

TEACHING WRITING THROUGH *CINQUAIN* IN EFL CLASSROOM: HOW?

Muhammad Iqbal Ramdhani

Universitas Bina Darma Palembang

Corresponding E-mail Author: m.iqbalramdhani@binadarma.ac.id

Shynta Amalia

Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

Shyntaramdhani@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract: Teaching medium is one of the factors which influence the success of teaching and learning process. This paper is aimed to discuss about the use of *cinquain* poems as a teaching medium in EFL classroom, especially in improving students writing achievement. There are some benefits of using *cinquain* in EFL classroom discussed in this paper; they are: helping students to improve their pedagogical aspects, promoting excellent strategies to encourage learning environment into more interesting and meaningful situation, and giving familiar themes which students are familiar with. Moreover, some procedures in using *cinquain* as a teaching medium in EFL classroom are presented. In conclusion, *cinquain* poem can be used as an alternative medium in EFL classroom which brings a lot of benefits during teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *EFL, Literacy, Writing, Teaching Medium, Poem, Cinquain.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing which is one of the productive language skills is not an easy skill to be achieved by students. One of the difficulties faced by EFL students in writing is the ability to achieve linguistic aspects. This aspect deals with the ability of the students to keep the channel of communication about the choices of sentences structures and the way the sentences linked and sequenced each other. Additionally, another problem commonly occurred in writing class is that most educators are too emphasizing the writing in a cognitive field. Therefore, only few students who are interested in writing (Alwasilah & Alwasilah, 2005).

Using appropriate media while teaching writing can be a solution to improve students writing skill. Susikaran (2013) asserted that poetry is a piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their beauty

and are carefully arranged by the writer. Therefore, it is believed that the use of poetry in EFL classroom can enhance and improve students English skill especially writing skill despite poetry is a special type of writing. Furthermore, poems often use lines instead of sentences and each line does not have to be complete thoughts. In addition, sometimes a line has only one word and how words sound in poetry is very essential. Poets pay attention to the length of words and syllables. These are the parts that make up a word. Clapping along as students say a word can help students count its syllables. e.g, *frog* has one clap or syllable and *Spi-der* has two syllables (Read Simons, 2014).

A *cinquain* which is a kind of poem can be about anything. Poets can write *cinquains* that describe about something, such as the appearance of an eagle. Another way to write a *cinquain* is to write a very

short story which consists of three elements; they are beginning, middle, and an end. Stories also have at least one character, e.g: person, animal, or object the story is about (Simons, 2014).

There are some studies related to the use of *cinquain* in ELT classroom. Northern Territory of Australia, (2006); Kautzer, (2012), claimed that *cinquain* is a great instructional medium which has short and interesting mini lesson to engage EFL students in writing. Although the form appears simple, it is not easy to write well. However, it needs frameworks for an inexperienced writer.

A *cinquain* form has been adapted to teach grammar to students in which it might be fun to write (Garrison. n.d.). In addition, specific structural of *cinquain* can help students to realize descriptive words which are important for them to express their feeling in poetry (Read Norton, 1991). Furthermore, Putra and Aryusmar (2012) found out some benefits of *cinquain* as an instructional medium: 1) students could enriched their vocabularies, 2) students become more aware of the use of punctuations and words spelling on their writing, 3) students could connect their ideas while writing poems, and 4) students enjoy writing *cinquain* poetry by their own choices, once the students follow the phase of writing process, they will find the easier way of writing. Therefore, they will enjoy writing activities.

The Process of Writing Poetry

When students are writing-for-writing, teacher wants to engage the students in the progression of writing. This usually involves some steps such as: 1) planning, students are planning of what they are going to write; 2) drafting, students write some points which are going to be developed or discussed in their writing; 3) reviewing and editing, students review their work and make some corrections if necessary; 4) finishing, students create or make their own writing. Teacher needs to push and persuade their students to plan,

draft and edit their work, although may be time-consuming and may meet, initially, with some struggle on the students part. By doing so, teacher can help students to be better writers (Harmer, 2007).

Furthermore, Harmer (2007) states that there are many teachers like getting their students to write poems because it allows them to express themselves in a way that may not be found in other genres. Teacher can ask students to write *cinquain* poems (where the first line has 2 syllables, second line has 4 syllables, followed by the third line has 6 syllables, then the fourth line has 8 syllables, and the last line has 2 syllables). Teacher can ask students to write a *cinquain* about a celebrity they like by giving instruction such as “write about this celebrity as if they were a kind of weather”.

Furthermore, Harmer (2007) states that the rationale for getting students to write in and outside class is writing gives them more time to think than they get when they try spontaneous conversation. When thinking about writing, it is helpful to make a characteristic between writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing. In addition, writing is used as a practice aid to assist students to practice and work with language they have been studying. Meanwhile, writing-for-writing is directed at developing the students' skill as the writers. In conclusion, it is clear that the way the teachers organize the students writing-and the way the teacher proposes advice and correction-will be different, depending on what kind of writing the students are involved.

***Cinquain* poetry**

A *cinquain* — which is pronounced “sin-cane,” not “sin-kwane” — is a form of poetry that is very popular because of its simplicity. *Cinquains* are just five lines long, with only a few words on each line, making them easy to write. The first and last lines have just two syllables, while the middle lines have more, so they end up with a diamond-like shape, similar to the

poetic form called the diamante (Nesbit, 2008).

How is the way getting started in writing *cinquain* poem? The students need to select a topic for their *cinquain*. Here are some topics that can be used for writing a *cinquain*: 1) Students favorite thing, 2) something students do not like, 3) what students see around themselves and 5) something that happens to the students (Read Simons, 2014). For example, a student likes meat ball, he/she can write a *cinquain* about meat ball. This is convenient since the words “meat ball” have two syllables; therefore the student can probably use this phrase as the first line of his/her *cinquain*.

How to teach writing through *cinquain*

Janeczko and Paul (2014) asserted that around 100 years ago, *Cinquain* was created by American poet Adelaide Crapsey, and it is similar to Japanese poetic forms: *Haiku* and *Tanka*. *Cinquain* is a poem form composed by five short, non-rhyming lines. It consists of five lines, of 2, 4, 6, 8 and 2 syllables.

The teacher and students can generate the idea on *cinquain* to write the text especially informative and descriptive text. The first line becomes the title of the poem, and then each word on the poem can be expanded in sentence forms, and the last word is used to restate the title. During learning process, language features of the text are given. Writing is a long process, to promote the students in a creative writing; the teacher should introduce different titles of *cinquain* poem such as Mama, Cat, friend and home (Putria & Aryusmar, 2012).

According to Simons (2014), there are some stages or suggestions to write a *cinquain* poem: 1) A teacher asks students to choose the most descriptive words from the chart and put in *cinquain* form together, 2) Students write and center *cinquain* on their paper, 3) begin each line with a capital letter and students can use comma to separate each word, 4) Students recheck

again for the last time for weak or repeated words, it is better for the students to use a good dictionary in order to help them in choosing the stronger ones, and 5) one last thing is the students should remember that *cinquain* does not need title.

In addition, Simons (2014) recommended some tips in order to write *cinquains* as follows: 1) A teacher asks the students to practice clapping out syllables to different words. Students might try *food*, *penny*, *vegetable*, *calculator*, and *refrigerator* and find out how many syllables does each word have?, 2) students may break rules like grammar in writing poetry, 3) students write a story *cinquain* about their daily activity or something that students do today and make sure to include a beginning, middle, and an end, 4) then, students should focus on specific words that another poet may not think of instead of writing *vegetable*, write *Brussels sprouts*, 5) after students write then they have to read *cinquains* out loud, 6) students should keep working on *cinquains*, even after they are written then try switching out some of the words for more interesting ones, 7) the teacher asks the students to end a *cinquain* with a surprise or something unexpected for the reader, and 8) students need to read lots of poems, and read all different kinds of poems. In addition, Gonzales (2010) suggested that one of the most or very important rule is that they may not repeat any words in writing a *cinquain* poem.

The example of *cinquain* poem written by Kautzer (2012):

- Line 1. These be (2 syllables)
- Line 2. Three silent things: (4 syllables)
- Line 3. The falling snow.. the hour (6 syllables)
- Line 4. Before the dawn.. the mouth of one (8 syllables)
- Line 5. Just dead (2 syllables)

About syllable patterns, in the early 1900s Adelaide Crapsey is American poet who created the *cinquain* syllable pattern most *cinquains* written today do not

rhyme. The use a syllable pattern instead. This means that each line of cinquain has a certain number of syllables. Crapseys pattern is 2-4-6-8-2 where most *cinquains* still use this syllable pattern as follows: 1) The first line has 2 syllables, 2) second line has 4 syllables, 3) Line three has 6 syllables, 4) fourth line has 8 syllables, and 5) the last fifth line has 2 syllables again. Crapsey based her pattern on a type of Japanese poem called a haiku. Haikus have 17 syllables in three lines (Simons, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The use of *cinquin* as a teaching medium in EFL classroom can bring a lot of benefits. Some benefits of using *Cinquain* in EFL classroom are: helping the students in order to improve the students pedagogical aspects, promoting excellent strategies to encourage learning environment into more interesting and meaningful situation, and giving familiar themes which the students are familiar with. Furthermore, carefully selected poems will provide a strong foundation for enhancing students writing on both literacy and non-literacy genres.

Finally, when a teacher teaches about *cinquain* poetry writing he/she should not forget that the foremost purpose of introducing *cinquain* poetry in EFL classroom is to enhance students language knowledge in enjoying milieu of teaching and learning process. In conclusion, the teachers should begin to read, listen, write, try to love, enjoy and share *cinquain* poetry with their students before using *cinquain* poetry as instructional media especially in writing.

REFERENCES

Alwasilah, A. C., & Alwasilah, S. S. (2005). *Pokoknya menulis*. Bandung: Kiblat Buku Utama.

Garrison, D. (n.d). An introduction to the American Cinquain. *The Cinquain*

Journal, 1. Retrieved from http://amazecinquain.com/vol_1_no_1/v1n1articleDG.html.

Gonzales, D. (2010). Poetic magic: Turning free writing into verse. A study of the list poem, the Diamante, the Cinquain, the Quatrain, the Fibbonacci, and the Triolet. *AMS Fall 2010 Conference*. Retrieved from www.debbiegonzales.com.

Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach writing*. Pearson education limited. Essex.

Janeczko, Paul. B., ed. (2014). *Firefly July: A year of very short poems*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Kautzer, K. (2012). *Cinquains. writeshop, Inc.* Ontario. Retrieved from <http://www.writeshop.com>.

Nesbit, K. (2008). *How to write a cinquain poem*. Retrieved from <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-a-cinquain-poem/>

Northern Territory of Australia. (2006). Poetry. *Department of Employment, Education and Training*. Retrieved from <https://portal.latis.net.au>.

Norton, D. E. (1991). *Through the Eyes of a Child; An introduction to childrens' literature*. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Putria, W., & Ayusmar. (2013). *The effectiveness of using Cinquain poetry in promoting a creative writing toward the third year of elementary students in LIA Stephanie elementary school*. BINUS University: Jakarta.

Simons, L. M. B. (2014). *Cinquain poems*. The child worlds. Mankato.

Susikaran, R. S. A. (2013). Teaching grammar with playful poems. *International Journal on Studies in Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, 1(4), 17-21.