



Please cite this article as: Lai B., & Rahim A.A., (2023), Perceptions, Difficulties and Methods of Learning English Literature among UPTM English Major Undergraduates, Jilid 4, Bilangan 3, Paper ID 23-145

## PERCEPTIONS, DIFFICULTIES AND METHODS OF LEARNING ENGLISH LITERATURE AMONG UPTM ENGLISH MAJOR UNDERGRADUATES

Sharmaine Batrisyia Lai (a), \*Anis Abdul Rahim  
\*Corresponding Author

- (a) Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia, [sharmainelai00@gmail.com](mailto:sharmainelai00@gmail.com)  
(b) Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia [anis@uptm.edu.my](mailto:anis@uptm.edu.my)

DOI:

Received 30 January 2024, Accepted 31 January 2024, Available online 2 February 2024

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of two courses of UPTM undergraduates majoring in English towards English literature, the difficulties encountered, and the types of methods that suit their needs in learning English literature. The study employed a quantitative method by collecting data from 100 respondents through 39-item questionnaires. Undergraduates perceived that learning English literature was pleasant as it could assist them in expanding their vocabulary and enhancing language skills. Even so, concerns such as the vocabulary they discovered while learning English literary texts having multiple meanings hindered them from learning English literature and inhibited their ability to comprehend literature better. However, the guidance of teachers or lecturers is a feasible approach to facilitate students learning in English literature. Overall, the findings suggest the need for increased exposure and tailored teaching methods to improve English literature learning outcomes.

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:*

*Perception,  
difficulties,  
methods,  
English literature,  
English major*

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Literature plays a significant role in English classrooms in Malaysia, particularly in high schools, as it is acknowledged by experts in English language teaching for its substantial benefits in supporting second language development (Copland et al., 2013). The integration of literary texts into English lessons not only assists students in acquiring new vocabulary, grammar, and phrases but also boosts their English proficiency by expediting their second language acquisition (Copland et al., 2013). The primary aim of including literature is to cultivate an appreciation for literary works and enable students to comprehend texts from various cultures (Copland et al., 2013). Nevertheless, Malaysian undergraduates encounter obstacles in studying English literature, with issues such as inadequate materials, language proficiency challenges, lack of interest, and negative perceptions contributing to their struggles (Copland et al., 2013). Majority non-native students in universities face difficulties due to insufficient knowledge and cultural differences, necessitating more time to grasp English literature, which leads to disinterest (Copland et al., 2013). Challenges also emerge in interpreting figurative meanings in poems, limited understanding of language in literature, and complexity in deciphering the language used in literary texts (Copland et al., 2013).

These challenges highlight the necessity for enhancements in teaching approaches, resources, and support systems for English literature education in Malaysia. By addressing concerns related to materials, language proficiency, cultural barriers, and comprehension, the learning experience and outcomes for students can be improved. Through acknowledging and addressing these challenges, educators can establish a more conducive environment for Malaysian students to effectively engage with and appreciate English literature. Learning English literature among Malaysian students is still in its early stages, with challenges in mastery and appreciation. Malaysian undergraduates studying English literature often face obstacles due to inadequate exposure to literature in their earlier education. This lack of exposure leads to a diminished appreciation for English literature. Previous research has extensively explored attitudes towards learning English literature in non-Malaysian contexts, while studies in Malaysia have primarily focused on undergraduates' perceptions of literature. However, there is a gap in research regarding methods to overcome challenges faced by Malaysian undergraduates in learning literature and their preferred learning styles. The study by Reid (1987) highlights that non-native English speakers often have different learning style preferences compared to native English speakers. These preferences can vary based on various factors such as language background, sex, education level, and TOEFL scores. Additionally, modifications in learning styles can occur with changes in academic environments and experiences.

Furthermore, the research by Kharb et al. (2013) emphasizes the importance of incorporating a variety of teaching methods that cater to different learning styles, including visual, aural, read-write, and kinesthetic modalities. This approach is crucial for ensuring effective learning among students with diverse preferences. Understanding Malaysian undergraduates' perceptions of literature and addressing the challenges they face in learning English literature require a comprehensive approach that considers their diverse learning styles and backgrounds. By incorporating varied teaching methods and strategies that align with different learning preferences, educators can enhance the learning experience and promote a deeper appreciation for English literature among Malaysian students.

### Research Questions

Based on the purpose of this study, these are the research questions that were addressed for this study:

1. What are the perceptions of English major undergraduates in learning English literature?
2. What are the difficulties encountered by English major undergraduates in learning English literature?
3. What are the methods by which English major undergraduates confront the challenges that they encountered in learning English literature?

---

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 English Literature

The inclusion of English literature in the educational curriculum from primary to tertiary levels in Malaysia has been demonstrated to enhance ESL students' proficiency in the English language. By incorporating various literary genres such as poetry, fiction, short stories, and drama, students are exposed to diverse forms of English language usage, which aids in improving their reading skills (Amiruddin et al., 2022). Literature not only introduces students to aesthetic and imaginative writing but also fosters critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential for language learning (Salleh & Ismail, 2022). Through the analysis and interpretation of literary works, undergraduates learn to identify themes and develop opinions, aligning with the notion that integrating English literature into second language lessons can enhance critical thinking skills (Yoon, 2012).

Furthermore, the utilization of literature in language learning has been associated with higher-order thinking skills and standards-based assessments in educational settings (Sulaiman et al., 2015). Learners' responses to literature in language lessons are influenced by the approaches and tasks employed in the classroom, underscoring the significance of how literature is integrated into the curriculum (Paran, 2008). Additionally, the incorporation of songs in ESL classrooms has been found to facilitate extensive and intensive listening, foster creativity and imagination, and encourage discussions on attitudes and feelings, thereby creating a more engaging and relaxed learning environment (Yung, 2021). The integration of English literature into the syllabus of Malaysian ESL students at various educational levels significantly contributes to enhancing language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and the overall language learning experience. By exposing students to a range of literary texts and promoting analysis and interpretation, educators can effectively nurture well-rounded English language learners.

### 2.1 Perceptions Towards English Literature

Literature plays a significant role in enhancing students' language skills and overall academic development. Firman (2022) emphasizes that through exposure to literary works, students can better understand ideologies, emotional responses, and artistic forms within different cultures, leading to improved knowledge and expanded vocabulary (Li, 1998). This sentiment is echoed by Ashrafuzzaman, Ahmed, and Begum (2021), who found that students tend to prefer learning from literature rather than grammar lessons due to the enriching and self-developmental nature of studying literature (He & Li, 2009). Additionally, Kassem (2020) discovered that students generally hold favorable perceptions of English literature classes as they aid in understanding cultural differences from diverse perspectives (Jenkins, 2009).

However, not all students share the same enthusiasm for literature. Dahiru (2020) observed that some students in Nigeria found reading extensive texts inconvenient and challenging, particularly when the materials were dull and difficult to comprehend (McKeown & Ramadori, 2022). Alshammari, Ahmed, and Shouk (2020) further support this by noting that a lack of reading habit and English proficiency can lead to boredom when engaging with literary texts, causing students to avoid such materials (Muhammad et al., 2020). While literature can be a powerful tool for language development and cultural understanding, students' perceptions towards it vary. Educators should consider these differing attitudes and work towards creating engaging and accessible literary experiences to cater to the diverse needs of students.

The inclusion of English literature in English lessons is a non-challenge free in teaching literature to students (Barzani et al., 2021). Teachers struggled to figure out the best approach to teaching (Hashim & Talib, 2019) and the best materials to offer students because they needed to be aligned with the students' levels of ability. The results are consistent with Harun and Samat (2021). The teaching approaches used cause teachers to strive in responding to students' diverse demands as

---

**Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)**

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

well as providing instruction and, in particular, providing examples in English literature lectures. Furthermore, pre-service teachers struggle to encourage participation of students in literature lessons. Students' lack of interest in learning literature

---

**Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)**

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

makes it difficult for teachers to involve students in lectures (Harun & Samat, 2021). According to Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2021), the results revealed that instructors found that students underestimate the importance of English literature because they believe it will not provide significant support for their learning outcomes. Furthermore, teachers acknowledged that students are more likely to disregard literature due to their inadequate English proficiency and cultural awareness (Harun & Samat, 2021).

### 2.3 Challenges and Difficulties in Learning English

Malaysian students encounter various challenges when learning and using English as a second language. Yacob and Yunus (2019) found that Malaysian secondary students often resort to their first language for translating words into English, leading to difficulties with English phrases and sentences. This reliance on the first language for translation was also highlighted by Nor, Razali, Talib, Ahmad, Sakarji, Saferdin, and Nor (2019), where interviewees expressed struggles with English vocabulary, impacting comprehension. Rusli, Yunus, and Hashim (2018) emphasized that Malaysian undergraduates face low self-esteem, particularly in English communication situations, which is consistent with the findings of Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2021) who identified a lack of confidence among students when speaking English as a second language. This lack of confidence is compounded by limited English proficiency, as indicated by Misbah et al. (2017) in Amoah and Yeboah (2021), where students encounter challenges with vocabulary, grammar, and overall English proficiency.

These difficulties are further supported by (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019), who noted that many Malaysian students perceive English as a foreign language primarily taught during language lessons. Additionally, Ismail et al. (2020) demonstrated that Malaysian students from various socio-economic backgrounds exhibit lower English writing proficiency levels, indicating ongoing struggles with English language skills. Research suggests that Malaysian students face obstacles in learning and using English as a second language due to factors such as reliance on their first language for translation, low self-esteem in English communication, limited proficiency in vocabulary and grammar, and the perception of English as a foreign language. These challenges underscore the necessity for targeted interventions and support to improve English language learning outcomes among Malaysian students.

Study conducted by Saeed, Ismail and Lin (2019), the performance of the test given to Malaysian university students was lacking, especially in speaking proficiency. According to the findings of a study conducted by Fan (2019), the students studying English in the Western country face challenges in writing, speaking, and independent learning. Besides that, Fan (2019) study also found out where students tended to put more focus on grammar and sentence structure neglecting the fluency as well as the meaning itself. According to the findings, it was the inverse of a study conducted at Nanjing Tech University by Amoah and Yeboah (2021), where the students' most significant difficulties in learning were difficulties in speaking. Grammatical error is a problem due to the factors of anxiety and fear involved in making mistakes while using the language. Furthermore, a study carried out by Zhang and Shao (2021), college students showed unconcerned attitudes towards learning English. Nevertheless, in Lin, Yeo and Lau (2020), findings have shown that speaking anxiety issues among students did not influenced much in their learning of a second language. This result contrasts with Yacob and Yunus (2019) article, which said that students' proficiency are limited due to first language interference.

## 2.4 Challenges and Difficulties in Learning English Literature

Several studies have pointed out the challenges students encounter in understanding English literature due to the complexity of language used by authors (Proctor et al., 2005; Tyler & Nagy, 1989). Alshammari et al. (2020) emphasized the necessity of advanced English proficiency to fully comprehend English literary texts, which has led to a lack of interest among undergraduates in studying English literature (Proctor et al., 2005). This lack of interest is further compounded by students' preference for class-provided materials over literary texts due to the difficulty in understanding the language used (Proctor et al., 2005; Tyler & Nagy, 1989). Uddin (2019) highlighted that lengthy and overly complex storylines may fail to engage students, impacting their attention and comprehension (Proctor et al., 2005). Additionally, students with low reading proficiency struggle with understanding the language in textbooks and English materials, hindering their learning process (Proctor et al., 2005).

Furthermore, Lock & Abidin (2020) emphasized that students face challenges in analyzing and understanding messages in poems due to the use of complex language and short lines, leading to frustration in English classes (Proctor et al., 2005). This difficulty in comprehending English literature is further worsened by the lack of exposure English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have to English literary works, making it difficult for them to learn (Proctor et al., 2005). The research findings also indicate that poor language knowledge and skills present a significant obstacle to learning literary works (Proctor et al., 2005). The complexity of language, lengthiness, and culturally challenging content of English literary texts contribute to students' difficulties in comprehending and engaging with English literature. These challenges highlight the importance of addressing language proficiency levels and providing support to enhance students' comprehension of literary materials.

## 2.5 Methods in Learning English Literature

In addressing students' challenges in learning English literature, Akbar and Yazid (2020) emphasize the importance of peer interaction over traditional teaching methods. They suggest that peer interaction is crucial for language skills acquisition. Additionally, they recommend using diverse approaches to enhance the productivity and engagement of English literature learning sessions. This aligns with the idea that students benefit from translating texts into their first language (Yacob & Yunus, 2019) and reading literary works in their native language Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2021) to aid in understanding the context of English literature. However, there is a noted gap in research regarding the specific strategies preferred by Malaysian undergraduates to overcome challenges in learning English literature at the tertiary level.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

A quantitative approach was employed, specifically the survey research design. The researcher sought to describe trends among large populations rather than examining relationships or variables in the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 47). The study focused on undergraduate students from two English departments at UPTM: the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied English Language Studies (BE201) and the Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) (BE203). These departments had a total of 657 students. However, only 100 undergraduates were surveyed in this research. Convenience sampling method was employed, involving willing undergraduates from both departments. Convenience sampling implies that the researcher chooses participants who are available and willing to participate in the current study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 173).

In this study, questionnaires were employed as the research instrument. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), a survey is a process in which a researcher distributes a form to a selected sample group to discover patterns in a large population of people for a study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 46). The survey form included a set of 39 close-ended questions, consisting of four sections: Section A (6 demographic information questions), Section B (8 items on

---

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

perceptions of learning English literature), Section C (12 items on difficulties in learning English literature), and Section D (13 items on methods for dealing with these difficulties). Sections B, C, and D contained Likert-scales ranging from 1 to 5, labelled "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" respectively. The questionnaires were adapted from Al-Saggaf et al., (2021) and Ta'amneh (2021). Modifications were made to the questionnaire tailored to the study's focus on perceptions, difficulties, and methods in learning English literature, ensuring its relevance and depth for research.

### 3.2 Data Collection Procedures

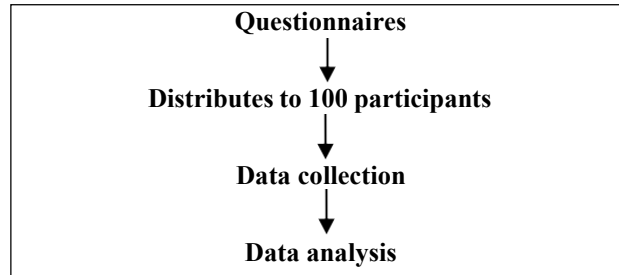


Figure 3.1 Data Collection Procedure

Figure above depicted that the researcher distributed the survey form to 100 UPTM English major undergraduates selected for the study. Quantitative data was collected through closed-ended questionnaires which created using Google Forms as survey instruments. Participants were provided with an informed consent form. The questionnaires were shared online with selected undergraduate courses at the university, allowing participants to complete the survey. Participants were required to answer all items and submit the questionnaires upon completion.

#### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data for this study. The data for the perception, difficulties, and methods items in the questionnaires for this research study will be analysed using SPSS as quantitative data. A pilot test was conducted prior to this study. The questionnaires were validated by lecturer from the English department. Using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability method in SPSS, the questionnaires' reliability was 0.843. These findings aligned with the study objectives, and minor modifications were made based on feedback.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study performed a descriptive analysis to measure the frequency for the research.

Table 4.1 Respondent Demographic Analysis

| Measurement                            | Items           | Percentage |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| Gender                                 | Male            | 28%        |
|  | Female          | 72%        |
| Course                                 | BE201           | 27%        |
|  | BE203           | 73%        |
| Year of study programme                | First year      | 16%        |
|  | Second year     | 36%        |
|  | Third year      | 48%        |
| Self-rated overall English proficiency | Excellent       | 10%        |
|  | Good            | 61%        |
|  | Fair            | 28%        |
|  | Weak            | 1%         |
| Number of languages spoken             | Two             | 57%        |
|  | Three           | 27%        |
|  | More than three | 16%        |
| First language/mother tongue           | Malay           | 95%        |
|  | Chinese         | 3%         |
|  | Others          | 2%         |

From the table above, females are the majority respondents compared to males. Amongst both courses, 73% of respondents are from BE203, and the majority of students (48%) can be categorized as third year undergraduates. Rating themselves as possessing good proficiency (61%). Furthermore, the majority of the respondents have the ability to fluently speak two languages (57%). Lastly, from the table above, 95% of the respondents considered Malay as their first language, indicating that most of them are non-native speakers.

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>



Table 4. 2 Descriptive statistics of perceptions of learning English literature

| Perceptions of Learning English Literature                               | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----|------|----------------|
| 1. I enjoy learning English literature.                                  | 100 | 4.14 | .82            |
| 2. I like to read English literary texts.                                | 100 | 4.09 | .85            |
| 3. I can learn literature independently.                                 | 100 | 4.35 | .88            |
| 4. I can increase my knowledge of other cultures by studying literature. | 100 | 3.65 | 1.01           |
| 5. It is better to learn literature with the help of a teacher.          | 100 | 4.33 | .77            |
| 6. Literature assists me in enhancing my English language skills.        | 100 | 4.41 | .68            |
| 7. Literature assists me in enhancing my vocabulary.                     | 100 | 4.49 | .67            |
| 8. Literature assists me in enhancing my grammar.                        | 100 | 4.20 | .80            |

Table 4.2 portrayed the perceptions of learning English literature from section B. As shown in the table above, the mean of items under the perceptions of learning English literature ranged from 3.65 (SD = 1.01) to 4.49 (SD = 0.67). Based on the data collected from the survey form, the highest mean from the overall item was item 7, (M = 4.49, SD = 0.67) which was “*Literature assists me in enhancing my vocabulary.*” Most of the respondents considered learning English literature can assist them in enhancing their vocabulary. Nevertheless, according to the same data gained, item 4 which was “*I can increase my knowledge of other cultures by studying literature.*”, had the least mean which was 3.65 (SD = 1.01) among all the items under perceptions.

Table 4. 3 Descriptive statistics of difficulties in learning English literature

| Difficulties in Learning English Literature   | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|-----|------|----------------|
| 9. The language used in literary texts is hard to understand.                             | 100 | 3.76 | .91            |
| 10. The literary texts are difficult to interpret without the help of a teacher.          | 100 | 3.90 | 1.01           |
| 11. The literary texts are too complex or long.   | 100 | 3.72 | .92            |
| 12. The English used in the literary texts has multiple meanings.                         | 100 | 4.24 | .82            |
| 13. The vocabulary is unfamiliar.   | 100 | 3.92 | .85            |
| 14. There are too much elements of literature need to memorise.                           | 100 | 3.82 | .98            |
| 15. The setting of the English literature is too unfamiliar.                              | 100 | 3.47 | 1.07           |
| 16. The elements of English literature are difficult to understand.                       | 100 | 3.55 | 1.04           |
| 17. The theme and values in literary works are difficult to identify.                     | 100 | 3.38 | 1.14           |
| 18. The old English language is difficult to apply in writing.                            | 100 | 4.06 | .97            |
| 19. The literary devices in poems are difficult to identify.                              | 100 | 3.56 | .98            |
| 20. English literature is hard to learn because they are not taught very well in classes. | 100 | 3.73 | 1.04           |

According to Table 4.3, the results revealed that respondents encountered several difficulties in learning English literature. The range of mean of difficulties in learning English literature is from 3.38 to 4.24. Item 12 had the highest mean among all items where the majority of the respondents (M = 4.24, SD = .82) indicated that “*The English used in the literary texts has multiple meanings.*” There was a total of 83% respondents who chose this item as their most encountered

challenges/difficulty in learning English literature. In contrast, item 17, which was “*The theme and values in literary works are difficult to identify.*” had the least mean ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) among all items. There was a total of 46% of respondents who chose this item as the least faced challenges/difficulty in learning English literature.

Table 4. 4 Descriptive statistics of methods to overcome the difficulties in learning English literature

| Methods to Overcome the Difficulties in Learning English Literature        | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|-----|------|----------------|
| 21. I prefer to learn literary texts in different types of media.          | 100 | 3.96 | .92            |
| 22. I learn literary texts outside the classroom.                          | 100 | 3.39 | 1.14           |
| 23. I learn elements of literature better through memorisation.            | 100 | 3.56 | 1.03           |
| 24. I learn new vocabulary from literary texts by putting it in sentences. | 100 | 3.92 | .87            |
| 25. I guess the meaning of the sentences in literary texts.                | 100 | 4.01 | .80            |
| 26. I prefer to learn literary texts through clear literal meaning.        | 100 | 3.87 | .84            |
| 27. I ignore learning difficult literary texts.                            | 100 | 3.17 | 1.14           |
| 28. I search for unfamiliar vocabulary in the online dictionary.           | 100 | 4.19 | .88            |
| 29. I break the stanza into parts to guess their meaning.                  | 100 | 3.99 | .93            |
| 30. I depend on verbal and visual information to learn poetry.             | 100 | 3.76 | .94            |
| 31. I prefer learning literary texts through group discussion.             | 100 | 3.68 | 1.07           |
| 32. I prefer learning with the help of my teacher.                         | 100 | 4.32 | .75            |
| 33. I translate it into my own language to understand the meaning.         | 100 | 3.93 | 1.06           |

Table 4.4 focused on methods to overcome the difficulties in learning English literature. Based on the table above, the highest mean from the overall items was  $M = 4.32$  ( $SD = 0.75$ ), where a large chunk of the respondents chose item 32, “*I prefer learning with the help of my teacher.*” as their most preferred strategy or method when it comes to learning English literature. However, the least preferred method by respondents for learning English literature was item 27, “*I ignore learning difficult literary texts.*”, which has the lowest mean ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) among all 13 items. The results indicated that respondents are more likely to finish the texts rather than ignoring those difficult literary texts.

#### 4.1 Discussion

According to the gathered data, English literature is perceived as a subject that undergraduates favour. The majority of UPTM undergraduates have a positive attitude towards the subject and enjoy learning it. In addition to being an enjoyable pursuit, the study of English literature can also be beneficial for improving vocabulary and reinforcing other English language skills. English literature study is an effective way to improve English language skills of an individual. Reading literary texts can assist undergraduates in acquiring new vocabulary and improving their grasp of the nuances of the target language. The discovery is related to Firman (2022), who claims that reading is an efficient way of honing English language skills. Furthermore, it allows undergraduates to practise their reading comprehension skills which are essential to academic success (Barzani, 2020; Barzani et al., 2021).

Additionally, studying English literature has significant benefits that extend beyond literary appreciation. By examining the elements in literary works, undergraduates can cultivate abilities in critical thinking (Ashrafuzzaman et al., 2021; Azizi et al., 2022; Engku Atek et al., 2020; Fathi & Soleimani, 2019) including analysis and interpretation. Undergraduates agreed that it was challenging for them to understand the multiple meanings of words used in literary texts. Based on the results, undergraduates considered English as their second language and not their first, since Malaysians are ESL learners. It could be said that the primary reason Malaysian undergraduates struggle with English is the lack of proficiency in the language among some students. The findings related to Nor et al. (2019) and Yacob and Yunus (2019) studies, where students expressed their difficulty in grasping the meaning of certain words they discovered.

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

In addition, the language used in classic literature can be particularly difficult for students to interpret due to unfamiliar vocabulary and language complexity (Lock & Abidin, 2020; Samat & Khaidzir, 2019). The writing styles and language used by authors in the early modern era can be quite different from those used by authors in the late modern era. Moreover, the language used in literature from previous eras may seem outdated or unfamiliar, making it harder for students to connect with and understand classic literature. Even if undergraduates have strong English skills, they still may struggle with comprehending the complexity of literary texts due to a lack of background knowledge and insufficient exposure to the language in their earlier education. This is especially true for non-native speakers in the Malaysian context, who typically only encounter literature as an integrated lesson in English class during their secondary school education. As a result, it might lead to a lack of motivation for learning English literature (Akbar & Yazid, 2020).

The method of teaching and learning English literature can greatly impact the undergraduate experience. According to the survey, the majority of undergraduates still prefer to learn with the help of their lecturers. This preference for teacher-led instruction has numerous benefits, including improving comprehension and fostering a sense of community and shared learning. Having an experienced lecturer when studying English literature is invaluable as it involves various themes and ideas. Lecturers are able to provide contextual knowledge and an understanding of literary devices, which can be crucial in fully comprehending the text. Furthermore, their guidance and feedback on assignments are important for success in the field of English literature. However, according to Ramlan (2015 as cited in Hashim & Talib, 2019), teacher-centered classes lead to boredom and hinder the learning process. Another study which was conducted by Akbar and Yazid (2020), suggests that traditional styles of teaching and learning would not help undergraduates learn well. The study found that more interactive methods of teaching would be much better for improving the understanding and engagement of students. |

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Research discovered the perceptions, and to acknowledge the difficulties encountered along with the preferred methods of learning English literature among English major undergraduates. The needs of undergraduates in learning English literature were acknowledged through the conducted study. Undergraduates regard learning English literature as a medium to enrich their vocabulary. However, a lack of exposure to English literature materials discourages them from learning English literature and hinders them from learning literature more efficaciously. Motivation and assistance from lecturers are important since they can guide them to gain an interest in learning English literature. Educators might also give guidance according to the undergraduate's proficiency level in English and encourage them to appreciate foreign cultures as well as the literary works. Institutions should also carefully select appropriate literary texts for undergraduates to minimise complexity and distraction. As a result, the chances of undergraduates becoming distracted may be reduced. Besides, it may maintain their interest in studying English literature.

There are a few recommendations that future researchers in this field may consider. Concerning the data collected from the study, the difficulties and methods of undergraduates in learning English literature were acknowledged. For further study, future researchers could study the same research topic but with the involvement of other English-major undergraduates from other universities as a sample. Thus, studying from other perspectives could yield more accurate results. Moreover, rather than using only the survey method, use the qualitative method by giving tests to see how undergraduates analyse and interpret the literary works. The comprehension skills of undergraduates toward literary texts and difficulties can be identified as well. In addition, researchers can also explore more about the type of learning approach that undergraduates are more likely to prefer in learning English literature based on their difficulties and preferences. Consequently, by conducting this study, it could give more insights and exposure for similar research in this field in the future.

Although this study utilised quantitative approach, there remain some limitations after conducting this research study. The study focused on two English departments at a university in the Kuala Lumpur region. Due to the small population and small sampling size, the results collected for this study do not represent the entire population of Malaysian English major undergraduates. Moreover, regional differences and varying perceptions may affect the results. Furthermore, this study was

limited only to the perceptions, difficulties, and methods that undergraduates intend to use in dealing with difficulties when learning English literature. Additionally, the study's instrument was questionnaires. Moreover, the number of respondents to be included in the current study was limited due to the lack of responses received. Thus, it might limit the validity and accuracy to the results of the study.

## 6.0 REFERENCES

- Amiruddin, A., Huzaimi, N., Mohamad, M., & Ani, M. (2022). Challenges and benefits of blended learning on tertiary Ashrafuzzaman, M., Ahmed, I., & Begum, M. (2021). Learning english language through literature: insights from a survey at university level in bangladesh. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 1190-1209. <https://doi.org/10.17263/jlls.904150>
- Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2013). Challenges in teaching english to young learners: global perspectives and local realities. *Tesol Quarterly*, 48(4), 738-762. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.148>
- He, D. and Li, D. (2009). Language attitudes and linguistic features in the 'china english' debate1. *World Englishes*, 28(1), 70-89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971x.2008.01570.x>
- Ismail, I., AlSaqqaf, A., & Din, W. (2020). Multiple intelligences and english writing proficiency levels among malaysian pre-university students with rural and urban socio-economic backgrounds: a comparative study. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(12), 6737-6744. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.081238>
- Jenkins, J. (2009). English as a lingua franca: interpretations and attitudes. *World Englishes*, 28(2), 200-207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971x.2009.01582.x>
- Kharb, P., Samanta, P., Jindal, M., & Singh, V. (2013). The learning styles and the preferred teaching-learning strategies of first year medical students. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*. <https://doi.org/10.7860/jcdr/2013/5809.3090>
- Li, D. (1998). "it's always more difficult than you plan and imagine": teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in south korea. *Tesol Quarterly*, 32(4), 677. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588000>
- McKeown, J. and Ramadori, M. (2022). Investigating a language learner identity in the international baccalaureate diploma programme. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(4), 24-37. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no4.2>
- Muhammad, A., Hussein, J., Endashaw, A., & Birbirso, D. (2020). English language planning congruence with the implementation: congruence between planning and implementation of undergraduate english language and literature program. *The Educational Review Usa*, 4(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.26855/er.2020.01.001>
- Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: an evidence-based survey. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 465-496. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s026144480800520x>
- Proctor, C., Carlo, M., August, D., & Snow, C. (2005). Native spanish-speaking children reading in english: toward a model of comprehension.. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(2), 246-256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.97.2.246>
- Reid, J. (1987). The learning style preferences of esl students. *Tesol Quarterly*, 21(1), 87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586356>
- Salleh, P. and Ismail, H. (2022). Paddling through the learning of literature using ict: a review on students' perception. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i3/15050>

---

Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Sulaiman, T., Ayub, A., & Sulaiman, S. (2015). Curriculum change in english language curriculum advocates higher order thinking skills and standards-based assessments in malaysian primary schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n2p494>

Tyler, A. and Nagy, W. (1989). The acquisition of english derivational morphology. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 28(6), 649-667. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-596x\(89\)90002-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-596x(89)90002-8)

Yoon, T. (2012). Teaching english though english: exploring anxiety in non-native pre-service esl teachers. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(6). <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.6.1099-1107>

Yung, K. (2021). Engaging exam-oriented students in communicative language teaching by ‘packaging’ learning english through songs as exam practice. *Relc Journal*, 54(1), 280-290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220978542>

Zulkefly, F. and Razali, A. (2019). Malaysian rural secondary school students’ attitudes towards learning english as a second language. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 1141-1156. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12173a>

---

**Copyright: © 2023 The Author(s)**

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribute (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>