

*Jurnal Pendidik dan Pendidikan, Jil. 22, 1–23, 2007*

## **APPROACHES EMPLOYED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TO TEACHING THE LITERATURE COMPONENT IN ENGLISH**

**Diana Hwang and Mohamed Amin Embi**

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,  
43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia  
E-mail: [hwangdee@hotmail.com](mailto:hwangdee@hotmail.com), [m.amin@ukm.my](mailto:m.amin@ukm.my)

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to report on findings of a study designed to identify approaches employed by teachers to teaching the literature component in selected secondary schools in Sabah. The study was conducted in 15 urban secondary schools in Sandakan, Sabah with a population of 112 English teachers. The approaches and activities conducted in the literature lesson were identified whilst the reasons to why teachers employed the approaches and activities were explicated. Triangulation involving the questionnaire as the primary data, classroom observation and focused interview as the secondary data was used. A total of 87 teachers responded to the questionnaire; whereas, in a related case study, an English option teacher (a TESL graduate) and a non-option teacher (a History graduate) were observed for four weeks and then be interviewed. Findings show that the paraphrastic approach (mean = 4.05) is popularly used by teachers, followed by the information-based approach (mean = 4.04) and the moral-philosophical approach (mean = 3.93). This seems to go concurrently with the findings of the case study whereby both teachers exhibited similar teaching approaches. The findings draw attention to the fact that teaching approaches are largely influenced by students' language proficiency, attitudes, the exam-oriented culture, the prescribed literary materials and the number of students in the classroom. The implication is that literature teaching which aims at generating students' personal response and appreciation maybe a futile exercise if the issues are not tackled wisely.

**Abstrak:** Kajian ini bertujuan untuk melaporkan gambaran keseluruhan tentang kaedah pengajaran guru dalam pengajaran komponen sastera bahasa Inggeris. Ia merangkumi sekolah-sekolah menengah bandar di daerah Sandakan, Sabah dengan populasi seramai 112 orang guru bahasa Inggeris. Kaedah pengajaran dan aktiviti yang dijalankan dalam kelas telah dikenal pasti, manakala sebab-sebab mengapa kaedah dan aktiviti tersebut digunakan telah dijelaskan. Kajian ini menggunakan tiga jenis kaedah penyelidikan, iaitu soal selidik yang memberikan data utama, manakala pemerhatian dalam kelas dan temu ramah dengan guru memberi data sampingan. Seramai 87 orang guru telah memberi respons kepada soal selidik manakala seorang guru beropsyen bahasa Inggeris (graduan TESL) dan seorang guru bukan opsyen bahasa Inggeris (graduan Sejarah) terlibat dalam satu kajian kes. Pemerhatian kelas telah dijalankan selama empat minggu dan temu ramah juga diadakan. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa kaedah pengajaran *paraphrastic* (min = 4.05) merupakan kaedah popular yang digunakan oleh guru. Ini diikuti oleh kaedah pengajaran *information-based* (min = 4.04) dan *moral-philosophical* (min = 3.93). Ini disokong oleh dapatan kajian yang mana dua orang guru yang diperhatikan juga mempraktikkan kaedah pengajaran yang sama. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kaedah

pengajaran kebanyakannya dipengaruhi tahap penguasaan bahasa Inggeris oleh murid, sikap, budaya peperiksaan, bahan bacaan dan saiz kelas. Implikasi kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa matlamat pengajaran sastera, iaitu untuk menggalakkan respons dan penghayatan murid terhadap sastera mungkin tidak tercapai jika isu-isu tersebut tidak ditangani dengan sewajarnya.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the light of re-establishing the importance of English in the Malaysian school setting, changes in the education curriculum have been witnessed over the past few years. This paper sets to look at one major change in the education curriculum which is the incorporation of the Literature Component in English into the English Language syllabus for all secondary schools. Whilst the Literature Component in English is aimed 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. However, recent studies have reported that students were seen to be passive and were unable to respond critically and literature lessons were often too teacher-centred and thus, labeling teachers to be dull and less creative. (Gurnam Kaur, 2003; Siti Norliana, 2003; Suriya Kumar, 2004).

There is a juxtaposition of views between the teachers and students. This raises a few pertinent questions – What is the current situation like in the literature classroom? How is the Literature Component in English taught in schools? Are teachers well-versed with the knowledge and methodology of teaching literature? The situation above depicts a state that needs immediate attention. If literature lessons are only fact-answer sessions where students are not guided and given opportunities to work with their friends and express their views and response that contributes to their language development and the appreciation of literature, then it is feared that the underlying aims and objectives of the literature component in English are doomed to fail. This paper is borne out of concern on what is going on in the literature classroom. There is a need to discover if the literature component in English is taught in line with its aims and objectives. Thus, a focus on the approaches employed by teachers in teaching the literature component in English would be of great value and interest.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to gain a general overview of the approaches employed by teachers in teaching the Literature Component in English. The research questions are as follows:

- i. What are the approaches employed by teachers in teaching the literature component in English?
- ii. Which types of activities are used by teachers in teaching the literature component in English?
- iii. Why do teachers employ such approaches and activities?
- iv. Is there a significant relationship between the approaches employed by teachers and the activities that they carry out in the literature classroom?
- v. Is there a significant difference between English option teachers and non-option English teachers in terms of their approaches in teaching the literature component in English?

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This review of related literature explains in brief the reasons to why the teaching of literature is proposed. It also discusses three models to teaching literature and then, elaborates on the approaches and activities to teaching literature.

- i. Literature contributes to the holistic development of an individual (Kamarudin, 1988; Mukherjee, 1976; Horner, 1983).
- ii. Literature is a resource for language learning (Maley, 1989; Nesamalar et al., 1995; Eagleson & Kramer, 1976).
- iii. Literature manifests valuable language experience (Moody, 1971; Carter, 1986; Collie & Slater, 2001; Rosli, 1995).

The models of teaching literature as presented by Carter and Long (1991) exhibit the theory as to how the teaching of literature is being viewed.

- i. The Cultural Model views literature as a source of facts or information and therefore, reading tends to be based on obtaining information. In this model, the teacher transmits knowledge and information to the students.
- ii. The Language Model seeks a closer integration between language and literature. Students can improve their language proficiency by using literature as a resource in language learning.
- iii. The Personal Growth Model seeks the opportunity for students to relate and respond to the themes and issues by making a connection to their personal lives. Consequently, students' growth in terms of language, emotions and character development are stimulated.

An analytical look at the three models as outlined by Carter and Long (1991) suggests that the language and the personal growth model complement and are interdependent on each other. In acknowledging the views of Carter and Long (1991), Rosli (1995) further elaborated that these two models denote approaches that place an emphasis on the student.

What is then an approach? Moody (1983: 23) explains that the importance of an approach is to "provide a framework, or sequence of operations to be used when we come to actualities". Whitehead (1968) mentions that one factor that goes a long way in determining students' lifelong learning towards reading is how the teacher approaches the teaching of literature. There are various approaches that can be employed in the teaching of literature, namely the information-based approach, language-based approach, personal response approach, paraphrastic approach, moral-philosophical approach and the stylistics approach.

In addition, Richards and Rodgers (1986) clarify that the different philosophies at the level of approach may be reflected through different types of activities and indifferent uses for activity types. In this context, Duppenhaler (1987) defines an activity as "anything that is designed to increase students' motivation, participation in the learning process and the interaction between learners". Whitehead (1968) says that one of the principles of a successful literature programme is that the teacher must be acquainted with a variety of techniques and activities so as to stimulate and develop students' interest and knowledge of literature.

Carter (1988) considers the information-based approach as a way of teaching knowledge about literature whereby literature is seen to offer a source of information to the students. Thus, teaching methodologies tend to be teacher-centred as Lazar (1993) points out that the focus on content would require students to examine the history and characteristics of literary movements ranging from the cultural, social, political and historical background to a text, thus demanding a large input from the teacher. Activities deriving from this approach could be lectures, explanation, reading of notes and criticism provided in workbooks or by the teacher. These activities usually cater for instrumental purposes such as examinations (Carter & McRae, 1996).

The language model seeks greater unification between language and literature. Carter (1988) asserts that the language-based approach helps students to focus attention on the way as to how the language is used. Lazar (1993) points out language-based approaches see literary texts as resources that cater for language practice through series of language activities rather than studying literature for the purpose of acquiring facts and information. The approach is student-centred and therefore, activities like prediction, cloze, ranking tasks, role play, poetry

recital, forum, debate and discussions can be used to create opportunities for language use in the classroom (Carter, 1996; Rosli, 1995).

The emphasis of this approach is on the elicitation of students' response to a text. Rosli (1995) asserts that the reason behind it is to motivate and encourage students to read by making a connection between the themes of a text and his or her personal life and experiences. Hirvela (1996) explains that responses are personal as they are concerned with students' feelings and opinions about the literary text. This approach focuses on activities like question-discussions (Rosli, 1995), activities which are interpretative in nature generating views and opinions on the text (Hirvela, 1996) and brainstorming, guided fantasy, small group discussions, revealing students' reactions in a short paragraph or journal writing (Lazar, 1993).

The paraphrastic approach deals with the surface meaning of the text. Teachers whose using this approach may paraphrase or re-word the story in a simpler language or even translating it into other languages. Rosli (1995) says that this approach is suitable for beginners of the target language as it acts as a stepping stone in formulating original assumptions of the author's work. In the case of the Malaysian ESL (English as Second Language) classroom, some students may be weak in English. Their understanding and comprehension of a particular literary text may be impeded due to low language proficiency. Therefore, this approach can be employed in assisting students with a better understanding of the text. Activities for this approach could include teacher re-tells the story or a poem using simpler language, the use of translation using other mother tongues and reading paraphrased versions or notes provided in the workbook or by the teacher.

It has been claimed that one of the roles of literature is to inculcate moral values through the teaching of morality. The focus of this approach is to search for moral values whilst reading a particular literary text. Students' awareness of values is seen and this approach assists students to understand themes in future readings. Thus, students would be able to reflect what they have learnt based on their readings of a particular literary text. According to Rosli (1995), this approach proclaims the worthiness of moral and philosophical considerations behind one's reading. Activities for this approach could be the incorporation of moral values at the end of the literature lesson, reflective sessions, getting students to search for values whilst reading (Wang, 2003) and eliciting students' evaluation on what they should do or not do based on their readings (Parwathy et al., 2004).

Stylistics approaches guide students towards a closer understanding and appreciation of the literary text itself using the combination of linguistic analysis

and literary critics (Lazar, 1993). This means students are taught to see how linguistic forms in a literary text function in conveying messages to the reader. Lazar (1993) claims there are two objectives of this approach. Firstly, it enables students to make meaningful interpretations of the text. This objective allows students to look beyond the surface meaning of the text. Secondly, it helps to expand students' knowledge and awareness of the language. Lazar (1993) suggests activities such as getting students to scrutinize a literary text by marking certain linguistic features, getting students to look at the language features, extracting possible clues which contribute to the meaning and interpretation of the text (Carter, 1996).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study was addressed using both quantitative and qualitative measures. It utilized a mode of triangulation whereby data collection and information were based on the questionnaire as the primary instrument, classroom observation and focused interview as secondary instruments.

### **Location of the Study**

The study was conducted in 15 secondary schools from the urban district of Sandakan, Sabah.

### **Sample**

The targeted group was English Language teachers. Only teachers who taught English (Forms 1 to 5) were involved in the study. An English option teacher (TESL graduate) and a non-option teacher (History graduate) were selected to participate in the case study.

### **Research Instruments**

The questionnaire is the main research instrument for the study. A classroom observation checklist, adapted from Allen, Frohlich and Spada's (1984) Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) was used. The checklists were then summarized, compared and interpreted. The interview questions were categorized and coded into a few constructs, namely profile of teacher (Q1), teachers' views on the literature component in English (Q2), teaching approaches (Q3), activities (Q4) and factors that influence teachers'

selection of approaches and activities (Q5). The interviews were audio taped, transcribed and interpreted.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study was carried out on 30 teachers. An analysis using the reliability test – Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was conducted to ensure the reliability of the constructs. The reliability of all question items in the questionnaire was at a high level, depicting .904. As for the two main constructs in the questionnaire, both constructs indicated a fairly high reliability, that is .894 and .801, respectively.

### **Data Analysis and Procedures**

The study required quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Descriptive statistical analysis, Inferential Statistics – Pearson Correlation and the Independent Samples T-Test were used for the quantitative data. Classroom observation field notes were compiled. Each observation was summarized and compared in order to draw appropriate conclusions and interpretations. The interview transcripts were grouped, coded and verbatim from the transcripts and were quoted to strengthen the basis of argument.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Demographic Profile of Teachers**

A total of 87 teachers responded to the questionnaire, at a return rate of 87%. Table 1 reports the breakdown of respondents according the respective aspects; namely, gender, academic qualification, area of specialization (option), experience in teaching English as well as training in the literature component in English.

### **Approaches Employed by Teachers**

Evidently, the findings of the questionnaire (see Table 2) revealed that the paraphrastic approach (mean = 4.05) is popularly applied by teachers. This is followed by the information-based approach (mean = 4.04), the moral-philosophical approach (mean = 3.93), the personal-response approach (mean = 3.62), the language-based approach (mean = 3.57) whilst the stylistic approach remains the lowest (mean = 3.36). Findings also corroborate with item no.14 "use simple terms to explain what the story is about to students" which has the highest mean score (mean = 4.44). A significant 92% (n = 80) of respondents reported that they used simple terms to explain literary texts to students. This is followed

by item number 2 which has the second highest mean score (mean = 4.33). A prominent 91% (n = 79) of respondents stated that they "explain[ed] the content of the text to the class". In addition, 87.4% (n = 76) of respondents reported that they "ask[ed] questions to check students' knowledge based on what they have read". This item sets the third highest mean score (mean = 4.28).

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of respondents

	<b>Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	15	17.2
	Female	72	82.8
<b>Academic Qualification</b>			
	SPM/STPM	13	14.9
	First Degree	71.3	62
	Diploma in Education	10.3	9
	Masters/PhD	3.4	3
Option	English Option	46	52.9
	Non-English Option	41	47.1
<b>Teaching Experience in English</b>			
	Less than 5 years	32	36.8
	5–9 years	19	21.8
	10–14 years	21	24.1
	15 years or more	15	17.2
<b>Trained in the literature component in English</b>			
	Yes	62	71.3
	No	25	28.7

**Table 2.** Mean score and standard deviation of approaches in teaching the literature component in English

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>Information-Based Approach</b>		
1. Elicit information from students about the text	3.52	.900
2. Explain the content of the text to the class	4.33	.757
3. Ask questions to check students' knowledge based on what they have read	4.28	.858
4. Provide students with background information	4.02	.876
<b>Personal-Response Approach</b>		
	<b>3.62</b>	.660
5. Encourage students to relate the themes to personal experiences	3.69	.853
6. Elicit students' response to a text	3.53	.860
7. Encourage students to express feelings towards the issues of the text	3.60	.882

(continued on next page)



**Table 2.** (continued)

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Language-Based Approach</b>	<b>3.57</b>	.654
8. Guide students to express their opinions towards a text	3.67	.757
9. Set language activities in literature lesson	3.34	.847
10. Encourage students to actively participate in the process of understanding the meaning of text	3.98	.777
11. Students work with their classmates in the process of understanding the text	3.56	.898
12. Generate language practice using the text	3.39	.881
<b>Paraphrastic Approach</b>	<b>4.05</b>	.610
13. Re-tell the text to students to help them understand	4.20	.805
14. Use simple terms to explain what the story is about to students	4.44	.710
15. Discuss what the author says in the text	3.93	.832
16. Get students to tell the storyline of the text	3.64	.902
<b>Moral-Philosophical Approach</b>	<b>3.93</b>	.720
17. Incorporate moral values in lessons	4.06	.932
18. Ask students the values they learn from the text	4.10	.822
19. Get students to search moral values from a text	3.79	.809
20. Raise students' awareness of values derived from the text	3.77	.817
<b>Stylistics Approach</b>	<b>3.36</b>	.643
21. Guide students to interpret a text by looking at the language used by the author	3.34	.847
22. Get students to mark any linguistic features from the text that are significant to their reading	3.30	.878
23. My literature lesson looks at the language of the text, thus, encourages language awareness	3.34	.729
24. Encourage students to discuss beyond the surface meaning of the text	3.47	.860

The classroom observations of both teachers revealed a high tendency of using the paraphrastic approach and the information-based approach in teaching the Literature Component in English. It was clearly noted that students were asked to read aloud the literary text to the entire class. This was followed by the teacher giving explanation of what was being read. However, it was noticed that teacher P would read the text aloud again, going through every unfamiliar terms found in the text. Teacher Q would explain and summarize the entire text in simple

language after the student has completed reading the text. In approaching the literary text, both teachers were seen to paraphrase difficult words and terms into 'layman' language which also involved the use of Bahasa Melayu and sometimes in Chinese. This was carried out by making elicitation to generate students' response as a way to check their understanding. Below are three evidences that illustrate the approaches adopted by the two teachers in their respective literature lessons.

- Teacher P : Class, what is a pearl?  
Student : Mutiara.  
Teacher P : Yes, you know oyster sauce? The one your mother cooks at home? [COB1P]
- Teacher P : What is a rifle?  
Class : (No response)  
Teacher P : It's something you use to kill something or even somebody. Like Kino, see what we read just now?  
Student : Pistol?  
Teacher P : Something like that. But it's longer than a pistol. (Teacher draws a rifle on the board). See, class? [COB3P]
- Teacher Q : You know what is baptism?  
Class : (No response).  
Teacher Q : It's when you want to be a christian, ok. Usually the priest will sprinkle some water. Who is a priest? Yes, class?  
Student 1 : Paderi?  
Student 2 : 'San Fu' (In Cantonese)  
Teacher Q : Yes, another name is... Father. You can also call him a pastor. [COB4Q]

### **Types of Activities Used by Teachers**

Findings from the questionnaire (see Table 3) reported that activities popularly used by teachers in teaching the Literature Component in English were as follows: information-based activities (mean = 3.75), paraphrastic activities (mean = 3.61), stylistics activities (mean = 3.51), moral-philosophical activities (mean = 3.32), personal-response activities (mean = 3.15) and language-based activities (mean = 2.85) remains the lowest.

**Table 3.** Mean score and standard deviation of activities used by teachers in teaching the literature component in English

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Information-Based Activities</b>	<b>3.75</b>	.670
1. Comprehension questions exercises	3.91	.910
2. Lecture sessions	3.14	1.11
3. Read notes from workbooks/handouts with students	3.71	.987
<b>Personal-Response Activities</b>	<b>3.15</b>	.697
4. Explain a text to students	4.25	.750
5. Journal writing	2.26	.994
6. Brainstorming sessions	3.54	.913
7. Small group discussions	3.60	.921
8. Writing about feelings/reactions towards an issue	3.21	.978
<b>Language-based Activities</b>	<b>2.85</b>	.639
9. Group work	3.66	1.01
10. Language activities (cloze, jigsaw puzzle, prediction exercises)	3.15	.971
11. Debate	2.03	.895
12. Performace activities (drama, role play, poetry recital)	2.57	1.02
<b>Paraphrastic Activities</b>	<b>3.61</b>	.659
13. Translation of text using L1	3.18	1.27
14. Re-tell story to students	3.99	.755
15. Students read paraphrased notes in the workbook/handouts	3.77	.911
16. Students re-tell story to the class	3.52	.926
<b>Moral-Philosophical Activities</b>	<b>3.32</b>	.759
17. Reflective sessions	3.21	1.00
18. Discussions on moral dilemmas	3.18	.959
19. Tell moral values to students	3.94	.826
20. Conduct self-evaluation activities	2.95	1.06

*(continued on next page)*

**Table 3.** (continued)

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Stylistics Activities</b>	<b>3.51</b>	.669
21. Identify linguistics features (eg. vocabulary, tenses) in a text	3.26	.933
22. Discuss different meanings of a text	3.52	.900
23. Extract examples from a text that describe a setting	3.55	.949
24. Identify adjectives that describe a character	3.72	.936

Language-based activities and personal-response activities were among the least activities conducted in the literature classroom. The findings could be associated with specific reference to item no. 5 and item no. 11 whereby journal writing (mean = 2.26) and debate (mean = 2.03) were the activities that depict the lowest mean scores. This is also evident whereby 26.4% (n = 23) and 32% (n = 28) of respondents indicated that they had never carried out such activities in their lessons. It is therefore not surprising to see that item no. 4 "explanation of text to students" was the activity most practiced by a significant 87.3% (n = 76) teachers in the literature classroom (mean = 4.25). A noticeable 76% (n = 66) of the respondents reported that they "re-tell the story of a text to the students" (item no. 14) as one of the activities during literature lessons. Item no. 19 and item no. 1 follow the list whereby 74% (n = 64) of respondents had indicated that they told moral values to their students and 66% (n = 57) of respondents have used comprehension questions exercises as their literature activities.

Interestingly, the case study on teachers P and Q also revealed similar findings. Both teachers showed some preferences to use information-based and paraphrastic activities. Teacher P was seen to constantly use three activities in her approach to teaching literature. First is reading aloud by the students. Students were given turns to read a paragraph. Secondly, teacher P re-read and paraphrased the literary text as a way of telling the story again to the students. The activity was in a passive mode. Occasionally, she would ask questions but most of the time would give students the answers to her questions. The third activity is setting comprehension questions exercises using prescribed exercises from the abridged version of the novel. This was systematically carried out at the post stages of her literature lessons.

Furthermore, the exercises were given as individual work where students copied the questions on the board in their exercise books and made an attempt to answer them whilst teacher P walked in the class or sat down to do her work. Similarly, teacher Q was seen to use the similar type of activities throughout her literature lessons. However, instead of reading the entire story like teacher P, she would get students to read the summary of segments of a chapter to the class. Her main

resource was the workbook. Throughout the observations, she made more references to the workbook than the novel and then proceeded to further explanation and clarification like teacher P. In addition, teacher Q set individual work for her students. Normally, she would get her students to answer certain questions in the workbook within a very short period of time. On a worrying note, it was observed that teacher Q would give all answers from the workbook to students in the form of a dictation. The findings presented above depict the nature of activities carried out in the literature classroom. Basically, it can be summed that reading aloud, comprehension exercises (in the form of WH-questions) and teacher re-telling and explaining the literary text were the three activities evident to all the classroom observations.

### **Why Teachers Employ Such Approaches and Activities?**

Based on the interviews with teacher P and teacher Q, both teachers had several fundamental reasons for approaching the teaching of literature in such a manner. First of all, the recapitulation activity as the beginning of the lesson using elicitation aimed at generating verbal responses from the students so as to recapitulate and set a connection between what was learnt earlier in the previous lesson before the new lesson commenced. Teacher P's reason was

"to check if they remember what they have learnt" [ITP/Q3]

Secondly, both teachers were seen to be in favour of getting students to read aloud the literary text. In the views of both teachers, this was largely due to the fact that the students had a lower proficiency in the English Language. Therefore, teacher P felt that it was a good way of helping them practice reading and pronouncing words in English. Teacher P clarified:

And then, we will start with reading aloud because the students on average, they are quite weak. So I encourage them to read aloud so that everyone can hear. They can improve their pronunciations. [ITP/Q3]

Whereas teacher Q explained:

It's for them to get a picture of the chapter I am teaching. Also, to practice pronunciation. Also some words they may not understand. So, we go through one by one. [ITQ/Q3]

After the reading aloud session, both teachers were seen to take over the scene again and attempt to explain what was read earlier. Certain terms and phrases were paraphrased into simpler words with occasional use of Bahasa Malaysia. Both teachers had the same reason for doing so, that is to enhance students'

further understanding on the literary text. Comprehension exercises were commonly given by teacher P after the completion of a chapter or segments of a chapter. This was a way for teacher P to check her students' understanding. Her decision to use comprehension questions was also partly due to the attitude of her students, their language proficiency and examination purposes. Teacher P pointed out that students who were good achievers or from the good classes per se preferred a more laid back approach and activity depicting more control by the teacher which required them to sit down, listen to the teacher and answer questions in the exercise books. This may well be related to their interest in acquiring good grades in English and the sole way is through successful attempts in answering examination questions. Whilst in the case of weak students, they did not appear to show any interest when Teacher P attempted to conduct dramatization. As a result, Teacher P chose comprehension questions as "comprehension question exercises are very easy questions for the weak class so it's easy for them to understand the story more" [ITP/Q4].

Teacher Q claimed that she would carry out role play and questions and answers (another term for comprehension questions) with her class. Her reasons were that the activities enable them to "understand the text and they can express their feelings" whereas "the questions and answers are to stimulate their brains and it's more for exam purposes" [ITQ/Q4]. The statement above seems to reflect teacher Q's concern over examination whereby she felt that questions and answers could trigger students' thinking on the things they have studied and therefore, it is an important activity for the purpose of examination. Interestingly, it was noted that teacher Q appeared to show more concern over the syllabus and examinations in comparison to teacher P although both teachers were seen to conduct very similar type of approaches and activities in their classrooms. When asked why they could not carry out certain activities like debates, dramatization, games and presentation in their literature lessons, teacher Q clarified "because of the time factor, I have to finish the syllabus because it's an exam class and then language proficiency" [ITQ/Q4]. Teacher P, on the other hand, had a differing set of reasons. Teacher P stated that "because of the space of the school, the number of students, the attitude of the students, they were not trained to be that way. Not vocal." [ITP/Q4].

### **Relationship between Approaches Employed by Teachers and Activities Carried Out**

Table 4 illustrates correlations of approaches employed by teachers and the activities they carried out whilst conducting their respective literature lessons. Calculations depict the correlation coefficient of +.733 is 0.537 (53.7%), where correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). It can be deduced that 53.7% of the variance in approaches employed by teachers can be accounted for by the

variance in activities they conducted in the literature classroom. This signifies that there is a relationship between the two variables namely 'approaches' and 'activities'.

**Table 4.** Correlations of approaches and activities in the literature classroom

Activity	Approach	
Pearson Correlation	1	<b>.733**</b>
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	87	87
Pearson Correlation	<b>.733**</b>	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	87	87

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### Differences between Option and Non-option English Teachers

Table 5 displays information on the means, standard deviations and standard error mean for the option and non-option teachers whilst Table 6 tabulates the results of the t-test. Findings from the table yielded a value of  $t [85] = 1.71$  where  $p > 0.05$ . The finding indicates that there is no significant mean difference between English option teachers and non-option English teachers in their approaches to teaching the literature component in English.

**Table 5.** Group statistics for option and non-option english teachers

Option	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Option	46	92.41	10.24	1.51
Non-option	41	87.93	14.07	2.20

Mean Difference = 4.49  
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances:  $F = 2.789, p = 0.99$

**Table 6.** Independent samples t-test on option and non-option English teachers in their approaches in teaching the literature component in English

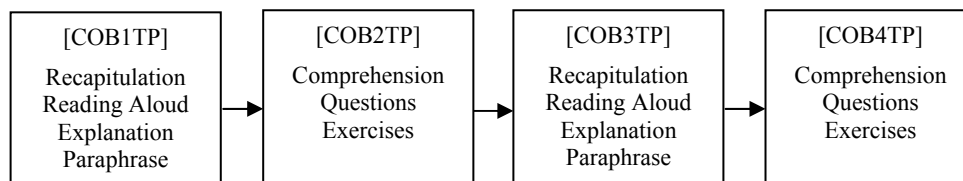
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif
Approach	1.71	85	.090	4.49

\*\*Significant at 0.05

The following section presents an analysis of data based on the compilation of eight classroom observations, field notes and interview transcripts to supplement the findings from the main instrument.

### Teacher P's Lessons

Teacher P is an English option teacher who majored in TESL. She has two years of teaching experience in the school as well as in the English subject. The class that was being observed is Form 5B, a social science class, which consists of 39 students with 80% Bumiputra students who are of Malay and Kadazan origin and 15% of Chinese students. Based on their form four year-end examination results, the passing rate of the class in the English Language was 50%. The students were generally weak in English, both in spoken and written. The literature lessons were based on the novel 'The Pearl'. The students were taught using the abridged version of the novel. In sum, teacher P's approaches to teaching literature depict a pattern of recapitulation, reading aloud, giving explanation and paraphrase a chapter or segments of a chapter. When these were completed, she would proceed to students' individual work, that comprehension exercises. This was carried out systematically throughout the four classroom observations (Figure 1).



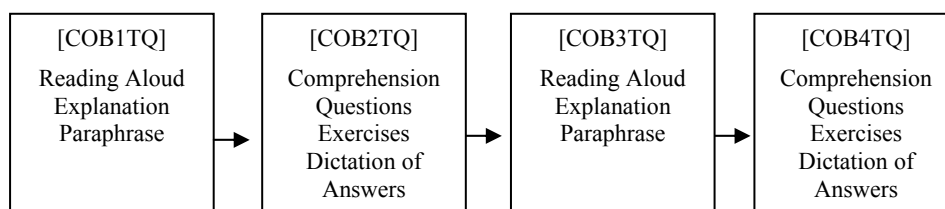
**Figure 1.** Structure of teacher P's literature lessons

### Teacher Q's Lessons

Teacher Q is a non-option English teacher who majored in History. She has five years of teaching experience in the school and has been teaching English for 5 years due to the shortage of English teachers in the school. The class that was being observed was Form 5C, a social science class, which consists of 40 students with 85% Chinese students and 15% Bumiputera students of Malay and Kadazan origin. Based on their year-end performance in form four, all students had obtained a passing mark in the English subject. Their range falls between 50% and 70%. No students obtained a distinction in the subject. During the literature lessons, the teacher did not use an abridged version as the text. Instead, each student had a workbook (with complete summary of all chapters) and the novel. Although Teacher Q claimed that she had used language-based activities like the role play and games in her lessons, these activities were not



seem to emerge in any of the four classroom observations. Therefore, it is best to conclude that teacher Q's approaches in teaching literature exhibit reading aloud, explanation and paraphrase segments of a chapter being read and answering questions prescribed in the workbook (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Structure of teacher Q's literature lessons

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The analysis of data gained from the questionnaire and the case study posits the current teaching scenario in urban secondary schools in Sandakan, Sabah. Interestingly, the six approaches for teaching literature appeared to be practiced at a moderate to high mode in the literature classroom. To reiterate, the paraphrastic approach and the information-based approach were among the most favoured approaches in the literature classroom.

This is substantiated by the qualitative findings through a case study involving eight classroom observations. The findings have indicated that the teacher acts as a dominant figure who reads the story, retells the story, explains, questions and gives answers to the students. The findings reflect a concomitant setting to earlier studies conducted by Suriya Kumar (2004) and Siti Norliana (2003), whose findings also manifested that the teacher was always in control by spending much time in dealing with students' comprehension and explanation of the literary text. A critical look at the findings of the approaches employed by these teachers also raises one pertinent issue. Ironically, the personal-response approach, language-based approach and the stylistics approach fall at the bottom of the list. This was clearly depicted in the classroom observation scenario. The classroom observations witnessed a very minimal interface of language and literature teaching in the classroom. The three criteria – "student-centred, activity-based and process-oriented" as termed by Carter (1996) were not exhibited in the literature lessons. Furthermore, Shahizah and Nackeeran (2003: 198) ascertain that teachers should "approach the teaching of the texts in ways that link the language-literary response or interpretation prioritizations" because personal response is very much expected from students as documented in the Curriculum

Specifications of the Literature Component in English. However, the findings seem to go against the core business of the Literature Component in English which is "to enhance students' proficiency in the English Language" (Ministry of Education, 1999). As Marckwardt (1978: 32) asserts "whenever literature was read in the classroom, it was designed to serve as a pathway to facilitate in reading and in mastering the language generally".

In retrospect, the findings of this study can be explained in terms of students' language proficiency. The classes involved in the case study were of low to moderate level of language proficiency. Here, language proficiency can perhaps be related to the degree of exposure to the target language itself owing to the attitude of people in general. Sandakan depicts a 'little Hong Kong' town whereby Cantonese, Hakka and Malay are the main languages spoken. In the school setting, it is not uncommon to hear Cantonese being used between an English teacher and her students during informal chats in the classroom, in the staffroom, during consultation or even between a headmistress and her subordinate! Perhaps, it is safe to say that English is not popularly used except for important or official matters. Thus, this scenario can possibly be an attributing factor to students' language proficiency in general. This is because Gardner (2003) asserts that attitude towards the learning situation has a direct impact on one's motivation in second language acquisition.

Hence, the findings seem to relate well with the findings of Zamrudah (2001) who revealed that these were examples of the typical activities she witnessed during her 8-weeks qualitative study on the teaching and learning of literature in an urban secondary school. It is, however, indeed ironical to find the absence of activities that reach out for the development of students' language proficiency and their personal response although these were clearly documented in the Curriculum Specifications of the syllabus. In particular, the language-based activities and personal-response activities were especially low in number. As Ganakumaran (2003) reiterates, the primary role of literature is to develop language competence. Again, the findings so far seem to leave a big question mark to the extent of which the core business of the Literature Component in English is being attended too seriously.

Activities related to language and triggering students' response were not conducted in any of the classroom observations. Activities like debates and journal writing were not popular among the respondents of this study. The reluctance to hold debates in the classroom, for example, can be explained in terms of the number of students in a classroom, ranging from 39 to 50. Consequently, it would be tedious to involve all students in a classroom debate. Furthermore, students may need to have a fair to good command of English when

conducting debates and the situation of a weak class may not enable the teacher to do so.

It can therefore be concluded that the activities witnessed throughout the eight classroom observations were of a passive mode which involved abundant listening, individual exercises and following the dictation of the teacher and copying the right answers. In corroboration of the findings in the T-Test conducted on option and non-option English teachers in their approaches to teaching literature, an analysis of classroom observations based on a case study was made with a view to gain a better justification realizing that the questionnaire itself would only give self-report data of the respondents. The findings of the case study would help to justify the situation. The results of all observations from the case study also illustrate the English option and non-option teacher had very similar approaches to teaching literature. Eventhough the English option teacher may have better advantages in terms of her knowledge and methodology in teaching literature, it was ironical to see that such knowledge did not differentiate her from her non-option counterpart.

## **CONCLUSION**

The embarkation of the Literature Component in English into the English Language Syllabus was legitimized five years ago. Yet, this newly embarked programme opens up interesting discussions amongst teachers, students, researchers, parents as well as the policy makers. This study allows one to see and understand how the Literature Component in English is taught in urban secondary schools. More importantly, it exposes the fact that teachers who are at the front line of teaching, are faced with different circumstances leading to their choice of approaches. To elaborate further, the findings of the study confirm that the choice of one's teaching approaches is largely attributed to six factors namely the exam oriented culture in the Malaysian school setting, students' language proficiency, selection of literary texts, large group classes, attitudes of students and the training received by teachers. With the factors identified above, these teachers are also placed in a dilemma – there is a need for them to gauge their approaches so that the aims and the objectives of the Literature Component in English will be attended to and hence, successfully accomplished and not a mere futile exercise.

## **REFERENCES**

- Allen, J. P. B., Frohlich, M. and Spada, N. (1984). *The communicative orientation of language teaching: An observation scheme*. In Handscombe, J. Orem, R. A. and Taylor, B. (eds.). *TESOL*, 83, 231–252.

- Anthony, E. M. (1963). Approach, method and technique. *English Language Teaching*, 17, 63–67.
- Beyea, S. C. and Nicoll, L. H. (1997). *AORN Journal Oct 1997*.
- Brown, D. H. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Longman.
- Carlsen, G. R. (1965). How do we teach? *English Journal*, 54, 364–369.
- Carter, R. (1986). Linguistic models, language and literariness: Study strategies in the teaching of literature to foreign students. In Brumfit, C. J. and Carter, R. (eds.). *Literature and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 110–132.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1988). The integration of language and literature in the English curriculum: A narrative on narratives. In Holden, S. (ed.). *Literature and language*. Oxford: Modern English Publications, 3–7.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1996). Look both ways before crossing: Developments in the language and literature classroom. In Carter, R. and McRae, J. (eds.). *Language, literature and the learner*. London: Longman, 1–15.
- Carter, R. and Long, M. (1991). *Teaching literature*. London: Longman.
- Carter, R. and McRae, J. (eds.). (1996). *Language, literature and the learner*. London: Longman.
- Collie, J. and Slater, S. (2001). *Literature in the classroom: A resource book of ideas and activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duppenthaler, P. (1987). Some criteria for selecting and designing activities for the language classroom. *Modern English Teacher*, 15(1), 36–37.
- Eagleson, R. and Kramer, L. (1976). *Language and literature: A synthesis*. London: Nelson.
- Ganakumaran, S. (2003). *Linguistic pathways to the study of literature in the Malaysian ESL context*. Retrieved March 10, 2004, from <http://www.fpbahasa.ukm.my/journal/20030102.html>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2003). Literature programmes in Malaysian schools: A historical overview. In Ganakumaran, S. and Edwin, M. (eds.). *Teaching of literature in ESL/EFL contexts*. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd., 27–48.

- Ganakumaran, S., Shahizah, I. H. and Koo, Y. L. (2003). The incorporation of the Literature Component in the Malaysian ESL syllabus for secondary schools: A study of pedagogical implications. In Ganakumaran, S. and Edwin, M. (eds.). *Teaching of literature in ESL/EFL contexts*. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd., 62–87.
- Gardner, R. C. (2003). *Language learning motivation: The student, the teacher, and the researcher*. Retrieved July 29, 2003, from University of Western Ontario. <http://www.utexas.edu/students/flesa/tpfle/contents.doc>.
- Gilroy-Scott, N. (1983). Introduction. in teaching literature overseas: Language-based approaches. In Brumfit, C.J. (ed.). *ELT Documents 115*, 1–6. Oxford: The British Council.
- Gurnam Kaur, S. (2003). Literature in the language classroom: Seeing through the eyes of learners. In Ganakumaran, S. and Edwin, M. (eds.). *Teaching of literature in ESL/EFL contexts*. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd., 88–110.
- Hirvela, A. (1996). Reader-response theory and ELT. *ELT Journal*, 50(2), 127–134. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horner, S. (1983). *Best laid plans: English teachers at work for school councils*. New York: Longman.
- Jayakaran, M., Ting, S. H. and Ali, A. G. (1998). *Class readers theory and practice*. Petaling Jaya: Longman.
- Kamarudin, H. H. (1988). *Kaedah pengajaran kesusasteraan*. Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.
- Krejcie, R. and Morgan, D. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607–610.
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maley, A. (1989). Down from the pedestal: Literature as resource. In Carter, R., Walker, R. and Brumfit, C. J. (eds.). *Literature and the learner: Methodological approaches*. Basingstoke, London: Modern English Publications, 10–24.
- Maley, A. and Duff, A. (1989). *The inward ear*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marckwardt, A. H. (1978). *The place of literature in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Marton, W. (1988). *Methods in English language teaching: Frameworks and options*. Hertfordshire: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd.

- McDonough, J. and Shaw, C. (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT: A teacher's guide*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing.
- McRae, J. (1991). *Literature with a small l*. Basingstoke: MEP Macmillan.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ministry of Education of Malaysia. (1999). *Curriculum specifications for the literature component in the English language curriculum for secondary schools*. Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Education of Malaysia.
- Moody, H. L. B. (1971). *The teaching of literature*. London: Longman.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1983). Approaches to the study of literature: A practitioner's view. In Brumfit, C. J. (ed.). *Teaching literature overseas: Language-based approaches. ELT Documents, 115*, 17–36. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Mukherjee, G. H. (1976). Literature for today and tomorrow. *Masalah Pendidikan, VI*, 43–47.
- Nesamalar, C., Saratha, S. and Teh, S. C. (1995). *ELT methodology principles and practice*. Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.
- Nolasco, R and Arthur, L. (1988). *Large classes*. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Noll, E. (1994). Social issues and literature circles with adolescents. *Journal of Reading, 38*, 88–93.
- Parwathy, R., Richards, C., Bhajan, K. and Theyy, R. (2004). *Light on lit emerald: Selected Poems & short stories for Form 4*. Petaling Jaya: Pearson Malaysia Sdn. Bhd.
- Povey, J. F. (1967). Literature in TESL programs: The language and the culture. *TESOL Quarterly, 1*, 40–46.
- Richards, J. C. and Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosli Talif. (1995). *Teaching literature in ESL the Malaysian context*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Pertanian Malaysia.
- Shahizah, I. H. and Nackeeran, S. (2003). Teaching Malaysian poetry through reader-response approaches. In Ganakumaran, S. and Edwin, M. (eds). *Teaching of literature in ESL/EFL contexts*. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd., 198–214.

- Short, M. H. (1983). Stylistics and the teaching of literature. In Brumfit, C. J. (ed.). *Teaching literature overseas: language-based approaches*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 67–84.
- Siti Norliana, G. (2003). Learner profiles based on attitudes towards literature. *M.A. Practicum Report*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Suriya Kumar, S. (2004). A study of the motivational factors that influence the learning of literature among upper secondary school students in Negeri Sembilan. *M.A. Practicum Report*. Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, E. (2003). Integrating moral education in the study of literature. *English Quarterly*, 35, 38. Toronto: Canadian Council of Teachers of English Language Arts.
- Whitehead, R. (1968). *Children's literature: Strategies of teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1975). *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*. Essex: Longman.
- Zamrudah, A. R. (2001). A study of the teaching and learning of literature in two Form 1 classes. *M. Ed. Practicum Report*. Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya.