



Promoting Literature-based Language Arts in the Primary Education Curriculum for the Traditional Chinese Medium Schools

English

By Tam Ka Lok, Loi Sio Hong

Introduction

In 2016/2017 academic year, all the primary schools in Macao need to follow the Basic Academic Attainment from DSEJ to set the curriculum and teaching methods. English language learning is in this document. In the field of English language learning, one of the rationales in the document highlight language learning motivation and ability. Thus, offering the English Language Arts in the curriculum can fulfil the goals of this document. Furthermore, it can build up the students' confidence of using English.

The Limitations of Using Textbooks in Language Learning

Traditionally, schools use a textbook to teach the language. Then, students learn the language unit by unit, module by module. It is systematic to learn English and the designs of the textbooks are focus on the forms of the language, functions of the language and the vocabulary learning. It shows that students can learn the receptive skills in the textbooks. Actually, teachers are not easy to create a meaningful environment to let the students apply what they have learnt in the classroom under this situation. In addition, students just can use the particular form of the language when they

are doing the workbooks, worksheets, or tests. It would let the students weak at cohesion and cohesive devices when they have the writing. As for speaking, most of the textbooks provide the speaking tasks after learning a unit for developing their speaking. However, most of the speaking tasks require students to use the particular forms of the language. They can let the students master the forms of the language, but they are not authentic. Students cannot feel that they can apply this in the daily life. It shows that the productive skills are not enough for the students. Thus, English Language Arts can cover the limitations from the textbooks.

English Language Arts

National Council of Teachers of English. (1996) defined students should have six skills in language arts learning. They are reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and visually representing. In this document, also defined texts should be more broadly, adding graphics and technological communications to print. Actually, language is a system of communicating that offers countless possibilities for representation, expression, and construction of meaning. It permeates human thought and life.

In English Language Arts, there are three theoretical frameworks are used. They are Constructivism, Social interaction and Reader response. The following table (Table 1) gives the suggested ideas under these theoretical frameworks.

Types of English Language Arts

There are two types of English Language Arts that school can use to apply in the school curriculum. They

are literature-based language arts and cross-curricular language arts. The aim of the literature-based language arts is to give students more time to read different genres for improve the reading literacy. As for cross-curricular language arts, it would be better for the school using Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as the school curriculum planning and development. In fact, literature-based language arts is more suitable in the traditional Chinese medium school and the cross-curricular language arts can apply in the English as a medium of instruction school.

Table 1: The Suggested Ideas or Activities

Theoretical Frameworks	The Suggested Ideas or Activities
Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. make the connections between what the students have already known and they will learn. b. use different strategies for reading and writing. c. recall the students' experiences about reading and writing processes. d. discuss the student's respond to the reading materials or the others reading materials.
Social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. give support as the children develop new understanding through social interaction. b. mediate the leaning cooperatively with support. c. be flexible, depending on the children's response to the activity. d. give direct instruction to making subtle suggestions.
Reader response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students make their own choices to choose what they want to read or write. b. Teacher asks open questions and provide options for responding to literature and writing. c. Students' opinion and their pervious experiences are honored. d. Instructional planning included attention to students; ideas and experiences.



Using Literature-based to Apply the Basic Academic Attainments

In fact, the aim of the literature-based language arts is want the students can produce the literature works. It is said that literature-based language arts is the productive skills language learning. In addition, students have some receptive learning skills during the class time. They are watching dramas, listening to the stories, reading different genres. They are receptive skills. Thus, the literature-based match all the domains in the Basic Academic Attainments. The following tables (table 2 and

3) provide the possible ways that the attainments can be applied in the literature-based language arts lesson.

Furthermore, English Language Arts can let some attainments from “task specific learning” change into “long term goals”. They are A-1-8, B-1-10, C-2-14 and D-2-13, etc. Hence, school can develop the school-based basic academic attainment after offering the English Language Arts. Moreover, the teaching materials are also flexible. It is because teacher can develop the school-based materials under the school-based Basic Academic Attainment. Therefore, schools can be more systematic to run the BAA document.

Table 2: The attainments in Lower Primary

Code	Descriptions
A-1-5	Understand simple classroom language and be able to follow the development of a lesson and the arrangement for homework.
A-1-6	Understand the meaning of simple descriptions and stories with the help of clues such as real objects, pictures and body language.
A-1-7	Listen to others attentively.
A-1-8	Demonstrate interest in listening to children’s songs, nursery rhymes, chants, etc.
B-1-10	Retell short stories presented by the teacher or in storybooks with teacher’s guidance.
B-1-11	Express personal feelings and emotions in simple sentences.
B-1-13	Demonstrate interest in participating in performances and oral activities.
C-1-6	Recognise common text types such as notices, short stories, poems, etc.
C-1-7	Understand simple verses, song lyrics and poems under teacher’s guidance.
C-1-8	Scan a text to look for specific pieces of information.
C-1-9	Understand the key points of a text with some guidance from the teacher.
D-1-6	Rewrite simple stories with teacher support or prompts given.
D-1-7	Write simple sentences to describe pictures and on familiar topics.

Table 3: The attainments in Upper Primary

Code	Descriptions
A-2-6	Understand and follow language and instructions for classroom activities.
A-2-8	Understand references in spoken texts by recognizing the use of articles and pronouns.
A-2-10	Understand descriptions and explanations presented by teachers and teaching materials.
B-2-2	Use appropriate pronunciation and intonation while participating in different performance or activities.
B-2-3	Read aloud expressively and rhythmically.
B-2-4	Carry out simple dialogue activities.
B-2-7	Tell brief stories.
B-2-8	Discuss familiar topics with others under teacher's guidance.
B-2-9	Briefly describe or explain matters with the help of clues such as real objects, pictures and body language.
C-2-2	Skim through a text quickly to get a general idea of its content.
C-2-3	Read or re-read a text to look for specific pieces of information.
C-2-6	Infer the meaning of words and sentences from context, sentence structure, illustrations, etc.
C-2-8	Have an awareness of how ideas in a text are developed.
C-2-9	Expand vocabulary knowledge through reading.
C-2-10	Be able to tackle various text types.
C-2-11	Have an awareness of the similarities and differences between various cultures through reading.
C-2-13	Know how to find required information with the help of the library and the Internet.
C-2-14	Read attentively and with purpose.
C-2-15	Choose a variety of reading materials for pleasure reading.
D-2-3	Use the correct format when writing in common text types.
D-2-5	Write simple narratives and descriptions with teacher support.
D-2-9	Use paragraphs to segment a longer piece of writing.
D-2-12	Show willingness to improve on earlier drafts with rewriting or editing.
D-2-13	Begin to show creativity.




The Possible Implementation

According to the “Curriculum Framework for the Formal Education Local System”, students need to have at least 41600 to 58240 minutes in leaning second language. It is said that students have around seven lessons per week. Therefore, school can divide the seven lessons into two aspects. It can be five lessons in General English and two lessons in English Language Arts. In this case, students can have receptive skills and productive skills leaning at the same time. In addition, students can have more time to use their own words to produce the language.

The Previous Researches about Using Literature in the Classroom

In the last academic year, Tam (2017) used a group of primary six students did a research about using literature-based language arts enhancing the language motivation. The result showed that students enjoyed having English language arts and they can have confidence by using English to produce the spoken and written works. Furthermore, leong (2003) suggests that English language teachers in Macao should let the students should read more poetries or using poetry as an activity in class. Tam (2016) also find out that a group of primary five are interested in reading stories in the classroom and the students had a highly class motivation after using storytelling as an activity in the classroom.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the literature-based language arts can motivate the students in language learning. It can not only create the lesson to be more meaningful, but also the language rich environment in the classroom. 

References:

- leong, S. (2003). Poetry as Resource for Enriching English Education: An Investigation into the Materials Development of Macao Schools. *Journal of Macau Studies*, 18, 194-235.
- Tam, Ka Lok (2016, June). *A Case Study: Using Storytelling to Enhance Reading Comprehension to Upper Primary Students in a Traditional Chinese Medium School*. Paper presented at the 2016 English Teaching and Learning Conference, National Taichung University of Education, Taiwan.
- Tam, Ka Lok (2017, June). *Offering Literature-based Language Arts to Improve the motivation in a Traditional Chinese Medium School*. Paper presented at the 2017 English Language Teaching Conference, Institute for Tourism Studies Studies, China, Macao.
- National Council of Teachers of English. (1996). *Standards for the English Language Arts*. Urbana IL: National Council of Teachers of English; Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Tam Ka Lok

**English Teacher, Hou Kong Middle School
(Primary Section)**

Loi Sio Hong

**English Teacher, Hou Kong Middle School
(Primary Section)**