CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a general description of literature, an overview of critical thinking skills and critical reading, followed by the strategies to teach critical thinking.

2.2 What is literature?

Literature is the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language (Marckward, 1978). The province of literature is the human condition, life with all its feelings, thoughts and insights. And the experience of literature is always two dimensional, for it involves both the book and the reader (Protherough, 1959).

Leavis, (cited in Widdowson, 1975: 34-35), defines the study of literature as:

> ...the essential discipline of an English School, is the literary-critical; it is a true discipline, only in an English school if anywhere will it be fostered, and it is irreplaceable. It trains in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating sensitiveness and precision of response ... intelligence that integrates as well as analyses...

Widdowson further defines literature as a subject which has the principal aim of developing the capacity for individual response to language use. On the other hand (Holloway, 1978: 20-1) views literature as: "students of English Literature ... draw from their studies the benefits of 'English' as a broad, flexible, and liberal discipline, concerned with a literature which is not clearly excelled by any other ... . There is no systematic study of literature which does not foster many qualities of mind-judgment, cogency and flexibility of mind and maturity of understanding".

Duff, (1990), says that essentially there are three types of justification for using literary texts that is for linguistic, methodological and motivational purposes. In terms of the language, literary texts offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty. The fact that literary texts are, by their very essence, open to multiple interpretation means readers' understanding of, or reaction to a given text may differ. This opinion gap between one individual's interpretation and another's, can be bridged by interaction. Literary texts are non-trivial in the sense that they deal with matters which concerned the writer enough to make him or her write about them. In this they are unlike many other forms of language teaching input which frequently trivialize experience in the service of pedagogy (Brumfit & Carter, 1989). This 'genuine feel' generated by literary texts is a powerful motivator,

especially when allied to the themes of the literary texts to which learners can bring a powerful response from their own experience.

Brumfit, et.al (1989), have the opinion that literature teaching must direct the students to the service of the community. Besides, it must generally develop the inquiring mind and the ability to learn from others, and build confidence. In other words, it must develop specifically the skill of criticism.

2.3 Critical Thinking and Critical Reading

In simple terms, thinking is a process or an operation. It occurs in a person's mind when he thinks of something that consists of cognitive and metacognitive operations (Woolfolk, 1987).

Cognitive operation is a common thinking skill such as comparing and contrasting, analyzing, synthesizing, logical thinking and composing. This operation also encompasses decision making processes or strategies and problem solving. On the other hand, metacognitive operation covers those that require directing and controlling cognitive skills and processes (Grawith, 1991).

According to Grawith (1991) thinking skills are intellectual skills such as memorizing and remembering facts and explanations, giving explanations, analyzing, providing opinions, making decisions, solving problems and planning.

According to Beyer (1985) critical thinking skills are prominently among the goals set for education. Although there are various diverse definitions of critical thinking, the common feature is the ability and tendency to gather, evaluate and use information effectively.

Ennis (1995) defines critical thinking as a reasonable and reflective decision on what to believe or do. Beyer (1995) on the other hand offers his view on critical thinking as the means of making reasoned judgements. Basically Beyer sees critical thinking as using criteria to judge the quality of something. In other words, critical thinking is a disciplined manner of thought that a person uses to assess the validity of something for instance statements, new stories, arguments, and research.

Simon and Kapplan (1989) state that critical thinking is the formation of logical inferences which rest upon reasoned judgments. Stahl and Stahl (1991) view critical thinking as the development of cohesive and logical reasoning patterns.

However, Elder and Paul (1994) sees critical thinking as the ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking. They feel that critical thinkers require developing sound criteria and standards for analyzing and assessing their own thinking. The essence of critical thinking is logic.

Soriven and Paul (1997) state that critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information gathered by observation, experience reflection, reasoning or communication as a guide to belief and action. They say that critical thinking is incorporated in an interwoven modes of thinking, among which are scientific thinking, mathematical thinking, historical thinking, anthropological thinking, economic thinking, moral thinking and philosophical thinking. Soriven and Paul (1997) view critical thinking as having two components: a set of skills to process and generate information and beliefs and the habit based on intellectual commitment of using those skills to guide behavior. However, these two components have to be contrasted with the mere acquisition and retention of information, the mere possession of a set of skills and the mere use of these skills. They further emphasize that critical thinking varies according to the motivation underlying it. Its quality is therefore usually a matter of degree and dependent on, among other things, the quality and depth of experience in a given domain of thinking or with respect to a particular class of question.

Critical thinking is defined as "the art of thinking about your thinking while you are thinking in order to make your thinking better, more clear, more accurate, or more defensible" (Paul, 1992: 643). He outlines five separate components of critical thinking. They are:

- total recall (remembering facts)
- habits (thinking approaches that are second nature)
- inquiry (kind of thinking used to reach conclusions)
- new ideas/creativity (individualized thinking which is characteristically expanded from the "normal" response to a situation)
- knowing how to think (thinking about one's thinking or knowing).

The last component of critical thinking is "thinking about one's thinking", the essence of meta-knowledge or meta-cognition skills. The term "meta" refers to "among", while "cognition" is the "process of knowing". Critical thinking skills and metaknowlege have a strong connection. This theory is supported by Grawith (1991), who says that metacognitive operation covers those thinking skills that require directing and controlling skills and processes. If we realize and think of a particular type of skill used, metacognitive operation is required. Grawith (1991) further emphasizes that the critical thinking skill is a skill required in evaluating data and information.

Critical thinking is not an isolated goal unrelated to other important goals in education. It is concerned to be the hub around which all other education ends cluster, say Soriven and Paul, (1992). For example, as students learn to think more critically, they become proficient at historical, scientific and mathematical thinking. Subsequently they develop skills, abilities and values crucial to success in everyday life.

The pioneer in developing critical thinking theory is Benjamin Bloom who classified learning behaviors in the cognitive domain. Bloom, (1956) developed a taxanomy of learning objectives for teachers which has been widely accepted in education programmes. The learning behaviors have been classified into six levels ranging from knowledge which focuses upon recitation of facts to evaluation which requires complex valuing and weighing of information. Each level relates to a higher level of cognition ability. According to Morrison & Paullin (1997), critical thinking is a contrast to rote memorization or simple information recall. It has its goal as the simulation of analytical and evaluation processes of the mind. Bloom's Taxanomy (Bloom, 1956) gives a six-level classification of critical thinking. A person begins with level one and then progresses to level six working through the analytical thinking process to reach the final process of evaluation. This taxanomy suggests that a person who goes through the six steps will arrive at an analytical evaluation and not reach

an evaluation based on impulses, emotions or sensations. The six level classification of critical thinking is presented below:

Bloom's Taxanomy

1. Knowledge = Specific facts
2. Comprehension = Understanding of facts
3. Application = Generalizing facts to other situations
4. Analysis = Breaking problems down, recognizing connections between subparts
5. Synthesis = Combining separate elements to form a coherent whole
6. Evaluation = Critically using information to make (reasonable) judgements

Another view on critical thinking is reflected in the following model of Beyer (1991) which makes distinctions between the behaviors of effective and ineffective thinking. Beyer's model suggests a dichotomy between good and bad thinking and is rooted in the assumption that people can be categorized in one area or another. The behaviors of good and bad thinkers as defined by Beyer (1991) are presented below:

The Good Thinker:

Welcomes problematic situations and is tolerant of ambiguity.

Is sufficiently self-critical; looks for alternate possibilities and goals; seeks evidence on both sides.

Is reflective and deliberative and searches extensively when appropriate.

Believes in the value of rationality and that thinking can be effective.

Is deliberative in discovering goals.

Revises goals when necessary.

Is open to multiple possibilities and considers alternatives

Is deliberative in analyzing possibilities.

Uses evidence that challenges favored possibilities.

Consciously searches for evidence against possibilities that are initially strong or in favor of those that are weak.

The Poor Thinker:

Searches for certainty and is intolerant of ambiguity.

Is not self-critical and is satisfied with first attempts.

Is impulsive, gives up prematurely, and is overconfident of the correctness of initial ideas.

Overvalues intuition, denigrates rationality; believes that thinking won't help.

Is impulsive in discovering goals.

Does not revise goals.

Prefers to deal with limited possibilities; does not seek alternatives to an initial possibility.

Ignores evidence that challenges favored possibilities.

In a literature class, students are required to read the literary texts prescribed, as it develops good thinkers and encourages reflective and rational thinking. According to Carr (1988), critical reading is defined as learning to evaluate, draw inferences and arrive at conclusions based on evidence in the text. It is believed that literature is a powerful tool for teaching critical reading. It offers students the opportunity to actively engage in texts while considering ideas, values and ethical questions. Sweet (1993) believes that through literature students learn to read personally, actively and deeply. Critical reading is a more sophisticated form of predicting or reading "between the lines" by looking for the meaning behind the author's words. This involves strategies such as looking for inference, implications and tone of voice.

The explanations given by Cortina, (1995) further elaborate these strategies. Cortina (1995) lists six specific skills of critical reading which are interrelated:

a. Determining an author's purpose and intended evidence
b. Determining an author's point of view and tone
c. Distinguishing between facts and opinions
d. Making inferences
e. Understanding denotations and connotations
f. Understanding figurative language

Hillocks and Ludlow (1984) state that in order for students to be able to understand the higher order skills (inferential), they must have mastered the lower level skills (literal) in the reading and interpretation of literary texts. Their study demonstrated that readers who are incapable of answering lower-level questions will not be capable of answering higher level ones, while those who are capable of answering higher level questions are capable of answering both lower level and inferential questions. The literal level category consists of:

a. Basic stated confirmation: Identifying frequently stated information which presents some condition crucial to the literary text.

b. Key Detail: Identifying a detail which appears at some key juncture of the plot and which bears a relationship to what happens.

c. Stated Relationship: Identifying a statement which explains the relationship between at least two pieces of information in the text.

The higher order skills are the inferential level which consist of:

a. Simple Implied Relationship: Inferring the relationship between two pieces of information usually closely related in the text.

b. Complex Implied Relationship: Inferring the relationship(s) among many pieces of information spread throughout large parts of the text.

c. Author's Generalization: Inferring a generalization about the world outside the work from the fabric of the work as a whole.

d. Structural Generalization: Generalizing about how parts of the work operate together to achieve certain effects.

In higher order skills, readers begin to consider relationship of the self and the world, including other cultures and social systems. It is important to discover if such skills are being encouraged in the literature classroom in Malaysian schools.

2.4 Strategies to Teach Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a liberating force in education and a powerful resource in one's personal life. In order to teach thinking, teachers need to provide instructions and activities that encourage thinking among students.

Just as there are similarities among the definitions of critical thinking across subject areas and levels, there are several generally recognized

"hallmarks" of teaching for critical thinking (Beyer, 1985; Costa, 1985). These include teaching strategies as given below:

- Promoting interaction among students as they learn – Learning in a group setting often helps each member achieve more.

- Asking open-ended questions that do not assume the "one right answer" – Critical thinking is often exemplified best when the problems are inherently ill-defined and do not have a "right" answer. Open-ended questions also encourage students to think and respond creatively, without fear of giving the "wrong" answer.

- Allowing sufficient time for students to reflect on the questions asked or problems posed – Critical thinking seldom involves snap judgments; therefore, posing questions and allowing adequate time before soliciting responses helps students understand that they are expected to deliberate and to ponder, and that the immediate response is not always the best response.

- Teaching for transfer – The skills for critical thinking should "travel well." They generally will do so only if teachers provide opportunities for students to see how a newly acquired skill can apply to other situations and to the student's own experience.

Since critical thinking is a part of our curricular goals and objectives it should be included in our classes. Teachers are encouraged to plan activities that will teach critical thinking. The question arises whether critical thinking is appropriate at some levels where the students' speaking ability or writing ability is too low to perform critical thinking tasks in the English Language. Another question is whether parents and students themselves value it enough to spend time on critical thinking activities in class.

Teacher's classroom goals came from a combination of an evaluation of the students needs as well as activities that reflect the teacher's educational philosophies, personal interest and personalities. Each teacher must decide on the activities and amount of time spent on teaching critical thinking and language – learning skills for her class.

Effective teachers facilitate students' learning by providing highly engaging learning experiences which are both motivating and challenging to students. Effective teachers intuitively know that student attitudes and academic achievement improve when learning experiences revolve around the interests, talents and needs of students. When the students are provided with fun-filled meaningful activities, effective teachers are able to teach

basic skills and learning strategies while maturing students develop higher order thinking skills and multiple intelligences (Jariah, 1993).

Teaching strategies need to be based on different levels of thinking when the literary texts are explored right from the initial lessons to follow-up lessons. Comprehension of literary texts requires inferencing which plays a central role in reasoning and problem solving activities. Literary texts have the potential to engage students in reasoning activities. The question is to see how far the skill of inferencing is put forward when exploring literary texts in the classrooms? When literature is approached from a problem solving perspective, students are put in a situation where they need to evaluate evidence, draw conclusions, make inferences and develop a line of thinking.

Wilson (1988) says that teaching students to read, write and think critically in a literature class is a dramatic shift from what has generally taken place in most classrooms. With the introduction of literature in Malaysian secondary schools, it would be interesting to investigate whether the strategies and techniques are effective enough to enhance critical thinking among the students.

The focus is now turned to the teachers as they are the pivot as to how successful the literature lesson would turn out to be as critical thinking

advocates the use of strategies and techniques like formulating questions prior to, during, and after the literature class; responding to the text in terms of the students' own values; acknowledging when and how the students' expectations are aroused and fulfilled; and responding to the texts through a variety of activities which would ask students to go beyond what they have read in order to experience the text in personal ways.

It would be favorable if the teacher is aware that the role of background knowledge and the students' ability to draw upon it are essential to critical thinking. Pre-reading discussion can expect to achieve the objectives set for a literature lesson. It helps students to activate prior knowledge or fill in gaps in background knowledge. Pre-reading, post reading and further reading set by the teacher can prove to be an effective strategy in enhancing critical thinking skills.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to create a conducive classroom environment which is student-centered, and to foster student participation in the literature lesson. Such an atmosphere can be created through pair-work, group discussion, individual presentation, question-answer sessions. It is believed that learning that is both personal and collaborative encourage critical thinking (Carr, 1988).

Teaching of literary texts is not only concerned with the transmission of facts and ready-made interpretations but also with the development in the students of interpretative procedures which can be applied to a range of language use (Widdowson, 1975). The main student outcome should be enjoyment of the text, saying what it is about and thinking critically about ideas contained in the text.

A literary text only comes into action when there is a reader to unlock it. To do this teachers need to provide the opportunities for personal responses which requires the students to use their critical thinking skills through effective teaching strategies and techniques in the classroom.

In most cases in Malaysian secondary schools, the students can only respond to literary texts as a result of guidance. What teachers so often do in the English Language classroom is to tell students what messages are to be found in the literary texts they are studying and this discourages them from seeking messages for themselves. The study of literary texts is primarily a study of language use and as such it is not a separate activity from language learning but an aspect of the same activity.

Bernstein (1995), in his papers on teaching critical thinking, says that learning strategy instruction which has been taught in English Language classes reflects critical thinking. In teaching learning strategies, teachers

encourage the development of meta-cognitive awareness by asking students to describe their thoughts, to explain how they found an answer. Reid emphasizes that learning strategy instruction needs to be explicit so that students can become consciously aware of which strategies work best for them for different kinds of tasks.

Charnot (1995) has identified five kinds of instructions that provide students with the chance to demonstrate and develop their thinking skills. He says that can provide the framework for developing a community of thinkers in the language classroom. The instructions are:

1. Recognizing and building on students' prior knowledge
2. Providing meaningful learning tasks
3. Engaging in interactive teaching and learning
4. Focusing on learning processes and strategies
5. Helping students evaluate their own thinking

Charnot (ibid) claims that teaching literature using a meaningful content invites the teaching of critical thinking skills. Besides that, teachers must be sure that the students have access to ideas and topics worth thinking about. Learning activities must be challenging, whether they are assigned by the teacher, developed collaboratively or chosen individually. Time needs to be spent in locating or developing supplemental activities that teach critical thinking. Some critics feel that there is a lack of time for

students to reflect and to process information in the literature classroom. The critics say that students in a language classroom are encouraged to be spontaneous and produce results immediately. Thinking through the steps of Bloom's taxonomy requires time and reflection by the students before there is expression of thinking. Some useful thoughts for teachers to consider about critical thinking (Costa, 1991) are given below:

1. Does the teacher's language (questioning and structuring) invite students to think?
2. Do the teacher's response behaviors extend and maintain higher levels of thinking?
3. Are learning activities arranged in order of increasing complexity and abstraction?
4. Do instructional materials support higher cognitive functioning?
5. Is adequate instructional time devoted to thinking?
6. Do students and teachers discuss their thinking (metacognition)?

Some of the findings in this study may contribute to answering some of the questions.

2.5 The Literature Class

There are significant differences between what happens when students read a literary text for themselves and what generally happens when a teacher organizes that reading in class. In a literature class, the pace of

reading is controlled; it may be interrupted by questions and comments and once the reading is over, certain responses are likely to be demanded from the students. Protherough (1959) points out that students approach texts from their own point of view, with intentions of their own rather than those of the author. And, students comprehend when their intentions are satisfied and when the questions they ask of the text are answered because their expectations are fulfilled. On the other hand, Protherough (1959) says that the teacher faces the problem of how to take into account what the students bring to a book as well as what they get out of it. The most important thing is the need for time when students can begin to formulate their own responses and to show them in an informal way among peers.

It has been found that in a literature lesson, students are pushed too quickly through the stages of learning. Importance and space are not allowed for the students to sort out what they have actually experienced in reading (Carles & Long, 1991). They need to be given the opportunity for individual reflection, thus legitimizing personal responses (Protherough, 1959). This would allow students to become more confident in formulating their own reactions to what seems significant in the text to them as individuals. If the idea is a new one, students will require help in discovering personal reaction and not just the 'right' answers.

Marckward (1978) believes that students should be invited by teachers to say how they as individuals respond to literary texts – what they say to them and about their lives, what they tell them about human beings and human life in general. The emphasis should be one of response.

Students need more practice in classroom activities and exercises that promote higher cognitive skills. Posing open-ended questions prompt or gear students into focusing on the main subject of the text and at the same time would require students to refer to their background knowledge. Besides, questions on synthesis and evaluation of meaning would be concerned with the student's ability to utilize their thinking skills in responding to higher-order comprehension questions. Developing the student's higher-order thinking skills should be the main concern in the literature class as this would provide them with the necessary skills for further explorations with literary texts.

Brown (1978) points out that thinking strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, and planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. Strategies are contextualized "battle plans". Brown also says that strategies vary intra-individually and each of the students may choose one of the several strategies or use a few of the strategies to achieve a particular end when solving a task. A description of thinking

strategies adapted from Grawith (1991) and Woolfolk (1987) is given below:

- Brainstorming can be done on an individual or group basis to work out the recall of past information or to trigger ideas and thoughts.

- Mapping is used to draw an overview of the topic which can be done by breaking down a topic into sub-topics.

- Categorizing, Grouping and Ordering can be done to group similar ideas, concepts, categories etc, so as to see the whole and to rank the items in terms of degree of importance and from general to specific concepts.

- Comparing and Contrasting is to list the advantages and disadvantages and also to find out what is common and also the similarities and differences.

- Using key words and concepts is to be able to describe what you know already to keep in mind when sourcing information and so on.

- Asking WH – questions of oneself by using who, what, where, why, when and how to pin down what is important and to form basic structures from which information can be analyzed and interpreted.

- Analyzing and Formulation of Hypotheses is to work through possible causes, effects, solutions or reasons when seeing a situation as "a what if" situation or to look out for causes, effects, solutions or reasons and to come up with general statements about them.

- Inferring and Deducing is to read for meanings not directly stated or spelt out; to look for what is implied by using reasoning.

- Using Associations is to use visual or verbal associations to consciously trigger memory.

- Visualizing is to put things in the head and "see" them work.

- Diagramming is translating information into tree diagrams, charts, mind maps and so on.

- Verbalizing is to give words to thoughts, to say things aloud or over and over again (thinking aloud), to speak the answers in one's own head to questions asked ourself, voicing out and tracing verbally routes to solving problems.

- Lateral Thinking is to think about "What If' situations or to imagine oneself in the other's situations; to look at and weigh a situation, issue or idea.

Keefe and Walberg (1992) point out that critical thinking in the classroom is facilitated by a physical and intellectual environment. Seating should be arranged in a manner where the teacher and the students can see and interact with each other as this can minimize the passive, receptive mode many students adopt when all are facing the teacher. Besides, visual aids in the literature classroom can encourage ongoing attention to critical thought processes for example, posing signs that say "Why do I think that?", "Is it a fact or opinion?, "What would happen if ...?" Each question can remind students that they are being engaged on some thinking strategies.

According to Guilford, (1956), Gulleghar and Aschner (1963), and Wilen (1985) critical thinking may be thought of in terms of convergent and divergent questioning. Convergent questions tend to align with the first

three levels of Blooms' Taxonomy of Learning objectives while divergent questions relate to the latter three levels.

On the other hand, Bloom (1976) suggested that feedback as the most important teaching behavior. It is related to the student achievement feedback and the teacher's response to the student's results. The table on Bloom's Taxonomy is presented below:

Table 1

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Level	Materials / Situations	Measurable Behaviors
Knowledge	Events, people, newspapers, magazine articles, definitions, videos, dramas, textbooks, films, television programs, recordings, media presentations	Define, describe memorize, label, recognize, name, draw, state, identify, select, write, locate, recite
Comprehension	Speech, story, drama, cartoon, diagram, graph, summary, outline, analogy, poster, bulletin board	Summarize, restate, paraphrase, illustrate, match, explain, defend, relate, infer, compare, contrast, generalize
Application	Diagram, sculpture, illustration, dramatization, forecast, problem, puzzle, organizations, classifications, rules, systems, routines	Apply, change, put together, construct, discover, produce, make, report, sketch, solve, show, collect, prepare
Analysis	Survey, questionnaire, an argument, a model, displays, demonstrations, diagrams, systems, conclusions, report, graphed information	Examine, classify, categorize, research, contrast, compare, disassemble, differentiate, separate, investigate, subdivide
Synthesis	Experiment, game, song, report, poem, prose, speculation, creation, art, invention, drama, rules	Combine, hypothesize, construct, originate, create, design, formulate, role-play, develop
Evaluation	Recommendations, self-evaluations, group discussions, debate, court trial, standards, editorials, values	Compare, recommend, assess, value, appraise, solve, criticize, weigh, consider, debate

It may be suggested that teachers avoid asking questions which elicit only "Yes" and "No" responses on critical thinking. Because critical thinking takes time, teachers should allow learners a few moments to formulate their answers.

Taba (1996) suggested inductive questioning as it builds higher thinking. Students should be led to infer the organization and significance of information. Students with strong thinking skills know how to organize and value information. Students should be asked questions like "What is the most important?, What is least important?".

Deductive reasoning was one of the techniques of inferring details from generalization. David Ausabel's (1968) research led him to suggest teachers introduce a topic on a general basis then slowly focus on details, linking new information with known information. This strengthens the cognitive organization of the new material relating to the old. Questions like "If this is true about A, B and C what might we conclude about D?" reflect deductive learning.

Kindsvatter et. al (1992) recommends that teachers resort to co-operative questioning. If students are asked to share responses with one or more

students and then report, then the whole class of students will be engaged in the lesson in contrast to individual questioning.

Teachers are encouraged to look out for evidence of critical thinking while the lesson is in progress. The Kindsvatter et.al (1992) checklist is presented below:

- Learners are active and in a continuous dialogue with the teacher
- Learning is constructing, not feeding
- Truth is discovered, not delivered
- Teacher functions as a facilitator
- Questions are answered with explanations or questions, not simply "Yes" or "No"
- Questions rarely have one right answer
- Pertinent discussion on related issues often break out
- Debate is common
- Peers exchange ideas
- Learner and teacher satisfaction increases
- Teachers often face questions for which they have no answers
- Social interaction in the class is generally high

This chapter has given an overview of literature related to critical thinking, critical reading and teaching strategies that can develop

critical thinking in the literature class. Essentially, they are related to activities in the literature classroom which are of particular relevance in this study.