CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This chapter forms the backdrop to the study on the use of performance to develop student responses to literature in an ESL classroom. It examines the scholarship pertaining to key concepts of performance and issues related to the learning and teaching of literature in the ESL classroom. It also explores the ways performance can be utilised to shape students’ responses to literature in-and out-of-the class.

The first section explores the position of literature in the curriculum. The notion of literature-based performance and the various types of performances will be foregrounded and examined. Besides, salient language learning theories that underpin the study will also be explicated. The teaching and learning of literature will be explored and some studies on literature classes will also be detailed in the concluding section of the chapter. The above elements underpin the case for using performance to develop student responses to literature in an ESL class.

2.1 Literature in the Curriculum

This section examines the place of literature in the secondary school curriculum. It defines the term literature, and how the subject can enrich the lives of learners making a case for its inclusion in the curriculum.

Literature can be defined as a “collection of writings usually grouped according to language, period, and country of origin. It may be subdivided into “forms such as poetry and prose and within these again into categories such as verse Drama, Novels, Epic Poems, Tragedies, Comedies, Satires . . .” (Philips Encyclopedia, 2001, p. 402.). Marckwardt (1978), argues that “there is a justifiable and profitable place for literature in the English curriculum irrespective of the role of the English language within a country” (p. 19). The corpus of
genres incorporated into literature would entail detailed reading of literary texts as well as cogent articulation of learner responses to texts. The subject which is offered a component in English Language and as an elective in Malaysia has been received with mixed feelings by teachers and students.

Slatoff (1970), as cited in Bushman and Bushman (1997), asserts “it is hard to remember that almost everything about a classroom, about the relation of students and teacher, about the structure of the curriculum . . . the total environment in which we teach literature helps to produce this unhappy condition and is at best alien and at worst hostile to the fullest comprehension and experiencing of literature” (p. 3). The negativity could be replaced with an appreciation and enjoyment of literature by increasing students’ awareness of the cultural dimension, the language dimension, the aesthetic dimension, the values dimension and the lifelong reader dimension that are nested in the study of literature.

2.1.1 The Cultural Dimension

The study of literature empowers students as they are offered in-depth insights into their own culture as well as the cultures of the people of the world. Reading such texts would heighten their awareness of their own rich cultural heritage as well as kindle their interest and enthusiasm to peruse similar literary texts. They would also be more keen and less inhibited to compare the cultural practices detailed in the texts and compare them with those practised by their communities. This would in turn generate better oral and written responses to literary texts. The enhanced sense of belonging, better appreciation and empathy for cultural diversity would promote a conducive environment for learning in the Malaysian heterogeneous classes. As Bushman and Bushman (1997) note “all students need a literature curriculum that stretches their perceptions and allows them to appreciate the richness of a contemporary culture woven from the threads of diverse heritage” (p. 161)
The study of literature allows students to explore their own identity, understand their place in their community as well as to view the world through multiple cultural perspectives by identifying with characters in the texts. They will be able to look beyond racial, religious and cultural differences and learn about similarities that foster better ties among people.

Carter and Long (1991) also state that the cultural model "enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space and to come to perceive tradition of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such culture endows" (p. 2). In a similar vein, Marekwardt (1978), concedes that literature functions as a bridge to the culture of a nation but it would only be effective "with a careful selection of texts and the manner in which lessons are conducted in school" (p.10). In short, appropriate pedagogical stances on literature will enable them to forge powerful connections with works that celebrate their sense of self as well as see the relevance of literature in their lives.

2.1.2 The Language Dimension

Language is often perceived as a tool to make students think and galvanise them to express their responses to texts orally and in written form. Teachers can help students to explore the richness and various uses of language including euphemisms, dialects, various sentence patterns, emotive words as well as increase their awareness of the authors’ craft and use of devices to achieve certain effects on readers.

It is crucial for learners to acquire both linguistic and literary competence as the learners are constantly being bombarded with the creative uses of language through the mass media and a plethora of multimodal texts. Literary texts ranging from Shakespeare’s works to tomes composed by Asian scribes offer themselves as good textual exemplars for discourse analysis. Students can be encouraged to look up the meanings of difficult terms inherent in the texts. In
addition, texts of different eras can be studied to enable students to discern the changes in the language over the years.

The study of literature will enable students to perceive language as more than a composite of linguistic features that have to be committed to memory through mechanical drill work. Literary works that encapsulate the essence of the language would enable students to "experience language not through dull, boring worksheets but through the excitement that can be found through reading" (Bushman & Bushman, 1997 p. 103). The exposure to authentic texts would enable students to initially imitate and gradually adopt and project own voices and stances in their responses to texts as well as in their own writing. As language is more interesting, meaningful and alive than in the traditional linguistic approaches to language study which focus on the mastery of grammar and vocabulary.

According to Carter and Long (1991), the study of language in literature is invaluable if the principal objective is "to provide students with some analytical tools with which they can find a way into texts themselves" (p. 2). However, this does not mean that teachers spoon feed their charges and reduce responses to texts to a boring stylistic analysis and relegate students to the role of passive recipients of knowledge. Students should be assisted to discern the interfacing of literary meanings and linguistic features that would help them appreciate and enjoy the study of literature.

The language dimension is also important as it would enable students to harness their imagination, intellect, senses and emotions to understand and interpret the texts. McRae (1991) who describes literary language as representational language asserts that it "opens up, stimulates and uses areas of the mind, from imagination to emotion, from pleasure to pain... it almost automatically brings about personal interaction between text and reader, between teacher and students, and above all between the producer and receiver of the message
represented by the text" (p. 19). This underscores the notion that students need to invest themselves holistically in grappling with the text in order to appreciate meanings, devices and style nested in it and to develop as informed consumers and producers of texts. The language aspect of the texts motivates learners to engage with texts and construct meaning from text based on their knowledge and experiences and to take ownership of their own learning.

Therefore scholarship supports the notion that the study of representational language in texts would motivate learners to perceive the playfulness of language, encourage them to interact with texts to make meaning and to appreciate various uses of language, devices and styles utilised by authors. The study of language comes alive and is not seen by learners as an exercise in the mechanical manipulation of linguistic structures.

2.1.3 The Values Dimension

Most literary texts also lend themselves to the exploration of moral values. Gardener (1978) argues that moral values embedded in literary texts present "valid models for imitation, eternal verities worth keeping in mind, and a benevolent vision of the possible which can inspire and incite human beings towards virtue, towards life affirmation as opposed to destruction or indifference" (p. 15). However, this does not imply that we expound the moral values in the texts didactically but incidentally so the learners' interest in the texts is sustained and developed. Incidental imbibing of moral values would encourage learners to imitate and internalise the values of the morally staid characters in the texts as well as express compassion for the marginalized individuals in society.

The moral dimension is also essential as psychologists state that adolescents undergo a turbulent time marked by a period in which they seek to assert their independence, face conflicts with parents and figures of authority, strive to excel in school and to forge
relationships with the opposite sex. The reading of literary texts that contain values that enhance their sense of right and wrong, detail struggles of teenagers as they confront their insecurities, and ways to adapt to the confusing and complicated adult world would engage the interest of learners, allow them to articulate their responses to such texts freely and enhance their moral development. It would also shape their personal philosophy about life.

2.1.4 The Aesthetic Dimension

The aesthetic dimension of literature focuses on the notion of the appreciation of beauty and on principles of good taste. It is significant as it allows the readers “to perceive more fully the implications of experience that the constraints of and pressures of modern life do not allow us to savour” (Rosenblatt, 1970, p. 37). Most literary texts incorporate this aspect which is conveyed through literary devices like imagery, metaphors, rhyme and rhythm which elevate these texts to works of art. Literary tomes that celebrate human life and the beauty of nature can be utilised by teachers to energise teenagers whose senses have been jaded by computers and television to rekindle and experience the rich feast of the senses and imagination proffered by literary texts.

The aesthetic dimension can only be fully appreciated through the use of literary language that engages the learners’ imagination, feelings and their senses. The study of figurative language will enable them to understand the mood, tone, attitudes of the writers. McRae (1991), argues that learners who fail to comprehend the aesthetic dimension of texts would miss out on “the potential enjoyment of representational materials”(p. 61). It would also nurture literary competence and help them express critical and creative responses to texts rather than proffer simplistic and mundane reactions to texts.
2.1.5. The Personal Growth Dimension

Carter and Long (1991) opine that the study of literature promotes the personal growth of students. Students would develop as mature, and competent learners as the texts allow them to reflect on universal issues, relationships and moral values not merely to pass examinations but also to be emulated in their lives beyond the classroom. Reading the texts also allows them opportunities to articulate their opinions about people and events depicted in them, examine their own values, attitudes, and prejudices and pave the way for them to develop as caring and responsible individuals. However, as Carter and Long (1991) caution, personal growth can only take place if teachers "stimulate and enliven their students in class by allowing them to participate in activity-based, student-centred approaches . . . which lead to a high level of personal response and involvement" (p. 3). This reiterates the importance of the teachers' role in generating meaningful responses from students by devising appropriate experiential learning activities for their charges.

2.1.6 Lifelong Reader Dimension

The world of literature that offers windows into the lives, beliefs and relationships of people can be accessed by learners through reading. However, Malaysians are not avid readers of literature. The Minister of Education in his speech at the 2002 International Association of School Librarianships cited research done in 1991 that indicated that only 67.2% of university students read the newspapers. It revealed that they are content with reading for the sake of information rather than for the pleasure of reading. This draws our attention to the pressing need to redress this deficiency by developing and sustaining the reading habit among all Malaysian students.

The Minister affirmed his ministry's commitment to nurturing the reading culture in schools through the implementation of strategies such as the NILAM Programme. The
reading habit can also be cultivated through the reading of suitable literary texts. Bushman (1997) asserts that the reading habit can be nurtured if students are encouraged to peruse texts 'that allow them to make some connection between themselves and the texts that they read, to find relationships between them and the developmental tasks that they must accomplish and to read at a level at which comprehension can come with little difficulty' (p. 80). This stresses the importance of text selection and implementing interesting and meaningful classroom activities that would enable them to talk about the texts freely and in an informed manner with their peers in and out-of-class. Probost (1984) as cited in Bushman and Bushman (1997) also affirms the notion that students will be motivated to become lifelong readers if they are encouraged to read texts that they understand, can relate to as well as capture their interest.

In sum, scholarship confirms the notion that learners can be transformed from apathetic readers to lifelong readers if they are offered literary texts with comprehensible input that sustain their interest as well as deal with issues that they can respond to strongly and confidently. The benefits of reading are numerous and need to be indulged in by learners at their own pace and time. As Nelson and Calfee (1998) note, students who have adopted and internalised good reading habits would be privy to "a world of vicarious adventure, able to weigh ideas, take informed stands and think deeply. It also offers them insights into themselves and their worlds" (p. 68). The study of literature would help create and nurture reflective and insightful learners.

2.2 Theories of Language Learning

Scholarship abounds with theories of learning and acquisition of language. This section will examine significant theories that are relevant to second language acquisition as well as to the study of literature. The theories are Vygotsky's learning theory (Woolfolk, 1993 : Moore,
2000) and Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition, input hypothesis and affective filter theory.

2.2.1 Vygotsky’s Learning Theory

Vygotsky expounded the importance of social interaction in the intellectual development of a learner. He argued that the people the learner interacts with, play a key role in assisting the learner in making sense of a text, a concept or an idea. Vygotsky explicated the notion that “learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organised, specifically human psychological function. Language learning, he argued ‘provides a means for expressing ideas and asking questions and provides the categories and concepts for thinking’ (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 48). His theory also states that social learning precedes cognitive development.

The two principal components of Vygotsky’s learning theory are the more knowledgeable other (MKO) and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The principle of MKO refers to an adult or peer who is more competent than the learner and has a better grasp of the task than the learner. The MKO need not be a person (Hallow, 2001). This suggests that the computer and other electronic media can operate as more capable peers for the learner. The complementary concept of the zone of proximal development is defined as the “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86).

This notion highlights the concept of scaffolding or guidance given to a learner that would enable him/her fulfil a task effectively. Once the learner has fulfilled an activity competently, the scaffold can be dismantled as the learner has obtained the necessary competence to perform a task independently. This theory underscores the role of a teacher as
a facilitator in assisting a learner to carry out tasks in a less resistant and stress-free manner. Conversations, sharing of ideas and participating actively in the meaning making process are significant scaffolding processes. The learners are also empowered to develop their own responses to literature by collaborating with their peers confidently. His theory invites teachers to adopt student-centred strategies "which create spaces for students verbally to elaborate developing concepts" (Moor, 2000, p. 16). Performance could allow the teacher to scaffold ESL learners' learning so that they would be able to articulate their responses and display their meaning making by staging their recreation of the text collectively.

2.2.2 Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition

Krashen (1987) makes a distinction between language acquisition and language learning. The former refers to the natural and subconscious manner in which learners acquire a language outside a classroom. It also foregrounds communicative competency rather than linguistic mastery. Learning a language denotes deliberate, formal and conscious instruction especially in the rules of the language. Krashen argues that language acquisition impacts the learner more than language learning.

2.2.3 Krashen's Input Hypothesis

This theory postulates the concept that a learner acquires a second language in a meaningful way when the input is just one level ahead of his/her current level of comprehension. In short, the learner is able to absorb information in a second language if it is comprehensible, authentic and relevant. The study of literature could serve as a bridge for the acquisition of the language of learners as students would be able to respond to and appreciate texts when relevant strategies are used to enable them to see the ways language can be utilised to convey meaning, as well as to inform and entertain the readers.
2.2.4 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

This theory encapsulated Krashen's view that affective factors like motivation, anxiety confidence affect the language acquisition of the learner. He theorizes that when effective filters are high, they hinder language acquisition while low affective filters facilitate and speed up the process. This reiterates the importance of the literature teachers' role in creating conducive spaces in class while utilizing various learner-centered strategies that would enable students to interact with literary texts positively while acquiring both linguistic and literary competence.

2.3 Teaching and Learning of Literature

This part examines two approaches to the teaching and learning of literature that foreground the learners and reiterate the need for their active participation in literature lessons. The main stakeholders in the literature classroom are teachers and students. In most literature classes, teachers still implement the transmissive and teacher-dominant mode of teaching. They carry out analysis of texts and literary devices through explanation and dictation of notes. This approach marginalizes learners who are not given the opportunity to formulate their responses or interpretations of texts. Their needs, opinions and involvement in the lessons remain unexplored or are deemed insignificant as teachers proceed to fill them up with information about texts.

The reader response approach and learner-centered pedagogy are two approaches that asset the importance and the need for learners to be allowed space and freedom to articulate and present their responses and meaning making so as to empower them in their journey of discovery of the exciting world of literature and life.
2.3.1 Learner-Centred Pedagogy

Most research on education underscores the notion that effective learning takes place when learners are actively involved in the learning process. In the study of literature, texts cannot come to life if teachers assume the role of "sages on stage" as they deny students the opportunities of triggering their imagination, senses, feelings and thoughts in order to grasp the richness and power of the texts. This would also deprive students of the chances of sharing their literary experiences with their peers and teachers.

Marckwardt (1978) succinctly notes that a student should "be powerfully moved by what he reads and it can rarely be done by lectures on the part of the teacher especially if the lectures deal with what ought to move one and how one ought to react" (p. 41). He advocates class discussions as they allow students to "say how they as individuals respond to the work, what it says to them about their lives, what it tells them about human beliefs and human life in general" (p. 42). Discussions about texts and ways of presenting their understanding of texts would challenge and motivate them to read and extend their repertoire of literary texts.

Learner-centred pedagogy places the onus on learners to discover the multiple meanings that reside in texts and articulate informed responses to texts. The experiencing of texts would enable them to move beyond the basic reaction level to a deeper and richer response and to connect with texts in a manner that helps them to assimilate it (Marckwardt, 1978). Teacher-centredness forces responses culled by the teacher as the correct ones and would not encourage learners' appreciation and internalisation of the literary experience. Teachers could scaffold the process by allowing students to savour literary works on a continuum ranging from the immediate reaction level to the more sophisticated and stimulating response level which involves active mental processing of texts through appropriate and comprehensible strategies and tasks.
Learner-centred lessons also allow spaces for students to communicate their responses to texts in the target language. Teachers who draw on students' funds of knowledge and cultural capital would enable them to understand and appreciate texts as well as allow communicative repertoires, perceptions, personal affective engagement to thrive” (Candlin, 1991, p. 25). Pedagogy that foregrounds the learners also implies that teachers must constantly ask themselves what their learners would cull from the lessons as the representational language could trigger in students a few minutes enjoyment to a change in student perceptions of the language, the text and even the world” (MacRae, 1991, p. 24).

Parkinson and Thomas (2000) argue that it is better to allow students to discover and express their perceptions on texts or “make guesses and confirm them later” (p. 125).

In sum, learner-centred pedagogy advocates an orientation that requires a shift in orientation from the teacher as the main source of knowledge to student empowerment and autonomy. Students should be actively involved in literature-based tasks so that they would be able to hone their responses and perceptions about texts and illustrate their understanding of literature through creative and innovative means.

2.3.2 Rosenblatt’s Reader Response Theory

Response can be defined as “a change, feeling, or movement caused by a stimulus or influence” and a reaction is “an immediate or first response (Oxford Reference Dictionary, 1990, p. 54). However, I think both terms are not interchangeable in the study of literature as response involves active mental processing and reflection before articulating a reply while reaction is a spontaneous answer. Most students stop at the reaction level in their reading of texts and rely on their teachers or guide books to furnish appropriate responses which are then regurgitated during examinations.
Rosenblatt's reader response theory explicates the importance of developing student responses to literature. She underscores the importance of foregrounding learners experience with texts to enhance their understanding of literature. Rosenblatt also makes a distinction between efferent reading and aesthetic reading of books. Efferent reading focuses on meaning getting from texts while in aesthetic reading, the reader concentrates on the lived through experience of the reading event. She asserts "our eyes must be directed toward that dynamic interaction between the work of art and the personality of the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1970, p. 10). The meaningful dialogue with texts would lead to an "enlargement of the student's understanding of human life which leads to increased esthetic sensitivity makes possible more fruitful human insights from literature" (p. 273). It highlights the importance of students grappling with texts, eliciting meaning from texts independently and forging links between texts and life. It also invites students to experience both the referential language as well as the representational language especially the former which would enable them to savour the aesthetic dimension of texts.

Bushman and Bushman (1997) note that Rosenblatt's theory would enable students to perceive literature as a subject that "when fully developed promotes personal growth and in the process aids students in making their own knowledge" (p.48). Students who are scaffolded effectively by teachers in their transactions with texts would be able to utilise the skills learnt to grapple with other texts and become lifelong consumers and producers of literary texts. She also reiterates the importance of student-centred activities as she argues "the really important things in the education of youth cannot be taught in the formal didactic manner, they are things which are experienced, absorbed, accepted, incorporated in the personality through emotional and esthetic experiences" (p. 27).
This ability would help them to translate their reading into oral and visual performances that demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of texts cogently. As Parkinson and Thomas (2000) assert, “the response is individual and creative . . . as it incorporates the ability to doing something active with it, creating another text perhaps even creating the original text” (p. 155).

In sum, the Rosenblatt’ theory “privileges individual readers’ unique responses” (Nelson & Calfee, 1998, p. 11). It has succeeded in making an impact on approaches to reading literary works as learners are empowered and encouraged to articulate their responses to texts. It motivates students to take ownership of texts and be actively involved in the meaning making process. It enables them to peruse texts on a continuum ranging from efferent information getting stance to the more interesting and challenging aesthetic stance independently with minimal reliance on teachers’ correct answers. It would transform the classroom into a vibrant area filled with rich, interesting, unique interactions between students and teacher. This theory suggests that students transactions with texts could be the springboard for them to appreciate literary texts by encouraging them to delve into the more sophisticated dimensions of reader response detailed by Wilhelm (1997) in his study as the evocative, connective and reflective dimensions. Frey (1997) maintains that a reader response approach to the study of literary works especially Shakespeare’s plays would nurture a “close and caring engagement” (p. 99) with texts read as students act out a text, they obtain a clearer perception of the metre and rhythm of the language and the rich nuances of the human voice and are driven to explore tone, mood and meanings in the texts.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to implement strategies to encourage students to articulate responses to texts, share these responses with peers which in turn would promote
involvement, appreciation and a sense of ownership of literary texts and experiences generated by them.

2.4 Performance and Literature Teaching and Learning

Performance is an activity that incorporates several elements including the play text, costumes, lighting, props, music, rehearsals, actors, directors and audience. Its main aim is to bring alive a text and to allow individuals to unleash their creativity. Oddey (1994) defines it as a process that "reflects a group's perceptions, and interpretations as members make sense of their dreams, intuitions, experiences, as well as the social and cultural context in the shaping of a presentation". Barranger (1995) perceives it as an experience that "that engages us in an active construction of meaning in regard to human experience" (p 223). It helps us "to discover things about ourselves and our world by seeing them through others' eyes"( p. 135).

2.4.1 Performance and the Literature classroom

In most schools, performance is an out-of-class activity conducted as part of the co-curricular programme. In many literature classes, performance of texts is a rarity as most teachers resort to reading the text followed by a line-by-line analysis or the dictation of notes on the text to the students. Most literary texts especially plays are written to be performed and yet this activity is hardly explored in literature classes.

Parkinson and Thomas (2000) argue that even with weak learners "some kind of performance like standing up or moving a few chairs can contribute to understanding and general language improvement. During subsequent lessons, "the boundaries can be pushed a little further" (p 125). Similarly, competent students would also benefit as "they can be invited to explore their own possible interpretations before considering others" (p 133). This highlights the notion that performance in class can be carried out minus music and costumes.
but with the clever utilisation of students’ voices, and appropriate movement to help them explore the multiple voices, complexities and levels of meaning nested in the texts. This activity could help trigger as well as build on their initial responses to texts.

Performance may also enable students to enter into texts by triggering their imagination and senses as they grapple with the texts. They can collaborate with their peers to explore different ways of presenting the texts visually, invest emotions and gestures of characters that are appropriate in order to bring the texts alive. Even staging a few selected episodes in the texts may persuade students to tackle the whole text and also enable them to respond to the texts for knowledge and for pleasure.

2.4.2 Using Performance To Teach Literature

The main purpose of performance-based pedagogy argues Styan (1997) is to “turn a dead classroom into a seeing and hearing place, a living theatre” (p. 3). This highlights the notion that students should be actively involved in using their senses, intellect and emotions in responding to literature. Performance in-the-classroom and out-of-the classroom can be played out in a variety of ways. The activities include drama, choral speaking and group discussion. They may be used to help students interrogate texts actively and demonstrate their understanding and appreciation of texts before their classmates or a larger audience.

2.4.2.1 Drama

“Drama is not made of words alone but of sights and sounds and stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses” (Styan, 1975, p. 122). This suggests that drama requires not just an interpretation of the text but also the performers’ gestures, movement, and holistic involvement with it. It does not lend itself to a passive reading in class but requires students to think and express their views about a scene or issue in the text. As Brown (1989) asserts it is a feasible classroom activity as it “involves pupil participation...
and [a] wide scope for discussion” (p. 30). All students are involved in the activity as performers or the audience. The performers recreate the text based on their interpretation of it while the audience utilise their imagination and senses to compare the performance with their own imaginative versions of the text.

Sithamparam (1993) reveals that students may encounter difficulties in comprehending drama as they may be unable to visualise the setting, identify the physical appearance, social position, attitudes, beliefs of characters by merely perusing the texts. The learners may also flounder if the plays are culturally alien. The literary devices may also pose problems for students. She argues that a scaffolding approach that breaks the play into manageable chunks would help students in their meaning making with texts as they work together to elicit the storyline. Schechner (1977) concurs that performance of plays allows students to deconstruct and reconstruct the play text, which in turn encourages them to visualise, vocalise actual scenes, actions, interpret meaning, depict apt facial expressions and walk in the shoes of the characters. Meaning making and responses to texts become more reflexive and meaningful as students enjoy taking ownership of the presentation. Teachers can function as facilitators to help learners in putting together their presentation as well as help shape their responses to plays. Performance would also serve as an activity to break the monotony of teacher explication activity. Sithamparam (1993) asserts however that “the greatest challenge to literature teachers is to bring the text alive through dramatization” (p.10). However, Styan (1997) assures us that using performance in class is invaluable as “it increases the intellectual commitment” of the students as all of them, the participants and the audience are “involved in the same effort with the same material” (p 62). Giese’s (1997) study revealed that the use of performance as well as video and film versions of texts combined
with written responses to texts enabled students to obtain a better understanding of texts through “the fluidity of meaning” (p. 175) on the page and the stage.

2.4.2.2 Choral Speaking

Choral speaking is an interesting performance that melds drama and poetry. The entire class comprising both good and weak learners can participate in this activity as the good speakers can provide assistance in correct pronunciation and intonation while poor learners can be spared the embarrassment of being singled out for errors.

It is an enjoyable way of exploring literary texts as learners discuss the visual, aural and kinetic ways of mesmerising their audience with their performance. It also entails collaboration as learners discuss, rehearse the text and in the process build team spirit. Rehearsing the texts allows them to appreciate the need to synchronise their voices, recite solo lines for dramatic effect and also to appreciate the rhythm and rhyme of speech and poetry. Kinetic reinforcement including apt movements and facial expression inject excitement and interest in the performance. Choral speaking motivates students to respond to texts in a positive and enjoyable manner and helps them overcome their inhibitions and fear of performing before an audience. Van Oort (2000) asserts that choral speaking is a “tremendous memory support and the sounds will reverberate long after the last text has been recited and will be remembered in a better way” (p. 2). Students would eagerly commit the text and their performance to memory with little difficulty as they are fully involved in the entire process from meaning making to the staging it while “enjoying the playfulness and power of language through poetry” (Hadaway, Vardell & Young, 2000, p. 804). A study by Pierce (1997) who adapted choral speaking techniques to teach Shakespearean sonnets showed that it enables students to understand the dramatic voice as well as discover the richness of language and sounds nested in poems.
2.4.2.3 *Group Work*

Group work allows students to explicate their responses to texts with their peers in a friendly and less daunting manner. Performance is involved as they have to move their seats and form small groups in order to discuss their text-based tasks. Students would feel less inhibited in seeking clarification about difficulties encountered in comprehending the texts.

This activity promotes learner autonomy and reduces dependence on teachers as main sources of knowledge. It also relieves boredom in lessons as it offers an alternative to teacher-centred explication of texts. Students can experiment with different learning styles, test their responses to texts with their peers and learn at their own pace rather than measure their individual performance against that of a whole class. Peer involvement promotes interaction and meaningful contact between learners as they work together to respond to texts actively (Gates, 1987, p. 3).

Group work promotes better informed responses to texts as discussions followed by presentations motivate students to seek textual clues to substantiate their responses to texts. They also support their peers’ ideas, become aware of the writer’s craft and use of devices as they collaborate “to unravel plot, step into character’s shoes, tussle with universal themes of literature” (Wood, 2000, p 110). Helphinstine’s (1997) study on utilising student groups to teach literature revealed that group discussions enable students to discuss all aspects of texts thoroughly, experiment with reciting lines, facial expressions, body language and movement. All the students get the opportunity to be engaged in animated talk about the texts. It also draws students’ attention to the crucial notion that multiple interpretations of texts are possible “rather than a single correct one” (p. 54).
Conclusion

This chapter discussed the important place of literature in the curriculum. It also examined the learning theories that would impact my study. The teaching and learning of literature was also explored. The chapter also focused on the rationale for the use of performance, the types of performances utilised by teachers and case studies that utilised performance techniques were also detailed in this chapter. This chapter therefore serves to make a case for my study on using performance to develop student response to literature in an ESL class.