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CHALLENGES OF TEACHING LITERATURE THROUGH BASIC APPROACHES AT SCHOOL

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Abstract

This article is aimed to identify the approaches employed by teachers in teaching Contemporary Children's Literature Program to upper primary school. Using classroom observations and interview as research instruments, this paper evaluates the approaches of five ESL teachers teaching Year 5 students and examines the various challenges faced by them in the teaching of literature. Preliminary findings on the approaches revealed that the incorporation of literary elements in the classroom was minimal. Teachers were lacked creativity and fully utilized the modules provided by the Curriculum Development Centre. The Pre, While and Post-Reading was not employed effectively due to the lack of textbook provided by the school. Nevertheless, the program provides great potential for enhancing students' language learning in the classroom. This study contributes to the field of curriculum and pedagogy for authentic learning from the evaluation of teachers' approaches in the classroom learning.

Key words: Approaches, Challenges, Contemporary Children's Literature Program, Literature in Education, Literature Component.

The literature component in English is aimed at enhancing students' language proficiency, and it is also geared for the purpose of generating the aesthetic part of the language that is personal response from students. The English language Curriculum Specifications stated that the aim of literature is not only meant to address the interpersonal, informational aesthetic value of learning but also the learning of the English language in general. Similarly, this objective is in line to the curriculum of the Malaysia Ministry of Education (2009) that spells out the objectives of the introduction of literature component into the English language syllabus are to enable students to improve their proficiency through reading, respond to text, draw lessons and insights from slices of life, understand and appreciate other culture, relate to events, characters and own life as well as expose students to models of good writing.



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Literature in Education is aimed at developing the potential of students in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high social standards. It is therefore, the primary aim of incorporating literature into the English Language syllabus is to improve students' language ability. As stated in the English Language Curriculum Specification, the CCL Program is aimed to help students improve their English through reading simple fiction, to provide a continuum for the literature component introduced in school and to create an enjoyable learning environment. In relation to this, literature is not only meant to address the interpersonal and informational aesthetic value of the learning, but also beyond that where the students learn about people, culture, ethics, behaviors and other social norms. Hence, the implementation of children's literature would help children to expand their imagination and to acquire literacy in their learning.

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 the teaching of literature component in English would be of great value and interest. This study focuses on teacher's approaches and challenges in the teaching of CCL Program in primary schools. The study will focus on the approaches employed and challenges encountered in the teaching of literature to upper primary students.

Literature is meant to be enjoyed, as literature can be employed as a tool to promote literacy and proficiency in the language. It assists students to deal with problem of social, cultural, racial or problem that deals with life in the real world. The CDC of Malaysia Ministry of Education (2006) provides three benefits of having children's literature in primary schools' learning in the implementation of CCL Program. They are (1) the personal and emotional gains which offer enjoyment, enrich children understanding of themselves and the world around them, develops imagination, helps children make sense of their own experience and evokes one's feelings on issues related to life, (2) the learning gained allows children to learn new ideas and new knowledge, adds to their understanding of concepts, allows children to understand cultural traditions and values and issues in life, allows children to develop respect for self and others, and encourages them to become aware of their audience, and (3) the language gain which help children develop an awareness of how language works in communication, develop an understanding of the meaning of words, allows them to experience new ways of using language that bridges the



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gap between written and spoken language and allows them to experience the form of narratives.

As we come to the Teacher's approaches in the teaching of literature at schools, Carter, R. and Long (1991) stated that there are three models in the teaching of literature:

- (1) The Cultural Model which view literature as a teacher-centered and source of facts where teacher delegates knowledge and information to students,
- (2) The Language Model which allows teacher to employ strategies used in language teaching to deconstruct literary texts in order to serve specific linguistic goals, and
- (3) The Personal Growth Model where the focus is on a particular use of language in a text and in a specific cultural context.

These models have been incorporated in various approaches in the teaching of literature. There are six approaches in the teaching of literature. They are the (1) Language-Based Approach, (2) Paraphrastic Approach, (3) Information-Based Approach, (4) Personal-Response Approach, (5) Moral-Philosophical Approach, and (6) Stylistic Approach. Each of these approaches is related to the teaching of CCL Program in classroom instruction.

In conclusion, teaching literature is considered as an important process in education system because not only pupils at school but also students at universities may have some difficulties in reading fiction books, novels and works related to the literature and understanding their notion of the plot as well. Also, some basic approaches that mentioned above are completely helpful while teaching literature in class in which teachers may conduct the lectures or seminars with the help of different teaching materials with approaches to raise students' interest to the literature. This article has also indicated that the authentic learning from the evaluation of teachers' approaches and challenges in the classroom learning of CCL Program. It can be seen that the program provides great potential for enhancing students' language learning in the classroom activities via the approaches employed by teachers in the classroom instruction.

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