

## **VISUAL RESPONSE THROUGH THE USE OF PIE CHARTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Lack of interest among students in a literature class has been a common concern among practitioners. Efforts have been carried to generate interest among these students and enhance their understanding of the literary texts. According Kostelecky and Hoskinson (2005), students may seek and enjoy stimuli that are different than what they are used to. Hence, this paper aims to address the above mentioned concern using literature pie charts. This technique is based on a Reader Response Approach whereby the students are able to relate and see issues from multiple perspectives. Pie charts can help reluctant learners or even weak readers to explore the text in a more effective manner. Using Pie charts in a literature class can reduce anxiety among these learners as it involves minimal writing. In fact, it provides a platform for these students to present their ideas and 'bring meaning' to the text. Rosenblatt (2005) found that the aesthetic stance in reading is missing in schools and suggests teachers must attempt to balance efferent reading with aesthetic. It is hoped that the inclusion of pie charts in a literature classroom as a learning tool will help provide opportunities for teachers and students alike to 'see' the literary texts using the aesthetic and efferent stances.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Readers play prominent roles in the production of meaning and interpretation of the literary texts. As stated by Hansson (1992) these readers are no longer 'implied reader' or 'ideal readers', they are real readers where their role in the literary world help shape pedagogical aspects of literature. As such various approaches have been incorporated to involve active participation of readers in the teaching and learning of English Literature.

The meaning making process takes on an active role in the present classroom. Students should be empowered to attach meaning as in terms of how they 'see' the text. The manner in which they dissect and analyze the text is entirely based on their understanding (content and language) and previous knowledge. Teachers, here, assume the role of facilitators by ensuring that the readers attain an appropriate level of understanding of the text. Hence, it is pivotal that appropriate teaching learning strategies are employed to maximize the reading potential of these students. This paper proposes literature pie charts as one of the teaching learning tools to be used in English language classroom.

## **WHAT IS LITERATURE PIE CHART?**

According to Whitin (1993), literature pie chart is a form of visual representation of the text. In other words, Literature Pie charts are used to express responses apart from using words or language in general. This technique requires students to visualize the contents or main ideas generated through reading and transfer their understanding of the text into a form of a pie chart.

As stated by Whitin (1995), readers are introduced to multiple sign systems using non-linguistic sign to generate meaningful interpretation of the text. The above approach using visuals is influenced by the reading theory by Rosenblatt. She states that:

Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context. Instead of two fixed entities acting on one another, the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The 'meaning' does not reside ready-made 'in' the text or 'in' the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text where ... the primary goal of instruction is to enable the student to express their individual experience with the text.

The readers' individual experiences can be expressed in many ways. One of the ways would be through the use of visuals. For instance, the use of colours in the pie chart provides the opportunity to students to express their views based on their interpretations. Their individual experiences can be shared amongst the class members and this can help enhance their understanding of the text from different perspectives. This can also be an effective approach to help students, especially the weak students, look and analyze the texts in a different manner. It involves minimal writing; hence, these students may not feel inhibited or anxious to complete the tasks.

## **WHY USE LITERATURE PIE CHARTS?**

Based on the theory of meaning making, using visuals can be advantageous in eliciting students' responses. Firstly, according to Harste cited in Whitin (1995), visuals have potential for making meaningful interpretations. One needs to think critically in order to create symbols to convey meanings. Apart from that, as stated by Eisner cited in Whitin (1995), the visuals generate additional perspectives with artistic experiences. The readers, in addition, play active roles as interpreters and co-researchers where as a group they can conduct discussions by examining and analyzing sketches or pie charts. Thus, as various interpretations surface, students too can use the opportunity to justify their interpretations of the text. Apart from that this approach is suitable for students with low proficiency as it does not demand high use of language.

## **INCORPORATING PIE CHARTS IN A LITERATURE CLASSROOM**

This section describes in brief the setting and participants of the study. In addition the manner of presentation in terms of incorporating the literature pie charts in the lessons is also explained.

### **Setting**

This study took place in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur. This grade A school has a population of 1,020 students. Four trainee teachers conducted this study in the school. They taught English for five Form Two classes and three Form One classes. Some of these classes consist of students from good to weak level of language proficiency.

### **Initial Procedure**

To carry out the study, the researcher sought help from four trainee teachers. These trainees are degree holders pursuing a one year teacher training course in a teacher training college in Kuala Lumpur. The researcher was their English literature lecturer. During their course of study in college, they have been exposed to literature pie charts and hence able to devise lessons using these pie charts.

As part of their course requirement, in addition to attending lecturers in college, they were also required to undergo 10 weeks of practical training in a school. During this time, they taught English language and literature classes in the school.

Initially the researcher conducted some preliminary observations on the lessons conducted by these trainees in the school. This was to ensure that these trainees had gathered adequate experience and practice on class management. Towards the later part of their teaching practice stint, these trainees carried out the lessons using literature pie charts.

The researcher informed the trainees that their grades obtained during their practicum (teaching stint session) had no bearing with their participation in this study.

Table 1 (Appendix 1) describes the classes used in the study. In addition, the table also presents some information on the data obtained through the trainee teacher's observations as well as some written reflections from the students in the class.

## **BRIEF OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

Data from five Form Two classes and three Form One classes were collected for this study. Six classes consisted students from poor to intermediate level of language proficiency. One class had students with low language ability whereas one class had students with advanced level of proficiency. Most classes had almost equal number of girls and boys.

## **FINDINGS**

The preliminary findings in this study are discussed below. The data obtained from the study cannot be generalized to the students from similar groups in other schools.

### **Summary of Findings**

1. Intermediate to advanced students enjoyed the activities. They liked colouring the pie charts and at the same time enjoyed the task of looking for justifications to support their choice of colour. According to these students, the activities enhanced their understanding of the text.
2. Weak and Intermediate students did enjoy the activities. However they needed to be given more practice and examples from other stories. They also encountered problems in terms on how to divide the portions in the literature pie chart.
3. Some of the students especially from the low proficiency group did enjoy the coloring activity but not the tasks that required them to justify the choice of colour used in the pie chart .This is probably because they are not able to write confidently, hence, their hesitation to analyze the text at a deeper level.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Pie charts can encourage over generalizations. For example, the student can associate a specific colour to a character and not provide justifications . A specific colour associated with a character in a story does not capture the variety of feelings of mood changes that the character experiences in the text.

Another disadvantage of literature pie charts is that it may not present intellectual challenge. Most students may like this form of activity because it is easy to do especially if the readers are just required to divide the portion in the pie chart and colour the portions accordingly.

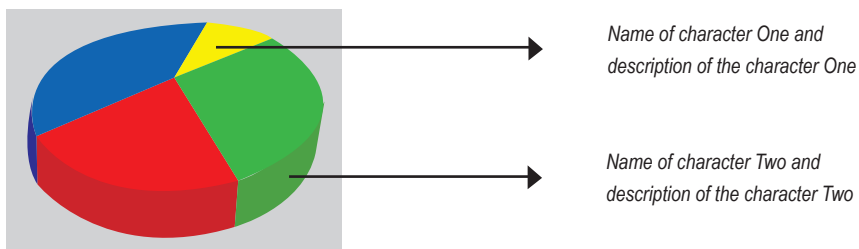
## CONCLUSION

This preliminary study's main focus was to introduce the use of literature pie charts in an English Literature class. It can be used as a while reading or post reading activity. In this study, the pie chart were used as a part of a while reading activity. To ensure the above limitations can be overcome, the following ways are suggested to present literature pie charts in a class.

For example, the literature pie chart can be used to:

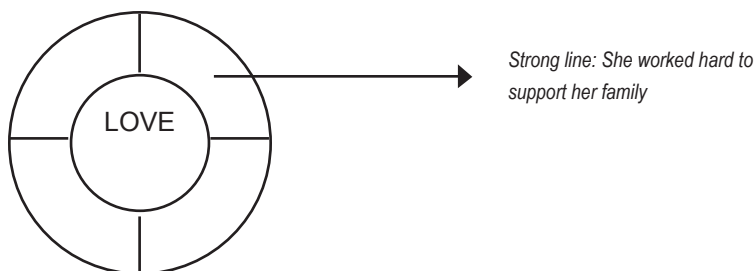
**a) Indicate character and their traits from the text (Figure One)**

**Figure One**



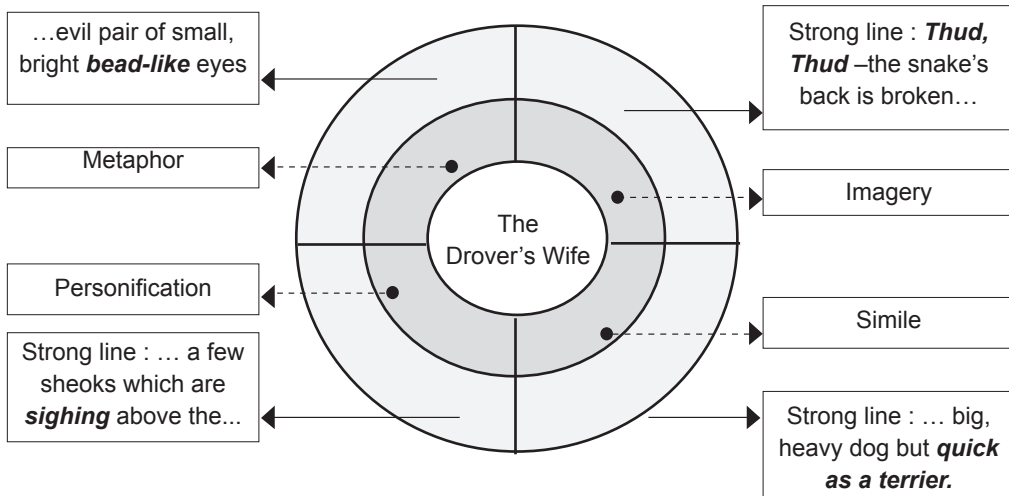
**b) Incorporate themes and strong lines from the text (Figure Two)**

**Figure Two**



'Strong lines' here represent the crucial evidence from the literary text. These lines can be selected by the students or the teacher. For example, a 'strong line' that is associated with theme such as 'love' is indicated in Figure Two.

c) Incorporate literary devices



Note: This research was also presented at Seminar Penyelidikan Pendidikan IPBA 2005

## REFERENCES

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Whitin, P.E. (1995). Exploring Visual Response to Literature. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 30 : 114-139 pgs

Appendix 1

Table 1: Overview of Data collected during the study

Aspects / Class	2P1	2P4	2P5	2P6	2 T2	1P4	1T1	1T3
<b>Number of students</b>	38 students (11 boys and 17 girls)	37 students (19 girls and 18 boys)	32 students (16 girls and 16 boys)	29 students (17 boys and 12 girls)	40 students (20 girls and 20 boys)	35 students (17 boys and 18 girls)	43 students (20 girls and 23 boys)	39 students (22 boys and 17 girls)
<b>Level of proficiency</b>	Intermediate to advanced. Able to converse well in the language .	'poor to intermediate'. Most of the students respond to questions in Bahasa Melayu	'poor to intermediate'. Can speak English but reluctant to do so .	Very weak ...discipline problems	Most students are intermediate learners. Tend to 'mix' English and Bahasa Melayu languages.	Mixed ability class. 5 or 6 students who are able to speak well . Majority of the students of intermediate level . Tend to 'mix' English and Bahasa Melayu languages.	...poor to intermediate. Mostly intermediate level .	Intermediate ...playful ...reluctant to do their work.
<b>Class traits</b>	They can think and work fast. ... able to complete the task in the given time or even less. Able to think analytically.	A few 'playful' students. They take a long time to complete the tasks.	'popularly known as the naughty class' ...not quick in completing tasks.	...reluctant learners ... refuse to work ...talkative	... quite shy but they do try to speak the language . There are some students with 'discipline problems'.	Initially listened and paid attention. But later ... tend to be noisy in class. Prefer audio →visual based lessons.	...playful class...at times... ignore the lessons	However the girls are quite good as they love to ask the teacher

<p><b>Aspects / Class</b></p>	<p><b>2P1</b></p> <p>Showed the Cinderella story as a guide .Able to justify the characters with the colours and traits without any problems .</p>	<p><b>2P4</b></p> <p>Initially students were 'blurred'. Therefore, the teacher proceeded by listing down and dividing the characters according to the portions in the pie chart . After making sure that the students understood the pie chart , the teacher instructed the students to discuss the pie chart in pairs. Later the students were required to create a pie chart individually.</p>	<p><b>2P5</b></p> <p>Showed the pie chart using the Cinderella story. This is because students were familiar with the story and hence able to identify the characters well .</p>	<p><b>2 P6</b></p> <p>Showed the pie chart using the Cinderella story. ... prepared a sample of pie chart for students</p>	<p><b>2 T2</b></p> <p>Drew the circle ... got the right answer ( pie chart) from the students . Later did a demonstration using Cinderella story. Later the students did the activity again using the 'Phantom of the Opera' . They were required to identify strong lines form the text and associate the lines to the pie chart.</p>	<p><b>1P4</b></p> <p>Showed first using Cinderella story. Later students were required to generate literature pie chart based on 'How Dalat got his name' story</p>	<p><b>1T1</b></p> <p>First showed the pie chart using the Cinderella story. Later used the pie chart on 'How Dalat got his name' story .</p>	<p><b>1T3</b></p> <p>Showed first using Cinderella story. Later students were required to generate literature pie chart based on 'How Dalat got his name' story</p>
<p><b>Reaction from the students</b></p>	<p>Students loved the activity ... to them it helps them in terms of understanding the story better. They were eager to show their answers to the class. Good students were able to justify the reasons for their choice of colour</p>	<p>The students found the activity fun. They enjoy coloring but they hated to justify the color that they have chosen .</p>	<p>... able to draw the literature pie chart ... have tendencies to copy down the pie chart based on the example given . They seemed to enjoy doing it ...</p>	<p>Could understand on how to draw the 'different portions' in the text. First attempt did not work well. Later some managed to draw on their own</p>	<p>Weak students tend to just divide the portions However took time in trying to find evidence to support their statements ... using 'strong lines' from the text .</p>	<p>Later for 'How Dalat got his name', the students the pie chart into portions without providing any explanation</p>	<p>Initially just copied on their own ...later managed to draw the pie chart on their own.</p>	<p>Initially first attempt ... not successful. On the second attempt, ...really surprised to see the outcome.... the students love to colour the pie chart but quite lazy to give the reasons why....</p>