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The Effectiveness of a Literature-Driven English Programme in Improving the English Language Skills of Secondary One Students in Singapore

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A Literature-Driven English Curriculum

*Their hearts and minds they lay bare
With honeyed clauses and bitter phrases,
Knotting, stirring, freeing that within
With sentences simple, compound and complex,
Come, I say,
See the words dance, and hear the whispers
Of souls that break free
Through language that touches you and me.*

Imagine, if you will, an integrated English Language and Literature class. It is a class where the written word takes a life of its own through the literature text. The literature text becomes a model of communication in action and through it students are shown the power to connect with themselves and others.

The Research on the Literature-Driven English Programme

A curriculum initiative project on the effectiveness of teaching an integrated English and Literature curriculum was undertaken in multiple sites, namely four schools in Singapore. In the four schools students were taught to communicate verbally and in written form through using the literature text as a tool. The literature texts were prescribed by the schools. These texts were fictional pieces: a compilation of related short stories, an adapted Shakespearean play, and single short stories. Through these literature texts, language skills were taught, and it was decided to name this form of integrated English and Literature teaching a Literature-Driven English Curriculum. Since the literature text was used as a tool to facilitate the

teaching of English Language skills, the term “Literature-Driven English Curriculum” was deemed appropriate.

With regard to the research, the term Literature-Driven English Programme (LDEP) rather than Literature-Driven English Curriculum (LDEC) was adopted because the LDEC consists of a broader curriculum than the one that was eventually implemented in the schools for the research. The broader LDEC would include the explicit teaching of vocabulary and oral communication skills and more time would be devoted to literary analysis. All these components may also be assessed. However, in the case of the current research, due to the fact that the schools could only offer five to six weeks during which the LDEP could be implemented, fewer components were taught and assessed. Due to the short time frame, the focus was on the teaching of narrative writing skills and the analysis of selected literary topics. Improvements in narrative writing and reading comprehension skills were evaluated through uniform pre-tests and post-tests and improvements in literary analytical skills through feedback from teachers and students.

In the context of this research, the teaching of narrative writing skills was selected as the curriculum was to be implemented in Secondary One classes. In most secondary schools, narrative writing skills are taught to Secondary One students. As such, the grammatical and technical features of narratives found in the literature text were highlighted. The students were then guided to create their own narratives. In that sense the LDEP was goal-oriented. A specific skill, namely narrative writing skill, that the students were expected to attain at the end of the LDEP was first identified. Then, the literature texts of the different schools were utilised to teach this skill.

Other skills were also identified. These skills included reading comprehension, oral communication and literary analytical skills though the latter two skills were not assessed through the use of test instruments due to time constraints and lack of human and other resources. While learning the skills, students were encouraged to express themselves in a variety of ways. Students presented their works in the form of role-play and artwork as well as

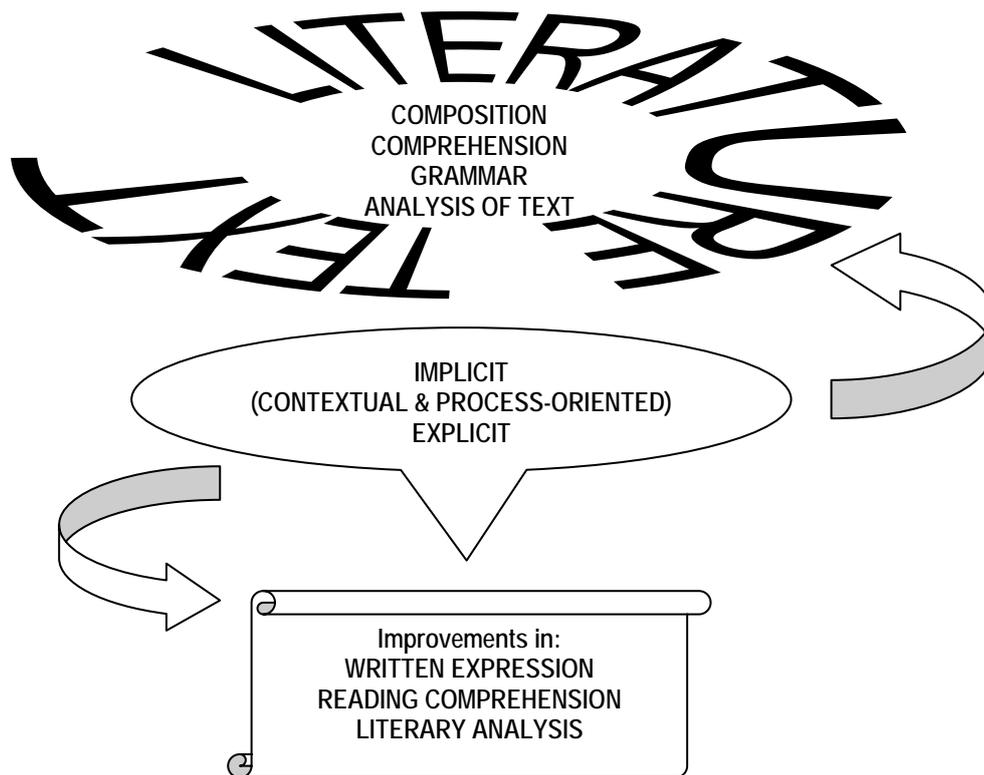
orally and through short and extended written pieces. Different means were also used to teach the skills. There was explicit teaching of concepts through lectures with the aid of PowerPoint presentations and through live demonstrations of concepts by students. The teachers also acted as facilitators, guiding the students during activities which enabled learning to take place through the application of the concepts being taught. In the current research, the specific aim was to investigate whether an integrated English and Literature Programme, through the explicit teaching and application of various skills, would aid students to become better readers and writers.

In order to evaluate whether the students had attained the abovementioned skills, the reading and writing skills of the students were assessed prior to and after the implementation of the LDEP. The objective was to determine if there were any improvements in these areas after the implementation. Thus, this curriculum initiative project involved a curriculum development project that sought to combine two correlated subject-areas, namely English and Literature, into one holistic subject in a manner that would lead to increased learning of the common skills of the subjects.

Structure of the Literature-Driven English Programme

This section explains the structure of the LDEP. During the LDEP the literature texts selected by the schools were used as tools to teach some of the components of the English Language, namely, Composition, Comprehension and Grammar. The students were taught how to analyse the literature text as well (Figure 1.1). The teaching methods included teaching through implicit and explicit forms of instruction. The implicit teaching included the use of contextual cues and a process-oriented approach (Figure 1.1). At the completion of the LDEP, it was hoped that there would be improvements in written expression, reading comprehension and literary analysis (Figure 1.1). Differences in written expression and reading comprehension skills were assessed through test instruments while improvements in literary analysis skills were evaluated through soliciting feedback from teachers and students.

Figure 1.1: Structure of the LDEP



Background and Context

In introducing an integrated English and Literature curriculum into a multi-lingual society like Singapore, it is important to consider the needs of the students in Singapore. The proposed LDEP must have the potential to improve the English language skills of the students in Singapore and address a real need to improve the existing standard of the language skills of these students.

In Singapore, there are four official languages and a wide variety of other minority languages. The four main languages are English (also known as the language of administration), Malay (the national language), Mandarin and Tamil, an Indian language. English is also taught as a first language in schools. Therefore, all students who pass the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) would have basic reading and writing skills in English when they commence secondary education. However, the degree of fluency varies depending on the language spoken at home. For instance, in 2000, the

percentages of children aged five to fourteen years of age who spoke English most frequently at home were: 35.6% of the Chinese majority; 9.4% of the Malays; and 43.6% of the Indians (Census of Population Office 2000).

Partly due to the fact that English is taught as a first language from kindergarten onward, literacy in English (English only or multi-language) increased from 63% in 1990 to 71% in 2000 among the general population (Census of Population Office 2000). However, the government began to fear that with the increasing importance placed on the learning of the English language in schools, Singaporeans would lose their Asian culture and become too westernised. Thus, most students were required to learn English and one of the other three main languages as a second language to preserve the Asian beliefs and traditions of the population (Ang & Stratton 1995; Foley 1998). Gradually, the term 'Second Language' was changed to 'Mother Tongue Language'. Those who were deemed capable of taking two languages, English and the Mother Tongue Language, as first languages were allowed to take 'Higher Mother Tongue Language' (Ministry of Education Singapore 2003a). In January 2004, the Ministry of Education brought about changes to the Mother Tongue Languages because there was a growing concern that some students, coming from English-speaking homes, were disadvantaged by their inability to cope with the Mother Tongue Languages (Channel News Asia 2004; Tee 2004). Conversely, some English Language teachers felt that the standard of the English Language was adversely affected by the stress placed on Mother Tongue Languages (Davie 2003). Many students in Singapore have experienced difficulty coping with the educational requirement that they achieve a pass in at least two languages.

To arrest a perceived drop in the standard of the English Language (Davie 2003) and to cater to a wide spectrum of students, with varying fluency in English, there is a need to discover more effective modes of teaching English. A possible effective mode of teaching English may be through integrating English and Literature. In most secondary schools in Singapore, English and Literature are taught as separate subjects, and often by different teachers. Under English, Comprehension, Composition, Vocabulary, Grammar and Oral

Communication are taught as separate components, each divorced from the other. In addition, Literature is taught for the first time in Secondary One (or Grade 7), but few schools have an integrated English and Literature programme. To aid the current research project, between October 2003 and January 2004 a preliminary survey was mailed to all the 165 secondary schools in Singapore. In the preliminary survey five out of twenty-one schools that responded reported having an integrated English and Literature programme. Of the five schools, the number of Literature and English components that were combined ranged from 4 to 28 components. Of the 21 schools, 5 schools had a combination of 6 components, with 9 schools having a combination greater than 8 components (please refer to Appendix 1b for analysis of data collected from the initial survey).

Many of the schools that responded to the survey supported an integrated English and Literature programme. In the preliminary survey 18 of the 21 schools reported that Literature and English should be integrated. According to the responses of some schools there was a natural link between Literature and English. They also thought that Literature could prove a useful tool in the teaching of English language skills. Other schools were of the opinion that a greater appreciation of the Literature text as well as language could be gained from combining the two (c.f. Appendix 1c). The three schools which were against integration cited mainly administrative and technical reasons although in the opinion of an all-boys' school, boys experience difficulty in learning Literature. Another school thought that students would fail to gain a deeper appreciation for the literature text under such an integrated English and Literature curriculum (c.f. Appendix 1c).

The responses with regard to an integrated English and Literature programme in the preliminary survey indicate that most of the teachers endorse such an integrated programme. Therefore, it was felt that research into the LDEP might be a viable option since there might be schools in Singapore willing to support the research if they were approached.

The Development of English Language Programmes in the United States and Australia

When considering the conceptual framework of the LDEP, some of the changes that had occurred in the United States and in Australia with regard to the English curriculum were taken into account.

In the United States, from 1894 onwards, literature assumed a central position in secondary English education (English Journal Forum 1994). Yagelski (1994) feels that the focus should be shifted to the study of language, and literature should become a component of it since there is a widespread trend to view reading and writing as separate. The separate reading and writing tasks lack purpose and are of little significance. In addition, Vavra (2003) mentions that generally students possess an inadequate knowledge of grammatical rules.

In some states in Australia, recent times have seen a shift from a literary tradition to a focus on literacy in the teaching of English Language. In New South Wales in 1988, the NSW Year 11 and 12 English Curriculum was changed to include the 2 Unit Contemporary course which focused less on literature and more on language skills acquisition (Parker, Meyenn & MacFadden 1991). According to teachers interviewed by Parker et al., this was more in tune with the English 7 – 10 syllabus in NSW. In Queensland, in 1986 there was movement urging the government to reform the curriculum so that teachers can return to teaching the basics especially grammar and spelling (Doig, Wyatt-Smith, Cumming & Ryan 1998). Progressive reformation in Queensland included the release in 2000 of the pilot literacy-based Senior English Syllabus which focused on multi-literacies while largely neglecting the study of literature (Green 2002). According to Green (2002) teachers in general were not enthusiastic about the syllabus.

However, it is contended here that Literature and Language are interconnected and so too are the different components taught under English linked to one another (Yagelski 1994). In particular, it could be argued that

there is a strong link between reading and writing. In a study done on the teaching of nine first grade teachers, it was found that more effective learning took place when the link was made between what was read and the writing assignment (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley & Hampton 1998). What may be true of first grade students could well be true for older students as well. Indeed, in comprehending a passage, one could argue that one needs to have knowledge of vocabulary and grammar as well as a contextual understanding. Similarly, in composing a written piece, one needs to be aware of the context in which one is writing. One would also require a wide range of vocabulary and be able to write grammatically correct sentences so as to be understood by the readers. Thus, Literature could be the vehicle through which vocabulary is expanded and there is a better understanding of the use of language in context. Apart from these advantages, the integration of Literature and Language could well lend itself to the teaching of critical and creative thinking skills. After all, the Literature text itself is a creative piece and studying it involves analysis (Gold 1988).

Conceptual Framework of the Literature-Driven English Programme

One of the approaches to teaching English is through Whole Language. In the United States in the '1960s and 1970s... a paradigm shift... [led to language teaching veering] away from formalism toward student- and child-centered education' (Tchudi 2003, p.741). The paradigm shift gave rise to Whole Language. The Whole Language approach encourages students to internalise language conventions 'not by study of forms, but through engagement with a wide range of 'real world' or purposeful discourse' (Tchudi 2003, p.741). The Literature-based English Curriculum, a variant of Whole Language, also advocates the contextual learning of language conventions through the process of engagement with the Literature text (Feeley, Strickland & Wepner 1992; Sorenson & Lehman 1995). In conceptualising the LDEP, the main principles of Whole Language or the Literature-based English Curriculum were first examined. The advantages of the Whole Language were incorporated into the LDEP. However, modifications were made in

areas where the Whole Language was deemed inadequate in transferring practical and theoretical knowledge of essential language skills.

The similarities and differences between the LDEP and Whole Language approach (Shafer 2001) are shown in Table 1.1. (The differences are highlighted through the use a shaded background across the relevant points.) The main similarities between the LDEP and Whole Language can be found in the use of whole texts rather than extracts to teach concepts or skills contextually (Table 1.1). On the other hand, an essential difference is that in the Whole Language or Literature-based English Curriculum, literature occupies a central position whereas in the LDEP literature becomes a part of language study.

Table 1.1: Contrasting Whole Language Curriculum with the LDEP

Whole Language ↓	→ Literature-Driven ↓
Down-up (Student Autonomy)	Down-up and top-down
Contextual	Contextual
Learning in Wholes (not “bits”)	Learning in Wholes
Purposeful (Problem-solving)	Purposeful (Critical/Creative)
Outcomes are Projects	Outcomes are Projects/Varied Group and Individual Output
Process Learning	Process Learning
Evaluate text and real world Issues	Evaluate issues: text/social (current & historical)
Non-directed (implicit)	Directed (explicit) and Non-directed (implicit)
Literature (minority)	Literature (merit/themes)

Table 1.1 displays the number of other differences between the Whole Language approach and the LDEP. In Whole Language, the emphasis is on problem-solving but in the LDEP, the objective is to help the students to become critical and creative learners (Table 1.1). As such the activities involved not just discussions of issues suggested in the literature text but rather, the students were expected to create different forms of output as well. The outputs included the end project of creating individual narratives as well as other forms of individual and group work comprising short written pieces,

art work and oral presentations. On the other hand, in Whole Language projects are the main output (Table 1.1). Additionally, apart from analysing the text for current issues, in the LDEP historical issues are also evaluated for it is believed that the past has a lot to offer in terms of lessons to be learnt. Thus, the literature text is not to be chosen based on just minority issues. Instead, the literature text is to be assessed on its own merits. The literature text has to be one that is a model of effective communicative language and one that includes complex issues that would give rise to critical discussions.

Another important difference between a Whole Language approach or a Literature-based English Curriculum and the LDEP lies in the teaching methods employed during the course of teaching language skills. As Table 1.1 illustrates, in the Whole Language approach the teacher is the facilitator (down-up) but in the LDEP the teacher is both a facilitator (down-up) and instructor (top-down). In other words, in the LDEP there is explicit teaching (directed) as well as implicit instruction (non-directed). In a Literature-based English Curriculum or Whole Language, it is believed that students will progressively attain language and literacy skills through interaction with a literature text. There is no explicit teaching of skills; rather, there is a reliance on the process or implicit form of instruction (Feeley, Strickland & Wepner 1992; Giddings 1992; Sorenson & Lehman 1995; Tchudi 2003). In the LDEP, interaction with the literature text is also important, but so is the explicit teaching of skills. Thus, while there are similarities between the LDEP and Whole Language or Literature-based English Curriculum, there are also significant differences.

In relation to Singapore, the LDEP offers a different perspective to the learning of the English language. At present in Singapore, in most English classes, students are taught language skills through the use of extracts or at times through exercises that employ a single sentence or a string of sentences. In the LDEP, however, emphasis is placed on interactive and contextual learning with the aid of the literature text. During the research the students were guided to explore the ways in which clauses, phrases and different sentence structures were used in a given literature text to convey

ideas, feelings and thoughts so as to discover if the students would be able to translate what they were learning into their own writing. Another purpose of the research was to discover if the reading comprehension and literary analytical skills of the students would be enhanced as well.

Scope of the Research

To study the effectiveness of the LDEP, the programme was implemented in seventeen classes in four diverse schools in Singapore. These four schools were chosen as multiple site case studies so that the research outcomes from these schools could be studied within the context of each individual school as well as in relation to one another. Additionally, each of these schools offered actual pre-existing classes and the English and Literature teachers who normally taught these classes volunteered to teach under the programme. The LDEP was also implemented as part of the normal operation in each of the four schools without any disruption to the normal working conditions or character of the participating schools and classes. Thus, there was scope to study how well the curriculum worked irrespective of the existence of the many differing variables inherent within and among the different schools and without manipulating actual pre-existing conditions.

In summary, the effectiveness of the LDEP in advancing narrative writing, reading comprehension and literary analytical skills within the contexts of four diverse schools with many variables was investigated during the research. The aim was to determine whether there was transference of knowledge through the explicit and implicit teaching within the short span of time during which the LDEP was implemented without any manipulation of the variables.

Research Questions: Major and Sub-Questions

The research questions, contextualised within the Singapore education system and early secondary education, consist of an overarching major research question and a number of sub-questions.

The major research question is:

Does an Integrated English Language and Literature Curriculum enhance the English Language skills of the students?

The above research question articulated into the following sub-questions which guided the development of the research methods.

1. Are the students able to write more effective narratives if they use a given literature text as a model of a good narrative?
2. Do students become more effective writers if they are taught contextually rather than in “bits and pieces”?
3. Are students able to produce a more grammatically accurate piece of writing if they are taught in context through a Literature text?
4. Are students able to comprehend better if they are taught comprehension skills in context through a Literature text?
5. Are students better able to critically analyse a Literature text if, in addition to content, they analyse the language of the text as well?

Limitations of the Research

There were a number of limitations to conducting a curriculum initiative project on the LDEP in multiple sites. There were many variables and in the event that there were no similar measurable outcomes, there was the risk of arriving at inconclusive results. Additionally, the decision by the researcher to surrender to the teachers the curriculum she designed and take on the role of an observer may have had an adverse effect on the successful implementation of the programme. The researcher, after an initial briefing, intervened only when the teachers sought her assistance or asked for clarifications about some of the lesson plans. Not recommending a standard literature text to be used by all the schools but adapting the LDEP to the different texts prescribed by the schools may be regarded as another limitation in terms of comparison of outcomes. Moreover, the short span of time that the schools could allow for the research to be conducted in their schools may have been insufficient to assess the effectiveness of the LDEP.

Strengths in the Limitations

However, in the case of the current research on the LDEP, the limitations may be viewed positively. The research on the LDEP was not positivist or empiricist in its approach. The intent of the research was to study the effectiveness of a specific curriculum in a naturalistic environment. Since the aim was to discover if the LDEP was robust enough to be effective in various non-manipulated situations, the limitations proved useful to the study.

Exercising controls over pre-existing variables or testing a curriculum in selected environments creates an artificially stimulated situation that may not produce any practical benefits. Even if the LDEP succeeds in enhancing language skills, there is no guarantee that it will succeed in real-life where there will be no controls imposed. Thus, testing the curriculum in diverse environments with the usual circumstances left intact facilitated a more pragmatic investigation of the effectiveness of the LDEP as a language programme (Pereira & Vallance 2005). In the event of inconclusive findings, it may be concluded that a standardised LDEP would be ineffective in improving the language skills in diverse settings. Similarly, the differences in implementation in the different schools and the use of different texts added to the variability, thus increasing the heterogeneity of the situations in which the LDEP was tested. The heterogeneity, in turn, strengthened the practical utility of the research on the LDEP.

Moreover, the short span during which the LDEP was implemented in each experimental class is comparable to the length of time devoted to a unit of teaching in Secondary One. Additionally, the short span was sufficient to assess the short-term effects of the teaching of particular skills and concepts since assessment of learning was restricted to topics covered during the research. Furthermore, long-term retention of learning was outside the scope of the research.

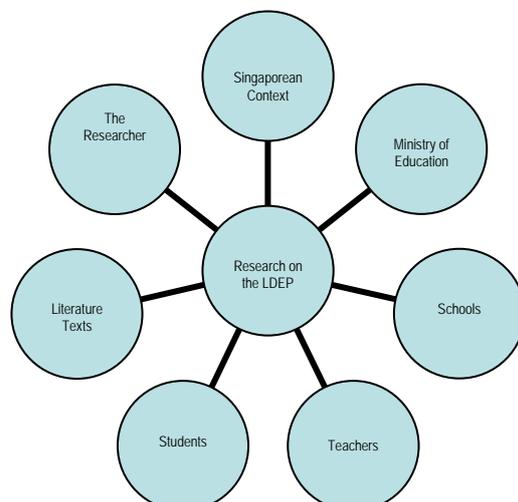
Ethical Considerations

As the research involved children as participants, it was important to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner. Care was taken to ensure that the time of the schools and students was not wasted by reviewing relevant literature and through having the LDEP appraised by practitioners and academics. Schools were also briefed on the programme and they volunteered to participate only after they had examined the entire programme. Schools, teachers and the students were assured of confidentiality when findings are reported and published. Additionally, the ethical implications of the test instruments and interview and survey protocols as well as the manner in which the findings were analysed were considered so as to minimise discomfort and inconvenience to the participants. Detailed examination of the ethical considerations is found in Chapter 3, pp.86–94.

Salient Features of the Research

In this section, the salient features of the research are examined. It is also important to establish how the researcher fits within the context of all the pertinent features of the research. There are two reasons for doing this. One reason is to ensure there is transparency by revealing that the researcher is aware of her strengths and weaknesses. Another reason is to articulate the measures that were taken so as to limit the effects of the weaknesses. Figure 1.2 displays the pertinent features of the research and the correlation between the researcher and the research context.

Figure 1.2: Salient Features of the Research



Each component of Figure 1.2 will be separately explained below.

Singaporean Context

In Singapore, English is taught as a first Language from kindergarten onward and students sit for a national exam, the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE), at the end of the primary education. Primary schooling commences at age seven years and the PSLE is normally attempted at the end of six years of schooling at age twelve years. Those who pass and enter secondary schools are placed in the Special/Express, Normal (Academic) or Normal (Technical) Streams (for detailed descriptions of these terms, please refer to the glossary on p.x). There is also diversity of culture, religion and Mother Tongue Languages in Singapore. The researcher conducted the research among the Special/Express and Normal (Academic) stream students, thereby including students of varying abilities. These students also included those who were high achievers and fluent in the English language and those who were weak in the English language.

Ministry Of Education

The Singapore Ministry of Education (MoE) generally sets the rules and regulations for the schools, and the curriculum requirements for government and government-aided schools. The MoE also serves as gatekeeper for any research done in schools. Permission from the MoE was obtained to conduct the research in Singapore schools (c.f. Appendix 10a).

Schools

The stakeholders in the research included the participating schools. In 2003, when preliminary surveys were mailed to secondary schools, there were 165 secondary schools in Singapore. These schools were made up of different types of schools, namely independent schools, government schools and government-aided schools. Some government and government-aided schools were permitted to become autonomous because of their good academic achievements. The degree of autonomy accorded to schools in

their operation depends on the type of the schools. Independent schools have the greatest autonomy in relation to financial and operational independence. Autonomous schools are financially dependent on the State but they are given some degree of autonomy over the running of their schools. Non-autonomous government and government-aided schools have the least autonomy.

The four participating schools included an all-girls', an all-boys' and two co-educational schools. These schools were independent, government-aided and government schools. One of the government schools was also an autonomous school. Since the number of schools participating in the research was small, different types of schools consisting of diverse student populations were included so that a wider representation of the student population in Singapore could be made. The intention was to see if there would be a general appreciable improvement in performance in the post-test when compared to the pre-test in students belonging to different types of schools and who were of different gender and of various abilities.

Within three of the participating schools a group of classes was taught under the proposed LDEP while another group of classes was retained as a control group so that a comparison could be made between the two groups. For details on the design and data collection, please refer to Chapter 3, pp.69–74.

Teachers

The other stakeholders in the research were the English and Literature teachers in the participating schools who collaborated in the current curriculum initiative project by teaching the experimental curriculum. Inclusion of these teachers with differing teaching styles also added to the heterogeneity of the variables.

Students

In the current research, the students were the participants who may be assumed to have basic literacy skills since they had passed the PSLE or its

equivalent. However, these students had varying language abilities since there were also students who came from non-English speaking backgrounds. The students were Secondary One students (thirteen year-olds) and came from the Special/Express and Normal (Academic) Streams.

Literature Texts

Three of the schools were contacted between the end of December 2003 and January 2004. The fourth school contacted the researcher in February 2004 to indicate its interest in participating in the research. Since there was no intention to dictate to schools or teachers the literature texts they should employ for the research, the texts presented by the schools were utilised for the programme. The designed curriculum for the LDEP was based on the texts that the schools had planned to use during the duration of the research. Though the texts differed, the skills taught and the mode of imparting these skills remained the same for all schools. The curriculum was easily adaptable to whatever texts were prescribed; it was not necessary to use a standardised literature text in all the schools.

The Researcher

The researcher was educated in a government-aided all-girls' school and taught in an independent all-boys' school, and so, had limited knowledge of how English was taught in government schools (c.f. p.x). Neither did she have an awareness of the language abilities of the students in government schools. In addition, the researcher has had little exposure as a student or teacher in a co-educational environment. The researcher also has a personal preference for Literature. These biases and lack of knowledge were considered and compensated through literature review when designing the LDEP so that the needs of all students, male or female, weak or strong, could be addressed.

Conclusion

The current research was a curriculum initiative project with the aim to discover the effectiveness of a Literature-Driven English Programme in guiding students toward attaining improved reading comprehension and writing skills as well as enhanced analytical skills in a literary study. The research was conducted as a multiple site case study so that a wider student population in Singapore could be included. In addition, no attempt was made to control any of the mediating variables since the intent was to discover whether this curriculum would be successful in a naturalistic environment.

In the next chapter, literature that discusses factors influencing language acquisition is explored. These factors are considered to discover the impact they would have in the design of a curriculum. Then the pertinent characteristics of the LDEP are reviewed. In Chapter 3, the methodology employed during the research is outlined. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the findings and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Chapter 6 integrates the quantitative and qualitative findings so as to evaluate the LDEP. Finally, the concluding Chapter 7 revisits the research questions to answer these questions in the light of the research findings.

*Into schools four I ventured
With questions at hand to answer.
In seeking new ways of knowing,
New ways of doing,
A new curriculum I designed.*

*Of a mixed lot the schools were
And varied too the texts used
But meddle with what is I did not
For the curriculum I tested
In conditions, natural and true.*

*These schools I located in Singapore;
And if you find the system a tad too confusing
Please do take a moment or two
Browsing through the glossary.*