LEARNERS’ PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE KBSM ENGLISH LITERATURE COMPONENT.

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LEARNERS’ PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE
KBSM ENGLISH LITERATURE COMPONENT

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requirements for the award of the degree of
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My utmost thanks to God for providing me strength and enabling me to successfully complete this project paper. A number of people have been instrumental in assisting my efforts to complete this project paper, and they certainly deserve my thanks. Firstly, my sincere thanks to my supervisor for this project, En. Abdullah bin Mohd Nawi, for his continuous support, encouragement guidance and input in helping me complete this project. Secondly, I wish to express my gratitude to my friends, especially Liew Hui Choo and Nurul Ros Adira, as well as my coursemates who have helped me in some way or other, such as contributing ideas and sharing literature. I also wish to express my appreciation for the support and prayers of my church friends, and for their concern throughout my the tedious moments of working on this project. Not to be left out, I also wish to thank every other individual/party who has played some role in the process of carrying out this research, whether directly or indirectly. Your input, contribution and feedback are certainly not forgotten.
ABSTRACT

This study explores learners’ perceptions towards the KBSM English Literature component for upper secondary. The focus of this study is on learners’ perspectives and attitudes towards the component, their perspectives towards their teachers’ teaching of the component, as well as teachers’ perspectives towards the component. Two groups of learners were involved, namely current learners and ex-learners. 50 students from a secondary school in Skudai and 50 undergraduates of the Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, as well as 4 upper-secondary English teachers contributed to the findings of this study. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for the collection of data. Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis of data, specifically in the form of mean. Data obtained from current learners were compared to the data obtained from ex-learners. On the whole, the results of this study showed marginal differences between the two groups of learners surveyed.
ABSTRAK

Projek ini mengkaji persepsi pelajar-pelajar terhadap Komponen Sastera Bahasa Inggeris KBSM untuk tahap menengah atas. Tumpuan kajian ini adalah dari segi perspektif dan sikap pelajar terhadap Komponen Sastera, perspektif pelajar terhadap pengajaran komponen tersebut oleh guru mereka, serta perspektif guru terhadap komponen tersebut. Kajian ini melibatkan 2 kumpulan pelajar, iaitu pelajar menengah atas semasa dan bekas pelajar. Seramai 50 pelajar dari sebuah sekolah di Skudai dan 50 pelajar dari Fakulti Pendidikan Universiti Teknologi Malaysia serta 4 orang guru Bahasa Inggeris menengah atas telah menjadi responden untuk kajian ini. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk kajian ini adalah soal selidik. Data telah dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan debentangkan dalam bentuk min. Data yang diperoleh dari pelajar semasa dibandingkan dengan data dari bekas pelajar. Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini menunjukkan perbezaan yang kecil antara kedua-dua kumpulan pelajar tersebut.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter comprises of the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, as well as its objectives, research questions, significance, scope, limitations, and definitions of terms used.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Literature component was introduced as part of the KBSM English Language syllabus in the year 2000\textsuperscript{1}. It is not taught as a subject by itself, but as part of the English language syllabus during English lessons in schools. Prior to this, Literature in English was an elective subject at the upper secondary level (Rosli Talif, 1995). Back then, its study was limited to the elite urban students who had exceptional mastery of the English language. Even though it was studied mostly for examination purposes, it had a significant role in language study. This situation perhaps put those who had
studied Literature in English at some advantage in terms of language input, while others were lacking in both the literary background and the necessary language skills.

During the time when Literature in English was an elective, it could be presumed that students who opted to study it comprised those who had genuine interest in the subject, or at least had some degree of interest or desire to study it. But at present, all secondary students throughout the country are required to study the Literature component, regardless of their level of proficiency, or even whether they have any interest towards it. As such, it can be questioned as to whether or not every learner is able to achieve the intended learning outcomes, before even questioning whether or not they enjoy learning it.

Several years have passed since the addition of the Literature component into the KBSM English Language syllabus. The teaching and learning situation of this component may have progressed over this period of time, as current learners may hold different perceptions towards the Literature component compared to that of learners back in 2000.

1.2 **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Students in Malaysia have varying levels of proficiency in English. Some students excel in English, while others face difficulty in their efforts to master the language. Even before the Literature component was introduced, the lack of proficiency among students in Malaysia was already a worrying issue to the Ministry of Education.

While it is common to find big numbers of students conversing fluently in English in schools in big cities like Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru, there is
still a large majority of learners throughout the country having poor command of English, and they can hardly utter proper sentences in English. Teachers at that time were concerned about the component becoming an added burden in English language learning. There was a question on whether this component would actually benefit students in Malaysia on the whole, considering the status quo of that time. A few students, for instance, might have a personal liking towards literature, while many others may study it just ‘for the sake of the examination’.

One of the underlying issues in the implementation of this component is the suitability of the component for Malaysian students. A substantial percentage of the texts selected are texts authored by foreign writers. Students throughout Malaysia have diverse knowledge about literary works, whereby some students have never been exposed to foreign literary works, while others may be familiar with some foreign literary pieces. For students who have little or no knowledge or exposure to foreign settings and cultural background that appear in the texts, it may be nearly impossible to clearly visualize what is being portrayed, thus hampering their ability appreciate the literary works.

Another issue that some people might have been worried about was the lack of teachers who were competent enough to teach Literature. The situation was that not all the existing English teachers were trained to teach literature, and some had never even studied Literature before. Hence, their teachers’ ability to teach the component effectively comes into question. Other problems on the part of teachers could be in terms of the amount of time to utilize to teach the component, considering that the component is integrated as part of the English Language syllabus, and that it is taught during English lessons. Lazar (1994) notes,

“… many teachers often have very limited time in which to complete a syllabus, and consider including literary texts in a lesson an unnecessary and time wasting distraction, while students themselves frequently lack the interest and motivation to work with such texts.”
1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Now that the Literature component has been in the system for about seven years, there may be some interest in finding out how this component has benefited or affected students. People may be interested to know what current learners and ex-learners (i.e. people who had gone through the system) themselves think regarding the component. It can generally be observed that in recent times, there had not been publicized reports regarding shortcomings or weaknesses in the component or the teaching of the component. While we have not heard reports about shortcomings or weaknesses in the component or the teaching of the component in recent times, this study intends to provide more in-depth information on current learners’ and ex-learners’ perceptions towards the Literature component, current and ex-learners’ perceptions towards their teachers’ teaching of the component, as well as current and ex-learners’ attitudes towards the component.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. a) to compare the perspectives of current learners and ex-learners towards the Literature component.

   b) to compare the attitudes (i.e. Literature for pleasure, Literature for exam) of current learners and ex-learners towards the Literature component.
2. to compare current learners’ and ex-learners’ perspectives of their teachers’
teaching of the Literature component.

3. to investigate teachers’ perspectives towards the Literature component.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) a) What are the perspectives of current learners and ex-learners towards the
Literature component and do they differ?

b) What are attitudes of current learners and ex-learners towards the Literature
component and do they differ?

2. What are current learners’ and ex-learners’ perspectives of their teachers’
teaching of the Literature component and how do they differ?

3. What are teachers’ perspectives towards the Literature component?