The Teaching of English Literature in the Bruneian ESL Secondary Classroom: A Preliminary Investigation

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Abstract: This paper is a preliminary investigation into the teaching of English literature in the ESL (English as a Second Language) secondary classroom in Brunei Darussalam. Although English literature has been taught in Brunei for more than twenty five years and is one of the subjects offered in the Brunei-Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level (GCE ‘O’ Level) examination, very little is known about this area in language education, in terms of how it is taught and the attitudes towards it. Based on the distribution of questionnaires and a focus group interview with English literature teachers in the secondary schools, this paper explores (i) the teaching methods used, (ii) the factors which helped influence the changes in teaching methods, and (iii) how teachers perceive students’ attitudes towards English literature as a school subject. It is hoped that this exploratory study will initiate a whole new area of research within language education in Brunei. Furthermore, it could contribute to the pool of research studies on the teaching of English literature in the ESL classroom contexts.

Keywords: Teaching Methods, English Literature, Student Attitudes, ESL Classroom, Brunei Darussalam

Introduction

Located in the north-western part of Borneo, Brunei Darussalam (hereafter Brunei) was a British protectorate from 1888 to 1984, although it has been described as a postcolonial country (Chin, 2007; Barry, 2009). This small Islamic sultanate (with an estimated 400,000 people) has an ethnically and linguistically diverse population comprised of Malays, Chinese, and various indigenous groups such as the Muruts and Ibans (Martin and Poedjosoedarmo, 1996, p. 1). The national and official language is Malay with English as a significant second language in the country (Martin et al., 1996). With the discovery of oil in 1929, English has played an increasingly important role in the country’s development and modernization (Chin, 2007). Like other ESL (English as a second language) countries, Brunei realizes the current relevance of English as a global “economic capital” (Barry, 2009, p. 62), a language of science and technology (Barry, 2009; Barry, 2011) and as “a means of access to the outside world” (Ożóg, 1996, p. 159). Thus, English is used and understood widely in Brunei. The government’s recognition of English and its advantages has led to the implementation of the Dwibahasa bilingual education policy in 1985, whereby up until recently English was the language of instruction at the upper secondary school levels in both government and private schools (Jones 1996). The current national education policy, known as Sijil Pendidikan Negara 21 (SPN21), gives impetus to the English language within the school curriculum. By English language as a subject, we mean the teach-
ing and learning of English in terms of reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and essay writing. Furthermore, English language continues to be a compulsory subject in all the examinations, including the Brunei-Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level (GCE ‘O’ Level) examination for upper secondary school students.

English literature—the language appreciation and aesthetic aspects of English—on the other hand, has not enjoyed a similar commanding presence in the school curriculum, even though it was first introduced in Brunei by “expatriate teachers back in the 50s and 60s, way before any documentation took place” (email communication with the Ministry of Education). There was the suggestion that initially English literature was seen as a conventional imperialist approach “designed to cultivate not just language skills but also a taste for British—and more generally western—culture and values” (Graddol, 2006, p. 84), something that postcolonial countries seek to avoid. Indeed, English literature has been a contentious issue among some postcolonial theorists and critics who maintain that it is “through the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value [. . .] that the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world” (Ashcroft et al., 1989, p. 7). Certainly, English in former British colonies like India (Ramanathan 2005), Singapore (Lim 1993), and Malaysia (Chin 2005/2006) is perceived “as a threat to core Asian cultural values and identity” (Chin, 2005/2006, p. 13). Whether this threat still exists today is unclear given that there is an increasing number of literature works written by non-native English writers reflecting local cultures and values.

In Brunei, the picture is less clear considering the fact that it was never a British colony but a protectorate. According to Jones (1996), Bruneians generally do not have ambivalent or hostile attitudes towards the English language. And yet, English literature is given a low profile within its educational system. This is evident in the government school curriculum, where it is usually offered for the first time in Form 4 at the upper secondary level. It is taught as a separate school subject in a two-year programme or a three-year programme, the latter mainly for students in their interim school year or Form 3. It is also considered an optional subject in the GCE ‘O’ Level examination for upper secondary school students. A possible reason for this lackadaisical attitude towards English literature could be that it may not carry the economic and political advantages compared to learning English for academic and specific purposes. One should also consider the conservative nature of Bruneian society (Minnis 1999) and how it relates to the perceived transmission of Western ideas and values through English literature. Barry (2009) observes that the English teachers’ attempts to “defend the study of English as a literary endeavour” (p. 62) and as “cultural capital” (p. 62) have been met with “non-plussed” (p. 62) reactions from the Bruneians who have hitherto viewed English in terms of its functional and pragmatic value. This extrinsic rather than intrinsic motive for learning English has somehow relegated English literature to secondary status. It would be interesting to see if this extrinsic motivation will lead to or spill into a greater intrinsic yearning among young Bruneian learners of English literature to appreciate and embrace the aesthetic aspects of the language.

**Purpose of the Study**

Due to its secondary status within the school curriculum, English literature has not generated the level of research interest found in the plethora of studies on English reading comprehension and grammar (Nicol, 2008; Barry, 2009). Yet it has to be appreciated that English liter-
ture is an integral component to be acquired if one hopes to be a proficient and eloquent user and speaker of the language. This paper is a preliminary investigation into this area of language learning and particularly in ESL/EFL classrooms where research on literature has been less than adequate. Specifically, the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the teaching of English literature at the upper secondary level in Bruneian government schools from the teachers’ perspective. It does this by exploring two main issues: i) the teaching methods employed by teachers in the ESL classroom and ii) their perceptions of students’ attitudes towards English literature as a secondary school subject.

Research Questions

Based on the main purpose and specific aims mentioned above, the following questions are posited:

1. What methods do teachers adopt in teaching English literature?
2. Have teaching methods changed over years? If so, what are the influencing factors for the changes made?
3. What teaching methods do students enjoy most, as perceived by teachers?
4. How do teachers perceive students’ attitudes towards English literature as a subject in schools?
5. What do teachers think about the future of English literature as a subject in the Bruneian school curriculum?

Review of Literature

In any discussion of the teaching of literature, Carter and Long’s (1991) three models are always referred to. The first model is the Cultural Model which aims at transmitting information about the worlds presented in literary texts to learners. The second model is the Language Model which focuses on language per se rather than literary elements. The Personal Growth Model is the third model which focuses on the use of literature as a resource for learners’ personal engagement with the reading of literary texts. Based on these three models, various teaching approaches are currently employed to teach literature, which include the following:

1. **Information-based approach.** This approach is a way of teaching knowledge about literature where literature is seen as a medium through which information is offered to students. This is based on Carter and Long’s Cultural Model.
2. **Language-based approach.** This approach seeks greater unification between language and literature, as espoused by Widdowson (1985) and the Language Model of Carter and Long, as literary texts are used as a resource to help improve students’ language proficiency.
3. **Personal-response approach.** This approach, associated with the Personal Growth Model presented by Carter and Long, requires students to make a connection between the themes of the texts studied and their personal life experiences.
4. **Paraphrastic approach.** Teachers who use this approach may paraphrase or re-word the story in a simpler language or even translate it in another language.
5. **Moral-philosophical approach.** The focus of this approach is to discover moral values while reading a particular literary text as it has been claimed that the teaching of literature can inculcate moral values (Hwang & Mohamed Amin, 2007).

6. **Stylistic approach.** In this approach, students are taught to see how linguistic forms in a literary text function in conveying messages to the reader.

In addition to the teaching approaches listed above, literature teachers have also included the use of web-based multimedia (Sivapalan & Wan Fatimah, 2010), popular music and television series (Pillai, 2010) and ‘Literature Circles’ (Wan Roselezam & Normaliza, 2009), where students in a small group help each other to engage with texts. Savvidou (2004), on the other hand, believes that in an EFL context, the best approach to teaching literature is an integrated one as it offers learners “an opportunity to develop not only their linguistic and communicative skills but their knowledge about language in all its discourse types”. She believes that integrating the different elements that is offered by Carter and Long’s three models would make literature “accessible to learners” and enhance their linguistic and cognitive development.

Given the array of teaching methods that is available to literature teachers, it is logical to assume that the choice of teaching approaches adopted by literature teachers depend on the learning and teaching contexts that they find themselves in. For example, Daimah (2001, as cited in Siti Norliana Ghazali, Roszainora Setia, Muthusamy, & Kamaruzzaman Jusoff, 2009) finds that the methods used by literature teachers in Malaysia are mostly teacher-centered as such an approach is deemed necessary in order to finish the syllabus in time for examinations. Similarly, Hwang and Mohamed Amin (2007) report that teacher-centered didactic approaches are generally favoured by literature teachers in Malaysian schools over more student-centered approaches such as the personal-response approach. This is attributed to the students’ lack of language proficiency as well as the large size of the literature classroom. In the same vein, Zancanella (1991) finds that the teaching approaches employed by literature teachers were “limited” by a ‘school’ approach to literature which included an emphasis on achievement tests.

The choice of teaching methodologies adopted by literature teachers has been found to have an important bearing on how students view the subject. A Malaysian study by Wan Kamariah (2009, as cited in Siti Norliana et al., 2009), reveals that students indicate negative attitudes towards activities that require them to memorise facts, answer multiple-choice questions and read aloud as well as drilling and teacher-centered classes where interpretations are provided by the teacher only. These findings concur with the results from a number of researches which indicate that positive responses to teaching methodology from student perspectives are found when teachers use a reader-response approach (Fogal, 2010). However, Wang (2009, as cited in Fogal, 2010) reports that the majority of students in Taiwan favour an integrated approach to teaching literature in which multiple pedagogical theories are incorporated in the literature classroom.

In related studies on students’ attitudes towards the subject, we believe that the findings from those studies can shed light on teachers’ perspectives of students’ attitudes, which is one of the focus of our research. Siti Norliana et al. (2009) in their study of students’ attitudes towards studying English literature in two Malaysian schools, report that the majority of the student respondents claim that learning literature is enjoyable. In fact, it is also revealed that the students’ attitudes towards learning English literature are more favourable than learning
English as a subject as they believe that learning literature not only enhances their language skills but also contributes towards their understanding and awareness of other cultures and beliefs. They also find that students with a family background of little exposure to English generally have a negative attitude towards English literature. Similarly, Aykel and Yalcin (1990) demonstrate that there is a link between students’ language proficiency and their attitudes towards the subject. Turkish students with a good command of the English language are, not surprisingly, found to have a more positive attitude towards the learning of English literature.

The attitude of students towards the subject is often inextricably linked to the selection of literary texts used in the literature classroom. Hirvela and Boyle (1988) claim that students in Hong Kong have a more positive attitude towards the subject when the selected texts “have a direct relevance to the students’ situation” (p. 182). Similarly, Aykel and Yalcin (1990) report that Turkish students who are less proficient in the English language find the study of British and American classics as “boring” or “too hard”. Davis et al. (cited in Siti Norlina, 2008) note that students’ attitudes towards learning literature in a foreign language are more positive when they do more pleasure reading in the target language. These facts clearly support the view of Vincent and Carter (1986) that “a text which is extremely difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will have few benefits” (p. 214). This view echoes Mckay’s (1986) beliefs that if students read literary texts for pleasure, they are more likely to be highly motivated to interact with the texts and consequently develop their academic goals. Thus, the choice of literary texts is seen to be an important factor in developing a positive attitude among students towards the subject.

In conclusion, it is perhaps worth quoting the words of Ayo Banjo (1985) who muses that “it would nevertheless be true to say that the teaching of the English language...has always been more advanced than the teaching of English literature” (p. 200). More than two decades later, it is clearly evident from the literature review presented here that compared to studies on the learning and teaching of English as a second or foreign language, there are fewer studies conducted on the learning and teaching of English literature in the ESL/EFL contexts. No significant study has been conducted on the subject in Brunei despite the fact that English literature has been taught as a subject in Bruneian schools for at least five decades. Thus, this study hopes to produce some insights on the teaching and learning of English literature in Brunei, a country where English is widely-regarded and accepted as a second language, and to contribute towards what is perceived as a gap in the literature.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

Altogether 24 teachers from ten government secondary schools took part in the study, all of whom were teaching or has taught English literature in the upper secondary classes. All have between 5 and 25 years of English literature teaching experience with the majority of them having between 10 and 25 years of teaching experience. Nineteen out of the 24 teachers were expatriate English native-speaking teachers from the United Kingdom and Australia, the majority of whom have been teaching in Brunei for between 1 and 5 years.
**Instruments & Procedure**

The collection of data comprises of two parts. The first part consists of a survey carried out among the participant teachers based on a questionnaire. A questionnaire was designed separately by each of the researchers who then met subsequently to discuss the final version in an attempt to come to an agreement on the most appropriate version for the study. It was then distributed to 24 teachers from ten government schools in their respective workplaces and collected immediately afterwards by the researchers themselves. It consisted of both closed and open-ended items designed to address the research questions posited in this study. Basically, items on the questionnaire revolve around finding out, among other things, whether teachers have changed their teaching methods in their classrooms and reasons for changes, if any (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire also seeks to gauge their perceptions of the popularity of English literature as a subject among students.

The second part consists of a focus group interview. It was thought that due to the explorative nature of the study, a focus group interview according to that described in Morgan (1997), Krueger & Casey (2000) and Litosseliti (2003) would be more appropriate in gauging teachers’ shared experiences in the teaching of English literature within the school setting. The participants were teachers selected from the survey who had between five and fourteen years of teaching experience in the Bruneian context. One of the researchers took the role of moderator and worked from an interview guide based on the responses to the survey carried out earlier (see Appendix 2). The interview, which was conducted in a teacher centre, revolved around five key areas: the factors that influenced teaching methods, the current teaching methods adopted by teachers, the methods students like best, the students’ general attitudes towards literature as a school subject and whether there has been a shift in their attitudes. A pilot study of the interview was carried out with a small group of participants prior to the actual interview. Altogether six teachers took part in the focus group interview, which lasted about one and a quarter hours, which was videotaped and later transcribed (see Appendix 3).

**Data Analysis**

All 24 responses from the questionnaire were subjected to a frequency count and tabulated. The focus group interview was transcribed and data for analysis were extracted from the 50-page transcription. A content analysis was employed in analyzing the transcript. Key words based on the research questions were identified and then categorized (Gillham, 2000). Examples of these key words and associated expressions were extracted from the data. While it is noted that this is largely an interpretive approach, considerable effort was made by the researchers to come to a consensus in interpreting the data.

**Findings & Discussion**

Altogether, 24 teachers took part in the questionnaire. Twenty teachers responded to the item which asked if their method(s) of teaching have changed over the years and their reason(s) for change. The findings are shown in Tables 1 & 2 respectively.
Table 1: Change in the Method(s) of Teaching English Literature in Brunei over the Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>N = No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No change in teaching method(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slight change in teaching method(s)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic change in teaching method(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Reason(s) for the Change in Teaching Method(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>N = No. of Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class size</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus/curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student attitudes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emergence of new texts and genres that require different teaching methods</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A change in student response &amp; engagement with texts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from school/MoE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to students’ cultural background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifteen of the teachers claimed to have made small changes to their teaching method(s). The main reasons appear to be student attitudes, followed by class size and syllabus/curriculum changes.

A number of these reasons were talked about during the focus group interview with the teachers afterwards. One is the change of focus in the Ministry of Education (MoE) syllabus from mainstream writers to alternative or modern writings which then forces teachers to use less prescriptive methods, less regurgitation of information and more active student participation: "But over the years, there’s been a definite change, and I think they’re (the Ministry) deliberately avoiding mainstream writers, and they’re looking for alternative writers…”; “some of the poets, some of the dramatists are so modern that there simply isn’t anything there and yet they’re the most compelling, they’re the most interesting, so it drives you into different avenues...”. As mentioned previously (Hirvela & Boyle, 1988; Aykel & Yalcin, 1990; Davis et al., cited in Siti Norliana, 2008; McKay, 1986; Vincent & Carter, 1986), text selection is an important criteria in instilling a more positive attitude towards the subject. The authorities in Brunei, as well as the teachers themselves, may be aware of this fact, hence, the shift in emphasis of texts used in the literature classroom.

Another reason that was expanded upon during the focus group interview is that of student quality and class size: “number of students also affect the whole planning of things as well...”; “...my methodology changes every year with different quality of students ... depends on the number of students ... depends on the English proficiency of the students...”. As pointed out by previous studies (Daimah, cited in Siti Norliana et al., 2009; Hwang & Mohamed Amin, 2007; Zancanella, 1991), teachers make changes to their teaching approaches to accommodate...
the learning and teaching contexts that they find themselves in, such as the requirements of school examinations, class size and the level of students’ language proficiency.

One of the reasons for a change in teaching method(s) that came up in the interview is the need to relate literature to students’ culture: “Yeah, the same emotions, the same kind of feelings, I guess some emotions … love… love is universal, so even though it’s five hundred years ago, or whatever, you can still relate to Shakespeare”; “… they’re looking at their own cultures… rather indirectly”. Again, this is related to the selection of texts for the literature classroom. Literature teachers in Brunei may recognize that students demonstrate a greater affinity to the subject if the texts chosen are seen to have “a direct relevance to the students’ situation” (Hirvela & Boyle, 1988).

The final reason for a change in teaching method(s), which was talked about quite extensively among the teachers during the interview, was the move from looking at the structural aspects of language to looking at the message and meaning conveyed by a text. The teaching of literature in the past focused on the grammar and vocabulary of the texts, but today, the focus is on getting students to ‘read’ the texts and subtexts in order to interpret the meaning and message conveyed: “... it’s [grammatical structure and vocabulary] devoid of a message or a conversation... whereas when you’re doing literature, the text is the thing...”; “…and the message is the thing...”. As indicated by the literature review, the teaching of literature now involves not just focusing on the linguistic features of the text, as espoused in Carter and Long’s Language Model (1991), but also other approaches which allow students to actively engage with the texts so they can make sense of the text under analysis.

Thus, while the reasons for change stated on the questionnaire were reflected in the focus group interview in terms of class size and syllabus/curriculum changes, not much was mentioned about student attitudes as a factor for change in the interview, although it was listed as one of the main reasons for change in the questionnaire. However, student attitudes could be implicitly gauged from some of the reasons mentioned for a change in teaching methods, such as the assumption that students prefer teachers who devise ways to help them relate what they have read to their own culture and experiences, as well as the move from the concern for grammar to focus on the meaning and message of a text.

As to the question about their current teaching method(s), it appears that the teachers do not adopt a specific method to teach literature. In the focus group interview, the teachers alluded to using a combination of approaches and doing it quite successfully: “fairly eclectic...”; “different approaches”; “…depends on what you’re asked to do I think...”. This is because in teaching literature, one is allowed a considerable amount of freedom not found in many other subjects in the curriculum: “literature is probably the least controlled subject taught here”; “anything goes... yeah, anything and everything...”. This degree of flexibility also means that non-traditional methods are commonly used, such as the use of photographs, movie making, using classroom props, conveying meaning through pictures and such: “...use electronic media, you know to make movies and photographs... be more visual...”; “…use the walls [of the classroom]...”; “… I like them to draw, anything and everything that they learn from literature... so they put into drawings...”. These methods will require a more active role on the part of the students.

Furthermore, they are methods that students like best too. During the interview, the teachers felt that students enjoy their literature classes when they are given the opportunity to express their opinions freely: “...to have their own voice and their own say...”; “…and they don’t have to worry that they’re gonna tell somebody else ... most students love that”. 

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Students also like to be actively involved in how to present a text: “...bring in a whole lot of other ideas and kids can say things and not be thrashed and yeah...”; “...something came up and that “why can’t we go and see a movie...”.

Perhaps teachers acknowledge that a more integrated approach, which involves drawing on different elements and combining various approaches, is perhaps the best approach to teaching literature, as espoused by Savvidou (2004). This flexibility and diversity in incorporating a multitude of pedagogic practices in the literature classroom also seems to be favoured by students too, as reported by Wang (cited in Fogal, 2010) previously. Similarly, the studies cited earlier (Wan Kamariah, cited in Siti Norliana et al., 2009; Fogal, 2010) also concur with the teachers’ views here that generally, students prefer that teachers used reader-response approaches rather than teacher-centred methods.

When it comes to how teachers perceive the students’ attitudes towards the subject in their school curriculum, the teachers felt that for many students, literature is not regarded as highly as the science subjects. In addition, they may be under parental pressure to take science, computer sciences or accounting because “if you can do Physics, Chemistry and Biology, you can be a doctor, or you can be an engineer. If you do literature, what can you do? Just a teacher.” Moreover, for many students, literature appears to be a subject they will consider only if “you’re really struggling ... as a kind of last resort...”. Thus, literature is seen to be rated second place compared to science subjects or accounting or Maths and presents a good option for students who are failing at the “better” school subjects.

However, the teachers felt that students who do literature have positive attitudes towards it: “certainly at my school in literature is that you never have to go through that [poor student attitude]... generally in my school their attitudes are wonderful”; “they are only there because they want to be there ... so attitude is never a problem”; “generally, I do not have any problem with attitudes because they chose to do it.” It can be safely assumed that students who choose to study English literature in schools would be fairly proficient in the English language. As indicated by Aykel and Yalcin (1990) and Siti Norliana et al. (2009) previously, there is a strong correlation between students’ language proficiency and their attitudes towards the subject.

With regard to the final research question about the future of English literature as a subject in the curriculum, teachers were quite optimistic about its popularity amongst students. Responses to this question in the questionnaire are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Responses to the Future Popularity of English Literature in Brunei’s Secondary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Think that English Literature as a School Subject in Brunei will</th>
<th>N = 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>remain the same in popularity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase in popularity</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decrease in popularity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluctuate in popularity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 24 teachers who responded, 16 thought there will be an increase in popularity. The focus group interview that followed, however, revealed mixed feelings. Some teachers felt that English literature is becoming more popular due to a number of reasons. One is that
parents appear to be more resigned in accepting their children’s choice of literature as a subject: “...so there are more parents, are actually accepting but feeling defeated at the same time, and just sort of surrendering...”. Also, the teachers felt that “there’s a wonderful sort of synergy...we’ve seen the blogging... and small plays...”; these will all contribute to boost the literature scene in Brunei. In addition, they felt that literature students begin to see themselves as an elite group “because they’re doing literature, they know more, they are different, they are more knowledgeable ...”.

Others, however, were more reserved in their prediction. For them, it appears that the popularity of English literature comes in waves: “it’s not consistent... sometimes there’s a real buzz, a real energy... sometimes it dips back...”; “I don’t think there’s a constancy... it’s just up and down, up and down...”; “I don’t know if there’s an increase or anything... yeah, it comes and goes.”

Thus, although the questionnaire yielded a positive and healthy future for English literature in the school, further probing reveals teachers’ mixed feelings about its future success. This apparent “mismatch” between responses from the questionnaire and the focus group interviews reveals the importance of triangulation when using a survey to collect data. It is an instance where what respondents say in a questionnaire about a situation may be quite different from what they actually feel about it upon deeper probing in an interview.

**Conclusion**

This preliminary study bears a number of observations about the teaching of English literature in the Bruneian secondary classroom. First, literature teachers generally adopt non-traditional, interactive methods of instruction in the classroom. Second, due to these unconventional methods, students appear to genuinely enjoy the subject as they prefer to participate actively in the literature classroom. Third, given the conservative nature of Bruneian society, students enjoy the relative freedom of voicing their opinions in the classroom. Finally, whether English literature will thrive in the future as a school subject remains to be seen, since many students and parents see it as a last resort. While we acknowledge the limitations of this paper, its exploratory nature nevertheless acts as a springboard to future directions in research within this area of study. One such future direction could be in looking at the situation from another important stakeholder’s perspective, that of the student.
References


**Appendix 1: Questionnaire for the Teaching of English Literature as a School Subject in Brunei Darussalam**

1. Age: ………………
   Gender: …………………
   Academic Qualifications: …………………………………………………..
   Nationality: ……………………………

*Please read each item carefully and tick in the appropriate box.*

2. Did you major/minor in English literature at tertiary level?
   - [ ] Yes, my major is in English literature.
   - [ ] Yes, my minor is in English literature.
   - [ ] Neither my major nor my minor is in English literature. Please specify:

3. I have been an English literature teacher at the secondary school level for
   - [ ] between 20 and 25 years
   - [ ] between 15 and 19 years
   - [ ] between 10 and 14 years
4. I have taught English literature as a secondary school subject in **BRUNEI** for

- [ ] between 20 and 25 years
- [ ] between 15 and 19 years
- [ ] between 10 and 14 years
- [ ] between 5 and 9 years
- [ ] fewer than 5 years

5. My method of teaching English literature in Brunei over the years has

- [ ] a) remained the same
- [ ] b) changed slightly
- [ ] c) changed dramatically

6. If your answer to Item 5 above is either b or c, choose the most appropriate reason below and tick the box.

- [ ] change in class size
- [ ] change in syllabus/curriculum
- [ ] change in student attitudes
- [ ] others. Please specify:

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...

7. I think that the popularity of English literature as a subject in the secondary school in Brunei will

- [ ] remain the same because

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...

- [ ] increase because

   ………………………………………………………………………………………………………...
Appendix 2: Focus Group Interview Guide on the Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools in Brunei Darussalam

1. In general, what kind of methods/approaches do you use when teaching English literature?
2. Do you use teaching tools/aids to teach English literature?
   a. Visuals (art, posters, etc.)
   b. Films
   c. Reading guides
   d. Online resources
   e. Others
3. In your experience, which approach/method do you think appeals most to the students in Brunei? Why?
4. In general, what are the factors that generally influence your teaching of English literature?
5. In your questionnaires, most of you mentioned that your method of teaching English literature in Brunei has changed slightly over the years. Please elaborate on the reasons.
   a. Class size
   b. Syllabus/curriculum
   c. Student attitudes
   d. Different texts and genres requiring different teaching methods
   e. Student response & engagement with the texts
   f. Support from school/MOE
   g. Students’ cultural backgrounds
6. In general, was there much interest in English literature as a subject at the secondary level in your school?
7. How would you describe the attitudes of the students you have taught towards English literature?
8. What are the possible reasons for their attitudes/viewpoints?
9. What kind of qualities do you think students should have in order to enjoy or be interested in English literature?
10. All of you have taught English literature for more than 5 years in Brunei. Have you noticed any differences in the attitudes of the students towards the subject?
Appendix 3: An Excerpt of the Transcript on “The Teaching of English Literature in Secondary Schools in Brunei Darussalam”

Key

M: Moderator
R1: Respondent 1
R2: Respondent 2
R3: Respondent 3
R4: Respondent 4
R5: Respondent 5
R6: Respondent 6
RS: Respondents
( ): pause
(inaudible): inaudible
[ ]: added notes
Bold: emphasis
…: irrelevant

M: What are the general factors that may influence the way you teach literature at school? I was just wondering, umm, if you could elaborate more on those er factors?

R5: I’m sorry the way you teach?

M: The way you teach, the methodologies that you adopt to teach literature, you know, what are the general factors that may influence how you teach literature to the students here?

R5: I think when you finish your first degree in literature, it’s very ( ) prescriptive, you sit, there’s a lecture, they tell you, this is what it is, and you write it down, and you sit in the exam and regurgitate it. And that’s true of literature a while ago. But over the years, there’s been a definite change, and I think they’re deliberately avoiding mainstream writers, and they’re looking for alternative writers. I think there are two reasons for it. The first one is they just want a wider range of writers. But the second reason is it ( ) avoids regurgitating large amounts of notes because there are no notes. Some of the poets, some of the dramatists are so modern, that there simply isn’t anything there and yet they’re the most compelling, they’re the most interesting, so it drives you into different avenues.
And I think that's increasingly important when your students have access to the Internet. They can find so much a lot of people have written, so to have to actually think about something that you can't find, something someone else hasn't written.

True, yeah.

It's not the same as (.) if it's uh a teacher is teaching Shakespeare, you can find tons and tons of information that you can use for notes. Whereas, like, for for myself, I'm now teaching Anita Desai, and that's why you can't find (.) anything on the Internet. And so what I've done is just, students have spent 2 weeks just learning about Indian culture and then, you know just immersing themselves.

in all things Anita Desai, Indian,

and the things that are connected, the language.

the language

er, the beauty of it.

I think you know the joy of teaching is sort of sharing wonderful things and particularly in Brunei where it tends to be the very good students do Literature.

you have these students that love to learn. Obviously the fact that it's regarded as literature means it's (.) probably a worthwhile thing, and so, you just have this constant sharing of wonderful things.

Ray said it's also you know response to literature has become much more (.) emphasized, if you know rather than learning what a critic said about it.
About the Authors

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