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Organised by:

Department of Modern Languages (English Unit) Centre for Language
Studies and Generic Development, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)

In collaboration with

Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Pattani.

International Colloquium on Language Teaching

ICoLT 2012

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The International Colloquium on Language Teaching (ICoLT) is an annual event organized by the Centre for Language Studies and Generic Development at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). The objective of ICoLT is to create an environment of discussion on ways to improve language teaching and learning. Both second language teaching and third language teaching.

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Preface

ICoLT 2012

'ENHANCING COMPETENCIES OF LANGUAGE PRACTITIONERS'

The International Colloquium on Language Teaching (ICoLT) is an annual event organised by the Centre for Language Studies and Generic Development at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). The objective of ICoLT is to create an environment of discussion on ways to improve language teaching and learning, both second language teaching and third language teaching.

Located in the city of Kota Bharu, this conference aims to bring together people from different countries and cultures to exchange ideas and experience, bringing particular benefit to language practitioners of the east coast region of Peninsular Malaysia.

With the close proximity to Thailand and according to the ideals of ASEAN this conference seeks to develop the synergy of the sharing of ideas across the region. It is hoped that the environment of this conference will attract language practitioners from the ASEAN region and throughout the world.

This year there was a variety of stimulating papers on topics including Collaborative Learning; Task Based Learning; Teaching Vietnamese Tones; Malay Language Learning by Non-Native Speakers; and Jawi Script. The conference includes multiple languages and there were eight papers presented in Arabic.

This publication presents the papers in the form in which they were received except for a limited amount of editing to the format in order to give a uniform look. There has been no editing of language, research approach or content.

We hope you find these papers stimulate new ideas and contribute to your effectiveness in language teaching.

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Attitudes of Form Five Students in Learning Literature based on Multiracial and Gender

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Abstract

The design of this study is of survey and in the form of a quantitative study carried out to identify about the students' attitudes towards learning literature, to compare the students attitudes towards learning literature based on their races, to compare the students attitudes towards learning literature based on gender and to examine the relation between the students attitudes towards learning literature and their examination results. The study involved 60 form five students of the three races with the equal amount of gender, from a school in the district of Jerantut, Pahang. An adapted set of questionnaire with an acceptable alpha value was used. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, in the form of frequency, percentage and mean and also inferential statistics using One-Way ANOVA, Independen t-test and Spearman Rho correlation. The findings of the study showed that the students of the three races, both male and female had favourable attitudes towards the learning of literature. There was only a slight difference between the Malay, Chinese and Indian students towards the teaching techniques used by teachers. In terms of gender, the students did not have any difference in their attitudes towards learning literature. Last but not least, their examination results did not correlate with either their attitudes towards literature in general, or the texts used in learning literature, but the results did have a significant relationship with the teachers teaching techniques when teaching literature, at a moderate level.

Keywords: Literature, students attitudes, multiracial, gender

INTRODUCTION

In 1992, Literature in English was first introduced to Form Four students. Subsequently, this has led to the re-introduction of literature into language classrooms in the year 2000, and is now an integrated element of the English language component (Fauziah Ahmad, 2008). By the end of the secondary school English Language program, students should be able to achieve several objectives, among them: giving a personal response to the text; showing an awareness of how language is used to achieve a particular purpose; reflecting upon and drawing valuable moral lessons from the issues and concerns of life as portrayed in the literary works and relating them to their lives; and, understanding as well as appreciating other cultures (Huzaina Abdul Halim, 2006).

Literature is one of the best mediums to expose second language learners to a variety of language input using authentic materials, and it is essential that teachers realize the level of motivations and attitudes of students towards learning it (Zubaidah Awang & Shaidatul Akma, 2008). The literature component of the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) syllabus aims to give learners the chance to engage themselves in a variety of reading texts for their enjoyment and self-development. It also aims in enabling the students to identify and develop an understanding towards other cultures and traditions that will contribute to their emotional and spiritual growth (Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris KBSM, 2000). At the same time, literature helps to make the learning of English to be more interesting. It allows students to express themselves more in terms of their creativity. Through the learning of literature, students' personal development and self-enrichment is hoped to be enhanced.

Yongan Wu (2008) concluded that the benefits of using literature in the ESL classroom have long been proven and recognized by ESL teachers and researchers in three core areas. Firstly in terms of how reading literature is beneficial to language and how the literary texts are also rich resources of accurate diction, diverse sentence patterns, and passionate narratives. Next is how the learning of literature enhances students' knowledge of culture and society, and last but not least, how the learning of literature fosters critical thinking by offering readers multiple perspectives, especially in books dealing with issues such as immigration, cultural differences and social upheavals.

So, it can be said that the teaching and learning of literature is vital in the part of second language learning. This is because it is clearly stated that the Literature Component in English does not only aim at enhancing students' language proficiency, it is also geared for the purpose of generating the aesthetic part of the language that is personal response from students (Diana Hwang & Mohamad Amin, 2007).

THE LEARNING OF LITERATURE

Known as the aesthetic component of the Secondary English Language curriculum, Literature has been incorporated since the year 2000, and its range of texts has been revised and changed starting from 2009, carried out in schools in the year of 2010. Based on the syllabus given, the study of Literature which involves literary works such as poetry, short stories, novel and drama are to allow students to engage with relationships, ideas, places, times and events. It is hope to help students to lead themselves to a better understanding of themselves, of the people around them and the world. The intergration of the literature component into the English syllabus is based on studies done which proved that literary works can help to convey certain values and arouse students interests. Each text used has been chosen by a list of panellists consisting if Ministry of Education (MOE) officers, academic lecturers from universities and teacher training institutions, teachers and pupils around Malaysia. The texts were chosen based on several criteria such as authenticity, aesthetic values, moral values, humour, teenage issues, length and language.

As stated in the textbook of A Collection of Poems, Short Stories and Drama for the Upper Secondary School students, the MOE hopes that teachers involved will use a wide range of strategies to draw the students interest in the texts used. The teaching and learning process of literature should make classrooms to be lively, engaging students in creative activities that can bring the texts to life. Parents are also encouraged to help their children to read and enjoy the texts at home so that literature could be more meaningful and appreciated.

Students Attitudes Towards Learning Literature

Attitude is the way someone thinks or behaves and it is not static and can be changed by identifying the sources of negative attitudes and correcting them (Siti Norliana Ghazali, 2008). For example, students in the rural schools may have a negative attitudes towards the learning of English as well as Literature, considering these to be of high difficulties. However, these negative attitudes may be changed if teachers can creatively come up with materials and teaching techniques which involve interesting activities that could help change the students attitudes to be positive. How will a teacher do that? By identifying what caused the students to be having such attitudes. For instance the students have negative attitudes towards the learning of literature in English because they are not exposed to English reading materials like poems, novels or short stories. So teachers can start by providing the students with various reading materials, inculcating reading habits among the students with such background (no exposure to English reading materials).

A positive attitude towards learning English language is one of the leading predictors of success in gaining fluency and these attitudes should be instructive for educators, who should take these factors into consideration when designing English language instruction or training courses. Instruction should meet the needs and motivations of students in order for them to become successful, fluent speakers of the language (Hall, 2009). A positive or a negative attitude is likely to be developed by learners' experiences based on their background. However, as stated in the first paragraph, they may change during the passage of time.

The attitudes of students play a great role in determining the successful learning for the students themselves. It is an important concept because it plays a key role in language learning and teaching (Azizeh Chalak & Zohreh Kassaian, 2010). They would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning (Atef Al-Tamimi & Munir Shuib, 2009). Students with positive attitudes will spend more effort to learn the language by using strategies such as asking questions, volunteering information and answering questions (Baker, 1993 as cited in Siti Norliana 2008).

Problems in Learning Literature Among Secondary School Students

Students face difficulties in learning English. The incorporation of the literature component into the English Language syllabus was definitely not welcomed by students with low English language proficiency as they did not have the complex skills needed to read literary texts. Even without the incorporation of the literature component into the syllabus, these students were already struggling learning the language and the incorporation of the literature component was seen as adding another burden (Radzuan et al, 2010).

As a new syllabus has been instilled since 2010, new texts are used comprising of poems, short stories, drama and novel. Teachers at first did not have enough sources in helping them to teach the students. The 'Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri' later did send some materials which were power point slides and activities in the form of Microsoft Word. However, not all of the materials are suitable and can be used by all level of students. For example, the materials cannot be used upon medium to low proficiency students in rural school. As mentioned by Abdullah and Yew (2010) the new texts used are foreign based which will make it hard for the students to relate to their own rural or local setting. For students who have little or no knowledge or exposure to foreign settings and cultural background that appear in the texts, it may be nearly impossible to clearly visualize what is being portrayed, thus hampering their ability to appreciate the literary works. This is proven in some of the findings from past studies. One done by Huzaina (2006) where the findings showed that only a minority of students liked literature while a majority hated it.

Students may like learning English, but their perceptions towards the literature component might not be as positive. Students can be negative, resenting their learning of the literature component. As shown in the findings of a study done by Marzilah & Sharifah Nadia (2010), a group of students admitted that they are interested in learning English. However, they reacted differently when learning the literature component during the English period.

Although literature seems to give opportunities for more interesting and expressive information and activities for students to explore, not all may perceive it to be something that is positive. As shown in the findings of a study conducted by Huzaina (2006), only a minority of students liked literature while the majority hated it. A few of them liked literature as they liked reading. They perceived literature as something that was full of adventure for them to discover, challenging their minds, enabling them to read out about other people's experiences and learning from them. Most of the students who disliked literature felt that the literary texts were too difficult to understand as the language was not direct. The unfamiliar words were scary for them and there was too much to read.

This is in line with the findings of a study done by Siti Norliana (2008). She revealed that most of her participants love learning literature but only on short stories and they expressed negativity towards poems and novels as they felt that the two literary texts are demanding and challenging for them. The poems are difficult to understand and the novels are too lengthy. However, a majority of the students in the study showed positive attitudes towards the literature component. They admitted that the learning of literature is enjoyable and could help them improve their proficiency. They also like learning literature as it enables them to learn more about others 'philosophy of life' and also their cultures and beliefs. Students with favourable attitudes and positive perceptions towards literature will be willing to take actions to ensure their success in learning literature (Zubaidah & Shaidatul, 2010).

So teachers had to opt for other source of materials or come up with one of their own. Their main guideline would be the syllabus and the texts themselves as there were no reference or activity books published and sold in shops. In the first few months of schooling, it all depended on the teachers' will to make the best out of nothing for the students. Although many teachers acknowledge the need to understand the ways in which learners differ in terms of needs and preferences, they may not consult learners in conducting language activities (Huzaina, 2006). This is shown in a study done by Marzilah and Sharifah Nadia (2010). From their findings, teachers only use the explanation and answering comprehension questions techniques in teaching literature which are rather boring for students. Some teachers only manage to teach their students by using the traditional method, by giving focus only on the literary texts for its pronunciation and vocabulary when teaching literature. This might lead to a process of teaching and learning which will not be effective and meaningful for the students.