

# Paddling through the Learning of Literature Using ICT: A Review on Students' Perception

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/15050>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i3/15050

**Published Online:** 27 September 2022

## Abstract

English literature in Malaysian English Language syllabus has a peripheral role in the enhancement of students' English proficiency level. Teachers have always sought innovative ways to teach literature in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has flourished in the educational sector since the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous studies have been conducted on understanding the advantages of teaching and learning through the ICT, yet studies on English literature in ESL classrooms remain uncharted. Henceforth, this paper reviews past studies on students' perceptions in learning literature using ICT to clarify the existing literature and establish new consensus. Two dominant databases were utilised in this review; Google Scholar and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) in the compilation of the research articles. An extensive search was carried out by using phrases to compile all articles pertaining to the topic. This review synthesised findings of journal articles from 2018 – 2022 to acknowledge the students' perception of learning literature with the presence of ICT in ESL classrooms and its advantages. Students exhibit increased motivation in learning literature and showed positive feedback. In general, the results are hoped to yield more insights to allow literature learning to continue to flourish in the near future.

**Keywords:** ICT In Literature, English Literature, ESL classrooms, Learning of English Literature, Students' Perception

## Introduction

Literature is one of the dominant aids in learning the English language. As such, English and literature complement each other in the process. Literature is involved with reciting, exploring and comprehending the literary texts, thus resulting in students learning the language more naturally. The Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Secondary Schools (SBELC) highlights that 'Literature in Action' segment enables students to delve and grasp myriads literature genres in an exciting, meaningful yet captivating manner to warrant maximum exposure to the students on the aesthetic use of language. Literature in Malaysian English Language Curriculum also aims for active participation in learning and allows students to express themselves freely by exploring their creativity. Students will learn the literature

more naturally with the presence of literature which is involved with reciting, exploring and comprehending the literary texts. Spontaneous sentences in literature makes students more comfortable with the language and it promotes memory retention along the way (Krasniqi, 2019). Learning English through literature helps students to acquire the language effortlessly. Learning English in a fun way enhances the ability of students naturally. The pressure during the learning process will be lessened and their affective filter is lowered that warrant a successful language learning.

Literature is made compulsory in English as second language (ESL) classrooms all over the globe to uphold its status in the English Language. This is reiterated by McKay (1982), arguing that literature provides the best navigation through the target culture and the literature study is constructed in the form of oral and written as well as the enthusiasm of the discovery including elements of literature are paving their ways into English for Foreign Language curriculums worldwide. The uniqueness of language portrayed through literature may spark the students' interest in learning the language. Hence, the educational stakeholders acknowledged the linguists viewpoint on literature being an essential tool in enhancing language learning with the inclusion of English literature into national curriculum. Arafah (2018) suggested that learning literature will make learning English more pleasurable to the ESL students. However, it has always been marginalised especially when it is not being tested in national schools examination since it is only intended for aesthetic purposes. Consequently, students are prone to neglect literature lessons because it is 'not important'. Although it is often considered as a secondary role to aid in enhancing English language proficiency level among students, teachers have always sought an innovative way to teach literature in English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom.

The world in the last decades fast progressed towards the use of technology in our daily lives. Its emergence has remarkably influenced humanity in various ways. Communication has become at our fingertips and knowledge can be accessed from anywhere in the world with abundant information offered on the internet. Almost all countries on the globe are harnessing the ICT to catch up with the rise of Industrial Revolution IR 4.0. The utilisation of ICT in the field of education is also improving gradually as it is perceived as one of the most powerful tools in teaching and learning process as it can be integrated in varying subjects including English literature. ICT in the education sector in Malaysia began to flourish more remarkably due to Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020 which ceased traditional face-to-face schooling all over the world thus compelling the education institutions to go completely virtual in order to ensure students' continuous learning can happen although in the trying time as such. Although the online learning method is still relatively newfangled to all members of the education field, it is vital to have it carried out to sustain students' engagement and motivation in learning when social distancing seems to pave its way into our lives (Ferdeus & Shifat, 2020; Marinoni et al., 2020). Therefore, as the time progresses and the world is shifting towards endemic, the ICT in education still has its remnants of significance as it has become a new norm to each of us. It can be said that ICT has secured a permanent role in education.

Like any other subjects in schools, the teaching of literature in ESL classrooms is not left out in the ICT pursuit. As known to all, literature is laden with diverse elements such as actions, emotions and dialogues which makes it more relevant to be integrated with ICT tools. Previously, literature was often associated with memorising the literature components in the text causing it to be perceived as dull and boring. The students do not find it imperative to learn English literature hence the shift of literature approach in ESL classroom will benefit students in many ways. In using literature, the student-teacher connection must be

established fairly because students regard the literary texts “represents authentic feelings of their authors and this produces a strong motivation in the learners,” (Babae & Yahya, 2014, p. 82). The dawning of COVID-19 pandemic has restricted the interaction between students and teachers due to multiple initiatives under the Movement Control Order (MCO) carried out in the country. The first MCO began on 14th March 2020 to halt the deadly virus from spreading throughout the country and is established based on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967 that involves a many activities (News Straits Times, 2020). Education field is not excluded from the restriction. Thus, tThis circumstance somehow poses an impact on the teaching of literature in ESL classrooms as limited social interaction is present during the lessons.

Thus, the onset of imperative technology that has been adopted in ESL classrooms may aid in the learning of literature. Although numerous studies have been conducted on exploring the advantages of teaching and learning through the ICT, research on the use of ICT in the field of literature remains uncharted. Henceforth, this review (a) identifies past use of ICT tools in the learning of literature, and (b) examines students’ perceptions in learning literature using ICT. This review synthesised findings from journal articles from 2018 – 2022 to acknowledge the students’ perception in learning literature using ICT.

### **Methodology**

Two main databases were used in probing the papers to review in this research. Google scholar and Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) were utilised in the process of finding the articles. An extensive search was conducted by using phrases to compile all pertinent articles to the topic. The selection criteria was based on 3 aspects: (1) papers written in language, (2) year of publication and (3) specific word search. In the first screening, search was based on several clauses including ‘ICT in literature’, ‘learning English-literature using ICT’, ‘perceptions in learning literature through ICT’, and ‘students’ perception in learning literature using ICT’. This was later re-reviewed by conducting an advanced search. As a result, thirty-two papers were selected to be reviewed in this study. The steps in gathering the literature for this study is illustrated in in the table below:

Table 1

*Steps in gathering literature on Google Scholar*

Step		Method	
1	Keyword Search	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Selection criteria</b>
		“English literature ICT”, “learning literature ICT”, “English literature using ict in ESL classrooms”, “English-literature ict perception” and “students perception in learning literature”	(1) Paper published 2018 up until present 2022 (2) Papers written in English
2	‘Advanced Search’ function	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Search Criteria</b>
		“students’ perception in learning English-literature using ICT”	(1) ‘with all of the words’

Meanwhile, for the ERIC database, the methods of data collection is shown below:

Table 2

*Steps in gathering literature on ERIC*

Step		Method	
1	Keyword Search	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Selection criteria</b>
		“English Language Literature ICT”	(1) Publication date: Since 2018 up until present 2022 (last 5 years) (2) Descriptor: -Literature -English (Second Language)

### Literature Review Findings and Discussion

#### Research Question 1: How has past use of ICT tools helped students learn literature?

##### Learning Literature using Multimodal

Teaching and learning English literature are accompanied with multiple approaches and one of them is using multimodal. Serafini (2014) asserted, multimodal is associated with both digital and print environments that use an array of cultural resources to utter, deliver, display and communicate diverse narratives, concepts hence information. Facile meaning-making in

learning literature text is made possible through multimodality as Thompson and McInay (2019) supported that integrating both texts and practice multimodal reading approaches resulted in enhancing students' motivation, reviving curricula and fulfilling emerging education standards. A trigger must be pulled for the students to appreciate more literature subjects as well as enjoy the literature lesson. This is due to the fact that their interest in reading literature texts continues to decline day by day due to multiple challenges. This situation is alarming to the English language learning process because literature is regarded as a resource to enhance English language proficiency among students (Kaur & Mahmor, 2014).

Several previous literature on the teaching and learning of literature components in Malaysia unveiled that curriculum planners along with teachers experience some hurdles in the development, on top of teaching literature (Sivapalan et al., 2017). One of the reasons responsible for this issue might be the teachers' approach in delivering literature lessons. This is substantiated by a study conducted by the Ministry of Education (2011), only half of lessons are taught effectively which means the rest did not promote students' active role followed by a rigid teacher-centered content delivery. Teachers also are facing challenges in teaching literature as they remain ambivalent about how to teach literature efficiently to warrant language acquisition while appreciating the literature itself. Ulin (2018) elaborated about the value of literature in an article entitled 'Is Literature Dead?' as the love of reading perished with the tedious school practices. Therefore, this no longer pertains to literature that is bogus but more to how to aid students to engage more with it. In a study with reference to multimodal practice in teaching and students' motivation, utilising multimodal texts including picturebooks puts students' understanding and comprehension of any types of information at an advantage despite what their reading proficiency is (Cortash, 2011).

Apart from that, literature also can be taught and learned through comics, graphic novels, films and television. Numerous literary classics such as King Arthur, To Kill a Mockingbird and The Great Gatsby were adapted into films to help students examine the literary components such as plot, setting and theme through visual imagery. Reading literary texts can be perceived as dull for some students, thus, films and television adaptations may bridge the gap between students' insights on the texts with the actual message that the author is trying to convey to the readers. As a result, these multimodal texts garnered students' interest to delve more into the literature and promote deeper understanding. Furthermore, the multimodal approach also grants teachers the privilege of catering students' diverse learning styles in ESL classrooms.

### **ICT in Education especially English Classrooms**

Incorporating ICT in ESL classrooms has been prioritised throughout the years, particularly in 21st century education. Malaysian schools are no exception in enhancing the teaching and learning experience in ESL classrooms with the aid of technology. Ebrahimi & Yeo (2018) asserted that the application of technologies in secondary education is well received. Both parties, teachers and students, incline towards the use of ICT in their teaching and learning. Teaching and learning literature can be a strenuous task in ESL classrooms in lieu of various reasons. Hence, integrating ICT in teaching and learning literature aids to motivate the students. Previous research presented a myriad of advantages of integrating ICT in ESL classrooms. Teachers were able to boost motivation to read literary texts by incorporating ICT in teaching English literature (Elbeichir, 2018). Umar & Maria (2021) also reported that teaching English literature with the aid of ICT affects the students' motivation to read literary

texts. Alkamel & Chouthaiwale (2020) claimed that English teachers may motivate students by giving activities to their liking with the use of technology. One of Nguyen's (2020) findings exhibited that technology application in teaching English literature also elevates students' motivation to learn. On the other hand, Karrar (2018) concurred that the use of ICT in teaching actuates the students to learn literature and broaden their worldly knowledge. Almusharraf (2021) claimed that integrating Kahoot!, an online game-based tool, increases students's engagement in English classrooms. In a study by Rahayu et al (2021), it is found that using an online learning platform can enhance fluency in speaking and expand vocabulary among the students. In another study, it is revealed that the integration of ICT positively affects students' comprehension level in reading literature (Ebrahimi, 2018). These researchers acknowledged that incorporating visual aids in teaching English literature has beneficial impact, in particular comprehension, among the students. The same study also divulged that the use of ICT in teaching literature is more effective compared to the traditional method. The inefficiency of traditional teaching method is parallel with Elbichir's (2018) statement where students become disinterested in learning literature when traditional method is used. Moreover, many previous studies have shown that integrating ICT in teaching becomes less time consuming (Elchibir, 2018; Alkamel & Chouthaiwale, 2020; Umar & Maria, 2021).

Regardless of the various benefits presented, the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in ESL classrooms also comes with a number of disadvantages. Some teachers are not well versed in manoeuvring technologies or gadgets (Racheal, 2020). The insufficiency of infrastructure or facilities to integrate technology or ICT in teaching and learning is also an unceasing issue in English language classrooms. Nguyen (2020) asserted that teachers utilised personal laptops due to educational institution's incapacity to provide teaching facilities. Furthermore, in a study by Ebrahimi & Yeo (2018) stated that the inadequacy of training in utilising ICT which leads to inability to use ICT in education effectively.

The boon and bane of integrating ICT in education, especially in English classrooms, should be considered simultaneously in order to utilise ICT effectively. The benefits of using ICT in education can be enhanced once the disadvantages are resolved.

## **Research Question 2: What do students think about learning literature using ICT?**

### **Perspective of learning literature**

Literature has paved its way in Malaysian education curriculum since the 1970s as a component of English language subjects. As the time passed, the Ministry of Education began to discern the significance of literature in English language education for the reason that it helps students in terms of personal growth, cultural enrichment and language development (Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008). Through literature learning, students are given leverage to discover foreign cultures and aesthetic values of the language itself. To emphasise the importance of literature, a plan was included in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 stipulating English literature to be a compulsory subject in Malaysian English secondary school syllabus (Suliman and Yunus, 2014).

Students' perceptions of learning English literature in the ESL classroom may vary. However, their perceptions matter in determining the literature teaching approach to be conducted in the classroom to permit effective lesson delivery. Most of the previous studies in the past revealed the importance of putting students' perception into account to accomplish a desirable learning outcome in literature lessons (Naser & Aziz, 2017; Othman et al., 2015). ESL learners perceive learning literature and its method as agreeable (Mustafa et



al., 2020). Nonetheless, the numerous studies being conducted to probe into students' perceptions are just good-for-nothing as they are often neglected when it comes to the matters of determining the curriculum framework by the educationists as their expectations contrast with students' ability (Tseng, 2010). Naser and Aziz (2017) also reported that students' perceptions of literature learning are often being shoved under the rug. In fact, the educationists should take into account the students' point of view in constructing the content for the literature curriculum instead of punching above their weight to benefit both parties. At the end of the day, the students' ability is the determining factor of a successful literature learning. Irene (2014) found that teachers also may experience difficulties to teach literature when the language used in the literary text is too difficult for the students to understand. Thus, more time will be devoted to explaining word-by-word meaning to the students instead of teaching literature content. As a result, the main purpose of learning literature can no longer exist. A study conducted by Othman et al. in 2015 highlighted the importance of students' attitudes towards literature learning to promote successful learning. This entails that being too ambitious by integrating so many elements in literature with no clear goal is a futile measure that will go in vain.

Meanwhile, students showed positive feedback in terms of learning literature using ICT due to their familiarity with technology as they literally grew up with it. The advancement of technology has brought significant changes to the current generation. Dai Guiyu et al. in 2018 claimed that the mobile learning habits of the students has served as a strong fundamental for their reception of the newly introduced WeChat learning mode. Adapting with the new ICT applications seems seamless for them when they acknowledged the WeChat learning mode positively. The acceptance level of the students might have been affected by their tech-savviness.

### **Positive Impacts on Language Learning**

Research envisages that learning literature through ICT mostly has a positive impact on language learning. Based on the findings from previous research, the integration of ICT into learning literature brought a significant improvement in language learning. Over the years, the teaching of literature in the classroom is shifting in various ways to cater the students' needs as well as to amplify their learning outcome. One of the most popular measures is utilising ICT in the classroom. ICT helps students to comprehend literary texts better with its dynamic features that enables literary contents to be integrated in various ways. This has caught the attention of many researchers. Learners with a low level of proficiency would experience difficulties to appreciate literature texts solely through reading. Nonetheless, with the presence of multimedia opened up a new horizon for the learners to approach the text through a different platform (Zainal, 2012). Weak students are known to have difficulty in language learning due to their limited vocabulary. Henceforth, through the use of ICT, it eases their way in navigating their way through the learning process. Baharuddin and Hashim (2020) contended that activity becomes more easy and engaging via integration of technology in reading tools and materials. According to them as well, students also acknowledge the digital leverage that comes along with the learning features namely reading tools and online dictionaries. It is ascertained that ICT has benefited the students and made learning ESL more meaningful. Likewise, Ogunnaike (2020) has the same take on this issue, the internet may be a source of motivation for students to practise English and Literature simultaneously in their daily lives. As a result, functional communicative experiences are achievable. In order to

ensure a successful language learning, the utmost importance should be fixated on the engaging activities in the classroom.

An in-depth understanding of a particular lesson such as literature can be attained through active-role of language learners. Ogunnaike (2020) added, ICT can be used as an instrument to enjoy and demonstrate creative works namely poetry, stories and essays besides advocating language activities for both English language and literature learning. It can be concluded that using ICT in literature learning facilitates sustainable education across curriculum and provides contingencies for effective learning of literature. This stance is also supported by Roy (2019) in which he highlights that multiple technology tools in ESL classrooms can engage students to delve deeper into the lessons and maintain their interest throughout the lessons which is crucial for the learning process. In the same line of reasoning, Zainal et al (2020) revealed the students' positive perception in using video essays in literature courses due to dominant reasons which are fun, engaging and interesting. They also depicted it as an experiential learning process since they can actually get a hands-on experience of the literary texts. Thus, students generally have positive attitudes towards learning literature using ICT for its advantages. This substantiated in Ebrahimi (2018) finding that ICT usage in Malaysian high schools is extremely welcomed by the students despite not receiving proper training to navigate the ICT in the classroom and further supported by Wahyuni et al. in 202 findings that students view activities related to ICT as more enjoyable compared to traditional reading. Umar and Maria (2021) also assert that most of the students held positive attitudes towards utilising visual aids in reading literary texts. Hence, ICT indeed brought a positive influence in learning. The usefulness of ICT can be maximized if integrated properly in the classroom. All the findings reviewed yielded positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in literature learning. Succinctly, innovative literature teaching and learning in the English language is possible with the presence of ICT in education.

### **Develop Confidence**

Utilising ICT in learning literature eventually aids students to develop self-confidence. Self-confidence, a form of an affective filter, is one of the main contributing factors that affect language learning performance. High affective filter is a common issue among language learners as they feel intimidated to use the language comfortably. Often, they appear to be highly anxious and timid, avoiding communicating their opinions and the worst case scenario, they could not articulate a full meaningful sentence. There is a significant correlation between language anxiety and the students' performance in the classroom. Albufalasa (2019) found that the students developed a higher level of self-confidence in perceiving their own abilities to perform better in the literature subject through the use of graphic organizers. It managed to lower down their language anxiety as they progressed in comprehending the narrative texts and their performance in the classroom also improved. In the end, the students begin to show extra effort to participate in the lesson and become willing to work autonomously on reading tasks. One with high self-confidence will do whatever it takes in order to be successful and they seldom give up. The study conducted by Thompson and McIlroy (2019) implies that by incorporating myriads of texts namely graphic novels, comics and films in literature reaps many pleasant outcomes particularly in building their confidence. Some introverted students may have fruitful ideas to share in the classroom but most of the time, it was halted by their low self-confidence. Learning outcomes would only be fair if all students have the same opportunity to participate in the lesson. Islam (2021) shed the light on the students' perception of wanting to own more opportunity to share their viewpoint in the classroom



besides preferring visual aids in virtual classes shows that students indeed have the interest in learning literature. Alternatively, the optimization of interactive classroom discussion accompanied by the fitting multimedia tools usage in teaching diverse genres of English Literature can mitigate the upcoming challenges in learning literature. Abdullahi and Iyere (2021) concluded that students connect more intimately with the literary texts when visual aids are involved. This circumstance suggests that having visual aids as a tool to teach literature can promote creativity and critical thinking among students aligned with the 21st century learning's core concepts. These engaging activities eventually may boost students' confidence level and ensure successful literature learning in the classroom.

### **Motivation**

Motivation is the most frequent point discussed in the research being reviewed. It is found that the use of ICT in the literature lessons garnered positive attitudes from the students. As Thompson and McInay (2019) asserted in their research, the implementation of multimodal reading approaches with the integration of non-traditional texts in literature contribute to enhanced motivation, reviving the curricula and fulfilling the aspiration of unfolding standards of education. Students view ICT as their source of motivation in learning literature. It is known that literature is a heavy subject with complex components in the texts that require the students to assay them bits and pieces in order to get to the underlying message portrayed. Commonly, students are found to have problems with long literary works such as novels and drama. This is supported by findings from Islam (2021) in his study that students demonstrate unpleasant attitude towards both novels and drama lessons. More than three thirds of students (87%) regard using presentation slides as literature lessons delivered by the lecturers as helpful and attractive. Thus and so, the efficacy of literature lessons is influenced by the vigorosity of the students to share their knowledge. ICT in literature lessons must be used precisely while taking students' need into consideration for a successful lesson delivery. Different measures are necessary in teaching short genres (poetry and short stories) and long genres (drama and novels). Meanwhile, Abulafasa (2019) cited the students' motivation is improved with the waning of their language anxiety. This is due to the fact that they have an innate capacity to perform well in class activities as they enhance their comprehension of the narrative texts. With the motivation as well, they were also found to put extra effort in acing the reading tasks and more voluntary to work independently on the tasks. Hence, the motivation prompted the active role of the students in literature classes is made evident. Again, Abdullahi and Iyere (2021) asserted ICT tools help in gaining students' avid motivation to take pleasure in learning literature better and fulfill the learning objectives comprehensively. It is supported by Halili et al. in 2018 claim that the students' virtual learning engagement has surpassed the traditional learning since virtual learning offers myriads applications that enables students to have the information they need at their fingertips. The dynamicity of ICT has opened a new horizon for the literature to flourish in the education system. Nowadays, teachers are equipped with various learning tools such as flicker, google search, youtube or even movies to teach literature (Al Kamel, 2020). Therefore, students are more interested in learning the complex literary texts besides getting an undocked comprehension of it from multiple facets.

## Conclusion

While the use of ICT tools in the classroom is a common practice, there is still a limited application in learning English literature in the present time considering that not many recent articles appeared during the research.

Paddling through the studies on learning of literature using ICT in this review, three dominant aspects were closely probed which are positive impacts in language learning, developing confidence as well as motivation which answered both research questions. These three aspects were examined from the eyes of the students. Firstly, the dynamic features of ICT helps students to grasp the literary texts well by integrating it in various ways. This has also promoted active learning among the students which resulted in successful language learning. Next, self-confidence can be developed through the use of ICT in literature lessons. Students appeared to be more open to engage and participate in class activities as their affective filter is lowered. The engaging activities which are lively may amplify their confidence level that established a successful learning environment. Meanwhile, literature lessons attained positive attitudes from the students since it enhanced their motivation to learn literature. The rigid form of literary texts can now be enjoyed by students with multiple facets of ICT tools such as movies, youtube, google search and such. Thus, the active role of the students in learning literature instigated from the motivation brought upon accomplished learning outcomes. These answered the second research question; What do students think about learning literature using ICT? twFuture research in the field of literature pertinent to the learning of English literature should aim to establish a clearer picture how the use of ICT tools in the classroom influence literature learning among students. In general, learning literature using ICT yields constructive impacts in the ESL classrooms.

## Acknowledgement

Deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr Hanita Hanim Ismail for the immense guidance and support throughout producing this piece. Writing this paper would be impossible without ample aid from my supervisor. She has been a great help along the way. Besides, I would like to express my thanks to my family and friends for being my pillar of strength in completing this paper.

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