

**ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONS IN THE *SPM* EXAMINATION AND IN
WORKBOOKS BASED ON “THE PEARL”**

UMAH DEVI D/O MURUGAN

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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UMAH DEVI MURUGAN

MATRIC: 2003 00995

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Abstrak

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menganalisis beberapa buah buku kerja komponen sastera bahasa Inggeris untuk mengajar novel “ The Pearl”. Pengajaran novel dalam komponen sastera Bahasa Inggeris adalah satu bahagian wajib dalam kertas bahasa Inggeris bagi peperiksaan SPM. Guru dan pelajar di seluruh negara merujuk buku kerja ini sebagai persediaan peperiksaan SPM. Pelbagai buku diterbitkan untuk membantu pelajar. Kajian ini akan menganalisis samada buku-buku ini ditulis mengikut kehendak objektif pembelajaran yang disarankan oleh Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia dalam sukatan pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris . Sebanyak 20 buah buku telah diilih untuk kajian ini.. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan buku memang menepati kehendak spesifikasi kurikulum yang disyorkan oleh Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia.

Abstract

This study investigated the relevance of the usage of workbooks and their significance in preparing students for the SPM examination in teaching the novel part of the literature component in the Form Five English language syllabus. The teaching of a novel is a compulsory part of the English language paper in the SPM examination. Teachers and students throughout the country have turned to the usage of supplementary workbooks. Publishers have come out with numerous workbooks to help teachers and students prepare for the literature component in their exam. It is the purpose of this study to find out if these books comply with the English language curriculum specifications lined out by the Education Ministry of Malaysia . A total number of 20 books were analysed using Bloom's taxonomy of question levels. . The study revealed that most of these books did comply with the curriculum specifications

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF PIE CHARTS	ix
 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Purpose of the study	12
1.3 Rationale for the study	12
1.4 Research Questions	13
1.5 Limitations to the study	13
 CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Why learn literature	15
2.3 Elements taught in a novel	16
2.4 Levels of questions in Bloom’s taxonomy	18
2.5 Summary of chapter	19
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Introduction	20
3.2 Research Design	22
3.3 Instrumentation	24
3.4 Summary of chapter	24

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion	26
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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction	52
5.2 Conclusion	53
5.3 Recommendations	55
5.4 Implications	55

REFERENCES	57
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APPENDICES

A. List of course books for First Reading in Literature Programme	60
B List of Books for Classroom Reader Programme	62
C Information from CDC website page	67
D <i>KBSM</i> English language syllabus	69
E List of workbooks analysed	70
F Curriculum Specifications for Form 5 English	72
G CDC Training module for teachers	75
H Internet article on Bloom’s Taxonomy	145
I Past year questions on Literature Component (2001-2004)	147
J Samples of questions from workbooks	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table	pages
Table 4.1. Analysis of SPM examination questions on Bloom’s Taxonomy	30
Table 4.2(a)Frequency of questions asked on elements of a novel	34
Table 4.2(b) Summary of frequency of questions asked on elements of a novel.	35
Table 4.3(a)- Analysis of questions for characterization	37
Table 4.4(a) –Analysis of questions for plot	40
Table 4.5(a)- Analysis of questions for setting	43
Table 4.6(a)- Analysis of questions for themes	45
Table 4.7(a)- Analysis of questions for moral values	47

LIST OF PIE CHARTS

Pie Charts	pages
4.2(c) Frequency of questions asked based on novel	35
4.3(b) Analysis of questions asked on Characterisation (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	37
4.4 (b) Analysis of questions asked on Plot (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	41
4.5 (b) Analysis of questions asked on Setting (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	44
4.6 (b) Analysis of questions asked on Themes (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	46
4.7(b) Analysis of questions asked on Moral Values (Bloom’s Taxonomy)	48

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The issue of teaching English literature in a non-native context dates back from the early years of this century when literature was considered of high prestige in language study and access to literary works was assumed part of the purpose of language learning (Widdowson, 1986). The literature class consisted often of an enthusiastic teacher-orator and passive students being “*too busy writing in translations of unfamiliar words to respond to the text*” (Long, 1986, p. 42)

The place and the role of literature in the language classroom was questioned furthermore by the English Language Teaching (ELT) approaches during the period 1960-1980, which did not encourage students to develop a “*feeling for language, of response to texts*” (Long, 1986, pgs.42-45). Carter and Long (1991) describe the main educational, linguistic and psychological arguments put forward for the teaching of

literature as three models which are associated with specific pedagogic practices: the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model.

The cultural model highlights the teaching of literature for its value in “*encapsulating the accumulated wisdom, the best that has been thought and felt within a culture*”(Carter and Long 1991). Works of literature are the relics of culture and through their 'study' students understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space.

In the language model (Carter and Long 1991) the emphasis is given on language as the literary medium. Since literature is made from language, if students are exposed systematically to works of literature, literary competence will be developed. Literary texts are exploited for the teaching of vocabulary or structures or language manipulation. The argument behind the model is that the students will enrich and develop language input since literary texts offer contact with some of the more subtle and varied creative uses of the language.

The third approach outlined by Carter and Long (1991) is an attempt to bridge the gap between the previous two models. This is the personal growth model, which highlights the need of the students' personal engagement with the reading of literary texts. The model focuses on the use of literature as a resource and not on the study of literature, or as Carter and Long (1991) put it “*the knowledge of and the knowledge about literature*”.

Before the coming of the 1119 English language paper in the Malaysian Certificate of examination, the communicational approach was adopted. Literature was only offered as an elective paper with the big ‘L’ in mind. Then, the teaching of literature

was not very much welcomed. This was because it was felt that literature in English as Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms is not beneficial to the contribution towards achieving language competency.

Moreover on the practical point of view, ESL students have no need for literature in their real life environment. Literature also often reflects a particular and to some extent, peculiar cultural perspective, it may be quite difficult for ESL students because of the difference at the conceptual level (McKay, 1982).

The Ministry of Education of Malaysia came out with several reading programmes that were implemented in schools on a large scale. (Ali Abdul Ghani & Jayakaran Mukundan, 2000). These included First Readings in Literature, the New Zealand Readers Project, and the English Language Reading Programme. Other programmes included the Reading Kit, which was designed and produced by the Curriculum Development Centre of the Education Ministry of Malaysia for British teachers (CFBT) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

The First Readings in Literature programme was carried out by secondary schools throughout the country. One of the objectives of the programme was to provide a structured reading plan to help students appreciate the social pleasures of literature apart from supplying them with materials written in English, (Ali & Jayakaran, 2000) This reading programme was divided into three reading stages: Stage one for form One, Stage two for Form Two and Stage three for Form Three. For each stage, four course books were provided (See Appendix A, pg. 55).

THE NEW ZEALAND READERS PROJECT

The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) introduced the New Zealand Readers Project using New Zealand Readers in 1977. Recognizing the importance of reading in second language learning, this programme was designed for primary and remove Classes. The aim then was to improve students' reading skills in order to build interest in reading. This project was the first structured reading programme and schools were strongly advised to allocate one period a week for it (Ali &, Jayakaran, 2000)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING PROGRAMME (ELRP)

The English Language Reading Programme (ELRP) was initiated by the Schools' Division of the Ministry of Education (Ali & Jayakaran, 2000) Generally the main focus of this programme was to encourage students to read extensively on their own by providing as much reading materials as possible with the aim of improving English language. It was introduced to 19 residential schools in Malaysia in 1976.

It was a continuation of the Junior ELRP implemented in primary four to six (Jayakaran, 1998). The long-term aims of the ELRP were to expose students to English language readers that are graded according to reading ability and to change the presentation and teaching of English language especially to the weak group.

Similar to the reading programme using the New Zealand readers, the ELRP required an allocation of one period a week. Students were expected to read a large

number of books on their own time (Ali & Jayakaran 2000). A Reading Chart was used to record the books students have borrowed and read. Students were also required to review the books they have read. Along with the ELRP books were sets of Readers for intensive reading purposes. These Readers were known as Class Readers and initially were only tailored for boarding schools (Ali & Jayakaran, 2000)

The ELRP proved to be successful. As a result, the Schools Division introduced the Class Reader Programme (CRP) in 1990 and was carried out in all secondary schools through the country (Ali & Jayakaran, 2000). It was developed alongside one of the objectives of the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools or *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* or *KBSM*. The CRP had an allocation of five periods per week and out of these, one period was allocated to the teaching of literary elements in English.

In the history of English as a second language in Malaysia, there have been two class reader programmes, namely the English Language Reader Programme (ELRP) and the Class Reader Programme (CRP) (Jayakaran, Sue & Ali, 1998). The ELRP was in use at the time when the structural English syllabus was used for lower secondary schools. Later the problems besetting the ELRP made it lapse into obscurity. After a few years, when the *KBSM* English language syllabus was introduced, it made a comeback in the form of the CRP.

The aim of the CRP was to introduce literature in the ESL classroom and at the same time increase the reading load of students in school. The four aims of the CRP were to expose students to materials written in English, to motivate students to read and inculcate in them the reading habit, to help students increase their language proficiency

through teaching materials that can enrich and consolidate learning and to generate interest in and prepare students for possible literature study.

For most of the students in Malaysian schools where the medium of instruction is Malay language, the only exposure that they have in English language texts is perhaps the text for English language lessons. The text is meant for intensive reading whereby students practise language skills through comprehension passages and exercises. Later when the *KBSM* English language syllabus was introduced to replace the Structural and Communicational English syllabus, the focus on reading was brought back.

The *KBSM* English language syllabus states that one of the objectives of reading is “ students should be able to read and understand prose and poetry for information and enjoyment”(Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah, 2000)). This provides a place for the use of class readers in enhancing the reading skill. For this Programme the students were not tested in public examination. The Class Reader Programme was more for enjoyment rather than for language learning.

Selected texts for this programme included simplified and abridged versions of books chosen from those written especially for young people in both foreign and local settings. (See appendix B, pg. 56)

THE LITERATURE IN ENGLISH PROGRAMME

The Literature In English programme (LEP) is offered as an elective subject at the Form four and five levels. It provides an alternative to students who are interested in pursuing literary studies. The LEP was aimed at developing students' skills in reading, analyzing, and appreciating literary works besides inculcating the reading habit. Another aim was to promote positive moral values and developing further understanding of human values and concerns. It was also aimed at preparing students for post-secondary school study in Literature in English.

The literary texts suggested by the Ministry of Education in 1990 comprised both original and translated works in English. From 1992 to 1995 the novels that were suggested included *The Pearl* by John Stenbeck, *The Village By The Sea* by Anita Desai and *Cry the Beloved Country* by A. Paton. The dramas were *Julius Ceaser* by William Shakespeare, *All My Sons* by A. Miller and *An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestly.

Poems chosen included *Stopping By The Woods On a Snowy Evening*, *Mending Wall*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Birches*, and *After Apple Picking* by Robert Frost; *Daffodils*, *Lucy Poems*, *The World Is Too Much With Us*, *We Are Seven*, and *My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold* by William Woodsworth; *Rain*, *The New Road*, *Three Beserah Fishermen*, *Si Tenggang's Homecoming* and *Words For Father* by Muhammad Haji Salleh; *Poison Tree*, *The Tyger*, *London*, *The School Boy* and *The Clod and The Pebble* by William Blake; *Mosquito*, *Snake*, *Last Lesson of The Afternoon*, *Piano* and *The Best of school* by D.H. Lawrence.

Short Stories for this time period included *A Horse and Two Goats* by R.K Narayan, *The Necklace* by Guy De Maupassant, *Hitchhiker* by Roald Dahl, *The Tell-*

Tale Heart by Edgar A. Poe, *The Open Window* by Saki and *Various Temptations* by W. Sansom.

After 1995 there was a change in the texts selected. From 1995 to 1998 the novels selected were *Shane* by P. Schaeffer, *The Man Eater Of Malgudi* by R.K Narayan and *The Walkabout* by V. Marshall. Three dramas were chosen namely, *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, *The Government Inspector* by N. Gogol and *Pygmalion* by G.B. Shaw. Poems selected were *Hope is The Thing With Feathers*, *Success Is Counted Sweetest*, *Because I could Not Stop For Death*, *A Narrow Fellow In The Grass* and *A Bird Came Down The Walk* by Emily Dickinson; *Tembusu*, *For My Son*, *To A Shrub*, *Sunday and On The death of A Friend in a Distant Country* by Ee Tiang Hong; *Dulce Et. Decorum Est.*, *Disabled*, *Futility*, *Anthem For Doomed Youth* and *Inspection* by Wilfred Owen; *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode to Autumn*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, *On the Grasshopper and Cricket* and *When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be* by John Keats; *Break, Break, Break*, *Splendour Falls on Castle walls*, *The Change of The Light Brigade*, *Ulysses* and *The Owl* by Lord Tennyson.

Short stories for this period included *A Retrieved Information* by O. Henry, *The Feeling Of Power* by J. Asimov, *The Journey* by Catherine Lim, *The Garden Party* by K. Mansfield, *The Overcoat* by S. Benson and *Galloping Foxley* by Roald Dahl.

HISTORY OF THE LITERATURE COMPONENT

In the early 1990s pure literature was an elective paper taken at O-levels. There was no literature component in the curriculum. Before the year 2000 students had four periods of English and one period of Class Reader Programme. The Class Reader programme has now been transformed into an extensive reading programme. In 2000, together with other changes in the curriculum format, the Curriculum Development Centre Of Malaysia. (CDC) also introduced the teaching of literature.

In a week, five periods of English is taught. Four is reserved for general English and one period is for the Literature Component. The Literature Component is tested in the official examinations such as the Lower Secondary Assessment or Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) and the Malaysian Certificate of Education or Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM).

This component contributes to 20 % of the marks for the English language paper.

Students who opt to do a pure literature paper will have to register and sit for it as an elective at O levels or in the Malaysian Higher School Certificate or Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM).

The Literature Component in the new Malaysian curriculum suggests a range of texts covering Malaysia, British, European, Australian, American, and African works (*Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah*, 2000). Learners are expected to follow a storyline and understand poems and to give their own personal response to the text. This is to inculcate values and broaden learners' outlook.

Students learning literature use the language for aesthetic purposes. This involves the English language to be used to enjoy literary texts at a level appropriate to the

learners' ability. Learners are also expected to be able to express ideas, thoughts, beliefs and feelings creatively and imaginatively. The study of moral values is also given emphasis in this area of language use. (The English Language Syllabus, CDC, 2000: 12-13)

The CDC or Curriculum Development Centre of the Malaysian Education Ministry introduced the Literature component in the English language 1119 paper in 2000. It was to be implemented in the schools by March 2000. The CDC in its website has given answers to some frequently asked questions. (Refer to Appendix C, pg.57).

Students in Form one are to learn 3 poems and three short stories. Form two students are to study one out of three abridged or simplified prescribed novels and from three students too can choose one out of three prescribed abridged or simplified novels. As for form four and five students they are to learn five short stories and six poems and one novel from a choice of three. 20% of the PMR and SPM question paper will comprise questions based on the prescribed texts

If students received the novels under the Textbook Loan Scheme, then teachers are required to teach the text according to the scheme. However, schools are also free to choose another text according to their students' ability. Teachers are also encouraged to use other texts to further enhance the teaching and learning of the literature component.

Teachers are free to choose any one of the prescribed texts to begin with. It is not necessary for all teachers in the state/district to teach the same text at the same time.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study was aimed at analyzing the different types of workbooks in the market, which are used in secondary schools to teach one aspect of the literature component in the English language paper for the Sijil Pelajaran Examination (SPM) or the Malaysian Certificate of Examination, that is the teaching of novels. This study attempted to find out if these books are in line with the learning outcomes stipulated in the *KBSM* Syllabus Specifications. (See Appendix D, pg. 58)

Three novels have been allocated namely, “The Pearl”(Steinbeck, 1111) “The Return” (K.S. Maniam, 1111) and the “Jungle of Hope” (Keris Mas, 1111) For the purpose of this study, the novel “The Pearl” was chosen.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Since the introduction of the literature component in the English language syllabus, various publishers in the market have introduced many workbooks. Some of these books may relate to the objectives and aims of the CDC while some may not. This study analysed commercilaised workbooks to find out whether the books complied with the requirements of the syllabus. This study has attempted to find out if these workbooks contained exercises that will help students prepare themselves for the SPM examination.

1.4 Research Questions

This research was in answer to the following questions:

1. Do the books analysed comply with the expectations of the learning outcomes spelled out by curriculum specifications?
2. Do the questions in the SPM examination reflect the learning outcomes in the curriculum specifications?
3. Do the books analysed gear students towards the types of questions expected in the SPM examination?

1.5 Limitations to the study

Only 20 workbooks were analysed. (See Appendix E, pg. 59) Some books were based totally on the novel, “The Pearl” while some comprised of the literature component in general and had the novel part as one section. These books gave exercises on general aspects governing the teaching and learning of novels in schools.

Most of these books had a combination of exercises for all the three novels in the syllabus. This study focuses on one novel and analyzing general workbooks with the novel did not help much. The classification of these books is explained further in chapter three.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The Curriculum Specifications for the teaching of English for the form 5 (Ministry Of Education, 2003:16-18 as in Appendix F, pg.60) states that the study of the Literature Component is to allow students to use the language for aesthetic purposes. The learning outcomes, which are, expected of students state that students listen to, read, and respond to literary works by understanding and telling in one's own words the story and poem heard and read and giving one's opinion of the text.

Besides that students are also to recognize the elements in a story such as characters and setting, explain the message the writer is trying to convey and discuss how this relates to one's life, understand other people's cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs and recite poems with feelings and expression.

These learning outcomes are expected to be achieved through the selected poems and novels.

As discussed earlier, the Education Ministry has allocated three novels for the purpose of achieving the learning outcomes mentioned above. (English Language Syllabus, CDC, 2000:12-13) The novels are “The Pearl” by John Steinbeck, “The Return” by K.S. Maniam and “The Jungle of Hope” by Keris Mas. For this study, the workbooks analysed are based on the novel “The Pearl” by John Steinbeck.

2.2 Why learn literature

There are several reasons for teachers to take literature into classrooms. Literary texts are an unlimited source of authentic, unmodified language for the learners to be exposed to (Collie & Slater 1987). This exposure to literary language along with the negotiations of meanings of texts aid learners to expand their language awareness, develop their language competence and become acquainted with the cultures of the English speaking countries. Furthermore these benefits are not limited to the linguistic and cognitive domains but are expanded to the education of the individual as a whole.

Lazar (1993), gives several reasons for using literature in the ESL classroom. Among them are it can be used as motivating material, to expose students to cultural background that is different from their very own, to develop students interpretive abilities and also to educate the person as a whole. Collie & Slater (1987) believe that literary

materials that speak to the heart as much as to the mind will provide materials with some emotional colour that can make more meaningful contact with students' own life.

Rosli (1995) says that there is a general consensus that literature is an object worth studying. The importance of literature in a language class cannot be disputed as literature can bring the use of language in real life before the learner's imagination. Rosli (1995) feels that since literature and language are complementary, the right procedure is to teach English along with literature in that language.

Carter and Long (1991: 3-4) say that literature is used as a resource which means that literature can be a special resource for personal development and growth to encourage greater sensitivity and self awareness; and greater understanding of the world around us. Brumfit and Carter (1986) lay out that in second language teaching there are at least two distinguishable major aims. Firstly, literature is used to assist the development of competence in language, that is, the prime intention is to teach language, not literature. The second reason is that literary texts are included in order to teach culture.

2.3 Elements taught in a novel.

The form five Curriculum Specifications point out a few aspects of the novel that are to be taught to students in schools. The main aspects are characterization, setting, point of view, plot, moral values, themes and messages and figurative language. Except for figurative language, all other aspects are to be tested in examinations. (English form 5 Curriculum Specifications, 2000, pgs.16-18).