

Teaching Strategies to Develop Higher Order Thinking Skills in English Literature

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This study aims to identify the teaching strategies to develop higher order thinking skills in English Literature by the ESL teachers. A qualitative approach with a case study design was used for this study. Classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were used to collect data. Three teachers were selected using purposive sampling. The classroom observations and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the questioning techniques used by teachers to teach literature to students with a high proficiency level in English contain more HOTS elements compared to a class with lower proficiency level students. The challenges faced by ESL teachers in teaching HOTS are teachers' negative perception of HOTS, time constraints in preparing for the lesson, and the low language proficiency level of students. The pedagogical implications of this study are that teachers should be given training on how to apply HOTS in their Literature lessons.

Key words: *Higher Order Thinking Skills, ESL teachers, Literature.*

Introduction

The contemporary children's literature program was introduced into English classes in Malaysian primary schools in 2003 with the determination of improving English language



teaching by introducing storybooks or children's literature. According to Mustakim (2014), the literature component in English is intended to enrich the language proficiency of students, and also to create the imaginative part of the language that is and individual response from students on the literary text.

The English language Curriculum Specifications stated that the aim of literature is not only meant to address the interpersonal, informational aesthetic value of learning but also the overall learning of the English language. There are six objectives for learning literature components. One of them is to help in language acquisition and developing the children's awareness on how language works in communication and come into contact with the form of narratives. It is also an effort to reduce the declining levels of achievement in the standard assessment of English proficiency in recent years in primary schools (Basree, 2009). The aims and objectives stated in the Children's Contemporary Literature are to inculcate the reading habit among pupils, enhance pupils' vocabulary and language content and to improve pupils' thinking skills.

It is clearly stated in the objective of teaching literature that enhancing pupils' thinking skills is one of the aims. The main reason for introducing literature to primary school pupils was to enable the pupils to use their prior knowledge to interpret meanings. Pupils' ability to be able to relate their prior knowledge to what is being read develops higher level thinking skills. Abdul Aziz (2017) further claims that in order for a student to attain the higher level of reading, he or she must be able to relay new information to what is known in order to find answers to cognitive questions. Moreover, Sarceni (2003) opined that the nature of a literary text which could be construed in various ways could be used to develop thinking skills.

A recent report published by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE, 2013) revealed that more than sixty percent of 15-year-old Malaysian students who finished lower secondary school performed poorly and achieved low proficiency level in thinking skills of understanding, reasoning and in transferring knowledge and skills learned in classroom for application in the real-life situations. These findings were then compared to 15-year-olds from three different countries namely Hong Kong, Singapore, China and South Korea, the findings showed that the students lag more than three years in schooling. The unfavourable performance of the students as reported by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE, 2013) showed that it is timely to focus and emphasise the importance of calculating thinking skills in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. It is stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint that 'Every child will master a range of important cognitive skills, including critical thinking, reasoning, creative thinking, and innovation' (MOE, 2013). The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) has deliberated and executed several reformations in curriculum and innovation in teaching and learning in order to produce students who are well versed in higher order thinking skills (Yusoff & Che Seman, 2018). Nevertheless, the efforts

put forward by the Ministry of Education were still unattainable (Mohd Koharuddin & Muhamed Fauzi, 2006; Zulkarami, 2011). Additionally, it was reported that the implementation and innovation of higher order thinking skills did not emerge even at a minimal level. The Ministry of Education has taken various efforts to ensure higher order thinking skills are embedded through the curriculum, syllabus, teaching and learning strategies and also the activities in order to nurture the importance of mastering the higher order thinking skills. Not only that, teachers were also trained so that they were able to master higher order thinking skills before they could transfer the skills to their students in the classroom (Rajendran, 1999). The Ministry of Education has made it compulsory for all the teachers just not to understand higher order thinking skills but also train students practically. It is very important for the teachers to understand and master the higher order thinking skills so that they can guide students to employ the knowledge and skills acquired to be able to find new ways and means to solve their daily problems and make appropriate decisions (Rajendran, 2013). Students needs to be taught thinking skills and how these thinking are divided into lower and higher order. In a study conducted by Singh et al., (2018) it showed that teachers had only basic knowledge on Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive processes. Teachers struggled to differentiate between lower and higher order thinking skills (Singh, 2018). Not only that, it was also reported that teachers find it difficult to introduce higher order thinking skills and were unsure how to employ the best teaching and learning strategies (Abdul Halim & Siti Muhibah, 2015). Teachers incompetence in planning and executing suitable techniques, strategies and approaches for teaching higher order thinking impede the implementation of the higher order thinking skills in the classroom context (Singh, 2017). Some studies reported teacher's inability to teach higher order thinking skills and some teachers refused to teach (Najeemah, 2007; Yee, Razali, Mimi, Widad & Tee, 2013); and some teachers expressed low self-efficacy in teaching higher order thinking skills (Rosnani & Suhailah, 2003). Some teachers showed some interest to embed higher order thinking skills in instruction despite having little knowledge and understanding to implement higher order thinking skills (Rosma, Ong, Shakinaz & Wong, 2012).

In today's globalised world, it is very important for students to be equipped with higher order thinking skills so the teaching of higher order thinking skills in classrooms needs to be emphasised (Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025). Higher order thinking skills (HOTS) consists of analysis, synthesis and evaluation stages in Bloom's Taxonomy. It involves the mastery of the previous stages which involve recall, comprehension and application (McDavitt, 1994; as cited in Nagayar, Aziz, Kanniah, 2015). King et al. (2012) stated that higher order thinking skills include critical, logical, reflective and creative thinking. It is usually activated when a person is faced with difficult problems or unacquainted circumstances. According to Abdul Aziz (2017), promoting higher order thinking skills among students requires a lot of planning, preparation, resources and trainings of teachers. It also needs enough support from different quarters of the education community.

In Malaysia, teachers were not sufficiently equipped to teach higher order thinking skills in the classroom despite the fact that teaching of thinking skills is part of the curriculum requirement (Abdul Aziz, 2017). The teaching of higher order thinking skills must be done in the classroom especially in teaching literature. This is because students must be able to think critically and creatively to understand the literary text better and analyse it.

According to Seman, Yusoff and Embong (2017), findings from previous researches showed that most of the students were unable to transfer the knowledge they acquired in the classroom using higher order thinking skills to the context outside the classroom. Higher order thinking skills programs were selected and have been implemented formally in schools in Malaysia for more than ten years and the explicit teaching for thinking skills has been implemented since then (Rajendran, 2002). Rajendran (2002) divulged that a lot of effort has been done to encourage the teaching of higher order thinking skills in Malaysian classrooms such as framing the curriculum and resource materials and training teachers to make the teaching of higher order thinking skills successful. However, initial findings on the Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) discovered that teachers spend a large quantity of time merely on comprehension of literary text and less importance is given to higher order thinking skills (Sidhu, Chan & Kaur, 2010). Even though producing students who are adept in higher order thinking skills is one of the aims in national education, the indication that there is a culture of creativity and innovation in schools at the national level is not present. Based on the observations in Malaysian Literature classrooms, it was recognised that students are not very keen to read literary texts and therefore, teachers have to read the text in the classroom and also prepare a synopsis for the students (Nagayar, Aziz & Kanniah, 2015). The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies used by the teachers in teaching HOTS in order to study the effectiveness of the method used in promoting higher order thinking skills. This study aims to identify the issues and challenges faced by ESL teachers in teaching higher order thinking skills in the literature classroom. It is crucial to explore and understand the problems faced by teachers in order to find solutions to improve how higher order thinking skills are being taught in schools so that the aims set by out by the Ministry of Education can be achieved. The objectives of this study are:

- i) To investigate the higher order thinking skills strategies used by the ESL teachers to teach literature.
- ii) To examine the factors that contribute to the teaching of higher order thinking skills in literature.
- iii) To find out the challenges and problems faced by ESL teachers in teaching English Literature using higher order thinking skills.

The result of this study can provide useful information to teacher educators, curriculum developers and the people who plan and improve the education system. The outcome of this

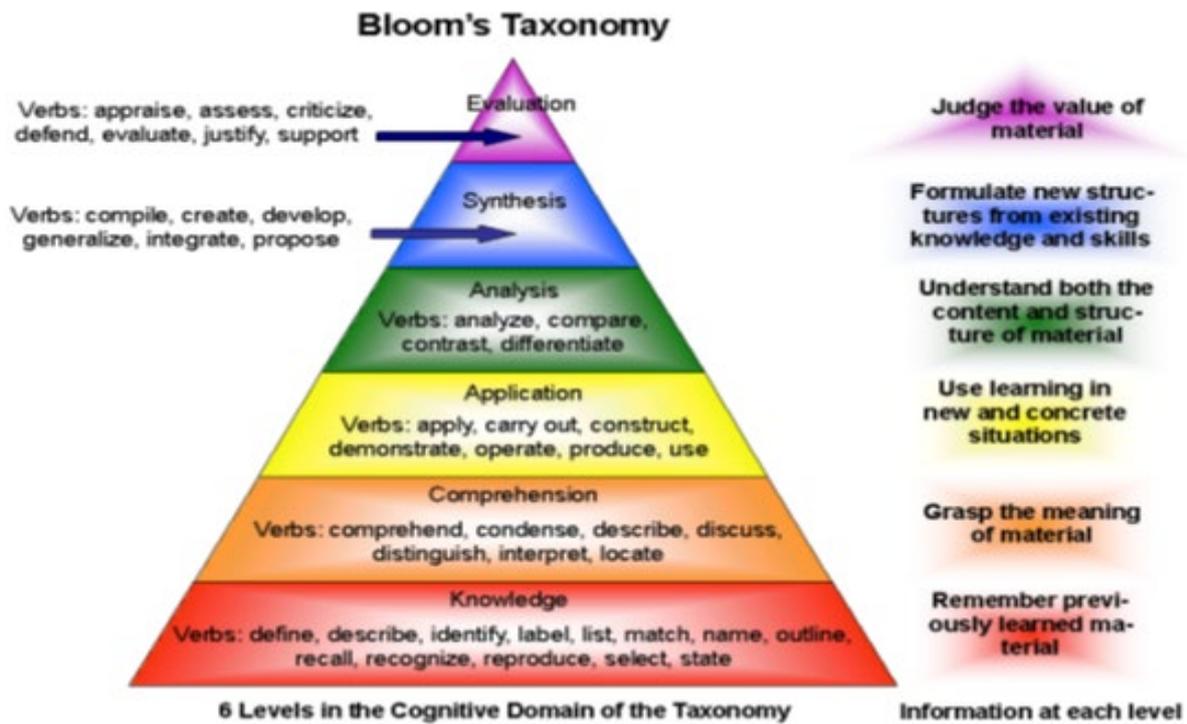


study can benefit the professionals who work in the education field and are looking for answers to the challenges faced by ESL teachers in teaching higher order thinking skills in literature class. Moreover, curriculum developers will be able to use the findings to improve the syllabus and also prepare reference materials for teachers to use in the future. Teacher educators and the Faculty of Education will be able to modify the course in order to produce teachers who are more prepared to teach higher order thinking skills in literature. Furthermore, trainee teachers also can gain benefit from this study as they can be equipped with the knowledge to teach higher order thinking skills in schools later on. It will also be good for the students as they can get advantage from the teaching and learning process conducted by ESL teachers in literature class.

Theoretical Framework

The framework used for this study is the theory of constructivism and Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy for Educational Objectives. The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, known as Bloom's Taxonomy is one of the most renowned theories in teaching and learning. Educators regularly use Bloom's Taxonomy to come up with learning objectives that aim not only at the subject matter but also at the level of learning they want students to achieve, and to then to create tests that accurately report on students' progress in relation to the outcomes (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Bloom's Taxonomy contains three learning domains: the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor and each of these domains has a hierarchy that is related to different levels of learning. The different levels of thinking defined inside each domain of the Taxonomy are ordered. It means that, each level includes the levels that come before it. For the thinking domain, it can be concluded that before a student can conduct an analysis, they first should know the methods of analysis, understand the different elements to review, and ponder which method to apply. It is only then that they will be ready to conduct the analysis by themselves.

Figure 1.



The concept of HOTS is very broad as it not only covers the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, but also includes critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making and also, metacognition. Constructivism theory is one of the most well-known learning theories in the education field. It focuses on student-centred learning. Constructivism was formerly a learning theory found in psychology but it can be applied in education because it explains how individuals learn and acquire knowledge (Olusegun, 2015 cited in Singh, 2018). The theory proposes that people construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. This theory suggests that teachers must not only transmit knowledge to students, but students need to enthusiastically construct knowledge in their own minds. This means that they find and transform information, check new information against old, and change rules when it is no longer applicable. This constructivist view of learning considers the student as an active agent in the process of gaining knowledge. The learner must be engaged in learning process by applying their existing knowledge and real-world experience, learning to hypothesise, testing their theories, and ultimately coming up with conclusions from their findings. Learning should be active rather than passive.

Higher order thinking skills is a very important component that can prepare students to solve problems in the 21st century (Retnawati, 2018). Higher order thinking skills is also important for applying, connecting and manipulating prior knowledge to resolve new problems (Thomas & Thorne, 2009 cited in Retnawati, 2018). In learning, higher order thinking skills cannot be directly taught to students but it need to be trained as a skill. Some examples of

strategies that can be used to teach HOTS are problem-based learning, discovery learning and inquiry-based learning. According to Graaff and Kolmos (2003), problem-based learning is an educational approach where the learning process starts by a problem. The problems are usually based on real-life or from a problem faced by a character in a literary text. Students need to come up with the solutions of the problems by having group discussions. So, students need to give their own opinion after they have interpreted the situation. This strategy can make learning fun in the classroom. Discovery learning is when students are engaged in an active, hands-on style of learning instead of being a passive learner (Brown, 2006). The students need to explore the environment by asking questions and performing experiments with their peers to encourage thinking, speculating and collaborating to solve a problem using their own ideas. According to Feriyanti (2014), Discovery method is when the students must organise their own material by the stimulus given by the teacher. The teacher only acts as a guide and students must arrive on their own answer based on their observation. Inquiry-based learning is when teacher acts as a facilitator by stimulating discussion among students so that they will be an independent learner (Maming, 2018). She also stated that effective inquiry is not just merely asking questions, students need to convert complex data into meaningful knowledge by interpreting information received from hands-on activities to come up with a logical conclusion.

According to Singh (2018), teachers are not aware on the proper way to teach higher order thinking skills to a large group of learners at the same time. Tajularipin et al. (2017) stated that it is more challenging to teach HOTS to a large number of learners in a classroom compared to small number of learners. This is because teachers have problems in tackling learners thinking skills due to lack of experience. Tajularipin et al. (2017) also propose that teachers need to understand the requirement of teaching higher order thinking skills first. Only then the teachers will be able to apply this knowledge in teaching higher order thinking skills to the learners when teaching the productive skills such as speaking and writing in particular. Tan and Halili (2015) revealed that teachers think that the training of integrating higher order thinking skills in their lesson is not enough because in order to use higher order thinking skills in the classroom, teachers need to teach learners how to think for themselves and how to make their thinking visible rather than just giving them higher order thinking skills questions for them to answer. Tanujaya (2016) also opined that it is difficult for the teachers to implement higher order thinking skills in their lesson because the teachers are unable to be creative and use new techniques in their teaching.

Another obstacle to the application of higher order thinking skills in the classroom is teachers' stress on curriculum coverage. The teachers have to rush in order to transfer knowledge for the of achievement gains have the tendency to result in learners being exposed to a wide variety of information and ideas but have less time for activities that focus on the development of higher order thinking skills (Azian Abdul Aziz, 2017). This kind of approach

opposes the explicit approach in teaching higher order thinking skills which only concentrate on the same thinking strategy that has been repeated several times in different situation and through different tasks (Azian Abdul Aziz, 2017). Adopting higher order thinking in the classroom may also indicate students' understanding on the subject taught and assessed (Singh 2017 et. al., 2017; Singh, 2017).

According to Seman, Yusoff and Embong (2017), teachers face many types of challenges in teaching and learning of higher order thinking skills in classroom. The teachers need to adjust, analyse and explain the outline of the curriculum which includes the objectives and the implementation of curriculum standards and themes that connects to teaching higher order thinking skills. It is also revealed that school teachers are loaded with other tasks that are not related to teaching which takes up to about 40% of their time. So, it is important to investigate and understand the challenges faced by teachers in order to come up with effective solutions that are applicable in real settings. The teaching and learning practices in Malaysian classrooms still continue as teacher-centred until now where the interactions between teacher and learners are minimal (Azian Abdul Aziz, 2017). This contributes to the lack of chances for teachers to come up with activities that can promote higher order thinking skills among learners. According Abdul Aziz (2017), the implementation of higher order thinking skills in the Malaysian classrooms is actually quite new and both teachers and students need some time to adjust. It is also necessary to expose teachers to samples of good teaching which give emphasis to the application of higher order thinking skills in the classroom. According to Sidhu, Chan and Kaur (2010), learning literature is a good way to enhance students' thinking skills because students are able to discuss literary elements such as themes, values and points of view so it will challenge students to use their critical thinking skills. There has not been sufficient research done to investigate the challenges in teaching higher order thinking skills using literature especially in primary schools even though higher order thinking skills are introduced in primary school. Based on the literature review, issues of ineffectiveness in the implementation of higher order thinking skills is clearly present in Malaysia. So, it is crucial to study about the challenges faced by the teachers in the implementation HOTS in literature in order to come up with solutions.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research are research studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations or materials (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2016). According to Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010), a case study is a form of ethnographic research study which focuses on only one unit, such as an individual, a group or an organisation. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2016), ethnography research emphasises documenting or showing the experienced of an individual or group in daily occurrence through the observation and interview method. The results of the study are an in-



depth description and understanding of a particular case. Case studies can answer questions about how something happened by observing the process. It is widely used in the field of psychology and education. Multiple methods of data collection can be used, for instance, observation, interviews and archives. This case study has the ability to answer descriptive questions or try to explain why a phenomenon happened by observing the process. According to Merriam (1998), case study is used to study the processes, development and fundamental forces of practice which is normally used in the field of education. It is essential to have a good case to understand and explore a specific subject. In this study, the researcher only focuses on teaching higher order thinking skills in the English Literature classroom in upper primary. The data was elicited from three English language teachers. The results of the study was analysed descriptively. The aim of this research is to analyse a particular case which is the teaching of HOTS in Literature class by observing the process or the lesson conducted by the teachers and also interviewing the teachers to gain insights on the challenges that is faced by ESL teachers in incorporating HOTS in Literature class. In qualitative research, the researcher studies behaviours as they happens in a natural setting such as a classroom, playground, in an organisation or community (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010).

Sampling is the act, process or technique of selecting a suitable sample or representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Wilumila, 2002). The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling method where a particular settings, individuals or events are selected intentionally in order to provide essential information that cannot be acquired by other ways (Maxwell, 1996 cited by Taherdoost, 2016). The researcher chose this sampling because this research needed data from primary school ESL teachers who has more than three years of teaching experience. The participants for this study were three ESL teachers from a public primary school in the state of Perak, Malaysia. The teachers were labelled as Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C. All three participants are senior teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience and all of them took English language as their major. Teacher A and Teacher B are female whereas Teacher C is a male.

Data Collection Method

According to Mason (2002), it is important to be sure of where to collect the data and find the most appropriate data for the research conducted. The researcher has collected data from an upper primary school in Perak using classroom observation, semi-structured interview and document analysis. The data from this study were obtained from classroom observation and semi-structured interview. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2016), it is said that certain kinds of research questions can best be answered by observing how people or how things look.

Data Analysis

Based on the data collected from the audiotaped literature lesson, teachers' lesson plans and semi-structured interview, both the audio from the data were transcribed for ease of reference. The transcription of the audiotaped lesson was used to analyse teacher talk which promotes higher order thinking skills in a literature lesson. Teacher talk that can encourage higher order thinking skills comprises of the teacher's questioning techniques which were analysed descriptively. From the teacher talk, only academic questions were considered. The questions were categorised into lower order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher order thinking skills (HOTS). The verbs used by the teacher related to the lesson were also be analysed. Verbs such as 'describe', 'explain' and 'discuss' can promote higher order thinking skills among students. Qualitative researchers may use written documents or artifacts to obtain comprehension of the situation that is being investigated (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). Thematic analysis was used to formulate themes or major ideas that will help in organising a large amount of data to make sure it makes sense (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2016).

Findings and Discussion

The objective of the research question is to examine the types of strategies and questioning techniques used by the teachers to promote higher order thinking skills in English Literature lesson. The findings from the classroom observation of three ESL teachers and also document analysis of the lesson plans showed that the teachers used more lower order thinking skills in their lesson compared to higher order thinking skills. The strategies used by each teacher vary because of the proficiency level of students. Teacher A and B incorporated technology in their lesson and also used higher order thinking skills questions when teaching students with good proficiency level of English.

Excerpt from Teacher A's lesson

Teacher: *Now, I am going to give you some pictures here. I want you to sequence according to the chapters.* (Level 3: Application)

Teacher: *Think, which chapter? Who can tell me which chapter? You can put it on the board. Ok, come. Just try. Ok, quick. Ok, next picture. Here, this one. Where is this? where?* (Level 3: Application)

Excerpt from Teacher B's lesson

Teacher: *Is this correct?* (Level 6: Evaluation)

Students: *No*

Teacher: *No? What is wrong with the picture?* (Level 6: Evaluation)

Student: *The animal has stripes not spots.*



Teacher C taught low-proficiency students so the strategies used were more on question answer sessions and completing worksheets. It was challenging to teach higher order thinking skills in the lesson because the students do not have the language skills to elaborate their answers or to have a group discussion to come up with their own work.

Excerpt from Teacher C's lesson

Teacher: *Granma's house. What is the one cat doing?* (Level 1: Knowledge)

Students: *Napping*

Teacher: *What is napping?* (Level 2: Comprehension)

Student: *Sleep*

The findings of the first research question are in line with the study conducted by Ganapathy (2010) regarding the approaches employed by teachers in teaching literature to less proficient students. The findings showed that the approaches used by teachers are influenced by student's language proficiency level because they are not able to comprehend the language.

The findings from the classroom observation of three ESL teachers and also document analysis of the lesson plans showed that the teachers used more lower order thinking skills in their lesson compared to higher order thinking skills. The strategies used by each teacher vary because of the proficiency level of students. Teacher A and B incorporated technology in their lesson and also used higher order thinking skills questions when teaching students with good proficiency level of English. They also had group-based activities where students need to work together with their group members to complete a task. Teacher C taught low-proficiency students so the strategies used were more on question answer sessions and completing worksheets. It was challenging to teach higher order thinking skills in the lesson because the students do not have the language skills to elaborate their answers or to have a group discussion to come up with their own work. The findings of the first research question are in line with the study conducted by (Rashid, 2010) regarding the approaches employed by teachers in teaching literature to less proficient students. These findings showed that the approaches used by teachers are influenced by student's language proficiency level because they are unable to comprehend the language.

What are the factors that contribute to the teaching of higher order thinking skills in literature?

The objective of this research question is to investigate the factors that contribute to the teaching of higher order thinking skills in literature. The data for this were collected from the English language syllabus and also the teacher's guidebook. The documents were analysed descriptively.

i) Data from the English Language Syllabus

There is a section in the English language syllabus where the educational emphases are discussed in details. The aim of education is to prepare students for the challenges that they need to face in the real world. Higher order thinking skills is one of the emphases in the syllabus. The National Curriculum aims to produce wholesome, resilient, inquisitive, ethical, knowledgeable and patriotic pupils who have thinking, communicative and collaborative skills. Higher order thinking skills are openly discussed in the curriculum and should be applied in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Teachers are required to use thinking maps, higher order thinking skills questioning techniques that can stimulate students' thinking skills.

ii) Data from Teacher's Guidebook for Literature

The Ministry of Education has provided all ESL teachers with a guidebook which contains a lot of interesting activities for the teachers to use in the literature lesson. Higher order thinking skills were also incorporated in the suggested activities and worksheets provided. There are also a variety of activities for individual as well as group work. The level of thinking skills was also indicated for each activity based on the levels from Bloom's Taxonomy. At the end of the guidebook, there are sample lesson plans for *Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK)* and *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (SJK)* which involve higher order thinking skills activities. The findings from all three-document analysis indicated that it is mandatory for teachers to incorporate higher order thinking skills when planning and conducting lessons in class. The findings are in line with the study conducted by Tan and Halili (2015) which states that higher order thinking skills are important as they complement the idea of lifelong learning and learners who can think critically are on demand in the real world. In 2012, the Malaysian MOE released the Preliminary Report of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has clearly emphasised higher order thinking skills in three core characteristics of education: the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the examined curriculum. This is why it is obligatory for teachers to revise their teaching of thinking skills in classroom principally when it comes to higher order thinking skills. There is research in the Preliminary Report of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which shows that almost all of the lessons in schools did not involve students in productive thinking satisfactorily and teachers often depend on lecturing instead of teaching. The focus of learning is still on fact retention and attaining surface level comprehension instead of cultivating higher order thinking skills (Malaysia MOE, 2012). In brief, lower order thinking still dictate the teaching methods in Malaysian schools.

The objective of the research question is to find out the challenges faced by ESL teachers in teaching English Literature in class using higher order thinking skills. In order to investigate

the challenges faced by the teachers, a semi-structured interview was conducted. Three ESL teachers participated in this interview. The researcher audio recorded the interview session and the audio recordings were then transcribed for ease of reference. The data were then analysed descriptively. Thematic coding was used to analyse the data. Based on the data, there were three emerging themes which were teacher's knowledge and perception, time constraint, and students' language proficiency. These three themes are the factors that influence the implementation of higher order thinking skills in English Literature class.

i) Teacher's Negative Perception of Higher Order Thinking Skills

From the interviews conducted, two out of three teachers think that it is important for teachers to teach higher order thinking skills in Literature class because higher order thinking skills can help in promoting growth and foster academic achievement gains because the students need to think beyond the literal questions, so, higher order thinking skills can train the students to think for themselves. Below is an excerpt from Teacher C's interview:

I think teaching of higher order thinking skills is very important especially in teaching English Literature because these skills can really help students to think beyond the literal questions. Students need to think on a level that is higher than just memorising facts. You see, when we teach Literature, it is not just for students to understand what the story is about...but also to analyse it (Teacher C).

From the answer given by the teacher, it is shown that teachers have the knowledge of higher order thinking skills and they know what is required from them when teaching higher order thinking skills in English Literature class. However, Teacher A answered that higher order thinking skills is only beneficial to the students who are from urban areas because the students from urban areas have more exposure to the language unlike students from rural areas who seldom use English because they are not exposed to the language. Below is the excerpt from Teacher A's interview:

Actually, this higher order thinking skills only benefit the students from urban areas...who are good in English...like students in KL, Penang and all. Our students here can't even grasp simple grammar...so how are they going to understand higher order thinking skills. For me.... This is what I feel ya... that it is beneficial...but only for the students who are proficient. Our students here don't speak English at home...they hardly speak the language in school (Teacher A).

ii) Time Constraint in Lesson Preparation

From the data gathered, all three teachers mentioned the time factor influenced their teaching of HOTS because the teachers do not have enough time to prepare lessons which involve activities that can promote HOTS. Below are the excerpts from all teachers:

Umm...actually we don't teach much on higher order thinking skills ...because we don't have the time. We need to cover the syllabus and we focus more on the components that will be tested in exam like writing, grammar and not much on literature and especially higher order thinking skills. We teachers are so busy with other work that we don't have the time to...you know...prepare for higher order thinking skills (Teacher A).

According to the teachers, they are burdened by other tasks and they are also in a hurry to cover the syllabus so they focus more on components that will be tested in exams. Teacher B also says that she needs to spend a lot of time with reading and explaining the text in class because the students don't read the text and expects the teacher to spoon feed them.

iii) Students' Low Language Proficiency Level

Based on the interview data, the teachers mentioned that students' language proficiency and also learning ability is the biggest challenge in incorporating higher order thinking skills in their lessons. The teachers stated that the students could not comprehend the text and the majority of the students translate from their mother tongue. To incorporate higher order thinking skills, students need to be able to think in English in order to compare and contrast, explain, and distinguish different perspectives. Below is the excerpt from Teacher B:

...sad to say that the proficiency level of the present generation leaves much to be desired. A majority of my students translate from their mother tongue (Teacher B).

Based on the findings, it is evident that the teacher's negative perception of higher order thinking skills, time constraints in lesson preparation, and students' low language proficiency level are the challenges that are faced by ESL teachers in teaching higher order thinking skills in literature in the classroom. The teachers are aware of the importance of teaching higher order thinking skills to students and the teachers also have the sufficient knowledge of higher order thinking skills but teachers did not incorporate it in their lesson because the teachers think that it is not practical for low proficiency students. The teachers clarified that they do not have adequate time to actually plan and conduct lessons involving higher order thinking skills. The teachers also further explained that it is difficult to implement higher order thinking skills in class due to the low language proficiency level of students and their learning ability. Research done by Seman, Yusoff and Embong (2017), revealed that school teachers are loaded with other tasks that are not related to teaching which takes up to about 40% of their time. Further research done by Siti Salina Mustakim (2014), showed that teachers could not use the Pre, While and Post reading because the students are not proficient in the language.



Conclusion

Thinking skills are an important part of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Higher order thinking skills has been introduced in Malaysian classroom since early 1990 (Rajendran, 2002). The Ministry of Education has given the mandate to teach higher order thinking skills in schools to promote the idea of lifelong learning as critical thinking skills as marketable in the real world.

Even though higher order thinking skills have been in the syllabus for a long time, its implementation is still lacking. Based on the findings of this study and the literature review, issues of unsuccessfulness in the implementation of higher order thinking skills evidently exist in Malaysia. So, it is crucial to study about the challenges faced by the teachers in the implementation higher order thinking skills in literature in order to come up with solutions. It will be a waste of the Ministry's effort in emphasising higher order thinking skills in the syllabus if this issue is not tackled and the practice of teaching higher order thinking skills in English Literature is not carried out. The pedagogical implication from this study is that teachers need to be introduced to good teaching models of higher order thinking skills in order for the teacher to familiarise themselves on the strategies and questioning techniques that can elicit students' higher order thinking skills in learning literature. So, training must be given to the teachers by showing good samples of teaching higher order thinking skills. It is to ensure teachers learn to come up with creative strategies and also use the current technology in their literature lesson. Teachers also need to be encouraged to reflect on their teaching of higher order thinking skills of literature in the lesson. Teachers can do their own research or involve themselves in action research by recording their own lesson and thinking about ways to improve their teaching skills. Teachers can also have peer evaluation so that they can share their experience, suggestions and ways to effectively using higher order thinking skills in their teaching. The findings from this study indicated that teachers use different strategies in teaching higher order thinking skills in literature class for students at different proficiency levels. Teachers use more higher order thinking skills questions in teaching a class of higher proficiency students and use lower order thinking skills questions when teaching low proficiency students. The challenges faced by the teachers in teaching higher order thinking skills in Literature are teachers' negative perception of higher order thinking skills, time constraint in lesson preparation and students' low proficiency level. The pedagogical implication for this study is that teachers need to be trained and also exposed to good samples of teaching higher order thinking skills in literature. Next, teachers should be involved in action research and peer evaluation in order to reflect on their instructional practice in teaching higher order thinking skills in literature. Finally, more time should be allocated for teachers to prepare materials and plan their lesson that incorporate higher order thinking skills. In order to be able to generalise the findings of this research, more research need to be carried out in future with a larger sample size from different schools in Malaysia.



It is important to get the idea of how higher order thinking skills are taught in English Literature class and the challenges faced by teachers so that the applicable solution can be proposed.

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