

Language Teachers' Perception toward Literature: E-portfolio-based Study within Malaysian Pre- Service Community

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Abstract

Despite apparent differences, literature is unified with language learning and its methodical exercise can enhance language proficiency. In Malaysia, literature was formally integrated to boost the deteriorated standard of English. However, contemporary studies denote that language teachers who practically experienced this initiative are struggling to attain several fundamental competencies including English language. Hence, such policy has become an issue of examination to understand the loopholes. Particularly pre-service language teachers' understanding of literature requires investigation as it can hinder their future professional excellence. Therefore, this study was initiated to examine fifty-five pre-service language

teachers' understanding of literature at Universiti Sains Malaysia. E-portfolios, the most adaptable tool currently available in teacher education contexts, were used in this regard. Content of the e-portfolios as well as the online reflections of participants were considered as the data source. Analyzed data indicate that pre-service language teachers were aware of the importance of the teaching literature for language development. Participants further stressed on the effectiveness/challenges of the existing syllabus and suggested for reformation. Since this study was accomplished in a limited context, constant flow of empirical investigations is imperative to safely claim participants' such supposition and reap the benefits of introducing literature for language development.

Keywords: Literature, Language Teacher, E-portfolio, Community of Practice

1. Introduction

English has the wider dispersion in the global economy than any other languages and been considered as the dominant language for interaction, reflection, and knowledge production. Hence, identifying the best strategy that can eliminate students' reluctance and boost up their interest to learn English is imperative. Researchers (e.g. Subramaniam, 2007; Paran, 2008) argue that literary components are unified with language learning and its methodical exercise can significantly enhance language proficiency. In Malaysia, literary components were formally integrated to enhance the standard of English language and prepare students to face the challenges of fast moving world (Bapoo, 2007). However, language teachers, who actually experienced this policy, are still struggling to become

proficient in several valuable competencies including English language (Kabilan, 2007). Therefore, the issue of using literature for language development in Malaysian context has become a matter of scrutiny and demands further empirical investigations.

2. Literature Review

The benefit of teaching literature in language context is widely researched and discussed. It is argued that literature facilitates readers to discover a culture by provoking reflection, evoking feeling, and stimulating action; multiple levels of text meaning involves learners to find the unstated senses which, in turn, fosters cognitive and critical thinking; relates vocabulary items to develop different interpretations; enhance students' motivation to interact with texts to develop reading proficiency and helps teachers for a broader understanding of the needs and characteristics of students (Subramaniam, 2007; Paran, 2008). However, the changing connection between language and literature is still dubious and not sufficiently underpinned by empirical experiments (Paran, 2008). More importantly, such benefits are "much more difficult than sometimes optimistically assumed" (Saraceni, 2003:18). For example, in traditional classrooms teachers try to transmit or impose own interpretations (Nystrand, 1997) which, in turn, de-motivates students to make meaning or respond to the text. Students also may feel reluctant to grasp the stylistic features of literary discourse.

Perhaps, such skepticism is particularly factual in Malaysian context. Literature was formally integrated at the dawn of new millennium when English was seen as 'necessary evil' (Gaudart, 1987 cited in Vethamani, 2007). Curriculum was redesigned "in line with the way English is used in society in everyday life, when interacting with people, when accessing information and when understanding and responding to literary works" (Bahasa Inggeris, 2000:2). It was expected that the new curriculum would pursue higher education,

carry out project works, discuss and analyse various issues in English. However, daily discussions in print and electronic media reveals that twenty-nine percent undergraduate language teachers come to universities with extremely limited command in English (Atan, 2007 cited in Sarudin et al., 2007), refrain from taking up literature courses for the same reasons or “do not have the confidence to handle the subject” (Bapoo, 2007:233). That is, despite enhanced interest from policymakers and academics, language teachers are struggling to achieve expected outcomes from this syllabus. Such situation certainly demands empirical investigation to identify the loopholes of this policy. However, relevant previous studies merely focused on the history, methodical concerns or pedagogical implication of this policy (Subramaniam, 2007, Vethamani, 2007). Empirical evidences are sparse so far, if any that focused on language teachers’ perception toward literature.

However, identifying the tool that effectively can examine language teachers’ understanding of literature is crucial. In the contemporary era, such examination needs to involve innovative technologies to unearth the actual situation. E-portfolio (also known as online portfolio, portfolio, digital portfolio, ePortfolio, efolio, webfolio), as an example of such kind, permits teachers to demonstrate understanding “in action, before action, after action, in solitude, in consultation with peers, in consultation with instructors, coaches, and advisers, written, spoken, videotaped, or geographically represented” (Riedinger, 2006:94). It is best integrated in line with a course (Stefani, Mason & Pegler, 2007) where objectives of the course facilitate teachers to collect, select, reflect, and present artifacts in a pre-determined online platform. Asynchronous and synchronous communication encourages teachers to create online community for mutual engagement and share repertoire (Wenger, 1998). As such, e-portfolios help to construct understanding of the content, facilitate personal teaching practices, reflect on it, document and unfold

learning process (Strudler & Wetzel, 2005). That is, emphasis on process rather than product provides opportunity to assess teachers' understanding from an alternative point of view (Kilbane & Milman, 2005). Hence, it is seen as the single most prominent innovation (De Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005) or the most adaptable tool currently available in teacher education context (Stefani, Masson & Pegler, 2007).

E-portfolios are advocated numerously in previous researches for several reasons; for example flexible to use, accessible anytime anywhere and inexpensive to reproduce (De Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005), enhance ICT competency (Costantino & De Lorenzo, 2002), promote self-directed (Avraamidou & Zembal-Saul, 2004), collaborative (Abrami & Barret, 2005), deep (Tosh et al., 2006) and lifelong learning (Acosta & Liu, 2006), enhance cross-curricular competencies (Abrami & Barret, 2005), promote critical thinking (Reidinger, 2006) and self-confidence (Zeichner & Wray, 2001), develop linguistic ability (Banfi, 2003), encourage development, reflection, assessment and showcasing (Stefani, Masson & Pegler, 2007), and represent accomplishments throughout teacher preparation programs (Sherman, 2006). Hence, it is seen as the single most prominent innovation (De Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005) or the most adaptable tool currently available in teacher education context (Stefani, Masson & Pegler, 2007). However, despite such significant attributes, it is never been heard of or reported in Malaysia (Vethamani, Kabilan & Khan, 2008). Therefore, aim of the study was using e-portfolios to examine Malaysian English language teachers' perception toward literature.

3. Theoretical framework

In this globalized epoch, learning style of 'net generation' is ever changing. Students of nowadays are more oriented to visual media and prefer to learn by doing rather than merely telling or reading. Community of Practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott &

Snyder 2002), the contemporary development of socio-cultural theory, has become a competing paradigm in today's landscape. It is a 'more intentional' and 'systematic' method to manage knowledge where members can spend time together, share information, insight, and advice, help each other to solve problems, discuss their situation, aspirations and needs, ponder common issues, explore ideas and act as sounding boards (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002). Combination of three 'fundamental elements' have distinguished CoP from other learning theories—domain, community and practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Domain is the issues or problems that members of a community commonly experience. Later, in pursuing common interests in a domain, members engage in a practice of joint activities to share information. However, in this epoch of ICT, developing such community through online has become a norm (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Since tools act as a mediator to link human activities and the society (Vygotsky, 1978), its role is imperative to create such communities. Vygotsky gives examples of cultural tools as printing presses, rulers, abacus; likewise, e-portfolios can be a worthwhile mediator to develop teachers' CoP and explore the challenges of e-portfolio in Malaysian context.

4. Methodology

Fifty-five pre-service ESL teachers participated in this study who were majoring in TESOL at Universiti Sains Malaysia and enrolled in the course *Teaching of English through Literature* (PET301). Participants were randomly divided into nine groups (on average six language teachers in each group) and asked to use e-portfolios to create online Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). For the purpose of this study, e-portfolio was defined as 'course e-portfolio' where students can document and reflect to meet the outcomes of a single course (Stefani, Mason & Pegler, 2007). Hence, the above mentioned course was selected as the face-to-face setting. Besides, derived from Barrett's (2007) suggestion *Google Group* was used as the online platform. Participants were required to submit five *Weekly Journals*

(domains) in line with the face-to-face discussion of classroom. These are (1) Literature syllabus, (2) Teaching literature: why, what and how, (3) Approaches to using literature with the language learner, (4) Activities in teaching literature and (5) Selecting and evaluating materials. Answers of three questions in each journal were required— what they have learnt in previous week, what their personal opinion about that issue is and how that learning can help them in their development and growth.

In addition, as reflection is considered as the most essential part of e-portfolios (Barrett, 2007), they were asked to visit others' e-portfolios to read, examine, reflect and post *Discussion Journals* (practice) at least once in a week. Stevenson's (2006) reflection method for e-portfolios was suggested to follow--(1) look over others' journals, read, study, or examine again (2) consider retrospectively, look back on (3) examine with an eye to criticism or correction and (4) write a critical report mentioning his opinion. The course instructor played the role of 'e-moderator' (Salmon, 2000) when participants were conceptualizing wrongly or deviated from the main discussion or even decision was required in debatable issues. A lecture session was arranged at the beginning of the semester aiming to orient them with the concept and demonstrate the procedures of creating e-portfolio. The graphical translation of the study plan is shown in Figure 1.

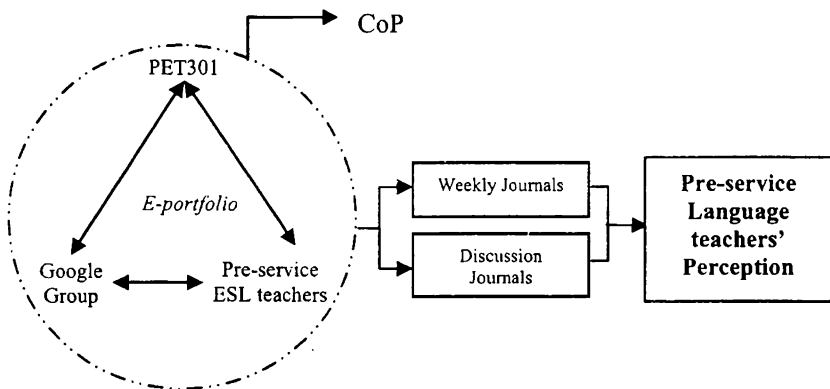


Figure 1: Study plan

Data collection period was limited within one semester. Data were collected from the posted weekly and discussion journals in e-portfolios. By examining the relevant contents, data were organized, broken into manageable units, synthesized, and reduced under different themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). A coding system was used to single out the participants (e.g. A1-- where A refers to the 'Group A' and 1 is the first participant; similarly C5 means the fifth participant of 'Group C and so on) and their postings (WK and DJ refer to weekly journal and discussion journal). For citation, posting code and participants' code were used together (e.g., WJF4—weekly journal of the fourth participants of group F, DJB5—discussion journal of the fifth participant of group B and so on).

5. Findings

Data indicate participants' enthusiastic involvement since they visited others' e-portfolios, reviewed their opinions and raised some considerable arguments. Such discussion enveloped a number of themes (Table 1) and described elaborately in the following sections.

Table 1: Themes Derived from Participants' Critical Opinion

Themes	Citation
Importance of Literature in ESL context	Findings that indicate the participants have gained, learnt or have become aware of useful and relevant fundamental knowledge and understanding about the importance of literary components.
Perceived Effectiveness of Existing Curriculum	Findings that indicate the participants positively perceived that existing literary texts could facilitate development in different folds including <i>enhancement of language proficiency, cultural awareness, moral and aesthetical value, and other competencies such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving.</i>
Perceived Challenges of Existing Curriculum	Findings that indicate the participants that existing literary texts have different challenges as well, such as <i>inappropriateness of content, cultural issues, inappropriate assessment method, and teachers' detachment in selecting texts.</i>

Suggestion for curriculum reformation	Findings that indicate the participants of reformation of the existing literary texts in line with students' <u>difficulty level and their interest</u> , <u>cultural issues</u> , <u>support ICT friendly approaches</u> , and <u>inclusion of Drama</u> .
Understanding as future teachers	Findings that indicate the participants have gained, learnt or have become aware of new, meaningful, useful and relevant fundamental knowledge and understanding in order to become effective teacher.

5.1 Importance of Literature in ESL Context

Data reveal that participants perceived literature as “less stressful to read than normal text” and can create “more interesting and friendly” (DJA7) learning environment compared to other language classes. Aesthetical themes or storylines help students to nourish ‘life lessons’ through critical and creative thinking, problem solving and imagination (WJA7), which in turn, broaden their mind to become a better person (WJE5) in a comparatively simple way (WJA7). Besides, it can be a ‘gateway’ for students “to access other cultural background within various places and races” (WJF4) or to become aware of others’ tradition (DJA6). The participants argued that reading literature could be an opportunity to compare the pro and contras between local and foreign arts (DJC6), understand “historical context and the relevance of cultural philosophies” (DJF4) and appreciate those things from their point of views (DJE5). As such, literature can be a platform “to explore more about language” (DJB4). Hence, one participant noted, learning language with literature might be shorter, but the absorption rate is greater (DJD3).

5.2 Perceived Effectiveness of Existing Texts

Participants perceived that literary text of existing syllabus is actually a very small part of the whole course (DJB7), ‘carefully planned’ (WJE6) with different genres (DJA2), and not a ‘burden to the student to study’ (WJE6). Rather, it can foster their development and growth

in different folds—enhancement of language, creative and critical thinking skills cultural awareness, problem solving skills among the others. For example, one participant claimed this curriculum could create interesting learning environment (WJA4) to stimulate students' language-based activities (WJF3) for writing accurately, speaking with correct pronunciation and intonation (WJB7), and promoting reading habit (WJD2). Hence, one participant noted, “literature is the best way to teach the students of the nation” (WJD3). They further quoted relevant texts to explain how existing syllabus can foster different skills. For example:

Language: *The word candle can bring meanings like life, light, emptiness and many more. With this, students will sense that a word can carry a lot of meaning (WJI1).*

Critical thinking: *The Sound Machine is a good example to look into other's mind as this particular short story reveals an old man who can hear the sound of wounded trees after being chopping down and the yell of the flower's stem after being cutting off through a machine. Students are also encouraged to express their own thinking and opinion as literature is very subjective (WJE6).*

Cultural awareness: *In How Dalat got its Name by Heidi Munan, a place close to us yet far to have ever imagined such a hideous incident could ever take place within our own country. These are examples of cross-cultural portal of which students are able to see for themselves. (WJF4)*

Problem solving skill: *Most of the writers covered about the adults suffering and problems in the story. For example, the story The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant tells about a woman's desire to wear well and wants things beyond her ability. However, at the ending the lady suffers to pay back her debts. By learning this story*

students can learn problems that they may face in the real world (WJA3)

5.3 Perceived Challenges of Existing Texts

Pre-service language teachers stressed that literature could be a burden for them if they face difficulties to enjoy or understand the components. It was noted “the most important aspect of having literature component in the syllabus is the right selection of texts that students can really relate and enjoy” (DJH2). Therefore, participants critically examined the texts and analyzed its effectiveness in terms of appropriateness of content, cultural issues, assessment method, and teachers'/students' detachment in text selection process.

5.3.1 Inappropriateness of content

Data indicate that participants were skeptical about the appropriateness of few texts in terms of students' age, maturity or culture. The critical questions surfaced:

All of these literary works are suitable for the students in their age? Do you think that they can really internalize their way of life through foreign literature? Towards what sense that they really can appreciate other people's cultures, traditions, customs and beliefs? (DJC1)

It was agreed that “there are some texts which are quite appropriate to the students” and students can get “better knowledge regarding own and other cultural beliefs, traditions, and values” (DJF1) from those texts. In parallel, “not all the module in literature component seems to fit the students' proficiency level and cognitive level” particularly who came from poor English background” (DJF1). For example, one participant noted:

Look at the literature works used to teach Form one. For example, the poems entitled Life's Brief Candle and the Dead Crow. The themes of these poems are about death and sorrow. At aged 13, are our Form one students old enough to be exposed to such heavy issue? (WJD1)

It could affect students to become pessimistic about life by pouring these thoughts into their susceptible mind and soul (DJF2). It will be difficult for the students, one participant stressed, to comprehend the language as well from such kind of texts (WJD5). Other participant claimed that even the university students might face problems to comprehend such a 'complicated text' (WJF1). Particularly students from rural areas or those who live in urban areas but not properly guided (WJE6) would become the 'victims' (WJD5). Therefore, the participants assumed that such lack of understanding may decrease the students' interest, create negative perception about literature and would perceive "literature is hard to learn as well as the other English texts" (WJE6). One participant described the anticipated situation with a metaphor:

I prefer to say that this situation is like watching a standup comedy. How can you laugh if you actually do not understand what the comedian is saying on the stage? You do not even understand the language he speaks, so how can you respond to his jokes? This goes the same with literary text included in the English lesson. How can we expect the students to enjoy reading those texts if they couldn't to master appropriate level of English, best fitted to their age and level of school? (DJ F2)

5.3.2 Cultural issues

The participants perceived that there is an imbalance in terms of quantity between the foreign and local literary components. Statistics was presented to compare:

Out of the nine poems that students must learn, there are three local poems with the rest being foreign works. Out of the eight short stories that students must learn, only two of it is from our local writers with local settings where else, the rest are foreign works using foreign settings. Then, from the eight novels whereby the students only need to learn three novels, there are also only two that are based locally. (WJB7)

The participants believed that learning cultural issues from local writings would be more effective for the students (DJF5). It was argued that more exposure to foreign texts may help students to understand others' cultural aspects (WJB7); but, a balance is required between learning other culture and appreciating own culture (DJB1). If students feel difficulties to learn foreign cultures before having sufficient knowledge about own culture, they might become confused and learning could be stalled (WJB7). Moreover, regarding student's age, political, historical or economic background some components may not suit the cultural belief as well. One participant provided an example:

I do not agree with the selection of a short story Looking for A Rain God that is regarding ancient tribal ritual for rain that is practiced in Botswana, Africa. They sacrifice their own kids just to wish for the rain would come down. This is obviously considered as crime in our country. I was thinking that introducing this text to the student is as if 'teaching' them to do crime. (WJE6)

5.3.3 Inappropriate assessment method

The participants argued that ‘Examination-Syndicate’ has been setting questions from the same texts for the last ten years (WJD2). They ask merely surface-level queries, which are not critical to provoke students’ thinking ability (DJA2). Students can almost predict what type of questions will come in the major examinations (WJH2). Besides, continuing with the same texts for a long time, many companies have been publishing a number of supporting books. Many of them are ‘unconvincing’ or not ‘effective enough’ for the students to understand the purpose of learning the English literature” (WJB2). Students “just memorize answers from reference books (like theme, characters, etc) and reproduce it for the exam” (DJA2).

5.3.4 Teachers’ detachment in selecting texts

Teachers are the persons who know better students’ needs, interest, their cultural background and their language level. Therefore, teachers’ view toward specific texts could be vital for its effective execution and “get more benefit from the literary texts that they learn” (WJD7). However, teachers’ role in selecting texts is minimal or they are merely required to follow the prescribed texts. In such situation, teachers might confine “in a small cage when the world is full of possibilities and creativity” (WJA2). As such, teachers might feel isolation from the texts, which, in turn, could oblige them to teach with less interest (DJC4).

5.4 Suggestions to Redesign

Because of such challenges, participants perceived that the literary texts should be monitored frequently and “undergo with some changes” (DJB3) after every few years (DJA2). It should be ‘done carefully’ that “marries more international and contemporary view of literature” (WJF1), can maintain students' ability and interest (DJE1)

to enhance proficiency in English (DJE6). Since students are more visually inclined and prefer not to read much (WJF1), the contents should be in line with 'ICT-friendly teaching approach' (WJF1) and "interesting enough to 'hook' the reader to the text" (DJG3). Such selection should be arranged based on 'easy to difficult' method (DJC4), so that they gradually understand the importance of learning literature in their life (DJE1). Participants further recommended to consider introducing more short stories" (WJD2). Ministry of Education also can give "some thoughts of putting songs instead of poem; as songs are also creative and students are more familiar with it (WJE6). Regarding cultural issues, more local texts were suggested to reduce the gap between the reader and texts (WJE6). Moreover, it was stressed that drama as a literary genre is absent in the existing syllabus (DJI4); therefore, need to incorporate it language development (DJI5). Perhaps the ministry can distribute some questionnaire involving the views of all the parties including teachers, students and parents (WJI3) to see their feedback on preferred topics, components or themes (WJE6).

5.5 Understanding as a Future Teacher

The participants stressed that teachers' ability to instruct literature is crucial for the effectual implementation of the policy. Consequently, the crucial questions surfaced-- "are Malaysian English teachers knowledgeable, skilled, and equipped enough to teach literature in classroom" (DJF2). From their schooldays experiences, the participants knew that learning literature was 'very boring and stressful' (DJ14), 'sleepy and boring' (DJA1), 'too heavy' (DJG3), 'something unpredictable and just wasting of time' as there was no input (DJE4). Hence, participants stressed that teachers "should have sufficient knowledge and understanding to answer students' doubts" (DJA7) but ability of using effective strategy to execute that

knowledge (WJ1B1) is imperative. Teachers need to provide “a meaning in learning literature” so that the students can come out from shadow (DJF1) “by thinking critically and creatively” (DJF1). It is teachers’ obligation to open the students’ eyes and let them aware that literature is a stimulus that could generate cognitive development, encompass intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects to become a harmonious human having high social standards (WJB4). Otherwise, traditional ‘boring approach’ may ‘kill students’ motivation’ (DJA6) or students can perceive English is ‘an unnecessary element’ (DJE4). Since the teachers would face difficulties to apply effective strategies, the Ministry of Education need to “come up with programs for the present and future teachers about teaching literature--why, what and how” (WJF1).

6. Discussion

The findings reveal that pre-service language teachers used e-portfolio as a mediator tool to demonstrate their understanding of teaching literature in English language classroom. Particularly, the discussion and weekly journals created opportunities for the participants to demonstrate their understanding of the significance of using literary texts in ESL context. Later, such understanding led them to examine the advantages of the existing syllabus. The participants generally appreciated this policy since it can create opportunities for students’ development in different folds including language proficiency, cultural awareness, moral and aesthetical value, and other essential competencies such as critical thinking, creative thinking and problem solving. Besides, pre-service teachers noted a number of challenges of the current syllabus, and consequently, provided few innovative and considerable suggestions for its further

effective implementation. From such findings it can be claimed that virtual interaction with e-portfolio facilitates the pre-service language teachers to develop knowledge and understanding about literary components, analyze critically others' opinion, reconstruct innovative ideas from prior knowledge and grasp the course content even deeply. It can be stressed that such online involvement might be a useful strategy (Coupland, 2010) to facilitate pre-service language teachers understanding of literature; because “many teachers have had little opportunity to be formally instructed in ways of reading and studying literary text” (Subramaniam, 2003:vii).

The participants claimed that few literary texts were not appropriately selected in terms of students' maturity level and, therefore, require proper reformation. Such claim can be connected with the recommendation of Subramaniam, Hamdan and Lie (2003:80) where “review curricula and syllabus design and implementation” was stressed. Actually, the current syllabus remains unchanged for the last one decade and the literary texts often become a debatable issue. Bapoo (2007:68) describes some researchers' argument that “the books students chose to read ... are of little value in the literature program”. Other researchers, he continues, “stipulate that such books have a vital transitional function in the preparing students for more mature literacy experiences”. In such situation, policymakers have to take the critical decision how literary texts should be taught in language classroom—either to foster aesthetical aspects of literature or to illustrate grammatical rules and enrich vocabulary. Moreover, few issues need serious consideration while selecting literary texts—(1) understandable to the students, (2) have connection to their life,

(3) can raise meaningful questions from texts, and (3) the language level is within their maturity.

Participants generally perceived that teachers' knowledge about content and its proper execution is imperative to create an effective classroom practice. Such understanding might be useful for the future Malaysian language context since 38% teachers have little or no knowledge and 11% do not know or do not care about the literature while a larger number of teachers (48%) are not aware of appropriate method of teaching literature (Surbamaniam, Hamdan & Lie, 2003) or "act as a dominant figure who reads the story, explains, questions and gives answers to the students" (Hwang & Embi, 2007:17). Undeniably such situation is not convincing, but it has to be realized that introducing literature particularly in Asian context is always challenging. Such policy could be challenging in different ways; firstly, how to place emphasis on functional use of language, not literature; secondly, teachers' inadequate preparation to deal with literature; and thirdly, teachers' insufficient understanding of the role of language in a society and how it can contribute to students' ability to function in that society (Blatchford 1972, cited in Marckwardt, 1978). Although pre-service language teachers demonstrated awareness in content knowledge and effective classroom practice, such sense might dissipate due to inevitable difficulties of teaching in practical situation, personal issues and vulnerabilities or even social pressure and values (Farber, 1991). Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) suggest creating teachers' community and engaging them in variety of activities, which include sharing visions, working and learning collaboratively, visiting and observing others' classroom, and participating in shared decision-making. Since the findings reveal

e-portfolios could promote reflective practice on what, how, and why to teach literature, using it to develop such community might be a valuable way to foster Malaysian language teachers' continuous professional development as well as educational reform.

Despite the elementary nature of the study or the involvement of a subset of pre-service teachers, this study generated several considerable implications. Apparently, it is hard to identify tangible relationship among CoP, teaching language through literature and e-portfolios, however, findings yielded implication that these phenomena can be incorporated under one umbrella. Undeniably, such implication has significance in the contemporary trend of ICT-based interdisciplinary research. Findings also revealed that online CoP with e-portfolios generated an understanding on how to take charge of own learning. Actually creating e-portfolios encourage a process of collection, selection, reflection on information to reorganize the prior understanding. In this study, pre-service language teachers expressed own voices, appraised with analytical opinions, reflected in a synthesized manner and provided methodical suggestion for implication. As such, online reflection supported them to expand the horizon of understanding on the questions they asked initially, later came out with questions that are more informed, new perceptions, or new ways of seeing. Therefore, it can be stressed that grooming online reflective practices with e-portfolios would be a worthy initiative for promoting students' development of competencies. Such claim would be useful for the other developing countries as well who are exploring strategies to integrate ICT in educational practices. It is required to acknowledge that educational challenges are moving rapidly in this global era, therefore, merely

understanding the innovative teaching learning strategy might not sufficient; rather a mechanism is required on how to integrate the most useful ICT tools and what would be the strategy to gain optimal impact from that. Higher education institutions need to take the primary initiatives in this regard as they are responsible to enable and stimulate individuals to develop abilities on a life-long basis to achieve the highest possible level of intellect and skills.

7. Conclusion

The study was initiated to explore the perception of pre-service language teachers in implementing literary texts in language classrooms in Malaysia. Findings reveal that the participants were positive about the functionalities of literary texts in general and particularly in Malaysia; although a number of components were perceived as not satisfactory. Although this study focused the perception of a subset of pre-service language teachers, generalization to a larger population was not in scope. In spite of that, it has shed light on literary texts from different point of view and provided insights on several considerable implications, which might be helpful for researches as baseline information. Moreover, this study raised few critical questions about the appropriateness of literary components that require serious consideration until the texts are properly selected.

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