



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING  
LITERATURE COMPONENT : SHORT STORY IN RURAL AREA.**

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Judul: THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING LITERATURE  
COMPONENT: SHORT STORY IN RURAL AREA

**SESI PENGAJIAN: 2005– 2008**

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**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING LITERATURE  
COMPONENT: SHORT STORY IN RURAL AREA.**

by

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
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The project entitled **The Challenges Faced by Teachers in Teaching Literature Component: Short Story in Rural Area** was prepared by Evelyn Alex submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science with Honours (English as a Second Language).

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## **Abstract**

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN TEACHING LITERATURE COMPONENT: SHORT STORY IN RURAL AREA**

The aim of this study is to study the challenges faced by teachers in teaching literature component particularly the short story, in rural areas. This study will look into what are the problems faced by the teachers and whether there are any differences in problems faced by primary and secondary teachers. Twenty teachers from Zone Tutoh in Baram District involved in this study. The data obtained from interviews were used and it was revealed both primary and secondary schools' teachers were facing same major problems in teaching literature in aspect of students' incompetence using the language and students' attitude in towards literature subjects. Findings also indicated they were facing several same causes to the problems and students' negative interest towards learning literature showed the highest notion. It as well revealed there were differences in problems faced by primary and secondary schools' teachers. A number of suggestions were requested from the respondents to overcome the problems.



## **Abstrak**

### **MASALAH-MASALAH YANG DIHADAPI OLEH GURU YANG MENGAJAR KOMPENEN SASTERA DI KAWASAN PEDALAMAN**

*Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru Bahasa Inggeris yang mengajar Komponen Sastera di sekolah rendah dan sekolah menengah dalam Zon Tutoh di daerah Baram. Selain itu, kajian ini turut dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti punca-punca masalah-masalah ini berlaku dalam pengajaran-pembelajaran di sekolah. Kajian ini turut bertujuan mengesan perbezaan masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru sekolah rendah dan sekolah menengah. Terdapat 20 guru yang mengajarkan komponen ini terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data diperolehi melalui temuramah. Hasil daripada kajian ini, terdapat beberapa masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru ini. Dapatan menunjukkan masalah penguasaan bahasa Inggeris dan sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran merupakan masalah terbesar yang dihadapi. Mengenai punca-punca masalah ini, semua guru berpendapat minat para pelajar terhadap pelajaran tersebut penyumbang tertinggi. Dapatan kajian turut menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan dalam masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh guru-guru tersebut. Antara perbezaan yang dikenalpasti ialah, guru-guru sekolah berpendapat sekolah lebih menumpukan tumpuan terhadap peperiksaan dan tidak mendapat sokongan daripada pihak pentadbiran, guru besar, guru manakala guru-guru sekolah berpendapat bahawa teks yang digunakan di tingkatan empat tidak bersesuaian dari segi sejarah dan budaya tempatan. Terdapat beberapa cadangan dan saranan yang perlu diambil kira oleh pihak Jabatan Pelajaran, guru-guru dan sekolah agar masalah-masalah yang dikenalpasti dapat ditangani.*

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.0 Chapter Overview**

This chapter will focus on the teaching and learning of literature from a broad view, the literature program that been implemented earlier and statement of the problem of this study.

### **1.1 Background**

For the past two decades or so, literature has found its way back into the teaching of ESL. Teachers have realized that literature can be used to reinforce the skills and complement language teaching. Scher (1976) as quoted in Muyskens, 1983 affirms that with students at the beginning and intermediate levels, teachers can use literary texts for language practice, reading comprehension, and possible aesthetic appreciation. In contrast, with advanced students literary texts may be utilized for the “development of knowledge of world literature, practice in reading and discussing creative work, and the introduction of literary concepts, genres, and terminologies e g, recognition of figures of speech, levels of meaning, and other stylistic features” (p. 413). Moreover, students can gain insight into literature by gaining entrance to a world familiar or unfamiliar to them due to the cultural aspects of stories, and taking a voyage from the literary text to their own minds to find meanings for ideas, leading to the critical thinking.

Widdowson (1985) points out that literature is a rich resource for teaching English Language in the ESL classroom and helps to develop learners' four language skills as well as the critical thinking skill. The development of critical thinking skill will enable learners to predict or infer meaning critically and analytically from the literary text. In addition, literature is a special source for personal development and growth that aims to encourage greater sensitivity and self-awareness towards the understanding of the target language and the world around the learners, especially in this area of globalization, internationalism and borderlessness.

Literature was introduced to primary school level because it can provide a motivating, meaningful context for language learning since children are naturally drawn to stories. It all started with several reading programmes as early 1970s such as The New Zealand Readers Programme, The World Bank Reading Project, The NILAM Programme and the latest is The Contemporary Literature for Primary Schools. This programme is directed at students at the primary 4, 5, and 6 levels. The aim of this programme are promoting good reading habits among students as well as develop their thinking skills in identifying the conflicts or problems and how to overcome it. All of the materials used in the primary schools are more contemporary, emphasized on the children' journey and adventure in order to make readers able to interpret the texts due to its similarity with their own experiences and the Curriculum Development (CDC) is responsible in selecting the materials. The materials used in teaching literature in primary school is shown in the table below:

<b>Year/Primary</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Writer</b>
<b>Year 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Humble Prince</li> <li>• Coral Bay Surprise</li> <li>• Everyone is Good at Something</li> </ul>	Kumara Velu Barbara & David Miller Peter Etherton
<b>Year 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Walking Box and other stories</li> <li>• What you wish for</li> </ul>	Judy Ling Ann Thomas
<b>Year 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorty</li> <li>• The Case of the Missing Maths teacher</li> </ul>	Christian Rule Suzanne Weyn

It also promotes academic literacy and thinking skills, and prepares children with English medium instructions. Literature also function as changing agent; good literature deal with some aspect of human condition and contribute to the emotional development of the child and foster positive interpersonal and multicultural attitudes.

Literature in the language classroom was implemented in all Malaysian secondary schools in 1989 through the introduction of the Class Reader Programme (CRP) with aimed; to expose students to materials in English, to motivate them to read and inculcate the reading habits. Beginning year 2000, the Literature in the Language Classroom Programme was introduced which allocated one period per week for English for the study of literature in the classroom. In this programme, the teaching of short stories in literature only took place in Form One and Form Four.

This programme, which also aims to enhance students' proficiency in English Language through the study of prescribed literary texts, contribute to personal development and character building, and broaden students' outlook through reading about other cultures. The short stories used in Literature in Language Classroom are listed below:

<b>Form</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Writer</b>
<b>Form 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Pencil</li> <li>• How Dalat Got Its Name</li> <li>• Of Bunga Telur and Bally Shoes</li> </ul>	Ali Majod Heidi Munan Che Husna Azhari
<b>Form 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Lotus Eater</li> <li>• The Necklace</li> <li>• The Drover's Wife</li> <li>• The Sound Machine</li> <li>• Looking for a Rain God</li> </ul>	Somerset Maughan Guy de Maupasant Henry Lawson Roald Dahl Bessie Head

## **1.2 Research Problems**

Teaching short story in Malaysian primary and secondary schools had made several changes in the teaching learning process. Every school in the rural area had made an effort to teach short story in their teaching learning process. These teachers had tried to ensure the students enjoy learning literature even though most of the students had poor command in English.

However, most teachers believed that they are facing problems in teaching these literature components. Some of the teachers might not have the knowledge to teach the literature component. Besides that, there are some teachers lacking the

experiences in teaching literature component especially for the non-English option teachers.

The problems that they might face such as the teaching techniques, problems with the provided texts in finding other sources to help them in teaching literature and relevant activities for their students, limited teaching and learning modules and minimal exposures.

Besides that, the students can cause teachers' problem. They might have to deal with the students' negative attitudes towards learning literature as they might find it difficult to understand the literary texts used, as they are proficiently poor in English. Therefore, all English teachers in schools in Malaysia regardless whether they have the knowledge of literature or training are required to teach literature component in the classroom.

Thus, the aim of this study is to find out the challenges faced by teachers in teaching literature component particularly the short story, in rural areas. This study will look into what are the problems faced by the teachers and whether there are any differences in problems faced by primary and secondary teachers. The teachers are required to give feedback regarding their problems and why are they facing such problems.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are to:

1. identify the problems faced by primary and secondary teachers in teaching literature component: short story
2. recognise the differences of problems identified between primary and secondary teachers in teaching literature component: short story
3. describe the causes of the problems identified by primary and secondary schools teachers in teaching literature component: short story
4. locate some possible suggestion that can help to overcome the problems

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the problems faced in teaching literature in primary and secondary school in rural areas?
2. What are causes of these problems to arise?
3. Are there any differences of problems faced by primary and secondary teachers in rural areas?
4. How do these teachers overcome the problems that they faced?

### **1.5 Significance of Study**

While the status of literature in English has been discussed from educational standpoints, the focus on challenges that faced by teachers especially serving in rural area has often remained outside the scope of purely pedagogical concerns. Indeed, although publications have recently begun to appear which explicitly address the international status of literature in English in relation to the challenges/problems of it (see, for example, Lazar 1993) such efforts remain rather isolated. At the local level, studies of this type have so far mainly been conducted in urban settings (e.g. Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, etc.), but not very much in rural settings especially Sarawak.



Thus, it is hoped that the findings of this study will provide insights into the education system in Malaysia in order to gain some indication as to what extent the teachers' awareness on challenges that arise from teaching literature in English in the language classroom and how such awareness affects their teaching. Besides, results from this study could provide some insight for the Ministry of Education and school authority to take measures and suggest ways to overcome the challenges that were identified.

Apart from the above, the result of this study will provide any interested future researchers with strong foundation to carry out further research in this area since most study had been carried out only focused on one part of Sarawak. It is hope by conducting this study in all the rural area in Sarawak, the authorities involved should able to identify the problems and indicate suggestion to overcome the challenges and to make sure the teachers and students have their equal rights as their peers in the urban areas.

## **1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The following terms will be used regularly in the study according to these definitions:

### **1.6.1 Literature Component**

Literature component is a part in the English Language Syllabus. Literature component refers to the teaching of literature with small "l" in the English Language. For this study, literature is taught as small 'l' in Malaysian classroom. The literary text is used as a medium to enhance and improve learners' proficiency in English such as the teaching of grammar items, vocabularies, pronunciation and the four language skills. However, in this programme, learners are expected to follow the story line and give their opinions, thoughts, and feelings to the texts as well appreciate others' cultures and belief. (Cater & Long, 1991)

### **1.6.2 Short story**

Short story is one of literature component. A short story tends to less complex than novel. It usually concentrates on one single incident and one finish reading it in one sitting. 19<sup>th</sup> century short story normally ended with or without a moral or practical lesson. (Kirszner & Mandell, 2004)

### **1.6.3 Challenges**

In this study, the terms ‘challenges’ refers to the difficulties arise while implementing short story in language classroom. Lazar (1993) pointed out that the challenges in teaching might be vary according to the students’ level of proficiency, selection of text or activities conducted. Variables such as classroom management, financial support and economic changes are some factors that contribute to the challenges in teaching literature component.

### **1.7 Scope of study**

The research covers all the English teachers serving in the Zon Tutoh, Baram District. All of these teachers have been teaching Literature in language classroom at least for a year regardless their teaching qualification and facing challenges while teaching this crucial subject. Teachers’ attitude, qualification and experience will give different perception towards challenges in teaching literature in the language classroom.

### **1.8 Summary**

This chapter is focused on the use of literature components in primary and secondary schools and what are the challenges arise while implementing literature components in schools. More further on the benefits of using literature components will be discussed in the literature review.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Preview**

This chapter begins by focussing on the Literature in English Classroom Programme, the benefit of using short story and teachers' role in teaching short story. Besides that, this study also discussing related study done by earlier researcher.

#### **2.1 Literature in Primary Schools**

The fundamental purpose of implemented literature in English language is to promote learners with strong foundation in language. There are several extensive reading programmes introduced to primary school such as The New Zealand Readers Programme, The World Bank Reading Project and The NILAM Programme. The aims of these reading programmes are to improve learner proficiency in English language, develop a love for reading, and promote independent reading.

Contemporary Literature was the latest programme introduced by the National Curriculum Development Centre to students at the primary 4, 5 and 6 in 2003.

The objectives of this programme include:

- The promotion of reading habit amongst students
- The enabling of students to become independent readers
- The development reading skills for different purpose

- The promotion of language accession
- The development of effective and competent readers

In this programme, students will be provided with fiction book as materials. The materials used are contemporary, written in 1990s, appeal to young learners, all about children and their adventures which enable the readers to imagine it while reading. This is due to fact that children's lives are largely organized around the narrative.

Besides, Ganakumaran (2003) said that literature brings the children into encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms. This will familiarize the students to the different types of genres in the English language syllabus that need to be covered. Each type of genres have its' own values and purposes which connection with the students interactions in their life situation.

## **2.2 Literature in Secondary Schools**

The programme was started in 1999 where the implementation is made in stages. It is been introduced to Form 1 and Form 4 in March 2000. In the following years 2001, literature component was introduced in the SPM English Language for the first time and followed by introducing it in PMR English Language in 2002.

The aims of this programme are:

- To enhance the students' proficiency in the English Language through the study of set of prescribed literary texts.
- To use literature in contributing towards personal development and character building of students
- To widen the students' outlook through reading other cultures and world views
- To encourage and facilitate more and keener interest for reading literature and literary texts among students

### **2.3. Benefit of using short stories in English Classroom**

Researchers who advocate the use of short stories list several benefits of short stories. These include motivational, cultural and higher-order thinking benefits. Nevertheless, before teachers look at these benefits in more details, they need to be reminded of one benefit that all teachers should take advantage of, reinforcement of skills.

#### **2.3.1 Reinforcement of skills.**

Short stories allow teachers to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. Murdoch (2002) indicates that “short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for students at intermediate levels of proficiency”. McRae, 1991, supports this statement, by saying short stories enable the students to be developed in all the four language skills and activate their thinking skill He explains why stories should be used to reinforce ESL by discussing activities teachers can create such as writing and acting out dialogues. In addition, Oster (1989) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively. Teachers can create a variety of writing activities to help students to develop their writing skills.

In addition, stories can be used to improve students' vocabulary and reading. Short stories is vary in multiple levels of meaning that demands learners to convey their personal responses to these multiple levels of meaning so it able to increase learners' attainment of language (Widdowson, 1985).

As short stories contain multiple layers of meaning, they can promote classroom activities that call for exchange of feelings and opinions. Such activities trigger the response potential in students. So learning a foreign language becomes a process of response (Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993). The students find the activities and the context in which they engage with these activities so absorbing that they enjoy taking risks in their search for meanings.

Students become more creative since they are faced with their own point of view, that/those of the main character(s) of the story and those of their peers, according to Oster (1989). This thoughtful process leads to critical thinking. As Oster confirms, "Focusing on point of view in short story enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen". Therefore, when students read, they interact with the text. By interacting with the text, they interpret what they read.

### **2.3.2 Motivating students**

Since short stories usually have a beginning, middle and an end, they encourage students at all levels of language proficiency to continue reading them until the end to find out how the conflict is resolved. They promote motivation in the classroom. By strengthening the affective and emotional domains of students, short story develops a sense of involvement in them (Carter and Long, 1991; Collie and Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993).

As a result, teachers should agree that short stories encourage students to read, and most literary texts chosen according to students' language proficiency levels and preferences will certainly be motivating. Text -books do not provide for any emotional and thoughtful engagement with the target language. This is because textbooks, for want of interesting and engaging content, focus the learners' attention on the mechanical aspects of language learning. Most textbooks derived the students to a lot of anxiety, stress, demotivation in addition to monotony and boredom. As a result, the arid and trivial content of the textbooks fails to bring about a sense of involvement. The failure to instill a sense of involvement in the students prevents them from an emotional engagement with the target language and denies them the pleasures of using the language imaginatively and reflectively (McRae, 1991). In the light of this discussion, motivation becomes equal with a process of engagement through which the learners begin to feel a sense of involvement with the target language.

By selecting stories appropriate to students' level of language proficiency, teachers avoid "frustrational reading" (Schulz, 1981). To choose stories according to students' preferences, stories should have various themes because, as Akyel and Yalçin (1990) point out, variety of themes will offer different things to many individuals' interests and tastes. However, the themes should be "consistent with the traditions that the learners are familiar with" (Widdowson, 1983) to avoid conflicts.

### **2.3.3 Teaching Culture**

Short stories transmit the culture of the people about whom the stories were written. By learning about the culture, students learn about the past and present, and about people's customs and traditions. Culture teaches students to understand and respect people's differences. When using literary texts, teachers must be aware that the culture of the people (if different from that of the students) for whom the text was written should be studied. As students face a new culture, they become more aware of their own culture. They start comparing their culture to the other culture to see whether they find similarities and/or differences between the two cultures. Misinterpretation may occur due to differences between the two cultures as Lazar (1993) explains. To avoid misinterpretation, teachers should introduce the culture to the students or ask them to find relevant information about it.

At the same time short story does seem to provide a way of contextualizing how a member of a particular society might behave or react in a specific situation' (Lazar, 1993). As a result, students will be able to develop their perceptions as to how people of different cultures relate to their experiences and assess them. Such perceptions help students to see the core of human situations that can occur cross-culturally. Furthermore, these perceptions equip them with the critical sensibilities they need to question, accept or reject the cultural assumptions of texts (Carter and Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993).

#### **2.3.4 Teaching higher order thinking skills**

Of all the benefits of short stories, higher-order thinking is the most exciting one. High intermediate/advanced students can analyze what they read; therefore, they start thinking critically when they read stories. Young (1996) discusses the use of children's stories to introduce critical thinking to college students. He believes that "stories have two crucial advantages over traditional content: . . . First, because they are entertaining, students' pervasive apprehension is reduced, and they learn from the beginning that critical thinking is natural, familiar, and sometimes even fun. Second, the stories put issues of critical thinking in an easily remembered context". Howie (1993) agrees with the use of short stories to teach critical thinking. He points out that teachers have the responsibility to help students to develop cognitive skills because everyone needs to "make judgments, be decisive, come to conclusions, synthesize information, organize, evaluate, predict, and apply knowledge." By reading and writing, students develop their critical thinking skills.

Introduced by Bloom et al. in 1956, thinking skills, called Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain, include both lower-order and higher-order thinking. Beginners are able to recall information and respond to questions about dates, events and places. Thus, when asked questions about names of characters, setting and plot of the story, they will have no difficulties responding to the questions. This is level 1 of the taxonomy - knowledge. As students become more proficient in the language, they can move to level 2 - comprehension. In this level, they must demonstrate their comprehension by comparing, interpreting, giving descriptions and stating main ideas. When students become even more proficient, they move to level 3 - application. In level 3, students try to solve problems by using the knowledge they have about the story. In level 4 – analysis - students must have reached the high intermediate level of proficiency to succeed. The reason is that students must analyze, compare, contrast, explain, infer, etc. facts/ideas about the story. Upon reaching the advanced level of proficiency, students can synthesize and evaluate what they read, the last two levels of the taxonomy (synthesis and evaluation).