

## **Integration of Literary Studies to Develop Business English Majors' Critical Thinking Skills**

Amporn Srisermbhok  
Faculty of Liberal Arts, Southeast Bangkok College  
E-mail: ampornsr@g.swu.ac.th

### **Abstract**

This study investigated an effective teaching model to develop Business English majors' critical thinking skills through integrations of classical poetry and fiction. Both task-based and student-centered approaches were incorporated with a focus on group-dynamism: group presentations, guided in class discussion, reading comprehension, individual essay-question reports, and quizzes. The samples for the study were 15 Business English majors studying Reading Skills in the Second Semester of 2016 academic year. There were 12 females and 3 males, aged between 21-24. Data for analysis included a pretest, and posttest, followed by individual interview with the researcher after the project, including a self-assessed questionnaire. The project lasted 8 weeks. Both descriptive analysis and percentage were used to present the data. The findings showed that literature reading, and poetry writing helped students improve their overall critical thinking skills, even those who scored rather low in the pretest. However, their English proficiency did not relate to their performance as shown in the post test. From both individual interviews and the questionnaire all students agreed that guided in-class discussion and individual essay-question report proved more effective than other student activities in developing their critical thinking skills.

**Keywords:** *critical thinking skills, reading literature, effective EFL teaching model*

### **1. Introduction**

There are many advantages in using literature as motivating materials for language teaching since literature can expose students to complex themes and fresh unexpected use of language. A good novel, play or poem can take student to foreign countries and bring up powerful emotional responses, which can be transported to their real lives. In addition, literature can provide students with access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying. Obviously, at lower levels, students may be unable to cope on their own with authentic materials, or they depend on their instructor to encourage them to use the language naturally in the real world. Another reason to use literature in the language classroom is that it can expand students' language awareness. Using literature with students can help them become more sensitive to some of the overall features of English. Consequently, it will enhance their interpretative abilities.

Literary texts are often rich in multiple levels of meaning, and demand that the reader/learner is actively involved in the understated implications and assumptions of the text. Thus by encouraging students to understand the materials with multiple ambiguities of the literary texts, we are helping to develop their overall capability to infer the meaning, which can be applied in real life.

It is undeniable that great writers are great readers. Nabokov (1980, 3-6) once asked his students to select four answers out of ten about what a good reader should be:

1. The reader should belong to a book club.
2. The reader should identify himself or herself with the hero or heroine.
3. The reader should concentrate on the social-economic angle.
4. The reader should prefer a story with action and dialog to one with none.

5. The reader should have seen a book in a movie.
6. The reader should be a budding author.
7. The reader should have imagination.
8. The reader should have memory.
9. The reader should have a dictionary.
10. The reader should have some artistic sense.

The answers are the good reader is one who has imagination, memory, a dictionary, and some artistic sense. Nabokov (1980, 5-6) concluded that:

A great writer is always a great enchanter, and it is here that we come to the really exciting part when we try to grasp the individual magic of his genius and to study the style, the imaginary, the pattern of his novel or poems.... It seems to me that a good formula to test the quality of a novel is, in the long run, a merging of the precision of poetry and the intuition of science. In order to bask in that magic a wise reader reads the book of genius not with his heart, not so much with his brain, but with his spine. It is there that occurs the telltale tingle even though we must keep a little aloof, a little detached when reading. Then with a pleasure which is both sensual and intellectual we shall watch the artist build his castle of cards and watch the castle of cards become a castle of beautiful steel and glass.

A genius writer himself, Nabokov's opinion above on the great novel and the reader from his book *Lectures on Literature* told us how he read a good novel. He looked closely at the details in order to examine the novel's structure, and was not abided by misleading emotional responses. That means a good reader reads with his spine, a metaphor, meaning reading deeply, making a balance of heart and brain. In this aspect, reading a good novel, a good reader has to read with his passion, paying the right kind of attention to the book or be prepared to listen to it without prejudice to understand and develop his intellectual growth along with his critical reading skills. In that sense, the book can make you feel deep in your spine. That is how a great novel can develop critical thinking skills in a good reader.

Irfaner (2006) claims that the lack of critical thinking skills utilized within the classroom greatly diminishes the students' chance for success. In addition, Irfaner (2006), Rozgay - Miller, (2009) maintain that in ancient Greece over 2500 years ago, Socrates began teaching what is today known as critical thinking. This method brings the students' eagerness to learn alive by proving their beliefs and achieving a higher level of understanding rather than spewing memorized facts. These scholars conclude that critical thinking allows students to clear up misconceptions, discover half-truths, unravel derisory beliefs, investigate self-contradictory attitudes, and scrutinize inadequate evidence.

Aguilar (2016) states that poetry promotes literacy, builds community, and foster emotional resilience. It can cross boundaries that little else can. She concludes that poetry

can allow kids to paint sketches of their lives, using metaphor, imagery and symbolic language to describe painful experiences, or parts of themselves that they are not ready to share. Poetry allows kids to put language to use – to make it serve a deep internal purpose, to break rules along the way (grammar, punctuation, capitalization). Poetry, when read aloud, is rhythm and music and sounds and beats. Young children-babies and preschoolers, get curious about what the sounds mean and perhaps want to create their own. Contrary to popular belief amongst kids, boys get really into poetry when brought in through rhythm and rhyme. It is the most kinesthetic of all literature, its physical and full-bodied which activates your heart and soul and sometimes by pass the traps of our minds and the outcome is that poetry moves us. Another important value is that poetry opens venues for speaking and listening, much neglected domains of a robust English Language Arts curriculum. Poetry also has space for English language learners, and they can find ways of expressing their voices while being limited in their vocabulary. Furthermore, poetry is universal. Learners can learn about or read poetry in their primary language, helping them bridge their worlds.

### **Rationale and Significance of the Study**

Many scholars agree that developing critical thinking skills in undergraduate students is a primary goal in higher education. Braum (2004,32-36) points out that higher educational institutes need to develop graduates' critical thinking skills to prepare them to live a balance life in society and encourage them to make sound judgment in personal, business or leadership decision. In addition, Friedman (2005) claims that the world is flat, maintaining that regional or cultural boundaries have been dismantled due to the accelerating information exchanges and economic interactions in the global community. Any global citizen is obliged to cope with the international trends and prepare himself/herself with skills that help him/her learn how to learn. Long (2003, 230) interestingly remarks:

Though there are certain aspects of critical thinking that may be 'foreign' in non Western context, if students are not exposed to these skills, they will be deprived the opportunities to compete in the global community.

Viewed in light of the above mentioned, it is the teacher's responsibility to develop his/her teaching strategy to encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills through different meaningful activities. Therefore, this current study is to promote critical thinking in a language classroom, and to acquire a deeper understanding of the ways students learn and how they respond to the selected authentic materials used in class. Many teachers in Thailand nowadays still use traditional methods in teaching with a focus on exams based on memorization to produce knowledge to students. Our educational system fails to generate a well-rounded student with the necessary critical thinking skills to survive the classroom and outside world. Without the ability to think critically on their own, students will only become robots, capable only on memorized facts to get the message, but fail to have adequate understanding of a deeper meaning of the message or information conveyed.

Baildon & Baildon, (2008) Savich. ( 2009) reveal that from their experiments students prefer a more hands-on, inclusive, and inquiry approach to learning rather than a pure lecture with no interaction with their peers or teacher for discussing information.

Case, Daniels, & Reeder(2011) argue that without the ability to think critically, students are unable to handle many situations in which those skills are required. In addition, Rolling (2008) confirms that learning to become critical of information and forming an opinion is essential for students to insert a new dialect while stating their unheard opinion.

In order to address the gaps in our education, meaning rote memorization versus the facilitation of critical thinking skills, the researcher wanted to bring in a task-based approach using selected poems, and a classic novel to encourage students to become receptive, perceptive, reflective, and critical within the experimental period. It is hoped that within the time frame, students will be able to articulate their understanding of the reading passages with a better chance to develop their own critical thinking skills.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

1. To develop Business English majors' critical thinking skills through literary studies
2. To find out if an integration of literary studies through task-based learning activities an effective teaching model for EFL learners?

## Definition of Terms

1. Critical thinking in this study refers to a definition given by Duron, Limbach, and Waugh (2006, 160) as ...the ability to analyze and evaluate information.
2. The participants in this study refers to 15 third year Business English majors, studying at Southeast Bangkok College in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2016 academic year.
3. Selected materials in this study are classical poems, and *The Little Prince*.

## Research Questions

1. Can a novel improve the students' critical thinking skills?
2. Why is an integration of literary studies in a task-based classroom an effective teaching model to develop Business English majors' critical thinking skills?

## Review of Related Literature

### Literature and Language Learning:

Krsteva (2014:3605-8) confirms that literature plays an essential role in foreign language acquisition. Each level of foreign language study requires inclusion of literary texts. Together with factual facts, it develops a deeper awareness of the language use. She further explains that in early school years children get familiar with associations from role - plays, drama, poetry and short stories that help them acquire idioms, colloquialisms, and syntax adding to their general cognitive development. This method acquires enormous proportion of linguistic and literary information through higher education. At university, schools other than School of Philosophy, learning English focuses not so much on the literary work from artistic point of view as to the text conveying ideas that students familiarize with and build vocabulary. In upper levels of foreign language acquisition students increase their competence and confidence to speak and present ideas in the foreign language. At advanced levels foreign learners put their imagination and research at work and many of them accomplish verbal advantage close to native speakers.

Tomlinson (2003b) states that learning best occurs when things are seen as part of recognized patterns, when learners' imaginations are activated, or when the information appeals to our senses. The use of literature in an EFL classroom can stimulate

multidimensional mental activity during language learning. He explains this only works if the learners are helped and encouraged to experience the literature rather than studying it for a particular purpose. One way of achieving literary experience is to use poems which are linguistically simple but cognitively and emotionally complex. This makes learners become engaged with the text personally.

Khatib & Daftarifard (2013: 191-200) state that poetry when read aloud can motivate learners. Their research findings revealed that the brevity and comprehensiveness of poems give English learners enriched data and provided them with opportunity to express and process the multi- vocality of language. In other words, learning language through literature is an exciting approach to language arts learning. Best of all, it has been proven highly effective. This can make them more motivated as far as different language skills are concerned. They also found that literature has been an effective way to enhance learners' cognitive growth as well as their psychological development in EFL situations. As reading motivation proves to be essential for learners' academic achievement, it is important what factor might affect or ameliorate learners' reading motivation.

### **Poetry and English Language Learners:**

Robertson (2013) states that writing poetry is a great exercise for English language learners. It gives them a chance to experiment with language and vocabulary, and to freely share their ideas without the confinement of perfect grammar or firm structures. Many ELLs have also had rich life experiences that range from memories of their home culture to saying good-bye to loved ones and adjusting to a new life in the U.S. They may very well welcome this opportunity to create heartfelt poems to share with their classmates and family. Most importantly, poetry can spark imagination. It may help get those creative juices flowing by doing some activities that involve students' imagining that they are something else such as a "drop of rain, the color blue, a school bus, or a stalk of wheat." There are many other activities the teacher can do to make students enjoy learning through poetry writing.

Reilly (2014) describes the role of poetry in teaching a second language as follows:

Poetry helps students learn in many ways.  
It helps them notice sounds – phonetics and  
Phonology – of a foreign language; it is  
important because to learn something students  
have to notice this particular "something".

Other studies support the assumption that poetry reading tasks enhance students' awareness in phonetic/linguistic items. Thus according to Hanauer (2001) poetry reading is primarily a construction process of close reading- of noticing and interpreting the poetic meaning based on all noticed linguistic elements.

Melin (2010) considers teaching poetry as reading- response to aesthetic task, hearing sounds play the leading role in conveying the atmosphere of poetic meaning, so without noticing the sounds the full meaning of poetic texts cannot be derived.

Woore (2007) conducted a study using poetry as one of the possible ways for foreign/second language learners to improve their ability to utilize the foreign language's symbol – sound relationships. His study consisted of the “referring back” strategy sequence when pupils had to 1) identify the target word with an unknown grapheme; 2) use poems as a source of analogy ;3) search the poems for the target grapheme;4) recall the pronunciation of the familiar word containing the same grapheme; 5) apply the familiar pronunciation to the new grapheme; 6)transfer the pronunciation of the 3. To conclude, poetry reading in the second language classroom is especially important because the highly praised in language classroom authentic speaking activities focus on meaning while quite often ignoring the form.

Tin(2011) explains that poetry writing with high formal constraints( acrostics, cinquains, haikus) is an advantageous activity in comparison with writing free-style poems of looser formal constraint(similes) because the highly form-oriented task forces students to stretch and transform their L2 linguistic and conceptual world at a higher level of knowledge and to search for new vocabulary, new more elaborate syntax, and new more complex conceptual world; while a free-style poetry writing task lets students use familiar vocabulary and simple syntax.

### **Impact of Reading Fiction:**

There are various benefits of integrating literature in the language classroom. It is a unique opportunity to inspire students to explore, interpret, as well as understand the world around them. With a student-centered in a task-based approach, the teacher acts as a facilitator, motivator, evaluator, and mentor to encourage students to share their ideas or responses to a literary work with friends in class and discover how to learn by themselves. With a practical application of the method, the researcher will adopt the critical literary approach as a tool through a series of in class activities: group discussion, group presentation, individual-essay report, quizzes, followed by an individual interview, and questionnaire after the project ends to assess the students' learning achievement and their attitudes towards the teaching strategies employed.

A genius writer himself, Nabokov (1980, xviii) reveals that “My father was an expert on Dickens, and at one time read to us, children, aloud, chunks of Dickens, in English, of course.... Between the ages of ten and fifteen in St. Petersburg, I must have read more fiction and poetry - English, Russian, and French- than in any other five - year period of my life.” This quotation obviously explains the impact of reading literature on the young Nabokov's exceptional literary craft in his later years as a great literary critic and novelist himself.

Ghosn (2002, 1997) state that literature may bring changes in students' attitudes toward the world. Working with literary texts help students to reflect on the world around them, opening “horizons of possibility, allowing them to question, interpret, connect, and explore”. This characteristic of literature as a means of developing students' ability to think critically, explore and discuss social problems is becoming especially valuable nowadays. Fisher (2001) also points out that the impact of literature on critical thinking has become a “buzz word” in educational environments.

Gold and Gibson (2001) state that reading aloud either to children or adults has been demonstrated the results of over 75 years of educational research. It was proved to be the foundation of literacy development. They also claim that reading aloud

demonstrates the relationship between the printed word and meaning and invites the listener into a conversation with the author.

Bobkina & Stefanova (2016, 692) observe that critical thinking skills have enormous value for students as they not only enable them to interpret and understand different viewpoints in the context of EFL classroom but also offer them an opportunity to create their own reflective learning styles. That is why this study is an attempt to create an effective teaching model to nurture the young learners in this class their ability to construct and justify the meaning of the literary texts they are studying to develop their own critical thinking skills necessary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In addition, Rosenstand (2009, 47) makes interesting remarks about the by product moral ethics of reading good stories as follows:

We may think that the most powerful moral lessons are learned from events in our childhood (when we are caught doing something we aren't supposed to do, or when we aren't caught), but chances are the most powerful lessons we carry with us are lessons we learn from the stories we have read or that were read to us.

Tung & Chang (2009, 306) investigated the efficacy of developing critical thinking skills and disposition in college students through literature reading found that developing critical thinking is a vital objective in higher education, using literature reading to encourage students to think critically is a highly feasible approach. They also recommended that to enhance critical thinking skills, the teacher should design and attach a response sheet for students to explore the depth of their thoughts and challenge themselves. They should also be alerted to the importance of group presentation which not only merely help cultivate their critical thinking, but also enhance their teamwork skills and employability. The researcher has integrated what Tung and Chang have suggested in the students' activities as discussed earlier.

### **3. Methodology**

This study took place in the second semester of the 2016 academic year. The experimental group were 15 third year Business English majors: 3 males and 12 females aged between 21 and 24. They studied Reading Skills. Since some of the participants had poor background in English, all the participants were encouraged to work in a group with a focus on discussion, oral presentation and individual – essay reports on specific topics. In class they were motivated to improve their English through poetry study with a combination of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They were also engaged in writing their Haiku poems freely to express their feelings or imagination or other personal experiences. The selected poems studied in class consisted of Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz", Wordsworth's "Daffodils", and Frost's "Design" including some Japanese Haikus. There were short quizzes in between to make sure the participants studied and understood the selected poems. The second session of the class was based on Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* with group discussion, oral presentations, followed by individual essay reports. At the end of the project, all the participants came for an individual interview, and answered the questionnaire.

### **Procedures for the Participants' Language Learning Activities:**

1. Giving a pretest
2. Giving a posttest
3. Giving questionnaire
4. Oral interview

1. On the first day of the class, all the students were given a course syllabus about what they would be doing during the experimental period, and then they were invited to introduce themselves in English. The researcher explained to them that the focus of the class was to enhance their reading comprehension and develop their critical thinking skills. To acquaint them with poetry writing, the researcher introduced them to some lyrics from modern popular songs, and then explained to them the direct and implied meanings of the selected songs. The researcher explained to them that originally songs derived from classical lyrics that were communicated orally and in writing. Lyrics are classified in the same category of literary genre called poetry. Then they were given the first poem, *My Papa's Waltz*, to read and tested their understanding. This was meant to be a pretest to collect data about the students' understanding of the poem. The researcher collected the students' answers and kept record of their marks.

2. After the pretest on the first day, the students were later given examples of simple poems to read aloud. In order for students to comprehend what was expected, they had to know what was expected. The researcher provided the students with explanation why they needed to improve their critical thinking skills after they were informed the results of the pretest scores. The researcher gradually taught them both the direct and implied meanings of the poems through discussion of connotations and denotations of the words. The students were encouraged to engage themselves in different class activities: doing a role play, practicing, reading the given poems aloud individually, using body language and tone of voice to express deep feelings and emotion to convey the meanings of the poems. The students had 4 more weeks worthy of their experience, and by this time, they had developed a routine with daily prompt. The researcher also explained to them the power of figurative language embodied in the poem, and later asked all the students to write their own *Haikus*. From observation, the students became more relaxed and confident in using English to communicate their ideas. They wrote their short poems, imitating the selected models, and used free verses as they liked. Then they were given a post test on the same poem, *My Papa's Waltz*, as in the pretest.

The last three weeks was focused on reading and discussing *The Little Prince* with various in-class activities: reading aloud, role- playing, group discussion on guided questions, group presentations, quizzes on reading chapters, and individual-essay reports. During class, students were encouraged to interact with their peers and the researcher to make sure they were engaged in their own reading and developing their critical thinking skills. The final week of the study, a majority of the students provided valuable insight in their critical responses to *The Little Prince*. Finally, all the students were given a questionnaire and an oral interview.

### **Data Collection:**

The research data was based on the students' pretest, post-test, oral presentations, their Haiku poems, group presentations, role-play, and quizzes, individual-essay reports, the questionnaire, and oral interview.

#### 4. Findings

The findings are presented as the objectives of the research. Firstly, based on the analysis of the students' pretest and posttest, it was found that there was a big development in the students' critical thinking skills through reading poetry as shown in Table1.below:

**Table1. Comparison of the students' scores in the pretest and posttest**

No of students = 15	Pretest Scores = 20	Posttest Scores = 20
Student 1	12	18
Student 2	10	17
Student 3	10	17
Student 4	10	15
Student 5	8	14
Student 6	8	14
Student 7	6	14
Student 8	5	13
Student 9	5	12
Student 10	4	12
Student 11	4	11
Student 12	4	10
Student 13	0	7
Student 14	0	6
Student 15	0	5

#### 5. Discussion

Table1 shows that most of the students in this class got rather poor scores in the pretest. Although there were 4 students whose scores were from ten to 12, it was considered rather low. That was due to the fact that they did not understand the deeper meaning of the poem. They only grasped the literary meaning of the words employed, and overlooked the deeper meaning conveyed in the whole poem. In addition, many of them gave similar answers based on denotative meaning of the words. After they were given advice and had a lot of practice reading more selected poems as well as writing their own poems in Haikus, they had gained more experience about reading critically. This resulted in an increase in their scores in the posttest. It showed that something had changed in their reading ability to improve their critical thinking skills. As shown in Table1.12 students or about 80% of the students made improvement in their learning and they had significantly improved their critical thinking skills. However, it is important to note that even the 3 students or about 20% of the class who got zero scores in their pretest had made some improvement in the post test. In the interview, they said that they hated English, but had to enroll in the course to finish their studies.

Secondly, an integration of literature through task-based learning activities had benefited the students a lot. It proved to be an effective teaching model for EFL learners. Through a lot of practice in reading, writing, and oral presentations, students became more relaxed and confident in using English. They had developed their critical thinking

skills and learned to appreciate different opinions among their peers. Consequently, they had developed positive attitudes towards learning English as shown in Table2.below.

**Table2. The students' feedbacks on the class activities**

Question	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Did you enjoy reading the selected poems aloud?	N = 13, =86.67 %	N=2 =13.33%			
1. Do you think that reading poems aloud have developed your pronunciation and enlarged your vocabulary?	N=15, = 100%				
2. Did you find that there was a fixed answer to interpret the selected poems?					N=15, 100%
3. Were you inspired to write your own poems to express to others your deep feelings?	N=12, =80.0%	N=3 =20%			
4. Have the poems studied in class developed your critical thinking skills?	N=15, =100%				
5. Did you find individual essay-question a good way to encourage you to develop your critical thinking skills?	N=15, =100%				
6. Did you find writing short quizzes on the contents of the learning material practical ways to enhance your critical thinking skills?	N=5, =33.33 %	N=10, = 66.67%			
7. Was reading poems aloud in class make you think more critically?					N=15, =100 %
8. Did you find that the best way to develop your critical thinking skills was through sharing and exchanging ideas in a group discussion?	N=15, =100%				
9. As a reader, you need to develop your understanding of the plot structure of the novel using your imagination, and critical thinking skills.	N=15, =100%				
10. In accordance with Nabokov, the great writer is always a great enchanter to grasp the individual magic of his genius to study the style, the imaginary, the pattern of his novels or poetry.	N=15, =,100%				

Data from Table2 shows that the students enjoyed studying the selected poems reflecting in their positive attitudes towards learning English during the project. They also revealed that reading poems aloud in class helped correct their pronunciation, and it was a good way to develop their communication skills as there was no fixed answer to analyze the selected poems although it did not enhance their critical thinking skills. Writing their own poems also inspired them to express their deep feeling. In addition, they found that individual essay-report and quizzes were very useful to develop their critical thinking skills. Their responses to the questionnaire also showed that reading and writing poems were beneficial for them and made them become more enthusiastic toward learning English. Most importantly, all the students strongly agreed that group discussions, exchanging ideas in class were useful and beneficial for them to improve their English. One striking observation was that all the students agreed that a great writer or poet was able to enchant and grab their attention by the writing style that conveyed meaningful information and helped broaden their perspective, and hence paved their way to respond effectively. In this way they have improved their critical thinking skill

**Table 3. The students' reflections of their learning development and critical thinking based on *The Little Prince***

Statements	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am more motivated to learn English through reading a short novel.	N=15, = 100%				
2 I found the plot structure of novel was significantly constructed based on The Prince's imaginative journey and his Socratic dialogues with all the characters, and these have provoked my critical responses to the text.	N=10 66.67 %	N=5, 33.33%			
3. I learned a lot of new words and expressions by myself using a dictionary and discussing them with my friends	N=13, =86.67%	N=2, 13.33%			
4. I have developed my critical thinking skills through my analysis of each of the characters' characteristics.	N=15, =100 %				
5. Seeing a movie was a good way to develop my critical thinking skills.		N=3, = 20%		N=12, 80%	
6. Reading some parts of the novel aloud in class has improved my pronunciation.		N=7, = 46.67%	N=8, 53.33 %		
7. Group discussion was the best way for me to share my opinion and listen to others to improve my rationale.	N=15, =100 %				
8. I enjoyed individual essay-question reports more than quizzes. I felt free to discuss my ideas with confidence.	N=13, 86.67 %	N=1, =6.67%	N=1, 6.67%		
9. In comparison to all activities in class, I	N=15,				

enjoyed group discussion and oral presentations.	100%				
10. An interview with the teacher made me confident in expressing my opinion and was able to show my disagreement openly.	N=15, =100 %				

Data from Table3 reveals that almost all the students were motivated to analyze the novel through reading other critics on the website as well discussing it with their peers in and outside class. They were also inspired to watch the adapted modern version of *The Little Prince* in a film although this did not really provoke their critical thinking skills. These findings supported relevant research findings of previous studies, which has been discussed earlier. Interestingly, all the students found that reading *The Little Prince* inspired them to read more fiction. In addition, the students found that group discussion and oral presentation helped them to develop their critical thinking skills and made them become more confident in speaking and writing their feedback in an individual – essay report.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

The findings have also answered the two research questions which will be restated and discussed one by one as follows:

### **Restatement of Research Question1: Can a novel help improve the students’ critical thinking skills?**

The findings presented in Tables 2 gave various answers to research question 1. Reading a novel was the best way to develop students’ cognitive domain. The task-based with the student-centered approach proved a practical teaching model to develop the students’ critical thinking skills and self - efficacy. Students learned to evaluate their own learning in comparison to those of their peers. This approach also encouraged teamwork and cooperative learning, which are important for their future career. Other additional factors also contributed to, the success of this project; the researcher’s extensive teaching experience and background in Literature provided students with fruitful learning environment for critical inquiries, and the selected novel *The Little Prince* was practical as it was not difficult to read, and it provided the students with a lot of opportunities to develop their critical thinking and problem – solving skills. The contexts provided were real and believable. Moreover, guided group discussion and oral presentations helped the students interact with one another to exchange their knowledge and comprehension of the text as well as cultivated their analytical abilities. In this way, the students gradually learned to improve their rationale as well as discovered their own ability to read critically.

### **Restatement of Research Question 2: Why is an integration of literary studies in a task-based classroom an effective teaching model to develop Business English majors’ critical thinking skills?**

Additional comments and responses of the students revealed that they had developed their reading comprehension, and enlarged their vocabulary. The interview with all the students reassured the researcher that the selected teaching and learning materials with task-based activities were effective to improve students’ meta-cognitive skills as illustrated earlier. From quizzes and individual assessments, the results proved that the students were able to interpret the texts through the process of applying their

literary skills learned during the project. Some reflections of their personal assessment are summarized below:

- They felt that they were able to learn a lot from the selected poems in terms of language use: grammar, lexical or discourses as well as aesthetic beauty of the language.
- They felt encouraged to express their ideas, personal experiences, feelings or opinions freely.
- They were motivated and stimulated to use their imagination and develop critical abilities as well as increase their emotional awareness upon the story.
- They were inspired to respond their feelings or personal ideas to interpret the poems without being afraid of being right or wrong, since it was just an opinion.
- They were encouraged to express themselves, and even with some mistakes, they were able to make themselves understood. In this way, they were inspired to learn from their mistakes, and hence improved their critical thinking skills.
- They have enlarged their vocabulary, and were able to use figurative language to convey their ideas effectively.
- A lot of the students enjoyed writing Haikus to express their inner feelings effectively.
- Reading *The Little Prince* enabled them to develop their critical thinking skills.
- The character of the Little Prince himself has made a deep impression on their emotional responses. It was the way the Little Prince communicated his ideas through inquiry methods that inspired the students to think critically.
- The message conveyed in *The Little Prince* was so powerful, and made them read the novel many times. Each time, they found new meanings, showing that they have developed their reading comprehension.
- They found that *The Little Prince* has a great plot structure, and the writing style is unique. They enjoyed the questions the Little Prince asked different characters. It was a Socratic inquiry method that inspired them to think deeply.
- *The Little Prince* has encouraged them to search for more information on the writer's biography, and other interpretations of the novel. In this way, they could make a comparison between their own interpretations with those of others, inspiring them to improve their analytical reading skills. In addition, they also enriched their vocabulary although they still made some grammatical mistakes.
- *The Little Prince* made them want to see a movie and enlarged their critical thinking skills. The film version was different from the book, but it was entertaining. They would recommend the book to their friends to read.
- *The Little Prince* motivated them to read other classical novels.
- The students felt proud to be able to understand the deep meaning conveyed in *The Little Prince* because they had no experience reading any classical novel before. They remembered a lot of good statements from the book, which helped them improve their English.
- It was good to learn both poetry and short fiction. Now that the course was over they felt like practicing writing poems on their own to be fluent in English.

The above feedbacks reconfirm the effectiveness of the teaching model that integrated the task-based approach with a focus on student-centered activities. It also supports the facts that literary studies can improve the students' language ability and critical thinking skills.

In sum, literary works have great positive impacts on the students' learning outcomes, especially poetry and fiction. It helps make language learning activities become more enjoyable, exciting as well as constructive. The students have learned to understand, interpret and make connections through their critical thinking skills. If carefully selected to suit the level of each group of students and their background, poetry study can become valuable teaching resources, especially for beginners or those who have weak background in English. That is because the language of poetry can communicate even abstract or complicated ideas powerfully, and effectively without conforming to rigid system or form of the language conveyed. In this study, after the students became more acquainted with poetry, its structure, and its ambiguous meanings, the researcher extended the students' critical ability development through a novella, *The Little Prince*, which is full of imagery and complicated ideas about human relationship. In this way, the students were able to approach the novel step by step, beginning with the plot structure, the narrative detail, and the writing style. They were also encouraged to exchange ideas and discuss different characters' behavior openly, and followed up by individual writing reports. All the students had plenty of time to assess and evaluate their own learning. The researcher's role was to monitor the flow of the class and assisted those who needed help the most. This method proved to be very effective. The learners used all the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. They eventually have developed their communication skills as well as improved their analytical and critical thinking skills. Therefore, language teachers are very much encouraged to integrate literary works in their English class to develop young learners' communication skills and inspire them to become critical thinkers to live successfully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In John Updike's words "Nabokov was a great teacher not because he taught the subject well but because he exemplified, and stimulated in his students, a profound and loving attitude toward reading literature" (Nabokov1980, xxiii).

### **7. Limitations of the Studies**

This study was based on 15 Business English majors at Southeast Bangkok College. Consequently, the findings might not be representatives of all Thai learners. It is therefore possible that other characteristics concerning developing critical thinking skills that the analyses of this research were not able to statistically control. For example, some other different traits of the students were not measured in this study, such as their background, and motivation levels.

### **8. Recommendation for Further Studies**

For those interested in an in-depth study on developing students' critical thinking skills, the following studies are strongly recommended.

1. Apply this teaching model to other groups of Business English major students at other institutes, and make a comparison with non-English majors to find out if their critical thinking skills are significantly achieved through literature study
2. Explore other teaching methods to increase the amount of student-to-student interaction in classroom instructional activities to develop students' critical thinking skills
3. Conduct an action research to develop students' critical thinking skills through commercial authentic materials
4. Use other teaching tools to encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills based on problems, questions or critical issues
5. Investigate the impact of negative and positive feedbacks on students' critical thinking skill development

## 9. Author

Associate Professor Amporn Srisermbhok, got a Ph.D.in English and American Literature. She has extensive experience in teaching English. Her research interests include gender and equity issues, feminist writing, and critical teaching pedagogy.

## 10. References

Aguilar, Elena. (2016). Five Reasons Why We Need Poetry in Schools.  
<http://edutopia.org/blog/five-reasons-poetry-needed-school-elena-aguilar>

Baildon,R., & Baildon,M.(2008).Guiding independence: Developing a research tool to support student decision making in selecting online information sources. *The Reading Teacher*, (61(8),636-647.doi:10.1598/RT.61.8.5

Bobkina, Jelena & Svetlana Stefanova.(2016). Literature and critical literacy pedagogy in the EFL classroom: Towards a model of teaching critical thinking skills. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*. SSLIT6 (4).2016, 677-695.

Braun,N.M.(2004).Critical Thinking in the Business Curriculum. *Journal of Education for Business*, Vol.79.(2004).pp.232-236.

Case,R. & Daniels,L.(2011).Introduction to the TC2 conception of critical thinking. Retrieved from <http://www.tc2.ca/pdf/profresources/IntroductionTC2Concept.pdf>Fisher, A. (2001). *Critical Thinking: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Friedman, T.(2005).*The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Duron, R., Limbach, B.,& Waugh, W.(2006).Critical thinking framework for any discipline. *International journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 17(2),,160-166.Retrievedfrom<http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/pdf/IJTLHE55.pdf>

Glaser, E.(1941).*An experiment in development of critical thinking*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Ghosn, I.(2002). Four good reasons to use literature in primary school. *ELT, ELT Journal*, 2(56), 172-179.

Gold, J.and Gibson ,A.(2001).Reading aloud to build comprehension(online). Available at:<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/343>

Hanauer,D.I.(2001).Multicultural Moments in Poetry: The Importance of the Unique. *Canadian Modern Language Review*.Vol.60 (1), 69-87.

- Irfaner, S. (2006). *Enhancing thinking skills in the classroom*. *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal*, 1(1), 28-30.
- Krsteva, M., Kukubajska, & Emilija, M. (2011). The Role of Literature in Foreign Language Acquisition. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Journal*, 116, 3605-3608.
- Khatib, M. & Daftarifard (2013). The Effect of Reading Poems on Learners' Reading Motivation. *Journal of Literature, Culture & Media Studies*, Vol. V(9&10) Jan-Dec.
- Long, M. L. (2003). Teaching Critical Thinking in Asian EFL Contexts: Theoretical issues and Practical Applications. *Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, Retrieved July 9, 2009 from <http://www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL8/pdf/pdf22.pdf>.
- Melin, C. (2010). Between the lines: When culture, language, and poetry meet in the classroom. *Language Teaching*, Vol. 4(3), 349-365.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. (1980). *Lectures on Literature*. New York: A Harvest Book Harcourt, INC.
- Robertson, Kristina. (2013). Writing Poetry with English Language Learners. [www.online.org/article/31170](http://www.online.org/article/31170).
- Reilly, Natalia. (2014). What is the role of poetry in Second Language Learning and Teaching?. *Second Language Acquisition*. Online [www.slideshare.net/NataliareillyPhD/reill-poetry-insla](http://www.slideshare.net/NataliareillyPhD/reill-poetry-insla).
- Robertson, Kristina. (2013). Writing Poetry with English Language Learners [www.online.org/article/31170](http://www.online.org/article/31170).
- Reeder, E. (2011). Measuring what counts: Memorization versus understanding. Retrieved From <http://www.edutopia.org/measuring-what-counts-memorization-versus-understanding>
- Rolling, J. H. (2008). Sites of contention and critical thinking in elementary art classroom: A political cartooning project. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 9(4), 1-28.
- Rosenstand, Nina. (2009). *The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Ethics*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition New York: McGraw Hill.
- Rozgay-Miller, J. M. (2009). Critical thinking and using modern information and communication technology (Unpublished master's thesis). Sierra Nevada College, Incline Village, Nevada.

Savic, C.(2009).Improving critical thinking in history. *Networks: An online journal for teacher research*,11(2).1-12.

Tin, T.B.(2011).Language creativity and co-emergence of form and meaning in creative writing tasks. *Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tomlinson,B.(2003b).Humanizing the Course Book. *Developing Materials*. New York: Continuum.

Tung, Chi-An & Shu-Ying Chang.(2009).Developing Critical Thinking through Literature Reading. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*Vol.19, December 2009,pp.287-317.

Woore, R.(2007).Weisse Maus in meinem Haus: Using poems and learners strategies to help learners decode the sounds of the L2 . *Language Learning Journal* .Vol,35(2),175-188.