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English Language Literature Component: Students' Perspective and Attitude Towards Malaysian Literary Texts

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ABSTRACT

The English language literature component has experienced several changes between the year 2000 to 2025. As a result of the changes, the amount of local literature used significantly decreases. In the latest change, local literary text in English was no longer included despite positive feedback given towards it. This study was conducted to find out the perspectives of secondary school students on the inclusion of local literary texts, the difference in students' attitude towards local literary texts as compared to Western Literary texts, and factors that affect attitudes. This study employed a mixed – method research design involving 180 Form 4 students who participated in a survey and face to face interview with two English secondary school teachers. The results showed that the students' responses, both for attitude and perspectives towards local literary texts, are generally positive. The teachers, both senior and junior, responded positively towards both Malaysian and Western literary texts too. In conclusion, four contributing factors to students' attitude towards literary texts are language complexity, unknown cultural aspects, familiarity of context as well as language proficiency.

KEYWORDS: Malaysian literary text, students' attitude, Western literary text, literature component

INTRODUCTION

The presence of literature component in Malaysian secondary school English language syllabus has begun in the year 2000 (Ukat & Ismail, 2022). As of the current time, literature is incorporated under the Standard-Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) known as Literature in Action (LiA) with various components of literature, including the use of literary texts namely poetry, dramas, short stories, graphics novels, and novels. According to the Malaysia Ministry of Education in the English

Language Management Guidebook (2019), the use of these literature components is to inculcate reading habits and enhance thinking skills, in addition to providing students with opportunity to explore creativity and potential, thus allowing them to be expressive without much reservation (Ministry of Education, 2020; Sahib & Stapa, 2022). Moreover, literature provides a platform for students to witness life through the eyes of different characters they come across in the literary texts and learn figurative language including similes, metaphors, personification and others (Yee et al., 2023).

Unfortunately, the students' responses are contrary to these beliefs and expectations. Isa and Mahmud (2012) claimed that the students often felt anxious when they are exposed to the literary texts that originated from the western countries' literary traditions. Further, these texts are commonly perceived to be challenging due to perplexing lexicons such as Shakespeare's archaic and antiquated literature. Due to the use of international content of literature components that are unfamiliar and distant to the Malaysian students, the unfamiliarity now not only serves as a language barrier, but also a culture barrier making it harder for the students to comprehend, and what more, appreciate it. Therefore, to retain the function of literature as a mode of rich linguistic input and students' expression while reducing the gap of language, the idea of using local literary texts as the instrument of English language literature component in secondary school has been suggested (Ghazali, 2016; Isa & Mahmud, 2012).

Coincidentally, the suggestion to include local literary texts seems to be in line with the growth and expansion of local literature as local literary texts written in English by local authors can easily be found and accessed. As a result, it will not be hard to find local literature in English that can be used as an English literature component of the secondary school English syllabus. Quayum (2021) listed a few literatures, one of it is Rani Manicka's 'The Rice Mother' which tells a story of four generation of women in a Malaysian family spanning most of the twentieth century. It is therefore safe to note that local literary texts often revolve around the local culture making it more context – relevant compared to the Western literary texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia has created a synergy of unique diverse language and cultures of its own, as a multilingual country uniting people with multiple ethnic and racial backgrounds. The diversity has affected Malaysian literature as well, providing a wide range of literary texts in line with the diversity of Malaysian writers. According to Quayum (2021), Malaysian literature in English did not surface until 1949, with Wang Gungwu's *Pulse*, a collection of poetry in English published in 1950. Although there are challenges and obstacles in the growth of Malaysian Literature in English, more and more Malaysian writers' literary work in English surfaced from outside the country with significant growth (Quayum, 2021). One particular reason that brings about the growth of Malaysian literature in English is the adoption of policies by Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in 1998, by introducing literature as compulsory components in secondary school English curriculum (Lim, 2020).

Literature component officially became compulsory in secondary school English language syllabus in the year 2000, putting together poems, short stories, and novels (Omar, 2017; Sahib & Stapa, 2022). Due to much criticism on the implementation of literature component calling for improvisation,

English literature subject in secondary school was reintroduced on 20th August 2012 by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Minister of Education of the time in order to raise the standard of English in Malaysia (Suliman & Yunus, 2014). With the on-going second wave of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the English Literature module is aimed to increase students' exposure to the language by 15% to 20% (Suliman & Yunus, 2014).

Despite the improvements made to the implementation of the literature component in the secondary school English syllabus, students' perspectives towards the text selection of literature components in the English language curriculum, related to the cultural background of the foreign texts, has been negative for some students due to difficulty in understanding unfamiliar culture which leads to the suggestion of using local literary texts for the literature components (Govindarajoo & Mukundan, 2013). In addition to that, Tina et al. (2007, as cited in Engku Atek et al., 2020), claimed that the language level of the selected texts by the Ministry was difficult for the students to comprehend as stated by the teachers. Engku Atek et al. (2020) also claimed that through observations, literature components have been a challenge to the students due to lacking competencies in language skills as well as insufficient vocabulary knowledge. Past study on compulsory English language literature component in national secondary schools related to literary texts used also revealed little enthusiasm and interest shown by students due to a lack of relevance and identification with the texts (Siti Hajar & Azlina, 2017). Gopal and Singh (2020) also found that students are unable to infer beyond the texts and connect it to their own life, which hinder comprehension.

Another challenge is students' attitudes towards Malaysian and western literary texts, especially their preference towards local literary texts. According to Awang and Kasuma (2010); Zainal, Mohd Deni and Arifin (2021), students had more favourable attitudes towards learning rather than reading the literature component because they are not able to understand the texts fully when they read it on their own due to the linguistic and cultural barriers that exist between the students' knowledge and the texts. In addition to that, Ghazali et al. (2009) relates students' negative attitudes towards literary texts by citing that despite the better opportunities to learn L2 cultures through literary texts (Hossain, 2024), the used of unsuitable texts can create distance between the text and the readers, especially culturally (Simmel, 2024). This shows that student's different interest across various literature genres play important role too in understanding the literary texts (Engku et al., 2020). Therefore, with the changes of literary texts over the years, there is a need to explore the recent students' attitudes towards literary texts and the idea of using local literary texts. This study addressed the following research objectives:

- 1) to identify the perspectives of secondary school students on the use of local literature in the English language literature component
- 2) to ascertain the difference in students' attitude towards the use of local literature in English as compared to Western literature
- 3) to explore factors contributing to students' attitude towards literary texts.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The present study was designed as an explanatory sequential mixed method because the qualitative data is needed to refine and further explain the results of the quantitative data (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2021). Data collection process started with the questionnaire distribution and analysis, and this was followed by the face – to – face interview with two ESL teachers. As for the participants, both the students and teachers were from a secondary school located in Selangor. Specifically, 180 Form 4 secondary school students took part in a survey and two English teachers participated in an – depth interview. Form 4 students were chosen compared to the other forms because they have learnt literature and come across more literary texts of the English language literature components. As for the interview, the teachers involved were identified using homogenous sampling in which both of them share similar traits. Hence, two teachers volunteered to participate in the face-to-face interview session. The senior teacher has more than 10 years of experience to get insights on teaching the previous cycle of literature component, and the junior teacher with less than 10 years of experience was chosen to get insights on teaching the latest cycle of literature component.

The questionnaire adapted the questions from Ghazali et. al (2009), Isa & Mahmud (2012), Othman et. al (2015), Tevdovska (2016), and Mohamad et al. (2021). Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study involving 20 Form 4 students was conducted to test the reliability of the adapted questionnaire items. All the respondents for the pilot study were Form 4 students from the same school and they were excluded in the actual data gathering process. Pilot study conducted has confirmed that the items in the questionnaire have acceptable reliability level based on the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha level (Table 1). Five points Likert scale was used, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', (*1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree*). As for the interview protocols, the questions for the interview protocol were adapted from previous study by Mohaideen, Ismail and Rashid (2020). The questions were evaluated and validated by three experts in ESL fields.

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha's reading for questionnaire items

Section	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha reading
B (Local text 1)	4	.75
B (Local text 2)	4	.76
C	8	.71

Research Process

The selected participants for the survey were first briefed about the research and the data collection procedures. They were informed about the purpose of the research and their significant contribution to

the research. In addition to that, one week prior to the questionnaire survey distribution, the participants were given a set of literary texts for them to read and review for the purpose of the survey. These four literary texts were chosen for strong reasons. Literary texts 1 and 3 are already used in the current syllabus, hence it is easier to use current literary texts that are in English. As for literary texts 2 and 4, these literary texts were once used in previous syllabus. They were literary texts in Malay then translated to English for the purpose of teaching English. These texts were discontinued, but they already have multiple reviews and literature on it, therefore a much-established Malay-to-English literary text. The literary texts used in this study were:

1. The charge of the light brigade in A poison tree: A poetry collection selected by Pie Corbett and Valerie Bloom, Poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson.
2. In the midst of hardship by Latiff Mohidin
3. Leaving in Changing the skies: Stories from Africa, M. G. Vassanji Retold by Jennifer Basset
4. Of bunga telur and Bally shoes by Che Husna Azhari

As for the interviews with the teachers, the teachers were informed of the interview procedures including the time allocated for the interview, formalities and ethics of the interview and other information including the instructions necessary for the interview. The interview sessions were conducted physically for approximately 40 minutes. The interview sessions were audio recorded with the participants' permissions. For the analysis, the quantitative data collected from the survey were analysed using SPSS, while the qualitative data collected through the interview were analysed based on thematic analysis using Nvivo.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The perspectives of secondary school students on the use of Malaysian literature in the English language literature component

Table 2 shows the results of students' perspectives towards the two Malaysian literary texts, poem and short story respectively.

Table 2. Students' Perspectives of Local Malaysian Literary Texts

<i>Malaysian Literary Text 1: Poem 'In the Midst of Hardship'</i>					
Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I have improved my English language skills by learning the chosen literature text.	0%	2.5%	16.9%	45.6%	35%
<i>Malaysian Literary Text 2: Short Story 'Of Bunga Telur and Bally Shoes'</i>					
I have improved my English language skills by learning the chosen literature text.	0%	1.3%	17.5%	49.4%	31.9%

Based on the results for text 1, many of the students have positive perspectives towards local literary texts. A total of 80.6% agreed that the poem improves their English language skill, with only 2.5% disagreed while 81.3% agreed that the short story improves their English language skill and only 1.3% disagreed. This shows that most of the students positively perceive the literary texts as an aid of learning the language. It is also revealed that the students are viewing literary texts as means of improving their English language skills, not merely leisure read. This perspective is significant as the importance of learning literature in which to improve English language skills would play a major part in students' attitude towards the literary texts.

Students' Attitude Towards the Use of Malaysian Literature in English as Compared to Western Literature for the English Language Literature Component

Table 3 shows the results of students' difference in attitude towards Malaysian versus western texts.

Table 3. Students' Difference in Attitude towards Malaysian versus Western Texts

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I accept literary texts which introduce topics and cultural aspects which differ from my own values and culture.	0%	0.6%	18.1%	49.4%	31.9%
Malaysian texts are more familiar and easier to understand.	0.6%	3.8%	21.9%	35.6%	38.1%
It helps me when text introduces cultural aspects which are familiar to me.	0.6%	1.9%	13.8%	47.5%	36.3%

From the table, the students have a positive attitude towards both Malaysian literary texts and western literary texts. However, in comparison, the students have more positive attitudes towards local literary texts as compared to western literary texts. A total of 73.7% agreed that Malaysian texts are more familiar and easier to understand and a total 4.4% disagreed with the statement, and the remaining 21.9% are unsure of the statement. It is shown that the majority of the students can understand Malaysian texts better and find them more familiar. It is also revealed that less than 30% of students have a negative attitude towards Malaysian texts based on their response towards the statement. It is most probable that less than 30% of students have better attitudes and/or prefer western literary texts. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, in comparison, the majority of the students have a more positive attitude towards local literary texts as compared to western literary texts.

The results also show that a total of 83.8% agreed that it helps them when the literary texts introduce cultural aspects that are familiar to them. This, again, relates to local literary texts presenting culture that are often associated with Malaysians. It is one of the local literary texts' specialties that western

literary texts lack. This is because western literary texts present cultures that are foreign to the students and often unfamiliar as the context is of foreign people, or western culture. It is also revealed that only 2.5% who did not find it helpful. It is probable for these students to find unfamiliar contexts in western texts more helpful. However, in comparison, the majority prefers familiar contexts as compared to unfamiliar contexts and hence, a more positive attitude towards local literary texts.

Nonetheless, the students are not entirely against western literary texts. The statement "*I accept literary texts which introduce topics and cultural aspects which differ from my own values and culture*" received a total of 81.3% agreement. This means that although the students have a more positive attitude towards local literary texts, they do accept the foreign or western contexts that are presented in western literary texts. It shows that the students are not fully rejecting the current literary texts that are all western literary texts. Instead, based on the findings, they would better prefer the local literary texts. Thus, it can be concluded that despite the students' acceptance of the current western literary texts, the students have more positive attitudes towards local literary texts due to it being familiar, easier to understand and relatable to their lives.

Factors contributing to students' attitude towards literary texts

Table 4 shows the factors that contribute to students' attitude towards literary texts.

Table 4. Factors Contributing to Students' Attitude Towards Literary Texts

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Some of the difficulties were due to the complex language used in the text.	1.9 %	3.8%	20.6 %	50.6 %	23.1 %
Some difficulties were due to the difficult or unknown cultural aspects described in the texts (beliefs, relationships, values, traditions).	1.9 %	11.9 %	29.4 %	42.5 %	14.4 %

The results in Table 4 show that a total of 73.7% agreed to the statement '*Some of the difficulties were due to the complex language used in the text*'. This indicates that the complexity of the language used in the literary texts affects the students' understanding. The majority of the students show concern in the language used as it affects their comprehension, literary texts with simpler language may aid students' understanding and hence, influence the students to have a positive attitude towards literary text. In comparing Malaysian and western literary texts in terms of complexity of language used, local literary texts have simpler word usage as it is fit to Malaysian context and common word selection. Thus, most probably, the students' preference towards local literary text may be due to the simplicity of the language used as compared to complex words that are difficult to understand in western literary

texts. This relates to proficiency in the English language, in which complex language needs higher proficiency of the language.

The results also show that 56.9% found the difficult or unknown cultural aspects described in the texts has caused them some difficulties. This shows that more than half of the students find cultural background to be a factor that affects their attitude towards literary texts. Due to most of the students finding unknown cultural aspects in literary texts to cause them difficulties when reading or comprehending literary texts, it can be derived that having prior knowledge of cultural aspects or background of the literary texts can better help the students' understanding, and hence, better attitude towards the literary text. In terms of cultural aspects, cultural backgrounds that are commonly known by the students are best represented in local literary texts as it is written by local authors who are accustomed to the culture of Malaysians. Therefore, it is safe to say that prior knowledge of cultural background can be a factor that contributes to the positive attitude towards local literary texts.

a) Language complexity

During the interviews, the teachers were asked, "Do you think most of the difficulties faced by the students were due to the complex and archaic language used in the text?". This question aims to know if language complexity can be a factor contributing to students' attitude towards literary texts.

Table 5. Language complexity as contributing factor from teachers' point of view

Teachers' Comments
A) It could affect the students' attention span.
B) Non-common lexis being difficult for low proficiency level students.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that both the teachers agreed that complex and archaic language used in the text contributes to the students' attitude towards literary texts. Teacher A, the junior teacher stated that she agrees the type of language used in the text could be the major factor contributing to students' attitude towards literary text. She stated that, "*So, when we're talking about complex and old language used, it could affect the students' attention span because they are students. They could be, you know, they are distracted. Especially if the language is not familiar to them, so, it might, you know, not in their interest*" indicating that unfamiliar language (complex and old language) affecting students' interest towards the text and hence, distract them.

Teacher A also notes that students' ability or proficiency in the language also plays a part as she stated, "*Even some of them are struggling in English. So, even... they are struggling in the basic English language, so how can they be able to comprehend the complex and the old style of language? That's why*". This is also similar to Teacher B, the senior teacher's view, in which she stated that, "*I think the*

difficult part will be, to understand the storyline. Perhaps, you know, of the, I think the lexical part. Like, maybe, some of the vocabularies, that they don't understand. Because of, maybe, those are the non-common lexis, like, difficult ones" indicating that non-common lexis affect students' understanding. Teacher B also stated that, *"Because some, like, like higher levels forms, like form 4 form 5, definitely the text would be higher"* which indicates for higher forms, higher level of language is used in the literary texts. Therefore, it is revealed that complex and old language used in literary is a factor that affects students' attitudes towards literary text, as mentioned in the above excerpts by Teacher B, the complex, non-common lexical being difficult for low proficiency levels students, as well as the unfamiliar words affecting students' interest and attention span, mentioned by Teacher A.

b) Unknown cultural aspect

The teachers were also asked, "Do you think most of the difficulties faced by the students were due to the difficult or unknown cultural aspect described in the text, such as beliefs, relationships, values or traditions?".

Table 6. Unknown cultural aspect as contributing factor from teachers' point of view

Teachers' Comments
A) Unfamiliarity makes students feel demotivated
B) Cultural aspects for exposure

The responses from two teachers however differ from one another as one agreed and one disagreed. Teacher A agreed that unknown cultural aspects caused difficulty for the students, while Teacher B shared it was not a major difficulty. Teacher A stated that *"But talking about Western texts, Western texts that are basically about English language being used on a different level, unfamiliar words, unfamiliar context, culture, beliefs and whatnot. So, it is very possible for the students to feel demotivated, having it hard to focus and concentrate to the...to the text, to find the meaning behind text"*. This indicates that the teachers felt that the unfamiliarity of cultural aspects in the Western literary texts to be a cause of students' being demotivated, hence, their negative attitude towards the literary texts.

However, Teacher B mentioned that *"I mean, the new knowledge that we gain actually is an exposure. So, I don't think it is a, I mean, the cultural aspect is the difficult part for the students to understand. I mean, the cultural aspects would be something that the students will appreciate"* indicating that foreign cultural aspects give exposure to the students for them to appreciate the literary texts. Therefore, she finds the unknown cultural aspect as new knowledge, and not a cause of difficulty for the students. However, she does acknowledge that unknown cultural aspects do affect the students' attitudes towards the literary texts, in which she said, *"So, you know, I think, they will... I mean, they*

like to know all these things, you know. I don't think this is the difficult part", which means it affects the students' attitude positively. Although not both of the teachers find unknown cultural aspects in literary texts to cause difficulty to the students, they acknowledge that it affects the students' attitude towards the literary texts, be it positively or negatively.

c) *Familiar context*

The teachers were also asked, "Do you think it helps the students when the text introduces cultural aspects which are familiar to them?".

Table 7. Familiar context as contributing factor from teachers' point of view

Teachers' Comments
A) Existing knowledge causes the students to require less time to comprehend the text
B) Not much difference between the Western and the Asian culture.

Table 7 shows the teachers' comments on whether or not familiar context helps the students in learning literary texts. The findings show that both the teachers find familiarity to be significant, no matter in local and western literary texts.

Teacher A stated that, "*So by using something that are familiar to them would give them the opportunity to focus more... more on their literacy skill, without having them to struggle in comprehending the thing*", indicating that with the use of familiar context, the students have existing knowledge which will accelerate their comprehension process, and hence, focus more on literacy skills. This reveals that with unfamiliar context, there may be a delay in the students' comprehension as they struggle to decipher the unfamiliar context. Therefore, it will affect students' focus on literacy skills. In addition to that, Teacher B stated that, "*Because nowadays, you know, they can watch, like, a lot of things on television, on movies. So, I think...I mean, they are fam...somehow, they are familiar*", which indicates the familiarity to the context of literary text can be gained outside of the classroom. Nonetheless, the findings show that both the teachers acknowledge the familiarity of context to be a factor impactful enough for the students' attitude towards literary text, be it local or western.

d) *Proficiency in English*

Lastly, the teachers were also asked "Do you think the students always feel unmotivated to learn literature during literature lessons due to their weakness in English?".

Table 8. Proficiency in English as contributing factor from teachers' point of view

Teachers' Comments
A) Reluctance to participate due to low self-esteem
B) Weak students require extra classwork

Table 8 shows the teachers' comments on proficiency in English contributing to students' motivation to learn literature. The finding shows that the teachers agree students' proficiency contributes to students' attitude towards literary text.

According to Teacher A, *"If they are weak in English, it could be the main factor; you know? Because as the language is weak, they will feel reluctant to participate, contribute ideas during discussion, due to, you know, low self-esteem and self-confidence"*. This shows that the weakness in the language affects the students' contribution in class and hence, lowers their motivation to learn the literary text. This reveals that, for lower proficiency students, difficult or complex literary texts may cause them to participate less in the classroom due to inability to fully feel confident to analyse the literary text. Teacher B also supports the view that weak students may feel unmotivated during literature lessons as she revealed that *"But for the weak students, I think they have to do more. Maybe they can do the drama, you know, can, like, bring out first the...all the difficult vocabularies, or like tell them stories first, okay, and then, we have to relate...we have to tell them naturally. We have to, for example, like, we ...the teachers must have like extra work to do"*.

This indicates that there is more classwork to do and extra effort required from weaker students in order to comprehend the text and participate in class, which may make them feel unmotivated. The two teachers agreed that students' proficiency in English language contributes to the students' attitudes towards literary texts due to a few reasons such as low self-esteem, reluctance to participate in class activities as well as extra class work causing demotivation.

Generally, the students positively perceive the use of local literary texts. This finding is consistent with a study by Isa and Mahmud (2012); Engku et al. (2020); Mohamad et al. (2021); Yee et al. (2023) that students have a positive perspective towards the literary text selection of the first cycle that included local literary texts. The results also confirm that the students perceive positively the use of localised content and context for the learning of English simply because the texts aid and improve their English language skills. This corroborates the findings of Azmi et. al (2020), which stated that the teaching of literature develops students' English skills and encourages their critical thinking. Another finding by Barzani et. al (2021) also confirms that students positively perceive literary texts used for teaching English help them develop the four language skills. This is important as stated by Ghazali (2016), the most important criterion for text selection to be used in the English language literature component is

students' interest as the students come from different backgrounds, interests and abilities, thus, implies localised content should be considered to better suit students' perspectives and interest.

As for the difference in students' attitude towards the use of Malaysian literature in English as compared to Western Literature. It is found that the students have positive perspectives towards both local and literary texts, but in comparison, they have more positive perspectives towards local literary texts. This is consistent with the findings of Ghazali et. al (2016), which shows that majority of the students are inclined towards Malaysian literary texts in English due to it being more familiar and easier to understand. In comparing students' attitudes between local and western text, the results show that the students have a more positive attitude towards local text. This is consistent with the findings of Mohamad et al. (2021) and Yee et al. (2023) which stated that students' negative attitudes towards literature was due to cultural and religious clashes between the students' and the context in the texts. The results also imply that the current literary texts which only include western texts might not be in the best interest of the students. Although the students show acceptance of the western literary texts, they prefer the inclusion of local literary texts and localised content, which therefore, should not be removed from text selection. The results of the present study are in an agreement with a study conducted by Hosseinzadeh et al. (2021) which suggested that due to the dominance of Western content and nearly missing Eastern content in the ELT textbooks, there needs to be a balance of content localisation and foreign content.

The findings of this study confirm the contributing factors that influence their attitude towards literary texts are complexity of language, unknown cultural aspect, familiarity of context and language proficiency. The findings are consistent with the findings of Galloway (2011) which listed familiarity, proficiency, cultural factors and context as the factors influencing students' attitudes. Adding to that, Mustofa & Hill (2018) stated that cultural values create challenges for readers in interpreting the texts, especially of different cultures between the reader and the author. Mustofa & Hill (2018) also stated that in order to make appropriate interpretations of the text when there is difference of culture, the readers need to have a deep understanding of culture and the cultural implications mentioned in the texts. This could mean that the cultural difference between the West and the East could affect students' attitudes towards the literary texts when the students lack the understanding of the West's culture and cultural implications. This is similar to the findings of Afriani, Mirizon & Sitinjak (2019) which stated that the lack of background knowledge of the culture of the West could lead to pragmatic failure among the students, which leads to their finding that the teachers suggested for their local culture to be included in textbooks.

Besides unknown cultural aspect, the students stated that the complex language used in the literary texts affects their comprehension. This is in line with the findings by Tevdovska (2016), which stated that texts with serious linguistic difficulties are not recommendable to use as literary texts due to the possible unknown words or phrases which could hinder understanding of text. This result also implies that when the texts are linguistically difficult, the students could have a negative attitude towards the text. It is widely known that literary texts, especially poems, have complex language with underlying

meaning and complex vocabulary. As stated by Satinem, Juwati and Noermanzah (2020), poetry requires special understanding from the reader, and there exist difficulties for students to understand poetry as a whole. In addition to that, Mahmud et al. (2019) also mentioned that students perceive the Western literary text as challenging with perplexing lexicons, which made the students feel fear. Therefore, it is understandable that the students better perceive the local text to be used as literary text in the English language literature component. This is due to the complexities of language used in the western texts as compared to the simplified local text with simple vocabularies.

Another factor that contributes towards students' attitudes towards literary text found in this study is the familiarity of context. Both students and teachers stated that familiar context contributes to their positive attitudes towards literary texts. Moreover, familiarity of the topic or content activates students' content schema, which is the culture-centred background knowledge relating to topic familiarity, cultural knowledge, conventions as well as previous experience of the domains influences students' understanding of the passage. Hence, with the needed schema due to familiarity, their understanding of the text increases. Similar contributing factors were found in a study by Gopal and Mokhtar (2020) which conform to findings of the present study. The results and findings imply that the students could have a more positive attitude towards local literature as the content and contexts are more familiar to them as it activates the students' schemata.

Finally, the influence of language proficiency towards students' attitude towards literary texts implies that students' low proficiency in English could cause their negative perspective towards the high difficulty western text that does not match their proficiency level. This finding is similar to a study by Zulkefly and Razali (2019) which found that students' negative attitudes towards learning of English can be attributed to the lessons not catering to their proficiency level. This finding also aligns with the guideline for choosing literary texts by Pattiwael (2019), which stated that one of the points in the guideline is to consider students' proficiency level, where the text should not be beyond the students' proficiency level when it comes to vocabulary and idea. When the text is too difficult for the students, it can decrease students' reading fluency and text comprehension (Amendum et al., 2018; Muhammad et al, 2020). Therefore, considering the stated difficulties faced by students when the text does not match with their proficiency, it is understandable that language proficiency could contribute to their attitudes towards local and western literary texts.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite the students' acceptance of the current cycle of literary texts in the English language literature component, there might be a need for a change of literary texts to a more localised content and context that will better suit the students' needs and preferences. A total change of the literary texts included might not be necessary as western texts are still accepted generally, but inclusion of more local literary texts is suggested to match the students' level of proficiency, ease students' comprehension and attract the interests of the students. In addition, the Ministry of Education should take into consideration learners' familiarity, proficiency, cultural content and context aspects for future text selection. Although the students and the teachers only show slight negative attitudes and no

opposition towards the current literary texts, their perspectives and point of view matters to enhance the quality of education and improve the usefulness of literary text as teaching and learning component in the English subjects.

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