

# Indonesian High School Teachers' Approaches in Teaching Literature in English

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discuss approaches used by Indonesian English teachers in teaching literary texts in high schools. This study was conducted during one of several community engagement sessions in which the writers acted as co-organizer and invited speakers. This activity is aimed at improving teachers' knowledge about literature subject, which includes poem, song and proverb and how to teach it. These texts are compulsory texts for students taking English as their minor. The inclusion of literature itself into the teaching of English in high school is mandated by the newly implemented curriculum dubbed as Curriculum 2013. The population of this study was 40 English teachers who are members of English Teacher Forum Chapter Agam Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia. A total of 23 teachers responded to the questionnaire which was administered online. A questionnaire adapted from Rashid, Vethamani and Abdul Rahman [10] and Mustakim, Mustapha and Lebar [9] was employed to collect the data. The results show that teachers employ language-based approach, paraphrastic approach, information-based approach, personal-response approach, moral philosophical approach and stylistic-approach. It was also revealed that language-based approach was the most popular approach used by teachers, followed by moral-philosophical approach and information-based approach respectively. The least popular approaches were paraphrastic and stylistic approach.

**Keywords:** English Teachers, approaches in teaching literature in English, Curriculum 2013

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Publication about the advantages of literature for language learning is in abundance. However, in Indonesian ELT context, literature was not formally included in high school curriculum. It was once only taught to senior high school students majoring in language program and completely dropped from the syllabus of English subject for senior high school after the implementation of Curriculum KTSP in 2006 [1]. Literary component was re-introduced to senior high school curriculum in 2013 when Curriculum KTSP was replaced by Curriculum 2013. In this case, literature is not taught to all students but only to those enrolling in English as elective subject.

According to Sayuti [2], the learning of literature revolves around two orientations, namely literary knowledge and literary appreciation. This holds true for the basic competences students must achieve for literature in English as stipulated by the new curriculum. In Curriculum 2013 [3], it is said that the learning objectives for this topic is students are able to identify the text's social function, linguistic features, and literary elements. Students are also expected to be able to appreciate the work by being able to discuss the meaning of the literary texts. The curriculum is also

very particular in mentioning that the theme of the literary work taught to students must be relevant with teenagers and their experience.

Since literature has never taken a centre stage in the teaching of English for secondary school students in Indonesia coupled with its relatively new re-implementation, it can be expected that research about it is few and far between. Some existing literatures talk about the perception of students, teachers and parents, about the effectiveness of the implementation of literature in English per mandated by Curriculum 2013 [1]. Others discuss about the benefit of including and retaining literature in Indonesian ELT curriculum [4]. There are also studies which look to issues such as students' attitude toward literature and its teaching [5], students' ability in analyzing literary work in English [6] and the compatibility between the requirements set by Curriculum 2013 about the theme of literary works taught to students with literary works included in textbooks for English as elective subject [7].

To ensure the success of the learning process, aspects such as teaching approaches employed by teachers is very important. In a situation where literature component is an established part of the English subject syllabus in primary and secondary school, there have

been a plethora of studies about approaches used by teachers to teacher literature [8]–[12]. However, to the best of the writers’ knowledge studies about approaches used by teachers in teaching literature in English for senior high school students in Indonesia are practically non-existent. Therefore, it is the objective of this paper to discuss about teaching approaches used by senior high school English teachers in Indonesia.

With regards to the teaching of literature, much publication on this topic cited three teaching models suggested by Carter and Long [13].

- a) **The Cultural Model:** often dubbed as the traditional approach to teaching literature, this model treats literature as the source of information about the culture of the target language. In this model, students are to study and interpret the social, political, historical and literary background of a specific text; as a result, they have the opportunity to immerse themselves with plenty of information about the work which can help them to understand the work better. However, this model is also criticized for being teacher-centered [14], [9] and [15]. Savvidou [14] even goes further by saying that this model is of little use in helping students with language practice; thus, turned down by those in the context of TEFL.
- b) **The Language Model:** often hailed as the most common approach used to teach literature, this model provides systematic and methodical ways for students to access a literary text. Within the framework of this model, teachers are given freedom to implement activities generally practiced in language teaching such as cloze procedure, jumbled-sentences, and role play. It is hailed to be beneficial in increasing students’ knowledge about the target language because literature is used to teach specific linguistic features [14],[9], [16]. However, according to Carter and McRae in [14], this model provides students with little opportunity to engage with the text other than for linguistic purpose; therefore, the literary goal of learning literature is hard to achieve.
- c) **The Personal Growth Model:** closely related to the language model, this model provides students some spaces to relate to themes and topics of a literary text with their personal experience. This model is also known to particularly rely on the language use in a text in a specific cultural context [14], [9], [15].

Aside from the three models listed above, there are also several teaching approaches in teaching literature which in one or other ways incorporate the three models proposed by Carter and Long. According to Moody in [8] a teaching approach is important to “provide a framework, or sequence of operations to be

used when we come to actualities.” Furthermore, Brown in [10] reiterates that approaches are “theoretically well informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings.” Suliman, Yusoff and Nor [15] state that approaches enable teachers to better prepare the class. Mok in [16] argues that they are crucial in learners’ skill development.

Information-based approach is the teaching and learning process which centers around teachers who provide inputs to students [15]. The input in question, according to Lazar [18], is knowledge about literature which may encompass the history, the literary movement and characteristics of a particular literary text. In other words, within the framework of this approach, teachers have to explain to students much information in order to make them knowledgeable about the input. As a result, common classroom activities in this approach are lecturing, note reading, explaining and teachers providing criticism towards the texts.

Language-based approach is basically the teaching of a language by using literature. In other words, as Lazar [18] puts it, within the framework of this approach, literature is treated as a resource for language learning . Furthermore, in this approach, the teaching and learning process shift to students [8], [15] because they are tasked to do some language activities related to a literary text. Language activities which can be implemented in this approach include poetry recital, prediction, role-play, debate and discussion.

Personal-response approach puts emphasis on students’ response toward literature. Since this approach involves students’ feeling or affective aspect, their responses are deemed as personal [8], [15]. According to Talif in [8] the objective of eliciting students’ response is to motivate them to read by relating the text with their personal experience. Question-discussion, brainstorming, small group discussion, and journal writing are among many language activities which can be implemented in the class room under this approach.

According to Hwang and Embi [8], paraphrastic approach deals with the surface meaning of a text. The nature of this approach is the use of simplified version of a text in teaching literature. Talif in [8] state that it can be used in the context where students are in the beginning phase of learning a language. Activities commonly suggested for this approach is reading paraphrased version of a text, teachers retelling a text in simpler language and translating the text to students’ mother tongue.

In moral philosophical approach, the emphasis is the instill men of moral values through the teaching of literature. In other words, students are made aware of moral values embedded in literature. In doing so,

searching for moral values in literature is at the heart of this approach [8], [10]. Classroom activities for this approach include reflective session, students searching for moral values in literature and asking students to evaluate what they should and should not do based on their reading.

Stylistic approach is an approach in which linguistics knowledge is used to understand literature. Unlike paraphrastic approach, it can only be implemented in classes where students have already possessed intermediate or advanced knowledge of a target language.

In this approach, according to Lazar [18], the combination of linguistic analysis and literary analysis will result in students' ability to understand and appreciate literature. Furthermore, Lazar [18] believes this approach can yield two benefits for students, namely the ability to make meaningful interpretation and the expansion of their language awareness and knowledge. Suggested activities for this approach are asking students to look for linguistics and language features which may contribute in the conveying of the meaning of a text.

## 2. METHOD

The present study employed quantitative measures and was aimed at identifying approaches used by English teachers in teaching literature in Indonesia. A survey research was employed as the design of the study. The population of the study was English teachers enrolled as the members of English Teacher Forum Chapter Agam Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia. This study is a part of a community engagement program organized by the writers in order to help English teachers in understanding literature and how to teach it. The program itself was conducted online to observe the government restriction in relation to COVID-19 pandemic. The number of the total population was 40 teachers. A total of 23 teachers responded to the questionnaire which was administered online. A questionnaire adapted from Rashid, Vethamani and Abdul Rahman [10] and Mustakim, Mustapha and Lebar [9] was employed to collect the data. The questionnaire was translated to Indonesian before being administrated online. It consisted of Yes-and No Items. In this case, the respondents were asked to tick which activities listed in the survey that they implemented in their English class. Demographic survey was also conducted to shed some lights into the profile of teachers teaching literature in the regency. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for demographic survey reveal that the majority of the research participants were female (89, 7%). In terms of education qualification, 89, 7 % holds a degree in English Education and the rest (10, 3%) has a master degree. The duration of time they have spent in teaching English in senior high school also varies considerably. 48, 3 % has been teaching English in senior high school for about 16-20 years. 31 % has been in the profession for more than 21 years. Those who have been teaching for about 5-10 years and 11-15 years account for 13, 8% and 6, 9 %, respectively.

The finding reveals the prevailing approaches used by English teachers teaching in senior high schools located in Agam Regency, West Sumatera, Indonesia prior to their participation in the community engagement program on the teaching of literature organized by the writers. The results show that the participants employ language based-approach, paraphrastic approach, information-based approach, personal-response approach, moral philosophical approach and stylistic approach. The breakdown of the percentage for each approach is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean of Approaches in Teaching Literature in English

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Language Based-Approach	17,83
Paraphrastic Approach	13
Information-Based Approach	16,5
Personal-Response Approach	15,25
Moral-Philosophical Approach	17,8
Stylistic Approach	14,6

Table 1 gives information that language-based approach and moral-philosophical approach are amongst those employed most frequently by teachers (mean = 17, 8). This is followed by Information-based approach (mean = 16,5) and Personal-response approach (mean = 16,5). Paraphrastic approach and personal-response approach are amongst the least used approach used by teachers (mean = 13 and 14,6, respectively). Table 2 shows the strategies used by teachers in teaching literature in English.

Table 2. Frequency and Mean of Strategies employed by Teachers in Teaching Literature

Item	Frequency	Mean
<b>Language-Based Approach</b>		
Guide students to infer meaning from clues from the text	18	0,78
Guide students to read between line	17	0,74
Asking students to predict what will happen next at key points of a story	17	0,74
Guide students to express opinion towards a text	18	0,78
Set simple language activities in literature lesson	19	0,83
Generate language practice using the text	18	0,78
<b>Paraphrastic Approach</b>		
Provide a written paraphrased version as a complementary reading text	11	0,48
Teach solely using a paraphrased version of a text	2	0,09
Guide students to paraphrase the text	11	0,48
Explain figurative and ambiguous language used in simpler words	17	0,74
Use simple terms to explain what the story is about to students	20	0,87
Re-tell the text to students to help them understand	17	0,74
<b>Information-Based Approach</b>		
Guide students to identify and read informative extract in the story	15	0,65
Provide specific details about the literary elements found in the text	16	0,7
Elicit information from students about the text	19	0,83
Explain the main content of the text to the class	17	0,74
Provide students with background information	14	0,61
Ask questions about students' knowledge based on what they have read.	18	0,78
<b>Personal-Response Approach</b>		
Guide students to relate to the themes to personal experience	17	0,74
Ask students to compare the text to any text they have read earlier	14	0,61
Elicit students' response to a text	13	0,57
Encourage students to express feeling about issues raised in the text	17	0,74
<b>Moral-Philosophical Approach</b>		
Incorporate moral values in the lessons	19	0,83
Tell students directly the moral values found in the text	18	0,78
Ask students the values they learn from the text	18	0,78
Guide students to search for moral values from a text	18	0,78
Raise students' awareness of values arise in a text	16	0,7
<b>Stylistics Approach</b>		
Guide students to interpret a text by looking at the language used by the author	14	0,61
Get students to mark any linguistics features from the text that are significant for their reading	13	0,57
Encourage students to discuss beyond the surface meaning of a text	17	0,74

Based on the data presented in the table above, it is interesting to note that teachers employ all of the listed strategies in class. In each of the listed approaches, there are strategies favoured by teacher than the others. Under language-based approach, the most frequently used strategy is setting simple language activities in literature lesson. Helping learners to access a literary text by using simple terms to explain what the text is all about is the strategy used by many teachers when they employ paraphrastic approach. For those who use information-based approach to teach literature, eliciting information about the text from the student is used more frequently. Guiding students to relate to themes in literature and encouraging them to express

feeling about issues raise in a text are two activities conducted in class by the majority of teachers. In moral-philosophical approach, the most frequently used strategy is the incorporation of moral values in literature lesson. Then, the majority of teachers employing stylistic approach encourage students to go beyond the surface meaning of a text in classroom.

What can be found from the analysis of the data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 is Language-Based Approach is the most preferred approach to teaching literature by Indonesian English teacher. This finding corresponds with the result of the study conducted by [12]. Aside from Language-Based Approach, Moral-Philosophical-Approach is also favoured by the respondents. This finding is relevant with the results of the study conducted by [8], [10]. Regarding the activities conducted by teachers in teaching literature, the finding reveals that using simple term to explain what the text is all about is employed by most teachers. This finding is similar with the study conducted by [15], [19]. Other activities which are also popular with the respondents are setting simple language activities in literature lesson, incorporating moral values in the lesson, eliciting information from students about the text.

According to Hwang and Embi [8], there are many factors influencing teachers in choosing the appropriate approach to use in class which include students' language proficiency, attitudes, the importance put on examination, teaching material and class size. In the context of this study, the findings indicate that respondents are dealing with students with low language proficiency. Therefore, the explanation of a literary text by using simple language is favoured by teachers.

It is also important to note that the respondents are dealing with EFL students. In other words, they do not use English in their daily life. In this case, teachers should help students to comprehend the text first before proceeding to other activities. It can explain why Language-Based Approach is employed by the majority of teachers in this study. Another factor which influences teachers to implement this approach is the textbooks they use in class. The majority of textbook for English subject in Indonesia presents literature subject in the fashion of language-based approach. For each literary text discussed in those books, book writers provide language activities such as matching activities and cloze procedure.

The second most used approach in literature teaching in Indonesia is Moral-Philosophical Approach. Although this study does not go further into why teachers employ a certain approach in teaching literature, there are some reasons why this approach is chosen. First, according to Hwang and Embi [8]

literature lesson has long been regarded as a way to teach moral values. Second, Abdul Rashid, Vethamani and Abdul Rahman [10] posits that this approach is effective in motivating students with low language proficiency. These two conditions are present in the context of the present study. Therefore, the employment of Moral-Philosophical Approach by the respondents is justified.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Indonesia English teachers favor Language-Based Approach and Moral-Philosophical Approach in teaching literature in English. However, teachers also opt to employ activities which they believe will help their students to comprehend literature like explaining the text with simple language and setting simple language activities. The findings also indicate that students' language proficiency influence teachers' choice of approaches and activities in their literature class.

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