

Architexture for Engaged Pedagogy: How Classroom Design Affects the Teaching and Learning of English Literature

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Abstract

English Literature as a subject challenges the traditional notion of accuracy and demands negotiation between teachers and learners. It is a discipline that requires discussion, innovation and enquiry. Therefore, teaching and learning English Literature requires an environment that facilitates and accommodates engaging pedagogies as opposed to classrooms which exercise authority. Studies have shown that engaging pedagogies are enhanced within classrooms that are designed to encourage modern pedagogic practices. However, an often overlooked area of Sri Lankan schools is the effect classroom design has on learning and teaching. This in particular affects English Literature due to its engaging pedagogic practices. This study aims to evaluate and understand classroom designs that help maintain engaging pedagogies for English Literature and the effect classroom design has on student learning. Data for the present study were collected through a

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lesson observation as well as semi-structured interviews of learners and a teacher of Advanced Level English Literature. Additionally, the school library was observed and discussed to understand the effects of learning environments on student learning. Through deductive data analysis, this study analyses features that contribute to the culture of learning required for Advanced Level English Literature. The implications of this study highlight that classroom design and culture promote learner thinking and collaboration. These factors enhance the learning experience of English Literature as they instill democratic values among learners and encourage learner participation.

Keywords: *Architecture, Classroom Design, English Literature, Literary Pedagogy*

Introduction

The ways in which knowledge is acquired help to understand the ways in which teachers transfer knowledge to their students. Freire (1968) elaborates that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p.53). Moreover, Socrates (circa 470 B.C.) famously engaged others in conversations with the aim of broadening ideas. He did this by discussing the ambiguities and complexities of topics with them. By engaging in dialogue, he took on the role of a student and forced his respondents to act the role of a teacher (Delic & Bećirović, 2016). Likewise, English Literature also has the capacity to help students to transform from remaining “passive consumer(s)” in the classroom to “active participant(s)” (Hooks, 1994, p.14). This can be achieved by defying “banking” information and following a form of open discussion, listening, criticism and independent learning that shapes a “problem-posing education” (Freire, 1968, p.67).

Advanced Level English Literature demands many skills from students such as writing, reading for inference and analytical skills. However, their experiences of the learning process may

largely differ from each other due to the learning environment and design which Miklitsch (1990) refers to as the “architecture” (p. 105). This factor may cause a considerable difference in the entire learning experience among different learning communities. Located in the understanding that knowledge emerges through innovation and inquiry, this study will conceptualize the importance of classroom design in the teaching of English Literature in secondary schools of Sri Lanka.

Those who identify the teacher as a guiding agent assert that the teacher’s job is to facilitate teaching as a motivator (Schwarz, 2008). Teachers must prompt students to think in sophisticated terms, which in turn would generate sophisticated writing. While there are many ways in which teaching can be made interesting and learning more empowering, many critics have termed discussion-based learning as a primary pedagogic practice within the Literature classroom. Meaningful social interactions (Gill & Illesca, 2011), authentic conversations (Petrosky, 2011) and literature circles (Shelton-Strong, 2012) are some terms for discussion-led literature learning. Discussion-based learning in fact functions as a microcosm of democracy for students (Gill & Illesca, 2011). In these pedagogies, the teacher may function as the link between learners and knowledge (Erdem, 2015). Moreover, Miklitsch (1994) views the teacher as the pedagogic subject-position sans autocratic authority.

Certain dialogic and cooperative pedagogic practices such as literature circles directly affect the structure of the classroom. For such activities, it is important to have flexible physical spaces to teach in, which can be altered according to the teaching activity. Unfortunately, the importance of physical space has often been overlooked in the educative process.

Classroom design and its impact on teaching and learning Literature is an under-examined field of pedagogy, especially in the Sri Lankan context. However, it is understood that classroom design directly affects teaching methods employed in the classroom. Studies have presented that there are many pedagogic

practices and classroom designs that have proven to be successful and impactful. Thus, this study hopes to understand the following.

1. Which classroom designs facilitate engaging pedagogies?
2. What is the effect of classroom design on student learning?

Therefore, by observing a Literature classroom of a Sri Lankan secondary school and by interviewing its participants, this study aims to analyze and discuss the effectiveness of classroom design for problem-posing and engaging pedagogies in the teaching and learning of English Literature.

Review of Literature

Architecture for Engaging Pedagogies

Miklitsch (1994) relates an anecdote of a class he conducted at Tufts. He elaborates on how he would usually arrange the seats in a circle so as to encourage discussion. However, the classroom allocated for the seminar was of a traditional layout, with desks nailed to the floor and a platform at the front with a lectern to teach from. Consequently, he had taught from the back of the class and experienced an unsuccessful seminar due to the layout of the classroom. This, he says, allowed him to think about the “pedagogic subject-position” as it relates to the physical space of the classroom which he terms as the “architecture” (p. 105). He further states,

“...the materiality of the classroom is ineluctably a practical and theoretical affair. In other words, the classroom is one of the contexts – a material, not negligible one – within which both the discourse of knowledge and the student – teacher relation is constructed.” (Miklitsch, 1994, p. 106).

According to this understanding, physical spaces in which teaching and learning occur are as essential to the pedagogy as tools and material used for the lesson. Stemming from Miklitsch’s study (1994), the present study focuses on the impact of physical

learning spaces on the learning process since certain pedagogic practices directly affect classroom design and vice versa.

Both Freire (1968) and Hooks (1994) highlight the notion of an active learning environment, those which pose problems, enquiries and discussions. This helps us to understand the impact modern pedagogic practices based on discussion and enquiry have in understanding the subject matter in a better and interesting way. In a study conducted in the UK by Turvey and Yandell (2011), a teacher entry is recorded in which the teacher's perception of the word "marooned", meaning isolated or cut off was challenged by a Jamaican student in a lesson on Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

"Nathalie's challenge resulted in a discussion about different races, isolation, leaving home, moving away, which then lopped back to the word 'marooned'. By this stage the word had assumed a significance for all of us, a meaning in fact that was steeped in a history of colonialism and slavery. Nathalie had in effect insisted that I attend to that history and to her knowledge of it. She did this in ways I could not have predicted or controlled." (Turvey & Yandell, 2011, p. 157).

This account links to Freire's (1968) understanding of how the learner's thinking authenticates the teacher's thinking. It is understood that this form of authenticity which Petrosky (2011) identifies as "authentic conversations" that make "students thinking visible" (p. 140) could be achieved through discussion-led and problem-posing pedagogies.

Significance of Physical Spaces

The correlation between student behavior, development and classroom design has proven to be a vital element in student education. In a study on whether space matters in cooperative learning, Espey (2008) analyses the impact of classroom design on undergraduates' attitudes towards learning experiences within team-based learning environments. Espey (2008) employs three set-ups: rows with large tables facing the front of the room, desks, and office type chairs with small desks on wheels for easy mobility. In her study, she identifies that students who learn in small groups

demonstrate better academic achievements and more favorable attitudes towards learning than their peers who study in traditional classrooms. Consequently, classroom design impacts the learning that occurs within groups. For instance, she identifies that individual seating choices within groups lead to casual conversation and cooperative studying; predetermined seating influences communication patterns and the role and perception of individuals within groups; and decentralized networks such as circular seating arrangements promote quicker problem solving. To form these networks and groups within the classroom, comfortable and flexible furniture are essential. While her study does not display significant statistical differences in using small group activities, it impacts individual learning because the main idea behind small group activities is to increase individual learning by actively engaging students in the learning process. This classroom design also echoes the principles of cooperative learning, which is not only to gain knowledge but to also hone important social skills that will benefit learners in the long run (Johnson & Johnson, 2018).

Close (1992) recalls her experience through the primacy of classroom design and literature discussion in the creation of a classroom environment for thinking and sharing. The research strand has looked at how classroom teachers can help students to think more deeply about the literature they read. The study has also considered the students as collaborators as they shared their reactions to class in frequent interviews. She states that through discussion students are validated as thinkers. It taps students' knowledge, scaffolds students' process of understanding and gives students control to work through their understandings. Furthermore, they connect discussion and classroom activity to the layout which contributes to this thought sharing process. Instead of desks, eight large tables are arranged in an octagon, leaving a large open space in the center. This permits students to work in small groups of three or four and move into the circle when a class discussion is to take place. Therefore, Close (1992) draws on the fact that pedagogic practices and physical space design in the Literature classroom have a direct correlation that influences

sound learning. Educational intervention such as classroom design experimented by both Espey (2008) and Close (1992) will benefit learners to progress intellectually, socially and emotionally, resulting in holistic development (Tomlinson, 2006).

Classroom design is essential for all age groups within a school context. Thomsen (2014) highlights three important elements in designing a classroom, primarily an all-purpose learning environment focused on children in the middle school age category.

1. Furniture arrangement: the most effective arrangement of furniture is desk clusters of 2-3 desks with distinct separations of different areas in the classroom. Additionally, placing the teacher's desk in the corner proved to be effective as the teacher was encouraged to move a great deal in the classroom, paying attention to all the students. Furniture arrangements also stimulate classroom discussions.
2. Activity centers: activity areas are distinct areas designated for small themed activities such as science corners, art centers or drama centers. These centers allow students to explore their interests and find out what they like to do best.
3. Literature center: it is recommended that every classroom has a library corner from which students may pick and read a book of their interest.

Though the above study on classroom design is not solely for Literature classrooms, it certainly encourages disciplines of literary studies and therefore can be adopted for Literature classes in Sri Lankan secondary schools as well.

Wulsin Jr. (2013) explores the impact of physical settings of tertiary educational institutes in the U.S.A. on learner interest and continuous education which can also be viewed in relation to Literature learning in secondary schools. The following are the elements that have been explored which induce learning in these settings.

1. **Learner-Centered Pedagogy:** refers to classroom design in new contexts which detach the teacher from an information transferring role to a guide. Hence, the study explores designs which focus on knowledge generation than transfer. These designs are referred to as hives and circular layouts.
2. **Natural Systems:** explores how classroom architecture brings in nature into the classroom such as natural light by equipping natural building material.
3. **Space Outside Classrooms:** this element explores how in-class learning is promoted in outside classroom environments through a seamless transition. Thus, outside environments are designed to connect classrooms to common spaces where students and faculty can meet informally and engage in subject-related discussions.
4. **Flexibility:** refers to reorienting from lecture-based, teacher-centered set up to whole-group and small-group discussions using flexible furniture and learner spaces. Relationship making, networking and creative problem solving are encouraged.
5. **Technology:** refers to classroom designs that support online learning and digital content-based learning via built-in technologies.

Peer group interactive approaches to learning are viewed as bearing positive outcomes on both academic and social elements of support learning (Nind & Wearmouth, 2006). A vital element of such pedagogies such as discussion-based and collaborative learning is teacher movement and interaction. A study on the same by Jakonen (2018) shows that mobility creates prospects for task-related guidance and supports addressing such guidance to specific recipients. The study addresses how, in traditional classrooms, there is a distinction between teacher – student territories and how modern pedagogies challenge these boundaries. As a teacher leaves the desk and enters the student territory, the teacher involves themselves in desk interactions, thus, the teacher’s movement away from the blackboard towards the students transforms the activity from a visual presentation of a concept to its conversational elaboration with students. This also

allows the teacher to provide students individual instruction based on their individual needs. This directly affects the classroom design. Teacher mobility and peer collaboration depend on the layout of desks and other furniture within the room. While student groups need to be seated appropriately, the teacher should also have sufficient room to walk about and pay equal attention to every student group and have equal access to all the students of the groups. However, the study also acknowledges the authoritative position embedded in the role of the teacher. At moments where the teacher needs to address the entire class and provide further instruction, positioning themselves in front of the blackboard or behind the teacher's desk provides the teacher the authority associated with their position and also makes them salient to the classroom. This asserts that classroom design plays a vital role in the pedagogical practices we employ within our Literature classes.

These studies demonstrate the impact classroom designs in terms of physical layout, facilities and furniture have on the learning process of students within classrooms. Through these studies, it is evident that classroom design creates a positive learning environment and determines the students' attitude towards learning. It is also understood that certain classroom designs suit only certain learning objectives. Therefore, purpose specific designs need to be used according to lesson objectives, such as circular seating for discussions which may not suit large lecture-based learning. These studies do not necessarily indicate better grades as a result of better environments. Nevertheless, they demonstrate an increased sense of learning and a hands-on approach to continuous learning that is instilled within learners.

Methodology

This paper stems from a larger study that primarily evaluates pedagogical practices utilized in the teaching of English Literature at the Advanced Levels. An observation from the said study is the role of classroom design in facilitating pedagogies for literature learning. Thus, this paper attempts to evaluate and understand the following.

1. Which classroom designs facilitate engaging pedagogies?
2. What is the effect of classroom design on student learning?

Data was gathered for this paper via semi-structured interviews and observations to evaluate the importance of classroom design in secondary school English Literature learning.

Rationale

The studies reviewed above demonstrate the importance of modern pedagogic practices. These practices primarily rely on discussion-based teaching to empower student voices and interpretations within classrooms for the enhancement of student interest in the subject (Espey, 2008; Jakonen, 2018; Thomsen, 2014). Moreover, these studies also highlight the importance placed on classroom design for carrying out these pedagogies.

One common methodology of cited studies is the use of qualitative approaches to understand the research motives. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), qualitative research stresses “the social constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 10). As such, in enquiry, research studies elements in their natural environments according to the meaning people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

This study is also based on the rationale that the best perception of pedagogic and architectural impact on English Literature learning in the Sri Lankan Advanced Level context can be achieved by examining how teaching and learning occur in the physical learning space of the classroom. Moreover, student and teacher views gathered through interviews have been incorporated into the study to understand how teaching and learning experiences within their environments shape individual experiences.

Participants and Observational Environments

This study followed a descriptive research design which observed

an Advanced Level English Literature lesson in a private boys' school in Colombo. Furthermore, the participants of this study, both students and the teacher took part in semi-structured interviews.

This convenience sample of five students and one teacher are known to the researcher as students and colleague, respectively. Moreover, the observed environments (both a classroom and a library) were from the same school. During this research, the researcher was attached to this school as a part-time teacher.

Table 1. Participants' Information

Participant Code	Other Subjects pursued for A/Ls
Student A	IT and History
Student B	Economics and GRC
Student C	Economics and GRC
Student D	Economics and GRC
Student E	Economics and Mathematics
Teacher	n/a

Despite the researcher's familiarity with research participants and environments, necessary steps were followed to facilitate an ethical study. Thus, permission was received from the observed school, and all participants took part in the study willingly and voluntarily. The participants' familiarity with the researcher and the researcher's familiarity with the environment may be considered limitations of the study; however, as presented in the discussion that follows, it invariably benefited the study.

In keeping with Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) interpretation of enquiry in qualitative research, the study first observed a lesson conducted in the students' usual English Literature classroom. This ensured that the observation and interviews took place in their natural settings. The researcher placed himself at the back of the classroom, behind the students. It was decided that the participants' familiarity with the researcher as their teacher/colleague would allow a natural flow of events as they are used to the researcher being present in their classes.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) developed by Stuhlman, et al. (2014) was used as the overarching structure for the observation. Therefore, factors such as classroom climate, regard for student perspectives and strategies for engaging students were observed.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. Student interviews were conducted in the classroom, while the teacher was interviewed in her office adjoining the classroom.

Data Analysis

This study adopts a deductive qualitative content analysis approach. The primary reason for this is the availability of previous literature on pedagogical and architectural impact on teaching and learning English Literature. Therefore, with available data obtained from a representative local context of Advanced Level English Literature, this study evaluates how classroom design is key to successful teaching and learning of English Literature in secondary schools.

Discussion

Miklitsch (1994) has posited that the design of the classroom is essential to conduct successful learning. Likewise, Jakonen (2018) highlights the importance of mobility within the classroom which creates more opportunities for task related guidance. Therefore, it is apparent that classroom design is pivotal for engaging pedagogies.

Classroom Environment

The observed school has a classroom for English Literature which is decorated and organized differently to other classrooms of the school. The students sit around the teacher's desk (Figures 1 and 2), similar to that of a meeting rather than a typical secondary school classroom with rows of desks and chairs and the teacher in

front. As seen in Figure 1, on one side of the teacher is a big whiteboard across the wall and on the other side is a wall full of charts with pictures and details of the poets, authors and playwrights in the syllabus. A bookrack is placed against the east wall of the classroom which contains many subject related books (Figure 3). A movable blackboard is placed at the back of the classroom which contains useful material such as essay writing techniques and points of analysis (Figure 4). The west wall is painted in blue. There are windows on three sides of the classroom, behind the teacher's chair and on either side (east and west) of the room. The door to the class is directly in front of the teacher, at the back of the room. This room also functions as the drama room; hence it contains many cupboards with costumes and props.



Figure 1. *South view of the Literature classroom*



Figure 2. *South-west view of the Literature classroom*

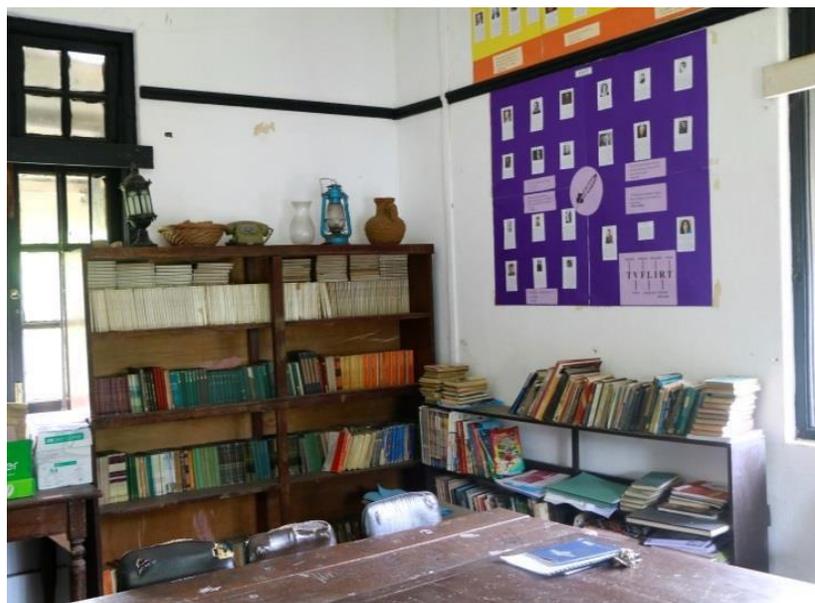


Figure 3. *South-east view of the Literature classroom*



Figure 4. *North-west view of the Literature classroom*



Figure 5: *A classroom in the Commerce Section*

The participants, both students and the teacher, unanimously agreed that classroom design is essential for learning Literature. Students study two other subjects alongside English Literature. Nevertheless, the student participants agreed that they enjoy the classroom environment they have for English Literature because it is different to the other classrooms.

The classroom in the Commerce Section (Figure 5) where most of the other classes are held does not seem to provide the same peaceful setting for learning. Therefore, one of the primary reasons that Students A, B, D seem to agree on is that the quiet atmosphere of the English Literature room creates a learner-friendly environment.

Moreover, according to Student A, they have "... charts and stuff to look at unlike in other classrooms", while Student D stated that "the books, the props, the charts, the layout, they all help". Both the charts and in-class library are not often used by the students; nevertheless, both Students A and D claim that they are motivated to study in the Literature classroom which is visually pleasing. This idea can be justified because students find the other classrooms rather dull as they are monochromatic and empty. Student E stated that "the Commerce Section might be new and better, but it has dull colors". Bell (2013) identifies visual impact as an essential factor for student interest in the subject. Though she primarily refers to visual prompts, it incorporates the use of color and prompts for visual impact. The teacher participant further justified this by stating that many students are visual learners, thus are motivated to learn in a room that is colorful and visually pleasing.

According to Student C, the seating arrangement is an important factor which contributes to successful learning in this classroom. The fact that the students sit around the teacher's desk, facing each other, generates conversation. Student E said, "...the attitude to learn is impacted because I am not at the back and the mind is not allowed to wander. I'd say that the round-table setup is helpful." Student D commented that "there's equal attention for

everyone. Everyone is in the front row here.” Thus, the students feel integrated in the lesson as they all receive equal attention in the classroom due to the seating arrangement. This quality of cooperation leads to higher levels of participation as learners feel heard and feel important, leading to positive attitudes towards their work and contribution (Munoz-Martinez, et al., 2020). Moreover, this proves that knowledge emerges in an environment which encourages enquiry. Enquiry makes students’ thinking visible (Freire, 1968). Thus, the layout contributes to allowing student thinking to take prominence in the classroom. This reflects Miklitsch’s (1994) understanding of architecture, reviewed above. The teacher in this study has attempted to change this structure to provide students a different environment for a change from routine. However, according to her, it was unsuccessful because it consisted of two rows which resulted in poor response rates.

The impact the classroom has on students seem to border on respect (and sanctity even) that is associated with the room. Student A stated that “There is a kind of respect for the Lit room when you think about it. It is *the Lit room*.” This view is shared by many. Student D commented that “there is a vibe and I like that vibe”, while Student E claimed that they feel special about having a room of their own for the subject. He further stated, “We feel special when we say we are going for Lit. It makes the subject elite almost. Like it deserves its own room and the atmosphere is necessary for the subject.” However, this form of elitist idea associated with the subject may be harmful and may be criticised by many. This mentality may distance the students from reality, similar to that of the ‘kaduwa’ effect which the English academia has attempted to move away from in recent years (Gunsekera, 2005).

The space concerned fulfills two of the three requirements of classroom design presented by Thomsen (2014): furniture arrangements and literature centers. Thomsen (2014) suggests desk clusters for students. While this recommended arrangement allows better small group activities and suits younger age groups, the arrangement used in this particular study assists in creating

conversation and contributes to discussion-based learning that is more suitable for the age group and the discipline in concern. Likewise, the literature center (in-class library) also contributes to student interest in the subject even though as reiterated before is not in full use in the context of the sample community.

Certain parallels can be drawn between this study and Wulsin Jr.'s (2013) study on the impact of physical settings. For instance, the round table layout in the observed environment facilitates discussion by removing the teacher from the role of a narrator and placing her almost as an equal within the classroom. The prominent location of the teacher, however, allows her sufficient authority to control discussion (Jakonen, 2018). Moreover, although the observed classroom is located in a building which is nearly a century old, there is sufficient natural light. The view of the school's green quadrangle from the windows of the class provides students sufficient engagement with nature while being present in the class. However, there is a stark difference in environment inside and outside the Literature classroom. Therefore, learning outside the classroom environment is not promoted due to the absence of a seamless transition. The multi-purpose classroom also consists of furniture that cannot be rearranged for different activities, and lacks digital facilities. Consequently, the layout remains static, and while technology is used for teaching, in-class usage of digital equipment is limited to the teacher's personal resources.

The observed lesson generated dialogue among students on the character of Amanda in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, resulting in differing interpretations of Amanda's role as a mother being discussed openly. This instance depicts Gill and Illesca's (2011) understanding that the interpretation of a text is negotiated rather than given. For the latter, the teacher may follow a transmissive method while the former is achieved through discussion as done in this context. Moreover, this asserts that discussions assist students to build sound analysis independently within a collective environment. That is to say that the student's thinking is independently generated with the assistance and

justification by the class community, including the teacher. As Johnson & Johnson (2014) state, a democracy is achieved within a cooperative setting in which participants aim to achieve mutual goals. Therefore, in addition to independent learning, this pedagogy also demonstrates democratic values inculcated within the classroom as students arrive at interpretations taking into consideration the different opinions of their peers.

In considering the importance of discussion-based teaching according to the observations and understandings mentioned above, it is undeniable that the classroom design is essential to creating and maintaining discussion. In this study, the participants were able to engage in meaningful discussion because the students sat at a U-shaped, or roundtable-like arrangement at the head of which the teacher presided. This allows the teacher to control the discussion while engaging in it. Thus, the layout of the classroom seems to be an essential element for successful teaching and learning. Additionally, it is also evident that classroom culture and teacher-student relationships affect discussions as free discourse among students is encouraged by the teacher.

According to a study by Jakonen (2018), mobility is also important to carry out successful learning activities. This means that the teacher should be able to move from one group to another to guide the students. In the present study, since the existing small group of students is hardly separated into smaller groups, this may not be needed. Nevertheless, if this is to be initiated, as mentioned above, the furniture is neither sufficiently flexible for this purpose nor does the multi-purpose classroom have sufficient space to rearrange its furniture. Yet, the way in which the furniture has been arranged facilitates age appropriate discussion activities during the lesson. In fact, many students stated their preference for the existing layout for discussion purposes.

Library Environment



Figure 6. *Library tables (during renovation)*



Figure 7. *Library shelves (during renovation)*

This study also analyses the design of the newly revamped library of the school. Prior to refurbishment, the library contained tall bookshelves which were unreachable for younger students. Moreover, the tables and seats were unsuitable for a library as the room was previously utilized as a science laboratory. Additionally, the space did not have any form of technology. Consequently, the library was not used by any students and few students obtained their library cards to borrow books. Figures 6 and 7 are photographs taken of the library during renovation which illustrate the layout of the space before refurbishment.

However, as illustrated in the photographs below, the refurbishment project transformed the space into a contemporary layout. The library has been made more vibrant, with the use of colorful and comfortable seating, carpeted floors and the display of house flags and wallpaper. Hettiarachchi & Nayanathara (2017) further justify the impact of color in learning environments through a case study on primary schools in Sri Lanka. Although the age groups of the two studies are different, a significant finding in the said study is the enhancement of creative artistic expression of students through shades of blue which is also the primary color used in the refurbished library. Secondly, by lowering bookshelves and rearranging them against the wall, they have been made more accessible for younger students. As a result of lowering bookshelves, more natural light is made available inside the library which Wulsin Jr. (2013) identifies as an important element of learning environments. Moreover, one round table and two square tables have been placed which encourage reading in companionable silence and teamwork within this environment. This eliminates total silence and individual learning associated with traditional libraries which may at times be viewed as a disturbance to other students.



Figure 8. *Layout of the renovated library*



Figure 9. *Computer hub of the renovated library*

Schwarz (2008) highlights the possibility of creating a community of enquiry through the use of technology. Thus, learners may use devices to both broadcast content and communicate for collaborative learning (Chambers & Gregory, 2006). Thus, the inclusion of a television and six laptops in the revamped library aims to promote the concept of virtual learning and online research-based learning among students.

After the revamp project, there is an overall increase in student association with the library which was previously unused by both teachers and students alike. The participants of this study are actively involved in the new library. While Students B and C are active members of the revived Library Club, all the students have been to the library for educational purposes. The teacher participant of this study encourages students to use the library facilities. Other teachers have begun to bring students more often to the library and students have begun to register for library membership. Moreover, a handful of teachers have begun to discuss texts in small groups in the form of literature circles. As Shelton-Strong (2012) identifies, literature circles encourage learner autonomy. As such, students lead discussions and the teacher only takes part in the process as a guide. Additionally, the laptops and television communicate the idea that technology can replace traditional library usage methods as well.

However, this process also has a few drawbacks. Many students tend to misuse the newly revamped space. The students who are familiar with strict seating arrangements and restricted spaces in classrooms see the open environment within the library as an opportunity to play. Moreover, the round table and other seating areas encourage talking more often than reading or cooperative learning. As a result, the teacher's duty within this new space which is to encourage independent learning is often doubled by the need to discipline students. An area which requires a significant amount of attention is the computer hub. The students have begun to use the library to primarily use the laptops more so for entertainment than educational purposes. Hence, strict monitoring of student activities is in progress.

Students are used to rote learning and teachers as narrators which has resulted in a lack of exposure to independent and cooperative learning in general classroom settings. Therefore, due to a gap that exists between regular learning environments and this new facility, learners are unable to utilize this resource suitably. Nevertheless, it is evident that the design of the refurbished library contributes to enquiry-based, autonomous and group-based learning which the students need to learn to utilize appropriately.

Conclusions

This study presents the importance of classroom design and pedagogic practices for the teaching and learning of literature. It is evident that pedagogic practices such as dialogic approaches depend on the layout of furniture and other design elements which may generate students' interest in the subject (Espey, 2008; Close, 1992). It also presents that student engagement in the lesson does not depend merely on newer facilities but on engagement and overall environment. Therefore, it is evident that pedagogies which are preferred by students require practical and enjoyable environments.

Classroom culture is an important element for pedagogical success. The classroom that was observed for this study has an open and friendly atmosphere. Students find it easy to communicate their opinions in class and are encouraged to do so. Moreover, the teacher's support may impact the general attitude of the class as students are encouraged to use democratic practices (Johnson & Johnson, 2014); permitting their peers' voices to be heard and accepting different opinions which are justifiable. Therefore, the important factors are the feeling of belonging to the community and being heard in the classroom which encourage such progressive pedagogies to take place in the classroom. The positive bond the teacher has developed with her students may have created a supportive space in which students belong and are heard, which contributes to successful learning. However, in classrooms that do not share a positive teacher-student relationship, this culture may not exist; as a result, practices that

were discussed in this study may not be effective in authoritative and traditional environments.

As discussed in this study, technological and classroom design implementations encourage independent research-based learning and support better communicative pedagogies. However, this study emphasizes the importance of gradually normalizing the use technology, and flexible and alternative classroom designs. Sudden implementations may cause inexperienced students to misbehave and misuse resources as seen in the library context herein.

This study also contains limitations and avenues for further research in the field of classroom design and pedagogic practices. While this study understands the importance of classroom design for conducting productive and more learner-centered lessons, it is important to consider what more can be done to increase student interest if similar and appropriate classroom designs and pedagogies are implemented for other subjects. The students' interest in this subject perhaps occurs because it is the only subject of this school with a room of its own, apart from laboratories for subjects such as Information Technology and Science. Therefore, the teacher needs to consider how she would retain student interest if other subjects are also provided spaces of their own. Moreover, it is evident that classroom culture and teacher-student relationships are areas of this study that can be further researched to measure pedagogical success.

In conclusion, this study highlights that classroom design is a key element for the successful teaching and learning of English Literature via a dialogic and cooperative approach. Some of these design features include furniture arrangement, visual effects and even technology. It is also evident that classroom design may only be effective if the culture within the classroom facilitates the atmosphere required for the successful implementation and maintenance of engaged pedagogies.

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