

The Teachers' Approaches In Teaching English Literature Component: A Systematic Literature Review

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Received 10 February 2023, Revised 20 April 2023, Accepted 30 April 2023, Published 31 May 2023

ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review examines the teaching approaches and challenges encountered in teaching English literature in Malaysia since its inclusion in the curriculum in 2000. Twenty empirical articles and six systematic literature reviews published between 2015 and 2022 were analysed using the PRISMA review framework. The findings indicate that various approaches have been employed in literature teaching, including the information-based, paraphrastic, stylistic, language-based, reader-response, and moral-philosophical approaches. These approaches involve different classroom activities designed to enhance students' engagement and understanding of literary texts. The review also highlights several challenges faced by teachers, such as students' negative attitudes toward learning literature, limited English proficiency, insufficient teacher training, and large class sizes. Addressing these issues is essential in creating a conducive learning environment that supports effective literature instruction. The findings of this review provide valuable insights for educators to improve literature teaching practices and promote better learning outcomes in English language education.

Keywords: *Literature components, Systematic Literature Review, Teaching approaches*

How to Cite:

Nawawi, N. N., & Mohd Kamil, F. (2023). The Teacher's Approaches in Teaching English Literature Component: A Systematic Literature Review. *Jurnal Evolusi*, 4(1), 20–41. <https://doi.org/10.61688/jev.v4i1.59>

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INTRODUCTION

The inclusion of literature components in the English curriculum aims to enhance students' language proficiency while encouraging meaningful engagement with literary texts. Literature learning provides opportunities for students to interpret ideas, develop imagination, and express personal responses to texts through structured classroom activities. Over the past decade, numerous studies have examined the approaches teachers use to teach literature in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Literature education plays an important role in fostering intellectual development, emotional awareness, and cultural understanding among learners. Through literary texts such as poems, short stories, novels, and plays, students are exposed to authentic language use and diverse perspectives that support their language learning. When literature is taught effectively, it can enhance critical thinking, interpretation skills, and language development. As a result, literature has become an important component in English language education in many countries, including Malaysia.

In Malaysia, literature was formally integrated into the English language curriculum in 2000 as part of the national effort to strengthen students' language competence and appreciation for literary works. The literature component is introduced at both the primary and secondary education levels to encourage students to engage with texts appropriate to their language proficiency and cognitive development. The selected literary texts aim to expose learners to meaningful content while promoting creativity and critical thinking. Previous research has shown that effective teaching strategies can significantly influence students' learning behaviour and academic engagement in classroom settings. In particular, appropriate instructional methods and supportive learning environments may encourage students to participate actively in learning activities and develop stronger comprehension skills (Yusof et al., 2025). Therefore, the effectiveness of literature instruction largely depends on the teaching approaches teachers adopt during classroom instruction.

However, teaching literature in ESL classrooms often presents various challenges for teachers and students. Many students encounter difficulties when interpreting literary texts due to unfamiliar vocabulary, complex language structures, and limited cultural background knowledge. These challenges may reduce students' motivation and interest in learning literature if the teaching methods used are not suitable for their language proficiency. Teachers must therefore adopt instructional approaches that can simplify literary texts while maintaining students' engagement in learning activities. Research on learning engagement has highlighted that instructional innovation and adaptive teaching strategies can significantly influence students' learning outcomes and classroom participation (Zaini et al., 2026). Consequently, selecting appropriate literature teaching approaches is essential to ensure that students can understand literary texts and appreciate the learning experience.

Teachers play a critical role in facilitating effective literature instruction by selecting suitable pedagogical approaches that support students' learning needs. Mok (2008) emphasized that teaching approaches influence how students interact with learning materials and how effectively they acquire knowledge in classroom environments. In literature teaching, several approaches have been identified in previous studies, including the information-based, paraphrastic, moral-philosophical, personal-response, and language-based approaches. Each of these approaches emphasizes different aspects of literature learning, such as comprehension, interpretation, moral reflection, or linguistic analysis. The choice of approach may depend on students' language proficiency levels, learning preferences, and classroom context. Consequently, understanding how these approaches are applied in literature classrooms can help educators develop more effective strategies to improve literature teaching practices.

Furthermore, the development of appropriate teaching approaches has become increasingly important in modern educational environments where student engagement and learning behaviour are key indicators of academic success. Innovative teaching strategies and effective learning frameworks have been shown to improve students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes in various educational contexts (Yusof et al., 2024). These perspectives highlight the importance of adopting adaptive teaching practices that respond to students' learning abilities and classroom challenges. Therefore, examining teachers' approaches to teaching English literature can provide valuable insights into how to improve literature instruction. Understanding the challenges teachers face and identifying effective teaching strategies may contribute to developing more engaging and effective literature learning environments in ESL classrooms.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the teaching approaches employed by teachers when teaching the English literature component in ESL classrooms. Understanding how teachers implement instructional strategies is important for determining the effectiveness of literature instruction in improving students' comprehension, engagement, and appreciation of literary texts. Literature instruction is often influenced by the instructional approach teachers select, which may affect students' motivation, participation, and learning outcomes. Previous educational research has shown that teaching strategies that emphasize engagement, interaction, and active learning can significantly enhance students' understanding and learning experiences in classroom settings (Yusof et al., 2025). Therefore, examining teachers' teaching approaches can provide

insights into how literature instruction can be improved and adapted to meet the learning needs of students in ESL environments.

In addition to identifying teaching approaches, this study aims to examine the challenges teachers face in teaching English literature. Teachers often encounter various difficulties in literature instruction, particularly when students have limited language proficiency or low motivation toward reading literary texts. These challenges may influence teachers' decisions about classroom teaching approaches. Furthermore, educational environments are continuously evolving, and teachers must adapt their instructional methods to meet changing learning demands and student behaviour patterns. Recent studies highlight that modern learner require adaptive and innovative teaching strategies that support their learning engagement and participation in educational activities (Zaini et al., 2026). Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by teachers is important for identifying effective strategies to improve literature teaching practices in ESL classrooms.

Based on these objectives, the following research questions guide this study:

RQ1: What are the preferred approaches employed by teachers in teaching the English literature component?

RQ2: What are the challenges faced by teachers and the solutions to teaching English literature?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to analyse existing research on teaching approaches and challenges in English literature instruction. A systematic literature review is a structured method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising relevant studies in a transparent and replicable manner. The use of SLR enables researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of a research topic by integrating findings from multiple sources. In this study, the PRISMA 2020 framework was applied to guide the review process, ensuring systematic and consistent article selection. The use of PRISMA also enhances the reliability and validity of the findings by providing clear procedures for article identification, screening, and selection.

Several academic databases were used to identify relevant studies, including ERIC, Scopus, ProQuest Education Journals, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because they provide access to a wide range of peer-reviewed articles related to education and literature teaching. The search process used specific keywords such as “teaching approach,” “literature,” “ESL,” and “challenges.” Selecting appropriate keywords is important to ensure that the retrieved articles are relevant to the research objectives. Studies have shown that systematic data selection and structured analysis contribute to more reliable research outcomes and stronger academic findings (Yusof et al., 2025). Therefore, a structured search strategy was implemented in this study to ensure that relevant and high-quality articles were included in the review.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully determined to ensure that only relevant studies were selected. Articles published between 2015 and 2022 were included in the review to ensure that the findings reflect recent developments in literature teaching. Only journal articles and review papers written in English were considered, while books, conference papers, reports, and non-academic sources were excluded. Additionally, the selected studies must focus on education, approaches to teaching literature, and classroom challenges. Articles that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the review. This process ensures that the selected studies are aligned with the research questions and contribute meaningful insights to the study.

The screening process identified 6087 articles, of which 6061 were excluded based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After further evaluation, 26 articles were selected for qualitative analysis, consisting of 20 primary studies and 6 systematic literature reviews. The selected articles were analysed by reviewing their abstracts and full texts to identify relevant themes and findings. This process allows for a comprehensive synthesis of existing research on literature teaching approaches and challenges. The systematic analysis of multiple studies provides a stronger foundation for understanding patterns and trends in literature teaching practices within ESL classrooms.

Systematic Review Process

The systematic review process focused on identifying relevant studies related to teaching approaches and challenges in English literature instruction. Four major academic databases were used to retrieve relevant articles, namely ERIC, Scopus, ProQuest Education Journals, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because they contain a wide range of peer-reviewed research articles related to education and language teaching. Conducting searches across multiple databases improves the reliability and comprehensiveness of systematic reviews by ensuring that relevant studies are not overlooked. In addition, structured search procedures allow researchers to gather sufficient academic evidence to support meaningful

synthesis and analysis. Systematic research methods have been recognised as an effective way to enhance the credibility and transparency of literature review studies in educational research (Yusof et al., 2025).

The first stage of the systematic review process involved identifying appropriate keywords to locate relevant articles. Keywords were selected based on the study's research objectives, focusing on teaching approaches and challenges in literature education. The keywords included "teaching approach," "challenges," "literature," and "ESL." These keywords were combined in different ways depending on the search functions available in each database. Using specific search strings ensures that the retrieved articles are closely related to the research topic and research questions. The search strategies used for each database are presented in Table 1, which illustrates how the keywords were applied during the identification phase of the systematic review process.

Table 1: Keywords and search strings

DATABASES	KEYWORDS USED
ERIC	"approaches" in teaching literature
Scopus	ALL ("teaching approach" AND "challenges" AND "literature" AND "ESL")
ProQuest Education Journals	"Approaches teaching" AND "Challenges" AND "Literature" "ESL"
Google Scholar	"approach" AND "challenges" AND "teaching literature" AND "ESL"

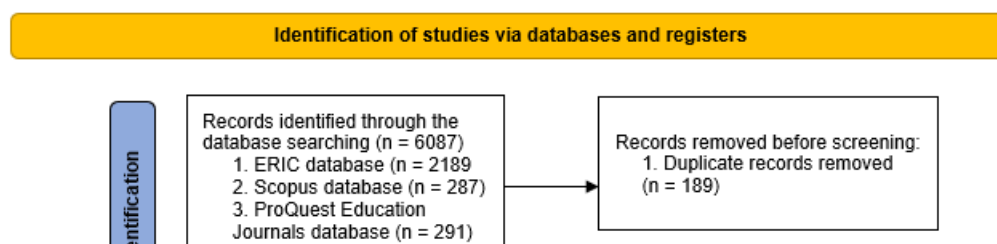
After the identification phase, the screening stage was conducted to filter the collected articles according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria established for the review. The screening process involved evaluating the publication year, document type, language, and research focus of the identified articles. The review included only articles published between **2015 and 2022** in order to ensure that the findings reflected recent developments in literature teaching practices. Furthermore, only English-language journal articles and review papers were included. Other types of publications, such as books, reports, conference papers, and blogs, were excluded from the review because they did not meet the required academic standards.

Table 2: The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

CRITERIA	INCLUSION	EXCLUSION
Year of publication	2015 - 2022	2014 and before
Document types	Journal article and review	Book, book chapter, report, conference paper, blogs, meeting paper, discussion.
Language	English	Other than English
Focus of study	Education, literature, challenges and teaching approach	Other than education, literature, challenges and teaching approach

Following the screening process, the remaining articles were examined during the eligibility stage. The full texts of the selected studies were reviewed carefully to determine whether they directly addressed the research questions of this study. Articles that did not discuss literature teaching approaches or challenges faced by teachers were excluded from the final analysis. The systematic filtering process resulted in the selection of 26 studies, comprising 20 primary research articles and 6 systematic literature reviews. These studies were then qualitatively analysed to identify common themes across teaching approaches, classroom activities, challenges, and possible solutions in literature instruction.

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram



The PRISMA flow diagram summarises the three stages involved in the systematic review process: identification, screening, and eligibility assessment. During the identification stage, a total of 6087 articles were retrieved from the selected databases using the predefined search keywords. In the screening stage, 6061 articles were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria. The remaining articles were assessed during the eligibility stage through full-text evaluation. After this process, 26 studies were included in the final qualitative analysis. The PRISMA framework helps ensure that the selection process is transparent and systematic, allowing readers to clearly understand how the final studies were identified and analysed.

Data Abstraction And Analysis

The selected articles were analysed systematically to identify patterns related to teaching approaches and challenges in literature instruction. The analysis involved examining both the abstracts and full texts of the selected studies to extract information relevant to the research questions. The articles employed various research designs, including qualitative studies, quantitative studies, mixed-methods studies, and systematic literature reviews. Examining multiple research designs provides broader insights into literature teaching practices and classroom experiences reported by previous researchers. During the analysis stage, key information was extracted from each study, including the teaching approaches employed, the types of classroom activities implemented, and the outcomes reported by the researchers. The collected information was then organised into categories to facilitate comparison across studies. This structured analysis helps researchers synthesise findings from multiple sources and develop a clearer understanding of effective approaches to literature teaching in ESL classrooms (Yusof et al., 2024).

The data abstraction process also aimed to identify how different teaching approaches influence students' engagement and comprehension when learning literary texts. Teachers often employ different instructional strategies depending on students' language proficiency levels and classroom learning needs. Therefore, analysing the selected studies allows researchers to identify the most frequently used teaching approaches and the activities commonly implemented in literature classrooms. This process also helps highlight how teaching strategies contribute to students' understanding of literary texts and their

participation in classroom discussions. Previous studies have suggested that the use of appropriate instructional strategies can significantly improve students' learning engagement and academic performance in educational settings. In addition, adaptive teaching methods allow educators to respond to diverse classroom situations and students' learning abilities. As a result, analysing literature teaching approaches provides valuable insights into how teachers can improve literature instruction and support meaningful learning experiences for students (Zaini et al., 2026).

RESULTS

After the data from all 20 studies and 6 reviews were tabulated, a systematic review table was formed. To answer the research question, all prior studies were reviewed and evaluated. All the articles and systematic reviews selected were based on studies done for the past eight years. All the data collected in the studies are summarised in Tables 3, 4 and 5 as follows:

Table 3: Summary of studies on approaches in teaching literature to the students

No.	Study	Approaches employed	Activities conducted	Results
1	Yimwilai (2015)	☐ Integrated approach ☐ Conventional method	☐ Integrated approach ☐ The method of teaching was divided into 3 phases: 1. Language consideration 2. Cultural consideration 3. Enrichment consideration ☐ The control group was taught using the conventional method (an instructor-led approach consisting of the instructor's one-sided discourse and the students' passive responses).	☐ The integrated approach can inculcate positive attitudes and enhance students' academic achievement and critical thinking skills, resulting in significantly higher levels. ☐ The improvement of the experimental group was significantly greater than that of the control group. ☐ The integrated approach is more effective than the conventional method.
2	Atek et al. (2020)	☐ Information - Based Approach ☐ Personal - Response Approach ☐ Language - Based Approach ☐ Periphrastic Approach ☐ Moral - Philosophical Approach	Short stories and poetry (incorporate moral values in the lessons)	The most preferred: 1. Moral -Philosophical Approach 2. Information -Based Approach 3. Language -Based Approach

		☐ Stylistic Approach	The contribution of this study lies in proposing appropriate literature teaching approaches that can help educators to develop a successful English literature curriculum, particularly for secondary school.
3	Ling & Chen (2016)	☐ Information-based ☐ Moral-Philosophical approach ☐ Paraphrastic approach.	☐ Group discussions ☐ Sharing
			1. The information-based approach was the most used among English teachers. 2. It is followed by a moral-philosophical approach, a paraphrastic approach, a personal-response approach, and a language-based approach. The least preferable approach is the stylistic approach. 3. Students were eager to learn without being forced, understand better and learnt to get information from the text in a fun way. 4. Could participate in the class discussion.
4	Wahyuni et al. (2021).	☐ Language-based approach ☐ Periphrastic approach ☐ Information-based approach ☐ Personal-response approach ☐ Moral philosophical approach ☐ Stylistic-approach	☐ Simple language activities (moral values) ☐ Eliciting information from students about the text.
			1. The language-based approach was the most popular approach used by teachers, followed by the moral-philosophical approach and the information-based approach, respectively. 2. The least popular approaches were the paraphrastic and stylistic approaches. 3. Effective in motivating students with low language proficiency.
5	Permanaludin (2017)	☐ Expository approach (Information model) ☐ Explorative method	☐ Lecturing ☐ Question-answer ☐ Group discussion
			1. The result shows that the preferred approach used is the expository approach with the formal methods. 2. Not applied the explorative method in which the learning-based approach focuses on the students in the literary teaching.

				3. Students understand the learning material more directly, and the lecturer's explanation is more memorable for the students.
6	Hernández (2020)	☐ TPR ☐ The Communicative Approach ☐ Problem-Based Learning	4 blocks: ☐ Understanding oral texts ☐ Production of oral texts ☐ Understanding written texts ☐ Production of written texts	1. The activities met these requirements established in the English Curriculum for Primary Education. 2. It could serve as an example for English teachers in primary schools to teach the English language in an innovative and more practical way. 3. Encourage reading and learning as well as to promote creativity in the students. 4. Helps the students to work with all the different language skills. 5. Encourage vocabulary learning and to develop the students' speaking and listening skills.
7	Suliman et al. (2019)	☐ Use simple terms in explaining the literary texts ☐ Ask questions to students' approach ☐ Encourage students to relate texts to their personal lives ☐ experiences	☐ Comprehension questions ☐ Group work ☐ Explain literary texts	1. The comprehension questions activity is prevalent in literature lessons 2. Performance activity seems to be a less favored activity in this study 3. Students will understand better especially those who are quite weak in the language
8	Moustafa & Naima (2022)	☐ Affective responses ☐	☐ Read literary texts ☐ Write literature essays	1. Memorize and reproduce the content 2. Helps to understand the literature materials & express their feelings

9	Jabeen & Sarifa (2022)	☐ Teacher Centred Approach ☐ Stylistic Approach ☐ Learner Centred Approach ☐ Paraphrastic Approach ☐ Culture-based Approach	1. The stylistic approach has been reported of achieving multiple benefits which improve language learning (information, motivation, and critical thinking). 2. The paraphrastic approach is also believed to attain at least three benefits (comprehensive, motivating, and informative). 3. The culture-based approach has also a preference for the learners as they have reported getting all the asked benefits (comprehensive, critical thinking, motivating, language improvement, and informative).	
10	Resueño & Ian Bel Resueño (2019)	☐ Information-based Approach ☐ Personal Response Approach ☐ Paraphrastic Approach ☐ Moral-Philosophical Approach ☐ Language-based Approach ☐ The Stylistic Approach	☐ Comprehensive question exercises ☐ Lecture session ☐ Discussion	1. The study revealed that most of the literature teachers in the college employ the Information-based Approach, followed by the Personal Response Approach, Paraphrastic Approach, Moral-Philosophical Approach, Language-based Approach, and lastly, the Stylistic Approach. 2. Information-based Approach - It is teacher-centred and demands a lot of the teacher's input in giving students various contents of literary text.
11	Al Sabiri & Kaymaka moğlu (2019)	☐ Paraphrastic Approach ☐ Information-based Approach ☐ Language-based Approach	☐ Reading literary texts	1. The most commonly used approach of teaching literature was the Paraphrastic Approach - helped them modify and simplify the original language of the literary texts to support their students' comprehension. 2. Teachers managed to teach literature at an appropriate level suitable to their learners.

		☐		3. The incorporation of using translation of L1 is considered as an option for teachers to help weaker students to understand the text.
12	Granath (2017)	☐ Reader approach ☐ Language approach ☐ Context approach ☐ Text approach	☐ Reflective exercises ☐ Book talks after reading literary texts	1. Findings show that the reader and language approaches are the most applied by the teachers.
13	Krishnasamy (2015)	☐ Approach-activities ☐ Teaching activities	☐ Reads & retells the story ☐	1. Teachers employed approach-activities. 2. Teachers reread, paraphrase and explain the literary text as a way of telling the story again to the students.
14	Fauziah (2016)	☐ The Language-Based Approach ☐ Reader-Response Approach ☐ Information-Based Approach	☐ Reading aloud ☐ Rewriting ☐ Matching ☐ Jigsaw reading ☐ Gap-filling	1. The findings of the current study showed that there were three phases in teaching activities. 2. The Language-Based Approach (LBA) was the most commonly used approach, followed by the Reader-Response Approach (RRA) and the Information-Based Approach (IBA).
15	Bunga Febriani et al. (2022)	☐ Language-based approach ☐ The Reader-Response approach ☐ The Philosophical approach.	☐ Reflective writing skills ☐	1. The implementation of the Reader-Response Approach to reflection writing facilitates the writer-readers to record their interaction and interpretation of literary works.
16	Benonguil & Barnido (2022)	☐ In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	☐ Role-play	<u>Focus Group Discussion</u>

□ Group discussion (discuss the literary texts)

1. Language barrier in text discussion.

2. The lesson is still nebulous or confusing for the learners.

□

Table 4: Summary of studies on challenges faced by teachers in teaching literature to the students

No.	Study	Challenges	Solutions	Results
17	Adeyemi (2016)	Major difficulties faced by the teachers: □ Lack of interest/enthusiasm for learning the subject by the students, as well as their lack of basic background in English. □ Students' difficulty in understanding and the difficult vocabulary/language in texts.	□ Pertinent recommendations were made for improved teacher practices and strategies.	1. Exposure to approaches and strategies for teaching literature 2. Mixed ability teaching skills (to ensure the effectiveness of teachers in the mixed ability classrooms.) 3. Strategies for teaching literature
18	Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu (2017)	□ Poor command of the English language □ Students' low motivation in learning foreign literature □ Students' low language proficiency levels □ Lack of language skills □ Cultural prejudices	□ Program assessment and teaching methodologies could be reconsidered to incorporate such methods, strategies and techniques which would first target the development of students' linguistic competence rather than their literary competence. □	1. Students' linguistic competence was found to be as low as elementary A2 2. English literature course designers need to provide learning materials suitable for as low as elementary levels of proficiency.

19	Harun & Abdul Samat (2021)	☐ Time management problem ☐ The students' feelings toward the subject ☐ Having difficulty with the time allocation to teach English literature ☐ Teachers are struggling to give clear instructions or examples to students ☐ Struggle to respond to students' various needs in literature lessons ☐ Anxiety over their capability to teach literature ☐ Lack and limited teaching and learning literature modules ☐ Limited exposure to literature teaching ☐ Lack of creativity in literature teaching	• Teachers need more exposure on the teaching literature modules. • Require more time to teach literature in class. • Should relate the cultures in the materials to the culture in Malaysia. • Teachers are suggested to apply their knowledge of technology in their literature teaching. • Teachers should consider choosing interesting text materials that are appropriate for the students' age and interests.	The problems can be overcome: 1. More exposure to approaches, methods, and techniques in literature teaching. 2. Encourage the English teachers to explore more of the good aspects of literature teaching. 3. Incorporating enjoyable approaches in the classroom
20	Othman et al. (2015).	☐ Students are lacking focus and co-operation in the literature class. ☐ Students' low language proficiency levels	☐ The teacher should use materials that help students better understand the literature. ☐ The teachers should inspire and assist the students to improve their English language skills in order for them be motivated and feel no burden in learning it.	1. The teachers will be able to select and implement a more appropriate method or teaching technique that can motivate their students to learn literature in their English Language classroom.

□ Negative perceptions towards English literature and teachers

Table 5: Summary of systematic reviews on approaches and challenges in teaching literature to the students

No.	Article / Study	Number of participants/studies/Research design	Results/strategies found effective/suggestions
1	Omar (2017)	Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Teachers' approaches employed in teaching the literature component. 1. The periphrastic approach is the most preferred approach in teaching literature in secondary school. 2. Integrated approach by blending the stylistic and reader responses to increase Creative & Critical Thinking skills (CCTS). 3. Students in Johor Bahru do not prefer an integrated approach in learning literature.	Teaching approaches used to teach literature in the language classroom: 1. Content-based approach - teaching knowledge about literature. 2. Language-based approach - how the language is used in the literary texts. 3. Personal response approach - learners' perception of and opinion on the literary texts. 4. Periphrastic approach - general meaning of the text. 5. Moral philosophical approach - requires learners to reflect on what they have learnt based on their readings of a particular literary text. 6. Literature offers potential benefits in ESL instruction in many ways. 7. Two advantages of using literature in language learning. i. Learners will become familiar with the use of language in different situations when they read literary texts. ii. Learners will learn through authentic sources where natural and meaningful uses of language are used through the descriptions of real-life culture.
2	Affendi & Aziz (2020)	Systematic Literature Review (SLR) 1. 18 papers related to teaching and learning of English Literature for the past decade were collected from various sources to be analyzed.	1. The three main approaches that language teachers prefer are the information-based approach, moral-philosophical approach and paraphrastic approach. 2. The reason why the information-based approach is favoured by teachers is that their priority is to make students gain enough literary information so that their understanding of the subject matter can be developed. 3. An information-based approach is beneficial in preparing students for the examination

2. Challenges with English Literature: Text Selection, Context and Themes, Language Style & Teachers Methods of Teaching.

4. When the students have low English proficiency, the paraphrastic approach is favoured by the teachers as they get to help the students understand the text by using simple words.

5. The moral-philosophical approach is implemented in the classroom for the benefit of inculcating moral values among students.

6. The personal-response approach is favoured by the teachers in this study because this approach motivates and encourages the students to make connections between the literature text and their personal lives.

7. The least preferred by teachers is the language-based approach. The students are not capable of giving out input as they have a low English proficiency level

3	Mohama d Fikray & Habil (2022)	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	There are six approaches that can be applied by ESL Teachers in Teaching Literature Texts:
		1. 22 papers were chosen as research samples since they provide relevant discussion on the theme of the current review appropriately.	1. Information-based
		2. This paper aims to:	2. Paraphrastic
		1. Describe the literature teaching approaches applied by teachers in the ESL classroom.	3. Stylistic
		elaborate on the challenges in applying appropriate literature teaching approaches in the lesson.	4. Language-based
			5. Reader response
			6. Moral Philosophical
			Challenges to implement appropriate literature teaching approaches:
			1. Examination-oriented system
			2. Large class size
			3. Time constraint
			4. Learners' attitude
			5. Poor language competence
			6. Inappropriate text selection
4	Regmi (2021)	Systematic Literature Review (SLR)	For successful literature teaching, the adoption of appropriate approach(s) is equally important.

		1. The present study is based on a descriptive and analytical research design. 17 papers were used for discussions. 1. Language-based approach – treat literature as one of the authentic sources of language teaching and learning to acquire better proficiency in language by students. 2. Information-based and new criticism approaches regard literature as material to facilitate students' acquisition of the skills of appreciation. 3. Response-based and other critical literary approaches support the analysis of literary texts using different critical lenses.
5	Hashim & Abd Talib (2019) Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Aims to investigate the current issues and challenges faced by secondary school teachers and students in learning and teaching English literature.	Issues and challenges 1. Teachers tend to conduct the lesson traditionally, the “chalk and talk” method. 2. “Spoon-fed” their students rather than coming up with creative ways to teach the subject. 3. Students find literature boring and dull due to how teachers conduct the lesson. 4. Teachers’ attitudes towards teaching literature can affect the students’ motivation and interest in the lesson. 5. Teachers become disinterested in teaching literature due to the pressure and expectation of students’ performance in examinations. 6. The selection of the literary texts – the language level of the text is higher, and the students have difficulty relating to the content because the texts/settings are not local.
6	Ukat & Ismail (2022) Systematic Literature Review (SLR) 22 studies from the years 2015 – 2022 were selected. 15 studies on challenges, while 7 on the opportunities.	The challenges reviewed include a lack of training and guidance in teaching, time constraints in completing the syllabus, limited mastery of teaching literature, and the use of irrelevant literary materials in the syllabus. The opportunities reviewed are knowledge enrichment about others’ backgrounds, enhancing mastery of language skills, and stimulating critical and creative thinking. Suggestions – further research on exploring or introducing a systematic and comprehensive literary module to solve the problems faced by English teachers.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate that teachers use several teaching approaches when teaching the literature component in ESL classrooms. The reviewed studies identified approaches such as the information-based, paraphrastic, language-based, personal-response, moral-philosophical, and stylistic approaches. Among these approaches, the information-based approach was reported as the most commonly used because it focuses on explaining the content, themes, and background of literary texts. Teachers often use this approach to help students understand the meaning of literary works before analysing deeper elements of the text. The findings indicate that selecting appropriate teaching approaches is important in helping students understand literature and participate in classroom discussions. Effective teaching strategies can improve students' comprehension and engagement during literature lessons (Yusof, 2025).

The reviewed studies also show that teachers frequently combine different approaches when teaching literature. Combining approaches allows teachers to adjust their teaching methods according to students' language proficiency and learning needs. For example, teachers may first explain the text using an information-based approach and later encourage students to express their opinions through a personal-response approach. This combination enables students to understand literary texts while also developing their own interpretations. Flexible teaching strategies are important in ESL classrooms, where students may have varying levels of language proficiency. Research also suggests that adaptive teaching methods can improve students' engagement and participation in learning activities (Zaini et al., 2026).

Another finding from the review is that classroom activities play an important role in the teaching of literature. Activities such as group discussions, reading tasks, and interpretation exercises are commonly used by teachers to help students understand literary texts. These activities allow students to share ideas, analyse characters, and discuss themes presented in the texts. Group discussions, in particular, encourage students to express their opinions and learn from their classmates' perspectives. Writing activities also help students organise their ideas and demonstrate their understanding of the literary works studied in class. When these activities are implemented effectively, they can create a more engaging learning environment and increase students' interest in learning literature.

The review also identifies several challenges teachers face in teaching literature. One major challenge is students' limited English language proficiency, which makes it difficult for them to understand complex literary texts. Students often struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary and figurative language used in literature. These difficulties may reduce students' motivation to learn literature if they are not provided with proper guidance. Teachers, therefore, need to provide clear explanations and support students in interpreting the texts. Addressing these challenges is important to ensure that literature teaching remains effective and beneficial for students.

Approaches Employed By Teachers

Several approaches have been employed by teachers in ESL classrooms to teach the literature component. Among the approaches identified are the information-based, paraphrastic, language-based, personal-response, moral-philosophical, and stylistic approaches. These approaches help students understand literary texts from different perspectives, such as content comprehension, language analysis, and theme interpretation. Studies have shown that the information-based approach is the most frequently used because it focuses on explaining the background, themes, and main ideas of the literary text before students analyse it further (Atek et al., 2020; Ling & Chen, 2016). Through this approach, teachers guide students to understand the story's meaning by discussing the plot, characters, and other important elements of the text. This method helps students build a basic understanding before engaging in deeper literary analysis.

In addition to the information-based approach, other approaches are also used to support literature teaching in the classroom. The language-based approach focuses on analysing vocabulary, sentence structure, and language features in the literary text, while the personal-response approach encourages students to share their opinions and personal interpretations of the story. The paraphrastic approach is often used to simplify complex literary texts so that students can understand them more easily. Teachers may combine these approaches depending on students' language proficiency and classroom learning needs. Research has shown that combining multiple approaches can improve students' understanding of literary texts and encourage active participation in classroom discussions (Kamarudin et al., 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2021; Yimwilai, 2015).

A Systematic Review of Approaches In Teaching Literature

Six systematic literature reviews were identified that discuss the approaches teachers use to teach the English literature component, as well as the challenges encountered in literature instruction. These reviews include studies conducted by Affendi and Aziz (2020), Hashim and Abd Talib (2019), Mohamad Fikray and Habil (2022), Omar (2017), Regmi (2021), and Ukat and Ismail (2022). The findings of these systematic reviews highlight several preferred teaching approaches used by language teachers in literature classrooms. Among the approaches frequently mentioned are the information-based, language-based, personal-response, paraphrastic, and moral-philosophical approaches. These approaches are commonly applied to help students understand literary texts and improve their interpretation skills. The reviews suggest that teachers often select these approaches based on students' language proficiency, classroom learning needs, and the objectives of the literature lesson.

Affendi and Aziz (2020) reviewed 18 studies on the teaching and learning of English literature and found that the information-based approach is widely used, as teachers prioritise providing students with sufficient literary information to help them better understand the text. This approach is also beneficial in preparing students for examinations. The language-based approach is also highlighted as an important method for language learners because it focuses on the comprehension of literary language and encourages students to actively engage with literary texts (Mohamad Fikray & Habil, 2022; Omar, 2017; Regmi, 2021). According to Choudhary (2016), this approach helps students improve language proficiency through discussion, communication, and collaborative learning activities. However, Affendi and Aziz (2020) noted that the language-based approach is sometimes less preferred by teachers due to students' low English proficiency levels.

The personal-response approach is another teaching approach discussed in the systematic reviews. Omar (2017) explained that this approach encourages students to connect their personal experiences and emotions with the literary texts they read. By relating the literary content to their own lives, students become more motivated and interested in reading literature. Similarly, Affendi and Aziz (2020) found that the personal-response approach allows students to develop meaningful connections between the literary texts and their personal experiences. This approach can help students develop a deeper understanding of the themes and messages presented in the literary works. As a result, students become more actively involved in the learning of literature and can express their opinions more confidently during classroom discussions.

The paraphrastic approach is also identified as a preferred teaching method among teachers. Reviews by Mohamad Fikray and Habil (2022) and Omar (2017) suggest that this approach helps students understand literary texts more easily by simplifying complex language and retelling the story in simpler terms. Teachers may paraphrase the content of the literary text or translate certain parts into another language to support students' comprehension. This method is particularly helpful for students learning English as a second language who may struggle with challenging vocabulary or unfamiliar expressions in literary texts. By simplifying the language, teachers can help students grasp the story's general meaning before moving on to deeper analysis.

Another approach discussed in the systematic reviews is the moral-philosophical approach. According to Affendi and Aziz (2020), Mohamad Fikray and Habil (2022), and Omar (2017), this approach encourages students to reflect on the moral values and lessons presented in literary texts. Through this approach, students are guided to evaluate the characters' actions and to relate the story's themes to real-life moral principles. Teachers often use this method to encourage students to think critically about ethical issues and to develop positive values through literature. Therefore, the moral-philosophical approach not only helps students understand the literary text but also promotes moral awareness and critical thinking in literature classrooms.

Activities Conducted in the Classroom

Teachers conduct various classroom activities when teaching the literature component to students. These activities are intended to help students understand literary texts while also improving their language proficiency and communication skills. Teachers often implement activities such as reading literary texts, group discussions, role-playing, and written responses during literature lessons. These activities encourage students to interact with the text and develop their interpretation of the story. Affendi and Aziz (2020) explained that interactive classroom activities enable students to become more engaged in the learning process by allowing them to share ideas and discuss different interpretations of literary texts. Similarly, Mohamad Fikray and Habil (2022) emphasised that classroom interaction plays an important role in helping students understand literature more effectively. Through these activities, students are encouraged to participate actively and develop a deeper understanding of the literary works studied in class.

Group discussion is one of the most frequently used activities in literature classrooms. Through this activity, students are encouraged to express their opinions and share their understanding of the literary texts with their classmates. This interaction allows students to explore different perspectives and interpretations of the story. Omar (2017) noted that discussion activities provide opportunities for students to analyse the themes, characters, and events presented in the literary texts. In addition, reading activities are also commonly implemented in literature lessons. According to Regmi (2021), reading literary texts helps students become familiar with vocabulary, language structures, and narrative elements used in literature. When students participate in reading and discussion activities, they can develop both their language skills and their comprehension of literary texts.

Writing activities are also used to support literature learning in the classroom. Teachers often ask students to write reflections, summaries, or responses related to the literary texts studied during the lesson. These writing tasks help students organise their ideas and express their understanding of the themes and messages presented in the text. Ukat and Ismail (2022) explained that writing activities encourage students to reflect on their learning and relate the literary themes to their own experiences. In addition, teachers may use role-playing or dramatization activities to help students better understand the characters and events in the story. These interactive activities create a more engaging learning environment and encourage students to participate actively in literature lessons while developing a deeper appreciation for literary works.

The Challenges Faced By Teachers In English Literature Class

After the exclusion session, four articles were shortlisted and selected to answer RQ2. The analysis of these studies revealed several common challenges faced by teachers when teaching English literature in the classroom. One of the main challenges identified is students' low English language proficiency or poor command of the English language (Işıklı & Tarakçıoğlu, 2017). This situation often leads to low motivation among students learning English literature because they struggle to understand the complex vocabulary and expressions found in literary texts. As a result, students may struggle to interpret the text's meaning and participate actively in literature lessons. In addition, teachers also face difficulties in delivering clear explanations and examples during literature instruction. According to Harun and Abdul Samat (2021), teachers may struggle to respond effectively to students' different learning needs, especially when students have varying levels of language proficiency.

Another challenge highlighted in the selected studies is teachers' limited exposure to and lack of creativity in literature teaching. Some teachers may lack sufficient experience or training in applying appropriate teaching approaches for literary texts. This situation may limit the variety of teaching strategies used in the classroom, which can affect students' engagement and interest in literature lessons. Teachers who rely on a limited set of instructional strategies may find it difficult to create interactive and meaningful learning experiences for students. Therefore, addressing these challenges is important to improve the effectiveness of literature teaching. This issue is closely related to RQ1, which focuses on identifying the teaching approaches teachers employ to support literature learning and minimise the challenges encountered in English literature lessons.

A Systematic Review of the Challenges Faced By Teachers In English Literature Class

Systematic reviews by Hashim & Abd Talib (2019), Mohamad Fikray & Habil (2022), and Ukat & Ismail (2022) identified the challenges faced by teachers of English literature. One of the most common problems is students' dislike for studying literature. When it comes to learning literary texts, students lack confidence, interest, and motivation. The literary appreciation abilities required for both understanding and enjoyment are lacking among students. They do not find the topics and concepts discussed in this literature compelling or easy to connect with.

The limited language skills of students present additional difficulty. The students find it extremely difficult to understand the literature due to their limited knowledge of English. Other difficulties included teachers' inadequate training in teaching literature, the inclusion of irrelevant materials in the curriculum, which reduced teachers' confidence in their ability to teach literature to their students, and the choice of texts that were inappropriate for the students' grade level.

Large class size is another challenge in teaching literature, as mentioned by Mohamad Fikray & Habil (2022). This systematic review discussed how having a large classroom limits the number of learning activities and exercises that may be done.

Additionally, it might be challenging for teachers to keep an eye on the lesson's flow because students have different learning styles and personalities.

The Solutions To Overcome The Challenges In English Literature Class

Regarding solutions to the problems mentioned above, the four studies suggested that teachers should focus on providing greater exposure to various approaches and techniques for teaching literature, while also exploring the positive aspects of the subject. In addition, teachers can incorporate engaging, appropriate approaches to make literature lessons more enjoyable and encourage interaction between teachers and pupils. Some previous research by Harun and Abdul Samat (2021) and Othman et al. (2015) involved students with low English proficiency, making it more difficult for them to understand complex literary texts. Therefore, to prevent students from losing interest in the subject, the language used in the texts should match their level of competence. Furthermore, the selected literary works should be accessible to all pupils, regardless of their level of English proficiency, so they can better understand and appreciate the literature being studied.

In addition, innovation and continuous improvement in teaching strategies are essential in addressing the challenges faced in English literature classrooms. Educators need to adopt flexible and creative approaches to enhance students' engagement, comprehension, and critical-thinking skills when analysing literary texts. The integration of innovative strategies and adaptive teaching practices allows educators to respond effectively to changing learning environments and students' evolving learning behaviours. Such strategic adaptation is necessary to ensure that teaching methods remain relevant and capable of improving learning outcomes in contemporary educational settings (Yusof et al., 2024). Moreover, strengthening students' analytical abilities, communication skills, and learning engagement through effective educational practices can contribute to better academic development and readiness for future professional environments (Ghani et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review highlights the preferred approaches employed by teachers when teaching the English literature component in ESL classrooms. The findings indicate that selecting appropriate teaching approaches is essential for ensuring effective literature instruction. Approaches such as the information-based, language-based, paraphrastic, personal-response, and moral-philosophical approaches play an important role in helping students understand literary texts and develop interpretation skills. The review also identifies several challenges faced by teachers, including students' low English proficiency, limited motivation for learning literature, and difficulties understanding complex literary texts. These challenges may undermine the effectiveness of literature instruction if appropriate instructional strategies are not employed.

Furthermore, the findings emphasise the importance of implementing appropriate teaching strategies and classroom activities to support students' engagement in learning literature. By applying appropriate approaches and adapting teaching practices to students' language abilities, teachers can create more meaningful and effective literature learning experiences. This review also suggests that future research should focus on conducting more qualitative studies that explore practical teaching strategies and innovative approaches for improving literature instruction in ESL classrooms. Such studies may provide deeper insights into effective teaching practices that can enhance students' learning outcomes and appreciation of English literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to IIUM for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this study. We would also like to thank all participants who contributed their time and insights to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who offered valuable feedback during the development of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of IIUM and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Review Board. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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