

# USING A “PROSING POEM” STRATEGY IN TEACHING POETRY IN THE EFL CONTEXT OF INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** The present article reports our reflections on how to teach an introductory course on poetry in an Indonesian tertiary educational institution where English is a foreign language. The reflections are made on the basis of our experiences of teaching the course, the main challenge of which centres on students’ wronged perception of what poetry is; students tend to have an entrenched idea that poetry must be perplexing. The reflections have led us to a teaching strategy which we call “prosing poem.” Applying the strategy, we help students by providing made-up prosaic forms of the poems. This strategy has proven to help demystify students’ idea on poetry as a difficult subject. It allows students to unpack the poetic texts in a less daunting way as they can rely on their English mastery without having cognitive block.

**Keywords:** poetry, EFL, prosing poem, teaching strategy

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Along with daily conversations, poetry might be the oldest form of verbal expression. This verbal form, ranging from holy to mundane expression, has always been with us accompanying our life history and also trajectory. Religious teachings, myths, legends, lullabies, are, as a matter of fact, originally in poetic forms. Popular songs, moreover, are evidently expressed this way. Despite its ubiquity, the teaching of poetry is not necessarily an easy undertaking, especially in the context of foreign language teaching. In this article, we are going to propose the initial step of the teaching of poetry, that is, literal comprehension of the work in the context of the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Indonesia. This issue appears to be one of the perennial concerns of instructors of literary courses in the context of EFL in general and in particular in the Indonesian EFL context (e.g., Basthomi, 2001, 2003; Mulatsih, 2018; Novianti, 2016; Syamsia & Ismail, 2021; Zakiyah & Wahyuni, 2020). In

addition to the teaching of literature in the context of mother tongue (e.g., Nissen et al., 2021), some practitioners in the area of TEFL also use literature as the main ingredient in their teaching activities (Alter & Ratheiser, 2019). As such, the significance of this area has been evident. Perceiving that there is no need for apologetic argumentation around this, in the following, we delve into our initial reflection undergirding this article which has led to the need to work about prosing poem as a teaching strategy which we have experienced to work well in the teaching of poetry in the beginning years of undergraduate degree in English in the Indonesian context.

### **INITIAL REFLECTION: RATIONALE**

It is true that the enterprise of English teaching and learning is multi-faceted and multi-voiced, which should inform language instructors and all stakeholders pertinent to the existence of English in the Indonesian context. It also holds true that some practitioners of English support the elitist view of English as propagated, for instance, by Honey (1997). Some others argue that aberrations by non-native speakers and learners of English should not be deemed to ruin English; instead, the aberrations should be deemed a variety of English among other kinds of English. Our conviction is that those working in the Department of English in the Indonesian context hold the task of escorting the students so as to master English. In this regard, many have dedicated their time researching around this area, be it related to language skills, grammar, vocabulary, or discursal aspects (e.g., Anandari, 2015; Cahyono & Rahayu, 2020; Kweldju, 2021; Meisani et al., 2020; Mufanti et al., 2019; Permatasari & Andriyanti, 2021; Suwartono, 2014). The sample works of these researchers have been predominantly within the overarching area of applied linguistics; therefore, the concerns are understandably around language issues, inclusive of its acquisition. Even so, the teaching of English as a foreign language in the Indonesian context is never totally free from the teaching of the literary aspects of the target language and one of which is the teaching and learning of English poems. In our teaching context, as noted earlier, the issue we often encounter is the students' mistaken perceptions of poetry which have led to counter-productive attitudes to the learning of poetry. A similar situation is reflected in the educational context of Pakistan (Ajmal et al., 2020; Alter & Ratheiser, 2019) which has also been geared towards the identification of teaching strategies to address ensuing problems in teaching literature.

It is a truism that the teaching of language including poems should be based on evidence (cf. Wilson, 2013) and, thus, evidence should be brought to the fore

for others to learn from. It is our aim in this piece of writing to communicate a piece of evidence we have had at hand to other professionals in the field. As such, we would consider the present project as research of teachers. Building on Borg's (2013) argument, the present work also constitutes our contribution to addressing the paradox of the scarcity of teacher research against the need for pedagogy to be based on evidence. In other words, we believe that our present work adds to the body of research carried out by teachers, particularly those dealing with poetry teaching in a foreign language context of higher education. However, it should be noted that this undertaking is based on our reflective-retrospective observations as faculty members in an English department of a public university in East Java, Indonesia, which has enjoyed national and international recognitions as indicated by, for example, its highest status of accreditation in the country and its accreditation by AQAS and certification by AUN-QA. The department has also received trust from the Directorate of Higher Education to run an English preparatory program attended by faculty members across the country wishing to embark on doctoral studies overseas. As such, this purposive sample (exemplary) of research setting should be read on guard in terms of its methodological implications.

It holds true that some works on poetry teaching have been carried out in view of providing some kind of pedagogical breakthrough, such as, by using songs (Sebastian, 2020), employing dance (Delchamps, 2018; Jusslin & Höglund, 2021), or embedding technology (Curwood & Cowell, 2011). However, these specific sorts of creativity tend to require specific capacity or talent on the part of the instructors. To some extent, this may lack applicability for some instructors due to their lack of specific talents like singing, dancing, and tech-savviness as prerequisites to meet. To address this issue, our idea in this article does not require additional specific talents as those implied in Sebastian's, Delchamps', Jusslin and Höglund's, and Curwood and Cowell's articles or any other similar projects. As such, we believe that this article should suit many instructors teaching poetry; it thus helps demystify the unwillingness of instructors in teaching poetry like that identified by, for instance, Weaven and Clark (2013) within the context of the teaching of English in senior secondary college in Melbourne, Australia. It should also be noted here that we are not thinking of teaching poetry writing as researched on by, for instance, Wilson (2013). Instead, it deals with the teaching of how to read and understand poetry, mostly for the benefits of the students, particularly those still early in their undergraduate career. Thus, this is pivotal in the students' formation of their foundational knowledge for further academic ventures in their career or

underclass (to borrow Dressman & Faust's (2014) term). As such, this article has some affinity of spirit with that of Creely (2019) yet with an obvious point of difference in that this article is derived from pedagogical practice.

The poems we present in this study are traditional as they are rigidly ruled. As poetry is made of words or language as its medium (Wellek & Warren, 1956), mastering the language used is inevitable although this is still far from being enough, for poetic convention is not only based on language (Culler, 1975). As a result, Culler further claims, those who understand language well do not necessarily readily understand literature. For this purpose, poets have a special authority granting them freedom to break linguistic performance, be it in terms of the structure, the word forms, or both, popularly called poetic license. These two issues, beauty and poetic license, in our observations, are tightly and complexly entrenched in students' mind that they strongly tend to start their approach to and treatment of a poem from such a stance. Unfortunately, in our informal daily conversations and anecdotal observations, most language instructors also justify this idea, that is, poets hardly ever obey linguistic rules in making poems. Therefore, we find it widely believed among colleagues that teachers should not use poems as good reading or grammar materials. This voice from the Indonesian context seems to echo Weaven and Clark's (2013) identification of the Australian teachers' reluctance to teach poetry.

Furthermore, in our observations, students tend to also uphold another belief about the poems they discuss in their educational institution. The belief is that, since the poems they discuss are selected from collection of great poets' works, the poems are great and, therefore, must present great issues, using symbols and many other complicated poetic apparatuses which scare them (cf. Weaven & Clark, 2013). While this perception may not be wrong, the students are often overcome with the perceived greatness of the poetry. Referring to our experiences of handling the course on poetry in our university for more than 20 years, we argue that this situation is true and, therefore, we are attempting to share our strategy which we have experienced and observed to be successful in solving the perennial issue. Despite the fact that changes did occur in the span of our careers, we have witnessed the same core issues about the situations of the students (sophomores) participating in the poetry course. This is one of the pressing motives why we are sharing this experience. As such, methodologically speaking, the data we are presenting is based on retrospections since we do not have notes or records of what we have experienced; instead, we rely on critical points or "troubling narratives", to borrow Henderson's (2017:11) words that we keep in our memories (cf. Bell et al., 2019; Roy & Uekusa, 2020) despite the fact

that our narratives are marginal or peripheral (cf. Ng-Chan, 2021). We would call the strategy we use “prosing poems”. This strategy, to the best of our knowledge (by operation of the open software *Open Knowledge Maps* and *Harzing’s Publish or Perish*), has never been coined by anybody else. As such, we are confident that this strategy has its uniqueness and novelty.

### **A THOUGHT ON THE STRATEGY: PROSING POEM**

As elaborated earlier, the poems we propose to use in the simulation of “prosing poem” strategy are traditional poems which are rigidly ruled in terms of meter and rhyme. In addition, although the poems we use as examples are randomly selected, they are definitely grammatical, yet creatively arranged. Originally, we have compiled such poems selected from various poets ranging from different schools of thought. However, for the sake of practicality, in this article we only present three poems from two poets.

In applying prosing poem, we recompose the poems into prosaic forms. It is thus different from paraphrasing—which is accounted as “heresy” hence rejected by New Critics (Currie, 2021; Janabi et al., 2020; Morrison, 2012)—in which we are free to use our own words as long as they present the same idea as that originally presented. Our experience shows that the students’ paraphrases frequently do not present the same idea as that of the poems they paraphrase. It is not to say that they are false since some are acceptable when they are related to the indirect, connotative, and symbolic meanings. Yet, the students usually fail to explain clearly how the idea relate to the given poem and which word(s) or phrase(s) suggest(s) the idea. Having observed and discussed this with the students, we believe that such a problem is due to their overthought that poetry is always about big issues with overcomplicated linguistic expressions (Mugijatna, 2016). To solve the problem, we encourage them to momentarily forget the definition of poetry entrenched in their mind and start to see the work as a form of general verbal expressions. Therefore, we have a very simple instructional suggestion for the students to remember when understanding and criticizing poetry: “Use your grammar and vocabulary mastery first whenever you study poetry before going further to the discussion of symbols, beauty, and others.” This strategy thus shares the features of the commonly called “language-based approach” coined by Carter and Long (1991, as cited in Mokhtaria, 2012). The “prosing poem” is one clear operation taken from the general idea raised by Carter and Long (1991).

We have observed that the students have difficulty forgetting the definition. As a result, it is not easy to make our suggestion to the students work. However,

our experiences have led us to see that the problem results from the form of expression which makes the students stop at every line and consider the line a sentence although they do not find a minimum characteristic of a sentence. This has led us to combine the lines which do not meet the requirement of a sentence into one continuous form like prose, without changing and/or adding anything but combining the lines. To our surprise, this strategy has worked well with our introductory classes. It changed the form of the literary works to deal with, from poetic into prosaic, and we call this strategy *prosing poem*.

### **A RETROSPECTIVE NOTE**

As noted earlier, this piece constitutes a teacher research project whereby the crux of our ideas is based on our retrospective reflections. As such, this project has the spirit of auto-ethnography (Hayes & Jeffries, 2015; Sinden-Carroll, 2019). We have identified that our concern centers around the students' entrenched idea that poems are difficult to understand for they are written in the light of *poetica licentia* (poetic licence) granting the poets freedom to even violate the normal linguistic conventions (Wales, 2011, p. 324). This situation has been in existence along our professional career for over 20 years within the context of Indonesian TEFL in our department. As advocated by Sinden-Carroll (2019), this design offers a wide pathway for participatory action research on subjective experiences, including our narratives as professionals.

As we are shaped by our narrative observations, narrative perceptions, narrative convictions, and narrative expressions, our existence stretches along narratives (Eakin, 2008). Along these narrative lines, we see that any scientific endeavor is not outside of our narrative-subjective understanding and conscience. As such, the article reflects our professional odyssey venturing into our own narratives as practitioners teaching an introductory course on poetry to undergraduate students in the Indonesian context of TEFL. Although the materials we are talking about in this study are in the form of poetry, which may not be commonly used in general communication, this undertaking remains within what has been suggested by Méndez (2013) in relation to language teaching-learning. As to why we refer to our own narratives is owing to the idea that analysis of self-narratives bears the potential of inter-subjective validity, which has the potential to drive transformation (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Nelson, 2011). Since the idea around the formation of the above-mentioned strategy has been based on our professional practice, we will present our typical application of the strategy as follows.

### IN-CLASS APPLICATION OF THE STRATEGY: OUR EXPERIENCES

Usually we start poetry class with a general question about what poetry is. The typical answer we receive from the students is, most of the time, that poetry is a special form of expression which is beautiful, using symbols and fancy vocabulary about anything great. Instead of giving comments to the answer, we ask them to read a poem we have prepared. In what follows, we take three poems as examples. The first is Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost's *Selected Poems* (Hamilton, 1973, p. 77)

Generally, we share the poems to students in advance through handouts or projected from a computer to the screen before the class. Having had the poem, we ask some of the students to read. We then make notes on the way they read. Mostly, the students read the poem line by line and stop at every end of each line like using a period, regardless the lines can be run-on ones. Very rarely, if ever, they read through to the following line whenever they do not find any punctuation, like the first stanza.

Responding to their readings, we suggest following this with small discussion of clarification, for instance, by asking questions about the reason for the way they read. We might also ask them further about the number of the sentences the poem has, and some questions about sentence structure or literal comprehension. In response to the questions about the number of sentences, usually the students' answers are the same as the number of the lines. This appears to be the reason for the way they read the poem, that is, they stop every time the line ends, in addition to giving emphasis on the rhyme. They also do not really account for the punctuations. When their comprehension of the last stanza does not make sense, e.g., the road taken is the second, regardless of the word "Yet ..." (line 14) negating line thirteen and putting aside the prepositional clause "To where it bent in the under growth" (line 5)—indicating that people rarely pass through it—they argue that poems are free to either follow or refuse any rules. They stick to their opinion that the road taken is the second. As this stage is only asking for clarification, we do not judge whether or not their answers are right. Instead, we provide another poem.

The second poem we usually present is also Frost's—it is not necessarily to be from the same poet, though—that is, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. For this second poem, however, we do not provide the students with the poet's name and the title. Instead, we rearrange the poem in a prosaic form without changing anything except the capitalization of the first letter of each line when it is relevant. The form is as follows:

Whose woods these are I think I know. His house 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 farm 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.

Having provided the second poem, we do the same activities as the first: asking the students to read, having small discussions for the purpose of clarification about the way they read, then directly going to the third poem. At this stage, unlike the first reading, the way they read mostly changes significantly, that is, they do not stop every time the line ends but they go on to the following line when they do not find any punctuation. Their reason for this is usually '... because the first is poem; whereas the second is prose.' For the students who are critical, they call the second lyrical prose as they can feel that the sounds, not simply words, are carefully structured in the work. Therefore,



students generally indicate that the number of the sentences of the second work does not depend on the lines but on the punctuation. With regard to the sentential and grammatical issues, this small discussion works better than the first, namely they successfully identify its sentence structure and, as a result, their surface and literal comprehension is good as they understand the contrast between remaining there and going on the trip to meet the promise. Still, such a comment and judgement about the way they read and the answers they give are not necessarily given. Moving on to the third poem is the next step.

The third poem is treated the same as the second, rearranging the poem like a prose without the poet's name. Presently, we take Lord Byron's *She Walks in Beauty*.

She walks in beauty, like the night of cloudless climes and starry skies; and all that's best of dark and bright meet in her aspect and her eyes: thus mellowed to that tender light which heaven to gaudy day denies. One shade the more, one ray the less, had half impaired the nameless grace which waves in every raven tress or softly lightens o'er her face, where thoughts serenely sweet express how pure, how dear their dwelling-place. And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, so soft, so calm, yet eloquent, the smiles that win, the tints that glow, but tell of days in goodness spent, a mind at peace will all bellow, a heart whose love is innocent!

Principally, the exercises given to the students remain the same as those in the second. Like the second reading of the second work, too, the students read through it regardless of where the line ends. They stop or have some pauses whenever they find punctuations. As they succeed in reading the work on the basis of the structural construction, the questions about sentence structure and vocabulary are extended to details, e.g., "How does 'She' walk?" and "What is the 'beauty' like?" These extended questions are important to develop their comprehension, both grammatically and literally. Unlike the answers they give when they are asked to explain how they consider lines as sentences, i.e., they tend to use their "imagined" sentences to justify their answers, although they do not find anything indicating them as sentences; they present their answers based on the text. At this step, their answers are based on the words they have in the text, not in their imagination. As they have succeeded in identifying the sentences of the poem, like the second poem, they find it 'easy' to understand the work literally.

When the class has agreed to the literal content of the poem as well as its general idea, we raise detailed probing questions like the different meanings between "and" and "to", and how these two words will change not only the meaning but also the form. Examples of our questions include "What would

happen if we replaced ‘to’ with ‘and’ in the clause ‘... which heaven to gaudy day denies?’” (the last clause of the third work). Usually, the students can answer this question correctly. If “to” is replaced with “and,” the clause will be “... which heaven and gaudy day deny.” They know that “and” unites “heaven” and “gaudy day”. So, the pronoun will be “they” and it results in changing “denies” into “deny.” Yet, they find it hard to explain the changing meaning resulting from the change due to the abstract imagination. This is our responsibility to enrich their vocabulary meaning with imaginative or imaginary possibilities. To solve this issue, for instance, we ask the students a question to differentiate between two sentences which are concrete and real. In this regard, a question to differentiate the meaning between “I cannot find the book in that room *and* this room” and “I cannot find the book from that room *to* this room” often work. If the students still fail to differentiate them, we use other examples, like “Number one *and* number five are good” and “Number one *to* number five is good”. In the first sentence the students can figure out that only numbers one and five are good, while in the second sentence, all the numbers—from one to five—are good. From this discussion, we take the students back to discuss the two previous sentences “I cannot find the book in that room *and* this room” and “I cannot find the book from that room *to* this room”. Relying on the two sentences about the number, the students usually manage to learn the different meaning between “to” and “and”. Thus, returning to the work, if “to” were replaced with “and”, somewhere between “heaven” and “gaudy day” may not deny its existence or the beauty like the way she walks may be found somewhere between “heaven” and “gaudy day.” Then, it is strongly related “... cloudless climes and starry skies”.

The next is about the second sentence, “One shade the more, one ray the less, had half impaired the nameless grace which waves in every raven tress or softly lightens o’er her face, where thoughts serenely sweet express how pure, how dear their dwelling-place.” To comprehend this sentence, usually we have to remind the students of the circumstances of the night under discussion and compare it with, say, two small rooms with different numbers of lamps but the same in power attached on their three-times-three-meter ceilings. One room is lit with one-hundred-watt *led* lamp at the center and other lamps with ten five-watt lamps. It has, then, one-hundred and fifty-watt lamps all together. The other room has the same amount of light but it is distributed equally in five-watt lamps. Hence, the second room has thirty lamps. We ask the students to imagine if we place randomly a small piece of black cloth high enough between the floor and the lamps, which room will grow darker easily. For this question, they hardly

ever answer wrongly that the second will be. As a result, the objects in the room will also decrease in their visual clarity. The further impact of this darker light in the space, then, is that the silky dark hair, "raven tress" (line nine) the girl has will not be able to reflect the light of the stars. As a result, its beauty decreases, at least, and so do other parts of her face. Thus, "... cloudless climes and starry skies" must not change.

Having arrived at this point, it is possible now to present the true form of the poem to deal with:

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress  
Or softly lightens o'er her face,  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace will all bellow,  
A heart whose love is innocent!

*Immortal Poems* (Williams, 1957, p. 291)

After the original form is provided, we ask the students to compare between the one in the prosaic and the present forms. At this stage, they have learned that both are actually one and the only difference is in their forms. Then, when we ask them whether or not they have different literal contents, their answer is unanimous: "No." The same answer is also present when questions about grammatical rules as well as punctuation issues are discussed. Then, when the students read the original form the way they read is almost the same as before, when it is in prose, only some sounds are more clearly pronounced compared to the previous reading. They can even answer easily when the issue of line cutting is raised. They can understand, too, why "to" is used instead of "and" because not only will it destroy its rhythmical form but also the meaning it offers.

Another example of deep question concerns the use of simile "... cloudless climes and starry skies", that is, why the poet did not use, for instance, "cloudless climes and full moon skies." This question is used to show them the significance of diction, unlike the previous question about "to" and "and", which is about grammar. This kind of questions about dictions is more difficult for the students. We discuss with them that the use of a different diction will not only change the meaning but also influence the next lines. If "full moon" were used, the "cloudless" would not have any relation with it. Indeed, it is true that "full moon" in a "cloudless" night is beautiful but if there were some clouds somewhere, the clouds would not decrease the moonlight as long as they did not block the moon. In contrast, however, it will happen in the "starry skies", the analogy of which has been discussed regarding the room with lamps, hence "One shade the more, one ray the less," (Line seven.)

As the students have practiced the procedure under our guidance, that is, recomposing the poem into a prosaic form, we ask them to do the opposite to the second work: changing it into a poetic form. We remind them not to add words or change the word order. The result is quite amazing in a way that the students can make a poem similar to the original with the difference only in stanzaic division; some of the students' works are in one stanza while some others are the same as the original. Afterwards, we provide the students with the original poem.

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house 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 farm 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.

Robert Frost's *Selected Poems* (Hamilton, 1973, p. 130)

We then turn back to the first poem. To this poem, the assignment is in contrast with the second, that is, to rearrange the poem into prosaic form. After the students finish the task, we ask a representative of each group to read the prosaic form of the poem they have made. Up to this stage, the way they read generally changes significantly. Certainly, the way they read is not exactly the same but the differences are only at the surface due to the style of each reader whereas the implied idea expressed is the same.

After all the representatives have read their prosaic form, we ask them to practice reading the original form posted on the board. Without tuning to the new form, a different representative of each group could read the poem in about the same way as his/her previous classmates have read when the form was in prose. The students also give the same answers when further questions about phrases, clauses, and sentences are posed. They appear to have learned that the linguistic grammar and other rules of language in poetry are basically not different from other forms of linguistic expressions. It is only because it is poetry that it must observe conventions in writing poetry, such as number of syllables of each line, rhyme—be they internal or end rhymes—and other rules a poem applies.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Our observations thus far have shown that prosing poem strategy in teaching poetry in our context of TEFL has succeeded to reform the general thought widely believed (at least among the students) that poetry, due to its poetic license, is free from linguistic rules. Therefore, we believe that language teachers are likely to benefit from using poetry in language teaching without any worry that the students would feel unnecessarily perplexed (cf. Weaven & Clark, 2013). As exemplified above, prosing poem constitutes a strategy which helps students unpack the properties of poems, which allows them to understand the poems with some degree of ease. Based on our observations as presented above, the direction of learning the students arrive at, indicates the students’ uniformity of understanding. This has brought us to a conviction that prosing poem is effective for the teaching of poetry to students relatively new in their undergraduate career (Dressman & Faust, 2014). Since this is a conviction based on our observations, others are encouraged to corroborate it for validation. Corroboration in other contexts will potentially further establish the transferability of the strategy.

As the above presentation of the in-class strategy application has shown, the flexibility of reiteration of the materials using short poems is quite apparent, which is essential in the teaching enterprise (Creely, 2019). This point is aligned

with the suggestion made by McIntyre and Jeffries (2017) pertinent to the use of poetry instead of the longer version of literary works like novellas let alone novels. After all, as noted earlier, the students we have in mind are undergraduate students still early in their undergraduate career. If McIntyre and Jeffries (2017) dealt with poetry in the context of English as a mother tongue, the use of poetry in the context of English as a foreign language is much justified due to the fact that the students are in the process of learning the poetry in the foreign language, which is likely to pose more problems to the EFL students. The strategy application has also shown the fit with the level of the students in that we applied what Liu (2017, p. 135) refers to as “lower-order techniques of close reading rather than higher order schools of interpretation.” The use of the poems is also close to the exercises pertinent to sounds which are pivotal in the teaching of a foreign language. This also has to do with the notion of the use of “conversational poems” with words using a small number of the alphabets in each line. This allows for the ease in memorization on the part of the students. All this makes the poems good models of sentence structure (cf. McIntyre & Jeffries, 2017).

In addition, the simplicity in class application exemplified above also strengthens our conviction that poetry is a potentially rich source for language teaching. This also relates to the fact that poetry is one kind of language usage and its existence is authentic. The authenticity through creative structuring by the poets has the potential as good exposure for the students to push the boundary of their mastery of the target language, including its grammatical aspects (cf. Cushing, 2018; McIntyre & Jeffries, 2017). The authenticity of poetry also affirms the idea that the students get exposed to the cultural and linguistic properties of the target language (Pushpa & Savaedi, 2014). Pushpa and Savaedi (2014) further say that the teaching of poetry also provides enjoyment for the students. In this regard, the ease on the part of the students that they show in understanding poems after some sessions of the application of the prosing poem strategy seems to be the foundation that reading and understanding poetry are enjoyable activities which are conducive for learning. In other words, the teaching of poetry using prosing poem strategy constitutes a scaffolding for the students to expand their competences and vistas (Wilson, 2013).

As also identified, the poems are mostly short enough to memorize. This short form makes poetry easy to remember. Besides, being short in form, time and place hardly matters to enjoy and recite poetry, and reading poetry is likely to occur since it is only of a very small piece of paper which is easy to take anywhere (this is not to say about the ease brought about by technology like kindle and the like). Being supported with its dependence on similar, even

precisely the same repeated sounds and number of syllables, particularly for the conventional poems as presented in the classroom practice, students have exact clue to keep the form. As a result, it makes them easy for them to memorize the poems. Therefore, traditional singers can perform a very long song because, borrowing Perry's term, the song has, according to Lord (2000), "formulas" on which the singers rely.

## CONCLUSIONS

As we have presented above, the application of the prosing poem strategy in the underclass first degree in the Indonesian EFL context makes the teaching of poetry easy for both the teachers and the students. The ease helps demystify the complexities in the teaching of poetry (c.f. Eaglestone, 2017) and has the potential to appease the troubling fear and anxiety of English teachers who are reluctant to teach poetry as identified by, for instance, Weaven and Clark (2013) as well as gain benefits like contributing to language development, encouraging good reading habits, and providing students with experiences and knowledge (Nissen et al., 2021). The demystification is crucial due to the fact that the students tend to see poetry as a complex conundrum as noted earlier. The crux of our belief is that the demystification through the application of the prosing poem strategy provides scaffolding allowing the students to enjoy the reading and understanding of poetry. This in turn logically helps the students enlarge their understanding of the target language at issue, encompassing its linguistic and cultural aspects presented in and through poetry.

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