



Instructional Practices in Teaching Literature: Observations of ESL Classrooms in Malaysia

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Abstract

Literature is an expression of life through the medium of language and in the ESL classroom it is often seen as an authentic means of learning the target language. A literature-enriched curriculum not only helps learners improve their reading and writing skills but more importantly helps them internalise grammar and vocabulary. The many benefits of literature saw the implementation of the Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) programme in all upper primary ESL classrooms in Malaysia two years ago. Using classrooms observations and interviews as research instruments, this paper critically examines the instructional practices of five Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) teachers teaching Year 4 students in the state of Selangor and evaluates the various challenges faced by them in their ESL classrooms. Preliminary findings on the Contemporary Children's Literature programme revealed that teachers spent a lot of time on individual comprehension work with little emphasis given to comprehension instruction and higher order thinking skills. The integration of literary elements in the literature classrooms was also minimal and teachers lacked creativity as far as organising learning tasks were concerned. Nevertheless, the CCL programme offers great potential for English language enhancement skills among students. Policy makers and education leaders also need to take cognizance of related concerns, challenges and issues prevalent in Malaysian ESL classrooms.

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