

# The Malaysian Literature in English Programme (Literature in Action): A Position Paper

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## ABSTRACT

*This position paper intends to explore both sides of the literature component included in Malaysian English programme in schools, specifically at the secondary level. We analyse the literature component, namely Literature in Action (LiA), in the perspective of the objectives stated in the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) developed by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The discussion made in the paper also revolves around the component's rationales, its drawbacks, as well as beneficial propositions to resolve the shortcomings. It could enrich future research on English literature in Malaysian classrooms and thus, contribute to the English curriculum in Malaysia.*

**Keywords:** *English programme, literature component, Literature in Action*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Literature and Language Learning

Literature has long been included in the teaching and learning of a foreign language or of a second language (L2). It has been used as a catalyst to learn language and in helping students to develop language skills all over the world. Lazar (1993) in his book 'Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers', gathers teachers' definitions of literature. One of them states that literature collects an individual's thoughts and feelings in the black and white's version and it aims to trigger readers' personal responses. It becomes teachers' responsibilities to make the literary texts relevant to the students and offer chances for students to express themselves and their personal opinions regarding the issue. However, as English teachers, it is more appropriate if we also use literary texts as the medium to bridge the gap between students and the target language. Literature does not only promote language learning, but it also brightens up the curriculum in which literature is incorporated in it (Erdem, 2016). In addition, Amer (2003) believes that literature offers a platform in which students are motivated to learn English and at the same time instills the value of empathy and develops students' critical and creative thinking skills.

## 1.1 Literature in Malaysian English Programme (literature component)

In Malaysia, English literature has been implanted in the National Education Blueprint (2013-2025) to help in promoting language learning. This is to support the second shift in the blueprint in which education in Malaysia should produce students who are proficient in English at the end of schooling age. The shift also elaborates on more exposure to the English language should be given to students where literature becomes one of the alternatives. One of the roles of English in the secondary level (literature component) is literature as a resource (i.e., small 'l' literature) where it becomes a mean to support language learning in Malaysian classrooms. As stated by Kaur and Mahmor (2014), in the Malaysian KSSR curriculum, the Language Art's component (literature) can be the agent to develop and enhance students' skills. Lazar (1993) states that "since literary language is not completely different or separated from other kinds of language," there is an option where "studying literary texts can help to improve students' overall knowledge of English" (p. 8). This statement confirms the clear role of literature and the relevancy of including its components in the education system in Malaysia, undoubtedly.

Since Malaysia uses Common European Framework of References (CEFR), the Ministry of Education (MOE) in collaboration with Cambridge English, United Kingdom (CE) developed the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) that maps the English Language Content (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017), to align with CEFR. SBELC has outlined Literature in Action (LiA) to be included in English lessons together with the teaching of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar skills. LiA emphasizes the literature component that is made up of a variety literary texts' genres (e.g., short stories, poems, dramas, graphic novels, and novels) mainly *to instill reading habits and to promote thinking skills among the students*. According to the Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (2017), the LiA's objective, in general, is to focus on *"students' ability to enjoy and appreciate different text types, to analyse and evaluate texts, and to respond imaginatively to texts"* (p. 42). Even though LiA has been implemented since 2017, there are no changes made in the reading list (i.e., literary texts that are specifically chosen for secondary students to read and learn). The only difference is that, starting in 2019, literary texts and its elements are not going to be tested in any examinations, including the major examination *Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3)* at the end of the year. The Ministry of Education (2017) also claims that the literature component is going to be assessed through the four language skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Nonetheless, the texts that the students are required to learn remain the same. The current reading list is as follows: -

**Table 1.** Literature Reading List (source by author)

Form	Poems	Short Stories	Plays	Novels
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Sad I Ams' by Trevor Millum</li> <li>• 'News Break' by Max Fetchen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Fair's Fair' by Narinder Dhani</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• '20 000 Leagues Under The Sea' by Jules Verne (Graphic Novel)</li> <li>• 'The Swiss Family Robinson' by Johann D. Wyss (retold by Martin Powel)</li> <li>• 'King Arthur' (retold by Janet Hardy-Gould)</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'My Hero' by Willis Hall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Cheat!'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'A Night Out'</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'What is Red'</i> by Mary O'Neill</li> </ul>	by Allan Baillie	by O. Henry	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Poisoned Talk'</i> by Raymond Wilson</li> <li>• <i>'The Day The Bulldozers Came'</i> by David Orme</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'The Elephant Man'</i> by Tim Vicary</li> <li>• <i>'We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea'</i> by Arthur Ransome</li> <li>• <i>'Moby Dick'</i> by Herman Melville</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'The Living Photograph'</i> by Jackie Kay</li> <li>• <i>'Charge of the Light Brigade'</i> by Alfred Lord Tennyson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Leaving'</i> by M. G. Vassanji</li> <li>• <i>'Tanjung Rhu'</i> by Minfong Ho</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'The Right Thing To Do'</i> by Martyn Ford</li> </ul>	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'A Poison Tree'</i> by William Blake</li> <li>• <i>'What Happened to Lulu?'</i> by Charles Causley</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>'Dear Mr. Kilmer'</i> by Anne Schraff (Perlis, Kedah, Selangor, WP Kuala Lumpur, WP Putrajaya, Negeri Sembilan, and Melaka)</li> <li>• <i>'Captain Nobody'</i> by Dean Pitchford (Johor, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak, and WP Labuan)</li> <li>• <i>'Sing to the Dawn'</i> by Minfong Ho (Pulau Pinang, Perak, Terengganu, and Kelantan)</li> </ul>

## 1.2 Malaysian Literature Component and Its Potentials

It is believed that LiA that enhances the literature component in the Malaysian curriculum is a valuable idea because it is based on solid, relevant, and encouraging objectives. LiA is designed to promote students' reading habit, develop both of their creative and critical thinking skills, enjoy and appreciate different literary texts, analyse and evaluate them, and to encourage imaginative responses to the literary texts (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017). In addition, at the same run these objectives are achieved, students are also learning about English language. Referring back to the function of literature as small 'l', the literature component is believed to bridge the gap between the students and the target language; literature as a resource to enhance language development. Literature can help in expanding students' knowledge of language and offers more chances of language use by exposing students with new vocabularies and syntax. It exposes students to a new way of writing and new vocabularies that might not be found in nonliterary texts. Moreover, Lazar (1993) believes that if we use literature as a resource, it can be

a powerful source of different kinds of motivating language activities in the classroom. As literature deals with unique themes revolved around human's life, nature, or stories from other cultures, it gives teachers various perspectives to initiate language games or activities that could possibly engage students with English.

## **2.0 DISCUSSION**

### **2.1 Rationalizing the First Objective: Developing Students' Reading Habit**

First and foremost, if literature is utilized well and creatively in English classrooms in Malaysia, it can develop students' interest towards reading with its unique ways of intriguing readers into the world of thoughts, stories, and feelings. For the reason to inculcate reading habit, the Malaysian literature component acts as an eye-opener for the students to see other cultures and traditions around the world. In fact, as claimed by Palardy (1997), when teachers expose students to the reading of literary texts, it will give them the chance to build comprehension about the cultures and people all over the world. Giddings (1992) in his paper states that to teach reading to students, teachers should start with real and meaningful literature instead of language in isolation and separately, and it may help students to take up the trait of a good reader. As an example, the short story '*Fair's Fair*' by Narinder Dhani, which is taught to all form 1 students, is written in simple language and the storyline can be related to the students' real excitement of attending a fair and thus, it helps in encouraging students to read and to explore more on the short story. Undoubtedly, it is a good effort by the Ministry of Education to include literature in the curriculum to inculcate reading habits as the positivity of reading literary texts in the classroom will give chances to students who are not exposed to any reading materials outside of the classroom the chance to read. "Reading of literature by children seems to correlate with reading achievement" as further explained by Giddings (1992) implies that the need to learn literature in school will help students to improve their reading habit and achievement as various kinds of literary texts will shape their reading comprehension in different ways. According to Erdem (2016), literature can be used mainly to produce students who are also effective readers, both in English and in their first language. Furthermore, literature offers reading practice that actually enhances students' reading speed and students' skill in guessing meaning while reading (Khatib et al., 2011). In our view, all of these evidences imply that the effort emitted by the MOE in integrating literature into the curriculum does not only inculcate reading habits among students, but also gives out benefits to improve their reading skills in the same run.

### **2.2 Rationalizing the Second Objective: Promoting Students' Creative and Critical Thinking Skills**

The second objective of including the literature component into the curriculum is to promote students' creative and critical thinking skills. Van (2009) believes that in the process of teaching literary devices such as characters and characterization, a plot, or themes, students' critical thinking is also sharpened. For example, in learning '*Tanjung Rhu*' by Minfong Ho (a literature text for form 4), students will have to sort out between the story telling of the past or current events in order to sort out the storyline of the story. This is further supported by Collie and Slater (1987) as they suggest a literature-based reading activity where different groups of students in a class have a discussion about the same literary text. When the outcomes of the discussions are presented (assuming that there is a possibility of the groups coming out with different plots of the story), they are then encouraged to discuss the similarities and differences of the outcomes, which is extending the time for more critical thinking skill to develop. Besides that, Asselin (2002) found

out that when students wrote down their responses about a certain literary text (e.g., in making connection between events in a story, writing about the preferred character, and asking further questions), it definitely enhanced their thinking skills. Another research by Awang and Ramly (2008) point out that in order for creative thinking to happen, students must engage in learning contents that exposed them to different perceptions and point of views. To illustrate, by including the literature component into the lessons, it will expose students to look at things in different point of views and sometimes it opens the window for students to look at one event or tragedy in more than one angle and thus, enhancing their creative thinking skill. Consequently, it will transform students to become more sensible readers (Damuri & Wahyuni, 2021). This further clarifies the rationale of the objective of including literature in the Malaysian English curriculum. In addition, research done in between 2014 and 2015 reported that several students admitted how literature helps in developing critical thinking skill as it gives them time and space to think about issues that they will not discover on their own if it is not because of the requirement of literature learning (Bloemert et al., 2017). This implies that students might be exposed to issues that are outside of their culture circle and widen their area of knowledge. Therefore, the truth of having literature in the curriculum to heighten students' critical thinking skill is proven as literary texts are not just enjoyable to be read, but also stimulate students' thinking skill (Ur, 1991).

### **2.3 Rationalizing the Third Objective: Appreciating Different Text Types**

Another reason of the inclusion of literature component is for students to enjoy and appreciate different text types. According to Maley (1989), literary drama and novels expose students to authentic texts such as conversations, contextualized expressions, expressions of feelings, functional phrases, and also descriptive writing. This is supported by Erdem (2016) where he also agrees that literature offers model examples of styles of writing together with authentic uses of the target language at the same time. As Muhammed (2013) explains that literature is valuable in a way that it provides readers with language varieties as language varies from one social context to another context. Bloemert et al. (2017) claims that literature comprises of various kinds of texts, poetry, and novels from different eras. In our view, when students learn about a literary text, it introduces them to a unique kind of writing style that only applied by the respective author. We also believe in the fact that the more the students read, the better they write. Therefore, through literature (that includes a wide range of type of texts) students can also learn how to write better in the target language. The same research also highlights the fact that when students learn literature, they found synonyms of the words they already know (Bloemert et al., 2017). This resulted in the expansion of vocabularies of the students. In addition, when Malaysia uses literature as a resource, it does not only increase a creative way of reading and writing, but also the appreciation of language used in the literary texts that they are exposed to (Erdem, 2016). In their paper, Kuijpers and Hakemulder (2018) defines 'appreciating literary text' in the way that students see the unique craftsmanship or the poetic aspects of the text. Thus, it is important that English teachers facilitate students to the path of seeing literary uniqueness that nonliterary texts may not offer.

### **2.4 Rationalizing the Fourth Objective: Analysing and Evaluating Literary Texts**

Even though literature as a resource is used as a foundation for adding literature component into the curriculum, LiA still aims to provide secondary students with the chance to analyse and evaluate literary texts. We believe that this is a reasonable aim because even though secondary students (English literature component) analyse the texts not as intense as those who take English as an elective (Literature in English), this is what drives them to benefit from other objectives. Jenkins (1987) affirms that in planning literature lesson, teachers should know how to grab students' interest and encourage their thinking more than just a simple comprehension.

Commonsensibly, teachers must facilitate students to discover deeper meaning a literary text has to offer and must not only stop on the surface and literal meaning. Khatib et al. (2011) believe that literary text such as poetry gives students the best chance to do close analysis which later leads them to finding out hidden interpretation that is portrayed through literary elements (e.g., simile, allegory, or metaphor). This is useful in obtaining the objective of promoting imaginative response from the students. Furthermore, by analysing literary texts, students get to discover more knowledge of the world and acknowledge various man's issues and conditions that might never cross their minds before (Erdem, 2016). Erdem (2016) also claims that when English teachers encourage students to express their opinions, it may result in students' "enhanced ability to make critical and analytical summaries to literature texts", which, at the same time, promotes students' thinking skills. From our own standpoint, giving students the chance to analyse and evaluate literary texts means opening the window to many benefits not just in promoting the target language, but also the ticket to 'travel' to see other cultures in other countries, taking them back to the previous eras that are not in the history textbook, giving them the chance to look into other people's minds and thoughts (i.e., feeling of longing, loneliness, betrayal, love or death). Thus, it is compulsory to have the aim of analysing and evaluating texts as the base for including the literature component in the curriculum.

## **2.5 Rationalizing the Fifth Objective: Responding Imaginatively to Literary Texts**

The last aim of including literature component stated by the MOE is for students to be able to respond imaginatively to texts. This is the most crucial and thoughtful aim because literature has the key to open students' minds and let them explore their own imagination (Asselin, 2000), which is rarely initiated in other subjects aside from English. This is further supported by Collie and Slater (1987) as they state that literature provides students with imagination that will move them from the texts to the story itself. Students may be able to relate their personal experience to that written on the page. For instance, the poem '*News Break*' by Max Fetchen acknowledges the situation faced by students whenever they bring back their school reports to their mothers. It is relatable to the students in a sense that the author puts the poem in a situation that is most likely to happen among school kids. Therefore, it shows that literary texts bring about stories that encourage students' imagination to relate to their own and even if they have never experienced it before, they surely can imagine it with the help of the imageries written in the texts. Nonetheless, this would only work if the teachers know how to pull their students' interest towards the stories and design activities that allow their imagination towards the text run wildly. For beginner students, especially, teachers have to guide them in the discovery of new vocabularies before the connection between the students and the imageries contained in the texts happen. As literature deals with the universal themes of love, nature, death, and hatred (Maley, 1989), it would be a total waste to not fully and creatively use the literary texts provided to engage students with the stories of the target language. This is specially commented by Murat (2005) where he suggests that teachers should integrate a method that work on the "personal/evaluative level" where it can stimulate students' imagination towards the texts. Undeniably, students, especially of the low-level proficiency, will need teachers' guidance to arrive to the desired thinking or imagination as they might not even know certain words even on the surface level (literal). This is supported by the finding of a study in Indonesia whereby it is found that students' proficiency influences the teachers' methods of teaching literature (Wahyuni et al., 2021).

Everette (2017) believes that objectives in education should always put forward students' learning and used them as the foundation of why students should learn that particular topic. We believe that the objectives underlying the inclusion of literature component (Literature in Action) represents the right path and platform used for literature learning in Malaysia. This is very important because objectives work as the backbone of that particular programme. The stronger

the objectives and the reasons behind them, the bigger the chance for the programme to create positive changes in the field of literature in secondary schools. The only question remains to be answered is whether the execution really reflects the objectives or are there any other factors that affect the execution that might fail the attainment of the objectives?

## **2.6 Malaysian Literature Component and Its Drawbacks**

In every programme or policy, there must be several drawbacks either in the planning, execution, or monitoring phase. LiA is first designed to be aligned with CEFR, which has been planned to be implemented in the second wave of the Malaysia Education Blueprint. LiA was first implemented in 2017 starting from students in the first form of secondary level education and will be fully implemented across all forms in 2021. We strongly believe LiA that brings about the literature component into the curriculum might not be totally effective (in achieving the stated objectives) due to some factors such as the fact that it will not be tested in any examinations, incompetency of English teachers in the field of literature education, and even if it is tested (for students in the fourth and fifth forms in 2019), the nature of the test does not encourage or motivate students to truly appreciate literary texts.

### **2.6.1 Drawback 1: The Absence of Literature Component in Examination**

The fact that the literature component is not going to be assessed in any examinations making it the biggest drawback that will get in the way of achieving the objectives stated in the previous section. Even though many benefits can be obtained from not being too dependent on a test, we cannot deny the nature of the Malaysian education where both teachers and students always rely on what is coming out in the examination. In our point of view, it is a drawback in the sense that teachers will surely prioritize the items or skills that will be tested in a test. This is what is meant by Kappa (1999) when he states that an examination “narrows the curriculum” and will promote (in a negative sense) excessive focus or discussion on the materials that will be covered in the said examination. The revised curriculum standard for English will be focusing on the four language skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. With this in mind, the components of grammar and vocabulary, and the literature component (which is called Literature in Action) will only be assessed through the skills. Therefore, noting the need to cover these skills that will surely be out in the examination, teachers might delay the teaching of literature component. This is also due to the limited face-to-face meeting per week that influences teachers to prioritize the teaching of language skills. Tutaş (2006) claims that the way literature is taught in the classroom will affect their opinions and attitudes towards literary texts as well as the texts they will read outside of the classroom. Therefore, the less exposure on literature given to the students in the classroom, the less the time spent on developing thinking skills and appreciation towards literary texts among the students. As a matter of fact, the future generation of students (as the product of Literature in Action) might no longer be familiar with English literature, except for those who read literary works during leisure time.

From the perspective of the students, when they acknowledge that literature is not going to be tested, somehow or rather they may lose a form of extrinsic motivation to pursue on learning literature (e.g., losing focus, interest, and curiosity). Kappa (1991) believes that there is a positive motivation that surrounds a powerful test where “fear of a low score” obtained from a test is what driving the “lazy, recalcitrant, or otherwise unmotivated students to work hard”. The fact that they have to be prepared for what is coming out in the examination will drive them further to at least read the literary materials and focus their attention in the literature class. This is further supported by Brown (2009) where he claims that how much students learn depends on their perception of that particular learning environment. When students acknowledge the importance of

comprehending a literary text for the test plus the effort made by the teachers to enhance their comprehension, it will somehow determine how much students engage with and learn the literary texts. Reflecting this, we believe that the abrupt decision to stop including the literature assessment through examinations is not a beneficial act towards the field and future of English literature in Malaysian government schools.

### **2.6.2 Drawback 2: Teachers' Incompetency in Teaching Literature**

Another drawback of the literature component in the Malaysian curriculum is the incompetency of English teachers in the area of literature. Some experts believe that the expected level of engagement with the target language cannot be reached due to the traditional method teachers used combined with their lack of experience (Muhammed, 2013). Teachers' lack of creativity in using the literary texts is shown in the classroom activities that usually involve a lot of worksheets to drill students to memorize the answers of the commonly asked questions in the examination. This will be the cause for less engagement between the students and the liveliness of the literary texts thus, making it hard to truly achieve the objectives. As another research points out, the problem that might occur sources from the unfeasible strategies in the teaching of literature employed by the teachers (Muhammed, 2013). We consider the term 'unfeasible' in a way that the lesson plan does not take into account the true learning and appreciating the values represented by literary texts in the classroom. Students cannot relate the meaning behind the stories into their real-life experience as teachers only use whatever 'methodology' they deem important for students to ace in the examination. They overlook the fact that literature can also contribute to the students' emotional well-being (EQ) that can promote their personal development (Norling, 2009). Thus, again, it is really important for teachers to spend some time in brainstorming ideas to make the texts relevant to the students. In fact, teachers are believed to be the key to transform literature learning (Nugraha, 2021). Especially with the emergence of LiA, it is now up to the teachers to decide on how to engage students with the literary texts; imaginatively, critically, and emotionally. To further illustrate the point, the following picture shows the sample lesson plan that is included in the documentation of the new LiA curriculum:



**Table 2.** Sample lesson provided by the Ministry of Education for Literature in Action (LiA) for Form 1 students (source: Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2017)

SCHEME OF WORK: NON-TEXTBOOK-BASED LESSON (SAMPLE LESSON)						
WEEK:	LESSON 5: Literature in Action					
	MAIN SKILL(S) FOCUS: Literature in Action					
	THEME: Consumerism and Financial Awareness					
	TOPIC: Money					
	LANGUAGE/GRAMMAR FOCUS: Adjectives and nouns					
CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARD	LEARNING OUTLINE	MATERIALS / REFERENCES	CROSS CURRICULAR ELEMENT	DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES	TEACHERS' NOTES / REMARKS
<b>Main Skill</b> <b>Literature in Action 5.3</b> Express an imaginative response to literary texts	<b>Main Skill</b> <b>Literature in Action 5.3.1</b> Respond imaginatively and intelligibly through creating simple stories and poems.  Other imaginative responses as appropriate	Teachers to refer to the suggested lesson plan on the following page.	Octopoem about friendship and Octopoem template	Financial Education	Please refer to provided list of differentiation strategies and select appropriate strategy/strategies.	
Secondary Form 1 Scheme of Work						29

The lesson plan shows how the literature component is integrated into the curriculum and is aligned with one of the decided themes which is 'Consumerism and Financial Awareness' (among others are 'People and Culture', 'Health and Environment', and 'Science and Technology'). English teachers cannot entirely depend on this lesson plan alone in carrying out the lesson. Instead, teachers have to be more creative in encouraging students' response in relating money with friendship (e.g., introducing a poem that shows man's hunger towards money, introducing the concept of octopoem to the students, and providing more guidelines for students to create one on their own). Thus, if teachers fail to do so, the benefits of learning literature will be shamefully dismissed and the lesson becomes dry. As claimed by Witte and Jansen (2015), the most important factor (in regards of school) that influence students' achievement is the quality of teachers they have.

The drawbacks of literature component disable students from enjoying the benefits literature supposed to offer. We also believe that the curriculum designed (despite the objectives) fail to accommodate teachers' and students' needs to fully enjoy the benefits of teaching and learning literature. To some extent, the MOE should have encouraged the use of literature in a sense that it promotes not only language learning, but also students' personal development.

### 2.6.3 Drawbacks in the Literature Component: Beneficial Proposition

It is an endless argument when it comes to the teaching of literature in Malaysia. When literature is included in the examination, teachers tend to rely on the drilling technique and

disregarding the need to do more authentic learning and teaching of literature. However, when literature is not included in the examination, teachers might prioritize other skills instead of the literature component. As implication, we believe that English teachers need to take advantage of whatever the system is offering at the moment. As literature is no longer tested in the examination, teachers can now practice less structured literature activities that are not confined by the format presented in the examination. Teachers can now encourage limitless responses from the students as they are no longer chained to any answer schemes in accepting students' answer. As believed by Henry (2003), teachers should use the approach of no-wrong answer in teaching literature to the second language students. Nonetheless, in our view, students still need guidelines for them to arrive to their own personal response of the literary texts and teachers must act as facilitators that initiate the comprehension of the text. This is where English teachers can practice a more creative way of alluring students to appreciate the culture, value, theme, or issue that is portrayed in the literary texts.

We consider LiA as a call for teachers to make literature learning more meaningful for students. The logic (most probably) behind the reason of not including literature in the examination is to encourage a less scripted literature teaching practices so as to empower students' imaginative thinking. Goodwyn (2012) hypothesises that most people view literature as a reading activity that offers experiential, aesthetic, affective, and authentic essence. English teachers must be up to any recommended extend to immerse the students with all of these essences. Almost majority of second language students are not familiar with any English literary texts until the teachers introduce them in the classroom. This introductory phase is very crucial in setting students' mind in an excited, ready-to-explore-more, and interested attitudes towards learning that particular literary text. According to their research, Witte and Jansen (2015) conclude that the characteristics of a successful literature teacher must:

- i. Have the knowledge of his/her students as individual reader
- ii. Have a wide variety of teaching methods, and
- iii. Practice the integrated approach in the teaching of literature

Therefore, it is an on-going effort for teachers to keep finding out how to be effective in teaching literature in the Malaysian classroom because of the regular changes in the education system, and even then, to keep experimenting various ways to engage students with English literature.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Malaysian literature in English programme is always in constant change. Due to this, the effects of the particular literature component (positive or negative) are rarely monitored and thus, making less room for improvement or enhancement. With this in mind, one of the most important things to do is to go back and give the attention to what may enhance literature learning in the Malaysian classroom, which stems from the teachers' attitude towards literature themselves. As important as teachers who teach reading must love reading themselves, teachers who wants their students to love literature must first know how to appreciate literary texts too. Despite whatever curriculum structure the MOE has decided upon literature teaching and learning in Malaysia, at the end of the day English teachers still have the autonomy (even in the littlest sense) to construct the lesson planning and the way to go about opening the door for the students to experience literature learning in the best and most beneficial way possible.

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