

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study. First, the relevant data obtained from the students' responses to the questions in Section A of the questionnaire is presented and discussed. Data on students' responses to Section B is then analyzed and discussed. The last section deals with the presentation of data obtained from the observation of the three literature lessons. This data is analyzed and the findings are presented.

#### **4.2 Analysis of Data Obtained from the Students' Questionnaire**

20 subjects from SMK Sultan Abdul Samad who obtained grade A in the English Language at the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) level were categorized as above average category. 20 students from SMK Methodist who obtained grade B and C were categorized as average category and 20 students from SMK Telok Panglima Garang who obtained grade D were categorized as below average.

The yardstick used to categorize them are, as stated above, their achievements in the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) examination. The analysis in this chapter is discussed in relation to the different levels of English Language proficiency.

#### 4.2.1 Views on Poems and Short Stories

Table 2

**Students' Views on Poems and Short stories.**  
Items are from Section B of the questionnaire. No. 1 – 2.

Questions	Response			
	Above average	Average	Below average	Total
1. Do you enjoy reading poems and short stories	Yes 17 No 3	Yes 13 No 7	Yes 3 No 17	33 (55%) 27 (45%)
2. Do you find poems and short stories difficult to understand.	Yes 5 No 15	Yes 11 No 9	Yes 18 No 2	34 (57%) 26 (43%)

Table 2 shows 55% of the students indicated that they enjoy reading the poems and short stories. However, 45% of the students do not enjoy reading the poems and short stories.

57% of the students say that they find the poems and short stories difficult to understand whereas 43% of the students have indicated that the poems and short stories are not difficult. The figure shows that the majority of the students who have indicated this, belong to the below average group. This could be due to their low proficiency level which hinders the

understanding of the text. Two students in the below average group and nine students in the average group have indicated they do not find it difficult to understand the texts. This could be probably due to their misinterpretation of the statement in the questionnaire.

A majority of 15 students from the above average group has indicated that they do not find it difficult to understand the text. This is probably the indication of their high proficiency level.

#### 4.2.2 Reasons for Interest in Literature

**Table 3**  
Reasons for Interests in Literature lessons. Items are from Section B 3(i) – (v).

Statements	Above average	Average	Below average	Total
1. It improves my communicative skills	Yes 10 No 10	Yes 12 No 8	Yes 3 No 17	25 (41.6%) 35 (58.4%)
2. It helps me in the process of self discovery & personal development	Yes 14 No 6	Yes 9 No 11	Yes 3 No 17	28 (46.6%) 32 (53.4%)
3. It gives me many ideas about individual and social behavior	Yes 17 No 3	Yes 11 No 9	Yes 7 No 13	35 (58.3%) 25 (41.7%)
4. It is a way of comparing my own culture with another culture	Yes 17 No 3	Yes 13 No 7	Yes 4 No 16	37 (61.6%) 23 (38.4%)
5. It offers insights into past and present cultures and societies and develops critical thinking on such topics in future	Yes 15 No 5	Yes 15 No 5	Yes 1 No 17  No response	31 (51.6%) 27 (45.0%)  2 (3.4%)

Table 3 shows the feedback on the students' reasons for interests in the literature lesson. About 42% of the students find that literature improves their communicative skills and the majority from this percentage is from the above average and average students. This indicates that the students with high language proficiency find the literary text useful in developing their language probably because they are able to understand the text. Approximately 58% of the students responded that it does not help them in their communicative skills, with the majority from the below average group and this could be probably due to their low proficiency level and not understanding the literary text.

Thirty two (32) of the students which is 53.4%, have indicated that the literature lesson does not help them in self-discovery and personal development.

More than 58.3% of the students have indicated that literature gives them ideas about individuals and social behaviors. About 62% find that literature lessons provide a way of comparing their own culture with another culture. About 51.6% of the students have responded that literature lessons do develop critical thinking and that it offers insights into past and present cultures and societies.



About 3.4% of the students did not respond to this question. The majority of the students find that the literature lessons do not help them in their communicative skills and in their personal development. However, they find that literature lessons do give them ideas about individual and social behavior besides giving insights into cultures. They also find that literature lessons develop critical thinking. Due to the low proficiency level, a large number of below average students do not find the literary text improve their communicative skills and that hinders their understanding of the texts in terms of ideas and cultures.

Table 4 shows the feedback on the students' expectations of the teacher during a literature lesson. A majority of the students (96.6%) with the breakdown of above average-20, average-19 and below average-19 expect the teacher to give explanations to vocabulary items during a literature lesson. More than half of the students (60%) with above average-19, average-12 and below average-5 expect the opportunity for individual expression of both the themes and the appreciation of the text itself. Nineteen above average students, fourteen average students and four below average students (58.3%) prefer the teacher to allow them to relate the text to their lives. The majority of the students (65.0 %) (above average-20, average-16 and below average-3) say that they should be given opportunities to give their opinions about the text. Forty-six student

(above average-20, average-19 and below average-7) which is 76.7% indicated that they should be allowed to exchange views with their peers.

#### 4.2.3 Students' Expectations of the Teacher During a Literature Lesson

Table 4

Students' Expectations of the Teacher During a Literature Lesson.  
Items are from Section B, No. 4(a) – (f).

Statements	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
During the literature lesson the teacher should:				
a. read the literary text and give the meanings of key phrases	Yes 20 No 0	Yes 19 No 1	Yes 19 No 1	58 (96.6%) 2 (3.4%)
b. allow students to express their understanding of the theme(s)	Yes 19 No 1	Yes 12 No 7  No Response 1	Yes 5 No 15	36 (60.0%) 23 (38.4%) 1 (1.6%)
c. identify the aesthetic value (beauty) in the text	Yes 17 No 3	Yes 12 No 6  No Response 2	Yes 7 No 11  No Response 2	36 (60.3%) 20 (33.4%) 4 (6.3%)
d. encourage students to relate the text to their life	Yes 19 No 1	Yes 14 No 6	Yes 4 No 16	35 (58.3%) 25 (41.7%)
e. allow students to give their opinions about the text	Yes 20 No 0	Yes 16 No 4	Yes 3 No 17	39 (65.0%) 21 (35.0%)
f. allow students to exchange views with peers	Yes 20 No 0	Yes 19 No 1	Yes 7 No 12  No Response 1	46 (76.7%) 13 (21.7%) 1 (1.6%)

It can be said that the students expect opportunities to be given to them in order to express themes, personal opinions and relating the text even though they expect the teacher to explain the meanings of key phrases in the literary text.

#### 4.2.4 Students' Experience in the Literature Class

**Table 5**  
Students' Experience in the Literature Class. Items are from Section B, No. 5 – 6.

Statements	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
1. Teacher involves you personally in the lesson so that you can discuss your opinions and feelings about the poem or short story	Yes 20	Yes 11	Yes 11	44 (73.4%)
	No 0	No 7	No 8	15 (25.0%)
			No Response 1	1 (1.6%)
2. The tasks and activities set during the literature lessons are challenging and they require me to think critically	Yes 15	Yes 11	Yes 4	30 (50.0%)
	No 5	No 9	No 14	28 (46.7%)
			No Response 2	2 (3.3%)

Table 5 shows the feedback on the students' experience in the literature class. Twenty above average students, thirteen average students and eleven below average students (73.4%) feel that the teacher gives room for them to discuss their opinions and feelings about the literary texts that is used in the lesson. Thirty students (50%) (above average-15, average-11

and below average-4) find the tasks and activities set during the literature lesson challenging and require critical thinking. It can be concluded that students find that it is interesting to participate when discussing opinions and feelings about poems and short stories.

#### 4.2.5 Acceptance of Students' Opinions, Views and Interpretations.

**Table 6**  
**Acceptance of Students' Opinions, Views and Interpretations. Item is from Section B, No. 7.**

Your opinions, views and interpretations are readily accepted by:	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
Teacher	Yes 19	Yes 15	Yes 15	9 (81.6%)
	No 1	No 5	No 5	11 (18.4%)
Classmates	Yes 15	Yes 15	Yes 11	41 (68.3%)
	No 5	No 5	No 9	19 (31.7%)
Both	Yes 12	Yes 14	Yes 7	33 (55%)
	No 8	No 6	No 13	27 (45%)
None of the above	Yes -	Yes -	Yes -	-
	No -	No -	No -	-

Table 6 shows the feedback on acceptance of students' opinions, views and interpretations in a literature class. The majority of the students (above average-19, average-15 and below average-15) which is 81.6% are of the opinion that their views and interpretations are readily accepted by the teacher. Fifteen above average students, fifteen below average students and eleven below average students (68.3%) feel that their peers accept their views when given. More than half of the students (55%) with above average-12, average-14 and below average-7 have indicated that both the teacher and classmates accept their opinions, views and interpretations of the literary texts. It can be concluded that the students are of the opinion that both teachers and peers in the classroom do give the opportunity to express views and opinions and this indicates that the role of peers and the teacher contributes to students' participation in the literature class. None of the students from all the three categories have indicated in the column for the statement 'none of the above'. This could probably indicate that all the students involved in this study feel that either the teacher or the classmates need to share and view opinions during the literature lesson.

#### 4.2.6 Students' Preference for Objective or Open-ended Questions

**Table 7**  
**Students' Preference for Question Type. Item is from Section B, No. 8.**

Question	Response			
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
Do you prefer objective type to open-ended questions at the end of a literature lesson	Yes 20	Yes 20	Yes 19	59(98.4%)
	No -	No -	No 1	No (1.6%)

Feedback on students' preference for objective or open-ended questions is shown in Table 7 above. The question on the preference of objective type questions to open-ended questions indicates a marked 98.4% (59 students) (above average -10, average-10 and below average-19) for the former.

#### 4.2.6.1 Reasons for Not Preferring Open-ended Questions

The students gave the following reasons for not preferring open-ended Questions. Their reasons were categorized in the following table.

**Table 8**  
**Students' Reasons for Not Preferring Open-ended Questions.**

Students' Responses	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
1. Too difficult to understand	5	5	5	15 (25.0%)
2. Do not have experience in answering open-ended questions. Therefore, do not have ideas.	2	-	-	2 (3.3%)
3. No time for answering open-ended questions	-	-	2	2 (3.3%)
4. Difficult to answer open-ended questions	-	-	5	5 (8.3%)
5. Need to think for a long time to write the answer	-	4	-	4 (6.6%)
6. Need to write long answers for open-ended questions	-	3	-	3 (5.0%)
Total response	-	-	-	31 (51.6%)
No response	13	8	8	29 (48.4%)

Fifteen students said that open-ended questions are difficult to understand and have therefore shown a preference for objective-type questions. A total of ten students (average and below average) have given the reason that open-ended questions are too difficult to understand. Two students (above average) indicated that they do not have experience in answering open-ended questions. Students' limited experience in answering open-ended questions is also seen as a factor as they do not have ideas on how to answer them.

Four students (average group) indicated that it requires them to think for a long time before writing down the answers to open-ended questions. Three students belonging to the average group feel that they need to write long answers.

Table 9 shows the feedback on the students' reasons for preferring objective type questions. Four students from the average group and eight students from the below average group did not respond to this part of the questions.

Eleven students (above average-4, average-4 and below average-3) have given the reason that answering objective-type questions saves time. Five students (above average) say that objective-type questions are not only



easy to answer but also easy to guess the answers from the given options. Three students (above average-1 and average-2) gave the reason that it is easy to copy from their classmates while answering objective-type questions and four students (2 from the above average and 2 from the average category) responded by saying that they need not worry about spelling where objective questions are concerned. One student from the below average category has indicated that he can become clever when he answers open-ended questions. Hence, it can be concluded that objective-type questions are preferred by the students from all the three levels of language proficiency as it is easier to answer compared to open-ended questions. It is not time consuming and answers can be guessed since there are choices given.

#### 4.2.6.2 Reasons for Preferring Objective-type Questions

Table 9

#### Students' Reasons for Preferring Objective-type Questions

Students' Responses	Above average	Average	Below Average	Total
1. It is easy to answer objective questions	5	-	-	5 (8.3%)
2. There is choice in answers	-	3	-	3 (5.0%)
3. Saves time	4	4	3	11 (18.3%)
4. Easy to copy	1	2	-	3 (5.0%)
5. Need not worry about spelling	2	2	-	4 (6.6%)
6. Easy to guess answers	5	-	-	5 (8.4%)
7. I can become clever when I answer open-ended questions	-	-	1	1 (1.6%)
Total response	-	-	-	32 (53.3%)
No response	3	9	16	28 (46.7%)

#### 4.3 Factors that Influence Students' Response in a Literature Class.

In this section of the questionnaire, students were required to evaluate four factors that influence them when dealing with literature texts. These factors are maturity, language proficiency, literary background and familiarity with literary text.

##### 4.3.1 Students' Language Proficiency

**Table 10**  
**Language Proficiency**  
**Section C**

Statements	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
Language proficiency is too high to be challenged by the text	Yes 10	Yes 6	Yes 16	32 (53.3%)
	No 10	No 14	No 4	28 (46.7%)
Language proficiency is too low to cope with the text	Yes 2	Yes 13	Yes 1	16 (26.6%)
	No 18	No 3	No 19	44 (73.7%)

Table 10 shows the feedback on the students' language proficiency. It was interesting to note that 32 students (above average-10, average-6 and below average-16) which amounts to 53.3% have indicated that they have a high language proficiency and the text used was simple compared to only 16 (above average-2, average-13 and below average-1) which is

about 26.6% who say that their language proficiency is too low to cope with the text. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority of the students were able to cope with the text in terms of the language.

#### 4.3.2 Students' Previous Knowledge of Literature

**Table 11**  
**Literature Background**

Statements	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total
Have too wide a literature background to be challenged by text	Yes 2	Yes 13	Yes 3	17 (28.3%)
	No 18	No 7	No 17	43 (71.7%)
Insufficient literature background to cope with the text	Yes 19	Yes 17	Yes 19	55 (91.6%)
	No 1	No 3	No 1	5 (8.4%)

In Table 11 above, the feedback on the students' literature background is shown. A majority of the students (71.7%) (above average-18, average-7 and below average-17) agreed that they do not have a wide enough literature background to be challenged by the text. Nineteen students of the above average category, seventeen students of average category and nineteen of the below average category (91.6%) responded that they have insufficient literature background to cope with the text. This indicates that the students' literature background is limited. Hence, coping with the text poses a problem in terms of literature background.

### 4.3.3 Students' Familiarity with Literary Texts in the Classroom

**Table 12**  
**Familiarity with Literary Texts in the Classroom**

Statements	Above Average		Average		Below Average		Total
Unfamiliar with the use of literary text in the language classroom to help in reading comprehension	Yes	19	Yes	19	Yes	19	57 (95.6%)
	No	1	No	1	No	1	3 (5.0%)
Very familiar with the use of literary text in the language classroom, hence comprehension is easy	Yes	1	Yes	4	Yes	1	6 (10.%)
	No	19	No	11	No	19	49 (81.7%)
			No Response	5			5 (8.3%)

Table 12 shows the feedback on the students' familiarity with literary texts in the classroom. Fifty-seven students (95.0%) (above average-19, average-19 and below average-19) responded that they are not familiar with the use of literary texts in the classroom thus making comprehension difficult. In contrast, 10% of the students (above average-1, average-4 and below average-1) said that they are familiar with the use of literary texts in the classroom, hence understanding of literary texts is easy. Five students belonging to the average class (8.3%) did not respond to the question. This indicates that students have insufficient exposure to literary texts. When they do have exposure to these texts it aids students in their understanding of the texts.

## **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

### **4.4.1 Students' Perceptions**

It can be said that the introduction of specified literary texts in the Form Four English Language syllabus has yielded interest in the subjects. It has been found that the majority of students from the above average and average categories in this study are interested in dealing with literary texts (Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). This implies that students basically enjoy poems and short stories be they intensive or extensive reading. It also reveals that the reading habit can be instilled in the students since the indications in the questionnaire shows they enjoy poems and short stories. Many students expect literary texts to give insights into other cultures and also broaden their thinking skill capacity (Table 5).

Students who belong to the category of below average, however, tend to depend on the teacher for the explanation of meanings and key phrases (Table 6). If this is carried out in class, the literature lesson becomes merely a reading comprehension lesson. Hence, the focus of the literature lesson would be one of a question-answer session at the literal level. On the other hand, students have indicated that they wish to express themselves by relating literary texts to their lives and also exchanging views with their peers (Table 6).

It can be said that students expect opportunities to express their views. What hinders the students' full enjoyment and understanding of the text is the difficulty and complexity of language (Section 4.3.1) rather than the plot and the values it contains thus limiting the critical appreciation of the text. The teacher, therefore, has to create the opportunity for the students to give personal responses from the text. Both the teacher and the peers accept opinions readily as seen in Table 5. This can be interpreted both positively and negatively. The positive perspective is that there are discussion sessions in literature classes where peers exchange views. On the other hand, it can also mean that peers do not oppose or challenge opinions given by the others and that there is a passive acceptance of ideas. 46.7% of the students have indicated that activities are not challenging enough as seen in Table 4 (Section 4.2.4). The probable reason is that the activities are similar to the ones set for reading comprehension lessons which are usually followed by WH questions, asked orally or in written work. Such WH questions normally require literal comprehension of the text without much emphasis given to critical thinking skills.

The preference for objective type questions clearly shows that students do not quite understand the significance of open-ended questions which would enhance critical thinking skills. It also shows that students' who are

in the average and below average category are not quite prepared to answer questions which require them to write their own opinions (Table 7). This would thus narrow the use of subjective questions in responding to literary questions. This preference could be due to the low esteem of students and the fear of expressing the 'wrong answer'. Poor understanding of the question is a contributing factor for students' preference for objective type questions (Table 8). The students, especially the below average, are not intellectually prepared to attempt high order questions like open-ended questions at the Form Four level. Guessing the answer from the options provided in objective questions appears to be challenging enough for the students. This could be due to the type of questions that the students have previously been familiar with in their lower secondary school work as well as in the PMR examinations. Therefore, an abrupt change to answering open-ended questions is not favorable to them. Making a choice whether correct or incorrect from the options provided in objective-type questions is preferred to open-ended questions where they are required to think critically before writing down the answers. Time factor has been highlighted (Table 7) as a reason for the objective-type questions. Students feel that open-ended type questions take up much time in both comprehending the questions and writing the answers. They feel that objective-type questions do not take up much time in deciding the answers (Table 9). Generally, the majority of the students



have opted for objective-type question for an easier and quicker way of answering.

#### **4.4.2 Self-evaluation Factors that Influence Students' Response in a Literature Class.**

The success of a literature lesson depends on the literary text used and this again depends heavily on the linguistic proficiency of the students as well as their literary background and familiarity with the literary text used in the classroom (Tables 10 to 12).

About half the total number of students have indicated that, they have higher linguistic proficiency compared to the linguistic level in the text (Table 10). This can mean that the texts are linguistically manageable but are not exactly challenging to some. The majority of the students agreed that they do not have a wide literary background and this implies that they have not cultivated the reading habit. Besides that, their insufficient literary background poses a problem in coping with the literary texts (Table 11).

The students' lack of exposure to literary texts in the classroom (Table 12) has influenced their ability to use critical thinking skills. Literary texts are not used as a tool for teaching the English Language in the classroom. 95% of the students have indicated this (Table 12). Hence, exposure to

literary texts in an English language class would probably aid students in developing their critical thinking skills.

#### **4.5 Analysis of Lesson Observations**

A 40-minute lesson was observed in each of the three selected schools involved in this study. Two lessons on poems and one on a short story were observed. A description of each lesson based on the lesson observation sheet is presented. The effectiveness of the teachers' techniques and strategies were observed. Students' responses during pair work, group discussions, individual presentations and question-answer sessions are also discussed. Besides that the students' active or passive responses are highlighted. The type of critical thinking skill as given in the list in Appendix C is also indicated. The strengths and weaknesses of the lesson are discussed based on the task, strategies and techniques used by the teacher in eliciting responses and developing the students' thinking skills when dealing with the literary texts. The strength of the lesson would also depend on the number and type of critical thinking skills that take place in the lesson. The students' active participation in the lesson through teacher-student rapport and peer-rapport will also be seen as the strength of the lesson.

# LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET 1

School : SMK Sultan Abdul Samad

Location 1

Class : 4 SI

Duration of Lesson : 40 Mins

No. of Students : 38

Literary Text Used : Poem: Sonnet 18

Teacher Strategies	(a)		(b)		(c)		(d)		(e)		(f)
	Evident	Not Evident	Task		Student Response		T - S	S - S	Types of Thinking Skills	Remarks Note	
1. The teacher guided the students towards a basic comprehension of the text	/		Question Answer		A		A	P	14	'WH' questions literal comprehension	
2. The teacher encouraged the students to draw on their own knowledge and experiences when making sense of the text.	/		Individual Presentation		A		A	P	1 and 2	Some interesting expressions Some reluctant to give views	
3. The teacher encouraged the students to infer unstated meanings and read between the lines where necessary	/		Pair Work		A		A	A	4	Needed prompting and cues	
4. The teacher encouraged the students to reach their own interpretation of the text rather than relying on a 'correct' or standard one.	/		Individual Presentation Group discussion Debate		A		A	P	9	Interpretations varied / acceptable Some counter arguments	
5. The teacher encouraged students to provide reasoned arguments for their interpretation	/		Individual presentation		A		A	P	13	Reasons strong and weak	
6. Any other way											

Note: Student Response: A – Active P – Passive

Thinking Skills: Refer to Appendix C

#### **4.5.1 Location One**

A total number of 20 students from SMK Sultan Abdul Samad of above average level of English proficiency were involved in the literature lesson based on the poem "Sonnet 18". This was an introductory lesson on the poem.

##### **4.5.1.1 Teaching Strategies, Students' Responses and Critical Thinking Skills.**

###### **(a) Question and Answer Strategy**

The item (1) in the observation sheet (Lesson 1) is referred. The teacher has used the question-answer strategy, specifically, 'WH' questions to elicit basic comprehension of the poem. This was the introductory step to the lesson. The teacher used the title as a springboard so as to lead the students into the lesson.

The teacher guided the students towards the literal comprehension of the poem 'Sonnet 18' by asking the meaning of the term 'Sonnet' using the technique of question and answer, 'What is a Sonnet?'. This was a 'starter' to thinking skills, as the students started giving answers at random and most of the responses were close to the meaning of the term 'Sonnet' which is a poem of fourteen lines. Besides that, the teacher asked simple literal-level questions on the poem and the students responded by putting

up their hands. The students referred to the poem again to get the information. The teacher's technique of asking questions was apparently based on Bloom's Taxonomy in which the questions are arranged from low-order to higher-order levels. For example, 'Who wrote this poem?' 'Who does the poet compare his beloved to?' 'What causes the darling buds of May to fall?' 'May can be referred to the season \_\_\_\_\_?' If the students showed signs of not understanding the question, the teacher rephrased to a simpler form as for example: 'Who does the poet compare his beloved to?' 'The poet compares his beloved to the season: summer?' The students responded actively to the questions posed by the teacher because the teacher started off the lesson with an interesting technique of "problem-solving" like 'What is a sonnet?' and posed literal level questions so as not to intimidate the students with difficult tasks at the very beginning of the lesson. The students' confidence was built at this point.

#### **(b) Drawing On Students' Existing Knowledge**

In item (2) of the observation sheet (Lesson 1), the teacher used the students' own knowledge and experience to relate to the text through using the individual presentation strategy. Student-teacher rapport was active as teacher intercepted with some remarks like, "Oh! really?" "That's interesting!", "Why do you think so?" etc. This encouraged the

students to go on with their presentation. The thinking skills of presenting logical opinions and defending opinions were evident together with reasoning skill. The majority of the students showed interest and enthusiasm by the show of hands when asked to present their knowledge and experiences in relating the issues in the poem to their lives. Prior to this activity the poem was read aloud by the teacher for the basic comprehension of the content and as a recapitulation exercise from the first activity. Some female students were quite hesitant to express their responses when questions like "Have you any similar experience?" or "Have you been praised for your beauty?" were asked. On the other hand, the male students were quite open and bold in relating their experiences. A few students expressed their views on love and beauty. For example, "beauty is only skin deep", "you will grow old and so will your beauty", "beauty is not forever but love is forever" "love is beauty" etc. Views from male and female students differed in terms of concepts and their perception of love and beauty.

### **(c) Pair Work**

The teacher also used pair work as one of his strategies as seen in Item 3 (Observation sheet), Lesson 1. A few lines of the poem were highlighted and written on the board. The pairs were assigned to infer the connotative meaning it carried. Phrases like "Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven

shines", "nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade" were set for discussion. The students appeared comfortable working with a partner as the task of inferring is generally seen as subjective and open to contradictions. Active participation of both teacher and student was seen. Pairs of students who were seen not moving on with their discussion, were prompted and cues were given by the teacher. The teacher avoided too much interference with the students' discussion so that their individual views would not be tampered with. At the end of the activity, students were asked to share their inferences with the rest of the class. Most of the responses were close to the intended meaning such as "weather hot", "the sky", "the sun", "death can take you", "you cannot die" etc. The critical thinking skill used in this activity was inferring.

#### **(d) Debate**

The highlight of the lesson was the activity where the students were totally engaged in critical thinking (5 skills involved), without the teacher's assistance in coming to a conclusion (Item 4 and 5). The strategy used by the teacher was a debate. Students were asked to get into groups of 5 and discuss the statement given i.e. "The poet is emphasizing the beauty of a summer's day rather than the beauty of the lady". Students were required to agree or disagree with the statement, to state their views and justify with reasons. Following that, the group leader took part in the debate by

presenting the views of the group and defending them. The teacher emphasized at the very beginning that the interpretations given by the students would all be acceptable as there was no specified correct answer to the question but the ability to justify the interpretation was given the credit. This assurance was seen as a useful strategy as students were able to speak up with confidence. The students were given a ten-minute preparation time. The task was quite challenging as some students counter-argued some of the reasons given by their counterparts. Encouragement and credit was constantly given by the teacher with remarks like 'good try', 'think', 'possible reason', 'acceptable' and 'interesting'. The critical thinking skills mostly used by the students during the lesson were presentation of information, defending opinions, inferring, reasoning and decision-making. The interpretation of the students varied and were accepted by the teacher and classmates most of the time. There were a number of counter arguments and students presented their views logically. The reasons given by the students were both strong and weak. Some of the reasons were justified as in some responses like "the poet is talking so much about summer rather than his beloved", "It is clear that his beloved is emphasized because he says "Thou art more lovely..."".



# LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET 2

School : SMK Methodist

Location 2

Class : 4 S2

Duration of Lesson : 40 Mins

No. of Students : 32

Literary Text Used : Short Story: The Lotus Eater

Teacher Strategies	(a)		(b)	(c)		(d)		(e)	(f) Remarks Note
	Evident	Not Evident	Task	Student Response T – S      S – S	Types of Thinking Skills				
1. The teacher guided the students towards a basic comprehension of the text	/		Question Answer	A	P			1 and 3	'WH' questions clear
2. The teacher encouraged the students to draw on their own knowledge and experiences when making sense of the text.	/		Pair work	P	A			1	Students unable to relate to any own experience
3. The teacher encouraged the students to infer unstated meanings and read between the lines where necessary	/		Individual	P	A			1	Needed prompting
4. The teacher encouraged the students to reach their own interpretation of the text rather than relying on a 'correct' or standard one.	/		Group work	A	A			8	Students have many interpretations both logical and illogical
5. The teacher encouraged students to provide reasoned arguments for their interpretation	/		Individual presentation	A	P			9	Teacher accepted. No counter-arguments from peers
6. Any other way									

Note : Student Response: A – Active P – Passive

Thinking Skills: Refer to Appendix C

#### **4.5.2 Location 2**

A total number of 20 students from SMK Methodist of average level English proficiency were involved in the literature lesson based on the short story "The Lotus Eater". This was an introductory lesson on the short story.

##### **4.5.2.1 Teaching Strategies, Student's Responses and Critical Thinking Skills.**

###### **(a) Question-Answer Strategy**

In this lesson the introduction started off with the question (Item 1 – Lesson Observation sheet, Lesson 2) "What does the title 'The Lotus Eater' mean to you?". The question-answer technique was suitable and did elicit the students' perception of the title. Most of the responses were of the literal level of meaning and the focus was on "Lotus". The responses were mainly "eating the lotus flower" which was a literal interpretation.

The teacher gave the interpretation of the 'Lotus Eater' as destruction of oneself. Following that, a few students took turns to read the text. Then the teacher asked the class to relate the sequence of events in the text and conclude that the main character, Thomas Wilson, depicts the lotus eater.

The students were able to justify that Thomas Wilson gave up his comfortable life and ended up being poor and lonely so as to fulfill his dream of living in Capri.

#### **(b) Pair Work**

A pair work activity was set for the students to draw on their own knowledge and experience when they were reading the text (Item 2 – Lesson Observation sheet, Location 2). The teacher asked the question ‘Do you recall any similar story that has happened to anyone you know of?’ A discussion among the students was triggered where they began to ask each other and relate any similar experience. The critical thinking skill of visualizing was used here. The teacher did not prompt the students. He was a mere facilitator while the pairs were discussing. The teacher asked for volunteers to give their responses but none could identify any similar experience.

#### **(c) Individual Task**

The next activity (Item 3 – Lesson Observation sheet, Location 2) was an individual task where the students had to come up with responses independently. The critical thinking skill here is inferring. The teacher wrote a line from the text “... I did not want to do the same work for the

rest of my life ...". Then the teacher told the students "write down what you can say (or imply) about Thomas Wilson". The students worked on the task and gave their responses like, "Thomas Wilson was bored with the life," He wanted a change," "He likes adventures". Following that, another line from the text was given "... that's a strange thing to say ... he's going to die when he's sixty". The teacher asked the students "What can you say about death?" The responses were "life is uncertain, you cannot tell when you are going to die".

#### **(d) Group Work - Discussion**

The next activity (Item 4 and 5 – Lesson observation sheet, Location 2) was on the group and individual tasks. Initially the teacher asked the students to get into groups of four and exchange their views on the statement "Thomas Wilson arranged things so that he could live his life to the fullest. What went wrong with his plan?"

There was active participation of the students and the student-teacher rapport was also good as the teacher facilitated the discussion by prompting. The teacher prompted the students with questions like "Why do you think ...?", "Could it be ...?", "Why not ...?". The teacher also gave her views when the students asked for a second opinion from the teacher. The students gave many views which were both logical and

illogical. After the group activity, the students were asked to present their views on the statement and also to give reasons to support their views. The students were confident in expressing their views on what they felt about Thomas Wilson but were not able to justify their interpretations well. Reasons given were almost similar ones e.g. "Thomas Wilson was lazy"; "He was silly to have resigned"; "He could have saved for longer period"; "He could have worked in Capri". Some students decided to rephrase or repeat the reasons given by their peers. Reasons given by the students were accepted easily by their peers without much counter-arguments. Questions were asked by the teacher during the presentation of interpretations and reasons. The critical thinking skills seen in this 40-minute lesson were visualizing, presenting logical opinions, logical deductions and reasoning.

#### **4.5.3 Location Three**

A lesson on the poem "The Road Not Taken" was conducted with twenty students of average and below-average English language proficiency level from SMK Telok Panglima Garang. Students had no prior knowledge of the poem. It was an introductory lesson on the poem.

#### **4.5.3.1 Teaching Strategies, Students' Responses and Critical Thinking Skills.**

##### **(a) Picture Stimulus – Question-Answer**

A teaching aid was used to introduce the lesson as seen in Item 1 in Lesson Observation sheet (Location 3). A picture showing two roads diverging in the woods was used as a focus for the students. Using the picture, the teacher asked questions which were basically in the 'WH' question form. For example, "How many roads are there?", "Where are the roads?", "What color are the leaves?". Questions asked were clear and direct and required literal comprehension of the poem. The critical thinking skill used by the students was gathering information which is a lower level task. There was active participation of the students and the interaction between the teacher and students was active. The question-answer technique as seen in Item (2) – Lesson Observation (3) was used again for the second activity where the students were asked to recall any experience where they had to make a choice from options given. Students responded by giving basic examples from everyday situations, for example, choosing items during shopping, choosing the subjects offered for an examination, and choosing the correct answer in answering objective-type questions. The critical thinking skills used were that of visualizing and elaborating. The teacher did not venture into more complex situations which would have required the students to think deeper. About 30% of the students responded in Bahasa Melayu using words and phrases to replace the English equivalent. Since the students

were of low proficiency level, they found it difficult in expressing their responses.

#### **(b) Pair Work**

Students were divided into pairs and were given the task of matching meaning with phrases (Item 3- Lesson Observation sheet, Location 3). The pairs of students were asked to match given statements with phrases and words like 'woods', 'yellow', 'sigh', 'diverged', 'undergrowth' that appeared in the context of the poem. This was more of a vocabulary building exercise. The critical thinking skill of problem solving was used here. Besides that, the teacher asked a few questions on connotative meaning like "woods" is similar to "*life*", "yellow" – "Which season has yellow leaves?" – "*winter* or *autumn*?", "sigh" – "It is being *happy* or *sad*?" But students had to think a while before answering.

#### **(c) Group Work**

Students were then put into groups of three and given the task of choosing one interpretation of the poem from a list of standard interpretations of the poem (Item 4 in Lesson Observation sheet – Lesson 3). The critical thinking skill of analyzing was required of the students. The list of interpretations were: "The traveler has made a wise choice", "The traveler decided which road to take quickly", "It was a difficult task to choose which road to take" and "The traveler was a brave man for choosing the

road less traveled by". Here the teacher had to explain the interpretations clearly in simple language as the students showed signs of being puzzled and restless. Following that the students worked on the task using the critical thinking skill of reasoning and presenting opinions and presented their choice and reasons in simple language with some Bahasa Melayu equivalent used to express their reasons. The teacher accepted the Bahasa Melayu version and translated them for the benefit of the students.

#### **(d) Individual Presentation**

Individual presentation (Item 5, Lesson Observation sheet – Location 3) was also one of the strategies used in this lesson. At the end of the lesson the teacher picked six students at random and asked them: 'Do you like the poem?' and 'Why do you like the poem?'. 50% of the students gave very simple and basic reasons rather than their own personal opinions since most of the responses was similar to one another. Some students were seen referring and comparing their responses with their peers. This could have influenced their responses. They preferred not to differ from their peers thus, showing a lack of confidence. This lesson was mainly teacher-led. The critical thinking skills which the students had shown were: gathering information, visualizing, elaborating and presenting logical opinions.



# LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET 3

School : SMK Telok Panglima Garang

Location 3

Class : 4 SPN

Duration of Lesson : 40 Mins

No. of Students : 25

Literary Text Used : Poem: The Road Not Taken

Teacher Strategies	(a) Evident	(b) Not Evident	(c) Task	(d) Student Response		(e) Types of Thinking Skills	(f) Remarks Note
				T - S	S - S		
1. The teacher guided the students towards a basic comprehension of the text	/		Question Answer	A	A	6	A picture of two roads diverging 'WH' questions clear and direct
2. The teacher encouraged the students to draw on their own knowledge and experiences when making sense of the text.	/		Question Answer	A	A	3 and 11	Prompted by teacher Student responses shallow Did not venture further
3. The teacher encouraged the students to infer unstated meanings and read between the lines where necessary	/		Matching & Pair work				Literal level
4. The teacher encouraged the students to reach their own interpretation of the text rather than relying on a 'correct' or standard one.	/		Question Answer Group work	A	P	1	Task set not specific Depended on Translation in B.M. Answered in B.M.
5. The teacher encouraged students to provide reasoned arguments for their interpretation							
6. Any other way							

Note: Student Response: A – Active P – Passive

Thinking Skills: Refer to Appendix C

#### **4.6 Discussion of Findings On the Lesson Observations**

The findings from the lesson observations show that the students need more exposure and guidance in answering higher order inferential questions which require the use of their critical thinking skills. The students in the schools in the semi-urban setting (SMK Sultan Abdul Samad and SMK Methodist) had shown to be more receptive and are more proficient in the English Language. This has proved these students the ability to be able to express their opinions quite confidently and critically in the literature lesson. This indicates that the students' language ability helped in their understanding of literary texts at a factual level (Section 4.7.1.1) as found in the analysis on the teaching strategies, students' response and critical thinking skills.

##### **4.6.1 Findings On Teaching Strategies and Students' Responses**

The findings show that there were not enough questioning techniques used. Teachers need to more often use questioning strategies that could lead students to respond to higher level comprehension questions which involve the students' own responses, inferences, knowledge and background experience. Varied questioning strategies will give more opportunities for eliciting responses from the students thus tapping on

their critical thinking skills. The section (4.7.2.1) on teaching strategies and critical thinking skills revealed a simple question-answer technique was used for a class of average level of English proficiency. The students' ability could have been exploited further by posing open-ended questions to get critical thinking responses from the students. Such questions require interpretations and seldom have one correct response. Besides that, such questions tend to be open to explorations thus enhancing the students' critical thinking skills as indicated in section (4.7.1.1), where the students of above average level of English proficiency were asked more open-ended questions which required them to use varied critical thinking skills like presenting and defending opinions, inferring, reasoning and decision making.

The findings also indicate that the students need more practice in classroom activities and exercises that promote higher cognitive skills (Section 4.7.3.1). In the literature class, students with a low level of English proficiency depended on explanation of the literary texts from the teacher and therefore the opportunity to use their critical thinking skills is limited. In the literature class where students had a higher level of English proficiency, the teacher did not fully exploit the students' ability to give personal responses by posing more open-ended questions that could lead them into enhancing their critical thinking skills. Most of the time the teacher resorted to the question-answer technique which is basically the

'WH' or Yes/No form rather than giving them debatable statements which could be more interesting and challenging.

Teachers could enhance students' low and higher order thinking skills through appropriate learning strategies or activities. Developing the students' higher-order thinking skills and creative abilities should be the main concern as this would eventually provide them with the necessary skills for further explorations with literary texts.

Questions which require students to analyze, evaluate, infer and to give ideas and opinions which are seldom asked should take the forefront. These questions could focus on the development of the students' own ideas in the process of understanding a literary text. The failure in the ability to comprehend literary texts in general is likely to result in the inability to instill appreciation in themselves towards literary study. Therefore effective strategies that could guide students to respond to higher level questions are necessary.

Teachers tend to fall back upon a more traditional classroom role where they see themselves as imparting knowledge about the poem as seen in the lesson with the students of the below-average level proficiency (Section 4.7.3.1). The students are somehow expected to have the ability to take all the information in and make it their own.

Sheer difficulties of a detailed comprehension of a literary text together posed by the high linguistic level of the language can turn the teaching of the literary text into a massive process of explanation by the teacher with much of the classroom time devoted to this purpose (Section 4.7.3.1). According to Lazar (1993), it is found that even if the teacher hopes to sharpen students' own responses to the literary text, there is often little guidance or stages on how to do so. The time-honoured question and answer technique do provide some help. However, unless the questions are genuinely open-ended, the students are led to give one standard kind of response or they may give what the teacher expects to be the answer. Personal involvement is seen to be only at an average level and in such a case, classroom activities will not encourage the students to share their personal views.