

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background and selection of the subjects involved in the study the research instruments used and the procedures in the study. The instruments used in the collection of data is a questionnaire and a lesson observation sheet. The questionnaire comprises three sections. Sections A and B are filled in by the students before the English Literature lesson and Section C immediately after the lesson. The lesson observation sheet was used in the collection of data concerning strategies and techniques used by the teacher, students' participation and students' responses. The reasons for choosing these two instruments are discussed, followed by the selection of literary texts. A discussion on how the materials were piloted and the planning for the actual session with the subjects conclude the chapter.

3.2 Background and Selection of Subjects

A total number of ninety-five students from three major secondary schools in the district of Kuala Langat, Selangor were involved in this study. The schools from which the subjects were selected are: SMK Sultan Abdul

Samad, SMK Methodist and SMK Telok Panglima Garang. These three schools are selected based on their academic achievement in the PMR examination. Besides that the level of proficiency in the English Language generally differs from each other. SMK Sultan Abdul Samad and SMK Methodist have students who belong to the above average and average categories where the proficiency of English Language is concerned whereas a majority of the students in SMK Telok Panglima Garang fall under the average and below average categories.

The students were of various levels of English Language proficiency based on their PMR English Language results. One Form Four class was chosen from each school. The basis for the selection of this one class is at least a pass in English Language in the PMR examination. The three classes from the three schools were of mixed ability in terms of language proficiency in the PMR English Language. Questionnaires were given to all the students in the class and once the researcher had collected the questionnaires, the researcher categorized the respondents according to their level of proficiency. Three levels were identified: Above average, Average and Below average. Twenty respondents in the class from SMK Sultan Abdul Samad, who obtained Grade A in the PMR English Language were categorized as above average students. Twenty respondents from SMK Methodist who obtained Grade B and C in the PMR English Language, were categorized as average students while

twenty respondents in the class from SMK Telok Panglima Garang who obtained D were chosen and categorized as below average students. Only 60 students were chosen from the 95 students, i.e. 20 from each class, so as to standardize the number of respondents for comparison purposes.

3.3 Students' Questionnaire

A self-reporting questionnaire was used to obtain information from 60 Form Four students from three major secondary schools in the district of Kuala Langat.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

Section A:

This section consists of details of the gender and the language proficiency level of the students based on the PMR English Language grade.

Section B:

This section comprises questions pertaining to the students' interest and expectations of the opportunities to use their critical thinking skills in the literature class. This section has a total of eight questions with eleven sub-questions. Students were required to indicate their answers by ticking the

'Yes' or 'No' columns provided (Literature and Language Teaching, Lazar, 1993).

Section C:

Deals with the students' self-evaluation of their engagement during the literature lesson, (Literature and Language Teaching, Lazar, 1993). This provides some information on the ability of the students to respond to critical thinking questions of a high order. The purpose and relationship of factors that contribute to the students' response during the literature lesson like maturity level of students, suitability of text, difficulty of language, students' literature background and use of literary texts in the classroom was obtained. Students were required to indicate by ticking the 'Yes' or 'No' columns.

3.4 Lesson Observation

The researcher also carried out classroom observations. This provides not only the means of looking at the ways in which students respond to and approach the tasks and activities given to them but also the way the teacher employs the strategies and techniques (Lazar, 1993).

Observations were carried out in the same class in each school where the students completed the given questionnaire. The focus was on the

teacher's teaching strategies and techniques. The number of students in the class was the actual number for a normal class i.e. SMK Sultan Abdul Samad – 38 students, SMK Methodist – 32 students and SMK Telok Panglima Garang – 25 students, making a total of ninety-five.

The data collected in the lesson observation (please see Appendices C and D) is a record of the students' on-going responses during the literature class and also the teacher's techniques and strategies employed in the teaching-learning situation. The researcher indicated by ticking in either column A or B if any of the statements from 1-6 (lesson observation sheet) is evident during the lesson. The researcher wrote out the strategies and techniques used by the teacher for example pair work, group discussion, individual presentation, question-answer sessions in column C. In column D, the researcher stated whether the student's response is active or passive. The type of critical thinking skills (refer to Table below) was indicated in column E. The researcher recorded the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson in column F. The observation was conducted once for each school involved in this study.

The purpose of the lesson observations was to determine thinking skills that students used during the literature lesson. A list of thinking skills is presented below.

List of Thinking Skills

Source: Critical thinking: What is it? (Beyer, 1985)

1. Presenting logical opinions	6. Gathering Information	11. Elaborating
2. Defending opinions	7. Sequencing	12. Analyzing
3. Visualizing	8. Logical Deductions	13. Decision making
4. Inferring	9. Reasoning	14. Presenting Information
5. Problem Solving	10. Listing	15. Analyzing for bias

3.5 Procedures

Arrangements were made with the teachers concerned in the selected schools for this study. The respective teachers were informed at least two days prior to the actual sessions. The teacher prepared for a 80 minute lesson (20 minutes for filling Section A and B of the questionnaire, 40 minutes for the lesson and 20 minutes for filling Section C of the questionnaire). Students were informed that this was a research project and that the results would not affect them in any way. They were reminded not to answer Section C yet, as they needed to wait until the lesson was over. The first 20 minutes was used to fill Section A and B of the questionnaire. Students were told to put away the questionnaire while the lesson was being taught. The teacher then taught the literature lesson he had prepared for 40 minutes. The researcher observed the lesson and recorded in the lesson observation sheet. After the lesson, the students were asked to fill in Section C of the questionnaire. The remaining 20 minutes was used for this. Section C provided feedback on the student's

opinion of the literary text used in the class. A total of 95 questionnaires were collected. Out of this, researcher chose 20 above average, 20 average and 20 below average by sorting and categorizing students response to sections B and C of the questionnaire. The purpose of categorizing into three levels is to see the correlation between the students response with their levels of proficiency in the English Language.

3.6 Pilot Study

It is essential that the materials selected for the research be piloted before hand to avoid last minute setbacks like printing errors in the questionnaire, instructions can be given within a planned duration of time comprehending the instructions in the questionnaire, and complexity of the statements in the questionnaire.

A pilot study was conducted on a group of 20 Form Four students of average level of proficiency in the English Language. The study was conducted in SMK Sultan Abdul Samad. Students were selected based on their PMR English Language grade i.e. Grade B and C which can be classified under 'average' category. These students can be said to represent the level of proficiency of the 60 students who are going to be involved in the study. A majority of the students in the district of Kuala Langat can be said to come from non-English speaking homes.

The purpose of the pilot study was to find out how the students responded to the questions in the questionnaire as well as how they responded to the literature lesson carried out in their class.

First the students were briefed on how to answer the questions in Section A and B. Secondly, the teacher who was to carry out the literature lesson was asked to prepare a 40 minute lesson and conduct the lesson on the actual day. Prior to the lesson, 20 minutes were given to the students to answer Section A and B of the questionnaire and 20 minutes were given after the lesson to answer Section C of the questionnaire. The researcher realized that a few of the students did not have their literary texts during the lesson. Therefore, they were told to share their texts with their peers and this interrupted the activities which required individual attention. In the actual study, students were told to bring their literary texts for the lesson. The teachers were requested to provide the students with copies taken from the other classes in case they did not have one.

3.7 Selection of Literary Texts

The Ministry of Education has prescribed literary texts for the English class. Hence, the researcher requested the teachers to choose either one story from the five prescribed short stories or one poem out of the six

prescribed poems for the lesson to be observed. Below are the texts prescribed by the Ministry of Education (Form 4 literature text, Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, 2000).

Short Stories:

1. *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant, 2000
2. *The Lotus Eater* by Somerset Maugham, 2000
3. *The Drover's Wife* by Henry Lawson, 2000
4. *The Sound Machine* by Roald Dahl, 2000
5. *Looking for the Rain God* by Bessie Head, 2000.

Poems:

1. *Sonnet 18* by William Shakespeare, 2000
2. *Monsoon History* by Shirley Geok-lin Lim, 2000
3. *Si Tenggang's Homecoming* by Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2000
4. *There's Been a Death in the Opposite House* by Emily Dickinson, 2000
5. *If* by Rudyard Kipling, 2000
6. *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost, 2000

The literary texts prescribed are of foreign setting except one by Muhammad Haji Salleh. The length and difficulty level of the texts were taken into consideration by the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education. The subject matter and sentence structures in the texts are

considered to be of moderate level of difficulty as the texts are abridged versions of the original text. This is to facilitate comprehension and ensure that the reading process is not a stressful activity (Hill, 1986). This could be seen from the ability of a majority of the students involved in the study to read the texts independently.

This chapter has attempted to show how the data for this research project was collected. There are two types of data collected:

- (a) response from students via the questionnaire.
- (b) teacher strategies in the literature classroom.