

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**THE USE OF SHORT STORIES FOR
PERSONAL RESPONSE
AT SMK SEMATAN:
A CASE STUDY**

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Abstract

Personal response in English has never been easy for students especially those from the rural areas. Even though in Malaysia English is the country's second language, due to the country's diverse background, English is perhaps the third or the fourth language spoken after the 'mother tongue', the standard Malay language and the other languages (if any) spoken by some Malaysians. English is perhaps a foreign language to some Malaysians. In SMK Sematan, students who mostly come from the Malay, Chinese and Bidayuh background normally put their mother tongue first in interaction, followed by Sarawak Malay, the Standard Malay, and then English. Hence, with this limited exposure in English, getting the students to give personal response in the language is a daunting task. Since the introduction of literature in the English language syllabus, one of its main aims is to get students to respond to the text personally. Therefore in this study, a research was done on the use of the two short stories 'QWERTYUIOP' and 'The Fruitcake Special' learnt by the upper form students to determine its effectiveness in promoting personal response. Ninety form four students and five teachers were selected as the sample for this study and the methods used to determine the results are testing and questionnaire. The result of the study is then generated from SPSS using the Descriptive Statistic Analysis method focussing on frequency, percentage and mean. In this study, the result shows that personal response through the two short stories is not quite effective due to students' poor language. Teachers' approaches and choice of activities contribute to students' poor language. Therefore, teachers' are encouraged to take some steps to improve their approaches and activities in the classroom to help students to improve their language first before promoting personal response.

Candidate's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This topic has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

In the event that my thesis be found to violate the conditions mentioned above, I voluntarily waive the right of conferment of my degree and agree be subjected to the disciplinary rules and regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Candidate's Declaration	
Acknowledgement	iii
Chapter 1	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	3
1.2 Statement of Problem	5
1.3 Objectives of the Study	8
1.4 Research Questions	8
1.5 Significance of the Study	9
1.6 Limitations of the Study	9
1.7 Definitions of Terms	10
1.8 Conclusion	10
Chapter 2	
2.0 Introduction	11
2.1 Literature Component in the Malaysian Classroom	12
2.2 Short Story in ESL Classroom	15
a) Practical Length	17
b) Developing Students' Interpretative Ability	17
c) Cultural Enrichment	18
d) Language Development	18
2.3 Short Stories	19
2.3.1 The Short Story 'QWERTYUIOP'	19
2.3.2 The Short Story 'The Fruitcake Special'	20
2.4 Teachers roles in literature classroom	21
2.5 Conclusion	24
Chapter 3	
3.0 Introduction	25
3.1 Research Design	26
3.2 Population and Sample	26
3.3 Probability Sampling	27
3.4 Instrument	27
3.5 Formatting the Questions	28
3.6 Data Collection	28
3.7 Criteria for Effective Measuring Instrument	28
3.8 Data Analysis	29
3.9 Conclusion	29

THE USE OF SHORT STORIES FOR PERSONAL RESPONSE AT SMK SEMATAN: A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

“I am shy”, “I have no confidence” and “I don’t speak good English” are the reasons given by students when asked why they do not want to speak up. Giving personal response is not everybody’s cup of tea. This is especially when one needs to voice out their opinions in public. This skill is important when students start working. Many employers lament that students, after their secondary education, are unable to deliver their best especially when communicating in English. Datuk Seri Dr. Chua Soi Lek, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) president comments that *“many employers are disappointed by the overall quality of school leaver despite the fact that SPM takers obtained A+ in their SPM examination.”* (Borneo Post, 2011:3). Datin Fatimah Abdullah, the Minister in the Chief Minister Department emphasizes that the school plays an important role to equip Malaysian students with appropriate skill in particular the skill to express opinions to meet employment market needs. She states that *“the ability to solve problems, analyse situation and critical thinking are very important. Therefore, teachers have to engage students in critical thinking to prepare young youth into future employment market.”* (Borneo Post, 2011:13). She too comments that Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) school leavers do not really possess oral proficiency in English despite being SPM top scorers. In light of that, teachers are encouraged to adopt different strategies and methods when teaching the students English.

One of the strategies adopted by the Ministry is through the introduction of literature which is incorporated in the English language syllabus. Many writers