

AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
LITERATURE AND ITS USE IN ESL CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY AT A MATRICULATION  
CENTRE IN MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the integration of literature in language education at a Matriculation Center in Malaysia. It attempts, through empirical research, to identify teachers' and students' attitudes towards literature and its use in language instruction in a specific ESL (English as a Second Language) context. The primary data were collected through quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interviews and they were complemented by classroom observations and journal entries. Stylistics-based worksheets were also designed and tried out with both sets of respondents. The results reveal several significant findings. First, the teachers' pre-study attitudes towards literature in language instruction are encouraging and important variables such as their personal interest and previous experience of using literary texts as teachers influenced their outlook. Their post-study attitudes, however, display mixed feelings towards literature and these are significantly influenced by their encounter with the worksheets. Second, unlike the teachers, the students' pre-and post-study attitudes towards literature are more consistent, yet are not as encouraging and diverse as their instructors'. Though, in principle, the students perceive literature as useful mainly in terms of language development, grammatical acquisition and vocabulary growth, they demonstrate reservation about the possible addition of literature to their syllabus at the Center. Third, both sets of respondents exhibit a strong preference for communicative activities that often result in less emphasis on the language of the texts when literary works are used. Among the implications of the study is that a stylistics-based approach to literature can bear fruitful results if it is combined with communicative tasks, and a language-based approach is not easy to implement with less advanced students mainly due to their limited proficiency and inadequate vocabulary in the target language.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BENL	-	Bachelor of English Language and Literature
CRP	-	Class Reader Programme
ELD	-	English Language Department
ELRP	-	English Language Reader Programme
ELT	-	English Language Teaching
EL4	-	English Language 4
EL2	-	English Language 2
EPT	-	English Placement test
LE	-	Language Enhancement
L2	-	Second language
L1	-	First language
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
PW	-	Project Work
TESL	-	Teaching English as a Second Language

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## DEDICATION

To my beloved husband, **Zulkifly Yusuf** and to our wonderful children, **Iman, Ihsan, Farah** and **Fatihah**.

PART I

CONTEXT, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

## **Chapter One: Background to the Study**

### **1.1 Introduction**

It is a challenge for EFL (English as Foreign Language) or ESL (English as Second Language) teachers to motivate non-native students to achieve fluency in English. This is mainly due to factors such as large classes, time and syllabus constraints, students' attitudes towards the target language, and lack of effectiveness in the teaching resources or methodology (Gonzalez 1998). One of the resources which has been more extensively used in language teaching is literature. The use of literature in ESL/EFL teaching is always perceived by many teachers as a source of activities or useful supplementary materials that they can frequently or occasionally bring into their classroom. Nevertheless, according to Johnson (1999), there are language teachers who hesitate to present literary texts to students. This may be due to the teachers' lack of experience and background knowledge of the issues presented in these texts. Lazar (1990) adds that not only are teachers reluctant to use literary texts in their language classrooms, but students are hesitant as well.

However, many educators and researchers in both L1 and L2 have recognised the various benefits that language learners can gain from the integration of literature. The interest in bringing literature into language teaching has been depicted in the works of Widdowson (1983a), Brumfit (1985), Maley (1989, 1996), Carter and Long (1991), McRae (1991) and Lazar (1993, 1996b). These are some of the most prominent researchers who have explored the scope of incorporating literature in language education.

### **1.2 Aims of the study**

This study aims to look at the use of literature in language learning, specifically in terms of investigating teachers' and students' attitudes towards such integration in a specific ESL context. Bredella and Delanoy (1996: xxiii) describe literature in education as an area of



research which concerns itself with the study of the interactive processes among literary texts, teachers and students in specific educational contexts in order to improve existing practice of literature teaching.

Since the early eighties, there has been an upsurge of interest in how literature is employed in the ESL/EFL context (e.g. Lazar 1993). It has been argued that the interface between the study of language and literature together can be mutually complementary and beneficial (McRae 1996). Maley (1989) makes a valuable contribution to the field with his distinction between the study of literature as an 'object' and the use of literature as a 'resource' for language learning. More recently, Maley (2001:181) has expanded on this and explained that literature as an 'object' looks at literary texts as the object of study and "they are studied for their literary qualities", while literature as a 'resource' means it is primarily employed "as just one among many other kinds of texts" that can be used to teach language. Since then, there has been a growing number of publications on the integration of literature in second or foreign language classrooms (e.g. Duff and Maley 1990; Carter and McRae 1996; Ghosn 2002; Spiro 2004). It has also been reported that this integration offers numerous benefits and pleasure to students (Kelliney 1993; Berg and Berg 2001). Kelliney (*ibid.*: 115) writes:

Literature nourishes authentic language development, develops cultural awareness and tolerance, and stimulates personal involvement, encouraging independent and enjoyable reading and appreciation for the second or foreign language audience.

Lazar (1993:15-19) provides five reasons for using literature in English Language Teaching (ELT): (i) motivating materials, (ii) encouraging language acquisition, (iii) expanding students' language awareness, (iv) developing students' interpretative abilities, and (iv) educating the whole person. Earlier, Collie and Slater (1987:3-5) mention that literature offers valuable, authentic and relevant materials that provide cultural and language enrichment, as well as personal involvement for students. Despite these claims and the enjoyment that students can derive from literature, Edmonson (1997) argues that literature is not usually much liked by students, particularly second language learners, and that it does not bring the much

acclaimed benefits mentioned by the advocates of literature in language learning. Zyngier and Shepherd (2003:7) in their survey of 74 first year Brazilian undergraduates point out that

few students are emotionally moved by literature and even fewer actually enjoy the subject...it would be interesting to investigate why students maintain an emotional distance from literature, despite the fact that they report that they find literature relevant.

Their survey has demonstrated that in spite of the numerous classroom methodologies used in teaching literature, these approaches have not always been able to develop students' interest in literature and to derive enjoyment from reading literary texts. In short, their findings suggest that students do not automatically enjoy literature. Therefore, they have suggested further research into this area as to how students perceive literature, its functions and how they respond to it. Hall (2005:189) also claims that there is a need for research on the application of literature in language learning, particularly from the students' perspectives on literature as there is a "relative neglect to date of students' perspectives on LLE [literature in language education]."

So far, very few studies have investigated learners' attitudes, particularly those of post-secondary school level or matriculation students, towards literature and its use in language learning in the Malaysian context. Manan (2000) argues that the use of literary texts in a literature classroom through the application of stylistic methods can help sixth-form students to be critical readers, while Engku Ibrahim (1997) provides an illuminating evaluation on the use of Graded Class Readers in language teaching from teachers' perspectives.

As mentioned earlier, many studies have demonstrated that literature is one of the most valuable resources and that it should be included in language classrooms (Lazar 1996a; Ghosn 2002). However, if literature is said to be beneficial, Hall (2005) questions why some teachers are reluctant to approach literature. There are teachers who remain sceptical and lack interest in using literature in their English lessons. Bassnett and Grundy (1993:1) claim that there are language educators who believe that "literature is irrelevant, who argue that what

students need are texts that are 'practical' and 'rooted in everyday experience', not works of art." They add that there are basically two types of teachers: "language teachers who are uncertain about the classroom possibilities that literature can provide, and literature teachers who ignore language when teaching literature." This view is supported strongly by Hall (2005: 4):

Literature teachers have seen little need for research on the teaching of literature, while language teachers have researched language teaching but hardly considered literature in language teaching perspectives.

One probable reason why language teachers are reluctant to engage literature is their lack of knowledge and guidance on how to exploit literary texts. Collie and Slater (1987:8) note that, "even if teachers hope to do more to sharpen students' own response to the literary work, there is often little guidance on how to do so." Kelliney (1993:116) in his survey of 35 language instructors in Bahrain concurs that some ESL teachers have rejected the idea of using literature in their curriculum because they

did not know how either to select or teach literature in the ESL/EFL situation, never having had training in this area or never having taught or studied English literature before; and many had not had any informal training in literature since secondary school and therefore felt uncomfortable with the prospect of including literature in the curriculum.

In order for teachers to overcome these problems, Bassnett and Grundy (1993:2) stress that it is important for them to find suitable methodologies or ways of working with literature. They also suggest that language teachers who use literature in their classrooms should try to encourage their learners to approach literary texts in "the spirit of discovery." However, they emphasise that the methodology should be "original, worthwhile and contain effective ideas, especially ideas based on principled linguistic and methodological rationales." The linguistics-based investigation of literary texts is predominantly used in literature teaching and is usually called stylistics.

McRae and Clark (2004) argue that a stylistic approach is ideal for developing students' awareness of language use in literary texts. Although a number of studies have shown how a stylistic approach is useful in helping learners to be linguistically aware readers (Breen and Short 1988; Simpson 1992; Manan 2000), so far these studies have been conducted either with advanced university students in L1 and L2 contexts (e.g. Verdonk 1989; Brumfit and Benton 1993) or literature students (Zyngier 1994c), and not with lower- proficiency ESL learners or with the application of stylistic tools within the language classrooms. Although there has been much research on stylistics and its application in literature teaching (Short 1989; Simpson 2004), Hanauer (2001: 296) argues:

... much stylistic research involves the analysis of literary texts, not how real readers, let alone non-native readers, understand these texts. The main effort of a stylistic approach is to use linguistics to teach and interpret literature, not to investigate empirically the role literature can play in the language learning process.

Thus, in general, this current study attempts to investigate the following questions in a Malaysian context:

- i) How do intermediate-level ESL students feel about literature and its relevance to their language learning?
- ii) How do ESL teachers conceptualise the use of literature in the language classroom?
- iii) When teachers are provided with guidance and materials to help them to exploit literary texts, what effects do the approach have on their and their students' attitudes towards literature?

### 1.3 Structure

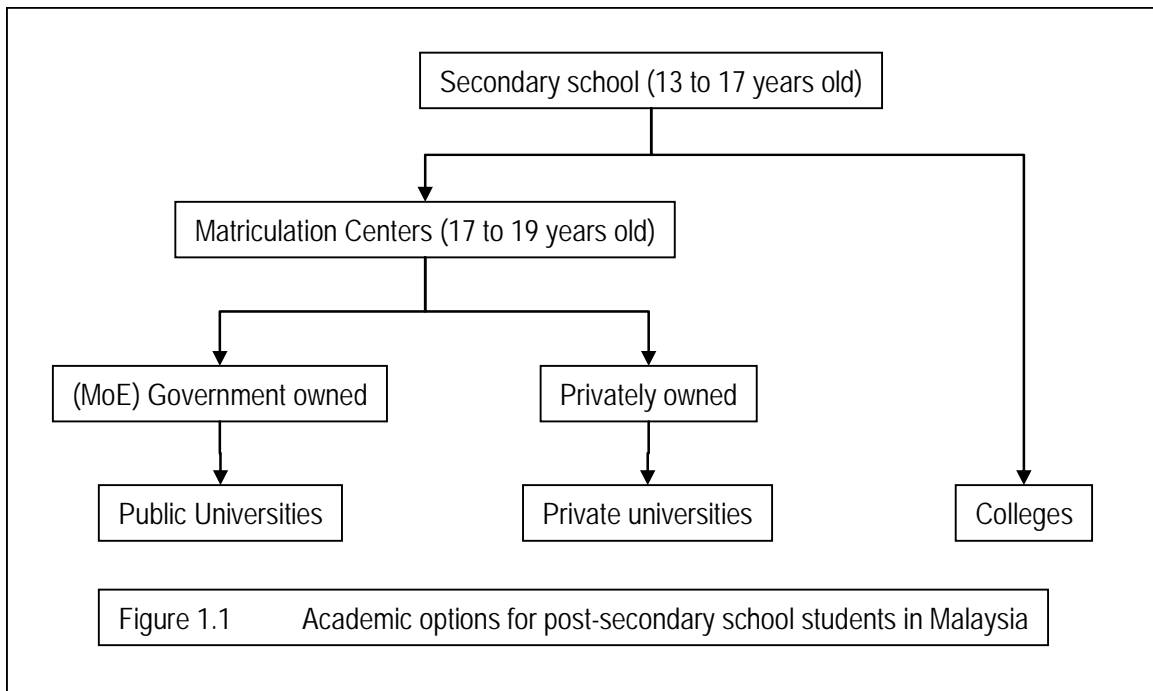
In order to achieve the aims outlined above, the study was conducted in two phases, consisting of a pilot work followed by a main study designed to investigate further the issues raised at the pilot stage. Each study had specific objectives which will be detailed later in Chapter Three.

This chapter began with the aims of the study, followed by a description of its background and context, and ends with a brief explanation on stylistics and the research

questions. A more detailed discussion of some of the research mentioned here is presented in the literature review in the next chapter. Chapter 2 reviews the research and theories on literature in ELT by outlining the theoretical assumptions on the approaches for integrating literature, and provides an in-depth discussion of the principles and practices of pedagogical stylistics, drawing on research in stylistics, linguistics and literary criticism. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology of the study. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews with the student respondents are presented in Chapters Four and Five, while Chapters Six and Seven discuss the data from the teachers' perspectives. A critical discussion of the findings follows in Chapter 8, where the study is evaluated and its implications explored. Chapter 9 concludes the study by presenting an overview of the strength of the study, acknowledging its limitations and outlining recommendations for future research with regard to the application of literature in ESL classrooms.

#### **1.4 The Malaysian context**

Generally in Malaysia, students who have finished their secondary school years choose to enter either local or overseas universities or colleges to further their studies. At the time of the study, there are 31 universities in Malaysia (20 public or government funded universities and 11 private ones) which offer diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. Some of the private universities are owned and managed by big companies in Malaysia such as *Petronas* and *Telekom*. It is compulsory for students to enrol in a pre-university programme, which is known as the Matriculation programme, prior to their admission to the public universities. On the other hand, admission to the private universities depends on the regulations of these universities. Figure 1.1 below describes the academic options that students have after completing their secondary school education.



The Matriculation programmes consist of two distinct types. The first is run by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Previously, this type was managed by the public universities themselves with different administrations and curricula depending on the needs and requirements of each university. However, in September 1998, the MoE took over the task of conducting the matriculation programmes for the public universities. The move was done in order to standardise and reorganise all the matriculation programmes. Currently, these programmes are conducted at 11 matriculation centers, which are run and owned by the MoE. Although the MoE is in-charge of managing these centers, it shares responsibility for developing the curriculum and assessment of the programmes with the public universities. Thus, these universities still play an important role in working together with the MoE in ensuring that students are given the essential foundation programmes which are relevant to their degree courses.

The second type of matriculation programme, however, is managed by the private university to which the matriculation center is attached. Thus, the curriculum for these centers

is dictated by the respective universities. Currently, only 2 private universities are offering matriculation programmes for their students.

Even though the MoE is administering most matriculation programmes, one public university, *University Islam Antarabangsa* (UIA) or the International Islamic University Malaysia, still runs its own programme. Its Center can accommodate a larger number of students compared to the MoE Matriculation Centers. This study was carried out at the UIA Matriculation Center for reasons of accessibility, as I am one of the academic staff of the university.

### 1.5 Matriculation Center

The Matriculation Center of the UIA was established in July 1985 and designed to prepare students for admission to the Bachelor degree programmes of the University. The University is comprised of three campuses: the Main Campus, the Medical Campus and the Matriculation Center. These three campuses are located in different places and English is used as the medium of instruction in all of them. The Main Campus and the Matriculation Center are located in different cities; the former is in Gombak, while the latter is in Petaling Jaya. Both cities, however, are located in the state of Selangor. On the other hand, the Medical Campus is located in Kuantan, the capital city of Pahang. However, the English language proficiency courses are only offered at the Main Campus and the Matriculation Center and no courses are provided at the Medical campus. This is because these students will have either taken their proficiency language courses at the Main Campus or at the Matriculation Center, before they proceed to the Medical Campus. The English language courses at the Main Campus cater specially for international students, whereas the Center is mainly for locals. The English language syllabus for the Matriculation Center and the Main Campus was recently standardised in July 2005. Prior to this, the two campuses had two entirely different syllabi.

A majority of the students at the Center are Malays and their first language is *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language). The average age of these students is 17-18 years. Since English is

used as the medium of instruction at the University, it is compulsory for all students to pass all their English language courses during their two-year stay at the Center before they can proceed to their respective degree programmes such as Law, Architecture, Human Sciences and Islamic Studies which are offered at the Main Campus, while courses such as Medicine, Pharmacy, and Nursing are run at the Medical Campus.

### 1.5.1 English language proficiency courses

The English Language Department (ELD) at the Center was established to offer English language proficiency courses to all matriculation students. Upon admission to the Center, all students have to sit an English Placement Test (EPT), which is devised by the ELD, before they can be placed at the appropriate level. Students have to pass each level before they can proceed to the next. There are 17 weeks in each semester, and students have to complete their appropriate English language courses within this period. Table 1.1 below shows the current English language courses and their levels.

Courses	Course Code	Level	Hours per week
English Language 3	LEM 3000	Pre-Intermediate	16
English Language 4	LEM 4000	Lower-Intermediate	16
English Language 5	LEM 5000	Intermediate	9
English Language 6	LEM 6000	High-Intermediate	9
English for Academic Purposes	EAP	Advanced	6

Table 1.1 English Language proficiency courses

The language courses at the Center start at English Language 3 because it is a continuation of the language proficiency courses offered at the Main Campus. At the Main Campus, the language levels start at English Language 1, followed by English Language 2 and then by the levels similar to the those at the Matriculation Center. The first two language levels are only offered at the Main Campus as they cater for the international students from countries such as Bosnia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Russia and Iran, who usually have a lower level of



proficiency in English based on their EPT results. On the other hand, the language courses at the Matriculation Center only start with EL3 as it is assumed that most of the students have a better command of English compared to their international counterparts at the Main Campus. This assumption is based on their higher scores in their EPT test, and also because the students at the Center will have undergone compulsory English language education both in primary and secondary schools.

Although the English language proficiency courses at the Center start at a slightly higher level than those at the Main Campus, the ELD at the Center is frequently criticised for failing to deliver students to the other two campuses with a satisfactory level of English. Based on my three years experience of teaching there, the students do exhibit a poor command of English even after having spent two years at the Center learning intensive English. The current Course Coordinator for English for Academic Purpose (EAP), the final English language course that students have to attend to before enrolling in their degree programmes, also verifies that the various Departments or Faculties both on the Main and Medical Campus that these students wish to attend, regularly question the quality of the students' English. She stresses that their complaints mainly emanate from the students' lack of competence in the language:

*Our students lack the ability to express their ideas in written form. They may be able to tell the lecturers and the professors their ideas verbally, but these same ideas are not well presented in written form...Faculties like Law especially require their students to express their ideas and speak their minds regarding topics in classes. But many of our students tend to shy away from the discussion simply because they are not able to articulate their arguments due to poor English. (A M Zamin, 2007, pers. comm., 4 January)*

Because of this, she claims that the ELD feels the pressure to deliver students with acceptable language abilities. As such, the department makes regular modifications to its syllabus in the hope of finding appropriate ways to equip students with an adequate level of proficiency. These changes may indicate the need to find other more suitable ways to help develop and improve the students' level of English. As pointed out by the coordinator:

*I feel that there is an urgent need for us to do something to improve this situation... I believe there is still a lot that we need to improve at our language centre. The curriculum is on top of the list, I think. (A M Zamin, 2007, pers. comm., 4 January)*

### 1.5.2 English language components

The English language components at the Center consist of Writing, Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Grammar. Each language level except for EAP has all the skills-based classes (Table 1.2). At each level, the students are assessed through mid-semester and final examinations, as well as their coursework.

Before the language courses at the Matriculation Center and the Main Campus were standardised, the Center used a different syllabus. There were also 5 levels of English in the previous syllabus, ranging from English Level 1 to EAP (Table 1.3). Similar to the current syllabus, students in all language courses in the previous curriculum were assessed in their Reading and Writing class through examinations, coursework and class presentations. The only difference was that the previous syllabus consisted of a course called Project Work (PW) and the Language Enhancement (LE) class for each language level. The latter, which focused on communicative tasks and was geared towards developing students' speaking skills, was replaced with the Speaking class in the current syllabus. The difference between these two classes is that the LE class was not assessed, whereas in the Speaking class students are assessed in terms of individual and group presentations. A new addition to the current programme is that a Listening class has been introduced at every language level. Grammar is also included in the new syllabus and taught as a separate component.

Courses	Skills-based classes	Hours per week
English Language 3 (LEM 3000)	Writing Reading Grammar Listening Speaking	6 4 2 2 2
English Language 4 (LEM 4000)	Writing Reading Grammar Listening Speaking	6 4 2 2 2
English Language 5 (LEM 5000)	Writing Reading Grammar Listening Speaking	6 4 2 2 2
English Language 6 (LEM 6000)	Writing Reading Grammar Listening Speaking	6 4 2 2 2
English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	Integrated skills	6

Table 1.2 The current skills-based components for the English language courses

The PW classes in the old syllabus were also omitted from the current curriculum. English Language 1 in the previous syllabus has been relabelled as English Language 3 (EL3) in the new curriculum. EL3 focuses on descriptive and exemplificative essays in both the Writing and Reading class. The only difference is that the former syllabus had a PW class. English Language 2, currently known as English Language 4 (EL4), focuses on comparative and classification writing. In the previous syllabus, the PW for this course was the only class that used literary texts as the reading materials. On the other hand, English Language 3 or the present English Language 5 (EL5), centers on cause and effect writing activities. In the previous PW, students had to do 'mini research' based on this theme. Although English Language 4 in the previous syllabus has been renamed English Language 6 (EL6) in the new

curriculum, the course still deals with argumentative writing. For the PW in the old syllabus, the students also had to do a 'mini research' of an argumentative nature. On the other hand, no changes were made for EAP, which deals with writing an academic research paper.

Courses	Skills-based classes	Hours per week
English Language 1 (LEM 1103)	Writing	6
	Reading	4
	Project Work	4
	Language Enhancement	2
English Language 2 (LEM 2103)	Writing	6
	Reading	4
	Project Work	4
	Language Enhancement	2
English Language 3 (LEM 3102)	Writing	4
	Reading	2
	Project Work	2
	Language Enhancement	1
English Language 4 (LEM 4102)	Writing	4
	Reading	2
	Grammar	2
	Language Enhancement	1
English for Academic Purposes (LEM 5103)	Integrated skills	6

Table 1.3 The previous English language syllabus at the Center

The changes made in the curriculum have significantly affected the focus of this study. Since this study is about the integration of literature in language classrooms, the PW at EL2 in the old syllabus was employed as the subject for the preliminary work as this was the only class that used literary texts. However, when the new curriculum was put into practice, the Reading course at EL4 in the new syllabus was selected as the focus of the research. The justification for using this course as the subject will be discussed in the following section.

### 1.5.3 Reading course at EL4

The Reading course is one of the skills-based classes offered at EL4, which caters for lower-intermediate language students. It entails a mid-semester and final examination and

students are only assessed through these formal tests. The Reading course is a 2-hour class, with two meetings a week. In this class, students use an integrated published textbook, which incorporates all the activities that teachers have to use for their Listening, Speaking, Writing and Grammar classes. In other words, the students are using the same textbook for all the skills-based courses.

The Reading course was chosen for three important reasons: the act of reading itself, the objectives for the Reading class, and the students' level of proficiency. First, it was selected because of the assumption that "the acts of reading and appreciating a text are closely related" (Zyngier, 1994c:298). Widdowson (1979:74) regards reading "not as a reaction to a text but an interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text." Other prominent researchers such as Iser (1978), Rosenblatt (1978) and Fish (1980) also argue that reading is dynamic and interactive, and meaning emerges from a transaction between the readers and texts. In other words, meaning is derived from the interaction between the text and the reader, who is affected by the social and physical context that she or he is in (Rosenblatt 1978). A similar interaction process also happens whether a reader reads literary or non-literary texts as reading is an active process. Aebbersold and Field (1997:15) further explain that "reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text. It is the interaction between the text and the reader that constitutes actual reading."

Accordingly, I decided that the Reading class would be an ideal context in which to see both students' and teachers' reactions and attitudes to using literary texts in their language classrooms. Moreover, since the Reading course is a language proficiency class, I wanted the students not only to be exposed to reading literary works, but more importantly, to learn about the target language through the language of these texts. This was why a largely language-based approach to literature was employed in the study.

Furthermore, both the general and specific objectives of the Reading course offered a good opportunity for literature to be used in this class. Generally, the Reading class aimed to help students: (i) construct meanings as they comprehend, interpret and respond to what they read, (ii) apply a range of skills and strategies in reading, and (iii) set goals, monitor and evaluate their progress in reading. Table 1.4 below lists the specific objectives for the Reading class. (A more detailed objective is provided in Appendix 1).

Specific aims
<b>1. Construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret and respond to what they read</b> a) Make predictions and connections between new material and previous information b) Demonstrate understanding of main ideas c) Accurately retell key elements d) Provide summaries
<b>2. Apply a range of skills and strategies in reading</b> a) Gather the meaning of words through grammatical structures, analysis of word parts and context b) Make accurate inferences based on the information in the text c) Adjust fluency, rate and style of reading
<b>3. Set goals, monitor and evaluate their progress in reading</b> a) Articulate and evaluate strategies to self-monitor reading progress b) Monitor reading successes and set reading goals

Table 1.4      The specific aims of the Reading class

The use of literature shares similar aims to the above when it is integrated into language learning. According to Maley and Duff (1989), literary texts allow multiple interpretations, thus providing ready-made materials for language discussion among students. In the performance of these literary-based discussions, students are encouraged to make predictions and inferences, discover new word meanings and demonstrate their understanding of the texts. This will also motivate interaction between the students and the text, and with each other, which can promote language acquisition. In addition, Simmons and Deluzain (1992) state that literature also develops different skills and strategies in reading, such as close reading and logical argumentation.

McRae (1991) has outlined the differences between 'referential' texts, which are predominantly used for conveying information, and 'representational' texts, which encourage readers to interact with the texts and re-create their own imaginative and creative interpretations. The textbook used in the Reading class is essentially referential. Thus, if literature was used to complement the textbook, the class would offer students access to both referential and representational texts which would further enhance their reading experience.

Teachers can exploit literary texts in numerous ways to suit their purposes and most importantly, students' needs and their language abilities. The Reading course allows both teachers and students the opportunities to read, explore and experiment with literary texts. Since the class deals with reading a language, stylistics, then, recommends itself as a suitable method of analysis of how the language elements work in literary texts (Fowler 1996). This is because stylistics is "undoubtedly an interesting and valid way of approaching literature...since its primary concern is with language" (Maley, 1989:11). The Reading class, therefore, presents an ideal setting for the integration of literature as it provides students with the opportunities to read, interpret and respond to literary texts, which can have an impact on their attitudes towards reading, whether literary or non-literary materials. Thus, literature can become one source among others for promoting language learning.

The third reason for selecting the Reading class as the subject for the study was because of the students' level of proficiency. EL4 caters for lower-intermediate language learners as did EL2 in the old syllabus. Since the preliminary study was conducted with students of the same level of proficiency, EL4 was selected to be the target group for the present research. The lower-intermediate language learners' level of proficiency is quite similar to Band 5 (Modest User of English) in the IELTS testing system.

## 1.6 Why stylistics?

In order to effectively integrate literature in ESL classrooms, teachers need an approach which can help them to exploit literary texts and bridge the gap between creative tasks and language-based activities in such context. Most importantly, the approach should also help students to achieve their main aim of learning English, which is to improve and accomplish the desired competence in the target language. Studies have shown how stylistics can offer assistance and ways for achieving such results (Simpson 1992; Zyngier 1994c; Manan 2000). Lazar (1993:35) holds that a "stylistic analysis is a useful way of revising grammar and vocabulary with students, and increasing their overall language awareness."

According to Carter and Long (1991:123) a stylistic analysis

can assist the awareness of language use, can heighten sensitivity to literary styles and purposes and foster confidence in reading and interpreting texts. If students are regularly encouraged to explore equations between linguistic norms and meanings, then they are becoming more effective and accurate readers.

However, critics of stylistics question this assumption that students will learn the target language by conducting a thorough analysis of the language of literary texts, and doubt that a stylistic analysis will contribute to students' aesthetic enjoyment of literary works. Gower (1986:126) claims that a stylistic analysis turns a literary text into an object and reduces the distinction between analysis and reading. He argues:

The impression is given of literature as an object, something inert, something you do something with, something that exemplifies the language system, to –well-analyse. What it isn't, is something you read and something which has an effect on you.

Stylisticians argue, however, that in order to improve a learner's language abilities, one must gain an understanding into the use of language. This is because a stylistic approach is a method of analysis that can provide students with "a 'way-in' to a text and, also, established ...linguistic terms to help them discuss and support the views that they may have of these texts" (Simpson, 1993:4). Consequently, a stylistic analysis can help to increase students'



motivation because of the enjoyment that they can derive from reading literary texts once they become aware of how language is used in them. This belief is an important assumption underlying the use of a stylistic analysis in approaching literary works. A further and an in-depth explanation on the development of stylistics is provided in Section 2.4.

### **1.7 Research questions**

This section revisits and refines the three broad questions mentioned in Section 1.2, in the light of the findings of the pilot study (an in-depth explanation on the pilot work is provided in Section 3.4). Therefore, the main study specifically aims to investigate the following research questions (RQs):

1. How do lower-intermediate level ESL students feel about literature and its relevance to their language learning?
2. How do ESL teachers conceptualise the use of literature in the language classroom?
3. How do ESL teachers and learners respond to the use of literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis?
4. What are the effects of the literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis on the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context?
5. What are the impacts of a pedagogical stylistic approach on the development of literature-based materials in language classrooms from the teachers' and students' points of view?

### **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has presented the introduction to the study and described the learning context in the Malaysian education system, particularly at the matriculation level. A preliminary study was conducted to investigate the students' and teachers' attitudes towards the integration of literature in language lessons at the Center. The findings revealed that the teachers appeared to embrace positive attitudes towards literature and were enthusiastic to use literary genres in their teaching, however, they lacked the knowledge to effectively integrate them. On the other hand, the students displayed mixed attitudes due to significant variables such as the

irrelevance of literature to their current programme and difficulties experienced in reading literary works. The preliminary work also provided the motivation for the main study that resulted in substantial amendment made to the research methodology and an application of a stylistics-based approach in ESL classrooms.

## **Chapter Two: Literature and Language Education**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Since this study concerns the integration of literature and language study, it is essential to provide detailed background information and the theoretical assumptions on the application of literature in ELT in general, and in the Malaysian context, in particular. This is achieved by exploring its principles and practices in order to accomplish a comprehensive understanding of its development and positions in its marriage with ELT. This chapter also extends the research on the integration of literature in some of the aforementioned studies in Chapter One. It also draws on research on stylistics, linguistics, literary criticism and pedagogical stylistics. The discussion of these disciplines is central in order to understand their theories and methods that help to inform the decision in using a stylistic approach in this study. This discussion also guides the development of the worksheets, one of the study key research instruments. Hence, this chapter is divided into three main parts: (i) literature in ELT, (ii) stylistics and (iii) pedagogical stylistics.

### **2.2 Literature as applied in ELT**

This section elaborates on the discussion on the integration of literature briefly mentioned in Chapter One. As mentioned earlier, literature is one of the available resources in language teaching and it has been a part of language curricula for many years, fading in and out of popularity in response to new theories and methods in teaching and learning contexts. During the period of the Grammar Translation Method, literature was considered an important part of foreign or second language classrooms. The aim of this method was to enable students to read successfully difficult classical texts through the method of translation (Hall 2005). Advocates of this approach claimed that through the continuous translation activity of vocabulary or sentences from the target language into students' first language and vice versa, helped them to successfully acquire the target language. Translation of texts was seen as a

practical and effective method of language acquisition because it enabled students to exhibit their understanding of the grammatical intricacies in sentence construction. Translating texts also required students to practice rote memorisation of vocabulary and it demanded substantial knowledge of grammatical rules to avoid mistranslation and little attention was committed to pronunciation. Students were expected to read and translate canonical literary texts because these texts were assumed to represent “models of good writing and illustrations of the grammatical rules of the language” (Duff and Maley, 1990:3).

With time, however, literature gradually lost its important position in the foreign language classrooms. This stage began during the period of structural dominance as the main emphasis was on the mastery of language structures and the formal properties of language. Structural patterns were taught using repetitive drills and there was limited or no analysis of grammar rules. This method assumed that language learning was acquired through habit formation and that students could improve their language abilities if these skills were presented orally before the written form. Thus, great importance was attached to correct pronunciation. However, the emphasis was on memorisation through pattern drills and conversation practices rather than promoting communicative competence. During this period, literary texts were no longer the “models of good writing”, but simply the outdated traditional teaching technique. Studying and translating literature was regarded as an old method because the “English involved was not that which the students were being taught in their language classes” (Short, 1986:153).

The emergence of the communicative approach also had significant impacts on the development of second language teaching. This approach placed a heavy emphasis on language activities that focused on real-life communication set in an authentic context to promote learning. According to Hall (2005:51), the communicative method was concerned with “learners negotiating meanings for themselves, learning by doing things with language in

authentic contexts." For instance, students practised real-life situations, such as ordering food at a restaurant or buying a stamp at a post office. The aim of such activities was to enable students to successfully communicate their needs or seek information and be able to send their message across without worrying about using correct grammar. Hence, in this approach, though the focus on grammar was still important, it was not central, as the highlight was on facilitating students to get their message across. The stress was on the notion of effective communication, which was strongly influenced by the developments in pragmatics. Since the communicative approach paid attention to authentic contexts, literature was "seen as an ideal resource" in language education as it could offer "the use of authentic materials and 'real' language and communication" (Hall, 2005:55). Unlike Hall, Zyngier (1994a:3) argues that during the communicative period, literature was ignored and lost its purpose because it was considered as "too conservative or too complicated." Literature was perceived as not supporting the conventional types of language that students were accustomed to in everyday communication. Accordingly, literature was dropped from the second language classrooms. This friction on the potential values or risks that literature brings into ELT continues to be debated.

The attitude towards the integration of literature seemed to be more encouraging in the early 1980's. At this time, many publications were devoted to the interface between language and literature. Widdowson's (1975) work was central in exploring the fundamental issues of using literature in ELT and these issues have been expanded and explored by other prominent researchers such as Brumfit and Carter (1986), Carter and Long (1991), Carter and Mc Rae (1996) and Lazar (1996b). Literature had begun to be accepted as one of the rich and valuable resources available for language education. Duff and Maley (1990: foreword) write that "literature is back, but wearing different clothing." In a slightly different vein from Duff and

Maley, Gilroy and Parkinson (1997:213) state that literature actually “never went away and has always been a large part of EFL for many learners.”

In addition, Bredella (2004:390) claims that literature has found a comfortable place and is accepted as one of the teaching resources because: (i) writing and reading are on equal footing, literary texts have an integral place in language classrooms, (ii) literary language is encoded in ways similar to advertisements, newspapers and everyday language, it can be taught with other type of sign system, (iii) the canon no longer exists, literary texts can be chosen not because they are good but because students can actually understand and enjoy them, (iv) literature is no longer regarded as a closed world to be decoded by the reader, students may read in order to find their own meanings. They may also learn to play with the text, (v) literature is ‘authentic’ as any other type of discourse, it can be sought out as a source of different level of expression, and (vi) literature is basically connotative in its suggestiveness, it teaches students implicitly that all utterances contain a connotative or a second meaning. Based on these reasons, Bredella argues that literature should not be separated from language teaching because it is a part of the language systems whether they are songs, advertisements, films or letters. All of these systems offer students varieties of opportunity to explore and experiment with the language found in each genre.

Furthermore, many scholars have claimed that there is no real linguistic difference between literature and the rest of the language. As Zyngier (1994a:3) writes, “the language of literary texts was not much different from the language of everyday communication.” According to Carter and Nash (1990), the language of everyday interaction can also be creative and ambiguous, and claim that there are no real differences between literary and non-literary language. Brumfit and Carter (1986:6) in a more confident tone, argue that “there is no such thing as literary language... [and] when we say this, we mean that we find it impossible to isolate any single or special property of language which is exclusive to literary work.” This

assumption helps to ease the intermarriage between literature and language study. The following section continues to talk about the integration of literature, however, with an exclusive focus on the Malaysian context.

### 2.2.1 Literature in ELT in Malaysia

ELT in Malaysia was initialised by the British colonialists in the early 1800s (Pandian 2003). English language occupied an important role in education and since then its teaching has been a very important part of the Malaysian school system. According to Edwin (1993), during the British colonial period until the 1970's, English was used as the medium of instruction and it was taught exclusively at the National Types English schools for primary and secondary levels. However, a large number of the public did not have access to the English medium schools due to factors such as financial and transportation problems as these schools were mainly located in urban areas. Thus, the use of English was confined to a small group of people. Malay language (*Bahasa Malaysia*) then was only used as the medium of instruction in the National schools. During this time, literature in English and the English language were taught as two separate subjects and were only provided at the English medium schools (Edwin 1993), and at the end of the schooling years, these students had to sit two different examination subjects.

After Malaysia gained its independence from the British, there was a strong call for a national identity that stressed on the "sense of identity through a society loyal to the nation, sharing common goals and aspirations" (Foo and Richards, 2004:230). This resulted in the gradual transition from English to Malay as the medium of instruction in all schools. With the passing of the Malaysian Education Enactment Bills in 1971, the medium of instruction for all schools was changed to *Bahasa Malaysia* and the new Bills saw the unification of both Malay and English medium schools. Since then, English lost its privilege as the medium of instruction and is now taught as a second language in schools (Abu Samah 1983). Even after the change

of the medium of instruction, English language and literature in English continued to be taught as two different subjects. However, during this time, literature was no longer offered to lower secondary students (Forms 1 to 3). This move seemed to indicate the end of literature teaching in lower secondary schools. On the other hand, literature in English continued to be presented as an optional examination subject at the upper secondary levels (Forms 4 to 5). The literature subject appealed to students who usually had the required language competence that enabled them to read literary works. Literature then was also considered as an elite subject as English was assumed to be the language used by the elite of the country (Foo and Richards 2004). However, in 1990, literature in English was incorporated as part of the English language syllabus. In other words, English language and literature in English were no longer taught as two separate subjects, but as one integrated component. This move also saw the return of literature for lower-secondary students.

Since the implementation of *Bahasa Malaysia* as the medium of instruction, there have been perennial complaints received from members of the public, teachers, academicians and ministers who are perturbed that the standard of English among secondary school students has declined (Edwin 1993; Pillay 1998). Pillay states that in 1991, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed voiced his concerns regarding students' poor results in the National English language examination which is given at the end of secondary school. The current Minister of Education, Hishammuddin Hussein (2004:3) realises that students' proficiency in English is declining when he announces that the ministry "recognizes that the level of English language proficiency among the students is not what we would hope for." Academicians have also highlighted their worries over students' standard of English. Pandian (2003) reports that students who continue to tertiary education are usually equipped with neither the skills nor knowledge to use English productively and competently in a communicative event. Mohd Salleh (2004:1-2) laments that many students have "severe English language proficiency



problems as well as those who could barely manage...despite many years both at primary and secondary schools...where English was a compulsory subject." In short, she claims that the standard of English among post-secondary students who enter higher learning institutions is deteriorating. Students' general deficiency in the language can be attributed to many factors such as teachers' lack of proficiency in English (Pillay 1998), syllabus development (Rajaretnam and Nalliah 1999), and ineffective use of teaching methodology and syllabus constraints (Pandian 2003).

As a consequence, the MoE has taken steps to address the falling standards of English among students and it has been implementing numerous strategies to improve this situation. Among these strategies is the introduction of English as the medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics, as well as the incorporation of literary texts into language teaching. The latter are carried out through programmes such as the English Language Reader Programme (ELRP), Class Reader Programme (CRP), and introducing literature in English as one of the compulsory examination subjects for both lower and upper secondary school students. The ELRP was developed in 1979 and it began in secondary residential schools which used their own funds to purchase graded readers. The project then spread to the non-residential schools with funds received from the government. However, ELRP did not involve literature at all. Edwin (1993:46) writes:

The ELRP had little or no relation to the teaching of literature in English ...The aims of the ELRP make no mention of teaching literature in English as this programme was in no way an attempt to bring back literature in English into the Malaysian curriculum. The ELRP mainly aimed at achieving the standard of reading stipulated in the lower and upper secondary English language syllabus.

Mukundan *et al.* (1998:2) report that the implementation of ELRP was disorganised and these graded readers were not efficiently utilised and that "the ELRP was an unstructured reading" because its implementation predominantly depended on teachers' efforts and attitudes. Accordingly, the programme was considered ineffective and gradually phased out.

The CRP started in 1990 as part of the English language syllabus for secondary schools and signalled the return of literature in the curriculum. Like the ELRP, it also consisted of simplified literary texts which linguistic difficulties were categorised into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced. In order to utilise these readers, teachers were supplied with a teaching file that contained recommended activities to undertake in class. Teachers were encouraged to use these graded readers during their lessons as supplementary reading materials. The primary aim of CRP was to inculcate in students the habit of reading that could augment their competence in English language (Pandian 2003). Although its emphasis was on developing reading skills, it also attempted to introduce literature in the hope that it would instigate interest and promote extensive and intensive reading among students. However, with the introduction of literature as an integrated component in the English language subject, the CRP was put on hold.

The implementation of literature as an integrated component in the language curriculum was carried out in three consecutive batches. The first was introduced in 2000 and it was designated for Form One and Four students. A year later, in 2001, the programme was presented to Form Two and Five students and finally, in 2002, it was offered to Form Three pupils. The literature addition is assessed in two major national examinations; the first is at the end of Form Three (Lower Certificate of Education) and the second, is at the end of Form Five (Malaysian Certificate of Education). The move to include a literature component in these examinations is seen as a serious commitment by the MoE to bring literature into the language syllabus in lower and upper secondary levels. The seriousness is also reflected in the Minister of Education's (Hishammuddin Hussein, 2004:3) speech:

To come to grips with why our students are not attaining an acceptable level of competence in English...we have looked at the issue from the perspective of teachers, students, resources and management. We have looked at ways to better motivate our students...and give them opportunities to practise using the language...RM 1.5 million has been allocated to the Primary Literature Project, to be delivered over the course of

five years. Teachers would be introduced to new teaching techniques through Primary Literature training workshops.

The development of the teaching of literature in secondary schools was significantly influenced by the changes in the language and education policies. Literature was once taught as a separate subject from the English language, and then dropped from the curriculum for lower secondary school students. It has now been brought back into the education system as an integrated component of the English language subject. Hence, literature has proven to be resilient and continues to occupy an important place in ELT in Malaysia.

### **2.2.2 Benefits**

This section examines the arguments that contribute to the integration of literature. The advantages of using literature with ESL/EFL learners are grouped into four reasons based on Ghosn (2002:173). She argues that literature provides a motivating, meaningful context for second language acquisition, contributes to language learning as it can help foster vocabulary development among students, promotes academic literacy and thinking skills and finally, functions as a change agent.

#### **a) Motivating and meaningful context for second language learning**

Zyngier (1994b:97) claims that literary texts provide students with pleasure that can be derived from “playing with sounds, rhythm and meaning” or the language games. Thus, through these games, literature offers students an aesthetic experience, where they experiment with creative tasks by engaging and manipulating the language of literature.

Hill (1986) argues that literature is full of examples of real-life language in different situations and thus, presents a variety of models for communication practice for students. Literature provides students with the necessary context and stimulus to provoke genuine interaction between them. Moreover, since literature does not contain a single right meaning, tasks based on literary works provide plenty of opportunities for discussion and problem-solving activities. Similarly, Widdowson (1983a:33) claims that “literature is more stimulating and it sets

up conditions for a crucial part of language learning." However, he has this to say about non-literary texts and the textbooks that students normally use in their classroom:

Many learners know perfectly well that the reading passage in the textbook is there to get them to practise language items, and they don't feel that they must 'read on'. They don't get interested in the world created by this passage, which is often one they are all too familiar with anyway...And when you compare the kind of drama that is available with the kind of drama in textbooks, it's not easy to see how learners at any level can get interested in and therefore motivated by a dialogue about buying stamps at a post office. There is no plot, there is no mystery, there is no character; everything proceeds as if communication never created a problem.

Literature not only sets an authentic context for communication, but also offers students pleasurable experience by engaging their emotions through the interaction between them and the text. As stated by Reeves (1985:23), "if a reader wants to find out what happens next, if it seems important to him personally, he will read on despite linguistic difficulties." Thus, when some students are reluctant to read literary texts, probably what they need is an added stimulus, such as finding out what happens to the main character in the story may encourage them to read.

Furthermore, according to Collie and Slater (1987), literature is an example of authentic material and it exposes students to unmodified language found in literary texts which sometimes is difficult or unfamiliar. The encounter with such language requires students to examine closely its features and the intricacies of grammar involved that promotes their knowledge of the language in the texts. Some educators assume that it is beneficial to expose students to this type of language in their classrooms because the skills that they acquire in dealing with it can be used in their daily communication. The encounter also facilitates students to become effective and competent users of the language.

b) Contribution to language learning and vocabulary development

Literature encourages ESL learners to learn new words as literary writing consists of a rich variety of linguistic items and an appropriate context for students to practise using the

words that they have learned. Literature, therefore, seems to offer a medium that can “create an acquisition-rich environment in the classroom context” (Ghosn, 2002:175).

Literary texts also help to improve and develop students’ awareness of the language use in a particular text. In order for them to produce appropriate interpretations, students have to pay close attention to its language, which in return, promotes and improves their awareness of the language. As pointed out by Carter (1982:12)

Literature is an example of language in use, and is a context for language use. Studying the language of literary text as language can, therefore, enhance our appreciation of aspects of the different language systems of language organisation.

Lazar (1994:123) also stresses that literature is a useful resource because it can be exploited in numerous ways to increase students’ language awareness, grammatical and lexical knowledge, particularly those at lower language levels. Literary works can be manipulated by using activities such as cloze passage, multiple-choice questions, guessing word meanings from context and matching tasks which are applied in everyday language lessons. As such, literature provides students with opportunities to conduct a variety of interesting and stimulating tasks. Also, through these activities, teachers will no longer be constrained to use literature as an end in itself. Instead, literature can be used to extend students’ knowledge and awareness which promote the development of their language abilities. Literary texts also offer students interesting topics to read, write and talk about which drive the acquisition of the target language and these topics can be developed into various meaningful classroom activities that give students the motivation and opportunities to experiment with creative tasks. Simply feeding students with practical situations such as buying stamps at a post office or asking for a direction will not encourage interest in learning the language. Aebersold and Field (1997) also maintain that if literary texts are used, they must serve the function of teaching language, as the emphasis on language is paramount. In short, if literary

texts manage to engage students' interest to read, write and discuss them, then their use in language classrooms is justified.

c) Promotion of academic literacy and thinking skills

Zyngier (1994a:4) holds that literary texts are beneficial in language education because they are "intellectually stimulating...[because] in building meaning, the reader reconstructs or recreates what he or she thinks the writer is trying to communicate." Lazar (1993) maintains that literary texts such as novels, drama and short stories engage students in intellectual, emotional and linguistic activities which demand them to form hypotheses and draw inferences. Reading literature allows students to build up hypotheses about the text and requires them to test the derived hypotheses. Brandt (1990), too, explains that by learning how to develop and examine these hypotheses, students are able to extend their thinking about a text by knowing what it is that they are doing and thus, have a metacognitive awareness of what to do next. In other words, students can think for themselves and being more aware of what they are reading helps them to achieve understanding of the text. Students also have to make inferences about the plot and predict what is going to happen in the following chapter or section. By encouraging students to develop these inferences and assumptions, they are indirectly led to extend their capacity for constructing and generating the texts' possible meanings. Literature, therefore, provides opportunities for learners to develop their thinking skills and helps to produce students as readers, writers, independent and self-reliant thinkers who employ language and literature to enrich their lives (Hayhoe and Parker 1990).

Literary texts can then be used as a springboard for developing varieties of language activities, which range from extensive reading tasks to close textual analysis. The primary emphasis is to ensure that students interact with the text and with each other in ways which promote learning. In order for the interaction between the students and text to occur, some elements of thinking skills are required, such as justification, evaluation, problem-solving and

decision-making (Beach 1993). This interaction puts students on guard as it constantly challenges them with numerous questions that require substantial argument, particularly when they discover contradictions in meaning.

Literature is also assumed to nurture thinking skills among students because one of its great strengths is its suggestive power (Hirvela 1996). In other words, literature invites students to go beyond what is said to what is implied. Since literary texts can suggest several connotative meanings with few words, literature is ideal for generating discussions among students (Maley 1989). Students have to analyse, evaluate and argue their opinions during the performance of the literary-based discussions. Beyer (1987) maintains that the tasks of providing justification and argumentation promote students' thinking abilities because they involve argument making and argument analysing. Hayhoe and Parker (1990) agree that literature is pertinent in developing students' thinking skills because literary reading requires response generating that involves cognitive processes. This is because reading literature usually involves deep concentration on text analysis and evaluation in order to fabricate appropriate responses.

d) A change agent

Lazar (1990:205) argues that literary texts can offer students a "tantalizing glimpse of another culture." Through this, students are led to imagine a world different from their own and try to put themselves in the position of others. Hence, they are able to view things from the perspective of others, and become aware of their own attitudes and principles in life. Accordingly, students can transcend their own awareness when they extend their sympathies and "become aware of the needs, hopes and fears" of other people from a different culture (Bredella, 2004: 378). Collie and Slater (1993:2) assert that students will be able to discover "how different people are, and finding out how alike, in some ways, we all are" that enable them to be more tolerant and considerate towards other people from different cultures or societies.

However, being exposed to an alien culture can be problematic for students because they may not have the cultural insight necessary for understanding some literary works. In order to overcome this problem, Lazar (1990) suggests that teachers provide some background knowledge about the texts that can guide students to achieve relevant interpretations. Widdowson (1992:115) agrees that cultural background information is important, but believes its significance should not be overestimated. He maintains that teachers must not provide students with the necessary cultural knowledge before reading a text, as "it is not a precondition but a consequence of interpretation." Thus, teachers need to decide carefully what and how much cultural knowledge students need in order to successfully access a text. Through this, cultural awareness and literary understanding can be used to supplement each other.

Apart from the four assumed values compiled by Ghosn (2002) above, Bredella (2004: 376-378) proposes another four key motives to support the application of literature in ELT: (i) contribution to foreign language learning, (ii) stylistic analysis of literary texts, (iii) aesthetic-pedagogical justifications, and (v) the significance of literary texts for intercultural understanding. Bredella's first point, the justifications of using literature, reiterates Ghosn's (2002) contribution to language learning. In terms of the second reason, stylistic analysis of literary texts, Bredella notes that the proponents of stylistics claim that if literature is to help improve students' language performance, then the emphasis must be placed on gaining an insight into the use of the language in literary texts. This motive is explored further in Section 2.4. The third reason, aesthetic-pedagogical justifications, postulates that literature offers a pleasurable and an absorbing reading experience. Rosenblatt's (1978) distinction between 'efferent' and 'aesthetic' reading is relevant: an efferent reading is essentially reading for information, while aesthetic reading allows readers to interact emotionally and explore the



thoughts and feelings evoked by the texts. Bredella's last point, the use of literary texts for intercultural understanding, naturally resonates Ghosn's (2002) a change agent.

### 2.2.3 Limitations

Notwithstanding the numerous claims of benefits in using literature in language study, some scholars are against this idea. Edmonson (1997) argues that many of the assumptions, which support the use of literary texts in language teaching, cannot be sustained. He critically questions the claim that literature or rather literary texts have a special role in language acquisition by presenting some empirical studies done by him and other researchers such as Akyel and Yalcin (1990). Akyel and Yalcin discover that the use of literature to augment students' language potentials through the exposure to literary texts usually reveals discouraging results.

Carter (1982) claims that for many years, literature has been given an uncomfortable role in ELT. Hall (2005:52) suggests one possible reason for such a role is because of the assumption that literature has yet to make itself relevant to the needs of language learners. He writes:

If language is logically to be at the center of a language syllabus, literature syllabuses for language learners failed to engage with or at least to explicitly signal their relevance to language acquisition and language skills.

This supposition exists because of the argument that literary language is remote from the everyday usage that students can achieve little practical values from reading literary texts. However, literary texts are not necessarily overloaded with literary jargons isolated from the daily conversation. There are numerous literary works that display the general use of English which are beneficial for language students. As aptly pointed out by Hall (2005:10), "language used in literature is in many ways central to understanding language and language use in more

general terms. Literature is made of, from and with ordinary language which itself is surprisingly literary."

Moreover, the attitudes of many teachers remain ambivalent and are often negative with regard to integrating literary texts into language teaching. Literature is thought of as "embodying a static, convoluted kind of language, far removed of the utterance of daily communication" (Collie and Slater, 1987:2). Because of this, Hill (1986) notes that many teachers tend to view reading literature as largely irrelevant to students' needs in either acquiring the target language or for communication purposes in their everyday occurrences. Strevens (1974, cited in Hill 1986:11) argues that literature does not contribute to the aim of language learning which "is to acquire some degree of practical command of the language, largely unrelated to the study and appreciation of literature."

Lazar (1994:115-116) discusses three disadvantages of using literature with less advanced language students: language grading, literary competence and motivational factors. Language grading is the use of deviant language in literary texts, especially in poetry, and it creates problems as it usually contains complex vocabulary and linguistic deviations. However, it needs to be remembered that deviation turns up in other literary genres and non-literary writing as well. Lazar mentions that the second difficulty relates to the students' literary competence or "an implicit understanding of certain conventions of interpretation which skilled readers draw on when reading literature." She believes that the lack of literary competence hinders their ability to produce sound interpretations because they feel inadequate and intimidated by the linguistic features of the text. Lazar adds that the third problem, motivational factors, occurs because literature is "considered too highly specialized an activity to be of interest to less advanced students." Put another way, these students are discouraged to approach literature because it is seen as arduous. However, Lazar has recommended some

interesting activities through which teachers can overcome these convolutions and experience literature successfully with these learners.

In an earlier publication, Lazar (1990:206-210) identifies two general drawbacks that teachers and students encounter when approaching literary texts: practical and literary problems. Practical difficulties entail choosing suitable texts with the right length and vocabulary, justifying the use of literature to students and making the cultural background more accessible. On the other hand, literary problems are the obstacles that students may experience when reading and responding to a text. In other words, literary difficulties involve understanding the story, characters, narrative point of view and more importantly, its language.

Furthermore, according to Short and Candlin (1989), many ESL teachers have always felt uneasy when expected to teach literature. This is because they assume that they have to know everything about the text, from providing a guided response about the minute details of the language to students, to knowing about the specific culture and background knowledge of the author and the text. Accordingly, they have frequently retreated into teaching literature as content or a "flight from the text" (Short, 1983:72), by placing a large emphasis on teaching the biographical information about the authors, characteristics of the literary movements, the social, political and historical background of a text, and most of the time, the established and accepted synopsis of the text, instead of teaching the language of literature itself. Thus, they have transformed the act of reading into something other than a literary experience (Probst 1988).

Zyngier (1994b) contends that as a result of this type of teaching, most students do not develop ways of looking through a text, and they find it challenging to produce relevant and discerning interpretations. Thus, they will try to find an easy way out, which is either by paraphrasing established interpretations of renowned critics or taking their teachers' interpretations. Greenwood (1988) warns that if students, particularly lower language learners, practise the habit of parroting other people's ideas and views, they will grow into passive,

uncritical and vulnerable students.

Lazar (1993) adds that many ESL teachers have voiced concern that literature exposes students to incorrect uses of the language. As an example, the phrase 'come we burn daylight, ho!' may confuse students because they will know from their existing knowledge of English that 'daylight' can not be the object of 'burn' (Short, 1996a:7-8). Furthermore, according to Short (1986), the widely held assumption that literature is complicated because there are a lot of linguistic deviations in literary genres, has led many teachers to either avoid or stop using literature in their language classrooms. Gajdusek (1988) concurs that many ESL teachers either consciously or subconsciously feel that literature is too hard for their students. To them, there is no point in exposing students to the difficult and ungrammatical language of literary texts since they are already struggling with learning the English language itself. The general belief that literature is a special and separate set of language also enhances this assumption. Consequently, literature is either banished from the classroom or separated entirely from language teaching. Here, students are taught language and literature in two separate classrooms by two different teachers.

## **2.3 Approaches to using literature in ELT**

There are various strategies that teachers can choose when literature and language study are combined. This section, therefore, elucidates some of the common models in an attempt to illuminate the theoretical assumptions on the approaches to literature in ELT. Lazar (1993:23-39) in her book, *'Literature and Language Teaching'*, describes three general methods when using literature with language students: (i) 'Language-based approach', (ii) 'Literature as content', and (iii) 'Literature for personal enrichment'.

### **2.3.1 Language-based approach**

According to Lazar (1993:23), this approach assumes that by studying the language of literary texts will help to "integrate language and literature syllabus more closely." The

advocators of this approach such as Brumfit (1985) and Duff and Maley (1990) believe in the integration of literature since it can help to promote students' knowledge of and proficiency in the target language through the use of literary texts. As Lazar (1993:23) point out, "detailed analysis of the language of the literary texts will help students to make meaningful interpretations... [and] at the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English." Accordingly, the proponents argue that this approach justifies the addition of literature to language acquisition since it fulfils students' main objectives of learning English, to increase performance and use in the target language.

However, the advocates of this approach have three different goals when using this method. First, the aim is not on studying literature, but literary texts are utilised as one of the resources in providing inspiring language tasks for students. Duff and Maley (1990:6) claim that literary texts are beneficial for this purpose because they "offer genuine samples of a wide range of styles and registers,...[and] are open to multiple interpretations" and the nature of literature that often touches on interesting themes that students can relate to acts as a "powerful motivator" that can instigate increased classroom participation.

Another goal for using a 'language-based approach' is concerned with the techniques of analysis which focus on the study of the literary texts themselves. The objective is to offer students analytical tools that presumably will assist them in formulating discerning interpretations. Lazar (1993:27) notes that this is when a stylistic method is frequently employed as it "involves a detailed analysis of the linguistic features of a text in order to arrive at an understanding of how the meanings of the texts are transmitted." In other words, students are helped to develop a response to literature by examining the linguistic evidences in a text. Undertaking a detailed language analysis can facilitate the construction of meanings and encourage students to exercise their existing knowledge of grammar or vocabulary. Hence, this approach is assumed to offer students a useful exposure to grammar and vocabulary in an

interesting and different context from their academic texts. Concurrently, it also helps to increase their general understanding of the target language.

However, there are some limitations with this method as it may seem mechanical and demotivating if students have to undertake a rigid linguistic analysis of a text. Also, if students assume a purely linguistic investigation, it may leave little room for them to respond to the text personally (Brumfit and Carter 1986). In addition, important factors such as the historical and cultural background of the text that may enhance learners' understanding will be underplayed.

The third aim of a 'language-based approach' is to prepare students with preliminary language activities in order to study literature, especially for those who are not ready to embark on a stylistic analysis of literary genres (Lazar 1993). Most of these language exercises are the usual everyday classroom tasks such as gap-filling and making predictions. Since students are arguably more familiar with these types of activities, then it will be less daunting for teachers and students to integrate literature in their lessons.

### **2.3.2 Literature as content**

Among the three approaches, this is the most traditional method. It is commonly used in higher learning institutions and literature becomes the content or the subject of the study. Lazar (1993) reports that this approach focuses on issues such as the development of literary criticism, writers' background information, and other pertinent factors that may influence the production of a text such as its political and historical background. The focus on analysing the language of the literary texts is secondary. Students normally acquire the target language through reading a wide variety of canonical texts and the topic of discussion usually revolves around literary theories and movements relating to these texts. This approach also involves considerable translation work from one language to another. According to Hall (2005: 50), the method of teaching usually involves a

lecture-based teaching, using anthologies of classic extracts or largely unread classic works...summarizing authors' life and times, themes, plot, characters and anticipating exam questions with lists of key quotations to learn.

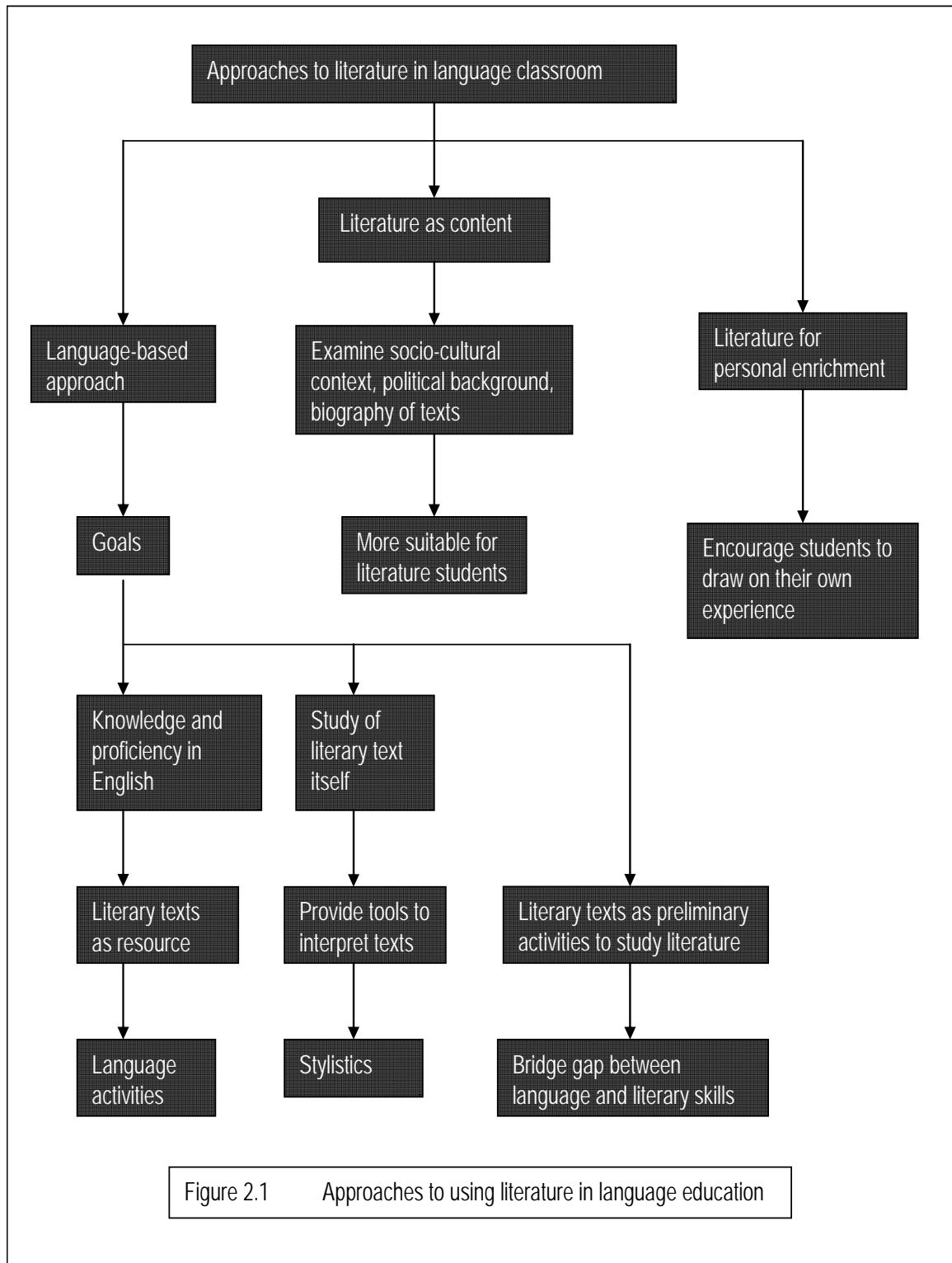
This approach is assumed to be more suitable for advanced learners because the texts used may be linguistically difficult and consequently, put off limited proficiency students. The method is also said to be teacher-centered as students have to rely on their teachers to translate or paraphrase difficult texts which result in students participating less in class activities. Students also may be dependent on reading and memorising the interpretations of texts from established sources or their teachers.

### **2.3.3 Literature for personal enrichment**

In this method, literature is perceived as a "useful tool for encouraging students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions" about literary writing (Lazar, 1993:39). In doing so, students are persuaded to become more involved in acquiring the language through class procedures such as communicating their views and fabricating suitable responses in discussing texts. Similar to the 'language-based approach', the most common procedure used in the 'literature for personal enrichment' classroom is the group discussion format. Group or class discussion will normally focus on the topic-related issues, characters or events.

According to Hayhoe and Parker (1990), this approach demands students' reactions to a particular text in the form of some commentary as evidences for comprehension or interpretations. Put another way, when students read any literary piece, they have to generate reliable responses and demonstrate their understanding. Since this method demands personal responses, it may inflict unwarranted pressure because they may not have enough guidance or knowledge to cope with the details of the text to fabricate a reaction. Attributes such as students' unfamiliarity with the text or linguistic restrictions also contribute to their failure in

constructing appropriate responses. When students are unable to generate worthy interpretations, they are more likely to be discouraged and withdraw from class activity. Lazar's three approaches to literature in language teaching could be illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.





### 2.3.4 Different models of teaching literature

Similar to the three approaches mentioned above, there have been other models suggested for the teaching of literature to ESL/EFL students. Carter and Long (1991:2) propose that the common approaches to using literature in language education can be grouped into three models: (i) 'Cultural model', (ii) 'Personal growth model', and (iii) 'Language model'. They have also stressed that these three models are not mutually exclusive and they overlap with each other, especially the 'language model' and the 'personal growth model'. Notwithstanding the different labels Carter and Long used, their models share similarities with Lazar's three approaches discussed above.

The 'cultural model' is a teacher-centered approach, where students obtain information by means of lectures and the text is viewed as a product. In other words, literary texts are treated as a source of information about the target culture. This method of teaching is the most traditional approach among the three models and is often used in university courses on literature. The model examines the social, political and historical background to a text as well as the literary movements and genres. The focus on language is also secondary as there is limited or no extended language work done on a text. Carter and Long (1991:2) describe the function of the 'cultural model':

teaching literature within a cultural model enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within heritage the literature of such cultures endows.

In other words, through the application of a 'cultural model' in teaching literature, not only are students introduced to the universality of thoughts and ideas of a particular culture, distinct from their own, but also promotes the appreciation of different culture and ideologies in relation to their own. Hence, this model stresses on the values of literature as a catalyst for expanding students' cultural awareness that promotes sensitivity and understanding towards other cultures. This model, to a large extent, reflects the characteristics of Lazar's 'literature as

content' approach. Although the latter method does not allocate too much attention to culture alone, both approaches place paramount emphasis on features such as literary movements, and the historical and political background surrounding authors and the production of literary genres.

On the other hand, in the 'language model', literary texts are utilised to exemplify certain types of linguistic patterns such as direct and indirect speech, and literal and figurative language. Though the model exposes students to the more "subtle and varied creative uses of language" in literary writing, its principal aim is to "help students find ways into a text in a methodological way" (Carter and Long, 1991:2). Put another way, it strives to help students discover independent and systematic ways into a text through extensive exposure to the language in literary works. This exposure is assumed to promote students' literary competence.

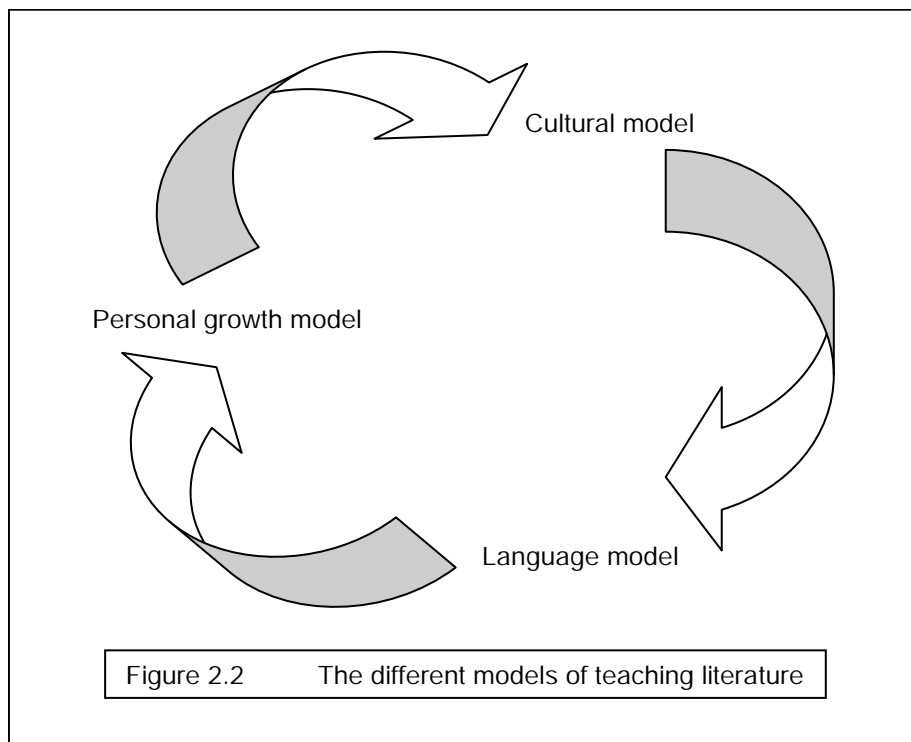
This model is also based on the principle that literature is taught for the promotion of vocabulary, grammatical structures and a close examination of the language. In short, the model endeavours to develop students' language skills through the study of authentic literary texts. When students read a text, they have to pay close attention to the way language is used. Accordingly, not only are students able to respond to the texts, but also improve their general knowledge and awareness of English. This model also allows teachers to devise language exercises that promote students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. This method also makes frequent use of a stylistic analysis to assist students in meaning construction and reading literature more competently. Nonetheless, Savvidou (2004) claims that the model's close preoccupation with linguistic practice leads to a rather mechanistic and rigid manner of undertaking language activities devised by teachers.

The 'language model' also exhibits similarities with Lazar's 'language-based approach' due to the model's main objective of developing students' language proficiency through the use of literary genres. Both methods are also central to literature-based language teaching (further

discussion on literature-based language teaching is provided in Section 2.3.5). Finally, unlike the 'cultural model', the 'language model' is more of a student-centred methodology.

The third model, the 'personal growth model' helps students to "achieve an engagement with the reading of literary text...to which students carry with them... a lasting pleasure in reading... [and] helping them to grow as individuals" (Carter and Long, 1991:3). In other words, the model focuses on the personal pleasure and emotional gain that students can procure by reading literary texts and how an effective reading of literature helps them to progress and mature as individuals. When reading literary texts, students are involved in an interaction between the texts and themselves that helps to create a more memorable and an absorbing literary experience. In doing so, the 'personal growth model' endeavours to bridge the gap between the 'cultural model' and the 'language model' (Savvidou 2004). Savvidou contends that it is possible to bridge the gap because students are prompted to communicate their opinions and thoughts and make the apposite associations between their personal cultural experiences to those depicted in the text, and concurrently, pay close attention to the language use.

This model also recognises the potential influence of literature that enables students to achieve enjoyment from reading literary works through classroom instructions. This implies the needs for teachers to carefully select genres that appeal to students that in return, stimulate students' emotional reactions by drawing on their own feelings and opinions. Hence, rather than having a predominant focus on language analysis like the 'language model', the 'personal growth model' promotes individual evaluation and judgement. This model displays an analogous resemblance to Lazar's 'literature for personal enrichment' approach. Figure 2.2 below can be used to demonstrate Carter and Long's three models of teaching literature.



Following a similar trend to Carter and Long, Maley (2001:181) states that literature is studied and used in many different ways and contexts. He proposes four common ways that literature can be used in a language classroom:

1. focus on teaching language vs focus on teaching literature
2. language learning purpose (pragmatic focus) vs academic/analytical purpose (intellectual focus)
3. linguistic orientation (stylistics) vs literary critical orientation (the new criticism, post-modernism, etc.)
4. learning how to study literature vs studying literature

The objectives of using literature in point 1 above are clearly different. As mentioned earlier, the focus on teaching language means literature is only used as one of the teaching resources, while the focus on teaching literature implies that literature becomes the subject matter and is studied for its literariness. Similarly, the objectives of employing literature in point 2 are equally distinct. At one end of the scale, the focus is primarily on language learning

purposes, and at the other end is the “academic analysis of literary texts.” Point 3 concerns the mode of “analysis carried out, whether it is primarily stylistics; seeking to understand the ways in which language is deployed to achieve aesthetic effects, or primarily literary-critical, using aesthetic criteria.” A stylistic analysis of literary texts is presumed to be an objective procedure, while literary criticism argues for subjective interpretations. Finally, in point 4, Maley talks about the distinction between finding ways of how to approach literature and studying literature itself. However, he acknowledges that these ways of using literature do not stand in isolation, but rather in a complex combination of the four and they depend on other factors such as students’ language abilities, assessment and syllabus concerns, context of study and students’ cultural orientation.

According to Lazar (1993), all these approaches or models are, to some extent, an idealised version of the methods or strategies that are most likely being used in teaching literature or developing literature-based materials. However, in the real world of teaching and learning, many teachers and material developers tend to employ a range of approaches or models which are combined in different manners usually to serve the course objectives or to develop appropriate teaching materials to suit students’ proficiency levels.

### **2.3.5 Teaching literature versus literature-based language teaching**

It is common to find that many ESL teachers mistake literature-based language teaching for the teaching of literature (Wasanasomsithi 1998). Edmonson (1997) also expresses a similar claim that English literature is handled more as literature than as English in language lessons. Therefore, it is necessary to provide further explanation and distinction between teaching literature and literature-based language teaching. As mentioned in Section 1.2, Maley’s (1989, 2001) distinction of literature as a ‘resource’ and literature as an ‘object’ is relevant. Among the many prominent advocates of literature-based language teaching, Carter and Long (1991:3-4) have clearly emphasised the contrast between teaching literature and

literature-based language teaching. Like Maley, they have also labelled the teaching of literature as "the study of literature", and literature-based language teaching as "the use of literature as a resource." They explain that the study of literature

involves reading literature within an academic, institutionalized setting for the purpose of obtaining qualifications in literary studies. It involves a considerable baggage of critical concepts, literary conventions and metalanguage and the requirement is often that students should show an ability to use such terms and concepts in talking and writing about literature.

On the other hand, Carter and Long have this to say about the use of literature as a resource in the context of language teaching and learning:

Using literature as a resource suggests a less academic though no less serious approach to the reading of literature... [literature] can also supply many linguistic opportunities to the language teacher and allow many of the most valuable exercises of language learning to be based on materials capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement than can be the case with many language teaching texts. Literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching.

The distinction between literature as a 'resource' and 'object' is probably the most significant feature that differentiates literature teaching from literature-based language teaching. McRae (1996:17) asserts that literature teaching concerns "literature as an institutional discipline, or as the subject of specialist study." On the other hand, when literature is used as a 'resource', its prime concern is not to understand and appreciate its literary qualities, rather literary works are utilised to improve and develop students' understanding and use of the target language (McRae and Boardman 1984). In short, literature-based language teaching advocates the use of literature as one of the main 'resources' in language acquisition. Specifically, its aim is to develop students' overall language proficiency through the use of literature and not to promote their literary competence as in the objectives of literature teaching.

Nevertheless, Wasanasomsithi (1998) stresses that the integration of literature must neither attempt to repudiate the roles and positions of other available teaching resources nor its use should take precedence over non-literary materials in language teaching. Instead, all these

materials, whether literary or non-literary, should be appropriately employed in order to achieve rewarding and successful outcomes of language study.

More recently, Hall (2005:47) talks about the problems of integrating literature. He argues that the main problem emanates from the friction between language and literature as two separate subjects and the frequent failure to coordinate the literary and linguistic element. He further explains:

Literature is typically used in more traditional ways in university foreign language education. 'Literariness' is emphasised and linguistic elements underplayed; in second language teaching situations, where language is required more immediately for communication, and at lower schooling levels, literature is more likely to be integrated into a communicative curriculum where language issues are focused on and difficult or distracting literary features are played down.

In other words, Hall argues that there are two common situations when literature is used in second language classrooms: literature is emphasised and the language element is "underplayed", particularly in university language courses, or language is focused on and the "literary features are played down", especially in ESL teaching or in secondary education where the emphasis is on students' communicative needs. Hence, Hall calls for a "better balanced and better integrated" approach to the use of literature in language study.

Rizzo (1993) also declares that in the teaching of English language, the divorce between language and literature came early. For several years, teachers tended to underline the importance of critical works, authors, historical backgrounds and all the things that would push literature further away from what it has in common with language. However, during the 1980's, the situation seemed to be changing. There was a strong resurgence of interest in bridging the gap between language and literature study, with much motivation fuelled by the "fusion of literary and linguistic methods", or stylistic analysis (Short, 1982:55). Supported by the pioneering work of Widdowson (1975) and developed further by the advocates of stylistics such as McRae and Boardman (1984), Verdonk (1989), Short (1986, 1996b) stylistic methods

have been extensively used in the teaching of literature to speakers of English as a second or foreign language.

## 2.4 Stylistics

This section extends the discussion on stylistics in Section 1.6. It tracks the development of stylistics and its relationship with linguistics and literary criticism in order to understand its principles and practices. The discussion also endeavours to establish the decision of using a stylistic approach in this study. In other words, since the study employs a pedagogical stylistic approach to literature, it is essential to understand its theoretical framework which largely originates and is influenced by the development of stylistics. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of stylistics is essential in order to comprehend its pedagogic implications in ELT. The discussion of stylistics is predominantly based on the works of some of its prominent researchers such as Fowler (1986), Carter and Simpson (1989), Short (1995, 1996a) and McRae and Clark (2004).

In order to understand what stylistics is, Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:4) list three key aspects:

1. The use of linguistics (the study of language) to approach literary texts
2. The discussion of texts according to objective criteria rather than according to purely subjective and impressionistic values
3. An emphasis on the aesthetic properties of language

The first key aspect mentioned by Thornborrow and Wareing is the use of linguistics to study literary texts. Although in the beginning, stylistics predominantly focused on the analysis of the language of literary texts, it has been acknowledged now by stylisticians that a stylistic analysis is also applicable to non-literary texts. Stylisticians have begun to acknowledge the existence of stylistic studies on non-literary works such as Cook (1992) who looks at advertising language, and Fowler (1981) who discusses the university guidelines on students'



enrolment. As stated by Simpson (1993:3), "exponents of stylistics are quick to point out...that stylistic techniques can be applied to texts other than those included in the established literary canon."

Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:7) explain that the early stylistics was primarily concerned with explaining "how 'meaning' in a text was created through the writer's linguistic choices." In other words, these stylisticians postulated that meaning was inherent in the language of the text and that meaning could be achieved through a close and thorough examination of the linguistic intricacies alone, without any consideration given to other factors such as the readers and sociocultural context that might influence meaning construction. Accordingly, such an analysis was assumed to provide the "ultimate or essential meaning of a text." These two assumptions could be traced back to the influence of the New Critics who perceived literary texts as self-autonomous and argued that there was only one correct interpretation of the text. However, these were outdated assumptions and they have been debated and argued in modern literary criticism and linguistics. According to Mills (1995:9), language analysis at that time was also based on the assertion that a "linguistic system is stable, natural, undisputed and shared by all native speakers – as if we were part of a homogeneous speech community, all using language in the same way." However, in recent years stylisticians have begun to realise the flaw with this method of analysis and presumption. Mills explains that the realisation has surfaced from the development of and extensive research done in linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and literary theories and these have seriously jeopardised this view of language and revealed that it is "unstable, the site of conflict, and exploding the myth of a homogeneous community." These studies have also demonstrated that meaning is neither stable nor absolute, but it is achieved and dependent on factors such as "the processes of interpretation undertaken by a reader...upon the actual linguistic structures" used by the authors and "contextual factors" (McRae and Clark, 2004:329). In other words,

meanings not only depend on the linguistic structures of the texts, but also on the process of interpretation done by the reader upon these structures, with appropriate emphasis given to other factors that can influence the production of meanings. A greater emphasis on reader's processing or interpretation of the text is reflected in the growth of cognitive stylistics (Stockwell 2002).

The focus on stylistic methods has also changed from an "attention on the texts or words on the page" which degrades the roles of either the reader or the author, to an analysis of the text in its social context (Hall, 1989:31). Since the nature of stylistics is dependent on a mixture of both literary and linguistic theories, new developments in literary criticism and linguistic models have given rise to a new movement in stylistics, which has recognised the existence of the social context outside the text. However, during the early development of stylistics in the late 1950's, many of the stylisticians then had not considered a text in the context either of its production or reception. Contextual factors such as gender, race, class, circumstances and life experiences were ignored because they were seen as a distraction since the focus was purely on the linguistic analysis of the text (Fowler 1996). These limitations presented a serious problem with stylistics at that time. The focus on a limited set of texts, especially the canonical texts for analysis, and for ignoring these contextual factors had seriously undermined the early stylisticians' claims to scientific and objective method of analysis.

Verdonk and Weber (1995) stress that it is important that contextual factors which have been neglected in the past such as the cultural background of the reader, and the circumstances in which a particular text is read, have to be taken into account. Stockwell (2002) adds that context is important as it determines how a reader interprets a text as there are many interpretations and different contexts for many readers. He goes on to say that the key to understanding issues of literary appreciation and interpretation depends on one's ability

to have a clear view of the text, context, circumstances, general world knowledge and belief. Consequently, rather than concentrating exclusively on finding out what a text means, stylisticians have become “more interested in the systematic ways language is used to create texts which are similar or different from one another” as well as to “link choices in the texts to social and cultural context (Thornborrow and Wareing, 1998:7).

However, this does not mean that stylisticians have lost interest in finding out what a text means. Thornborrow and Wareing point out stylisticians have started to consider the significant influence of the social and cultural contexts in developing meanings in literary works. They also note that the modern stylisticians are more aware of the contextual factors that play essential role in the interpretation process and the possibility of deriving several distinct and valid meanings from a particular text. Carter and Simpson (1989:14) maintain that stylistics is no longer limited to word-counts, and it is more concerned with occupying “the territory beyond the level of the sentence or the single conversational exchange and examining the broader contextual properties of texts which affect their description and interpretation.” In doing so, stylistics has moved away from a structuralist perception of a text as predominantly “monologic, stable and self-referential” (McRae and Clark, 2004:329), and begun to view texts as primarily dialogic, that is, as a social discourse in which the words used and the meaning of the words cannot be separated from their relevant contexts (Macdonell 1986). Hence, stylistics has shifted its examination of literary texts from a purely linguistic level to discussing the wider surrounding contexts of their production and reception which contribute to the development of meaning (Hall 1989). The willingness to recognise the existence of context reflects the characteristics of modern stylistics, which has shifted away from a purely formalist and text-oriented to a more functional and contextualised approach (Verdonk and Weber 1995). Consequently, stylisticians have begun to view literary texts as a part of a complex social and cultural process (Fowler 1981).

The second key aspect mentioned by Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) is the discussion of texts according to objective criteria, rather than according to purely subjective and impressionistic values. They explain that the idea of objectivity of a stylistic analysis was initially developed in order to differentiate between stylistics and literary criticism. This is because the early stylisticians believed that by scrutinising and interpreting texts based on objective criteria, instead of focusing on subjective concerns or reflecting a literary analyst's emotions, stylistics would not experience similar attacks thrown at literary criticism. Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:5) state that literary criticism involves a close reading of a text and "selecting features from it to comment on and analyse" in an endeavour to evaluate "how good or bad a piece of literature it was." Hence, literary critics were interested in evaluating literary works, however their judgment was criticised due to the criteria focused on when selecting and analysing these texts. McRae and Clark (2004) add that a literary analyst often seemed to choose any criteria of his or her individual choice in assessing the literary value of the particular text. Another critic might select different criteria and thus, these two literary analysts could arrive at two distinct evaluations of the same text. As Thornborrow and Wareing (1998: 5) write, "literary criticism involved explicit value judgements" that relied greatly on the literary critics' choice of certain criteria for analysis that influenced their textual evaluation. Accordingly, this gave rise to the development of stylistics in an effort "to provide a less intuitive, less personal technique of analysis...which would depend on the observable facts, the language of the texts, and a scientific discipline to interpret them: linguistics." Because of this reliance on the scientific discipline of linguistics, stylistics often claimed that its approach was a purely objective method of textual analysis (Simpson 1993).

Many of the early stylisticians also analysed literary texts in a rather scientific way by drawing on linguistic theories and practices. The earlier claim of stylisticians was that their discipline, which was founded on the efficient method of linguistics, could provide an

unambiguous judgement of literary writing. Accordingly, most of them assumed that it was possible to scientifically and objectively examine a text in isolation, as self-sufficient, which meaning was independent of any external factors. As pointed out by Mills (1995:6), in some extreme cases, "stylistic studies have perfected quantification at the expense of interpretation, or have treated linguistic forms as if they contained meaning without reference to the context they occur."

The subjectivity of interpretation and evaluation of literary genres was also strongly opposed by the early stylistics. These stylisticians believed that by focusing on the language of texts, it would be possible to make a rigorous objective textual analysis, rather than a subjective one (Steen 1989). This view was greatly influenced by the Russian Formalists, who aimed to establish a scientific study of literature. This belief also contradicted the subjectivity of a Leavisite approach, which evaluated literary genres according to the criteria determined by the individual literary analyst (Mills 1995). Stylistics, at that time prided itself on its claim of objectivity and many stylisticians employed "mathematical diagrams and terminology" (Chapman, 1973:4) in their analysis and placed significant emphasis on the process of quantifying specified components of texts in order to achieve a scientific and generate similar observable and replicable descriptions of literary texts. As stated by Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:5):

by concentrating on the language of the text, and accepted linguistic methods of categorizing and interpreting, it was argued that stylistics did not reflect the view of the individual critics, but an impersonal, reproducible 'truth'. Anyone approaching the text and conducting the same stylistic procedure ought to arrive at the same result.

However, this kind of work had invited numerous criticisms and attacks on stylistics for being primarily concerned with objectivity to the exclusion of other factors involved in the evaluation of literary genres (e.g. Thurley 1983; Mackay 1996).

Another reason for the criticism was because of the stylisticians' decisions regarding which elements of a text to examine closely, and which stylistic approach to use to interpret the text, were subjective themselves. The process of interpretation itself is subjective when other factors such as educational, social, cultural backgrounds and current circumstances, which differ from one reader to another, are taken into consideration as they can influence literary interpretations. Short (1989: 2) writes, "it is true that each reader will to some extent interpret a text differently from others, merely as a consequence of the fact that we are all different from one another, have different experiences, and so on." Stylisticians have begun to recognise that all interpretations are, to some certain extent, context-bound and dependent on the position of the reader relative to the text. As Toolan (1990:11) suggests, stylistics offers a way of reading which is a "confessedly partial or oriented act of intervention, a reading which is strategic, as all readings necessarily are." Short (1989) and Widdowson (1992) also maintain that stylistics is now concerned with the subjective, individualistic process of interpreting literary texts. Hence, according to Verdonk (2002), modern stylistics has acknowledged that there are other variables involved in meaning construction and that an objective investigation of literary writing alone is insufficient because the detailed examination of the linguistic texture cannot of itself reveal meaning. As Chomsky (cited in Fowler, 1996: 8) has insisted:

linguistics is not a discovery procedure, not an automatic machine which, fed a text at one end, delivers at the other end some significant generalizations about the characters of the text.

Thornborrow and Wareing's final key aspect of stylistics is an emphasis on the aesthetic properties of language. According to McRae and Clark (2004:330), early stylistics was developed in an attempt to describe how pleasure was obtained from the analysis of the language of the texts, or "description of aesthetics derived from linguistics." In other words, how the language used in literary writing such as metaphors, metre and rhyme can give pleasure to readers. As Thornborrow and Wareing (1998:6) write, "what makes a text attractive." The focus

on aesthetic properties of language plays a significant part in a stylistic investigation and is of value, especially when approaching poetry. However, McRae and Clark maintain that since stylistic methods can also be applied to non-literary writing, the emphasis on the aesthetic properties of language is no longer seen as an essential part of all stylistic analysis. Hence, the functions and future direction of this aspect of stylistics are contingent upon the aim and interest of a stylistician in undertaking a stylistic enquiry and the type of text used to carry out such an analysis.

#### 2.4.1 Definitions

Stylistics has been notoriously difficult to define and so far, the attempts have proven to be futile (Van Peer and Andringa 1990). This is because stylistics consists of a variety of distinct stylistic methods used in the analysis of literary writing (Wales 2001). Lecerle (1993:17) argues that attempts to precisely define what stylistics is have proven elusive so far and an adequate definition is still lacking:

no one has ever known exactly what the term meant, and that nowadays hardly anyone seems to care. And yet, paradoxically, the object, style, seems to be as fascinating as ever, and the subject, stylistics, like the phoenix, is forever reborn.

Lecerle is probably right when he states that stylistics is a fascinating subject and its precise agreed definition remains elusive, but he may be mistaken when he claims that "nowadays hardly anyone seem to care." It is argued that the attention to stylistics is growing with the increasing number of publications (e.g. Widdowson 1992; Short 1996a; Wales 2001; Simpson 2004) and papers presented at conferences, for instance, those organised by the *Poetics and Linguistics Association* (PALA). As Simpson (2004:2) writes, modern stylistics is "alive and well...and positively flourishing." Generally, stylistics is defined as an approach to the understanding and interpretation of texts, mainly literary, through linguistic descriptions (Carter 1982; Simpson 1993; Fowler 1996; Hanauer 2001). Short (1996a: 27) states that

a stylistic analysis is a method of linking linguistic forms, *via* reader inference, to interpretation in a detailed way and, thereby providing as much explicit evidence as possible for and against particular interpretations of texts.

In other words, a stylistic approach is used to support a reader's intuition about the meaning of the text under analysis. The reader performs the act of examining literary work by linking the linguistic structure to meaning construction. Hence, a stylistic analysis is engaged to enable the reader to provide substantial evidences for his interpretation through a systematic and detailed investigation of the language of the text. In order to conduct this activity, readers have to refer to their existing knowledge of the language. They need to possess some knowledge of the rules and conventions of linguistics, and should be able to use them accordingly in order to provide evidences that can validate or reject their interpretations.

More recently, Wales (2001: 372-373) provides a detailed definition of stylistics:

The study of style...just as style can be viewed in several ways, so there are several stylistic approaches. This variety in stylistics is due to the main influences in linguistics and literary criticism... By far the most common kind of material studied is literary; and attention is largely text-centred. The goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe the formal features of text for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of text; or in order to relate literary effects...to linguistic 'triggers' where these are felt to be relevant...

Wales defines stylistics as a "text-centred" approach which focuses on the study of the "formal features of texts" and it is principally concerned with describing the "functional significance" of these linguistic features in relation to interpretations and the perceived effects that they may have on readers. Stylistics is also predominantly applied in the study of literary more than non-literary writing. Its theoretical models and practices mainly draw on the developments in "linguistics and literary criticism." The connection between linguistics and literary criticism is explicated further in the following section.



### 2.4.2 Relationship between linguistics and literature

According to Short (1996a:1), "stylistics spans the border of two subjects: literature and linguistics." These two disciplines have also been discussed by Widdowson (1975) and he labels them as linguistic criticism and literary criticism. Wales (2001) concurs that stylistics is sometimes known as literary stylistics or linguistic stylistics. It is called literary stylistics because it focuses on literary works, and linguistic stylistics because its models are drawn from linguistics. Stylistics, therefore, can be perceived as either linguistic stylistics or literary stylistics, depending from which angle one is looking (Short 1996a).

Stockwell (2002) agrees that stylistics has its linguistic and literary sides. He explains that linguistic stylistics is concerned with language study and sees literature as one source of its language data, while literary stylistics develops from literary analysis, taking its theoretical models and approaches developed by linguistics in non-literary contexts in order to undertake an examination of literary texts. Hence, literary critics investigate the language of literature by performing a literary evaluation utilising approaches generated in the language system by linguistic stylistics. However, both literary and linguistic stylistics have different objectives in undertaking the analysis. Leech and Short (1981:13) provide a detailed explanation between the aims of linguistic and literary stylistics:

...in general literary stylistics has, implicitly or explicitly, the goal of explaining the relation between language and the artistic function. The motivating questions are not so much *what*, as *why* and *how*. From the linguist's angle, it is "*Why* does the author choose to express himself in this particular way?" From the critic's viewpoint, it is "*How* is such-and-such an aesthetic effect achieved through language?"

In other words, the linguists are concerned with exploring why the author prefers to use certain specific linguistic textures to express himself, while literary critics concentrate on how certain effects are achieved through the language used by the author. In short, stylistics helps to relate the literary critics' obsession with aesthetic interpretation, appreciation and understanding with the linguists' concern of language analysis and description that are central

to the development of linguistic theory. Carter and Simpson (1989:4) add that the aim of linguistic stylistics is to provide a rigorous and systematic analysis of language of literary texts and believe that there are “dangers in compromising the rigor and systematicity of analysis of stylistic effects.” Hence, the precision of an analysis achieved through stylistic methods are paramount for linguistic stylistics, while many literary critics remain traditional in their methods of approaching literature despite the advancements made in literary theory.

Although there are new developments in linguistics which affect the directions and procedures of stylistics, there has been a perpetual dispute between literary critics and linguists whether it is appropriate to use linguistic methods to approach literary texts. As Carter and Simpson (1989:1) write, “the relationship between these two disciplines has been uneasy and is still fraught with all kinds of theoretical and practical difficulties.” Fowler (1987:70) claims that most linguists feel that the application of linguistics models to the study of literature “is entirely justified.” Nine years on, Fowler (1996) maintains that linguistics is appropriate to be used in the study of literature despite the criticism against its procedures because, to him, linguistic analysis is a flexible, directed procedure that requires exclusive control and knowledge from its users to manoeuvre it towards achieving their purpose of reading literature. Simpson (1993:4) also holds that it is beneficial to use linguistics to study literature because literary texts offer “exciting testing ground” for the application of linguistic theories and models, which usually leads to the development of better linguistic knowledge and insightful literary appreciation. To him, “linguistic models offer a ‘way in’ to the text, while the text itself allows for a challenging application for those models.” In other words, a stylistic analysis is very much dependent on linguistic models and frameworks and, in return, the analysis tests and challenges these frameworks or models by identifying their limitations. And based on these revelations, linguists are forced to modify and improve these models. Concurrently, the linguistic examination further motivates readers’ literary insight. Thus, stylistic methods are a suitable testing instrument for

the linguistic models and promote the development of an astute literary evaluation.

Nevertheless, there are critics who argue that linguistics should not be used to approach literature. One reason is because linguistics is perceived to be inadequate and unfit to describe the subjective interpretation and aesthetic experience of literature. Bateson (cited in Fowler, 1987:70) in his long infamous controversy with Fowler, has protested:

linguistics is a science,...but literature has...an ineradicable subjective core which is inaccessible to science. Again, linguistic processing is only a preliminary to literary response, so the linguist is incapable of taking us far enough in an account of literary form and experience.

Furthermore, according to Lodge (1966:57) linguistics is inappropriate to be used in the study of literary texts because of its nature that claims to be of a scientific inquiry. It, therefore, contradicts the "essential characteristics of literature that it concerns values. And values are not amendable to scientific methods." In short, it is assumed by literary critics that literary values are not applicable to the scientific methods advocated by the linguists, making them inappropriate to be used in the study of literature.

Literary critics have also claimed that a stylistic analysis is too scientific and mechanical a method that it does not assist learners in reading literature despite the numerous claims of benefits that stylistics can offer. Gower (1986:127) argues that the "stylisticians' way is to charge in, white coats on, and perform a linguistic analysis" on literary texts and this does not aid students in understanding the workings of the language in the text, rather they become confused.

Despite the heated debate between linguists and literary critics regarding the relationship between linguistics and literature (e.g Fowler and Bateson 1968; Mackay 1996; Short *et al.* 1998), Weber (1996) asserts that stylistics has managed to develop in two significant directions: pedagogical stylistics and contextualised stylistics. Among the examples of the different types of contextualised stylistics practised today are feminist stylistics (e.g. Mills

1995), pragmatic stylistics (e.g. Short 1998) and cognitive stylistics (e.g. Semino and Culpeper 2002; Stockwell 2002). According to Weber (1996:3), contextualised stylistics is predominantly influenced by the movements in linguistics, where context becomes a crucial notion and its significance is influenced by the new developments in pragmatics, critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics. He goes on to explain that stylisticians have begun to recognise that style is neither “inherent in the text...[nor] totally in the reader’s mind”, but it is considered as an “effect produced by and through the interaction between the text and reader.” Hence, contextualised stylistics postulates that meanings and the aesthetic effects of the language are neither fixed nor exclusively embedded in the texts, but they are achieved and materialised in the reader’s mind not only through the dialogic interaction between the reader and the text, but also the surrounding sociohistorical, circumstances and cultural context of the text, author, and the reader himself or herself.

On the other hand, Weber (1996:3) writes that pedagogical stylistics shifts away from “theoretical matters...and bold claims of scientificity” to a more “rigorous, systematic replicable stylistic analysis, which achieve inter-subjectivity, validity and pedagogical usefulness.” Pedagogical stylistics attempts to illuminate the potential values that a stylistic analysis can offer L1 or L2 learners, if it applied as a way of reading literary or non-literary writing as it can enrich students’ thinking about the target language (Simpson 2004).

The pioneering movement of engaging stylistics in language learning was advocated by Widdowson (1975) in his book *‘Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature’*. Since then, stylisticians have been working towards the interface between literature and language study. Weber (1996) notes that among the efforts made in their endeavour to ensure an effective integration is the development of pre-literary language-based activities such as gap-filling and rewriting the beginning or an ending of a story (e.g. Carter and McRae 1996). These exercises were aimed at enhancing students’ language competence in order to achieve the desired level

of proficiency in the target language and also to elevate their understanding of the different uses of language employed in literary or non-literary writing.

## 2.5 Pedagogical stylistics

This section details the pedagogic implication of stylistics in ESL/EFL classrooms. The discussion attempts to elucidate the principles and practices of pedagogical stylistics that facilitate the development of the worksheets for use with both sets of respondents in this study. Wales (2001:373) states that because of the eclecticism of stylistics, it has “come to be used as a significant teaching tool in language and literature studies for both native and foreign speakers of English: what can be termed pedagogical stylistics.”

In broad terms, pedagogical stylistics can be considered as the study of literary texts with a sharp concern for how the language elements work in these texts (Tan 2004). It is, therefore, reasonably similar to stylistics as “one of the many ways in which literary texts can be approached” (Carter, 1982:10). Clark and Zyngier (2003) point out that the theory and methods employed by pedagogical stylistics draw largely on the theoretical framework within stylistics. Most of its teaching resources or learning materials are either derived or adapted from studies done by stylisticians. Hence, pedagogical stylistics is not so different from stylistic activities but, it is a part of them. However, Clark and Zyngier claim that there are some differences between the two disciplines and the differences lie in the purpose and functions of undertaking the analysis. Stylistics is predominantly concerned with textual analysis and interpretations in which the primacy of focus is assigned to language (Simpson 2004). Pedagogical stylistics, however, is aimed at using stylistic activities within the classroom context to help students develop language, text and cultural awareness in reading all texts, whether literary or not (Short 1995).

Tan (2004) states that pedagogical stylistics is also slightly distinct from stylistics as the former is more concerned with the textual matter or the words found on a page. While

language observation is similarly central in stylistics, extra-textual issues such as authors' biographical details, writer's intention, and the socio-historical and cultural circumstances are also essential in a stylistic examination of literary texts. Tan further suggests that the focus on textual matter benefits ESL learners because it allows them to interpret literary works without sufficient background knowledge that can influence their confidence in approaching literature. Hence, pedagogical stylistics places paramount importance on the text itself and less on its background information (Duff and Maley 1990). Nevertheless, Duff and Maley suggest that background knowledge can be provided later if students express more interest in a particular work that they are working on.

Furthermore, Weber (1996) maintains that pedagogical stylistics is more concerned with the interactive activities between the student, as a reader and the text during the reading process. McRae and Clark (2004) concur that stylisticians have begun to acknowledge the interactive roles played by both the reader and the text, during the process of analysing and developing its interpretation. Leech and Short (1981) posit that when a student performs a stylistic analysis, he/she is involved in a dialogue between him/her, as a reader and the text. This interaction usually involves a close observation of the linguistic particularities in the text, which helps students to understand their functions and effects (Toolan 1998). The language examination exercises drive students to build relevant arguments and seek evidences to support them. In doing so, students can develop and improve their awareness of the language use in a particular text that promotes greater knowledge of English language in general. Since teachers usually determine the choice of texts and the types of classroom activities, they assume a significant influence and play an important role in encouraging students' language awareness through active participation in undertaking a stylistic analysis.

Nevertheless, according to Clark and Zyngier (2003:341), pedagogical stylistics cannot claim that by only employing stylistic methods as teaching activities, it can either improve

students' language skills or develop their linguistic proficiency. This is because the primary aim of pedagogical stylistics is to develop students' awareness of the language use in literary texts rather than their language skills such as reading and writing. However, they acknowledge that the skills involved in textual analysis are "transferable to the ways in which students use language themselves" that can promote the development of these language skills. Hence, such by-products should be considered a bonus as these skills are paramount in language acquisition albeit their development is not the main priority of pedagogical stylistics.

McRae's (1996) concept of 'referential' and 'representational' language is also central in the use of stylistics for L2 students as they are among the key concepts in the integration of literature and language study. According to McRae and Clark (2004:335), representational language "refers to any use of language, which makes an appeal to the imagination or to the affective side of the interlocutors: imagery, idioms, advertisements..." Pedagogical stylistics is more relevant to representational than referential language as it attempts to expand students' language, text and cultural insight. Representational language exposes students to different uses of language that requires imagination and the questioning of the rules as a part of the ongoing process of acquiring a language (McRae 1996). Such an exposure can promote the development of learners' language competence. This kind of language is also assumed to be conducive for a stylistic classroom because it has

richness and variety, not the monotone of singularity of vision and intent....For as soon as language begins to mean, it begins to expand its meaning, to make demands on its users...and as soon as this happens, questions of interpretation, shades of meaning, of reaction and response are brought together into play (McRae, 1996:19).

Representational language imposes demands on students as it requires elements of imagination and subjectivity from them during their encounter with the text. Pedagogical stylistics, thus, introduces representational language as a stylistic analysis involves discussions, reflections and explanation of interpretations, rather than merely reporting, parroting or accepting meanings given by others. These activities are among the essential

characteristics of representational language learning. On the other hand, McRae (1996:17) argues that referential language is not suitable for conducting a stylistic activity because referential materials “remain close to what they mean in a dictionary sense...one word has one meaning, one grammatical construction is right and another is wrong, the words mean what they say, no more and no less.” In other words, referential language is mainly information-based, with little or no requirement for processing and interpretation. This type of language is usually used in English textbooks for second or foreign language learners.

### 2.5.1 Aims

According to Clark and Zyngier (2003:340-342), generally, the principal aim of pedagogical stylistics in L1 or L2 classroom settings is similar, “a focus on the language of the text and the relationship of that language of the possible meanings and interpretations generated by it.” In other words, it attempts to develop students’ awareness of the language use in a particular text in which linguistic analysis is undertaken and how the observed linguistic features create the intended effects on its readers. Clark and Zyngier put forward three specific key objectives of using pedagogical stylistics: (i) to sensitise learners to linguistic and poetic problems specific to a text, (ii) to encourage students to propose appropriate solutions, and (iii) to investigate how the interaction between students, teachers and texts occurs. Put another way, pedagogical stylistics attempts to sensitise students to language use in the text, and to motivate learners to suggest the most appropriate solutions for the potential interpretation problems through the interaction between the students, teacher and the text, and at the same time investigates how these interactions take place. Hence, pedagogical stylistics in a classroom is not intended to

...produce the next generation of stylisticians...or create even more accurate users of a language..., but to promote linguistically aware readers who can perceive the qualities of language which are manipulated for particular effects. (Clark and Zyngier, 2003:342)

Therefore, pedagogical stylistics is not merely concerned with the teaching and



familiarising students with linguistic textures, or identifying linguistic problems in literary writing, but rather it plays essential role in developing and enhancing the interactive nature between the student and the text, with another student and with the teachers. This can be achieved as pedagogical stylistics is interested in investigating the interaction in the performance of a stylistic analysis on selected works.

Apart from offering students a method of analysis towards a more sensitive understanding and appreciation of literature, Lazar (1993:31) suggests that pedagogical stylistics has two main objectives: (i) to enable students to make meaningful interpretations of the text itself, and (ii) to expand students' knowledge and awareness of the language in general. Hence, pedagogical stylistics not only endeavours to help students read and decipher literary texts more competently, but also offers students numerous language practices.

Nevertheless, according to McRae and Clark (2004), stylistics is applied differently in L1 and L2 settings and the difference lies in its purpose. A similar text may be read and construed differently by L1 and L2 students, depending on various factors such as their surrounding context and language competence. Hence, their purpose for reading differs and the textual analysis procedures undertaken by the learners (L1 and L2) rely greatly on practical methods which draw on their knowledge of language, current circumstances and learning context.

### **2.5.2 Advantages**

Short (1996a:5) states that stylistics is beneficial when students disagree over an interpretation of a text, teachers and students can perform a stylistic analysis as one way to choose which of the various suggestions of interpretations is the most appropriate as stylistics is "concerned with relating linguistic descriptions to interpretations in as explicit a way as possible." In other words, stylistics assists students to acquire an explicit and rational basis for deciding between the suggested interpretations. It also aids them to become more aware of the

interpretation process that they use in order to achieve comprehension. This, coupled with a general interest in English literature, has led to the gaining popularity of a stylistic approach.

Clark and Zyngier (2003:340) claim that another reason for its popularity, particularly in L1 setting, is because stylistics uses and draws upon linguistic methods and principles to elucidate the linguistic patterns employed in literary writing. By engaging a stylistic method of analysis, students are led to discover "ambiguities, layers of possible meanings and any irregular linguistic patterns within a text" that may go unnoticed if a different method is used. The patterns are usually taught to these students in order to equip them with the appropriate stylistic tools that can facilitate meaning construction and also as a means to verifying their interpretation. Leech and Short (1981) also agree that these tools are essential in the production of meanings. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the linguistic features or categories found in a text do not constitute meanings on their own. Instead, a detailed, systematic and thorough examination of these features can constraint students from "inferring unreasonable meanings and prompt them towards reasonable ones" (Short, 1996a: 8).

Stylistics is also useful for students who struggle with reading and responding to literature, particularly when they have the task of stating the interpretations and supporting them with textual evidences. This is because a stylistic analysis can provide students with a basic procedure for interpreting a literary piece. Toolan (1998:3) states that an examination usually begins with an attempt to answer one of the most basic analytical questions, "what do you notice about this object?" and based on this question, students can gradually progress to their analysis of the text. Short (1995:53) adds that pedagogical stylistics is pedagogically useful for students because it elucidates how

...understanding of a text is achieved, by examining in detail the linguistic organisation of a text and how a reader needs to interact with that linguistic organisation to make sense of it...the main purpose of stylistics is to show how interpretation is achieved, and hence provide support for a particular view of the work under discussion.

Short is saying that a stylistic approach provides linguistic evidences to readers as how certain effects are created and achieved through the interaction between the reader and the author's linguistic choices. By observing these linguistic peculiarities, students are guided to the discovery of meaning. Hence, stylistics facilitates students' understanding of the text by not only focusing on "*what* a text means, but also *how* it comes to mean" (Short, 1996a:6).

McRae and Clark (2004) argue that students with limited proficiency in English who evidently have less knowledge of linguistics than advanced learners, should not be discouraged from using a stylistic approach when reading literary texts. Stylistics promotes students' awareness of the language used, which means an insight into the linguistic organisation in the text that advances student's language proficiency. Not only are students aware of what the story is about, but also how they interpret the story to be what it is by looking at its language. They will be able to realise what language elements facilitate meaning construction. Brumfit and Carter (1986:4) point out:

more importantly for the students a firm basis in language analysis is given from which he or she can proceed to say with some precision what it means to them, how it means what it means, and why the text is liked or disliked by them.

A stylistic approach can also be offered to students as an enabling device which, once acquired, will allow and facilitate an understanding of the ways in which language create impressions, effects and meaning on its reader. Language observation prompts, restricts and refines students' personal responses to literature. They are able to accomplish this as they are provided with a systematic method of analysis and also by depending on their knowledge of the language. This approach also offers a useful exposure or a revision of grammar and expanding vocabulary in a different and interesting new context (Lazar 1993). The understanding of how language works will help to develop both competence in stylistic analysis, and a systematic awareness of the organisation of the language. Such an analysis also helps them to be intellectually and emotionally involved in learning English, which promotes a greater

understanding of the target language in general. As Widdowson (1996:140) writes, “stylistics renders an essential service to language learning...the learner...will have acquired an awareness of the way language functions...he will have developed an awareness of literature as language.”

Sinclair (1982:19) adds that pedagogical stylistics also offers students an insight into the use of language which helps to improve their “expressive abilities.” This can be achieved by reading and talking about interesting topics which are richly inherent in literary works. These literary-based activities also provide the means whereby students can relate a piece of literary writing to their own experience (Widdowson 1992). This is because literary texts often touch on common themes to which readers can bring personal responses, feelings and opinions from their own experience.

### 2.5.3 Activities

This discussion on developing pedagogical stylistics-based activities is mainly derived from Clark and Zyngier's (2003) '*Towards a pedagogical stylistics*' which has been of fundamental importance in the development of pedagogical stylistics. According to Bex (1999, cited in Clark and Zyngier, *ibid.*: 343 -344), in order to explain the types of activities which are suitable for pedagogical stylistics, it is important that the activities should focus upon how:

1. writers make selections from the linguistic potentials of a given language so as to create an artefact manifesting certain formal properties (e.g. foregrounding)
2. writers construct cohesion and coherence within a text so as to give it a dynamic of its own (e.g. narrative structure)
3. writers position themselves (and their characters) vis-à-vis their potential readers ( e.g. modality, transitivity, point of view)
4. writers draw attention to previous text (intertextuality)
5. readers track texts during the act of processing (e.g. anaphoric devices)
6. readers draw upon their cognitive environment in the interpretation of texts either individually (e.g. relevance ) or universally (e.g. cognitive metaphors)
7. readers 'place' texts within a social context (e.g. genre studies)

8. texts mediate authority, power and control (e.g. critical discourse analysis, feminist approaches)

Clark and Zyngier add that this list can be subdivided into three distinct but interrelated kinds of activities. These activities are also discussed in McRae and Clark's (2004:333-334) '*Stylistics*'. Teachers using stylistic methods can select any of these activities in explicating literary texts to their students. These three kinds of activity can also be utilised independently as the content of study, or be combined with one or both of the activities. These activities are:

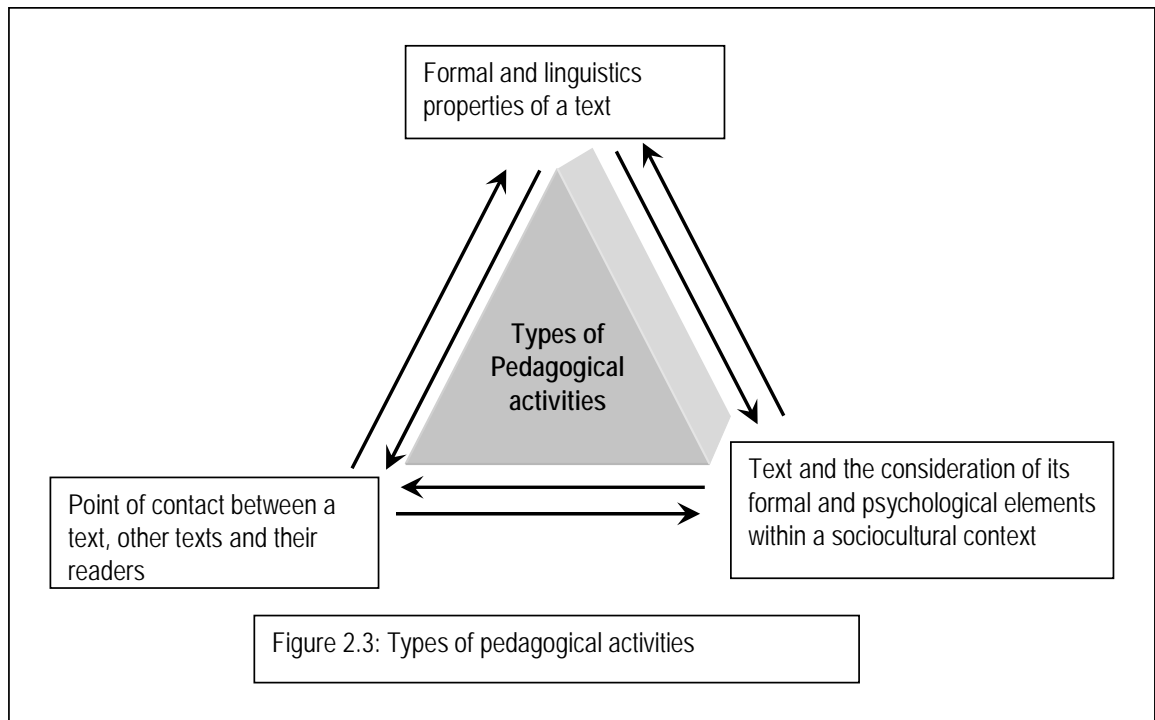
- those related to the recognizably formal and linguistic properties of a text, which itself exists as an isolated item in the world
- those which refer to the points of contact between a text, other texts, and their readers
- those which position the text and the consideration of its formal and psychological elements within a socio-cultural context.

The first activity, which focuses on the formal and linguistic properties of a text, includes the first three points from Bex's list above. It involves the analysis of the words and sentences found on the page itself and the method of analysis draws mainly from linguistic theory. This activity also has the "most developed conceptual vocabulary and frames of references" than other areas in stylistics and is commonly used in the application of a stylistic approach in both L1 and L2 teaching and learning context (McRae and Clark, 2004:333). It is frequently used in teaching literature due to its pedagogic usefulness as a way of reading that provides more opportunities for students not only to read denotatively, but more importantly, to read connotatively when they examine the types and uses of language that authors employ in their writing (Simpson 2004). Furthermore, as Clark and Zyngier point out, class activities based on a text's formal and linguistic properties usually make use of the stylisticians' checklist or toolbox such as the ones provided by Leech and Short (1981) and Short (1996a).

With regard the second type of activity, the points of contact between a text, other texts, and their readers, Clark and Zyngier maintain that this activity includes points 4 and 5 in

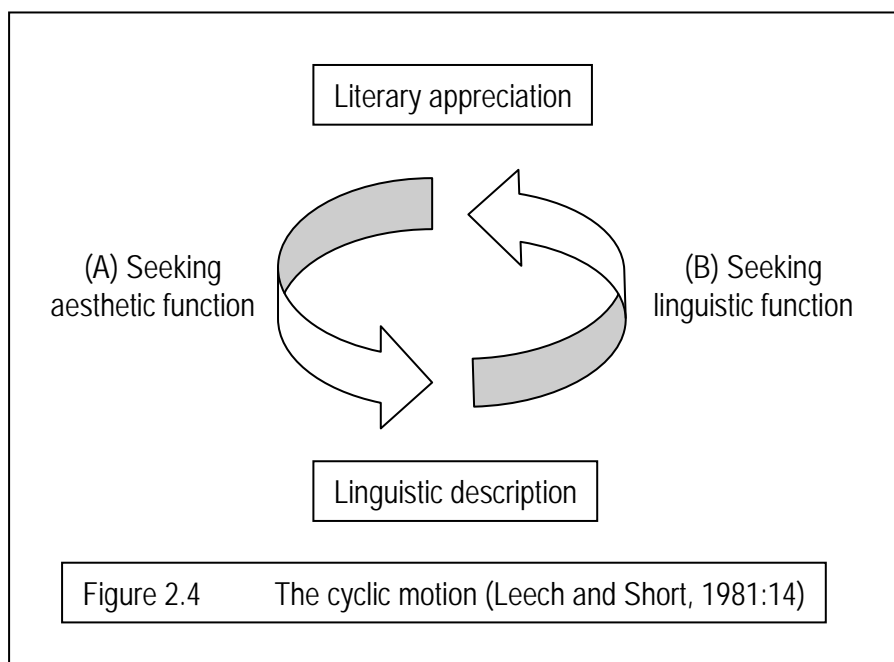
Bex's list above: writers draw attention to previous text (intertextuality), and readers track texts during the act of processing, (e.g. anaphoric devices). Hence, this interactive activity requires readers to refer back and forth within the text and make reference and connection between the previous text read and the current one during the reading process. They also note that the current studies into the point of contact between the text, reader and other texts are expanding, especially in area of cognitive stylistics. Cognitive stylistics focuses on reading activity that involves psychological and cognitive processes that affect readers' interpretations of texts (Stockwell 2002).

The third kind of activity focuses on the text within its socio-cultural context and it includes Bex's last three points mentioned above (points 6, 7 and 8). This type of activity maintains that the socio-cultural factors such as readers' philosophical outlook and knowledge of the world will significantly influence their literary interpretations and it is important that these factors are recognised when applying a stylistic approach in a classroom. Put another way, this type of activity is not only concerned with the interaction between the reader and the text, but also considers the contexts of the production and reception of the text. However, Clark and Zyngier raise the question of how the third kind of activity associates itself with the first and second activities and hence, this issue remains to be researched and elucidated by stylisticians. If a visual model is to be drawn from Clark and Zyngier's three kinds of activity, it probably would take the shape of a triangle, which clearly outlines the distinct yet interrelated relationship of the three activities (Figure 2.3).



In relation to the three types of activities mentioned above, one probable question that may be raised is, which should a reader focus on first, the linguistic or the aesthetic aspects of literary texts? Though Leech and Short (1981) consider this question more pertinent to the relationship between linguistic and literature, it is also applicable in this context. Spitzer's (1948:19) 'philological circle' can be used to answer this question. Spitzer claims that when readers read literary works, they are forced to interactively move between the linguistic structures to the literary aspects of that particular work. In other words, he suggests that a stylistic analysis initiates the aesthetic response, moves towards linguistic descriptions and circles back to aesthetic response. Spitzer writes that the circle is, "our to and fro voyage from certain outward details to the inner center and back again to other series of details." Hence, readers are required to make the incessant journey in his/her back and forth movement from the linguistic descriptions of the text to its aesthetic functions. Leech and Short (1981:13) add that the movement results in a "cyclic motion whereby linguistic observation stimulates or modifies literary insight, and whereby the literary insight in its turn stimulates further linguistic observation." In other words, the examination done by a reader during this cyclic motion

promotes an awareness of the linguistic features which create such effects on him/her and this awareness, in return will encourage the reader to become more sensitive in his/her observation of the language use. Widdowson (1975:5-6) agrees that the purpose of stylistic analysis is to extend "the linguist's literary intuitions and the critic's linguistic observations and making their relationship explicit." Thus, according to Leech and Short (1981), the answer to question above is that there is no starting point since these two activities are concurrently done: the readers' aptitude to provide aesthetic reactions to a text as a piece of literary work, and their capability to examine its language. Short (1996a) maintains that readers perform these complex tasks without even realising that they are doing them and how they do them. Leech and Short (1981) draw the following figure to represent Spitzer's 'philological circle' (Figure 2.4).



With regard the application of a stylistic analysis in a classroom, Bex (1999, cited in Clark and Zyngier, 2003:345) suggests three different but interconnected choices that teachers have to carefully consider in terms of text, method and application. However, Clark and Zyngier explain that these choices are influenced by essential attributes such as course objectives, teaching materials, students' needs and interests, and teachers' attitudes. The criteria are:



1. The choice of text. The principle of selection at work is usually either (i) selection of a text or group of texts to illustrate a particular stylistic point, or (ii) selection of a text and subsequent identification of a range of stylistic issues within it and indication of possible solutions.
2. Selection of the most appropriate linguistic, literary or theoretical approach or model, and associated practices from the stylistician's toolbox, to illustrate a specific stylistic point in the case of (1)(i) above, or in order to bring about a solution to a particular textual problem or general principle, as in the case of (1) (ii).
3. Applying the selection of approaches/methods outlined in (2) above to the chosen text(s) in the ongoing dynamic of the classroom/seminar/workshop.

Bex clarifies that the choice of text is usually bounded by students' programme and purpose of study. Hence, it is apparent that teachers have to carefully consider the criteria for selecting literary texts to address their teaching purposes and students' needs. Short (1986) recommends two significant criteria when choosing literary works: the suitability of the text's level of difficulty for the students, and how the reading of that particular text enhances students' knowledge and understanding of English.

In terms of Bex's second criteria, the selection of the most appropriate approach or model to illustrate a specific stylistic point, Clark and Zyngier claim that this is quite easy to achieve as most teachers will have adequate knowledge of such methods from the guidance and information provided in numerous textbooks on stylistics (e.g. Clark 1996; Toolan 1998; Simpson 2004). Short (1996b) adds that it is important for teachers to have some knowledge of stylistics in order to describe textual analysis and interpretation to students. This is because they need to explain to them in less technical and daunting ways about what is going on in the text. An evident and explicit explanation about these activities also enables students to have a better understanding of the target language and how it works (Alderson and Short 1989).

Finally, Bex's third choice concerns the application of the selected stylistic tools to the chosen text in a classroom. Clark and Zyngier claim that this can be considered the most

problematic area in pedagogical stylistics as it is lacking in research probably because it is the most difficult area to investigate.

In a similar trend to Bex, Maley (1989:13) proposes a more specific framework, which is primarily concerned with exploring alternative ways of using literary texts in teaching language. He lists four ways of treating texts:

1. by allowing the text itself to suggest the nature of the activity, rather than imposing the activity ready-made upon the text.
2. by redefining the function of the text. Instead of regarding it as the sole focus of activity, it is looked upon as one element in a set of linked activities. The text, therefore, is not the beginning and end of all discussion.
3. by presenting the text in a variety of ways, and not merely as a static, immovable block of words.
4. by devising activities which are not only shaped by questions, but are also given in the form of instructions, suggestions or prompts.

Maley adds that there are two overall criteria that can be applied to these four aspects. The first criterion entails constant reference back to and interaction with the text, and second, involves student in an interaction with other students and the teacher about the text.

#### **2.5.4 Application in ESL/EFL context**

Widdowson (1975) was among the pioneers who has advocated and illustrated the pedagogical benefits of using stylistics in language and literature teaching. Since then, the potential of stylistics in these subjects has been explored and given greater attention by prominent researchers and scholars such as McRae and Boardman (1984), Carter and Simpson (1989) and Short (1989; 1996a). Simpson (2004) claims that stylistic methods are much valued techniques and have been predominantly used in the teaching of literature to learners of second languages due to their close attention to the analysis of the linguistic features in literary writing.

However, at first sight, a linguistic approach to literature may not seem appropriate to

non-native learners of English because literature can be considered as the most difficult type of language to approach stylistically because of its diversity and complexity (Chapman 1973). Maley (1989), however, claims that since the nature of stylistics is primarily concerned with language, it is therefore, more suitable to be used with second or foreign language learners. Short (1983:73) maintains that stylistics is applicable to the ESL/EFL learners because the teaching of English grammar "has never been expunged from the foreign learner's curriculum" that enables them to cope better with "detailed technicality of stylistic description" than native speakers. He further claims that the application of a stylistic analysis is

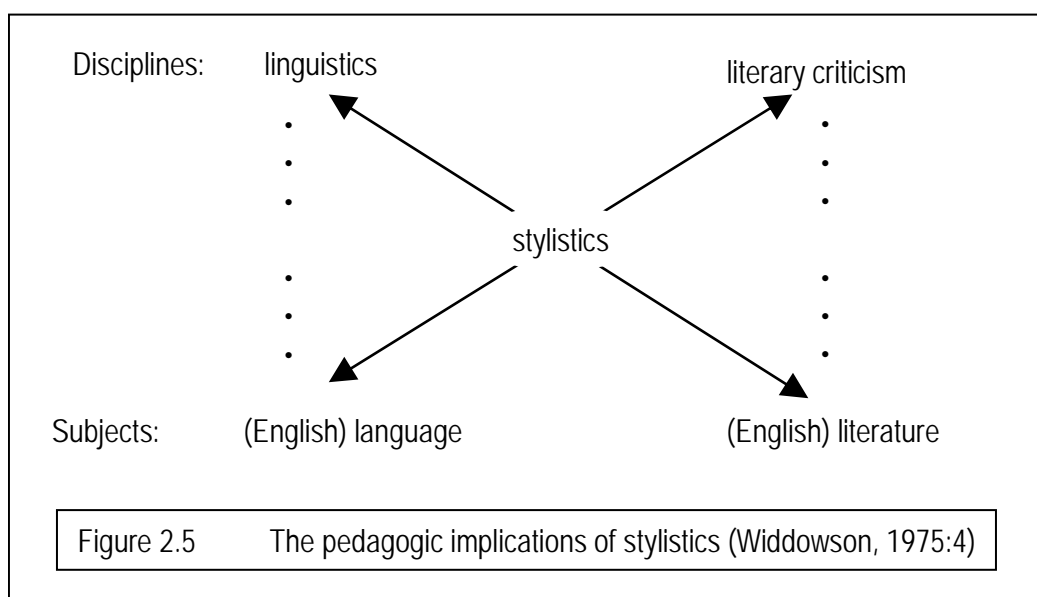
stronger when teaching English literature overseas than at home, precisely because the chances of students misunderstanding were greater, and because the only way of guaranteeing with any certainty that misunderstandings are cleared up is through as explicit an analysis as possible.

In other words, Short contends that a stylistic approach is apposite for teaching literature to non-native speakers because these students are disadvantaged by their unfamiliarity with the language and culture and, thus, they are more likely to have inadequate or incorrect interpretations, which result in their "misunderstanding" of the text. Because of this, Short claims that a stylistic analysis is beneficial for them as it is a "way of guaranteeing...that misunderstandings are cleared up...through as explicit an analysis" and as a means of generating several appropriate interpretations. Via stylistic methods students are guided to choose between these derived interpretations and eventually decide which interpretation is the most appropriate and sound for the text. As such, a stylistic analysis has been of "particular concern to the foreign language learners as it has been seen as a device by which the understanding of relatively complex texts can be achieved" (Short, 1989:6).

Moreover, according to Short (1996b), language study in UK schools is usually associated with English grammar and it is deemed to be boring and irrelevant. Accordingly, a lot of students have a restricted knowledge of grammar and experience difficulty in performing simple tasks, for instance, in identifying the different parts of speech in a sentence. Earlier,

Short and Candlin (1989:183) have also pointed out that to some extent, non-native speakers have certain advantages over native speakers because “foreign students have learnt how to analyse sentences grammatically and...[are] more consciously more aware of linguistic structure and better equipped to analyse it and its relationship to meaning.” McRae and Clark (2004) also agree that stylistics is applicable to second language learners because they are more aware of the rules and functions of the language from the native speakers who tend to take them for granted.

Widdowson (1975:3-4) suggests that “stylistics can provide a way of mediating between two subjects, English language and Literature.” In other words, he is proposing the integration of language and literature teaching through the use of stylistics. Figure 2.5 below illustrates Widdowson’s views on the implications of stylistics in the teaching of literature and language. Further, he argues that stylistics is neither a “discipline nor a subject in its own right” instead it is a way of relating the disciplines (linguistics and literary criticism) and subjects (English language and English literature) and claims that stylistics is “essentially a means of linking the two and has (as yet at least) no autonomous domain of its own.”



Hence, Widdowson perceives stylistics as a method of analysis rather than a discipline which can act as a bridge between these disciplines and these subjects. Through this, he suggests that stylistics can help students to gradually progress from English literature into linguistics and from language into literary criticism and vice versa. Widdowson claims that

stylistics can serve as a means whereby literature and language as subjects can by a process of gradual approximation move towards both linguistic and literary criticism, and also as a means whereby these disciplines can be pedagogically treated to yield different subjects. Thus stylistics can... provide for the progression of a pupil from either language or literature towards either literary criticism or linguistics.

Zyngier (1994c) claims that one of the valuable contributions of this diagram is that it places stylistics in a pedagogical context in language teaching and learning. However, she maintains that this model has yet to achieve its proposed flexibility in the real world of teaching and learning context as envisioned by Widdowson.

More recently, Bredella (2004:377) also holds that one of the ways of combining literature in language teaching is through stylistics when he states, "stylistic analysis can unite literary studies and foreign language learning." He argues that since stylistics involves a close study of literary genres that promotes students' language awareness, its analysis can increase "students' motivation because they will enjoy reading literary texts when they become aware of how language is used in them." Carter (1982:8) is of the same opinion that literature helps to bridge the gap between literary studies and language learning, however, he cautions that if there is to be an "effective marriage" between literature and language study, both disciplines need to accommodate and adjust to the "concerns, techniques and the principles" of one another.

Short (1996b) further asserts that stylistics is pertinent for relatively inexperienced or unsophisticated students to arrive at possible meanings of texts. However, he cautions that in order to teach stylistics successfully to non-native speakers, it is necessary for teachers to find new and more accessible ways of teaching it. Teachers have to be prepared to make their

terminology more transparent and search for teaching techniques to help students overcome any problems that they may experience when using stylistics, especially when the approach can be discouraging and complicated. Widdowson (1975) argues that if teachers want to develop the capacity in their students for independent reading and response to literary texts, they need to find ways to actively engage them in the interpretation activity, without simply telling them what to look for. As pointed out by Rodger (1969:89):

Our task as English teachers is...not to hand over predigested meanings, but to teach our students to read and interpret for themselves ...to be reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and judge for themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts, in response to any work of literature they may choose to read...

Lazar (1993:31) adds that teachers must not impose their own interpretations of the text and ideas at the expense of students' when undertaking a stylistic examination in order to "engage students in the process of making sense of the text rather than reaching a definite view of that text's meaning" and promote increased participation in and awareness of meaning production activity among students. Greenwood (1988), like Lazar, reminds teachers that their role is to help with students' language errors, and should not replace students' perceptions of the text with their own as they assume the role of neither a corrector nor information provider, but of a facilitator. However, this is an uphill task as Gilroy-Scott complains (1983:2), "students do not know how to approach literature and teachers do not know how to present it." In an agreement with Gilroy-Scott, Widdowson (1992) claims that students are frequently exposed to literary texts as if they already know how to approach them. This often results in demotivation and a kind of pseudo-literary competence, with students merely parroting ideas based on received and established opinions.

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented an in-depth discussion of the theoretical framework of stylistics, pedagogical stylistics and also a comprehensive overview of the application of literature in ELT, with substantial attention given to the discussion on the positions of literature

in the Malaysian education setting. This chapter has also outlined the theoretical assumptions underpinning pedagogical stylistics, drawing from principles and practices of linguistics, stylistics and literary criticism. It is essential to provide comprehensive background information on stylistics in general, and pedagogical stylistics in particular, as a means of elucidating a stylistics-based approach, which helps to guide and inform the development of one of the central research instruments used in this current study: the worksheets.

## Chapter Three:            The Empirical Study

### 3.1      Introduction

The third chapter discusses the research design of this empirical study that adopts a case study method which encompasses a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research tools that includes interviews, observations, survey questionnaires, worksheets and journals. Hence, this chapter provides a rationale and an in-depth explanation for each research instrument employed in this study. It also elucidates issues regarding the integrity of the study, the selection of the research participants as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis.

### 3.2      Research methodology

As stated in Section 1.2, this study aims to investigate ESL students' and teachers' attitudes towards literature and its use in their language classrooms. In order to achieve these aims, the study has employed the case study research methodology, an essentially qualitative approach that facilitates the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Triangulation is used in this study because it helps to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation of data (Stake 2000). Cohen and Manion (1994:233) define triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection." In other words, the process of triangulation occurs by collecting diverse sets of data obtained by different methods. Flick (1998) and Silverman (2001) agree that triangulation is necessary in social science research as it serves to clarify meaning by identifying different ways through which the phenomenon is being seen. Triangulation also reduces the errors of drawing inappropriate conclusions based on one data set, and thus, helps to enhance the validity of the accumulated data (Bryman 1998). Cohen *et al.* (2007:142 -143) list four types of triangulation that are frequently used in educational research:



1. time triangulation – investigates the factors of change and process by utilising longitudinal and cross-sectional studies
2. space triangulation – studies conducted in the same country or within the same subculture
3. investigator triangulation – two or more observers independently rate the same phenomenon
4. methodological triangulation – the use of different methods on the same object of study

This study was concerned with the last type of triangulation listed above. This is because methodological triangulation involves several research methods for collecting and interpreting data, since the rationale is to compensate the weakness of one method by the strength of another. The current study has employed multiple methods which can be applied to the same problem as both the quantitative and qualitative research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, journal entries, worksheets and classroom observations were used to collect the data. The quantitative data were collected from the pre- and post-questionnaires, which were based on the review of literature and my previous experience as an English language teacher at the Matriculation Centre for 3 years prior to my undertaking the study. The quantitative data were then further expanded, clarified and compared with the qualitative findings from non-participant classroom observations, students' and teachers' journals entries, and the semi-structured pre- and post-interviews. However, the primary data were mainly derived from the interviews and the questionnaires, while the findings from classroom observations and the journal entries were used to supplement the principal data.

### 3.2.1 Case Study

In one sense all research is case study: there is always some unit, or sets of units, in relation to which data are collected and/or analysed. (Hammersley *et al.*, 2000:2)

Case study is a popular research strategy in social science and though it has been described in many ways, there has been a general consensus on what constitutes case study research. Essentially, it involves an in-depth exploration of a single case or multiple cases which is (are) investigated in its (their) specific setting in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of that case (cases). Stake (1994) describes case study as the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case in order to understand its activity within its circumstances. Denscombe (1998:32) defines case study as a focus on a single or a few instances in its or their natural settings, which examines an in-depth understanding of "relationships and processes, experiences, or events" happening in that specific situation. A case study is identified by Burns (2000) as an intensive, holistic and descriptive analysis of a phenomenon. Yin (2003:13) mentions case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context."

There are several types of case studies. Yin (1984) lists three types: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The explanatory case study is usually the preferred method of research particularly when 'how' and 'why' questions are being asked. On the other hand, if the research questions concentrate mainly on 'what' questions, the case study is more likely to be exploratory. Descriptive case studies provide a narrative account of the conducted study. Although the three types have their own distinctive characteristics, there are overlaps among them. Yin's categories of case studies are quite similar to those of Merriam (1988) who also lists three types: descriptive, interpretative and evaluative. Stake (1994) also identifies three types: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case studies are carried out in order to understand a particular case in question, while an instrumental strategy examines a particular case in order to gain an insight on an issue. A collective case study, however, involves a group of individual studies that are undertaken in order to understand the fuller situation.

There are, however, some boundaries to case studies. According to Punch (1998), one of the common prejudice against case studies strategy is they provide little basis for generalisation since they are usually based on only one case. A case study research faces a question of credibility of generalisations being made from its findings. Adelman *et al.* (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007:256) argue that a case study allows generalisations as its strength lies in its “attention to subtlety and complexities of the case in its own right” which is investigated by researchers who exercise rigorous, careful and systematic data collection and interpretation protocols. Another frequent criticism is it is easy for case study researchers to fall trap into personal biasness that influences verification of the reports (Burns 2000). Flyvberg (2006) raises the counter argument that observer’s bias in case study approach is no greater than other methods of enquiry. Silverman (2001) proposes that a verbatim account of the respondents’ views rather than the researcher’s reconstructions of the general sense of the sample’s viewpoint can diminish the problem of observer’s bias in data interpreting and reporting.

According to Cohen *et al.* (2005:181-183), essentially there are three broad approaches to educational research:

- ✓ The scientific paradigm which rests upon the creation of theoretical frameworks that can be tested by experimentation, replication and refinement. This approach emphasizes the idea of objectivity.
- ✓ The second approach seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors. This approach is also known as interpretivist or subjectivist.
- ✓ The new emerging approach that takes into account the political and ideological contexts is known as critical educational research.

Case study research falls under the second approach to research, the interpretative or subjective paradigm since it can “see the situation through the eye of the participants.” Cohen

*et al.* (2005) point out that a case is an object of interest, such as a person, a classroom, or a programme, or a school, which is assumed to be a complex system that cannot be easily understood. Since it focuses on a single entity such as a programme, a class, or a community, a case study provides examples of real people in real situations. As mentioned above, Stake's (1994) instrumental case studies analyse a particular case in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of its perceptions of events and issues and researchers typically observe the characteristics of that particular unit or case. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the situation of that unit with a possible view to establishing generalisations at the wider population to which that unit belongs (Cohen *et al.* 2005).

Taking Cohen's and Stake's approach, an instrumental case study strategy was used for this research because a particular case was observed, examined and looked at in depth mainly to provide an insight into an issue. The main concern of this research was to explore the case in order to understand the 'hows' and 'whats' (Yin 2003). In this study, three teachers and three different groups of ESL students represented the case, and the issue was to gain an understanding of their attitudes towards literature and its application in ELT. This strategy, therefore, permitted an exclusive focus on the particular unit of investigation that provided opportunity to attain in-depth data about the concept being studied.

### **3.3 Research participants**

The participants for the main study were selected according to the "convenience sampling method" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006:100). They describe convenience sampling method as selecting "a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study." Accordingly, the sample for the study was selected because they were readily available and accessible.

The sample comprised three English Language teachers who were teaching the Reading course, and three separate groups of first year Matriculation students, totalling 81,

who were involved in the course at the Center (Table 3.1). The teachers were selected on a voluntary basis as they had expressed their interest in participating in the study. They were taken from the pool of 11 teachers who were teaching the Reading class at the time of the study. I informed the trio of my intention to carry out a research in their classrooms and of its purpose and manner of implementation during our first meeting. They had also taught the Reading class in the previous semesters. All the teachers were female; none of the male tutors was interested in participating in the study. Nadia was the Reading teacher for Group A, Zahra was teaching Group B and Aminah was responsible for Group C (all pseudo names).

However, the selection of the students was not on a voluntary basis. Since the research was conducted during the Reading class hour which was under the supervision and authority of the three teachers, they assumed full responsibility of the events happening in the class. Hence, when the teachers volunteered to participate in the study, their students automatically became the subject too. Nevertheless, I went into each class and explained the purpose of my research and its procedures to the students. All three groups of students verbally agreed to take part. The students who were interviewed provided written consent and were anonymised. The number of students for each group was predetermined by the ELD. Group A consisted of 25 students, Group B had 29, while there were 27 in Group C. All the students in Group A were female, except for one male; there were 12 girls and 17 boys in Group B; and Group C consisted entirely of girls. Thus, 18 boys and 63 girls from the three different groups were involved in the fieldwork. The respondents in Group A were doing Economics, while Group B consisted of Engineering students, and Group C had Human Sciences students.

Group	Teacher	No. of students	Male	Female	Programme
A	Nadia	25	1	24	Economics
B	Zahra	29	17	12	Engineering
C	Aminah	27	-	27	Human Sciences
Total	3	81	18	63	3

Table 3.1 Research participants

Since the student respondents were not chosen on a voluntary basis like their teachers, several preliminary assumptions could be made about the students' potential attitudes towards the research. First, they might feel obligated to participate in the study as they did not have the freedom to refuse. If the students felt obligated and were not volunteers, their participation in class activities might not represent their true attitudes and thus, the results obtained might fail to reflect accurately their attitudes towards literature. The study might also be imposing on students who were not interested in literature and might resent the idea of using literary texts in their Reading class. As such, their attitudes could potentially influence the research and affect its outcomes.

Although I realised that there was a strong possibility that these assumptions could materialise during the course of the study, it was important to use this method of selecting the student participants because it was impossible to form three different groups outside the customary class hour. Furthermore, it would also have been difficult to gather students from different classes in order to form these groups and to ask the three teachers to use the worksheets with them. This was because the students had a full class time-table and the only time most of them would have been available was during the weekends. However, during this time, most students would either leave the campus or engage in extra-curricular activities. The teachers were also reluctant to put in the extra hours during the weekends for the research.

Thus, I decided the best way to carry out the study was during the teachers' Reading classes and to select their available assigned groups as the student respondents.

Furthermore, though I realised that these assumptions might possibly put some students at a disadvantage and affect the outcomes of the study, I felt the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. As mentioned earlier, since this study involved a pedagogical stylistic approach to literature that concentrated on the linguistic aspects of literary texts, it could help to develop the students' language abilities, especially with regard to grammar and new vocabulary. The study could also offer valuable information to the Center if literature were to be included in the language syllabus because it could provide an analysis of the students' needs and information about the teachers' views as well. Through this, the policy-makers could choose appropriate published or design learner-centred literature-based materials that could assist in the students' language acquisition and simultaneously, complement the objectives of the skills-based courses. Furthermore, my study would reveal students' and teachers' attitudes towards the application of literature in ELT that could shed more light on studies about the intermarriage of language and literature as there is a paucity of empirical research on such studies, especially in the ESL/EFL context (Reeves 1985; Davis *et al.* 1992; Hall 2005). Davis *et al.* (1992:320) claim that

it is indeed surprising that investigations of these [ESL] students' attitudes towards literature are almost non-existent. In contrast, research on attitudes toward general foreign language study is widely reported.

In an earlier publication, Brumfit (1981:243) also complain that

The relationship between reading in foreign language and the teaching of literature...is an area which has been neglected in recent discussions of language teaching, while practice has continued to relate the two.

Prior to the study, all students had been introduced to literature in English during their secondary school where literature was an integrated component in the English language

curriculum. Among others, they had been exposed to canonical works such as Shakespeare, Robert Frost and Emily Bronte. They had also been exposed to writers such as John Steinbeck and Gaston Leroux, as well as to contemporary non-native literature by Malaysian writers such as A. Samad Said, Usman Awang and K.S. Maniam. Although the students had been exposed to literature in their English language subject, they were taught separately. In other words, literature was not engaged during the language lessons, but had a special slot in the time-table. Therefore, the students were studying English language and literature as two separate subjects although literature was listed as an integrated component of the former.

### **3.4 Pilot study**

The pilot work was carried out for three weeks in December 2004 at the Matriculation Center. Since the preliminary study aimed at investigating teachers' and students' attitudes towards the use of literature in language classrooms, the PW at EL2 was the main focus of the study. The PW was a two-hour class with one meeting a week. It entailed the reading of six short stories, which were included in the PW course book. The course book was developed and compiled internally using samples from published materials. Apart from reading the short stories, the students were also required to do individual and group assignments and they were assessed on these assignments. However, the use of literature was very limited as this was the only class that used literary texts in the whole two-year English Language syllabus. The pilot study was guided by the following aims:

1. To identify the teachers' and students' attitudes towards literature and its use in the ESL classrooms.
2. To find out about the classroom activities when literary texts are used in language learning in the ESL context.



### 3.4.1 Methodology

The pilot work involved a sample of 6 teachers and 18 students, who were involved in the PW. Six students and all teachers were interviewed, while another 12 students were given the questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and non-participant classroom observations were engaged as the research instruments. Observations were carried out in order to have a better understanding of how the short stories were being used in the classrooms. The interviewees were individually interviewed and each session was tape-recorded. Respondents were selected on a voluntary basis and asked about their experiences, feelings and opinions on the use of the short stories in the PW. Then, the questionnaires were distributed to the other 12 students during their PW class. Finally, two classroom observations were conducted in two of the interviewed teachers' classrooms.

For the purpose of data analysis, the students' interview transcripts were translated from Malay into English as most students conversed in Malay during the interviews. However, none of the teachers' transcripts was translated because all of them communicated in English. Also, for the purpose of clarity, most of the conversation fillers such as 'ehmm' and 'err' from the interview transcripts were eliminated.

### 3.4.2 Findings

This section presents the discussion of the findings based on the interviews, questionnaires and observations which are relevant to the research aims mentioned above. The findings are categorised into three main areas: (i) teachers' attitudes, (ii) classroom activities, and (iii) students' attitudes.

#### Teachers' attitudes

The results indicated that all six teachers showed positive attitudes towards literature and strongly supported its integration in language teaching. They felt that literature encouraged the students' interest in learning English, motivated them to read materials written in L2,

improved their knowledge of the target language and exposed them to the variety of literary genres. The following statement best represented the teachers' encouraging attitudes towards the integration of literature:

*Definitely...I would imagine it [literature] as a very interesting way to help the students acquire the language, definitely.* (Teacher 1)

The pilot work also revealed another interesting finding. Though, the teachers were keen on using literature, they were unaware of how to integrate literary works in their teaching. This might be because there was no training or guidance provided. The teachers were supplied with the PW textbook and it was exclusively up to them to decide how to approach the short stories. Although some practical exercises were provided in the textbook, they still needed to prepare their own responses as they had to discuss these stories with their students. The course book, however, did not provide any explanation on how the teachers could interpret and respond to the texts. Consequently, for some teachers, this complicated their teaching as they had not been trained in teaching literature. This would have adverse effects on the students as well because, if the teachers were not interested in literature, then this attitude could be imparted to the students who would not be motivated to read the texts and would lose interest in using literature within their course. Two teachers talked about their difficulties:

*Not all of us are trained in literature. No doubt we have...a degree in English, but not most of us are exposed to the methodology of teaching literature.* (Teacher 3)

*That is why some teachers, I think they would ask, "What's the point?" I mean...if the teachers have no interest in literature...I don't blame them. Even I do not know what or how should I approach this kind of thing [literature].* (Teacher 2)

The findings also revealed that the six teachers were unsure of the aims of using the short stories in the PW class. Albeit the general aims for this class were listed in the course outline for EL2, they did not indicate the reasons why the stories were employed. In other words, the tutors were uncertain as to why and how they should exploit these texts.

Accordingly, it was difficult for them to explain to the students why they were doing that particular work. One tutor noted:

*Some teachers are not clear about it [the aim]...Coming from somebody who has dealt and written the curriculum, I have to say some teachers are really not sure about the objectives in the class that they are teaching. So, I think in terms of that aspect, the teachers need help also. They need to be clear of what is expected of them and what is expected of the students.* (Teacher 1)

Due to the uncertainty on how to exploit this genre, the teachers collectively agreed that there should be an approach that they could use to integrate literary texts more effectively. They also stressed that they needed some guidance to help their students understand the set texts. The teachers felt that they would like to have had some training or be provided with a methodology on how to utilise literary works before they could attempt to integrate literature in their lessons. They also maintained that the approach should focus on the texts themselves. As pointed out by Teacher 3, *"it has to be something that is brought from the text itself that you get from the text itself."*

### **Classroom activities**

Observations suggested that the teachers preferred to focus more on the communicative tasks when using literary texts and less on the language of the texts. In other words, they felt that in order to incorporate literature, the students needed to be involved in verbal tasks more than language-based activities. This situation was apparent in both classroom observations. In the first observation, the teacher instructed her students to perform a role-play based on a particular scene from one of the short stories in the textbook. Quite similarly, the second teacher also asked her students to identify the possible themes in another story and provided evidences from the story that best reflected these themes in their class presentation.

The findings implied that there was a gap between the focus on language and the communicative activities. The focus on the language of the texts seemed to be neglected. One

plausible reason was because the teachers did not know of the methods that they could use to concentrate both on the language and creative tasks when engaging literary works in their class. If this was the case, as suggested by the teachers, they required an approach that would help them to do so.

Nevertheless, it is irrefutable that a creative task such as role-play is one of the most effective ways of getting the students to be interested in a language class. While it was good that the teachers observed could use whatever creative means they could think of to make the lesson lively and encouraging, it is argued that they could also concentrate on the language so that there would be a better balance between the creative tasks and the language focus that could further enhance the learning process.

It was also a good idea to elicit oral responses from the students as a means of checking their understanding of the texts. However, I believe that this activity could also direct the students' attention to the language of the texts. The teachers observed could give the students ample opportunities to say and do more with the language that they found in these texts, not only by acting out the language, but also by working on the language in order to understand the texts. As pointed out by Maley (foreword in Spiro 2004:3), "there should be more creative and playful uses of language." However, Maley maintains that the activities should offer students a structured and non-threatening approach to using the language, as well as provide them with opportunities to be more creative with the language. Spiro (2004) has impressively demonstrated the ways poetry can be used in language classrooms and how its language can be introduced in a creative context, so that the focus on language and creative uses of literature complement each other and become an integral part of the learning process.

### **Students' attitudes**

The questionnaire data revealed that 75% of the respondents claimed that they enjoyed reading literature in school. 83% of the students maintained that they liked reading

literary texts such as short stories and novels, while only 17% did not enjoy reading literary works. 60 % of the respondents indicated that they were interested to learn more about literature in English, while only 10% disagreed. The results also revealed that 58% of the respondents supported the integration of literature, while 42% disagreed. This implied that the students held mixed views and some were not fully convinced about its integration in their PW class. Those who supported its application cited the widely held perceived benefits of literature such as language development and vocabulary expansion. The interview data helped to further clarify their views. The students mainly saw literature as an aid in improving their language skills, especially speaking, reading and writing. Two respondents explained:

*I try to read literature, and by reading the stories, I can improve my English and I can know something that I do not know before, like new words. And I try to use these words when I speak or write.* (Student 6)

*Literature, for example, short story, I think, we can know how to write a good sentence by reading the short story, but for poems, I don't know.* (Student 4)

The view expressed by Student 4 also suggested that he exhibited some awareness of genre differences. Although he could see the practicality of reading a short story in regard to improving his writing skills, he could neither recognise nor ascertain how poetry could help to develop this particular skill.

Apart from developing their language abilities, the students articulated another typical motive for the integration of literature. The use of literary works was assumed to create enjoyable and interesting classroom activities. One of the respondents' remarks best summarised the students' views:

*Literature is fun and interesting... and my teacher also encourages to us to do a presentation...we can conduct group discussion and discuss with the teacher or our friends.* (Student 2)

Although the findings indicated that some of the respondents were positive towards the application of literature, there were a significant number of students who argued against its

addition to their PW class. One reason was because literature was perceived as a separate independent subject, inferior to the other language courses that they had to learn at the Center. As pointed out by Student 5, *"the Writing and Reading classes are much important. I think that is the important thing in language. But I don't think literature is important."* Hence, it was not essential for the students to use literature in acquiring the target language.

This view was reflected from the students' attitudes in the classrooms. Four interviewed students admitted that they had not read the short stories prior to class, and three of them attended the PW class just to fulfil the attendance requirement, because without 80% attendance at any class, they would be barred from taking their final examination. Observations showed that when the students were asked to voice their views in class, most had difficulty in communicating their opinions and when they failed to do so, they would turn to the teacher for answers. Not only were the students reluctant to express their views, but they also lacked initiatives and confidence to express their opinions lest they gave the wrong answers. Inevitably, the teachers usually had to supply the necessary information about the texts to them. Teacher 6 explained:

*When we [teachers] ask certain questions that are related to the short story, then they couldn't answer. You don't want to wait for so long for the answer to come out. At the end of the day, the teachers themselves have to cough out the answers for the students in order to make the class run smoothly or else, waiting for an answer from the students is just like waiting for the moon to fall on your lap [Malaysian idiom].*

Another probable reason why literature was perceived as insignificant was because of its irrelevance to the students' programmes. When they enrolled in their respective degree programmes at the University, they would be concentrating on their core subjects that might have little or nothing to do with literature. Student 6 said, *"because I take ICT [Information Communication Technologies], so literature is not important in ICT."*

The students' attitude towards reading was another key factor that influenced their perspectives on literature. All six teachers complained that their students disliked reading,

unless it was for examination purposes or when they were instructed to do so during the class activities. Hamid (2003) discovered that factors such as interests, friends, classroom assignments and preparing for lectures play important roles in influencing students' reading habits. Most importantly, his findings supported the teachers' view that the principal reason for the students to read was for exam purposes. This finding is also consistent with Lazar's (1994) claim that less advanced language learners often lack the interest and motivation to work with literary texts. Greenwood (1988) adds that these types of students do not enjoy reading because they perceive it as a passive and boring activity and associate it with rote learning, regurgitating and hard work. Thus, using literary texts in a language classroom and presenting students with more words to be learned is likely to be met with some reluctance on their part.

The difficulties experienced while reading literary works also significantly influenced the students' attitudes towards literature. Their main problems were the unfamiliar vocabulary and linguistic complexities instigated by their restricted proficiency in the target language. Student 3 talked about his problems, *"the language used in literature is not straight to the point. So, I have to work hard to understand the words, the language."*

The teachers also concurred that their students encountered problems in reading literature mainly because of the *"language barriers"* (Teacher 5, Teacher 1), and *"their vocabulary is very weak"* (Teacher 2, Teacher 3). Hence, when they failed to understand what they read, they became bored. As McRae (1991:11) has stressed, "boredom in language learning is always caused by the lack of motivation." And for these reasons also, the students experienced difficulty in communicating their opinions and were usually dependent on either their teachers or peers for the interpretations of the texts.

### 3.4.3 Implications for the main study

The pilot work provided further motivation for the actual study when it revealed that all six teachers were in favour of integrating literature, but they were unaware of how to

manipulate literary texts. This finding correlates with the claims made by Bassnett and Grundy (1993) and Kelliney (1993) mentioned earlier (Section 1.2). Hence, because of the lack of knowledge on how to approach literature, the teachers concentrated more on the communicative tasks. Accordingly, there was a limited focus on language, but a greater one on literature-based communicative activities such as dramatisation when literary texts were brought into their classrooms.

The findings also suggested that the students embraced mixed attitudes towards the incorporation of literary genres in language study. Some students assumed that literature played essential roles in language acquisition, while others saw it as inconsequential and irrelevant. Their attitudes were significantly influenced by attributes such as their outlook on literature, linguistic complexities and inadequate vocabulary in the target language.

In the light of the preliminary findings, I began to see the need for a specific approach that could help the teachers to incorporate literary works in their lessons. I needed to find a suitable approach that could have significant effects and provide valuable data on the teachers' perspectives on the integration of literature. The approach should also be able to provide information on the students' perceptions of literature and its relevance in their language learning, and offer sufficient data about the problems that they experienced in reading literary texts and whether these difficulties affected their attitudes. Because of these criteria for an approach and following the suggestions made by Bassnet and Grundy (1993) earlier, I decided to try out a linguistics-based or stylistic investigation of literary texts with the teachers and students.

For these reasons also, amendments were made to the questionnaires, the interview questions and the structure of the main study in order to address the issues raised at the preliminary stage. The research instruments used in the fieldwork were expanded to involve pre- and post-questionnaires, pre- and post semi-structured interviews, classroom



observations, journal entries and designing my own worksheets, which were largely influenced by a stylistic approach to literary texts.

### 3.5 Research Instruments

A diverse amalgamation of research instruments that entailed questionnaires, interviews, observations, journals and worksheets were used in order to uncover the answers for the research questions of the study posed in Section 1.7.

#### 3.5.1 Worksheets

Tests are one of the powerful research instruments of data collection (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 414-418). There are myriad of tests to cover areas of testing, to name a few: personality, language proficiency and attitudes. Though the worksheets did not attempt to literally test the students as they sought to uncover their attitudes towards literature, the worksheets shared the same hallmarks apparent of non-parametric tests and researcher-produced tests. Both tests are designed for a given specific population and tailored for individual context or needs, utilised for a small sample, and the objectives, purposes and content will be deliberately fitted to the specific needs of a researcher in a specific given context. Hence, the worksheets can be broadly categorised as tests as one of the strategies for data collection and investigation.

The worksheets were developed and tried out with both sets of respondents as an intervention approach to identify their attitudes towards the application of a stylistics-based approach to literature. In this study, the worksheets were developed by referring to published resources such as Lazar (1993), Pope (1995), Short (1996a) and Toolan (1998). These references acted as starting points and guidance for their development. Some of the ideas for the activities were also taken from these resources with modifications to the choice of texts and the activities in order to suit the language level and the needs of the students in the context of the study. The worksheets were also developed under the significant influence of Short's

(1996b:41-43) concept of stylistics 'upside down', where stylistic complexities are 'softened up' or made simpler.

### 3.5.1.1 Linguistic patterns

Most of the linguistic patterns used in the worksheets were reasonably simple taking into consideration the students' level of proficiency. The patterns chosen also did not require the student respondents to have an extensive knowledge of grammar and linguistics since they are lower-intermediate language learners and hence, assumed to have little or basic knowledge of either. Since the worksheets were predominantly focused on grammar, and most students were quite weak at it, its concepts and terminology were either illustrated or explained in the tasks.

The worksheets also aimed to present linguistic concepts in a student-friendly manner and offer practical and accessible introduction to a simple stylistic analysis as well as to progressively sensitise the students to the selected linguistic patterns in approaching literary works. In short, the worksheets attempted to provide strategies to help them to respond to the literary texts by concentrating on the language of these texts. The worksheets used nine linguistic patterns:

1. Tenses
2. Antonymy and synonymy
3. Cohesion
4. Point of view
5. Adjectives
6. Nouns
7. Direct and indirect speech
8. Adverbs
9. Turn-taking

Some of these patterns such as 'tenses', 'adjectives', 'adverbs', and 'nouns' were chosen with close reference to the students' Reading course book. These were some of the grammatical items that they had to acquire in the Reading syllabus at EL4. Developing and understanding 'cohesion' was also one of the compulsory skills that they had to learn in their

Writing class. Therefore, the activities based on these items attempted to complement and enhance what the students were supposed to learn in their skills-based classes, specifically in Reading and Writing subjects.

The other language patterns such as 'point of view', 'antonymy and synonymy', and 'direct and indirect speech' were selected because they represent some of the common stylistic tools in analysing literary works (Simpson 1997, 2004). Toolan (1998) also recommends that these patterns are useful in introducing and exploring a stylistic analysis of written texts to beginner students. 'Turn-taking' was chosen in order to expose the students to real and everyday conversation prevalent in plays (Short 1996a). The selection of the linguistic patterns was also influenced by the online Ling 131 programme, Language and Style, managed by the Department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University, which is freely featured for teachers and students to access.

These patterns were also chosen on the belief that employing stylistic methods would help the teachers to focus on analysing the language of literary texts, while still providing enjoyable tasks. In other words, the patterns were intended to expose these teachers to different ways of how they could focus on the language of the literary texts, and concurrently, integrate this activity with creative tasks. Because of this, the worksheets embraced and incorporated to some extent, Pope's (1995) 'textual intervention'. Even so, it needs to be stressed that the approach is more applicable and appropriate for advanced language learners or literature specialists, who are linguistically distinct from the students in this research context. In his book, '*Textual Intervention*', Pope (1995:1) argues that

The best way to understand how a text works... is to change it: play around with it, to intervene in it in some way...and then to try to account for the exact effect of what you have done

In other words, he claims that readers have the opportunities of making changes in the text and based on this principle, he recommends that teachers and students intervene in the

construction and reconstruction of texts “from the merest nuances of punctuation or intonation to total recasting in terms of genre, time, place, participants and medium” in order to better understand them. This is achieved through an engagement with the text through creative exercises such as a re-writing activity, a task-based process which allows students to access the language of the text that promotes active and critical reading.

The worksheets also strove to offer methodological suggestions on the integration of literature in language learning by allowing both sets of respondents to experiment with and decide whether a stylistics-based approach to literary texts was appropriate, relevant and applicable for their learning needs and contexts. Hence, the implementation of the worksheets depended to some extent on the attitudes, adaptability and creativity of the teachers and students.

### **3.5.1.2 Text selection**

Since this study was an attempt to investigate how ESL teachers and students would respond to literature-based materials that drew on pedagogical stylistics, I needed to carefully choose appropriate literary texts in an endeavour to illustrate the nine linguistic patterns mentioned earlier. Indeed, it was not an easy task to find and select texts where the language level was perceived to be appropriate for intermediate-language students and at the same time, illustrate a specific linguistic pattern. After careful consideration and looking through examples and suggestions of texts and activities put forward by researchers such as Carter and Long (1991), Lazar (1994) and Zyngier (2002), and following one of the criteria suggested by Bex (1999, cited in Clark and Zyngier 2003) mentioned in Section 2.5.3, a text is selected in order to illustrate a particular stylistic point, nine literary texts were chosen to exemplify the linguistic patterns (Table 3.2). Although only nine texts were used to illustrate these patterns, it needs to be stressed that other literary texts could have easily contained them as the patterns are plentiful in any genre.

Worksheet	Genre	Text	Linguistic pattern
1	Poetry	This is Just to Say	Tenses
2	Poetry	When	Antonymy and synonymy
3	Poetry	maggie and milly and molly and may	Cohesion
4	Short story	A Day's Wait	Point of View
5	Short story	Hearts and Hands	Adjectives
6	Short story	China's Little Ambassador	Nouns
7	Novel	The Great Gatsby	Direct and indirect Speech
8	Novel	After The Funeral	Adverbs
9	Play	Death of A Salesman	Turn-taking

Table 3.2 Texts used and their stylistic patterns

Nine worksheets were developed based on the linguistic patterns and each worksheet illustrated the pattern it focused on with examples taken from the literary texts and included activities for the students to undertake in groups or on their own. The texts used were taken from four different literary genres: poetry, short stories, novels and plays. These genres were used in order to demonstrate to the teachers and students that stylistic methods are applicable to all of them. In other words, a stylistic analysis is not confined to a specific genre such as poetry, but is also applicable in examining other forms of literary writing. Furthermore, these texts were employed in order to expose the participants to a stylistic method in approaching these genres in an attempt to understand their reactions and attitudes towards such an approach.

These texts were primarily chosen based on linguistic criteria because I wanted to illustrate the patterns to both sets of respondents in their specific educational context. Nonetheless, I am aware that linguistic factor is only one of many criteria in choosing texts, there are more and other ways to approach literature. In other words, apart from looking at the language, there are other attributes that I can consider such as themes, plots or cultural

references. I also realise that there are a variety of ways that students can respond to literature whether personally, socially or culturally aside from the linguistic point of view.

The nine selected texts also contained a mixed combination of linguistically simple to more challenging and complicated texts. Easy texts were used in order to help the students feel less threatened and thus, reduce their anxiety in reading literature in the second language. On the other hand, complicated texts were included in order to expose the students to some unfamiliar and challenging vocabulary in the hope that these words would help in their vocabulary acquisition.

Only twentieth century texts were selected based on the presumption that it would be easier for the students to understand them since these texts use modern language that they could easily identify with. Since the students in this study were undertaking an obligatory general language proficiency course, I decided to employ literary texts that could display everyday language that they were exposed to in and outside their classroom setting. Lazar (1994) also recommends that texts derived from contemporary literature rather than past centuries are more suitable for use with less advanced language students.

Finally, the texts were also chosen because of their thematic relevance to some of the topics of the required readings of the Reading course. For instance, the theme of *Death of A Salesman* is compatible with the topic in Chapter 3, which discusses jobs and professions, while *The Great Gatsby* fits the topic 'Lifestyles Around the World' in Chapter 4 of the Reading course book.

### 3.5.1.3 Activities

The activities in the worksheets were derived from the three poems, three short stories, while only extracts were taken from the novels (*The Great Gatsby*, *After the Funeral*) and the play (*Death of A Salesman*). Only extracts were used because analysing a long novel using a stylistic analysis is time-consuming. The extract from *Death of A Salesman* was employed in an

attempt to expose the students to plays. Most of the questions on the texts and the linguistic patterns in the reading activities were based on Carter and Long's (1991:36) "higher-order questions" which required the students to produce their own responses and evaluations of the texts by making inferences and applying their knowledge and experience of the world. The tasks also aimed to integrate the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in activities such as group presentations or rewriting the beginning or ending of a story. The exercises also endeavoured to enhance language-based classroom activities such as matching tasks, reading comprehension, cloze procedures, simulations, pair and group work.

The students were also encouraged to assume active roles while conducting the activities as they had to interpret, criticise, transfer information and perform guided writing tasks prepared in the worksheets. The activities also encouraged the students to express their suggestions and arguments. Vocabulary tasks, communication, inferring and prediction activities were also engaged. All these exercises endeavoured to offer the students a richer context for language practice, which was useful for the development of their language skills.

#### **3.5.1.4 Lesson plans**

The worksheets were accompanied by lesson plans which were meant to serve as guidelines on how the class should be conducted. The plans were designed to help the teachers by giving explicit descriptions of the tasks that the students would perform. Nevertheless, the instructors were reminded not to over impose their own ideas of the texts on the students and were restricted from making any changes to the activities, texts used, and linguistic patterns focused on in order not to compromise the procedures, objectives and the outcomes of the study.

The lesson plans were divided into five stages: Introduction, Pre-Reading, While-Reading, Post-Reading and a Follow-Up reading activity. The Introduction stage introduced the students to the topic that was going to be discussed on that day. Next, the Pre-Reading activity

directed the students' attention to the text and prepared them for reading it. In some of the Introduction and Pre-Reading activities, the students were encouraged to relate to their own experiences and existing knowledge of the world when dealing with the texts.

After the first two activities, the students would move to the While-Reading tasks, followed by the Post-Reading activity, which was the last-but-one phase in the lesson plan. Both the While - and Post-Reading activities focused on a particular language pattern occurring in the texts. These activities were more language-based and they tried to demonstrate how the language patterns could help the students to understand the texts, and what effects the patterns had on them as readers. At the same time, the functions and examples of the language patterns were also exemplified in the text. This was to enable the students to apply their knowledge of the language patterns in their other language classes. These tasks also aimed to show the students that reading literary texts could also be fun and interesting.

The last stage in the lesson plan was the Follow-Up activity. Some of the follow-up tasks included the use of creative communicative activities. These tasks were not only designed to sensitise the students to language use in a particular context illustrated in the texts, but also in other related settings and situations where the students might encounter within and outside their classroom. The tasks also attempted to create healthy interaction among the students. Most of the tasks could be carried out individually, or in-group, or in a class discussion with the teachers.

#### **3.5.1.5 Administration of the worksheets**

The worksheets were designed in such a way that they did not require a special slot in the timetable designated as a literature lesson because they could be integrated into the Reading class. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the use of the worksheets were not meant to over regulate the lesson. In other words, the worksheets tried to complement the



Reading class. Instead of using their course book, the students utilised the worksheets to learn Reading.

There were two sets of worksheets: one set was for the students and another for the teachers. Since there were 9 literary texts used in the study, 18 sets of worksheets were involved because each genre had its own specific worksheet. In addition, some of the teachers' worksheets were prepared with ready-made answers to help them execute the lessons, while none was provided in the students'. Both sets of respondents kept their worksheets in folders which were given to them at the beginning of the study. At the end, the folders were collected from the students, while the teachers were allowed to keep theirs for future references. The study started off with analysing the three poems, followed by the short stories, then the extracts from the novels, and ended with the extract from the play.

### **3.5.2 Questionnaires**

The questionnaires were employed in the study because they are "widely used and useful instruments for collecting survey data...and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005:245). Only the students were given the questionnaires. Two types of questionnaires, the pre-and post were used and they employed a semi-structured format. The questionnaires included closed-ended, open-ended, multiple choice questions (MCQs) and rating scales. Most of the items were closed-ended requiring the students to answer a "yes" or "no" response, while the open-ended questions required justifications. The MCQs provided students with several pre-defined responses that they had to choose from. Some of the items asked in the questionnaires were taken and adapted from Durant and Fabb (1990) because they are, to some extent, relevant to the objectives and context of this study. However, the questionnaires were not intended as tests, but rather to explore the students' attitudes towards literature before and after the exposure to the worksheets during the course of the study. The information gathered from the questionnaires was then used for data analysis.

### 3.5.2.1 Pre-questionnaires

These questionnaires were administered to the students before the study commenced. They aimed to:

- ✓ identify the students' attitudes towards literature based on their experience in school
- ✓ discover the students' perceptions of the use of literature in language learning

Overall, only 75 students out of the total population of the study (81) answered the questionnaires. Six students, all of whom were in Group B, were absent during their administration due to problems with their time-tabling and class grouping. 25 students answered the questionnaires in Group A, 23 in Group B and 27 students in Group C. The distribution of the questionnaires for each group was administered on different days and time based on their Reading class (Table 3.3). The teacher for each class and I were present. The students were briefed about the questionnaires and on average, took 20–30 minutes to complete them.

Group	Date	No. of students who answered the Qs	Day	Time
A	13. 12. 2005	25	Tuesday	10.15 – 10.45
B	14.12. 2005	23	Wednesday	5.15 -5.45
C	15.12. 2005	27	Thursday	2.20 – 2.50

Table 3.3      The distribution of the pre-questionnaires

### 3.5.2.2 Post-questionnaires

The students were given a different set of questionnaires at the end of the study to obtain their views on the worksheets used in their Reading class. The post-questionnaires sought to explore the potential effects of the worksheets on their attitudes towards the integration of literature. A similar procedure for administering the pre-questionnaires was applied to the post. However, the overall number of students who answered the second

questionnaires was slightly less. Only 72 respondents answered the questionnaires, while 9 students did not. Two students were absent from Group A and seven from Group B. The questionnaires for each group were distributed during their Reading class, as shown in Table 3.4 below:

Group	Date	No. of students who answered the Qs	Day	Time
A	14.3.2006	23	Tuesday	3.00 -3.30
B	15.3.2006	22	Wednesday	5.15 – 6.45
C	16.3.2006	27	Thursday	2.00 – 2.30

Table 3.4      The distribution of the post-questionnaires

### 3.5.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were also chosen as a data gathering technique in this study. A semi-structured interview is an interview in which certain information is desired from all the participants and the interview is “guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored” (Merriam, 1988:74). One main concern of employing interview as a data collection instrument is the interviewer-interviewee bias. Another limitation is that conducting interviews is a time-consuming process which limits the number of participants to be interviewed. Interviews were used in the study as they could provide the necessary information about the respondents’ perceptions of literature.

The interviews were conducted in two phases, the pre- and post-interviews. Most of the students’ transcripts were translated into English as many of them had conversed in Malay during both interview sessions. However, the teachers’ interview transcripts were not translated as they had communicated in English. Nevertheless, for the purpose of clarity, most of the conversation fillers such as ‘ehmm’ and ‘err’ from both sets of respondents’ transcripts were eliminated.

### 3.5.3.1 Pre-interviews

The pre-interviews aimed to investigate the teachers' and students' attitudes before the study commenced. Three teachers and 27 students were individually interviewed at a time which was convenient to them. I experienced little problems with the teachers, all of whom had readily agreed to be interviewed. However, at the beginning, some of the students were quite apprehensive and sceptical because of their limited command of English. Only when I explained that they could converse in Malay, did 9 students volunteer from each class.

There were 18 interview questions for the students and they were divided into two parts. Part One (questions 1-7) attempted to identify their attitudes towards literature, and Part Two (questions 8 to 18) focused on their perceptions of its application in ELT based on their experiences in school. Similarly, there were also 18 interview questions for the teachers which were divided into two parts: the first looked at their existing attitudes towards literature (questions 1 to 10), while the second concentrated on their perceptions of the integration of literature (questions 11 to 18).

On average, the interviews with the teachers took 1 to 2 hours to complete, while most of the students' sessions finished in about 50 minutes. Written informed consent was obtained from both sets of respondents prior to the interviews and each session was tape-recorded. The recordings were then transcribed for data analysis purposes.

### 3.5.3.2 Post-interviews

The post-interviews were conducted with the same set of respondents after they were introduced to the worksheets. These interviews intended to explore their effects, if any, on the students' and teachers' attitudes towards the application of literature. The interviews were tape-recorded and the recordings were transcribed for analysis of data.

There were 21 questions for the students' interview sessions and the questions mainly focused on: their reactions to the application of a stylistic approach in analysing literary texts in

their classroom, their perceptions of the use of literature in language learning, the effects of a pedagogical stylistic approach on their attitudes towards literature and, their perspectives if literature were to be integrated in their language curriculum at the Center. On the other hand, there were 24 interview questions for the teachers. Essentially, the questions focused on the teachers' reactions and attitudes regarding the application of a stylistic method in reading literature with their students, the effects of the worksheets on their perceptions of literature, and their suggestions on the application of literature in ELT.

#### **3.5.4 Observations**

According to Robson (2002:311), observation techniques are commonly used in an "exploratory phase typically in an unstructured form, to seek to find out what is going on in a situation." As pointed out by Cohen *et al.* (2005:185) "whatever the problem or the approach, at the heart of every case study lies the method of observation." Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) agree that observation is useful because of its directness and its data usually contradicts or complements the information gained from other research instruments. Because of this, observations can also be used as a supportive or supplementary method to collect data. As mentioned earlier, classroom observations were used in this study to supplement the primary data obtained from the interviews and the questionnaires.

However, conducting an observation is not an easy task. There is always the issue of the influence of the presence of the observer on the respondents or the observer's effect (Fraenkel and Wallen 2006). This problem can be minimised through prolong and persistent observations that result in the presence of an observer is taken for granted by the respondents (Cohen *et al.* 2007). Another problem with the observation method is that it is time-consuming.

##### **3.5.4.1 Administration of the classroom observations**

Classroom observations were carried out and they involved watching and recording what the participants did during the classroom activities followed by describing and analysing

what had been observed. In other words, the observations were conducted because I wanted to identify the respondents' attitudes while actually working on the worksheets. In order to do this, observation of the students was based on their verbal and non-verbal behaviours, facial expressions, reactions to the worksheets, teachers' instructions, interaction between the teacher and students, and between the students themselves. The teachers were also observed in order to identify how they responded to the worksheets. The observations were recorded in the observation sheets and were based on the concept of descriptive non-participant observation (Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003). Before the observations commenced, I entered each class and explained about the purpose and procedures for the observations.

Both sets of respondents were exposed to activities primarily grounded in pedagogical stylistics. Nevertheless, these activities were also integrated with exercises that required the students to respond to the selected texts and perform tasks such as role-play and creative writing. The same worksheets were used for the three groups in order to reduce any reliability threats from having three different teachers teaching different groups. The worksheets were given to the teachers two days prior to the observations to enable them to study the lesson plans, the activities and prepare for the lessons. On the other hand, the students only received their worksheets during the class hour itself.

Prior to each lesson, briefings were also set up for the three instructors in order to explain (when necessary) about the kinds of activities that they would be conducting in their respective classrooms and to answer any questions that they might have regarding the worksheets. Usually, each briefing lasted for about 15 to 30 minutes. The briefing for each teacher was done at a different time, usually a few hours before the scheduled observation for their Reading class in that particular week. Therefore, three briefings were carried out in one week.

As mentioned in Section 1.5.3, the Reading subject is a 2-hour class, with two meetings a week. The observations for the three groups were carried out during their first class meeting. Hence, 3 observations were involved in one week. Overall, 35 classroom observations were conducted throughout the study. Although the worksheets were designed to suit the Reading class hour, some of the worksheets could not be completed within this time. This was due to a number of reasons such as the students' inability to complete the activities as anticipated, and constant punctuality problems by the students and teachers. When this happened, the teachers had to continue the rest of the activities in the worksheets in the next class in the following week. The continuation was necessary in order to complete all the activities and concentrate on the selected language patterns. Accordingly, sometimes there were two worksheets being used in one class observation, the incomplete worksheet from the previous class and the new one.

### **3.5.5 Journals**

Journals have been used widely in either L2 or L1 classrooms to encourage students to write frequently on topics that interest them. Theoretically speaking, journal entries are supposed to be an on-going, written 'conversation' between the students and the reader about topics that have been generated by the students (Bell 1999). However, for the purpose of this study, both sets of respondents were specifically asked to reflect on their experience of using the worksheets, instead of choosing their own topics. What the journals aimed to do was to elicit personal response data about the worksheets. In other words, the participants had to describe how they felt about the individual worksheet used in each class session.

The three teachers and 10 students agreed to write in their journal about their experiences of using the worksheets after every session. Two students from Group A, three from Group B, and five from Group C volunteered to keep a journal. The students were also required to write in the target language because of the language practice involved. There was

no word limit set for each entry and they were asked to try as far as possible to write about their experience immediately after each lesson so that they could recall it easily and reflect on it. Essentially, there were nine entries that the participants had to write in their journals based on the worksheets used, however, additional entries were welcomed. Two teachers, Nadia and Zahra, wrote ten entries in their journals, while Aminah made only seven. She did not provide any reason for the missing entries. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 below illustrate the teachers' and students' journal entries.

No	Entry/Teacher	Nadia	Zahra	Aminah
1	This is Just to Say	✓	✓	✓
2	When	✓	✓	✕
3	maggie and milly and molly and may	✓	✓	✓
4	A Day's Wait	✓	✓	✓
5	Hearts and Hands	✓	✓	✓
6	China's Little Ambassador	✓	✓	✓
7	The Great Gatsby	✓	✓	✓
8	After the Funeral	✓	✓	✕
9	Death of A Salesman	✓	✓	✓
10	Additional entry	✓	✓	✕

✕ No entry  
✓ Available entry

Table 3.5 Teachers' journal entries

Entry/Student	Ss 1	Ss 2	Ss 3	Ss 4	Ss 5	Ss 6	Ss 7	Ss 8	Ss 9	Ss 10
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✕	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	✕	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✕ No entry  
✓ Available entry

Table 3.6 Students' journal entries



### 3.6 Validity and reliability of the study

Validity and reliability are important criteria to an affective case study research (Yin 2003). One of the measures that can be used to address the reliability and validity concerns is methodological triangulation (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Descombe 1998; Silverman 2001). The study employed triangulation of methods as a means of ensuring its validity and reliability.

The combination of different methods can give rise to construct and concurrent validity (Cohen *et al.* 2007). Construct validity requires that researchers must display clear understanding of the concept being studied which can be achieved by selecting the specific changes that can be measured or verified through multiple sources, a chain of evidence or reviews from key informants (Yin 2003). In this context of study, the use of multiple sources of data gathering tools such as the interview, journal, survey questionnaire, observation and worksheet provided in-depth and rich data for analysis. The data were evaluated and compared to substantiate evidences to support the students' and teachers' pre- and post-study attitudes towards literature that form support for construct validity.

The use of methodological triangulation is also a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity (Cohen *et al.* 2007). In order to achieve concurrent validity, the data gathered from one research instrument must substantially correlate with the findings accumulated from the other research instruments. Since four different research tools were employed in this research, the findings of the respondents' attitudes towards literature were more valid as they came from four instruments, instead of one. An exclusive reliance on one research method may also bias or distort researchers' views on the area of investigation that may influence data interpreting and report writing. This weakness, however, can be minimised when different research tools yield substantiated similar results that help to increase concurrent validity (Cohen *et al.* 2007). For this research, the results obtained from any of the research

tools (e.g. interviews, questionnaires) that corresponded with another from a different method (e.g. journals, observations) helped to ensure and increase the validity of the findings.

Another issue of validity is the degree to which the results of the study can be generalised to similar situation or the wider population (external validity). In other words, how generalisable are the study's findings beyond its immediate scope of study (Yin 2003). Though a case study approach may be limited in terms of making generalisations, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that they can be achieved when the study's interpretations are comparable and transferable to similar empirical contexts. Descombe (1998:36) adds that while a case investigated is to a certain extent unique, "it is also a single example of a broader class of things." Although this study was based on three specific groups of students and three teachers at EL4, its findings can be generalised because the respondents can be considered as a representative example of the wider student and teacher population at the Center. Further, Denscombe (1998) suggests that generalisation can be achieved provided that a researcher obtains data of significant features of the case study in general, and then demonstrates where his/her specific case study fits in relation to the overall description. In short, the generalisability of a case study depends to the extent to which its profile on significant factors such as ethnicity, cultural references and educational experiences match those found elsewhere. For this research, its findings can be applied to the wider student population as they share similar educational experiences, language courses, cultural references, ethnic origin, and to some extent, language proficiency level with the student respondents. The teacher participants also have similar characteristics with the rest of their colleagues at the ELD in terms of their teaching responsibilities and experiences, training (locally or overseas trained), ethnicity and culture that make the generalisation of the findings applicable. The findings from the study can also be applied to students and teachers at other educational establishments in Malaysia who exhibit akin characteristics to the research respondents'.

Finally, reliability strives to ensure that if future researchers engage in similar protocols described in a particular study and conduct the same case study all over again, these researchers should be able to obtain similar results (Yin 2003). According to Silverman (2001), methodological triangulation can be used as a means to address reliability concerns. Since this research used multiple methods, the higher the agreement of the data accumulated from different methods in exploring the respondents' attitudes towards literature, a more reliable interpretation of data was achieved. Hence, I have focused my research on methodological triangulation as a basis for reliability. Although the survey questionnaires were administered with the students, the results were mainly used either to support or refute the findings obtained from the qualitative methods, particularly the interviews'. Also, the study was more interested in finding out how and what variables influenced the respondents' attitudes towards literature. Therefore, the questionnaires served to strengthen and enhance the study's qualitative findings.

### **3.7 Data collection procedures**

This study involved 2 phases: Phase One entailed a pilot study, while Phase Two dealt with the actual fieldwork. They were carried out at the same Matriculation Center, but with distinct sets of students and teachers. The overall descriptions, methodology and findings of the pilot work were discussed in Section 3.4. Apart from the difference mentioned earlier (the pilot study looked at the PW at EL2, while the fieldwork concentrated on the Reading course at EL4), there were other differences between the two. The main study involved an intervention approach where the students and teachers were exposed to the worksheets, while none was used in the preliminary investigation. During the pilot work, the students and teachers were observed while they were using their own textbook. Hence, as mentioned in Section 3.4.3, the notion of developing the worksheets for the main study was instigated by the findings of the

pilot investigation. Accordingly, the following section provides an overall description of the actual fieldwork.

### 3.7.1 Fieldwork protocols

The fieldwork was conducted from December 2005 to March 2006 at the Matriculation Center. The data collection procedures involved seven important steps:

- ✖ In order to have a better understanding of the students' attitudes towards literature based on their experience in school, a set of questionnaires was given to them prior to the study.
- ✖ The second step involved conducting pre-interviews with both sets of respondents.
- ✖ Next, the journals were distributed to the teachers and students who were interested in writing about their experience of using the worksheets.
- ✖ After that, non-participant classroom observations were conducted while the students and teachers were actually using the worksheets in their respective Reading classes.
- ✖ The fifth phase involved the distribution of post-questionnaires to the students.
- ✖ Next, the journals were collected from the teachers and students.
- ✖ The last procedure was conducting the post-interviews with the participants.

### 3.8 Data analysis procedures

This section briefly describes the data analysis procedures employed in the study. The qualitative and quantitative data were examined by using different mode of analysis. The descriptions for pre- and post-questionnaires were provided and the data obtained were quantitatively analysed and accordingly, used to develop a general profile of the students' attitudes towards literature by using the statistical analysis software (SPSS).

The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, journal entries and observations were coded, synthesised and categorised in a few significant categories based on thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998:4). Boyatzis defines thematic analysis as the "process for

encoding qualitative information." This process requires the generating of codes, which can be in the form of "themes; a complex model with themes, indicators and qualifications that are causally related, or something in between these two forms." This approach was used in the study as it was considered "a way of systematically observing...an interaction, a group, a situation" that helped in code generating and led to the formulation of several important categories. Thus, the approach entailed the development of codes based on the themes that could best describe the observations of the respondents and interpret their interview transcripts and journal entries.

Furthermore, the tape-recorded interviews were first transcribed, analysed and coded into several significant themes. These themes were then grouped into certain categories in order to establish the participants' attitudes, experiences and views on the use of literature in language education. The data obtained from the observations and journals were also analysed and compared with the interview findings. Then, the qualitative results obtained from the interviews, observations and journals were used to verify or refute the analysis of data from the survey questionnaires. The findings were discussed in order to identify and report as accurately as possible the teachers' and students' attitudes towards literature and its application in language study.

### **3.9 Summary**

This study adopted a case study approach which incorporated the triangulation of the research methods to investigate three different groups of ESL students and three teachers at the Matriculation Center in order to identify their attitudes towards the application of a stylistics-based approach to literature in their Reading course. The respondents were exposed to the worksheets which largely incorporated a combination of a pedagogical stylistic approach and task-based activities. The study employed semi-structured interviews (qualitative) and survey questionnaires (quantitative) as the primary research instruments and these were

supplemented by journal entries and non-participant classroom observations (qualitative methods). Thematic analysis was used to decode the qualitative data, while the SPSS software was used to analyse the quantitative findings.

**PART II**  
**FINDINGS**

## Chapter Four: Students' Pre-Study Perspectives on Literature

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the pre-questionnaires and interviews conducted with the students. The study empirical evidence is combined and examined qualitatively and quantitatively with the aim of exploring the attributes that place significant weight on the students' attitudes towards literature and its integration in ELT prior to the study. Hence, the findings are presented in order to represent as accurately as possible the students' overall pre-study outlooks on literature.

### 4.2 Presentation of findings

The purpose of the interviews was to identify the students' attitudes towards literature based on their experience of it in secondary school. Essentially, the interviews aimed to find answers for the first research question: How do lower-intermediate level ESL students feel about literature and its relevance to their language learning? In order to answer this, the students were asked the following key questions during the interviews:

- ✓ What experience have the students had in learning about literature in secondary school?
- ✓ How do the students feel about literature and its use in language learning?
- ✓ What are the students' views on literature if it were used at the Center?

The survey questionnaires also shared similar aims with the interviews. The results were combined in order to reflect a precise description of the students' overall attitudes. Hence, all the students' responses that indicated favourable attitudes (strongly agree and agree options) were grouped as positive results, while responses that exhibited discouraging attitudes were categorised as negative (strongly disagree and disagree options). All the students' responses (positive, negative and the not sure options) were presented in the discussion of

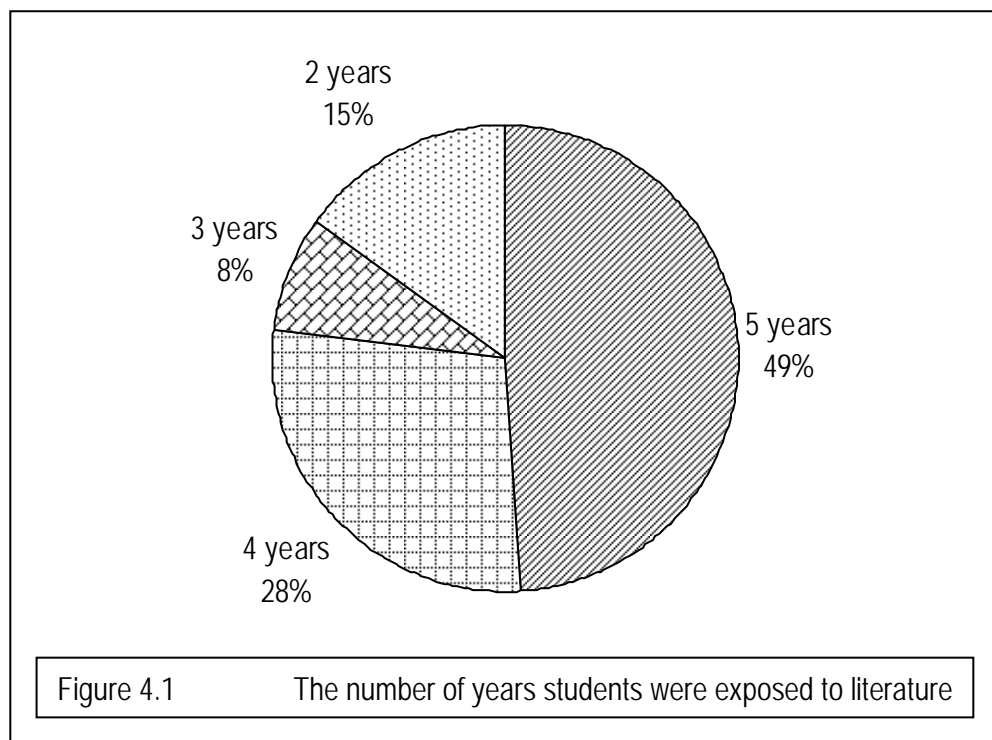


data as these types of responses would contribute significant information about their attitudes towards literature.

Based on the results obtained from the study and in an attempt to answer the first research question stated above, the findings are divided into five main categories: (i) experience of literature in school, (ii) attitudes towards literature, (iii) attitudes towards the use of literature in language learning, (iv) suggestions on how to make the integration of literature effective, and (v) attitudes towards literature at the Center.

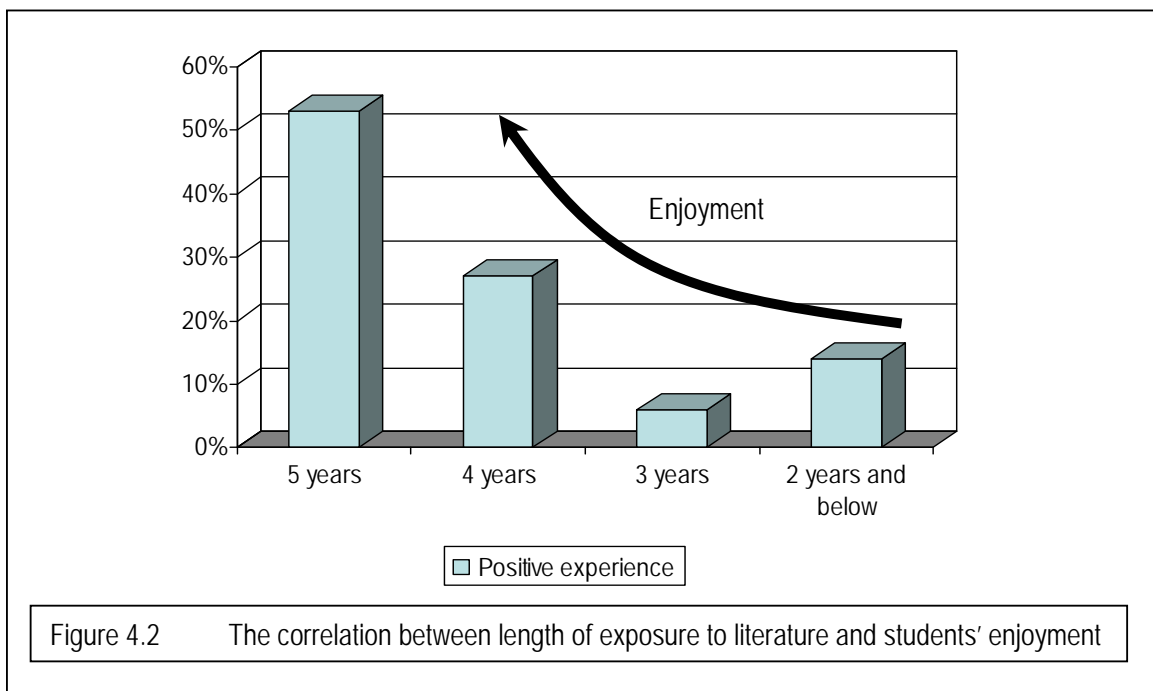
#### 4.3 Experience of literature in school

All students had studied literature in secondary schools as an integrated component of the English language subject. However, the number of years that they had been exposed to literature varied from 2 to 5. Figure 4.1 below shows the number of years that the students had studied literature during their school years.



The findings from the questionnaires also revealed that the duration of the students' exposure to literature significantly affected their experience. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the

correlation between the number of years and the increasing positive experience that the students encountered in reading literature in school. The vertical axis indicates the students' enjoyable experience, while the horizontal represents the number of years that these students had been exposed to literature. Thus, the findings seemed to suggest that the longer the exposure to literature, the more enjoyable were the experience the students were likely to have.



When asked how they would describe their experience, 72% of the respondents stated that they had enjoyed learning about literature, while 28% did not. In addition, 59% of the students thought that their experience had been fun and interesting, while 41% disagreed. 83% of the sample agreed that their experience was not dreary, while only 17% felt it was. Furthermore, 87% of the respondents considered that their experience was not time-wasting, while only 13% claimed otherwise. Taken together, these findings revealed encouraging attitudes on the part of the respondents towards literature in school. In addition, the word "interesting" was also mentioned 120 times by the 27 interviewees during the interviews. Thus, it could be inferred that this was the overall dominant experience among the students.

Nevertheless, there were students who stated that they did not like reading literature in school. 59% of the respondents felt that their experience was confusing, while 41% disagreed. This finding supports Hall's (2005:51) argument that "the study of literature is not always pleasurable or meaningful for all readers, despite the claims of its enthusiasts. A number of classroom studies...have shown that classroom uses of literature put off at least as many students as they encourage."

The pre-study results revealed that the respondents' experience of literature in secondary school was significantly influenced by four important factors: (i) teachers' attitudes and teaching styles, (ii) texts preference, (iii) difficulties in reading literary texts, and (iv) reading preference.

#### 4.3.1 Teachers' attitudes and teaching styles

Most students indicated that their first encounter with literature had had significant effects on their attitudes towards it. They claimed that their experience whether it was positive or negative, was largely shaped by their teachers and the way they taught the class. One of the interview questions required the interviewees to explain what kinds of experience they had had and to provide justifications for their answers (Table 4.1). 16 students had had "enjoyable" experiences, while 10 had had a mixture of both "enjoyable" and "not enjoyable." One student "did not enjoy" learning about literature at all. The finding implied that the teachers' conduct of lessons could influence the students' perceptions of literature. This finding is consistent with Harper's (1988) argument that the way teachers present literature to students is one of the significant reasons that can either stimulate or diminish their interest in literature. The remark from one participant demonstrated how the teachers' styles of teaching influenced his experience:

*I enjoyed it [literature] but it depends on the teacher. If the teacher makes the class interesting, I enjoy it. But if the teacher makes his or her teaching uninteresting and ineffective, I am not interested to learn about literature.*

No. of students	Experience	Reasons
11	Enjoyable	Teachers' attitudes, teaching styles
5	Enjoyable	Interested in literature
6	Sometimes enjoyable	Teachers' attitudes, teaching styles
4	A little bit enjoyable	Texts used
1	Not enjoyable	Teachers' attitudes

Table 4.1 Students' experience of learning about literature

The findings also suggested that if teachers were interested in literature, this interest would somehow manifest itself in the language activities and their instructional strategies. Some participants claimed that when their teachers were enthusiastic about literature, the classroom activities were usually lively as their teachers would engage them in various tasks that helped to stimulate their interest. Hence, it could be argued that teachers exercised a significant influence on their students' attitudes towards literature. As pointed out by one participant, *"I enjoyed learning about literature because the way my teacher taught me was so interesting."*

Moreover, the respondents indicated that they liked reading literature when their teachers conducted class discussions and encouraged them to assume active roles in these discussions. This type of literature instruction usually involved eliciting the students' responses to texts in the hope that, through responding, they would develop a fuller understanding of their reading. The extent to which learners were given active roles and the freedom to express their responses would affect their perceptions of literature. If they were given the opportunity to openly communicate their own responses, they could react to the reading activity according to their own individual experience of the text and this would instigate further interest in the lessons. In contrast, if students were expected to passively respond to the class activities such as by giving monosyllabic responses and regurgitating memorised texts or passages, they

were less likely to develop positive attitudes towards literature (Beach 1985). Davis (1989:420) reiterates Beach's position and adds, "what has been lacking in much foreign language literature teaching, particularly at less advanced levels, is a more active role for the individual reader."

The students also found the lessons more appealing when their instructors employed a variety of stimulating exercises such as gap-filling activity, arranging and matching tasks, utilising attention-grabbing materials such as bright colourful game-cards or pictures, playing language games with them, and encouraging them to undertake active roles in communicative activities such as role-plays and class presentations. Many respondents consented that dramatisation was a popular and much preferred activity when literary texts were brought into their classrooms. This finding suggested that many students preferred to learn about literature when their teachers were creative and made the effort to ensure that the lessons were interesting and stimulating. One student related her experience:

*She [the teacher]...would bring all the materials. Sometimes she would ask us to use the materials and then discuss them...in class, or discuss in-groups and she would ask us to arrange the story in the right order...sometimes we do a group game, so the activities make the literature lessons more interesting.*

Some participants also mentioned that reading literature was more stimulating when their teachers conducted out-of-class activities. A teacher's action of conducting the class outside the classroom could be seen as an initiative to develop the students' interest in the lesson. The change from the customary classroom setting not only made the lessons more interesting and invigorating for them, but also had a positive impact on their interest and attitudes towards literature.

Similarly, when the teachers were not enthusiastic about literature, their attitudes would also be reflected in their instructions and inevitably, influence the students. Most respondents sensed that when their teachers were not keen on using literary works to teach English, their lessons were less attractive. Two examples of the insipid lessons provided by the

interviewees occurred when their teachers repetitively explained about the texts, and provided unnecessary clarification about the plots when they had already understood them. The students were expected to take in their teachers' explanation usually with little or limited chance to communicate their views. Consequently, most of them felt bored and subsequently, lost interest in literature. This finding reinforces Ali's (1994) discovery that most of the time, students feel bored when they lack the opportunities to express their feelings and thoughts in lessons. One participant in the current study described his experience:

*My teacher made me feel bored. She explained about the text again and again and again, I already understood it, but she kept on explaining it to us. We just listened.*

In addition, the respondents claimed that the lessons were less appealing when the primacy of focus for the class discussion was literature assessment. Because the literature component of the English language subject was assessed, many students said that their teachers imposed considerable memorisation and drilling methods upon them. They were required to read and memorise the texts in order to achieve exemplary results in the tests. In these circumstances, they had limited opportunities to articulate their own opinions because of their teacher's rigid instructions. One student explained, *"the class discussion was focused more on answering the examination questions only. It's like we study literature just to pass the exam, that's it."*

The respondents also claimed that they mainly had to memorise the plot summaries, characters and their descriptions, metaphoric meanings and values from the texts. They were also drilled on answering exam-like questions that were either prepared by the teachers or taken from the revision books or the teachers trying to speculate possible examination questions based on past year test papers. Similarly, in his study, Pandian (2003:278) also discovers that the "most popular teaching method was drilling using past year examination questions, work sheets and exercise books." This was one of the common manners of preparing the students for an examination and it could be seen as a mechanical mode of

learning, where the students had to memorise and regurgitate what they had learned during the test. Hence, there was a strong tendency for the teachers to teach for the examination rather than reading literature itself. One respondent recalled her teacher's focus of teaching:

*The teacher who taught me did not really stress on literature. He was more concerned with the examination and he would say, "read this and read that, only read these and the rest you don't have to read because they are not going to be asked in the examination."*

Due to this, many students perceived literature as one of the many subjects to be mechanically studied and tested. Consequently, most of them were more likely to see literature as a difficult and tedious subject, which became an unwelcome liability amidst the other examination subjects that they had to study. One student complained:

*There are so many things to remember and memorise like the metaphors, simile. So, it was hard. I think we don't really like the examination because we have to remember a lot of things, and I don't like to memorise things.*

Some students also said that they did not like reading literature when their teachers presumed that they knew what to look for in order to understand the texts. In other words, these students considered the lessons dreary when they had to independently respond to the texts without any guidance from their teachers. They were expected to read, deliberate and construct suitable interpretations of the texts with no or very limited explanation or intervention from their instructors. Most of the time, the students claimed their teachers failed to check whether they managed to appropriately respond to the texts or not. One participant expressed her feelings about her teacher's lack of attention:

*The teacher who taught me just told us to read by ourselves and then discuss with our friends. And then it was done, the class was finished, so that was it. So, it's like I don't feel anything, it's like nothing...*

Here, the findings implied that although the students should be given active and independent roles in learning, they still required assistance and guidance from their instructors regarding the texts, especially when the literature component was assessed. When these

students were left entirely on their own to approach literature without the necessary teachers' support, they were more likely to feel abandoned, disappointed and subsequently, lost interest in the lessons. Because of this, many students not only failed to enjoy the lessons, but also could not identify the potential benefits that literature could offer them as readers and language learners. This type of classroom experience was likely to leave a negative impression among them and affect their attitudes towards literature.

Furthermore, some students felt that they were not keen on literature because their teachers had indirectly shown them their own lack of interest. This could be seen from the teachers' poor class attendance during the literature lessons. One student noted, "*my English teacher rarely taught us and he was not really concerned about literature... [he] rarely came to class when he had to teach the literature component.*" Moreover, some respondents claimed that they could sense when their teachers were not literature enthusiasts. They felt that their teachers taught the class just to complete the syllabus and paid little attention either to the students or to the literature component itself. One respondent complained:

*I think my teacher was not really interested in teaching about literature... I noticed that he just came to class and simply taught us without giving much attention to literature, and to the students as well. So, to me, it seemed that he taught the class just to complete the syllabus. At first, I enjoyed learning about literature, but when I noticed that my teacher was not interested in literature, I became lazy too because my teacher was not really interested in teaching us.*

The findings suggested that the teachers' lack of interest in literature was sometimes mirrored by some of the students based on what they had seen or experienced in their classrooms. When these educators indirectly showed the students their discouraging attitudes towards literature through their actions, modes of teaching and the types of classroom activities, some students were inclined to adopt a similar attitude.

Furthermore, the data suggested that some of the respondents were not keen on lessons in which the primary emphasis was on grammar and little attention was given to



literature. Their instructors had used the allotted time for the literature component to teach grammar and accordingly, the students had rarely had the opportunity to learn more about literature. Due to this lack of exposure, many students were not interested in the literature lessons. Moreover, insisting on grammar activities when the students were supposed to be reading literature would impress upon them that studying grammar was more important and that it should take precedence over the use of literary texts in learning English. The emphasis in teaching grammar instead of literature during the slot specifically allocated to teach the latter was also a strong indication that the teachers were not interested in literature. As observed by one respondent, *"my teacher just concentrated on grammar and writing exercises, so, only sometimes we learned about literature."* The findings are consistent with Lazar's (1990:207) argument that when teachers are reluctant to use literary texts in a language classroom, students are likely to be hesitant as well because they believe literature will somehow "detract them from more serious classroom activities such as learning grammar."

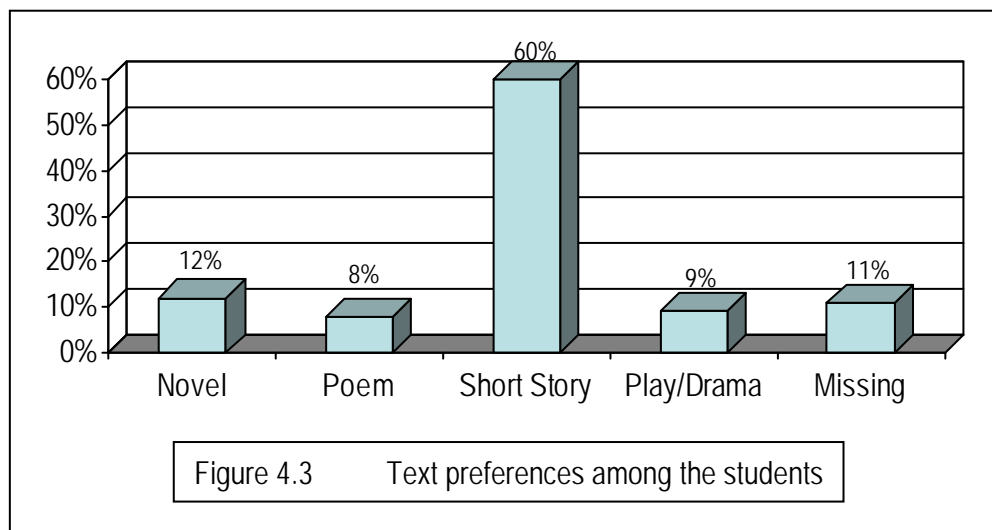
In conclusion, the findings revealed that the students were more interested in the literature lessons when they were encouraged to assume active roles, be involved in class activities, were offered sufficient opportunities to share their views and received adequate guidance from their instructors. But, most importantly the teachers' own perspectives on literature and their instructional strategies could either stimulate or dampen the students' interest in literature.

#### **4.3.2 Text preferences**

Another important factor that had a significant influence on the students' experience of literature in school was the types of text used. Some students held the belief that literary texts, particularly short stories, were more likely to create effective lessons that could engender favourable attitudes towards literature. When asked during the interviews about their choice of

text, one student answered, *"it depends on the texts used. Like for example, poems. I don't enjoy reading poems because I don't like them."*

A majority of the respondents (85%) reported that they liked reading literary texts while, a smaller percentage (15%) stated otherwise. 60% of the students enjoyed reading short stories, while only 8% preferred poems, another 9% enjoyed drama and only 12% chose novels. These findings showed that short story was the most popular genre among the participants. 11% of the respondents did not indicate their preference and their lack of response is labelled as 'missing' (Figure 4.3).



Among the most common reasons stated by the students in the questionnaires for choosing the short stories were "easy to understand", "short" and "interesting." Short stories were popular as they were generally more memorable and easier to understand than other literary texts. The students were also more familiar with the narrative styles in short stories than in the other non-narrative genres. On the other hand, drama and poems were the least favourite among the students. Only a small number of them expressed a preference to read plays or drama. The probable reason for this attitude was because they were not exposed to plays in school. Although they enjoyed performing drama activities during the lessons, these tasks were based on the short stories or novels that they read in school. In other words, they

were not exposed to plays, rather they only performed role-play or acted out certain scenes from the novels or the short stories. Only a few of the respondents indicated an interest in poetry. Most considered poetry difficult and demanding mainly due to its linguistic complexities and the students' own restricted vocabulary in the target language. Because of this, many students had problems in understanding poetry and were put off by the difficult words. When they encountered unfamiliar and complicated words, they were more likely to develop a dislike towards poetry. One student expressed the typical reason for disliking poetry, *"I don't like poems because I could not understand them. They are so difficult because the words are so difficult."*

Some of the participants also thought that not only the words used in the poems were difficult, but their linguistic complexity was compounded by the abundance of figurative language and images that they had to decipher. Hence, poetry became more complicated when they could not identify and explain its symbolic meanings. Many respondents also felt that it was challenging to read poetry because they had to identify the meanings of the words in each stanza and this usually involved a translation from L1 to L2. Moreover, they claimed that poetry was challenging because its structure was different from the narrative genres that they were familiar with such as short stories. Because of this, some of them felt that the language used in poetry was different from the English language that they learned in everyday classrooms. One student explained, *"They [poems] are even more difficult because they have a lot of figurative meanings and sometimes, I have never seen the language used in poems."*

Hirvela and Boyle (1988:180) in their survey similarly found that poems were the least favourite genre among their Hong Kong students. They discovered that many of their students "have fears and anxieties about studying literature, especially poetry" and argued that these fears and anxieties stemmed from the learners' lack of knowledge of literature as most of them had had little exposure to literature during secondary school. However, this current study has

revealed that even when the students had been exposed to literature for a number of years, they were still reluctant to read poetry. Thus, it could be inferred that it was not only the lack of knowledge of poetry that made students fear it, but also their initial encounter. If students had never been exposed to poetry before, it is argued that they would be more receptive and less apprehensive towards it as they would have no preconceived ideas about this particular genre. However, if these students had been exposed to poetry, then their experience during that encounter could have formed their attitudes towards it. In short, the students' feelings, experience, and knowledge would be likely to affect and shape their perceptions of literature in general, and poetry in particular. The remark below supported this argument:

*I think literature is a new thing for me, moreover it is in English language. So, I am interested to know more about literature, about poems, short stories and novels. It is something new. I like English [language] too.*

Novels were also not popular among the participants with only 12% indicating an interest in them. Among the reasons for their lack of interest were that the novels read in the secondary school were too long, and contained complex and elaborate plots. One participant gave her reasons for disliking novels, "*novels are quite long and they take time to read. The plot is long and it takes time to understand the story. So, it is time-consuming.*" This remark implied that the students' experience of literature not only affected their perspectives on literature, but also influenced the types of genres that they were likely to read. If they were introduced to simpler and shorter novels, they might hold a more encouraging view on them. It also suggested that many students were inclined to presume that shorter and linguistically simpler texts held the key to a more successful reading, a belief which was expressed by all the interviewees based on their encounter with literature in school.

#### **4.3.3 Difficulties in reading literature**

The participants mentioned the problems which they encountered in reading literature were the other prime reason that influenced their experience of literature. The data showed that

the common difficulties that they faced when reading literature could be grouped into two main categories: (i) literary comprehension, and (ii) linguistic difficulties. These findings correlate with those of Hirvela and Boyle (1988) who carried out a study on ESL students' attitudes towards literature.

### **Literary comprehension**

Many respondents indicated that they had experienced difficulties in understanding and responding to literary works. When they failed to understand the text, they found it quite impossible to arrive at its suitable interpretations. The common reason given for the comprehension failure was the language of these texts. This was because most students were concerned with the language problems at the surface level of the texts in order to look for their underlying meanings. The comment below suggested that learners with limited proficiency in the target language experienced difficulty in comprehending literary texts as they were preoccupied in dealing with constant vocabulary problems:

*English is so difficult to understand, the words, sometimes the sentences, and when I try to read novels in English, I will use a dictionary. But it is still hard for me to understand the words, and the meaning of the words, and most of the time I can't understand what the sentence means.*

The respondents also assumed that literary texts were typically demanding to decipher and the meanings were difficult to extract, especially in poetry due to its symbolic or special use of language that required them to identify its literal and figurative meanings. They were also more inclined to place a lot of attention to elements of the short story or novel such as characters and themes in an attempt to achieve clarity of meaning. Accordingly, when they failed to achieve these, they gave up on reading literary texts that they could not understand or produce the suitable interpretations.

### **Linguistic difficulties**

The participants also said another major problem in reading texts was the linguistic difficulty arising from their limited vocabulary in the target language. The linguistic problems

were usually instigated by factors such as the complexity of words and sentences. When the students encountered complicated vocabulary and did not know its meanings, they lost motivation to persist reading. One respondent shared her feelings:

*[A] novel is long and when I find some words that I don't understand in one page, and find the same words in another page and in another page, I feel bored.*

Although some students assumed that word meanings were easily obtained from the dictionary, sometimes a word might contain several meanings. Hence, they remained confused and were unable to determine which meaning was most appropriate for that word in that particular context. Consequently, they would blame their incompetence in the target language for not knowing which word meaning should be used. As indicated by one respondent:

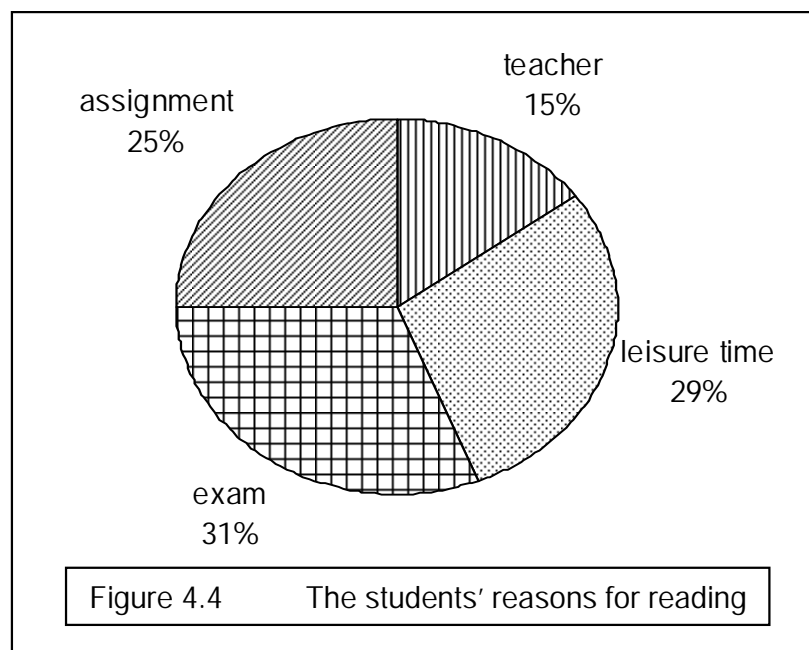
*Sometimes one word in English can have different meanings, so it is quite confusing. Sometime one word has several different meanings. In one sentence it means something, and in another sentence it means something else. So, it is quite difficult.*

In addition, there were students who refused to consult a dictionary or ask their teachers or peers when they stumbled across problematic words. Instead, they would stop reading. Therefore, when the students faced a range of obstacles in responding and interpreting literary works, they were likely to encounter a frustrating reading experience. These difficulties not only hampered their interest in reading literary works, but also their perspectives on literature.

#### 4.3.4 Reading preference

Another central issue cited by some participants as influencing their experience of literature was their reading habits. The reasons which motivated these students to read could be grouped into four main categories: (i) 31% of the sample read for examination purposes, (ii) 25% of the respondents read due to coursework requirement, (iii) 15% of the students only read when instructed by their teachers, and (iv) 29% of the participants read for pleasure (Figure 4.4). In general, the results implied that the students did not like reading as only a small

percentage of them read during their free time and a slightly higher number of the respondents read exclusively for examination purposes. This supports Grabe and Stoller's (2002:89) argument that "most students read little in either the L1 or L2, and they do not enjoy reading." The results are also consistent with Hamid's (2003) findings that students' primary reason for reading is the examination factor. This problem is not only pertinent in Malaysia, but also in the international context, where language educators continue to complain that students do not like reading (Hall 2005).



Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the students who read during their leisure time were more likely to be interested in literature and exhibit a stronger interest in English language than their peers who did not like reading. They were more prone to discover that literary works could present them with an engaging and a pleasurable read. Consequently, they were more inclined to embrace encouraging attitudes towards literature. As pointed out by one student:

*I like to read English literature. I like literature because literature is symbolic and it has a lot of underlying meanings and I have to find these meanings. That's why I like it, finding its meanings and I like the language as well.*

However, this should not be taken that the students who did not favour English language did not read at all. There were students who disliked learning English, but stated that reading was one of their passions and they derived satisfaction from reading literature in their L1 than L2. The prime reason they read in their mother tongue was the language barrier that hindered their understanding of the L2 texts. These students claimed that when they read these texts, they failed to engage with what they were reading. In other words, the sense of pleasure that they obtained when reading texts in their first language was missing when they read short stories or novels in English. Therefore, they were reluctant to read literary works in English and were more likely to develop negative attitudes towards literature. One student explained:

*If I don't understand the story, there is no feeling. I don't feel anything. But when we read in Malay language, we could understand what the story is about. We can identify whether it is a funny or a sad story. We feel sad if the story is a sad one and we laugh if the story is funny.*

In addition, these students who enjoyed reading (in either L1 or L2) adopted strategies that enabled them to understand a particular text. Usually, most respondents would resort to their teachers for an explanation, but some diligent students would make the commendable effort such as reading the text several times to attain a deeper understanding before approaching their teacher, consulting a dictionary for troublesome words or referring to reference books. Thus, it could be said that the students who were interested in reading were more independent and active in their attempts to achieve comprehension.

The findings suggested that the respondents' passion for reading literary texts in either the first or second language influenced their views on literature. The enjoyment and pleasure that students could obtain from reading literary works also played a significant role in determining the types of text they chose to read and this preference also affected their experience of literature.



#### 4.4 Attitudes towards literature

The results showed that many of the interviewees had indicated an interest in literature. However, their interests differed for various reasons. Some of the participants expressed their enthusiasm for literature as emanating from their personal interests. Two students related their passion for literature:

*Yes, I like literature. I really like literature.*

*I like to continue using literature at the Center because I love literature.*

It was also interesting to discover that a few students confessed a liking for poetry even though the majority embraced negative perceptions and expressed reservations against this genre. A small but significant group of students explained that they preferred to read poetry because they derived enjoyment mainly from interpreting its symbolic meanings. One student expressed her satisfaction when she managed to identify and decode the metaphorical representation embedded in the poem that the poet was trying to convey:

*Yes, I love it [literature]. I like it because I like something artistic, like arts, something symbolic, I like to read poems such as 'Sonnet 18' written by William Shakespeare. I like that.*

Another reason why some of the students were interested in literature was because it helped them to unwind from the hassle of academic demands by reading interesting works. In addition, most of the participants thought that apart from being an enlightening read, literature provided excitement in learning about the target language rather than leaving them being dependent on their academic course books alone. Literary texts appealed to them because they managed to awaken their curiosity and left them wanting more. Accordingly, they developed a liking for reading which could promote vocabulary development. One student presented his views:

*When we learn about literature, when we read novels, we can increase our knowledge of the language. Now we only use the usual stuff based on our textbook, like how to write essays and others, nothing special like literature. So, when we read novel, there*

*are so many things in a novel, it makes us wonder, it arouses our curiosity and we can also learn new words.*

Some students also stated that they were keen on reading literary works because the texts helped to develop their knowledge and motivate an awareness of other cultures in the world. Thus, literary reading enabled them to gain an insight and new information about other communities or cultures that would not only help them to become better language users, but better human beings, more considerate and sensitive towards people of other beliefs and societies.

The participants also stated that they liked literature because it encouraged them to read not only materials in their first language but, more importantly, texts written in the target language. Some of them claimed that they lacked the initiatives and motivation to read these types of text. Because literary texts were assumed to offer unpredictable plots and exciting settings, literature was considered to be a good motivator for reading texts written in English.

One participant shared her opinions:

*I think literature helps to develop our interest to read novels, especially novels written in English. Because I think, usually, Malay students, like me, like to read books written in Malay language. So when they read interesting books they will become interested to read more. So, I think literature is necessary because it helps to attract the students' attention and develop their interest in reading books in English.*

Some of the respondents expressed the versatility of literature as another prime reason for their attraction to it. The students claimed that literature offered a spectrum of encouraging and beneficial activities that they could pursue with more interest in comparison to the monotonous learning of the grammar of the target language in their everyday classroom.

One respondent explained:

*I love literature. I can do a lot of things from it and we can learn a lot of English from it, from literature. It's not like learning grammar. Grammar is quite boring because it's specific. With literature we can do a lot of things. We can get a lot.*

Finally, some of the respondents also said that literature was valuable not only within the classroom setting, but also because its perceived effectiveness could be extended and applied in the real world context where literature could help to develop their communicative ability and groom their confidence to converse in English. Accordingly, they maintained that they would become more effective and confident users of the language. This lengthy remark from one respondent summarised this view:

*I think it is good for us to learn about literature...because in the world nowadays English language is important. I am not really good at speaking so, I think we need to learn about literature ...because it can help students to be more fluent in speaking. We will become more confident to speak because in the outside world, we need to speak in English. Literature can train us to speak better and be more fluent and...we can become more confident with ourselves. Because sometimes students like me, I can speak in English, but I don't have the confidence to speak with other people because I am afraid that I might use the wrong grammar and I am scared that people might laugh at me.*

Though the findings suggested that many respondents expressed favourable attitudes towards literature based on the aforementioned reasons, there were students who disliked literature. Among the reasons for their dislike were their perceptions that literature was complicated, dull and an unwelcome addition to the numerous compulsory examination subjects that they had to learn in secondary school. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition of the same points, further discussion regarding the students' discouraging attitudes is presented in Section 4.5.5, 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.

#### **4.5 Attitudes towards the use of literature in language learning**

The findings revealed that there was a great amount of consistency in the responses of the students in the questionnaires and interviews to the use of literature in the language curriculum. Analysis from the questionnaires revealed that 60% of the participants believed that literature could be included in the acquisition of the target language, while 40% disagreed. Apparently, there was a significant percentage difference between the students who approved and those who disapproved. The results of the interviews were similar to those of the

questionnaires in some respects. Some of the interviewees assumed that literature was potentially relevant because of the perceived advantages that literature could offer to learners, while others disagreed (their disagreements are explored further in Section 4.5.5). Those who supported the integration of literature based their argument on the assumption that literature is a valuable teaching and learning resource mainly due to these four reasons (i) development of language skills, (ii) understanding of other cultures, (iii) personal development, and (iv) classroom activities.

#### 4.5.1 Development of language skills

The questionnaires revealed that 73% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that literature helped to improve their language skills, while a much lower 7% disagreed. Most of the participants claimed that literature helped to develop their language skills particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition and grammatical improvement. The data also demonstrated that a majority of respondents (93%) argued that through their exposure to literary texts, they were introduced to new words and phrases that helped to expand and enrich their vocabulary. They claimed that through this encounter, they learned to formulate sentences by using these words which enabled them to write better English. This finding supports Lazar's (1994) argument that literature can play a significant role in developing students' language abilities and extending their linguistic knowledge because it provides a wide range of vocabulary. Furthermore, literary texts could provide the students with a context for them to practise using these new words, for instance during role-play or group discussion activities based on these texts. One student explained, *"when we read the literary texts, we can find new words, new language that we have never heard before....and we can use them in writing, and in everyday conversation."*

In addition, many respondents said that literature helped to improve their grammatical knowledge because literary works were assumed to contain examples of grammar that they

could identify with. Moreover, since these examples were set against real-life settings in different situations, they offered an opportunity for the students to identify their functions and system in an authentic context. In return, the students would be able to apply this newly gained knowledge in their acquisition of the language. In other words, they were given the chance to see how language was used and hence, were able to use the target language with better skills and results. One participant had this to say:

*When we read a story...it helps to improve our grammar, such as 'past tense', 'present tense'. Of course, there are a lot of 'past tenses' in novels. Many students have problem with 'past tense' because there are many things to learn such as 'past participle' which is difficult to memorise. But if we read a lot, we can understand the 'past tense' better and we can use it in our essay.*

Unlike literary texts, the students claimed that their grammar textbooks offered examples of grammatical items on their own, a separated entity minus the authentic settings in the real world context. Their aim was mainly to get the students to practise the items in isolation. Because of this, most of the students did not feel that they needed to read on. Literary texts, on the other hand, offered attractive plots that could entice them to keep on reading. Most participants also expressed the belief that if they continued reading literary genres, their knowledge of grammar would be gradually improved. The grammar examples exemplified in literary works could also be exploited in numerous ways by using techniques and activities such cloze passages, multiple-choice questions, guessing word meanings from context and matching activities. Accordingly, these types of activities could help to increase the students' grammatical and lexical knowledge.

The respondents also stated that literature provided them with better examples and styles of writing. 71% of the participants responded positively to the notion that the use of literary texts in their classroom exposed them to different styles of writing, while a much lower 9% disagreed. They also believed that they could apply these styles in their writing activities or assignments. One student noted:

*Because literature provides us [with a] guide on how to write stories, and we can copy the styles that we find in the short story, we can use it in our writing tasks. We can copy the styles.*

It is arguably true that students could copy the writing styles found in literary texts, especially in genres such as short stories and novels. In her study, Katz (2001) asserts that students can imitate a writer's style of writing and they can also come up with creative work of their own. Nevertheless, it is argued that since these genres are in narrative form, they do not really serve the students' writing needs if they are composing an academic paper which usually involves precise information or figures. Furthermore, poetry and plays also have their own distinctive styles which are considered inappropriate for these students' writing assignments.

The participants also claimed that the exposure to literary genres helped to broaden their perspectives and develop their creativity and imagination. The varied themes richly inherent in different literary genres such as human dilemmas and conflicts offered the students opportunities to extend their emotional experiences beyond those of their own lives, which in return, enabled them to expand their knowledge, understanding and experience. Consequently, they were more likely to produce their own imaginative and interesting pieces of written work. A student expressed his view, *"literature can build up and expand our mind, develop our imagination so that we would become more creative in writing. We can write better essay then."*

The data from the questionnaires also indicated that 71% of the respondents felt that literature had motivated them to become more interested in reading literary works. Most of the literary genres, especially short stories appealed to them as they offered intriguing storylines and thus, encouraged them to continue reading in order to uncover and enjoy these plots. They also stated that the use of literary texts motivated them to become more interested not only in reading literature, but also in non-literary materials. 59% of the respondents agreed that literature inspired them to become more interested in reading, in general, while only 12% disagreed. The findings are consistent with Lazar's (1993) claim that literature encourages

students to read because literary works offer interesting topics to read, write and talk about, which can promote further interest in learning the target language.

Furthermore, 71% of the respondents felt that literature had helped them to become better readers. As stated before, through their literary exposure, they were confronted with a wide range of vocabulary. The more words that they acquired, the better their understanding of the texts read. When they could comprehend most of what they read due to their increased vocabulary, the students considered themselves good readers. In addition, some respondents said that class activity such as the reading aloud of literary genres helped to improve their pronunciation, especially when they were corrected by their teachers. The ability to have proper and acceptable pronunciation was also assumed as one of the characteristics of a skilled reader. Hence, the findings suggested that many students perceived a good reader as someone who could understand the text and read it with acceptable pronunciation. None of them talked about other qualities such as being critical or reflective as being the attributes of a skilled reader. In other words, the students held that as long as they could understand the vocabulary or phrases in the texts and could articulate the words properly, they perceived themselves as efficient readers.

In addition, some of the participants stated that literature helped to improve their reading fluency and abilities as they were able to understand other reading materials through the reading of numerous literary pieces. The new vocabulary that they had acquired from reading the texts promoted their comprehension of other reading materials (literary or non-literary) when they came across similar words. Thus, they could read these texts at a much faster rate than they had before. As one student related:

*When I read novels and short stories, I come across a lot of words and sentences that I have never seen before. Before I learn about literature, I don't even know some of the words in the novels, and I don't even understand these words. But when I learn literature in school, I learn a lot of new words and sentences while reading these texts. So, these words help me a lot in reading and understanding other texts that have similar words.*

However, this finding should not be taken as a claim that only by reading a few literary texts, students would become skilled readers. Aebersold and Field (1997:163) have stated it clearly that students will not “become great readers in the L2 from reading one novel in a course or a few short stories. Their ability will strengthen as they read more, read a variety of texts.”

Many respondents also sensed that literature reading helped to develop their speaking abilities. From their encounter with literary works, the students seemed aware that language could be used in different ways for different communicative functions and purposes. They felt that literary-based discussion activities helped to improve communication between them and their teacher, and among the students themselves. Despite their claim that literature helped to develop their communicative abilities, many students still exhibited a limited proficiency in the target language due to problems arising from grammatical restrictions that impeded their ability to convey and receive messages. Hence, fluency in the language was still beyond many of the students' reach and the expected level at the Center. This limitation was apparent during the interview sessions as most of them struggled and hesitated to communicate their opinions in English. One student talked about her insecurities:

*I am not really good at speaking and I think we [the students] need to learn literature because it can help us to be more fluent in speaking, and we can become more confident. It can... help us to speak fluently, to be more confident. Sometimes students like me, sometimes, we have no confidence to speak because we are afraid that our grammar is wrong. So, literature can help.*

In conclusion, it was apparent that those who supported the integration of literature strongly believed that literature helped in language acquisition. The perception that literature enabled them to acquire competence and improve proficiency in the target language was dominant. They also showed an awareness of the potential values of literature in developing their language skills, particularly in writing, reading and speaking. This awareness might be the result of their experience of literature in school.



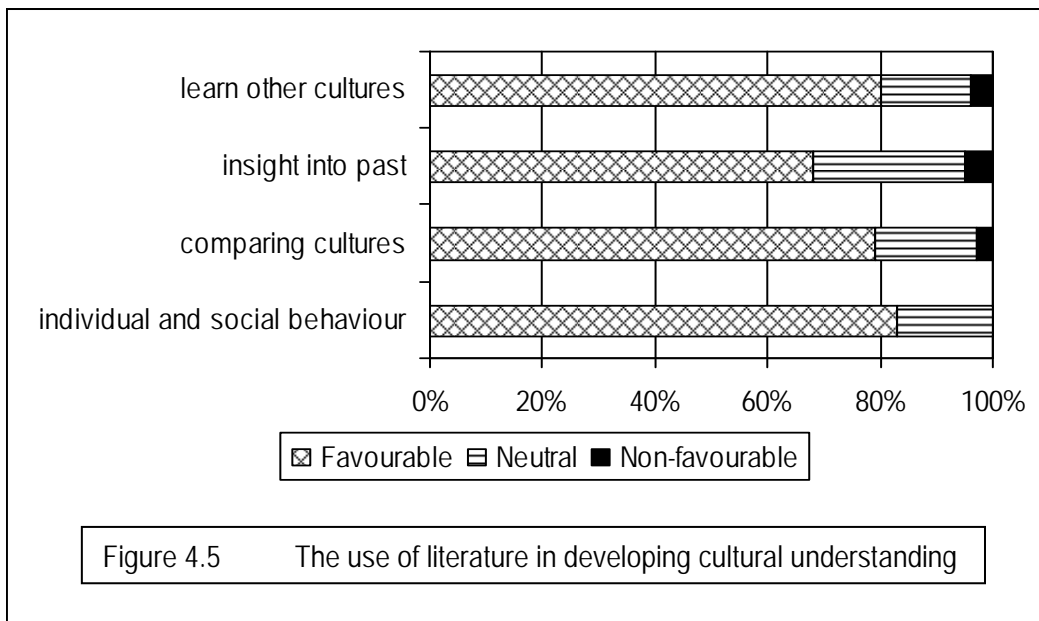
#### 4.5.2 Understanding of other cultures

The responses gathered from the questionnaires demonstrated that a majority of the participants (80%) felt that literature reading helped to develop their knowledge and awareness of other people's culture. On the other hand, only 4% of them disagreed that literature provided the means to gain an insight into a different culture. The respondents also added that apart from learning about other cultures, literary works offered insights into their own. Accordingly, the students could come to appreciate the values of both cultures. 79% of the respondents viewed the use of literature as a way of comparing aspects of their own culture with another, while only 3% disagreed. The interview findings also complemented the survey data. Many interviewees commented on the roles of literature in developing their cultural awareness. One student said:

*When we want to know about the Chinese cultures, we can know and read about them because there are texts written about the Chinese cultures in English. So, by reading these texts, we can know more about the Chinese cultures. We can also learn about other cultures such as the Indian's.*

The participants also stated that through literature reading they had the opportunity to learn about other people's lifestyles and history. They also claimed that literature offered knowledge of past and present cultures and societies that helped to develop their thinking and understanding of these lifestyles. 68% of the respondents supported this view, while only 5% disagreed. Moreover, 83% of the sample agreed that reading literary texts had given them a deeper understanding of individual and social behaviour, while none opposed this view. These findings are consistent with Beiger's (1996:308) claim that by learning about other people's way of life, students can develop "recognition, understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity and individual uniqueness, with an emphasis on intergroup understanding and human relations."

The findings, therefore, implied that the participants, to some extent, were able to identify another assumed value of literature, which is an exposure to different cultures portrayed in texts and thus, helped to increase their awareness of these cultures. Figure 4.5 below summarises the students' views on the application of literature in language education in terms of acquiring cultural understanding.



#### 4.5.3 Personal development

Another key factor why the respondents supported the application of literature in language study was personal development. They expressed a firm belief that literary writing not only offered pleasurable reading, but confronted them with different moral values that could promote and enhance their own personal development. They claimed that the values learned from their reading had helped them understand and become more aware of the people around them, regardless of differences in age, race, gender and belief. The lessons learned could also be used as guidance in their life. One participant explained:

*In some of the short stories, there are a lot of moral values that I could learn from. Sometimes, they help me to understand the people around me. And it is also fun to read interesting stories with good moral values.*

The questionnaire data also revealed similar results to those of the interviews in some respect. 51% of the respondents agreed that literature helped in self-discovery and personal development, while only a relatively small number of the students (5%) opposed this view. There was also a relatively high percentage of students (44%) who were uncertain whether literary exposure helped in their personal development. Their uncertainties could be attributed to a lack of tangible evidence of the effectiveness and the relevance of literature in developing these qualities.

#### 4.5.4 Classroom activities

The questionnaire results indicated that most participants cited classroom activities as another central motive to support their argument for the integration of literature. 57% of them responded positively to the statement that the use of literature in their classrooms was entertaining and interesting, while 16% stated otherwise. This was mainly because of the creative tasks such as dramatisations that they performed in school. The data also revealed that 59% of the respondents claimed that when literature was employed, the atmosphere was more relaxed, while 28% of the participants disagreed. The assumption that the use of literature was relaxing and helped to create motivating language tasks also received favourable responses from all the interviewees. The statement below represented the view of many on the effects of literature on classroom activities:

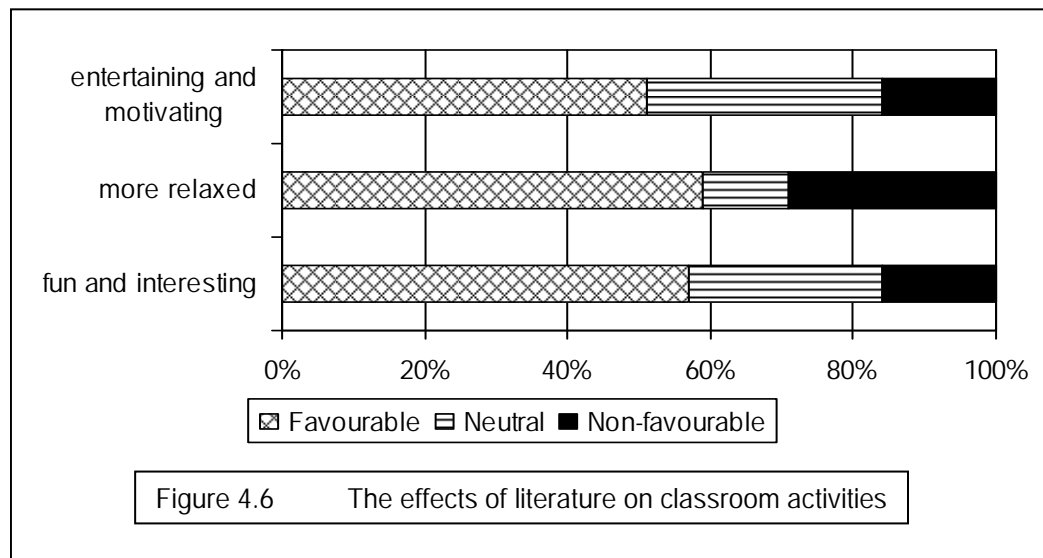
*When we use literature... we would not feel bored or pressurised because literature makes the class interesting and it helps to reduce our stress and tension, especially when we read stories that are really interesting.*

In addition, the data from the interviews brought to light another interesting discovery. Most participants claimed that literature was relaxing because it was considered as a break from reading the academic course books. Hence, they welcomed something refreshing that did not focus on either facts or figures like their textbooks. Some students also felt that literature offered something valuable that they could not get from their textbooks, an opportunity to enter

a different or an imaginary world that enabled them to experience and be part of the excitement and adventure described in the texts. One respondent talked about her reading experience:

*Sometimes when I read literature in English, I feel that I am in a different world. When I study or read texts on Economics and Accountancy, it's always about numbers. But when I read literature in English, I feel that I am in an imaginary world.*

Furthermore, 51% of the respondents claimed that the use of literary texts provided an entertaining and an encouraging way to learn English. On the other hand, 16% disagreed that literature was a good motivating learning tool and instead, argued that it was challenging and difficult. The findings suggested that most of the students tended to associate the integration of literature with enjoyment, relaxation, fun and interesting classroom activities. Figure 4.6 below summarises the students' overall views regarding the effects of literature on classroom activities.



The survey data also revealed that 56% of the respondents agreed that literature motivated them to participate in classroom activities, while only 8% disagreed. They also claimed that literature-based tasks encouraged increased participation and co-operation among them, especially during group discussion exercises.

#### 4.5.5 Limitations

As mentioned at the beginning of Section 4.5, there were students who argued that the application of literature in ELT was neither necessary nor beneficial. Their perspectives could also be used to account for their negative attitudes (Section 4.4). Essentially, the students reiterated similar reasons mentioned in Section 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, as the primary motives for their disagreement: literature, especially poetry was too hard as it contained difficult language and complex vocabulary that brought about a failure of comprehension and response. The questionnaire data indicated that 71% of the respondents thought that literature was arduous, while 29% thought otherwise.

These students also argued that literature should not be integrated because from their experience in school, literature was a challenging component to study. Apart from the linguistic complexities, literature was demanding because it usually involved a lot of memorisation and translation, especially in some canonical poems such as *Sonnet 18* where they were expected to translate most of its stanzas. Accordingly, they were inclined to perceive reading literature as arduous and burdensome. One student related her experience:

*In most poems, there are usually a lot of underlying meanings that we have to identify and we are easily confused and feel bored if we come across too many difficult words that we do not know their meanings. Moreover, the stanzas in the poems are linked from the first to the last and we need to know the meaning for each stanza. When we were in secondary school, we had to memorise all the meanings for each stanza. Most of the time, we felt really tensed when we had to memorise all these.*

In addition, these respondents also saw the addition of literature to the language curriculum as an inconvenience measure due to their impression that attaining proficiency in English was already difficult, and that throwing in an additional literature component merely compounded its difficulties. One student stated:

*If we want to use literature, it should be something simple, because English language is already too complicated for me. I mean English is already too difficult for me to understand, so I think we have to use simple [literary] texts or something like that.*

The next reason why the participants opposed of the application of literature was their perception that literature used old language which was irrelevant for learning English language now. This belief was probably instigated by their previous experience of reading some old canonical texts in school. Accordingly, some maintained that literary language was distinct from the ordinary language that they came across in their classroom activities and everyday occurrences. A respondent presented her comparison:

*In most poems, they use old language such as "thou", "thy", so it is difficult for us to understand. Moreover, if the poems use old language, then the grammar would be different from the one that we are learning today. We are learning modern English, so it's quite difficult to see the link between the old language and the modern one that we are learning in our classrooms.*

Because of this assumption, these students saw literature as a separate subject, detached from everyday English. In short, they did not understand how literature could be made relevant to the learning of modern standard English. The findings, therefore, implied that the students did not recognise how literature could be integrated in language lessons. Their experience of literature in school was one contributory factor for such perception. Although literature was an integrated component of the English language subject, it was taught separately from the lesson. There was a separate and special slot in the time-table to teach literature. Furthermore, when the time-table was allotted for literature, the teachers would be teaching about the literary texts, usually with the emphasis on a teacher text-centred approach and class discussions would develop around the themes or characters in the texts. Because of this, literature was not taught together and within the language subject although the same teacher would be teaching both components. Consequently, the students failed to discover how literary texts could be used within actual language lessons.

#### **4.6 Suggestions on how to make the integration of literature effective**

As mentioned earlier, there were a variety of reasons why the participants considered their experience of literature in school was either satisfying or disappointing. Despite their

diverse experiences, the respondents provided some insightful suggestions that they sensed could create a successful and effective integration of literature and enable language learners to enjoy and appreciate literary encounters in an encouraging manner.

#### 4.6.1 Literature assessments

One of the important factors cited by most respondents was whether the use of literature should be assessed or not. There were two conflicting views: some agreed that literature assessment was essential, while others argued that it was undesirable. Based on their experience in school, many of the interviewees saw literary assessment for language students as an unwelcome measure. The questionnaire data complemented the interview results when they showed that only 19% of the respondents thought that a literature examination was necessary, while a majority (81%) disagreed. Because literature was seen as complicated, the respondents argued that studying and preparing for its examination would impose an unnecessary burden on students. The teachers' teaching styles also placed significant weight on the respondents' argument against literature assessment. Based on their experience, the participants also assumed that language instructors, especially those in similar educational settings, were more inclined to use rote memorisation and drilling techniques in teaching literature. These methods, which the respondents claimed, most language learners would consider unexciting, difficult and discouraging. One student was clear in her view:

*No [literature] examination because the first reason is to help us enjoy learning English language and we want to practise our speaking skills and to train us to read properly. So, when it is tested, we have to memorise a lot of things, so it burdens us. I am afraid that many of us will find it difficult to score high mark for the subject.*

On the other hand, those who supported literary examination claimed that such an assessment could encourage greater students' attention. The respondents maintained that language pupils with similar educational backgrounds were usually assessment-conscious. Hence, they claimed that were these pupils to be tested, they would be more likely to pay closer attention to literature in order not to jeopardise their overall result. Otherwise, the pupils

would be inclined to neglect literature and commit exclusive focus on their other examination subjects. The remark below helped to clarify this point:

*When we learn something, our teacher would want to test our understanding of the subject. So, when we are tested, only then we will know that we have to study and concentrate on it. But for some of the students when the subject is not tested, they are not serious about it, they will ignore it. But when we learn and we are tested, it will make us pay more attention and concentrate on the subject.*

#### 4.6.2 Choice of texts

The interviews revealed that the participants expressed a strong belief that in order to achieve an effective integration, literary texts must be carefully chosen as they were integral in attracting language students to read. One common suggestion put forward by all interviewees was the necessity to use texts with interesting plots that appeal to teenage readers. It was important for the texts to have attractive storylines because they would motivate learners to read and to keep on reading despite any linguistic difficulties that they might come across. One participant explained that although she encountered linguistic difficulties in reading a particular text, she would persist reading it if the story appealed to her:

*There are interesting books but sometimes their language is difficult, but when there are books that I really like such as Harry Potter, I will read, by hook or crook, whether I understand it or not, I have to make myself understand.*

Another factor proposed by the participants was that the selected texts should contain universal themes that learners can relate to such as human values, conflicts and relationships as a means to attract language pupils who are reluctant to read not only literary materials, but also non-literary.

The participants raised an interesting proposal that the subject matter or the topics of the chosen texts should be connected or compatible with students' programmes of study as a means of enabling them to identify the relevance of reading literature to their academic subjects and needs. This could be achieved by choosing texts that complement the themes of the required readings of the students' course.



As mentioned earlier, short stories were the favourite genre among the respondents. Most of them felt that this genre should become the primary type of texts for use in lessons. Poems and novels were rarely suggested. Again, the prevalent reason for their hesitance to recommend poetry was because of its difficult language. As for novels, they were considered time-consuming with regard to their length. In addition, none of the respondents suggested the use of plays. One plausible explanation was their unfamiliarity with plays since they were not exposed to them during their school days. However, drama activities or role-play were regarded obligatory if literary works were employed.

Most of the participants also stressed that the texts chosen should be linguistically non-challenging. Based on their experience in school, they expressed confidence that learners would encounter fewer language difficulties if easier texts were used. The respondents also assumed that texts with simple language would be more accessible to lower-proficiency learners, such as themselves, mainly because of their supposition that literary understanding would be easily achieved if simpler texts were engaged. The following remark highlighted this claim:

*Short story with simple words, or novel although the novel is not as simple as the short story, it is easier for the readers to concentrate and understand what the writer is trying to say. So, the language should not be difficult, it should be simple.*

In addition, some of the respondents recommended that the language level for the chosen texts should be appropriate to students' level of proficiency, and its linguistic difficulties could be gradually increased. In other words, at the initial stage of introducing literary texts to less advanced learners, simple texts should be used and more linguistically complicated texts could be progressively introduced when they were ready to approach more difficult works.

#### **4.6.3 Class implementation**

Class implementation was another key attribute quoted by most of the respondents as playing an essential role in the application of literature. There were diverse views among them

with regard to class implementation. Many of them strongly suggested that literary texts were most appropriately suited for speaking courses. They assumed that literature could encourage and develop learners' communicative abilities, especially in terms of providing sufficient opportunities for language practice. One participant gave her views:

*I think literature should be used in the Speaking class because when we have drama activity, we have to talk. When we want to act, so we need to speak. So, I think literature helps us to speak, and we can practise speaking English.*

The findings implied that the respondents placed a heavy emphasis on developing fluency in the target language and argued that literature was more fitting for communicative purposes. However, it is arguable whether the emphasis on speaking ability at the expense of the other language skills, particularly listening, is a good suggestion. The respondents' preoccupation with communicative activities could probably emanate from their experience of performing dramatisation tasks in school. These encounters seemed to create a positive learning experience that left an impression among the participants that literature was more suited for speaking exercises.

Some of the respondents also suggested that the potential effectiveness of literature was more evident and substantial in writing courses. They presupposed that literature helped to increase students' grammatical knowledge and expose them to a rich source of new vocabulary that could help them improve their writing skills and produce better and more interesting assignments. The participants also indicated that literature would be more acceptable if the extent to which reading and writing about it helped improve learners' standard of academic writing were made transparent. A study conducted by Hirvela (2005) similarly indicated that most of his students viewed the use of literature as helpful in their acquisition of writing skills.

A small number of the respondents recommended that literature was potentially useful in reading courses because it could be employed as a teaching tool to reduce pupils' learning

anxieties and make the lessons more appealing. The data suggested that these participants saw the role of literature in the courses not as a dominant source of reading material, but rather as a vehicle to create fun-filled and enjoyable lessons that encouraged students' positive involvement in class activities.

These findings implied that the respondents perceived literature as predominantly more beneficial in general proficiency courses such as Speaking, Writing and Reading. However, several important questions need to be answered before literature can be integrated in these proficiency classes. First, which genres are likely to be most suitable and what kinds of literature-based activities will be more effective for use in each class as literature can prove to be daunting to read, write and speak about, especially for less advanced students.

#### **4.7 Attitudes towards literature at the Center**

At the time of the study, literature was not included at all in the English language syllabus at the Center. This section, therefore, describes the respondents' feelings and reactions if literature were to be integrated there. In other words, it does not attempt to advocate the use of literature, but serves to provide information about the students' attitudes and perceptions of literature if it were used in their own educational context.

As mentioned earlier, in principle, most respondents seemed to have assumed that the integration of literature was beneficial due to its potential effectiveness in developing their language abilities. Indeed they made interesting suggestions on how to make the intermarriage between literature and language study more effective and successful. However, in practice, there was an interesting shift in perspective when the participants were asked to respond to a statement asking whether they felt that literature could be integrated at the Center. Despite their encouraging views on its potential values in language acquisition and their overall positive experience of literature in school, two thirds (66%) of the respondents did not want literature to be included in their language syllabus, while only one third (33%) indicated an interest in

literature being used. These findings implied that there was a contradiction between the students' belief and their preference. While claiming that they believed that literature was relevant in language learning, their actual words and attitudes contradicted their belief. There were three main reasons why most students exhibited reservations about the notion of adding literature to their curriculum: (i) perceptions of literature, (ii) assessment factors, and (iii) peer influence. These attributes can also be used to account for the respondents' negative attitudes (Section 4.4).

#### 4.7.1 Perceptions of literature

The findings revealed that one of the primary reasons why the students demonstrated reservations to reading literature at the Center was due to their perception that literature was irrelevant to their programme. The questionnaire data revealed that a majority of them (88%) strongly felt that literature was not related to their programme, in contrast, a mere 12% agreed that it was. They claimed that they could not identify the relevance of literature and how it could help them study for their course. The following remark might best represent many of the respondents' views on the irrelevancy of literature to their current programme:

*Literature is very enjoyable, but for me right now, I am doing Economics. So, literature and Economics are not relevant to each other.*

Some participants offered another reason why they felt literature was irrelevant to their programmes of study. Their view of literature was restricted to the presumption that literature was more suitable and applicable for those who either wished to become poets or writers or students majoring in literature. One student had this to say, "*because Engineering involves mathematics, physics and I think literature is not relevant at all and it is more suitable for poets and writers.*" This suggested that non-Arts respondents preferred not to use literature because it involves different types of texts from the ones that they were accustomed to, factual texts that contain straightforward and accurate information. Their presumption was that students like them, could not identify the relevance of literary texts, which usually contain elements of

ambiguity as well as metaphorical meanings, to their programme. However, this is not to contradict the points discussed earlier that some respondents derived pleasure from reading literary works which academic texts failed to provide. This simply means that some of these students enjoyed reading literature and some did not. The latter probably preferred to read their course books mainly to serve and fulfil their academic requirements.

Moreover, the respondents also perceived literature as irrelevant as it did not contribute to attaining good results in other courses, especially the science subjects. 69% of them claimed that literature played little or no part in assisting them to achieve a better grade in other subjects, aside from English language. Nevertheless, 31% of the students felt that literature could facilitate them to perform better in other subjects. Since the medium of instruction at the Center is English, this group of students sensed that literature could help achieve their desired level of competence and when they were more proficient in English, they could concentrate on and understand their core subjects more effectively.

Some of the participants refused to read literature at the Center because it offered little contribution to achieving their academic goals. 71% of the respondents agreed that literature was irrelevant in accomplishing this, while only 29% disagreed. These students also believed that literature was academically more relevant for students who were pursuing a degree in English or those who were undertaking teacher training courses. One respondent noted:

*Maybe it is because literature is more important for BENL [Bachelor of English Language and Literature] students or TESL students because literature would help them to achieve their goals as they are going to be English teachers. Since I am doing a course in Economics, I don't think literature would help me to achieve my goals.*

This finding is consistent with McKay's (1986:192) claim that students do not see the relevance of literature or how it contributes to "academic and/or occupational goals." Hence, it implied that if the respondents could recognise the relevance of literature in achieving their academic goals, they would probably be more interested in using literary texts in their language lessons.

#### 4.7.2 Assessment issues

The study revealed that literature assessment was another significant reason why most respondents opposed the integration of literature at the Center. They were reluctant due to their negative experience of literature assessments in school. They attributed their refusal to the pressure of being tested and the fear of failure that might jeopardise their result in the examination. They were also predominantly grade-conscious and because of this anxiety, they did not want literature to be added into their language syllabus. One student explained how literature had affected her examination results:

*I don't want it [literature examination] because it affected my exam result. I learned about Sonnet 18 when I was in secondary school. The language in that poem was old and I could not understand the poem. So, when I could not answer the questions about the poem in the examination, I got zero for those questions. So, it affected my English result.*

Some of the participants also lacked the interest in studying literature because they claimed that it would distract them from concentrating on their core subjects such as Mathematics and Science and, hence might affect their performance in these subjects. Since it was assumed to be complicated, the respondents claimed that it was essential for them to commit substantial attention to studying literature. By doing so, their focus on the examination subjects would be affected and to some extent, neglected. Accordingly, they would not achieve the desired results in the tests. Such apprehension undoubtedly would engender negative attitudes towards literature assessment. One student explained:

*For me, if there is a subject that I do not understand like literature, I will really focus on it and because of this, the other subjects will receive less attention from me. I always concentrate on the difficult subject. The other subjects would be neglected because I focus on literature.*

Furthermore, most students claimed that the pressure of revising and studying for a literary examination would deprive them of the pleasure and enjoyment that they expected to

obtain from reading literature. In other words, their concern with literary assessment would lessen their enjoyment of reading literary works.

The participants were also not keen on engaging literature at the Center because it was seen as an additional subject to be studied for, apart from their compulsory skills-based classes. Regardless of their experience of literature in school, they could not recognise how literary texts could supplement or strengthen their language lessons. In other words, they essentially perceived literature as a separate component that they had to mechanically and meticulously learn. The following remark highlighted this point:

*Yes, it is going to burden us because we already have 5 subjects [skills-based classes] in one semester, and if literature is included then we have to concentrate on literature, so we have to study for 6 subjects.*

Nevertheless, there were respondents who mentioned that they would probably welcome the possible addition of literature to their syllabus if it did not involve any form of assessment. As discussed before, their assumption that literature-based communicative activities that brought about fun and stimulating lessons exert a sufficient pull as to attract them to read literature at the Center. However, these students maintained that if literature was to be integrated, its use should be tailored to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere and motivate language exercises. In other words, the primacy of emphasis on using literary materials should be assigned to creating fun-filled and assessment free lessons.

#### **4.7.3 Peer Influence**

Finally, it was worth mentioning peer influence as another main issue for the participants' argument against the possible implementation of literature at the Center. It was interesting to discover that some of their attitudes towards literature were significantly influenced by their friends. They believed that they would be mocked by their peers if they showed an interest in literature. Their peers assumed that literature occupied an inferior status to the other subjects, language or otherwise. These circles of friends tended to undermine and

ridicule those who showed any attention to literature and were keen on its integration. Consequently, the interested students would become discouraged and lost their enthusiasm for literature. One participant noted:

*Some students think that learning about literature is not interesting and they would ridicule their friends who want to learn about literature. They would ask their friends who are learning about literature, "you are learning about literature?" There are a lot of students who think that literature is not important and will look down on those who want to learn about it. And because of this, it would spoil the mood of the students who are interested to study about literature.*

#### 4.8 Summary

The discussion of the pre-study results has managed to provide answers for the first research question: How do lower-intermediate level ESL students feel about literature and its relevance to their language learning? The findings reveal that some students embraced highly positive attitudes towards literature, while some displayed little or no interest at all. The students' perceptions of literature were significantly influenced by several important variables such as the teachers' attitudes and their instructional strategies, their inadequate linguistic competence and restricted vocabulary in the target language, and their own reading habits. The participants also expressed a belief that literature was potentially beneficial in language acquisition mainly in terms of vocabulary enrichment, grammatical improvement, and development of language skills. However, it was interesting to discover the respondents' shift of perspectives when they rejected the notion of integrating literature into their own educational setting. Their perceptions of literature, assessment concerns and peer influence were the primary reasons that seemed to have led to their resistance towards the application of literature in the language syllabus at the Center.



## Chapter Five: Students' Post-Study Perspectives on Literature

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter details the findings of the post-interviews and questionnaires with the students supplemented by the data from classroom observations and journal entries. However, only a few journal entries were used in the findings because most of the students only provided descriptions of the activities that they had done, instead of reflecting on their feelings and thoughts about the texts and the tasks in the worksheets. Similar to the pre-study findings, the post-results are combined in the discussion of the data in an endeavour to provide a truthful description of the students' perspectives on literature.

### 5.2 Presentation of findings

The interviews aimed to explore the participants' attitudes towards literature based on their experience of using the worksheets in their Reading class. Hence, they intended to seek relevant answers for three of the research questions mentioned in Section 1.7, where the apparent focus is on the learners:

- RQs 3: How do ESL teachers and learners respond to the use of literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis?
- RQs 4: What are the effects of the literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis on the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context?
- RQs 5: What are the impacts of a pedagogical stylistic approach on the development of literature-based materials in language classrooms from the teachers' and students' points of view?

In order to find answers for these questions, the students were asked the following key questions during the interviews:

- ✕ What experience have the students had in using the worksheets in their Reading class?
- ✕ Did the worksheets help the students to understand and enjoy the texts?

- ✖ What were the difficulties that the students faced when dealing with the worksheets?
- ✖ What effects did the worksheets have on the students' attitudes towards literature and its use in language learning?
- ✖ What effects did the worksheets have on the students' views if literature were to be implemented in the language syllabus at the Center?

Similarly, the questionnaire data were combined in order to present as reliably as possible the respondents' overall perceptions of literature based on their experience of the study. In order to achieve this, all the 'strongly agree' (Option 5) and 'agree' (Option 4) options in the questionnaire were grouped as positive results or in favour of the statement. The options 'strongly disagree' (Option 1) and 'disagree' (Option 2) were considered negative or not in favour of the statement. As with the pre-study findings, all three responses (positive, negative and not sure) were included in the presentation of data. In an attempt to answer the three research questions mentioned above, the discussion of the results are categorised into two main areas: (i) overall experience of the worksheets, and (ii) the effects of the worksheets on the students' perceptions of literature.

### 5.3 Experience of using the worksheets

In order to establish how the respondents had responded to the worksheets and to answer RQs 3, the discussion of data focused on the first three key questions in the interviews. Both the interview and the questionnaire results indicated that the participants had had mixed experiences. 50% of the respondents indicated that they had had a positive experience of using the worksheets, another 46% were uncertain and in contrast, only 4% disliked the worksheets. Some of the participants claimed that their positive experience was mainly influenced by the activities and texts in the worksheets. One student explained:

*The activities made me feel so enjoyable, happy, and interesting. I enjoyed it very much. What I like most are the poems and the play, I mean the drama activities, and I kind of like reading the other texts as well... That was how I felt...and overall it had been an enjoyable experience for me.*

There were also students who encountered a discouraging experience of the worksheets. For instance, one student blamed his limited proficiency in the target language as the main factor that affected his experience. However, his comment below implied that he had already embraced negative attitudes towards literature prior to the study and the encounter with the worksheets did not alter his perceptions:

*Like I said, during the first [pre] interview, I think literary texts such as novels, the language is quite high [difficult]. It's difficult for a student like me who is weak in English. I think it was difficult. It was difficult for me to understand the text. That's why I don't like it.*

As mentioned earlier the students' neutral response (not sure option) would also be included in the presentation of results. The findings revealed that there was a high percentage of not-sures (46%), indicating the students' uncertainty as to whether they had had a favourable experience or not. It was evident that almost half of the participants were indecisive how satisfied they had been in using the worksheets. The following statement best illustrated the students' uncertainties about their experience:

*My experience had been quite interesting, but there are times when I feel bored and there are times when I feel interesting. So, it depends on the texts we used. I like poems, and I don't like the short stories. So, I don't know what to say. Sometimes I am happy, but there are times when I feel sleepy and bored.*

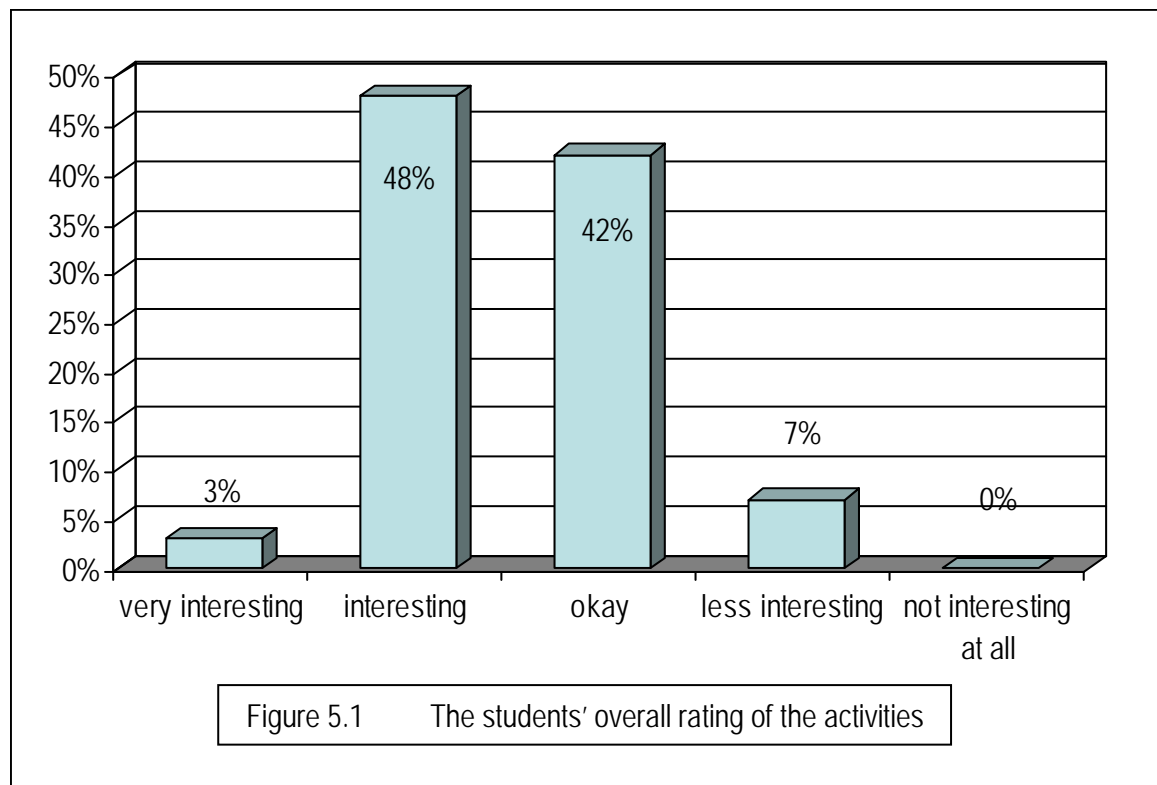
The findings revealed that that the students' diverse experiences of working with the worksheets were significantly affected by four major factors: (i) the activities, (ii) the texts used, (iii) difficulties in using the worksheets, and (iv) physical factors.

### 5.3.1 Activities

There were varied responses from the students when asked to articulate their views on the activities in the worksheets. Some students thought that they were useful, while others felt that there were limitations with the tasks. 61% of the respondents stated that some of the activities were interesting, while 6% thought otherwise. 29% of the students felt that the exercises were dreary, while a higher percentage (43%) opposed. In addition, 86% of the

students considered the tasks challenging, while only 1%, a single respondent disagreed. When asked in the questionnaires whether the activities were time-wasting, 65% of the students disagreed, while, in contrast, only 7% agreed. The respondents were also queried on whether they deemed the tasks arduous. 56% of the sample considered they were, while only 14% indicated otherwise.

Regardless of their mixed opinions regarding the activities, most students seemed to hold a positive view on them. The respondents were asked to rate the overall tasks based on a 5-point Likert scale of '5=very interesting', '4=interesting', '3=okay', '2=less interesting' and '1=not interesting at all'. 3% of the respondents stated that they were 'very interesting', 48% considered the activities were 'interesting', and 42% thought they were 'okay'. This left only 7% of the respondents who felt that the tasks were 'less interesting'. None of the students rated the activities as 'not interesting at all'. Figure 5.1 summarises the students' overall evaluation for all the activities.



### 5.3.1.1 Role-play activities

The interview data also supported the findings from the questionnaires. Most respondents said that some of the activities were interesting because they helped to make the class more enjoyable, relaxed and fun. They provided the students with the opportunities to perform creative tasks and role-play activities. The survey data also indicated that 79% of the respondents derived satisfaction from conducting role-play activities, while only 7% felt otherwise. The students' performances, which sometimes were amusing, helped to create lively and attractive lessons. Since most of their Reading classes were in the afternoon and many students were tired, role-play activities helped them to stay alert and reduce their fatigue. The fact that the tasks were enjoyable, relaxing and offered the respondents an opportunity to have fun with their friends proved very popular. This situation was evident in Group B when they acted out an incident from *The Great Gatsby* and in Group C when they performed a scene from Arthur Miller's play. This finding matches that of Gerber (1990:202) who conducted role-play with his students and discovered a high level of participation and the class "atmosphere is very relaxed. There is frequent laughter and merriment." A participant in the current study reiterated his experience:

*Yes, I really enjoy it when we do role-play. Yes, it's very interesting because all the students in the class take part and we do role-play and we act and we present it to our class. I took part in one role-play and then I co-operated with my pair, I discussed which characters that we had to choose and the dialogue, so, it was very interesting.*

The respondents preferred conducting drama activities because they involved physical movement as they had to move about the classroom as they tried their best to portray the characters from the extracts. They sought to represent the characters and the scenes based on their own perceptions and understanding and some guidance received from the tutors. They also arranged their chairs and tables in order to create suitable settings for these scenes. Hence, this type of activity appealed to the respondents and accordingly, encouraged greater participation from all members of the class.

Because of their positive experience in these activities, 74% of the students believed that more drama exercises should be included in the worksheets and a further 12% felt that there had been an adequate provision. The participants also stated that these tasks motivated them to stay focused on the lessons. They allowed the students to develop their self-confidence, experiment with their talents and, most importantly, have fun. In short, they felt that there should be more literature-based creative physical activities. Observation data also revealed that when the lessons were entertaining, most students paid closer attention and became more motivated in acquiring the target language. One respondent related her view:

*Because when we learn about literature and when I do these group activities, it helps me to learn English, it encourages me to learn English because literature is interesting. It helps me to pay more attention to the lesson and enjoy the class.*

The findings demonstrated that the use of literature-based drama activities generated excitement among the students and encouraged them to become more involved in the lessons. Maley and Duff (2005:1) also make clear that drama “fosters self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence and through this, motivation is developed.” This finding is also consistent with Gerber’s (1990) finding that role-play or drama-like activities are more successful and suitable for use with teenage students.

#### 5.3.1.2 Independent creative activities

*I think when I read aloud the poem that I had written, I felt really funny, it was funny because my poem had a different meaning from the original poem in the worksheet. I think the activity was good, it was very interesting.*

The remark above represented some of the respondents’ claim that some of the activities were helpful because they provided an opportunity for them to produce their own creative works such as writing a police report, letters and developing their own poems. The findings suggested that the students enjoyed the lessons because they were given active and independent roles in learning. Duff and Maley (1990: iv) argue that students need to be perceived as “active agents and not passive recipients” to ensure a successful learning to take

place. For instance, in Worksheet 1, the students were required to construct their own poems in response to Williams Carlos Williams' *This is Just to Say*, by applying the particular linguistic pattern that they had learned. One of the respondents articulated her feelings for successfully writing her own poem as a reaction to the original:

*It's a bit easy, well, not really easy. It's freedom, I mean we can write anything that we like, it's up to us, we have the freedom, so we can write anything that we like.*

Therefore, it was apparent that the students preferred lessons which granted them the opportunity to explore and expand their creativity and develop their own responds to the poem without their teachers imposing their own views on them. The extent to which the students were able to express their responses would affect their attitudes. When they were allowed the freedom and opportunity to openly express their own reactions, they were more likely to develop positive outlooks on literature. Consequently, they would become less dependent on received opinions, especially from their teachers and eventually acquired the confidence to develop, express and value their own responses. When they had this sense of achievement, the students were more inclined to demonstrate interest in literary texts and extend this interest through personal reading in their own time.

### 5.3.1.3 Group discussion activities

Most of the respondents also sensed that some of the activities in the worksheets were useful because they promoted group discussions that encouraged the sharing and exchanging of ideas between them. Through this, they learned to tolerate and appreciate each others' opinions and learned to work as a team and co-operate with one another. In this way, literature helped to promote collaborative learning among them. As they began to rely on each other, there was less dependency on the teachers. One student said:

*I feel interesting about the poems, short stories, novels in the worksheets. I had to discuss in group. I had to co-operate with my friends to solve the problems and to answer the questions.*

This assertion is consistent with Collie and Slater's (1987:9) claim that working in groups can help students to reduce the difficulties that they face when approaching literary texts. By doing so, students learn to work together as one and become more confident to approach the texts because they have worked as a group rather than as an individual. Collie and Slater write:

Working with groups can lessen the difficulties presented by the numbers of unknowns on a page of literary text. Very often someone else in the group will be able to supply the missing link or fill in an appropriate meaning of a crucial word, or if not, the task of doing so will be a shared one. Shifting attention away from the text itself to such shared activity is often conducive to the creation of a risk-taking atmosphere. With the group's support and control, the individual has greater freedom to explore his or her own reactions and interpretations.

In addition, group discussion activities helped to improve communication between the students and the teachers, and among the students themselves. The students had to interact with each other when discussing either the tasks or the texts and pay careful attention to the texts and to generate language use in the process of completing these activities. In other words, the students not only had to engage interactively with the texts, but also with the other fellow students and their teachers while performing the tasks. These findings support Duff and Maley's (1990) argument that literature encourages interaction between the teachers and the students. They claim that since literary texts contain rich multiple layers of meanings, they can be effectively used for generating discussions and the sharing of feelings or opinions among students and instructors. Some of the participants added that discussion surrounding literary texts not only helped to improve their communication skills, but also developed a closer relationship with their classmates.

Nevertheless, some of the respondents experienced difficulties in dealing with their peers while working as a group. They claimed that usually their group comprised of two types of students: those who were interested in literature and those who were not. Therefore, when they had to deliberate on the activities, the second type of students would rarely participate and



left the ones who were interested to complete the tasks by themselves. Another difficulty was addressing the group members' conflicting ideas during the discussions. When they were not able to reach an agreement regarding the tasks, some would withdraw from the discussion and remain aloof from the group. One student talked about her experience:

*My experience was enjoyable because I get to learn literature again, and I got to do the group discussion activities but, sometimes I felt upset when my opinion was not accepted by the group. For example, when we did the poem, Maggie and Milly and Molly and May I had the right answers, but my group did not want to listen to me. So, when we discussed the answers with the class, our answers were wrong.*

Moreover, some of the students felt that they had not gained many benefits from class discussions as sometimes their friends' explanation was barely audible due to poor voice projection. Because of this, the others failed to grasp what was being said by the presenting group. Hence, they were unable to compare their answers with the other groups', which led to dissatisfaction. Another setback that the students encountered was that they had different interpretations from the other groups and they were unsure which was the right one. One participant explained:

*We did our group discussion and during the class presentation, each group presented their ideas...sometimes it was difficult for us to understand their presentation because we had a different interpretation from them and we were not sure which one was correct.*

In this sense, the findings suggested that some students failed to acknowledge the possibility of deriving multiple, even mutually contradictory meanings from literary texts because they were used to having fixed answers, whether right or wrong. Not many of them could appreciate that a text might prompt more than one possible interpretation. One probable reason was because of the ways they were taught in school. As explained in Section 4.3.1, most students were drilled to memorise the correct answers and regurgitate them during the examination. Accordingly, when they were faced with several possible interpretations of a text, they needed the teacher's confirmation that their answers were either right or wrong.

The findings also implied that some respondents lacked an understanding of ambiguity when discussing literary texts. Normally, as teachers and as adults, we know from our experience that the most important questions in life rarely have clear right or wrong answers. The students, on the other hand, do not necessarily realise these facts and tend to demand definitive answers to every question. One possible reason for their attitude is because they are very familiar and have been provided with fixed or correct answers during their everyday encounters with their academic textbooks.

Unlike their academic textbooks, literary works are opened to multiple interpretations and some of the students failed to recognise this. The desire to be completely certain of the correct answers or interpretations could often be overwhelming. Because of this, these students found it difficult to acknowledge the idea of having two or more interpretations of a text. However, if the students had been trained to accept this ambiguity, they might have realised that not all interpretations are equal, but that some may be more valid or appropriate than others.

#### **5.3.1.4 Challenging activities**

Although most respondents agreed that some of the tasks were challenging, there were conflicting views. Some welcomed these challenges, while others found them to be demotivating. Some participants appreciated these activities because they contained questions that challenged and developed their thinking ability. These students seemed to prefer the type of question that required them to express their feelings and thoughts about the text read, usually by drawing on their own experience. Here, the activities did not simply ask them to recall or memorise the characters or themes, rather it was essential for them to produce their own explanations for their answers which were not directly stated in the texts. The tasks required them to produce their own responses to questions such as 'how do you feel?' and 'what do you think happened (or will happen) and why?' Most of the time, they had to infer and

use textual clues in order to generate the appropriate responses to the questions asked. One student explained:

*Sometimes we have to think because the texts, the questions were not direct or straight to the point. The messages that they [the texts] are trying to convey, they are not directly stated in the texts. We have to think in order to understand the messages, only then we can understand the texts... We have to think because the answers are not directly stated in the text.*

These types of question also helped to develop the students' interpretive ability that enabled them to express, justify and then refine their ideas of the texts read. Lazar (1996b) argues that it is important for students to acquire these abilities because they are crucial in the process of language learning, particularly in situations when the learners have to decipher what their friends are trying to say during a conversation or what a stanza of a poem means.

On the other hand, there were many respondents who did not approve of these challenging questions. The findings showed that they were not able to deal with questions that required them to describe their feelings and explain why they felt in such a way. This gave the impression that they were not pleased with the types of questions that demanded them to think and produce their own responses. They also claimed that these challenging questions diminished their interest in the worksheets. This was probably because the tasks contradicted one of the usual ways of answering questions that they were familiar with, that of looking for answers directly in the texts. The typical students' method of answering questions involved looking for words or phrases used in the question and then these words were taken up and matched with similar words or sentences in the text. Once they had identified and matched these words, the phrases from the text were usually lifted and copied in the answer section. On the other hand, because the questions in the worksheets required thoughts and interpretations, the respondents failed to establish the answers by using this style of matching certain key words. The following remark helped to support this point:

*In some activities there are questions which ask about my feeling towards the text, or something that has to do with the text. For me, I rarely read books. In the exam, I just*

*read the questions first, and then I will try to identify some words mentioned in the questions, and then I will try to find the similar ones in the texts. However, the questions in the worksheets are different. The questions are about the text but they are different. I can't do it.*

Most of the respondents also preferred the type of questions that did not challenge them to think, as they liked straight-forward problems with answers they could easily obtain from the texts. However, when they encountered questions that demanded analysis or evaluation of a text, the participants found them discouraging. One participant expressed her preference for straight-forward questions:

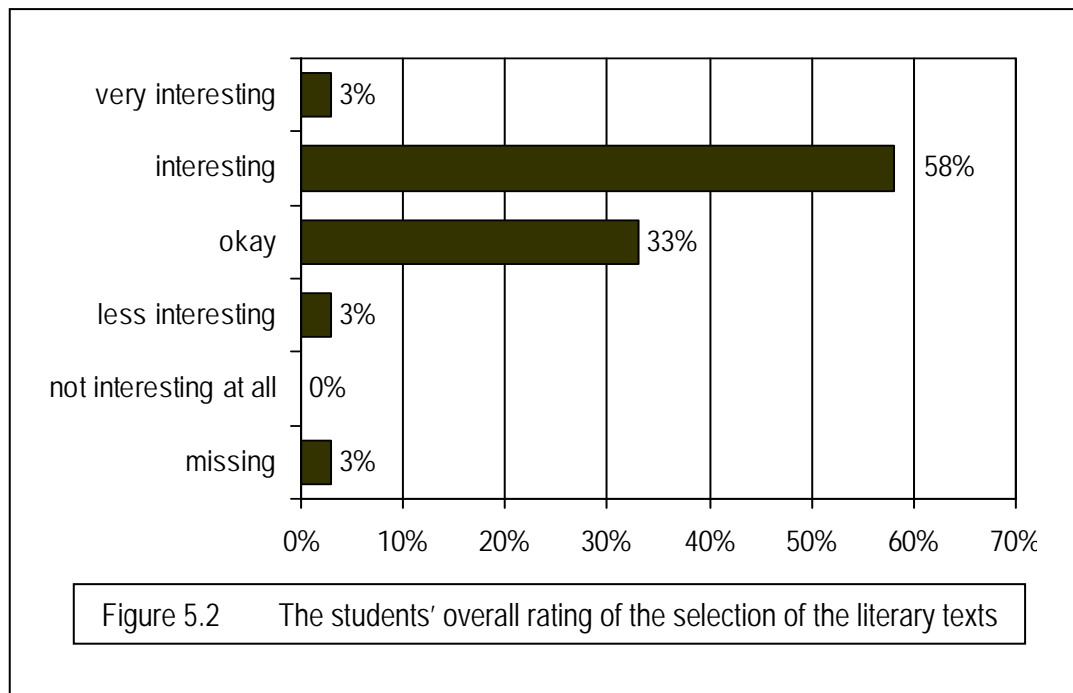
*I don't like to answer the questions, I don't like it. It's difficult for me to look for the answers from the given extract. I have to read the extract a lot of times...It's difficult for me to find the answers, I like the questions which answers are already in the extract.*

Another probable reason why these students disliked these types of question was because they were usually dependent on their teachers to feed them with the answers. 68% of the respondents claimed that they needed more assistance from their teachers to respond to the questions, while only 6% felt that they had received sufficient guidance.

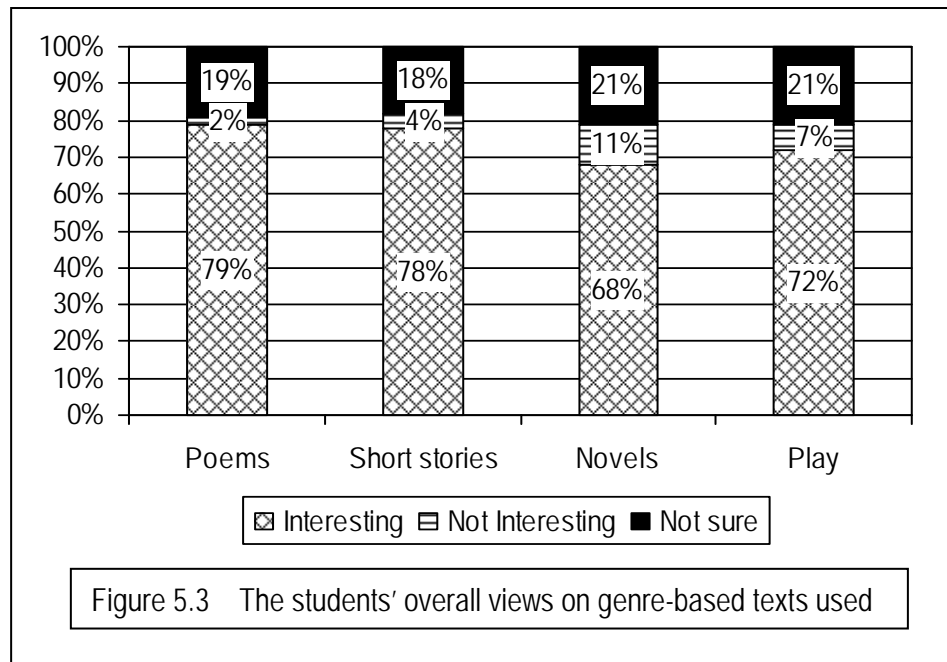
### 5.3.2 The texts used

Another important factor cited by the respondents that affected their experience of using the worksheets was the texts used. As with their views on the activities, there was a combination of reactions. Some respondents gave positive comments about the selection of texts and there were others who provided discouraging remarks. The students were asked in the questionnaires to indicate their views on the overall selection of the literary texts used in the study. 3% of the sample considered the texts 'very interesting', 58% stated the texts as 'interesting', another 33% perceived the texts as 'okay', while only 3% of the students thought the texts were 'less interesting'. None of the respondents felt that the texts were 'not interesting at all'. Another 3% of the students did not indicate their evaluation and their non-response was

recorded as 'missing'. The students' evaluations on the overall selection of the texts are summarised in Figure 5.2 below.



In addition, a majority of the respondents (79%) indicated that the three poems, *This is just to say*, *When*, and *maggie and milly and molly and may* were most pleasurable, while only 1 student disagreed. 78% of the participants considered the three short stories, *A Day's Wait*, *Hearts and Hands*, and *China's Little Ambassador* were appealing, by contrast, only 4% indicated otherwise. Furthermore, 68% of the respondents stated that the extracts from the two novels, *The Great Gatsby* and *After the Funeral* were interesting. In contrast, 11% of the sample disagreed. Finally, 72% of the students felt that the extract from the play, *Death of A Salesman* was attractive, while only 7% claimed it was boring. Figure 5.3 below illustrates the students' overall views on the genre-based texts used in the worksheets.



The data from the questionnaire also revealed that 71% of the students indicated that they liked reading all the texts in the worksheets, while 29% of them did not share this opinion. 78% of the respondents felt that they wanted to continue reading works written by the authors whose texts were used in the study, while a lower percentage (22%) indicated otherwise. Therefore, it could be inferred that most of the participants were reasonably pleased with the selection of the texts. Further discussion on the texts used in the study is based on four important variables: (i) texts that interest students, (ii) texts that bored students, (iii) texts that students find complex, and (iv) texts that students find simple. And in all the following figures that describe the texts, the abbreviations are as follows:

1. *This is just to Say* (TIJTS)
2. *When* (W)
3. *maggie and milly and molly and may* (mmmm)
4. *A Day's Wait* (ADW)
5. *Hearts and Hands* (HAH)
6. *China's Little Ambassador* (CLA)
7. *The Great Gatsby* (TGG)
8. *After the Funeral* (ATF)
9. *Death of A Salesman* (DOAS)

### 5.3.2.1 Texts that interest students

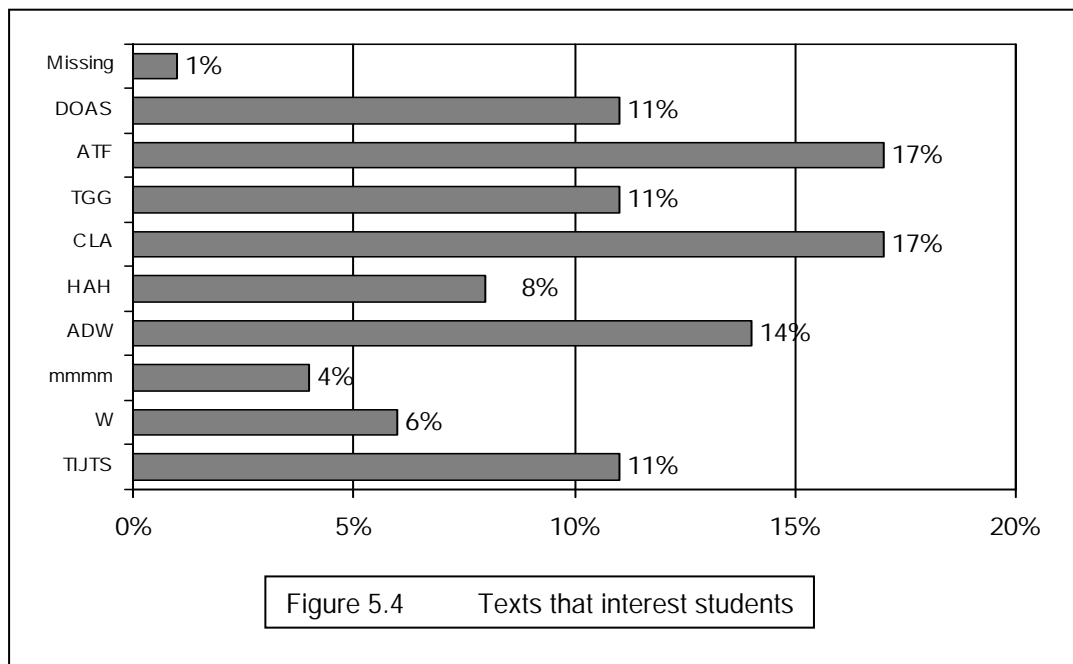
The interviews revealed that the poems, *This is Just to Say*, *When* and *maggie and milly and molly and may* were rated as the favourites among the students. Most of the interviewees said that they enjoyed working on the poems as they were simple, easy to understand and short. They also enjoyed the activities on the poems more than the other texts used in the worksheets. One of the participants explained:

*Because the language used in these poems was simple and quite easy to understand. Yes, it was quite easy for me to understand the poems and the messages or the themes were easy to understand as well.*

Another participant also recorded in her journal that she found the activities on the poems more interesting in comparison to the other genres:

*At first, I felt bored but after a while I felt interested and enjoyed myself, especially when we had to discuss in our groups and listen to other groups reading their poems. That was fun. I enjoyed it. I didn't feel sleepy at all. The questions for the poems were not so difficult and I could create my own poem in English. I thought it was going to be difficult, but it wasn't bad at all. (Student 1: Journal Entry 1: This is Just to say)*

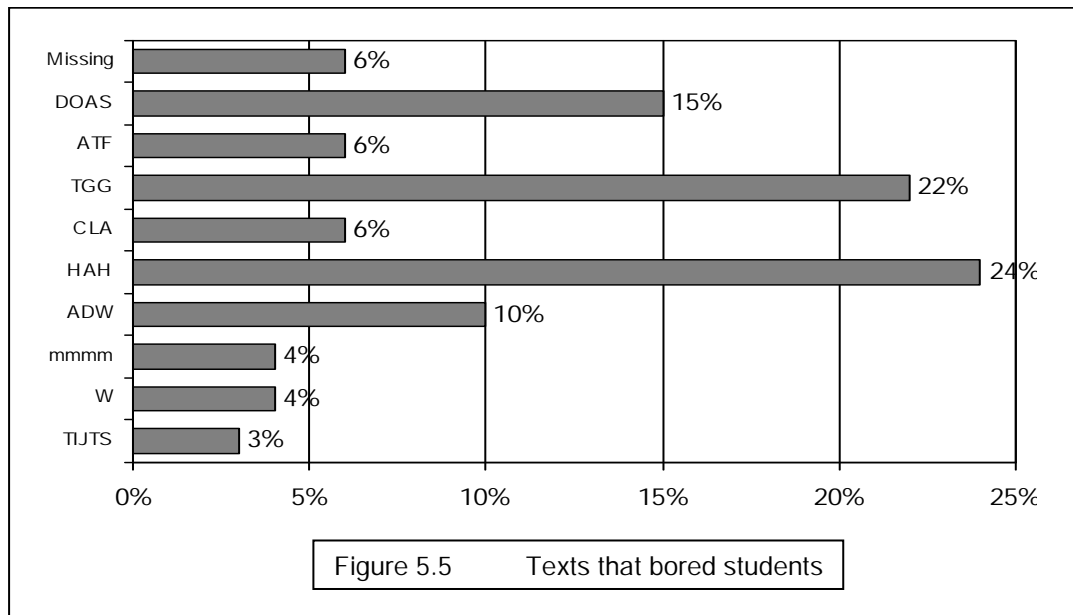
Although the respondents stated that they enjoyed the poems, the data from the questionnaires showed a contradiction (Figure 5.4). 17% of the respondents felt that the short story, *China's Little Ambassador* was the most interesting text. Agatha Christie's novel, *After the Funeral*, also scored a similar percentage, followed closely by Ernest Hemingway's *A Day's Wait* at 14%. The poem, *This is Just to Say*, and the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, and Arthur Miller's play, *Death of A Salesman*, achieved similar 11%. However, only 8% of the respondents thought that O. Henry's, *Hearts and Hands*, was appealing and a mere 6% considered the poem, *When*, interesting. In addition, the poem, *maggie and milly and molly and may*, was perceived as attractive by only 4% of the participants. 1% of the respondents did not answer the question.



### 5.3.2.2 Texts that bored students

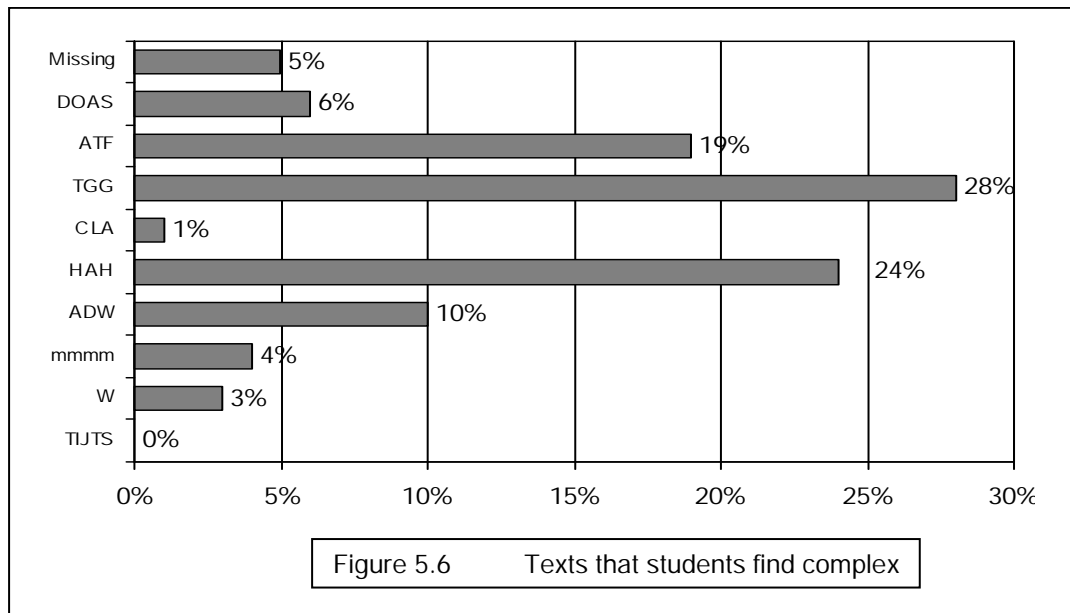
24% of the respondents stated that *Hearts and Hands* was the most boring text and another 22% considered *The Great Gatsby* dull. 15% of the sample thought that *Death of A Salesman* was a bleak and dry play. Though it was stated above that some of the students indicated that *A Day's Wait* was an interesting read, 10% of them felt that the story was dreary. On the other hand, only a relatively small percentage of the students (6%) thought that *After the Funeral* and *China's Little Ambassador* were unexciting. The poems, *maggie and milly and molly and may* and *When* also received a significantly small vote (4%) as boring texts. Only 3% of the respondents claimed that *This is Just to Say* as an insipid poem. Meanwhile, 6% of the respondents did not record their choice for the most uninteresting texts and their lack of response was recorded as 'missing' (Figure 5.5). Most of the students attributed the linguistic complexities and perplexing plots of some of these texts as grounds for their lack of understanding. Consequently, the students found the texts to be an unexciting read and thus, became discouraged from reading.





### 5.3.2.3 Texts that students find complex

Some respondents claimed that a few of the texts were complicated (Figure 5.6). 28% of the respondents agreed that *The Great Gatsby* was the most complex text. Another 24% of the sample thought that *Hearts and Hands* was difficult. 10% of the participants reported that *A Day's Wait* was quite challenging to comprehend. These two short stories and the extract from the novel were perceived as demanding because they contained complex and unfamiliar vocabulary. On the contrary, only 6% of the participants considered *Death of A Salesman* complex. Predictably, the poems received small votes for complicated texts (*This is Just to Say*=0%, *When* =3%, and *maggie and milly and molly and may* =4%). Only 1 student thought that *China's Little Ambassador* was tough. Furthermore, 19% of the respondents maintained that *After the Funeral* was challenging regardless of the views of many that it was one of the most interesting texts. Like *The Great Gatsby*, the students reiterated similar reasons to back up their claim that *After the Funeral* was complicated: language problems and puzzling storylines. These convolutions had significant effects on their interest both in reading the texts and the lesson itself.



Although *Death of A Salesman* was considered uncomplicated, some students encountered problems in understanding its extract. The probable reason for their comprehension failure was because they were more familiar with the narrative style found in the other literary genres such as short stories and novels. Moreover, since only extracts were given to them, they found comprehension difficult and they needed to be provided with a complete text or its summary. They could not see the development of the plot or the significance of the characters which led to that particular extract being selected. Thus, there was a sense of dissatisfaction among some respondents for not knowing the whole story in either the novels or the play. One respondent had this to say:

*Because we only received incomplete extracts, we only know parts of the story. So, it was difficult to know the whole story, how and when it happened, we needed our teacher to explain it to us. When she had explained it to us and gave the synopsis, it helped us to understand the story better.*

Hence, it could be inferred that the extracts were not suitable to be used with these language learners as they were to some extent, unable to understand their stories when only extracts were used. Though their teachers did provide plot summaries of the novels and the play to the students, some of them remained confused. The findings also implied that when extracts are supplied to language students whose level of proficiency is similar to the

respondents', they need to be provided with the synopsis of the text, a brief explanation about its major characters and the incidents that led to the extract being used. Teachers can also provide additional information either about the story or its author as an added information about the writer can promote learners' understanding of the extracts.

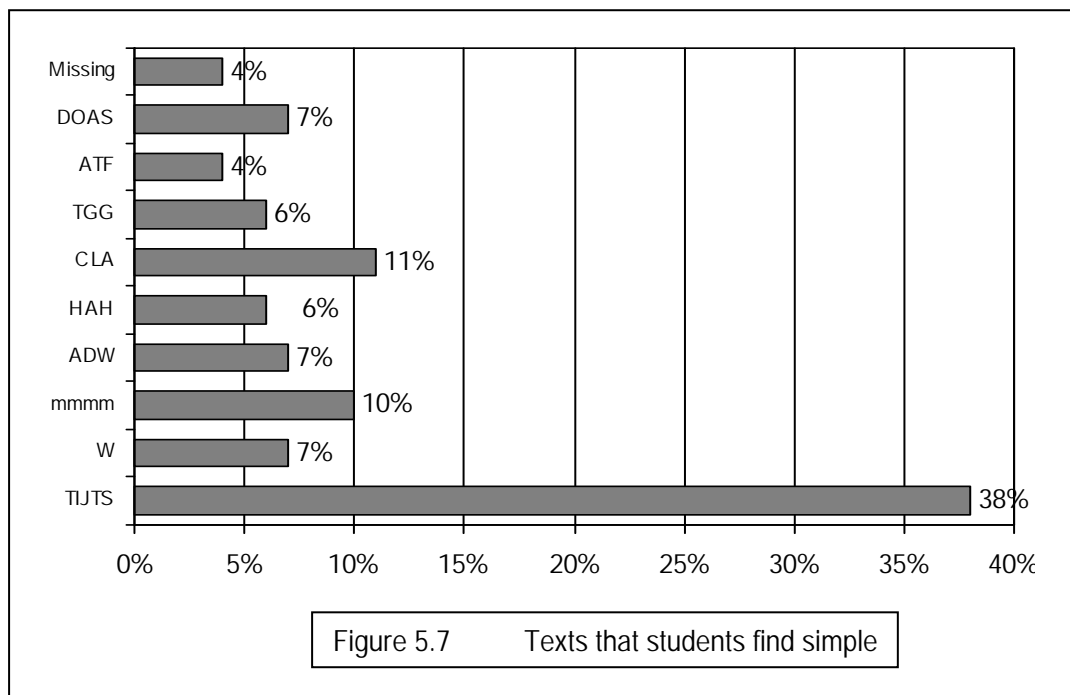
Nonetheless, there were students who felt that the extracts had motivated them to read more, had raised their curiosity and attracted them to read the whole text. As pointed out by one of the students, "*the extracts help to increase my interest to read the novels...I wanted to know more, 'what happen after this' and 'what happen to this character after this' so, I wanted to know about these things.*" Here, the extracts could be used as the pulling factor to encourage further interest in reading literature. These students who having been intrigued enough to know the complete story from reading the extracts, had made the effort to read the complete novels. Two students from Group A read *The Great Gatsby* and another two from Group C bought the novel, *After the Funeral*, because they were intrigued to discover its conclusion.

#### 5.3.2.4 Texts that students find simple

There was a general consensus among the respondents that the poems were the easiest texts to understand in comparison to others. *This is Just to Say* topped the ratings with 38% of the respondents labelling it as the simplest poem. *China's Little Ambassador* came second with 11% of the participants assessing it as non-challenging. 10% of students also endorsed *maggie and milly and molly and may* as the easiest texts used. Most participants maintained that these texts, especially the two poems, were relatively undemanding because of their simple language. On the other hand, texts such as *Hearts and Hands* (6%), *The Great Gatsby* (6%), *After the Funeral* (4%) and *A Day's Wait* (7%) were designated as the least easy texts in the worksheets. It was also interesting to discover that despite their claim that the poems were the easiest among all the texts, only 7% thought that *When* was uncomplicated.

Similarly, though the students considered *Death of A Salesman* was not one of the complex texts, only a mere 7% perceived it as simple. 4% did not provide any response to the question (missing). Below is one of the many interview remarks which typified the questionnaire responses:

*I think the easiest text is the poem This is Just to Say because it's easy to understand. It's short, its paragraph is short, its stanzas are short.*



### 5.3.3 Difficulties in using the worksheets

Apart from the types of activities and texts used in the worksheets, another key factor that affected the students' experience was the difficulties faced when reading the chosen texts. 33% of the respondents had regular difficulties in understanding these texts, yet another 24% indicated otherwise. The students' lack of comprehension was mainly instigated by their restricted vocabulary. The following statement best summed up the problems that the participants encountered when reading the texts:

*I have problems understanding some words, because I am not good at English, so that's why sometimes I don't understand the words, some difficult words.*

The remark implied that when reading literature, these students were inclined to pay close or even excessive attention to the linguistic forms. Such preoccupation with the language might be valuable to them. However, it could also be problematic and discouraging when such close concern with the language were more likely to put the students off, particularly when it caused failure in reading and responding to literature. Furthermore, the linguistic complexity could also affect accessibility to the text and the students' enjoyment. When they considered themselves as unsuccessful readers due to linguistic reasons, they might avoid reading literature which could subsequently, diminish their interest (if any) in it.

The findings also suggested that while in principle the students assumed that reading literature helped in their vocabulary acquisition, when difficult words were not successfully learned in their reading activity, instead of expanding their vocabulary, they merely induced comprehension failure. Accordingly, the students were persuaded to abandon literature in favour of less frustrating and discouraging reading experience. In addition, the results demonstrated that the respondents faced identical problems before and after the study. The language barriers that brought about unsuccessful literary reading and the students' inadequate vocabulary in the target language had always been their major concern when approaching literature.

#### 5.3.4 Physical factors

*I enjoyed some of the lessons, but sometimes I felt tired because my class was at 5 o'clock, and before my class I had to do some experiments at the science laboratory, so I felt tired and my motivation to enjoy the class, my interest in the lesson decreased.*

The remark above illustrated another significant factor that affected the respondents' experience of using the worksheets: physical tiredness after long hours in class. Observations showed that most of them looked exhausted while working on the worksheets because they had been attending classes since morning. Some of the students, for instance, in Group A appeared weary when they were working on *The Great Gatsby* as did several students in

Group C who also exhibited signs of exhaustion because their class was late in the evening and they had been attending lectures since morning. Therefore, it could be argued that since some of the respondents were physically and mentally drained, their physical and mental state affected their motivation and interest in the lessons.

#### **5.4 Effects of the worksheets**

In the following sections, the effects of the worksheets on the students' perceptions of literature will be discussed and an attempt is made to provide answers for the remaining two research questions:

- ✓ RQs 4: What are the effects of the literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis on the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context?
- ✓ RQs 5: What are the impacts of a pedagogical stylistic approach on the development of literature-based materials in language classrooms from the teachers' and students' points of view?

Evidently, attention will be focussed on the student respondents and the discussion of findings is divided into four main areas in an endeavour to provide answers for both research questions: (i) attitudes towards literature, (ii) attitudes towards literature in language learning, (iii) suggestions on the integration of literature, and (iv) perceptions of literature at the Center.

##### **5.4.1 Attitudes towards literature**

Mixed responses emerged from the participants' post-study opinions on literature. The results revealed that their pre- and post-study attitudes remained consistent; where some respondents exhibited highly encouraging perceptions, others maintained their negative attitudes. There were several motives for the students' favourable views on literature. As indicated in the pre-study discussion (Section 4.4), the students' personal enthusiasm for literature was mainly responsible for their positive attitudes. In contrast, they cited their post-research experience of reading some of the texts and conducting the tasks in the worksheets as the central motivators for their favourable outlooks on literature.

The students' experience of the worksheets not only promoted positive views on literature, but also witnessed a transformation of attitudes towards it among some of the participants. One of them confessed that prior to the study she abhorred literature and suggested that if she were to learn about it again, it would be a time-wasting activity. Surprisingly, after the study, she expressed a significant amount of interest in literature and was keen to know more about it:

*It is kind of hard to explain. I told you before the study that I don't like literature at all, right? So, when you did this activity, I mean the worksheets, I feel that I am more interested in literature. I think I am more interested now. Yes, I am interested.*

Another respondent also revised her attitude towards literature. She attributed this change to the texts, the activities and mostly importantly, her teacher's conduct of teaching. She gave a lengthy clarification:

*At the beginning, I felt that I was not interested in literature. But, when I worked on the different worksheets and read interesting stories, that was interesting. I really enjoyed learning about literature, especially because of my teacher. She was really nice and she helped us a lot in answering the questions, explaining the stories to us. And we can always ask her when we don't understand anything, so it was really interesting. I really enjoyed learning about it.*

This finding confirmed the pre-study results that teachers assumed a significant influence on students' perceptions of literature. Motivated teachers could encourage interest in literature among reluctant learners with appropriate and effective teaching strategies.

Another reason for these students' encouraging attitude was due to their exposure to different and new stories that they had never come across before and thus, this encounter ignited an interest in literature. Some students also sensed that their experience of reading the narratives had promoted a stronger drive to read more literary texts whereas, before the study, they claimed that they neither possessed the interest nor incentive to approach literary works. They added that their literary encounter had given them the motivation and confidence to read

one of the most misunderstood genres, poetry. One student in particular explained about her new found interest in literature:

*Before I use the worksheets and learn about literature, I'm not interested to read poems, short stories, novels and drama in English. But after this semester, I'm interested to read more about English literature, especially poems. At the beginning of this semester, when we started to learn about literature, I couldn't write poems but when you gave us the texts...I could write the poem. Before this I couldn't act but when we had the activities, I could act. Before this I am not interested to read novels. Like I said just now, I am not interested to read novel, short stories, poems because I think it's difficult to understand them and when I read them I get a headache. But, after this semester, I am very interested to read them.*

In addition, some participants recorded that their newly found interest in literature sprouted due to their reading experience of some of the narratives used in the study as they could personally relate to and become involved with the events described in the texts. They also stated that these texts richly portrayed everyday occurrences such as human conflicts and relationship that they could easily empathise with. Because of this, they were implicitly persuaded to be emotionally engaged in their reading and this prompted further motivation to read literature. One student expressed her feelings:

*I enjoy reading the story because of the language and the way the author writes about it. I could feel sad or angry and from that, I know how to handle a similar situation depicted in the story if it happens to me. I could really feel the situation in the story.*

The remark also implied that reading literature offered the students an 'aesthetic' experience where they derived pleasure from the texts because they regarded their literary encounter as an intensely personal, pleasurable and engaging experience. On the other hand, textbook style of reading is more of an 'efferent' nature or basically information processing which deprives the students of these pleasurable and absorbing feelings (Rosenblatt 1978).

The students added that their experience of the worksheets provoked a deeper interest in literature in comparison to their previous encounters with literature in school. However, this should not be taken as a contradiction to the discussion in Section 4.4, where some students reported that their experience of engaging in literature-based activities in school as the factor



that sparked their enthusiasm. The post-study results centred on the effects of the worksheets that engendered a change of attitude among the students, from disliking to liking literature, while the pre-study discussion was concerned with their perceptions of literature based on their experiences in school. Furthermore, the context, purpose and aims of using literature were undoubtedly entirely different.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, literature was either approved or rejected by the respondents. Those who approved of literature cited various reasons, mentioned above, in order to account for their interest, while the students who repudiated literature were inclined to exhibit consistent discouraging attitudes throughout the study. One participant related her feelings in her journal and blamed her experience of reading complicated literary texts, particularly poetry, during her school days as the primary factor for her strong resentment of literature. In other words, her experience of the study neither affected nor changed her negative attitudes. They had merely hardened following her discouraging encounter in school. She wrote:

*I want to say something ...actually I am not a student who really loves literature, poems. It is something that I really hate. It is hard for me to understand. Playing with words all the times, I am not interested with that all...When I was in my previous school, I learned literature because it was compulsory and it was a part of our English syllabus. I learned it for five years before...It's too bad! (Student 5: Journal Entry 1: Introduction)*

Nevertheless, this should not be taken as a rebuttal of the point discussed earlier that some students became more receptive towards literature after their exposure to it in secondary school. It basically means that some students may not share the same positive sentiments about literature as their peers. This is because each respondent is different, everyone has different ways of seeing things and undoubtedly, each student is entitled to have his or her own perceptions of literature.

Another important reason why some of the students had sustained a consistently negative attitude towards literature was because of their apparent obsession with assessment.

Among the most crucial items in the priority list for these grade-conscious respondents was the desire to excel in examinations. In order for this to happen, they had to place serious emphasis on studying, revising and completing their academic course work with meticulous care and attention. This left little thought for literature, specifically the use of the literary texts in the worksheets. Furthermore, the fact that the worksheets were not assessed also acted as a catalyst for their discouraging perspectives. One student confessed that she was not keen on literature because of the examination pressure and workload of her current programme:

*I feel lazy to learn about literature because I have a lot of work to do for my core course, the assignments, the quiz and the examination. And I have to struggle to understand literature. So, that's why I don't like it.*

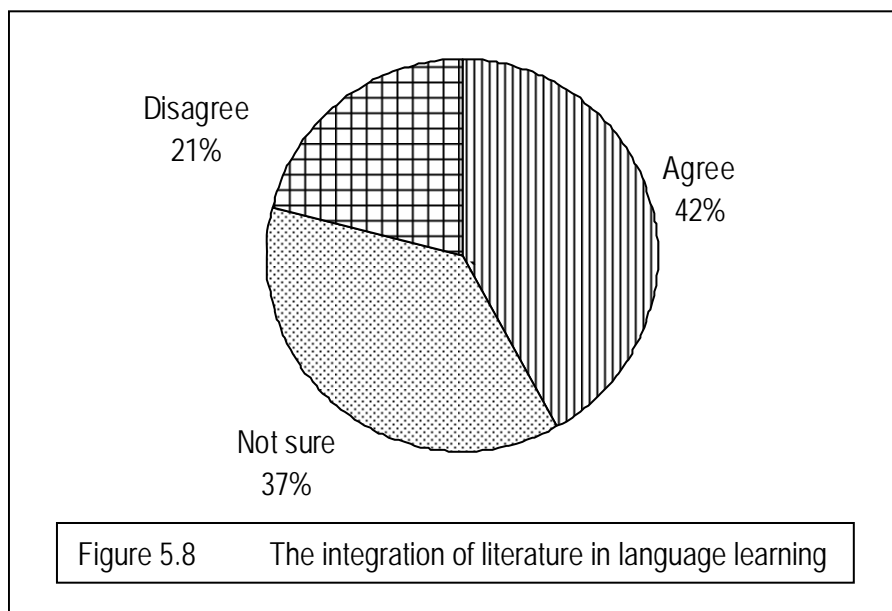
In addition, some of these students stated their lack of interest in reading, particularly literary texts as another attribute that had influenced their interest in literature. Difficult vocabulary and words that carried several meanings were held responsible for their poor motivation. When the students experienced problems in reading literature due to their restricted English vocabulary, they were more inclined to adopt discouraging perspectives. This finding also supported the pre-study results (Section 4.3.4) that students who enjoyed reading were more likely to show an interest in literature, while those who disapprove of reading were more inclined to display negative attitudes. One respondent professed that she was not enthusiastic about literature because she disliked reading:

*Because I don't like to read, because when I read I always discover new vocabulary and I would have to find the meanings and then I have to translate them into Malay language and sometimes I have to ask my teacher to help me to understand the story. So, I don't like it.*

#### **5.4.2 Attitudes towards literature in language learning**

The findings revealed a contradiction regarding the students' perspectives of the application of literature in language learning. This meant that some of them displayed favourable views towards its integration, while others disapproved. 42% of the respondents

agreed that literature was potentially beneficial in language learning as against the 21% of the sample who disagreed. However, they provided fewer justifications for the integration of literature in comparison to their pre-study points of view. In an endeavour to avoid unwarranted repetition of the same points, the students' argument against the application of literary texts in language acquisition is further explored in Section 5.4.4.1 and 5.4.4.2. Nevertheless, a noticeably high percentage of the respondents (37%) were not sure whether literature should be used indicating their uncertainties about the roles of literature in language learning (Figure 5.8). Therefore, it could be assumed that these students were not fully convinced with the study and their experience of using the worksheets did not seem to have affected their views on the integration of literature. Another probable reason why the students were unsure was because they could not identify how the use of the worksheets was going to benefit them as they could not recognise the relevance of the study in helping them improve their English. This finding affirms Hall's (2005:114) argument that "many language students are relatively unconvinced of the points or the values of literature in second language learning."



Despite the mixed results from the questionnaires, the findings revealed that nearly all the interviewees expressed the belief that literature was potentially relevant and most of them

articulated almost identical reasons to back up their thoughts. They assumed that the use of literary texts as a resource to acquire the target language augmented their learning, particularly in terms of expanding their language skills. The study revealed that one of the students' most predictable arguments to support the integration of literature was language development. This reason had also been discussed in the pre-study findings and their experience of using the worksheets further strengthened this view. Furthermore, the post-study results revealed that there were three main factors why 42% of the respondents supported the incorporation of literature: (i) language development, (ii) classroom activities, and (iii) personal growth. These variables were almost identical to the ones mentioned in Section 4.5. This implied that the participants' pre- and post-study perspectives largely remained the same.

#### **5.4.2.1 Language development**

The development of their language skills was one of the paramount factors why most respondents agreed with the use of literary texts in learning English. Based on their experience, 81% of the respondents indicated that the texts used and their associated activities helped to improve their language skills such as writing and speaking, while only one student disagreed. Many of the participants maintained that literature helped to improve their writing abilities. The assumption that good writer reads more was also prevalent among them when the vast majority of them (81%) mentioned the benefits of reading literature in developing their writing skills. The literature-based reading activities was said to help improved these skills because the students could understand and apply many of the words that they had acquired through reading the texts in their writing assignments. A larger vocabulary, they agreed, would add variety to their choice of words, and improved sentence constructions would result in better and more interesting coursework writing. The respondents also stated that the exposure to these texts offered them plenty of ideas that encouraged creativity and imagination. One participant explained:

*For example, we learned about 'antonym', 'synonym', 'alliterations' and then 'adverb' from the texts. So, when we learned all these, they helped to make our essays more interesting and creative.*

Some of the students added that the tasks provided them with sufficient speaking practice. 74% of the participants indicated that the activities presented numerous communication opportunities that enabled them to enhance their communicative skills. In contrast, only 6% of the respondents claimed that the tasks did not offer adequate speaking opportunities. In almost all of the activities, the students were required to discuss the texts and their accompanying exercises using the target language. The discussions encouraged interaction not only among the students themselves, but also between the students and the teachers. Furthermore, by reading the texts, the students were exposed to a range of methods on how language could be used for different communicative functions such as relaying feelings or communicating information. Akyel and Yalcin (1990) maintain that language students can profit from the integration of literature as it helps them to learn to identify and understand the operation of language for different communication functions. One female respondent explained why she felt literature-based discussion helped to improve her speaking abilities:

*The activity helps me especially in speaking when my teacher wants to know about our answer for the questions, in group. So, we have to discuss and select one person. We have to select one representative and sometimes I am the representative and I can speak, present our ideas to the class. Even though it's broken English [ungrammatical English], it still can improve my speaking skills.*

The respondents stated that some of the activities were beneficial because they focused the students' attention to the language of the texts. By undertaking a close examination of the language, they felt that the literature-based tasks and the exposure to the texts helped to improve and develop their knowledge of grammar that promoted a greater understanding of English language. This was because the texts and their exercises exemplified the different grammatical elements of the target language such as verbs and nouns, in ways that were helpful to their language development. The tasks also attempted to illustrate and

prompt knowledge and reflections on grammatical forms and functions. Hence, to some extent, the students had to rely on their existing knowledge of grammar in order to complete these exercises. This remark from one participant illustrated their view:

*In some of the activities, we have learned about 'antonym', 'synonym' and 'adverb' and then 'adjectives', 'nouns', 'verbs'. They helped me when I read, I know their functions. I know when to use them. Before this, I was confused, what is an adverb, what is an adjective, but when I learned about them in the worksheets, I know more about 'adverbs' and 'adjectives', their differences and their roles.*

Vocabulary growth was another important motive that engendered strong support among the participants for the integration of literature. They claimed that their encounter with the texts helped with their vocabulary acquisition because the texts introduced them to a variety of new words. As pointed out by one respondent, "*when I read the text, when I read it, it gave me a new sentence, it introduced me to a new word that I did not know previously and then I could use the words in my writing, reading.*" In addition, these activities not only expanded their vocabulary, but also deepened their understanding of the different contexts in which a particular word might be used. This newly acquired vocabulary not only helped to promote their understanding of the texts, but also non-literary materials when they came across similar words during the reading activity.

In addition, some participants stated that the application of the literature could encourage interest in reading. They claimed that their literary encounter with the texts had not only motivated them to become more interested in reading in general, but also developed their desire to read more literary works. 63% of students indicated that they wanted to continue reading literature on their own after the study, while 37% did not share such an enthusiasm. Like the pre-study findings, the students claimed that literature attracted them to read because it offered a break from reading their information-condensed textbooks. As stated by one participant, "*because the story is interesting, most of the stories are interesting. But when we use the ordinary texts, I mean the textbooks, they have too many facts. It's kind of boring to*

*read.*" Such an interest could encourage extended reading where the students read literary texts as a supplementary basis for the enrichment of language study.

These findings implied that literature can be used as a good motivation tool to entice the students to read as it frequently contains the elements of suspense, intrigue and fascination that managed to capture their interest. Hence, it could be inferred that through continuous exposure to literary texts, students would be more likely to develop an interest in reading, whether literary or non-literary materials. The findings also suggested that literature was potentially effective for use with reluctant readers who found academic textbooks too boring to sustain their interest in both the texts themselves and the language being learned.

#### **5.4.2.2 Classroom exercises**

*When we are tired of learning, sometimes we need to relax with this kind of thing such as literature and it helps to make the class activity more interesting and entertaining.*

The above remark illustrated another prime reason why some of the respondents corroborated the integration of literature: the effects of literature-based materials on classroom tasks. Literature was assumed to help create interesting and fun language exercises and a stress-free classroom atmosphere which brought about a feeling of relaxation that engendered positive involvement in the lessons. A similar point was also raised by the respondents in Section 4.5.4. This implied that the students' experience of using the worksheets had limited or no significant impact on their views on the cause and effect relationship between literature and class activities.

#### **5.4.2.3 Personal growth**

Personal development in terms of gaining self-confidence was another significant motive why some students assumed that the use of literary materials was profitable. Citing their experience of the worksheets as the basis for their argument, they claimed that literature-based communicative activities such as role-play and dramatisation helped to increase their self-confidence. They explained that prior to the study, they were usually apprehensive and felt

insecure when asked to communicate their views to their peers. However, they claimed that the exposure to the worksheets cultivated and provoked a feeling of confidence to express their opinions or perform in a sketch for their classmates. Observation data revealed that this attitude was apparent among the students in Group C when they were presenting a sketch based on *Death of A Salesman* and in Group B when the respondents were acting out a scene from *The Great Gatsby*. Although some students in Group B seemed ill-prepared, they displayed assurance and managed to entertain their peers and teacher with their impromptu presentations. The female students in Group C also looked confident and gave a commendable presentation. The girls were able to use appropriate voice intonation and create suitable a setting to make their drama realistic and entertaining. The remarks from one student in Group C accentuated the point that literature had helped to develop her self-confidence:

*For me, literature is something interesting to learn and I like acting very very much suddenly because, I don't know, I like it after I learned about literature in my Reading class. Before this, I was very afraid to act in front of the audience, but, now I am not afraid anymore. I like it.*

This remark implied that the students were able to perceive the potential influence of literature on their personal development. Positive reinforcement from their teachers or peers augmented their confidence and strengthened their appreciation of the reported values of literature and its associated activities. The result was a demonstration of positive attitudes towards literature.

#### 5.4.3 Suggestions on the integration of literature

Based on their experience of the study, the participants proposed several insightful suggestions on how to make the use of literary materials in language lessons more effective and appealing to students with a similar level of proficiency and educational background. There were three main areas of importance put forward by the students: (i) activities, (ii) genre selection, and (iii) implementation concerns. The last two areas for consideration reiterated



those previously mentioned in Section 4.6.2 and 4.6.3. Nonetheless, their post-study suggestions were more specific.

#### 5.4.3.1 Activities

From their experience, some of the participants claimed that some of the texts used were inappropriately long and that they could not be read within the allotted time. Some of the reading activities such as the While- and Post-Reading were also said to contain too many questions either on comprehension or the language patterns expounded by the texts. The participants stressed that most language learners were less likely to feel enthusiastic about the prospect of reading lengthy extracts or texts which were accompanied by a long list of questions. Hence, it was recommended that if similar literature-based materials were to be more effective in language classes, shorter texts should be employed with fewer questions on the selected texts. In other words, the text lengths should be short enough to be completed in one reading and teachers needed to ensure that the number of questions on both comprehension and the language patterns are appropriate and achievable within the class hour. One respondent gave her view:

*I think there were too many questions in one activity, like the While-Reading activity and sometimes we did not have enough time to complete all of them during our Reading class.*

In addition, many of the respondents proposed the use of role-play activity because it was assumed to encourage students' active participation in English lessons. As indicated before, the respondents felt that this type of activity created fun-filled and motivating classroom exercises that resulted in positive learning experience. The role-play usually involved students assuming a character from a particular text and they could use ready-made scripts or develop their own. Either way, students would experience plenty of language practice that could supplement their language acquisition. The participants also recommended Pre-reading activity such as watching a movie about the texts that students were going to read as a method to

guide and prepare them for the drama exercises or to stimulate their own interpretation of the narrative. Screening films could also be engaged as a means of helping learners to understand the selected texts, especially if they were linguistically complicated. Spack (1985) argues that it is a good idea to use stories which have been made into films because the films can provide students with a visual interpretation of the stories and present the costumes, scenery, and sounds of the works in an interesting manner.

Furthermore, most participants also suggested the use of visual aids such as relevant pictures or diagrams in order to help students to achieve comprehension of the texts. They postulated that these materials were beneficial because they could stimulate students' intuitions about a text, suggest its possible denotative or connotative meanings that could inform and narrow down students' scope of interpretations. The respondents also believed that pictures could have easily made the approach to literature more appealing and less daunting for less advanced language students.

#### **5.4.3.2 Genre selection**

As regard the types of literary genres that could best be used to maximise the potential effectiveness of the intermarriage between literature and language study, most respondents displayed a strong preference for the short story genre. They agreed that the short story has more appeal than any other genre. As the name suggests, it involves the telling of a story which learners are accustomed to in their daily occurrence. Since short narratives appeal to language learners, they can encourage further interest in language acquisition. The respondents also declared that short narratives which are centred on diverse topics such as horror, adventure and comedy are more appealing to teenage readers like them. Language students, they claimed, are drawn to such stories because they provide a means of escapism and an absorbing experience. Beach (1985:3117) asserts that adolescent readers prefer "adventure ...detective or mystery series, romance and obvious humour, reading that provides

escape and entertainment." One of the participants in this current study expressed a similar opinion:

*I think it is better to use short stories because they are interesting to read and maybe we could add other stories which have themes like horror, comedy and mystery. Use a lot more of these. I like these kinds of stories and they help me in learning English, writing, speaking.*

The respondents also advocated the use of texts with simple language as these were assumed to be appropriate for students whose language ability matched theirs. Based on their experience, some participants claimed that their inability to understand and respond to some of the texts in the worksheets stemmed mainly from the texts' linguistic complexities and unfamiliar vocabulary. Hence, they expressed confidence that texts with simple language not only would reduce the difficulties encountered in literary reading, but also prompt and accelerate students' understanding. They also strongly stressed that it was paramount for the texts to contain exciting plots or storylines and to depict themes that learners could relate to. This was because learners' familiarity with the topics could significantly help to overcome their linguistic weakness and drive them to persevere with reading despite the language difficulties. One interviewee said:

*If we want to include literature in language classes, I think we should use simple literature. I mean using easy and simple texts, texts that use simple language and I think most importantly, the texts must have interesting plots because I think it would encourage students to become more interested in literature and they won't feel bored when they are reading it.*

This implied that students with limited ability in the target language prefer to read simple, straight forward and easy to understand texts. However, it is argued that if students are continually exposed to simple texts with easy language, it will do little to expand their vocabulary and increase their knowledge and awareness of the language being learned.

#### 5.4.3.3 Implementation concerns

Another key point proposed by most of the participants that played an important role in the assimilation of literature was the implementation factor. This point was also mentioned in the discussion of the pre-study result (Section 4.6.3). Many participants stated that if literature were to be integrated, they sensed that it would be more successful if it were employed in speaking courses. The respondents' assumptions that literature was more fitting for stimulating communicative activities (e.g. role-play) because literary texts could promote the development of students' speaking skills were responsible for this view. As such, the participants expressed a strong belief that literature-based communicative activities provided plenty of opportunities for students to speak and practise using the target language and, subsequently, improve their speaking abilities. The respondents' view that literature should be mainly employed in teaching speaking skills had been consistent from the beginning of the study. Hence, their experience of the worksheets had little effect on this. However, this finding contradicts the previous studies done by Martin and Laurie (1993) who discovered that their students did not perceive literature to be particularly useful in helping them to achieve communicative proficiency.

By referring to their experience of the study, some respondents stated that if literature were to be effectively integrated, it must not be implemented too frequently. In other words, they postulated that it was more fitting for literary materials to be utilised in lessons one or twice a month in order not to compromise students' motivation in acquiring the target language. The respondents held the belief that it was challenging enough to study for a specific language skill such as writing courses or reading subjects without having additional literary texts to read. The participants further declared that the frequent use of literary texts might impose an unwarranted load on students and overshadow its usefulness in language acquisition. Their perception that literature was complicated was mainly responsible for such an opinion. Thus, the findings suggested that too much use of literature was likely to be counter-productive to learners'

general proficiency training and literature-based language teaching was more likely to be well-received by students provided that it was used in moderation.

Finally, the respondents communicated that the incorporation of literature with language study, if properly implemented, could provide the means for students to wind down from the hectic schedule of academic life. Otherwise, they could instigate boredom among learners and engender detrimental attitudes not only towards literature, but more importantly, towards language learning. As pointed out by one respondent:

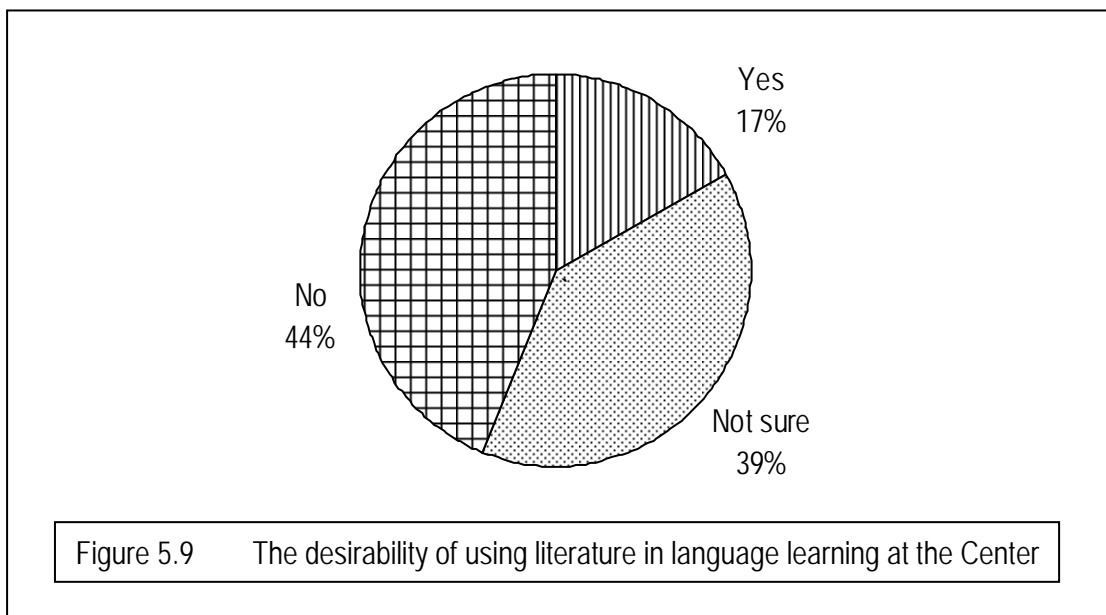
*I think literature is okay, but we should not learn it everyday during our English lessons. If we do it everyday, the students will feel bored and it becomes a burden. But if we do it like once a week, it would help to release our tension. But if we learn about it everyday, we become tense.*

#### 5.4.4 Attitudes towards literature at the Center

This section acted as a needs analysis if literature were to be implemented in the language curriculum at the Center. It was not intended, however, to give the impression that the study was trying to advocate the formal introduction of literature into the students' obligatory language courses. In other words, this section attempted to provide an accurate reflection of the students' needs and views on the integration of literature based on their experience of the study.

As discussed earlier, though there were conflicting views among the students with regard the use of literary materials in language learning, a fairly large number of students (42%) seemed to display favourable attitudes towards its integration. However, there was an interesting shift of perspective when they were asked to respond to an item in the questionnaire, which asked whether they felt that literature could be integrated in their own language syllabus (Figure 5.9). 44% of the respondents indicated that they did not want to, while only 17% wished to use literature-based language learning there. Hence, the participants' post-study experience did not alter their pre-study attitudes of not wanting to use literature at the Center. The questionnaires also revealed that there was a high percentage of the

participants (39%) who indicated their uncertainties on whether literature should be used at the Center or not. It could be assumed that these students might or might not be interested to read literature while learning the target language. Although they were exposed to the worksheets for over a period of time, the results showed that they were relatively unconvinced of the potential values of literature in their skills-based classes after the study. These uncertainties might point to a less enthusiastic view on their part on the inclusion of literature at the Center.



The findings revealed that there were two significant variables that influenced the respondents' beliefs and decision to reject the possible addition of literature to their language syllabus: (i) perceptions of literature, and (ii) literature examination. These attributes also contributed to their contention that literature was irrelevant in language acquisition (Section 5.4.2). Both factors were also mentioned in the pre-study findings (Section 4.7.1 and 4.7.2). This showed that the students had been consistent with their views and the encounter with the worksheets had no significant impacts on them.

#### 5.4.4.1 Perceptions of literature

Some of the respondents perceived literature as a distraction from studying for the Reading subject. Although some students reported their experience of using the worksheets

was reasonably enlightening, they maintained that they preferred to learn about Reading. To them, learning Reading should be focused on the textbook and completing the exercises in it. Hence, some of them did not really welcome the idea of using literary texts as their reading materials and seemed to prefer doing the main language course minus the literature addition. The observation data also complemented the interview results to a certain extent. Some students in Group A seemed not to have appreciated the concept of using the worksheets in their class. Observations revealed that these students were inclined to remain in the same group discussion and were less responsive to most of the class activities. For instance, when their teacher, Nadia, asked for volunteers to respond to the tasks in the worksheets, they rarely offered their opinions and frequently had to be instructed. One of these students offered an explanation:

*Actually, I know literature is good, but because it was not included in the syllabus and not tested in the examination. That was why some of us were not really paying attention in class. We were not serious about it. It was not really important.*

This finding confirmed some of the preliminary assumptions mentioned in Section 3.3, that some respondents who were not interested in literature might resent the study and this would probably lead them to participate less in the activities. This might have also contributed to their general feeling that literature should not be used in their language curriculum. Nonetheless, it was worth mentioning that most of the respondents in Group B and C, seemed to exhibit encouraging attitudes and were keen to participate in the performance of the tasks in the worksheets.

Furthermore, some of the respondents assumed that literature was irrelevant to learning Reading. They believed that when other materials such as the worksheets were used, they were not a part of learning Reading, but learning literature as an independent subject. In other words, these students perceived literature and their specific skills-based class, Reading, as two separate subjects. This would be irrefutable if literature was taught as content in a

literature classroom for students usually pursuing a degree in Literature or English. However, in this context, the use of the worksheets attempted to investigate the respondents' attitudes towards the application of literary texts as a tool for learning the target language, instead of being studied as an independent subject. Thus, the findings implied that some of them did not recognise the use of literature as a resource in language study. Rather, they regarded it as a subject to be learned, a separate entity and distinct from their skills-based classes. Although they had been exposed to the worksheets and had used literature in school, many respondents maintained this view and consequently, saw literature as irrelevant to their Reading syllabus. The following remark helped to accentuate this point point:

*Even though we can use literature to help us write essay, we need to concentrate on Reading, more on learning Reading and not so much on literature because Reading is important. If we have Reading and literature together in one class, it will be confusing.*

Similar to the pre-study findings, the post-study data also revealed that most of the students opposed the integration of literature at the Center because it was not related to their programme. In other words, they saw literature as irrelevant to their academic needs. This finding matched that of Shanahan's (1997:165) research that many foreign language students perceived literature as irrelevant because "the environment surrounding the teaching of FL [foreign language] is heavy with such utilitarian logic." The respondents in this current study also seemed to cling to the assumption that literature was academically and practically more appropriate and relevant to either Arts or Humanities students. Below is a typical response:

*We are Science students, so literature is not relevant to our subjects. But for Arts students such as LAW, Economics or BENL [Bachelor of English Language and Literature], it might be more appropriate because maybe, they can use literature but, for us, Science students, it is not connected to our programme.*

Moreover, some respondents saw literature as irrelevant to their language needs. Since they were doing obligatory language proficiency courses that involved assessments, they



could not understand how literature could help them to study and prepare for the examination, for instance, in their Writing subjects. As pointed out by one of the participants:

*In my writing class, when we have to create a story or descriptive essay, then literature can help but, when it comes to factual writing such as comparative or argumentative writing, I don't think literature really helps.*

It could be inferred from the remark above that the students' view of literature was confined to the notion of creativity that could benefit them in creative writing. However, its practicality and relevance in producing an academic or a factual piece of writing was not evident. Hence, the results suggested that teachers could employ or choose texts that mirror the types of writing courses that students should be undertaking at their particular language level. For instance, since EL4 is focused on comparative essays, stories that described the similarities or differences between two characters, events or settings could be used to introduce and familiarise students with the concept of comparison. Furthermore, students could assimilate some of the comparative phrases found in the narratives and apply them in their own work. Accordingly, they would be more inclined to accept literature and participate in class activities as they could identify the relevance of literature to their needs as language learners. This finding echoes the study by Hirvela's (2005:78) who discovered that "ESL students' degree of acceptance towards literature depends on the extent to which literature is linked to their academic writing development."

Some of the students also disapproved of the possible implementation of literature-based language teaching at the Center because literature was deemed as difficult. As discussed earlier, literary texts were assumed to be linguistically demanding and their meanings were believed to be neither obvious nor easy to interpret. Furthermore, the abundance of specific linguistic features such as metre and verse forms as well as the figurative language mainly found in poetry, created difficulties in reading literature and led most of them to sense literature as complicated and arduous.

In addition, the participants were more preoccupied with the content, rather than the language of the texts or form. In other words, they enjoyed reading the texts used in the study, but most of them tended to neglect the language of the texts. Instead, they were concerned with storylines, characters, values or themes rather than how the language helped them to understand these texts. The students' close concern with these literary aspects was probably because of the way they were trained in secondary school. The remark below made the point:

*Because each worksheet has its moral values, its own moral values like in A Day's Wait, or especially in China's Little Ambassador, the moral value is that we have to be brave in a foreign place or country and for After the Funeral, it is about wealth, distribution of wealth and then in Hearts and Hands, money is nothing. Money is not everything.*

As stated in Section 4.5.4, most respondents associated literature with the idea of having fun and performing enjoyable activities. The post-study results also indicated identical results where they stated that literature could help them to unwind from the pressures of learning the second language and create interesting lessons. However, they felt that literature should not be given equal emphasis and importance as the obligatory language courses. In other words, literary texts could be engaged, but mainly as something that teachers could exploit once in a while, to make their lessons more motivating and for the students to relax and enjoy. This implied that the students hung on to the belief that literature occupied a place in their classrooms, but one of less importance in comparison to the proficiency language subjects that they had to study. Thus, when it came down to serious learning, literature was sidelined. Other alleged important subjects like the Reading and Writing classes took center stage. This perception might have led to the students' resistance to the integration of literature at the Center. The following statement was common:

*I think literature should be used just to increase our general knowledge, nothing serious...just something to know about but, we don't need to learn about it. Maybe we could read it just for fun, during our free time, nothing serious. Because for me, we learn literature just for fun and to relax.*

#### 5.4.4.2 Literature examinations

Another central attribute why most of the respondents were not keen on the combination of literature and language study at the Center was literary assessment. Most respondents seemed to be grade-conscious and syllabus dependent. They felt that their course of learning should follow the curriculum and the exercises that they undertook should prepare and help them to achieve desirable results in the examination. Other subjects or supplementary materials that were seen irrelevant to their examination needs were considered unnecessary. The fact that the use of the worksheets in their Reading class was neither included in the curriculum nor tested further engendered their hesitation for literature to be included in their language curriculum. One student had this to say:

*We are doing a course in English, not in literature and in the final examination, we don't take literature. Although literature is a good, I am not bothered with it because it's not part of the syllabus. It's not a subject that I have to study.*

There were no tangible assessments involved in the study because it did not attempt to measure the students' performance in literature, instead, it aimed to investigate their attitudes. Since the worksheets were not assessed, some students assumed that they were just a part of the classroom activities. This lack of assessment significantly affected some of their interest in and attitudes towards the tasks in the worksheets. If the students had been assessed, the study might have produced a different result. They would probably have put in more effort and paid closer attention had the worksheets been an integral part of their exam-oriented educational system. One of the students' comments exemplified this point:

*Because I'm more focusing on studying Mathematics and Computer because they are included in the examination and as for me, I do not take literature right, I just learned it in class, it started there and it finished there.*

Therefore, it could be deduced that the lack of assessment had a significant influence on the students' perceptions of literature. The demands of the educational practice (e.g. secondary and tertiary) that require students to achieve exemplary results in their examinations

has resulted in grade-conscious learners whose main concern is passing the examinations. Accordingly, neither literature nor any other subject will receive the proper attention it deserves from students if it is not listed as examinable by the policy makers or the education authorities.

## 5.5 Summary

The post-study findings have provided comprehensive responses to all three research questions mentioned in this chapter: (i) how do ESL learners respond to a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis, (ii) what are the effects of such an approach on these learners' attitudes towards literature, and (iii) what are the impacts of this approach on literature-based materials? First, the views received from the respondents regarding their experience of the method (applied in the worksheets) were diverse. Some articulated pleasurable experiences, while other expressed dissatisfaction. In short, some students had a highly positive attitude towards literature, while some did not. Their responses were influenced by key variables such as the activities and the choice of texts used in the study. Second, the respondents' exposure to the worksheets also generated varied reactions. Some of them confessed to a new found interest in literature, while some remained steadfast and exhibited negative attitudes. Furthermore, the students' perceptions of the application of literary genres in the language curriculum were not significantly influenced by their experience of the worksheets. They essentially communicated similar arguments (pre-and post-study) either to support or reject the integration of literature. Among the main influences on their attitudes towards the integration were their perceptions of literature, assessment factors and implementation concerns. Finally, the respondents' experience of the study also had little effect on their views on the development of literature-based materials for language acquisition. In essence, they reiterated the pre-study suggestions, but the current ones were more specific.

## **Chapter Six: Teachers' Pre-Study Perspectives on Literature**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings from the pre-interviews with the tutors and discusses their existing attitudes towards the application of literature in language teaching. The qualitative data are examined and discussed in an attempt to investigate and identify the variables that influence the teachers' perspectives on literature prior to the research. Therefore, the pre-study results are presented with the aims of reporting as reliably as possible their attitudes and views on the integration of literature in second language educational settings.

### **6.2 Presentation of findings**

Essentially, the pre-interviews intended to identify the teachers' existing attitudes towards literature. In doing so, it attempted to investigate the second research question of the study: How do ESL teachers conceptualise the use of literature in the language classrooms? In order to establish valid answers for this question, the teachers were asked the following key questions during the interviews:

- ✓ How do the teachers feel about literature?
- ✓ How do the teachers feel about the use of literature in language teaching in the ESL context?
- ✓ What experience have the teachers had in using literature in language classes?
- ✓ What recommendations are proposed by the teachers on the integration of literature in language teaching based on their experience?

In an endeavour to provide substantiated responses to the research question stated above, the qualitative data gathered from the pre-interviews were discussed and categorised into four key areas: (i) experience of literature, (ii) perceptions of literature, (iii) attitudes towards literature in language teaching, and (iv) suggestions on the integration of literature.

### 6.3 Experience of using literature

The findings indicated that the teachers' previous experience of using literature in their language classrooms as instructors had significant effects on their attitudes. Both Nadia and Zahra had used short stories, while Aminah had brought poetry into her classroom. Generally, all three teachers had had an encouraging encounter with literature. Nadia related her positive experience:

*I think I had a lot of fun, and students also had a lot of fun doing it. At first, they were quite sceptical. I was also... They said, "Why do we have to do literature? We are not going to do English per se," and things like that. But after a while, they get the hang of it, I had fun teaching them and we ended up doing a play based on one of the short stories. It was quite good.*

There were many strategies in which the instructors tried to use literature in their classrooms. Apparently, all three teachers had quite similar teaching styles. One of the most common methods in engaging literature-based activities was class discussion, either in a whole-class or a smaller group format. Zahra also employed in-class reading when she assigned her students to read the short story. Aminah had used a few poems in her previous class and she usually asked her students to conduct group discussions. Nadia related her successful experience of combining in-class reading with drama activities by asking her students to act out selected scenes from one of the short stories which they had read in class. She believed that the amalgamation of different formats of activities not only promoted their understanding of the texts, but also increased their interest in the lessons. She explained how her method of teaching helped her pupils to successfully grasp her teaching content:

*I asked them to stage the play as they read or we sat in a circle. I remember in one class, when they had a lot of fun, as one student read the story, another would have to act the story out...I talked about irony and after reading the story to them...I also made them come up with [a] situation where irony took place and they understood the concept of irony and what irony was about at that time.*

Nadia's experience of using literature was also not limited only to the confines of her classroom. She assigned her students to do an out-of-class project as well where they were

required to produce a play based on one of the short stories that they had to study. She felt that the activity was successful because she and her students had truly enjoyed the experience.

The three teachers also communicated a strong belief that literature had positive effects on the classroom instructions. They generally shared the notion that when literature was employed, it created “fun” (Nadia), and “relaxing and enjoyable” (Zahra) activities. The teachers’ views are consistent with Hall’s (2005) argument that one of the most common claims made for literature is that it is said to be pleasurable. The three respondents expressed a great degree of confidence in the literature-based activities because they sensed that most of their students responded well and enjoyed these tasks. Since these activities were assumed to be entertaining and fun, they encouraged further interest in learning English and reading literature among their students, even the reluctant ones. Hence, their pupils exhibited increased motivation and displayed a transformation of attitudes towards literature that resulted in a positive commitment to the lessons. Nadia articulated that she was impressed by her students’ gradual change of perceptions of literature and the level of involvement that they had shown during the exercises:

*First, they were a bit sceptical, hostile with the idea of having to learn literature. They were quite angry at first when I said, “This semester we are going to do literature only...not grammar, not writing, just literature.” So, they asked why they had to do this and towards the middle of [the] semester and at the end, they enjoyed it very much.*

Aminah also experienced a similar situation in her classroom. Like Nadia, she was surprised by her students’ change of attitudes and claimed that the reason for such a transformation was because she related the activities based on the poem that she employed to something that they were accustomed to, thus, making the discussions more accessible, pleasurable and less intimidating for her students. Accordingly, her students also demonstrated an augmented interest not only in the poem, but more importantly, in her lesson as well.

The third instructor, Zahra was also pleasantly shocked when her intermediate-language students responded quite well to the short story and its activities that she carried out in her class. This was because she had expected them to be annoyed and demotivated to read the narrative because she assumed that its language was reasonably difficult for their level of proficiency. Instead, they showed enthusiasm and wished to read more short stories and conduct similar literature-based activities. Her experience further reinforced her view that literature-based language teaching proffered attractive tasks and a rewarding literary encounter for her students:

*When I asked them do they like the story, everybody said, "Yes", and then when I asked, "Would you like to have some more stories like this to be used in class, they said, "Yes, why not?"*

The findings suggested that the respondents' positive experience of literature-based language teaching influenced and shaped their attitudes towards literature. In spite of their overall encouraging encounter of using literary texts with their students, all of them had had quite a limited knowledge and opportunity in exercising this method of teaching as they rarely integrate literary works due to factors such as syllabus and time constraints. And occasionally, when literary materials were utilised, most of the time they assumed the role of supplementary materials to facilitate the construction of more attractive lessons or in Nadia' words, *"just to spice things up."*

It was also interesting to note that none of the participants concentrated on writing practice based on the literature the students had read. Most of the activities carried out in their classrooms were predominantly focused on communicative tasks such as dramatisation and role-play activities and these exercises were primarily intended to enhance the students' skills in speaking.



### 6.3.1 Text preference

The findings from the interviews with the three teachers also revealed that among the different genres of literature, short stories had the highest degree of popularity. When asked what types of literary texts they preferred to engage in teaching language, all agreed on short stories. Aminah provided the typical reason for her preference for them: "*short stories are interesting*", while Nadia cited her previous successful experience of using this particular genre with her students as her prime motive. The other predictable answers given by the respondents were not only that short stories have manageable length, which is ideal for use in class, but also they usually contain exciting, yet simple plots that make them more accessible to the students.

On the other hand, although the participants agreed that poetry is usually shorter than most of the other genres of literature, its structural and linguistic complexity, particularly the special use of vocabulary, would be too problematic for their students. Zahra's opinion well reflected one of the widespread reasons why many ESL educators hesitate or exhibit reservations against the use of poetry in their teaching when she declared that poetry "*is hard to understand because there are so many symbols, so many metaphors*" (see Lazar 1994; Short 1996a). Similarly, Nadia was also less enthusiastic about the prospect of integrating poetry in her lessons. However, she provided a slightly different reason why she preferred short stories to poetry. Nadia attributed her disinclination to her experience of finding poems with relevant topics or themes that otherwise could "*turn off some students*", and maintained that appropriate themes were easily available and plentiful in short stories. However, it is argued that poetry contains topics as diverse and versatile as do any other genres. Teachers can easily locate any relevant themes regardless of the choice of genres, but the decision to apply or reject poetry lies mainly on their attitudes towards it.

Nadia and Zahra were also quite reluctant to bring poetry into their classroom because they themselves possessed neither the knowledge nor the confidence to handle its literary devices such as metaphors, deviations and parallelism. Zahra personally professed that she not only lacked the interest, but more importantly the skills to integrate poetry with her lessons because she herself was unsure of how to approach it. Zahra's remark below also implied that not only students experience problems in reading and interpreting poems, but teachers as well:

*A poem is short, but, for me, to handle it is difficult because I have to really understand, as personally I don't like poem because it's hard for me. It's hard to understand because there are so many symbols, so many metaphors as compared to short story. You have characters, you have the plot, so it's easy for you to follow.*

On the other hand, Aminah had used poetry before and assigned a poem for her students to read, a choice the other two teachers claimed to be difficult for students who were not highly proficient in the target language. Nevertheless, she admitted that her students encountered some linguistic problems in reading it. In order to overcome these problems, she concentrated on the themes of the poem instead of its language, and simplified the literary reading process by providing the students with possible topics and asked them to match or relate the given themes to the appropriate stanza in the poem.

Hence, the findings implied that there was an overall lack of interest in the application of poetry in the language classrooms among the three respondents. The perceptions that poetry was difficult, contained abstract ideas and symbols engendered a feeling of insecurity and resentment among the teachers towards poetry. Hence, it became the least favourite choice of literary genre. The tutors' view that poetry was complicated and linguistically challenging also echoed the students' mentioned in Section 4.3.2.

The three teachers also gave their opinion that novels were not really suitable for their students, owing to the fact that most novels are usually long. Because of their length, they maintained that they were usually unable to accomplish reading and discussing the novels within the class hour. Both Aminah and Nadia agreed it was "*time-consuming*" and "*taxing*" for

the students to read novels. The three colleagues also displayed a strong preference for simple literary texts which entail a straightforward plot, simple and easy to understand language and interesting themes coupled with appropriate cultural elements. Their inclination for simple literary texts was best reflected in Zahra's comments:

*Short stories, simple short stories, yes. But some short stories can be confusing. Take simple ones, novels. Yes, simple novels.*

### 6.3.2 Factors affecting teachers' interest in using literature

The findings from the pre-interviews revealed that there were six important attributes that affected and influenced the tutors' interest in employing literature in their lessons. The six reasons were: (i) lack of knowledge about figurative language, (ii) time and syllabus constraints, (iii) relevance of literature to the course' objectives, (iv) students' difficulties in approaching literature, (v) lack of training, and (vi) students' attitudes.

In the teachers' view, one of the key factors that dampened their attempts to employ literary works was their lack of knowledge about figurative language. As mentioned earlier, Zahra was reluctant to use poetry because she lacked both the confidence and knowledge to tackle its metaphorical representation with her students. Nadia also related her own difficulties in handling poems due to her limited knowledge about figurative meanings and she had had constantly to refer and seek advice from her colleagues regarding the assigned poems before entering the classroom. It was this dependency on her peers which reflected Nadia' restricted ability to approach poetry and led to the feeling of insecurity with her teaching:

*I remember when I had to teach them something on metaphors, something about figurative language. I had to make sure myself...because the questions were without answers. So, I had to make sure, I had to consult a few other colleagues of mine to make sure that I had the right answers before...I went into class. So that was the problem.*

The teachers also articulated time limitations and syllabus constraints as the other prime factors which impeded their attempts to integrate literature. This was because they had

to adhere to and complete the syllabus assigned by the University and to cope with their demanding and hectic teaching schedules and commitments. At the time of study, the three teachers were teaching 20 hours a week excluding administrative tasks and the compulsory tutorials with students. Zahra articulated the teachers' typical complaint when she said, "*The problem is the time limit, and because we have to finish [complete] the syllabus, I used this short story only in two class meetings.*" Although Nadia agreed that time and syllabus limitations prevented her from frequently using literature-based materials in her classes, she felt that too frequent use of literary works was undesirable because she "*would be running away from the syllabus*" and thus, fail to accomplish it within the stipulated period required by the University.

Furthermore, the relevance of literature to the objectives of the language module was also another significant motive why the three respondents had some reservations in integrating literature. Nadia stated that she had "*to consider the objectives of that particular course*" before attempting to engage literary genres in order to achieve its aims. Since all of them were teaching language proficiency courses, Zahra claimed that literature had to make itself relevant to the aims of these courses. She argued that literature not only had to show its relevance to the syllabus, but also demonstrated its significance in complementing the course's objectives in order to encourage teachers to bring literary texts into their classrooms. Otherwise, she claimed that attempts at using literature in teaching English would be futile.

The instructors also uniformly agreed that another important reason that affected their desire to use literature was addressing the students' difficulties in literary reading and comprehension. Zahra felt that one primary reason that instigated these problems was the students' restricted vocabulary in the target language and the texts' linguistic complexities that led to the failure of reading, understanding and responding. Aminah expressed an identical

view to Zahra's and added that her students' motivation to read literature was distracted by the abundance of unfamiliar and complex words, especially those prevalent in canonical poetry.

In addition, the three colleagues unanimously agreed that their lack of training in reading, interpreting and evaluating literary texts was another prime reason that placed a significant weight on their decision on whether to employ literature or not. They argued that if policy-makers had decided to add literature to language syllabus, teachers should not be left to fend for themselves without any kind of training given. Nadia clearly stressed that training was definitely a prerequisite for a successful and effective incorporation of literature, especially "*on how to execute the lesson, on how to teach and how to use the materials effectively.*" Otherwise, she maintained, most teachers who had limited knowledge and received minimal or no guidance at all, would either rely on their own creativity to devise activities that might or might not work for students or were inclined to abandon the integration altogether.

Finally, it was interesting to discover that the three instructors experienced similar problems in that many of their students were either not interested in literature or disliked reading. Nadia sensed that some of her students were less enthusiastic in reading literary works and she attributed their reservations and refusal to their lack of interest in reading (literary or non-literary). She claimed that their reluctance was primarily instigated by the structural and linguistic complexities in the texts they had encountered. She explained, "*first, that was the barrier...not liking the short stories. The next barrier was for them to understand figurative language. That was the barrier.*" Aminah proposed that one possible solution to the problem of students not liking literature was to use relevant texts. Based on her experience, she argued that when teachers were able to help students relate to the texts read, they were more inclined to show interest. Thus, she stressed that it was important to select texts that students could relate to or texts that contained elements such as themes or cultural allusion that they were accustomed to.

#### 6.4 Attitudes towards literature

The three teachers evidently communicated that their passion for literature emanated from their personal interests in it. Zahra boldly professed her enthusiasm when she said, *"I do love literature."* Similar to her colleague, Nadia also confessed that she enjoyed reading literary genres. Nadia gave a lengthy explanation about her interest in literature:

*I like to read novels, poems. I don't sit down and read poems. But when I do have to read poem, I enjoy it but, I don't really buy books on collection of poems. But I like, I love the Shakespeare sonnets... I loved it. Actually I memorise some of the sonnets. I love Shakespeare, believe it or not.*

One apparent similarity between these colleagues was that they shared an ardour for reading literary texts. Nadia considered reading novels pleasurable and she read them almost on a daily basis. Like Nadia, Zahra enjoyed reading novels, but she preferred to read this genre exclusively during her leisure hour. Aminah, unlike her two colleagues, found solace in reading short narratives because she discovered them to be entertaining and had the appropriate length to fit comfortably in her busy teaching schedule. Nadia's explanation for her reading preference for novels could also be applied to Zahra's:

*Because the plot is more complex as compared to short stories, sometimes the stories are somewhat [left] hanging. Short stories are hanging in a way. The plot is simple, quite straight forward, characters are few as compared to novels, there are more characters.*

Their interest in literature also emanated from their academic experience when they embarked on their undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. Zahra and Nadia hold a Masters degree in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), while Aminah has a degree in BENL (Bachelor of English Language and Literature). At the time of study, Aminah was still undergoing her Masters programme. Hence, in terms of their experience of literature, the teachers had either undertaken some courses in English Literature or taken it as their major during their undergraduate or graduate studies. Since then, they claimed to have a liking for it. Zahra further explained, *"Yes, I do love literature because it was my first degree, I took*

*literature so I am used to plays, novels, short stories, poems but the text that I really like is the novel."*

Despite their enthusiasm for literature, two of the teachers claimed that the training they had received in literature was inadequate and a waste of time. Zahra attended a few courses on literature, however she felt that they were theory-based. Accordingly, she considered her training inadequate in helping her to exploit literary texts in teaching English. Similarly, Nadia also received some training in literature during her undergraduate programme, but claimed that she did not perform well. She saw her training as time-wasting because it was focused more on teaching methodologies and limited information and strategies were provided, particularly on the incorporation of literature in language study. The third teacher, Aminah, on the other hand, did not receive any training on teaching literature and wanted to learn about it. Nadia had this to say about her previous training:

*I didn't learn very much because it [the course] was just for one semester, so I didn't get much out of that. It was more on micro-teaching. She [her lecturer] made us prepare lesson plans and she made us teach in front of the class and she gave comment only on that part. So, we wasted a lot of time in class...just listening to our friends doing micro teaching, that's all. So I don't really get that much input on how to teach literature.*

The tutors also expressed a firm belief in the potential benefits of literature not only to students, but to them as language teachers as well. Since the short story was used as a supplementary reading text in her class where the students were mainly encouraged to "*read and enjoy the story*", Zahra claimed that literature helped to reduce the pressure of teaching, thus, making it more relaxing for her. Nadia also talked about the assumed values of the integration of literature, but she was focussing more on the positive effects of the communicative literature-based activities on the relationship between the teacher and students. She related her experience:

*I became quite close especially towards the end of the semester because they had to act and...I was involved in the preparation and they loosen up a little bit in the class.*

*So, towards the end, the atmosphere was quite warm and friendly between the teacher and the students.*

Furthermore, Aminah sensed that the use of literary texts helped her students to escape from the domain of the academic course books and encouraged them to read more. The more they read the better they could improve and develop their interest, knowledge of and proficiency in English. She claimed, *"one advantage is that the students get away from the textbook. They get something different that they don't expect that enhances their interest in learning the language."* Aminah's view matched those of Lott's (1988) when he maintains that literary texts are often better and more appealing than the reading passages which appear in students' ordinary course books.

Nadia went on to present the perceived values of literature in terms of enriching the students' experiences in life not only as language learners, but also as human beings. She claimed that literature is able to achieve this because literary texts often portray a spectrum of human conflicts, issues and values that students can identify with and learn from and subsequently, use them as guidance in their lives. Her lengthy remark below helped to illustrate her argument:

*So, I say [to her students], "Sometimes in your life, you only have one life to experience, but when you read a different types of books, you get to experience a different types [type] of life and when you think that your life is very bad, when you read hardships of other people's lives, then you think that yours is nothing as compared, so ... that enriching experience will make you more mature." So, I think they should be encouraged to read because it's not about the language per se, it's also about experience...about how you look at life and things like that.*

## 6.5 Perceptions of literature in language teaching

Not only did all three teachers appear to share a strong personal enthusiasm for literature, they also communicated similar opinions on the suggestion of implementing literary texts as one of the resources in language acquisition. In essence, they exhibited favourable attitudes towards the intermarriage between literature and language study and the primacy of



their viewpoints was assigned to the discussion of the potential effectiveness of literary materials. Nadia's statement best summed up the teachers' overall attitudes towards the integration of literature:

*I think it is good to actually integrate literature into the syllabus because it shows that in language there are so many things to be read, to explore and not just academic texts... Literature can play a part especially to encourage reading when they [students] have the love for reading. That's when they can develop. They can expand their vocabulary, expand their language use, their style in writing.*

One of the most widespread assumptions of the benefits of literature unanimously agreed by them was its roles in developing students' language skills. In terms of helping their language development, these instructors believed that literature played different functions. For Aminah, literature was perceived as a vehicle to learn English, a pressure-free tool that teachers could use and bring into the classroom to promote students' language competence. In her words, "*It [literature] is just to enhance their [students] language proficiency, so, it's just a vehicle to learn the language.*" Nadia, on the other hand, believed that the nature of literature itself made it one of the available teaching resources which could most attract and draw learners' attention to lessons. Based on her experience, even reluctant students were attracted to reading intriguing literary works and because of this, she felt that literature could be manipulated not only to fuel students' interest in literature, but also act as the pulling factor to encourage participation in language activities:

*The students that I taught were science students. At first, they couldn't see the beauty of short stories because they didn't like reading. So, I had to take a bit of time to encourage them to read... I read the stories with them in class...and I read the story in a very dramatic kind of way... so, after a while, they got hooked on...and they wanted more and that was then I roped them in and had them act.*

Therefore, Nadia argued that literary texts if properly selected and exploited could inculcate positive reading habits among students. She was pleasantly surprised to discover that most of her students "*started to like reading. They went on to reading books on their own, to*

*reading novels*" and continued reading literary works even after they had finished their language classes.

Furthermore, Nadia expressed a firm belief that reading the different genres of literature helped to improve students' styles in writing due to their exposure to the different, rich and unique styles of writing in these genres. She was trying to advocate the benefits of reading literature in developing students' writing abilities based on her assumption that in order to become good writers, they must read extensively. Accordingly, they could adopt, select and adapt appropriate styles and examples of writing exemplified by the texts in their course work and thereby fabricate a more creative and impressive piece of written work. Her lengthy remark below illustrated this point:

*Sometime their styles, their essay is very dry because it reflects that they don't read, they don't have that flair...in writing. But you can see when students who read, that styles in writing. You can't achieve that, you can't teach that. You have to acquire that style of writing coz [because] I remember I read one essay last semester from the student... There's such flair in writing ... and when I asked him, he said he reads a lot. I said, "No wonder!"...that's the difference. I have been trying to tell my students, "Read. When you read it will show in the way that you write". ...if not, it [your writing] will be very straight forward...very dry, not rich.*

The third teacher, Zahra, saw the application of literature as a means of encouraging students to assume proactive roles in language acquisition. She communicated that since literary texts usually exposed students to difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary or phrases, their encounter with these words would encourage interest in using a dictionary in English, instead of one in their first language. Based on her experience, she claimed that it was typical for her students to resort to using a dictionary in L1 which supplied ready-made translations of the words and their meanings. Most of them were reluctant to consult an L2 dictionary and considered the task burdensome and often preferred to depend on her to supply the definitions for the difficult words. Zahra maintained that the use of the short stories in her classroom had indirectly promoted the students' interest in using an L2 dictionary. She saw this as their

positive attempt to learn English. Thus, in some respect, the use of literature in her class had motivated the students to assume positive roles in acquiring the language instead of depending on an L1 dictionary or anticipating the teacher's spoon feeding. Zahra further explained:

*For example, they never use a dictionary in English before. Then this time they are forced to use dictionary. So, they are open to another scope of English...getting to use [an] English dictionary. That's a good step forward in learning the language.*

Another prime motive why these instructors believed that the application of literature was beneficial was because it offered valuable language input that was necessary for learning English. They claimed that literature facilitated and expanded students' vocabulary acquisition through the exposure to new or unfamiliar words encountered while reading literary texts. They also assumed that if students obtained a wider vocabulary, they could express their ideas and thoughts more efficiently, especially in their writing assignments. Students not only could increase their vocabulary, but more importantly, develop an awareness of the system of the language, its functions and how it could be used to create certain effects on them, as readers. Zahra added that apart from developing their language awareness, literary works also exposed students to words or phrases that are usually associated with imagery and metaphorical language. In return, not only would their vocabulary increase, but also their awareness of this style of language exemplified in a particular genre. These findings are consistent with Widdowson's (1975) argument that when students examine and compare the types of language used in literary texts such as the complicated or non-standard examples of language, particularly in poetry, teachers can assist students to become more aware of the language use. Once they have achieved an understanding of the language, they can use this knowledge and apply it in different contexts, distinct from the one that is portrayed in the texts.

Apart from its potential values in developing students' language abilities, there were other factors why these three educators were positive towards the integration of literature. They equally agreed that literature helped in students' personal development. Zahra felt that

literature offered students an avenue of development into a more broad-minded and insightful person:

*I think it's time for us to use literature. For so many years now we only use textbooks. Why not we open up a little bit, to use literature in class so that students are not too rigid in their thinking? Because when they learn literature, they learn culture, they learn character. Maybe it can also build up their character.*

Aminah, on the other hand, touched on the cultural understanding that students could possibly acquire when reading literature. She expressed a firm belief that literary reading helped to prompt and increase their knowledge and awareness of other cultures because cultural allusions are intrinsically available in most literary works, and they can be conveniently exploited by instructors and students to make the language learning process more varied and substantial.

Although essentially all three tutors established that literature was potentially relevant in ELT, their views on its use differed. There were two contrasting opinions: literature as something different and separate from the English language, and literature as a part of the language. Aminah strongly believed that literature was an inseparable part of the language that students learned in their everyday classroom activities when she said, *"literature still deals with language and [in] language we cannot just scope [view] language as [only learning] grammar... So, [it is the] same with...reading literary texts, that could also be included as part of [learning] language."* In contrast, the other two instructors, Nadia and Zahra, saw literature as a separate subject from the English language. It was not a part of the language; it was a subject in its own right. Zahra expressed her view:

*We [teachers] don't really teach literature, we have to teach Reading, so I use just use a short story. There was just one short story that I used, 'Charles'.*

In addition, while all three colleagues had experience of using literature and employed almost identical instructional strategies, they had had different objectives. Nadia used short

stories in her previous classes but with the objective of introducing literature to the students, and not of using literature to teach language. In other words, literature was primarily studied as a subject and not employed as a resource to learn English during the language lesson itself. Thus, she presented literary texts as pieces of literature and concentrated on discussing their qualities such as irony and metaphors. She explained:

*I have not used literary texts per se, the whole thing, to teach language. It [literature] was used to teach metaphors, irony, moods, tone, and characters. But it was offered to Science students... They were actually doing English foundation but, in the syllabus, they had to do literature.*

Nadia's style of teaching followed one of the goals in 'Literature as content approach' (Section 2.3.2) which concentrates on the study of the literary texts themselves with the aim of providing students with the appropriate linguistic tools to interpret these texts. However, the aim of this approach was not met when Nadia asked her students to draw from their own experiences in order to understand and respond to the text. Her technique of asking the students to react to the text by relating it to their own experiences could be broadly categorised under Lazar's 'Personal response approach' (Section 2.3.3). The findings, therefore, to a certain extent, illustrated that language teachers were more inclined to employ and combine a range of methods to using literature in their teaching. Nadia's remarks helped to clarify this argument:

*So, it was the fact that it was the irony...the element of irony. Here... [the] parents tried to protect the boy, but at the end...he died out of that protection. So, that was very dramatic and the students loved the story...it was really good, it was a really a good story to teach irony. And at that time...they started talking about irony taking experience from their own life experience.*

Unlike their colleague, Zahra and Aminah perceived the application of literary writing as supplementary materials or resources to teach language. Although Zahra saw literature as a subject in its own right, detached from the English language, both she and Aminah maintained that not only could literature be exploited as reading texts, but also to develop entertaining

language activities for students that promote increased participation and motivation to learn English. Since literary texts were used as a resource and the aim was to help enhanced students' knowledge of and proficiency in the language, this method of teaching to a certain extent, matched the characteristics of Carter and Long's Language model (Section 2.3.4) and Lazar's Language-based approach to literature (Section 2.3.1). Furthermore, Zahra added that when literature was applied as a resource, it offered students the opportunity to explore and learn about the target language in a variety of interesting ways that could engender further interest and effort. She noted:

*For those who are quite weak in English and never read a single story in English, it's quite an eye-opener for them because now they see English, it is not just the texts in English that they can explore, it's not just from the newspaper or magazines, not dry texts...that they have to read in their textbook. They can explore English...by reading short story, simple novels.*

## 6.6 Suggestions on the integration of literature

There was a variety of reasons why the three instructors considered whether the use of literature in language teaching effective or not. Although at the time of study, literature was not included in the English language curriculum at the Center, the three instructors expressed confidence that there was a strong possibility for it to be integrated there. Based on their experience, they managed to provide some perceptive suggestions on how to make the incorporation more efficient and profitable. Although their recommendations were context specific, they were applicable in language acquisition in general.

### 6.6.1 Texts selection

All three respondents strongly believed that in order for literature to be implemented successfully in a language syllabus, it was paramount that works of literature were properly selected. Aminah stressed that the linguistic level of the chosen works should be as much as possible appropriate to students' competence in the target language. Zahra also concurred by saying that "*the text should suit the proficiency level of the students.*" Otherwise, she believed,

students would become bored in the lessons if the linguistic level of the selected texts was either too complicated or too simple.

Apart from the texts' linguistic compatibility with students' language abilities, Aminah adamantly stressed that the selected genres should also be culturally relevant or familiar to them. For instance, if literature were to be added to the syllabus at the Center, she felt that it would be good to engage texts written by Asian or Malaysian writers as such texts could alleviate some of the cultural misunderstandings that might arise from students' lack of knowledge about the culture and promote responses and comprehension. Nadia concurred that cultural familiarity was an important criterion, but, more importantly, she argued that it was paramount for the texts to contain appropriate content and themes suitable for students in their particular educational context. Since the Center is a part of the International Islamic University, she maintained that the texts used must be thematically and religiously appropriate for the Muslim teenage students there. Nadia related her own embarrassing experience of dealing with the content of one of the assigned short stories in her class:

*It talked about premarital sex and it was it was quite towards soft porn. It was quite descriptive at some parts of the story...So that one [the story] I went very briefly lah [Malaysian English]...quite embarrassed myself, having to talk about sex with 18-year-old.*

Zahra added that the selected genres should also be thematically accessible to students and hence, she suggested using an amalgamation of contemporary and canonical works that revolve around universal issues that they might encounter in their daily lives. She claimed that the elements of familiarity about the topics of the texts would enable students to relate them to their own life and thus, not only gain deeper understandings of the issues raised, but also find pleasures in the experience as well. Thus, these texts could encourage a deeper interest in students to keep on reading literary works.

Apart from appropriate topics and linguistics, the three tutors also thought that it was essential for the texts to contain interesting plots, themes and characters. Zahra maintained

that the texts should be attractive enough in order to tap students' motivation to read, no matter how discouraged they might feel about literature. Nadia was also in the agreement that if students found the texts to be an exciting read, it would provoke and prompt them to continue reading despite their linguistic complexities. She claimed that language would not be "*much of a problem*" if students were involved in an engaging literary encounter. She explained further:

*I think the storyline ... would give real impact. Sometimes they [students] feel very excited and that's when they start talking. When the storyline is boring or predictable, it's when they lose interest. Sometimes I see that language is not much of a problem if they're very much into the story. It doesn't matter if they don't understand some of the words, because I remember some of the stories were quite difficult. We had some quite difficult words, but since they understood the whole story, what the story was about, so it didn't quite matter to them and at the same time, they could learn all these words.*

In conclusion, given all the recommendations, all three colleagues firmly believed that there was a strong potential for literature to be included in their own educational setting at the Center. They also communicated that not only teachers, but students as well would reap fruitful outcomes from their encounter with literary texts if it were to be integrated there.

#### **6.6.2 Training needs**

Nadia, Zahra and Aminah suggested that training was necessary if a rewarding and effective integration of literature was to be achieved. Based on their experience, they claimed that they would feel more confident in approaching literature if they were equipped with the necessary knowledge of how to exploit literary texts and had received proper guidance. Two of the teachers said that they lacked the necessary training and support in integrating literary materials because they had not learned much from their previous training. As mentioned earlier, Nadia considered that she did not "*get that much out of the course and the previous training*", while Zahra felt that the focus of her training was on theoretical perspectives rather than on the practicality of literature in language classroom scenario. Zahra explained:



*The lecturer touches on how to teach literature only...part of the class activity, but not fully and it's only theory. We [her course mates] kind of liked the class, but we didn't really go into practising the theories.*

The training that Zahra and Nadia underwent was 11 - 12 years ago, while Aminah did not receive any. Moreover, both Zahra and Nadia claimed that the primary emphasis of their training was to use literary texts to teach English Literature, and not to use literature as a resource to teach language. As stated by Nadia, *"It's different I think, having to teach short stories, to teach literature using all these literary works, and also to teach language using literature."* Therefore, they stressed that they would like a *"refresher course"* (Zahra) or *"an eye-opener"* (Nadia) in order to manipulate literary genres in their teaching.

Aminah added that training was essential particularly on how to conduct lessons that combine literature and language study. Nadia shared a similar opinion that training was a pre-requisite in order to show instructors how to utilise literature-based materials in their classroom instruction. She maintained that training could function as a platform for teachers and course developers to exchange and receive ideas from trainers and other instructors in order to explore ways and identify potentially effective strategies of engaging literature. Her comment below highlighted this point:

*To do it effectively, to really utilise the piece of text, sometimes, I can't see how else I can explore. Suddenly, one person says, "Hey why don't you use it this way?" I said, "Yeah, I didn't see that."*

On the other hand, Zahra was more specific in the type of training that she felt teachers required. For instance, she said that if literature were to be integrated at the Center, the ELD would need to provide guidelines and support for its teaching staff in selecting the appropriate texts, identifying which part of the texts to be given prominence attention, and determining which linguistic or literary features of the texts that teachers could concentrate on. She claimed that this was necessary because if too much unwarranted emphasis was given to a text, students might be discouraged and thus, gave up learning:

*They [English Language Department] should give us [teachers] guidelines as to which part of the text, for example, the short story, we have to explore with the students. There are so many things in literature that we can explore, so maybe, they have to be specific because we cannot impose too much on the students because they are not literature students.*

Finally, Aminah suggested that sufficient opportunities for teachers to share their views on the development of literature-based materials should be allocated by policy makers or module conveners. She also felt that teachers should be encouraged and trained in how to select and develop their own literature-based teaching materials. Based on her observations at the Center, she claimed that most of her colleagues preferred to use published or ready-made materials due to their teaching responsibilities and commitments. The policy-makers, therefore, had to play pro-active and effective roles in providing continuous support to keep the interest going.

### **6.6.3 Assessment of literary learning**

The three colleagues also mentioned literary assessment as another vital aspect that must be taken into consideration when integrating literature. However, there were two different views on whether the use of literature in language proficiency courses should be assessed or not. Zahra believed that if literature were introduced at the Center, it should be tested owing to the fact that the *"students had been exposed to literature when they were in secondary schools."* Nonetheless, she stressed that the assessment must only include a minimum percentage of the overall evaluation in order not to compromise students' examination results. Aminah, on the other hand, was adamant that *"literature should not be tested"* when literary texts were incorporated in language teaching as she felt assessments might impinge on students' interest in literature. Like her colleague, Nadia argued against literary assessment for students, but for a different reason. Based on her experience, she discovered that some teachers and students were quite apprehensive of the idea of using literature in their lessons

because of their *"negative perceptions of literature."* Therefore, she was doubtful that both language educators and learners would welcome literature assessment.

Notwithstanding their varying viewpoints, all three instructors uniformly agreed that if literature were to be applied and tested, it would inevitably burden students. Although she supported literary examinations, based on her experience, Zahra agreed that if the use of literature was assessment free, students would be more relaxed and able to enjoy literature. She stated, *"it's a bit relaxing because the students know they are reading not to pass the exam, unlike when they read the textbook or [are] doing the exercises."* Nadia echoed her colleague's view that literary assessment might inflict unwarranted examination pressure on students and this would impose some tension on teachers as well. She related her previous experience:

*It was very taxing for them [the students], we had to finish all the short stories within a short period of time. It was short semester at that time, so, I had to rush through all the short stories because they appeared on the exam.*

## 6.7 Summary

The pre-interviews with the three respondents offered rich data that managed to provide answers to the second research question of the study: How do ESL teachers conceptualise the use of literature in the language classrooms? The findings suggested that the three teachers exhibited favourable attitudes towards literature and its integration in ELT. Their personal enthusiasm for literature coupled with other attributes such as their experience of using literary materials as teachers, their current teaching circumstances and training or the lack of it, were among the significant variables that influenced their perceptions of literature. They also seemed to hold to the belief that literature was potentially relevant in language acquisition primarily because of their assumption that it offered numerous benefits in developing students' language knowledge and abilities.

## **Chapter Seven: Teachers' Post-Study Perspectives on Literature**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the post-study findings from the interviews with the teachers and they are supplemented by the data from classroom observations and journal entries. Similar to the pre-study results, the findings obtained from these three qualitative research methods are amalgamated and analysed together with the aims of establishing the attributes that add significant weight to the instructors' post-research attitudes towards literature. Hence, the data are thoroughly examined in order to represent as accurately as possible the tutors' overall perceptions of the application of literature in ELT.

### **7.2 Presentation of findings**

The interviews were conducted in order to identify the teachers' attitudes towards literature after they were introduced to the worksheets in their Reading class. Like all three previous finding chapters, this current chapter also revisits and provides an in-depth exploration of the last three research questions mentioned in Section 1.7. These questions were also deliberated on in Chapter 5, but with different objectives and perspectives:

- RQs 3: How do ESL teachers and learners respond to the use of literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis?
- RQs 4: What are the effects of the literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis on the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context?
- RQs 5: What are the impacts of a pedagogical stylistic approach on the development of literature-based materials in language classrooms from the teachers' and students' points of view?

Hence, the post-interviews attempted to explore and ascertain the pertinent answers for these research questions where the primacy of focus is assigned to the teacher respondents. In order to achieve these, the instructors were asked the following key questions during the interviews:

- How did the teachers respond to the use of the worksheets in their Reading class?

- How did the teachers feel about the texts and the activities in the worksheets?
- What were the difficulties that the teachers faced when using the worksheets with their lower-proficiency language learners?
- What effects did the worksheets have on the teachers' existing attitudes towards literature and its use in language teaching?
- What effects did the worksheets have on the teachers' suggestions on the integration of literature in language teaching?

With the aims of providing apposite answers for the three research questions listed above, the presentation of the study's qualitative empirical findings is divided into two main sections: (i) experience of using the worksheets, and (ii) post-study attitudes towards literature. The first section concentrates on RQs 3, while the second places the primacy of the discussion on RQs 4 and RQs 5.

### 7.3 Experience of using the worksheets

In order to establish an understanding of the teachers' reactions to the worksheets and to provide answers for RQs 3, exclusive attention is given to the first three key questions in the interviews. The results revealed that the three teachers had had mixed experiences of using the worksheets. Zahra felt that her encounter had been "*interesting*" and considered it an "*eye-opener*" because she could apply the knowledge gained on how to manipulate literary texts in her future classes. She also sensed that she had been provided with a new angle to explore literary works, particularly by focusing on the linguistic aspects, instead of, typically asking the students to concentrate on the characters, themes or the moral values. She related her experience:

*It's really interesting. It's an eye opener because it really helps me in the future if I were to use literature in class, what sort of questions to ask, what are the areas to tackle and...what are the things the students should look into other than understanding the characters. What I mean here is the grammar part.*

Aminah also agreed that her experience of using the worksheets had been worthwhile and "*a good experience*" not only for her, but for her students as well. Like her colleague,

Aminah also said that her experience had provided her with a new avenue in teaching language, instead of relying on the course books alone. Her experience further reinforced her belief that literature occupied a significant role in ELT:

*I will use the text given... to have something new, actually it added to my experience...it is not like static, you use all the textbook, you just follow whatever [is] given in the outline [Course Outline] so, this is something new ... So, I think it's a good experience not only for me, but also for the students. They enjoyed the class and as for me, I enjoyed teaching them using all these worksheets. So, I think literature should be incorporated in teaching language.*

Nadia, on the other hand, professed that she had mixed feelings about the study. She stated that though she had also had a reasonably enjoyable experience of using the worksheets, her enthusiasm waned towards the end of the study because of the worksheets themselves. She felt that they were quite restricting as she could not make any changes deemed necessary based on the feedback she received from the students. Hence, she felt limited in her teaching because she could not manoeuvre the lessons in the direction that she saw fit as she had to follow the prepared materials. Due to this, her initial eagerness to learn something new as well as to help in the research began to recede and it affected her experience of the study. She described her feelings:

*At first, I was very excited about the whole idea. I wanted the input and I wanted to help. I got the materials ready prepared for me. I thought it was going to be a breeze. But, that was where the problem was. The materials were prepared for me. At first, I thought that would be of help, but in the end, I realize that was the problem because the materials were prepared, sometimes during the teaching I wanted to not do some of the activities, I wanted to do something else. I was inspired by the feedback I got from the students, I wanted to take on the feedback that they gave me, I wanted to do something else but, I couldn't because I was tied down to this... schedule of events that I have to follow. So, I was restricted in my teaching in that sense.*

It could be implied that the worksheets were working to the extent that Nadia did receive some "*inspiring feedback*" from the students. The students responded well to some of the lessons and she wanted to respond to their feedback. However, she could not do so because of the "*schedule of events*" or the lesson plans that she had to follow. Therefore, she

suggested that the worksheets should allow more flexibility for the teachers to make the changes they judged appropriate. In one of her journal entries, she also reflected her feelings about not being in control and seemed to be torn between wanting to conduct the lesson in her own way, and the need to adhere to the worksheets because of the fear of compromising the study:

*But again, it goes back to the fact that I wasn't comfortable enough to 'let loose' and get really 'involved' in the lesson because (1) I was being observed; (2) I had to follow the lesson plans – if I went off course, then I wouldn't be able to complete all activities. (Journal Entry 4: A Day's Wait)*

The two teachers, Zahra and Aminah, stated that their encounter with the worksheets had shown them how to integrate literature and confessed that they were more aware of the ways of manipulating literary texts that could promote and strengthen the students' understanding of the target language. One of the interview questions asked the tutors whether they felt the interaction between language and literature was clearly demonstrated in the worksheets. Zahra had this to say:

*Yes, I think so because the worksheets, the activities, the questions asked about the grammar part, the vocabulary and sometimes the understanding or comprehension of the texts and things like that. So...it helps in students understanding more about the English language.*

Though Zahra also professed that she gained more knowledge on how to integrate literary works, she complained that it was physically and mentally challenging to merge literature, especially when her students expressed their uncertainties or confusions about some of the texts or their accompanying activities. She attributed the reasons for these difficulties to the types of question asked in some of the reading activities in the worksheets. Zahra's post-study view contradicted her initial opinion that when literature was engaged, it was a relaxing experience for her and the students alike, as the primary activity was eliciting their oral responses to the text, mainly by drawing from their own experiences or discussing their feelings about the story. However, when she encountered some of the texts in the worksheets that

demanded the students' responses and interpretations through an examination of the language of the texts, her perception changed. She no longer felt relaxed in her teaching because of the superfluous demands being made of her. In other words, her notion of using literature in the language study shifted from relaxing to demanding for the teacher.

Aminah also agreed that the integration of language and literature was evident in the worksheets. She claimed that the students' encounter with the texts allowed for grammar acquisition to occur. She sensed that the texts were manipulated in a variety of ways that not only could help to improve the students' knowledge of grammar, but also teach them the necessary reading skills such as skimming, scanning and inferencing which were parts of the syllabus requirements for the Reading course. In other words, she was more aware of how literary works could be utilised in teaching grammar as well as the sets of reading skills that the students had to acquire. Therefore, she maintained that some of the activities had clearly exemplified the usefulness of literature and the manner in which it could be exploited in teaching language.

On the other hand, Nadia argued that the integration of literature was not evidently demonstrated in the worksheets. She maintained that the linguistic patterns such as 'noun phrase' in *China's Little Ambassador*, 'point of view' in *A Day's Wait*, and 'turn-taking' in *Death of A Salesman*, were quite vague and confusing for her students to comprehend. She could not see how the texts used exemplified these patterns and how relevant were the patterns to their understanding of these texts. For instance, she considered the focus on 'noun phrase' was inadequate for her pupils to identify the significance of the language pattern in helping them to understand *China's Little Ambassador*. Because of this, she felt they could not recognise the relevance of using these texts to learn about the patterns. She added that most of them could only understand the story, but not the patterns. Her comment below helped to illustrate this point:



*Not clearly shown... Some were quite clear, I think I would have to quote the same activities again, the ones on the 'past tense', 'tenses', the 'antonyms'. But, for some, the language item was quite confusing like the 'noun phrase' in the China's Little Ambassador. I think the students didn't even get that at the end...they only got the story. They didn't get that part of the language item and also in Death of A Salesman, they didn't get any of the language item there. And also the one on 'point of view' in A Day's Wait, also, the language item was not clear, in the activities themselves, it was not clear.*

This finding revealed that the teachers had distinct views on whether the combination of literature and language study was evidently demonstrated. Notwithstanding their mixed views, all three teachers acknowledged that they had gained some knowledge on how to approach and exploit literary works in their teaching. They said that their experience of the worksheets had been a revelation as they acquired something new in engaging literary texts more effectively, particularly in choosing the apposite elements of the texts to concentrate on and determining the types of question to ask in order to create a balanced focus on the language of the texts and their literary aspects. Nadia's statement basically summed up the teachers' views:

*In relation to the activities and the worksheets, some of the activities were interesting. They gave me lots of ideas on how to use literature texts in teaching language items.*

The three instructors also pointed out some of their discouraging experiences of using the worksheets. Nadia mentioned that she faced a demotivating encounter of explaining about some of the activities and the texts. For instance, she was frustrated when her students could not understand *A Day's Wait* although she had explicated about it and its activities. Observations also showed that most of the students seemed confused and remained silent when Nadia asked for answers to some of the questions, such as the part in the story where the father went hunting for birds during winter time while his son was sick at home. She struggled to explain about the conditions during winter time and certain words associated with

that season such as 'sleet' and 'frozen creek'. She related her experience of working on *A Day's Wait*:

*The teaching of the 'point of view' as a language item and the questions were more towards understanding the story, and when the students couldn't understand the story, it frustrated me and it was also difficult to teach. The language of the text was difficult, about the one on hunting...as I said the cultural differences, and when the students didn't respond well to the short story, so it made teaching a little bit more difficult.*

Zahra also experienced some difficulties in explaining about certain parts of the texts and their activities to the students as she had not anticipated such problems from them. She explained, "*because there are times when I thought that they could understand certain part of story, but actually they need further explanation whereas I didn't really prepare to explain that part to them. So, it was difficult.*" She also found it tiring to walk around the class and check on their work as some students were reluctant to approach her when they faced problems with the activities. Instead, they expected her to provide answers for some of the exercises. It was also interesting to discover that the word "*difficult*" was mentioned 40 times in the post-interviews suggesting that the worksheets based on a pedagogical stylistic approach were considered too difficult for their students to cope with and for the teachers to employ in their the lessons.

Finally, Aminah and Zahra stated that teachers' expectation of the students could also either lead to a frustrating or satisfactory experience of using the worksheets. Aminah did not expect her students to be able to accomplish some of the activities, for example the ones on 'Direct and Indirect Speech' based on the extracts from *The Great Gatsby*, as she thought they were quite challenging for them. However, she was pleasantly surprised when they managed to complete the tasks without much assistance from her:

*Actually, I was a bit surprised when [to learn] they managed to complete the activity...First, when I looked at some of the instructions for The Great Gatsby I can see that "Oh, this is a bit difficult for them." But when they managed...to carry out the tasks, it is quite surprising...it's something like you don't really think that they will do that, but actually they are doing that.*

On the other hand, Zahra encountered a frustrating experience when her expectation that the students would be able to understand the short story, *China's Little Ambassador*, and identify its comical aspects was not met. She assumed that her students could grasp the story as it was considered linguistically easy and contained a familiar theme and content. She talked about her experience:

*When I first read the story before the class, I laughed and I smiled and I enjoyed because there's humour in it. But, when the students did it in the class, nobody smiled, nobody laughed, and I said to them, "this is supposed to be funny, why don't you all laugh" and then one boy said, "ha ha ha" so...it gives me a negative feeling.*

### 7.3.1 Views on activities

One of the main reasons the three teachers attributed to their assorted experiences was the activities provided in the worksheets. They stated the worksheets entailed a combination of interesting and less exciting activities. Nadia's statement exemplified best the teachers' overall view of the tasks:

*My overall opinion, generally they were good. Some were better than the others. The ones on poems were so much better but, the ones on short stories, the activities were a little bit confusing.*

Some of the activities were perceived to be interesting because they exposed the students to a variety of reading tasks within one worksheet. Zahra considered the different stages of the reading activities in each worksheet such as the While-reading and Post-reading, were beneficial, especially the Pre-reading stage because *"it opens up the students' minds and prepare their minds about [for] the story."*

Some of the tasks were also regarded as useful because they facilitated the students' understanding of some of the texts. Aminah agreed that some of the activities were helpful because they promoted her students' comprehension of *China's Little Ambassador*. Observations revealed that when her students failed to grasp the short story, the matching tasks (Pre-Reading stage) helped them to achieve it. Zahra added that the activities not only

instigated her students' responses and comprehension of the texts, but they also obliquely encouraged them to think in order to generate the appropriate responses to their tasks. In doing so, the students also had to pay close attention to the language of the texts that could promote an increased knowledge of English. Zahra noted:

*When the questions ask "[why did] this thing happen" and then [the students had to] explain "why [did] it happen"...they [had to] have a second look at the texts, and with the help of some of their friends' explanation and my explanation, they could understand the text better so they [activities and questions] really help.*

Like her two colleagues, Nadia also stated that some of the activities were advantageous because they encouraged her students to develop and understand their own reactions to some of the texts. She felt that with the help of the questions in some of the reading tasks, most of her students were able to accomplish them and were prompted to produce and evaluate their own discerning interpretations. Her remark helped to illustrate her point:

*The activities...the questions were designed in a way that the students could understand the storyline, the characters and therefore, they could come up with a conclusion of their reactions towards the story.*

Furthermore, the instructors stated that some tasks contained the types of question that were different from the ones which normally appear in the students' academic course books. Zahra articulated that some of the activities were appealing because they entailed an integrated approach to teaching a specific linguistic pattern and sentence construction, while at the same time, they checked, questioned and enhanced the students' understanding of the texts. She gave her views:

*My opinion is that the worksheets are really interesting because it helps [they help] students to understand the texts better and the questions are really different from what they get from their textbook. The questions in the worksheets asked about their understanding of the text as well as their understanding of English language, grammar and vocabulary.*

Taking a slightly different view from Zahra, Aminah, talked about the integration of language skills by using literary works, particularly in merging reading and speaking skills. In other words, she felt that the activities managed to combine reading and speaking activities which, she claimed, could provide benefits to both the teachers and students. She reflected her view in her journal:

*I feel that the students are not only doing speaking but also reading. It is more of 2 in 1, just like the other worksheets. Integrating the skills is not only an advantage to the teacher and also more on the students. I really recommend this kind of activity. (Journal Entry 9: Death of A Salesman)*

In addition, Nadia felt that some of the activities were practical because the students could understand and apply the language patterns that they were supposed to learn when they managed to produce their own interesting poems or stories. Accordingly, she argued that successful learning took place as the students and teacher "*enjoyed doing the activities and it brought home the point that the lesson was supposed to make*" and positive feelings towards the use of literature for both the teacher and students were achieved. Therefore, the findings implied that these tutors derived satisfaction from the use of literature-based materials when their students managed to understand the texts and react positively to activities assigned to them. Zahra reflected in her journal her satisfaction when the students displayed relaxed attitudes and yet demonstrated commendable endeavour in responding to and completing the activities on Williams Carlos Williams' poem, *This is Just to Say*:

*I like the worksheet...What was very enlightening was that the students really put effort in answering all the questions. They enjoyed the activities – they didn't look pressured. They helped each other in their groups. What is most interesting is they manage to come up with nice poems of their own as a reply to the Williams' poem. (Journal Entry 1: This is Just to Say)*

Aminah also thought that the some of the activities were interesting because they helped to increase the students' general knowledge of poets and authors and at the same time, exposed them to different literary genres. She claimed that this exposure could arouse a feeling

of anticipation among them, leaving them wanting to read more texts and thus, would engender positive attitudes not only towards literature, but also to reading in general. She expressed her view:

*It is like ... they [the students] are waiting, what they are going to get next week...because it's like [a] different week is a different story, so, it is interesting, and it will actually add to their general knowledge, for example, by knowing about the authors, the poets.*

The three instructors also considered the worksheets appealing because there were many language tasks that presented opportunities for the students to apply and demonstrate their understanding of either the linguistic patterns or the new vocabulary that they came across with. These tasks involved creating and developing their own poems and short stories, writing letters and performing dramatisations. Aminah sensed that a majority of her students responded well and were able to successfully fulfil some of the tasks, especially those which required them to write, act or change the beginning or an ending of a story. She said:

*I love it especially when there are lots of activities...they [the students] have to come up with their own poem, their own letters, their own story. I like that part because that shows how good they are in...manipulating or using the words from the text.*

Zahra and Aminah also added that some of the activities were effective because they offered the students the chance to assume active roles in learning. Tasks such as constructing their own poems, rewriting the ending or beginning of the stories, and participating in role-plays encouraged their participation because they had to develop personal responses and conduct discussions in the performance of these tasks. When the students were aware that they were actively expressing their opinions while undertaking these activities, the more positive attitudes towards literature and the lessons would emerge. These activities also improved their interaction skills, particularly when they had to sit in groups and interact with each other in order to talk about the texts and accomplish the tasks required of them.

Hence, the findings implied that literary-based discussions could encourage positive interaction among the students as literary works are often rich with multiple layers of meanings and thus, offer an effective source of discussions and sharing of feelings or opinions between the students. Aminah claimed that these interaction activities among her students promoted their confidence in conversing in the target language. She noted, *"I can see that students, they improved a lot... They are more confident. They have a lot of self-esteem towards the end."*

Furthermore, Aminah and Zahra considered that some of the tasks were enjoyable because they contained a lot of role-play activities. They claimed that these activities were more successful and entertaining for them and their students as well. Observations revealed that Aminah was visibly pleased when her students showed an eagerness to participate in the exercises and made a commendable effort. This type of activity aroused the confidence in her to integrate literary texts in her future lessons. She reflected her experience in her journal:

*It was very interesting especially the last task, Activity 5. They acted out the scene and they were very participative. I personally feel that this worksheet is easier and interesting. The students managed to complete the tasks on time. I think I will use this worksheet in my future class. (Journal Entry 9: Death of A Salesman)*

However, Nadia encountered a discouraging experience of conducting drama activities with her students. Observations showed that some of her students were passive and her requests for volunteers to act out a scene from *The Great Gatsby* were left unanswered. Accordingly, she had to instruct each assigned group to prepare a short sketch and later present it to the class. She seemed displeased with their attitudes and class presentations. Although she realised that some of them were not paying attention to the lessons, she did not take any action. During the interview, she claimed that if she had *"scolded them"*, she believed that the students might have reacted differently to her request for a sketch. She vented her disappointment in her journal:

*The part where the students had to act out some of the scenes was terrible! ...I would have blown my top and really scolded the students for not being interested and*

*motivated to put up a good acting. In fact I would have scolded them ever since the 5<sup>th</sup> activity because I saw many students were giving me the 'bored and lost' look. (Journal Entry 7: The Great Gatsby)*

Notwithstanding her discouraging experience, Nadia felt that to a certain extent, it had given her some benefits. Though she considered that some of the lessons did not achieve their aims, she believed that she still could learn from this experience and improve for future teaching. In other words, she knew what activities had worked and what did not and this knowledge would enable her to choose or develop literature-based activities to ensure future success. Nadia showed her optimism when she explained that she had learned something valuable even when some of her lessons had been less successful. This suggested that her attitude remained positive and encouraging towards the integration of literature:

*Yes, yes, I am more aware of the different ways [of] going about...using literature in language classroom. And the interesting part is that when some of the lessons were not successful, they also gave me some ideas...of what I shouldn't do. In other words, it was not a total failure because lessons were still learned for me as the teacher.*

Furthermore, all three teachers indicated that the activities on the poems were more interesting than the other tasks in the worksheets. They considered the poems, *This is Just to Say*, *When, and maggie and milly and molly and may*, were simple, yet interesting. The language of the poems was considered easy to understand and thus, they did not experience difficulties in explicating either about the poems, the language patterns or the tasks to the students. Zahra found that their activities were effective because her students could understand the poems and the intended patterns and were able to produce their own creative poems as a reaction to the original in an enjoyable and fun-filled way:

*The first poem, This is Just to Say, is rather straight forward and the words are all very simple and the message is simple. So, I can see that the students enjoy it because after that, they have to write their own poem of [in a] the similar format and writing a message to someone and then replying to the message. And they really had fun doing it.*



Aminah also sensed that her students were keen on doing the tasks related to these poems as much as she did, in contrast to the other activities. Like Zahra, she cited their language simplicity as the main attribute that appealed to her students when she said, " *I like the poems ...they are easy, the words are easy and [the] students, I can see, are very happy [and] they are very interested to know more.*" Nadia affirmed that the poems were easy not only because of their words, but also because the linguistic patterns for each poem were straight forward. For instance, the first poem *This is Just to Say* centred on 'tenses', the second, *When* dealt with 'antonymy and synonymy' and the last poem, *maggie and milly and molly and may* focused on 'cohesion'. Hence, Nadia felt that their activities were appealing because there was an integrated combination of language focus and an emphasis on literariness. Her students enjoyed performing these tasks because they could see how these language patterns were expounded by the poems and how these patterns further enhanced their understanding of the texts. She gave a lengthy explanation:

*The first activity, which was the poem by [Williams] Carlos Williams. It was easy because it played on the 'tenses', where they had to change the tense from the 'past tense' to 'future tense', it was easy and they could see the function of the language item...I think they enjoyed the poems more because the activities were simpler, like the first...was on the 'tenses', the second...was on 'antonym' and also the activities made use of this application technique or replacement technique where first you introduce the 'antonym' and then 'synonym' and the follow up activity also make use of that so, it further strengthens the language item.*

The three teachers also described their experience of using the poems in their journals. Table 7.1 below summarises their personal reflections regarding the activities based on the poems.

Poems/ Teachers	Poem 1 This is Just to Say	Poem 2 When	Poem 3 maggie and milly and molly and may
<b>Nadia</b>	<i>Loved the lesson. Students responded well and enjoyed the lesson. Students were excited. Students were able to grasp the function of tenses. Students produced really interesting poems. Happy with the lesson.</i>	<i>Interesting poem Interesting way of teaching antonyms. Students understood the concept of antonyms. Something to apply for future lessons. Students wrote beautiful and very interesting poems about family and friends.</i>	<i>Initially, the students were a bit confused. Students enjoyed the activities. The activities were fun. Students came up with brilliant poems. I enjoyed the lesson and think the students did too!</i>
<b>Zahra</b>	<i>Poem was simple. Students made an effort. Students enjoyed the activities. Students understand the concept of tenses. Students produced nice poems on their own.</i>	<i>Students showed wonderful interest. Students were active in class. Students lacked the vocabulary. Students managed to come up with words above their language level. Students produced interesting poems.</i>	<i>Students still showed full interest. Not enough time to share the students' poems with the class. Students wrote nice messages in their postcards. The students were called 'Poetic Engineers!'</i>
<b>Aminah</b>	<i>Students showed their enthusiasm. They understood the poem and the concept of tenses. The content of the poem was related to them. Students produced interesting poems. The lesson was successful.</i>	<i>No journal entry</i>	<i>The activities were quite challenging for the students. Students had fun doing the activities. The content of the poem was a bit difficult due to certain words such as 'languid' and 'stranded'.</i>

Table 7.1 The teachers' personal reflections of the poems

As stated at the beginning of this section, there were mixed responses from the teachers regarding the activities. Apart from the aforementioned positive comments, the three colleagues also recorded some discouraging views. Nadia claimed that it was quite problematic

for her to sustain the students' interest in the tasks, especially towards the end of the study, partly because they found the similar patterns of activity in the worksheets dreary. In other words, they could predict the tasks that they would receive in the following week. Accordingly, she and Aminah proposed that literature-based materials should include a variety of patterns instead of continuing as before, where the students were required to answer comprehension questions based on the texts and discuss the language patterns. Nadia suggested there should be more "*different types of activities*." She further explained:

*I think towards the end they lost the interest already, probably because of the repetition, in terms of the patterns of the activities where they always had this group work, discussion of the poem, or discussion of the short story, or discussion of the novel and then you know, post-activity, so it was kind of stereotyped, so I think towards the end they already predicted the patterns of the lesson, so they were kind of bored.*

In addition, the teachers also felt that there were too many questions in one reading stage. For instance, Aminah stated that there were many questions on the language pattern as well as the questions that required evaluations and giving of opinions in the While-Reading activity in *China's Little Ambassador's* worksheet. Because of this, she sensed that some of her students were a "*bit tired of answering a lot questions*." As mentioned in Section 3.5.1.4, there were five stages of activity: Introduction, Pre-Reading, While-Reading, Post-Reading and Follow-up Activity. Zahra felt that albeit it was good to have all these reading stages, she consented that there were too many questions to answer in one phase and consequently, she faced a shortage of time. She felt that her students did not have sufficient time to complete all the reading activities and took longer to understand the texts than anticipated. Thus, she needed more than one class hour to conduct and accomplish all five reading stages in a worksheet. Hence, the teachers assumed that if the number of the reading stage was reduced and fewer questions were asked, the students would be able to complete the tasks and so, gain a sense of achievement. When they were less tense, they were more inclined to

participate in the lessons and the teachers, would not only have less explaining to do, but enjoy teaching the class as well.

### 7.3.2 Views on texts

There were also distinct reactions from the three colleagues with regard their views on the texts used. As stated earlier, they enjoyed working on the poems more than the other texts and agreed that they were easy to understand, straight-forward and contained simple words and messages. Zahra changed her pre-study perceptions of poetry when she taught the activities on the poems:

*The poems, at first, I thought it was going to be difficult for me to carry the lesson because I am not so keen in doing poems myself. But, the poems used in the worksheets are very simple and straightforward and they [students] could understand them clearly and I can see that the students really enjoyed doing the poems.*

Another poem, *When* was a favourite for Nadia because her students were receptive towards the lesson and her expectation that the class was going to be successful was fulfilled. She sensed that the students could easily relate to the poem as it revolved around common issues with which they were quite familiar.

With regard the other texts used in the worksheets, the three instructors generally felt that *A Day's Wait*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Hearts and Hands* were quite inappropriate for their students' levels of proficiency mainly due to language difficulties and complicated vocabulary. In other words, linguistic problems, particularly the complexity of the vocabulary and sentence construction of the texts, were held responsible for the students' inability to achieve understanding. Because of this, it was difficult for their students to fulfil some of the activities in the worksheets. When they neither understood the texts nor accomplished their tasks, they resorted to the teachers for explanation and answers. Therefore, both parties were affected, the students became demotivated in pursuing the exercises, while the teachers felt pressured to supply the information.

Aminah added that she did not favour *After the Funeral* because it contained some complicated vocabulary that hampered her students' comprehension and reactions. Accordingly, some of them turned to her for the definitions of some of the difficult words as they lacked the initiative to refer to a dictionary or they sought answers from their peers without understanding. Nonetheless, in her journal, Aminah contradicted her earlier view when she wrote that although her students experienced some setbacks in comprehending the story, they were captivated to know more about it and succeeded in grasping the language pattern taught, 'adverbs', in the performance of the tasks and in return demonstrated their understanding in their own work:

*I can see that when I told or narrate the summary of the story to them, they looked very interested to know more ... In Activity 3, they managed to get the answers correctly and understood the usage of adverbs and the types of adverbs. As a result, the students managed to come up with very interesting answers in Activity 4, there was one group choose the adverb, 'nicely' and put it in the romantic atmosphere. This is very good as they can apply the words. (Journal Entry 8: After the Funeral)*

These texts were perceived to be linguistically inappropriate for the students as they contained a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary which was considered beyond their levels of proficiency. For example, *After the Funeral* contained words such as 'testimony disposition, desultory and disquisition' which were judged difficult for them as they would not encounter such words either in their everyday conversations or class activities. I am aware that these words might pose some linguistic problems, however, as mentioned in Section 3.5.1.2, my intention was to introduce complicated words to help enrich and develop their vocabulary. The students' vocabulary will not be expanded if they are constantly bombarded with familiar and simple words.

Zahra claimed that *Hearts and Hands* was quite difficult for her students due to some interpretation problems where they failed to understand the "*meanings of the story because it is very deep.*" This was because they were engrossed with the idea that reading literature would

mean looking for the underlying meanings of the story. She felt that when they failed to achieve them, it would probably eliminate any residual enthusiasm that they might have for reading the rest of the texts used in the worksheets, and other literary works in general. However, unlike Zahra, Nadia stated that *Hearts and Hands* was interesting because of the unexpected twist at the end of the story. Initially, her students encountered a difficulty in identifying the twist and consequently, they became confused. However, when they managed to discover its irony, they too became interested.

Although *The Great Gatsby* was essentially considered linguistically challenging for the students, Zahra claimed that when her students performed the role-play activity based on the novel, she found the lesson not only to be entertaining and successful, but also relaxing. She experienced a similar situation when her group conducted a sketch based on *Death of A Salesman*. To her, these lessons were effective because the activities created a stress-free and pleasurable classroom atmosphere that promoted an increased interest in the lessons among the students. Zahra talked about her experience:

*The most interesting text was the latest one, Death of A Salesman because I could see that the students are more laid back and relax, even though it's a play and the other one is The Great Gatsby because they have to do some performance and then they enjoy teasing each other when their friends perform. So, it kind of gives us to relax a bit.*

The three colleagues also thought that the students were unable to understand some of the texts because of the unfamiliar culture depicted in them. For instance, Aminah sensed that it was easier for her students to figure out *China's Little Ambassador* than *Hearts and Hands* as they were more aware and accustomed to the Chinese culture, as Malaysia itself is a multiracial community which encompasses three major ethnic groups, the Malays, Chinese and Indians. Her thoughts were reflected in her journal:

*I could see that the students liked the story very much... When asked, they said that the story is easy to understand and very interesting, compared to last week's Hearts and Hands. They also said that the story is very light and funny... For me, I think the*

*story is very interesting and understandable due to the language use, the story line and the culture portrayed which is the Chinese culture. This is interesting because they used their background knowledge in understanding the culture. (Journal Entry 6: China's Little Ambassador)*

However, Aminah claimed that some of her students encountered difficulties with the other text such as *A Day's Wait* due to the fact that they were not familiar with the custom of "hunting and the shooting of birds." She felt that all this culture was foreign to her Malay students and hindered their understanding of the text. Aminah also felt that they were quite confused about the "reading of a will", and having a "butler" at home (*After the Funeral*) for these were alien to Malay culture. Therefore, the findings implied that the students' difficulty in literary reading from the teachers' point of view were instigated by unknown cultural references and linguistic difficulties. But, most often, the students' problem in literary reading and comprehension was caused by the complicated words and this was especially true for lower-proficiency learners with their limited vocabulary in the target language.

Nadia claimed that not only were the texts culturally new, they also contained inappropriate cultural descriptions for Muslim teenage students such as "married couples having affairs and also about the American cultures of parties" in *The Great Gatsby*. Accordingly, she suggested that the texts should contain appropriate cultural references which should fit comfortably in the background context of the students. There might be values in the teachers' views that the lifestyles portrayed in *The Great Gatsby* were unsuitable for the students at this Islamic Institution. However, it is argued that the students could also be exposed to such cultures through the technological advancement such as the Internet and television. Hence, instead of withholding information about such cultures, the students could be exposed to and discover about other cultures that could promote the development of understanding and tolerance of different races and beliefs. Furthermore, it is less likely to be profitable for the students if they continue to be drip-fed with known cultures as they will not increase their knowledge and awareness of other people's cultures and faith. Hence, the

exposure to varieties of cultures may or may not be paramount, is relevant to the students and the teachers can encourage them to reflect about themselves and other people from different societies.

Furthermore, Nadia and Aminah claimed that extracts of the novels and the play were unsuitable for the students as they experienced comprehension difficulties when only extracts were given. Nadia maintained that the students needed to be presented with summaries of the texts because *"they had to understand the whole story first before they could understand the excerpts."* Although the teachers provided these summaries, some students were still confused. Aminah suggested that they be given the complete novel to read prior to class. Nonetheless, asking the students to read a complete novel was most likely to be met with rejection because most of them seemed to have a dislike for reading novels. On the other hand, Zahra contended that it was interesting to use extracts because they raised the students' curiosity and anticipation about the rest of the story and thus, encouraged extended personal reading among them.

### 7.3.3 Difficulties in using the worksheets

During the interviews, the three instructors were asked about the difficulties that they encountered when using the worksheets. Nadia complained that one of the problems she had was the lack of ownership of the lessons as she lacked the freedom to use texts of her own choice and devise her own activities. Moreover, since she did not *"play a part in designing the worksheets"* and was just the *"executor"* of the lessons, she did not feel involved at all. Accordingly, she felt detached from the worksheets and these feelings affected her confidence to teach. Another lengthy explanation from Nadia:

*The short stories, they were not my choice, they were someone's choice. So, I didn't have that sense of ownerships towards the lesson. So, I think that was one of the biggest issues throughout the research. I didn't play a part in designing the worksheets, I didn't play a part in designing the activities, I didn't play a part in choosing any of the texts, I was just the executor.*



Another concern that Nadia raised was her unfamiliarity with the literary texts used. Her limited knowledge of the texts significantly affected her confidence to deliver the lessons as effectively as she would have because she had neither read any of the novels nor was she familiar with their authors and their work. Because of this, she felt incompetent to handle the texts and was anxious lest her students ask about them. She expressed her insecurities:

*I wasn't confident enough to teach some of the lessons because I was not familiar with some of the authors although I have heard of them, I was not familiar with their whole orientation...and I didn't read the novels. So, again, that didn't give me a sense of command of the whole lesson.*

This finding accords with Lazar's (1993) argument that it may be important for teachers to know about an author's background as it can provide some valuable information to help students understand the texts. However, according to Short and Candlin (1989), teachers' preoccupation with knowing about the specific culture and background knowledge of an author and the text will result into teaching literature as content. They further argue that most ESL teachers assume that in order to teach literature, they have to know everything about the texts and their authors, and if they lack this information, they will hesitate and feel reluctant to carry out the lessons.

Next, Aminah and Nadia brought up the point of having the focus on language and the text itself as another issue that caused difficulties in using the worksheets. They claimed that in some of the tasks, the focus on understanding the texts had underplayed the emphasis for language. In other words, some of the reading activities, especially those on the short stories and novels concentrated more on the students' understanding of the texts and less on analysing the language. Nadia noted:

*The questions asked in the handouts made them understand, helped them to understand stories or the poems, but most of the questions were about that, to help them understand the story and only a part of it, especially the ones on the short stories and the novels, only a small part was catered towards teaching the language item. More questions asked them for understanding...most of the questions were about stories, were about the novel, and very few questions help the students understand the language item.*

Nadia stated that another problem in using the worksheets was the irrelevant linguistic patterns. As mentioned earlier, she claimed that it was difficult to make the students appreciate the significance of the language patterns such as 'points of view' and analysing 'turn-taking' in learning English. In other words, they could not see the importance or relevance of these patterns in either their daily communication or their skills-based classes. They would probably be more receptive and interested in fulfilling some of the tasks if they could identify their relevance. She also claimed that not only were the students unable to relate to these patterns, but she also failed to identify their significance in teaching language proficiency:

*The language item tested, which was 'points of view', was also something that I think they could not relate to really because it was not like a language item like 'tenses', 'adjectives' or 'adverb' and it was probably difficult, a little bit difficult for them. Overall, that activity I think was difficult...I didn't get the significant of teaching turn-taking in a conversation, interruptions and all. I couldn't see that significance and I think the students also couldn't see...the importance of it.*

Nadia also sensed that it was easier to teach the linguistic patterns that were relevant to the students' needs as language learners. Patterns such as 'tenses', 'adverbs' and 'cohesion' which were very much pertinent to their language courses, were well-received by the students. This was probably because they could exercise and enhance their existing knowledge of the patterns acquired from their daily occurrence and classroom encounter with the target language whilst undertaking some of the tasks. Nadia also sensed that the linguistic complexities of the texts were compounded when the language patterns were also difficult. As such, she recommended the use of simple linguistic patterns like the ones illustrated in the poems as they had proven to be more successful with the students. She reflected her view in the journal:

*So far, the teaching of parts of speech and tenses had been proved to be successful. So - easy language item, not difficult ones like 'direct and indirect speech' etc, because difficult concepts would need more explanation - explanation on the story and explanation on language item... (Journal Entry 10: Additional Entry)*

The three tutors also considered the students' attitudes as another key issue in using the worksheets. They felt that some of their students were unresponsive because when they could not fathom a particular question or activity, they lacked the initiatives either to ask the teacher, or their peers, and kept to themselves. This attitude was apparent during the classroom activities, particularly in Group A. Observations revealed that when the students encountered problems with the tasks, they started to lose interest in the lessons. This attitude implied that passive students were inclined to feel discouraged when they encountered problems in the completion of tasks and were reluctant to seek help.

Apart from the students' passive attitudes, the colleagues also claimed that their learners exhibited little or no motivation and were reluctant to communicate their ideas in class and needed to be pushed. Observations also revealed that some students, especially in Group A, seldom volunteered to provide answers for class discussion. Because of this, Nadia had to pick out a few students and instruct them to express their opinions. After instructing two students to give their predictions regarding the ending of *China's Little Ambassador*, and since their responses were poor, Nadia disappointedly revealed its ending. Zahra agreed that the students also had to be encouraged to speak up in class. She believed that the main reasons for their hesitance were either because of their lack of understanding of the story or they were simply not interested in the lessons for a variety of reasons. She reflected her thoughts in the journal:

*Maybe because they have to read more and lost their concentrations towards the end of the story or they did not understand the story. I had to work 'extra' to make the students see behind the incidents, event and moments in the story, to make them understand and therefore, like the story. I had to pull them into discussion because some I can see from their facial expressions they have 'left' the class and wander around! That I didn't see when we were doing poems. (Journal Entry 4: A Day's Wait)*

Aminah offered another plausible explanation for the students' aversion to communicating their views claiming that they were unable to get their message across. In other words, the students lacked the communicative competence and knowledge of the target

language to relay their message. Accordingly, most students preferred to give written rather than spoken answers. Like Aminah, Zahra attributed the motives why most of her pupils refused to present their ideas during class discussions to their limited vocabulary and lack of proficiency in English. She pointed out that sometimes they had the right ideas, but they could not find the appropriate vocabulary to communicate their thoughts. She noted, *"sometimes they have the ideas but they couldn't really put it into the correct words, the correct vocabulary."*

All three instructors also expressed faith that the students' incapability to achieve comprehension was one of the reasons why they refused to speak up in class. In other words, they refused to present their ideas because when they failed to fathom the text, they became fearful of talking about something that they had limited or no knowledge of. Consequently, they were inclined to depend on their teachers for further clarification either about the activities or the texts. Zahra claimed that most of her students were teacher-dependent because they relied on her to supply the meanings of the difficult words encountered in reading the texts. She found their dependency to be energy-sapping as she had to meticulously provide clues about the words in order to help them guess their meanings. She described her experience of teaching 'Hearts and Hands' in her journal:

*Teaching a group of LEM 4013 (Level 4) can be stressful when you have to give clues (sometimes you have to think on the spot) for them to guess the words. For example, there was a blank which begins with I\_\_\_\_\_ and I told the students "it's not big" and surprisingly majority shouted "large" and I said, "No!" It's the opposite of big and large that starts with 'l'. They couldn't think... Due to the struggle, I was already lost my energy towards the end of the story to explain to them the other 2 characters in the story. (Journal Entry 5: Hearts and Hands)*

This dependency on teachers probably occurred because of the teachers themselves. The data from the observation revealed that in all groups, most of the time, the teachers dominated the classroom talk. They talked the most, assigned group discussion and usually either explained about the texts or provided the answers to some of the tasks to the students.

The three instructors also cited the students' attitudes towards literature as another key motive that caused difficulties in using the worksheets. It was easy to find in the three groups students who were enthusiastic about literature and those who were not. Similarly, there were students who enjoyed doing the activities, while some did not. Aminah was uncertain why some of her students were not interested in literature when she stated, "*some of them are not very interested in learning about literature... [but] I do not know why.*" Zahra also experienced some difficulties in dealing with her students who had least interest in literature and were unwilling to participate in the class activities. She noticed the interested students would make an effort to complete the tasks, while the uninterested parties would choose to ignore them. She observed:

*I can see some of the students who are really keen in answering the questions, they really put [in] the efforts, from the way they work, looking at their body language in answering the questions, their facial expression, they are really serious into answering the questions...But some students who...couldn't care less, they just don't care whether they can understand or they cannot understand, they just leave it be.*

Nadia, too mentioned that she faced problems in encouraging her students to become interested in reading literary texts and to maintain that interest. She believed that some students were not keen on literary reading primarily because they lacked sufficient language competency. As a result, they felt discouraged and perceived reading as "*boring*" or "*difficult*."

All three teachers also put forward another possible amalgamation of motives that affected the students' attitudes towards the lessons: the students' own physical exhaustion, and the time tabling of the Reading class itself. The classes were held in mid-afternoon to late evenings when most of the students had already been attending classes since morning, usually with no break in between, except for lunch. Nadia complained, "*[the] students were tired, they were restless, they were not interested in the lessons.*" Another factor was the physical setting of the class. Since all three classes were held in an old wooden building which was unbearably hot and subject to regular thunderstorms. The location and weather factors significantly impaired the students' concentration and the teachers' motivation. The observation data also

revealed that both sets of respondents were visibly uncomfortable with the heat in their classrooms. Nadia revealed in her journal how she was badly affected by the hot weather:

*Take note that **HEAT** is one of the contributing factors to the failure of a lesson! Heat really saps my energy!!! And the students'!!! (Journal Entry 6: China's Little Ambassador)*

#### 7.4 Post-study attitudes towards literature

This is the second section of the chapter and it discusses the effects of the study on the instructors' perceptions of literature and its assimilation in ELT. The discussion is based on the last two research questions listed in Section 7.2:

- RQs 4: What are the effects of the literature-based materials which incorporate a pedagogical stylistic method of analysis on the teachers' and learners' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context?
- RQs 5: What are the impacts of a pedagogical stylistic approach on the development of literature-based materials in language classrooms from the teachers' and students' points of view?

It goes without saying that the focus of analysis is targeted on the three instructors and in an attempt to explore and provide answers for these research questions, the discussion of the their post-research attitudes is grouped into two main categories: (i) perceptions of literature, and (ii) suggestions on the integration of literature.

##### 7.4.1 Perceptions of literature

Aminah, Zahra and Nadia expressed a strong belief in the potential values of literature and remained favourable towards its integration in their work after the study. Aminah maintained her view that literature should not be "*put aside*" and that "*it should be incorporated with learning the language*" as she perceived literature as a "*vehicle*" that enabled the students to acquire and use the target language. Zahra also agreed that literary texts are useful resources in language teaching and clearly said she would continue to use literature in her future classrooms. Her experience of using the worksheets had further enhanced her enthusiasm to incorporate literary materials in her teaching. She reflected her view:

*Using literature in Reading class is really refreshing. Something new and should be included in the syllabus. ...I think in future if I were to use literature I would use the ideas from the worksheets. (Journal Entry 10: Additional Entry)*

Nadia affirmed the other two teachers' statement regarding the place of literature in language teaching and asserted that literary works could be manipulated to supplement the lessons provided that the texts used clearly exemplified the linguistic patterns that the students were supposed to learn. However, she preferred to teach literature for its literary qualities rather than focusing on its language. To her, literature could be integrated in the language syllabus, but with a separate time-table, detached from the skills-based classes. Like Zahra and Aminah, Nadia professed a strong interest to keep using literature with her students. As mentioned earlier, albeit she encountered some discouraging experiences of using the worksheets, she remained optimistic towards the integration of literary texts when she said, "*I have been using them and I think I would continue using them.*"

The teachers also remained firm in their stand that it was profitable to engage literature as one of the many resources in language teaching primarily because of the various benefits that their students could gain from its incorporation. Among the advantages articulated by them were that the exposure to literature promoted the students' competence in the target language by enhancing their grammatical knowledge and expanding their restricted existing vocabulary.

In addition, Aminah and Zahra contended that literature-based activities helped to create a fun-filled and an entertaining learning atmosphere. Creative tasks developed around literary texts such as role-plays were perceived as being more enjoyable than the tasks in the course book. Zahra sensed that her students liked these tasks because they derived satisfaction from the performances presented by each group in her class and enjoyed the opportunity to tease their peers in a playful manner when their friends were presenting. Aminah also believed that her students enjoyed themselves during the sketch on *The Death of A Salesman*. Observations revealed that her students were most participative and appeared to be

having fun. They reorganised the chairs and tables in the classroom to depict the setting from the play and made effort with their gestures and movements. While one group was performing, the rest were quiet and concentrated on their actions. After each performance, claps and loud praises were heard from the non-presenters. Like Zahra, Aminah felt the atmosphere in class was stimulating and lively. Zahra's journal entry best summed up the effects of using literature-based drama activity on the classroom atmosphere:

*The boys' performance put the class in stitches when they tried to add their own lines and some had to play Myrtle – one example, when X, a rather small sized-boy, is paired up with Y, who is twice his size. X as Myrtle asked Y to beat him – "beat me! Beat me!" but he sounded like a parrot – so monotonous. That made the class roared with laughter. Y had to portray a fierce character when he is by nature a soft-spoken and courteous boy. It was fun to see both performed. (Journal Entry 6: The Great Gatsby)*

Aminah assumed that her pupils were active and motivated because the drama activity emphasised the speaking practice more than the writing exercises. The students were also moving about the classroom and there was more physical movement instead of sitting at their tables and discussing the tasks. The findings, therefore, suggested that the students would be more participative and enthusiastic if the tasks involved more communicative activities and physical movement and less paper work.

Furthermore, it could also be inferred that the teachers were more concerned in using literature for communicative purposes. This view was further strengthened when they indicated during the interviews that if literature were to be integrated in the language syllabus at the Center, it should be predominantly used in the Speaking course. They claimed that the students could improve on their communication abilities during literary-based classroom exercises. Aminah and Zahra were especially keen on bringing literature into their future Speaking classes. Based on her experience, Zahra was confident that activities focused on literary works, especially dramatisations, could best work in this particular course, "*especially*



*with the lower-level proficiency students because it could polish up their pronunciation, expression and improve their speaking skills."*

Nonetheless, Nadia added that literature-based materials could also profit the students in their Writing subjects, especially in terms of constructing comparative or descriptive essays. At the time of study, the Writing class at EL4 focused on comparative essays, while EL3 concentrated on descriptive essays.

Another reason why the three colleagues assumed that literature was potentially pertinent in language teaching was due to the popular supposition that it presented the students with an interesting read. Literature was said to offer something refreshing to read apart from their academic course books, and that literary works were often more exciting with conflicting plots and colourful characters and interesting themes. Nadia sensed that some of her students liked reading *Hearts and Hands* and Zahra noted that some of her pupils were attracted to read *The Great Gatsby* because of the stories' romantic themes, while Aminah reported that many of her pupils were intrigued in reading about the mysterious plot in *After the Funeral* or enjoying the comedy in *China's Little Ambassador*. In this sense, Zahra felt that her students not only were presented with a pleasurable read, but also the experience was relaxing for them as they could momentarily escape from the stress of reading their customary textbooks which usually dealt with either facts or numbers. She said:

*I think rather than using the textbooks, this can be something refreshing, to use stories and poems and plays in class so that the students could relax a bit rather than using texts with facts. Now, they can enjoy texts with stories and characters and look into the deeper meaning, and the underlying meanings of texts.*

Zahra also assumed that a continuous exposure to literary works would eventually instigate an interest in literature among the students. She argued that since the texts are understandably a more engaging read than the course books, she expressed confidence that they would learn to like literature. She held the belief that when they could understand and accept literature as part of an absorbing reading activity, the interest would gradually emerge.

She noted, *"from my observations, as time goes by the students really can...accept literature as part of reading activity. So far, they didn't complain about using literature in class. Maybe because they like it, even if some of the texts are difficult."* This finding corresponds to Davis *et al.* (1992:322) who reported that learners' positive attitude towards the integration of literature in language acquisition were mainly due to the sentiment that literary reading was "personally rewarding."

As mentioned earlier, Nadia stated that one of her problems in using the worksheets was to get her students to become more interested in some of the lessons and to maintain that interest. However, when she used the worksheets on *Hearts and Hands* it was relatively easy for her to engage their interest in the story as one of its themes was about the relationship between two characters, a beautiful woman and a handsome man. Because 99% of the students in Group A were female, it was easier for her to relate the story to them. She wrote about her experience in her journal:

*I was more involved in the story. Probably the theme on 'love' made it much easier to relate to. The students were also attracted to this story probably because of the same reason – a theme on 'love' usually works with girls. (Journal Entry 5: Hearts and Hands)*

It could be deduced from the findings that stories that involved romance, mystery and comedy were more appealing to teenage students. And when they unearthed something that fascinated them, they were more likely to have an exciting reading experience. It could also be inferred that if teachers displayed an interest in a story, they would feel more enthusiastic towards the lessons and their attitudes would be reflected by the students as well. In other words, enthusiastic teachers could encourage positive attitudes towards reading literature among students.

Furthermore, it was interesting to note that although the teachers expressed enthusiasm in continuing to use literature in their future lessons, there were two different views regarding its use. Nadia was adamant from the beginning that if literature was to be integrated,

it should be taught as content or as an independent subject, rather than being incorporated within the actual language lessons. Her experience of the worksheets had not altered her opinion, but further strengthened her view that it was not a "*good idea*" to use literature as supplementary or alternative materials within the language class. In other words, she preferred to use literary texts to teach literature, rather than having to use them to teach language. She felt that it was quite difficult to concentrate on two things at a time, to focus on teaching language and to concentrate on the literary texts. She found it hard for her to juggle these two subjects as she claimed the attention to language depleted the students' enjoyment of learning about literature. Thus, she assumed that it was better to let them enjoy and be totally engaged in the literary work, rather than distract their concentration by focusing on its language. She also expressed difficulties in getting them to concentrate on a language item when they were already engrossed in reading the text. Thus, the findings suggested that Nadia supported the use of literature in language learning, but felt that it should be regarded as an independent subject with its primary use geared to teach literature as content and for the students to read and enjoy the text without having to concentrate on its language. She gave another lengthy explanation:

*If I were to use the texts for language teaching, the focus would be more on language, and if I were to teach texts for literary purposes, then the focus would be that. But I think it's not really a good idea to mix them both, to teach the literature aspects a lot of that, and suddenly having to teach the language aspect as well. I enjoyed more teaching the texts as a literary piece rather than having to use the texts to teach language item, because when the students and the teacher got carried away with the whole text, it was difficult to get their focus back on track and to get them to see now we are actually doing something on language rather than on literature.*

The findings are also consistent with the results of a previous study by Mohd Salleh (2004) who discovered that the perennial problem faced by most ESL teachers when using literature in their language instruction, is their struggle to convey the literary aspects while working on the proficiency problems.

On the other hand, Zahra and Aminah were also steadfast in their belief that literature should be integrated and taught within the language lessons. In other words, literature should be used as a resource to teach English during the language class itself. Aminah had been clear from the beginning that literature was potentially effective as one of the teaching tools since it is made of and deals with language. As she pointed out, *"literature or literary texts... are closely related to language. So, they should always go together."* However, the focus should be on the acquisition of the target language and not on the literary qualities.

Zahra was also keen on using literature in language teaching. Nevertheless, at the beginning, she was unsure how literature could be integrated in her lessons. After the study, however, as mentioned earlier, she sensed that she had gained some knowledge of how to integrate literary texts and reiterated a similar opinion that literature offered numerous benefits to students and teachers alike. Thus, her experience further reinforced her view that literature is one of the valuable resources for language learning and teaching.

#### **7.4.2 Suggestions on the integration of literature**

When asked during the interviews whether they would like to use literature-based exercises in their future classes, the three instructors indicated positive responses. This suggested they had maintained favourable attitudes towards literature, prior to and after the research. Their experience of the study further strengthened their initial view that there was a strong potential for literature to be integrated in the language syllabus at the Center. Furthermore, their experience of using the worksheets enabled them to offer more specific suggestions on the application of literature in comparison to their pre-study. Their recommendations are applicable to teachers or language instructors whose students share a similar level of proficiency with those in this study. The tutors' after study suggestions were mainly focused on five main concerns: (i) the choice of texts, (ii) training needs, (iii) assessment

factors, (iv) literature-based activities, and (v) the frequency of classes. The first three factors were also mentioned in Section 6.6.

One of the important factors named by all three teachers that could determine a successful integration of literature was the choice of texts. They stressed that the texts should be straight forward, contain simple language and plots in order to enable students achieve understanding in one reading. They argued that it was essential to use simple literary genres with less advanced learners as most of them would experience problems in reading texts with complicated vocabulary. Moreover, they maintained that these students would prefer reading easy texts instead of complicated ones.

Hence it could be inferred that not only the students preferred to use simple and easy texts (see Section 4.6.2 and Section 5.4.2.2), but the teachers as well. The teachers articulated similar views to the students' that uncomplicated works of literature were assumed to produce successful literary reading and develop a positive experience and attitude towards literature. The findings also implied that the teachers' preference to use simple texts was instigated by their difficulties in explicating texts with complex vocabulary to their students.

The three tutors also mentioned training needs in terms of support and guidance for teachers as another important issue to ensure an effective and a profitable incorporation of literature. Aminah, Zahra and Nadia strongly agreed that training on how to efficiently use and exploit literary texts in language lessons was paramount before teachers could be encouraged to attempt such integration. This is because they felt that although they were provided with the worksheets and lesson plans during the study, they still required more training and guidance especially in understanding, evaluating and discussing literary works in order to feel competent and confident. Zahra explained why she felt training was necessary:

*Because then I would know how to carry out [a] lesson and then maybe some guide if the students and I got stuck in the middle of the texts, [unable to] understand and...help each other, I need that kind of guidance.*

Nadia and Aminah also agreed that training was imperative. Nadia maintained that teachers needed to be provided with adequate resources for them to be interested enough to venture into the journey of incorporating literary works into their lessons. She stressed that language instructors should be given the means to obtain literature-based materials such as by setting up a Resource Center that provides appropriate materials and support to help teachers explore and use these materials. She believed that if sufficient guidance were provided, teachers would be more likely to be enthusiastic about *"using literature in their classroom."*

Aminah added that language teachers should be provided with assistance and guidance such as an in-house training or workshops in order to acquire more knowledge on how to manipulate literary texts. She also believed that adequate sources should be provided for teachers, particularly in terms of secretarial support and funding. All three teachers agreed that language educators would be more inclined to lose interest in literature if there was no continuing support to engender further interest. Otherwise, teachers would run the risk of being burn-out cases as the years pass by. Accordingly, they must be offered time, opportunities, training and guidance in order to pursue, develop and maintain their own interests so that they could keep the spark and enthusiasm towards literature, for without it, its integration with language study would be a lost cause. The findings also implied that interest alone was not enough. It needed to be strengthened and complemented with the necessary training. If teachers received sufficient support and proper training, literature might have a brighter future and occupy an important place in language education.

Assessment was another key aspect mentioned by the three tutors as integral for a rewarding assimilation of literature. Apparently, there was a conflict of opinions on whether the use of literature should be assessed or not. Aminah remained steadfast that literature should not be tested as she felt it would *"limit the students' interest in reading the texts."* Her opinion remained consistent before and after the study. On the other hand, Zahra thought that literature

should be assessed, however she stressed that it should only form a minimum percentage of the overall assessment. Like Aminah, she had been consistent with her view throughout the study. Nadia also felt that the application of literature should be assessed. Based on her experience of the study, she felt that it was more opportune to test students in order to create the impression that the use of literature was pertinent to their syllabus and helped them in their preparations for the examination. In other words, the relevance of literature to the curriculum and the roles that it could play in helping students to prepare for the language tests should be made transparent. Otherwise, Nadia claimed, the learners would devote little attention to the class activities. She was reflective in her journal:

*Probably it is partly my fault because I didn't explain to them how the lessons are related to the syllabus. ... I think some of the students felt the lessons do not help them in the preparation for the finals. (Journal Entry 7: A Day's Wait)*

Hence, it could be presumed that it was important for policy-makers and material developers to carefully consider whether the use of literary works, especially in the educational settings where the learners might not be competent in the target language, should be tested or not as literary assessment could have significant effects on students' attitudes towards literature and the language lessons.

The development of literature-based activities was the other prime factor pointed out by the three instructors that played a crucial role in the integration of literature. They recommended that there should be a balance between the choice of texts and the types of activities. If difficult texts were used, then the activities should be simpler, and if simple texts were selected, harder and more challenging tasks should be prepared. Zahra claimed that such an arrangement was practical because her students encountered difficulties in completing some of the tasks in the worksheets. She considered that not only were the texts such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Hearts and Hands* linguistically challenging, but their tasks were also complicated. She had this to say:

*The worksheets are really helpful but I think some of the stories which are difficult for them, maybe [they] should be used for the higher level students. And for these students [her class] maybe if we were to use difficult texts, maybe the questions shouldn't be so difficult. So, that it can be balanced out. So, the students can understand the texts but it won't be a burden for them when they are answering the questions.*

The teachers also suggested that literature-based materials should include more communicative activities since their experience had demonstrated that dramatisations proved most successful for use with students of limited proficiency. Nadia also proposed that the activities should include more *"physical movement in the classroom"* in order to maintain students' enthusiasm in the lessons. Such movements created an excitement for them and encouraged increased participation in the activities.

In addition, Aminah recommended that the materials should include the use of visual aids such as graphics, diagrams that could be developed into *"mind mapping tasks."* Like Nadia, she felt that the use charts and pictures might help to attract and sustain students' interest in the activities and make the lessons more appealing.

Finally, the three colleagues considered the frequency of classes as another important motive that could determine a profitable amalgamation of literature and language study. They argued that it was quite taxing for students to use literature-based materials if they were too frequently employed. This was because the materials could indirectly pressurise not only students who were not interested in literature, but also those who were, as they were not doing a course on literature, but obligatory proficiency language subjects. Nadia suggested that the materials would be more beneficial if they were employed occasionally in order not to overburden students and to maintain interest in classroom work.

Hence, based on all the aforementioned recommendations, it is apparent that much work remains to be done in terms of developing suitable and effective literature-based materials that can complement language syllabus and help in improving and promoting



students' language abilities. Attention must also be paid to identifying teachers' attitudes, experience and needs in order to ensure an effective assimilation of literature in ELT.

## 7.5 Summary

This chapter has presented an in-depth discussion on the post-research findings with regard the teachers' attitudes towards literature by referring to the last three research questions of the study. First, RQs 3 focuses on the teachers' experience and reactions to the worksheets. The findings revealed that though the teachers encountered mixed experiences, they seemed to have embraced encouraging attitudes towards literature. The types of activities, texts used and the difficulties in using the worksheets were responsible for their varied feelings. Second, RQs 4 talks about the effects of the worksheets on the teachers' attitudes towards literature in the ESL context. All three instructors appeared to exhibit positive and consistent views on literature and its integration in language study with their pre-study perspectives. Although they encountered some setbacks in using the worksheets, the instructors claimed that their experience had increased their knowledge of how to manipulate literary works in their teaching. As such, they professed a keen interest in employing literature in their future lessons. Finally, RQs 5 discusses the impacts of the worksheets on the respondents' views on the development of literature-based materials. The three tutors managed to offer specific, insightful and interesting proposals and to identify teachers' training needs, material development, selection of literary genres and assessment issues as significant concerns that could discourage attempts to integrate literature. These concerns need to be appropriately addressed before teachers could seriously embark on the journey of bringing literary works into teaching language to lower proficiency students.

**PART III**  
**CRITICAL OVERVIEW**

## Chapter Eight:            Implications of the Study

### 8.1      Introduction

This chapter provides a critical evaluation and discussion on the implications of the study. It entails a comprehensive account of the significant variables that appear to have essential effects on the respondents' attitudes, reactions and experience of the study in general, and their perspectives on literature and its potential effectiveness and pertinence in language acquisition in particular. Hence, the pre- and post-study findings are concurrently examined and discussed in order to elucidate and achieve an in-depth understanding of the instructors' and pupils' overall attitudes towards the intermarriage between literature and language study.

### 8.2      Significance of findings

The study revealed several important and interesting findings. First, the findings implied that a stylistics-based approach to literature or pedagogical stylistics was not suitable for lower-proficiency language students in this context of study for several reasons. A stylistics-based approach was seen as too demanding for the students of that level of proficiency because, when this approach to literature was used, the focus on language created problems for them. A study conducted by Hirvela (2005:79) also reported a similar result that literature "can prove daunting to read and write about, particularly for students who have not yet achieved an advanced level of English language proficiency." The teacher respondents also agreed that the approach was quite difficult for the students as they mainly lacked sufficient competence in the target language. The finding also affirms Gower's (1986) argument (see Section 2.4.2), that most ESL teachers consider a linguistic analysis of literary texts as difficult and one which denies students the enjoyment from reading literature.

Similarly, most of the students also said that reading literary texts was more pleasurable and interesting than analysing their language. They were engrossed in reading the

texts due to the power of narrative because the narratives made sense to them. The findings also suggested that a language-based approach could obstruct the students' enjoyment of reading and responding to the texts because the approach pulled the text apart. Although the worksheets tried to combine a focus on the language with a less directed reading of the texts, one of the teachers, Nadia, felt that the division between the two still existed. Because of this, she claimed that it was difficult for her to draw the students' attention to language, while they were immersed in reading the text and it was also difficult for her students to get back to enjoying the text after analysing its language. She claimed that when the students were forced to look at and analyse the language items, it disrupted their concentration on reading the texts and deprived them of the pleasure of being 'lost' in the reading. However, when the literary works were employed mainly to evoke the students' personal responses, where they talked about their feelings about the texts read, the three teachers agreed that their students considered their reading experience to be enlightening and worthwhile. Because of this, the three instructors, especially Nadia and Zahra, were drawn to reading the texts rather than focusing on their language. Therefore, it could be construed from the findings that the texts and the activities should have been handled in a way that enabled students to analyse the language and at the same time, enjoy the read.

Nevertheless, it is argued that given freedom, flexibility and guidance, positive results can be achieved in using a stylistics-based approach to literary works with students of limited competence in the target language. The study revealed that despite their failure to achieve comprehension of some of the texts read, the students managed to understand some of the simple linguistic patterns focused on such as 'adverbs', 'adjectives' and 'tenses' expounded by these texts. They were able to grasp the rules, functions and appropriate context for these patterns to be used. Hence, the study implied that a stylistic approach could still work with these students as it could prompt them into an investigation of the language of the text in order

to learn more about the target language itself. It also inferred that a much simpler type of stylistic analysis that used simple linguistic patterns could be accomplished with lower-proficiency language learners. Short (1996b) calls this method of making stylistics accessible to these groups of students as 'stylistics upside down', but cautions that teachers need to find new, accessible and student-friendly ways of using stylistics as the approach may be quite arduous and daunting for them.

Teachers should also be encouraged and given the freedom to experiment with new methods of exploiting a linguistics-based approach to literature in language teaching. However, before they can attain the confidence to leave the complacency of using literary texts for conducting communicative tasks, training and guidance are pre-requisite. A stylistic approach can be made accessible to lower-language learners, but it requires flexibility on students' and teachers' part to try alternative methods of reading literature by exploring the language of the literary texts, apart from the preferred methods of themes or topic-related discussions.

The study also revealed that literature-based communicative activities were more suitable and successful with limited proficiency language students. The findings indicated that the teachers and most students preferred to conduct creative communicative activities and that the students indicated their preference for problem-solving tasks, games and role-plays. The classroom observations showed that most students, especially in Group B and C, were most responsive when they were undertaking role-play activities based on the texts in the worksheets. Although there were numerous exercises on the language patterns, Zahra and Aminah, seemed more enthusiastic when they involved role-play or presentations from the students. Like their instructors, the students enjoyed the stylistic tasks far less than the communicative activities. When the attention was more to the language of the texts, they found the tasks in the worksheets to be demanding and less exciting compared with the speaking

exercises. Nevertheless, some of the students could recognise the potential relevance of a language-based approach in helping to develop their communicative abilities.

The study also revealed that there were three main perceptions among the students towards literature and its application in language education. They were: (1) literature is irrelevant, (2) there is a gap between 'Reading' and literature, and (3) literature is difficult. Most of the students assumed that literary language was different from everyday English language and irrelevant to their academic needs. Though it was mentioned in Section 4.5.1 and Section 5.4.2.1 that most students acknowledged that literature was potentially beneficial in language learning, especially in vocabulary expansion and grammar acquisition, it was not what they were in urgent need of acquiring. In other words, they believed that there were specific language skills that they had to learn for academic and practical purposes. Given such a belief, some students doubted the values of using literature in their lessons because it was not relevant to their skills-based courses. As pointed out by one of the students, *"one of the weaknesses of the study is that it is not connected with what I am learning in my Reading class."* Or (1995) similarly revealed the perception that literature "does not really meet the immediate academic and occupational needs of the students" is prevalent among L2 learners. This finding also reiterates one of the common reasons mentioned by Hall (2005) that most ESL students are reluctant to use literature in their classes because it still has not managed to make clear its relevance to their needs as language learners.

Edmonson (1997:47) also questions the use of literature in foreign or second language classrooms and claims that literature fails to "further language learning and can in fact be highly demotivating, or at best irrelevant." Earlier, McKay (1986:191) has said that not only do students doubt the necessity for literature in language learning, but many instructors are also resistant the idea of using literary materials because they hold the view that one of the main

“goals of ESL teachers is to teach the grammar of the language, literature, due to its structural complexity and its unique use of language, does little to contribute to this goal.”

The findings from the study also demonstrated that there was an apparent perceptual gap between literature and the Reading course. Some students viewed literature as a separate and different component from the Reading subject albeit literary texts were employed as the reading materials and used within the Reading class hour. Moreover, though they had been exposed to literature as an integrated component of the English language subject in school and to the worksheets, most of them still perceived literature as a subject in its own right. This finding is similar to Weist's (2004:209) who discovered that most of her ESL students differentiated between a Reading and literature course although literature was stated clearly as a component of the Reading course. She claims that this common “distinction is reflected in the language/literature curricula in many foreign language departments.” Other studies such as those of Schulz (1981), Davis *et al.* (1992), Berg and Berg (2001) and Frantzen (2001) also report similar findings.

This perception lingered on even after the completion of the study because most of the students could not understand how literature was used to complement the Reading subject. As mentioned in Section 5.4.4.1, the study, to some extent, failed to demonstrate how literary texts could be employed to learn Reading. This further enhanced their assumption that there was a division between literature and the Reading course. The students perceived literature as a separate subject, and not as an alternative resource to their course book that could facilitate the development of their reading skills. This would be undoubtedly true if literature was offered as content to Literature specialists or students pursuing a Degree in English. However, in this research context, literature was utilised to complement and reinforce the students' language learning, instead of being studied as an independent subject. Therefore, the invisible yet strong division between literature and the Reading course still existed in the students' view.

Accordingly, most of them felt that literature should not be used in the language curriculum at the Center.

In addition, the students' view that literature should be offered as an optional course further strengthened their supposition that literature was an independent subject. The following remark from one student respondent helped to support this claim:

*I think literature should be offered as an elective course for students who [are] interested in it, if the students want to learn about literature, they can, but for students who do not want to, they don't have to learn about literature.*

In order to address the students' assumptions that literature is irrelevant to their language needs, and to try bridge the gap between Reading and literature, the students need to be made aware that reading literature can be one of the means of acquiring the language skills such as reading, writing and speaking and that it can be integrated within the skills-based classes. Previous studies have discovered that literature is beneficial in developing these skills because students can write about and discuss a text before and after reading it. For instance, Spack (1985) has demonstrated how writing and the study of literature can be mutually profitable, while Gajdusek (1988) discusses the potentials that literary texts can offer for developing students' communicative abilities. Thus, if the students can identify the relevance of literature to their needs as language learners, especially in acquiring these language skills, they are more inclined to relate more easily to literature that can promote their understanding of the target language and boost their motivation. In short, the students need to understand the potential relevance of literature in learning the language. In order to achieve this, Wasanasomsithi (1998) recommends that literature-based lessons or materials must be designed in such a way that clearly ties them in with the language lessons or the teaching topics. The materials should also incorporate the sets of reading skills such as inferencing, scanning or skimming that the students are required to learn as indicated in their syllabus. And



it is also essential that literature is stated clearly as an integrated part of the language curriculum.

Furthermore, if students can relate literature to their own experience in life, this will lower their anxiety levels and enable learning to take place more successfully. As pointed out by Aebersold and Field (1997), if literature is to be used in language classrooms, the selected literary texts should have some degree of relevance to students' lives or their needs as students as this can increase their motivation and interest in the lesson. I agree that familiarity with literary texts helps students to relate to the texts and create a rewarding learning encounter. The observation data revealed that most students in the three groups were more receptive and attentive when they read *China's Little Ambassador*, *maggie*, *milly*, *molly* and *may* and *When* because these texts dealt with common issues such as problems and experiencing new things in life that the students might have encountered themselves.

Students also need to feel that they have achieved something valuable from using literature in language learning. They should be able to derive pleasure from reading literary works, apart from acquiring the target language. The study suggests that if students understand what they read, they can have a sense of personal involvement and pleasure from successfully reading a literary text in a foreign language, which can be a very motivating experience. As a result, students discover the text to be enjoyable and this is likely to benefit their language development and abilities. However, if they fail to understand and enjoy the read, they can feel discouraged and lose interest in literature and the lessons.

Hence, it is recommended that it is essential for curriculum developers to look further into students' points of view on how they determine and perceive the relevance of literature to their needs as language learners in order to ensure that these needs are properly addressed. With an examination of students' needs and their perceptions of literature, teachers can make informed decisions whether literature should be employed or not, which types of texts to select,

and how to approach these texts to promote students' language acquisition. Furthermore, if the assimilation of literature is deemed appropriate, this survey of attitudes will better equip teachers with the necessary information to effectively design, implement and evaluate the use of literature-based materials in their classrooms and this can lead to fruitful learning and teaching outcomes.

Furthermore, teachers assume an important role in developing students' awareness of the relevance of literature in language learning. The study revealed that although the three instructors could recognise literature as one of the available teaching resources, they still required further knowledge and guidance on how literary works could complement and enhance their lessons in order to demonstrate its relevance to the students. This finding accords with Hall's (2005:40) argument that literature is frequently used by teachers but with "no clear indication of why it should be included in language teaching." As mentioned in Section 6.4 and Section 7.4.1, the three tutors assumed that literature was relevant mainly because of its potential benefits in developing the students' linguistic, lexical and grammatical proficiencies in the target language. Thus, it could be said that these teachers were aware of the perceived values of integrating literature. If they could recognise the significance of literature, they were more likely to understand how literature could be included in the skills-based classes and taught as one integrated subject, rather than having a special slot in the time-table. And in return, they could exemplify this understanding to the students through classroom activities and instructions that enabled their pupils to identify some benefits of literature themselves.

Furthermore, it is argued that not only teachers need to be aware of 'why' or the motives for engaging literature, but also 'how' it can be approached or manipulated to suit the lessons. In other words, teachers need advice and assistance in order to develop or utilise literature-based activities that may offer students the experience to identify some values of literature such as improving their communication skills through literary discussions with minimal

spoon-feeding and coaching. Furthermore, by recognising its other assumed functions such as creating interesting and motivating class activities, and presenting pleasurable reading experience for students, teachers may also be able to identify the potential effectiveness of literature in language study.

The students' third perception was that literature is complicated. Prior to the study, most of the students communicated that their experience of literature in school involved a lot of memorisation and translation which they deemed as difficult, boring and irrelevant. Davis *et al.* (1992) concur that this method of traditional teaching and learning styles does not appeal to students and it can have significant effects on their attitudes towards literature.

Furthermore, the students also faced difficulties in reading and understanding literary genres, particularly poetry, because all the poems that they had to learn in school were older texts such as *Sonnet 18, If, Life's Brief Candle, The Lake Isle of Innisfree and Road Not Taken*. These poems contain complicated and non-modern vocabulary, special use of language and symbolic images which most students had to struggle with. Accordingly, literature was perceived to be difficult, a finding that contradicted Rizzo's (1993:38) argument that the study of literature should

...stimulate students' responses through an approach which does not only require them to remember facts about periods and writers, or to repeat what the teachers say about literary texts or the interpretation of the best-known critics. Rather, it should become a way for students to be supplied with tools so that they can say with some precision what a piece of literature means to them, how it means and why the text is liked or disliked by them.

However, the post-study results revealed that memorisation and translation were no longer the main factors why most students considered literature arduous. Difficult vocabulary and linguistic complexities were responsible for their perception. Due to these complexities, they encountered problems in literary reading and comprehension and thus, were discouraged from further interest in literature. This perception is also borne out by Or's (1995:185) research which demonstrated that there is a general perception among second language learners that

literature is “necessarily difficult, complex, unmanageable” and inaccessible due to its special uses of language in poetry and prose that often deviates from the conventions of the normal language that these learners are accustomed to. Moreover, as discussed in Section 5.3.2.3, the students claimed that some of the texts used in the worksheets appeared to be quite complicated and demanding. Therefore, it was not surprising to discover that they suggested the use of simpler texts. This finding is parallel to those of Wasanasomsithi (1998) and Takagaki (2002) who discovered that lower-proficiency language learners prefer to read easy texts such as clips from newspapers, simple articles from magazines or comic strips.

### 8.2.1 Different emphases in using literature

The study revealed that the three teachers differed in their emphasis in using literature in language teaching. Nadia was consistent with her view throughout the study that literature should be taught as a separate subject and studied for its literariness. Albeit she presumed that literature was pertinent, she felt that it should not be taught during the language lessons because it was *“not a good idea to mix them both, to teach literature and language together.”* In other words, she considered the integration of literature was rewarding, but it should be taught as an independent subject, in which class activities should centre on discussion of the literary elements such as the themes or characters in a text, excluding a close analysis of its language. Undoubtedly, the students would be looking at the language while reading the text, it was, however, not the main focus. The primary emphasis was in encouraging the students to respond to the text by drawing on their own experiences, feelings and opinions. Though it was mentioned earlier (Section 6.5) that Nadia’s method of teaching reflected a combination of Lazar’s ‘Personal response approach’ and ‘Literature as content approach’, her preferred use of literature also corresponded to the way literature was employed in secondary schools where the students had to “reflect upon the themes and values explored in the text” and “think about the story and the characters” by asking questions such as “which characters do I like or dislike?

Why?, How do I feel about the characters' behaviour?, Do I feel sorry for them?" (KPM, 2000: vii-xii). Literature, therefore, should have its own special time-table, detached from the language classes.

Zahra also acquiesced that the interface between literature and language study was profitable for students and teachers alike. Unlike Nadia, she felt that literature should be integrated within the language subjects. However, her idea of using literature was for fun-filled and interesting lessons and as a means for students and teachers to unwind. Zahra found it more comfortable to talk about the text rather than focus on its language because it was fun and relaxing for her and the students as well. She felt that it was enjoyable for them as they had the opportunity to read texts with intriguing storylines and at the same time, produce personal or emotional reactions to the texts. However, this was not to say that the teacher and students were lazy. Relaxation here could be perceived as an emotional output by the students, responding to the texts, and having a feeling of ease and contentment that helped them to unwind. There was also intense communication going on between the students and the texts, among the students themselves, and also with the teacher while discussing the texts. Zahra sensed that the interaction not only helped to improve her students' communication skills but, more importantly, their language abilities. Therefore, she saw literature as a useful supplementary teaching material that she could employ to make her lessons more interesting and motivating, as well as to help her students to relax.

This finding, however, raises the important question. Does literature have more important roles apart from being used for relaxation, or making the lessons more interesting and fun? Hall (2005) argues that having fun in language learning is an advantage, but he questions how do we, as teachers, ensure that learning has taken place? I assume that when there is an intense communication going on between students, it is very likely that more language is being learned. Nevertheless, I concede that this issue requires further research on

whether students do actually learn while having fun with literary texts in acquiring the target language.

The third teacher, Aminah, also strongly felt that it was more beneficial for literature to be engaged as a tool to help students learn English. She believed that literature was inseparable from language and she was consistent with her view that literature should be incorporated within the lessons. Though she claimed that literature was one of the "*vehicles*" to acquire the target language, the findings implied that she mainly associated literature with developing the students' cultural knowledge and awareness. Apart from expanding the students' lexical and grammatical knowledge, she repeatedly stressed that literature exposed the students to a variety of rich cultures or "*cultures of the world*." Her view is similar to that of Scott (1964, cited in Sage 1987:5), who argues that literature "teaches cultural understanding as it is one of the most obvious and valuable means of attaining cultural insights." It is arguably true that students can gain an understanding of other cultures from literary reading as cultural illusions are richly illustrated in many literary texts. Hence, learners are encouraged to understand and appreciate different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own that can lead to the development of prejudice-free and tolerance human beings.

### 8.2.2 Establishing the role of literature in language education

The study revealed that the three tutors and most students sensed that literature could be used in language education, in general. The findings indicated that most of the students assumed that literature was beneficial in language study thus, suggesting a favourable attitude towards literature, whether they wished to use it in their curriculum at the Center or not. As one of the respondents commented:

*I enjoy this experience and I hope that it should not be stopped. But it should not be done so frequently. Maybe once in a while because we need literature, because most of the time, we learn English just by using the textbook. So, we need something extra, like the literature component.*

This study also indicated that most students essentially reiterated some of the widespread benefits of literature: the promotion of vocabulary, language development and the improvement of grammatical knowledge. It is, however, important to stress that these three are not the only potential values that literature can offer, there are other advantageous. Numerous publications and studies have reported on the other merits of bringing literature into language instruction. For instance, Takagaki (2002:1) claims that literature offers pleasurable reading to students due to the richness of the English language which can convey "love, despair, joy, anger, pity and agony" and claims that "literature has a vital role in teaching foreign language ... and that literary works ...are full of feelings and emotions, along with imagination and creativity." Davis (1989:421) agrees that literature offers pleasurable reading to students because of the "uniqueness of the printed words as...literature unfolds moment by moment during the reading process." On the other hand, McMillan and Gentile (1988) claim that literature is beneficial for second language learners because it helps to teach critical thinking and ethics among young learners due to the growing concern about the importance of teaching ethics in American schools. Subsequently, Shanahan (1997) talks about the values of literature in developing students' cultural knowledge and awareness.

Furthermore, a majority of the students in this study professed that they are weak in and have limited knowledge of grammar. They claimed that their encounter with the worksheets to some extent, helped to increase their understanding of 'tenses' such as 'past and present' and 'parts of speech' such as 'adjectives' and 'adverbs' which concepts, they claimed, were quite difficult to grasp. Short (1996b:43-44) affirms that it is common for language students to have some "difficulty in identifying which are the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs in a sentence, let alone coping with anything more sophisticated." The students' view is also consistent with Lazar's (1994) argument that literature is a useful resource for learners because it can be manipulated in numerous ways to increase language awareness, and the grammatical

and lexical knowledge of students, particularly those at lower levels. Moreover, she states that literary texts exemplify the different elements of the target language such as 'verbs' and 'nouns' in ways that are helpful to learners' language development. Rizzo (1993) concurs that literary works provide authentic examples of language in use so that students have the opportunity of internalising the grammar and working out the meaning of words from the context.

Nevertheless, it is a known fact that non-literary texts can illustrate these grammatical concepts as well. However, according to Hirvela (2005:78), literary texts present grammar in an interesting way in which it is embedded within appropriate contexts usually accompanied with attractive settings, "interesting and colourful characters and often clever events and plots, and meaningful themes" that can entice students to persist reading. Hence, it is contended that the more students read literary works, the better they will understand and improve their knowledge and awareness of the grammatical concepts and terminologies.

However, linguists such as Topping (1968) argue that literature should not be included in language curriculum and he based his dispute on the main goal of language teaching. To him, the primary objective of language acquisition is to teach grammatical knowledge of the target language. Hence, he argues that literature, especially poetry, is known for its structural complexity and possible deviation from the standard grammatical rules does little to contribute to students' aim of achieving the desired proficiency and competence in the target language. In other words, what Topping is saying is that literature does not support the basic purposes of language learning, particularly for less advanced students. Topping is quite right when he says that poetry usually contains a lot of complicated structures and linguistic deviations, however, I disagree that it should be banned from language teaching. As an alternative, simpler and shorter poems such as the ones that were used in the worksheets could be employed because the study demonstrated that these types of poems worked well with limited proficiency learners. Not only could the students understand the poems, they also managed to comprehend the



language patterns expounded by the texts. Therefore, it is argued that poetry can be used in language learning because it helps students to acquire and improve their understanding and proficiency in the target language.

Like some of their students, all three teachers agreed that literature occupied an important place in language teaching, in spite of their distinct emphases in approaching literature. Apart from developing the students' linguistic knowledge and competence, the teachers also assumed that literature built up their pupils' confidence and helped them to become more comfortable in using English. Sage (1987) points out that literature is an ideal medium for teachers who wish to cultivate language learners' communication skills and argues that literature "models a wide range of communication strategies and displays a broader range of such communication strategies than any other single ESL teaching component." Sage is right because literary texts usually contain different settings and characters accompanied with specific dialogues to suit a particular situation. For instance, in *The Great Gatsby* the students were introduced to questioning techniques used by the police officer enquiring about the car accident that killed Myrtle Wilson, "Come here and let's have your name. Look out now. I want to get his name." In *Death of A Salesman*, the students were exposed to a conversation between an employee and his employer. Furthermore, the language found in literary texts also includes different communicative functions such as asking for and expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing and asking for and giving information. There is also a variety of registers used, from formal standard English, "I am the executor of Richard Abernethie's will" (*After The Funeral*), to informal slang, "You didn't crack up again, did you?" (*Death of A Salesman*). Consequently, the students can apply some of the words gleaned from their encounter with these texts in their daily conversation or academic activities. They will also feel more involved in the texts and be able to empathise or identify themselves with the characters or issues in the story.

Like their instructors, most of the students also agreed that literature helped to enhance their communicative abilities through numerous literary-based discussions and speaking practices. The belief that an exposure to literature would progressively enable them to become better users and speakers of the language was also reflected by one of the participants:

*When we talk about poems, we read and discuss the poems with our friends. When we recite the poems, it helps to show our talent and it can also help to improve our speaking skills, our pronunciation and help us to speak better and the lecturers can also help us.*

The three teachers also claimed that literature encouraged positive interactions among their students which promoted the development of their communicative competence. Gilroy (1995) argues that literature encourages interaction because literary texts are open to multiple interpretations and provide an opinion gap between one student's interpretation and another's which can be bridged by genuine interaction between them. Therefore, while engaging in this interaction, students will have the opportunity to learn about and acknowledge other people's opinions, and also to practise using the target language in a meaningful interaction for different communicative functions. Furthermore, literature also provides a rich source of shared common experience for both teachers and students which can stimulate discussion and improve communication not only between the students and their peers, but also with their teachers.

The teachers' personal interests also influenced their motivation in engaging literature. Prior to the study, all three colleagues had utilised literary texts in their teaching. The findings revealed that the tutors found literature pleasurable because of their personal enthusiasm for it. Nadia said that she liked teaching literature because of her own passion for it. Zahra and Aminah added that they, too, employed literature because of their own interest and to make the lessons more appealing to the students and themselves by using materials which they were enthusiastic about. This finding is in agreement with Wasanasomsithi's (1998) discovery that when teachers have the chance to use teaching materials which they are enthusiastic about,

this helps to boost their confidence in their own teaching. Put another way, a teacher's enthusiasm about her own teaching can result in better instructions for students. Moreover, enthusiastic teachers can motivate and challenge students in such a way that they are motivated as human beings and not just as language learners. The learners' motivation is also an essential motive in ensuring a successful integration of literature. Unless learners are motivated to become effectively engaged in the process of language learning, teachers cannot expect fruitful outcomes from their instruction. Oxford and Ehrman (1993) add that learners' motivation helps to determine their level of engagement with the lessons and the higher their level of motivation, the more successful the learning process will be. However, when teachers begin to lose their own interest in the lessons, their attitudes will affect students' motivation as well.

This attitude was reflected by one of the teachers, Nadia, who admitted that at the beginning of the study, she was very excited but as it progressed, she lost interest in the lessons for a number of reasons which were discussed in Section 7.3. Observations also showed that when she started to lose her enthusiasm, her attitude manifested itself in the ways she conducted the class and this affected the students too. Her students began to participate less in the exercises and their attitudes further frustrated her. Zahra was also losing her enthusiasm towards the end of the study, however, she seemed quite positive compared to Nadia despite her complaints that some activities in the worksheets were exhausting as they demanded a lot of physical and mental effort from her. Hence, it is implied that if teachers feel uncomfortable and lack the motivation towards their teaching, students are more likely to feel even less demotivated and uneasy.

The post-study data also suggested that despite the mixed feelings about their experiences, all three instructors still retained favourable attitudes towards literature. Moreover, though the current application of literature at the Center is non-existent, based on their previous

experience of using literary works and their encounter with the worksheets, they suggested insightful ways of how literature could be effectively implemented in the language syllabus there. This interest in using literary writing is consistent with Gilroy's (1995:8) finding that "there seemed to be a general feeling that, given the opportunity, the greater use of literature in language teaching was desirable." This finding also matches those in studies conducted by Ling (1997) and Wasanasomsithi (1998) who investigated ESL teachers' perceptions of literature and indicated that the general attitudes towards its use in ELT are quite favourable.

Although the teachers seemed to demonstrate encouraging attitudes towards literature, they explained that they had restricted freedom to use literary texts at the Center partly due to attributes such as time and syllabus constraints, the students' lack of interest in literature and limited competence in the language, and their own insecurity in approaching literary works. Gilroy (1995) argues that time and syllabus limitations are among the factors that can pose threats and jeopardise the endeavour to integrate literature. In addition, Ling (1997:49) in his survey of Singaporean school teachers revealed that some of them are against the idea of using literature simply because there is a "lack of time allocated for teaching hence, precious lessons cannot be wasted on materials that require too much reading time, like novels." Accordingly, literature becomes a luxury that teachers cannot invest time on as they have to work through their tight time work schedule (Or 1995).

### **8.2.3 Approaches to literature in language teaching**

The pre-study findings indicated that the three tutors displayed a common approach when utilising literature in their classrooms. When literature was used, the discussion usually centered on moral issues, themes or characters and the usual activities would be the classroom method of group learning and discussions. The primary emphasis was getting the students to talk about the values or topics related to a text, rather than concentrating on its language. In other words, the focus was more on asking the students to respond to the text

either by relating it to their own personal experiences or discussing the themes. This finding supports Lott's (1988:9) argument that:

It is the topic of the text that is first selected for study, not the text itself ... and the distinctive nature of literature, and as a display of language put to special uses, seems often to be lost sight of...And since the study of the text is topic-based, it also seems a pity that the language involved is not investigated and exercised so as to show how particular situations and emotions are communicated, both in the selected text and in real life.

Furthermore, the post-study revealed that the three teachers seemed to employ the traditional method of approaching literature in the language classroom. Based on the classroom observations, the teachers spoke 90% during the class hour and most of the time, they read the texts to the students and provided or corrected the students' answers. For instance, when Nadia read aloud the extract from the short story, *A Day's Wait*, she would stop and comment on the parts that she found interesting. Occasionally, she would ask the students some questions regarding these sections and when none of them responded to her enquiries, she often would provide the answers to her own questions. She would also ask each assigned group to provide answers for questions in the worksheets, and when they responded, she would add her own views and give her personal comments on those sections. The observation data also showed that most of the students in the three groups relied on their teachers for the definitions of the complicated vocabulary or the interpretations of the texts. The three teachers were regularly observed supplying the students with such information. Therefore, it could be assumed that the tutors' style of teaching indirectly encouraged the students to rely on them and because of this dependency, the teachers appeared to assume the role of correctors and information providers, instead of facilitators. Accordingly, I believe many of the students became used to accepting ready-made interpretations from their teachers, rather than developing their own skills of interpretation and perceptions through reading. Katz (2001) reveals that among the key concerns of integrating literature in language classroom is addressing teacher dependency and promoting students' independence. This finding also

supports Collie and Slater's (1987:7) argument that one of the most common approaches in using literature in language classroom is the traditional approach where teachers assume the role of the information provider by

imparting information about the author, the background to the work, the particular literary conventions that inform the text and so on. Learners are somehow expected to have the ability to take all this in and make it their own.

Prior to Collie and Slater, Kramsch (1985:360) has noted that teachers' traditional approach to literature in language teaching "only confirms the students' belief that their major block to understanding is lack of vocabulary and grammar and solidifies their dependence on the teacher." Furthermore, according to Simmons and Deluzain (1992), if students are dependent on teachers as the sole source of information in the classroom, they become passive receivers of information, which leads to dogmatic teaching and passive learning. Basically, when students are assumed to be passive learners, their creative and emotional expressions are often ignored. Simmons and Deluzain also assert that instead of reflecting on what students know and encouraging them to offer their own responses, some teachers either tell students the answers or ask them to guess what is in the teachers' mind. Collie and Slater (1987:8) maintain that

all these teacher-centered approaches may foster detailed comprehension but students will probably not have made the text their own. Nor will the classroom process have encouraged them to share their own views with each other, and they may not have used the target language very much.

Methodologically speaking, while conducting literature-based activities, teachers are expected to assume the role of facilitators, who help and guide students during their interaction with the texts, as well as giving them the opportunity and encouragement to assume active roles in the lessons. The worksheets in this study encouraged the teachers to assume this role, and to a certain extent, they complied. Most activities in the worksheets were task-based and the students were expected to complete them with minimal assistance and reinforcement from

their tutors. However, it was frequently observed that the teachers tended to provide the interpretations, word definitions and some of the answers for the tasks. In other words, there was too much reinforcement from the tutors. The students, on the other hand, seemed content with the teachers' method of teaching.

### **8.3 Important issues in the integration of literature**

The study reveals that there are five paramount issues that require significant consideration from policy makers or curriculum developers in order to reap fruitful outcomes in using literature in ESL classrooms. They are: (i) students' difficulties in reading literature, (ii) selection of literary texts, (iii) training needs, (iv) literature-based materials and (v) literary assessments.

#### **8.3.1 Students' difficulties in reading literature**

The study revealed that one of the key problems in integrating literature is addressing the students' difficulties in approaching literary texts. Most students and the three teachers agreed that the students had linguistic limitations, especially when dealing with complicated and unfamiliar vocabulary, which are abundant in literary works that hindered their literary understanding. Hence, the findings implied that the students needed to have some level of linguistic proficiency in order to overcome the problem in reading literature. Davis (1992) claims that students' limited linguistic proficiency can result in inaccurate decoding of the target language, and even misunderstanding of the overall intent of the texts. In other words, a reader cannot read in a second language without some knowledge of the intricacies of language. Weist (2004) in her studies, affirmed that students' linguistic competence in the target language plays an important role in reading comprehension. However, according to Goh (1991), linguistic proficiency alone is not enough for students to understand literary works. His survey showed that linguistic competence was not sufficient for secondary school students in Singapore to comprehend literary texts. Therefore, the question remains, what really hinders students'

literary comprehension? I believe that further studies on what factors impede students' understanding of literary works are essential.

Another difficulty that the students encountered when reading the texts in the worksheets was their limited existing vocabulary in the target language. Their lack of vocabulary not only hampered their understanding of the texts, but also their interest in literature. When they were unable to prevail over the difficult words, literature was likely to induce painful experience of deciphering and prompted reduced attention. Aebersold and Field (1997:13) argue that:

readers are not usually aware of vocabulary unless they encounter unfamiliar words. If the number of unfamiliar words in a text is small and their content is not crucial to the basic meaning of the message, they do not hinder reading comprehension. However, if there are many unfamiliar words that are keys words, comprehension of the text begins to break down.

Furthermore, the post-study data also revealed that most of the students had experienced problems in answering the type of questions that required thoughts and expressions. Almost all of the questions in the worksheets expected them to provide their own thoughts and feelings about the texts. In other words, they had to generate responses to the text and demonstrate understanding of their reading. The following statement from one student helped to illustrate this point:

*Actually, the questions do not have their answers in the text. They require us to think, 'why does it happen like this', 'why do we need to do it', we don't know. The answers are not written in the extracts so we have to think deeper. They train us to think and we need to explore the text in details. We need to explore and think harder. The answers are not straight-forward.*

These types of questions not only aim to help the students recall simple information, but more importantly, to prompt them to give their own analysis and evaluation of the texts. These questions also required the students to produce their own answers and provide justifications for them. Nor were the answers explicitly found in the texts for they were essentially non-information based responses. Hence, they were not simply a matter of



retrieving details, ideas and facts, but more of drawing inferences, finding personal responses and forming appropriate evaluations. Carter and Long (1991:36-37) call these types of questions as "high order questions" which have

less to do with literal meanings or factual content and rather more to do with involving the learners' own responses, inferences, knowledge and experience of the world. They are of a 'higher' interpretive order and seldom have a 'right' answer.

One probable reason why most of the students experienced some difficulties in answering such questions in the worksheets was because they had been drilled to memorise literary works during their school days. The pre-study results revealed that most of the students complained that their teachers imposed a lot of memorisation and drilling techniques while studying literature. They were expected to remember what the teachers had said about a text, or what interpretations were given in reference books in order to succeed in the examination. Consequently, most of them became accustomed to their teachers distributing information about the texts, while they would simply absorb and memorise the received information. This view is also reflected in one of the students' statements, *"I think when we are at the Matriculation Center, it is different, but when we were in school, we used to depend on the teachers."* Sivell (1980:51-52) claims that most ESL students are accustomed to memorisation techniques because they are usually taught in large classes by teachers who are pressed for time and lack the training "to guide their pupils in good study habit may fall back on memorisation as a way of imposing some kind of order on their efforts to review and master their work." However, he cautions:

memorization is a habit that commonly hinders the development of critical skills, especially with students just beginning to read and write about literature...[and] a slavish reliance on repeating or closely echoing prepared responses to literary questions will stifle originality and precision.

Not surprisingly, the study also revealed that the type of questions that most of the students preferred to answer in the worksheets are what Carter and Long (1991:36) label "low

order questions" because they basically concern with retrieving "factual information or literal meanings or the basic presuppositions or content of a text." The questions among others, involve reviewing details, ideas, facts, making comparisons and looking at cause and effect relationship. Carter and Long state that 'low order questions' are useful in assisting students with preliminary orientation to a text where they help to form students' general understanding of it. Most of the time, the answers to these questions are explicitly found in the text, as they are essentially information-based responses. Therefore, it can be said that little cognitive process is involved and required from students. Most of the participants claimed that they did better in answering these types of questions in the worksheets. One student said:

*Sometimes I cannot find the answer in the comprehension, in the text because the language is difficult to understand, but if I do the matching activity, the answer is already there and I just have to choose one.*

Previous study done by Goh (1991) also revealed that students face difficulties in answering questions that require more elaborate inferencing or imagination as opposed to answering factual questions whose answers can be easily obtained by direct reference to the texts. Therefore, the present study implies a need for more research into the reasons why students are unable to answer or encounter difficulties in responding to these 'high-order questions'.

In addition, it is interesting to discover that it was only the three tutors who pointed out another common difficulty which their students experienced when approaching literary works namely, cultural unfamiliarity. The findings showed that none of the students mentioned unfamiliar cultural allusion as one of the factors that hindered their comprehension of the texts used in the study. Most of them regarded either the complicated language or their limited vocabulary as the main reasons for their lack of understanding. For example, the observation showed that when Group B was discussing *After the Funeral*, albeit the students were not familiar with the culture of the reading of a will when somebody died, they were not interested

to know more about it. As Muslims, when somebody dies in a family, there is no reading of a will, and everybody normally wears white in comparison to the Western people who put on dark clothes. The students were less interested to know more about such culture, and as long as they managed to get the meanings of certain words and were able to understand the story, they seemed satisfied. Observations in the other two groups also revealed that most students were less concerned with the cultural elements in the texts as most of the time, they would ask their instructors for the meanings of the troublesome words, instead of making further enquiries about these cultures. Thus, from the students' points of view, unfamiliar culture was not a problem in their literary reading. Furthermore, the worksheets did not stress on cultural interest as the emphasis was on the linguistic elements of the texts. However, if the students gained some cultural insights from reading the texts, then this was considered as a bonus.

### 8.3.2 Selecting literature

Another potential problem in engaging literature in language study is selecting appropriate texts. This is because the choice of texts to be brought into the classroom can determine the success or failure of introducing literature to language learners. When there is interest, students will be motivated, so the first thing to do is to develop their interest by selecting interesting works and stimulating activities that appropriately integrate language and literature. Lazar (1996b:775) maintains that well chosen literary texts can "delight and motivate the learner. They clue learners in to other cultures. They encourage students to make meaning from language."

The pre-study results indicated that on average, the teachers and students had used or read short stories more frequently than other genres of literature, and that poetry was used least often in their classrooms. Short story was the popular choice among the students and teachers mainly because of its length. Randall (1995) argues that students are easily drawn to short stories because narrating a story is a common occurrence in their own lives. Furthermore,

the teachers and most students said that if literature were to be part of the language syllabus at the Center, they would prefer to use short stories. Many of the students were also resistant towards poetry as it was considered difficult. Short (1996b:43) affirms that students are "highly resistant to studying poetry, because it is 'difficult' and, by and large, novels and short stories are much preferred to plays."

Although the three instructors and most students find short stories are more preferable to other genres, especially poetry, it is argued that it is essential for students to be exposed to a variety of literary genres in order to increase their language awareness. Wasanasomsithi (1998) and Or (1995) maintain despite teachers and students' reservation against poetry because it may contain 'deviant' language and stylistic variations that lead to students' bewilderment, teachers should draw students' attention to such special uses of language. Contrasting linguistic deviation to the grammar of the standard language helps students to develop their awareness of language use in the text and also English in general. Teachers can also enhance students' awareness by comparing the poetic language to the real-world communication or the classroom discourse, as well as to the more conventional uses of language inherent in other works of literature. As pointed out by Widdowson (1983b:7):

if the uniqueness of poetry as a model of meaning can only be recognised and appreciated against the background of conventional uses of language, then poems ought to be presented in association with instances of other kinds of discourses and attention directed to the differences between them.

Hess (2003:19) agrees that poetry is beneficial for use with second language learners since "the entry into a poem, under the guidance of appropriate teaching, brings about the kind of participation that almost no other text can produce." Isenberg (1990) concurs that poetry guides students in meaning making that allows personal involvement. According to Or (1995), poetry is usually dissociated from an immediate social context that students can rely on to make meaning, they have to interpret, infer and make sense of a poem while reading it. Hence, they are encouraged to create meanings by making sense of what they observe in the text.

Similarly, other researchers such as Hanauer (2001) and Mattix (2002) maintain that poetry is an authentic and relevant teaching material that provides language enrichment and personal involvement for students. Therefore, while a poem may or may not be an appropriate text to be used, exposing students to different genres will enable them to compare ways of using language and further develop their awareness of the language being learned. Furthermore, I believe that in an ESL classroom, the use of a variety of genres of literature, instead of an exclusive focus on one specific genre, is a good thing as the priority should be to encourage students to engage with what they are reading, whether it is a sonnet, short narrative, novel or play.

The post-study findings revealed a contradictory result regarding the students' and teachers' views on poetry. It is interesting to discover that at the end of the study, the three tutors and most of the students said that they enjoyed the poems and their activities the most. Some of the students even voiced a new found interest in this particular genre. Observations also showed that they were most responsive and active while working on the poems compared to the other texts in the worksheets. The teachers also claimed that the texts were more appealing and articulated their interest in reading and using poetry in their future lessons. This indicated that there had been a favourable change of the students' and teachers' attitudes towards poetry.

I believe one plausible reason for this transformation was because they were presented with unthreatening short poems, short enough to be used within the class hour, and which only needed a few minutes of analysis. Moreover, since all the poems are contemporary and use modern English that the students could easily relate to, they seemed to be more receptive towards the lessons. Some of them also felt that their experience of the poems had been more interesting in comparison to their encounter with poetry in secondary schools. Hence, it could be inferred that if poetry were to be used with students of similar level of

proficiency, it should be straight-forward, have a simple message and use modern language. The themes or the subject matter of the selected poems should also be something that students are familiar with or deal with universal themes such as life and love that they may have experienced themselves. Most importantly, the language of the poem should be simple to understand, yet challenging enough to enable students to acquire new knowledge of the language. However, Lazar (1994) argues that lower-proficiency learners should not be mainly supplied with simple and easy texts and maintains that even at this level, it is necessary for students to move beyond an understanding of the language simply in terms of individual words or sentences.

Albeit in this research context, the students' accessibility to some of the texts was hindered by complicated language, I do agree with Lazar that low-level students should not be primarily exposed to linguistically simple texts. This is because I feel that despite their limited proficiency in the target language, they need to be provided with the challenges and stimulations of addressing complicated texts with appealing themes and plots, which can help to develop their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar substantially. Accordingly, such texts can promote the expansion of students' overall language awareness. This was one of the reasons why the worksheets included a different range of linguistic level of difficulties from simple texts (e.g. *When, This is just to Say*) to complicated works (e.g. *The Great Gatsby, A Day's Wait*).

In addition, teachers need to be assured that they do not need to know everything about the author or the surrounding context of the poem in order to encourage interest in bringing poetry into language teaching. Spack (1985:720) also maintains that ESL teachers should not be discouraged from using literature, especially poetry because they are not literary specialists who have to teach literature "...through formalist criticism that is bogged down in technical terminology and complex symbolism."

The after-study data also revealed that the three teachers felt that extracts from the novels were unsuitable to be used with their lower-proficiency students. When given such extracts, these students needed to be provided with a summary of the text, the major characters involved and the incidents that led to the extracts being used as some of them could not understand the extracts. Therefore, the research implied that although extracts of novels are very often used in course books, and extracting may appear advantageous as this removes the burden of intensive lengthy reading, it was not as effective as anticipated. Though the worksheets tried to employ extracts from the novels and the play that were assumed to be self-sufficient and create fewer comprehension problems for the students, they still encountered challenges in understanding the extracts. Likewise, the teachers tied themselves up into knots trying to explain the novels which they had not read. This finding, however, is not consistent with Ling (1997) who discovered that extracts from novels were the most popular form of literary texts among Singaporean school teachers.

Furthermore, the three teachers also felt that the selected texts should be relevant to the students and their life in general, with young protagonists and interesting plots in order to tap in to their interests. It is important to appeal to students' own life experiences in choosing texts, as these experiences that they bring in learning about literature in the ESL context are essential. For instance, the teacher respondents claimed that most of their students found it easier to relate to *China's Little Ambassador* because of their own experience on their first day at school. Hence, it is recommended that policy makers and material developers should include students' general life experiences as one of the central principles when developing the curriculum. The instructors, especially Nadia and Aminah, also stated the texts should be culturally familiar so that the students could understand the texts better. However, this begs the question, if teachers keep feeding students with known culture, when do they get the

opportunity to increase their awareness and knowledge of the other unfamiliar cultures of the world?

### 8.3.3 Training needs

Another central factor that needs to be addressed in the assimilation of literature in language study is teachers' training needs. All three tutors stressed that sufficient training, resources, and support were necessary before they could seriously embark on the integration of literature. They argued that training was paramount in order to boost their level of confidence because, without it, they claimed that they lacked the necessary skills and confidence to handle literary works with their students. Though the tutors professed that they were more aware of how to exploit literary texts after the study, they considered their experience insufficient and their knowledge of literature inadequate for the application of literature-based language teaching. Thus, they needed to be equipped with more knowledge to effectively integrate literature and be provided with the appropriate tools to facilitate comprehension and interpretations of texts. The training could entail courses on how to develop home-grown or exploit published literary materials, how to play around with language in the texts, how to choose relevant texts, what approach or approaches would be appropriate to their specific settings and needs, and also identifying the objectives of using a particular text and approach.

The tutors sensed that if teachers were provided with such knowledge or training, it would be easier for them to transfer their skills to students. In return, students would be more interested in literary reading for one of the main factors that discouraged them was comprehension failure. When students were able to comprehend the texts independently, there would be less dependency on teachers. This would have positive effects on teachers as well because if students were independent, teachers would experience fewer problems in helping them to achieve literary comprehension.



Brumfit (1985) acknowledges the likelihood of such views when he states that even when teachers already have some background knowledge of literature, they still need training specifically on planning, teaching, evaluating and adapting literature-based courses for their language students. Moody (1983:18) affirms that teacher training is a particularly important requirement for a successful literature-based language instruction because it ensures that “teachers understand how to present literature ...so that its potential can be fully realised.”

#### 8.3.4 Literature-based materials

Crafting effective literature-based materials is another concern that requires significant attention from curriculum conveners and developers in engaging literature for language students. Based on their experience of using the worksheets, the three tutors believed that teachers should be given the opportunity to share their views on text selections and designing activities. They felt that if instructors played a part in developing the materials, they would feel more involved and confident in conducting the lessons. Otherwise, they would be inclined to feel detached and lack a sense of ownership of their lessons. One of the teachers, Nadia, felt disconnected from the lessons because she was not involved in designing the activities and choosing the texts for the worksheets. Consequently, she felt uncomfortable and was not confident in executing the lessons and these feelings affected her teaching performance. She wrote in her journal how she felt about this issue:

*The teacher has to be familiar and comfortable with the text and the activities – only then can she be involved in the lesson. If she starts the lesson with any kind of discomfort or apprehension, the negative feelings will show in the lesson and be transmitted (unintentionally or unconsciously) to the students. (Journal Entry 10: Additional Entry)*

Nadia also argued that effective literature-based materials should include a balanced focus on the literary text and its language. In other words, there should be an equal focus on the message of the text, or the ‘content’, and analysing its language, or ‘form’. Based on her experience of using the worksheets, she claimed that only the activities on the three poems

evidently demonstrated an integrated focus on understanding the content of the texts and analysing their language. It is argued, therefore, this finding raises two important questions on the integration of literature. First, should there be any division between the focus on language and the content of the text. Second, if there is, how much focus should be allocated for analysing the language and how much attention should be devoted to its content? I believe that there should be no any gap between the two as they complement each other. They are overlapping and interrelated as students will be focusing on the language while reading and talking about the content of the text.

Furthermore, when developing the materials, teachers also need to consider the age group of the students. Since the average age of the student respondents was between 18 and 19 years old, activities such as games, role-play, and drama presentations were more successful with them. Role-play also helped to promote interaction among the students as they prompted each other in formulating what they wanted to say during the sketch. This activity also encouraged the learners to use more natural language that would normally be heard in the classroom. Robinson (1981:385-386) states that role-playing not only

...encourages interaction among the learners as they relate to each other through their identities and roles. It constitutes a significant breakthrough in language learning...[and] enables the students to maximise their language potential through using language in a real-life manner.

In addition, teachers could also reflect on the themes and types of literary texts to use because the selected topics and the chosen genre must appeal to the particular age group. This study had demonstrated that genres which centered on mysteries, comedy and romance were more attractive to this age group.

Furthermore, I feel that instead of being over-dependent on published or established materials ESL teachers should try to develop their own materials for their pupils as they are arguably more familiar with their students' learning needs. There are, of course, numerous publications which can offer guidance for teachers to implement literature-based language

teaching (e.g. McRae and Boardman 1984; Collie and Slater 1987, 1993; Bassnett and Grundy 1993; Spiro 2004). These publications can be used as a springboard to developing home-grown materials. However, Brown (1995) reminds educators that before they begin their quest to develop literature-based material for language learners, it is essential that they carry out a needs analysis as this is one of the key requirements in developing teaching materials. Further, he stresses that the analysis is necessary in order to discover students' language needs to enable teachers to effectively use literature based-lessons to address such needs. In addition, Carter and Brumfit (1986:20) offer a useful guidance for educators who aim to develop their own language-based approach to literature. They remind teachers that in incorporating literature and language study, they need to contextualise such integration by

- a) recognising the importance of linguistic and non-linguistic criteria in text selection
- b) using language-based approaches prior to stylistic analysis
- c) recognising that some areas of language organization can create greater problems than others, especially in the case of foreign students

### **8.3.5 Literary assessments**

Assessment, as cited by both sets of respondents, is another prime feature that assumes a significant function and may pose potential difficulties in the integration of literature. One of the teachers, Aminah, and most of the students were adamant that if literature were to be used at the Center, it should not be assessed. The findings revealed that some students were reluctant to use literature in their Reading class because it was not included in the syllabus and was not assessed. Albeit no assessments were involved in this study, the findings implied that assessment played an important role in determining the success of the integration of literature. As such, the findings can be read in two conflicting ways. First, they suggest that literature should be assessed because it is one way of attracting the students' attention to the lessons in this exam-oriented educational context for fear of compromising their results in the

examination. Second, literary assessments should not be carried out because the use of assessments or tests as a means of attracting the students' attention to the lessons is hardly beneficial to them. Although the study has insinuated that literature assessment is important, it is my contention that the use of literary texts in language teaching should not be tested because it will only burden and unnecessarily pressurise these already grade-conscious students. Furthermore, since these students are doing an obligatory language proficiency course, they do not need to be tested in literature because it is irrelevant to their main academic training and needs. Researchers such as Hall (2005:60-61) have claimed that it is difficult to assess literature in language education because "exam questions attempting to integrate language and literature now look distinctly odd and inappropriate... [as the] education system's demand for statistics, passes and fails ... with wrong and right answers." Miall (1989) mentions that there have been attempts by language educators to exclude testing in the integration of language and literature as they feel the focus should be on the feelings or pleasure that students may obtain from reading literature.

#### **8.4 Summary**

The study revealed that the teachers and students alike generally felt that pedagogical stylistics or a linguistics-based approach was not suitable to be used with lower-proficiency students in this context of study because a certain linguistic competence was required from them in order to use a stylistic analysis to approach literature. The students were also less enthusiastic in doing stylistic tasks in comparison to communicative activities. Most of them perceived literature as irrelevant to their current programme and there was a perceptual gap between the Reading course and literature. The view that literature was arduous was also apparent among the students that led to their strong resentment against literature testing. The students would probably be more positive towards the notion of integrating literature at the Center if its relevance and connections to their needs as language learners were made

transparent. The three teachers, on the other hand, appeared to exhibit a favourable attitude towards literature notwithstanding their different emphases and approaches to literature in language teaching. The study also indicated that if literature were to be used in their curriculum at the Center, its effective implementation would depend greatly on significant variables such as the students' difficulties in approaching literary works, choice of texts, assessment concerns and requisite training that teachers received from policy-makers.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarises the insights of the study, presents the comparison between the pre- and post-study results and offers the researcher's reflections and the pedagogical lessons learnt from undertaking this empirical study. It also discusses the opportunities for further research in acknowledgement of the limitations of the study and how they can be improved. This final chapter also proposes directions and recommendations that can act as a springboard for further investigations into the application of literature in ELT that determine its future development and roles in educational settings where English assumes the status of either a second or foreign language.

### **9.2 Summary of the strength of the study**

One of the main implications of this research is it offers insights and understanding of how ESL educators and learners feel and think about literature and its use in language education. It examines the integration of literature through the application of stylistics-based worksheets consolidated by a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research instruments. In doing so, it sufficiently reveals the respondents' experience of using the worksheets and the effects on their attitudes towards literature, as well as the impact of a linguistics-based approach on the development of literature-based materials in language instruction. All these aims were discussed and presented in detail in the Findings section of the thesis.

The integration of literature may present benefits to students and educators but it can also lead to confusion, reservation and rejection due to factors such as lack of available training and support for teachers and if its integration is not synchronised or aligned with students' immediate language learning needs. Hence, it is evident from the discussion that this research has illuminated the contribution to the incorporation of literature in language education with respect to ESL learners' and instructors' attitudes, perspectives and needs.

This study has also presented findings on the learners' and teachers' reactions to a stylistics-based approach in their language classrooms. When this approach is employed alongside communicative activities, it gives rise to a learning environment that exhibits and reinforces positive learning. Hence, this evidence adds to the methodological discourse in ELT in general, and the strategies in the integration of literature in particular.

Another strength of the study is its application for course design in producing literature-based materials for language teaching and learning activities. It provides valuable information to educators about the potential effectiveness and relevance of literature if literary texts are carefully selected. Understanding the effects, boundaries and benefits of the integration of literature in ESL/EFL classrooms allows course developers or module conveners to decide if and whether such assimilation is likely to be beneficial and what types of activities, texts and assessments to employ that suit students' language needs, abilities and context.

Another significant contribution of this study is that the data analysis is based on empirical evidence in a specific ESL setting. Thus, the context drawn from this study, although may not be generalisable to wide populations, is to some extent, relevant for comparable and translatable to other settings and cultures in similar situations. Hence, future research can anticipate what may be expected of learners and teachers in a context akin to the one investigated in this study.

### **9.3 Overall comparison of findings between pre- and post-study**

This section details the comparative findings for both sets of respondents by emphasising the significant similarities and differences based on the results obtained from the research. The tables below summarise the teachers' and students' pre- and post-study attitudes towards the experience of literature.

The teachers' encouraging attitudes towards literature were apparent at the beginning of the study. At the end, however, they showed varied attitudes partly due to the worksheets, which to some extent, influenced their perceptions of literature. Though they displayed mixed attitudes, they expressed enthusiasm and were keen to use literary-based materials in their future language classrooms. Nonetheless, their future eagerness remains to be seen. Moreover, their post-study perspectives which were based on their experience of the worksheets, were more specific. The findings also revealed that they highlighted almost similar attributes that influenced their pre- and post-research attitudes. Table 9.1 below shows that the teachers' perceptions of literature and its application in ELT remain largely the same.

Attribute	Response	
	Pre-study	Post-study
Attitudes towards literature	Were positive and expressed a strong interest in literature	Display mixed attitudes, yet maintained enthusiasm towards literature
Attitudes towards literature in language teaching	Literature can be used in language teaching	Literature has a strong potential to be integrated in language teaching, but they stressed that it requires serious and careful planning and implementations.
Motives for integrating literature in language teaching	Students' language input Students' vocabulary expansion Development of students' cultural awareness Students' personal development	Students' language development Students' vocabulary enrichment Motivating classroom activities Engaging and absorbing read
Factors affecting encounter with literature	Choice of text Previous experience Insecurities in approaching literary works Curriculum constraints Time limitations Lack of training Student factors	Experience of using the worksheets: Texts Activities Student variables
Attitudes towards literature if it were to be implemented at the Center	Were favourable and felt that literature could be integrated in the language syllabus Concerns: Selection of literary works Training needs Assessment factors	Remained favourable and supported the notion of integrating literature in the language curriculum Concerns: Literature-based activities Choice of texts Support and guidance Implementation issues Literary assessment

Table 9.1 Teachers' attitudes towards literature before and after the study



The summarised findings outlined in the Table 9.2 below demonstrated that the students embraced conflicting perspectives on literature. Although they claimed that literature was potentially pertinent in language acquisition due to its benefits, they rejected the notion of integrating literature in their own curriculum at the Center. Moreover, albeit their post-study perspectives were confined to their experience of the worksheets and their pre-study views were affected by their encounter with literature in school, their attitudes towards literature were influenced by almost similar factors. They put forward the same motives for its integration and echoed their previous justifications for not wanting its possible addition to their syllabus at the Center. The study also revealed that the students faced similar difficulties in approaching literary texts regardless of the different classroom instructions and contexts.

Attribute	Response	
	Pre- study	Post-study
Attitudes towards the use of literature in language teaching	Literature could be used in language learning in general, but not in the language syllabus at the Center	Reiterated similar stand. In principle, literature could be used in language learning, but in practice, literature should not be added to their syllabus at the Center
Potential benefits of literature in language learning	Development of language skills Understanding of other cultures Personal development Classroom activities	Language development Classroom activities Personal development
Attitudes towards literature	Students displayed mixed attitudes towards literature Motives: Personal interest Reading experience Interest in literary reading Experience in school Literature-based classroom tasks Language development Cultural knowledge	Students displayed varied attitudes towards literature Motives: Texts used Reading experience Experience of using the worksheets Increase of knowledge of the target language
Factors affecting experience of literature	Experience in school: Teachers' attitudes and teaching instructions Texts used Difficulties in reading literary texts Reading preference	Experience of using the worksheets: Activities Texts used

Suggestions for the integration of literature in language teaching in general	Literature assessments Choice of texts Class implementation	Activities Text selection Implementation factors
Students' attitudes towards literature if it were implemented at the Center	Literature should not be used at the Center Reasons: Perceptions of literature Examination anxiety Peer Influence	Expressed similar view. Literature should not be integrated in the language syllabus at the Center Reasons: Perceptions of literature Assessment issues
Difficulties in literary reading	Literary interpretation Linguistic difficulties Limited vocabulary in the target language	Literary comprehension Linguistic complexities Limited vocabulary

Table 9.2 Students' attitudes towards literature prior to and after the study

Three important conclusions emerged from the comparison between the teachers' and students' attitudes. First, the findings suggested that the teachers were more enthusiastic and convinced about the significance and potential values of integrating literature in language classroom than their students. This might be because of their experience of integrating literary works and their personal interest in literature. When asked during the interviews and responding to the questionnaires most students stated that literature should not be incorporated in the language syllabus at the Center. In contrast, the three teachers were more positive and believed that literature could be integrated there, but that serious thought and thorough preparation were paramount prior to implementation. This indicated that the three teachers were more positive towards the integration of literature than their students. The findings are consistent with a number of studies (see Gilroy 1995; Ling 1997; Wasanasomsithi 1998) which have suggested that teachers are more favourable and have a strong belief in the perceived values of integrating literature.

Second, the findings also revealed that it was difficult to generalise about the students' attitudes towards literature. Some students were positive and strongly supported its integration, whereas some did not. Those who supported the integration articulated typical reasons such as the development of language skills, vocabulary expansion, knowledge of grammar and its

effects on the classroom activities which have been mentioned elsewhere (e.g. McRae 1991; Lazar 1993; Strong 1996; Savvidou 2004). Nevertheless, there were students who perceived literature as a boring and complicated subject, irrelevant to their needs as language learners. This finding is consistent with Hall's (2005:59) argument that "the dominant and abiding image of English teaching and of English literature in many students' minds, in traditional classrooms, is often tedium, condescension and irrelevance." There were other significant variables in this current study that influenced the students' attitudes such as their perceptions, language needs and abilities, genre selection, the teachers' attitudes and teaching methods, other curriculum demands as well as the classroom activities.

Third, the findings also suggested that the students faced similar problems in their literary reading and comprehension as other ESL students with similar language levels regardless of the different classroom instructions and settings as well as the educational contexts. Prime among their problems was the students' lack of competence in the target language. As a result, they felt threatened, uncomfortable and were usually put off by the difficult and highly unfamiliar words that they encountered. A number of studies such as Schulz (1981), Hirvela and Boyle (1988) and Davis *et al.* (1992) have also produced similar findings.

#### **9.4 Reflections of the researcher**

Whilst going through the study, I went through a journey of self-discovery. I encountered a demanding, yet an enriching experience of conducting a qualitative empirical case study. The chosen research design involved carrying out a preliminary study, developing the worksheets in light of the preliminary findings, conducting the fieldwork and finally, performing data analysis. Apart from developing the questionnaires and interview questions, designing the worksheets was one of the most challenging tasks to complete, particularly in terms of finding suitable texts and developing activities to accompany them. Another phase was the data collection procedures that required many long hours of classroom observations

and interviews. Nevertheless, with co-operation from the teacher and student respondents, I managed to obtain significant data relating to their attitudes towards literature. Though I had anticipated that I would obtain a large amount of data since five research instruments were used (questionnaires, interviews, observations, worksheets and journal entries), I was completely overwhelmed with the massive amount of data and encountered many challenges in my attempts to code, categorise and interpret them. The process of coding, categorising and interpreting the data based on thematic analysis was another crucial phase of the study that needed to be accomplished. During the interpretation process, I had to go through several processes such as data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Hence, I had to constantly ask myself analytic questions about the data. I also had to select, focus, simplify and transform the data that appeared in my field notes and interview transcripts. Moreover, I needed to interpret the facts and inferences that were revealed, provide explanation and draw conclusions based on the accumulated data.

The experience of doing this research has also taught me some valuable lessons in conducting an educational research. I learned how to interview curriculum developers, language instructors and students. I also discovered the act of conducting classroom observations. And since they took place over an extended period of time, I began to develop informal relationship with the students observed as they gradually grew accustomed to my presence in the class. I also learned not to impose my own personal viewpoints on literature in my writing irrespective of how strongly I might feel about it. I had to detach myself from the study, constantly reflecting and evaluating my work, looking at it from an outsider's point of view, something that I found quite difficult to achieve. Indeed, the journey of doing this research has been long, yet educationally worthwhile as it has taught me to be more independent, reflective and critical which will help me to grow from a novice researcher to a better one.

## 9.5 Opportunities for further research

As is the case with most research in social studies, there are areas in the study which can be improved. One area is the types of activity used in the worksheets. Despite my very best effort to ensure that the tasks would be suitable, challenging and interesting for the students, they were subject to limitations to a certain extent. The respondents, particularly the three teachers, had pointed out during the post-interviews that some of the activities were quite demanding for their students. Thus, both sets of respondents suggested that the activities should be simple. In other words, the choice of activities and the sort of questions asked should be encouraging and non-challenging for the students to complete. Though there are some values in the respondents' views on these types of questions and activities, their opinions lead to one important conclusion: if students are constantly drip-fed with simple tasks and questions that require little cognitive ability, how do we as teachers, help them to become critical, independent and reflective language learners?

The post-study results also revealed that the tutors suggested that another area in the research that can be improved further is the choice of the texts used in the worksheets. They considered that some of the texts were linguistically demanding for the students and due to this, they encountered some problems in reading them. These difficulties affected the students' experience of using the worksheets and to a degree, influenced the outcomes of the study. If different literary works with lower linguistic levels were used, the study would probably have presented different findings. Nonetheless, as mentioned in Section 3.5.1.2, a range of simple to complicated texts were chosen in order to expose the students to varied levels of linguistic difficulty. Thus, some texts were more accessible than others and the combination of different texts with varied levels of difficulty helped to provide rich data about the students' attitudes towards literary works. It is also worth mentioning that language was not the only factor that led to the students' difficulty in reading and responding to some of these texts. Other significant

attributes such as their perceptions of literature and assessment concerns also contributed to their problems.

Furthermore, a successful integration of literature in language instruction relies greatly on selecting interesting works. The study revealed that interesting texts such as *China's Little Ambassador*, and *After the Funeral* managed to encourage interest even when the three teachers considered the language level was quite difficult for the students. Hence, interesting literary texts can serve as powerful pedagogical tools for teaching language even to lower proficiency learners. However, the texts will become problematic and possibly discouraging if students can not successfully and sufficiently access them. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that linguistically complicated texts should be avoided at all cost; they can be used but teachers need to be provided with sufficient time and training, and students should be presented with simpler literature-based exercises such as cloze passages or matching activity to promote accessibility.

Another area that could be improved is classroom observations and their effects on the participants, particularly the teachers. At the beginning of the study, Nadia said that she felt restricted in her teaching, was more self-conscious and did not feel confident to execute the lessons with the presence of an observer in her classroom. The observer's effect is one of the common difficulties in using observation as a research method (Fraenkel and Wallen 2006). As a capable teacher, Nadia not only felt uncomfortable due to the fact that she was being observed, but also having being observed using materials that were not her own. Her attitudes, however, were distinct from Aminah's and Zahra's, who seemed happy to receive the worksheets and carried them out their in respective classrooms. However, this does not mean that Aminah and Zahra are incompetent instructors. Each teacher has her own abilities and styles. Thus, it can be assumed that the observation was not the only factor that might have led Nadia to feel constrained and insecure when using the worksheets, but also the fact that she

was using ready-made materials. Hence, future study should allow some flexibility for teachers to manoeuvre the lessons into the directions they feel appropriate. Teachers should also be given the opportunity to share ideas and give recommendations in developing literature-based activities.

Although the observational methods have some limitations, it was important to conduct observations because I needed to identify how the teachers and students responded to the worksheets, instead of relying on the teachers' and students' reports alone. And I sensed that as the study progressed, the teachers and students became accustomed to my presence in the class and gradually, the observations became less intrusive.

## **9.6 Recommendations for future research**

Despite the limitations previously discussed, the findings from this study provide valuable insights into certain aspects of the application of literature in ESL classrooms mainly in terms of attitudes, perspectives and needs of both teachers and students. The following recommendations can act as a stepping-stone for future studies in the experience of literature in similar learning contexts.

It is recommended that if literature is to be used in language lessons, additional care and attention should be committed to the selection of the literary works to ensure a more successful integration. They need to be carefully selected because they are a crucial factor which can determine the success of the endeavour. The suggested criteria are length, vocabulary levels of the texts and engaging storylines with appropriate themes for students in a particular educational setting. Another factor that can be considered is compatibility with the themes or topics of the required readings of a particular language course.

Further studies are also needed to explore the feasibility of the texts for use with similarly limited proficiency language learners. It is apparent that more empirical studies are necessary to investigate and address the linguistic complexities faced by these students in

reading literary works. The current study reveals that these complexities are instrumental to the students' perceptions that literature is difficult and inaccessible. To low-ability and unmotivated or disinterested students, literary texts can confuse or distract them and lead to boredom. Consequently, students tend to expect answers from their teachers without trying on their own or seek answers from their peers without understanding. Students may also plagiarise or accept the established interpretation of texts gleaned from reference books. Thus, studies on exploring, examining or proposing appropriate methods that help to address these difficulties are essential.

Since the study concentrates on the teachers' and students' attitudes towards literature and little attention is given to the pleasure that the students may have obtained from it, it is recommended that future research focuses on the reported enjoyment that students, as readers, can derive from reading literature. In other words, future studies should take greater account of the aesthetic experience of literary reading. Lott (1988:3) declares that very little is discussed on "the pleasure that literature can bring to the reader." Mattix (2002:515) also maintains that it is important to empirically investigate the role of literary texts in language learning, while at the same time, making space for its uniqueness, or "the aesthetic value." To sum up, Hall (2003:397-398) agrees that "pleasure and understandings are equally important and mutually necessary for a successful literary experience."

The student respondents in this current study placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of examinations. As stated before, they are assessment oriented and most examination subjects taken are given serious attention during their course of study. If there are educational establishments with similar context consider employing literature in their language curriculum, then it is suggested that more research be carried out to probe further and examine the effects of literary assessments not only on students' attitudes, but also on teachers'



instructional strategies and perceptions of literature. This is because language educators assume an important role and have significant influence on students' learning and attitudes.

The pre- and post-study findings also reveal that the teachers and the students prefer communicative tasks as they are assumed to be entertaining. Hence, it is apparent that further studies are needed to investigate whether students are actually learning the target language while having fun with literary works in an institution that shares a similar setting with the context of the current study.

This study also raises the issues of cultural allusion where unfamiliar culture can be one of the contributing factors that leads to students' failure in reading, understanding and responding to literary texts. Hence, the argument put forward by the three teachers is that, if literary works are to be presented to learners whose language abilities are similar to their own students', they need to contain references to cultures with which learners are familiar. For this reasons, it is apparent that more investigations are required in order to establish the extent to which a lack of familiarity with other cultures may hinder or distort students' reading and understanding of literary texts.

## **9.7 Conclusion**

It has been widely claimed that literature can play a significant role in language learning. Among others, McRae (1996:23) claims that "the language and literature interface is probably the richest vein of learning potential for learners at all levels of language, and indeed of literature study." Literary texts, if carefully selected can be used at any level of proficiency and can assist in students' language development. This is because these texts can engage students in reading as they contain interesting plots and vividly described scenes and characters. Literature-based activities also manage to encourage active participation from students as they are usually more creative and entertaining. In other words, the elements of fun and stimulating tasks are associated with literature-based activities which can motivate further

interest in students in the lessons that can lead to improve used and performance in the language.

Nevertheless, this study is not an attempt to argue that literature should be integrated mainly because it seems to support language development, vocabulary growth and cultural enrichment. What it set out to investigate, however, was the teachers' and students' attitudes towards literature and its use in language education through a specific encounter with a pedagogical stylistic approach.

Based on the study, I have discovered that the integration of literature requires a lot of effort, commitment and a strong desire from teachers and students to try something new or different in the language classroom. Many ESL teachers feel that the use of literary texts is primarily for fun and to provide interest and entertainment in their classroom strategies. Indeed, the application of literature can be fun and pleasurable for teachers and students alike, though it may not be as relaxing as many ESL instructors may expect it to be, for instance, when a language-based method is used to approach literature, as demonstrated in this study. That is why it is argued that most teachers turn to methods such as 'literature as content' where they feel safe when they talk about issues surrounding the text, or 'personal response' where they ask students to produce their own responses when literature is used in language lessons. These methods are also popular because they can motivate learners. As such, these approaches are assumed to be comparatively easier to undertake and that a linguistic analysis is almost avoided. However, it is not suggested that teachers should abandon these two methods and allocate exclusive attention to a language-based approach. Neither is it argued that this approach is superior in approaching literature nor the only approach that ensures an increase in students' awareness of the target language through the study of literary texts.

The study reveals that a language-based approach is inappropriate on its own to encourage interest in literature for the students in this particular context due to a number of

reasons such as the students' limited competence in the target language and their perception that literature is complex. An exclusive focus on this particular approach is also not an enriching experience for the students. Not only does a close attention to language analysis discourage the learners, but the teachers also find it to be demanding and challenging. Nevertheless, this approach works well if it is done alongside other methods of engaging literature in language lessons. For instance, the 'personal response' method can be used to attract students' interest in a text and when it is combined with a language-based approach, not only are students able to enjoy the text, but also pay close attention to its language. This helps to expand their knowledge of the language of the text and promotes a greater understanding and awareness of how English language works in general. Thus, it is argued that a balanced integration of a language-based approach with other methods will help to stimulate students' desire to read and encourage their response to literary works.

The study also reveals that in order for a language-based approach to work well with less advanced language students, it is essential that it is combined with communicative activities. The research has shown that such an approach coupled with role-play activities or drama presentations is most successful with these types of students. The teachers also prefer to work on literature-based communicative activities more than teaching about the linguistic aspects of the literary texts to the students. Finally, through this process of unification of different approaches and activities, it is argued that the potential effectiveness of literature in language education is made evident and will become more substantial. Accordingly, it will greatly influence students' and teachers' attitudes and perceptions of literature that have significant weight on its future directions and roles in ESL/EFL classrooms.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

## Standard Course Outline Format

<b>Kulliyah:</b> Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development	<b>Department:</b> English Language Division
<b>Programme</b>	English Language
<b>Course Title</b>	
<b>Course Code</b>	LE 4000
<b>Status</b>	
<b>Level</b>	LEVEL FOUR
<b>Credit Hours</b> <b>Contact Hours</b>	3 16 hrs 8 LSR 8 WG
<b>Pre-requisites (if any)</b>	LE 3000 or by EPT placement
<b>Co-requisites (if any)</b>	
<b>Teaching Methodology</b>	<i>State applicable items only</i> Examples as below: Distance learning Lecture Practical/Laboratory Seminar Tutorial
<b>Method of Evaluation</b> State weightage of each type of assessment.	Mid-term exam Final Examination Listening progress test Listening test Speaking test Group presentation
<b>Instructor(s)</b>	
<b>Semester Offered</b>	

Course Objectives	<p><b><u>READING</u></b></p> <p><b>General Objectives</b></p> <p>At the end of the course, students should be able to:</p> <p>construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read</p> <p>apply a range of skills and strategies in reading</p> <p>set goals, monitor and evaluate their progress in reading</p> <p><b>Specific Objectives</b></p> <p>Students will be exposed to the following skills:</p> <p>Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read</p> <p>Make predictions and connections between new material and previous information / experiences</p> <p>Tenses (G4.4.a-e),</p> <p>Modals and related verbs and expressions (G4.9.a-j)</p> <p>Conditionals (G4.10.a-b),</p> <p>Linking words (G4.13.a-b),</p> <p>Incorporate new print information into existing knowledge to draw conclusions.</p> <p>Modals and related verbs and expressions (G4.9.a-j),</p> <p>Linking words (G4.13.a-b),</p> <p>Demonstrate understanding of main ideas and select important supporting facts and details.</p> <p>Conditionals (G4.10.a-b),</p> <p>Adverbial clauses of time(G4.11.a)</p> <p>Linking words (G4.13.a-b),</p> <p>Interpret and provide oral, written, and/or artistic responses to ideas and feelings generated by the reading material and compare responses with peers</p> <p>Modals and related verbs and expressions (G4.9.e-j)</p> <p>Equatives, Comparatives and superlatives adjectives &amp; adverbs(G4.14.b)</p> <p>Tenses (G4.4.a-e)</p> <p>Accurately retell key elements of appropriate reading material</p> <p>Linking words (G4.13.a-b),</p> <p>Tenses (G4.4.a-d, f-h)</p> <p>Reported Speech (G4.8a-d)</p> <p>Adverbial clauses of time (G4.11.a)</p> <p>Provide summaries using key elements of appropriate reading materials</p> <p>Linking words (G4.13.a-b),</p> <p>Reported Speech (G4.8a-d)</p> <p>Adverbial clauses of time (G4.11.a)</p> <p>Students apply a range of skills and strategies in reading</p> <p>Gather the meaning of words through grammatical structures, analysis of word parts, and context to understand</p>
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	reading material Gerunds (G4.1.a-b) Infinitives G4.2.a-d) Sentence patterns (G4.6.a-c) Passive (G4.7.a-b) Phrasal verbs(G4.16.a) Make accurate inferences based on the information in the text. Infinitives G4.2.b-c) Sentence patterns (G4.6.a-c) Adverbial clauses of time(G4.11.a) Linking words (G4.13.b-c), Adjust fluency, rate and style of reading to the purpose of the material with guidance to develop vocabulary through the use of context clues, analysis of word parts and dictionary Students set goals, monitor and evaluate their progress in reading Articulate and evaluate strategies to self-monitor reading progress, overcome reading difficulties with minimal guidance. Monitor reading successes and set reading goals with minimal guidance.	
<b>Course Synopsis</b>		
<b>Course Outlines</b>		
<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Topics</b>	State Chapters of the textbook /reference materials on each of the topic covered in each week.
<b>References</b>		<b>Required Recommended</b>
<b>Proposed Start Date ( Semester)</b>		
<b>Batch of Students to be Affected</b>		

**NOTE:**

The course outlines should reflect the course description/ synopsis and Islamic mission of the university as well as to provide the room for Islamic critique.

Latest editions of textbooks and references should be used unless otherwise necessary or if the course is classical in nature. Please check with the library to ensure that the books are up-to-date and incorporating the latest edition.

The reference lists shall be presented in accordance with APA bibliographic practices and in alphabetical order.

The reference title shall be italicised or underlined or bold. If in doubt, please consult the Librarian.

Proposed course outlines should be presented to Senate for approval at least two Senate meetings prior to the course offering.

## APPENDIX 2

## QUESTIONNAIRE – PILOT STUDY

This questionnaire aims to explore your feeling about the use of literature in learning English language. Please read carefully the following items. Just tick a box or write down your answers. There are no right and wrong answers. Please be honest in your answers.

Please fill up the following:

1. Gender:                      [Male]                      [Female]
2. Programme: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous school: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you enjoy learning about Literature in English when you were in secondary school?  
[Yes]                                      [No]
5. Do you want to learn about literature in English now?  
[Yes]                                      [No]
6. What do you think about learning literature in English? You can tick more than one answer.  
[   ] It is fun and interesting  
[   ] It is boring  
[   ] It is confusing because I do not understand what I read  
[   ] It is a waste of time because it is not relevant to my programme  
[   ] It helps to improve my writing and reading skills  
[   ] Others \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you think literature should be used in learning English language?  
[Yes]                                      [No]
8. Do you like to read literary texts such as a short story, novel or drama?  
[Yes]                                      [No]

Please circle the appropriate value on the scale against each item in the list below.

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

The reason I am using short stories in the Project Work is...

- |     |  |           |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 9.  | ...because they will improve my language skills such as writing, reading and speaking.   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 10. | ...because they will allow me to experience the thoughts and feelings of other people, including people who are no longer alive. | 5 4 3 2 1 |

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 11. | ...because they will help me in the process of self discovery and personal development.   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 12. | ...because they will give me a broad sense of ideas for thinking about individual and social behaviour.   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 13. | ...because they will be way of comparing aspects of my own culture with another culture.  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 14. | ...because they will offer insights into past and present culture and society, and develop my thinking skills about these things for the future | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 15. | ...because I am interested in learning about literature in English  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 16. | ...because they are the compulsory reading texts for the Project Work   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 17. | ...because they are fun and interesting   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. | ...because I don't have a choice  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. | ...because I like learning about literature in English  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. | ...because I can learn about other cultures   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 21. | ...because I can learn about the different styles of writing in literature  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 22. | ...because the class is more relaxed than the other skills-based classes  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 23. | ...because I like to read short stories.  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 24. | ...because the attendance is compulsory   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 25. | ...because I will not be tested as the end of the semester  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 26. | ...because I like my teacher  | 5 4 3 2 1 |

Thank you very much for your help.

Wan Kamariah Baba, School of Education, University of Leicester, wkb2@le.ac.uk

## APPENDIX 3

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS - PILOT STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be kept strictly confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview session will focus on your attitudes towards literature, and the use of literature in language learning. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview. You can answer the questions either in *Bahasa Malaysia* or English, whichever language you are more comfortable with.

1. What kind of books do you like to read? Why?
2. Do you enjoy reading books, novels etc...in English?
3. Did you learn about literature in English when you were in school? How was your experience?
4. Do you want to continue learning about literature in English now?
5. What do you think about learning literature in English?
6. Do you think literature helps to improve your language skills? Please explain yourself.
7. What do you think about the current assessment of the project class?
8. What do you think of the current texts?
9. How you feel about reading the short stories?
10. What do you think of the project class? Why?
11. Do you like the method that your teacher uses in teaching about the short stories?
12. Do you experience any problems in reading the short story? Please explain.
13. Do you think you will read other short stories/novels etc...on your own, maybe outside the classroom?
14. Do you think the reading of literature should be formally tested during the mid semester and final examination?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?

## APPENDIX 4

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS - PILOT STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be strictly kept confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview will focus on your attitudes towards literature and its use of literature in language learning. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview.

- 1) In your opinion, do your students like to read?
- 2) Do you think your students have problem understanding what they read?
- 3) In your opinion, should the teaching of English language be integrated with literature?
- 4) In your opinion, can literature help to improve your students' language skills?
- 5) In your opinion, does literature benefit you as a language teacher?
- 6) How do you exploit the short stories use in the Project Work? What kind of approach(es) that you use in the project class?
- 7) In your opinion, students can understand the text better because they have been exposed to literature in English during their secondary school?
- 8) Is there any standardised approach outlined by the department to teach the short stories to the students?
- 9) Are you constantly and strongly influenced/restricted/guided by the project work course book? How do you use the course book?
- 10) In your opinions, what are the aims for the Project Work?
- 11) Based on your experience in teaching the project class, how do your students respond to the use of the short stories in the class?
- 12) How do you feel about the project class?
- 13) Do you think the short stories used as the reading text are suitable for your students?
- 14) Do you your students like reading the short stories? How do you help your students to understand and interpret the story? What method do you use?
- 15) Do you think your students should be tested at the end of the semester?
- 16) Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?



## APPENDIX 5

## STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

POEM: "This is just to say" by Williams Carlos Williams

## Activity 1: (5 minutes)

Look at these messages 'Sorry I forgot to buy the milk' 'Gone home', 'Ring your mum.' Where you might see or hear them? When people write these kinds of messages?

## Activity 2: (15 minutes)

In pairs, write short messages for the following situations. The first one has been done for you.

- Letting a friend know you have arrived home safely  
E.g. I've arrived home safely at 9.00 pm. Bob dropped me off.
- Leaving a message to your mother that you'll be late for dinner  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Telling someone you have forgotten to find articles for the assignments  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Telling a friend you have taken something from her/his room  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Telling a friend you will be late for the group discussion  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Telling someone that you have left something in his/her house  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Activity 3: (50 minutes)

THIS IS JUST TO SAY by Williams Carlos Williams

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which

you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were so delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

Your tasks: Answer the following questions.

1. Where would you normally see or find this kind of "message"?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Who do you think the "message" is written for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you know? Can you find any evidence from the poem to support your answers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you think the "message" was written?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How do you know? Are there any words or sentences from the text that make you think this way?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is (are) the tense(s) that you can identify in the poem? For example, present tense etc...List it (them) here:  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Can you provide the words or sentences from the poem to show the tense(s) that you have listed in question 6?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Now, switch the tense(s) in the poem (your answers in question 6, and 7) into a future tense with 'will' or 'be going to'.  
a) What kind of effect did you get?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you think it is appropriate to use future tense (with 'will' or 'be going to') when you want to leave a message about something that you have done? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Now switch the future tense into a present form.  
a) Did you get the similar effect when you used the future tense? Why? Why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Do you think it is appropriate to use present tense when you want to leave a message about something that you have done? Please explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Would you eat the plums that someone had been saving for breakfast? Why? Why not?

---

13. How would you feel if you had eaten those plums?

---

14. How would you tell the person that you had eaten his/her plums? Would you just leave a simple note or tell the person face to face?

---

#### Activity 4: Post-reading (30 minutes)

First, write a short message as a reply to the poem. Choose and include one (or more) of the tenses (e.g. present tense, past, future, past continuous, past participle etc...) in your reply. Then change the message into a poem. Your poem must not be more than 100 words.



#### Activity 5: Follow-up

1. Poem writing exercise where the students have to choose any situation from Activity 2 and turn the message into a poem. This is an individual task and later students can arrange and place the poems round the walls of the classroom.
2. Once students have finished writing their poems, teachers can ask a few students to read their poem aloud.
3. Poem recitation. This can be done as a group work. Students are allowed to use various styles that they can think of to recite the poem, "This is just to say" by Williams Carlos Williams.

## APPENDIX 6

## STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

SHORT STORY: "Hearts and Hands" by O. Henry

Activity 1: (5 minutes)

Look at the two pictures. Can you describe them? How would you describe them?

Activity 2: (15 minutes)

Some of the repeated words and phrases in box A and B have been left out except for the first letter. Try to work out what those words and phrases might be by referring to the previous paragraph or infer from the text itself. What clues did you use to get the answers?

Box A

At Denver, a great many passengers joined the coaches on the eastbound Boston and Maine train. In one coach, there sat a p\_\_\_\_\_ y\_\_\_\_\_ woman. She was beautifully and richly dressed. Among the new comers were two men. The y\_\_\_\_\_ one was g\_\_\_\_\_-l\_\_\_\_\_ with a b\_\_\_\_\_, h\_\_\_\_\_ face and manner. The other was a l\_\_\_\_\_, s\_\_\_\_\_-f\_\_\_\_\_ person, roughly dressed. The two were handcuffed together.

As they passed down the aisle of the coach, the only e\_\_\_\_\_ seat was one facing the y\_\_\_\_\_ woman. Here the l\_\_\_\_\_ pair seated themselves. The woman quickly glanced at them with disinterest. Then, with a l\_\_\_\_\_ smile, she held out a l\_\_\_\_\_ g\_\_\_\_\_-g\_\_\_\_\_ hand. When she spoke, her voice showed that she was used to speaking and being heard.

**Box B**

He slightly raised his r\_\_\_\_\_ hand, which was bound at the wrist by the s\_\_\_\_\_ bracelet to the l\_\_\_\_\_ one of his partner. The h\_\_\_\_\_ look in the woman's eyes slowly changed to one of puzzled h\_\_\_\_\_. The g\_\_\_\_\_ passed from her cheeks. Easton, with a l\_\_\_\_\_ laugh, as if amused was about to speak again when the other stopped him. The s\_\_\_\_\_ - f\_\_\_\_\_ man had been watching the y\_\_\_\_\_ woman's face with his s\_\_\_\_\_ s\_\_\_\_\_ eyes.

**Activity 3: (50 minutes)**

Read the story. Can you find the words that describe Easton, the Marshal and Miss Fairchild? What kinds of words are used to describe each character?

1. How would you describe Easton?

a) Make a list of adjectives used to describe him.

---

b) Do you think his descriptions fit his behaviours and attitudes? Why?

---



---

c) Based on your answers above (a and b) what kind of person do you think Easton is?

---



---

2. How would you describe the Marshal?

a) Make a list of adjectives used to describe him.

---



---

b) Do you think the descriptions of him fit his behaviours and attitudes? Why?

---



---

c) What do you think is the narrator's opinion about the Marshall?

---



---

3. How would you describe Miss Fairchild?

a) Make a list of adjectives used to describe her.

---

b) Do you think she is a nice person? Why?

---



---

4. Look at the table below. Which characters in the story "Hearts and Hands" have these characteristics? One characteristic can be used for more than one character.

Characteristics	Character
Rich	
Confident	
Fashionable	
Solemn	
Alert	
Compassionate	
Understanding	
Young	
Materialistic	
Kind	
Sympathetic	
Elegant	
Materialistic	

5. How do you feel about Easton and the Marshal?

---



---

6. Do you think if the narrator had described Easton as the "large, sad-faced person, roughly dressed" and the Marshal as the "good looking" young man with "a bold, honest face and manner", would have changed how you feel about both of them?

---



---



---

**Activity 4: (35 minutes)**

1. This story is full of opposites (e.g. right, left, east, west). How relevant are the oppositions to the characters?

---

2. What can you infer about the relationship between the "good-looking young man" and Miss Fairchild? Are there any evidence from the text to support your answer?

---

---

3. Who is the prisoner? The younger man with "bold, honest face and manner" or the "large, sad-faced person, roughly dressed"? How do you know?

---

---

4. Are there any clues in the story about why he may have needed to commit this crime?

---

---

5. The "sad faced man had been watching the young woman's face with his sharp searching eyes"

a) What does sad-faced man say next?

---

---

b) Why do think he said that? What is the significance of these lines in the story?

---

---

---

6. Do you think Miss Fairchild knows that Easton is not the Marshal? Are there any evidence from the text to support your views?

---

---

7. Why do you think the story is called "Hearts and Hands"? Can you find words or expressions from the text to support your answers?

---

---

---





## Hearts and Hands: by O. Henry

At Denver, a great many passengers joined the coaches on the eastbound Boston and Maine train. In one coach, there sat a pretty young woman. She was beautifully and richly dressed. Among the new comers were two men. The younger one was good-looking with a bold, honest face and manner. The other was a large, sad-faced person, roughly dressed. The two were handcuffed together. 5

As they passed down the aisle of the coach, the only empty seat was one facing the young woman. Here the linked pair seated themselves. The woman quickly glanced at them with disinterest. Then, with a lovely smile, she held out a little gray-gloved hand. When she spoke, her voice showed that she was used to speaking and being heard.

"Well, Mr Easton, if you will make me speak first, I suppose I must. Don't you ever say hello to old friends when you meet them in the West?" 10

The younger man pulled himself up sharply at the sound of her voice. He seemed to struggle with a little embarrassment, which he threw off instantly. Then he held her fingers with his left hand.

"It's Miss Fairchild," he said, with a smile, "I'll ask you to excuse the other hand, I'm not able to use it at present." 15

He slightly raised his right hand, which was bound at the wrist by the shining bracelet to the left one of his partner. The happy look in the woman's eyes slowly changed to one of puzzled horror. The glow passed from her cheeks. Easton, with a little laugh, as if amused was about to speak again when the other stopped him. The sad-faced man had been watching the young woman's face with his sharp searching eyes. 20

"You'll excuse me for speaking, miss. But I see you know the marshal here. If you ask him to speak a word for me when we get to the pen, he'll do it. It'll make things easier for me here. He's taking me to Leavenworth Prison. It's seven years for counterfeiting."

"Oh!" she said, with a deep breath and returning color. "So that is what you are doing out here. A Marshal!" 25

"My dear Miss Fairchild," said Easton calmly, "I had to do something. Money has a way of taking wings. You know it takes money to keep in step with our crowd in Washington. I saw this opening in the West, and ...Well, a marshal isn't quite as high a position as that of an ambassador, but..." 30

"The ambassador," she said warmly, "doesn't call anymore. He needn't ever have done so. You ought to know that. So now you are one of these dashing western heroes. And you ride and shoot and go into all kinds of danger. That's different from the Washington life. You have been missed by the old crowd."

The woman's eyes, interested, went back, widening a little, to rest upon the shiny handcuffs. 35

"Don't you worry about them, miss," said the other man. "All marshals handcuff themselves to the prisoners to keep them from getting away. Mr Easton knows his business."

"Will we see you again soon in Washington?" asked Miss Fairchild. 40

"Not soon, I think," said Easton, "My carefree days are over, I fear,"

"I love the West," she said. Her eyes were shining softly. She looked away and out the train window. She began to speak truly and simply, forgetting about style and manner. "Mamma and I spent the summer in Denver. She went home a week ago because Father

was ill. I could live and be happy in the West. I think the air here agrees with me. Money 45  
isn't everything. But people always misunderstood things and remain stupid."

"Say, Mr. Marshal," growled the sad-faced man. "This isn't quite fair. I'm needin' a  
drink of water. Haven't you talked long enough? Take me into the dining car now, won't  
you?"

The bound travellers rose to their feet. Easton still had the same slow smile on his 50  
face.

"I can't say no to a need of water," he said lightly. "It's the one friend of the  
unfortunate. Good-bye, Miss Fairchild. Duty calls, you know" He held his hand for farewell.

"It's too bad you are not going East," she said, remembering again her manner and 55  
style. . "But you must go on to Leavenworth."

"Yes," said Easton. "I must go on to Leavenworth."

The two men made their way down the aisle into the dining car.

The two passengers in a seat nearby heard most of the conversation. Said one of  
them, "That marshal is a good sort of chap. Some of these Westerners are all right."

"Pretty young to hold an office like that, isn't he?" asked the other. 60  
"Young!" exclaimed the first speaker. "Why ...Oh....Didn't you catch on? Say, did you ever  
know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

## APPENDIX 7

## STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

NOVEL: "After the Funeral" by Agatha Christie

**Activity 1: Introduction (5 minutes)**

Can you predict what type of story (mysterious, romance, murder, etc...) you are going to read later based on this sentence?

'After the funeral'

**Activity 2: (20 minutes)**

Read the extract below. Then complete the following tasks.

After the meal was over, Lanscombe indicated the library for coffee. This was his feeling for niceties. The time had come when business - in other words, The Will- would be discussed. The library had the proper atmosphere for that with its bookshelves and its heavy red velvet curtains. He served coffee to them there and then withdrew, closing the door.

**Task A: Inference**

1. What do you think is happening here? Where does it take place?

---

2. Who do you think is Lanscombe?

---

3. When do people normally discuss "The Will"?

---

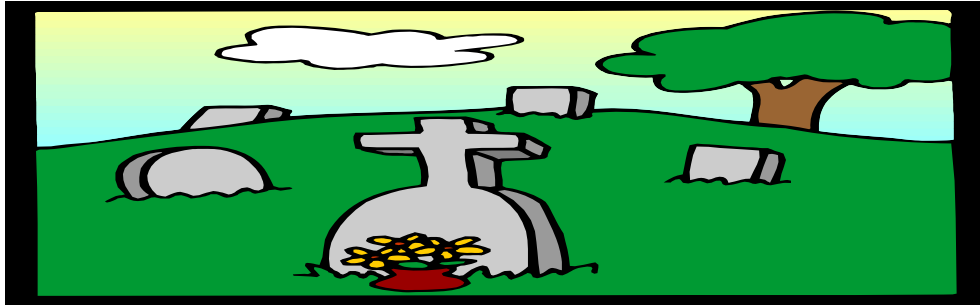
4. Look at these words, "proper atmosphere for that". What do you think they refer to?

---

---

Can you predict what the story is going to be about based on the extract above? In not more than **50 words**, write your prediction.

## Activity 3: While-reading activity (50 minutes)



The extract below is adapted from Agatha Christie's novel, "After the Funeral"

After a few \*desultory remarks, everyone began to look tentatively at Mr Entwhistle. He responded promptly after glancing at his watch.

'I have to catch the 3.30 train,' he began.

Others, it seemed, also had to catch that train.

'As you know,' said Mr Entwhistle, 'I am the \*executor of Richard Abernethie's will-' 5  
He was interrupted.

'I didn't know,' said Cora Lansquenet brightly. 'Are you? Did he leave me anything?'

Not for the first time, Mr Entwhistle felt that Cora was too apt to speak out of turn.

Bending a repressive glance at her he continued: 10

'Up to a year ago, Richard Abernethie's will was very simple. He left everything to his son Mortimer.'

'Poor Mortimer,' said Cora. 'I do think all this \*infantile paralysis is dreadful.'

'Mortimer's death, coming so suddenly and tragically, was a great blow to Richard. It took him some months to recover from it. I pointed out that it might be advisable for him to 15  
make new **testamentary dispositions**'

Maude Abernethie asked in her deep voice:

'What would have happened if he hadn't made a new will? Would it –would it all have gone to Timothy- as the next of kin, I mean?'

Mr Entwhistle opened his mouth to give a \*disquisition on the subject of next of kin, 20  
thought better of it, and said crisply:

'On my advice, Richard decided to make a new will.

\*\*\*\*\*

'That's very nice!' said Cora Lansquenet with real appreciation. 'An income! How 25  
much?'

'I-er-can't say exactly at present –'

'Can't you give me an idea?'

Mr Entwhistle realized that Cora must be \*appeased.

'Possibly somewhere in the neighbourhood of three to four thousand a year.'

'Goody!' said Cora. 'I shall go to \*Capri'

'How very kind and generous of Richard. I do appreciate his affection towards me.' 30

'He was very fond of you,' said Mr Entwhistle. 'Leo was his favourite brother and your visits to him were always much appreciated after Leo died.'

Helen said regretfully:

'I wish I had realized how ill he was-when I came up to see him not long ago before he died, but although I knew he had been ill, I did not think it was serious.'

'It was always serious,' said Mr Entwhistle. 'But he did not want it talked about and I do not believe that anybody expected the end to come as soon as it did. The doctor was quite surprised, I know.'

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, nodding her head. 'I wondered then.'

'I was a shock to all of us,' said Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy dreadfully. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up very nicely, hasn't it?' said Cora.

Everybody stared at her and she seemed a little embarrassed.

'I think you're quite right,' she said hurriedly. 'Quite right. I mean – it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept strictly in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwhistle leaned forward:

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquenet looked round at the family in wide-eyed surprise. She tilted her head on one side with a bird-like movement.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* desultory - showing little interest/uninterested

\* executor - person who executes a person's wishes expressed in a will (usually a lawyer)

\* disquisition - a long and detailed explanation

\* infantile paralysis – ( a type of disease, limbs are not working/paralysed)

\* appeased- to sooth, to calm or pacify

\*Capri - a place in Italy

Discuss in groups of four to five and complete the following tasks:

1. Do you want to continue reading the story? \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

---



---

2. Do you have problems understanding the extract? **Yes/No**

Why?

---



---

3. What do you think the words "**testamentary dispositions**" in line 19 refer to?

---

## 4. Read the text below.

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, nodding her head. 'I wondered then.'

'It was a shock to all of us,' said Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy dreadfully. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up very nicely, hasn't it?' said Cora. Everybody stared at her and she seemed a little embarrassed.

'I think you're quite right,' she said hurriedly. 'Quite right. I mean – it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept strictly in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwhistle leaned forward:

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquenet looked round at the family in wide-eyed surprise. She tilted her head on one side with a bird-like movement.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said

5. How do you feel when you read the text? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are the words or sentences from the text that make you feel this way?

7. Look at the underlined words in the text. What type of word class do you think they belong to (e.g. noun, verb, etc...) Write your answer here:

8. Can you explain your answer for question 7?

9. Look at the text below. The underlined words have been omitted.

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, nodding her head. 'I wondered then.'

'It was a shock to all of us,' Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up, hasn't it?' said Cora. Everybody stared at her and she seemed embarrassed.

'I think you're right,' she said 'Quite right. I mean – it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwhistle leaned forward:

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquenet looked round at the family. She tilted her head.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said

a) Does the extract have the same effect on you once the underlined words have been omitted? \_\_\_\_\_

b) Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Find the sentences from the extract that you think might show the types of \*adverbs listed in **Box A** below (if there are any). Then put each of the sentences in the appropriate column in **Box B**.

**Box A** - Types of adverb:

Adverb type	Question	Examples
Manner	How?	Well, badly, cleverly
Place	Where?	Here, there, anywhere
Time	When?	Now, then, soon, tomorrow
Duration	How long?	Briefly
Frequency	How often	Always, weekly, daily, never
Degree	To what extent?	Rather, quite, much, hardly

Put one sentence in each column in **Box B**. Underline the adverbs. The first one has been done for you. You can refer to the examples in **Box A** above to help you to answer the questions.

**Box B**

Adverb type	Question	Examples
Manner	How?	'I didn't know,' said Cora Lansquenet <u>brightly</u> .
Place	Where?	
Time	When?	
Duration	How long?	
Frequency	How often	
Degree	To what extent?	

\*Adverb is a word-class which is commonly marked by the suffix *-ly*, and which refers to circumstances such as 'how' or 'why' or 'when' etc...an action is done.

#### Activity 4: (30 minutes)

Sit in pairs and do the following tasks:

- a) Choose any of the adverbs from the extract.

(E.g. strictly)

Adverb: \_\_\_\_\_

- b) Think of an atmosphere that you want to create (suspense, romance, comedy, horror, magical, sci-fi etc...) by using this adverb.

(E.g. magical)



Atmosphere: \_\_\_\_\_

- c) Then write your own sentence using the adverb that would create the particular atmosphere that you have chosen in (b).

(E.g. The students were strictly forbidden to talk to each other during their visit to the enchanted and magical castle)

The sentence:

---



---

What idea of your sentence would you like to emphasize?

- d) (E.g. enchanted castle)

Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

---

- d) Transform your sentence into a story of not more than 100 words. Keep your reader guessing what is going to happen. Use appropriate words/ sentences to keep your reader interested in your story. Only towards the end, reveal what is the main issue/point/problem/climax in your story.

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### Activity 5:

Discuss in groups of four to five the differences and similarities between your own cultures during a funeral with the one depicted in the extract.

## APPENDIX 8

## PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE - MAIN STUDY

This questionnaire aims to explore your feeling about the use of literature in learning English language. Please read carefully the following items. Just tick a box or write your answers. There are no right and wrong answers. Please be honest in your answers.

Please fill up the following:

1. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male
2. Programme: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous school: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you like to read? ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
5. When do you usually read? Please tick only **ONE** answer.
  - ☐ When preparing for an examination
  - ☐ When doing assignments
  - ☐ When instructed by my teachers
  - ☐ When I have free time
6. Did you read some literature in English when you were in secondary school?
  - ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
7. How many years did you do literature in English in school?
  - ☐ 2 years and below
  - ☐ 3 years
  - ☐ 4 years
  - ☐ 5 years
8. How do you feel now about having done literature in English when you were in secondary school? Please tick only **ONE** answer for a, b, c, d and e.
  - a) It was enjoyable. ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
  - b) It was fun and interesting. ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
  - c) It was boring. ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
  - d) It was a waste of time. ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
  - e) It was confusing ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
9. Do you want to continue doing literature in English at the Matriculation Center?
  - ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
10. Do you want to continue using literature in learning English language?
  - ☐ [Yes] ☐ [No]
11. Do you think literature encourages you to become interested in reading?

- [Yes]                      [No]
12. Do you think literature helps you to learn new words and write better sentences?  
[Yes]                      [No]
13. Do you think your experience of learning about literature in school helps you to become more interested in reading literary texts?  
[Yes]                      [No]
14. Do you think literature helps you to be a better reader?  
[Yes]                      [No]
15. Do you think literature helps you to get good results in other subjects?  
[Yes]                      [No]
16. Do you think literature helps you to achieve your academic goals?  
[Yes]                      [No]
17. Do you think literature is relevant to your programme right now?  
[Yes]                      [No]
18. Do you think literature should be used in language learning?  
[Yes]                      [No]
19. Do you think literature in English should only be offered to BEN students?  
[Yes]                      [No]
20. Do you like to read literary texts such as a short story, novel or drama in English?  
[Yes]    Proceed to question 21                      [No]    Proceed to question 25
21. Which type of literary texts do you like to read most? Please tick only **ONE** answer.  
[   ]    Novel  
[   ]    Poem  
[   ]    Short story  
[   ]    Drama or play  
Why? Please explain.
- 
22. How often do you read this type of literary text in a week?  
[   ]    More than 7 times a week  
[   ]    Between 4-6 times a week  
[   ]    Between 2-3 times a week  
[   ]    Less than 2-3 times a week
23. What type of text do you like to read? You can tick more than one answer.  
[   ]    Romance

- [ ] Science Fiction  
 [ ] Horror  
 [ ] Adventure  
 [ ] Mystery  
 [ ] Others

24. What kind of selection of literary texts do you think should be used in the Reading class? You can tick more than one answer.

- [ ] Various types of writing such as mystery, horror, romance, science fiction  
 [ ] Stories written by Asian or Malaysian writers  
 [ ] Translated stories from *Bahasa Malaysia*  
 [ ] Islamic stories from the Middle East  
 [ ] Others. Please explain

25. Do you think literary texts should be used in the skills-based class?

[Yes] [No]

Why? Please explain your answer.

26. Do you think the reading of literature should be formally tested during the mid semester and final examinations?

[Yes] [No]

Why?

27. Please circle the appropriate value on the scale against each item in the list below.

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree
--

I think the use of literature in language teaching

... will help to improve my language skills such as writing, reading and speaking. 5 4 3 2 1

... will allow me to experience the thoughts and feelings of other

people, including people who are no longer alive.

5 4 3 2 1

... will help me in the process of self discovery and personal development.

5 4 3 2 1

... will give me a broad sense of ideas for thinking about individual

and social behaviour.

5 4 3 2 1

... will be a way of comparing aspects of my own culture with another culture.

5 4 3 2 1

... will offer insights into past and present culture and society, and develop my thinking skills about these things for the future	5 4 3 2 1
...should be used in the Reading class	5 4 3 2 1
...is fun and interesting	5 4 3 2 1
...helps me to learn about other cultures	5 4 3 2 1
... exposes me to different styles of writing in literature which I can use in my writing activities or assignments	5 4 3 2 1
...will make the class more relaxed	5 4 3 2 1
...should not be tested	5 4 3 2 1
...is an enjoyable experience because I like reading literature in English	5 4 3 2 1
...will be a waste of time because I am not going to be an English language teacher	5 4 3 2 1
... encourages me to participate in group discussions	5 4 3 2 1
...makes me more interested to learn about literature in English	5 4 3 2 1
... is an entertaining and motivating way to learn English language	5 4 3 2 1
...is a burden and unnecessary in learning English	5 4 3 2 1
...is challenging because literature is complex and difficult	5 4 3 2 1
... does not help me to get better result in the examination	5 4 3 2 1
...encourages me to become interested in reading books in general	5 4 3 2 1
...is time-wasting as the focus should be more on learning grammar	5 4 3 2 1
...is boring	5 4 3 2 1

28. In your opinion, what is literature? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your help. Wan Kamariah Baba, University of Leicester.  
wkb2@le.ac.uk

## APPENDIX 9

## POST-QUESTIONNAIRE - MAIN STUDY

This questionnaire aims to explore your feeling about all the activities that you have worked on throughout the study. Please read carefully the following items. Just tick a box or write your answers. There are no right and wrong answers. You can refer to your folder if necessary. Please be honest in your answers.

**Please fill up the following:**

1. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male
2. Programme: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Previous school: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which worksheet was the most difficult? Worksheet \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which worksheet was the easiest? Worksheet: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which literary text was the most boring? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which literary text was the easiest? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which literary text was the most interesting? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Were any of the texts difficult? Which one? Please specify. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Why do you think the text was difficult?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. How would you rate your experience of using the worksheets?  
☐ Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Not sure
12. Did you enjoy reading all the texts in all the worksheets?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure  
Why? Please explain your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_

For question 13-14, put the appropriate number in the box provided for each question.

5 = very interesting, 4 = interesting, 3 = okay, 2 = less interesting, 1 = not interesting at all

13. From the scale above, how would you rate the overall activities?
14. From the scale above, how would you rate the overall selection of literary texts (poems/short stories/extracts from novels and play)?

**For question 15-33, please circle the appropriate value on the scale against each item in the list below.**

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

15. In general, the activities in the worksheets were interesting 5 4 3 2 1
16. In general, the activities in the worksheets were boring 5 4 3 2 1

- |     |  |           |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 17. | In general, the activities in the worksheets were challenging  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 18. | In general, the activities in the worksheets were time-wasting   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 19. | In general, the activities in the worksheets were difficult  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 20. | The activities have helped to improve my language skills<br>(e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening)           | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 21. | I had a lot of problems when doing the activities  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 22. | The activities in the worksheet helped me to understand the texts  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 23. | I want to continue doing these types of activities in the other<br>language classes                                | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 24. | I had enough time to complete all the activities in the worksheets   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 25. | All the instructions in all the activities were clear  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 26. | I did not enjoy doing the activities in the worksheets   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 27. | I needed more help from the teacher to complete the activities   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 28. | More activities such as role-play and drama should be included<br>in the worksheets                                | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 29. | I liked the activities because they focused on the language of the texts   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 30. | I enjoyed doing activities such as role plays and dramatisation  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 31. | The activities provided a lot of opportunities for speaking practice   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 32. | The worksheets provided a lot of opportunities for writing<br>activities which helped to improve my writing skills | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| 33. | The activities also helped me to understand what I read  | 5 4 3 2 1 |

34. What did you like most about doing the activities in the worksheets?

- [    ] I got to discuss the activities with my friends
- [    ] I got to read the literary texts
- [    ] I got to focus on the language of the text
- [    ] I got the chance to practice my reading and writing skills
- [    ] I got the chance to practice my speaking skills
- [    ] I could learn about grammar at the same time
- [    ] Others

---

35. What did you dislike about the activities in the worksheets? You can tick more than one answer.

- [    ] The activities focused too much on the language of the text

- [ ] The activities were too difficult  
 [ ] The activities were time-consuming  
 [ ] The texts used in the worksheets were not interesting  
 [ ] Others

36. Do you feel that these kinds of activities are a waste of time in learning language?  
 [ ] Yes [ ] No
37. Do you feel that you have learned how to read and understand literary texts better than when you were in school?  
 [ ] Yes [ ] No

These are the literary texts that were used in the study:

<b>Poems:</b> 'This is just to Say' by William Carlos William 'When' by Mustapha Matura 'maggie and milly and molly and may' by e.e.cummings	<b>Short stories:</b> 'Hearts and Hands' by O. Henry 'A Day's Wait' by Ernest Hemingway 'China's Little Ambassador' by Bette Bao Lord
<b>Novels:</b> 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald 'After the Funeral' by Agatha Christie	<b>Play:</b> 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller

38. Do you want to continue reading works by any of these authors in future?  
 [ ] Yes [ ] No
39. Do you think that the activities have motivated you to become more interested in learning about literature?  
 [ ] Yes [ ] No

Please circle the appropriate value on the scale against each item in the list below.

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

40. Please indicate how you feel about the activities for each literary text conducted throughout the study.

**A) Poems:**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| The poems selected were interesting  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| The selected poems were difficult  | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| The activities helped me to understand the poems   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| The worksheets made me realize how language was used in certain ways to create an effect on me as the reader | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| The worksheets did not help me to understand the poems   | 5 4 3 2 1 |
| I had to struggle in order to complete the activities for the poems  | 5 4 3 2 1 |



I liked doing the activities for the poem 5 4 3 2 1

**B) Short stories:**

The selected short stories were interesting 5 4 3 2 1

The activities for short stories were boring 5 4 3 2 1

I had fun doing the activities for the short stories 5 4 3 2 1

I had to struggle in order to complete the activities for the short stories 5 4 3 2 1

The activities were irrelevant to my understanding of the stories 5 4 3 2 1

The activities helped me to understand the short stories 5 4 3 2 1

I now realize how language is used in certain ways to create certain effect on the readers 5 4 3 2 1

**C) Novels:**

The extracts selected from the novels were interesting 5 4 3 2 1

The activities helped me to understand the extracts 5 4 3 2 1

Now, I am interested in reading the whole novel and read it on my own 5 4 3 2 1

I enjoyed doing all the activities based on the extracts from the novel 5 4 3 2 1

I would like to continue doing these kinds of activities in future 5 4 3 2 1

I had a lot of problem completing the activities, especially in terms of the language difficulties 5 4 3 2 1

I didn't understand the extracts even though I had done the activities 5 4 3 2 1

**D) Play:**

The selected extract for the play was interesting 5 4 3 2 1

I didn't understand the extract 5 4 3 2 1

The activities for the extract were interesting 5 4 3 2 1

I would like to read more plays 5 4 3 2 1

I would like to stage the play used in the study 5 4 3 2 1

I would like to be involved in staging a play 5 4 3 2 1

41. Do you feel that you want to continue reading literary texts on your own after this study?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

42. What is your opinion about keeping your work organised, worksheet-by-worksheet, in a folder?

43. Give your overall comments about the activities that you have done throughout the study.

44. In your opinion, having experienced using literature in your Reading class, should literature be used in the English language syllabus at the Center? Please tick only **ONE** answer.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

45. In your opinion, having experienced using literature in your Reading class, should literature be used in the teaching and learning of English language? Please tick **ONE** answer only.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Thank you very much for your help. Wan Kamariah Baba, School of Education, University of Leicester, wkb2@le.ac.uk

## APPENDIX 10

## STUDENTS' PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - MAIN STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be kept strictly confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview session will focus on your attitudes toward literature, and the use of literature in language learning. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview. You can answer the questions either in *Bahasa Malaysia* or English, whichever language you are more comfortable with.

## Part One:

1. Do you like to read?
2. When do you usually read?
3. What kinds of reading materials do you enjoy? How often do you read this type of material every week?
4. Do you like to read texts such as short stories, novels or plays in English? Which do you like to read most? Why?
5. Did you learn/study/read about literature in school? For how long?
6. Did you enjoy learning about literature (or reading literature) in English when you were in school? Why? Why not?
7. Would you like to continue using or reading literature as part of learning English language now at the Center? Why?

## Part Two:

8. Do you think (reading) literature helps to improve your language skills? If so, how?
9. Do you think literature helps you to become a better reader? Can you give your reasons?
10. Do you think (studying/reading) literature helps you to get good results in other subjects? Why?
11. Do you think (reading/studying) literature helps you to achieve your academic goals and is relevant to your programme right now? If so, how?
12. Do you think literature is important in language learning? Give your reasons.
13. Do you think literature in English should only be offered to BENL (Bachelor of English Language and Literature) students? Can you explain your answer?
14. Do you think literature should also be used in the other classes (Writing, Grammar etc) for your language level?
15. Do you think literature should also be used in the language classes at the other language levels? Why?
16. If literature were to be used in your Reading class, what kind of literary texts do you think should be used?
17. Do you think the reading of literature should be formally tested during the mid semester and final examinations?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?

## APPENDIX 11

## TEACHERS' PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - MAIN STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be strictly kept confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview will focus on your attitudes toward literature and its use of literature in language learning. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview.

## Part One:

1. Do you like to read literary texts such as short stories, novels or plays in English? Which do you like to read most? Why?
2. How often do you read this type of material every week?
3. Have you received any training on the teaching of literature before?
4. What did you do in the training and how do you feel about it?
5. Have you ever used literature in a language class?
6. How was your experience using literature in that class?
7. What kinds of text(s) did you use?
8. How did you select the text(s)?
9. Do you think the text(s) was (were) suitable for your students?
10. Did you face any problems using literature in that class? If so, what were the problems? What do you think caused these problems?

## Part Two:

11. Were there any advantages to you in using literature in that class?
12. How did the students respond to that class?
13. Do you feel that you would like to continue or start using literature in language teaching/learning? Why?
14. In your opinion, does literature play an important role in language learning/ teaching? Can you give your reasons?
15. If literature were to be used in the Reading class, what kinds of literary texts do you think should be used?
16. Do you think the use of literature in a language class should be tested?
17. What kinds of help or support would you expect to receive from the Department if literature were to be used in the Reading class?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?

## APPENDIX 12

## STUDENTS' POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - MAIN STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be kept strictly confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview will focus on your experience of doing the activities in the worksheets, and how you feel about them. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview. You can answer the questions either in *Bahasa Malaysia* or English, whichever language you are more comfortable with.

1. How do you feel about the activities in the worksheets?
2. Did the activities help you to understand the texts? Please give your reasons.
3. Did the activities motivate you to become more interested in learning about literature?
4. Did the activities help you to understand why you felt in certain ways when you read the texts? (Were you able to explain your reaction to the texts through the use of the activities?)
5. Do you think the activities have helped to improve your writing skills?
6. Did you face any problems when you were doing the activities? If so, what were they? And what do you think caused these problems?
7. What did you like most about doing the activities in the worksheets?
8. What did you dislike about the activities in the worksheets?
9. Did you complete all the exercises in the worksheets?
10. Do you think these kinds of activities are helpful in learning language? Why?
11. Having experienced using literature in your Reading class, do you think literature should be used in language learning?
12. Do you want to continue using these types of activities in your other classes such as the Writing and Grammar class? Give your reasons.
13. Did you enjoy reading all the texts in all the worksheets? Why? Why not?
14. Do you think the activities have motivated you to become more interested in reading?
15. Do you think that you are more interested in reading literary texts now, after doing the activities? Give your reasons.
16. Do you think the activities have improved your reading skills? If so, how?
17. If you could improve and change the activities, what would you change and why?
18. If you were allowed to change the texts used in the study, which text(s) would you change and why?
19. Do you think that the activities have shown you how literature can be used in the Reading class? If so, how?
20. Do you think the use of literature in the Reading class should be tested in formal examinations such as the mid semester and final examinations?
21. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?

## APPENDIX 13

### TEACHERS' POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS - MAIN STUDY

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be strictly kept confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview will focus on your experience in conducting the activities in the worksheets. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt me during the interview.

1. What is your overall opinion of the worksheets used for this study?
2. Which activity do you think was most difficult for your students to complete?
3. Which activity do you think was the easiest for your students to complete?
4. Do you think your students enjoyed doing the activities in the worksheets? Why?
5. Do you think the activities helped your students to understand the texts? Can you explain your answer?
6. Do you think the activities helped your students to understand why they reacted in such a way when they read a particular text?
7. What is your overall comment on the texts used in the study? Were they suitable for your students?
8. Which text was the most interesting for you to teach?
9. Which text was the most difficult for you to teach?
10. Did you enjoy conducting the activities in the worksheets with your students?
11. Did you have problems when conducting the activities with the students? If so, what were your problems?
12. What do you think were the problems that your students might have faced while completing the activities? What were the students' problems?
13. Do you think you had enough time to conduct all the activities?
14. If you were allowed to change the texts used in the study, which text(s) would you change and why?
15. If you could make changes to the activities, what changes would you make and why?
16. On the basis of your experience in this study, do you think literature should be used and play an important role in language learning/teaching?
17. Do you think that literature could also be used in the other skills-based classes e.g. Grammar, Writing, Speaking, and Listening?
18. Do you want to continue using these types of activities in your other language classes?
19. Do you think the use (reading) of literature in language learning should be tested?
20. Do you think you needed more guidance before using the activities with your students?
21. What kinds of help or support do you expect the Department should be able to provide if literature were used in teaching language to students?
22. Do you think the integration of literature in language learning was shown clearly in the activities in the worksheets? Can you give your reasons?
23. Do you think now, having used the worksheets, you are more aware of how to integrate literature in a language classroom?
24. Is there anything else that you would like to say before we end this interview?

**APPENDIX 14****WRITTEN CONSENT**

I am aware that all the personal details that I would have given during the interviews will be kept strictly confidential; and it will only be used for the purpose of the research. I have agreed to participate voluntarily in this study without any physical or psychological coercion from the researcher.

Thank you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 15**  
**OBSERVATION SCHEDULE**

Date	Wk	Group/Tchr	Wksht	Text	Class obs.	Total obs.
20.12.05	3	A/Nadia	1	This is Just to Say	1	1
21.12.05	3	B/Zahra	1	This is Just to Say	1	2
22.12.05	3	C/Aminah	1	This is Just to Say	1	3
27.12.05	4	A/ Nadia	Cancelled	Teacher – on leave	Cancelled	Cancelled
28.12.05	4	B/Zahra	2	When	2	4
29.12.05	4	C/Aminah	2	When	2	5
3.1.06	5	A/ Nadia	2	When	2	6
4.1.06	5	B/Zahra	3	maggie and milly and molly and may	3	7
5.1.06	5	C/Aminah	Cancelled	Teacher on EL	Cancelled	Cancelled
6.1.06	6	A/ Nadia	3	maggie and milly and molly and may (replace class on 10.1)	3	8
10.1.06	6	A/ Nadia	Cancelled	Public holiday	Cancelled	Cancelled
11.1.06	6	B/Zahra	Cancelled	Public holiday	Cancelled	Cancelled
12.1.06	6	C/Aminah	3	maggie and milly and molly and may	3	9
13.1.06	7	A/Nadia	4	A Day's Wait (1 <sup>st</sup> )	4	10
17.1.06	8	A/Nadia	4	A Day's Wait (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	5	11
18.1.06	8	B/Zahra	Cancelled	To concentrate on mid semester exam	Cancelled	Cancelled
19.1.06	8	C/Aminah	4	A Day's Wait (1 <sup>st</sup> )	4	12
23.1.06-31.1.06	-	-	-	Mid Semester Holiday	-	-
31.1.06	9	A/Nadia	Cancelled	Public holiday (Chinese New Year)	Cancelled	Cancelled
31.1.06	9	B/Zahra	Cancelled	Public holiday (Chinese New Year)	Cancelled	Cancelled
1.2.06	10	B/Zahra	Cancelled	Public Holiday (Awal Muharram)	Cancelled	Cancelled
2.2.06	10	C/Aminah	4/5	A Day's Wait (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) Hearts and Hands (1 <sup>st</sup> )	5	13
3.2.06	10	A/Nadia	5	Hearts and Hands (1 <sup>st</sup> )	6	14
6.2.06	11	B/Zahra	4	A Day's Wait (1 <sup>st</sup> )	4	15
7.2.06	11	A/Nadia	5	Hearts and Hands (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	7	16
8.2.06	11	B/Zahra	4	A Day's Wait (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	5	17
9.2.06	11	C/Aminah	5	Hearts and Hands (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	6	18
14.2.06	12	A/Nadia	6	China's Little Ambassador (1 <sup>st</sup> )	8	19
15.2.06	12	B/Zahra	5	Hearts and Hands (1 <sup>st</sup> )	6	20
16.2.06	12	C/Aminah	6	China's Little Ambassador (1 <sup>st</sup> )	7	21
21.2.06	13	A/Nadia	7	China's Little Ambassador (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) The Great Gatsby (1 <sup>st</sup> )	9	22



22.2.06	13	B/Zahra	5/6	Hearts and Hands (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) China's Little Ambassador (1 <sup>st</sup> )	7	23
23.2.06	13	C/Aminah	6/7	China's Little Ambassador (2 <sup>nd</sup> ) The Great Gatsby (1 <sup>st</sup> )	8	24
28.2.06	14	A/Nadia	7	The Great Gatsby	10	25
1.3.06	14	B/Zahra	7	The Great Gatsby	8	26
2.3.06	14	C/Aminah	7	The Great Gatsby	9	27
3.2.06	14	A/Nadia	7	The Great Gatsby	11	28
6.3.06	15	B/Zahra	7	The Great Gatsby	9	29
7.3.06	15	A/Nadia	8	After the Funeral	12	30
8.3.06	15	B/Zahra	8	After the funeral	10	31
9.3.06	15	C/Aminah	8	After the funeral	10	32
10.3.06	15	A/Nadia	9	Death of a salesman	13	33
13.3.06	16	B/Zahra	9	Death of a salesman	11	34
14.3.06	16	C/Aminah	9	Death of a salesman	11	35
14.3.06	16	A/Nadia	Journals	Questionnaires	-	Folders
15.3.06	16	B/Zahra	Journals	Questionnaire	-	Folders
16.3.06	16	C/Aminah	Journal	Questionnaire	-	Folders

## APPENDIX 16

## SAMPLE OF A STUDENT'S JOURNAL ENTRY

THURSDAY...

22<sup>nd</sup> DEC 2005

Hmm... my 1<sup>st</sup> class... ~~started~~ <sup>started</sup> learned literature...  
 study by making our own group... quite enjoyable...  
 for this 1<sup>st</sup> class, I didn't feel bored yet...  
 even I know it will...

We learned how to make a poem at the  
 end of the session... me? I as the team leader  
 of my group... I always use my creativity ideas  
 to solve the problem... there are one girl who  
 love literature... but, she don't know how to  
 make a poem... It's too bad!!

So, I decided to make it by my own...  
 even I'm not interested in literature specially  
 poem... but it is not impossible for me to make  
 a poem... What I do is, I change all of the  
 word of the poem that available in our  
 paper work... but the meaning is still the same...

I know, it ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> bad... but for the 1<sup>st</sup> class  
 like today... I ~~can't~~ can do nothing.

"THIS IS JUST TO SAY"

By: William Carlos Williams

*William*

11

- SWEETIE GIRL -

Thursday 14/03/2002

Dear Diary,

We have discuss about 'Death of a Salesman' by Arthur Miller. It is about Willy who had fired by Howard from the company. He wants to change his job as salesman to work at the office. But, he had been fired because too old. The story is quite interesting. I feel sympathy with Willy after read it. He had been sacrificed a lot to build up the company with Frank, Howard's father. After that, we do activity like acting. It is enjoyable.



## APPENDIX 18

## SAMPLE OF A TEACHER'S JOURNAL ENTRY

Date 1/3 /06

"The Great Gatsby"

This is a walk-down-the-memory-lane activity. I used to teach the novel when I taught A-Level in Mara College Baringo. I remember the students, at that ~~the~~ time there were only 8 of them, liked the novel. They were of the high proficiency level. It was not so difficult to teach that group.

And now, with this low proficiency level group, I had to struggle to make them understand. Students showed interest in understanding this extracts and asked a lot of questions while they were answering the activity questions. With this worksheet, their knowledge about Direct speech and Indirect speech was tested. To ~~be~~ help them, I explained the difference, <sup>wrote</sup> on the white the examples to help them in answering the questions.

## APPENDIX 19

## SAMPLE OF A TEACHER'S JOURNAL ENTRY

7

19.1.06

~~Today in~~ In class today I did 'A Day's Wait' by Ernest Hemingway.

This short story is a bit sombre and a bit difficult to understand because it is more of a relationship of a father and a son. The students too have difficulties in ~~understand~~ understanding the setting and the plot. I had to explain to them first before they continued with the activity.

However, they managed to complete all the activities without any problems. As for activity 4, it was quite challenging because the students need to ~~change~~ change the form of the dialogue into ~~recreation~~ narration. This ~~is~~ ~~was~~ was a bit ~~diff~~ difficult and I find ~~that~~ found that some of them ~~to~~ have difficulties in changing the tenses. There were still some errors in the tenses. But this was actually a very good approach.



## APPENDIX 20

## SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

NUR HIDAYATI BT ABDEL HALIM.

1

## Worksheet 1

## Student's worksheets

POEM 1: "This is just to say" by William Carlos Williams

## Activity 1: (5 minutes)

Look at these messages 'Sorry I forgot to buy the milk' 'Gone home', 'Ring your mum.' Where you might see or hear them? When people write these kinds of messages?

## Activity 2: (10 minutes)

In pairs, write short messages for the following situations. The first one has been done for you.

- Letting a friend know you have arrived home safely

E.g. I've arrived home safely at 9.00 pm. Bob dropped me off.

- Leaving a message to your mother that you'll be late for dinner

Sorry mom, I'll be late for dinner tonight!

- Telling someone you have forgotten to find articles for the assignments

I'm so sorry, I forgot to find articles 4 the assignments

- Telling a friend you have taken something from her/his room

I borrow your books for the <sup>science</sup> <sup>some projects</sup> assignments, thanks!!

- Telling a friend you will be late for the group discussion

I'll be late 4 group discussion tonight. Maybe I'll be come half an hour later.

- Telling someone that you have left something in his/her house

I had left your books on your desk, message me when you get it.

I've left something for you <sup>in your kitchen</sup> phone me, when you receive it.

APPENDIX 21  
SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

2

**Activity 3: (55 minutes)**

THIS IS JUST TO SAY by William Carlos Williams

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were so delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

Your tasks: Answer the following questions

1. Where would you normally see or find this kind of "message"?

refrigerator

2. Who do you think the "message" is written for?

The owner of plum tree / Family members.

3. How do you know? Can you find any evidence from the poem to support your answers?

and which you were probably saving for breakfast

4. Why do you think the "message" was written?

Because the writer want to inform that she / he  
has eaten the plums.

5. How do you know? Are there any words or sentences from the text that make you think this way?

I have eaten...



## APPENDIX 22

## SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

3

6. What is (are) the tense(s) that you can identify in the poem? For example, present tense etc...List it (them) here:

Past Perfect tense: have eaten

Past tense: were...

7. Can you provide the words or sentences from the poem to show the tense(s) that you have listed in question 6?

I have eaten.

They were so delicious.

8. Now, switch the tense(s) in the poem (your answers in question 6, and 7) into a future tense with 'will' or 'be going to'.

a) What kind of effect did you get?

I am going to eat...

9. Do you think it is appropriate to use future tense (with 'will' or 'be going to') when you want to leave a message about something that you have done? Why?

We cannot use future tense ~~thing~~ that we have done.

10. Now switch the future tense into a present form.

a) Did you get the similar effect when you used the future tense? Why? Why not?

I am eating the plums. No, because future tense is something that we will do, and present tense is something that we do at the moment!

11. Do you think it is appropriate to use present tense when you want to leave a message about something that you have done? Please explain your answer.

No!! because the things that we have done must use the past tense.

12. Would you eat the plums that someone had been saving for breakfast? Why? Why not?

Yes, because I must be hungry at that time.

maybe, there are no foods in the house, except just delicious plums.



## APPENDIX 23

## SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

4

13. How would you feel if you had eaten those plums?

I feel a little bit guilty.

14. How would you tell the person that you had eaten his/her plums? Would you just leave a simple note or tell the person face to face?

I will tell the person face to face. show sincere

#### Activity 4: Post-reading (30 minutes)

First, write a short message as a reply to the poem. Choose and include one (or more) of the tenses (e.g. present tense, past, future, past continuous, past participle etc...) in your reply. Then change the message into a poem. Your poem must not be more than 100 words.



Past Tense

Future Tense

You say,

You have eaten the plums,  
that were in the ice box,  
I forgive you & that,

But you told me,

there were so delicious  
so sweet, and so cold,  
I can't accept it

So that,

I will punish you  
to buy & me the plums  
to replace the plums  
that you have eaten!!!

**APPENDIX 24**  
**SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET**

5

**Activity 5: Follow-up**

1. Poem writing exercise where the students have to choose any situation from Activity 2 and turn the message into a poem. This is an individual task and later students can arrange and place the poems round the walls of the classroom.
2. Once students have finished writing their poems, teachers can ask a few students to read their poem aloud.
3. Poem recitation. This can be done as a group work. Students are allowed to use various styles that they can think of to recite the poem, "This is just to say" by William Carlos Williams.



# APPENDIX 25

## SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

1

### NOVEL 3: "After the Funeral" by Agatha Christie

#### Activity 1:

Can you predict what type of story (mysterious, romance, murder, etc...) you are going to read later based on this sentence? 'After the funeral'

#### Activity 2: (20 minutes)

Read the extract below. Then complete the following tasks.

After the meal was over, Lanscombe indicated the library for coffee. This was his feeling for niceties. The time had come when business - in other words, The Will - would be discussed. The library had the proper atmosphere for that with its bookshelves and its heavy red velvet curtains. He served coffee to them there and then withdrew, closing the door.

#### Task A: Inference

1. What do you think is happening here? Where does it take place?

Discussing the will in the library.

2. Who do you think is Lanscombe?

A butler  
A heir of the dead person.

3. When do people normally discuss "The Will"?

After the funeral of the death person.

4. Look at these words, "proper atmosphere for that". What do you think they refer to?

They prefer to the quiet, clear, neat, cold atmosphere in the library to discuss about the will.

#### Task B: Prediction

Can you predict what the story is going to be about based on the extract above? In not more than 50 words, write your prediction.

My prediction:

Investigation about a mystery of a death person

#### Activity 3: While-reading activity (50 minutes)

The extract below is adapted from Agatha Christie's novel, "After the Funeral"

After a few \*desultory remarks, everyone began to look tentatively at Mr Entwistle. He responded promptly after glancing at his watch.

'I have to catch the 3.30 train,' he began.

Others, it seemed, also had to catch that train.

'As you know,' said Mr Entwistle, 'I am the \*executor of Richard 5 Abernethie's will.'

- son Mortimer (died)

= Rosemund

Gordon + Pamela

= Susan

Richard

Time +

man



APPENDIX 26  
SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

2

He was interrupted.

'I didn't know,' said Cora Lansquenet brightly. 'Are you? Did he leave me anything?'

Not for the first time, Mr Entwhistle felt that Cora was too apt to speak out 10  
of turn.

Bending a repressive glance at her he continued:

'Up to a year ago, Richard Abernethie's will was very simple. He left everything to his son Mortimer.'

'Poor Mortimer,' said Cora. 'I do think all this \*infantile paralysis is 15  
dreadful.'

'Mortimer's death, coming so suddenly and tragically, was a great blow to Richard. It took him some months to recover from it. I pointed out that it might be advisable for him to make new **testamentary dispositions**'

Maude Abernethie asked in her deep voice: 20

'What would have happened if he hadn't made a new will? Would it – would it all have gone to Timothy- as the next of kin, I mean?'

Mr Entwhistle opened his mouth to give a \*disquisition on the subject of next of kin, thought better of it, and said crisply:

'On my advice, Richard decided to make a new will. 25

\*\*\*\*\*

'That's very nice!' said Cora Lansquenet with real appreciation. 'An income! How much?'

'I-er-can't say exactly at present –'

'Can't you give me an idea?'

Mr Entwhistle realized that Cora must be \*appeased. 30

'Possibly somewhere in the neighbourhood of three to four thousand a year.'

'Goody!' said Cora. 'I shall go to \*Capri'

'How very kind and generous of Richard. I do appreciate his affection 35  
towards me.'

'He was very fond of you,' said Mr Entwhistle. Leo was his favourite brother and your visits to him were always much appreciated after Leo died.

Helen said regretfully: *Time*

'I wish I had realized how ill he was-when I came up to see him not long ago before he died, but although I knew he had been ill, I did not think it was 40  
serious.'

'It was always serious,' said Mr Entwhistle. 'But he did not want it talked about and I do not believe that anybody expected the end to come as soon as it did. *Time*  
The doctor was quite surprised, I know.'

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, 45  
nodding her head. 'I wondered then.' *Time*

'I was a shock to all of us,' said Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy dreadfully. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up very nicely, hasn't it?' said Cora.

Everybody stared at her and she seemed a little embarrassed. 50



## APPENDIX 27

### SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

3

'I think you're quite right,' she said hurriedly. 'Quite right. I mean – it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept strictly in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwistle leaned forward:

55

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquenet looked round at the family in wide-eyed surprise. She tilted her head on one side with a bird-like movement.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said.

\*\*\*\*\*

- \* desultory - showing little interest/uninterested
- \* executor - person who executes a person's wishes expressed in a will (usually a lawyer)
- \* disquisition - a long and detailed explanation
- \* infantile paralysis – ( a type of disease, limbs are not working/paralysed)
- \* appeased- to sooth, to calm or pacify
- \* Capri - a place in Italy

Discuss in groups of four to five and complete the following tasks:

1. Do you want to continue reading the story? yes

Why?

Because I want to know who will get the property and who was the murderer.

2. Do you have problems understanding the extract? **Yes/No**

Why?

No, because there are lots of direct speech.

What do you think the words "**testamentary dispositions**" in line 19 refer to?

refer to the will, make new formal testament.

3. Read the text below.

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, nodding her head. 'I wondered then.'

'It was a shock to all of us,' said Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy **dreadfully**. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up very **nicely**, hasn't it?' said Cora.

Everybody stared at her and she seemed a little embarrassed.

'I think you're **quite** right,' she said **hurriedly**. 'Quite right. I mean – it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept **strictly** in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwistle leaned forward:

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't **quite** understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquenet looked round at the family in **wide-eyed surprise**. She



**APPENDIX 28**  
**SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET**

4

tilted her head on one side with a bird-like movement.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said

5. How do you feel when you read the text? But he was murdered, wasn't he

6. What are the words or sentences from the text that make you feel this way?

7. Look at the underlined words in the text. What type of word class do you think they belong to (e.g. noun, verb, etc...) Write your answer here: adverb

8. Can you explain your answer for question 7?

from the sentences, for example dreadfully - upsets poor Timothy.

9. Look at the text below. The underlined words have been omitted.

"Suddenly, at his residence" that's what it said in the paper,' said Cora, nodding her head. 'I wondered then.'

'It was a shock to all of us,' Maude Abernethie. 'It upsets poor Timothy. So sudden, he kept saying. So sudden.'

'Still, it has been hushed up, hasn't it?' said Cora.

Everybody stared at her and she seemed embarrassed.

'I think you're right,' she said 'Quite right. I mean - it can't do any good - making it public. Very unpleasant for everybody. It should be kept in the family.'

The faces turned towards her looked even more blank.

Mr Entwistle leaned forward:

'Really, Cora, I'm afraid I don't understand what you really mean.'

Cora Lansquet looked round at the family. She tilted her head.

'But he was murdered, wasn't he? She said

a) Does the extract have the same effect on you once the underlined words have been omitted? No

b) Why?

it is still the same

10. Find the sentences from the extract that you think might show the types of \*adverbs listed in **Box A** below (if there are any). Then put each of the sentences in the appropriate column in **Box B**.

**Box A** - Types of adverb:

Adverb type	Question	Examples
Manner	How?	Well, badly, cleverly
Place	Where?	Here, there, anywhere
Time	When?	Now, then, soon, tomorrow



# APPENDIX 29

## SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

5

Duration	How long?	Briefly
Frequency	How often	Always, weekly, daily, never
Degree	To what extent?	Rather, quite, much, hardly

Put one sentence in each column in **Box B**. Underline the adverbs. The first one has been done for you. You can refer to the examples in **Box A** above to help you to answer the questions.

### Box B

Adverb type	Question	Examples
Manner	How?	'I didn't know,' said Cora Lansquenet <u>brightly</u> .
Place	Where?	He served the coffee to them there
Time	When?	I wondered then
Duration	How long?	He responded promptly
Frequency	How often	always much appreciated
Degree	To what extent?	'I think you're quite right,' (line 51)

\*Adverb is a word-class which is commonly marked by the suffix *-ly*, and which refers to circumstances such as 'how' or 'why' or 'when' etc...an action is done.

### Activity 4: (30 minutes)

Sit in pairs and do the following tasks:

- a) Choose any of the adverbs from the extract. (E.g. strictly)

Adverb: attacked / gaily

- b) Think of an atmosphere that you want to create (suspense, romance, comedy, horror, magical, sci-fi etc...) by using this adverb. (E.g. magical)

Atmosphere: suspense / bright happy

- c) Then write your own sentence using the adverb that would create the particular atmosphere that you have chosen in (b).

(E.g. The students were strictly forbidden to talk to each other during their visit to the enchanted and magical castle)

The sentence:

When Anna was attacked by polar bears, her dog  
charlie protected her.

What idea of your sentence would you like to emphasize? (E.g. enchanted castle)

Cora  
Susela danced in a bright and happy way round the room.  
She danced gaily round the room.

APPENDIX 30  
SAMPLE OF STUDENT'S WORKSHEET

6

Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

d) Transform your sentence into a story of not more than 150 words. Keep your reader guessing what is going to happen. Use appropriate words/ sentences to keep your reader interested in your story. Only toward the end, reveal what is the main issue/point/problem/climax in your story.

**Activity 5:**

Discuss in groups of four to five the differences and similarities between your own cultures during a funeral with the one depicted in the extract.



## APPENDIX 31

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS



## APPENDIX 32

### CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS



## APPENDIX 33

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

