

The Application Of The Internet In Understanding And Interpreting Meaning Of Form Four English Language Poems Among Tesl Students

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Abstract : This study was conducted to seek information on the application of the Internet resources by the TESL teacher-trainees in understanding the KBSM English language Form Four poems. A total of 30 third and fourth year TESL teacher-trainees who have taught the poetry component of the Form Four English language syllabus were selected during their practical teaching. A set of questionnaires was designed to obtain primary data from the respondents on their Internet usages in understanding the poems to help them in their teaching of the subject. The overall finding of the study suggests that the Internet is being used actively as a major resource for the more established poems written by the foreigners compared to the local poets. However, books are still a preferred tool of information among the respondents especially on the topic of the local poems. In conclusion, a few propositions have been made on the usage of online resources among TESL teacher-trainees to enrich their knowledge of the KBSM English language poems. Some recommendations for future researchers have also been made in the final part of this study

Katakunci : application, internet, understanding, interpreting, English poem

Introduction

The World Wide Web has played a major role in providing information in today's fast-paced world. Almost all of the information needed can be obtained anytime, anywhere by the simple click of the mouse. This advancement has great effects in the world of education especially in the learning processes among students who can now be active learners rather than passive recipients of information. According to Savage (2000), the Internet is considered as the vast global system for connecting computers linked by the World Wide Web – that is the leading edge of technology and an important teaching/learning tool in today's classroom.

In Malaysia, the English language is considered as 'the strong second language' for most speakers (MOE, 2005). It is spoken everywhere regardless of social or educational background by almost all Malaysians. At the tertiary level, this has been upheld by the recent move of the internationalization program by a number of local universities including UTM. As a part of the university, the TESL teacher-trainees of the Faculty of Education are a group of future major movers of inculcating the importance of this international language among the primary and secondary school students.

The TESL teacher-trainees of UTM are the future teaching workforce in the secondary schools throughout the country that are currently involved in the integration of latest information technology in the teaching and learning processes. Thus, it is important that they should be able to apply the limitless resources available on the Internet, into their future teaching practices in the classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

The English literature is one of the subjects that the TESL students need to have a firm grasp on in addition to other areas of the English language. As future English language teachers, they need

to be well-equipped with all of the components of the KBSM syllabus, including the literature components.

The rationale of introducing this literature component in the English language syllabus is that as syllabus is that as

“an aim that this component would found the base for an appreciation of literature in English with its concerns with humanity, values, beliefs and customs as well as its great intellectual tradition and heights of imagination and creativity. By the same, it is hoped also that the study of the literature would enhance the learning of the language in providing interesting language in context for students”.

(Foreword, Selected Poems and Short Stories for Form 4, 2000)

From the researcher’s observation and experience, there are not many reading materials available in the university main library that can help and cater to the students’ needs in understanding the poetry. The need to provide a better alternative in filling up this gap is important and is in-line with the emergence of the Internet as the latest source of unlimited information.

The emergence of the Internet providing unlimited amount of resources has been bombarding the world of education for years. How this has affected the students of Teaching English as the Second Language (TESL) in helping them to enrich their knowledge and understanding of the poems as future English language teachers in schools, is an interesting view to discover.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To obtain information on the most frequently used Internet tools among TESL teacher-trainees in interpreting meaning of KBSM English language Form Four poems.
2. To gain information on availability of the Internet resources in interpreting meaning of KBSM English language Form Four poems among TESL teacher trainees.
3. To investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the Internet application in the understanding of KBSM English language Form Four poems among TESL teacher-trainees.

Significance of the Study

The emergence of the World Wide Web as a vast sea of information has greatly affected the world of education especially the students as the main recipients of information. With it, information can be accessed by just a click of a button within a very short period of time.

This research will benefit the TESL students in optimizing their online communication skills in understanding the poems components as a preparation for their future undertakings as the English language teachers in schools. In addition, this is also can be used as an alternative resource without being fully dependent on textbooks alone as a resource for understanding and expanding their knowledge in the English language literature components. The TESL students will have more resources for these topics.

This research will also provide some alternative approaches to the lecturers in incorporating the Internet as the utmost source of information in their teaching of English literature. This is in line with the advancement of informational technology that enabled both the

teachers and learners in language classrooms from all around the world to access multitude forms of information online.

This research could also be regarded as a background for future development in the preparation of online teaching and learning materials of other KBSM English language literature components for both the teachers and students such as the novels, short stories and plays.

This research could be regarded as an additional exposure to the TESL students in the application of the Internet tools in other TESL subjects which will facilitate and enhance their expertise in incorporating the ICT skills in the language classroom which is an asset in this technological world.

Research Design

A set of questionnaires is used in obtaining the data needed for this study because according to Hague (1993), it is a useful method in drawing accurate information from the respondent. It also provides an ideal structure to the data collection so that it will flow smoothly and orderly thus the overall picture of the data can be constructed.

The questionnaire could also be regarded as a standard format on which facts, comments and attitudes of the respondents can be recorded.

Sample

The respondents selected in this study are 30 TESL teacher-trainees pursuing the Degree of Science with Education (TESL) in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. They have completed their practical teaching. The reason for choosing them is because they have taught the English language subject for the Form Four classes, including the literature components especially the poems focused on in the research. The respondents have also been chosen because they have the necessary experience in the teaching of the literature components and also the informational data collection skills using the Internet. The method of collecting information for their teaching purposes and personal enrichments of the poems are also being taken into consideration in the selection of the respondents for this study.

The respondents consisted of 2 males and 28 females, ranging from 22 to 27 years old. All of them have completed their practical teaching in various secondary schools in Johor such as Johor Bahru, Pontian, Kota Tinggi, Kulai and Batu Pahat, either in the session of 2006/2007 or 2007/2008. Each one of them has at least taught a class of form Four students.

Instruments

For the purpose of this study, a semi structured questionnaire is being used because it provides a mixture of questions with predefined answers as well as those where the respondents are free to express their opinions other than the choices stated by the researcher in the structured type. It is also a more flexible tool than its highly structured counterpart where there are opportunities to do more inquiries for reasons of certain answers. (Hague, 1993).

The questionnaire consists of four sections. Section A contains behavioral questions that dealt with the respondents' background information such as age, gender and year of study.

Section B is concerning the information on the respondents' session of completing their practical teaching, the schools and the number of Form Four classes that the respondents have been assigned to.

Section C is the set of questions posed to find out information regarding the poems such as the poems that they taught to the students and the availability of the resources of the poems on the Internet.

The final section consists of the attitudinal questions where the respondents need to answer questions regarding their understanding of the poems and also their perceptions towards the usages of online resources in the teaching of the Form Four poems. 2 open-ended questions are also included in this section where the respondents are asked about their opinions and suggestions on the usages of online resources in teaching poems.

Data Analysis

Figure 1 shows the types of online resources used by the respondents for the purposes of understanding and interpreting meaning of Form Four poems.

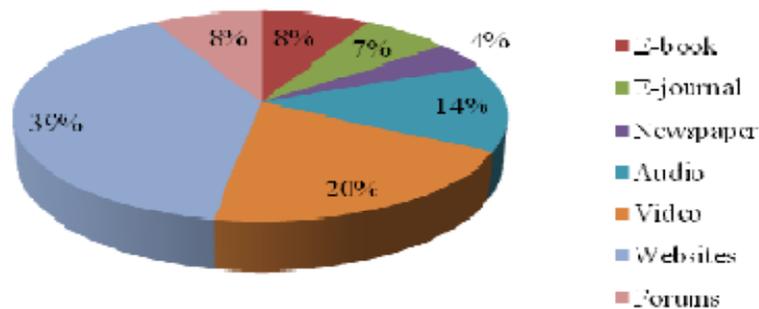


Figure 1 : Types of online resources used

Websites are the most commonly used online resource on the Internet by the TESL respondents in the understanding and teaching of the Form Four poems. This is due to the abundance of websites on the poetry as opposed to other forms of online resources. The online newspapers were the least chosen alternative by the students as a resource for the poems. Fourteen percent of the students preferred to listen to the audio materials on the poems since the appropriate ways of reciting these poems would help them in classroom teaching. The reason for the underuse of the e-journals as a favourable resource was due to the complexity of the language used by the writers. The students preferred to use the materials which are in simpler and clearer sentence structures, to save time and increase understanding of the poems. These in turn have assisted them in their teaching processes.

Figure 2 shows the availability of the online resources for the Form Four poems as stated by the respondents.

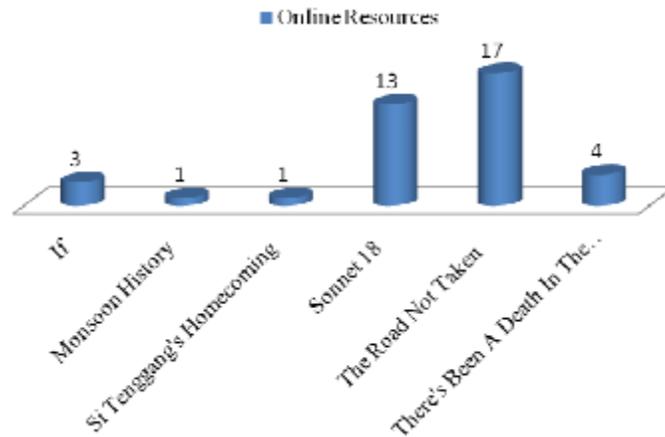


Figure 2 : Poems with available online resources

The figure shows that the poem “The Road Not Taken” is the most accessed poem on the Internet. This is followed by the poem “Sonnet 18”. The percentages indicate that these two poems have the most resources available on the Internet. The poem with the most limited number of online resource is the poem “Si Tenggang’s Homecoming” that contributed to the lowest number of response. Another local poem The “Monsoon History” shares this spot. However, two other poems, “If” and “There’s been a Death in the Opposite House” by two other equally recognised poets are not better than the lowest two poems.



Figure 3 : Poems with sufficient online resources

The sufficiency of online resources in this analysis refers to the resource that is most widely found online. “The Road Not Taken” is the most widely found online resources, voted by 18 of the respondents. All of the poems by the British and American poets have more online resources available compared to the works of local poets such as Monsoon History and Si Tenggang’s Homecoming, each with 3 and 2 responses respectively. The chart reveals that the more established poems have more resources compared to the local ones which have yet to be accepted by the poetry enthusiasts.

Discussions

From the data collected through the questionnaires, the most commonly used online resource in understanding and interpreting the Form Four poems among TESL teacher-trainees are the

websites. This is due to the characteristics of the websites that consist of the multimedia elements to support the content that make them interesting and reachable to the users, including the teacher-trainees in general.

The poems by more established writers, especially those who have the reputation as influential poets such as William Shakespeare and Robert Frost, have more online resources on their poems compared to the less influential and prominent poets, for example our own Mohd. Hj. Salleh and Shirley Lim. This may be due to the fact that we are still focusing on the conventional books as our tool of information, compared to the highly developed Western countries which have earlier awareness of the advantages of the Internet, thus have the foresight to advance and adapt the latest technology far beyond our current attainment.

To the majority of the TESL teacher-trainees, the Internet resources provide more strengths than weaknesses in its application regarding the Form Four poems. They are able to find information a click of the mouse away. The most beneficial type of information concerning the poems is the criticism provided by the readers and professional critics that can be found online.

In general, although the TESL teacher-trainees have an active level of Internet usage for understanding and interpreting the Form Four poems in the KBSM syllabus, it does not influence the level of their understanding of the poem in focus as the problem is still apparent among them. This is clearly showed by their partiality to the conventional books as the main reference.

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