (2013) view, creativity and critical thinking are central to effective teaching and learning and have a significant impact on students' attainment, engagement, attendance and behaviour. Oster (1989), commenting on the scope for student's cognitive engagement through TLTL, argues that literature can be seen differently with different eyes, which provides multiple views of literature in ELL classrooms. Literature, obviously, is an authentic material and it is evidently analyzable. Literature is revealing in nature. Incidentally, the difference between non-literary and literary writing is that of between informing and revealing. Literature encourages meaningful interaction as multiple layers of meaning can be mined for discussion. Literature expands language awareness by examining norms of sophisticated and non-standard use of language. Literature educates the whole person as it develops values, individual attitudes, and relates to outside world. And, literature is motivating as it holds high status in almost every culture and; moreover, it is more interesting than the texts found in the course books.

Why use Poetry in ELT classrooms?

Maley (1987, rep. 2000) emphatically favors the use poetry and songs as language-learning activities in ELL classrooms. Poetry is a special form of literature which has many appealing qualities for language teaching and promotion of critical thinking: (i) Memorability: Poetry displays poignant or striking phrases that stick in our minds; (ii) Rhythmicality: Poetry is usually of high rhythmical nature; (iii) Performance-oriented: Poems offer better opportunity for oral reciteability and performance; (iv) Ambiguity: A poem means more than one thing as it always has a public and personal meaning; (v) Non-triviality: Poetry offers significant input for learners and enhances their experience of existence; (vi) Universality: Poetry, as forms of language use, is universal among human beings and their themes are also common to all cultures; (vii) Playfulness: Learners can observe and experience what others have dared to do with the language in poetry and the experiment with the language in poetry provides the opportunities to play with it and test its linguistic elasticity; (viii) Reactional Language: Poetry gives people access to react personally to another person's verbal sensibility; (ix) Motivation: Poetry offers motivational force of appreciating what is considered to be difficult; (x) Greater scope for exploitation: Poetry offers

greater scope for the exploitation of the semantic sources of language than prose; (xi) Complexity of thoughts and multiplicity of meanings: Poetry offers scope for unfolding many layers of meaning(s); and (xii) Interaction: Poetry provides unparalleled opportunities for interaction: teacher-student; student-student; author-reader. Exploiting these twelve appealing qualities of poetry, that come from Maley (1989, rep. 2000), can help promote HOT skills considerably in ELL classrooms.

Having examined why literature in general and poetry in particular are highly conducive to promote student's linguistic abilities and HOT skills, I now wish to direct attention to the procedural aspects of this task-based paper.

Procedural Aspects of the Paper

Based on Krashen's (1984) premise that acquisition is promoted best when language is presented in interesting and comprehensible communicative contexts (p. 25) and Rivers' (1980) argument that communication essentially derives from interaction, this paper attempts at making Rivers' (1976) notions of "skill-getting" and "skill-using" an achievable reality in ELL classrooms by engaging the learners in exploiting the reactional language and verbal sensibilities of one of the most authentic forms of language, the poetry, in order to facilitate language acquisition and promote HOT skills.

This paper, which is presented in a workshop like manner, is mainly focused on: (a) examining the benefits of using poetry in ELT; (b) discussing a variety of learner-friendly tasks and activities that could be based on poems; and (c) demonstrating the pedagogic viability and validity of some of these tasks and activities. The tasks and activities being discussed to be tried out mainly include (i) probing critical questions in poems; (ii) putting poems back together again; (iii) discussing personal/group reflections of poems; (iv) creating pied poems by rearranging the words and phrases of poems to form new works and/or different forms of discourse; and (v) involving bidirectional reading of a poem and developing two diverse reflective interpretations of the same poem, etc.

Critical Thinking Skills Tasks and Activities based on Poetry

Twelve poems by renowned poets, with diverse themes, have been used to develop a reasonably good number and comprehensive range of tasks and activities that offer a wide range of opportunities for students to use all the four skills of LSRW and apply their critical and creative thinking abilities to meet the demands of the tasks and activities. The tasks and activities aim at providing clear guidance on how teachers can help students develop dynamic thinking and creative learning strategies and bring in the creative perspective into the ELL classrooms in order to broaden their understanding of these two important concepts. Both the teachers and students, and also the readers, will quickly realize that the working concept of creativity developed in this paper

encompasses almost all curricular areas that are intimately related to critical thinking. Furthermore, to use Padget's (2013) remark, the understanding of this is both a cultural and a philosophical starting point on which effective pedagogical practice that has the potential for transformational impact on classroom practice (pp. xi-xii) for promoting HOT skills can be built. It is now time to explore this.

What follows next in the rest of the paper is a presentation and discussion of a variety of HOT skills and analytical tasks and activities based on a number of poems that are diverse in themes, rich in their tone and tenor, and unique in their vantage points. These poems are exploited for analytical comprehension and reflective critique in order to trigger and target the use of HOT skills and strategies in ELL classrooms, for instance interpreting, predicting, analyzing, evaluating, rearranging, recreating, reconstructing, critiquing, etc. It is needless to state that HOT skills are based on Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and its action verbs.

Task 1 (A): An introduction to poems on memories

Travelling in Memory Lane Activity: Try to remember some of the earliest things which happened to you as a child. Think of your first day at school. Revisit your school as a child; not as a grown-up person you are now. Try to recollect whatever you saw that day, whatever happened to you that day, whatever you experienced that day, i.e., happy moments, fears, fellow students you saw and met, the school gate, the school building, the classroom, the teachers, the lessons, etc. Jot down your memories of that day in a child-like manner. Then share your notes with your partner. Write a short narrative paragraph. After this task on travelling into one's old memory lanes, the following task can be given. This task, based on a beautiful poem, 'First Day at School' by Roger McGough, is going to be helpful in kindling the imagination and emotions of the students and developing and sharpening their thinking skills.

Task 1 (B): An introduction to a poem on memories (Warm-up activity)

You're going to read a poem about a 'Child's first day at school'.

(a) Imagine that you are that child and that you are standing alone in the playground during your first day at school. (cognitive skill of *recalling/relating*)

(b) As you read the poem, try to see in your mind what the child could see in the playground.

(c) Identify the expressions that make the reading of this poem enjoyable for you. Discuss why? (cognitive skill of *analyzing/explaining*)

Poem 1: First Day at School
(by Roger McGough)
Source: https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/first-day-at-school/

A millionbillionwillion miles from home
Waiting for the bell to go. (To go where?)
Why are they all so big, other children?
So noisy? So much at home they
must have been born in uniform
Lived all their lives in playgrounds
Spent the years inventing games
that don't let me in. Games
that are rough, that swallow you up.

And the railings.
All around, the railings.
Are they to keep out wolves and monsters?
Things that carry off and eat children?
Things you don't take sweets from?
Perhaps they're to stop us getting out
Running away from lessins. Lessin.
What does a lessin look like?
Sounds small and slimy. They keep them in glassrooms.
Whole rooms made of glass. Imagine.

I wish I could remember my name
Mummy said it would come in useful. Like wellies. When there's
puddles.
Lellowwellies. I wish she was here.
I think my name is sewn on somewhere
Perhaps the teacher will
read it for me.
Tea-cher. The one who makes the tea.

The following tasks 2 A-D are based on the very popular poem, 'A Red Red Rose' by Robert Burns. These tasks provide a wide range of opportunities for the teachers to develop critical as well as creative thinking skills of students by involving them in answering probing comprehension questions, confronting them with discovery-oriented analytical questions, and engaging them in a higher order synthesizing reconstructing task.

Task 2 (A): Read the poem "A Red Red Rose" by Robert Burns and answer the comprehension and critical questions that follow.

Poem 2: A Red Red Rose (By Robert Burns)
Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43812/a-red-red-rose

My Love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
My love is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my love,
Thou' it were ten thousand mile.

Task 2 (B): Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the speaker? How do you know?
2. Who is the person spoken to?
3. Does the word 'love' refer to the feeling of love or the person loved?
4. What does he compare his love to?
5. Which expressions in the poem describe the beauty of the speaker's beloved?
6. Which of the two persons referred to in the poem, is going away? Which expression in the last stanza tell you about this?
7. How long will the speaker be away from his beloved?
8. What does the speaker promise his beloved? What does 'ten thousand miles' mean?

Task 2 (C): Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why is the word 'red' repeated in 'A red, red rose'? (cognitive skill of *explaining*)
2. Explain the simile in 'My love is like a red, red rose'. (cognitive skills of *applying/analyzing*)
3. What kind of love does the poem express? (cognitive skill of *explaining/evaluating*)
3. What is hyperbole? What is its function as a figure of speech in this poem? (cognitive skills of

relating/analyzing)

4. Can the sea go dry and can the rocks melt with the sun? Why does the poet say this? What's this way of expression called? (cognitive skills of *interpreting/analyzing/explaining*)

5. How does the rhythm of the poem reinforce the theme of the poem? (cognitive skills of *interpreting/analyzing/explaining*)

6. Which line has been repeated in the poem? What does the speaker want to express through the repetition? (cognitive skills of *relating/interpreting/analyzing/explaining*)

7. The intensity of the feeling of love goes on increasing with every stanza. At the end it is at its highest. How does the poet do it? (cognitive skills of *recognizing/demonstrating/analyzing/explaining*)

8. Study the poem as a lyric and share your thoughts about it. (i.e. as a song that expresses a person's strong personal feelings, thoughts, and emotions). (cognitive skills of *applying*/*explaining/analyzing*)

Task 2 (D): (i) Rewrite the following stanza of the poem, "Red Red Rose" as a different form of discourse. (cognitive skills of *generating/creating* a new text)

OR

(ii) Write your own stanza using the original as a model (cognitive skill of *reconstructing* a new/different text).

My Love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
My love is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

The third poem entitled, 'Wander Thirst' by Gerald Gould' is highly philosophical in nature, which offers both teachers and students an opportune scope for critical reflection and that is what is exploited in the tasks designed on this poem. Incidentally, critiquing the artistic purpose behind unique linguistic choices and structures used by the poet and their significance in the poem are given in the following tasks 3 A-C.

Task 3 (A): Read the following poem, "Wander Thirst" by Gerald Gould and answer the questions that follow.

Poem 3: Wander Thirst
(By Gerald Gould)
Source: **https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/wander-thirst/**

Beyond the East the sunrise, beyond the West the sea,
And East and West the wander-thirst that will not let me be;
It works in me like madness, dear, to bid me say good-bye;
For the seas call, and the stars call, and oh! the call of the sky!

I know not where the white road runs, nor what the blue hills are;
But a man can have the sun for a friend, and for his guide a star;
And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice is heard,
For the rivers call, and the roads call, and oh! the call of the bird!

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and day
The old ships draw to home again, the young ships sail away;
And come I may, but go I must, and, if men ask you why,
You may put the blame on the stars and the sun and the white road and the sky.

Task 3 (B): Examine and comment on the choice of words, sentence structures and the artistic purpose behind such choices in the poem.

Task 3 (C): How would you interpret the significance of the second line and the third line in the last stanza of the poem?

The fourth poem used in this paper is a universally popular poem entitled, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost. This poem offers opportunities of involving not only the students but every reader in 'deep thinking' as the poem jolts them out of their reverie and takes them through by shifting their attention towards the more important aspects of 'promises to keep' at the end of the poem.

Task 4 (A): Read the following poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost and answer the critical questions that follow.

Poem 4: Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening
(By Robert Frost)
Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42891/stopping-by-woods-on-a-snowy-evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Task 4 (B): Critical Thinking Questions

1. What contrasts does the poem present? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/explaining*)
2. How does the poet create the atmosphere of quietness? (cognitive skills of *identifying/analyzing/explaining*)
3. Would you consider the poet as his own commentator in the poem? Why? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/predicting/analyzing*)
4. What makes the last stanza memorable? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/analyzing/explaining*)
5. What insight about life does the poet get from the woods? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/relating/explaining*)
6. Frost has often employed the rhetorical device of repetition of sentence elements sometimes in the same order, sometimes with reversals. A well-known instance is the end of this poem:

   And miles to go before I sleep,
   And miles to go before I sleep.

The above repetition in the poem has given rise to differing interpretations as listed below. Which of the interpretations given below would you support and why? Explain. (Cognitive skills of *identifying/explaining/justifying*)

(a) The repetition suggests a clear determination on the part of the speaker to go forward without tarrying any longer.
(b) The repetition is an indication of the long distance the speaker has to traverse.
(c) The difficulty in achieving the goal he has set for himself.
(d) The speaker is already in a sleepy state under the heavy intoxicating effects of the captivating beauty of the snowy evening in the woods and hence repeats his own words, which does not seem to reflect responsible attitude.

The fifth poem, 'A Coat' by W. B. Yeats is a short poem but it offers a long scope of applying one's critical imagination and make reflective impressions. Five critical thinking questions, designed on this poem, are aimed at challenging and exploiting the critical reflection abilities of the students.

Task 5 (A): Read the following poem carefully and attempt the critical questions that follow.

Poem 5: A Coat
(W. B. Yeats)

Source: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12893/a-coat

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the word's eyes
As though they wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there is more enterprise
In walking naked.

Critical thinking Questions:

1. Can your imagination reach the full potential of the poem? What does this poem personally mean to you? Write your reflections and impressions emerging from the poem. (Cognitive skills of *interpreting/explaining/critiquing*)

2. 'I made a coat for my song': Does it mean one of the following? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/relating/judging*)
   (a) I made a coat for my song. (Like 'He made her (indirect object) a cup of tea (direct object).
   (b) I made my song into a coat. (Like 'He made him (object) a good singer (Object-complement)
   (c) I became a coat for my song. (Like 'She made him (object) a good husband (Subject-complement)

3. 'From heel to throat'; Why not 'head to feet'? Why is there a change in the normal order? (Cognitive skills of *analyzing/arguing/judging*)

4. 'But the fools caught it': What does 'but' convey here? And, 'Why are they called fools? (Cognitive skills of *applying/analyzing/explaining/arguing*)

5. 'There is more enterprise in walking naked.'
   (a)Why has the poet used the word 'enterprise' which belongs to the commercial register?
   (b) Who is walking naked: my song or the coat or both? What is the meaning of the word *Naked*-- without clothes or without the coat? Justify your choice. (Cognitive skills of *applying/analyzing/explaining/arguing*)

6. Whose song is this? 'My song': Does it convey any empathetic feeling for you? (Cognitive skills of *relating/interpreting/analyzing/explaining*)

The following two poems; the sixth and the seventh, are on the theme of 'death'. The title of both the poems is 'A Delicious Death'. However, the poet's vantage point; the foreground, in the two poems is totally different. These poems and the tasks and activities designed on them offer higher order cognitive opportunities of critical interpretation and evaluation.

Task 6 (A): Brainstorming Activity: Brainstorm the words that naturally collocate with the word 'death'. **Question:** Would it be normal if the word 'delicious' is used with the word 'death'?

Task 6 (B): Read the following 2 poems on 'death' and answer the questions that follow.

Poem 6: A Delicious Death (A Dark Poem)
(By Christos Andreas Kourtis aka NeonSolaris)
Source: **https://hellopoetry.com/poem/451763/a-delicious-death-dark-poem/**

I created for myself
a most delicious death
one of the delirious mind numbing kind
for I need to break my wings once more

Think not that this write dear friends
do not think that this is a cry for help
I am one of those that is capable
and do choose my own fate

Look into my black eyes
there is such a delicious death
hear my screams liken to an Angel
as I scream her words in my last breath

Poem 7: A delicious death
(By Gage S.)
Source: Unknown

He liked em baked
He liked em fried
Smothered in cheese
Or covered In bacon
Till one day he started shakin
His arteries clogged from too much cheese
And soon after he hit his knees

Task 6 (C): Critical Thinking Questions
1. What is the central idea in the two poems? (Cognitive skills of *identifying/analyzing/explaining*)
2. Discuss the significance of the title in the two poems on 'death'. Does it have the same meaning and effect in the two poems? Justify your answer. (Cognitive skills of *relating/analyzing/explaining*)

3. Is the idea of death presented in the two poems differently? How? (Cognitive skills of *analyzing/contrasting/explaining*)

4. Are the ideas presented in the two poems exaggerated, i.e. they are far from the reality? Why do you think so? (Cognitive skills of *analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/judging/explaining*)

5. Identify the two most important lines from each of the poems on death above removing which the poem will collapse and lose its creative and emotional impact. Discuss why and how. (Cognitive skills of *identifying/analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/explaining*)

6. Discuss the poets' vantage point in the two poems on 'death'. Which one, in your view, is more effective and why? (vantage point = a position from which you watch something or a point in time or a situation from which you consider something.) (Cognitive skills of *analyzing/contrasting/judging/appraising/explaining/defending*)

7. How would you react to the situation in the two poems on 'death' from a social point of view? (Cognitive skills of *critiquing/analyzing/evaluating/judging/defending)*

The next task 7 on creating a pied poem is a perfect example of the HOT skill of generating ideas, which involves higher level cognitive skills of *rearranging* and *reconstructing* combined with both the cognitive and affective domains of thinking.

Task 7: Create a Pied Poem from an existing short poem (or a stanza from a longer one). Rearrange the words to form a new work. You may change punctuation and capitalization as you wish. (Cognitive skill of *generating new ideas and thoughts*)

Example: Here's a Pied Poem for you to read that Martin Gardner created, using four lines from Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Gaol".

Poem 8: From The Ballad of Reading Gaol (1904) **By Oscar Wilde** **(Original Stanza)** Source: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/298363544037741379/ The vilest deeds like poison-weeds Bloom well in prison-air: It is only what is good in Man That wastes and withers there.	**(Pied Poem)** **Created by Martin Gardner** <u>**Source: Unknown**</u> Prison Bloom and Withers Poison the air-well? What good is there in that? It is only in deeds Vilest man Wastes like weeds.

Extension Task: Create a Pied Poem from the following poem by Pablo Neruda from "The Book of Questions". *(Cognitive skill of generating new ideas)*

Poem 9: From the Book of Questions
By Pablo Neruda
Source: https://isleofbooks.com/tag/pablo-neruda-poetry/

AND WHY IS the sun such a bad companion
to the traveler in the desert?

And why is the sun so congenial
In the hospital garden?

Are they birds or fish
In these nets of moonlight?

Was it where they lost me
teehat I finally found myself?

The following tasks 8 A-C, set on the tenth poem on (a) Rewriting the given poem to create a new discourse and (b) Composing one's own poem on a similar theme, concept, or idea striking from the given poem, are aimed at sharpening students' creative critical thinking skills. In such tasks students get the opportunity to originate, integrate, and combine ideas and produce an aesthetic piece of writing.

Task 8 (A): Read the following poem and answer the questions that follow.

Poem 10: The Rose Family (By Robert Frost)

Source: https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-rose-family/

The rose is a rose,
And was always a rose.
But now the theory goes
That the apple's a rose,
And the pear is, and so's
The plum, I suppose.
The dear only knows
What will next prove a rose.
You, of course, are a rose—
But were always a rose.

Task 8 (B): Personal Expressions: Creating your own poem
Rewrite the following poem as a different form of discourse. (Cognitive skills of
recreating/reconstructing/generating a new text and discourse)

OR

Task 8 (C): Write your own poem using the original as a model. For example, you can compose your own poem on a similar theme/idea, e.g. 'Life is a Life'. (Cognitive skills of *creating/composing/generating a new poem*)

The forthcoming tasks 9 A-E designed on the next poem, entitled, 'Refugees', aim at sharpening students' acuity of deep critical thinking through a reflective analysis and evaluation of the poet's creativity and critical authorial voice that is reflected in the two ascending and descending orders of the poem reflecting the two faces of the society, the 'inhuman and ugly' and the 'loving and humane'.

Task 9: Giving a personal reflection and critical interpretation

Task 9 (A): Read the following poem, reflect upon it critically and interpret it in your words. Share your personal representation of it. Tell us what does the text of the poem personally mean to you. (Cognitive skills of *interpreting/analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/appraising*)

Poem 11: Refugees
(By Brian Bilston)

Source: **https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/poem/refugees/**

They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who are born there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

Task 9 (B): Read the above poem again (in the reverse order); this time in bottom to top sequence; and interpret it in your own words. Share your personal representation of it. Tell us what does the text of the poem personally mean to you. (The poem below has been rearranged in the bottom up sequence of lines from the original poem.) (Cognitive skills of *interpreting/analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/appraising*)

<div align="center">

The world can be looked at another way
Do not be so stupid to think that
A place should only belong to those who are born there
These are people just like us
It is not okay to say
Build a wall to keep them out
Instead let us
Share our countries
Share our homes
Share our food
They cannot
Go back to where they came from
We should make them
Welcome here
They are not
Cut-throats and thieves
With bombs up their sleeves
Layabouts and loungers
Chancers and scroungers
We need to see them for who they really are
Should life have dealt a different hand
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
So do not tell me
They have no need of our help

</div>

Task 9 (C): Now compare the two versions of the poem, your two interpretations and reflect upon the narrative art and the creativity of the poet. (Cognitive skills of *comparing/analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/appraising*)

Task 9 (D): Which version of the poem, i.e. the original one or the rearranged one, do you like more or most and why? Justify your answer. (Cognitive skills of *comparing/analyzing/evaluating/critiquing/appraising*)

Task 9 (E): Do you think the two versions of the poem reflect and represent the two attitudes and two faces of the individuals and the societies? Which one would you support and why?

(Cognitive skills of *relating/critiquing/valuing/justifying*)

The last part of tasks and activities (10 A-E), based on the twelfth poem on 'Old Age', is driven by Vygotsky's (1978) notion of social co-construction of knowledge, thinking, and meaning. In collaborative tasks, activities, and project works a wider range of opportunities are provided to students to apply their language skills, thinking skills, analytical skills, and also social skills. The following tasks and activities set on and from a poem entitled, 'Old Age', involve the cognitive skills of constructing valid arguments; reflecting and critiquing arguments; evaluating, judging, and defending situations; etc.

Task 10: Ask students to (a) project themselves into a situation based on the following poem; (b) evolve a discussion on relevant topics of argument; and (c) undertake a project work on the topics related to the issues of concern emerging from the situation in the given poem.

Task 10 (A): Read the following poem and do the tasks and activities listed after the poem.

Poem 12: Old Age

Source: Maley, 1987, p. 104

There's no one to help me
If I want a cup of tea,
No one to talk to
Except my old TV.
There's nobody to lift me
When I can't get out of bed.
No one to cry on
Or to stroke my poor old head.
There's nobody to call on
When I want my shopping done.
No one to be my friend,
For all my friends are gone.

Activity 10 (B): Work in pairs and tell each other about an old person who you admire or who you feel sorry for. (Cognitive skills of *relating/explaining*)

Activity 10 (C): Discuss in groups if you agree or disagree with the following statements and defend with reasons. (Cognitive skills of *discussing/arguing/defending/justifying*):

(a) Old people should be looked after by their children.
(b) Old people should never be allowed to be lonely.

(c) The government should look after old people by providing them with free places in old people's Home.

(d) Old people should be helped by their families and their government to remain independent and to look after themselves.

(e) Governments should not waste money keeping old people alive in loneliness and misery.

Activity 10 (D): Project Work: With poems about 'Old Age' or 'Loneliness', the following mini projects could be assigned to students:

(a) Interviewing old people in the local community (hence designing a questionnaire) and writing a reflective essay or a report based on the interviews (Cognitive skills of *designing/developing/evaluating/analyzing/critiquing*)

(b) Collecting newspaper and magazine articles on the above subject and writing a reflective essay or a report (Cognitive skills of *classifying/composing/developing/analyzing/critiquing*)

(c) Interviewing local officials (e.g. in hospitals or old peoples' homes) and writing a reflective essay or a report (Cognitive skills of *composing/developing/analyzing/critiquing*)

(d) Conducting a survey of facilities and special concessions for the aged in the community and writing a report (e.g. hot meals at homes) (Cognitive skills of *describing/composing/developing/analyzing/critiquing*)

(e) Writing proposals for improvements in local care for the old or lonely. (Cognitive skills of *analyzing/assessing/arguing/evaluating/composing/developing*)

Activity 10 (E): Research Project: Students can be involved in joint research projects to explore information about the life of old people in 2 or 3 different countries of their choice and write a research-based reflective compare and contrast essay or report based on the support they get from the family, government, non-governmental organizations, etc. (Cognitive skills of *classifying/comparing and contrasting/evaluating/concluding/recommending*)

The list of tasks and activities on poetry, shared in this paper, are neither exhaustive nor conclusive. But they are meant to serve as models for using poetry in the educational practices of ELT and ELL. Creative and innovative teachers and students can design and practice many more such tasks and activities and provide stimulating teaching and learning experiences in the ELL classrooms as, for example, done (a) in task 1 on *relating* one's experiences with the poet's or poet's character in *My first day at School*; (b) in tasks 2 and 5, based on the poems *A Red Red Rose* and *A Coat,* posing probing questions on analyzing the theme, the choice of images and their effects and the foregrounded vow factors in the poems; and (c) in task 6 on *comparing and contrasting* two different perspectives developed by the two poets writing on the same theme and topic of '*A Delicious Death',* etc. The scope and possibilities are innumerable.

Before I get down to draw conclusions from the discussion evolved in this paper, it is desirable that I discuss my own experience and feedback on the reactions and responses of students and participants with whom I used poetry for the purposes of promoting HOT skills in ELL classrooms.

Students' and Participants' Performative Reactions and Responses on the use of Poetry

The performative reactions and responses of the students and participants to the use of poems in my ELT/ELL classes, and also in one of the ESBB conferences at Toyama University, Japan, have been quite encouraging. First of all, I witnessed a heightened sense of motivation and participation of students and conference participants in the given tasks and activities based on the poems highlighted in this paper. Some of the observations are worth sharing.

As a warm up to tasks 6 B-C, I asked the students to suggest the words that naturally collocate with the word 'death' and they gave a number of words that denote suffering, sadness, and loss. After that, I wrote the phrase 'delicious death' on the board and asked them to respond to my question, 'Can death be delicious?' Many amazing responses came from the students such as: *Yes, when the person has achieved what he or she wanted to in life and had lived a fully contended life; when the person had all friends and no enemies in his life; when a soldier sacrificed his life in war to defend his/her country; when someone has achieved the peak of his or her field or specialization in life before dying; when the person was suffering from pains beyond normal limits and praying for death to come;* etc. After this, the students got involved in responding to the six questions included in the task 6 C of the two poems entitled, 'A Delicious Death'. A very engaging group discussion was witnessed in the task number 4 and 5 in which they argued if the ideas presented in the two poems are exaggerated than the reality and compared the effectiveness of the vantage point adopted by the poets in two poems. Active engagement of students and their critical application of a range of HOT skills was clearly visible in their arguments to defend their answers.

Similarly, in a group activity, on analyzing the significance of the last line in the third stanza of the 3rd poem, *'Wander Thirst'*, lot of critical thinking and reflective discussion on the meaning, effect, and the contribution of *'And come I may, but go I must'* worked out, emerged, and led towards the conclusive inevitability and certainty of 'death'. Similarly, from another group the meaning and significance of the second last line of this stanza, i.e. *'The old ships draw to home again; the young ships sail away'*, got critically concluded in *'the old ships draw to home again'* referring to *reality of concluding the journey of life* and *'the young ships sail away'* referring to *the beginning of the journey of life* as a natural part of the law of nature.

Similarly, one of the students in responding to the multiple choice question number 6 of Task 4 (B), set on the poem *'Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening',* on the logical interpretation of the repetition of the phrase *'And miles to go before I sleep'* in the end of the last stanza chose the

choice (d) which suggests that the poet had an intoxicating effect of the captivating beauty of the snowy evening and the woods, which reflected the poet's or the character's irresponsible attitude in the poem. The student provided strongly convincing analytical reason to support his viewpoint in choosing this option that the repetition is not a genuine reminder of the responsibilities that the character or the poet owes before he or she sleeps, i.e. takes rest. Rather, the repetition can be taken as the reflection of a state of drunkenness where the person loses all controls and is not in a stable state of awareness or else the character would have speeded up his/her horse ride and crossed the woods faster ignoring the captivating dark and deep beauties of the woods that worked as a distraction. Another student suggested that *'my little horse'* in the second stanza of this poem is symbolic which actually refers to *one's heart*, i.e. *one's conscience* in *'My little horse must think it queer'*; *'To stop without a farmhouse near'*.

Such discussions created moments of celebration among the students as a result of a sense of authentic achievement and contribution. The students' participation and contribution got better ensured when poems were used in ELL classrooms as compared to when text book tasks and activities set on dry reading passages were used.

Conclusions

Based on my examination and reinforcement of pedagogic ideas, the arguments built with reference to the available research literature, the tasks and activities presented in this paper, and my own experiences of the reactions and responses that I received in my ELL classrooms, I wish to articulate some recommendations as well as resolutions for pedagogical practice in ELL classrooms.

Poetry is linguistically as well as emotionally authentic and capable of evoking equally authentic responses. Creative and innovative teachers can exploit poetry for a variety of pedagogical purposes in ELL classrooms.

Creativity and critical thinking are intrinsically related to each other and an effective pedagogical practice can be built based on it in ELL classrooms as I have discussed in this paper. Creative potential of poetry can be fruitfully used and exploited to expand students' linguistic, emotional, and cultural awareness. Poetry can also stimulate students' imagination and add motivational buzz to classroom activities. Poetry can be successfully used for developing students' critical abilities. Planned use of poetry can promote active interaction with the text. A considered and considerable integration and use of poetry in ELL classrooms can make LSRW intensely interactive activities, promote HOT skills and enhance learners' personal enrichment. This recommendation finds a strong support in the findings of the study by Caceres, Nussbaum and Ortiz (2020) in that teachers primarily try to develop their students' critical thinking by integrating them into their subjects; not

teaching them separately (p. 1) and that studying critical thinking is key to bridging the gap between theory and practice (p. 15).

In sum and spirit, by applying creative and critical thinking approaches to ELT and ELL we can enrich and deepen our students' learning experiences for the strong reason that is rooted in the findings of Butler, Pentoney, and Bong, 2017, and also of Kuhn, 2018, whose studies claimed that mastering critical thinking is a better predictor of successful life decisions than other factors, such as intelligence. Furthermore, based on my own experiences and positive feedback from the students and participants on using poetry and HOT skills tasks and activities, the use of poetry testifies its relevance and need in ELL lessons and classrooms.

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