



REASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERATURE AS TOOL

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Abstract:

Reassessment of English language literature as tool gossips on the review of existing scholarships and research articles on the teaching of English literature. A critical inquiry emerges within the canvass of the English Literature Teaching (ELT). ELT is a wide corpus of existing issues, from the prescribed texts to the pedagogical approaches employed. In the attempt to map the bewildering inquiry with its riposte, this study is aimed at conceptualizing the status quo by synthesizing pertinent literature. Overall, the findings yielded implication that would offer theoretical, novel and empirical means for the future teaching of English literature which evidently is still beset with numerous challenges. Thus, the review concludes with recommendations by advocating fundamental tenets; intercultural and selection of texts variables to be pragmatically employed for future researches.

Keywords: English literature, language teaching & learning; intercultural competence, tool

INTRODUCTION

Literature, most generically, is anybody or collection of written works. More restrictively, literature refers to writing considered to be an art form or any single writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value, and sometimes deploys language in ways that differ from ordinary usage. Literature, as imaginative writing, and comprising fiction and non-literary texts, employs a unique set of discourses [1]. At the onset, avid art and language devotees read and appreciated literature; however, literature has surfaced as an increased vigorous and dynamic resource, especially in language education. Initially, the teaching of

literature constituted English education, prior to the World War 2, at which time it was perceived as an outstanding model of language use and as a source of high ethical values, consequent to the study of the literary canon of the target language [2]. To restate this, according to Carroli, study of literature emerged as the main component of the learning, and not as an ingrained facet of language development [3]. Conversely, learning changed when the espousers of the Functional Approach debated to abolish literature from language education, influenced by the dispute that the study of literature did not match the essentials language skills of the students [4]. To exemplify the circumstance, student conceptions indicate that they have limited opportunities to employ developed language competence, as lexicon employed was not able to be contextualized to social practice. The aims to augment student comprehension of the English language, as it do offer enjoyment. Hence, literature can offer both a tool to enhance literacy and accuracy in the language as well as a means of pleasure. Finding a balance of the two becomes possible, despite the inhibitions [5].

In the year 2000, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia opted to integrate literature as a tested component in the secondary school English language education syllabus [6]. In the year 2005, the ministry included literature into the English language extended reading program for Primary 4 to 6. The change towards the incorporation of literature as a tested component in English education for the local context indicates that Malaysia not only intently adheres to current global trends in language education, but has also revealed the value of literature for English language education for. Influenced by the fact that literature in English language education comprises part of the traditional language teaching approaches, literature decreased in popularity when language education embarked on a focus on the functional uses of language. However, the role of literature in the English language classroom has received renewed attention, and many now view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in multiple non-primary discourses, and a potential source of student motivation [7, 8]. Formal English language education has existed globally due to the global application of English in media and popular textual modes, commerce, and the transactions of cultural commodities. It follows that developing competence in the English language presents increased opportunities for employment.

However, to compete globally, persons must be equipped with intercultural communication competence in particular. The inevitability of cultural diversity in the market place demands it, thus making intercultural communication competence an extremely important skill to develop and to cultivate. As a measure, literature in English language education can narrow the cultural gap. Institutions have employed differing approaches in language and literature-based education to constitute one of the teaching approaches used in language education [9]. By increased familiarity with literature, students can extrapolate their conceptions, a sense of what becomes possible, and their ability to empathize with others. In addition, literature education can also improve an ability to read critically and interpret texts, while gaining appreciation for literary genres and theories of interpretation (Writing Commons). Consequently, we can argue for greater appreciation of the role of literature as a basic component and a source of authentic text of the language curriculum, rather than as an inserted component, an ideology which has recently emerged [10].

REVIEW OF PERTINENT STUDIES

To explore the role of prescribed literary work and culture in the teaching of literature, a review of several empirical studies was done. The review divulged inconsistencies of corpus which was subsequently developed into research gaps or issues which were employed closely to examine relevant studies, evaluates the quality of the studies, and thus the findings are summarized below: The Ministry of Education boarded on a policy change in the year 2000, at which time policy acted so to integrate a greater exposure to literature into English education, whereby one of the five English periods required a greater component of literature. Subsequently, literary texts of a plethora of genres emerged in schools, where designated texts have English and Asian writers. Through exposure to these literary texts, student proficiency increases, contributes to student growth of character, as it does widen student viewpoints through exposure to an increased number of cultural varieties [8]. These selections of texts emerge from numerous genres. These Malaysian, British, European, Australian, American and African texts, consisting of short stories, novels, drama and poems, have become secondary school curriculum as school systems anticipate that students develop competences to effectively conceptualize and mentally delineate plots, to comprehend the poems, and to provide personal retort to texts. Exposure and increased familiarity with these texts intend to install values and widen student perception and attitudes towards the world. Literature is classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction, and whether it is poetry or prose. Fiction can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story, or drama; and such works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or genre. Impediments to Cultural and Language Teaching with the inception of language teaching, the concept of culture should be embedded as being a set of learned behaviors shared among society. At its core, the unique relationship and inhibition between learning and culture are ubiquitous, and undoubtedly, culture exists in all learned behavior. An indispensable facet of culture is that language perpetuates in shaping and expressing cultures from one society to another, and from one cohort to another. Literary style and structure can pose difficulties and challenges for students, particularly when writers comprise various ethnic enculturation. In this case, students must make sense of the writers' background. Therefore, to increase knowledge of the text, students must identify the language deviances and their significance. According to Wan Kamariah, students commonly develop a negative conception of poems, influenced by the abundance of figurative language and images employed, which students fail to comprehend [28].

In addition, linguistic structure in poetry can increase confusion, influenced by irregular punctuation, as well as organization. Despite that literary texts can assist students to develop competence in a secondary discourse, and respective set of cultures, inappropriate texts may engender gaps between the texts and the reader's perception, particularly in the cultural context. For example, the words or notion of autumn in Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*, can present itself as alien to students who lack knowledge to equate words employed in the aspect of cultural reference. Emanating from renewed attention assigned to literature in language education, we can well see the importance of issues such as intercultural competence, diversity in the range of text, and the use of antiquated language in relation to literature in the Malaysian context, where there exists significant need to further investigate the matter to expose information on ways in which teachers, and students cope with the

literature component. This becomes crucial as continuous research may assist in not only identifying perceptions and problems encountered in the implementation of literature in the English language classroom, but also to suggest specific ways in which teachers and students may negotiate to effectively include the literature component into syllabi. Existing studies can offer recommendations to institutions responsible for the preparation of future English language teachers for the challenges corresponding to their teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

Issues underlying the implementation of the literature component may include the viability of the component for students, as texts written by foreign authors constitute a considerable number of the manuscripts selected. College students who have had little exposure or contact with foreign settings and cultural background presented in texts may face difficulty in visualizing and imagining intended descriptions, thus hampering understanding of the literary works. Students and classrooms are becoming more diverse and multicultural each day, and therefore, mastering intercultural competence is a desirable option for a start. The variety of language learning situations has resulted in a growing demand for flexible and well-tailored approaches to intercultural communication in order to fill the gap. The challenge now is for language educators to respond to this demand by enriching language learning and by integrating into an informed awareness of intercultural issues. Educators are well placed to respond to this challenge, but they will need to adapt their professional profile to meet the new needs.

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