



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENGLISH LITERATURE READER FOR CLASS X UNDER MIZORAM BOARD OF SCHOOL
EDUCATION: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

¹Lalmawipuii Chawngthu and ²Lalhmasai Chuaungo

¹Assistant Professor, IASE, Aizawl, Mizoram

²Professor, Department of Education and Dean, School of Education and Humanities, Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 04th May, 2017
Received in revised form
20th June, 2017
Accepted 26th July, 2017
Published online 31st August, 2017

Key words:

English Literature Reader, Contents,
Literary genres, Grammar, Activities and
exercises, Listening skill, Speaking skill,
Reading skill, Writing skill.

ABSTRACT

It is observed in Mizoram that most of the students are facing the problem in expressing themselves in English through speaking as well as writing. What are responsible for this? Are textbooks not good enough to promote language skills in students? - are questions that very often come to the minds of the investigators. The present study was undertaken to address such type of issues and to evaluate English Literature Reader for class X in Mizoram. The book was evaluated in terms of its content, different literary genres, grammar, activities and exercises and its appropriateness for developing language skills. Contents of the book were found to be quite appropriate. However, there was lack of Mizo stories as well as Mizo Authors with which the students could have identified themselves and felt more at home with the topics. The Literature Reader acted mainly as a material to help students appreciate literature and to assist them in the development of listening and reading skills than the grammatical knowledge and speaking and writing skills.

Copyright©2017, Lalmawipuii Chawngthu and Lalhmasai Chuaungo. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Lalmawipuii Chawngthu and Lalhmasai Chuaungo, 2017. "English literature reader for class x under Mizoram board of school education: An evaluative study", *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (08), 56056-56059.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks can be referred to as published books, specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities (Sheldon, 1987). Thus, English language textbooks can be referred to as published textbooks which could be used to improve the linguistic and communicative abilities of learners in acquiring the objectives of learning the particular language. They play a very significant role in the teaching and learning especially in developing countries where teachers and students can utilize them according to their needs. Textbooks influence both the teachers and students, as they provide pattern to the teachers so that the teachers could teach in a better way and give guidelines to students for better learning. There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. In today's world, English language provides the chief means of access to high-tech communication and information. Further, it continues to remain as the world's language for international communication. It is the associate official language of India and became the dominant language of communication among the educated classes after the famous

Minute of Lord Macaulay in 1833 in the Indian sub-continent (Thirumalai, 2002). Such an important language when taught in schools, needs the presence of a good textbook which helps in acquiring the language skills through various genres of literature and exercises and activities to practise the correct pattern of the language. It is an obvious truth that if students at secondary stage master English language, their performances in High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examinations will surely be satisfactory thereby giving them wider and better openings for further education and careers. However, it is observed that most of the students, even after passing HSLC examination, are still facing the problem in expressing themselves in English through speaking as well as writing. What are responsible for this? Are textbooks not good enough to promote language skills in students? To find answers to these questions, it was felt necessary to evaluate the existing English Literature Reader for class X in Mizoram. Moreover, no study has been found to have been conducted in the area of textbook evaluation in Mizoram. With these things kept in view, the problem of the present study has been stated as: "English Literature Reader for Class X under Mizoram Board of School Education: An Evaluative Study".

*Corresponding author: Lalhmasai Chuaungo,
Professor, Department of Education and Dean, School of Education and
Humanities, Mizoram University, Aizawl, Mizoram

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the present study are:

1. To evaluate English Literature Reader prescribed for Class X by Mizoram Board of School Education in terms of:

- i) Content
- ii) Different literary genres
- iii) Grammar
- iv) Activities and exercises

2. To evaluate English Literature Reader prescribed for Class X by Mizoram Board of School Education in terms of its appropriateness for developing language skills such as:

- a) listening skill
- b) speaking skill
- c) reading skill, and
- d) writing skill

3. To suggest remedial measures for improvement of English Literature Reader prescribed for Class X by Mizoram Board of School Education.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms Used

English Literature Reader: English Literature Reader in the present study refers to Essential English Literature Reader 10, one of the three English textbooks prescribed for Class X by Mizoram Board of School Education.

Mizoram Board of School Education: The Mizoram Board of School Education is a board set up by the Government of Mizoram whose functions include prescription of curricula for Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools and conduct of High School Leaving Certificate and Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate examinations.

Method of Study

Descriptive and evaluative methods of study were employed for the present study. The methods involved an in-depth study of Essential English Literature Reader 10 prescribed for class X by Mizoram Board of School Education. The investigators carried out evaluation of the contents of the book in accordance with the objectives of the study. For the analysis of the content, literary genre, vocabulary and grammar, exercises and activities, the criteria adapted from 'The textbook evaluation checklist' by Joshua Miekley (2005) was used.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Academic Aspect of English Literature Reader

Evaluation of the academic aspect of English Literature Reader is categorized into:

- i) Content
- ii) Different literary genres
- iii) Grammar
- iv) Activities and exercises

Content

English Literature Reader is a thin book which contains seven short stories including an interesting science-based short play

by Dilip M. Salwi and two poems. Interesting works of great writers like William Shakespeare, Hellen Keller, Saki, Arthur Conan Doyle etc are provided in this textbook. The Literature Reader does not contain many exercises and activities intended to improve the different skills. However, the exercises and activities that follow the lessons and poems are mostly meant to develop an appreciation for literature and to help students comprehend the given stories and poems.

Different Literary Genres

A literary genre is a category of literary composition which may be determined by literary technique, tone, content, or even length in the case of fiction. To understand and have an appreciation of the beauty of literature, students need to be acquainted with the different literary genres in literature. The Essential English Literature Reader contains two poems viz: The Louse and the Mosquito by Vikram Seth and The Land of Beyond by Robert Service respectively. Seven short stories to acquaint the students in developing their reading and comprehension skills are also included in the Literature Reader textbook. These are :

- i) The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare
- ii) The Story of My Life by Helen Keller
- iii) The Paper Plague by EroTolvanen
- iv) The Corener Shop by Lady Cynthia Mary Evelyn Asquith
- v) The Stalled Ox by H.H. Murro (Saki)
- vi) Science is My Best Friend by Dilip M. Salwi
- vii) The Adventure of the Three Students by Arthur Conan Doyle

Among these short stories, there are two adapted works of the famous William Shakespeare and Arthur Conan Doyle. To add to the variety of the literary genre, the Literature Reader introduces two plays for the students – Science is My best friend and The Adventure of the Three Students. Students are also introduced to the blank verse style of poetry composition in this textbook. The elements of satire, motivating biographical accounts and attractive plots are found to be quite appropriate for class X students. On the other hand, no Mizo story or Mizo writer make a contribution in the writing of this Literature Reader which is found to be a drawback of the Literature Reader.

Grammar

Grammar, according to the Pocket Oxford English Dictionary is, "The whole structure of a language, including the rules for the ways words are formed and their relationship to each other in a sentence." According to Dr. Sweet as cited in Govil (2006), grammar is "the practical analysis of a language." It deals with the various laws and framework of a particular language and helps one to be aware of the nature of the language. The Literature reader does not provide special room for the practice of grammatical rules and exercises in it. It acts mainly as a material to help students appreciate literature and assists them more in the development of listening and reading skills than the grammatical knowledge.

Activities and Exercises

The Essential English Literature Reader focuses mainly on the Reading and Speaking activities. Activities under "Let's infer"

which are meant to be developing the reading skills and comprehension skills of the students can be used to develop the writing skills and utilised if needed. The number of reading and speaking skills in the Literature reader is shown in the following table:

Table 1. Number of Reading and Speaking Activities in the Literature Reader

Sl. No	Name of Activities	Number of Activities
1.	Let's infer (Reading Skills)	45
2.	Let's discuss (Speaking Skills)	18

It has been found that these Reading skills are found in the form of texts like short stories and poetry which are to be read in the classroom while the speaking skills are found in the activities to be carried out. With the help of teachers, students can learn to read and comprehend the learning topics while at the same time learn to speak the language. However, due to limitation of time, these Reading and Speaking skills could not often be mastered by students. The two poems- 'The Louse and the Mosquito' by Vikram Seth and 'The land of Beyond' by Robert Service do not contain any activity or exercises and are mainly intended to inculcate reading pleasure in students.

English Literature Reader in Terms of its Appropriateness for Developing Language Skills

Listening Skill

The book 'Essential English Literature Reader' does not provide a separate column for the development of listening skills. The main given text seems to be the only thing that if read aloud by the teacher, students could learn to listen and comprehend the meaning. No separate activity or exercise is provided to develop this skill. However, the "Let's discuss" activity at the end of each lesson except for the two poems, could be utilised as an activity to develop the listening skills of students. While discussing the given points which are related to the text itself, students could develop their listening skills by listening to the discussion from the teacher and their classmates.

Speaking Skill

The skill of speaking follows the skill of listening. Once students are able to listen and understand daily simple conversation, they are ready to learn the skill of speaking accurately at a normal speed. When speaking skill is concerned, English Literature Reader does not include a separate space for the development of speaking skills. However, the "Let's discuss" activity at the end of each lesson could be utilised by the teacher and the students to develop speaking skills. This might create problems if the teacher could not motivate students to speak up using the topics of discussion given which might not seem to be interesting enough for students.

Reading Skill

The Literature Reader too could be of great assistance in the development of reading skill among students. The text in each unit and the poems could serve as materials to practice reading. Silent reading and loud reading could both be practiced through these texts and poems.

Writing Skill

The skill of writing aims at enabling students to express themselves clearly and logically. The Literature Reader does not provide room for developing writing skill in particular. However, some questions from the "Let's infer" section may be used to develop writing skills. For example Question number 5 of Unit 1 gives some hints and asks to write a character sketch of one of the characters in the story i.e. Portia. The main objective of teaching writing skill is almost completely ignored in the Literature Reader as there is no room for students to express themselves in writing and there is lack of sufficient writing exercises.

Major Findings of the Study

Major findings of the study are as given below:

- 1) The warm up paragraph at the beginning of each topic in the Essential English Literature Reader did prove to be a great source in inspiring and motivating the students to learn their lessons.
- 2) English Literature Reader contained two poems and seven short stories to acquaint the students in developing their reading and comprehension skills out of which two were adapted works.
- 3) To add to the variety of the literary genre, the Literature Reader introduced two plays for the students.
- 4) Students were also introduced to the blank verse style of poetry composition in this textbook.
- 5) The elements of satire, motivating biographical accounts and attractive plots were found to be quite appropriate for class X students.
- 6) There was lack of Mizo stories as well as Mizo Authors (except for the first unit David' Story) with which the students could have identified themselves and feel more at home with the topics and this was a drawback of the Literature Reader.
- 7) The Literature reader did not provide special room for the practice of grammatical rules and exercises in it. It acted mainly as a material to help students appreciate literature and to assists them more in the development of listening and reading skills than the grammatical knowledge.
- 8) There were 45 activities or exercises under 'Let's Infer' meant for developing reading skills and 18 activities or exercises under 'Let's Discuss' designed to promote speaking skills.
- 9) There was no activity or exercise in the two poems in the book probably as they were intended to inculcate reading pleasure only in students.
- 10) The Literature Reader did not contain many exercises and activities intended to improve the different language skills. However, the exercises and activities that followed the lessons and poems were mostly meant to develop an appreciation for literature and to help students comprehend the given stories and poems.
- 11) The Literature Reader did not provide a separate column or activity or exercise for the development of listening skills.
- 12) English Literature Reader did not include a separate space for the development of speaking skills. However, the "Let's discuss" activity at the end of

each lesson could be utilised by the teacher and the students to develop speaking skills.

- 13) The text in each unit and the poems in English Literature Reader could serve as materials to practice reading.
- 14) The teaching of writing skill was almost completely ignored in the Literature Reader as there was no room for students to express themselves in writing and there was lack of sufficient writing exercises.

Suggestions for improvement of English Literature Reader for Class X under Mizoram Board of School Education

The following suggestions are tendered for improvement of English Literature Reader in particular and other textbooks as well in general:

- The subject matters must be presented in an organised manner following the maxims of teaching and learning.
- The contents must reflect the learners' culture so that the learner could easily understand and identify himself/herself with the topic.
- The previous knowledge of students must be made use of in the textbooks.
- The content matter must include a variety of literary genres for learners to develop a favourable attitude toward literature.
- The content matters must always keep in mind the general aims as well as the specific aims of teaching a language.
- More vivid and interesting illustrations must be given.
- New words and grammatical rules introduced must be utilised and reinforced in the following chapters.
- Grammar rules must be presented in an increasing order of difficulty.
- Exercises must facilitate the use of these rules.
- Guidelines to develop the listening skills must be provided.
- Audio-visual aids to learn the skills of listening and speaking must be added.
- More rooms for students to participate in the interaction and conversation must be made in the classroom.
- Interesting and motivational topics of writing must be suggested in the activities.

Conclusion

English is such an important language that its importance could never be over exaggerated. It continues to remain as the world's language for international communication. Such an important language, when taught to school children, needs the presence of a good textbook which helps in acquiring the language skills through various genres of literature and exercises and activities to practise the correct pattern of the language. The present study is a meagre attempt to find out the quality of English Literature Reader prescribed for class X by Mizoram Board of School Education. It is expected to bring about improvement in the textbook when revised in particular and in other books as well in general.

REFERENCES

- Cunningsworth, A. (1984). Evaluating and selecting EFL teaching materials. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Deuri, C. 2012. An evaluative study of textbook in English at higher secondary level. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267943107_AN_EVALUATIVE_STUDY_OF_TEXT_BOOK_IN_ENGLISH_AT_HIGHER_SECONDARY_LEVEL
- Govil, P. 2006. Teaching of English. Lucknow: Rashtra Bhasha Offset Press.
- Miekley, J. 2005. ESL textbook evaluation checklist. The Reading Matrix. Vol 5 (2), Retrieved from http://www.readingmatrix.com/reading_projects/miekley/project.pdf.
- Mizoram Board of School Education, 2016. Essential English Literature Reader 10. Aizawl: Author.
- Sheldon, L. 1987. ELT textbook and materials: Problems in evaluation and development. Oxford: Modern English Publications.
- Thirumalai, M.S. 2002. English as an international language. Retrieved from <http://www.languageinindia.com/april2002/tesolbook.html>.
