

# Teaching Literature in Malaysian English Classrooms: A Review on its Challenges and Opportunities

Jennie Awing Ukat<sup>1</sup> and Hanita Hanim Ismail<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Desa Petaling, 57100, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600, Bangi, Malaysia  
Email: p111758@siswa.edu.ukm.my, hanitaismail@ukm.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i11/15700> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i11/15700

**Published Date:** 12 November 2022

## Abstract

Literature, which is a means of expressing self through the medium of language, is frequently used in ESL classrooms as an authentic method of teaching the target language. This review answers two questions on the obstacles and opportunities experienced by most teachers during the teaching of literature in ESL classrooms in Malaysia. 22 studies from the year 2015-2022 were selected from Google Scholar and Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC) to answer these two review questions. 15 relevant published studies on the challenges in integrating literature in the English classrooms, while 7 fitting previous research on the opportunities that arise via the implementation of this idea. The challenges reviewed are lack of training and guidance on teaching literature, time constraints in completing the syllabus, lower mastery in teaching literature, and the use of irrelevant literary materials in the syllabus. While the opportunities reviewed are knowledge enrichment toward others' backgrounds, enhancing language skills mastery, and stimulating critical and creative thinking. This review suggests further research on exploring or introducing a systematic and comprehensive literary module to solve the problems faced by English teachers during the implementation of these literary components inside the Malaysian English syllabus.

**Keywords:** Teaching Literature in ESL Classrooms, Literary Components, Teaching Challenges, Opportunities, Malaysian School Students

## Introduction

Malaysian primary and secondary pupils are generally required to sit in two major examinations Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah (PMR) and Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) as means to measure standard learning achievements. Both centralized examinations assess students' academic achievement at the end of lower and higher secondary levels where general subjects, including Bahasa Malaysia, English language, Mathematics, Science, Geography, History, and Islamic Education (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013-2025). With

Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) purposefully benchmarked, it is internationally recognized as an equivalent to the GCE O-Level.

However, due to low achievement for English papers in these two major examinations in previous years, the literature component was implemented as part of the English curriculum in 2000 (e.g. Yahya, 2017). Sharna (2022) pointed out that literature seems to play an important role in learning English to help boost low language achievement. For instance, literature helps the expansion of vocabulary regardless of the language they speak or learn. This is due to the choice of words employed in the text which is often more challenging than those used in casual reading materials or magazines. As supported by Sharna (2022), a learner's vocabulary could be expanded by reading a wide range of literature. Correspondingly, McKay (1982) believes that one of the most significant contributions of using literature for language classroom instruction is its realness in presenting language in real-time discourse. Its feature mainly demonstrates how a particular language form ought to be used, thus contributing to the development of students' language awareness. Moreover, Spack (1985) argues that literature ought to improve student's proficiency level, besides promoting tolerance for cultural differences and cultivating more creative students in language classrooms. Besides, literature also helps develop more culturally tolerant language learners and introduces the concept of "language and cultural awareness," as well as serves the purpose of stimulating writing and composition (Spack, 1985). Burhanuddin (2018) also concurs that reading literary works has been shown to facilitate the learning of English as a second language (ESL).

English and literature are intertwined; both rely on one another. Literature has been introduced elsewhere as a syllabus in language learning (Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008). It has long served as a foundation in English education. There has been an explosion of national interest in investigating the triangular relationship between literature, language, and education in the past thirty years (National Education Blueprint, 2013-2025). Learning literature facilitates ESL learning (e.g. Omar, 2022; Ismail et al., 2008; Rajandram, 2020). As a result, a new paradigm including the integration of literary resources in schools emerged in the late 1980s, serving its importance to enhance learners' English proficiency within the twenty-first century. English is quickly becoming an essential skill for the workforce to ensure the nation's development and to strengthen its ability at competing in the current competitive market (Vethamani & Nair, 2007; 2008; 2012). As a result, literature is included as one of the curriculum components to improve students' English proficiency (Omar, 2017). As a result, literature is regarded as the most effective platform for teaching English to pupils and plays a major influence on the curriculum (Chacko & Yahya, 2007; Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008; Nair, 2012). The introduction of literature as a component is hoped to encourage students' interest in reading while also improving their English proficiency in writing and reading. The ability to appreciate literature is a measure of good English proficiency (Malachi, 1993). Learners are also hoping to "find the foundation for appreciation of literature in English with its concerns with humanity, values, beliefs, and customs, as well as its great tradition and heights of imagination and creativity" through this component (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.13).

Towards its independence in 1957, English served as a colonial legacy of its role as a lingua franca of a modern nation, same goes with Malaya where the English language is only common within the upper-class social group who are well trained and have more experience to administer the new nation. With more English teachers trained locally (Asmah, 1977), it marked a transitional period after independence where English was redirected to function as

a second language. Under the first wave of the Malaysia Education Blueprint Plan (2013-2015), 61000 ESL teachers from primary and secondary schools were re-trained nationwide to be more skillful in language teaching. English is viewed as a medium for development and acquiring knowledge (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014). There is more emphasis on how to create awareness to take English seriously. The standard of the SPM English paper has been upgraded to replace it with 1119 GCE English paper. The current status of English in Malaysia is "constantly developing and changing in terms of adapting the norms of English to the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts of contemporary Malaysia" (Lowenberg, 1991, p. 367). The importance of acquiring the language is reiterated by existing policies. One in particular concerns the importance of Bahasa Melayu as the national language, placing English as a second language where Malaysians who complete the national education system should be able to communicate in the language where both Bahasa Melayu and English are required subjects in Malaysian schools (Asmah, 1981). Even then this is backed by the assurance that this language policy will not threaten the national language (Anthonysamy, 1997).

According to Keshavarzi (2012), ESL instructors are rigorous at encouraging their students to study the language outside its linguistic rules and structures via literary works since it is compelling and relevant learning. Literary elements are used to help learners' competence including through the use of poetry, novels, and short stories. They can appreciate the importance of the language and its use through a range of methods whilst also adhering to syntactic constraints by memorizing poems, for example. The development of literature components also adds a new perspective to English studies and has been regarded of the most effective non-traditional methods of teaching English (Keshavarzi, 2012).

Since the learning of literature is said to detract learners from the goal of learning English, which is also believed to cause the loss of learners' interest as a result of reading since they lack the requisite information to comprehend and fully enjoy what is taught because they have no prior experience with it (Muhammad, 2015). This has led Malaysian teachers to devise some methods for teaching literature effectively while keeping the goal of English instruction and the content of literary works in mind (Muhammed, 2015). Besides, they also lacked essential skills to understand literature, and teachers have struggled to teach literature (Aziz & Nasharudin, 2010), which explains why English educators struggle to find the best strategies for teaching literature (Murugan & Yunus, 2019). As a result, this review is guided by two objectives: (1) to explore prevailing challenges faced by teachers, and (2) to discover possible opportunities during the implementation of Literature components in English classrooms in Malaysia which are knowledge enrichment toward others' background, enhance language skills mastery and stimulate critical and creative thinking.

### **Methodology**

To identify potential papers to be reviewed, 5 steps were identified. Table 1 illustrates this. First, the process began by using two databases as its main platforms for conducting the search of references, which are using Google Scholar and the Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). A list of critical and related research papers was assembled and organized into phases. The search was done using Google Scholar and the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) where the selection of journal articles was based on two selection criteria: those that are (1) written in English, (2) current and relevant (having been published between 2015 and 2022) and (3) within the scope of search. The criteria used in this review were culled from previous research on the topics of "English Literature Classroom," "challenges in English Literature Class," and "learning opportunities in English Literature

Classroom." When looking for relevant prior articles, each database has various features and techniques for inputting keywords. The keywords "challenges in literature learning" or "challenges in literature teaching" and "challenges and opportunities in studying literature in Malaysia" were entered into Google Scholar to find existing research on the topic of "English literature classroom challenges", and "ways to teach Literature components in Malaysia". Upon selecting the latest and related articles, the articles were sorted by relevance where the data should suit the title and be able to answer the two research questions. Plus, the data has to be the latest and updated. Besides, reviewing articles which includes checking the citations box when searching for pertinent information to answer the two research questions.

In terms of search parameters, the 'precise word' found under the 'advanced search' option yielded around 7000 prior review articles on ESL issues in literature learning in Malaysia. The fundamental objective for ERIC database searches is 'challenges in integration literary learning in', which was narrowed down and specifically focused on the Malaysia classroom context. Other characteristics, such as the 'descriptor' and the publication date, were also tweaked to fit the review paper's goal. The researcher also selected the year of 'publication dates' that have to be updated and within the last 10 years (2012-2022). Lastly, 'barrier' in teaching English literature was chosen as a 'descriptor' to make sure the search articles related to challenges and opportunities in literature learning and teaching are met and achieve their desired goals. Besides, secondary and elementary education as education levels were also selected and the search is narrowed down by focusing on Malaysian context to make sure the findings are relevant to the goals of this review paper.

Table 1

*Methodological Steps*

Steps		Google Scholar	ERIC
1	Database search	Keywords used: 1. "English Literature Classroom in Malaysia" 2. "Challenges in Malaysia English Literature Classroom" 3. "Learning opportunities in English Literature Classroom". 4. "Ways to teach Literature components in Malaysia"	Keywords used: 1. "Challenges in integration literary learning in Malaysia" 2. "English Literature" 3. "Classroom challenges and opportunities"
2	Selection criteria	a. Publication dated between 2015-2022 b. English papers	a. Publication dated since 2012-2022
3	Sorting by relevance		Descriptors: a. barriers b. English Second Language

			c. teaching method d. language art
4	Reviewing of Articles	Education level- Secondary education, elementary education	
5	Include citations	Location - Malaysia	Worldwide

Table 2

*Findings*

	Author and Year of Publication	Title	Methods Used	Findings
1	Omar (2017)	The Inclusion of Literature Components in Malaysian English Papers: the Challenges and Pros in Teaching and Learning	This paper review past studies related to the implementation of Literature component in English language by looking specifically at the teacher's roles since teachers are the direct factor contributor in learners' process of learning and teaching	Pros- learners will become familiar with the use of language in different situations when they read literature text. -learners will learn through authentic sources where natural and meaningful uses of language are used through the descriptions of real life culture Cons-lack of training among English teachers in teaching literary components
2	Habil (2022)	The Implementation of Literature Teaching Approaches in the ESL Classroom: A Systematic Review	Used thematic analysis of 22 journal articles which related to the teaching and learning of literature in the ESL context through the use of systematic review approach	The findings show that there are six approaches to teaching literature that may be applied by the ESL teachers in their classroom, which are the information-based, paraphrastic, stylistic, language-based, reader response and moral philosophical approach

3	Affendi & Aziz (2020)	Systematic Review: The Challenges and Approaches in The Teaching of English Literature in Enhancing English Proficiency	presents a systematic review of pertinent published research on the teaching of English literature in enhancing English proficiency, particularly on the challenges and teaching approaches for the past one decade from the year 2009 to 2019	The findings highlight on the problems faced by students and teachers in dealing with English literature as well as the teaching approaches implemented by teachers.
4	Ismail (2019)	Literature and Gender Equality as National sustainable Goals	provides a discussion of initiatives at providing the basis of including literature as part of the national language policy and planning	This study retell past research on encouraging results and high morale among the school teachers and the public as due to its use in classrooms.
5	Kaur & Mahmor (2015)	Examining the Role of the English Literature Component in the Malaysian English Curriculum		This paper argues that there is a general state of ambivalence towards the role and position of English Literature in the curriculum

### Literature Review Findings and Discussions

This section consists of three parts: (1) a discussion on general aspects regarding literature and its teaching in Malaysian ESL classrooms, (2) its challenges and (3) opportunities. Based on the findings, part 2 discusses teaching challenges when incorporating literature components in English language classrooms. The challenges reviewed are lack of training and guidance on how to deliver the concept, time constraints in completing the syllabus, lower mastery in mastering the new component, and irrelevant literary materials in the syllabus. This section also explores the opportunities that arise when incorporating literature components in English language classrooms, which are knowledge enrichment toward others'

upbringings, enhancing language skills mastery, and stimulating critical and creative thinking.

### **Discussion on General Aspects Regarding Literature and its Teaching in Malaysian ESL Classrooms**

A review of past research studies on the teaching of literature in ESL classrooms reveals many directions, including studies suggesting possible directions for future research. One, for instance, calls upon retrieving collective English teachers' opinions on the best means of teaching or integrating literature as an English component in an ESL classroom which suits the Malaysian context (Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe, 2012). Besides, teachers' creativity is necessary and plays as a stepping stone in creating an active and engaging classroom. As mentioned by (Ahmadi & Besancon, 2017), merry-go-round technique in teaching literature components can increase critical thinking and creativity to answer problems, positive learning activities, efficiency in time, fostering patience. Various creative and interesting activities such as playing games related to topic, quiz, literary postcard, characters silhouettes and many more when incorporating literary components which can also attract pupils' attention.

This personalized approach is best practised since pupils are the ones who are managing their own learning process while understanding factors that allow the accomplishment of learning objectives. There is also another direction that highlights collecting pupils' perceptions and feedback with regards to learning English through the use of literature such as to Atek et al (2020); Students Perception of the English Literature Component in Malaysian Secondary School. According to Othman et al (2015), an adequate amount of research can be done to collect pupils' opinions on how they want the class to be and what are their expectations during literature class.

Feedback and suggestions from both teachers and pupils may navigate the success of student learning development, particularly in learning English through literature components. Finally, as stated by Sindhu et al (2010), there is a third direction that suggests the introduction of systematic and comprehensive literary modules that can act as references and guidelines for teachers in their classrooms since most teachers are still not clear and lack of creativity about how to incorporate the components in their teaching. To improve this situation, a standardized module can be developed by the Ministry of Education as a guideline for English teachers when incorporating literature components in their ESL classrooms.

Literature is increasingly used in ESL classrooms for different reasons. Literature, which is a cornerstone of traditional language classroom practices, gradually has become less familiar since teaching and learning moved towards emphasizing functional language use. This can be seen when Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seems to be more favourable as a method in teaching. Beginning in the 1980s, literature has reclaimed its place in language instruction due to the advancement of Applied Linguistic Literary (Thakur, 2003). The role of literature in ESL classrooms is continuously re-evaluated, with many presently viewing literary texts as rich linguistic input, stimulating attention is drawn for pupils to articulate themselves in other mother tongues and a key source of student engagement (e.g. Choudhary, 2016). For instance, Al-Mahrooqi and Roscoe (2012) stated that Malaysian pupils approached given tasks with a very positive attitude, which helped them acquire new vocabulary, enhance reading, and develop the ability to collaborate with others through discussions, and accepting suggestions. According to McRae (1994), appreciating literature as a type of knowledge is different compared to appreciating of literature as a form of entertainment. Reading fairy tales, and listening to music lyrics are examples of applied literature (McRae, 1994).

**The Role of Literature in English in Malaysian Education Setting**

In an unexpected turn of events, the Malaysian government altered its educational strategies in the 1990s after realizing a gradual fall in the standard of English language in Malaysia that became a major hindrance to the country's goal towards achieving the status of a developed nation by 2020 (Kayad, 2015). As a result, literature was reintroduced in schools by 2000, which is now a vital part of the English language component (Sanub & Yunus, 2017; Sivapalan et al., 2017; Xian et al., 2017). According to Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil 4/2000, literature as a new syllabus aspires to fulfil 4 objectives. Besides instilling the passion for reading and good habits of reading among Malaysian students, literature is hoped to improve these students' English language proficiency through a set of approved literary texts and assists them in the development of positive personal growth and character. Finally, it is hoped that reading about other cultures and worldviews can broaden students' viewpoints (Teh & Isa, 2016).

**Literature in ELT Classroom**

The new English Language Syllabus featured literature as a component categorized under 'language for aesthetic use' in its early implementation, consisting of a poem, short stories, and a book. Additionally, incorporating literature into the English curriculum seeks to educate pupils in a thorough, stable, and coherent way, embracing intelligent, religious, spiritual, and physiological aspects, in order to achieve a balanced and healthy human being with high standards of society. (Noah, 2018; Rahman & Manaf, 2017; Yusof et al., 2017). Besides, The Ministry of Education (MOE) publishes the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025), which emphasizes the importance of literature in enhancing students' language fluency and skills in studying English which is deemed necessary for 21st-century human development.

**2 Challenges Throughout the Adoption of Literature Classroom Instruction**

Based on the review, four main challenges were largely discussed, thus making the crux of this discussion - (1) lack of Training and Guidance on Teaching literature in ESL classrooms, (2) Time Constraint in Completing the Syllabus, (3) Low Mastery Among English Teachers in teaching literature, and (4) Using irrelevant Literary Materials. Firstly, there are evident past studies discussing Malaysian teachers' lack of training. One, for instance, discusses the spontaneity of the implementation to include a literature component for English language teaching and learning at Malaysian secondary schools prior to 2004; it "caught off guard" (Agrawal, 2004, p.379). Besides emotions, several roadblocks were identified that might hinder the operation of incorporating this new module further into the English language curriculum. School teachers were at first apprehensive since they lacked training and guidance in how to teach this new component. Paran (2008) highlights that teachers were first concerned since they had not been trained in how to teach this new integrated module. Although some teachers may have attended literature courses in university, the vast majority are unaware of the instructional approaches which support further use of literary components in the English medium classroom.

Besides, Isa and Mahmud (2012) also observed that some teachers are worried about the insufficiency of time to complete the subject since the new component has been added to the English language syllabus. Learners, on either hand, struggle to comprehend the writer's message since they are unable to see through the meaning of the text or phrases. Shah and Empungan (2015) argue that the pupils seemed naturally worried about analyzing and debating literature texts by foreign authors who provide challenging contexts. Trowler's (2010) findings are consistent with previous findings that students found literature



challenging and unfamiliar, for instance, past study by Sivapalan and Subramaniam (2008) "The Incorporation of Literature in the English Language Program for Engineering Students: Learner Interest and Perception". According to Sivapalan and Subramaniam (2008), curriculum developers and secondary school literature instructors encounter difficulties developing and delivering the topic. Their study revealed that the next barriers to successful book adoption in secondary ESL classrooms include a broad and balanced curriculum, learners' readiness, fluency, multicultural exposure, and as well as social awareness.

Furthermore, it is reported that a minimum of 60 percent of English teachers performed poorly in the Cambridge Entrance Examination, worsening the students' dilemmas (Jalleh, The Star, 2012). If these students fail to perform, these teachers are put to question about their ability to teach literature. If teachers are not fully prepared, ministerial aims and goals may be jeopardized. The transition toward implementing literature as an evaluated component in English instruction not only demonstrates the process of enhancing English learning quality, but it also necessitates a transformation in English teaching and learning. The English language proficiency of Malaysian students has decreased as a result of the switch from English to Malay as the medium of teaching. The Ministry of Education reintroduced English as the primary language of instruction for science and mathematics beginning in Year 1 of primary school and Form 1 of secondary school in 2003 as one of the steps to stop the decrease in English language proficiency.

Besides, the communicative language teaching (CLT) method was suggested for the English language curriculum by the Malaysian Curriculum Development Centre in 1974. CLT refers to both classroom learning objectives and activities to operationalize the notion of communicative competence (Richards, 2002). CLT is a method of teaching ESL or as a foreign language (EFL) that emphasises interactions as the primary method and endpoint of language acquisition to encourage students to use the English language in everyday situations, universities have adopted the CLT syllabus for English language instruction.

The inclusion of literature as a component in the English subject requires a shift in classroom instruction, with teachers scrambling to restructure their methods in an effort to match the demand of instructing the literary concept. In consideration of this, literature is intended to teach pupils about people, society, ethics, behaviours, and other social standards in addition to the interpersonal and informational aesthetic value of their education. Therefore, incorporating children's books into lessons would aid in helping kids develop literacy skills and an expanded sense of imagination. According to Ismail et al (2008), despite this, research revealed 93.3% of instructors employed flashcards or annotations emphasizing how issues of assessment could be resolved by including the literature component in the English subject.

As a result, there is more emphasis on materials and exam preparation rather than providing opportunities to experience and develop personal responses through aesthetic reading, which may help improve individual passion for reading (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2017). Since Malaysian students are observed to be highly competitive and obsessed with getting a high grade (The Star, 2005), they are also unlikely to understand the importance of reading and writing if these two skills are means to pass exams (Sivasubramaniam, 2006). As a result, teachers and policymakers ought to work hard to start making narratives "live" rather than merely "written on paper" as suggested in the National Education Blueprint (2013, E10). The Malaysian education system emphasizes teachers' duties as part of recreating the educational transition, by improving their ability and developing their potential to ensure the authority's or policymakers' ability and to provide a high-quality educational system. Worldwide research has found that teacher quality is a key education determinant of academic achievement and

that the expertise of a system's educators cannot be surpassed. As stated by Ken Rowe 2012, by far the most important findings from the relevant local and worldwide evidence-based studies show that quality instructors and instruction, backed by effective teacher professional development, are what matter most. Teachers' delivery and content knowledge are critical for developing students' abilities concurrently with the literature learning process. The necessity of "literature teachers in marking on insight in language teaching and bridging that information during language learning classroom" is emphasized by (Donato and Brooks, 2004; Paran, 2008).

The fourth challenge is the use of irrelevant literary materials in ESL classrooms. Olson and Land (2007) observe on encountered teaching difficulties, including a variety of issues with using literary components in the classroom context. Some of the discussed limitations of using literary genres in ESL classrooms include its inability to barely maintain students' attention, their dealing with linguistic difficulties, and their experience with cultural alienation. Cultural alienation is defined as the act of undervaluing or rejecting one's own culture or cultural background. When someone is culturally alienated, they place little emphasis on their own or their host culture and instead yearn for that of the colonizing nation that drove individuals to reside there. On a good note, Olson and Land (2007) discover the usefulness of stories and novels in ESL classrooms, which are indeed favourably praised. Furthermore, students lose interest in several books because they are historically and distinctively unusual, and they do not interact fully with them (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010). Studies by previous research (e.g. Sidhu et al., 2013; Norliana, 2003; Kumar, 2004) also supported the argument that students were perceived to be inactive and therefore unable to react meaningfully as a result of this difficulty and hurdle. Moreover, literary works sessions were commonly excessively teacher-centred, resulting in the classification of teachers as unappealing and less imaginative.

### **Opportunities Arise During Implementation Of Literature In ELT Classroom**

Based on the reviews, there are three main opportunities that are being highlighted in the discussion of the paper - (1) knowledge enrichment toward others' background, (2) enhance language skills mastery and (3) stimulate critical and creative thinking.

#### **Knowledge Enrichment Toward Others Backgrounds**

Including multicultural literature in a classroom setting can help students imagine the lives of others, which can lead to a process of picturing the perspectives of many cultural groups (Howlett et al., 2017). School stakeholders, on the other hand, should do their homework while looking for multicultural literature that is acceptable for a classroom and linked with the school's mission (Slaughter, 2021). Iwai (2015) proposed the following additional ideas to improve the use of different narratives in the classroom. A positive diversity behaviour model whereby teachers classify all students equally and instruct them to treat others and their peers equivalently without prejudices or biases, allowing students to realize the value of communication and understanding among individuals from different backgrounds.

#### **Enhance Language Skills Mastery**

Khatib and Rahimi (2012); Maley (2001) are excellent resources for EFL and ESL students. This is because readers can either experience or imagine the concepts, occasions, and things conveyed in literature. As a result, individuals can draw parallels between the texts as well as their own experiences. Even so, as mentioned by Maley (2001), emphasis on literature covers a broad array of topics and languages. As a result, students were able to experience a wide

range of literary works. This may assist ESL students to learn and enhance their language mastery. Past research (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990; Rashid, 2021) stated that improved communication skills among students have been linked to the implementation of practices based on literary reading materials. This argument is also supported by Sulaiman, Mohd Ayub, and Sulaiman (2015) where it has been observed that the introduction of literature in the KSSR has opened up new avenues for studying English as a Second Language (ESL).

### **Stimulate Critical and Creative Thinking**

Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi (2012) also stated that the other key factor to consider when incorporating literary works into English teaching and language learning is whether it allows for a diversity of approaches. Plus, it is unusual for multiple individuals to use the same passage of a short text, according to (Oakhill et al., 2003). As a result, the diversity of techniques and theories allows for a genuine sharing of ideas and encourages discussion. When attempting to uncover the implicit meanings of a text, learners can develop solid arguments for their choice of explanation if the dialogue is encouraged. Original literature, according to Van (2009), is one essential aspect that may stimulate creative and critical thinking. As previously argued (e.g. Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002; Vardell, Hadaway, & Young, 2006), literature provides legit resources and therefore can help language learners in developing critical thinking skills.

### **Conclusion**

As a paradise of diversity, it is critical to promote diversity awareness among students in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Local teachers can extend their students' worlds perspective by using multicultural literature to introduce them to diverse events, histories, peoples, and civilizations, as well as help them obtain insights to reflect on their own culture. Incorporating multicultural literature into the ESL classroom is a good place to start when it comes to promoting diversity awareness. Teachers who are assigned to teach multicultural literature should be well-prepared in terms of both knowledge and the application of multicultural literature as a teaching tool. In today's diverse classrooms, teacher must maintain equity, model a positive attitude, select high-quality literary forms with diligence, and plan successful instructional tactics with suitable strategies and objectives. They should also incorporate different types of multicultural diversity into their teaching across the curriculum, such as identity and gender. In addition to that, the use of Malaysian English literary texts could become a feasible choice for encouraging multiculturalism in the classroom. The usage of indigenous literary works may provide a more relatable perspective, therefore propelling multiculturalism education even further is practical. Teachers, hopefully, will be able to assist students in developing their intercultural competence and literacy skills in appreciating their own and others' cultures, honouring students' voices, being connected to students' cultural backgrounds and rich linguistics, as well as promoting critical multiculturalism awareness. As a result, ESL teachers will become the world's agents of social transformation. On the other hand, literature can be used to promote Malaysian cultural legacy and national identity. A thoughtful selection of appropriate local written works can be used to advertise and inform Malaysians about our multicultural nation's values and identities. Literature should not be considered foreign or exclusive. Instead, it plays a crucial role as a catalyst for socialization. Malaysia must likewise break free from post-colonial bonds and norms by creating an individual "multi-racial literary culture" that reflects Malaysian values and standards. Policymakers should shift away from a myopic view of literature as solely a tool for improving

competency and steer towards understanding the significance of literature as a unifying agent in the construction of a working nation. Nevertheless, the impact of teaching or studying literature on teachers' or students' motivation in learning English should be explored as a potential research gap as suggested by this review paper. Besides, future research should focus or prioritize more on the teacher's role in teaching literature components in English as they hold the main responsibilities in the making the learning and teaching process a success. Besides, this paper also proposes that the learning of English Literature as a subject in the Malaysian Curriculum should be reconceptualized taking into account its potential to help educate and prepare young Malaysians for the impact of the 4th Industrial Revolution of the Economy, Malaysian political and also social context. Hence, Literature should not be viewed as more than just a tool for improving English proficiency, it should also serve as a bridge to connect young Malaysians about their rich traditions, heritage, and culture.

### Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my supervisor, Dr Hanita Ismail for the supports and guidance throughout this writing. This paper would not have been possible to complete without the aids from my supervisor. I also would like to give credit to my family and friends for the moral support and words of encouragement.

### References

- Affendi, F. R., & Aziz, A. A. (2020). Systematic Review: The Challenges and Approaches in The Teaching of English Literature in Enhancing English Proficiency. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education & Development*, 10(4), 318–336
- Aghagolzadeh, F., & Tajabadi, F. (2012). A Debate on Literature as a Teaching Material in FLT. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(205-210). <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.3.1.205-210>
- Benzoukh, H. (2017b). The Relevance Of Teaching Different Literary Genres In The EFL Classroom. *Kasdi Merbah University - Laboratory for the Development of Psychological and Educational Practices* <https://doi.org/10.35156/1192-000-019-017>
- Duff, A., & Maley, A. (1990). Literature. *Oxford University Press*.
- Ismail, H. H. (2019). Literature and Gender Equality as National Sustainable Goals. *Trends in Social Science (TSS)*, 1(3), 16-24. e-ISSN: 2637-0735
- Maley, A. (2001). Literature in the language classroom. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McRae, J. (2022b). Literature with a Small l: Developing Thinking Skills in Language Teaching and Learning". *Wayzgoose Press*. ISBN-10 1938757912
- Pulverness, A. (2004b). Literature in English Teaching Professional [E-book]. *IATEFL 2003 Brighton Conference Selections*. ISBN-10 1901095215
- Habil, H. (2022). The Implementation of Literature Teaching Approaches in the ESL Classroom: A Systematic Review. *LSP International Journal*, 9(1), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v9.18595>
- Hadaway, N. L., Vardell, S. M., & Young, T. A. (2002). Literature-based instruction with English language learners, K-12. Prentice Hall.
- Howlett, K. M., Bowles, F. A., & Lincoln, F. (2017). Infusing Multicultural Literature into Teacher Education Programs: Three Instructional Approaches. *Multicultural Education*,

- 24(3–4), 10–15.
- Howlett, K. M., & Young, H. D. (2019). Building a Classroom Library Based on Multicultural Principles: A Checklist for Future K–6 Teacher. *Multicultural Education*, 26(3–4), 40–46.
- Iwai, Y. (2015). Using Multicultural Children’s Literature to Teach Diverse Perspectives. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 51(2), 81–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2015.1023142>
- Iwai, Y. (2019). Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Global Era: Using the Genres of Multicultural Literature. *Educational Forum*, 83(1), 13–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2018.1508529>
- Kaur, P., & Mahmor, N. (2014). Examining the Role of the English Literature Component in the Malaysian English Curriculum. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 134, 119–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.229>
- Khatib, M., & Rahimi, A. H. (2012). Literature and language teaching. *Journal of Academic and Applied Studies*, 2(6), 32–38.
- Malachi, E. (1993). Teaching Literature in English in Malaysian secondary schools. in C. Brumfit and M. Benton (eds.). *Teaching Literature: A World Perspective*. London: Macmillan.
- Oakhill, J. V., Cain, K., & Bryant, P. E. (2003). “The Dissociation of Word Reading and Text Comprehension: Evidence from Component Skills”. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 18(4), 443–468.
- Omar, Y. (2017). The Inclusion of Literature Components in Malaysian English Papers: the Challenges and Pros in Teaching and Learning. *Al-Ta Lim Journal*, 24(3), 174–186. <https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v24i3.335>
- Osorio, Sandra Lucia. (2012). Letting Go: The Multiple Roles of a Teacher in Literature Discussions. *Journal of Classroom Research in Literacy*, 5, 3–15. Vol. 5. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.905.1553&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Rashid, R. A., Abd Rahman, S. B., & Ismail, H. H. (2020). The Teaching of Literature to Less Proficient Students. Kuala Terengganu: *UniSZA Press*.
- Rass, R. A. (2020). Integrating Multicultural Literature in EFL Teacher Training Curriculum. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 10(5), 588–598. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2020.105035>
- Sindu, Fook & Kaur. (2010). Instructional Practices in Teaching Literature: Observations of ESL Classrooms in Malaysia. *English Language Teaching* vol. 3, no. 2, Canadian Center of Science and Education, May 2010. *Crossref*, <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v3n2p54>.
- Slaughter, R. (2021b). *Turning the Page: The Ultimate Guide for Teachers to Multicultural Literature* [E-book]. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. ISBN-10 1475857640
- Sudigdo, A., Slamet, Winarni, R., & Ekowardani, N. (2018). The Urgency of Multiculturalism in Children’s Literature Textbooks in the Industrial Revolution 4.0. *European Union Digital Library (EUDL)*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4108/eai.19-10-2018.2282178>