

The Impact of Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) in Enhancing English Proficiency: Teachers' Perspectives

(Kesan Sastera Kanak-Kanak Kontemporari (CCL) dalam Meningkatkan Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris: Perspektif Guru-Guru)

AINUL AISHAH BINTI AWANG & AZLINA BINTI ABDUL AZIZ

ABSTRACT

The integration of Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) is a promising avenue for elevating English proficiency among upper primary students. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate primary school teachers' perceptions of the impact of CCL in ESL classrooms. A mixed-method research approach that adopted a case study was employed in this study. The respondents were 72 primary school English teachers from Year 4 to Year 6 teaching in urban schools in Tawau district in Sabah, Malaysia, who were selected using purposive sampling, while interviewees were selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven volunteer teachers. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to analyze the quantitative data, and thematic analysis via Atlas.ti was used for qualitative data. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents perceived the effectiveness of using CCL in enhancing English proficiency. The impact of CCL can be observed on student engagement, alignment with curriculum goals, enhancement of multiple language skills, and overall impact of CCL on teaching and learning. This study underscores the potential of CCL to advance ESL education and contributes to actionable insights into the evolution of the English curriculum in Malaysia.

Keywords: Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL), Teachers' Perspective, English proficiency, English as a Second Language (ESL), Primary School

ABSTRAK

Pengintegrasian Kesusasteraan Kanak-Kanak Kontemporari (CCL) adalah satu pendekatan yang memberikan harapan dalam meningkatkan kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar sekolah rendah atas. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat persepsi guru sekolah rendah terhadap kesan CCL dalam bilik darjah Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL). Pendekatan penyelidikan campuran yang mengambil kajian kes telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Responden adalah 72 orang guru Bahasa Inggeris sekolah rendah dari Tahun 4 hingga Tahun 6 yang mengajar di sekolah bandar di daerah Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia, yang dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan, manakala responden yang di temubual dipilih menggunakan persampelan mudah. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan soal selidik, dan temu bual separa berstruktur telah dijalankan dengan tujuh orang guru sukarelawan. Statistik deskriptif (frekuensi dan peratusan) digunakan untuk menganalisis data kuantitatif, dan analisis tematik melalui Atlas.ti digunakan untuk data kualitatif. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa majoriti responden menganggap keberkesanan menggunakan CCL dalam meningkatkan kecekapan Bahasa Inggeris. Kesan CCL dapat dilihat dalam penglibatan pelajar, keselarasan dengan matlamat kurikulum, penambahbaikan pelbagai kemahiran bahasa, dan impak keseluruhan CCL terhadap pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Kajian ini menegaskan potensi CCL untuk memajukan pendidikan ESL dan menyumbang kepada pandangan yang boleh diambil tindakan dalam evolusi kurikulum Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Sastera Kanak-Kanak Kontemporari (CCL), Perspektif Guru, Kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris, Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL), Sekolah Rendah

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) initiated the Children's Contemporary Literature (CCL) Programme in 2003, progressively integrating it into the primary English Language syllabus from Year 4 to Year 6. The primary aim of this initiative is to improve English language teaching through the introduction of children's literature storybooks (Basree 2009). Additionally, the programme aims to enhance English proficiency, provide continuity with secondary school literature components, and create an enjoyable learning environment (Curriculum Development Centre 2003). Integrated into Language Arts lessons, the CCL component exposes students to various literary genres, including poems, short stories, and graphic novels. This aligns with national education goals, emphasizing language improvement, cultural appreciation, and exposure to exemplary writing models (Malaysian Ministry of Education 2009).

The benefits of teaching literature to ESL learners are well-documented. Literature provides exposure to authentic language use, enriches vocabulary, and promotes critical thinking (Collie & Slater 2011; Ghosn 2002). According to Lazar (1993), using literature in language classes offers several advantages. It promotes language acquisition through meaningful and memorable contexts, motivates learners by bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world, and provides access to the cultural background of the target language. Additionally, it enhances learners' language awareness, fosters their interpretive and analytical skills, and engages their imagination (Hill 1986; Zaker 2016). Literature also teaches learners to be more effective communicators by providing numerous examples of real-world language usage. Studies have demonstrated that teaching literature enhances language proficiency and literacy skills among students (Rahimipour 2019; Ghani & Aziz 2023). Recognizing these benefits, the MoE strategically decided to incorporate CCL into the primary school curriculum. This decision is grounded in the understanding that CCL can significantly enhance English proficiency by providing students with high-quality, age-appropriate literature that is both educational and entertaining. By integrating CCL, the MoE aims to create a more dynamic and effective language learning environment, supporting students in achieving higher levels of English proficiency and better preparing them for future academic and professional endeavours.

Theoretical frameworks like the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky), Input Hypothesis (Krashen), and

Swain's Output Hypothesis guide incorporating literature into ESL instruction (Wass & Golding 2014; Krahnke 1983; Izumi & Bigelow 2000). In children's literature teaching, the ZPD helps determine suitable materials and activities, tailored to individual student needs. Krashen's Input Hypothesis suggests language acquisition happens with comprehensible input which is slightly challenging but understandable (Krahnke 1983). It implies exposing children to varied literature can aid language acquisition. Swain's theory proposes language proficiency improves through producing language, not just understanding it (Izumi & Bigelow 2000). In children's literature teaching, this means engaging them in activities like discussions or retelling stories foster language development. These theories emphasize scaffolding learning, providing comprehensible input, and promoting language production to enhance language acquisition and development.

Carter and Long (1991) suggested that there are three models for teaching literature to ESL learners which are the Cultural Model, the Language Model and the Personal Growth Model. These models explain the use of literature in classroom practise. In this study, the Language Model is the most relevant model for teaching literature to ESL learners. The Language Model, among others, is widely used for teaching literature to ESL learners, focusing on language proficiency enhancement through literary texts (Carter & Long 1991; Lazar 1999). This approach emphasizes linguistic features, language awareness, and language practice within the context of literature (Suliman et al. 2019; Dhillon & Mogan 2014). Lazar (1999) stated that a language-based approach to using literature would include techniques and procedures, which are concerned mainly with the study of the literary text itself. Thus, students are equipped with the tools they need to interpret a text and to be able to make competent critical judgments of it.

English language proficiency is a crucial skill in today's globalized world, with significant implications for academic success, professional growth, and cross-cultural communication. The Primary English Curriculum of 2011 aims to equip primary school pupils in Malaysia with fundamental language skills to effectively communicate in various appropriate contexts (Malaysian Education Ministry 2010). This highlights the importance of improving English proficiency among students in Malaysian primary schools, where English is taught as a second language. On average, Malaysians receive 14 to 15 years of English language education from preschool to tertiary levels (Azman 2016). However, many students continue to face challenges within language proficiency, particularly at the primary school level. Research has

shown that second language learners encounter difficulties and complexities in speaking English (Nijat et al. 2019), and a significant percentage of children between the ages of 10 to 14 lack interest in reading (Yusof 2010). Despite the emphasis on language skills in the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR), innovative and engaging teaching methods are still necessary to ensure sustained student motivation and effective language skill development.

In this regard, the integration of CCL emerges as a potential approach to enhancing English proficiency among primary school students. However, the successful implementation of this approach heavily relies on teachers' perceptions and attitudes as key agents in the teaching and learning process. Teachers' perspectives are crucial to the success of using literature in language teaching, as their beliefs shape the classroom environment and practices. Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly examine how teachers perceive and approach the use of CCL in ESL classrooms in Malaysian primary schools, and how their attitudes may influence the acceptance and implementation of this approach.

The CCL has emerged as a potential pedagogical tool to address this need, offering engaging narratives that can captivate young learners' attention while fostering language development. However, the constant focus on exam-driven learning in Malaysian schools often pushes subjects and teaching methods that do not directly relate to exam results to the edges. The prevalent sentiment, rooted in an exam-centric education system, tends to downplay the significance of CCL, attributing it to being academically non-essential (Ling & Cheng 2016). Malaysia's rigorous focus on standardised testing and high-stakes exams places subjects like literature in a precarious position, as they are often perceived as less "practical" in comparison to subjects with direct applicability to exams, such as mathematics or science. This perspective, however, underestimates the profound cognitive and holistic benefits that literature can offer, including critical thinking, empathy, and creative expression (Ab Rashid et al. 2010). In addition, the pressure placed on educators to prioritise exam results can result in the marginalisation of teaching methods that foster these broader skills. As teachers strive to meet exam-related expectations, subjects that do not directly contribute to these outcomes can find themselves allocated less classroom time. This is supported by Pelletier et al. (2002) discovery that teachers' decisions about which teaching approach to use are influenced by the amount of time allotted for the lesson.

While studies investigating the incorporation of literature-based teaching approaches to bolster English proficiency are abundant, most of the existing research focuses on secondary school students (Haja Mohaideen et al. 2020; Singh et al. 2020; Hassan et al. 2020; Pillai et al.

2016; Othman et al. 2015; Kaur & Mahmor 2014; Ab. Rashid et al. 2010; Sidhu, Chan & Kaur 2010; Ghazali et al. 2009; Hwang & Embi 2007) and higher education (Sivapalan & Subramaniam 2008; Baba 2022). This leaves a notable void in understanding how such approaches can be optimally employed within the context of upper primary ESL classrooms in Malaysia. Consequently, there is a lack of substantial research on literature-based pedagogies tailored for primary schools in Malaysia.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to this field of research by investigating the perceptions of primary school English language teachers towards the use of literature in English language classrooms. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the success of literature-based teaching approaches in the Malaysian context, with the hope that its findings will guide teacher professional development and the enhancement of ESL teaching strategies at the primary school level. By addressing the research question, the study seeks to gain insights into the efficacy of children's literature as a pedagogical tool and identify potential areas for improvement and support in implementing literature-based approaches in ESL classrooms:

What are the perceptions of upper primary school English language teachers in Tawau district regarding the impact of CCL in the English language classroom to enhance English proficiency?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews within a case study framework. Mixed-method research integrates qualitative and quantitative strands to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). The case study methodology, chosen for its suitability in deeply exploring complex phenomena, aligns well with the study's aims (Cope 2015). The research involved 72 primary school teachers from 28 urban primary schools in the Tawau district of Sabah, teaching English to upper primary pupils aged 10 to 12, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling method helps ensure coherence within the study's context (Obilor 2023). The majority of the participants had experience using CCL in their English classrooms, indicating familiarity with the curriculum. Additionally, seven teachers were interviewed using convenient sampling until data saturation was reached.

The survey, adapted and adopted from Mohaideen et al. (2020) and validated by experienced teachers, investigated primary school teachers' perceptions of using

CCL to improve English proficiency in ESL classes. It comprised demographic questions (Section A) and questions on CCL’s effectiveness (Section B), rated on a 4-point Likert scale without a neutral option to avoid ambiguity (Nowlis et al. 2002). Interviews, guided by 14 questions, aimed to explore teachers’ perceptions of CCL’s effectiveness in English classrooms (Fallon 2008). Data collection utilized Google Forms for electronic data gathering, eliminating the need for paper-based surveys and manual entry (Wiemken et al. 2018; Mondal et al. 2019). Respondents completed consent forms, ensuring ethical standards, and survey links were disseminated through school headmasters for accessibility. Responses were managed via email. Interviews were audio-recorded

for accuracy (Yin 2014). Survey responses underwent descriptive statistical analysis, while interview data were thematically organized using ATLAS.ti software (Arkelin 2014; Friese 2019). Main themes were identified through constant comparison and refinement in line with the study’s research question.

FINDINGS

The results highlight the potential influence of CCL on teaching and learning in ESL classrooms and show how primary school teachers view CCL’s efficacy in improving upper primary students’ English proficiency.



FIGURE 1. Percentages and frequencies of respondents based on (a) age, (b) gender, (c) educational qualifications, and (d) experience in teaching English literature

Figure 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) show the demographic profile of respondents. The age distribution indicates a predominantly mature group, with 38.9% aged 40 to 49 and 31.9% aged 50 and above. Participants in the 30-39 age range make up 25%, while those aged 20-29 represent the smallest portion at 4.2%. The majority of respondents are female (81.9%), indicating a female-dominated teaching environment. Regarding educational qualifications, 73.6% hold a bachelor’s degree, 13.9% have a Master’s degree, and 9.7% possess a Diploma in Education. The least represented group holds SPM/STPM qualifications (2.8%), indicating that the vast majority of the teachers

have higher educational qualifications. This could lead to a more informed and nuanced perspective on the implementation and impact of CCL in enhancing English proficiency. The absence of respondents holding a PhD indicates that the study may have limited access to highly specialised academic perspectives. However, it is expected that the practical and classroom-based experiences of the teachers will be prominently highlighted.

In terms of teaching experience in English literature, the largest group of respondents (41.7%) has 16-20 years of experience, indicating a strong familiarity with literature education. This extensive experience suggests that these

teachers are likely to provide deep insights into the long-term impacts and effectiveness of CCL in the curriculum. The significant representation of teachers with 6-10 years (23.6%) and 11-15 years (18.1%) of experience further adds to the richness of the data, offering perspectives from educators who have substantial but varying lengths of engagement with literature teaching. The smaller groups of teachers with less experience in literature teaching—11.1% having less than 3 years and 5.6% having 3-5 years—are also valuable. Their insights can highlight the challenges and learning curves faced by newer teachers

in adapting to and integrating CCL into their teaching practices. These teachers' perspectives can provide a contrast to those of more experienced educators, offering a comprehensive view of the programme's implementation across different stages of professional development.

Drawing from the collected data, the study identified key factors, according to teachers, that contribute to the effectiveness of CCL in improving students' English proficiency. The survey items were categorised based on themes that are closely aligned with the research objective, providing a focused approach to assessing the responses.

TABLE 1. Student Engagement and Interaction

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B1	Students actively participate in the process of understanding the meaning of texts	72	0% (0)	6.9% (5)	86.1% (62)	6.9% (5)	3.0	0.38
B2	Students are encouraged to collaborate with their peers in order to analyse and understand the literary texts.	72	0% (0)	11.1% (8)	84.7% (61)	4.2% (3)	2.93	0.39

S.D= Standard Deviation

Table 1 examines how CCL impacts student engagement and collaborative learning. From the 72 responses, there is a strong agreement regarding students' active involvement in understanding texts. A vast majority of 86.1% of participants agreed, while an additional 6.9% strongly supported it, with none expressing strong disagreement. This is supported by the mean response score of 3.0, indicating a consistent belief in students' active engagement in learning, accompanied by a low standard deviation of 0.38. This finding is consistent with those from the interviews. Teacher 1 stated that *"Using the books like poems, stories and comics in class is enjoyable and engaging for my students."* and Teacher 7 mentioned, *"Pupils love to do prediction task on what will happen next in the story. They shared their ideas with friends in the classroom."* When asked about promoting collaborative work among peers in analyzing literary texts, a significant majority of 84.7% agreed, and 4.2% strongly agreed. Although the mean score for this question was slightly

lower at 2.93, the standard deviation remained similar at 0.39. In the interview, Teacher 1 stated that *"Students are able to have better comprehension and answer with confidence when I use CCL in class."* whereas Teacher 3 stated that *"I usually incorporate interactive activities such as projects, presentations, or group activities with my students just to get them going."*

The quantitative data, supported by the qualitative insights from teacher interviews, consistently demonstrate that CCL significantly enhances both student engagement and collaborative learning. The survey results, which show high agreement percentages and low standard deviations, are supported by teachers' qualitative observations. These observations offer a more comprehensive understanding of the practical implementation and perception of CCL methodologies in classroom settings. The combination of different types of data enhances the reliability of the results, demonstrating the beneficial effect of CCL on students' learning experiences.

TABLE 2. Comprehensive Language Development

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B3	The texts recommended in CCL have the capability to improve multiple language skills in students.	72	0% (0)	6.9% (5)	86.1% (62)	6.9% (5)	3.01	0.36
B5	The texts recommended in CCL help teachers stimulate the use of the target language.	72	0% (0)	8.3% (6)	80.6% (58)	11.1% (8)	3.03	0.44

S.D= Standard Deviation

The first question in Table 2 looks at how CCL can improve different language skills, and teachers mostly agree on this. About 93% of teachers (86.1% agreeing and 6.9% strongly agreeing) support this idea. The average score is 3.01, showing that most teachers believe in CCL's effectiveness. One teacher mentioned how students "actively participate in understanding texts," while another said "students collaborate with peers" when analyzing texts. This is consistent with the findings from the interviews. Teacher 3 stated that "Using CCL helps with language exposure and immersion...enhances reading comprehension skills." whereas Teacher 5 mentioned that "I believe that using CCL can improve my kids' language skills. Especially in developing their vocabulary."

Similarly, when the respondents were asked about CCL's role in encouraging the use of the target language, 91.7% saw it positively (80.6% agreeing and 11.1% strongly agreeing). The average score here is slightly higher at 3.03, with a standard deviation of 0.44. There were no strong disagreements, suggesting a general agreement on integrating CCL in ESL classrooms. Using CCL in English classrooms encourages students to use the target language. Teacher 7 stated that "Pupils love to make predictions

about what will happen next in the story. They shared their ideas with friends in the classroom." When Teacher 5 reflected on her experience using CCL in her English classes, she noticed that "...especially if interesting words occur in the text and relate to their daily lives. They will repeat the same words to their friends in the classroom throughout the whole lesson." Teacher 3 elaborated in her interview that "Reading books exposes students to a variety of vocabulary, sentence structures, and language patterns... Furthermore, it also enhances reading comprehension skills." whereas Teacher 7 claimed that "...after a lot of lessons using the graphic novel, I have seen improvement in reading, speaking, and listening skills. They read for understanding, they start to speak up and listen during group discussion." The findings from the two items revealed that CCL activities, such as group discussions and role-playing, significantly contribute to the use of the target language, fostering overall language development. The emphasis on sharing ideas, discussing texts, and completing prediction tasks demonstrates how CCL encourages students to use the target language more effectively and confidently.

TABLE 3. Alignment with Teaching Objectives

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B6	The recommended texts used support the teaching objectives of the teacher.	72	0% (0)	8.3% (6)	80.6% (58)	11.1% (8)	3.03	0.44

S.D= Standard Deviation

Table 3 shows how well CCL aligns with teaching objectives. Nearly the same proportion of teachers (91.7%) expressed agreement or strong agreement that these texts effectively supported their teaching objectives. This was additionally reinforced by a mean score of 3.03 and a standard deviation of 0.44. During the interviews, teachers observed that CCL texts promote important language skills such as reading comprehension and speaking. Teacher 1 stated that "Children are able to have better comprehension and answer with confidence when I use CCL in class," highlighting the role of CCL in promoting reading comprehension and speaking skills. Teacher 3 specifically mentioned that engaging activities based on CCL materials

improve students' language proficiency, "Reading comprehension is also another skill... Students read a chapter or a short story and participate in guided discussions about the main ideas, characters, and plot." In addition, Teacher 5 stated that "I believe that my children's reading skills have improved a lot since we always did read aloud sessions together... their pronunciations have also improved a lot." Overall, the findings presented here strongly support the use of CCL as an effective resource in ESL education, emphasising its perceived value in supporting teaching objectives and facilitating lessons.

TABLE 4. Suitability of CCL Content

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B8	The content of the recommended texts provided by the Ministry can be understood on its own without any help from supplementary materials.	72	1.4% (1)	29.2% (22)	66.7% (48)	2.8% (2)	2.71	0.54
B9	The content of the recommended texts provided by the Ministry is culturally acceptable and appropriate.	72	0% (0)	8.3% (6)	83.3% (60)	8.3% (6)	3.0	0.41

S.D= Standard Deviation

Table 4 shows teachers' views on the CCL content for ESL classes. A significant majority of teachers, specifically 66.7%, agreed and a smaller percentage of 2.8% strongly agreed that the recommended texts can be comprehended without the need for additional materials in B8. It is important to mention that the mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.54 suggest a small amount of variation in their responses. Based on the interviews, it was found that certain texts were easy to understand and relatable, while others, particularly those that were not based in a familiar cultural context, required additional support, such as teacher-led discussions and multimedia aids, to help with comprehension. Teacher 4 noted that challenges with language levels for remedial students, suggesting some texts are more accessible than others, "Yes, the graphic novel, for example, has a higher level of English for my remedial, so we usually discuss the front cover first, and I have to do the reading—read-aloud or shared reading."

Finally, regarding the cultural acceptability and suitability of the content in B9, a significant majority (91.6%) found them to be suitable, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.0 and a standard deviation of 0.41. Teachers in

the interviews highlighted this by discussing the significance of students being able to connect with and learn from the moral and cultural elements depicted in the stories. Teacher 5 reflected on the cultural and moral connections students make with CCL materials, "Well, I love doing *The Jungle Book* with the kids and I know they love it too. I can see they enjoyed during the reading time... They kept repeating the characters' names that sound interesting to them." whereas Teacher 7 claimed that "They can learn moral value gained from the story. For example, in *Jungle Book*, they need to overcome their fear in order to achieve." Teachers observe that CCL materials like poems and graphic novels captivate students, fostering a strong interest in literature. While some texts are easily comprehensible and relatable, enhancing students' English language skills, others, especially those outside students' cultural contexts, may require additional teacher support for full comprehension. Finally, the cultural acceptability and suitability of CCL content, as highlighted by teachers, affirm the value of integrating these materials into ESL classrooms to promote cultural understanding and moral learning alongside language development.

TABLE 5. Effectiveness of Foreign and Local Texts

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B10	The teaching and learning process can be made more effective with the use of local texts.	72	0% (0)	4.2% (3)	65.3% (47)	30.6% (22)	3.26	0.53
B11	The teaching and learning process can be made more effective with the use of foreign texts.	72	2.8% (2)	36.1% (26)	59.7% (43)	1.4% (1)	2.60	0.57
B12	The cultural context or origin of a literary text does not affect the students' understanding of the item.	72	4.2% (3)	26.4% (19)	66.7% (48)	2.8% (2)	2.68	0.60

S.D= Standard Deviation

In Table 5, items B10 - B12, aimed to understand teachers' feelings about using local or foreign literary texts in primary school literature classes. The responses from 72 teachers showed clear preferences and views. Item B10 highlighted a strong preference for local texts, with 95.9% of teachers agreeing that they're more effective for teaching and learning. Interviews showed teachers appreciate how local texts relate to students' lives, making learning easier. On the other hand, opinions on foreign texts varied. While 61.1% of teachers found them effective, 38.9% disagreed. Interviews revealed that foreign texts introduce diverse

languages and cultures but may need extra explanation. Regarding how a text's culture affects understanding, 69.5% of teachers didn't see it as a big issue, but 30.6% disagreed. Interviews noted that while culture matters, what really helps students understand are the story's themes and ideas. Overall, teachers see value in both local and foreign texts for language learning, but they recognize the challenges of teaching from different cultural backgrounds. They prefer texts that connect with students' lives but also see the benefits of exposing them to other cultures with proper support.

TABLE 6. CCL as Meaningful and Enjoyable Materials

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B7	The content of the recommended texts provided by the Ministry can instill further interest in literature.	72	0% (0)	11.1% (8)	81.9% (59)	6.9% (5)	2.96	0.43
B13	The recommended texts and materials provided by the Ministry of Education are meaningful.	72	0% (0)	5.6% (4)	84.7% (61)	9.7% (7)	3.04	0.40
B14	The recommended texts and materials provided by the Ministry of Education are enjoyable for students.	72	0% (0)	9.7% (7)	83.3% (60)	6.9% (5)	2.97	0.41

S.D= Standard Deviation

The results from Table 6 shows that most teachers had a positive view. Around 81.9% of teachers agreed, and 6.9% strongly agreed that the suggested texts make students more interested in literature. The mean score was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 0.43, showing general agreement. Teachers have observed that CCL materials, such as poems and graphic novels, are extremely captivating and effectively hold students' interest. This is in line with the interviews with the teachers. Teacher 7 claimed that "Pupils love to do prediction task on whats will happen next in the story. They shared their ideas with friends in the classroom," reflecting how CCL materials like stories engage and generate interest among students. Another evidence is from Teacher 4 stated that "My pupils enjoy doing poems in class because the topics vary and we always have fun activities in class," highlighting the captivating nature of poems and their effectiveness in holding students' interest.

A considerable majority (94.4%) agreed that the Ministry of Education's materials were meaningful, with an average score of 3.04 and a standard deviation of 0.40, indicating strong agreement. This is parallel with the

findings in the interviews when Teacher 2 stated that "They just enjoy the process without needing to think about any comprehension questions", implied the meaningful engagement of students with CCL through active participation. Teacher 7 also expressed the same view that "Pupils love to do prediction tasks on what will happen next in the story. They shared their ideas with friends in the classroom," showcasing the meaningfulness of CCL materials in fostering engagement and comprehension.

Similarly, 90.2% of teachers found the resources enjoyable, with an average score of 2.97 and a standard deviation of 0.41, suggesting that teachers perceive these materials as engaging for students. Teacher 1 stated that "CCL materials are engaging," and Teacher 3 concurred, saying that "CCL materials increase motivation and engagement, which can positively impact language acquisition and retention." These statements were based on the findings from the interviews. Overall, teachers strongly believed in the effectiveness of CCL, seeing it not only as educational tools but also as an enhancer of students' literary experience in ESL learning contexts.

TABLE 7. Effectiveness of CCL for Diverse Proficiency Levels

No.	Item	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Score	S.D
B18	The recommended texts and materials provided by the Ministry of Education are effective in catering to students of mixed proficiencies.	72	0% (0)	12.5% (9)	76.4% (55)	11.1% (8)	2.99	0.49

S.D= Standard Deviation

Table 7 shows that most respondents, around 87.5%, believed the recommended texts and materials worked well for students with different English levels. This agreement was strong, with 76.4% agreeing and 11.1% strongly agreeing, giving an average score of 2.99. While there was some disagreement (12.5%), it wasn't a big part. The slight variation in responses, shown by the standard deviation of 0.49, suggests some differences in opinions. This is evident in the interview, where Teacher 1 stated that *"Their [lower achievement students'] listening results in assessment carried out by using classroom-based assessment definitely showed improvement."* In addition, Teachers 2 discussed the universal appeal and adaptability of poems by stating, *"My students really enjoy reading poems especially rhyming poems. It is fun for them and it's incredible that they can memorize it in a short amount of time."* This demonstrates that poems, as a form of CCL, are effective and enjoyable for students across different proficiency

levels. Teacher 4 went on to say *"Yes, the novel for example has higher level of English for my remedial so we usually discuss the front cover first and I have to do the reading; read-aloud or shared reading. It takes a lot of time! Graphic novel is easier because of its comic features so it helps pupils learn the content."* This directly supports the notion that CCL materials need to be adapted for lower proficiency students but are effective in engaging a wide range of learners. Teacher 5 provided insight into the impact of CCL on student engagement and confidence, stating, *"I believe that my children's reading skills have improved significantly since we always did read aloud sessions together. They were more confident in reading."* This indicates that CCL not only meets the diverse needs of learners but also boosts their confidence and skills in English, regardless of their starting proficiency level. It is consistent with the engagement and confidence that students demonstrate, regardless of their initial proficiency in the language.

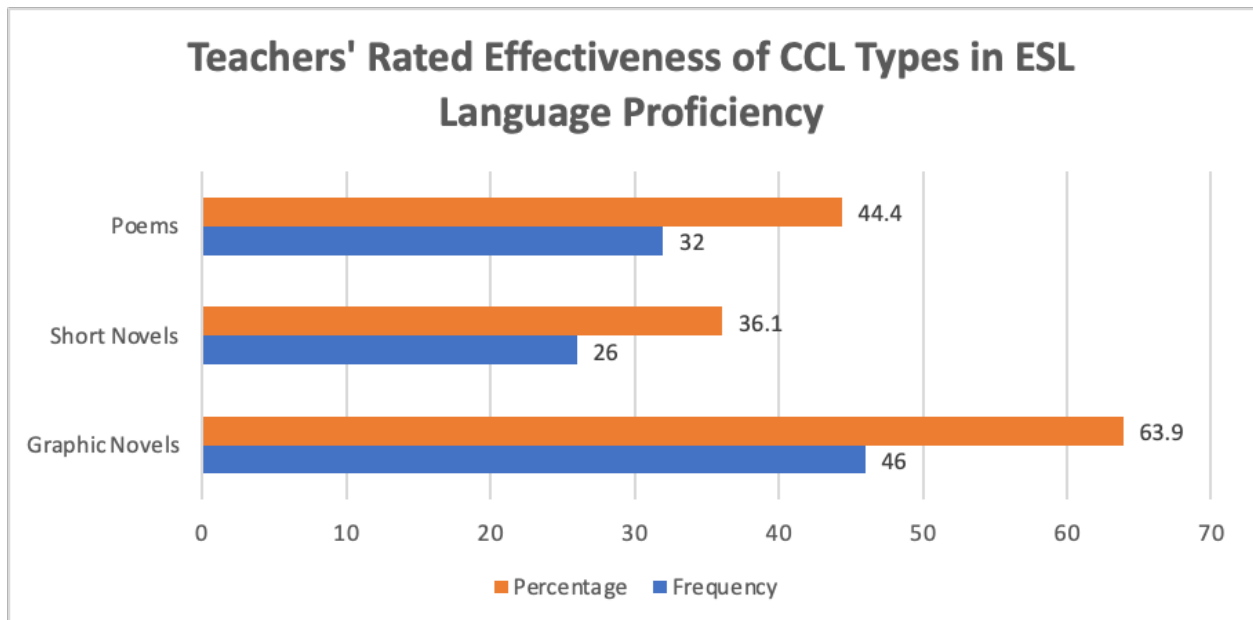


FIGURE 2. Effectiveness of CCL Types

The data presented in Figure 2 indicates a clear preference for graphic novels, which 46 teachers, representing 63.9% of the total, consider to be the most effective. For instance, Teacher 4 mentioned that *“Graphic novels are much easier for my students to grasp because of the visual elements. The comic features really help them understand the content better and keep them engaged.”* Similarly, Teacher 6 noted, *“My students are more motivated to read when they see graphic novels. The illustrations make it fun and less intimidating for those who struggle with traditional texts.”* Teacher 9 added that *“Using graphic novels has significantly improved my students’ comprehension skills. The combination of text and visuals helps them make connections and retain information more effectively.”* Teacher 12 emphasized the diverse learning styles catered to by graphic novels, stating, *“I find that graphic novels cater to diverse learning styles. Visual learners, in particular, benefit greatly from the detailed illustrations, which enhance their understanding of the story.”* Additionally, Teacher 15 observed, *“Graphic novels are a great tool for reluctant readers. The engaging format encourages them to read more and discuss the stories with their peers, which promotes collaborative learning.”*

Poems are also favoured by a significant portion of the respondents, with 32 teachers, or 44.4%, recognizing their value in language learning. Based on the interviews, Teacher 2 provided insight into the appeal of poems, *“My students really enjoy reading poems especially rhyming poems. It is fun for them and it’s incredible that they can memorize it in a short amount of time”*. In addition, Teacher 5 also expressed the same view regarding the value of poems in language learning. She stated that *“My students really enjoy reading poems especially rhyming poems.”* While 36.1% of teachers consider short novels to be effective, interviews indicate that there are certain challenges. This aligns with what was discovered during the interviews. Teacher 5 specifically mentioned that *“Yes, the novel for example has higher level of English for my remedial so we usually discuss the front cover first and I have to do the reading; read-aloud or shared reading,”* reflecting on the need for additional support when using short novels in class, which corresponds to the observation that novels may be less accessible for some students. This suggests that some students may face greater difficulty accessing these novels.

In conclusion, the quantitative data clearly demonstrates a strong preference for graphic novels among teachers, with 63.9% considering them the most effective. The qualitative data supports this finding, as it offers specific explanations for this preference, including the visual components, interactive structure, and adaptability to various learning styles, as emphasised by Teachers 4, 6, 9,

12, and 15. Furthermore, the substantial inclination towards poems (44.4%) is corroborated by qualitative feedback from Teachers 2 and 5, who highlight the pleasure and ease of remembering poems for students.

However, the lower preference for short novels (36.1%) is extended by qualitative data, revealing specific challenges. Teacher 5’s observation about the higher language level required for short novels and the need for additional support activities, such as read-aloud sessions, highlights why these materials may be less favored. This qualitative data not only corroborates the quantitative findings but also provides a deeper understanding of the nuances in teachers’ preferences and the practical difficulties encountered in using different CCL materials in the classroom. Thus, the qualitative data supports the quantitative results and extends the understanding of teachers’ preferences by providing context and detail about the practical applications and challenges of using various CCL materials.

DISCUSSION

The research aimed to investigate teachers’ perceptions of the impact of Contemporary Children’s Literature (CCL) in enhancing English proficiency among primary learners.

THE IMPACT OF CCL ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTION

A significant 86.1% of teachers observed an improvement in student engagement and collaborative learning through CCL. This aligns with the work of Sylvester and Aziz (2022) and Kebede and Milkite (2021), who highlight the motivational benefits of children’s literature. Teachers’ observations suggest that CCL not only facilitates language learning but also enriches the overall educational experience through active participation, a vital component in language acquisition. According to Hill (1986), students who are actively involved in the learning process are more likely to form a deeper connection with the material, which in turn improves comprehension and retention. The collaborative aspect of learning through CCL is consistent with the social constructivist approach to education, which holds that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, as cited in Wass & Golding 2014). The dual advantages of CCL in improving language abilities and enriching the educational experience demonstrate its comprehensive impact on learning. When students are motivated and engaged, they are more open to learning and more likely to take risks with language, which is essential for language development (Krashen 1983). Active participation in literary discussions

and group activities centred on CCL texts can foster a sense of agency and ownership over the learning process, which is invaluable for ESL learners (Izumi & Bigelow 2000). Furthermore, the engagement and collaborative learning fostered by CCL are consistent with current pedagogical approaches that promote interactive and communicative classrooms. Teachers can create a learning environment that encourages not only language acquisition but also critical thinking, creativity, and social skills by incorporating CCL into the curriculum (Savvidou 2004; Duff & Maley 1990).

THE IMPACT OF CCL ON COMPREHENSIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

A strong consensus among teachers indicates that CCL significantly enhances multiple language skills, including speaking and listening, with 93% of teachers agreeing on its effectiveness. This observation is supported by studies conducted by Victorovna (2021) and Gürsoy (2010), which substantiate the effectiveness of literature in language practice. The teachers' perceptions align with pedagogical frameworks advocating for diverse language exposure, which is crucial for language skill development in ESL settings. Exposure to various narrative voices, vocabularies, and linguistic structures in CCL materials pushes students to interact with the language actively, progressing from simple understanding to practical use in speaking and listening situations. This exposure offers numerous benefits such as enhancing vocabulary acquisition, improving pronunciation through phonetic exposure, and providing contextual understanding that supports language comprehension and usage. Furthermore, CCL's emphasis on authentic language use provides students with realistic and relatable language scenarios, as opposed to the artificial constructs found in language textbooks. This authenticity in language presentation not only aids in comprehension but also fosters students' confidence in using English in real-life situations, thereby improving their communicative competence. Collie and Slater (2011) highlight the value of authentic literary texts in ESL education, providing a natural context for language learning that is rich in cultural and linguistic content. This is further supported by Ghosn (2002), who underscores the importance of using children's literature to offer a motivating and meaningful learning environment, thereby enhancing vocabulary development and fostering academic literacy. Moreover, Hill (1986) notes that exposure to the varied language in literature helps learners expand their vocabulary and improves their overall language proficiency, contributing to their ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations.

THE IMPACT OF CCL ALIGNMENT WITH TEACHING OBJECTIVES

Regarding curriculum alignment, 90.3% of teachers found that CCL effectively integrates with targeted language objective achievements. This echoes Collie and Slater's (2011) views on the synergy between literature and educational systems. Teachers perceive CCL as a bridge between traditional language instruction and contemporary educational needs, enhancing the language learning process. The perception of CCL as a bridge between traditional language instruction and modern educational needs suggests a recognition of the evolving dynamics within ESL classrooms. By integrating CCL, educators can create a meaningful and motivating context, as suggested by Ghosn (2002), to enhance academic literacy and critical thinking skills. The narrative structures, varied language, and thematic richness inherent in literature are consistent with what Hill (1986) identifies as a means of improving overall language proficiency by providing real-world language usage examples that traditional language lessons may lack. CCL's effectiveness in curriculum alignment helps with language development and also supports broader educational goals of promoting critical thinking and analytical skills (Khatib & Shakouri 2013). By engaging with literature, students are exposed to diverse linguistic styles and are challenged to think more deeply about language and its uses, enhancing their interpretive abilities as suggested by Lazar (1993). The fact that CCL can be successfully incorporated into language learning objectives supports the idea that literature is an effective means of promoting language awareness and proficiency and validates the crucial role literature plays in language acquisition and cognitive development (Kelly 1996).

THE IMPACT OF THE SUITABILITY OF CCL CONTENT

Teachers identified various forms of CCL, such as graphic novels, poems, and short novels, as effective tools for language learning. Among these, graphic novels were significantly preferred by 63.9% of teachers. The qualitative data support this preference, highlighting the engaging and accessible nature of graphic novels, which cater to diverse learning styles and help students grasp content more easily. This suggests that the suitability of CCL content is an important factor in its effectiveness. The distinct preference for graphic novels is consistent with the visual and textual synergy that these novels offer, which can be especially engaging for young learners (Graham et al. 2021). Ghosn (2002) emphasizes the importance of literature in promoting academic literacy and vocabulary development,

demonstrating that the richness of language and storytelling inherent in CCL can significantly expand a student's linguistic repertoire. The effectiveness of CCL in language teaching extends beyond traditional methods by integrating cultural relevance and literary quality into the curriculum. This helps students meet their language goals and gives them a more well-rounded learning experience.

THE IMPACT OF FOREIGN AND LOCAL TEXTS IN CCL

Teachers' experiences suggest that exposure to a variety of texts enriches the language learning experience and helps in developing academic literacy and vocabulary, as supported by Ghosn (2002) and Graham et al. (2021). The inclusion of foreign texts introduces students to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, broadening their understanding of language use in different settings. This diversity not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters cultural awareness and sensitivity, which are essential components of global citizenship. This diversity not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters cultural awareness and sensitivity, which are essential components of global citizenship (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1993). On the other hand, local texts provide students with relatable content and familiar contexts, which can boost their confidence and motivation to read and engage with the material. When students see their own experiences and cultural backgrounds reflected in the texts, it validates their identities and encourages them to participate more actively in the learning process (Cummins 2001). This relevance to their own lives makes the learning experience more meaningful and impactful (Freire 1970).

THE IMPACT OF CCL AS MEANINGFUL AND ENJOYABLE MATERIALS

The motivational benefits of CCL are evident from teachers' observations that students find literature engaging and enjoyable. This enjoyment and engagement are crucial for fostering a positive learning environment where students are more likely to participate actively and develop a love for reading and language learning. Teachers widely agree that CCL greatly improves various language skills, highlighting its diverse impact on language development. Teachers have acknowledged that CCL is not merely a supplementary part of the curriculum but a fundamental factor in language acquisition, especially in improving speaking and listening skills in young ESL learners. The 93% reported agreement rate shows strong support for CCL's effectiveness, highlighting its influence on students' linguistic skills. This is supported by Kelly (1996) stated

that literature provides a rich language model that goes beyond everyday conversation, contributing to vocabulary acquisition and language development. The integration of literature in ESL classrooms has been shown to motivate and engage students better than relying solely on linguistic textbooks (Kebede & Milkite 2021).

In conclusion, ESL teachers perceive CCL as a highly effective tool for enhancing English proficiency among primary learners. The effectiveness of this tool is attributed to its various formats, alignment with curriculum objectives, and capacity to facilitate collaborative learning among students. This study emphasises the potential of CCL in ESL contexts, highlighting its role in fostering a more inclusive, engaging, and effective language learning environment for primary learners.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that teachers view CCL as a powerful tool for improving language skills in ESL settings. Teachers have reported that CCL not only improves language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, but also greatly increases student involvement and promotes collaborative learning. The implications of these findings are extensive for education practice, policy development, and future research. The high levels of student engagement associated with CCL highlight the need for ESL teachers to integrate these resources more extensively into their teaching. Incorporating interactive and dynamic activities such as prediction tasks and role-playing can further enrich the ESL learning environment. Moreover, the study highlights the potential of CCL to facilitate collaborative learning, suggesting that teachers can design group-based activities centred around literary texts to encourage student interaction and discussion. Additionally, the impact of CCL in improving various language proficiencies indicates that ESL teachers should include these materials not only for comprehension but also to develop oral and written language skills. This approach aligns with current pedagogical trends and responds to the diverse needs of ESL learners.

Several limitations can be identified throughout the course of the study. Firstly, the constraint on the size and variety of the sample. The study involved 72 survey respondents and 7 interviewees, which may not be representative of the broader population of ESL teachers. The findings might not capture the diversity of experiences across different regions, school types, and cultural settings. Furthermore, due to the study being conducted in an ESL setting and targeting primary school teachers, the conclusions drawn from the study may not be applicable to non-ESL settings or to students in higher educational

stages, such as secondary or tertiary education. Future studies could compare the effectiveness of CCL in different educational settings and among different age groups to generalise the findings more broadly. Besides, quantitative measures of language development pre- and post-exposure to CCL could offer objective evidence of the specific language skills enhanced by CCL. In summary, this study has the capacity to reveal the potential of CCL to act as a bridge between learning languages and appreciating literature, thereby enriching the educational landscape for ESL learners.

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Ainul Aishah Binti Awang
Faculty of Education,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.
p118846@siswa.ukm.edu.my

Azlina Abdul Aziz
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Faculty of Education,
43600, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.
azlina1@ukm.edu.my

Corresponding Author Email: azlina1@ukm.edu.my