CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The introduction of the new Literature in English component adds yet another change to the national English Language Syllabus for secondary schools. The inclusion of literature is thus a recognition of the crucial role it plays in facilitating the development of English Language proficiency amongst Malaysian learners.

This chapter reviews the scholarship which examines issues surrounding curriculum change in the education system in general. It also looks at issues concerning the teaching and learning of literature in the ESL/EFL classroom, specifically the role of literature in the English Language classrooms, the selection of literary texts and finally, the teaching and learning processes in literature-based lessons.

2.1 The Implementation of Change in a National Curriculum

This section firstly examines the definition of educational change and the difference between change and innovation in a national curriculum. After defining change, this section describes the process of dissemination of information that takes place during the implementation stage. It also looks at teacher beliefs and how it affects and influences the implementation of educational change at school and classroom levels. This section finally concludes with a brief historical tracing of the status of literature in the Malaysian English Language Syllabus.
2.1.1 Definition of Change

Nicholls (1983) defines "change" as "an idea, object or practice perceived as new by individuals, which is intended to bring about improvement in relation to desired objectives" (p. 4). This change, Nicholls elaborates, is fundamental in nature, and it is not unplanned and thus deliberate.

Kennedy (1999), however, comments on the general distinction between change and innovation: the former is often perceived as a natural, unplanned occurrence while the latter is planned and deliberate, with goals to achieve in improving a situation. He warns that is difficult to differentiate between unplanned and planned influences as well as between aspects that are natural from those which are deliberate, and concludes that "there is no one truth or theory about change" (p. iv). He further adds that societal change results in changes in education. This relationship is more apparent at the curriculum and syllabus levels, where the cause and effect relationship is more obvious. A change in the classroom caused by changes in the educational curriculum will eventually change the processes of teaching and learning and this could even possibly affect the roles of teachers and learners.

2.1.2 Dissemination of Information

Schon (1971) argues that real change will unavoidably go through "zones of uncertainty" (in Fullan 1991, p. 31), equating the situation to being lost at sea, as one is faced with more information than one can handle. The meaning of change is often initially unclear, and real change (be it desired or not) "represents a serious personal and collective experience, characterized by ambivalence and anxiety" (Fullan, 1991, p.32).
This view was earlier voiced by Gross et. al. (1971), Charters and Pellegrin (1973) and Huberman and Miles (1984), who found that merely telling teachers of the goals for the change and asking them to achieve those goals resulted in confusion, frustration and anxiety. Often, efforts by teachers at change were just abandoned.

Marris (1975) however argues that any change cannot be implemented unless its meaning is shared. Kennedy (1999) reveals that most teachers in his study had no training for the additional roles they were assigned with. Hence, as frontliners and the implementers of the changes, teachers need to be well informed rather than merely being left to interpret those changes. In communicating curriculum changes to teachers so they will be implemented, the cascade model is often used. A top down approach in changing a national system of education is necessary especially if there needs to be some form of uniformity and standardization in teaching and testing across schools (Kennedy, 1996).

In the cascade strategy, trainers (who are teachers themselves) will firstly be trained in the new approaches, content or format. Next, these trainers will conduct orientation courses for selected teacher representatives from various schools. These teachers are then expected to return to their respective schools to conduct training sessions and pass on the information which they have learnt from the trainers to their colleagues (Gilpin, 1997).

The cascade strategy may be economical and time saving, but it is not without shortcomings. Although in theory, the strategy seems to be an effective and efficient strategy in implementing change, it also makes certain assumptions about change (Gilpin, 1997). According to Kennedy (1999), the cascade strategy assumes that information regarding a complex educational change could be relayed in a short time frame using
simple techniques of information. It also assumes that the change agents or trainers (or teacher representatives) who are supposed to explain the changes to their colleagues in schools would have the “skills, experience and status” (p. 1) to do so successfully. The strategy also underestimates the change required in the teachers’ methodological beliefs (Goh, 1999) as well as the classroom constraints (Ajzen, 1988).

2.1.3 Teacher Beliefs

Carless (1994) argues that those in the Curriculum Development Centers or Ministries often underestimate the time required for training, if teachers are to implement the change rather than just accept it. Teacher attitudes and beliefs, the most influential factor to the success of a change, are also often underestimated. Goh (1999) reveals the difficulty in changing the established teaching styles based on “long standing attitudes and beliefs” (p. 13) in the short term. She argues most teachers felt they were merely “passive receivers” of things being “prescribed”, and as a result they were not personally interested in the change (p. 13). Teachers regard proposals for change as “frivolous” (Lortie, 1975; p. 34 in Fullan, 1991): it does not consider issues as boundedness, psychic rewards, time tableing, student disruption and interpersonal support, among others.

Among the factors influencing a teacher’s action is a set of principles formed by his or her experience, behaviour, personality, school practice and educational theory (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Ajzen (1988) describes the three factors which influence people’s actions or intentions as being their attitude towards the action itself, peer group or superior influence and most importantly, the extent to which they believe they have control over the change. This would result in new curriculum materials or technologies
being used without a change in the teacher's teaching approach (Fullan, 1991). Even if the materials are used with the desired approaches, teachers may not fully believe in the conceptions or beliefs behind the educational change. Without a change in teachers' attitudes, educational change will just be superficial and worse, short lived (White, 1988).

House (1974) states that "the personal costs of trying new innovations are high — and seldom is there any indication that innovations are worth the investment" (p. 34, in Fullan, 1991). Teachers are always pressured by "classroom press" (Huberman, 1974, p. 34, in Fullan, 1991). Huberman (1974) identifies this press as the press for immediacy and concreteness, the press for "multidimensionality and simultaneity", the press for adapting to everchanging conditions or unpredictability and finally, the press for personal involvement with students. As a result, teachers often feel critical shortage of time and thus, "teaching decisions are often made on pragmatic trial and error grounds with little change for reflection or thinking through the rationale" (Fullan 1991, p. 33).

In the light of all these, there is a need to find ways of explaining and implementing change that it results in achievable objectives in the classroom (Crandall et al in Fullan, 1991). Kennedy (1999) highlights the need to look at individual teachers and how they react to the change as without analysing the classroom teaching situation, it is impossible to find out why teachers are reacting in such a way towards the change. The failure to diagnose the teacher behaviour will only deter the change agents from taking on the necessary and appropriate steps to remedy the situation.

2.1.4 Changes in the English Language Syllabus in Malaysia

In the past few decades, change has been a very familiar word in discussions on
the Malaysian National Curriculum especially as far as English Language is concerned. In the 80's, the move from the structural syllabus to a communicative one was made to prepare students for real life communication using the English Language. However, there was a growing awareness for the need to inculcate better reading habits among learners in the late 80's with the deterioration of the standard of English among them. As a result, with the introduction of the New Integrated Secondary Curriculum in 1989, literature was introduced into the English Language classroom in the form of Class Readers. Unfortunately, the programme died a natural death due to time constraints, texts' unsuitability and other factors. The integration of the Literature in English Component in 2000 to replace the Class Readers is the latest in the line of changes to date in the English Language Syllabus. Hence, this study was perceived crucial as it examined the day-to-day processes in two Literature in English classes, comprising students of different abilities coming from various social backgrounds.

2.2 The Role of Literature in the English Language Classroom

Rosl Talif (1992) states that literature was once affiliated to high status as it was believed that it could only be appreciated by an elite few, gifted with the talent to decipher its hidden meaning. Hence, literature was put on the pedestal. However, the advancement of the structural and communicative approaches perceived the use of literature in fostering language learning as irrelevant (Leki, 1986). It was abandoned as it was perceived as a confusing activity when used in a second language learning classroom (Durant & Fabb, 1990).

Today, the importance of literature and the value of its contribution in the English
Language classroom has been realised. Among the most common arguments for the inclusion of literature in language learning are that it is believed to greatly promote the personal and more importantly the language development of the ESL learners. This section thus describes the importance of literature towards the holistic development of the whole person in different facets. To be more specific, this section examines the contribution literature makes to the reader’s personal development, the development of the reader’s knowledge of the world and finally, the linguistic development of the reader.

2.2.1 Literature and Personal Development

According to Hill (1986), the motivation to read is simply the most important justification for literature to be included in the English Language Syllabus because as the students are motivated to read more extensively, they will develop into more independent readers. Literature also has positive effects on students’ behaviour and their ability to work in other areas adds Protherough (1989), who believes that literature “subtly changes the person that we are” (p. 20). Literature helps to develop students cognitively and affectively as its issue complexity engages its readers linguistically, emotionally and intellectually (Ibsen, 1990). Hence, it has the power to promote students’ “personal growth” (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 3) as it exposes them to a range of emotional experiences and expressions through its central human issues, universal values and validity. Through this, it teaches students about human values as well as helps internalise these values in them (Knapton & Evans, 1976).

Literature also provides a realistic experience involving themes, events and characters to which students can relate to (Basturkmen, 1990). This, together with the
ended nature of the texts’ interpretation, will engage students in meaningful
unciation as they discuss the texts where the students will be provoked to think
ily. As a result, their thinking skills will be developed, their imagination stimulated
ir their emotional awareness increased (Lazar, 1993).

Literature and Knowledge of the World

Carter & Long (1991) argue that through literature, students could be exposed to
target language’s traditions, ways of life and even history as literature is a rich
ct of culture. Literature also helps students to understand, emphasize and actively
art in the target language culture (Stern, 1987). These exposures give students the
unity to compare foreign cultures with their own and thus would encourage them
preciate their own culture. Students therefore are sensitised to a diversity of beliefs,
s, traditions and living practices through the literary text. English literary texts
other places and cultures thus enrich students’ knowledge of the world around them
y learn through their reading experience.

Literature and Language Development

The relationship between literature and language learning is perhaps best
ded by Widdowson (1985). He stresses that the study of literature and language
ot be separated because literature is actually language in use. Hence, the study of
ure is essentially the study of language. Although it is a general assumption that
nts must be equipped with enough linguistic competencies in order to interpret a
ry text (O’Sullivan, 1991), linguistic difficulties are not a barrier to reading (Ibsen,
1990). As readers usually read literature to enjoy a good story, they will be motivated to read on irregardless of the linguistic barrier as their curiosity have been aroused.

Literature also helps to develop students' interpretive abilities (Lazar, 1993). As they meet a figurative expression which has no direct dictionary translation, the students could be encouraged to discuss their own interpretation of the expression, based on the evidence embedded in the text. An interaction between the reader and the writer, mediated by the text, takes place in the reading of a literary text (Widdowson, 1978). To make sense of what is conveyed, the reader must be sensitive to the hidden hints and clues. As the reader is less proficient in the language used by the text, the reading process may become a more challenging psycholinguistic guessing game (Goodman, 1967).

According to Sithamparam (1990), poetry strengthens the need for language awareness. A poem's language patterns, through its rhyme, rhythm, line length and sentence structure will be internalised unconsciously by the students as they recite the poem repeatedly. The students will also internalise a poem's vocabulary, structure and intonation unconsciously as they read a poem aloud (Lazar, 1993). Thus, the more they read, the more their language proficiency would be improved. This internalisation of the target language's grammar and vocabulary is the result of the rich context that literature provides (Collie & Slater, 1987). "Individual lexical and syntactical items are made more memorable" (p. 5) as the literary text provides the comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). The language's internalisation is also generated by the authenticity of the language used in the text (Hill, 1983). Literary texts present an authentic use of the target language instead of just including samples of everyday English through authentic materials such as
and letters. As a result, the text provides a more meaningful learning experience for students (Ibsen, 1990). Since the literary texts present authentic and undistorted re, it can also be used to complement other authentic teaching materials in the classroom (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Apart from improving students’ language proficiency, literature also helps to improve students’ writing (Gwin, 1990). This is achieved through exposing the literature to coherent and expert writing which unconsciously guides them to write well. The exposure to different writing styles of various authors could also eventually lead students to unconsciously develop their personal writing styles (Chin, 1989).

The many wonders of literature in helping to develop the English Language proficiency of a second language learner is expressed by Mahmud (1989). He writes, “the use of literary texts in the language classroom, students will acquire "a native competence in English, express their ideas as in good English, learn the features of English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, concisely and become more fluent in English." (p. 25).

The Criteria for Text Selection

The criteria for the selection of a literary text are among the most important influencing factors to the success or failure of any literature programme in school. Platt (1985) highlights that “both the text and reader must be considered if one to understand the factors that either permit or block the reader’s attention to the litres of the text or the organisation or synthesis of the reader’s responses to the
patterns of words” (p. 36). This section presents arguments regarding the most common criteria that are perceived crucial in selecting a reading text, namely the learners’ interests, their background knowledge and their language proficiency.

2.3.1 Learners’ Interests and the Reading Text

Coady (1979) suggests that the selected text must be of the students’ interest so as to capture their attention and to further encourage them to read on, regardless the linguistic difficulties. The selected texts thus must be viewed from the students’ perspectives (Basturkmen, 1990) as students have actually been “put off reading” by being forced into reading texts they discovered “too dull, difficult or babyish” (Protherough 1989, p. 21). Students’ mental maturity are determined by their age and thus, age is among the basic factors that must be considered as it influences the students’ interests (Kellerman, 1981). Students’ interests are also influenced by their cognitive development because this determines their understanding of the text’s significance and their sensitivity in responding to it (Icoz, 1992).

Basturkmen (1990) advises teachers to select themes which are more familiar universally so their students have no problem in relating to it. According to the Bullock Report (1975), children at the beginning stage in reading should be introduced to fantasy, fairy and folk tales, while at upper levels, any books which interests them could be introduced. These tales and stories on mystery and adventure, have universal appeal and are evergreen (Kellerman, 1981). Hill (1986) suggests that apart from adventure stories, detective stories and science fiction attract readers of all ages.

Teachers must also consider the need for a more balanced selection to cater for
readers with various interests (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990). A wider range of genres and themes will cater for the interests of a larger number of individuals in the classroom. Protherough (1989) expresses the crucial need for a literature programme to be flexible for modifications “in the light of (students’) changing needs and interests” (p. 172), while being firm enough to “exemplify some identifiable pattern” at the students’ level.

2.3.2 Learners’ Background Knowledge and the Reading Text

The familiarity of the text to students’ background knowledge is another factor which must be considered in selecting a text. Hedge (1987) defines background knowledge as general knowledge or students’ understanding of the world, subject specific knowledge or their background knowledge on specific subjects which assist them in reading, and cultural knowledge which enable students to identify themselves with the situation or characters in presented in the text.

According to Hirvela and Boyle (1988), a text to which the students can relate to in terms of their background knowledge and experience makes a much more interesting read than one that is unfamiliar and unrelated. Apart from generating students’ interests, content familiarity also contributes to meaningful reading. This is because readers interpret what they read based on their own schemata (Rumelhart, 1980) and thus they comprehend better when they have prior knowledge on the events, people or feelings that they are reading. Successful reading thus greatly depends on a successful match between the students’ background knowledge and the text’s content (Nuttal, 1982). Not only that, the reading text and how it relates to the students’ existing prior knowledge actually influence students’ motivation to read (Hedge, 1987).
Rosenblatt (1985), in her description of the relation between the students' lives and the text's content, reveals how "the marks on a page becomes a text by virtue of its particular relation with the reader, who in turn is a reader by virtue of his relation to the text (as) the reader brings to the text a network of past experiences in literature and in life" (p. 35). During this aesthetic transaction (Rosenblatt, 1985) that takes place in reading, characters and events are realised as familiar people and places, where motives are "tested by 'how would I feel' or 'what would I do?'" (Protherough, 1989, p. 21).

2.3.3 Language and the Reading Text

Many teachers believe that the selected text which is to be used for a literature programme should present students with only the best English (Nicholson, 1989). They also believe that until their students have gained the necessary vocabulary and reading skills, they will not be able to enjoy reading the text. How much a text can increase students' vocabulary is among the most common criteria looked at in selecting reading texts after how much it can enrich students' experience and stimulate their intellectual development (Koh, 1990).

However, giving too much weight on linguistic difficulties during text selection may actually mislead teachers into having a much lower expectation than they should on their students' success (Hedge, 1987). Too much emphasis on language difficulty in selecting a text is also very irrelevant (Flyod & Carrell, 1987) as neither elementary nor intermediate students can be expected to read major prose work (Carter & Long, 1991). The mastery of decoding skills is not as influential as learners' background knowledge in
aining successful reading (Brock, 1990). Thus, teachers should be more concerned
utural familiarity than language complexity (Flyod & Carrell, 1987).

Krashen and Terrel (1983) reveals that students can actually read beyond their
lt lexical, syntactic and semantic levels if they are truly intrigued by what they have
given to read. Contextual clues enable the students to read at the level of 'i+1'
en, 1982) and thus help students in understanding and interpreting the meaning in
xt. Hence, a reading text should consist unfamiliar words or new meaning to
ar words so as to strike a “balance between a challenging and a frustrating reading
Hedge, 1987, p. 34). This is crucial in developing students’ strategies in reading.

Hill (1986) warns that finding a suitable literary text as an introduction to fresh
ure students can be challenging since they may feel they could do without the
y English they perceived as irrelevant and unrelated to their daily communication.
roduction of a lengthy literary to first time readers of literature may also result in
ible reactions (Collie & Slater, 1987). Kachru in Brumfit and Carter (1986) and
: (1990) highlight that using a non-native English literary text may actually aid in
nts’ understanding as it consists an element of the culture they are familiar to.
, as discussed in the earlier section, this promotes successful reading as students
be able to relate to what they are reading in contrast with native English literary texts
culturally foreign setting (Hill 1986, Carrell & Eisterhold 1987, Krashen 1982).
from promoting reading, local works help in motivating the students in reading as
an identify themselves with the characters, issues and events in the text (Edwin,
). Goh (1989) points out that using localised literary texts may also promote a sense
ional cultural identity and it can help to economise precious time as teachers need
not spend too much time in explaining the text's background (Hill, 1986).

There is also the fear that non-native literary text may actually promote the use of sub-standard and colloquial English among students. However, according to Ismail Said Talib (1992), this non-native variety can actually help to develop students' communicative ability if the colloquial English has been widely accepted and used.

The use of native English literary texts is, however, not without its merits. White (1975) encourages the use of such texts so as to widen students' knowledge via the exposure to foreign cultures and fresh experiences. Hence, the bilingual students will also be bicultural. It would furthermore be very rewarding for the students as they compare and contrast the problems and conflicts faced by various cultures (Hill, 1986).

Basturkmen (1990) suggests selecting contemporary texts with everyday setting as this will be more familiar to students simply because including classical literary text in a literature programme may be problematic due to its complicated and outdated language (Hill, 1986). Icoz (1992) however, warns that though contemporary works may be linguistically and lexically easier, they also often involve themes and symbols which are mostly too difficult to understand or decipher.

Teachers should broaden their perspectives in selecting texts for literature programmes. Instead of the traditional genres of prose, poetry and drama, non-literary genres such as diary entries, autobiographies and media articles should also be considered (Hill, 1986).

2.4 The Teaching and Learning of Literature

According to Brown (1987), the traditional focus on "the author of the text, the
whole text and nothing but the text” (p. 94) used to dominate the teaching of literature. Salasar (1992) however reveals that time has not changed literature lessons. He observes that they still consist of boring, teacher-centered lectures lacking of activities whereby the “teacher, the bearer of the right answers, imposed ideas to a class of passive, lifeless students”. Students are still regarded as containers that need to be topped up with knowledge by the expert, the teacher (Icoz, 1992).

This section focuses on the processes that take place in the reading of literature before examining the teacher’s role in the teaching and learning of literature. To end with, this section looks at some proposed student-centered activities which are suggested to be used for the purposes of exploiting the literary text in the language classroom.

2.4.1 The Reading of Literature

In the present day, the main emphasis of reading programmes should be to discover the factor that motivates, and demotivates, schoolchildren to read and to create policies and environment that contribute to them, stresses Protherough (1989). He also argues for the necessity to shift teachers’ attention from “theorising about what fiction is to what fiction does” (p. 18) and urges teachers to analyse and respond to their students, the reading process and the students’ responses to what they have read. There is a need to find a balance between the extreme objective model, where the teacher determines the right and wrong interpretation from passive recipients, and the extreme subjective model, where the text has no meaning and it is all a matter of opinion (Protherough, 1989). Hence, the readings of a literary text should ideally concentrate on “transaction, recreation, participation (and) interaction” (p. 26) between the students and the text.
Moody in Brumfit (1983) defines that while the extrinsic appreciation involves what is implicit in a text and focuses on what the reader brings to the interpretation of the text, the extrinsic appreciation involves what is made explicit, or what fresh information readers could extricate and discover in a text. In practice, he concludes, the process of reading is likely to move backwards and forwards between the two elements above. Reading is also a two way process where there is a dialogue taking place between the reader and the text during the process (Ibsen, 1990). During this aesthetic experience, the reader make their own interpretation of what is read based on their own personal history, experience and expression. As described by Rosenblatt (1985), “in the aesthetic transaction, the reader’s attention is focussed on what he is living through during the reading event. He is attending both to what the verbal signs designate and to the qualitative overtones of the ideas, images, situations and characters that he is evoking under guidance of the text.” (p. 38). She thus urges teachers to keep the readers aesthetic transaction central in teaching and learning so as to.

Since the transaction described above is what is involved or take place during the reading of a literary text, it thus has great implications on the teaching and learning of literature. In particular, it greatly influences the role of the teacher as well as the type of activities accompanying the teaching and learning of literature in the language classroom.

2.4.2 The Teacher’s Role

As a result of the aesthetic transaction, students will understand and interpret readings in their own way (Gajdusek, 1988). Due to the shift of focus from the text to the reader in teaching reading, teachers should stop asking students to search for some
“magical formula” (Brown & Gifford, 1989, p. 107) to the meaning of the text they read. Instead, teachers should raise students’ consciousness towards the manipulation of language by writers in expressing their thoughts and feelings so that students would be encouraged to be more aware of the power of words. The teacher’s knowledge is an asset that should only be shared together with the students’ interpretation and it is also crucial for the teacher to find a common interpretation of the text so that it can be shared by everyone in the class (Ibsen, 1990). In short, the teacher’s role should merely be that of a facilitator and not of an authoritarian (Durant & Fabb, 1990).

2.4.3 Student-Centered Activities

Ibsen (1990) reveals that student-centered and task based activities are central in the new methodology of the literature classroom. Pair and group work as well as projects are among the meaningful activities that could be carried out in promoting effective teaching and learning. By giving their students more “airspace” (Brown, 1987, p. 94), active student-centered class participation will also help their students to develop into more independent readers. Authentic literary tasks, such as giving students an authentic voice and asking them to write using that voice, directly invite students to reveal and express their deepest thoughts and feelings in a meaningful situation (Oster, 1989). This is something which may not be easy to do in the normal writing class.

Greenwood (1988) advises teachers to spend more time in the pre-reading stage during which, students’ curiosity towards the text, its theme, characters, setting and plot should be exploited and stimulated to their fullest so as to motivate them to read on. Among the activities suggested are asking students to hypothesize after giving them a
peek at sections of the text. Teachers are however asked not to intervene at this stage as it may make their students lose interests. Collie and Slater (1987) adds that this pre-reading stage is especially crucial for beginners of literature who need the extra encouragement and motivation prior to their first meeting with the text. As for while-reading activities, teachers are advised to divide the text into sections to allow for a full exploration of the entire text (Collie & Slater, 1987). Home reading assignments must also be given to students apart from in-class activities. This is crucial in order to maintain their interests, motivation and “reading momentum” (Greenwood, 1988, p. 59) in between the last and the next literature lessons.

To examine and reinforce what has been read, post-reading activities must be carried out after reading the entire text (Greenwood, 1988). This is also the stage whereby students’ awareness, interests and appreciation of literature could be further exploited. Activities at this stage should bridge the text and the real world where students are expected to go beyond the text and apply what they have learnt to the real world (Edwin, 1992). These activities will also help to sustain students’ interests in the text and will further encourage them to read other works of literature.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has defined what is meant and involved in educational change, particularly the process of disseminating information regarding the change as well as the factors influencing teachers and the problems they face in implementing the change. The important contribution that literature makes to the holistic development of the individual has also been examined, namely to the personal and linguistic development of the learner
as well as to the development of his or her knowledge of the world. This chapter has also discussed the criteria influencing the selection of a literary text, which include learners’ interests, their background knowledge in relation to the text and their language proficiency. These issues form the backdrop against which the present study was conducted. Finally, this chapter focuses on the actual process of literature teaching and learning, in particular the reading of a literary text, the teacher’s role and the suggested activities in the literature classroom, which are the focus of the study.

This study was thus set to probe into the beliefs, thinking and practice of two English Language teachers teaching Form 1 classes, as well their students. It investigates their feelings and perceptions towards the latest change in the Form 1 English Language Syllabus, which is the introduction of the Literature in English component. Apart from examining the participants’ responses to the programme and the texts used, I also sought to capture the actual goings-on in the processes of teaching and learning of literature, through long-term participant observation of the two classes. My observations of the classes provided first-hand experience critical in developing a clearer picture of actual classroom events in the implementation of the Literature in English component in the Malaysian education. It is thus hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to the improvement of the present or future literature-based ESL programmes.