The teaching of literature in a Singapore secondary school: Disciplinarity, curriculum coverage and the opportunity costs involved

Abstract

Set against the backdrop of reinvigorating the study of literature and concerns about the adequate preparation of students for the world of work, this paper explores how a Singapore teacher presented a literary text in the classroom. Drawing on data from a large-scale representative sample of Singapore schools in instruction and assessment practices, we discuss some of the potential consequences of instructional choice-making from a disciplinary perspective. Our findings suggest, for example, that when teacher-dominated discourse and interpretations dominate, instructional flexibility and responsiveness are correspondingly limited and restricted. These courses of action, we contend, may occur contrary to teachers' plans and expectations. The paper closes by making a call for further longitudinal research across multiple research sites into the nature of literature pedagogy that has a strong disciplinary focus.

Keywords: English literature, Disciplinary knowledge, Opportunity costs, Curriculum, Pedagogy.

Introduction

The call to reignite 'the spark of literature' (Ng, 2013) is long-standing in Singapore (Kramer-Dahl, 1999; Liew, 2012). In particular, there is a concern that a shortage of students "trained in literary ways of thinking and writing" (Ng, 2013) will lead to less creativity, inventiveness and interest in the Arts. Consequently, some commentators feel the quality of thought, argument and communication among young Singaporeans has fallen, and that students are not being adequately prepared for a world of work where there is a need, among other things, to make sense of ambiguous data and differing points of view. The question is: What are we, as educators and researchers, to do?

While we recognise there is considerable merit in reconceptualising the study of literary texts from various theoretical, analytical and dispositional perspectives (e.g., multiculturalism, interculturalism, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, humanism, utilitarianism, critical pedagogy, dialogic learning, discourse analysis etc.), we believe there is an equally pressing need to study 'how' literary texts are read in class (Loh, 2009) because this will uncover what we think subject-literature is and how it operates. Once we know this, we will be in a much stronger position to assess the potential of current instructional practices to meet the demands 21st century life and living.

This article concerns how the day-to-day literature curriculum is designed and enacted in a Singapore secondary-level classroom. Two interlinked research questions underpin the investigation: (i) How does the literature teacher present a classroom text, and (ii) what might be some of the instructional consequences of his choices and decision-making from a disciplinary perspective?

In our presentation of findings and discussion, we also seek a rationale and explanation weighing the benefits of adopting one instructional approach over another. We believe this is important in understanding the complexities of instructional choice-making and articulating the implications for how subject literature is recognised and valued in classrooms (Choo, 2014; Holden, 1999; Liew, 2012; Loh, Yeo, & Liew, 2013a, b; Poon, 2010, 2013; Singh, 1999). We begin with a brief overview of the disciplinary nature of subject literature to identify its distinctive features.

Disciplinary Knowledge in Literature

Generally, an academic discipline is an organised, distinctive yet contestable body of knowledge where scholars act in noticeable ways for specific purposes (Authors, 2013a, 2013b). More specifically, a domain- or subject-disciplinary perspective allows scholars, curriculum developers and educational practitioners to determine what counts as knowledge and decide on whose knowledge counts according to certain criteria and standards. In the case of literature, there is much debate and concern about the identification of literary texts, appropriate study methods and the benefits of being and becoming literate (i.e., having knowledge of literature).

Literature is open to various interpretations and value-propositions. For example, there are roles for it to play in the formation of a national culture (Singh, 1999), critical reflection, independent judgement, intellectual scepticism and sensitivity towards multiple perspectives (Liew, 2013). At the personal level, researchers and teachers view literature as a unique avenue to concretise life principles and balance personal perspectives towards discernment, sensitivity and empathy (Henry, 2013). There is also scope for students to explore their own identities with respect to the world around (Cheng, 2013) and even to imagine contexts and circumstances that are vastly different from their own (Choo, 2014; Loh, 2009).

For subject literature to live up to these expectations, there is a need for it to result in action and personal commitment (Loh, 2012) otherwise it would remain inert and questionable. Thus, literature-as-disciplinary-behaviour necessarily involves discourse (Lewis & Dockter, 2011), participation and the willingness to respond to texts in different ways: dialogically by asking critical questions, continually revising worldviews, understanding multiple viewpoints and being aware of cultural complexities (Loh, 2009).

Singapore Literature Curriculum for Secondary Schools

The Singapore curriculum for Secondary Literature describes its disciplinary nature as the "critical study of literary texts" which focuses on "the critical analysis of how language is purposefully and creatively used in texts in order to create meaning and explore issues or themes" (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 2). Studying literature encourages students to "actively construct meaning", "make connections between the texts, their lives and the world", "explore, examine and reflect on both current and timeless issues, as well as their individuality and humanity" (p. 2). This is achieved through having a "questioning mind" and "interrogating and managing ambiguities and multiple perspectives" (p. 2).

A number of instructional principles are detailed in the curriculum text, including how teachers should design classroom interaction to facilitate student textual engagement, development of individual textual responses, sharing and evaluation of multiple views (p. 5). Teachers should also provide feedback that "guide[s] students in developing critical responses that are substantiated by textual evidence", and help[s] students explore connections between the text, their lives, the world and other texts. Key areas of study in the literature curriculum include focusing on plot, character, setting and atmosphere, style, theme (central ideas of the text).

In comparing the Singapore literature curriculum with the broader philosophical and disciplinary intentions of the subject, there are numerous commonalities including a critical stance, a focus on meaning making and identity formation, and engaging in multiple perspectives.

Conceptual Framework on Disciplinarity and Instructional Practices.

The conceptual framework used in this paper is based on a larger research programme (2010-2013), that had three key objectives: (i) measure, map and model instructional practices in Singapore, (ii) systematically explore the logic of teaching, and (iii) ascertain the intellectual quality of knowledge work in classrooms (Authors, 2010). Central to the framework is a set of interlinked instructional practices that support high intellectual quality and disciplinary knowledge work and visible learning (Hattie, 2009) in Singapore classrooms. The term "intellectual quality" stems from Newmann and Associates' work on Authentic Pedagogy in Chicago (1996), defined as comprising three specific criteria: (1) Construction of knowledge through (2) the use of disciplined inquiry which includes building on prior knowledge, in-depth understanding and elaborated communication, and (3) value of acquired knowledge beyond school. Gore, Griffiths and Ladwig (2004), building on Newmann and Associates' work, further developed intellectual quality as a key dimension in their Productive Pedagogy Framework, and is defined to comprise: (1) Higher Order Thinking, (2) Deep Knowledge, (3) Deep Understanding, (4) Substantive Conversation, (5) Knowledge as problematic, and (6) Metalanguage.

Extending from both Authentic Pedagogy and Productive Pedagogy research, we expand the notion of intellectual quality to focus on the intellectual quality of *knowledge* work. This includes the teaching and learning of epistemic, disciplinary, cognitive, discursive, collaborative, textual, digital, metacognitive and practical work that happens in the classroom. Underlying this conceptual framework are four issues: (a) The epistemic, cognitive and metacognitive design of instructional tasks derived from work on disciplinarity; (b) The work of Stein and Lane (1996) on task set up and the affordances and constraints of task implementation; (c) John Hattie's (2009) efforts to identify instructional practices that facilitate visible learning and promote student achievement; and (d) Features of quality classroom interactions including epistemic discussions and dialogic teaching (e.g., Alexander, 2008; Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

Figure 1 represents our conception of the relationship between task setup and implementation framed in terms of the lesson life cycle (Authors, 2013b). The normative framework identifies

key elements in the life cycle of the lesson (although not necessarily in temporal order): institutional context, teacher capacity, lesson and task planning, lesson setup, checking for prior knowledge, task setup, task implementation, communicating learning goals and performance standards, monitoring, feedback, scaffolding, knowledge focus, classroom interaction and talk, task output, assessment of learning outcomes, and lesson evaluation. Critically, many of the relationships between elements can be and often are iterative and cyclical. Classrooms and lessons are highly contingent and variable centres of hermeneutical activity and human agency. While most classrooms exhibit highly institutionalised forms of social and instructional practice, every class is different because of the variable patterns of human agency that develop within them. This is partly because teaching is mediated by a range of contributing factors including teacher capacity, understanding, reasoning and skill. On the other hand, the press of key institutional rules that govern instruction in Singapore—the saliency of the national curriculum and the national high-stakes assessment system in particular—significantly constrains the scope of instructional agency in the classroom across the system, as we will elaborate further in this article.
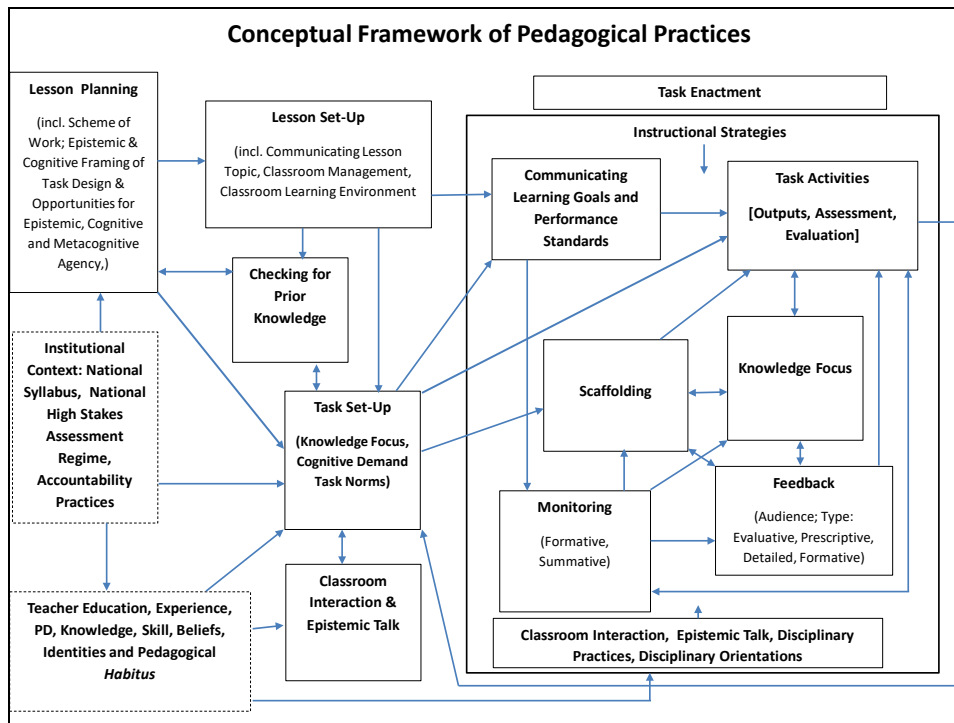

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Instructional Practices (Authors, 2010)

Methodology

Data Collection

Based on our theoretical and pedagogic interests, we used descriptive and explanatory case methods (Freebody, 2003; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995) to identify and reflect on particular instances of educational practice regarded mainly from the points of view of teachers teaching

in their classrooms. The material used in this article originates from a subset of data from a larger research programme (Authors, 2010). The data in question is a small part of a representative sample of English Language and English Literature lessons from 16 Secondary schools spread geographically across Singapore (Authors, 2010). The data sources from these classes included survey instruments, video-recorded classroom observations, interviews, and a collection of teachers' tasks and students' work samples. All of the schools involved gave their institutional consent for their nominated teachers and students to participate in the study.

The present case study draws on the video-recordings and some other qualitative and qualitative data sources collected in the 3rd 10-week term of the academic year from a literature teacher. We chose this case because of the widespread and unique occurrence of a number of high-scoring instructional items in the large-study classroom coding scheme (see Appendix 1) and our wish to understand the relationship between the organisation of lessons and the intellectual quality of knowledge work in this particular classroom. As we will see, the key to grasping the nature of this relationship is to recognise that the organisation of lessons helps determine the structure of learning opportunities students have to participate meaningfully in their learning. There is a long-standing history of interest in this respect (e.g., Barnes, 1976; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Mehen, 1978; Phillips, 1972).

Participants and Context

Mr. Kim (a pseudonym) was an English teacher in a Government Aided Secondary school.[1] At the time of our study he taught English literature to an Express Stream[2] class. In response to a pre-observation questionnaire, he stressed the importance of responding to students' questions and in explaining difficult concepts. He also considered that students learn best when they participate in 'learn-by-doing' activities (compared to having the correct answers), discussion, group-work for certain tasks and extended oral communication.

Mr. Kim's teaching centred around John Wyndham's (1955), *The Chrysalids*, a science fiction novel set in the far-future, post-apocalypse, rural land of 'Labrador'. The teaching sequence, which we call a thematically- or topically-linked 'Unit of Work' (UoW), consisted of five lessons (total lesson time of 3 hours) taught over a period of two weeks. In lessons 1 and 2, the students mostly worked to interpret and engage with the text in small-group settings. In Lessons 3, 4 and 5, the focus shifted to students showing evidence of understanding through group-based PowerPoint presentations to the whole class. In the findings presented below we focus mostly on data drawn from lessons 1 and 2, as these were the sessions where Mr. Kim presented the text to the class.

Data Analysis

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[1] Typically, Government Aided schools have a certain amount of flexibility in terms of class size and affliation to a particular brand of education.

[2] At Secondary level, the Ministry of Education, Singapore, channels students into one of three courses (Express, Normal Academic and Normal Technical) tailored to meet their learning abilities and interests.

The data analyses used in this case study included classroom coding (Appendix 1), descriptive statistics and transcription analyses of video-recorded lessons and interviews.

Findings

In this section we present illustrative findings in response to the research questions above into four interrelated and mutually-informing parts: (i) classroom learning environment, (ii) visible teaching and learning, and purposefulness, (iii) knowledge focus, and (iv) instructional practices.

Classroom Learning Environment

Our conceptualisation of the term, 'classroom learning environment', includes the physical aspects of a classroom and a range of indicators suggesting patterns in talk, communication and teacher-student interactions.

As described in Appendix 1, we segmented a typical lesson into 3-minute phases and then coded for a range of teaching and learning indicators. Table 1 shows Mr. Kim's UoW centred mostly around student performances of understanding in Lessons 3, 4 and 5, and the preceding preparatory group work involving the use of information technology in Lessons 1 and 2. There was also some whole class interactions in the majority of lessons.

Table 1. Classroom Organisation

Classroom Organisation	Lesson 1 (%)	Lesson 2 (%)	Lesson 3 (%)	Lesson 4 (%)	Lesson 5 (%)	Unit Mean (%)
Whole Class Interactions	4.6	4.0	0.0	4.6	15.2	**5.6**
Performance of Understanding	0.0	0.0	38.9	50.0	18.2	**21.4**
Pair Work	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Group Work	22.7	22.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	**9.1**
Inter-group Interaction	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Information Technology	21.2	27.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**9.6**

During the activities, Mr. Kim played a large part in directing interactions at the whole class and group levels. In both cases, we determined that his main foci of attention were based on the pragmatic matters of getting and maintaining the students' attention, organising tasks, and the substantive issues of content knowledge and skill development. For example, in 45.5% of the time in lessons, students were listening to the teaching and taking note of what he said, while 29.6% of the time in lessons, students were listening and responding to the teacher's questions in structured Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequences (Mehan, 1979).

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Mr. Kim often used questions in group work settings to check, prompt and support the students' understanding of the text. For instance, in transcript Extract 1, his questions in turns 119, 122, 124, and 129, were meant to encourage the students' engagement (personal responses) with the text. There is more than one reading possible of Line 129. One interpretation is that Mr. Kim wanted to stand back and allow the students time and space to explore the matter he had identified on their own, "See if you can work that one out. Okay?" Alternatively, his suggestion that the students needed to do further work signalled the reach of his epistemic authority in the classroom, defined as "a source that exerts determinative influence on the formation of individuals' knowledge" (Raviv *et al.*, 2003, p. 17).

Extract 1. (Lesson 1)

119	T*	You've also got to look at Anne in terms of Alan. What does Anne do?
120	S**	Keeping loyal to Alan.
121	S	What does she do, right?
122	T	What does she do? She marries Alan, right?
123	S	She leaves the group for him.
124	T	Yeah. Is she praiseworthy when she leaves the group for Alan?
125	S	She's like betraying the group.
126	S	No. To Alan she is praiseworthy but to the group she is betraying them.
127	T	Okay. Think this through because she actually justifies leaving the group.
128	S	She has a valid reason.
129	T	She's got a valid reason in terms of how it helps the group. See if you can work that one out. Okay?

*T=Teacher
**S=Student

Finally, concerning the classroom learning environment, Mr. Kim's talk centred mostly on the curriculum content to be learnt in the UoW. He also used talk around classroom organisational matters and regulatory talk to help ensure the students were on track and able to proceed in their work. Clearly, his lessons, as we will see in the next sub-section, were highly purposeful and directed.

Visible Teaching and Learning, and Purposefulness

According to John Hattie (2009) visible teaching and learning can make a great difference in levels of student learning and achievement. In particular, Hattie (2009) emphasizes the importance of the communication of explicit learning goals and performance standards to students as a key element of visible learning. In his words, "Learning intentions describe what it is we want students to learn in terms of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values within any particular unit or lesson" (p. 162).

Following the statement of the learning goals for each lesson, Mr. Kim's approach was typically task-focussed in line with his curriculum talk orientation. For example, he would say to students that "we need to get [work] done quickly, to fit in the time frame, so this is what's going to happen". Such on-task focus exemplifies a very pragmatic concern to ensure that work was completed and content covered in the limited time allotted to the lesson.

Notably, Mr. Kim had definite performance standards in mind and provided examples of what he considered to be high-quality task completion. For example, following the first group presentation in Lesson 3, he endorsed and validated the students' work to the whole class by stating that "this group has done such a good job". Additionally, he suggested to students who had yet to present that they could draw on the endorsed presentation and they "may wish to fine-tune a little bit, and bring a version two to the party on Monday … why not learn from your peers". Further, in Lesson 4, Mr. Kim continued to endorse and validate the students' work when it agreed with his interpretations of the story. He showed approval of the students' comparison with the Sealand woman (a character in the story) with Hitler, a real-life historical figure. He also hinted there was more interpretative work needed to unpack this relationship but that was a matter for later.

It is useful at this point to know something about the underlying rationale for Mr. Kim's goal-setting, lesson sequencing and classroom management/teaching approaches. In a post-class interview following Lesson 2, he expressed his viewpoints concerning his students readiness and abilities in literature. In response to the question, "What were your learning goals for this particular lesson?", Mr. Kim responded:

> The students don't quite know enough about how literature works yet. So, I'm gradually getting them to literature type thinking. Why does the writer put the message in? But I'm not expecting much in the presentation on this. But some of them have got ideas and the lights have gone on and I got some really good answers from them this morning.

For unspecified reasons, Mr. Kim did not think his students knew enough yet about the mechanics and disciplinarity ('how literature works' and 'literature type thinking') of literature, with its emphasis on interpretation and meaning-making. Consequently, he felt his job was to guide them gradually by asking relevant questions and setting his expectations accordingly. He also considered his approach had a positive effect with some members of the class.

Knowledge Focus

One way of understanding the nature and quality of teaching and learning is to consider the content of the 'academic' work conducted in classrooms via the tasks and activities set and enacted (Doyle, 1983). Central to our larger study is a focus on the epistemic and cognitive dimensions of the knowledge work associated with instructional tasks (Authors, 2013b). In particular, doing knowledge work in the classroom entails understanding the knowledge focus of instructional tasks that are deployed in lessons, and building on Bloom *et al.* (1956), Krathwohl (2002), Tardy (2005), and Young (1982), a taxonomy of knowledge foci was developed to understand the range of knowledge that is brought into the classroom. As explained below and in Appendix 1, an examination of the knowledge foci in tasks and activities therefore allows us to determine how students experience the curriculum as it is presented in the classroom.

Our data show that the dominant knowledge foci of the UoW were: Factual, Hermeneutical, and Procedural Knowledge. We define, Factual Knowledge as propositional knowledge (e.g., dates, events, facts, names, definitions etc.) that is either true or false. In turn, we understand Procedural Knowledge in the context of our study as concerning 'how' someone undertakes and completes a task. This may involve knowing about particular methods, strategies or heuristics for understanding a text or generating specific knowledge claims. Finally, Hermeneutical Knowledge relates to the conventions, protocols, models of the interpretation of texts, images and other representations used in instruction. We provide further details and illustrations of these knowledge types in Extracts 2 and 3.

Factual Knowledge: Extract 2, is an example of how many of the facts discussed by Mr. Kim revolved around the setting, events, characters and themes in the story. Following the opening question in Turn 310, he established the importance of events and characters by adding further details in Turns 316, 318 and 320 to help draw out their significance, thematically.

Extract 2. (Lesson 2)

310	T	What does he do?
311	S	He attacks Gordon Strorm.
312	T	He attacks Gordon Strorm. Why is this important? Why does he attack him?
313	Ss	Save Rosalind.
314	T	Yes.
315	S	To protect her from ...
316	T	So, loves Rosalind, attacks Gordon Strorm to save her from ...
317	Ss***	Harm.
318	T	Harm. It doesn't do him any good. He gets jumped on, knocked unconscious and thrown out. Which in a way is quite strange because I would've thought Gordon Strorm, if he was as bad as the Fringes people are painted, would do what?

319	S	Kill him.
320	T	Would kill him, because he's standing in the way of Gordon Strorm having his way with Rosalind. Why doesn't he treat David more harshly?
321	Ss	He's his own nephew.

***Ss=Students

Procedural Knowledge: In the first two lessons, procedural knowledge featured strongly as Mr. Kim gave instructions and guidance on the specific requirements of task activities. For example, in lesson 2, he provided a series of questions for the students to think about in producing a summary after a group presentation on a key theme in the text:

> Now these are the things to put down in the group summary …. This will be your overall conclusion. Why did the writer include that theme there? His message to the reader and his message about life in general. All right? What do we learn for instance about David's growing up process in the growing up theme—theme four? What do we learn about the change in our life through what David undergoes? Who do we think has the better handle on change? Old Jacob, Uncle Axel or the Sealand Woman. Ah, they are three very different views, okay?

Hermeneutical Knowledge: Typically, Mr. Kim used the context of facilitating small group discussion to add interpretative notes to previously-established facts. For instance, in Extract 3, he answered a student's question (Turn 263), to make connections to the real-world (Turn 268, "We dream of having a girl that's close to us, right"?) and added his own life-experiences (Turn 270, "And this is a mature Rosalind, as I've told you, I think girls get much more mature more quickly than boys") to extend the students' understanding of the text.

Extract 3. (Lesson 1)

263	S	Is this part of David?
264	T	Yeah, because if a girl does that for you, you are pretty privileged, right?
265	S	Yes.
266	T	I mean, this is soul stuff right?
267	S	Yup.
268	T	We dream of having a girl that's close to us, right? In terms of our minds. We're talking about soul mate, for life stuff. So, basically, she's given her whole being to David, because not they can be safe and secure in the new ...
269	S	And live happily ever after.
270	T	Well, yeah. Actually, Wyndham's been accused of having very safe catastrophes, if you've read the introduction. But still, it's valid. Because this is the final step of David's growing up. And this is a mature Rosalind, as I've told you, I think girls get much more

| | | mature more quickly than boys. You can see the more mature, the secure, the real Rosalind, and that's the gift. |

Instructional Practices

We understand instructional practices as the planned and enacted means of accomplishing important instructional goals (Brophy, 2004; Hattie, 2009). These items can take many forms but each one is reflected in particular interactions that characterise the forms and purposes of teaching and learning in a classroom. For example, in interpreting, summarising and explaining the story, Mr. Kim provided examples of how the class could make meanings from the text. In Extract 4, he helped the students make inferences about a character based on the character's actions, and then linked them to themes by modeling his thought processes (Lines 107 and 110).

Extract 4. (Lesson 1)

104	T	Okay. The point is that we're looking at loyalty and heroism, you know what Uncle Axel does to Alan, don't you?
105	S	Kills him.
106	S	Shoots him.
107	T	He shoots him. Now what does that show you about Uncle Axel?
108	S	Heroism?
109	S	No.
110	T	Well, like what? Well, I mean, you know what happened. To you, does that make him a hero?
111	S	Maybe, in a sense, he has helped the group.

Mr. Kim also modelled the use evidence in the text to support or substantiate a claim. In Extract 5, Turn 112, he provided an explanation of how the facts in a story were related to specific events within a context. The students, however, appeared to disagree and wanted to explore the interpretation further. Mr Kim skirted this in Turn 118, and redirected their attention to *his* explanation which he summarised in Turn 123.

Extract 5. (Lesson 2)

112	T	Okay, you don't have to quote all of it. Just the most violent parts of her speech. Because she's going against the whole thing. Remember why she's saying all this because she has absolutely nowhere to go. The rules state third child, husband casts her out. And in this society when the husband casts you out you're nothing. She's got nowhere to go. Please note the outcome. We don't know whether she was murdered,

		or whether she killed herself. It doesn't matter. She's dead and that's a violent act. That's why she's in your section. You can speculate. Maybe she was murdered because of what she said. The violent part of what she said. Maybe because her views were incompatible with the rules, she was murdered. Or maybe she killed herself because she had nowhere to go.
113	S	But she wouldn't, isn't it?
114	T	She would have prayed and then she would have killed herself.
115	S	And she also said to Emily, you are the only person I can turn to
116	S	But I thought the sister had other siblings?
117	S	They had other children
118	T	Anyway, she turned, why did she turn to David's mother?
119	S	She was desperate, and she needed help
120	S	Because she was unaware
121	T	What did she want to do, in fact?
122	S	She wanted to swap babies, she wanted to swap Petra for her baby.
123	T	She wanted to swap babies for the inspection right? I mean, that's desperate measures and of course she's torn, but she must defer to her husband, because that's what that society does, you don't go against your husband in this society. She goes along with her husband.

Overall, it is worth noting that Mr. Kim's teaching and content coverage was aimed quite specifically in preparing the class for a final literature test where the students had to respond to questions requiring both literal and accurate comprehension, and personal responses to the text. In response to his assessment practices, Mr. Kim strongly believed that assessment prepares students for the examinations, especially the high-stakes GCE 'O'-level examination at the end of Secondary 4. Even the test format and difficulty are aligned to the 'O'-level examination to ensure students are aware of the summative nature of the high-stakes test.

Discussion and Implications

Set against the background of a decline in popularity in literature studies, our findings from a case of a teacher in a Secondary school in Singapore teaching a Unit of Work based on Wyndham's futuristic novel, *The Chrysalids*, illustrate a particular instructional style and pedagogic rationale.

In brief, Mr. Kim was purposeful and pragmatic. His approach was mostly teacher and teaching focussed and organised around content coverage and task completion. This is evident through the extracts of classroom talk above where the social order in which educational activities takes place is displayed giving them structure and significance (Luke, Freebody, Cazden & Lin, 2004).

In short, the organisation of classroom talk revolved specifically around Mr. Kim's instructional choices.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Kim's lessons featured instruction-giving, establishing the facts and adding his own interpretative notes to illustrate and extend the students' understanding of the text 'as text' (Loh, 2012, p. 229). He also made conceptual and temporal connections between new and prior learning and knowledge, monitored the students' performance closely, edited and corrected ideas, validated, evaluated and modelled how to make and support meanings from the text.

Overall, we can explain these practices in two broad ways: First, Mr. Kim was no doubt very mindful of the need to prepare the class not only for a forthcoming assessment, but also the high-stakes pen-and-paper literature examination at the end of the following year. This puts a non-trivial constraint on the instructional agency for a teacher such as Mr. Kim as he had to attend to institutional requirements – to prepare students for high-stakes testing – more than the disciplinary intentions of the literature curriculum. Second, he believed his students "... don't quite know how literature works yet" and it was his task and responsibility to nurture and grow in them "literature type thinking" (Extract 5). Clearly, a teacher's personal beliefs and assumptions about the students he or she teaches are fundamental to instructional practices (e.g., modes of interaction, selection of materials and issues to raise) and the discipline as a whole (Lewis & Dockter, 2011; Loh, Yeo, & Liew, 2013b), that is, how it is projected, taught and perceived.

Indeed, when we consider how Mr. Kim mobilised the classroom learning environment, his UoW and teaching approaches appear familiar, principled, responsible and justifiable given the requirements of Secondary schooling in Singapore. But are there any consequences of adopting one instructional approach to teaching literature over others? In what follows, we consider the implications of our findings in terms of 'opportunity costs', a term we borrow from the business world relating to lost benefits or missed opportunities in the context of offering choices and decision-making for oneself and others.

Opportunity Costs

There were four main areas where Mr. Kim's instructional choice-making influenced the students' learning. First, when a teacher conducts most of the interpretative work in the classroom and the mastery of facts is a key skill for development, it is likely that knowledge will be conveyed or presented as true and non-contestable from a fixed epistemic standpoint—the teacher's. In Mr. Kim's UoW, we see little deliberation or critique of the text emanating from the class members. Our view is that the prevalence and tenacity of teacher-dominated discourse and instructional patterns have a persistent and daunting reality in literature classrooms. They effectively restrict or deny altogether access to broader literature disciplinary interactions and the very subject-based 'thinking' Mr. Kim's hoped to nurture and inspire over time.

Second and concomitantly, when there is a set and pre-planned scheme of work, there can be a resulting lack of variation in classroom practices. For example, we have scant evidence to

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demonstrate instructional flexibility (Gholami & Husu, 2010) across the UoW. We contend, therefore, that Mr. Kim's curriculum coverage left him (and his students) with little room for movement.

Of course, some timings could have been adjusted on a piecemeal basis, but ultimately, successful task completion usually guarantees high activity levels and output, not quality learning outcomes necessarily. While Mr. Kim provided much procedural support before and during task enactment, there was little guidance on alternative solutions, strategies or options to aid the students' work. There also seemed to be limited options for approaching tasks in multiple ways. And as a consequence, the students had restricted opportunities to direct their own learning and to think independently.

Third, when teachers focus primarily on students' achievement within certain parameters, there can be a tendency to focus on pre-identified performances of ability or understanding. For example, Mr. Kim was not expecting much from the students in their presentations. Yet, we might propose, more ambitiously, that a different learning 'performance' would be the number and type of *questions* the students asked each other and the teacher. An emerging and growing inquiry approach could perhaps better foster the cognitive skills mentioned by Ng (2013).

Fourth, while the knowledge of facts and procedures is important, there seemed to be less emphasis in Mr. Kim's lessons on the development of the disciplinary perspectives that are arguably central in the Singapore literature curriculum. For example, such academic attributes include: identifying with creativity, thinking, organisational skill, independence, directness, persuasiveness, feeling, maturity, sensitivity, balance, making ideas and connections explicit, genuineness, and knowing what counts as relevant (Kramer-Dahl, 1999).

Conclusion

There are some obvious limitations in the present study based as it is on time-bound, cross-sectional data that was focussed mainly on the teacher's instruction and interpretations. First, we only collected one Unit of Work from a single teacher. Therefore, we were (and still are) working with a restricted context with little knowledge of Mr. Kim's teaching and specific reasoning on certain matters throughout the academic year. As we do not focus on students' work in the present paper, we do not know, for example, to what extent the students were able to make their study of Wyndham's, *Chrysalids,* personally meaningful and their capability to connect to wider social and cultural issues nationally and globally. We are also unsure about how or whether Mr. Kim negotiated between different discourses and cultural traditions. And we do not know if the students saw themselves differently as a consequence of reading the text. As our understandings are both methodologically and interpretively incomplete, It would be useful, then, to conduct further research of a longitudinal nature across several research sites where multiple interventions in literature pedagogy are conducted and studied across the secondary school years (cf. Poon, 2006).

However, within the specific context of a Unit of Work in literature with Secondary-level students in Singapore, our study findings suggest that the teacher taught in a distinctive teacher-led manner for particular reasons. Essentially, his organisation of the class and tasks revolved around his planned and enacted instructional choices. Within the scope of our coding, these decisions, we believe, influenced the ways in which the students directly experienced the curriculum. While Mr. Kim was pragmatic and purposeful in his curriculum coverage, the issue of whether more could have been done to probe and problematise issues in the study text from various disciplinary perspectives remains open (cf. Poon, 2006). In this respect, Poon (2007) has argued convincingly that instead of approaching literature through the cultivation of certain skills and the division of the text into key areas of study like plot, theme, character and so on, curriculum coverage could also include constructing certain critical perspectives: Who has a voice? Who speaks? Who gets silenced? etc. If this were the case, perhaps Mr. Kim's class would have looked and felt different especially when viewed through a different set of theoretical and methodological lenses that position literary studies more broadly within the humanities.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: Singapore Pedagogy Coding Scheme 2

The Singapore Pedagogy Coding Scheme 2 (SCS2) was adapted and redeveloped based on the Singapore Pedagogy Coding Scheme for classroom knowledge discourse (Luke, Freebody, Cazden, & Lin, 2004; Luke, Cazden, Freebody, & Lin, 2004).

SCS2 was primarily based on the teaching and school reform literature drawing on normative models from instructional psychology, cognitive theory and instructional/pedagogical research (Authors, 2010). In general terms, SCS2 reliably captured the instructional order in classrooms: teacher goals and standards of understanding/performance; the design of assessment and instructional tasks, the social organization of lessons (the participation structure), the pattern of instructional activity, the use of classroom resources, the classroom learning environment, classroom management, and classroom talk. Above all, it focused on the intellectual quality of the knowledge work reflected in teacher tasks and student work, as well as in classroom talk.

SCS2 facilitated coding of each lesson in 3-minute intervals. The decision to code every 3 minutes was made on a number of methodological and practical reasons, including the need to code the temporal development of knowledge work within and across lessons, and considerations of the cognitive load on trained coders (Authors, 2010). The following table describes the indicators that are relevant to this article.

SCS2: Indicator Descriptions

Indicator Focus	Description
Lesson Topics/Objectives/ Recapitulation (36 variables)	Describes whether the teacher explicitly states the lesson topic, learning objective/s and the rationale for the same as well as the mode of articulation.
Instructional Activities (IA) (36 variables)	Describes the common instructional activities in the classroom such as the teacher's exposition, IRE sequences, students' presentations and demonstrations of understanding, pair/group work, drill and practice etc.
Teacher Communication (6 variables)	Describes teacher talk to individual students, and in group, or whole class contexts. Teacher communication may vary from the dominant curriculum talk focused on content and skills to talk of an organisational, or regulatory nature with occasional downtime and digressions (non-curriculum talk).
Activity Type (9 variables)	Describes the type of activities done in class, outside the classroom; or undertaken based on instruction/s given by the teacher. These include classwork, homework, tests and assessments that constitute key indicators of the social organization of the classroom.
Checking Background Knowledge (3 variables)	Describes whether the teacher checks for prior knowledge i.e. the knowledge students already possess through their past experiences. It is always teacher-initiated and may serve to activate students' underlying cognitive schema or simply help to check what students already "know".
Whole Class Discussion Interactions	Describes the social organization of classroom talk in whole class discussions. It includes explicit teacher instruction of

(7 variables)	social norms/protocols as well as instructions in "strategic questioning" and "understanding or exploratory talk" in whole class contexts. The focus is also on the social relations of talk or the implicit norms that regulate the formal social features of classroom talk such as positioning of discursive authority, wait time, inclusivity, and reciprocity.
Small Group Work (11 variables)	Describes the social organization of small group talk. It details teacher management of group work, and also captures the normative structure of student talk, in groups by revealing the presence (or absence) of a supportive environment, shared decision-making, informal support, inclusivity, and reciprocity.
Monitoring (4 variables)	Describes ways in which teachers monitor student learning (at the individual, group or class level) to provide feedback or ideally, to adjust teaching strategies. While supervisory monitoring is essentially about compliance with given instructions, the purpose of formative monitoring is to ascertain the level of student understanding or skill in a learning task.
Feedback (8 variables)	Describes the type and audience of feedback in the classroom. Feedback includes evaluative comments/remarks, detailed corrective responses and ideally, formative feedback which meaningfully informs students *and* teachers.
Learning Support (6 variables)	Describes the nature of 'scaffolding' by the teacher. The teacher's resource, idea, suggestion, or proposition may be planned and fixed, or may be given on a contextual and flexible basis. To assist learners in the successful completion of a task or activity, teachers may render procedural, strategic, or logistical learning support.
Locus of Epistemic Authority (9 variables)	Describes the locus of epistemic authority in the classroom, which is generally the teacher in the Singapore classroom. Occasionally, the teacher may appeal to evidence or domain-specific knowledge, or may privilege other sources such as students' opinions and judgments. Epistemic authority may also shift to artefactual sources such as the textbook or other digital tools.
Learning Activities (24 variables)	Describes the specific *learning activities* that students are instructed by the teacher to engage in over the course of the lesson. These include listening to the teacher's exposition, participating in IRE sequences, doing individual seatwork or pair/group work, reading and presenting, self and peer assessment etc.
Knowledge Focus (9 variables)	Describes the generic focus of the knowledge work in the classroom. By assigning various activities/tasks, teachers ask students to engage in different levels and forms of knowledge primarily - factual, procedural and conceptual. The knowledge focus may be epistemic, rhetorical, hermeneutical, or and perhaps, to a lesser extent, moral, civic and aesthetic knowledge may be evident.

	Note: Hermeneutical knowledge and Moral/Civic knowledge are not applicable in Mathematics.
English-specific Disciplinary Practices (10 variables)	Describes domain-specific disciplinary practices such as coding/decoding, comprehension, interpretation and creative writing. Knowledge work in English also includes description, explanation, conveying, expression and persuasion.
Performance Standards (3 variables)	Describes the performance standards and exemplars used in class. The level and detail in communicating performance standards and examples of successful (or unsuccessful) performance help students to: 1) gauge what they need to do to achieve the standards, 2) assess their own learning, and 3) determine what they require for future work.
Structure of Classroom Interactions (20 variables)	Describes discursive agency – teacher talk and student talk in whole class, individual or group contexts. Besides the teacher's exposition, the scale provides an indication of teacher/student questions (open, closed), teacher/student responses (short, medium, extended) as well as comments and exchanges initiated by classroom participants.
Focus of Classroom Talk & Social Organisation of Talk (33 variables)	Describes the nature of classroom talk. Whole class interactions may be in the form of the teacher's lecture, IRE sequences, exploratory talk, or may involve varying combinations of the same. Epistemic or knowledge talk may be of a factual or procedural nature or may incorporate clarifying, making connections and doing explanatory work. Occasionally, classroom talk may revolve around epistemic justification and epistemic virtues. The scale encompasses reflexive talk as well as performative or assessment-oriented talk.
Epistemic Pluralism and Orientation (7 variables)	Describes the degree of epistemic pluralism in the Singapore classroom – whether knowledge is perceived as Truth or whether it can be contested. The scale explores whether epistemic agents (teacher/students) contest and subsequently, support or justify knowledge claims; compare and contrast information; engage in knowledge critique, or in collective deliberation.