

Benefits of using literature in the classroom



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This chapter attempts to emphasize on relevant literature review that illustrate the following details; definition of literature, the importance of pedagogy, benefits of teaching literature in ESL Classroom, trainee teachers, and past studies.

2. 1 DISCUSSION OF MAJOR TOPICS OF STUDY

Literature is defined as pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays, and poems (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005). For literature in English, William Shakespeare is one of the famous writers who had produced massive masterpieces. He had been widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist (Greenblatt, 2005). Literature is also known as ' the window of the world' as it offers the learners or readers the gist of ones' culture, history, and traditions (Carter & Long, 1991)

Literature in English has been implemented in the Malaysian education system to enhance students' proficiency in the English Language through the study of a set prescribed literary text, as well as contributing to personal development and character building (Ministry of Education, 2000The claim " the study of literature is fundamentally a study of language in operation" (Widdowson: 1971) is based on the realization that literature is an example of language in use, and is a context for language use. Thus, studying the language of literary texts as language in operation is seen as enhancing the learner's appreciation of aspects of the different systems of language organisation (O'Sullivan, 1991). By the end of the secondary school English Language program, students should be able to achieve the objectives set for them. Unfortunately, after ten years being in the English syllabus, literature

<https://assignbuster.com/benefits-of-using-literature-in-the-classroom/>

is still not seen as an important role to learn English language in Malaysian curriculum.

There are several definition of teaching, and one of the definition is by Bruner (1996), he defined teaching as an effort to assist or shape the growth of students; it is mean that teacher should have an effort such as to prepare lessons, should know extra information on what they are going to teach in order to make their students understand more. The teaching process should be a two way communication between the teacher and the students so that it will be a meaningful learning. Therefore, to be able to have a better understanding on an outstanding teaching process that results in meaningful learning, a teacher should have pedagogical knowledge on teaching which contained methods, approaches, and strategies of teaching.

2. 1. 1 THE IMPORTANCE OF PEDAGOGY

According to Collins English Dictionary 6th Edition, 2006, pedagogy is defined as the principles, practice, or profession of teaching. Pedagogy came to be identified as practice, techniques, methods, or implementation, either separated from theory or inadequate to revise it (Salvatori, 1996). In becoming a teacher, trainees should be equipped with the knowledge of pedagogy and should be able to implement and use it in the real classroom. Pedagogy determines the effectiveness of a lesson by implementing the techniques and methods, as stated before. Effective teachers display a wide range of skills and abilities that lead to creating a learning environment where all students feel comfortable and are sure that they can succeed both academically and personally. (Early Childhood/Generalist Standards, 1998).

” pedagogy considers how education can provide individuals with the tools to better themselves and strengthen democracy, to create a more egalitarian and just society, and thus to deploy education in a process of progressive social change”

(Giroux, 1994)

As explained by Giroux, pedagogy promotes one individual to identify her flaws and discover the potential to be a better person. A teacher, for instance, could discover her/ his weaknesses in teaching by the approaches or strategies used in class. According to Entz (2006), it is possible to identify the crucial elements of teaching that contributes to successful learning for all children by implementing on pedagogical practices with the weakest and most challenging students. Entz adds that the most important areas of inquiry are how the teacher chooses to interact with learners, structures the classroom and delivers the content which conforms to the idea that the knowledge on pedagogy of teaching is crucial in order to be a teacher. In addition, Agree (1998) has stated that “ Good grasp of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and understanding students’ interests and needs are some of the requirements needed to teach literature competently”. Therefore, it is proven that pedagogy is one of the important elements in determining whether the lessons are successful or not.

2. 1. 2 THE BENEFITS OF TEACHING LITERATURE IN ESL CLASSROOM

Apart from that, teachers should have discovered the benefit of teaching literature in ESL classroom. According to Dr. Ganakumaran Subramaniam, a president of Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA), <https://assignbuster.com/benefits-of-using-literature-in-the-classroom/>

literature is introduced into syllabus for plentiful purposes. Literature is hoped to be able to (1) provide rich and diverse exposure to language, (2) improve vocabulary, syntax, and structure, (3) develop perception and interpretation skills, (4) develop comprehension and motivation. As stated in the Curriculum Specification (also known as Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah), the study of literary texts is meant to inculcate values and broaden learner's outlook. All the objectives mentioned can be related to literature component that existing English Syllabus.

There are three core areas that literature can help a language learner. The first aspect is literature assist learners' language development. According to Fook and Sidhu, (2010), a literature-enriched curriculum not only helps learners improve their reading and writing skills but more importantly helps them internalize grammar and vocabulary. Sidhu(2003) and Savvidou (2004) add that the study of literature unconsciously enhances students' overall linguistic competence including their knowledge of syntax, morphology, semantics and phonetics. HiÅŕmanoÄŕlu (2005) stated that, literature provides learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. As stated by Davis et al (1992), literary style and structure pose a problem for students in trying to comprehend literary texts, therefore, it somehow contributes to students' attitude towards literature learning. For instance, poems are identically disliked as it contains numbers of figurative language and images which students fail to interpret (Wan Kamariah, 2009). In order to make literature

as the prominent role in enhancing English language, teachers should be able to change this hindrance into attraction.

Literature also enhances ESL students' knowledge about society. In the literary texts prepared, students are exposed with various cultures from different countries. As stated by Kow (2002) noted that children's books are multifunctional. They help students to expand their imagination, apart from literacy. Literature helps students to cope with problems be they social, cultural, racial or problems that crop up in dealing with life in the real world. It also helps to inculcate specific social attitudes that are thought to be acceptable in their community. In fact, one of the advantages of using literature is that it can serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written. (Valdes 137). Valdes also warns us however, not to use literature only as a means of imparting cultural information (Valdes 137). The study of literature allows students to learn new ideas and knowledge. It adds to their understanding of concepts and cultural traditions and values and issues in life. Developing respect for self and others and encouraging one to become aware of one's audience are learning gains to be derived from the study of literature.

The third area that literature will benefit English language learner is in fostering students' critical thinking.

“ As it is highly suggestive and associative, literature speaks subtly different meanings to different people. It is rare for two readers to react identically to any given text. In teaching, this has two advantages. The first advantage is that each learner's interpretation has validity within limits. The second

advantage is that an almost infinite fund of interactive discussion is guaranteed since each person's perception is different. That no two readers will have a completely convergent interpretation establishes the tension that is necessary for a genuine exchange of ideas."

(Hismanoglu, 2005)

In other words, Hismanoglu agreed that literature promotes students to think critically as they have different perception and prior knowledge towards one literary text. According to Norliana Ghani (2009), students prefer books or texts that discuss the issues of youth, relationship, and social changes. These texts or stories are usually have clear language, good organization of the plot, and thought provoking. This is the reason why in literature class, students are encouraged to have discussions or presentations of their opinions which indirectly promote critical thinking. Critical thinking is very useful when it comes to problem solving as one has to weigh before making any decisions.

2. 1. 3 TRAINEE TEACHERS

In this study that involves trainee teachers; several aspects will be looking at. The first one is trainee teachers' readiness. In assuring the objectives of the KBSM to be achieved, trainee teachers should be prepared, knowledgeable, and confident to teach the subject that they are majoring in. Teacher preparation accounts for 40% to 60% of the total variance in students' achievement (Hammond, 2000). Darling Hammond also added that teacher preparation has a stronger connection with students' achievement. Therefore the teachers should be aware of all topics and sub topics used in

teaching process and able to discuss as well as enlighten students to understand the topic. As for literature, one of the best ways to have effective literature teaching in school is to be ready and prepared before hand.

According to Safiah Osman, (1992), the success of learning and teaching will depend a great deal on the teachers. The problem raises here is whether trainee teachers are well-equipped with relevant knowledge about literature or not. As future English teachers who are going to teach Literature for the subject, they will encounter some problems in teaching literature as they have least knowledge about literature elements. For those who are taking literature as their minor, they will learn various forms of literature from the various Literature subjects for instance Asian Literature, Contemporary Literature, Women and Literature, Literature in the English Classroom, Creative Writing, and Literature and Media. Throughout these subjects, the future English teachers will be learning and analyzing the elements of literature from various pieces of work. This show they gain their knowledge of literary elements and devices needed in teaching literature.

Teaching literature during micro/macro teaching is totally different with teaching literature in the real classroom. Teaching audience who have been embedded with the knowledge of the literary texts is very much easier than teaching students who have zero prior knowledge about the text. As stated in a research done by Nor Liyana Ghazali (2009), ninety seven percents of her respondents agree that prior knowledge of the literary texts is vital in comprehending the texts. Through my experience, as a student and also a trainee teacher, most students enter the literature class without reading the texts, even after the teacher had told them to do so. Teachers obviously

<https://assignbuster.com/benefits-of-using-literature-in-the-classroom/>

can't delay the lessons that they have planned before hand, hence, their strategies and techniques in making these students understand and participate in their instruction is crucial. If to compare with ' students' who have analyzed the literary texts, trainee teachers will found a huge difference and realize that their ambitious aims and objectives of the lessons can't be implemented in the real classroom.

As Grieve stated in his Teaching Strategies and Tips for Adjunct Faculty, teacher should be able to be a facilitator of learning which means they have to know how to develop learning skills and teach students to learn and to organize their materials. He added that teachers are actors or actresses on stage. They are responsible to their audience by assuring that their appearance, conducts, communication techniques, and physical traits are constantly under scrutiny. Teachers are also advised to vary their teaching activities to keep students interested. The usage of teaching aids like films, videos, demonstrations, or mini sketch/drama should be helpful in feeding their attention span. Apart from that, teachers have to be sensitive and alert to early signs of difficulties and ready to provide assistance and referrals to the students. This is parallel to Brown's suggestion in teaching English which teachers as the source of information. In literature teaching, teachers should be able to assist students with limitations in areas of reading and writing.

2. 2 CONCLUSIONS

As the conclusion, it can be seen from the statements above that teachers play crucial roles in determining students' interest and attitude towards literature teaching. Teachers' possession on pedagogical knowledge, creativity to conduct literature lessons, exposure and readiness to teach

literature are the aspects to determine the successfulness of a literature lesson.