ESL AND TESL STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA AS A TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING
LITERATURE IN ESL CLASSROOM

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This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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SESU PENGAJIAN: 2006-2009

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL  English as a Foreign Language
ESL  English as a Second Language
KBSR Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah
LEP  Limited English Proficiency
ELL  English Language Learner
ABSTRACT

TESL AND ESL STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA AS A TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING LITERATURE IN ESL CLASSROOM.

Mabel ak James Daim

The aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of TESL and ESL students in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) on the importance of using drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom. It is also to determine TESL and ESL students’ understanding of drama, to identify the TESL and ESL students’ attitudes and perceptions on the importance of using drama, and to discover the challenges that TESL and ESL students might perceive in implementing drama and to locate the possible suggestions to overcome the challenges. 71 participants from TESL and ESL programme, Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development were involved in this study and data was collected through questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed by using SPSS 15.0. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the TESL and ESL students showed positive attitudes and perceptions towards drama. Majority of the students understand the main concepts of drama although some of the students have misconception in drama. The findings also indicated the challenges that TESL and ESL students might perceive in implementing drama whereas the challenge of time consuming was the major reason that caused them hesitate or uncertain to use this technique in teaching literature. A number of suggestions were requested from the respondents to overcome the problems.
ABSTRAK

SIKAP DAN PERSEPSI PARA PELAJAR ESL AND TESL UNIMAS TERHADAP KEPENTINGAN DRAMA SEBAGAI SALAH SATU TEKNIK DALAM PENGAJARAN LITERATURE DALAM KELAS BAHASA INGGERIS

Mabel ak James Daim

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti sikap dan persepsi para pelajar TESL and ESL dari Universiti Malaysia Sarawak terhadap kepentingan drama sebagai salah satu teknik dalam pengajaran Literature dalam kelas subjek Bahasa Inggeris. Selain itu, kajian ini turut dijalankan untuk mengenalpasti kefahaman pelejar TESL dan ESL terhadap konsep atau makna drama. Kajian ini turut bertujuan mengesan sikap dan persepti para pelajar TESL and ESL terhadap kepentingan drama dalam kelas Literature, mengenalpasti masalah yang akan dihadapi apabila menjalankan aktiviti drama dalam kelas dan cara-cara mengatasi masalah yang dihadapi dalam perlaksanaan drama dalam kelas. Terdapat 71 pelajar TESL and ESL terlibat dalam kajian ini. Data diperolehi di analisis menggunakan program SPSS 15.0. Hasil daripada kajian ini, majority daripada para pelajar TESL dan ESL menunjukan sikap dan persepsi yang positif terhadap kepentingan drama sebagai teknik dalam pengajaran Literature dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris. Dapat juga menunjukan pelajar TESL dan ESL memahami konsep drama sebagai aktiviti dalam kelas. Dapat kajian juga menunjukkan terdapat pelbagai masalah yang dihadapi dalam perlaksanaan drama di dalam kelas dan masalah yang paling utama ialah kekangan masa. Beberapa cadangan turut dikemukakan oleh pelajar TESL dan ESL untuk mengatasi masalah yang bakal wujud ketika perlaksanaan aktiviti drama dalam kelas. Antara cadangan yang dikemukakan ialah pengurusan masa yang baik, mengikut kursus mengenai aktiviti drama, sokongan daripada pihak sekolah dan
perlaksaan aktiviti yang dapat meningkatkan motivasi pelajar terhadap kepentingan terlibat dalam aktiviti drama.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides the background of the study in order to connect ideas with the present study. Apart from that, it also states the purposes of the study, which are to determine TESL and ESL students’ understandings of drama, to identify the TESL and ESL students’ attitudes and perceptions on the importance of drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom, to discover the challenges that TESL and ESL students may perceive in implementing drama and to locate some possible suggestion that can help to overcome the problems.

The final section of this chapter presents the various definitions at hand for all the key terms that will be use in this study. Based on the given definition and also the context of this study, the key terms are redefined.

1.1 Background of the Study

Wilga Rivers, 1983, cited in Chauhan (2004) states, “the drama approach enables learners to use what they are learning with pragmatic intent, something which is the most difficult to learn through explanation.” By using drama techniques to teach English, the monotony of a conventional English class can be broken and
the syllabus can be transformed into one that will prepare learners to face their immediate world better as competent users of the English language because they have opportunity to use the language in operation. Using drama technique also can fulfill socio-affective requirements of the learners. Moreover, this learner centred approach makes the syllabus personally fulfilling.

Many school teachers have been using many teaching techniques and approaches to teach literature component in classroom. They use these techniques and approaches which are necessary or suitable based on their experiences and the pedagogical knowledge they gain from a courses, conferences and workshop. However the most common techniques and approaches applied by the teachers can be categorized into questioning techniques, the use of teaching aids, classroom activities, discussion, teaching materials, the use of instructions and reinforcement. According to Geyser (2006), using drama in the classroom setting provides a useful and enjoyable medium for language discovery. Students can express themselves in variety of ways and may be transported into world of imagination. Students are able to shed their inhibitions, taking on the role of entirely different character and escaping the shackles of culture and social expectations.

It is also hope that through literature it can help learners to be creative, sensitive towards certain culture ad deals with their daily life routines. The teachers’ role to creates or implement variety of activity is important in order to achieve that objective. However not all the activities are effectives because of the difficulties face by the teachers or the students when conducted it. This may be the challenge for the teacher because some of the activity if it is well manages, will give benefits to the students.

Therefore, the aim of the literature component in English Language Curriculum for Secondary Syllabus highlights the intentions to enhance students’ proficiency in English language through the study of prescribed literary texts. Students are expected to engage in wider reading of good works for enjoyment and for self-development. However, this study suggests that the study of prescribed
literary texts using Drama will be able to contribute to personal development and character building, and broaden students’ outlook through reading about other cultures and world views.

The literature component in English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools has outlined three areas of language use. These areas of language use are the Interpersonal, the Informational and the Aesthetic. The learning outcomes of the Aesthetic purposes is to expect students to be able to follow a story line, understand the poem and recognized elements in the three genres in short story, novels and poetry and give personal response to the text.

Since in aesthetic reading the experience is primary, this is where a classroom approach should begin and language usage should be explored only to the extend that it is relevant to that experience (Brumfit and Long, 1991). Consequently, Drama is an aesthetic classroom presentation to interpret literary text and encourage students to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. The language teachers can effectively foster aesthetic development by including Drama in the language programme activities in literature classes.

Furthermore, drama technique can enhance the language teaching and learning process. It can bring life and vitality to the classroom and release the teacher from the trap of the routine (Via,1987: 123). It also helps teachers to break away from the conventional techniques of teaching. It encourages the students to view the language as a tool for communication rather than as an academic subject (Via,1987: 123).According to Holden (1981), drama can develop student motivation to learn and at the same time offer simulating language practice.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Royka (2002) supports the notion by saying that sometimes teachers are reluctant to use 'drama' activities in classrooms for various reasons because they do
not know how to use the activities, limited resources, time constraints, a fear of looking and feeling foolish and the list goes on.

She also states that, some traditional style teachers are afraid they will appear unprofessional and even risk being fired if they focus the lesson on 'playing’ instead of serious study. Some language teachers feel comfortable only when using the course textbooks and feel that drama activities could take away from their position as the language "role model”.

It is supported by Furman (2000) as cited in Sun (2003), he states that although numerous researchers have emphasized the tremendous effect drama and theatre can have on learners’ cognitive and affective development as well as provided abundant resources for teachers, there still exists a gap between understanding its value and the implementing of it.

Drama in term of role play, simulation, simple dialogue reading, improvisation and reader’s theatre are some of the techniques that have been incorporated into classroom as to facilitate literature learning in English Language classroom and not as stand alone subject. Therefore some students and even the teacher did not realize the drama implementation in the class. The revise English Syllabus and Curriculum Specification (2002) of the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSR) that stresses on the use of language mainly for interpersonal, information and aesthetic use has prompted the significant role of drama. The main objective of using language for aesthetic use in literature is to promote students’ creativity and imaginations, and in drama students are given the opportunity to exercise their sensitivity and imagination. As a result according to Chamkaur Singh Gill (1996), the different batches of non-native English Language speakers have so far felt that their confidence and motivation in relation to spoken English has improved tremendously due of drama activities. She further says that students as non native of English language use the second language only in short, simple conversations based on dialogues they learned.
Nevertheless, the teachers might have different views and perceptions towards the using of drama in literature classroom by taking account of their experiences and preferred teaching techniques. Realizing the importance drama in literature classroom as mentioned above, this study is attended to find out the ESL and TESL students’ views towards drama as one of the techniques in teaching literature.

For the purpose of this study, ‘drama’ will be a technique for teaching and the drama activities would include role playing, improvisation and simulation. The drama is for the use of teaching and learning and not the traditional drama for performance and production. (undergraduate) students in UNIMAS views towards the use of drama by English language teachers as technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom. The students had learnt the drama or reading play in university however it is not stated in secondary school syllabus. The play is exposed not for the teaching in classroom but for them to learn the play and for the stage production. All of the scenarios will create some dilemma to them in teaching literature.

Drama technique is a very potential technique that can be used to enhance the process of teaching and learning. However drama is not stated as the literature component in the syllabus. To motivate learners in learning literature, so the teacher has to incorporate the drama activities such as role play, simulation and readers theatre in classroom to teach some of the literature component. Therefore the teacher will face some problem or challenging on how to conduct the drama in classroom.

Hence, this study seeks to discover trainers’ view on the usage of drama in ESL classroom in learning literature and the difficulties they face in conducting drama activities. It also explores the potential effects of drama on the students’ understanding of literature. This study will be useful to all English language teachers who are going to utilize drama into the teaching of literature in classroom.

Drama is one of the techniques that educators can implement in schools, since it has promised a positive outcome to learning and teaching. Many researchers has been done on the effects on Drama (Rousseau et. al.,2005; Najem 2000) but
less are done on what actually are the ESL and TESL students’ views on drama in teaching literature. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the ESL and TESL student’s views on drama as a technique in Teaching Literature.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

As mentioned earlier, drama is one of the techniques that educators can implement in schools, since it has promised a positive outcome to learning and teaching. Many researchers has been done on the effects on drama (Kozub, 2000; Liu, 2001; Sun, 2007),

But less are done on what actually are the ESL and TESL students’ attitudes and perceptions on the importance of using drama in teaching literature. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the ESL and TESL students’ attitude and perceptions on the importance of using drama in teaching literature. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the ESL and TESL students’ attitudes and perceptions on the importance of using drama in teaching literature in ESL classroom.

The purposes of this study are to:

1. determine ESL and TESL students’ understanding on drama.
2. identify ESL and TESL students’ attitudes on the importance of drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom.
3. identify ESL and TESL students’ perceptions on the importance of drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom.
4. discover the possible challenges that ESL and TESL students face in implementing drama in teaching literature in ESL classroom.
5. locate some possible suggestion that can help to overcome the challenges in implementing drama in teaching literature in ESL classroom.
1.4 Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the ESL and TESL students’ understandings on drama?
2. What are the ESL and TESL students’ attitudes on the importance of drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom?
3. What are the ESL and TESL students’ perceptions on the importance of drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom?
4. What are the possible challenges ESL and TESL students may face in teaching literature using drama in ESL classroom?
5. What are the possible suggestions that can help to overcome the challenges in teaching literature using drama in ESL classroom?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study can serve as one of the ways for teachers to know whether ESL and TESL prefer drama as technique or not suitable technique in teaching literature and the importance of using drama in teaching literature. Besides that, the findings can be a source of reference for educational practitioners and as guides to apply pedagogical practice, especially in the teaching of English language and literature subjects in classroom. It can also provide the teachers and other education practitioners a new insight into the use of drama in teaching and learning the other non English language subject.

In practical, the finding of the study can be a source of reference and translated into pedagogical practice for educational practitioners, particularly in the teaching of English language and literature subjects. For example, the findings of the study can serve as one of the basis references for TESL lecturers to be aware on what and how the students actually perceived drama in learning and teaching literature.
Thus, the findings of the study could give some ideas to those who involved in the process of incorporating Drama in literature classroom, to take the necessary steps, as to ensure its delivery effectiveness. Lastly, it is also to meet one of the objectives of the syllabus, that is in using drama and role-play in learning literature (Ministry of Education, 2003).

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Attitudes

Banos and Elia (2003) defines attitude as the individual prevailing tendency respond favourably or unfavourably to an object (persons or group of people, institutions or events) where it can be positive (values) or negative (prejudice). Attitude towards drama was examined based on the positive or negative responses TESL d ESL students had towards drama as a technique in teaching literature in ESL classroom.

1.6.2 Perceptions

Campbell (1967) defines that perceptions is closely related about something that is being observed and what is and what is said about it. It is a process where one will form an impression about someone or something. It is formed close observation that will be stared as added information which in turn will be based on its suitability. The perception in this study refers to ESL and TESL student’s interpretation and impression towards the importance of using drama in teaching literature and what they belief and value of using drama as a teaching technique in literature classes.

1.6.3 Drama

Holden (1981) defines drama as any activity which asks the participant to portray himself in an imaginary situation or to portray another person in an imaginary situation. Drama is thus concerned with the world of ‘let’s pretend’. It
provides an opportunity for a person to express himself through verbal expressions and gestures using his imagination and memory.

Billing and Cledd (1975) states drama as a medium through which the individual can express his ideas, his reaction to the impression he receives and by expressing, learn and evaluate them. According to McRae (1985), dramatization is role play and characterizations, music, movement and spatial awareness. By using fairy tales and creative teaching aids in situation dramas and improvised plays, students develop emotional intelligence by being more aware of others and self. Children are introduced to teamwork and to work in a group setting. They are also encouraged to develop their ability to think creatively.

In this study, drama refers more to informal drama (creative drama) as it is used in the language classroom and not on stage. Drama activities would include role playing, improvisation, story telling, readers theatre and drama games.

The participants in the drama activities are thus learners and not actors. All activities that require learners to imagine themselves in an imaginary situation would be included in drama. For the purpose of this study, the individual ‘drama activities’ are defined as follows:

1.6.4 Role Play

Van Ments (1989:16) refers to role play as “asking someone to imagine that they are either themselves or another person in a particular situation” whereas Bryne (1986: 115) states that participant interact either as themselves in imaginary situations or as other people in imaginary situations.” On the other hand, McCaslin (2000: 9) refers to it as “the assuming of the role for the particular value it may have to the participant rather than for the development of an art.”

Based on the given definition and explanation, role play can be defined as an act of asking a person or participant to imagine that he or she is either himself or