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Research Article

Students' perception on the use of poetry for teaching speaking

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ABSTRACT

Poetry is rich in terms of its selectively chosen dictions that have to be read aloud to be enjoyed. This descriptive qualitative study investigated fourth-semester students' perception on the use of poetry to teach speaking. Students' perceptions were collected through an archives study comprising 75 students' essay projects about using poetry to teach speaking. The result indicated that 75 students perceived poetry is effective in developing six aspects of students' speaking skills, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, confidence, and fluency. 41 (54.66%) students perceived that teaching speaking through poetry enriches students' vocabulary by representing unique words. 16 (21.33%) students perceived that using poetry to teach speaking practices students' pronunciation through poetry reading strategy. In terms of grammar mastery, 8 (10.66%) students believed that poetry was able to familiarize students with sentence structure. Four (5.33%) students perceived that through poetry analysis, students must comprehend and share their interpretation of the content and context used in the poems. There were 4 (5.33%) students perceived that poetry helps students be more confident in communication. Two (2.66%) students perceived that fluency in speaking could be trained using poetry by exposing students to the rhythm, making their intonation improved.

Keywords: Speaking; Poetry; EFL;

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as Foreign Language is not only about teaching vocabulary and language structure to make students understand English sentences (Alqahtani, 2020; Ivanova, 2019; Khoirunnisa et al., 2018). It is about developing students' language skills to enable them to use English naturally. Therefore, it requires attractive instructional media as the stimulus for the students to be able to master the language skills (Kaowiwattanakul, 2020; Mahmud, 2017; Xerri, 2017). English teachers usually use technology-based media or varied forms of literature as teaching media to teach English (Kaowiwattanakul, 2020; Mahmud, 2017). Literature becomes the most chosen media to be integrated into teaching English in order to expose students to the target language (Freyn, 2017; Ismail, 2021; Mahmud, 2017; Rahman, 2018). Literature is considered as an effective tool for language teaching purposes (Freyn, 2017; Ismail, 2021; Jabsheh, 2019). Many experts believe that the use of literature exposed students with target language in a natural way since it provides students with language in context rather than language usage (Freyn, 2017; Ismail, 2021).

Poetry is pieces of creative writing that express deep feeling or noble thought through rhythmical composition and beautiful language (Kennedy, 2005). It is composed with the desire to communicate experiences and feeling. Poetry is expressed in written or spoken to produce pleasure through beautiful, elevated, imaginative, or profound thoughts (Riffaterre, 1978; Shelley, 2002). The uniqueness of poetry is that it employs words that are excluded from common usage. It has its own grammar that is not based on the standard. Poetry is commonly used to express meaning indirectly. It employs symbolic meaning or connotation. Kennedy (2005) mentions 3 basic aspects of poetry namely denotation and connotation, imagery, and figurative language. A word used in poetry has at least one denotation and it also has connotation or additional meaning based on the context. Imagery refers to the sequences of words that present any sensory experiences. Figurative language is used to communicate truths or feeling that literal words cannot express. Therefore, poetry plays a role in teaching phrases, structure, and language construction.

Poetry has become one of the literary genres which is used frequently in EFL classroom (Ismail, 2021; Kaowiwattanakul, 2020). Poetry is used by English teachers in their classrooms to teach English to students at various levels since it provides an attractive language learning environment (Abida & Kuswardani, 2018; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Sigvardsson, 2020). Teaching English through poetry is able to maintain students' motivation to improve their English skills because of its length and unique linguistic features (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020). Poetry can be used to promote the development of students receptive and productive skills by adjusting with the level of students comprehension (Beymer et al., 2020; Tomak, 2021).

Studies on how poetry is used to improve student's language skills have been conducted. Some studies have found that poetry becomes an effective media to teach language skills (Beymer et al., 2020; Cushing, 2018; Freyn, 2017; Hirsch &

Macleroy, 2020; Hong, 2018; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Liao, 2018; Seltzer, 2020; Syed & Wahas, 2020). The use of poetry in EFL classroom is able to maintain students' interest to read and write (Beymer et al., 2020; Freyn, 2017). Poetry is able to provide emotion in language learning which give significant effect on students speaking and writing skills (Hirsch & Macleroy, 2020; Liao, 2018; Seltzer, 2020). By exposing students with poetry, it makes students become more creative in composing their own poetry (Cushing, 2018; Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020). The exposure of target language in poetry is able to improve students sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Beymer et al., 2020). As their sub-skills improved, it will affect the quality of their writing and speaking (Beymer et al., 2020; Hong, 2018; Seltzer, 2020; Tomak, 2021).

Speaking skill becomes one of the English skills that needs poetry as the teaching medium (Husnu, 2017; Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Speaking is considered as challenging language skills since it requires the development of other language aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation as well as other aspects such as confidence (Burns, 2019; Husnu, 2017; Tomak, 2021). Therefore, the use of poetry is effective in developing the language and non-language aspects that contribute to the improvement of students speaking skill (Hirsch & Macleroy, 2020; Liao, 2018). It is motivated by emotion and expression provided in the poetry which enable students to enjoy the learning process (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020; Sigvardsson, 2020).

Considering the frequent use of poetry to teach speaking, it is important to investigate the perception of EFL students who become prospective English teachers toward the use of poetry to teach speaking. Thus, this present study was aimed to explore the perception of fourth semester EFL students to teach speaking through poetry. The result of this present study can be used as preliminary data to identify students' needs in order to develop effective instructional design integrated with poetry to teach speaking. It gives insight about how poetry affects students' speaking skills since poetry becomes promising teaching media for EFL students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to investigate students' perception toward the use of poetry as teaching media to teach speaking, this qualitative study was conducted through archieve study of students essay project. It involves 68 fourth semester EFL students who joined literature course as participants in this study. This study adopted qualitative research method developed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) which consists of four stages such as data collection, data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing. **Figure 1** showed the detail stages done in this study.
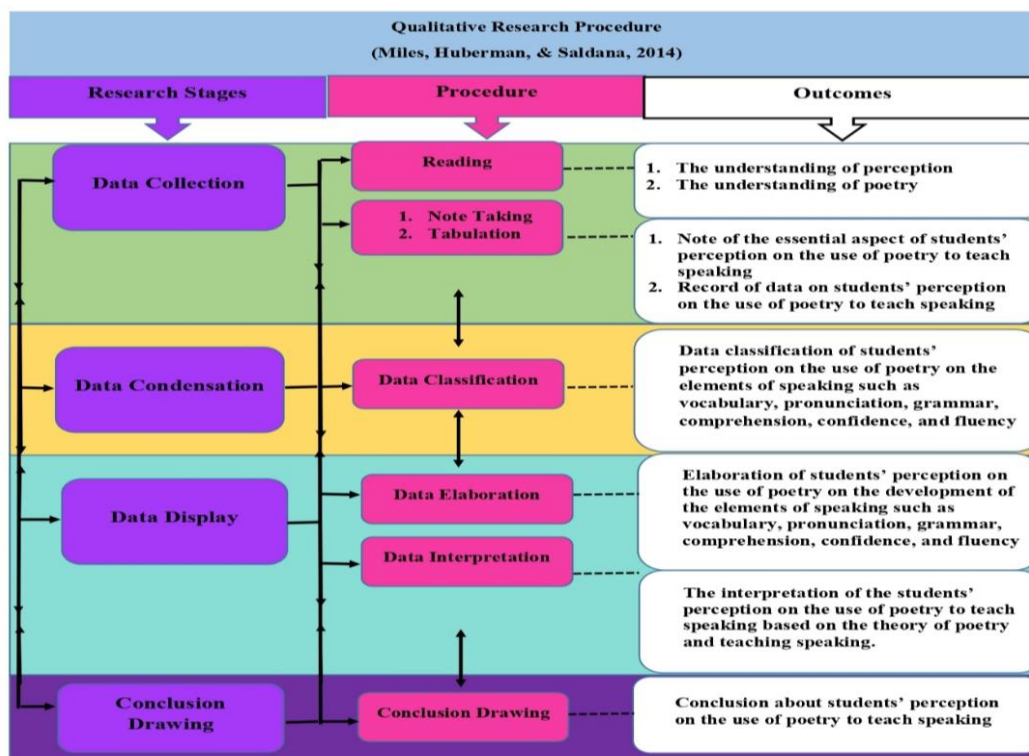

Figure 1. Interactive data analysis model

Based on the figure above, the data about students' perception were collected through achieve study of students essay project about the use of poetry in to teach English. Then, the data tabulation was done in order to specify the data about students' perception about the use of poetry to teach speaking. The data about student's perception on the use of poetry to teach speaking were classified into several categories, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, confidence, and fluency. The data that have been classified into six speaking categories were elaborated and interpreted. After the data were interpreted, the conclusion about students' perception of the use of poetry to teach speaking was drawn.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the students perceived the use of poetry as an effective medium to teach speaking since it positively influences the aspects of speaking, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, confidence, and fluency. Figure 2 presents the students' perceptions toward the use of poetry as teaching media to teach speaking.
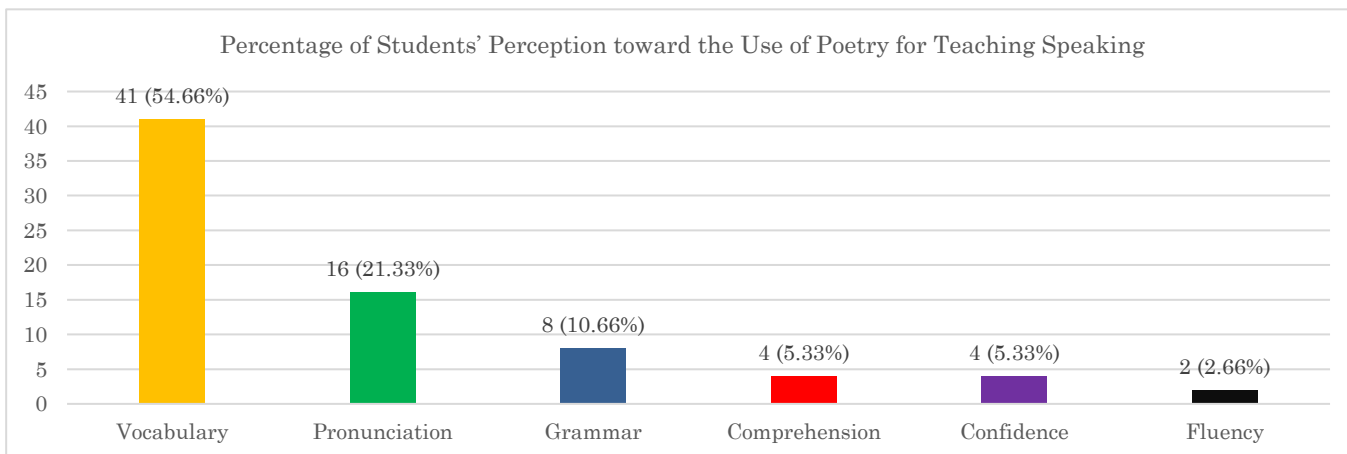

Figure 2. Percentage of students' perception toward the use of poetry for teaching speaking

Figure 2 shows that students perceived the use of poetry to teach speaking can positively affect students' speaking aspects including vocabulary repertoire, pronunciation, grammar mastery, and communicative confidence. 54.66% of students stated that teaching speaking through poetry enriches students' English vocabulary. There were 12.33% of students stated that students' pronunciation will be improved when poetry is used as teaching media. Besides, teaching speaking using poetry positively affect students' grammar mastery. There are 10.66% students who perceived the use of poetry can improve students' grammar mastery. There are 5.33% students who perceived that teaching using poetry improves students' comprehension. In terms of confidence, 5.33% students perceived teaching speaking through poetry can develop students' confidence. Meanwhile, 2.66% students believe that teaching speaking through poetry can help students to improve their fluency.

3.1 Vocabulary

Vocabulary becomes one of the aspects in speaking that influence the fluency of the students speaking ability. The analysis of students' essay projects in this study indicated that students perceived the use of poetry to teach speaking gives a positive impact on the development of students' English vocabulary. There were 41 (54.66%) students who stated that teaching speaking through poetry improve the development of English vocabulary. It was found that teaching speaking through poetry enrich students' vocabulary repertoire. Some respondents mentioned that poetry makes students to be able to use good vocabulary in which the vocabulary is presented in context. It will guide the students to use the words in the relevant context of communication. Respondent 17 stated that "the purpose of using poetry to practice student speaking skills is to enable students to use language in appropriate situations and to make students competent in using good vocabulary and grammar". Respondent 27 mentioned that "poetry enriches students' knowledge of universal topic and vocabulary, students will try to connect their prior knowledge with a new information".   In addition, Respondent 41 stated that "Teaching poetry gives student the opportunity to multiply their vocabulary in new ways that show meaningful contexts that are easy to remember effectively". Respondents perceived that poetry is effective for building students' English vocabulary because the words are presented in context which can help students to remember and understand the words.

Poetry is also perceived to have abundant figurative language, wordplay and word choice that can be used by the students in communication. It can build students' vocabulary. Respondent 18 mentioned that "poetry provides abundant wordplay that student can implement for daily use. It means students has plenty of word to combine in order to convey their thoughts or conversation's topic into oral communication". Respondent 25 added "in a poem, there are many figures of speech and figure of speech that are rarely heard by students. By reading poetry, students will get more creative words or sentences. Respondent 26 stated that "vocabulary in poetry is usually very unique and imaginative. By learning the choice of words in poetry or diction, students will find it easier to improve their vocabulary skills". The presentation of words through figurative language and wordplay enriches students' vocabulary because it exposes students to many new dictions.

In addition, some respondents also mentioned that the development of vocabulary was gained through poetry reading and analysis which contribute to students' ability to find out synonym and antonym of the words which makes the students easier to memorize many words in target language. Respondent 52 mentioned that "students can increase their vocabulary from them reading poetry. In addition, teaching vocabulary through poetry also can make students more understand of the meaning of the vocabulary and automatically increase the vocabulary through find out the synonym of the previous vocabulary". Respondents 19 added that "the students will practice their critical thinking skills in searching for the meaning of the vocabulary they have found in a poem. And as a result, they will enrich themselves with a variety of vocab-

ulary and improve their language skills". Respondent 47 also mentioned that "the teacher can ask the students to take notes about the new vocabulary and find out the meaning. To remember that vocabulary, the teacher can ask the students to apply the vocabulary in their daily conversation or conduct a test about the vocabulary obtained from poetry given by teacher". Students' vocabulary can be enriched through finding out synonym and antonym of the words in the poetry. It helps students understand and memorize the meaning of new vocabulary.

The findings above show that poetry was perceived to be able to develop students' vocabulary because it exposes students to words in context, wordplay, and figurative language. Moreover, it is also perceived that poetry enables students to do poetry reading and analysis that can build students' vocabulary. These findings were supported by several studies. Some studies found that the cultural context presented in the poetry is beneficial to improve students language skills and also vocabulary (Abida & Kuswardani, 2018; Rahman et al., 2018; Syed & Wahas, 2020). The opportunity to enrich the vocabulary is served in a new way in which meaningful context is presented, so the vocabulary will be easier to be used and remember (Antika, 2017; Syed & Wahas, 2020). Poetry is found as an effective tool to encourage students to extend their word choice in order to express the correct emotion, so that their vocabulary repertoire will be enriched directly (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020). In using poetry in language classroom, younger students need to be exposed with more wordplay and repetition, so that they will be able to grasp the meaning of the poetry (Hirsch & Macleroy, 2020). It will make the students learn new vocabulary from the wordplay. Moreover, numerous linguistics features presented in poetry give students the opportunity to compose creative and fresh phrasing (Jabsheh, 2019). Poetry analysis helps students to memorize the vocabulary (Kim & Kim, 2018). Kim and Kim (2018) found that the students are able to memorize more advanced words in English after poetry integrated as teaching media.

3.2 Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the second aspect of speaking that perceived improving through the use of poetry as teaching media in speaking class. There were 21.33% students who perceived that poetry can be used to improve students' pronunciation. Students believed that poetry can make students become familiar with English words and phrases by initiated with poetry reading activities. Respondent 1 stated that "poetry reading train students pronunciation and fluency in speaking since it makes students familiar with the pronunciation of each word". Respondent 2 added that "by experimenting or practicing reading poetry, students can get used to the clear and correct pronunciation so their skills will be improved". Respondent 12 also mentioned that "poetry consists of various words and meanings so that students will find new words that have never been spoken before. By diligently reading poetry, students will get used to pronouncing English words so that the students' pronunciation ability will increase".

The exposure to English words through listening to poetry is effective to improve students' pronunciation. Students perceived that listening to poetry performance provides an opportunity for students to practice their pronunciation by recognizing proper pronunciation of English words. Respondent 8 stated that by reading and listening to poetry, students can find out how to pronounce a word or sentence properly and correctly. Therefore, using poetry in the process of practicing students' pronunciation is very effective. Respondent 9 mentioned that listening English poetry gives a chance for the students to recognize the proper English pronunciation and its rhythm. Moreover, the students believed that the use of poetry to improve pronunciation in speaking class can be done through listen and repeat method. Respondent 10 added that using poetry in the classroom with "listen and repeat" method and reading aloud method is an effective way to improve students' pronunciation. The first is because by listening and repeating, students know how to pronounce English words or sentences properly". Teaching students' pronunciation through poetry can be mediated through repetition method which can make students familiar with the pronunciation of English words. Respondent 3 stated that there is a repetition method that complements the teacher's teaching method so that students understand more and quickly remember the correct pronunciation". Respondent 7 mentioned that poetry can be used to improve pronunciation skills in students by the method that the teacher starts and the students will follow so that they become familiar with the pronunciation their teacher says".

The findings show that poetry was perceived as an effective teaching media to practice student's pronunciation through the utilization of several techniques, namely, poetry reading, poetry listening, and repetition method. Poetry reading can be used as initial activity to improve students' pronunciation in which it will contribute to the speaking skill. By paying attention to phrase sounds in poetry reading, students can improve their pronunciation of English words (Rumbold & Simecek, 2016; Simecek & Rumbold, 2016). Rumbold & Simecek (2016) found that students have better speaking skill after they were taught using poetry. Listening to poetry familiarize students with pronunciation of words in the poetry (Purwanto, 2019). It trains students ability to recognize L2 phonology so the students will be able to produce correct pronunciation (Purwanto, 2019). Students taught using poetry showed significant progress on their accent and syllable stress which contribute to their pronunciation ability (Khaleghi et al., 2020). According to Purwanto (2019), repeating the words in the poetry is able to establish students' habit in recognizing L2 phonology. It helps students to incorporate both cognitive and motor skill in order to produce correct pronunciation (Purwanto, 2019). The use of poetry in speaking class also encourages students to learn accented variant of English, which makes their pronunciation sounds like native-like speakers (Ismail, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2018).

3.3 Grammar

Grammar is the third aspect of speaking that can be developed through the integration of poetry as teaching media in speaking class. There were 10.66% students who believed that poetry is able to help students to develop grammar mastery. Grammar mastery is developed through poetry analysis in which students can learn about sentence structure used in the

poetry. Respondent 1 mentioned that "students learn grammar by analyzing the sentence structure of the poetry". Students can observe sentence structure used in the poetry to be able to construct their own sentences. The role of poetry in improving students' grammar mastery is very important since poetry provide sentence structure in the target language. Students believed that poetry contains sentence structure that is essential to enrich student's English syntax. Respondent 66 stated that in the learning process, poetry will be a complementary tool in teaching grammar, because poetry contains the essence of grammar which is an important part of learning English. It implies that poetry is able to help students to recognize sentence structure in the target language.

Besides improving student's ability to compose sentences incorrect grammar, the use of poetry encourages students to arrange spoken and written sentences effectively. The students perceived the use of poetry make the students compose coherent sentences. Respondent 28 stated that "the activity in acquiring the things that happened in poetry not only will improve students' vocabulary but also their ability in knowing sentence structure and make it cohesion in answering questions, because they need to read it". Poetry helps students to recognize and learn sentence structure which is cohesive and coherent. The findings above were supported by Jabsheh (2019) who found that students perceived the use of property can lead to the development of grammar. The students are not forced to focus on the grammatical correctness when they learn English through poetry, but through grammar tests, it was found that students who are taught using poetry composed better English sentences (Iida & Chamcharatsri, 2020). Liao (2017) also found that the students learn about composing better sentence structures through poetry presented in the target language. The use of poetry provides a platform for students to learn about sentence formation and syntax in the target language (Deepa & Ilankumaran, 2018). Deepa & Ilankumaran (2018) found that students who were taught using poetry is able to compose correct sentences in English and it has good coherence.

3.4 Comprehension

Comprehension is the fourth aspect of speaking that can be developed through the utilization of poetry as media for teaching speaking. There were 5.33% students who perceived that poetry is effective teaching media to build students' comprehension. Students' comprehension can be improved since poetry uses figurative language that encourages students to think critically and imaginatively to comprehend the meaning. Respondent 73 stated that "We can use figure of speech in explaining or delivering material that is quite complicated for students. In my opinion, figure of speech can provide beauty in a series of words when delivering material in English class, hone student's to think critically, and invites them to imagine". In addition, poetry was also perceived that it helps students understand the content in the target language in a more concise form since poetry is shorter than prose. Respondent 74 mentioned that "By using poetry, the teacher asks the student to understand the existing content, interpret, make theories, and feel the vibe of the poetry. Poetry can be used in lessons that last for about 30 minutes to three hours. Using poems as teaching material is much easier than prose, since poems are easier to digest for the students".

The findings above show that poetry contributes to the student's comprehension since it exposes students with figurative language and concise text. Figurative language encourages students to think critically to comprehend the actual meaning. Meanwhile, the form of poetry, which is shorter than other forms of literary work helps students to digest the meaning conveyed in the poetry. These findings were supported by Mittal (2016) who found that poetry is useful to improve student's comprehension as long as the poetry selected is appropriate to the level of target learners. It will encourage students to read the poems and search for its meaning. Rasinski et al. (2015) stated that the use of poetry helps students to construct meaning while reading. Therefore, their comprehension can be improved.

3.5 Confidence

The fifth aspect of speaking that is investigated in this study is communicative confidence. There were 5.33% students who perceived that the integration of poetry in speaking class improve students' confidence in using English in communication. Respondents perceived that the use of poetry create exciting learning atmosphere which can make students more confident to speak. Respondent 69 stated that "when a student learning English especially for speaking skill with use poetry can be increased their self-confidence, increased public speaking, and much more. And teaching English with poetry is more effective because its more happy and exciting for a student". Respondent 70 mentioned that "by asking students to read a poem in front of the class, it increases their confidence and also their speaking skills". Respondent 39 added that "teaching English through poetry can improve students' speaking skills. If students have a good speaking skills, it will be easier for them to communicate with many people". Poetry is perceived as a teaching media that can make the teaching and learning process more exciting so that it will contribute to students' confidence to speak using the target language and to communicate with others.

Students also perceived that the use of poetry provides motivation for students to improve their confidence to practice students' speaking skill. Respondent 71 mentioned that "poetry can improve the student's oral language, get rid of students' low self-esteem, and build their confidence. Also, poetry can be a good, motivating, and addicting way to enrich the students' critical thinking along with their speaking skills". It implies that the use of poetry in English language teaching is able to provide motivation for students to practice their speaking skill and use it in their communication. These findings were supported by several studies. Sigvardsson (2020) found that students will gain confidence after poetry reading when they can acknowledge their feeling and emotion in a relaxing atmosphere. By integrating poetry in English teaching, students feel motivated to use target langauage (Syed & Wahas, 2020). Syed & Wahas (2020) found that students who were taught using poetry showed increasing motivation in learning English.

3.6 Fluency

Fluency is the last aspect of speaking that can be developed through the use of poetry as media for teaching speaking. There were 2. 66% of students who perceived that poetry is effective teaching media to improve students' fluency. They perceived that poetry reading helps students to practice their fluency in speaking since it makes students more familiar with the pronunciation of the words. Respondent 1 stated that "Poetry reading train students pronunciation and fluency in speaking since it makes students familiar with the pronunciation of each word". Poetry is also perceived to be able to improve student's fluency since poetry employs rhythm. It helps students to pay attention to their intonation that contributes to their fluency to speak using the target language. Respondent 72 mentioned that "The teacher guides students to pay more attention to the rhythm of the poetry where the teacher asks students to make a poem and read it in front of the class using good intonation, paying attention to the level of sound, rhythm, expression, fluency in saying each word".

     The findings above indicated that the use of poetry improve students' fluency through poetry reading in which student can practice their pronunciation and intonation. It contributes to the fluency of their speaking. Good pronunciation and intonation will make their fluency better. This finding was supported by Deepa & Ilankumaran (2019). It was found that poetry can improve students communication skill in using English including their fluency. Moreover, poems are meant to be performed. The rehearsal or repeated poetry reading will help students to practice their intonation and speed in speaking (Rasinski et al., 2015).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings above highlights the students' perception on the use of poetry to teach speaking. The use of poetry to teach speaking was perceived positively by the respondents in this study. They perceived that poetry as teaching media improve several aspects of speaking namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, confidence, and fluency. English vocabulary can be developed through poetry since poetry introduces students with English words in context. It helps students to choose appropriate vocabulary in particular situation. Moreover, poetry contains varied figurative language and wordplay that can enrich students' vocabulary. Some respondents also perceived that students' vocabulary will be developed through poetry reading and analysis in which those kind of activities can be integrated in speaking class. Pronunciation is another aspect that can be improved by using poetry as teaching media to teach speaking. The use of poetry to teach speaking is able to familiarize students with pronunciation of varied words through poetry reading, listening to poetry and repetition method. Grammar aspect is also mentioned by the respondents as the speaking aspect developed through the use of poetry. Students perceived that the use of poetry through poetry analysis provides a platform for students to recognize sentence structure and coherence. Students also perceived that poetry can improve students' comprehension. It helps students to construct meaning through the use of figurative language and concise text. It encourages students to think more critically in analyzing the meaning conveyed in the poetry. In terms of confidence, students perceived that the use of poetry to teach speaking is able to provide an exciting and relaxing learning atmosphere which can increase students' confidence to speak. Moreover, poetry also provide motivation for students that contribute to students' communicative confidence. Student's fluency also can be improved through poetry reading. Repeated poetry reading will help students to practice their intonation and pronunciation in which those aspects influence fluency. Thus, the utilization of poetry as teaching media for speaking is very important in order to provide an opportunity for the students to practice all aspects of their speaking in a more attractive way. The use of poetry to teach speaking becomes one of the practical and creative teaching strategies that need to be taken into consideration by EFL teachers.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors discussed the results and contributed to from the start to final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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