

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Major changes in the educational systems of all 5 (ASEAN) countries, and indeed in all the other countries of South- East Asia as well, have taken place since 1950, and many of these changes have affected the use of various languages in education, and ultimately the very roles of these languages in the societies concerned and in the region ...

Thus, education is often affected by issues which have more to do with social, economic, political, cultural, and religious questions of a general nature than they have to do with education for its own sake. (Noss, 1984, p. 1)

The teaching and learning of literature has been considered a prominent part of the history of mankind and education. Literature has been featured in all ancient civilisations and was popularised since the time of Plato, the Greek philosopher, who advocated the study of music and literature for children from the primary level. The important role of literature in education has often been emphasised in Malaysia. However, the role and need for Literature in English in the Malaysian curriculum has met with some mixed feelings from educationists and national leaders who do not see the need for English literature, especially after our independence from Britain. Yet, in recent years, there has been a growing national concern and emphasis on better competence in the English language in order to keep abreast with science, technology, commerce, international relations, educational advancement, computer literacy, information technology and the need to develop a reading culture. Thus, this phenomenon has lent ample impetus for the teaching and learning of the English language in the country and literature in English too has been provided a new status in the recent 1990 "Kesusasteraan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris" which was drawn up by the Ministry of Education with significant scope for a broad study of Literature in English which includes the following genres - Prose, Short Stories, Poetry and Drama.

The significant role of the English language can be traced with the historic arrival of the Englishmen, Francis Light in Penang in 1786, and Stamford Raffles in Singapore in 1819. Gradually the establishment of greater British economic and political influence in

Malaya through the English East India Company was destined to grow by leaps and bounds due to various local and British colonial policies and circumstances. The expansion of political and economic influence of the English East India Company in Malaya also meant the spread of Christian missionary movement in the sphere of education, and schools were established primarily in the bigger towns to provide educational opportunities for the working populace who could afford to pay for their children's education. The English language was adopted by the colonial administration as the medium of instruction in order to provide some proficiency in the English language before the students were prepared and absorbed into the British colonial administration. Hence, the English language continued to be the predominant language in all the urban mission schools to prepare the students for the requirements of the English administration.

With the establishment of the Penang Free School as early as 1816 by the Christian missionary Reverend R.S. Hutchings and six other committee members, certain objectives were drawn up to lay the foundation for a proper system of education. The general outline of the objectives were put distinctly in these words

Their belief was that the same happy effects of education, which had been witnessed in every place where a proper system of general instruction had been pursued were also to be in the Island - the character of the people would be gradually changed and industry and good order would succeed idleness and vice. This change will be no little comfort to the higher orders and it will be no little gratification to them to form an Institution, which, besides effecting these advantages, will train up for themselves a race of intelligent, diligent and honest citizens... That any part or all of the children may be instructed in reading and writing English and in the common rules of Arithmetic. (Chelliah, 1947, p.37)

This set the motion for a concerted effort in the promotion of English in the mission schools while Malay and Arabic languages were fully supported for the Malay pupils in the Free School funded Malay classes. The term "Free School" was clearly defined according to that adopted by Dr. Bell of Madras and also after the model school in Calcutta as

implying - "open to the reception of all children on the Island (Penang), of every description." (Chelliah, 1947, p. 41)

Thus, pupils in the mission schools were predominantly from the Chinese, Indian, Eurasian and Ceylonese ethnic groups including some Malays who saw prospects in the English administration. This trend continued for a century until 1957 when Malaya achieved her Independence and national identity. The new Federal Constitution secured the status and the prominent role of the Malay language as enshrined in Article 152

The national language shall be the Malay language and shall be in such script as Parliament by law provides. (Nik Safiah K., 1994, p.135)

However, the English language remained as the official language of Peninsula Malaysia for a duration of ten years as a grace period " to provide sufficient time for the Malays to develop and for all Malaysians to acquire the (national)language." (Nik Safiah, 1994, p.135)

Therefore, concerted efforts were channelled towards the promotion of English for over a century, and it is essential to bear in mind that as far back as 1891 English Literature too was included as part of the British school curriculum that mentioned twenty three subjects, all of which were to be taught in English, except Malay, Chinese and Tamil. The English Literature syllabus of the post-independence curriculum was drawn up by the Cambridge University, just as most of the other subjects, and it continued to be taught at certain urban schools right up to 1990. The syllabus was basically one which was designed according to the British format to teach literature to students who aspired towards an L1 native-level proficiency in the English language.

The study of English literature, by virtue of its British origins and the nature of its subject matter which incorporated texts from the English canon, had generally been the source of mixed feelings time and again, among educationists and curriculum planners with regard to its role and importance in the school curriculum while balancing national and social goals for an ideal educational system for the Malaysian milieu as a whole. English literature was in the 1970s associated with the urban students solely and was considered as elitist since it continued to portray an allegiance to the colonial-type syllabus. Thus, by 1975 there was a gradual shying away from this Literature paper as the students found it rather a burden especially since all the other subjects were taught in the national language, and therefore, more time and effort had to be focussed on those subjects, rather than on the former.

Since the term "English Literature" embodied the notion of primarily English and American literary texts, the new term "Literature in English" was found to be more appropriate to include all established Commonwealth literary works of writers in the English language. This meant literary works of British, American, Indian, Chinese, West Indian, African, Malaysian works, including prominent translations into English.

Thus, with the new 1990 Literature in English syllabus drawn up and implemented in the upper secondary schools as an elective subject and offered to students who could pursue it at the 1993 Form 5 - Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level, it was indeed a positive step by the Ministry of Education in recognizing the merits and the role of an English Literature programme for our learners. It is indeed part of the overall move to instil a reading culture coupled with the desire to uplift the sagging standards in the English language proficiency among our students. This literature programme could provide substantial impetus for language learning considering the wealth of resources available in the realm of English Literature and new literatures in English. A formal study of literature could broaden the world-view of our students since the wealth of literary resources would indeed provide

them an effective "window" to the world, its human condition, as well as foreign cultural elements and universal themes.

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The teaching of English Language and English Literature in Malaya was established as part of the British-style school curriculum in the English-medium urban schools for decades before and after the Independence in 1957. The British colonial government and mainly Western missionaries established several English-medium schools and the curriculum to cater for the occupational needs of the colonial administration. The medium of instruction was English as it was considered the "language of power and social prestige and a common channel for communication among the nation's multi-racial educated elite (Rajah,1990, p.109). However, the English language brought about social and economic disparities between the educated urban elite and the non-urban, including the rural population, which had mainly vernacular schools run by the respective communal groups.

Eventually with the Independence, some political efforts to remedy the economic imbalance and restructure society led to dramatic policy changes in the field of education, especially to replace the English language with Bahasa Malaysia, the national language, to inculcate a national identity and unity in Malaysia. Hence, concerted efforts were made to implement Bahasa Malaysia in the educational and administrative spheres in the country, while Sabah and Sarawak (having joined Malaysia later in 1963) were given more time to implement the language policy and work towards national integration. In 1969, the then Minister of Education, Dato Hj. Abdul Rahman Ya'kub, announced the policy on the new role of Bahasa Malaysia

The greatest single benefit to be accrued from the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia will be the accelerated pace of national integration and unity. The new system will ensure a healthy mingling of all our children during their formative

years and so ensure that they will learn to grow up and live together in peace and harmony as loyal and united Malaysians. (Fatimah Hamid-Don, 1971, p.106)

Thus in 1971, the education system was revamped to implement Bahasa Malaysia from Primary Level 1 to the final year of the undergraduate study in 1984. This historic change secured the role of Bahasa Malaysia, as it was firmly established as the language of political, economic and social dominance which the English language had hitherto enjoyed. Thus, according to Rajah (1990, p.110), the English language was relegated to the status of "second language" not in the true linguistic sense, but as "second" only to Bahasa Malaysia in importance for all official purposes, since it was still a crucial medium in the quest for

higher education and technology, for research and communication with the world, intellectual community and for the maintenance of trade and diplomatic relations .

Nevertheless, in the early 1970s, the English language was still prominently featured in the Malaysian Certificate of Education, including the option "English Literature" which was offered by predominantly proficient students in the urban schools, primarily mission schools, which usually had a few experienced literature teachers to prepare them for the UK- Standard "O" Level Literature paper . However, with the policy shift towards the consolidation of Bahasa Malaysia and the gradual change in the medium of instruction for all the subjects in the curriculum, more and more students began to avoid English Literature in order to focus their time and energies on securing a good command of the National Language, Bahasa Malaysia, or Bahasa Melayu as it is referred to today. This trend left many urban schools with experienced teachers having a few enthusiastic and proficient students still offering the English Literature elective at the SPM - level or none at all, since most school time-tables could not accommodate this elective as the number of Literature candidates did not warrant an official time-slot. Hence, the students intending to offer this elective had to seek the guidance of their school English teachers or engage private tutors outside the school hours in order to prepare for this elective at the SPM level examination.

1.3 THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

The English Literature syllabuses for the Forms Five and Six in Malaysia were designed in collaboration with the Cambridge University and certainly drafted according to the format of the British General Certificate of Examination (GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels respectively). Thus, the syllabuses incorporated primarily the three genres - poems, plays and prose of the British and American origin and tradition and these were generally introduced into the mainly urban mission schools where the students supposedly had a higher proficiency and aptitude for literary works in the English language. Besides, these schools had certain experienced teachers who continued and promoted the study of English Literature as part of the move to maintain a reasonable proficiency level and command of the English language in Malaysia even after Independence in 1957. Notwithstanding the concerted efforts to promote Bahasa Malaysia in the nation after 1971, the study of English Literature at the Form Four - Form Five Malaysia Certificate of Education (MCE) level continued to appeal to a limited number of proficient learners in various urban schools who were willing to study it with guidance from their English teachers or through the assistance of private tutors who had a flare and experience in the teaching of this elective subject, English Literature.

With the growing interests in the the study of English literature, Moody (1971, p.2) stressed that , "the pendulum has swung towards the promotion of literature in schools in developing countries", and added that language and literature teaching could integrate the four skills, namely reading; listening; speaking and writing. However, the winds of change did not reach the shores of Malaysia until late in the 1980's. Maley (1989) again highlighted the new enthusiasm towards literature when he observed, " Literature is back - but wearing different clothes", referring to the new approaches adopted in order to popularise the study of literature among the present day L2 learners.

By 1988, the Ministry of Education was already drafting the first Malaysian syllabus for the Upper Secondary students, this is, the Forms Four and Five to prepare them for the SPM "Literature in English" paper ("Kesusasteraan dalam Bahasa Inggeris") to incorporate literary works from British, American and Commonwealth texts and good translations. Hence, this new syllabus was introduced to the Literature teachers to familiarize them first and then offered to the Form Four students in 1992 in preparation for the first SPM "Literature in English" examination in 1993 according to the prescribed syllabus which included the three genres - Prose (Short Stories and Novels), Drama and Poetry.

1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF "LITERATURE IN ENGLISH" AS AN ELECTIVE

The Literature in English is the first Malaysian designed syllabus that has been incorporated into the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM - Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah) in 1990 for the first batch of Form 4 students to prepare them for the first locally set examination in 1993. The advent of English literature in such a formal fashion augurs well for the students, teachers, the English Departments in the universities and the country as a whole, since the Education Ministry and the government have come to acknowledge the merits of teaching this subject after a spell of dormancy for over 15 years in the school curriculum, despite its accorded status as an elective.

The objectives of the Literature in English programme seek to inculcate in the learners :

- an awareness of the value and pleasure of reading good literary works;
- an appreciation and a deeper understanding of important human concerns, and human relationships;
- an ability to appreciate values which would enhance an understanding of themselves and their relationships with others;

- an initial ability to communicate their response to texts supported with reasons; and
- an acquaintance with, and an appreciation of the main forms of literary expressions and of literary devices used. (Sukatan - Kesusasteraan Dalam Bahasa Inggeris 1990)

The other aims outlined in the programme are that the learners could develop an awareness of their own creative potential, explore the universal and human conditions and issues, instil a deeper appreciation of literary works to prepare some of them for higher pursuits and career prospects and also to enrich the learners' command of the English Language.

The teachers are provided ample flexibility to modify and incorporate other teaching strategies in order to maintain "student-centred" approaches to assist the learners to respond and express themselves as they interact with the texts personally and creatively.

In order for this study to attain concrete direction and focus, a few questions have been formulated to examine the overall classroom scenario with regard to the teaching and learning of Literature, particularly Drama - and specifically *Julius Caesar*.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that have been formulated are primarily to provide a better focus in the study of the teaching techniques and strategies used by the two teachers in the two girls' schools selected.

The questions are :

1. How are the form Five students offering "Literature in English " as an elective at the SPM level, being taught the drama component (*Julius Caesar*) in the two schools in Petaling Jaya ?

2. What are the main features of the lesson structure in the six consecutive lessons in each school as observed and recorded on video ?
3. Based on the above two questions, what are the effective teaching techniques and strategies that can be employed to aid the students in the learning of Shakespeare and Drama ?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The implementation of the new Malaysian syllabus for Literature in English provides ample impetus for the promotion of a reading culture and the improvement of competence in the English language. This study attempts to determine the nature of the teaching techniques and strategies which are utilised in the classroom to promote the effective learning of the play *-Julius Caesar* . Both the learning and the teaching aspects are essential in this study as there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained from the proceedings in the classroom. In fact, there are several aspects which could be observed and studied from the findings. According to Cullen (1991, p.76), he highlights two significant uses of video excerpts which essentially provide interesting "slices of classroom life"; they are also

- (i) "trainer-directed" - where the trainer can focus on and teach certain aspects of the recorded lessons: and
- (ii) "semi-directed" - where viewers of the excerpts can focus, analyse and learn particular points or aspects of the lessons.

Since the study was based on twelve classroom observations and video recordings from two schools covering six drama lessons in each, it can be concluded that it is a minor study which cannot be representative of the *Julius Caesar* lessons conducted in other schools in

the state or the country. However, the study can be of significant interest to experienced and budding Literature teachers who wish to embark on the teaching of Drama or since it is the most difficult of the genres to teach. Morgan and Saxton (1987) in their Introduction write

When teaching drama or theatre, it is not enough for the teacher to know what to do. It is important for the teacher to know why she is doing what she is doing and how to do it, because every class and student is different.

This explains the paramount role of the teacher in a drama classroom, a role that could determine the success or failure of a Shakespearean Drama or Literature course. According to Hayes (1984, p.11), teaching drama poses a very unique set of challenges

Teaching drama is not like teaching any other subject , perhaps because it is not really a subject but rather a creative process.

Here too we can perceive the immense role and responsibility of a drama teacher in the success of the students' capacity to enjoy and nourish their emotional appreciation and understanding of literary and aesthetic texts. According to Akyel and Yalcin (1990,ELT, p.175), drama is regarded as the most effective in helping students improve oral expression and gain confidence in using English. This point is vital for our consideration and Literature teachers ought to appreciate and inculcate the value of drama in developing oral and speaking skills among their learners.

With evidence from the video recording of the teaching of *Julius Caesar* at the two selected schools, we could also draw some comparisons and similarities in the lesson techniques, activities and strategies employed by the two teachers. Thus, we have the opportunity to view and learn of different techniques, activities and strategies used to enhance learning of drama in the classroom setting especially among Form Five learners.

Therefore, this study can demonstrate to us the salient features and aspects of classroom lessons on *Julius Caesar* and other prospective teachers and students too could benefit from these lessons. Besides, the video recordings can be replayed over and over again to select and pick up the salient features in the teaching techniques, strategies and activities employed in the study of this play by Shakespeare -*Julius Caesar*. The study also shows that this elective "Literature in English" is a viable option open to enthusiastic students keen in this subject which opens new avenues for enhancing their proficiency in the English language and future career opportunities.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The proposed research study entailed primarily classroom observations and video recordings conducted to cover six 40 - minute lessons over a duration of two weeks in two selected schools. In addition, a questionnaire was also administered to the students in order to gauge how they were studying and coping with the study of drama -*Julius Caesar*; the teachers too were given a questionnaire to elicit some responses pertaining to their teaching techniques, strategies and problems confronted in teaching the Shakespearean text. Out of the ten schools in Petaling Jaya with students offering the Literature in English elective, only two schools were selected for the study which involved sixteen and nineteen students, making a total of thirty five learners from both the schools. Thus, this brief period of study cannot be considered substantial; however, it will reveal from both schools some essential strategies currently utilised in the teaching of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

The primary aspects which will be focussed upon are :

- teaching techniques, strategies, approaches to *Julius Caesar* ;
- the activities, types of questions, homework, preparation utilised in the lessons, especially in the teaching and learning of *Julius Caesar* ;

- the student-centred and teacher-centred teaching strategies;
- the teacher's role in the lessons and the personality; and
the problems the students faced in the study of drama - *Julius Caesar*

With these aspects to be considered, other factors such as students' attitudes towards Drama and Literature, their socio-economic status, their previous Form Three English Language grades and other background issues are not covered in this study.

Finally, with this limited study, it is hoped that the findings from the report could assist other teachers and students to understand the kind of teaching techniques, strategies and class activities that are employed in order to plan and implement interesting and effective drama lessons. In addition, the video recordings can be utilised as a practical and motivating training resource, not to be copied, but used essentially as a guide based on the variety of teaching styles employed by the two teachers featured.

However, due to its limitations, it would not be proper to generalise the findings as being the common and standard practice in all the schools in the State. This study would also reveal certain shortcomings and problems faced by students and teachers during the period of study. Perhaps, the video camera could have made the students rather quiet and uncooperative during the six recordings, or perhaps they could have been self-conscious with the presence of the threatening eye of the camera.