

**From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the
English primary curriculum in Malaysia**

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June, 2014

Abstract

In 2011, a curricular reform of primary education in Malaysia known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) was implemented for all taught subjects including English. The aim of the English language curriculum reform was to place great emphasis on the development of student communicative competence through interactive, learner-centred teaching approaches. Research suggests that the implementation of a curriculum reform at the classroom level depends largely on the extent to which teachers understand what the curriculum policy is intended to achieve and whether they perceive the policy as relevant and feasible.

This study critically examines the effectiveness of the SCPS for English in three dimensions: (1) the clarity and usefulness of the curriculum documentation; (2) the effectiveness of the curriculum dissemination process; and, (3) the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. A mixed-method was used in the study. It consisted of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, lesson observations, systematic interaction analysis of digitally recorded lessons, discourse analysis of lesson transcripts and video-stimulated reflective dialogue. The study involved 8 teachers, 2 curriculum trainers, 2 District Education Officers, and one officer from the Curriculum Development Division of Ministry of Education (MOE) in Malaysia. A total of 32 primary English lessons, four from each of the teachers involved, were also observed, video-recorded and systematically analysed.

The findings revealed that the SCPS was not fully understood by the teachers and top-down, cascading of the curriculum process was largely ineffective. They also highlighted incongruence between the curriculum policy and classroom practice. The findings suggest there is a need to revise the SCPS documentation, to evaluate the curriculum dissemination process, and to support teachers in curriculum implementation at the classroom level. The wider implications of the findings for curriculum policy makers and teacher professional development are also discussed.

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Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious and Most Merciful

I express my praise and thankfulness to Allah, without whose assistance, this work would never have been completed.

I would like first to acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jan Hardman, who spared no efforts to provide me with sincere advice and encouragement. Without her constructive feedback, invaluable guidance, patience and faith, this study would not have been successful. Thank you for believing in me.

I would also like to thank the Scholarship Division of the Ministry of Education Malaysia for offering me the scholarship to pursue my PhD study.

Special thanks are also due to everyone who have participated in this study, particularly the teachers, head teachers, MOE officials, curriculum trainers and students who went out of their way in providing me with their precious time and unfailing commitment and cooperation during my field work in Malaysia.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my family for their love and unending support especially my dear sister, Nurul Sheema A. Rahman who undertook the responsibility for all my issues in my home country during the period of my study in the U.K. Thank you for looking after Along and Kak Ngah.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my husband, A Rahman Suderlan and children (Alief, Nadjwa, Tasya, Fisya, Iman, Miqael and Nuha) for their unconditional love, patience and continuous support, which has kept me going in this long and lonely journey. My completion of this thesis would not have been possible without their presence with me in the U.K during the full period of my study. To Along and Kak Ngah thank you for your sacrifice.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis presented here is an original work of mine. No part of this thesis has been previously published or submitted for another award or qualification in other institutions or universities.

To the best of my knowledge and belief appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

NOR HASLYNDA A RAHMAN

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The low performance of students of English has been a frequent and major topic of concern in the Malaysian education scene. Students at both primary and secondary schools, and at higher education institutions have very weak levels of English language (EL) proficiency, especially in oral communication, even after 11 years of learning English formally in school and many years' of effort and exposure to acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate in the language. Previous studies, for example Gaudart (1987), Hassan and Selamat (2002), Mohd Asraf (1996), Muniandy, Nair, Krishnan, Ahmad and Mohamed Noor (2010), Mustapha (2008), OECD (2013), Pandian (2002), Selvaraj (2010) and Shakir (2009), show that basically Malaysian students lack the ability to communicate effectively in the English language and have poor analytical skills. The introduction of various types of approaches to and methods of language instruction, through innovations and reforms in education, to improve the quality of English language learning and teaching in Malaysia has not successfully produced students who are able to communicate in English competently and effectively (Mohd Radzi, Azmin, Zolhani & Abdul Latif, 2007).

The withdrawal of English as the medium of instruction for mathematics and science in 2009 and its replacement with Malay has exacerbated the issue of deteriorating standards of Malaysian students' English proficiency. This policy change has led to seriousness and a sense of urgency to bring English language teaching back to a higher level. Moreover, the rise of English as a global language and as a tool of communication has established a worldwide need to enhance students' proficiency in English, to enable them to communicate effectively for easy access to world knowledge, commerce, science and technology (Selvaraj, 2010). This immediate need has had a significant impact on the teaching and learning of English across the world, especially in countries where English is a second or foreign language (Toh, 2003). There have accordingly been numerous re-evaluations and transformations of the objectives of English education. As a consequence, there has been a rapid growth in curriculum innovations, curriculum reform and materials development in English language teaching (ELT) (Phakisi, 2008). This curriculum and materials development has been particularly marked, as Nunan (2003) and others have noted, in the case of ELT for young learners in developing countries.

To address the issues of improving the standard of English language among Malaysian students and to meet the demands of globalisation, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced in 2011 a curriculum reform known as the ‘Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools’ (SCPS hereafter) or its widely used Malay equivalent, ‘Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah’ (KSSR) involving all subjects including English. The SCPS is an attempt “to restructure and improve the current curriculum to ensure that students have the relevant knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges of the 21st century” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012a, p. 6). Hence, compared with the previous curriculum, the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (ICPS), the English language teaching component of the SCPS places greater emphasis on the development of students’ communicative ability and higher-order thinking skills. This aspiration is clearly expressed in the quotation below by the Deputy Prime Minister cum Minister of Education,

Our goal and the purpose of the education system, is to equip our students holistically to allow them to succeed in the 21st century, with all of the opportunities and challenges that this new era presents. In order to compete with the best in the world, our education system must develop young Malaysians who are knowledgeable, think critically and creatively, have leadership skills and are **able to communicate** with the rest of the world.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012c, p. viii)

The Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) was first piloted in 30 selected primary schools in the north region of Malaysia (Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak) in the academic year 2009-2010 and was officially implemented in all primary schools in 2011. Therefore, it is important to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum in actual practice. That is why it is significant to estimate the opinions and practices of classroom teachers who are using the curriculum. The present study accordingly aims to determine to what extent the teachers understand, adopt and implement the new primary school curriculum.

1.2 Brief summary of background literature

Many studies have shown that curriculum reform does not always work very well and there tends to be a mismatch between the curriculum and its implementation (Cheserek & Mugalavai, 2012; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008; Curdt-Christiansen & Silver,

2012; Pandian, 2002; Wang, 2006). In most cases reforms specifically in ELT, in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, are either part enforced or haven't been enforced in accordance to however the course of study developers had hoped (Hamid & Honan, 2012; Yaacob, 2006; Yieng, 1999). A report by the Malaysian School Inspectorate (Ministry of Education, 2010d) and findings from studies conducted in Malaysia show that despite an emphasis on active and learner-centred teaching approaches in the previous curriculum, most classroom practices are still teacher-centred or comprise chalk-and-talk drill methods (Abdul Rahman, 1987; Abdul Rahman, 2007; Aman & Mustaffa, 2006; ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM & KITA-UKM, 2012; Mohd Sofi, 2003; Mustaffa, Aman, Seong & Mohd Noor, 2011; Sidhu, Fook & Kaur, 2010; Yaacob, 2006).

Moreover, the preliminary report of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025 states, “the full potential of the integrated curriculum for both primary and secondary schools has not always been brought to life in the classroom” (Ministry of Education, 2012c, pp. 3-4). In other words, what is mandated in the integrated curriculum of both primary and secondary schools was not realized in actual classrooms and so the aims of the program were not achieved. Although the integrated curriculum has been (or rather, is being) replaced with the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS), there is a good possibility of such results reoccurring. Perhaps by examining the effectiveness of the recent curriculum reform will shed light on a new perspective or possible factors affecting successful curriculum implementation.

Although research on curriculum reforms in ELT and their implementation and implications for teaching and learning have gained great interest in academic circles, a review of the related literature shows that most studies have been more interested in issues such as the effectiveness of specific teaching approaches, methods or strategies (e.g., Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2012; Carless, 2004; Ozsevik, 2010; Mohd Radzi, Azmin, Zolhani & Abdul Latif, 2007; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Schweisfurth, 2011; Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992). Most of these studies rely on self-reported use as the sole measure of implementation, something, which only reflects an attitude of acceptance and overlooks the possession of the knowledge and skills necessary to implement the curriculum behaviourally. Studies that critically analyse the synchronization between policy and practice specifically in the Malaysian context are few and far between. Moreover, studies that focus on the implementation of the

curriculum with reference to classroom interaction are even scarcer (Yaacob, 2006). The present study is designed to fill this gap, by examining the effectiveness of the curriculum by looking at the degree of alignment between policy (i.e. the curriculum) and practice (i.e. the dissemination process and classroom practices) in the context of the Malaysian primary education system.

In short, as mentioned earlier, often a new curriculum and its implementation do not match. Hence, this study examines whether this is true in the case of the SCPS, which was introduced in Malaysia in 2011 and which will be rolled out in subsequent phases of primary education. Moreover, since the SCPS is a new curriculum and has just recently been implemented, there is a need to ascertain its effectiveness in order to ensure its success. To date, this study also represents one of (if not, *the only*) research to examine the effectiveness of the SCPS in the Malaysian context.

1.3 Rationale for the study

The springboard for this research is a personal one. As an EL teacher with eleven years experience and a teacher trainer with eight years experience, I have long felt that the standard of English language proficiency of primary students has continued to worsen. Indeed I have worked with a series of English curricula and found that none of them really worked.

It is worth noting that the primary education system in Malaysia has over the years experienced a number of curriculum reforms in its efforts to improve the English language proficiency of its students. In 1983, the New Curriculum for Primary Schools (NCPS) was introduced, followed by the Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools (ICPS) in 1993 and a revised ICPS curriculum in 2003. However, the students' English language proficiency particularly in communicative ability is still low despite the efforts made to improve their English competency. It has proved a very frustrating experience for my colleagues as well as myself.

My own involvement in the new SCPS initiative has been as a teacher trainer for the subject of English in one of the Teacher Training Institutes, the main provider of both pre-service and in-service primary teacher education in the country. Hence, I really want to know if this new SCPS curriculum will work better than the previous ones. In other

words, does it achieve what it sets out to do?

1.4 Significance of the study

As stated earlier, the overall purpose of the present research is to critically examine the effectiveness of the English language part of the SCPS, which was recently implemented in all Malaysian primary schools. Particularly, this study investigates how clear and useful the curriculum is as perceived by the teachers, how effective the training is in communicating the curriculum to teachers and whether the process of the implementation is congruent with what is expected and aimed for.

This study is significant because it is important to continuously study and understand the curriculum and its implementation in the local context. Klein and Sorra (1996) explain that implementation refers to the act of using an innovation or the practical aspects of an innovation. Implementation happens when certain new characteristics such as changes in materials, structure, role/behaviour, knowledge and understanding, and value internalization are adopted practically in a social system (Fullan & Pomfret (1977). It is important to focus on implementation because, by conceptualizing and measuring it directly, one is able to know what has changed. Not only does such a focus provide knowledge on what the changes are, but in the context of the SCPS, a critical examination of the curriculum also enables one to observe whether changes that are expected in the policy and those that transpire in classroom actual practice are compatible.

Secondly, this study may help to identify some problematic aspects concerning the intended changes, which can lead to a better understanding of why many educational changes fail. This study focuses on teachers who are responsible for delivering the curriculum in the classroom. How teachers perceive and understand the curriculum will affect how it is implemented. The findings of this study will provide in-depth and evidence-based understanding of the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the curriculum, and this information will, it is hoped, indirectly persuade other relevant stakeholders to take appropriate measures to address these issues. By examining the effectiveness of the curriculum reform, this research may help language policymakers and administrators gain a better understanding of primary English curriculum development and of the impact of the current curriculum on the teaching and learning of

English as a second language (ESL) and of the challenges it poses for teachers. A study of the teachers' actual practices should "provide the curriculum developers with insights that will help them in formulating effective future curriculum innovations" (Zanzali, 2003, p. 34). At a specific level, it is hoped that this study will lead to implementable recommendations regarding the further development of ELT in Malaysia. The findings of this study could highlight relevant and appropriate solutions of the challenges in implementing the curriculum before it is rolled out to the three different phases of primary education.

Thirdly, focusing on implementation may enable one to interpret learning outcomes and to relate these to possible determinants. Curriculum development is too critical an issue to be left without investigation and very little is, it would appear, known about the process of curriculum development in Malaysia as part of curriculum change. Thus, by investigating the recent curriculum change in Malaysian primary schools and outlining the specific process or framework adopted for curriculum development from the teachers' perspectives, this study hopes to inform current practice.

At a general level, empirical studies in this field are very limited. There are, for example, comparatively few studies conducted in Asian regions such as in China, Hong Kong and Singapore, all of which have reported classroom interactions that are teacher dominated. Building on the earlier studies, this study tries to provide a detailed analysis of how a curriculum is implemented by focusing on the discourse practices found in Malaysian primary school classrooms. Hence, this investigation is an attempt to fill in a gap in our knowledge by portraying a detailed picture of curriculum change in Malaysia.

The study has methodological as well as educational significance. By looking at the interaction patterns using the instruments which have been used in many earlier studies (e.g. Hardman, Adb-Kadir, Agg, Migwi, Ndambuku, & Smith, 2009; Mustaffa, Aman, Seong, Kok, & Mohd Noor, 2011; Vaish, 2008) this research indirectly provides opportunities to check the effectiveness of the instruments in a new context (namely Malaysia) where English is formally accepted as a second language, but is taught in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context where English is not the language of the community. By utilizing and adopting similar instruments with some adaptations, this

study attempts to strengthen the methodology of previous studies with more comprehensive triangulation procedures.

To sum up, the SCPS was only at its initial stage of implementation when this study was carried out. The present study thus constitutes pioneering research on how the SCPS is being implemented in classrooms and thus should yield fruitful and meaningful findings that may provide a reference point for teachers in improving their teaching practices and for curriculum developers in improving learning outcomes that fulfil the students' needs. Furthermore, the findings of the present research on how teachers perceive and respond to the current reform of the primary English language curriculum in Malaysia may also be relevant to other Southeast Asian nations. The teachers' perceptions of the SCPS can be compared with those in different countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore as other nations share many commonalities with Malaysia with respect to educational policies (Nunan, 2003).

1.5 Research objectives

The overall purpose of this study is to critically examine the recent curriculum reform (SCPS) and its effectiveness that is whether the curriculum is doing what it is intended to do. The effectiveness of the curriculum is determined by investigating three domains: 1) the clarity or usefulness of the curriculum documentation itself, 2) the effectiveness of the dissemination process, and 3) how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom with special reference to teacher-student interaction that accompanies classroom activities. The clarity of the curriculum documents and the effectiveness of the dissemination process and classroom practices are not independent, but rather are interrelated and together contribute to the effectiveness of the curriculum reform.

The first domain relates to the clarity of the SCPS curriculum document itself. This is considered vital because unclear contents of the curriculum document may cause confusion for teachers (Bennie & Newstead, 1999) and may result in negative perceptions of the curriculum reform (Karavas-Doukas, 1995). These will in turn affect the level of implementation of a curriculum and eventually the success of the curriculum.

The second domain involves the dissemination process of the SCPS. Examining how the curriculum is communicated to the teachers is important, as an effective dissemination process and adequate professional support may have an effect on teachers' understanding of the curriculum and on what is required of them and eventually on their classroom practices (Carless, 1998; Kirgköz, 2007). The choice of the dissemination process and how it is carried out should "promote genuine development rather than surface adherence to official mandates" (Hayes, 2000, p. 135).

The third domain is how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom. This, in particular, focuses on the types of activity that take place in the EL lessons and looks closely at the quality of interaction, which aids the development of communicative competence. For this purpose, lessons comprising writing, reading, listening and speaking modules were observed and analysed. Lessons from all the four modules were observed to explore the types of communicative activities practised in class, and that listening and speaking lessons were chosen to examine how classroom interaction facilitated the development of students' communicative competence.

This is what makes the study different from previous studies in the Malaysian context such as Abdul Aziz (1987), Abdul Rahman (2007), or Ali (2003). From an educational point of view, the use of language in classrooms or interaction is interesting and important because education itself is conducted fundamentally through the medium of language (Benham & Pouriran, 2009). According to Alexander (2012), the quality of interaction between teacher and students contributes significantly to developing the oral competence of the student because "by using the means of communication, in solving communication problems, ... we not merely practise communicating but also extend our command of the means of communication, the language itself" (Allwright, 1984, p. 157).

The three objectives of this study are accordingly:

- I. To investigate the clarity and usefulness of the curriculum standard document and support materials by exploring teachers' perceptions and understanding of the curriculum.
- II. To appraise the effectiveness of the dissemination process of the curriculum reform by exploring teachers' viewpoints on the training model in enhancing

teachers' understanding and facilitating the implementation of the curriculum in achieving the desired curriculum goal.

- III. To discover whether the curriculum reform is implemented in line with the curriculum goal by investigating teachers' practices with a focus on classroom activities and teacher-student interaction patterns.

1.6 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter One provides the research background, rationale, objectives, research questions and significance of the study. Chapter Two gives a historical account of the general education system and of English language teaching in Malaysia and an overview of the SCPS. Chapters Three and Four provide the theoretical framework for the thesis, introducing and discussing key concepts that help to inform the study. It then builds on this theoretical perspective by introducing and critically evaluating the relevant literature on the main constructs to be discussed, namely the role of English in the region, teaching approaches and teachers' perceptions on curriculum reform and communicative language teaching.

Chapter Five describes the methodology of the study, in which a detailed explanation of the research context is offered, as well as a description of the research methods, data collection and analysis. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present, analyse and discuss the themes that emerge from interviews, classroom observations, video-stimulated reflective dialogue (VSRD) and document analysis. Chapter Nine presents a summary of main findings and offers implications, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the Malaysian education system in order to provide a broad understanding of the context within which the present empirical research was done. The chapter first provides a general description of education in Malaysia, which includes discussions on the historical background of the education system, its administration and management, and its structure, focusing on primary education, the history of English language teaching and the primary school English curriculum. Following this is an overview of the recent curriculum reform known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS), with a focus on the English language component, as this study focuses on the English language teaching part of the curriculum.

2.2 Background

Malaysia is divided into two major geographical areas: West (Peninsular) Malaysia and East Malaysia, which are separated by the South China Sea. It comprises 13 states and three federal territories. One distinct feature of Malaysia is its “multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious” composition (Pillay, 1995, p. 1), which includes Malays, Chinese, and Indians, as well as other indigenous ethnic groups such as Ibans, Bidayus, Kadazans, Melanaus and Muruts in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Although Islam is the official religion, the Constitution states that all Malaysians are given freedom of worship. Moreover, although *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) is the national language, English is widely used.

2.3 Historical background of the Malaysian education system

Before the arrival of the Europeans to Malaya, education in the Malay States was informal and in the form of the *pondok* (hut schools) and religious schools or *Madrasah* run by Muslim missionaries who were mostly religious teachers (Gaudart, 1987; Foo & Richards, 2004). The education was for the most part focused on *Al-Quran* and religious matters. During the British occupation, the education system that existed in Malaya remained a diverse and fragmented system (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008). The objective of educational development at that time was mainly to preserve the existing status of the different communities in the country. There was an absence of uniformity

in the system in Malaya because each ethnic group established their own school systems using their own language as mediums of instruction. Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools were usually only attended by students whose first language was similar to the language of instruction. Only the English medium schools were open to all ethnic groups, but these were mostly situated in urban areas. The educational programme in the English medium schools followed the British model (Hirschman, 1972). The Chinese and Indians imported teachers and borrowed their curricula from the countries of their origin. The Malay schools were basically religious schools focusing on religious matters and basic skills.

After World War II, there was a protest against the standard of Malay education. Following this, the Barnes Committee was formed to review Malay education and the problems of Malaya's plural society. The Barnes Committee Report of 1951 recommended a single multi-racial and bilingual school which would provide free primary education for all children of all races aged between six and twelve years in Malay and English (Thanaraj, 1996). Indian and Chinese languages were to be taught as ordinary subjects. Such policy of bilingualism in English and Malay with provision for the learning of other languages was believed to be the most logical solution to the language problem in a multi-racial society to foster social integration and national unity. Through this policy, the Barnes Committee hoped to discontinue the system of vernacular schools including Malay schools and concentrate on one type of school for all.

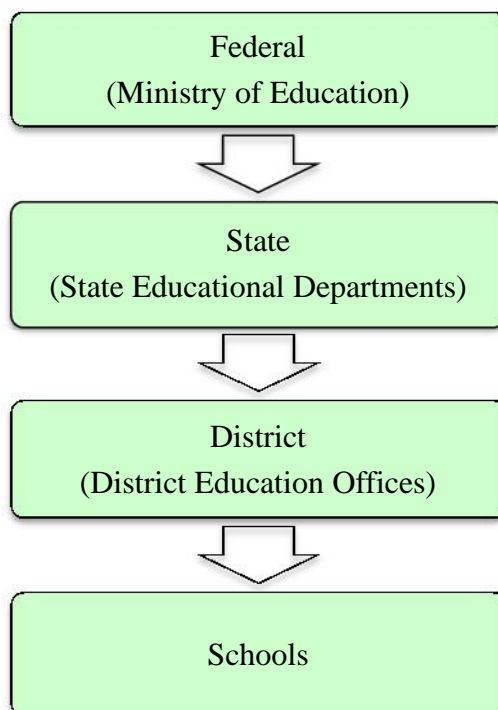
However, the Chinese community objected to the recommendations, fearing the destruction of their culture. So following this, there was a review on Chinese education in Malaya and a report known as the Fenn-Wu Report of 1951 was presented. The colonial government agreed with the suggestion of the report to allow bilingualism in Malay schools (Malay and English) and trilingualism in Tamil and Chinese schools (a combination of either Tamil-Malay-English or Chinese-Malay-English) (Education Encyclopaedia-StateUnivesity.com, 2013). After independence in 1957, following the recommendations of the Razak Report (Report of Education Committee, 1956) and the Rahman Talib Report (Report of the Education Review Committee, 1960), the government established the National Education System, where all schools used a similar content syllabus and *Bahasa Malaysia* as the medium of instruction. These efforts were part of the initiative to create and establish a Malaysian education system with a

Malaysian outlook and a Malaysian-oriented curriculum in order to create a united nation (Pillay, 1998). The two reports were an integral part of the Educational Act of 1961, which defined *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) as the medium of instruction in all schools except Non-Malay-medium National-type schools¹, and English was given the status of an important second language in the country. Later the 1996 Educational Act repealed the 1961 Act and added that all schools should use a national curriculum and all pupils sit for common public examinations.

2.4 Administration and management of the Malaysian education system

The Federal Government under the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for education in Malaysia. Its administrative structure is divided into four hierarchical levels i.e. federal, state, district and school as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below. The institutions representing these four levels are the Ministry of Education (MOE), the State Education Departments (SED), the District Education Offices (DEO) and the schools.

Figure 2.1. Management Structure of the Malaysian Education System



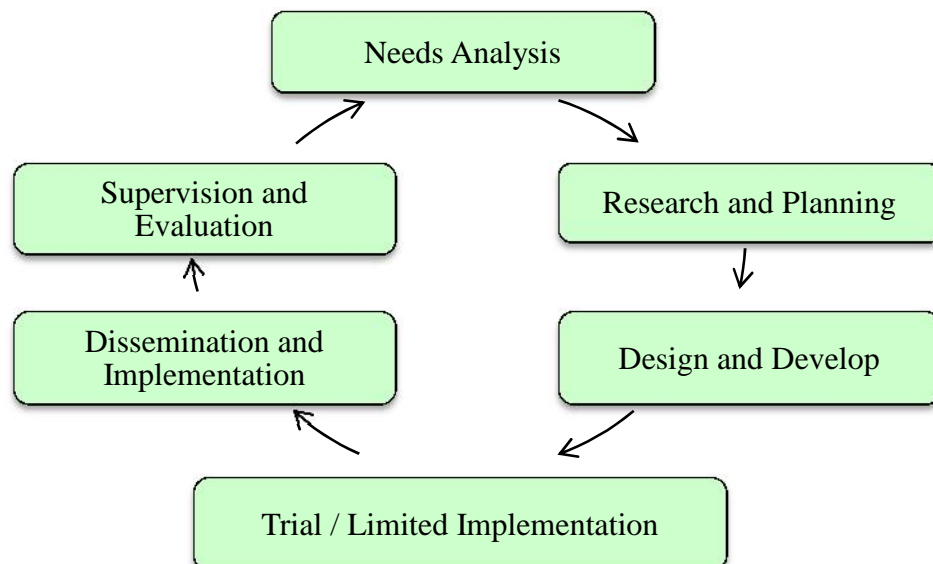
¹ Public primary schools in Malaysia are divided into two categories based on the medium of instruction: 1) Malay-medium National Schools use *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) as medium of instruction and 2) Non-Malay-medium National-type Schools use Mandarin or Tamil as medium of instruction.

The MOE is responsible for developing policy guidelines, transforming education policy into plans, programmes, projects and activities; and managing its implementation, as well as prescribing the curricula, syllabuses and examinations for all schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004). Hence, all primary schools and secondary schools follow the same curriculum, the Malaysian National Curriculum. The State Education Department is accountable for the implementation of educational programmes, projects and activities in the state. The District Education Offices assist the State Education Department in supervising the implementation of educational programmes, projects and activities in the schools of the district.

2.5 Curriculum development in the Malaysian education system

The Curriculum Development Division (CDD) of the MOE designs and develops the school curriculum from preschool to upper secondary. The process of formulating a new curriculum or revising an existing one follows a cyclical model as illustrated in Figure 2.2 below. It starts with analysis of needs, followed by planning, development, piloting, dissemination and implementation, evaluation and back to the identification of needs (Mohamad Sharif & San, 2001).

Figure 2.2. Curriculum Cycle

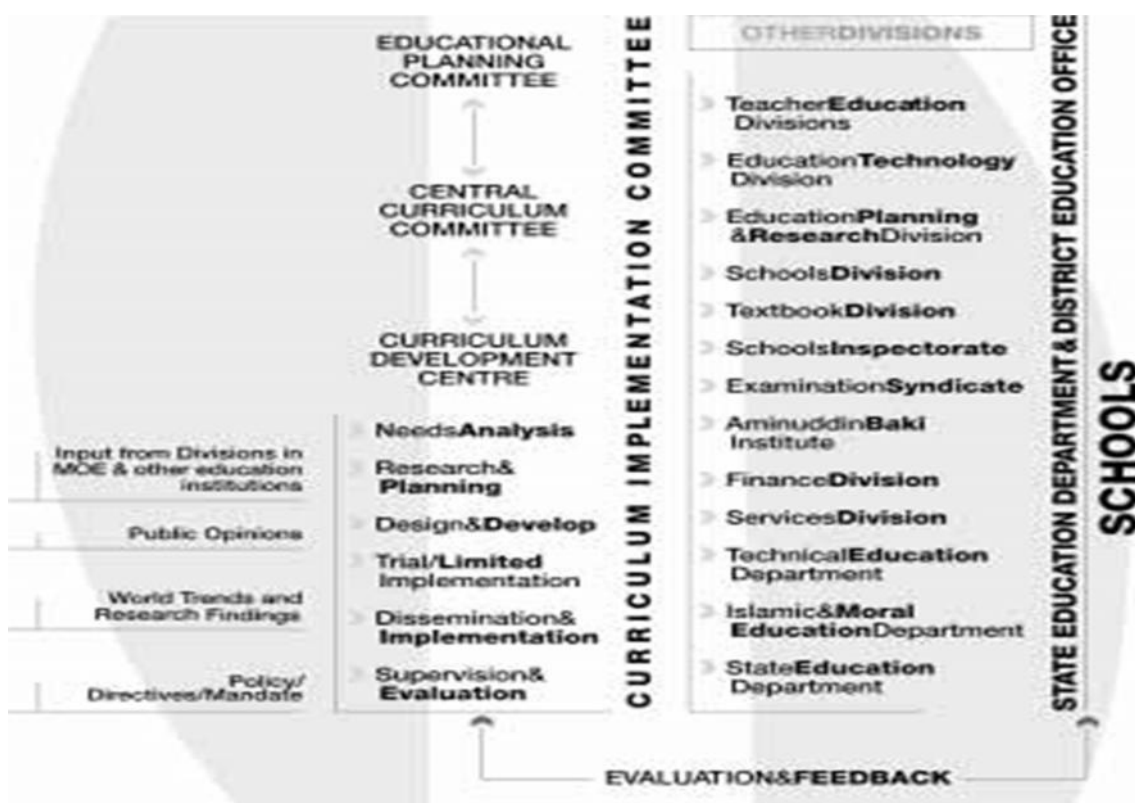


Source: Ministry of Education, 2004

In the process, firstly, the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) performs needs analyses by gaining feedback from teachers and experts, reports from state education offices, findings from surveys and library research, including information on local and world trends (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004). Based on the results of the analyses, a curriculum committee or project team is formed, consisting of CDD officers, subject specialists or experts, lecturers from teacher training institutes and universities, as well as representatives from industries and training agencies. The project team will prepare a concept paper through a series of workshops. The concept paper is then presented to the Central Curriculum Committee (CCC), the highest decision-making body on professional matters, chaired by the Director-General of Education. The members of CCC include heads of professional divisions and relevant administrative divisions, selected state education directors and deans of education faculties of local universities.

Once the CCC approves the concept paper, the project team meets again for several workshops but involving additional practising teachers and subject specialists. The approved concept paper forms the basis for the development of a syllabus that comprises goals, objectives and content outlines. The proposed syllabus is again presented to the CCC for further comment and approval. Once the CCC approves of the proposed syllabus, the project team meets again and develops a curriculum specifications document stipulating among other things, the goals and objectives, content and proposed activities, teaching and learning strategies, workshop requirements and layout. Based on the curriculum specifications, decisions on the curriculum materials such as teachers' guides, resource books, and teacher and student modules are made. As it involves finance, a budgetary request is forwarded to the Educational Planning Committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education. Clearly, "the whole process from the formulation of the concept paper to the development and approval of the syllabus and curriculum specifications is a long process" (Mohamad Sharif & San, 2001, pp. 7–8).

Figure 2.3. Flowchart of the curriculum development process in the Malaysian education system



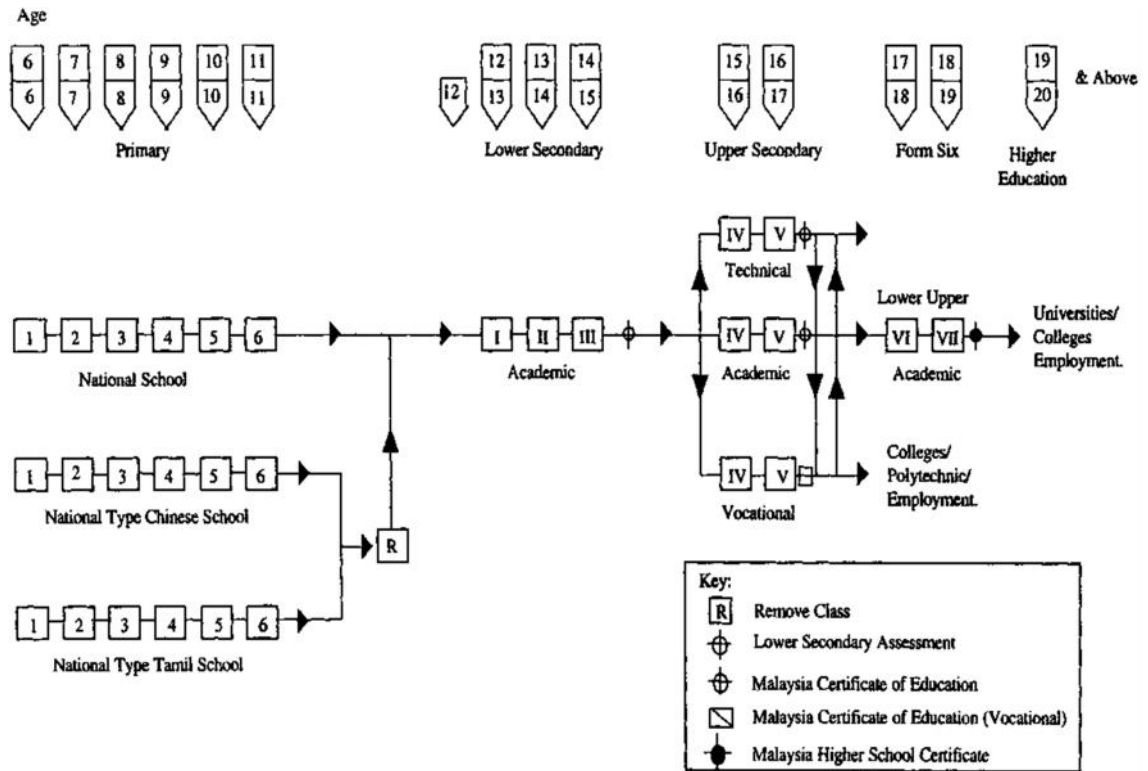
(Adapted from UNESCO 2003, p. 19)

Before the full implementation of the completed syllabus nationwide, it is first piloted in selected schools. At the implementation stage, the CDD is only involved in the dissemination of the curriculum to key persons i.e. curriculum trainers, those selected from amongst teachers who have shown potential to be effective in schools. These key persons are in turn responsible for cascading it to practitioners i.e. teachers. School Inspectors, as well as state and district level officers, are responsible to monitor and supervise the implementation of the curriculum and provide support to help teachers undertake relevant activities (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004).

2.6 Structure of the Malaysian education system

Education system in Malaysia follows the 6-3-2-2 model representing the number of years spent at primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post secondary levels respectively. Figure 2.3 below illustrates the structure of the education system in Malaysia.

Figure 2.4. The structure of the Malaysian education system



(Adapted from: Educational Planning and Research Division Malaysia, 2008, p. 27)

The earliest education level in Malaysia is pre-schools attended by children at the age between four and six years of age. There are three types of pre-school; government, non-government or private sector. The admission age to the first year of primary education is six. Children usually spend six years at primary school, followed by three years at lower secondary, two years at upper secondary and another two years at post secondary level consisting of the matriculation programme, form 6, or programmes beyond which there are a range of tertiary options. The schools in the country are mostly government or government-aided schools or private schools. The school year starts in January and ends in November with sessions divided into two semesters. A headmaster heads every primary school, while a principal heads each secondary school. The headmasters and principals are responsible for providing professional as well as administrative leadership in schools. A common public examination is required at the end of primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and sixth form levels.

2.6.1 Primary education

Since the present study focuses on the implementation of the primary school English language curriculum, it is appropriate to provide an overall picture of the primary

education structure in order to understand the role and function of English language teaching (ELT) in the Malaysian education system. According to the World Declaration of Education for All, the term ‘primary education’ refers to “the main delivery system of basic education for children outside the family” (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, 2006, p. 1). In Malaysia, primary education for girls and boys between the ages of 6 and 11 refers to formal education that emphasizes providing strong foundation in reading, writing and arithmetic as well as emphasizing thinking skills and values across the curriculum.

Primary education is divided into two three-year phases: Phase 1 (Year 1–Year 3) and Phase 2 (Year 4–Year 6). Students are automatically promoted from Year 1 to Year 6. There are two categories of primary school, namely ‘Malay-medium National Schools’ with the national language, *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) as the medium of instruction and ‘Non-Malay-medium National-type Schools’ where the medium of instruction is Mandarin or Tamil. However, Malay and English are taught as compulsory subjects in all schools. There are also special schools catering for the hearing-impaired and visually handicapped known as Special Education schools. Table 2.1 below shows the number of primary schools and the different types of primary school that existed between 2010 and 2012.

Table 2.1. Number of Primary Schools (2010–2012)

<i>Types of school</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
National	5,826	5,848	5,859
National Type (Chinese)	1,291	1,291	1,294
National Type (Tamil)	523	523	523
Special Education	28	34	28
Special Model (K9) ²	1	8	1
SABK ³	16	5	18
Total	7,685	7,709	7,723

Source: Quick Facts, 2012b, Malaysia Educational Statistics

² Special Model (K9) — A special comprehensive model of school that combines six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education in one institution. The purpose is to ensure that all children from very remote areas will be able to continue to secondary education and indirectly addresses dropout cases during the transition from Year 6 to Form 1. Complete boarding facilities are also available in these schools (Comprehensive Special Model School Concept, 2007).

³ SABK refers to Government-Aided Religious Schools.

At the end of primary school, pupils sit the Primary School Assessment Test (UPSR), and if successful they receive the primary school certificate, granting access to lower secondary education. Education at primary level is free to all children and according to the Education Amendment Act of 2002, primary education is compulsory for all children aged 6, regardless of their socio-economic background (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004).

2.7 Overview of English language teaching in Malaysia

As English is officially accepted as a second language, English is taught in all primary schools in Malaysia as a compulsory subject. English teaching and learning for primary schools is meant to provide learners with a robust foundation in the English language so that learners are able to use English in daily and job situations, as well as to pursue higher education and use the language for various functions. The formulation of the development of learners' linguistic abilities is in keeping with the goals of the National Education Philosophy, which sought to optimize the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical potential of all students.

After independence and until 1970, there was no common content syllabus for English although the teaching of English was made compulsory throughout the school system. There was one syllabus for the national type English schools and another for the non-English medium schools including the national schools. In 1965, the Ministry of Education issued a common content ELT syllabus to be used for the primary level as well as Remove Forms/Class⁴ (refer to Figure 2.4) with the publication of *Syllabus for Primary School and Remove Forms 1965*. The syllabus promoted the use of the structured-situational method or the oral method (Pandian, 2002). However, children in the two types of school learned different content. Children in the national type English school covered all three stages of the syllabus, while pupils at non-English medium schools did only stages 1 and 2. Similar situation happened in the secondary schools where two different syllabuses were used to learn English; *The Syllabus for the Secondary Schools (Malay Medium): English (1966)* and *The Syllabus for the Secondary Schools (English Medium): English (1968)*. This phenomenon resulted in

⁴ Remove Class is a one-year transition class to reinforce and enhance the Malay language of students from Non-Malay-medium National-type Primary Schools (medium of instruction is in Chinese or Tamil) before proceeding to Form 1.

two different examination papers at the end of secondary education: *Syllabus 121* for national-type schools and *English 122* for national schools.

The implementation of the National Education Policy of 1970 marked the conversion of all national-type English schools to national schools and changes in the language policy such that *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) became the medium of instruction in order to create uniformity. This led to the need to produce a common content syllabus for English to be used from Primary One to Form Five, so that students could sit for common examination papers at the end of their secondary schooling. At this juncture, *The English Syllabus for Use in Standard One to Standard Six of the Post 1970 National Primary Schools (1971)*, which advocated a structural-situational approach was implemented in all national primary schools in the country (Foo & Richards, 2004). The syllabus prescribed the teaching of structural items through the use of situations and visual aids and focussed on oral practice to enable pupils to understand a structure and how it is used. The same syllabus was also used in National-Type Tamil and Chinese primary schools. However, in these schools English was introduced only in Standard Three. To ensure continuity at the secondary level, the English syllabus for the lower secondary was also based on a structural syllabus called *The English Syllabus for Form One–Form Three of the Secondary Schools in Malaysia (1973)*. Students in upper secondary level were taught using *The English Language Syllabus in Malaysian Schools Form Four–Form Five (1980)* which was basically a task-oriented situational approach. And because of the influence of the trend towards communicative language teaching (CLT) in ELT, the syllabus was also known as *The Malaysian Communicational Syllabus*.

However, it was found that having three different syllabuses for primary and secondary education resulted in a fundamental disparity within a single English programme (Pandian, 2002). Since three different committees were involved in designing the syllabus for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, the ELT syllabuses were created independently of each other and not as part of the whole curriculum. Besides, the emphasis to produce a common content syllabus had taken little account of the students from non-English speaking background. As a result, these students had very low levels of English proficiency when they left the education system. At about the same time, The Third Malaysia Plan (1976–1980) was also implemented, which reiterated the immediate needs of manpower for the country. With these points in mind,

the government appointed a cabinet committee under the chairmanship of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who was then the Minister of Education, to review the National Education Policy. A report was released in 1979 popularly known as the Cabinet Committee Report and the following conditions were noted:

- There was a need for the implementation of a national curriculum as opposed to the existing subject-oriented curriculum.
- Most of the subject matter contained foreign elements, which made it difficult for the students to relate to.
- There was no emphasis on basic education, that is the acquisition of the three R's — reading, writing and arithmetic — at the primary level.
- There was a need for a curriculum to equip students with skills and knowledge that would enable them to enter the job market or further their education after school.
- It was important to be proficient in English in order to acquire knowledge in the field of Science and Technology.
- ELT in Malaysian schools should emphasize more oral activities that would help students relate the language to the environment.

(Source: Foo & Richards, 2004, p. 234)

The recommendations made in the report led to the revamping of the existing curriculum and the introduction of the *New Primary Schools Curriculum (NPSC)* in 1983 and the *Integrated Secondary Schools Curriculum (ISSC)* in 1989 which shared a common goal, direction and approach. The NPSC focussed on the acquisition of the three R's — the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic — while the ISSC was a continuation of the NPSC and aimed to consolidate the learning of the basic skills. The introduction of the NPSC and ISSC generated the implementation of communicative skills-based English language syllabuses that emphasized the acquisition of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, to replace the previously heavily content-oriented curriculum. Both curricula incorporated learner-centred teaching strategies, to be congruent with a holistic (physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional) approach to human development, to promote cognitive, affective and

psychomotor development as emphasized in the National Educational Philosophy⁵ (Ahmad, 1998).

However, despite being a continuous syllabus, several differences were identified in the transition between the NPSC and ISSC. One of the differences included a lack of references to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the NPSC, as against the ISSC, which incorporated suggestions for the use of computer software and audio-video recordings. Moreover, elements such as learner autonomy, study skills and thinking skills were also absent from the NPSC. These weaknesses were redressed following the findings of the National Seminar on the Evaluation and Implementation of the NPSC in 1990, which resulted in a revamped curriculum known as the *Integrated Primary Schools Curriculum (IPSC)*.

The IPSC aimed “to equip learners with basic skills and knowledge of the English language so as to enable them to communicate, both orally and in writing, in and out of school” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2001, p. 2). In the first year of primary education, the emphasis of the curriculum was on the development of the four language skills and literacy skills, which are to be taught in context. Although there is no prescribed methodology in primary English teaching, what is important is that pupils are involved in various language activities so that language learning becomes active and experiential in nature (Kam, 2002).

To support English language teaching, the government introduced a range of programmes. One of the programmes was Self-Access Learning (SAL), with the objective of allowing students to take charge of their learning at their own pace and time using organised learning materials and equipment provided at the Self-Access Centre (SAC).

Besides that, there was the Structured Early Reading Programme, which purpose was to develop at an early age passion to read in English. In this programme schools were provided with ‘big books’ to attract children to read. Another programme was called Smart Schools; it emphasized critical and creative teaching, and learning and technology and is self-paced, self directed and self-access (Kam, 2002). One of the

⁵ National Educational Philosophy or ‘Falsafah Pendidikan Negara’ is a charter that outlines the country’s educational philosophies and objectives.

latest programmes promotes the incorporation of literature in English teaching that aims to provide students with an enjoyable learning environment as well as inculcating the reading habit (Kaur, 2010).

In 2003, the government took the very bold decision to change the medium of instruction of the teaching Mathematics and Science to English. The decision to shift to English as the medium of instruction was based on the rationale that a good command of English would enable students to access the Internet, read articles and research papers and other materials published in English (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2004). However, in 2008 the government decided to revert the policy to Malay language as the medium of instruction when it was found that the children in rural areas had difficulty learning Mathematics and Science in English.

Although many political groups, Malay nationalists, Chinese and Tamil educationists welcomed the reversal of the policy, many parents were unhappy with the decision as the move may give effect to the standards of English proficiency among the students remain low especially of those who did not have an English-speaking background and who were from rural areas. In response to the growing opposition to the policy shift, the government announced it was introducing a new English language curriculum to improve the teaching of English.

2.8 Overview of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS)

In October 2010 the MOE issued a circular on the implementation of the new Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) to replace the Integrated Primary Schools Curriculum (ICPS). The implementation schedule for the SCPS is an incremental one, starting with Year 1 classes in 2011 and advancing through primary school together with the pupils, as they go up to the next level of education. By 2016, the SCPS is going to be in situ for all primary school years. The curriculum reform will be applicable to all schools nationwide. The weekly lesson timetable for national and national-type schools (Chinese and Tamil schools) is presented in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2. Malaysian Primary Education, Phase I (Year 1–2): Weekly lesson timetable according to the new Standard Curriculum for Primary School of 2011

Modules	Weekly time allocated to each subject (in minutes)		
	National School	Chinese School	Tamil School
<i>Core Modules:</i>			
Malay Language	360	300	300
English Language	300	150	150
Chinese Language	-	360	-
Tamil Language	-	-	360
Mathematics	180	180	180
Islamic or moral education	180	120	120
Physical education	60	60	60
Health education	30	30	30
<i>Thematic modules:</i>			
Visual arts	60	60	60
Music	30	30	30
Science and technology	60	60	60
<i>Elective modules:</i>			
Additional language (Arabic or other national language)	90	-	-
Assembly	30	30	30
Total weekly time	1,380	1,380	1,380

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010

As mentioned earlier, primary education in Malaysia is divided into two three-year phases: Phase 1 (Year 1–Year 3) and Phase 2 (Year 4–Year 6). The curriculum for Phase I primary schooling emphasizes the mastery of the basic 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic), reasoning skills, basic ICT, the development of socio-emotional, spiritual, physical, cognitive, attitudes and values (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a). The discipline of knowledge is categorized into three main modules: the core basic module, the core thematic module and the elective module. The Core Basic Module emphasizes literacy and numeracy, self-esteem and character and spiritual development; it contains six subjects, which are *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language), English, Chinese or Tamil (only for national-type schools), Mathematics, Islamic Education (for Muslim pupils) or Moral Education (for non-Muslim pupils) and Physical Education. The Thematic Core Module contains three subjects, namely ‘Arts and Me’, ‘World of Science and Technology’ and ‘*Malaysia Negaraku*’ (Malaysia My Country). The Elective Module contains language subjects such as Chinese, Tamil, Arabic, Iban, Kadazandusun or Semai, which schools can choose to offer.

At Phase II primary level, the curriculum emphasizes strengthening and applying the 3Rs, basic ICT skills, the development of socio-emotional, spiritual, physical, cognitive, attitudes and values. Content knowledge is presented through nine subjects. Core subjects such as *Bahasa Malaysia*, English, Chinese and Tamil (for vernacular schools), Mathematics, Science, Islamic Education, Moral Education, Physical Education and Health Education are retained. However, some subjects have been redesigned by combining two or more disciplines of knowledge into one subject. Thus subjects such as Living Skills, Civics and Citizenship Education and other new subjects replace Local Studies such as Design and Technology/Information and Communication Technology, Visual Arts and Music and History/*Malaysia Negaraku* (Malaysia My Country).

2.9 The SCPS English curriculum

As mentioned in Chapter One, the SCPS was introduced in an attempt to restructure and improve the current curriculum, and to make sure that students have the relevant knowledge, skills and values to face the challenges of the 21st century (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012a). The rationale behind the curriculum reform for primary schools is “to ensure the relevancy of the schooling with the current needs by enhancing students learning with the acquisition of new skills in thinking, communication, entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity” (Mohamad Yusof, 2008, p. 9 see also Bapoo Hashim, 2009). In addition, the need to re-evaluate and revise the curriculum especially for English subject was also due to the deteriorating standards of English language proficiency among students and graduates, specifically their poor communication skills (Sen, 2011), the overemphasis on rote-learning and the examination-oriented education system, which hinders students’ creativity and critical thinking (ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM & KITA-UKM, 2010). As stated in the Preliminary Report of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, “poor English proficiency among fresh graduates has been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues facing Malaysian employers since 2006” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012c, p. E-12).

As mentioned earlier, the withdrawal of the English language as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science, led to a sense of urgency to improve English language teaching. In view of the fact that the decision to revert to Malay in the teaching of Mathematics and Science has numerous implications for the ministry’s attempt to strengthen students’ English language proficiency, reforms in the primary

English curriculum have tried to promote maximum exposure to the target language and optimum opportunities to use the target language.

Apart from the language skills and language content, various current developments in education are also to be integrated into language teaching. This includes higher order thinking skills, skills of learning how to learn, information and communication technology skills (ICT), constructivism and mastery learning. Besides that, language teaching should also take into consideration multiple intelligences and emphasize the importance of using real life examples to prepare learners for the real world. Hence, several features are given prominent focus in the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) such as the aim, curriculum documentation, curriculum design, approach, curriculum content, curriculum organisation and the underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum. The following features are those that are relevant to the current study.

2.9.1 The aim of the SCPS

One aspect that is emphasised is the agenda to improve pupils' communication skills and ability. Accordingly, the current curriculum is built upon six core salient topics, which includes 'communication' as one important aspect (Mohamad Yusof, 2008). It is explicitly stated that the aim of the SCPS is "to equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that are appropriate to the pupils' level of development" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 3).

Developing pupils' communicative competence appears to have been a major concern in the SCPS. In SCPS the level of communication is advanced and higher which is recommended and applicable outside of the classroom as well in our daily life. The curriculum hopes to achieve this aim by developing pupils' ability to listen and respond to stimuli with guidance, to participate in daily conversations, to listen and demonstrate understanding of text, to talk about stories heard; and to listen and follow simple instructions (ibid). The curriculum also proposes to encourage pupils to speak from the basic level of sound, word, and phrase and move on to structural sentences in various situational contexts. In addition, pupils are also encouraged to recognise, understand and use verbal and non-verbal communication. Oral communication practice by means

of repeating, responding, understanding and applying what pupils have heard sensitise them to be ready for communication (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010c).

2.9.2 The underlying pedagogical principles of the SCPS

The SCPS is based on several teaching and learning principles. The following are detailed descriptions of the principles.

2.9.2.1 ‘Back to basics approach’

SCPS emphasizes on the development of basic language skills so that students have a strong foundation to build their proficiency in the language such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and language arts. In learning the English language, learners are taught the English sound system to enable them to pronounce words correctly and to speak fluently with the right stress and intonation so that from these early stages, pupils learn to speak internationally intelligible English. It focuses more on basic literacy with an emphasis on phonics.

2.9.2.2 ‘Learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful principle’

The SCPS proposes that contextualised as well as meaningful and purposeful activities will promote the fun element in language learning, which could initiate students’ interest to learn the language. Classroom practices such as inquiry-based, problem-based and project-based activities are some recommended teaching strategies, which promote critical and creative thinking and innovation among pupils.

Teachers ought to be sensitive to students’ learning needs and desires and be ready to identify learning styles that suit them best. Learners differ from each other in their individual strengths, talents and learning styles and preferences. In teaching the curriculum, these variations should be taken into consideration so that the aims and aspirations of the curriculum are consummated and therefore the potential of the child is maximized.

2.9.2.3 ‘Interactive learner-centred learning’

In the words of the MOE Education Director General, Tan Sri Alimuddin Mohd Dom, speaking on the changes in the primary English curriculum, “the teaching and learning approach will be more interactive and interesting especially for the teaching of the two languages namely *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language) and English, in line with the Education Ministry’s policy to strengthen both languages as the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English has come to an end” (Ramachandran, 2010).

Along with the aim, the curriculum promotes the development of higher-order thinking skills as well as learning skills through active and interactive learner-centred learning. The SCPS requires teachers to apply teaching strategies, which promote creative and critical thinking and innovation among pupils. Teachers need to carry out teaching and learning activities, which are student-centred, offer opportunities for pupils to explore and check their hypotheses and concepts; solve problems and most importantly offer fun learning surroundings.

Accordingly, one of the principles underpinning the SCPS concerns the roles of students and teachers in second language classrooms where the concept of learner-centred approach is emphasized. The curriculum highlights the concept of having more student-centred learning, where teachers will not dominate the teaching and learning process. Teachers are encouraged to develop learners’ communicative performance in English by promoting active participation by the pupils in the learning process through various kinds of activities and strategies, such as by allowing them to learn how to interact with their peers, listen attentively, express themselves orally or in writing with confidence, read with comprehension and write with minimal grammatical errors. The teacher undertakes the role of a facilitator of the learning process instead of a knowledge transmitter. Active learning will allow teachers to pay more attention to the differing needs and abilities of the pupils, so that variations in pupils’ learning capabilities and styles can be better catered for and their full potential can be realised.

Another major premise of the SCPS for English curriculum is the amalgamation of critical and creative thinking skills to enable pupils to unravel simple problems make choices and express themselves creatively in simple language. Students will then be able to evaluate an idea, generate and produce ideas, as well as evaluate using a series of

logical steps. Indeed, it is a feature of the SCPS that it incorporates constructivist-learning theory. By engaging the students in a pupil-centred active learning approach, teachers are expected to assist pupils to acquire and build new knowledge and concepts based on their existing knowledge and schemas.

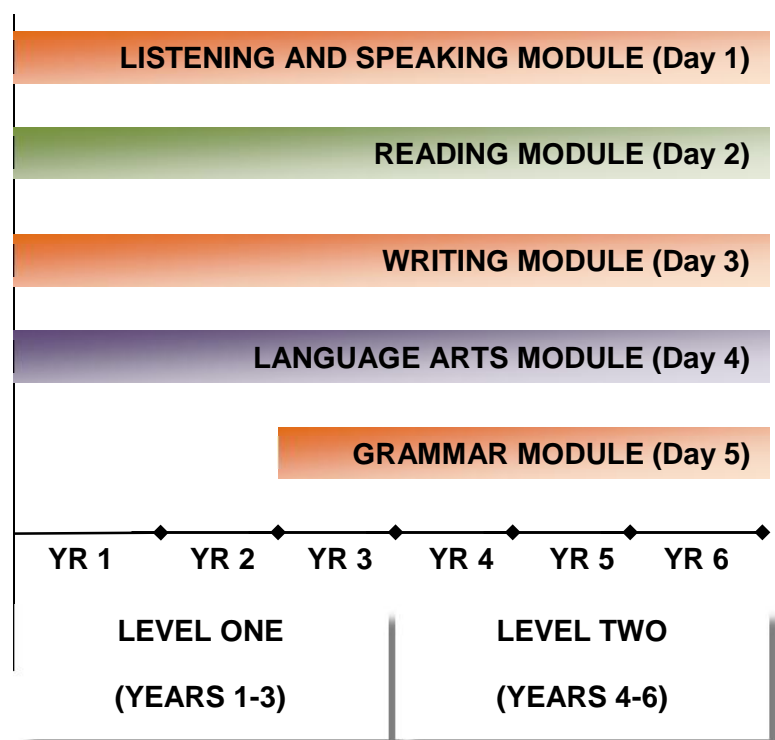
2.9.3 Curriculum documentation: Content Standards and Learning Standards

The SCPS was formulated based on a statement of standards. This comprises content standards and learning standards, which need to be achieved by a student in a specific period and level of schooling. The Content Standards are specific statements of what the students must know and be able to do, within a specific period of schooling, covering the areas of knowledge, skills and values. Learning Standards are set criteria or indicators of education quality and achievements, which can be measured for each content standard (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012c).

2.9.4 Curriculum organisation: The modular curriculum design

The SCPS has a modular structure. The subject of English is placed in the Core Module. In addition to the four basic skills — listening, speaking, reading and writing — two new modules have also been introduced: grammar and language arts. However, the grammar module will only be introduced at a later stage when students are in Year 3. Figure 2.5 below shows the conceptual framework of the curriculum model.

Figure 2.5. The Modular Configuration of the SCPS



(Adapted from: Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010)

Although the SCPS is using modular approach, integration of skills is exploited strategically within a week to reinforce pupils' development of specific language skills, as represented within the content and learning standards in every module. In order to make learning more meaningful and purposeful, language input is presented underneath themes and topics, that area unit thought-about acceptable for pupils. Three broad themes have been identified in the curriculum:

- (1) World of Self, Family and Friends
- (2) World of Stories
- (3) World of Knowledge

2.9.5 The assessment

The SCPS proposes the implementation of school-based assessments, to gauge students' potentials and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom, along with traditional summative assessment. This formative assessment will inform teachers about suitable remedial or enhancement treatments for pupils. It will also help teachers identify and plan salient and effective classroom strategies. Formative assessment is to be conducted as an on-going process, while summative assessment is

conducted at the end of a particular unit or term. Both assessments will be used to gauge pupils' performance. This is also designed to reduce the problem of school being too focused on exams.

2.9.6 The curriculum materials

To assist teachers in the implementation of the SCPS, teachers are provided with two types of curriculum materials: 1) the standard document (the blueprint guiding primary schools' English language education) and 2) the textbook and the teacher guidebook (the conduits guiding the teaching and learning of English). The standard document outlines the aims and objectives of the curriculum, the content and learning standards that need to be achieved, the pedagogical approaches that need to be followed and the modular curriculum design. The textbook and the teacher guidebook are the resources provided as support for teachers to implement the new curriculum. They consist of suitable teaching and learning strategies, as well as activities for teachers. They also give teachers ideas for lesson organization in order to help them organize their daily lessons. The textbook is divided into 30 topics related to the themes specified in the standard document. The teacher guidebook provides appropriate and practical suggestions for teaching strategies via the materials provided. However, teachers are allowed to create applicable and relevant choices using their pedagogical content knowledge, experience, skills and creativity to plan their lessons in order to assist their pupils to learn better. Teachers should select on a theme or topic and so choose appropriate listening and speaking, reading, writing and language arts activities to be used for teaching that topic. Hence, teachers can choose either to use activities from the textbook or choose other alternative appropriate resources when planning their lessons.

2.10 Summary of the chapter

Since independence, education in Malaysia has undergone several changes and development and has passed many milestones. Nonetheless, throughout all of these changes, achieving access, quality, and equity in terms of student outcomes, unity amongst all students, and system efficiency and effectiveness to deliver these, has remained persistent anchors for the system. The intention has been to confirm that every students can have the chance to achieve an excellent education that is unambiguously Malaysian and akin to internationally high-performing education systems.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CURRICULUM REFORM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the study's theoretical underpinning by reviewing the relevant literature regarding effective curriculum reform. The review explores curriculum policy and its implementation in both general education and English language education, using the research evidence from previous conceptual and empirical studies. The review includes the assertions that have been made about the nature of curriculum reform, the role of the teachers in curriculum reform and key variables known to facilitate or impede the implementation of curriculum policies in classrooms and thus to impact on the effectiveness of the curriculum reform. Finally, the review highlights the influence of the dissemination process on curriculum reform and the impact of the curriculum implementation in the classroom.

3.2 Understanding curriculum reform

3.2.1 Why there is a need for educational or curriculum reform

The process of globalization has led to changes in various aspects of life, such as socioeconomic features, culture, the status of the English language and rapid advancement in computing and technology innovation. The need to respond to these profound and multifaceted changes occurring in the world has in turn prompted changes or reforms in both general education and English language policy in many countries, particularly developing ones like Malaysia. The rationale behind revising and updating existing educational curricula is thus to provide learners with the very best opportunities and progression in local and global communities (Airini et al., 2007; Fullan, 2007; Oloruntegbe, 2011). In other words, education must continue to change and curricula should be regularly altered in order to fulfil this pressing need. Indeed, the argument for change or reform in education has become "indisputable" (Bantwini, 2010, p. 88), and change is "inevitable" (Fullan, 1993, p. 4) and an on-going process of constructing meaning (Airini, McNaughton, Langley & Sauni, 2006; El-Okda, 2005; Hallinger, 1998; Jacobs & Farrell, 2001).

To give two examples: the educational system in Turkey has undergone several major alterations and changes since 1980 to better prepare young citizens for the current real world (Aksit, 2007). Likewise, the school system in Singapore has been regularly

reforming to “increase educational standards so as to ensure that more young people can have the appropriate knowledge and skills in the fierce international competition for economic success” (Chew, 2005, p. 2).

In the context of the Malaysian education system, the motivation for the English language component of the recent curriculum reform known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) was “to realign the curriculum and the education standards globally and to match current teaching to the country’s existing and future needs, particularly in recognition of the need to adapt to rapid technological development within and outside the country” (Mohamad Yusof, 2008, p. 4), in order to develop a more competitive workforce as Malaysia pushes towards being a developed nation by 2020 (Bapoo Hashim, 2009). The recent ELT curriculum reform in Malaysia is hence proposing transitions and changes in line with local, regional and global needs (Selvaraj, 2010). In short, educational reform movements are intended to improve education and schools and to make them more effective to meet the current and future needs of the country (Aksit, 2007) by maximising the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Cheng, 1994).

The following section examines different conceptualisations of the curriculum. The purpose is to establish a theoretical basis for later discussion of the factors or variables (a) affecting the development of curriculum reform and its implementation, and (b) determining the effectiveness of curriculum reform in both general and English language education. However, in order to explain the concept of curriculum reform, the curriculum itself needs to be first defined and characterised.

3.2.2 What is a curriculum?

There are several definitions of ‘curriculum’. Broadly defined, a curriculum refers to a selected blueprint for learning that derives from content and performance standards (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). In other words, a curriculum includes content and shapes it into a plan for effective teaching and learning. In the words of Finney (2002), ‘curriculum’ refers to “all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational programme, the why, how and how well together with the what of the teaching-learning process” (p. 70). Thus, the curriculum can be defined as a specific plan with identified lessons in an appropriate form and sequence for directing teaching,

which is synonymous with a syllabus. Richards (2013) defines curriculum as “the overall plan or design for a course and how the content for a course is transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved” (p. 6). A curriculum for English language teaching according to Richards is developed from a decision about the input (i.e. the linguistic content), moves on to a focus on methodology (i.e. the design of classroom activities and materials, the types of learning activities, procedures and techniques that are employed by teachers when they teach and the principles that underlie the design of the activities and exercises in their textbooks and teaching resources) and then leads to a consideration of output (i.e. learning outcomes, that is, what learners are able to do as the result of a period of instruction).

At a more detailed or specific level, a curriculum has been treated as referring to “a set of activities and content planned at the individual level, the programme level, or the whole school level to foster teachers’ teaching and students’ learning” (Cheng, 1994, p. 26). Nordin (1991) and Marsh and Willis (1998) add that through the activities and content, the curriculum provides an experience or a series of experiences that are interconnected, for students to undertake under the guidance of the school and that are planned to achieve a particular goal. Selvaraj (2010) describes a curriculum to refer to “specific subjects or topics within the curriculum of any learning institution” (p. 53). Longstreet and Shane (1993 cited in Ramparsad, 2001, p. 288) limit the scope of a curriculum to “a result of the interaction of objectively developed plans...created by teachers for the benefit of students, as well as for the better implementation of the plan. However, the plan is not the blueprint for student learning but rather the strategy for curriculum development”. Thus they contrast markedly with McTighe and Wiggins (above).

Purkey and Smith (1983, cited in Razali, 2007) divided a curriculum into three dimensions: 1) the ‘intended curriculum’, that is, the curriculum produced by the curriculum developers, 2) the ‘implemented curriculum’ which refers to the curriculum as presented to the students in their classrooms and 3) the ‘attained or realized curriculum’ that is the curriculum as learnt or assimilated by the students. Similarly, the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) is also divided into three dimensions: 1) the ‘written curriculum’, 2) the ‘taught curriculum’ and 3) the ‘examined curriculum’. The written curriculum refers to the knowledge, skills and values that form

the content of a programme, outlining what is to be taught by teachers. The taught curriculum refers to the knowledge acquired, skills developed, and values inculcated in students; and the examined curriculum refers to students' knowledge, skills, and values that are tested, either in summative national examinations or through formative and/or summative PBS (*Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah* or English equivalent School Based Assessment) that guide teaching (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012c). These three dimensions of curriculum are in contrast to Purkey and Smith (above), who interpreted the curriculum purely with reference to the different parties and stakeholders associated with it, rather than to a mixture of stakeholders and educational events, like the SCPS.

Hence, in the context of the SCPS, curriculum is referred to as the knowledge, a set of language skills and competencies that form the content of a taught subject planned to foster teaching and learning in order to achieve a desired goal “that are aligned with the National Education Philosophy⁶ to give Malaysian students an internationally competitive edge” (Ministry of Education, 2012c, p. 4–2).

Based on this definition, clearly the SCPS does not merely entail acquisition of content knowledge, but also the development of skills to ensure holistic development of the students. Thus, the focus of the curriculum for English language component of the SCPS is on the development of students' communicative competency instead of information regarding the language. So what is taught in class and what is examined at the national level ought to correspond the intent of the written curriculum.

3.2.3 What is meant by curriculum reform

Reform in education involves change to various aspects of classrooms, schools, districts, universities and so on (Fullan, 2007). It does not merely mean putting the latest curriculum reform into practice. As Altrichter (2005) notes,

A new curriculum may be described as an attempt to change teaching and learning practices, which will also include the transformation of some of the beliefs and understandings hitherto existent in the setting to be changed. It is usually strong on the material side by providing a

⁶ The National Education Philosophy is predicated on the construct of lifelong education geared towards the development of a virtuously upright individual who is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced (Mustapha, 2008).

written curriculum, textbooks, recommendations for teaching strategies, working material for students, and probably also new artefacts for learning.

(p. 35)

Typically the outcome of change in education is to introduce new ways of doing things, such as improved practices or more efficient use of resources. In the school sector, this type of policy decision usually involves changes to things such as “resource levels and distribution, curriculum content and structure, assessment regimes and reporting methods” (Crump & Ryan, 2001, p. 1). In this sense, reform in education means “the removal of faults and the drive for education outcomes to be better” (Airini et al., 2007, p. 32).

In this study, the terms ‘change’, ‘innovation’ and ‘transformation’ tend to be used interchangeably with the term ‘reform’ although some studies do make a distinction between them. Altrichter (ibid) for example differentiates an innovation from a reform in that the former is usually characterized by some material plan, which describes the intended practices, and the desired ways of changing existing practices. Besides an innovation involves the use of some materials or resources such as time and money, and specific social structures (e.g., steering groups, peer observation, debriefing sessions, regular appraisal) to make people act in another way. Its real test lies in it being put into practice. In other words, “innovation is a practice to change practices” (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 9).

However, in the context of this study, I consider change in the educational context to encompass reform, transformations and innovations. As mentioned by Marsh and Willis (1998), curriculum change is “a term that subsumes concepts such as innovation, development and adoption” (p. 150). For the purposes of this study, ‘curriculum reforms’ will be used to refer to the changes, which the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia has introduced in the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS).

Generally change can be divided into two: ‘piecemeal change’ and ‘systemic change’ (Reigeluth, 1994). The difference between the two is that the former involves only modification of some part(s) of the system, while the latter refers to change that entails replacing the whole system. In the context of this study, reforms in the curriculum refer to piecemeal change, since the changes involve amendments to several but not all

aspects of the Malaysian English primary schools curriculum. In the context of SCPS, reforms in the curriculum refer to a change process based on the existing school curriculum involving changes in basic aspects of a curriculum, such as content structure, pedagogy, time allocation, assessment procedure, curriculum materials and school management (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2009). Reforms in the curriculum are designed to improve facets of the educational system, such as aspects of teaching practices, alongside beliefs about and understandings of the curriculum, pedagogy and learning.

Another relevant way of classifying educational change is by dividing it into external and internal change (O'Sullivan, 2002). The former refers to “the externally initiated change itself, its development as well as efforts to implement and evaluate it”, while the latter focuses on “the implementers of change who are the teachers and how they implement the change” (ibid, p. 221). Since this study examines the effectiveness of a curriculum reform via three domains — the curriculum documents and dissemination process which involves external aspects and its implementation in the classroom which relates to the internal aspects — this study covers both external and internal aspects of educational change.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Mascall (2002) argue that seven elements are necessary for comprehensive large-scale reform initiatives:

“...a unifying vision; curriculum frameworks and related materials; standards for judging student success; policies that reinforce the standards; information about the organization’s performance; a complementary system of finance and governance; and an agent that receives and acts on information about organizational performance”

(p. 11)

Fullan (2007) however identifies at least three topics that are relevant to any new educational policy or curriculum reform: 1) the possible introduction of new or revised teaching materials, that is, direct instructional resources such as textbooks; 2) the possible introduction of new teaching approaches or methodological skills, for example, new teaching strategies or activities; and 3) the possible attempted alteration of beliefs, for example, pedagogical values, assumptions and theories underlying particular new

policies. All these three components are essential in order for change to achieve its specific educational goals and to produce the intended outcomes.

In sum, factors such as curriculum framework, teaching principles, teaching approaches, support materials, curriculum resources, the role of the implementers and how information on curriculum reform is communicated are significant to determine the success of any curriculum reform. And the recent curriculum reform for primary schools in Malaysia, the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for English involves changes in all these important components with the aim of improving students' communicative ability. Hence, to examine the effectiveness of the SCPS, it will be important to examine, as stated earlier in Chapter One, the curriculum document, the dissemination process and how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom.

3.2.4 The role of teachers in curriculum reform

Curricular reforms are extremely demanding on teachers, and the nature of most curriculum reform requires most teachers to make big changes to implement them well (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007). There is an abundance of literature that discusses the role of the teachers and the influence they have on the success and failure of reforms in education. As this study examines recent curriculum reform from the perspectives of the teachers (the rationale to discuss this study from teachers' perspectives is in Chapter Five) it will be important to look at the role of the teachers involved.

Teachers have been described in various ways with respect to educational change and curriculum reform: as the *implementers* (Wang, 2008), *playmakers* (Cuban, 1998, cited in Priestly, 2005), the *centrepiece of educational change* (Datnow & Castellano, 2000), *key players* (Kirkg z, 2008b), *decision-makers*, and *main stakeholders* (Wang & Cheng, 2008). Wu (2001) argues that teachers are the key to the outcome of reform and therefore of ELT. The former Education Director-General of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), Tan Sri Dr Murad Mohammad Nor once shared the same view when he said that "the most important part in the implementation of any plan is the teachers. However good the plan, it will be of no use if the teachers do not implement it well" ("Pak Lah: Think out of the box," 2007).

In a similar vein, Karavas-Doukas (1995) admits that, “in the long and arduous journey of implementing an innovation the teachers’ role and contribution is essential because teachers are the instruments of change” (p. 55). Without teachers’ willingness, participation and cooperation, change in education is impossible. Hence, centrally initiated curriculum change will be of no value if it fails to engage the teachers as the key players or implementers to improve the student outcomes (Cuban, 1998, cited in Priestly, 2005). In other words, the significant role that teachers play in curriculum reform must not be unnoticed if implementation is to be successful (Wang & Cheng, 2008). Fullan (1993) similarly describes teachers as agents of change in education reform because they are able to greatly influence the end result.

Clearly then, teachers are in large part responsible for the success of the implementation of an educational change, as they pass on the changes through their teaching. However, their ability to engage in change productively and achieve the desired results can only be achieved if adequate resources and support are provided. Teachers need support in terms of developing their knowledge and skills to perform the new curriculum and their roles, if the changes are to be successfully implemented. The knowledge and skills required can be enhanced through training and professional development. If teachers are not provided with enough support, adaptation and acceptance to the changes are unlikely to occur. Kennedy (1996) emphasizes that,

Teachers can be a powerful positive force for change but only if they are given the resources and support which will enable them to carry out implementation effectively, otherwise the change is more likely to cause stress and disaffection with the change remaining as a pilot with certain schools rather than creating a renewed national system.

(p. 87)

Brain, Reid and Boyes (2006) agree that the success of any education policy depends on how the practitioners, namely the teachers, accept the mandated policy and adopt the desired practices. Teachers’ openness and willingness to accept changes or their resistance to (or modification of) government policy could affect the implementation process and eventually determine the success or the failure of a new policy. As O’Donnell (2005) notes, “bureaucrats may give orders, but it is up to the individual teacher to implement those changes at the classroom level” (p. 301).

3.3 Why curriculum reform fails

In as much as teachers play a very significant role in the implementation of an innovative curriculum and in ensuring the effectiveness of the curriculum reform, the downside is that in many cases it is they who get blamed for the failure to implement the proposed changes as intended. The literature on curriculum innovation, however, argues that teachers should not be the only ones to be blamed for the success or the failure of an innovation, because there are other factors that impinge on successful reform implementation (Karavas-Doukas, 1993; 1995). Orafi (2008) and Orafi and Borg (2009) agree, as they found that limited uptake of educational innovation during the implementation of a new communicative English language curriculum in Libya was due to other obstacles, such as a mismatch between the examination and the aim of the curriculum, students' low proficiency level in English and limited training and development. Bantwini (2010) concludes that the repeated failure of curriculum reforms to achieve the desired outcomes is because the curriculum developers overlook the social issues that surround the teachers, school or district.

The literature on curriculum implementation suggests that myriad factors have the potential to impact on the extent to which innovations or reforms in education are implemented (Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992). Among the factors identified that perpetuate existing teaching practices and hinder integration of innovative teaching methods and approaches include institutional pressures, such as large class sizes (Chang, 2011b; Hiep, 2007; Hu, 2002; Kirkgöz, 2009; Mondejar, Valdvia, Laurier & Mboutsiadis, 2012; Qoyyimah, 2009; Wang, 2008; Wedell, 2003). Tılfarlıo lu and Öztürk (2007) point out that a high teacher:learner ratio makes it difficult for teachers to apply learner-centred teaching approaches that require active pupil involvement. Bantwini (2010) similarly claims that to work in crowded classroom is often extremely infuriating and devastating for teachers, as they struggle to give attention to all the learners. With respect to language teaching, over-crowded classes limit the students' opportunities to practice listening and speaking through effective techniques such as group discussions and oral interactions, because such practices require sufficient time and attention (Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012). In other words, over-crowding hinders effective learning and effective teaching.

Obstacles related to organisational arrangements, such as role overload, rigid scheduling of time and failure of the administration to recognise and understand the changes involved have also been identified as contributing to the implementation or non-implementation of a curriculum reform. In a study to investigate the implementation of English as foreign language in elementary schools in Turkey, Tılfarlıo lu and Öztürk (2007) found that an over-loaded weekly timetable was one factor behind teachers not able to teach effectively. A second example of unsuccessful implementation is that of the Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) programme to upper primary students in Malaysia. CCL was a programme that was introduced into English classes in Malaysian primary schools in 2003, with the aim of improving English language teaching through the introduction of storybooks or children's literature. One of the reasons for the unsuccessful implementation of the programme was the limited understanding and unawareness of the broader policy context among the administrators/principals involved (Abdul Rahman, 2007).

Equally important are problems related to contextual factors such as a lack of fit between the curriculum teaching approach and the reality of the teaching situation (Saad, 2009, 2011; Waters & Vilches, 2005; Waters & Vilches, 2008). Failure to recognize factors such as the poor physical conditions of classrooms, or problems with the context within which teachers work, like poor infrastructure, lack of support services, or the geographical location of the school are likely to result in the curriculum reform not proceeding in the intended manner (Bantwini, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2002). Hence, a suitable teaching environment is prerequisite for successful implementation of new curriculum (Gömleksiz, 2005).

Another reason why teachers fail to implement a curriculum policy or reform in education as expected relates to the impact of testing and inconsistency between policy goals and examinations (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Many education systems are heavily examination oriented (Hassan & Selamat, 2002; Lan, 1994, Pandian, 2002; Sidhu, Fook & Kaur, 2010), and the system focuses on teaching students to answer questions and seek better grades (ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM & KITA-UKM, 2012). Hence, teachers tend to teach to the test, and instruction is tailored to what is tested (Wang, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2009). Skills and content that teachers perceive will go untested in the National Examinations are often dropped from lesson plans and more attention is given to content that is more frequently tested (Ministry of Education, 2012c). Therefore,

classroom teaching emphasizes the techniques of answering the different types of question which are commonly asked in the exam and, in the case of foreign languages, teaching the aspects of language which are standardly tested, rather than focusing on the development of language skills as intended in the policy. As a result, students eventually rote learn the questions, rather than make an effort to learn the language (Kausar & Akhtar, 2013).

Teachers' lack of knowledge and teaching skills may also deter the implementation of a curriculum innovation. Studies have shown that curriculum reform or innovation was not carried out in classrooms where teachers did not have the knowledge or skills required (Chang, 2011b; UNESCO & IBE, 2011). A report by the Malaysian Ministry of Education states that the integrated curriculum for primary and secondary schools in Malaysia was not fully executed in either primary or secondary schools in Malaysia, due to the fact that most teachers were less effective at teaching the higher-order thinking skills articulated in the written curriculum than was needed (Ministry of Education, 2012c). Cook (2009) discovered similar factors hindering Japanese teachers in the implementation of CLT. He categorizes them into four main factors: (1) personal attributes, (2) practical constraints, (3) external influences and (4) awareness. Cook explains,

Personal attributes include factors such as deficiencies in oral English, deficiency in sociolinguistic and strategic competence and traditional attitudes; practical constraints include wider context of curriculum like traditional teaching methods, class sizes and schedule, resources and equipment, lack of texts, students' not accustomed to CLT, difficulty in evaluation, too much preparation time, grammar-based examinations, lack of exposure to authentic language, grammar-based syllabus, insufficient funding; external influences are factors like low status of CLT teachers, students don't perceive a need for it, student resistance due to CLT practices being different from traditional teacher/student interactions, lack of support for government agencies, colleagues, etc.; awareness are factors such as misconceptions about CLT and training includes factors like lack of training or few opportunities for retraining.

(p. 100)

Other factors that have been frequently discussed in the literature and seem to have a significant influence on the effectiveness of a curriculum innovation include teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards reform (Carless, 1997), a lack of clarity about curriculum reform (Fullan, 2007; Smit, 2005), which results in teachers' lack of

understanding of the curriculum innovation (Bantwini, 2010; Karavas, 1993; Kırkgöz, 2008a), teachers' non-involvement in the curriculum development process (Kırkgöz, 2009), insufficient instructional support and inadequate resources (Hu, 2002; Kırkgöz, 2008a) and shortcomings in the dissemination of the curriculum reform, like a lack of teacher in-service or professional development (Carless, 1998; Hayes, 2000; Wang & Cheng, 2008). Overall, it is clear that there are numerous factors that may affect the implementation of a curriculum innovation. The following sections will discuss a selection of key factors in more detail.

3.3.1 Teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of curriculum reform

One of the most significant factors that has been cited as affecting the implementation or non-implementation of an educational reform is how teachers perceive, and their attitudes towards, the anticipated and implemented curriculum reform. Carless (1997), Kyriakides (1997) and Mulat (2003) claim that teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about the curriculum reform play a crucial role in the adoption, reinvention or rejection of a new curriculum. And Bantwini (2010) aptly notes that "teachers' perceptions and beliefs influence and shape the meanings that the teachers eventually attach to the new reforms, which in turn play a vital role in their acceptance and classroom implementation" (p. 89).

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes may develop from their own "learning experiences, training, teaching experience, interaction with colleagues and values and norms of the society in which they work" (Carless, 1998, p. 354). Teachers with good learning experience, effective training and teaching experience usually show positive attitudes and behaviour towards teaching and the innovation, which eventually results in a positive outcome. In a case study of the implementation of the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in primary schools in Hong Kong, Carless (ibid) found that a teacher with a positive attitude towards the innovation in the curriculum was able to foster the TOC in a way which was compatible with the constructivist view of learning adopted in the TOC framework despite some confusion during the implementation process.

Conversely, the existence of negative perceptions and attitudes on the part of teachers can mean English Language Teaching reforms are significantly beyond teachers' capacities, leading to unsuccessful implementation and consequently ineffective

curriculum reform (Morris, 1985). Thus, Handal and Herrington (2003) are of the opinion that it is fundamental to “acknowledge, identify, analyse and address teachers’ attitudes, feelings, perceptions and understanding before the launching of any innovation in order for the innovation to be successfully implemented” (p. 65).

Studies of reform initiatives suggest that in most cases the teachers concerned are likely to show not uniform positivity or hostility, but rather a range of attitudes and opinions. Thus Kennedy (1996) found that the Spanish teachers he surveyed were not all antagonistic towards its national curriculum reform. Some were just scared to change to something new where they were used to the old system, some were favourably inclined to the change while others were open to the changes, but needed time to adopt them, and especially to learn new techniques.

Teachers’ perceptions of their role in the classroom, and difficulties with taking on a new role, may also be relevant to the success of a reform (Abdul Aziz, 1987). Thus Karavas-Doukas (1995) found that in Greek secondary schools EFL innovations where English was supposed to be taught using a communicative learner-centred approach, many teachers were in fact not able to adopt a different role in the classroom and make the students the centre of the learning and teaching process. The reason was that “most teachers viewed their role in the classroom primarily and ultimately as the language expert who was equipped with the ability, knowledge and skills to transmit information on the language to learners” (ibid, p. 60). In short, it was difficult for the teachers to change their roles from knowledge dispenser to facilitator.

Knowing how teachers’ perceive a curricular reform and the attitudes they hold towards it is important, because their perceptions and attitudes will govern the kind of behaviour that will be cultivated in real classroom activities (Carless, 1998). In other words, teachers’ perceptions and attitudes are highly likely to influence their decision whether (or not) to conduct their classroom practice in accordance with what is intended in the reform. Indeed, Gorsuch (2000) suggests that the attitudes and beliefs of the teachers are the single strongest guiding influence on instruction.

Ford (1992, as cited in Haney, Lumpe, Czerniak & Egan, 2002) identifies two types of beliefs for a person to function effectively; 1) capability beliefs as “an individual perception of whether he or she possesses the personal skills needed to function

effectively”, and 2) context beliefs as an “individual’s perceptions about how responsive the environment will be in supporting effective functioning” (p. 172). Ford argues that the combination of these two beliefs develops personal belief patterns that are likely to influence the motivation level of a person to reach the goal of the education reform. Haney et al (2002) share a similar view that the beliefs teachers hold are “valid predictors of their subsequent classroom actions” (p. 181). Their study in a large urban district located in northwest Ohio on the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and actual classroom behaviour to determine teaching effectiveness in science classrooms revealed that teachers with positive capability and context beliefs scored high in effective science teaching.

A mismatch between what teachers believe about classroom practice and teaching theory and the philosophy behind an educational reform can affect its degree of success, the morale of the teachers and their willingness to implement it further. Studies on the process of implementing curriculum innovations or reforms have revealed a situation of excessive complexity when teachers hold negative attitudes or conflicting beliefs towards the reforms and/or misunderstand the principles underpinning the changes. Incompatibility between teachers’ perceptions and their existing attitudes and the change philosophy is likely to cause derailment of the reform effort, changes not to be implemented as expected, and ultimately resistance to the change. Conversely, if teachers’ beliefs are compatible with the innovation, it has been found that acceptance is more likely to occur (Roefrig & Kruse, 2005).

Kırkgöz (2009) in an overview of the recent changes introduced into the ELT curriculum at primary level in Turkey has found that teachers whose views were consistent with the current views of CLT and TEYLs (Teaching English to Young Learners) had a greater likelihood of implementing the new Communicative Oriented Curriculum (COC) in their classrooms. However, if teachers hold opposing beliefs or perceive barriers to enacting the curriculum, then “low-take up, dilution and corruption” of the reform is likely to follow (Carless, 1998; Handal & Herrington, 2003, p. 61). Karavas-Doukas (1995) found that incompatibility between Greek secondary school teachers’ beliefs about the learning process and the principles of educational innovation resulted in a reduced implementation of communicative teaching in the classroom. Similar findings have been reported in studies from both Egypt (Holliday, 1996) and China (Hui, 1997; Penner, 1995). In short, as Haney et al (2002) note, “people tend to

act according to their beliefs and beliefs that teachers hold on educational reform are the core of educational change” (p. 171).

Teachers’ beliefs about the relevance of a reform to the students and the teaching environment are also crucial to the reform process. Teachers tend to be reluctant, unwilling and resistant to change when they believe what is required of them in the curriculum reform is irrelevant to the students and unrealistic to the classrooms. Palmer (1993) emphasises that innovations are highly likely to be adapted by teachers if they think it is appropriate and relevant to their teaching contexts. Indeed, most reform efforts have been to no avail, as they are viewed and perceived as impractical, unfeasible and incompatible with existing classroom realities, conditions and constraints (Kennedy, 1996; Wang, 2008).

Morris (1985) reveals that in the early 1980s teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools were unwilling to put into practice a curriculum emphasising a heuristic⁷ style of learning and active pupil involvement, as required by the official curriculum documents, due to their beliefs that lecturing was the most efficient method to prepare students for the examination. The teachers in his study kept their traditional approach of giving lectures and supplying notes, because the new approach was perceived as being inefficient to cover the examination syllabus and likely to produce undesirable consequences, such as teachers being blamed for students’ failure in the examinations, pupils refusing to cooperate and negative evaluations of teachers’ performance.

Teachers’ beliefs about the practicality of an innovation can strongly influence their willingness to implement it. A major element of practicality is the extent to which the innovation is compatible with existing classroom practices. Reforms that require radical changes to teacher behaviour are likely to be labelled as impractical by teachers, irrespective of their objectives. As White et al. (1991 cited in Carless, 1997), put it: “to be practical, an innovation needs to be able to fit into the existing school systems. An innovation which places heavy demands on the school in terms of time, personnel and money will be less likely to be adopted than one which has more realistic demands” (ibid, p. 352).

⁷ A learning process whereby a person learn, discover, understand, or solve problems on his or her own, as by experimenting, evaluating possible answers or solutions, or by trial and error.

The teachers' perception of the flexibility of the new curriculum is another type of belief that may influence the effectiveness of a curriculum reform. A curriculum is flexible when teachers are allowed to implement it at a pace that suits them and to adapt it to the local context. Thus, Cowley and Williamson (1998) propose that in order for a curriculum to be successful,

A flexibility model is preferable to an over prescriptive model. The flexibility model involves providing national curricula guidelines with localized interpretation and implementation at a pace determined, at least to some extent, by the schools and their teachers. The flexibility model promotes collegiality among staff and results in school curricula relevant to the local context, but bounded by a national curriculum framework.

(pp. 91–92)

It has been repeatedly found that teachers believe allowing a new curriculum change to fit their local school context is essential because the ability to modify, adjust and make amendments whenever they feel necessary ensures maximum curriculum interest for students and the production of a more effective curriculum. Indeed, Ramparsad (2001) emphasises that the opportunity for teachers to be flexible with respect to their roles in the classroom and the ability for them to contextualise the curriculum content to make it relevant to their teaching contexts results in successful implementation of a curriculum innovation. Besides, allowing teachers to commit to the innovation at their own pace enables them to take on board the ideas and concepts inherent in the curriculum when they feel ready. As a consequence, as Cowley and Williamson (1998) note, “teachers will have time to become familiar with the ideas inherent in the documents and thus [are] less likely to reject the change” (p. 89). In other words, a flexible model of new curriculum avoids the problem of having teachers subvert or resist the change process (Fullan, 1991, 1993).

Nevertheless, an under-prescriptive curriculum that allows considerable freedom for teachers to make professional decisions as to what to do and how to do it, and even when to teach, may well cause misinterpretation of the curriculum. This is because different teachers may interpret the curriculum differently (Ben-Peretz, 1990). As there are few or no suggestions or guidelines as to the choice of content and curriculum materials, teachers are likely to make pedagogical decisions based on their own understanding and professional expertise.

Conversely, Fullan (1991) argues that over-prescription of a curriculum can stifle the successful implementation of a national curriculum as it does not allow, in particular, “amendment in changing circumstances for the development and implementation of the innovation, allowance for staff to commit to the innovation at their own pace and, to some extent, openness of staff to try new ideas and teaching strategies” (ibid, 1991, p. 89). The over-prescription model does not allow for differences in school contexts or teacher development and readiness for change.

However, in foreign language teaching Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) argue that teachers’ attitudes towards issues in education such as curriculum reform may not be totally influential in determining their actual classroom behaviour. They found that there was a mismatch between teachers’ expressed attitudes and what they actually did in the classroom. Some teachers were found to have positive attitudes towards changes in the curriculum, but in actual fact did not implement it in the classrooms as required. This was because there were other equally important factors that can influence successful implementation of change. Such factors included “subjective norms” (ibid, p. 355) which refers to what the individual believes others think about the behaviour concerned and “perceived behavioural control” (ibid, p. 356), which consists of internal or external factors associated with the context, such as teachers’ low language proficiency level, their lack of pedagogical knowledge, the clarity or otherwise of the information on the required change and large class sizes. A teacher may perceive a change in education to be beneficial, but if the head teacher is not in favour of the change, or the class size is so large that it is impossible to implement the change, this may result in non-implementation of the change.

The study mentioned earlier on how teachers of the Contemporary Children’s Literature (CCL) programme in Malaysian upper primary schools perceived and implemented the programme provides evidence that, despite teachers’ reported awareness of the aims and objectives of the programme and their support and belief in its benefits, their classroom instruction was found to be teacher-centred rather than student-centred as advocated. The child-centred approaches and activities required by the CCL were for the most part unheeded, as teachers simply continuing with their usual teacher-centred patterns (Abdul Rahman, 2007). There have been restricted opportunities for pupils to initiate talk and a failure on the part of teachers to build upon pupil contributions. Teachers failed to differentiate between more or less proficient students. The more proficient

children complained about being bored by inappropriate activities (Sidhu, Fook & Kaur, 2010). This all suggests that teachers' positive perceptions are not always indicators of their fidelity to the proposed programme, a conclusion which appears to be in conflict with other studies reported previously e.g. Carless (1997), Gorsuch (2000), Handal and Herrington (2003), Kyriakides (1997), (Morris, 1985), Mulat (2003) and Roefrig and Kruse (2005).

3.3.2 The clarity of the curriculum

Another factor that has been found to constrain the implementation of a curriculum reform is the clarity of description of the changes involved. If teachers are to implement and apply a teaching theory in their classroom successfully, they must fully and clearly understand the basic principles and practical implications of that theory (Karavas, 1993). Smit (2005) shares similar opinion that "teachers' local knowledge, which includes teacher understanding of the curriculum reform may affect the policy implementation and non-implementation process" (p. 304). Carless (1998) agrees, arguing that understanding how to apply the theories of the innovation in the classroom is of considerable consequence, because this is the component that determines the success or the failure of the implementation process, especially in a context where the teachers are not well-trained or lack distinct knowledge of the innovation.

Evidence suggests that the curriculum to be implemented should be delineated in significantly clear and concrete language to ensure a clear understanding of the curriculum, Leithwood, Jantzi and Mascall (2002) explain,

This is not meant to diminish the necessity and value of dealing with relevant conceptual and philosophical matters in curriculum frameworks and related materials. It does mean, however, that the actual practices emerging from such considerations need to be outlined very clearly, and with plenty of illustrations if they are to be widely and uniformly understood. The curriculum and forms of instruction appropriate for implementing the curriculum, should receive equal emphasis in frameworks, guidelines and related materials designed to describe the new classroom practices advocated by the reform.

(p. 14)

A clear description of the curriculum will determine the teachers' depth of understanding and lead to a good knowledge of it. Kirgk z (2008b) explains that

“teachers’ understanding of the principles underlying the reform strategies plays a significant role in the degree of implementation of an innovation” (p. 1860) because teachers with a low degree of understanding may generate a low degree of implementation. For her (2008a, b) study examining how teachers of English approached the implementation of an innovation for young learners in Turkish primary English classrooms, Kırgköz (2008a) defined understanding of the curriculum “as the ability to articulate the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Communicative Oriented Curriculum (COC) and an awareness of the implications for classroom practice in TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners)” (p. 317). Kırgköz found that a lack of understanding of the theories underlying the curriculum innovation, plus an inability to envision the practical implications of the principles of the communicative approach, resulted in most teachers continued to use their traditional way of teaching and being unwilling to attempt new methods: specifically, the promotion of practical communicative skills, an emphasis on encouraging pupils’ active participation through communicative activities and student-centred classroom organization.

A lack of understanding of what is required of the teachers in the classroom, due to insufficient information, and negative responses to the reforms may result in uncertainty (O’Sullivan, 2002) and hinder positive change and implementation (Bantwini, 2010). This may be due to the fact that unclear understanding of the theory behind the educational reform and of its practical implications may lead to confusion, misconception and misinterpretation of what is required and this may eventually obstruct the implementation process (Bennie & Newstead, 1999). Karavas-Doukas (1995) claims that incomplete understanding of the theoretical and practical implications of what a communicative syllabus entails was one of the main reasons why the Greek secondary teachers (see above) were unable to employ principles of learner-centred approach as required by the communicative language-teaching syllabus.

Wang (2008) emphasises that unclear understanding of the syllabus and a lack of guidance about the teaching methods that language teachers should use may result in teachers sticking to the teaching methods with which they felt most comfortable, even though they were not necessarily effective or appropriate and might not be congruent with what is prescribed in the policy or the syllabus. English, Hargreaves and Hislam (2002) illustrate how teachers in England ignored the reforms in implementing the

National Literacy Strategy (NLS) due to confusion about what was being demanded from them. In a study on teachers' early responses to curriculum reform in California, Cohen and Ball (1990) reported that some teachers resorted to organizing the new curriculum within the existing structure of their established practice so that the new materials conformed to their existing teaching style due to limited understanding of the reform. When teachers' theories on teaching and learning contradicted the philosophy of curriculum change, there was a tendency for teachers to understand the reform strategies or the innovative ideas in the light of their own teaching styles. As a result, the required (and expected) changes did not materialize.

To sum up, a good curriculum requires careful planning and development, and it is worthless and ineffectual if teachers are not alert and receptive to what is required of them and if they cannot see how the innovation can be successfully applied in their own classrooms (Marsh & Willis, 1998). Teachers accordingly need to be provided with adequate information on what is expected of them and to enable them to fully understand and value the theoretical underpinnings of the innovation. There should be a clear description as to what teachers should do, why it should be done and how to do it. This is because issues of clarity have been found in almost every study of significant change, particularly when the reform is too complicated. Despite the fact that there is agreement that some kind of change is needed, teachers usually are not clear of what they should do (Baine, 1993).

3.3.2.1 Teachers' non-involvement in the development of curriculum reform

One suggested reason for the lack of understanding of curricular reform is teachers' minimal or non-involvement in the design and development of the curriculum. Research shows that teachers' involvement in curriculum development is confined largely to the implementation of the curriculum in order to achieve the product (Ramparsad, 2001). This is due to the top-down approach of much school-level curriculum development, where the division of labour between experts as designers and teachers as implementers is the norm (El-Okda, 2005). Teachers are not usually involved in important stages, such as development and evaluation, even though it is claimed that curriculum implementation can only be successful if they are (Cheng, 1994; Fang, 2010). Teachers' non-involvement in the development of the curriculum may result in a sense of a lack of ownership, which will directly influence their understanding and consequently affect the

implementation of the curriculum reform. It is reported that teachers often show resistance and lack of commitment to the implementation of curriculum reforms precisely because they are seldom involved in the development or in establishing how best to implement them (Oloruntegbe, 2011). Teacher involvement in the conceptual and development stages of the reforms will facilitate their understanding of the crux of the new curriculum, and its necessity as well as the expected end results (Bantwini, 2010).

As noted above, minimal or non-involvement in the development of a curriculum reform results in lack of a sense of belonging or ownership. Carless (1997) claims it is necessary to create a sense of belonging amongst teachers who will be responsible for putting the innovatory ideas into classroom practice, in order for curriculum implementation to be successful. One way to enhance the feeling of ownership is by making the teachers feel they play an important role in policy-decision making. To this end, Ramparsad (2001) suggests actively engaging teachers in all phases of curriculum development at school, district, provincial and national levels of educational organization.

Personal ownership within the curriculum reform process is vital, because the effectiveness of a programme has been found to be negligible when changes in education are viewed as an extra burden rather than as change to improve the teachers' skill to deliver quality education to learners. This is especially true in many curriculum reforms that adopt the top-down approach (Airini et al., 2007). Johnson (2001) in a study to determine the key elements that would affect successful curriculum reform from the perspectives of the educational practitioners employed in public schools districts within the Southeastern quadrant of Missouri found that the effectiveness rate was considerably higher when the curriculum was reviewed, rewritten and established by practitioners who used it. In short, "greater involvement of teachers in the design phase at the macro-level contributes to greater professionalism and empowerment" (Ramparsad, 2001, p. 289).

Hence, Ramparsad (2001) and Oloruntegbe (2011) argue that teachers who are in the field and know what and where a change is needed should initiate reforms. In other words, a bottom-up approach is more relevant than top-down approach in the development of curriculum reform. A curriculum emerging through this process will be

more acceptable because teachers will not be reluctant to implement it, as they are accountable and responsible for providing quality education (Oloruntegbe, 2011).

3.3.3 The availability/significance of required curriculum resources and materials

The availability, adequacy and quality of curriculum resources and materials may also be a factor that affects the feasibility or success of a curriculum reform. The textbook is still the basic tool or guidance that most teachers need in the implementation of new curriculum innovation. Baine (1993) and Chang (2011b) point out that the existing resources should be sufficient to support the innovation and the necessary facilities, equipment, materials and supplies should be available to ensure effective or successful curriculum reform. Carless (1997) reported that one of the reasons why the initial piloting of the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong was not successful was the lack of teaching resources. Teachers were not provided with sufficient teaching materials or with additional noncontact time in which to rewrite schemes of work or prepare supplementary materials. This resulted in teachers simply avoiding implementing the new curriculum.

Apart from that, if the materials are not of a high standard or do not accurately reflect the principles of the innovation, their production may be counterproductive. Thus Kırıköz (2008a) found that due to the failure of the textbooks for the Turkish Communicative Oriented Curriculum (COC) to promote listening and speaking, and to the fact that the activities in the textbook were not contextualised in situations meaningful to the learners (which is a prerequisite of communicative methodology), the result was a non-implementation of the COC.

3.3.4 The dissemination process of curriculum reform

The process of disseminating a large-scale innovation in education, a curriculum reform, or new teaching and learning methods, is commonly achieved through in-service teacher training (INSET) or professional development (Hayes, 2000; Lamb, 1995; Mathekga, 2004; McDevitt, 1998; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Wedell, 2005). Such training is clearly a highly important part of any reform (Ramparsad, 2001). Above and beyond skills and method training, it is an important

way of encouraging motivation and commitment of the teachers (Baine 1993). An effective dissemination process may well determine the success of an educational change.

In-service training is an essential preparation for a new curriculum because teachers need retraining in new skills and knowledge, particularly when the required methodology is very different from the existing one (Carless, 1997). The purpose of the training is usually to bring about changes in beliefs and attitudes, in teachers' classroom practices — by transforming their knowledge into classroom practice — (Avalos, 2011) and in students' learning outcomes (Guskey, 1986). Training and professional support is crucial to establish and improve necessary skills and knowledge, especially in the case of unqualified and under-qualified teachers (Morris, 1985; Suzuki, 2011).

Inadequate and ineffective training can be a potential barrier to curriculum reform implementation. According to O'Sullivan (2002), in order to ensure successful and effective implementation, the professional support given to teachers need to be given careful consideration. Kirgk z (2008b) notes that the training teachers receive is important, because insufficient and ineffective training may lead to teachers' incomplete understanding of the proposed changes in the curriculum. Training is a means of ensuring a good understanding of the curriculum reform, where the theoretical and practical aspects are clarified and teachers' language learning or teaching attitudes are revised and refined (Karavas-Doukas, 1995). However, unfortunately, research on curriculum reform reveals that the curriculum is usually implemented in the absence of adequate or effective in-service professional training and support (Bantwini, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2002).

3.3.4.1 The cascade model

The most common strategy of disseminating information in most in-service training programmes especially for introducing major curriculum innovations or reform into an educational system is the cascade model. This strategy is widely used due to its advantage of providing training for a maximum number of teachers in a cost effective manner (Bax, 2002; Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; McDevitt, 1998; Suzuki, 2011). Hayes (2000) adds that the cascade model is both cost effective and minimizes the problems of teacher absences during school time and uses trainers who are drawn from successive

tiers, as the training is conducted at several levels. This is one of the reasons why the cascade model is well known in the process of disseminating curriculum reform to teachers, especially in under-resourced situations and where “the number of teachers needing training is large and/or funding to provide training is limited” (Wedell, 2005, p. 637).

Basically, the cascade model involves training which is conducted at several levels (Hayes, 2000) following a ‘top-down’ and ‘centre-periphery’ approach (McDevitt, 1998). Through the cascade model approach, the knowledge and skills thought necessary to initiate specified changes in classroom understandings and behaviours are transferred to a comparatively small number of specialists or trainers at the top (Wedell, 2005). These specialists or trainers are then expected to train a cohort of selected teachers at the lower group and these teachers are then expected to pass on the essence of their training to their colleagues in schools (Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Suzuki, 2011). However, the cascade has potential disadvantages, like dilution and distortion, or simply the loss of the messages transferred during the training. This may lead to less understanding, due to miscommunication and different interpretations of the messages, the further one goes down the cascade (Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; Hayes, 2000; Suzuki, 2011). Hayes (2000) suggests for cascade training to be successful there are five criteria that need attending to:

1. The method of conducting the training must be experiential and reflective rather than transmissive;
2. The training must be open to reinterpretation; rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working should not be expected;
3. Expertise must be diffused through the system as widely as possible, not concentrated at the top;
4. A cross-section of stakeholders must be involved in the preparation of training materials;
5. Decentralisation of responsibilities within the cascade structure is desirable.

(p. 138)

A purely transmissive mode of training at all levels is one of the prime causes of failure of the cascade model, because one-way communication and theory alone are insufficient

and ineffective (Hayes, 1995). Training needs to involve two-way communication between trainers and trainees, to encourage active participation and commitment from all the participants involved at all levels. Palmer (1993) explains, “the transmission approach, which is a one-way model [does] not allow the participants to personally invest in the idea and therefore [they] may have little commitment to using it” (p. 168).

In the study on the implementation of a Greek English language teaching innovation, Karavas-Doukas (1993, 1995) agrees that training which mainly dealt with theoretical issues, rather than classroom reality and practice, was one factor that impinged on the successful implementation of the innovation in Greek secondary classrooms. Similarly, Nagappan (2001, p. 20) reported that ‘*sit and get*’⁸ type of training was not effective in preparing and providing support for secondary school teachers in Malaysia to teach higher-order thinking skills as part of their content instruction. Hence, for a cascade model to be effective, it needs to change its nature from merely providing predetermined content, skills and knowledge to taking account of more specific user needs (Morrison, Gott & Ashman, 1989).

For training to be effective, theoretical knowledge needs to be compensated and integrated with practical skills (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995), to develop a sense of ownership of the materials learned and hence ensure deep understanding. Integration of theoretical knowledge and practical experience is important because “participants need to see (in the case of materials) or even experience (in the case of activities) the practical manifestation of many ideas before they [can] fully understand, and so accept them” (Lamb, 1995, p. 74). Fullan cited in Baine (1993) argues that one of the characteristics of effective in-service provision is that explanations of new practices should be combined with demonstrations, emphasising what to do, how to do it and why it should be done. In his review for “Save the Children” of literature on professional teacher development and support, Hardman (2011) argues,

Effective professional development develops theories of curriculum, effective teaching and assessment alongside their application in the classroom. Such integration allows teachers to use their theoretical understandings as a basis for making on-going, principled decisions about practice. Focusing only on skills will not develop the deep

⁸ An expression used to refer to the training or professional development where the trainers talk and the participants listen without being involved in active activities or experienced collaborative time with the trainers.

understanding needed if teachers are to change their beliefs and practices and meet the complex demands of everyday teaching. Conversely, merely teaching theoretical constructs to teachers without helping to translate them into classroom practice will also prove ineffective.

(p. 7)

Thus, apart from learning the theories, the trainees should be involved in the training as much as possible by engaging them in hands-on activities or by engaging their experiences at some level, such as by demonstrating what the teachers need to do when they go back to their schools: in short by considering the environment and context in which the training ideas and activities will be applied. Merriam, Cafarella and Baumgartner (2007) refer to this type of knowledge that is learned through experience as experiential learning. Training that does not complement the cultural mores, policy environments and the conditions of the school in which the ideas and knowledge will be applied may be a deterrent to the success of the reform (Hardman, 2012).

Involving the trainees in the training by taking into consideration the classroom environment the teachers are operating in, provides the opportunities for them to reflect and think about the relevance of what they have learned and think how best their newfound knowledge, skills and competences can be best adopted and adapted to their own scenario. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) propose that training or professional development should provide time, opportunities and support for teachers to explore the new knowledge or skills, reflect on their current practice and assess how it might be implemented in different teaching environment and “the values it is intended to serve” (Hayes, 2000, p. 79). Unfortunately, many in-service programmes have been so intensive (or brief) that trainees or participants do not have the opportunity to actually explore the implications of the innovation on their previous established classroom practices and behaviours and thus adapt it to their specific teaching contexts (Palmer, 1993).

It is believed that training that gives opportunities for hands-on work and is related to the situational context is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2011) and consequently to result in a willingness to experiment. Successful training programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to those they will use with their students, and which encourage the development of teachers’ learning communities (OECD, 2011). Doing this facilitates “ownership of ideas”, something which Palmer (1993) believes is enhanced when

teachers are allowed to:

- a) Experience the innovation;
- b) Reflect upon the possible impact of the innovation on one's own teaching;
- c) Adapt the innovation to one's own particular circumstances and teaching style;
- d) Evaluate the innovation in the light of actual experience.

(p. 170)

Clearly from the explanation above, a successful training programme should be reflective. Wedell (2005) suggests that when “the trainees listen to and reflect on others’ views, [this] gives them the opportunities to plan and manage the new techniques and activities, and chances to think about and obtain feedback on such practice from peers and trainers” (p. 639). Furthermore, a reflective session is also useful as it enables the trainers to monitor the progress of the training, as it takes place in stages, by identifying areas that need improvement or special attention, or by reviewing feedback for further refinement (Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; Mathekga, 2004; McDevitt, 1998). Barrett (2011) recommends that a possible way to assess the impact of the most critical factors on the success of cascade training is through monitoring and evaluation exercises. She suggests that the monitoring and evaluation process be done on four distinct levels. Level 1 is teachers’ reactions after training; level 2 is the learning that the teachers have gained; level 3 is the changes that result from the training and level 4 relates to the results of the performance. The argument is that these four levels increase the level of ownership of the change because they are comprehensive and provide teachers and trainers with essential professional development opportunities to improve their ability to self-assess, reflect and rethink their classroom practices.

Successful training also should be open to reinterpretation where teachers are able to select appropriate knowledge learned and resources gained from the training and adapt and adopt those that are relevant to the needs and the context in which they are working. All teachers will go through the process of determining and deciding what is appropriate for their classroom and “make informed choices about how best to teach in their own classes considering the context they work in” (Hayes, 2000, p. 143). Hence, knowledge and skills gained from the training should be sensitive to emerging features of context

and be flexible and responsive to the local needs, and thus allowing for modifications (Shezi, 2008). Rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working limit creativity and will not support the application of the training ideas and activities if they do not fit the contextual realities of environments in which the teachers are operating, thereby compromising the success of the programme.

Apart from that, for training to be successful, expertise should be spread out throughout the cascade system as widely as possible and not only concentrate on the top level. Participation of expertise at all levels, i.e. from the topmost level to the lowest level, is to ensure that the potential of everyone involved in the cascade is maximized and hence all participants develop better a understanding of the reform concerned (Mathekga, 2004). Thus, everyone in the cascade will be an active agent, due to his or her active participation (Hayes, 2000). Diffusion of expertise in the cascade can be achieved either by using the personnel who have undergone training at national level to go directly to districts to train the personnel at that level, or by inviting state/regional training personnel to attend training at national level. Having the experts spread at all levels of the cascade, however, will involve a degree of extra cost. But diffusion of experts will provide much-needed support for lower level trainers and ensure that the aim of the training is achieved. Such support will successively be likely to encourage positive attitudes towards implementation and thus, the additional cost concerned would possibly mean that the cascade project normally offers a greater benefit on the monetary outlay (Wedell, 2005).

Besides that, the preparation of training materials should involve a cross-section of stakeholders at various levels, so that related activities throughout the cascade are coordinated. Cooperation or joint development in the preparation of training materials between the top-level personnel, trainers and teachers in the subsequent levels encourages active participation of all those involved in the programme and promotes a sense of ownership in teachers and trainers of the training in which they are involved and eventually of the curriculum development process. Bantwini (2010, Barrett (2011) and Hayes (2000) all stress that development of a sense of ownership, through involvement in the conceptual and development stages of the reforms, is one of the basic principles of successful training as teachers' involvement will facilitate better understanding of the fundamentals of the new curriculum and its necessity, as well as the expected end results. Without involvement of the teachers, sustainability is

improbable; El-Okda (2005) points out that a “lack of teacher involvement results in feelings of a lack of ownership, which can detrimentally affect teachers’ commitment to the success of the newly introduced innovative features” (p 36).

To involve trainers and participants in the development of the training materials, Palmer (1993) proposes an approach through the problem-solving approach. He explains that through this approach, the participants can contribute by “relaying personal teaching problems, recounting personal experience and accessing previously acquired knowledge, while the trainers could contribute by suggesting possible solutions to the problems based on their experience and knowledge” (ibid, p. 168). Such approach ensures a high degree of investment from the participants, which is important because “the greater the investment in a new idea, the greater the commitment to try it out, because by eliciting an active contribution to the proposed innovation during training, teachers have an even stronger impetus to use it in their teaching” (ibid, p. 171). McDevitt (1998) suggests,

Involvement of various stakeholders could be performed by incorporating a small amount of production work at each level of the cascade. Thus, whenever a technique is demonstrated, the participants should be required to implement it using a real part of the syllabus. This material could be refined and standardized then added to the package for the next level, where a new area of the syllabus is worked on. This snowball effect means that the end user, the teacher, at least has a small kit of resources, which can be used immediately as well as the skills to develop his/her own materials.

(pp. 426–427)

The involvement of a cross-section of stakeholders in the production of training materials will also help to resolve doubts of the relevance of the materials through consultation with the various targeted trainers (Mwiroti et al., cited in Hayes, 2000).

Finally, a successful training programme should decentralize the responsibilities within the cascade structure. Decentralization means transferring power to the state/regional governments and granting autonomy to district authorities and within them to individual schools to disseminate the information. Thus, responsibilities will be shared out respectively at national, local and school levels. The collaboration between the top authority and the lower authority will increase the feeling of ownership of the programme and develop better understanding. Hayes (2000) says one of the major

reasons for unsuccessful cascade training is the “concentration of expertise only at the top most levels of the cascade” (p. 138).

Apart from the five criteria above, the literature on professional development also suggests that the type and duration of training play a significant role in the effectiveness of most training or professional development programmes (Boyle et al., 2004). It has commonly been found that professional development activities for teachers are too short and offer limited follow-up support (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007). Professional development that is sustained over a period of time and has a substantial number of contact hours “is likely to be of higher quality” (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001, p. 933), has a greater impact on teaching practice, and is more consistent with systemic reform efforts than professional development of a more limited duration (Corcoran, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Little, 1993). Boyle, While and Boyle (2004), Garet et al. (2001) and Karagiorgi, Kalogirou, Theodosiou, Theophanous and Kendeou (2008) maintain that professional development activities which are of longer length and extend over a period of time allows for exhaustive discussion of content, teacher conceptions and misconceptions and pedagogical strategies, and allow teachers to test new practices in the classroom and reflect upon their teaching.

Kirgiz (2008a, 2008b) stresses that for training to be effective, it must be “continuous and developmental, rather than one-off in nature” (p. 1874). Similarly, the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development, in its most recent review of teacher education covering 65 countries from around the world, suggests that professional development programmes that upgrade knowledge and skills in pedagogy over a sustained period of time is more effective than through disjointed one-off courses (OECD, 2011). In this way, teachers are equipped with the necessary support and are updated with the knowledge about emerging practices, ensuring adequate implementation of the curriculum reforms especially during the initial years of implementation.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) and Leithwood, Jantzi and Mascal (2002) share a similar view that professional development of a large-scale national education reform must be sustained, on-going and intensive, so that consistent guidance can be provided. Baine (1993) reiterates that one-off workshops or training without follow-up and courses unconnected to the job have little or no impact at all but on-site workshops

that provide on-going, interactive, cumulative learning may develop new skills, behaviours and conceptions in practice. Continuous support and follow-up after the initial training is also crucial. Guskey (1986) emphasizes that,

Teachers need on-going guidance and direction during this period of trial and experimentation for teachers to fit the new practices to their unique classroom conditions to ensure necessary adaptations are made and simultaneously maintain program fidelity. Support is also necessary so that teachers can tolerate the anxiety of occasional failures that persist in their implementation efforts.

(p. 10)

Corcoran (1995) argues “sufficient time, follow-up support and continuity is necessary in order for teachers to master complex ideas and new strategies and content and to incorporate them into their practice” (p. 22). Hayes (2000) points out that continuous professional development through supportive workshops, classroom observations and counselling after the initial course contribute to the success of the training element of the project. The support and follow-up ensures that the process of learning and adapting the new knowledge and skills in the classrooms continues. Hence, effective professional development needs to be continuous, to include training, monitoring and evaluation, to provide support structures, and to provide adequate time and follow-up support to ensure teachers develop the appropriate understanding of reform, as well as quickly receive necessary help whenever challenges arise (Bantwini, 2010; OECD, 2011).

On-going communication in the form of continuous support and follow-up is extremely necessary as a way of providing information, reinforcement, feedback and motivation. Baine (1993) lists seven suggestions to enhance communication:

1. Provide frequent, informal consultation with small groups of teachers; these visits are designed to address the unique, individual needs of teachers and fill the gap between training.
2. Develop networks; connect teachers who have particular types of experience, skills and attitudes, which will be supportive; facilitate small group problem solving.
3. Provide the participants with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to work collaboratively.
4. Take steps to minimise inaccurate sharing of information about the innovation; welcome questions and be available to provide

information, support and feedback.

5. Acknowledge that lack of awareness is expected and that no question about the innovation is foolish.
6. Provide on-going monitoring and evaluation to assess concerns, and problems with implementation, and to identify and correct problems in the early stages.
7. Work as a collaborator with staff; be team-oriented; schedule periodic meetings to review progress and problems, generate ideas, plan and share techniques.

(p. 28)

Time is also a critical variable in implementing curriculum transformations to ensure changes spread throughout the educational system (Kennedy, 1996). In most reform strategies it has been reported that teachers were not given enough time to engage with and implement the reforms. In many cases, teachers were expected to implement teaching reforms after just one short training session. Galton et al. (1999) claim that in implementing a radical new approach such as interactive teaching or a learner-centred approach, teachers require a longer time. Teachers need time to assimilate and develop the skills in order to ensure successful implementation. A realistic time frame is important in the implementation of any innovation. Sufficient time needs to be allocated to teacher training before the actual implementation. A study on the strategies for the foundation phase teachers' in Guateng, South Africa involvement in the curriculum development process revealed frustration on the part of the teachers when the time allotted for explanations and a clear understanding of the curriculum change process was inadequate (Ramparsad, 2001).

Accordingly, Kirgk z (2008b) categorizes time factor as one of the key challenges that teachers in Turkish primary schools face in implementing curriculum change. In many cases, the curriculum planners and developers could not foresee the significance of the time needed for the alteration of most teachers' professional culture. Moreover, the innovation timeframe was not designed with reference to the teachers' and schools' readiness. Kirgk z suggests that the time span must be "long and extensive rather than intensive", especially for a curriculum innovation which is implemented on a national scale, so that teachers will be able to undertake the new ideas and have ample time to try them out and acclimatize them to their situation (ibid, p. 1863). Launching a policy

hastily do not typically lead to immediate school improvements (Leithwood, Jantzi & Mascal, 2002).

Another effective way of providing support and development to teachers is school-based training: that is the training that takes place at school itself (Hardman, 2012). This type of training includes practices such as peer tutoring, mentoring, coaching, constant training and on-site follow up supervision and feedback. In other words, such training emphasizes the need for face-to-face teaching and classroom-based guidance, supervision and assessment. In this process, regular and consistent monitoring and support, such as peer observation of other teacher/teacher educators, will play a key role in developing critical reflection, leading to major changes in attitudes, levels of self-confidence and pedagogic practice. Evaluation of such training in many sub-Saharan countries shows that the school-based training resulted in teachers become more confident and skillful, interact much more effectively with young children, and provide a stimulating and positive classroom climate (ibid). With the support by distance learning materials, school clusters and local support agents, school-based training is effective to shut the gap between theory and practice and raising the quality of teaching and learning in low financial gain countries.

School-based mode training could help to generate greater school commitment towards the new curriculum and enable teachers to mould the new curriculum to the specifics of their own students and their own school environments. Carless (1997) reports that a school-based training (in Hong Kong) in the implementation of Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) that included school visits from lecturers, provision of TOC information packs, workshops, videos which include extracts from TOC-style lessons and demonstrations of the new curriculum in action, was a positive step, as it entailed the four elements of a useful model for promoting innovation through in-service work outlined by Palmer (1993), namely: experiencing the innovation, reflecting on its impact, adapting it to one's teaching context and evaluating it in the light of experience.

3.4 How curriculum reform is implemented in the classroom

Studies on the implementation of educational policy reveal that reform in education has not produced expected substantial outcomes on teachers' instructional practices (Airini et al., 2007). Most curriculum implementation studies suggest that there was a relative

lack of success of most innovative efforts in most ELT curricula (Crump & Ryan, 2001; Saad, 2011). Previous studies on English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum implementation show that transformations in curriculum frequently had very little impact on teachers' classroom practices. What is practised in the actual classroom usually contradicted what was intended by the policy makers and curriculum developers (Aksit, 2007; Bantwini, 2010; Butler, 2011; Das, 1987; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Kirgk z, 2008b; Lefstein, 2008; Oloruntegbe, 2011; Vaish, 2008; Wang, 2008; Walters & Vilches, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, even where teachers express support for the reform programmes and strategies, it does not guarantee that changes will take place in actual classroom practice (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996; Morris, 1983). Teachers very rarely implement what is mandated by the policy exactly as intended by the developers, leading to a discrepancy or a gap between the curriculum that is developed and its implementation in actual classrooms. Research suggests that a gap between the enacted educational policy and implemented educational practice is normally due to incompatibility between what is mandated in the curriculum reform and the school or classroom environment where the innovation is applied. This happens when curriculum innovations in ELT in developing countries are largely taken from the educational innovations of developed counterparts. Adopting western curriculum innovations in non-western contexts can be a major challenge, because curriculum change is a complex and dynamic process involving a range of stakeholders who may perceive, interpret and understand the curriculum change differently, and consists of diverse teaching and learning contexts that may determine the suitability or unsuitability of the curriculum innovations. The gap is even greater when reforms are adopted with inadequate capacity to put them into practice.

As a result, innovations get adopted 'on the surface', in the sense that alterations or changes are made to the language and structures, but not the practice of teaching (Fullan, 2007). Very frequently, teachers either assimilate their teaching strategies to their current repertoire with little substantive change, or simply reject those changes altogether (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007, p. 929). In other words, reforms are frequently modified or rejected, rather than being strictly followed. Evidence from studies in different parts of the world will be illustrated in the following section.

3.4.1 The impact of curriculum reform on teachers' classroom practices

As mentioned earlier, there is often found to be very little impact of educational reform on teachers' general classroom practices. In an investigation of English teachers' instructional practices in Turkey, Kirgköz (2008a) reports that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) proposed by the Turkish Ministry of Education (MNE) did not seem to have made the expected impact on teachers' classroom instructional practices. Teachers were minimally oriented towards Communicative Oriented Curriculum (COC) and students were not actively involved in lessons whose classroom practices were largely teacher-centred. The Turkish teachers were not able to adequately translate the MNE's objectives of CLT that highlighted the promotion of learners' practical communicative skills, into their instructional practices. Their instructional practices placed more emphasis on the delivery of knowledge about the language and the development of basic grammatical skills than on the development of pupils' communicative abilities.

Likewise in Namibia, most teachers were found to continue using the traditional approach to English Language Teaching (ELT), such that teaching and learning styles preserved the transmission of knowledge and rote learning of information. Despite the curriculum reform efforts in ELT to promote a new, more communicative approach to teaching, which emphasized contribution from pupils and a heuristic style of learning, there was no evidence of teachers using learner-centred and communicative approaches as suggested in the reform strategies (O'Sullivan, 2002).

Wang's (2008) study on college English teachers in China reported similar results: teachers in the Chinese tertiary context, when asked to change to a communicative approach, adopted a teacher-centred approach, with a high degree of teacher talk, rather than a student-centred approach, which required a focus on the students, less teacher talk and an increase in student participation, according to the policy documentation. Teaching took the form of lecturing to the whole class and students' work comprised only choral work and individual seatwork. Notwithstanding the policy, which aimed to develop the students' competence in the four basic language skills (namely listening, speaking, reading and writing) so that students become able to communicate in English, the main focus of teachers' lessons was mainly on developing students' receptive skills (reading and listening), rather than on fostering productive skills (writing and speaking).

In fact, the time spent on the cultivation of speaking skills was quite minimal and student speaking seemed negligible, even during the listening and speaking component.

In an evaluation of Basic Secondary Education reform in The Netherlands 1996-1999, Van Gool (2003) stated, “the general conclusion for English was that educationally teachers performed fairly well but theoretically they performed badly” (p. 2). Referring to the instructions in the English classrooms, it was observed that the target language was not fully used by the teachers and only a small number of teachers varied their teaching methods and encouraged pupils to work actively with the language. The majority of the lessons remained mainly textbook-based, where pupils simply worked on the exercises, in contrast to the reform policy, which advocated a different approach and teaching strategies. All in all, English language teaching in the Netherlands is still very much based on grammar and correctness of language use, which conflicts with what the theories of language teaching and learning consider good language teaching.

Lefstein’s (2008) study agrees with the other findings on lack of effect, in that the implementation of the English National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in the United Kingdom was found to have no significant effect on teacher-pupil interactions. Open questions were very limited in number and curricular contents were re-contextualized into regular classroom interactions, despite the NLS requiring more involvement and contribution by students and a more interactive pedagogy. In other words, teachers retained the conventional teaching approach and made no changes to the instruction, rather adapting the contents of the new curriculum to the existing pedagogy.

Surprisingly however, Webb (2010) reported a contradictory finding, when a remarkable upsurge in the use of ‘interactive whole-class teaching’ at the beginning and end or throughout classroom lessons was observed, in a recent study analysing the impact of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) on primary teachers in England. Most teachers felt that the strategies had a positive effect in promoting the use of higher-order questions and more extended and varied responses from the pupils. This, Webb concluded, was due to the fact that after a few years of implementation, teachers became more confident in their use of whole-class teaching and incorporated some aspects of best practice into their teaching. It was observed that classroom practices were subsumed within whole-class teaching patterns to provide opportunities for more varied, demanding and sustained work. Webb claimed

that earlier published research studies, which showed little evidence of higher quality teacher-pupil interaction, or higher levels of pupils thinking and understanding, was simply due to the fact that the strategies were at an early stage of implementation. Moreover, the process of incorporating ‘interactive whole-class teaching’ is clearly very difficult and demanding, particularly in a context where the emphasis is on content coverage and meeting standards attainment. In Singapore, Vaish (2008) discovered that the English teachers’ pedagogic practices contradicted the goals of the Singapore English syllabus, which focused on improving oracy. The classroom practices of both primary and secondary English classes were found to be teacher-centred and monologic, involving whole-class lectures, individual seatwork (student do their work at their own seat) and initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) classroom discourse, which promotes very few and brief student contributions and minimal talk generally.

In the Malaysian EFL context, Lan (1994) provided evidence that classroom practices did not reflect the change imposed on the English programme. The change from structural syllabus (the Old Primary School Curriculum and Old Secondary School Curriculum) to the functional-notional syllabus of the Integrated Primary School Curriculum and the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum did not lead to a change in emphasis from form to use and to communicative language principles. Similarly earlier, Abdul Rahman (1987) had reported no fundamental differences between what was planned in the KBSR (Old Curriculum for Primary School) and how it was implemented. In 2006, Yaacob showed that despite the change in language teaching practices proposed by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the primary teachers did not seem to follow the guidelines closely. The shared reading steps seldom included discussion of ideas or meaningful interaction around the story, even though they were clearly required by the Ministry’s guidelines. In fact, there was little or no group work and there were no plenary sessions at the end of each lesson to sum up or reflect on what was learned; the more interactive teaching approach intended did not materialize.

After examining the instructional practices of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) teachers on the implementation of the Contemporary Children’s Literature (CCL) programme in upper primary ESL classrooms in Malaysia, Sidhu, Fook and Kaur (2010) state that more time is spent on individual comprehension work and lesser time on comprehension instruction and higher-order thinking skills. Most of the classroom time involved mainly addressing the whole class, which comprised reading

aloud and question and answer sessions. Besides, a lot of emphasis was spent on reading and writing, while speaking and listening activities were rarely observed, even though the Integrated Primary School English Language (IPSL) syllabus that is used in Malaysian schools is a skills-based syllabus that encourages the integration of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Indeed, speaking activities were based principally on short 'one-liners' wherever students were needed to answer questions posed by the teachers. At a general level, a teacher-centred strategy dominated the classroom instruction, despite the policy requirement to carry out student-centred teaching. Teachers claimed that this was mainly because the students had very low level of language proficiency, which put them off participating in classroom discussions.

O'Donnell (2005) reports that the English classes of Japanese secondary English teachers were still using *Yakudoku* (Grammar Translation method), although the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology had mandated the use of Communicative Language Teaching method, which aims to foster students' communicative competence. It was concluded that to a certain degree, the use of the grammar translation method was ineffective, as a result, it failed to promote students' communicative skills, particularly speaking skills as prescribed in the syllabus. Apart from that, it was found that major as well as minor adaptations were made to the reform programme in spite of teachers being required to closely follow the model provided. In fact, there were also a lot of the teachers who adhered quite loosely to the programme.

In a study to examine how teachers' responses influenced the implementation of a whole-school reform programme which reorganized reading resources to ensure success in reading throughout the elementary grades in two elementary schools in California, Datnow and Castellano (2000) found that although many teachers believed that the structure of the programme would ensure success in improving students' reading ability, teachers did not follow strictly the changes but modified and adjusted the changes to fit their classroom practices. One aspect that involved a major change from the plan was the allocation of time spent for specific activities. This was attributed to the fact that many teachers were not able to complete the required tasks as expected. However, some of the adaptations were also made by the teachers in view of the necessity to suit the needs of the students, which is fundamental in planning a lesson. In some studies, there were also cases whereby a new educational policy was totally rejected and not implemented. In his review of teachers' responses to 2003 UK government policy in

raising pupils' reading attainment, Brain, Reid and Boyes (2006) reported how teachers in a local primary school determined to forsake teaching methods prescribed in the Literacy Hour orders and to adopt 'jolly phonics' or 'synthetic phonics'. Teachers resorted to their own teaching method preferences, which they considered to be more relevant and effective than the methods they were required to implement.

To sum up, teachers frequently continue to teach and use pedagogical practices which they believe are necessary and relevant for the students, rather than what is mandated in official policy (O'Donnell, 2005). This is especially true in centralized examination-oriented education systems, where teachers' focus is primarily on enabling students to pass the examinations and very frequently teachers tend to neglect a policy of English Language Teaching which aims to develop students' communicative competence (Morris, 1985; Ali, 2003). Typically teachers only emphasize the techniques of answering the exam questions and focus on the test contents, rather than teach the students the skills and the knowledge they are supposed to acquire in the classrooms.

3.4.2 The impact of curriculum reform on teacher-student interactional patterns

Studies indicate that curriculum reforms in English Language Teaching have often not significantly affected how teachers interact in the classrooms or their discourse patterns (Fisher, 2011; Lefstein, 2008). Teachers have been observed to repeatedly employ a directive teaching approach and only play the role of knowledge transmitter, despite all the new guidelines and changes in curriculum documents which place greater emphasis on developing students' critical thinking and students' active involvement and contribution to improve learners' communicative competence (Wang, 2008). Despite the change in the curriculum that required teachers to encourage more pupil-initiated ideas and promote higher-order thinking, transmission-type teaching dominates classroom practice (Mroz, Smith & Hardman, 2000; Ackers & Hardman, 2001; English, Hargreaves & Hislam, 2002; Hardman, Smith & Wall, 2003, Hardman, Smith & Wall, 2005). Teachers' classroom discourse remained dominated by teacher presentation, where teacher informs and provides knowledge, as well as there is a preponderance of teacher-directed questions-and-answers, which take the typical form of an initiation-response-follow-up (IRF) sequence. Although the curriculum requires teachers to encourage more active and independent learning to enable the students to explore ideas and be responsible for their own learning, teachers continued to practise teacher-led

recitation in which rote learning and repetition characterise classroom practice (Pontefract & Hardman, 2005).

Earlier Galton *et al.* (1999) claimed that the enactment of the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom (UK) seemed to have had no impact on the traditional style of teaching, which emphasized telling or transmitting. The findings in a study to replicate the 1976 ORACLE study showed that over the past two decades, whole-class teaching interactions mainly comprised the teacher talking at pupils via statements, rather than their talking with pupils by asking questions. In fact, the questions being asked were only those that required pupils to recall facts or solve a problem by providing one correct answer, which are labelled as closed questions. Open or speculating questions where students are required to offer more than one possible answers are still comparatively rare. Wells and Arauz (2006) reported similarly that “teachers rarely ask the children to express and explain their beliefs and opinions” (p. 387), resulting in children ceasing to ask questions (Ametler & Scott, n.d).

The literature in Malaysia studies shows that the implementation of reform policies has always had a very weak or very little impact on teacher-pupil interaction practice. Abdul Aziz (1987) compared the teaching strategies and teacher-pupil interaction patterns prior to and subsequent to the implementation of the New Primary School Curriculum (NPSC) Programme in Malaysian rural schools. She found substantially no difference between the types of communication strategies used, or the choice of teaching strategies in the classroom, irrespective of the main objective of NPSC teaching strategies, which was active pupil participation. The teaching strategies before and after the implementation of the NPSC did not change: “teachers initiated and closed episodes⁹ of interactions, episodes were short and rigid in structure and strategies for discussion and problem-solving were not found in the classrooms” (ibid, p. 72) which prevented opportunities for pupils’ active participation and involvement in the classroom interactions and activities. However, it was evident that teachers and students used discussion and problem-solving strategies in their social interactions outside the classrooms. Thus it was concluded that the absence of such strategies in the classroom

⁹ Abdul Aziz (1987) adapted Gumperz Model of Conversational Analysis in her study to investigate the strategies for communication between teachers and pupils. In the model an episode refers to a complete unit of interaction with a beginning and an end and usually has three linked components; initiation, response and closure.

was not due to teachers' lack of skills, but was more of a case of their not bringing the strategies into the classroom.

An analysis at micro level, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, of teachers' classroom instruction in the CCL programme indicated that lower-order thinking skill (LOTS) questions, which focus on comprehension, knowledge and application and which refer to mainly literal and surface-level content and tested the students' understanding of the story accounted for the majority of the total number of questions asked in a literature lesson. Meanwhile, higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), that include questions such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation and which could provide opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking, accounted for only a very small portion of the total number of questions posed by the teachers (Sidhu, Fook & Kaur, 2010). Hence, the implementation of the CCL programme was not executed as prescribed in the policy when it challenged one of the objectives of the programme, which is to enhance students' thinking skills through the teaching of literature. Like these Malaysian studies, English, Hargreaves and Hislam (2002) criticized that although the implementation of the National Literacy Strategies (NLS) in the UK increased the rate of pupil contributions, but at the same time reduced opportunities for extended interactions.

In all these studies, it was reported that there was very little variation in the classroom interaction patterns. The majority of the questions asked were closed, while open and thought provoking questions were very rare. Pupils' responses were mostly in the form of choral responses, which provide few opportunities for cognitive and linguistic development, as choral responses are of low cognitive level and are unlikely to encourage pupils to experiment with ideas or language. For this reason pupils' responses were often limited to three-word answers or less.

3.5 Summary of the chapter

Based on the review above, it is clear that curriculum reform is a complex and dynamic field. Nevertheless, reform in the English language curriculum is necessary to extend the students' English language proficiency to enable them to meet the challenges of the changing world. The success of a curriculum reform depends largely on the teachers. Teachers play an important role, because as implementers they are the ones who put the curriculum into practice. In other words, the effects of education policies and

programmes depend chiefly on what teachers make of them. In order for change in education to be successful, teachers must be involved as professionals, because if teachers are unwilling (or are not allowed) to participate, the expected and required changes are unlikely (Rust, 2006).

Nevertheless, teachers are not the only factor behind the failure of a curriculum reform. There are many other related factors that contribute to its success and failure. Among these are included the teachers' perceptions of, attitudes to and beliefs about the reform, teacher understanding of the reform, the relevance of the curriculum to the context to which it is to be applied, support in terms of resources and materials, the language proficiency and pedagogical skills of the teachers, the dissemination process and the clarity of the curriculum change. These factors pose challenges in the implementation of the curriculum reform.

It also quite clear from the research available, that reform in favour of the communicative approach has brought innovation more at the level of theory than at the level of teachers' actual classroom practices (Karavas, 1993, p. 42). What is mandated and expected in the curriculum very seldom seems to have materialized in teachers' actual lessons. In short, curriculum reform in foreign language teaching has failed more often than it has succeeded.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION PATTERNS

4.1 Introduction

Due to the status of English as a global language, improving the English proficiency of students in a context where it is taught and learnt as a second or foreign language has become a very important task. A wide range of initiatives including introducing and incorporating new teaching approaches and innovations to language instruction to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning have been taken. One innovation that has received worldwide recognition and has become the dominant model for language education is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT hereafter) approach. However, although most teachers acknowledge the importance of CLT, teachers' classroom practices frequently do not reflect its theories and principles (Ansarey, 2012). This has at times been found to derive from teachers having misconceptions about the nature and implications of CLT (Chowdhury, 2012; Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores & Dale, 1998; Thompson, 1996; Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2011; Wu, 2008). This emphasises the importance in curricular reform of addressing teachers' understanding of CLT, as they are the agents of implementation of various teaching approaches in language learning. This applies particularly to the present study, investigating the use of the approach in second language classrooms to enhance oral competency among Malaysian students.

As this study examines the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for English, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) underlies its teaching theories and principles, a review of literature on CLT is needed. The literature review in this chapter provides insights into the definitions, theories, principles and characteristics of the language teaching approach. In addition, a review of the literature on communicative competence is presented. An attempt will also be made to describe the teaching and learning techniques that are considered communicative, the philosophy of learner-centred teaching and the rationale for implementing learner-centred teaching in CLT.

In the context of CLT, classroom interaction holds an important position, as it has great impact on facilitating or inhibiting students' language acquisition, because "the interaction or communication system that teachers set up in the classroom shapes the roles that pupils can play and goes some distance in determining the kinds of learning that they engage in" (Barnes, 2008, p. 2). Indeed, analysis of classroom interaction

shows that inadequate interaction between teachers and students often occurs and that this limits the development of students' communicative competence. Teachers in such cases spend a large amount of time lecturing while students take notes and seldom participate in class. Hence, this chapter will review the characteristics and functions of the patterns of teacher-student/s interaction that exists in classrooms and explore how classroom interaction patterns affect language acquisition. In relation to this, this chapter will also describe the system for analysing classroom discourse patterns suggested by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992).

4.2 The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the early 1980s in Britain. It spread throughout the world within a short span of time and remains today as a powerful theoretical model, recognized by many language instructors as an effective approach, and it is still the dominant model in English Language Teaching and English language learning generally (Liao & Zhao, 2012; Mohd Radzi, Azmin, Zolhani & Abdul Latif, 2007; Oszevik, 2010). A lot of studies have been conducted to investigate if the CLT approach, which was first invented and utilized in western countries, is feasible and practical to be adapted as a language teaching method in a context where English is taught as a second or foreign language (ESL or EFL) e.g. Ansarey (2012), Asassfeh, Khwaileh, Al-Shaboul and Alshboul (2012), Chowdhury (2012), Fang (2010), Hu (2008), Ozsevik (2010), Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) and Savignon and Wang (2003).

4.2.1 Differences between CLT and the traditional approach to English language teaching

CLT differs from traditional approach to language teaching and learning in many respects. The focus of the traditional approach to English language teaching and learning was the creation of grammatically correct full sentence utterances. It was assumed that to learn a language means to possess a large range of sentences and grammatical patterns and to be able to use these grammar forms accurately and quickly in appropriate situations. Therefore, grammar was taught deductively where rules of grammar were first presented to the students and later opportunities to practise using the rules were provided. The traditional approach to ELT was based on the principles of

pattern practice and the production of error free utterances where opportunities are usually given through repetitive drills and controlled practice in an attempt of minimizing the chances of making mistakes. Due to this, learning was very teacher-centred where the teacher's role is more that of a knowledge transmitter and the student's role that of a receiver.

However, it was realized that developing language proficiency requires more than knowledge in grammar. Knowledge and skills to use other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purposes, such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and needs, showing directions and so on, are also important in order to communicate meaningfully and purposefully. Hence, it was suggested that the goal of language teaching and the development of language proficiency should not only comprise the ability to produce grammatical structures, but also the ability to use language communicatively. But in order to use language communicatively, one has to be communicatively competent. Based on this fact, the teaching of communicative competence became the central theoretical concept of CLT and its main goal (Savignon, 2002).

4.2.2 Communicative competence

The term communicative competence was coined by Dell Hymes, which he referred to "that aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts" (1967, 1972 cited in Mulat, 2003, pp. 10–11). The ability to communicate competently includes the skills to transfer ideas and knowledge effectively, via writing, or speaking or through various tools and aids, including body language; as well as attitudes towards communication. It also covers openness to both positive or negative feedback and the ways of interacting and communicating with people. Communicative ability can be developed through social communication and may solely be examined by means of the public performance of two or additional people in the process of communication.

Richards and Rodgers (1987) refer to communicative competence as knowledge of a language that enables a speaker to use the language or linguistic system effectively and appropriately for meaningful communication in a speech community. This knowledge includes the ability to use a language in a social context appropriately taking into

account aspects such as the formality of the language use, the feasibility, the appropriateness and its practicality (Hymes, 1972, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1987). Berns (1990) is of the same view, that competency to communicate effectively and meaningfully should reflect the sociocultural contexts where the language is used.

In line with the above definition, Savignon (1991, 2007) emphasizes that the competency to communicate does not merely refer to the ability of classroom language learners to recite dialogues, or perform well in discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge or to master grammatical structures, but more to their ability to interact with other speakers to form meaning. Brown (2000) supports the idea that communicative competence refers to knowledge that enables a person to communicate functionally and interactively as compared to simply having knowledge about language. This is because the competency to communicate includes “expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and socio-cultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) research to account for its development” (Savignon, 2002, p. 1).

Canale and Swain (1980) stress that both linguistic competence and communicative competence are important, in order for communication to be successful. They justify that communicative competence is “interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of the rules of grammar, and socio-linguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use” (ibid, p. 7). Following this definition, Canale and Swain divide communicative competence into four different components or sub-categories. Table 4.1 below provides a summary of each of the four components.

Table 4.1. Components of communicative competence

<i>Component</i>	<i>Description of component</i>
Grammatical competence	That aspect of communicative competence that encompasses knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar, semantics and phonology. It is the competence that we associate with mastering the linguistic code of a language or the linguistic competence
Discourse competence	The ability to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form meaningful series of utterances. While grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar, discourse competence is concerned with intersentential relationships.
Sociolinguistic competence	The knowledge of sociocultural rules of language and of discourse. It requires an understanding of the social context in which language is

	used, such as the roles of the participants, the information they share and the function of the interaction.
Strategic competence	The verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence. It is the competence underlying the ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge and to sustain communication through paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance and guessing as well as shifts in register and style.

(Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 247)

The above categorization shows that the first two components reflect the use of the linguistic system and the last two define the functional aspects of communication. These two spheres of knowledge are interdependent, because students need both grammatical competence and communicative competence to express themselves in the target language, exchange meaningful information, to cope with basic interactive skills like exchanging greetings and thanks and apologies, and to express needs (such as requesting information or services), or to convey feelings or thoughts (Liu, 2010). Thus, “the primary goal of a communicative approach is to facilitate the integration of these two types of knowledge for the learner” (Canale & Swain, *ibid*, p. 25).

Bagari and Djigunovi (2007) are of the same view that “to be communicatively competent, knowledge about language and knowledge how to use the language should occur simultaneously in order to ensure that language is used effectively in various communicative events” (p. 100). In other words, communicative competence refers to the knowledge of what to say, when to say it and how to say it appropriately, based on the situation, the participants and their roles and intentions (Freeman, 1986; Nunan, 1989). Richards (2006, p. 3) summarizes that communicative competence entails the following aspects of knowledge about language,

1. Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions;
2. Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication);
3. Knowing how to produce and understand different types of text (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations);

4. Knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies).

In summary, the ability to be communicatively competent does not merely entail knowledge of the system of structurally related elements, but also knowledge and skills to express meaning for social interaction. The absence of one may result in inaccurate and/or inappropriate use of language and misunderstanding of ideas, which may in turn lead to ineffective communication or a communication breakdown.

4.2.3 Characteristic features of CLT

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach that is based on the principle of learning a language to communicate (Nunan, 1991; Wu, 2008). This is where language learning entails using language as a social tool to convey meaningful messages and to communicate about something to someone for some purposes either through oral communication or written communication. The central focus of communicative teaching and learning is on the importance of authentic comprehensible language to enable the learner to accomplish communicative goals and to interact meaningfully, rather than just organize language forms (Harmer, 1982; Kavanagh, 2012).

CLT is a teaching methodology that requires learners to engage in real communication. The principle of CLT states that language is best developed when it is used in ways that are active, convey meaning and have communicative purposes. Hence, language-teaching techniques in CLT should engage learners in pragmatic, authentic and functional use of language for meaningful purposes (Brown, 2000). Such type of language is accessible through the use of authentic materials. Mulat (2003) explains, "the use of authentic materials is felt to give students the opportunity to develop the strategies for understanding language as it is actually used by native speakers" (p. 19). Role plays, simulations, dramas, games, projects and problem solving are some of the examples of activities which can help the learner to improvise and communicate spontaneously and not just undertake mechanical practice of language patterns via repetition and drills (Rao, 2002). Information gaps, making choices and offering and receiving feedback are also thought to be truly communicative, as these activities are

done with a communicative intent. The literature shows that despite the fact that there are various definitions and versions of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), there are a considerable number of similarities. The following list is taken from Brumfit (1984), Celce-Murcia (1991), Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), Johnson (1982), Larsen-Freeman (1986), Littlewood (1981) and Richards and Rodgers (1986):

1. There should be an emphasis on the integration of linguistic form, meaning and function;
2. Fluency and accuracy are complementary principles underlying communicative techniques;
3. Learners should be engaged in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes;
4. The principles of CLT apply to reading and writing skills as well;
5. Class teaching/learning should emphasize pair or group work;
6. Errors are natural and should be tolerated;
7. Evaluation should be carried out in terms of fluency and accuracy;
8. The student's native language is best avoided;
9. The role of the teacher is to facilitate students' learning.

As explained earlier, communicative competence covers both the knowledge of linguistic items and communicative skills; thus the first principle of CLT emphasises the incorporation of linguistic knowledge, meaning and functions. In other words, CLT focuses both on metalinguistic awareness, or knowledge of rules of syntax and discourse, as well as meaning (Johnson, 1982; Larsen-Freeman, 1986; Savignon, 2002). This is because as mentioned earlier, the emphasis of CLT is on meaning (i.e. the message learners try to convey or tasks¹⁰ they are carrying out) rather than form (accuracy of language and language structure). Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) say "meaning is paramount since it helps the learners to manage the message they engage with the interlocutors" (p. 91). In other words, the classroom goal of CLT is to focus on all the components of communicative ability and not just grammatical or linguistic competence (Brown, 2000).

¹⁰ "An activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response) for example, drawing a map while listening to a tape, listening to an instruction and performing a command" (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985, as cited in Nunan, 1991a, pp. 280-281)

This conception leads to one fallacy about CLT that is common among teachers, namely that it means not teaching grammar. In other words, in CLT, the teaching and learning process does not require the explicit teaching of grammar. However, it is argued that attention to form (structure) is required in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as students need to be involved in a communicative event in order to enhance language development. Ungrammatical structures or utterances in communication may impede the flow of ideas and eventually affect the understanding and comprehensibility of the messages. Wu (2008) contends that an exclusive focus on meaning and totally disregarding form fails to develop students' language competence; instead it may result in students using broken language or pidgin¹¹. Celce-Murcia (1991) makes the same point,

In spite of the intuitive appeal and the anecdotal evidence supporting the proposal for exclusively communicative language teaching, there is equally appealing and anecdotal evidence...that a grammarless approach...can lead to the development of a broken, ungrammatical, pidginized form of the target language beyond which students rarely progress.

(p. 462)

Savignon (2002) explains that, “communicative language teaching does not necessarily mean total rejection of familiar materials [grammar]” (p. 7). Nowadays, there seems to be a consensus among the educators that grammar is important and should be taught deductively. Rather “the focus has now moved away from the teacher covering, to the learners discovering grammar” (Thompson, 1996, p. 11). One suggestion is for grammar to be taught implicitly by incorporating grammatical structure under various functional categories so that focus is less on the overt presentation and discussion of grammatical rules but more on the application of the rules (Brown, 1994). Savignon (2002) says, “for the development of communicative ability [communication depends on grammar], research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience” (p. 7). This is mainly because to neglect grammar totally can lead to communication breakdown, because learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences (Savignon, 1991, 2001; Thompson, 1996).

¹¹ A simplified form of a language made up of elements of two or more other languages with a reduced vocabulary and grammatical structure and considerable variation in pronunciation (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001).

In relation to the above characteristic, CLT emphasises both fluency and accuracy in communicative techniques (Brown, 2000). The ability to use the language fluently refers to the ability to use a language naturally when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and on-going communication without too many hesitations, pauses, repetitions or false starts which can between them cause communication breakdowns (Lan, 1994; Richards, 2006). According to Jones (2007), speakers are fluent when they are able to express themselves despite a lack of knowledge of vocabulary or grammar. Accuracy, however, focuses on creating correct examples of language use, which do not contain phonological, syntactic and semantic errors (Jones, 2007; Lan, 1994; Richards, 2006). In language classrooms, fluency and accuracy are enhanced through different types of classroom tasks and activities. And for the development of communicative ability teachers are encouraged to use a balance of fluency and accuracy activities and to make greater use of small-group work, because pair or group activities give learners greater opportunities to use the language and therefore to develop fluency.

Originally CLT focused on programmes and methodologies that promoted the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative tasks and events, where fluency and accuracy became the aim and objective of language learning (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999). Thus, the initial development of CLT proposed that learners' communicative ability is enhanced by focusing on the aim of acquiring the target language, the setting within which the target language is to be used, the social role of the learners in the target language, the communicative events within which the learner can participate, the language functions concerned in those events, the notions or concepts involved, the discourse and also the rhetorical skills, the kinds of the target language required, the grammatical content and the lexical content (Richards, 2006). This was in line with the idea that developing communicative competence emphasizes learning the functions of the language needed for communication in various situations (communicative competence being defined as mastery of language functions).

However, it is argued that occasionally fluency is more important than accuracy so as to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use because "fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal and accuracy is judged in contexts" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983, p. 93). In many cases, fluency is emphasized over accuracy mainly

because, in order to build fluency, a great deal of use of and exposure to authentic language is needed. Nevertheless, it is vital to note that fluency is not important when communication is unclear and ambiguous (Brown, 1994).

It is also argued that a functional approach to CLT and focusing on learners' ability to communicate fluently and accurately does not ensure effective communicative ability among the learners. Savignon (1991) mentions,

A distinction between fluency and accuracy is misleading as it suggests that the form of a message is somehow unrelated to its meaning and implicitly proposes an absolute grammar norms for learners. Accuracy in this instance is measured in terms of discrete features of phonology, morphology and syntax, and thus fails to take into account the context-relevant, collaborative nature of self-expression. Fluency, on the other hand, suggests speed or ease of self-expression, which may or may not enhance communicative effectiveness.

(p. 269)

This all suggests that it is likely to be difficult to develop fluency and accuracy simultaneously. In classrooms that focus on fluency tasks, where the emphasis is on getting meaning across, learners tend to be less motivated to be grammatically or phonologically accurate. Indeed, learners were not able to apply the language they learned in classrooms in their daily communication because the classroom interaction patterns did not provide genuine communication between teacher and learner or between learner and learner (Savignon, 1991). In other words, the interactions that take place through the classroom tasks and activities do not portray real life communication, or are 'unnatural', thereby breaking one of the principles of developing communicative ability.

Lessons in the classrooms should provide opportunities for students to interact with each other and rehearse real-life situations and provide opportunities for real communication. One reason is that language learning does not only mean producing grammatically correct sentences, it also involves the processes of interaction among the learners, the creation of meaningful interactions, negotiations of meaning to arrive at mutual understanding, learning through feedback, incorporation of new forms and experimenting with different ways of saying things (Freeman, 1986; Nattinger, 1984; Richards & Rodgers, 1987; Savignon, 1991; 2002; Richards, 2006). However, research has found that this is precisely what lacking in classrooms based on CLT (Chang,

2011b; Chowdhury, 2011; Fuller & Snyder, 1991; Hiep, 2007; Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores & Dale, 1998; Mtika & Gates, 2010).

CLT is not limited to oral communication and applies equally to reading and writing activities (Savignon, 2002; 2007). Teachers sometimes have the misconception that CLT is devoted to teaching only speaking (Thompson, 1996; Wu, 2007) however it is important to understand that communication through language can be both written and oral. Thompson (1996) explains “learners reading a text silently to themselves are taking part in communication (assuming that the text has something of relevance to them) just as much as if they were talking to their partner” (p. 12). Hence, CLT does not merely entail speaking but also reading and writing activities that engage readers and writers in the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning.

In CLT, active learning through pair or group work in tasks such as problem solving is also emphasized as group tasks provide increased opportunity and motivation for communication where students learn to negotiate meaning. In group or pair work students are usually required to transfer (and if necessary to negotiate) meaning as one person has information that others lack (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Thompson (1996) and Savignon (2002) regard group and/or pair work as flexible and useful techniques that enable the students to engage in active learning where students learn to negotiate meaning and engage in problem-solving activities. Through pair or group work, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts (Brown, 2000). However, CLT does not require small group or pair work all the time. Classroom group or pair work should not be considered an essential feature because it may well be inappropriate in some contexts (Savignon, 2002). However, many teachers assume group/pair work is applicable in all contexts and is the only way to conduct communicative teaching.

In CLT errors are considered as “a natural outcome of the development of the communication skills and are therefore endured” (Mulat, 2003, p. 23). Errors cannot be avoided because while learners communicate with one another, their minds are focused on the content of what they’re saying, not on the linguistic features. Hence, corrective feedback is to be avoided and if correction is needed, it should be unobtrusive (Jones, 2007). An example is the use of recasts where teachers reformulate learners’ incorrect utterances, while at the same time confirm the content or meaning. This allows students

to continue talking and expressing themselves without specifically focusing on the form of the language. Hence, although students has limited linguistic knowledge but they can still be successful communicators (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

As mentioned earlier, effective communication should focus both on fluency and accuracy, rather than on accuracy alone, hence CLT emphasizes that evaluation of CLT should cover both fluency and accuracy (Mulat, 2003). This is based on the principle that the best communicators are not always those who are good at the language structures and vocabulary. The evaluation can be a formal evaluation, such as a communicative test, or an informal evaluation of student performance, with the teacher acting as an advisor or co-communicator (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Savignon (1991, 2002) accordingly concludes the foremost appropriate and relevant sort of analysis for communicative approach is qualitative evaluations of learner achievement than quantitative assessments of distinct linguistic items.

In the CLT approach, the use of students' native language is avoided or ignored or at least not encouraged (Larsen Freeman, 1986; Rao, 2002). The target language should be used both during communicative activities and for the purpose of classroom management, so that maximum exposure to the target language can be provided, to ensure successful learning. Hence, teachers themselves need to have a fairly high level of proficiency in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Unsurprisingly perhaps, several studies on the implementation of CLT in countries such as Turkey (Ozsevik, 2010), Japan (Cook, 2009), Korea (Li, 1998), Libya (Orafi, 2008, Orafi & Borg, 2009) and China (Chang, 2011b) have found that lack of language proficiency among teachers is one of the main challenges to successful implementation of CLT-based curriculum reform. Nonetheless, considerable evidence on the importance and positive role of native language use in second or foreign language learning suggests that, as long as teachers are able to find the right balance between the quantity and quality of L1 and L2, and base the teaching and learning process on the comprehension of the students, the use of the native language is acceptable (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). L1 use can thus ensure that students understand and, by reducing the time taken on elucidating problems, it can actually maximize the use of the target language.

Martin (1999) argues that the use of two or more languages in a classroom can contribute to the accomplishment of teaching and learning where one language supports

the other. There is some empirical evidence for this conclusion. For example, in a study by Martin (2003) examining the language used to accomplish lessons in Brunei primary schools, it was found that the use of Malay alongside the language of instruction, English, was crucial to ensure that pupils understood the lesson, participated in it, and learned the key points from it in a context where exposure to English was absolutely minimal. Cummins (1993) in a review of research and theory on bilingualism and second language learning concludes, “the predominant L1 instruction throughout the grades does not seem to impede the acquisition of conversational or academic skills of the majority language” (p. 65). At a general level it can be argued that classroom instruction, at least at initial stages, should be conducted in a language that is familiar to the students if learning is to take place (Mapunda, 2011).

Finally, in CLT, the teacher’s role changes from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, manager, advisor and co-communicator (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Littlewood, 1981). CLT advocates that the teacher’s job is to facilitate students’ learning, manage classroom activities, give advice during the activities and engage in the communication along with the students. With this transformation within the teacher’s role, students have to be compelled to become managers of their own learning. Students are expected to interact with other people through pair and group work. They are communicators and actively engaged in negotiating meaning that means in making an attempt to make themselves understood. They learn to speak by communicating (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Since the teacher's role becomes less dominant, the teaching/learning process is student-centred rather than teacher-centred because learners play the key role in a large proportion of the learning process.

Based on the characteristics described above, it is clear that the underlying properties of CLT are that: 1) communicative competence is the goal of instruction, 2) interaction between language learners or users and their environment is a primary objective of all learning activities, and 3) the process involved in using language, namely the strategies for making sense of something and for negotiating meaning, are the centre of attention. CLT is an approach that gives priority in meaning making where in the process learners experiment with and create language independently through trial and error. It is believed that learning a target language is more effective when in the process people struggle to make oneself understood (Hawkes, 2012).

4.3 Communicative activities

In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), it is believed that second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication. They learn to communicate when they are actively engaged in negotiating meaning in order to be understood. In CLT, meaningful communication can happen when learners are provided with the opportunities to experiment with the language for communicative purposes and effectively use the communication strategies. This can only be accomplished through real communication: “language learning activities that involve real communication promote learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 1987, p. 93). Therefore, it is essential to engage the learners in doing things with language where they use language for a variety of purposes in the learning process. By using language, learners are able to analyse and reflect on the language, and utilize the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of the language, which are important to the development of learners’ competence. Such opportunities will indirectly enhance students thinking skills.

The opportunities for students to engage in meaningful communication can be created through the use of communicative activities. Communicative activities in the classroom provide opportunities to develop students’ speaking proficiency in English as communication is an exchange of knowledge, ideas, information, opinion and feelings between people (Xuru, n.d.), and communication that is meaningful and appropriate involves communication, interaction and negotiation of meaning which results from students processing relevant, purposeful, interesting and engaging content. Hence, communicative activities are those activities that encourage and need a learner to talk with and listen to other learners in real purposes such as to find information, break down barriers and talk about oneself (Bilash, 2011). Furthermore, research on second language acquisition (SLA) suggests that a dynamic learning environment where students are engaged in relevant tasks increase learning than a traditional teacher-led classes (Moss & Ross-Feldman, 2003). Furthermore, as students learn to communicate, they are more motivated to study a foreign language if they realise that they are learning to do something useful with it (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Activities such as role-playing, problem-solving, situational dialogues, small group interaction and language games can be seen as communicative activities because

through these activities students have the opportunities to negotiate meaning, which means expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful social exchanges; they allow the class (and classroom) to become a communicative social community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing. Through these activities students acquire and practise aspects of linguistic competence that develop the student's pragmatic, strategic and socio-cultural competence, which will together build up their productive and receptive skills needed (Thongwad, 2011). Hence, the curriculum needs to have in an increasingly wide range of communicative events, if learners are to expand their communicative competence.

In addition, through communicative activities, the learning process enables the learners to be actively involved and develop higher-order thinking skills. In language teaching, this suggests that students not only learn language for its own sake however to develop and apply their thinking skills in situations that transcends the language classroom. According to Savignon (2002), "by encouraging learners to ask for information, to seek clarification, to use circumlocution and whatever other linguistic and non-linguistic resources they could muster to negotiate meaning, to stick to the communicative task at hand, teachers are invariably leading learners to take risk, to venture beyond memorized patterns" (p. 3). Littlewood (1981) states that communicative activities are relevant to language learning because "they provide 'whole-task' practice, they improve motivation, they allow natural learning and they can create context, which supports learning" (pp. 17–18). Through communicative activities learners are provided with opportunities to practise real communication and experiment the language in real-life settings and thereby promote interaction (Demo, 2001). Lan (1994) explains that "as language is for communication, learning a language without experiencing the satisfaction of speaking and using it, puts a distance between the learner and the language and this can be a major obstacle to developing general proficiency" (p. 2).

In short, every programme with the goal of communicative competence should focus on providing opportunities for meaningful language use. Special attention needs to be given to providing learners with opportunities to experience the new language (Savignon, 2003). Conducting activities that are communicative is one essential technique to help students become communicatively competent.

4.3.1 Types of communicative activity

There are various different kinds of communicative activity and Littlewood (1981) has divided them into two broad types:

- 1) Functional communication activities
- 2) Social interaction activities.

4.3.1.1 Functional communication activities

Functional communication activities are activities that are aimed at developing certain language skills and functions through sharing and processing information. In these activities there is no appropriate language to choose; rather, students use the language they have at their disposal. The purpose of these activities is for learners to use the language they know to get meaning across as effectively as possible. Hence, the language can be ungrammatical and in this type of activity success is measured primarily by how well students cope with the communicative demands of the immediate situation. Activities include language games, scrambled sentences, rearrangement of picture strip stories and puzzles. The use of games can be a powerful language-learning tool, because games stimulate communicative skills, being task-based and having a purpose beyond the production of correct speech. Games provide a natural opportunity for learners to work together as they communicate using the target language to persuade and negotiate their way to desired results (Chen, 2005). The attention is on the message, not on the language, because the ultimate aim of all language games is for students to use the language. This process involves productive and receptive skills simultaneously. Furthermore, by integrating playing and learning, students practice the linguistic knowledge they have learned in a vivid and meaningful context (ibid).

4.3.1.2 Social interaction activities

Social interaction activities, on the other hand, are ones that emphasise social and functional aspects of communication. In this type of activity learners choose language that is functionally effective and socially appropriate, because activities in this category aim to convey meaning but pay attention to the social context in which the interaction takes place. Thus success is measured in terms of the functional effectiveness of the language and the acceptability of the forms that are used. Nunan (1991) refers to this

type of activity as ‘communicative tasks’. The task is meaning-focused where learners are required to comprehend, produce and/or interact in the target language. The tasks are analysed or categorized according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles. Task-based teaching activates a series of effective tasks for communication, which lead to a natural process of language acquisition and active participation in the EFL classroom (Nakamura, 2005). Through the tasks, two general goals are achieved: communicative effectiveness and second language acquisition, because task-based language instruction provides learners with experience of spontaneous interaction, the chance to notice how different speakers express similar meanings, chances to negotiate turn taking, use language purposefully and cooperatively, participate in complete interaction and try out communicative strategies in order to achieve communicative goals (Ellis, 2000).

Examples of social interaction activities include activities such as conversation and discussion sessions, problem solving, dialogues and role-plays, simulation and information-gap activities. Activities such as role-play provide students with opportunities to practise or rehearse situations that may happen in real life. Indirectly, they prepare the students for real-life language use (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010). Moreover, communicative activities such as role-play are effective at arousing students’ motivation to speak English (Liu, 2010). High motivation leads to a greater interest in speaking the language and eventually contributes to the development of language proficiency, specifically the ability to communicate effectively. Activities such as collaborative problem solving have a slightly different impact, fostering “a dynamic engagement with ideas amongst partners, with language as the principal means for establishing shared understanding, testing out possible solutions and trying to get some agreement” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 4). All in all, this second type of activity encourages thinking and communication, which are essential in the language development of the students.

4.4 Learner centred teaching in CLT

As communicative language teaching (CLT) places great importance on the process of communication rather than mastery of language forms, students become the centre of teaching and classroom activities, as they are required to be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Education that places emphasis on the learners and pays

close attention to learning processes results in a classroom that is learner centred (Fulcher, 2004). In learner-centred education, learners become the managers of their own learning, because they are given the autonomy to take on a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning both in terms of the content of learning as well as the processes they might employ (Freeman, 1986). Previously, teachers may have made all the decisions concerning lesson activities and assignments, course content and evaluation activities but learner-centred education encourages students' involvement in the decision-making process. In this manner, decisions about content will not be mainly how much to cover, but also how to use content to develop students' knowledge base, develop learning skills and create learner self-awareness. In learner-centred evaluation activities students are also involved, so that they learn how to assess their own work and work done by their peers. The self and peer assessment activities develop more independent and self-regulating students. Moreover, the purpose of evaluation then is not only to generate grades, but also to promote learning (Weimer, 2002).

These characteristics echo Weimer's (2002) features of learner-centred education. Weimer specifies a classroom that is learner centred as the one that undergoes changes in the following five aspects of instructional practice: 1) the balance of power, 2) the function of content, 3) the role of the teacher, 4) the responsibility for learning and 5) the evaluation purpose and processes. She argues that,

If students are engaged, involved and connected with a course, they are motivated to work harder in that course and we know from so many studies that time on task results in more learning. In my case, they become able to apply the content to their own communication. They learn not just about how communication works from a theoretical and conceptual basis; they come to understand themselves as communicators and suddenly see communication happening all around them.

(ibid, p. 31)

In other words, students' involvement and motivation towards learning is greater when they are involved in deciding the conceptual and linguistic contents of the classroom activities (Tudor, 1993). Learner-centred teaching, where students are empowered to take more responsibility for their learning and to increase their involvement and participation in the learning process, promotes an active learning approach. This is because pupils play more active roles during teaching and learning experiences, when they are engaged in intentional, active, goal-directed and self-regulated learning in order

to have first-hand experience of the content (Weimer, 2002, p. 52). Besides, by providing the opportunities for students to take personal responsibility for their learning, a learner-centred approach promotes meaningful learning and understanding of new materials and activates their prior knowledge base, actively linking, connecting or relating new knowledge to previous knowledge so that they are able to apply what they have learned to new situations or to their own life in real-world contexts. In other words, learner centred practices prepare the students to become autonomous and life-long learners (Phungphol, 2005).

Besides that, the active learning approaches enhance critical, creative and analytical thinking skills through strategies such as creating critical learning environments and challenging pupils to confront important problems. These strategies encourage pupil interaction with the subject contents and with one another, while the teacher facilitates the learning process and thus enhances their responsibility as students for knowledge construction. In other words, learner-centred education echoes the desire to produce learners who are effectively equipped with metacognitive skills such as creative intelligence, critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Mtika & Gates, 2010; Phungphol, 2005). These skills enable students to monitor and control their own thinking or mental activities in acquiring, integrating and using knowledge. In other words, teaching stresses discovery-based learning where greater emphasis is on the pupil's learning and outcomes (Hardman et al., 2008; O'Sullivan, 2004; UNESCO, 2007), rather than simply basic recall of facts and information.

Learner-centred teaching also emphasizes designing and tailoring appropriate, relevant and meaningful teaching instruction and language materials to suit students' needs, interests, levels of development and the characteristics of individual learners (Mtika & Gates, 2010). Jones (2007) comments;

A student-centred class isn't a place where the students decide what they want to learn and what they want to do. It is a place where we consider the needs of students, as a group and as individuals, and encourage them to participate in the learning process all the time. The teacher's role is more that of a facilitator...than instructor; the students are active participants in the learning process. The teacher (and the textbook) help to guide the students, manage their activities, and direct their learning.

(p. 2)

Focusing the teaching and learning content and process on the students' immediate

needs, makes teaching and learning more effective, as students are able to see the relevance of what is taught to their interests and desires. It also encourages increased participation, contribution and involvement on the part of the students, as they play a more active role than just receivers of knowledge.

After evaluating the implementation of two communicative activities in Thailand, Thongwad (2011) concludes that the selection of classroom activities should be based on the problems the students' experience with different aspects of speaking and the kinds of interaction the activities provide. Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2012) support this view, "learner-centeredness is reflected by recognising learners' prior knowledge; their needs, goals and wishes; learning styles and preferences; and their views of teaching and learning and the nature of classroom activities" (p. 74). By providing a range of instructional activities that are relevant to learners' needs and tailored to different levels of development, teachers are actually providing undivided support and careful monitoring as well as individualized help. In other words, as Daniels and Perry (2003) put it, "not only students' academic needs are fulfilled, but also their socio-emotional needs" (p. 102). Empirical studies have shown that providing developmentally appropriate instruction can enhance children's positive behaviour and motivation (Stipek, Feiler, Byler, Ryan, Milburn & Salmon, 1998).

Learner-centred teaching is best conducted through the use of pair or group work. The use of pair/group work could be a physical indication of a point of management and selection passing to the learners. According to Thompson (1996), there are at least three advantages of pair/group work activities:

1. they can provide the learners with a relatively safe opportunity to try out ideas before launching them in public;
2. they can lead to more developed ideas, and therefore greater confidence and more effective communication;
3. they can also provide knowledge and skills which may complement those of their partners, which in turn leads to greater success in undertaking tasks.

By working in pairs/groups, students will feel free to express their ideas and opinions, because they are more comfortable working with their peers whom they think have the

same level of language proficiency and knowledge. This feeling will develop their levels of confidence and self esteem to communicate in the target language and produce more accurate and appropriate language, which in turn provides more input for other students (Hedge, 2000).

It is generally accepted that as the focus of the learner-centred approach to teaching is more on learning than on teaching, and the action in learner-centred classrooms features the students, this alters the roles played by both the teacher and the learners. In an exceedingly learner-centred classroom the role of the teacher shifts from being a knowledge-transmitter to a facilitator of students' learning as students' active participation and involvement in the learning process are encouraged (Shihiba, 2011). Learner-centred teachers are thus "guides, facilitators and designers of learning experiences. They are no longer the main performer, the one with the most lines, or the one working harder than everyone else to make it all happen" (Weimer, 2002, p. xviii). In the language classroom, as a facilitator and a monitor, the teacher creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunities for students to use and practise the language and to reflect on language use and language learning (Ramparsad, 2001). The teacher is responsible for facilitating the communicative process in the classroom in such a way that students feel "secure, unthreatened and non-defensive" (Rao, 2002, p. 88). Littlewood (1981, p. 19) gives three suggestions on how teachers should play their role in learner-centred classroom.

- a) If learners are unable to cope with the demands of a situation, the teacher can offer advice or provide necessary language items. Teachers act as a source of help or guidance. This includes being there during the encounter to offer guidance, explanations, wise counsel, critique and encouragement. It means being there afterwards with praise and with the kind of constructive critique that motivates an even better performance next time
- b) The teacher can monitor the strengths or weaknesses of the students' performances. The weaknesses may indicate learning needs that require addressing.
- c) The teacher can correct learner errors that need immediate attention, to avoid fossilisation.

Obviously, the teacher's role is to "help and encourage students to develop their skills" but without giving up his/her traditional role "as a source of information, advice and knowledge" (Jones, 2007, p. 25). The function of the teacher becomes less dominant, but no less important. The learner-centred teaching (LCT) approach is considered to be a more powerful and more effective way of language teaching because, as O'Sullivan (2004) claims "it is an effective antidote to the prevalence of teacher-centred didactic classroom practices, which have support teacher dominance over passive learners and lead to rote learning and the stifling of critical and creative thinking" (p. 585).

4.5 Socio-constructivist theory

Studies on classroom interaction and its effect on language development tend to be based on socio-constructivist theory because it foregrounds language and social interaction as fundamental influences on learning and cognitive development. Socio-constructivist theory provides explanation for how learning can be fostered effectively through interactive pedagogical practices. The theory offers an appropriate conceptual framework for examining the use of language as a pedagogic tool and for analysing classroom interaction. Researchers have examined classrooms where social constructivist theory has been employed as regards discourse, interaction, pragmatics and negotiations among other things.

Socio-constructivist theory views learning as a social process, and meaningful learning occur when people are engaged in social activities where people interact with each other and with the environment they live in to create meaning (Kim, 2001). Vygotsky (1978 cited in Yang & Wilson, 2006) claims that dialogue between teacher and student, or students and students may have an effect on learning because learner makes sense of what is said through the dialogue. Fisher (2007, p. 616) emphasizes, "dialogue is important because it is the primary means for developing intelligence in the human species. It is through the capacity to verbalize that consciousness and understanding develop". Learning is an interactive process as learners interact with sources of ideas or knowledge in social settings, and as they play an active role in reconstructing ideas or knowledge within their own minds. Hence, social and individual processes involved may determine how knowledge is constructed because what we learn and how we make sense of knowledge depends on where and when, such as in what social context, we are learning. Therefore both the context in which learning occurs and the social contexts

that learners bring to their learning environment are crucial.

Social-constructivist theory focuses more on the effect of learners' interactions with others and therefore drew its attention to language as communication across individuals (Brown, 2000). Palincsar (1998) explains, from social-constructivist perspectives, interactions such as those achieved through classroom discussion are thought to provide mechanisms for enhancing higher-order thinking. But much of constructivism has led to a misplaced emphasis on the amount of face-to-face interaction in contrast to the quality of interactions. Thus, in recent years more attention has been paid to the quality of interaction processes in which students are involved because the nature of student participation in interaction processes may influence the process of learning (Terwell, 1999). Constructivism's emphasis on the role of language in learning has shifted teachers' teaching strategies toward the use of language classroom as a tool in students' meaning-making processes through interactive negotiation among learners (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). The constructivist perspective creates awareness among teachers of the role of prior knowledge in students' learning, recognizing that students bring with them a rich array of prior experiences, knowledge, and beliefs that they use in constructing new understandings and should be taken into account during curriculum planning and instruction.

Besides, socio-constructivist theory also emphasizes the active role student plays in acquiring knowledge and the social construction of knowledge. Following the constructivist view of teaching and learning, learners are actively engaged in making meaning through interaction, which is essential for language development. It is believed that students should participate actively in class, joining in interactive language learning tasks and becoming autonomous learners (Yang & Wilson, 2006) to ensure effective or meaningful learning.

Clearly, theories of socio-constructivism provide ways of identifying more effective language teaching practices for use. Socio-constructivism offers teachers instructional approaches that are congruent with current research on learning. By viewing learning as an active process, taking students prior knowledge into consideration, building on preconceptions, and eliciting cognitive conflict, teachers can design instruction that goes beyond rote learning to meaningful learning that is more likely to lead to deeper, longer lasting understandings.

4.6 Classroom interaction

The communicative approach to language teaching advocates the development of communicative competence via interaction in the target or foreign language during classroom sessions (Razmjoo & Raizi, 2006). Interaction is fundamental in CLT due to the critical relationship between language in use in the classroom and learning (Hawkes, 2012). Hall and Walsh (2002) assert that, “schools are important sociocultural contexts, their classrooms, and more specifically their discursively-formed instructional environments created through teacher-student interaction, are consequential in the creation of effectual learning environments and ultimately in the shaping of individual learners’ language development” (p. 186).

Malamah-Thomas (1987) defines interaction as “the social encounter of the classroom” where “people/things have a reciprocal effect upon each other through their actions” (p. 7). Classroom interaction is a two-way process between the participants (i.e. the teacher and the learners) in the learning process, such that one influences the other (Dagarin, 2004). In other words, interaction is more than action followed by reaction; it includes acting upon each other. Mercer and Dawes (2008) refer to classroom interaction as the use of verbal language for teaching and learning the curriculum. Through interaction functional and communicative purposes are reflected in language structures (Nunan, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 1987). However, it is important to note that interaction may also involve non-verbal language, where learners respond to teachers through action or demonstration.

Interaction in the classroom is also referred to as classroom talk (Alexander, 2012). Classroom talk or classroom interaction is an inevitably crucial aspect of the learning process and the most valuable resource in the classroom (Martin, 1999) because the function of interaction is twofold; as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning to happen and as a means of acquiring and learning language (Swain, 2000). Interaction is an essential pedagogical tool whereby lessons are accomplished (Allwright, 1984; Hall & Walsh, 2002). All classroom pedagogy can proceed only via a process of interaction. Hence, how interaction in the classroom is managed is likely to determine the success of the pedagogy in any subject (Dagarin, 2004). Effective classroom interaction in the language classroom encourages students to become effective communicators in the foreign language, which is likely to result in a successful language lesson. Alexander

(2006) identifies five types of classroom talk, which can be summarised as follows:

- a) ROTE (teacher-class): drilling of facts and ideas through repetition;
- b) RECITATION (teacher-class or teacher-group): asking questions for recall or to cue pupil's answers;
- c) INSTRUCTION/EXPOSITION (teacher-class, or teacher-group or teacher-individual): giving pupils information or explanations;
- d) DISCUSSION (teacher-class, or teacher-group or pupil-pupil): sharing ideas and information and solving problems;
- e) DIALOGUE (teacher-class, teacher-group, teacher-pupil or pupil-pupil): building a common understanding through structured questions and purposeful discussion.

(p. 30)

The different types of classroom talk suggest that basically classroom interaction can be divided into two broad types: 'one-way', where teachers only act as transmitters of ideas or knowledge and students rarely respond or react, and 'two-way', where teachers and pupils react to each other during interactions. Effective classroom interactions are held to be those that involve less of the teacher and more of the students. For this reason, rote, recitation and instruction/exposition are said to be less effective classroom talk, while discussion and dialogue represent more effective classroom talk. Classroom interaction can involve different sets of participants: teacher-student, teacher-group of students, teacher-whole class or student-student. The range thus covers: whole class, collective (teacher-led) group, collaborative (pupil-led) group and pair work.

Classroom interaction is considered the key to second language learning (Albakri, n.d) or the "locus of language learning" (Hawkes, 2012, p. 3), because through interaction learners are provided with comprehensible input, situations for maximum personal involvement in the communication and opportunities to use the target language in social interactions, which are necessary elements in the development of communicative competence. Research claims that classroom talk such as discussion not only provides opportunities for students to experiment and use the language, but it also promotes creative and critical thinking by learners in the process of negotiating meaning to ensure meaningful communication. It is now widely appreciated that the types of talk that take

place in the course of educational activities and how talk is practised in the classroom have potential value for children's learning and cognitive development (Alexander, 2004; Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

The quality of teacher-pupil interaction in classrooms plays an important role in enhancing teaching and learning, because the pedagogical processes in the classroom will ultimately affect the quality of education (Hardman et al., 2009). Good quality talk which genuinely interests learners is said to have far more impact on fostering communicative competence than involving them in some form of superficial activity simply in order to fulfil the requirements of communicative teaching (Bolitho, 2011; Reynolds, 1998). Barnes (2008) and Graham (2011) claim that ineffective teacher talk and interaction between teachers and learners may affect any progress in organizing and facilitating learning, especially in developing learners' communicative competence. Indeed, it is now broadly accepted within the field of Second Language Acquisition that second language learners will learn better if they are provided with opportunities to interact (Fisher, 2006; Hawkes, 2012).

However, research on what happens in the primary classrooms and how teachers interact with young learners in various parts of the world for example in Kenya (Ackers & Hardman, 2001), Singapore (Vaish, 2008), England (Hargreaves, Moyles, Merry, Paterson, Pell & Esarte-Sarries, 2003), China (Yu, 2009), Hong Kong (Wong, 1996; Yang, 2008) and India (Smith, Hardman & Tooley, 2005) has found that the kind of talk that takes place during lessons does not lead to learning or stimulate cognitive response. Alexander (2006) says basically classroom interaction has not been fully utilized for learning in the classroom, despite being the potentially most important educational tool for guiding the development of understanding and for constructing knowledge, because talk is typically viewed by teachers as a means of learning instead of an aim for learning and very often teachers fail to use talk to challenge students' cognitive level. In many cases, interaction in the classroom merely functions as a pedagogical tool or channel to impart knowledge and share information or ideas and is very rarely used to stimulate creative and critical thinking or to foster extended discussion or interaction. Part of the reason relates to the types of question employed, which are usually closed rather than open, and feedback that does not encourage longer interaction; the result is that the teacher asks more questions than the students, which limits the opportunities for the students to interact (Alexander, 2006; Pontefract & Hardman, 2005).

Essentially, language teaching and learning needs to be interactive. Indeed, the current Malaysian English primary curriculum, the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) implicitly emphasizes teaching English in an interactive way and encourages teachers to do so (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2010). There is empirical evidence for this position. For example in a recent international research study, Alexander (2008) reports that the Russian and French EFL classrooms observed emphasized a pedagogy, which exploited the power of talk to probe children's thinking and to secure sustained participation, engagement, learning and understanding. Talk is the most effective way to test one's understanding because speech is very flexible where we are able to try out new ways of arranging what we know and can easily change them if needed (Barnes, 2008). Hardman, Smith and Wall (2005) concur that more interactive whole class teaching could promote high quality dialogue and discussion and improve inclusion, understanding and learning performance and subsequently elevate the children's literacy standards. This is reported in their investigation of UK primary teachers' interactive and discourse patterns where teachers tried to actively engage pupils with special education needs (SEN) in whole-class and group-based activity of the literacy hour.

However, there were arguments on the lack of information on what constitutes interactive teaching and how it should be used in the classroom. Galton et al. (1990a) claim that interactive teaching was defined in a vague way to the teachers. Paterson and Moyles (2003) agree, reporting confusion among teachers about what interactive teaching meant. For this reason, teachers were not confident and sure of whether what they were doing in their language classrooms corresponded to the underlying concepts of interactive teaching.

A number of empirical studies try to ascertain the underlying theory and principles of interactive teaching by looking at what is going on in actual classrooms. Smith, Hardman, Wall and Mroz (2004) reported in a study to investigate the impact of the official endorsement of 'interactive teaching' on the interaction and discourse style of primary teachers across regions in England that teachers had no clear concept of what interactive teaching is. Another study by English, Hargreaves and Hislam (2002) showed that teachers were confused by the concept interactive teaching as proposed in the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) due to the conflicting definition of successful teaching that should involve interactive teaching which is referred to where pupils

contributions are encouraged, expected and extended but at the same time it should also include well-paced lessons with a sense of urgency, driven by the need to make progress. Linda et al (2003) found similar finding in that English primary school teachers defined interactive teaching differently.

One compelling question in relation to the implementation of interactive pedagogy relates to the nature and the quality of teacher-learner patterns of interaction and communication that take place in the classroom. As mentioned by Ackers and Hardman (2001), “the quality of teacher-pupil classroom interaction is seen as being of central importance: the research suggests it is the single most important factor, accounting for wide differences in outcome measures using the same curriculum materials and purportedly the same teaching methods” (p. 246). Barnes (2008) agrees, adding that the role the learners play and the kind of learning taking place in a language classroom depends largely on the quality of teacher-learner interaction patterns in the classrooms. The importance of interaction has led to increased attention being directed to the social dynamics and discourse of classrooms.

4.6.1 Dialogic teaching

Alexander (2004, 2006) suggests enhancing interactive teaching by improving the quality of classroom talk by transforming classrooms into ‘dialogic’ environments in which students are active participants. By dialogic he means the forms of instruction and learning conversation that stimulate thinking: “the kinds of verbal interaction that provide cognitive stimulus, expand consciousness and enlarge the dialogic space for thinking in children’s minds” (Fisher, 2007, p. 617). Dialogic classrooms seem to produce good quality language teaching due to the fact that the teaching method empowers pupils to express their views, ideas and feelings. Through dialogic teaching, pupils are able to contribute to the progression of their understanding from the chances given to them to refine and work on their own ideas.

Wells and Arauz (2006) compare dialogic to monologic classroom interaction in terms of their functions. According to them, monologic pedagogy is important “for passing on cultural meanings and thus preserving continuity and stability of beliefs and values within a culture. However, a text treated in this way is by nature authoritative, not open to question or alternative perspectives” (ibid, p. 385). For this reason, monologic

instruction alone is not sufficient. There will always be instances where children misunderstand or have different perspectives on a topic. Therefore, they need to engage in a dialogue to clarify their understanding or compare and understand their perspectives but in order for dialogue to proceed satisfactorily, the participants (listeners and speakers) need to achieve a state of mutually understanding of each other's perspectives. According to Alexander (2006) there are five principles of dialogic teaching:

- a) *COLLECTIVE* where teachers and children address learning tasks together, as a group or as a class, rather than in isolation;
- b) *RECIPROCAL* where teachers and children listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints;
- c) *SUPPORTIVE* where children articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over wrong answers; and they help each other to reach common understandings;
- d) *CUMULATIVE* where teachers and children build on their own and each other's ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry;
- e) *PURPOSEFUL* where teachers plan and facilitate dialogic teaching with particular educational goals in view.

Classroom talk can be made dialogic by taking children's thinking forward and connect it into coherent lines of enquiry where everybody including teachers and pupils, is encouraged to ask questions and provide explanations. Pupil talk is encouraged by asking children to narrate, explain, instruct, raise different sorts of question, receive, act and build upon answers, analyse and solve problems, speculate and imagine, explore and appraise ideas, discuss, argue, reason, justify and negotiate. Through this type of classroom talk children learn to understand that mistakes are natural and they can learn a lot from mistakes they made and it is something to be ashamed of (Fisher, 2006). In other words, dialogic teaching concerns the function of how patterns of talk may open up the discourse area for exploration and varied opinions, and the way teacher and student decision-making regarding content is conferred and discussed (Boyd & Markarian, 2011).

With these principles, dialogic teaching is deemed as helping to promote more effective thinking and learning and eventually to develop children's cognitive level. This is because dialogic teaching focuses on "the quality, dynamics and content of talk to engage children, accelerate and extend their thinking and advance their learning and understanding, to empower them both as thinkers and as active learning agents" (Alexander, 2006, p. 23) as dialogic teaching lays emphasis on:

1. the contexts of talk (whether whole class, teacher-led group, pupil-led group or individual),
2. the purpose of questions (whether to elicit, recall, instruct or probe),
3. their structure, (whether open, closed, narrow, leading or discursive),
4. the form of answers (such as factual, analytical, speculative, hypothesising or evaluative) and their length,
5. the type of feedback received (such as evaluative, motivational, diagnostic or neutral),
6. the length of exchanges
7. the way answers are built upon to stimulate thinking

(ibid).

Alexander reports changes in teaching, pupil engagement and pupil learning after dialogic teaching was introduced in the classrooms in North Yorkshire, Barking and Dagenham in the UK. In this project, teachers used video to analyse the quality of their classroom talk, identify its strengths and weaknesses and monitor progress, in order to plan for more effective professional development. It was reported that after the introduction of dialogic teaching, not only did the pupils become more confident in oral communication but they were answering more loudly, clearly, audibly, confidently and lengthier. There was also an increase in pupil contributions of an expository, explanatory, justification or speculative kind when the children were able to speculate, think aloud and help each other, rather than compete to spot the right answer. There was a shift from directing and controlling discussion to prompting and facilitating it, as teacher-pupil exchanges were longer. In short, the growth in children's confidence was both marked and impressive.

4.7 Patterns of classroom interaction

Extensive research on classroom interaction in non-dialogic contexts has shown that typically teaching and learning employs one particular pattern of interaction, which encompasses three turns, namely teacher asks questions, students provide answers and teacher evaluates the answers (Bolitho, 2011; Chang, 2009; Yang, 2008). The classroom discourse is analogous to the archetypal kind of teacher-led recitation first identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) which consists of the three moves referred to as ‘initiation-response-feedback’ (I-R-F hereafter): an *initiation*, usually takes the form of teacher questions, a *response*, usually refers to a student’s attempt to provide an answer to the teacher’s question, and a *follow-up*, refers to the feedback the teacher gives (usually in the form of an evaluation) on the answers given by the student(s). This discourse pattern is sometimes known as ‘triadic dialogue’ (Nassaji & Wells, 2000). One reason for the common occurrence of I-R-F sequences is teachers’ underlying epistemological belief that this type of interaction pattern is “a powerful pedagogic device for transmitting and constructing knowledge” (Cullen, 2002, p. 118) where “teacher’s role is to pass down information to students whose role is to receive and internalize the information and when called upon, to extract and accurately display it” (Hall & Walsh, 2002, p. 196).

It is claimed that a strict use of the I-R-F structure constrains students’ learning opportunities, especially as regards building communicative competence. This is due to the fact that the I-R-F pattern is typically dominated by closed questions (definitions and examples of closed questions can be found in 4.7.1.1) which require one-word or short factual answers, or by questions that recall information and call for predictable correct answers, and by teachers’ follow-up moves that are usually in the form of evaluative feedback (Ackers & Hardman, 2001; Hawkes, 2012). In this case, teachers play the role of an expert and control almost all of the verbal functions; they select and initiate topics for discussion, ask questions, decide who may speak, when and for how long, and initiate repair (Hall & Walsh, 2002; Mroz et al., 2000; Walsh, 2002; Walsh, 2011; Yang, 2008). As a result, learner participation and learning is inhibited (Cazden, 1988). Such a teacher dominant pattern of classroom discourse more often facilitates teacher control of the interaction than student learning of the content of the lesson.

4.7.1 The effects of questions and feedback on classroom interaction

However, in recent years empirical studies have found that the same basic I-R-F structure can take a variety of forms and be recruited by teachers for a wide variety of functions, which can in fact contribute to enhancing the learning process. Nassaji and Wells (2000) suggest that the choice of initiating questions and the choice of follow-up by teachers may influence the way the sequence develops. By introducing questions that introduce issues and avoiding evaluative follow-ups, students' contributions and participation can be extended and in due course elevate students' learning performance. Smith and Higgins (2006) argue similarly: "the quality of the manner with which teachers react to pupils' responses to questions in the I-R-F exchange facilitates a more interactive learning environment" (p. 490). In other words, patterns of interaction that are able to engage students' and promote their active participation will help to develop thinking and subsequently affect learning. These characteristics are consistent with the typology of the features of interactive teaching constructed by Paterson and Essarte-Sarries (2003) which assert that interactive teaching should engage the pupils, involve the pupils actively and practically, encourage broad pupil participation, conduct activities in a collaborative way, convey knowledge, assess and extend knowledge, encourage reciprocity and meaning-making, attend to thinking and learning skills, and address the social interests and emotional needs of the pupils.

4.7.1.1 The effects of questions

One of the commonly used strategies to enhance interaction in the ESL classroom is questioning, because in communicative language teaching, (a) questions are meant to persuade the learners to produce language (Shomoossi, 2004) and (b) questioning behaviour that the teacher employs may affect ESL classroom interaction (David, 2007). Teacher questions can either be in the form of a series of questions to bring the class to a conclusion or used in isolation in the middle of a series of informs to check whether the pupils have remembered a fact (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992).

The types of question teachers may ask can be categorized in many different ways. One common distinction is between closed questions and open questions. Closed questions are those that have only one acceptable answer or a predetermined answer (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005). Conversely, open questions are those that have more than one

acceptable answer (Galton et al., 1999a; Yang, 2010) or exploratory, tentative responses (Myhill & Dunkin, *ibid*). Closed questions such as, “*Is the sky in the picture white or black?*” or “*Do you like the story?*” will only allow students to answer in one word or with a yes/no answer. Such kinds of question limit the opportunities for the students to elaborate and expand their answers. On the other hand questions such as “*Why do you think the sky is black?*” or “*What is interesting about the story?*” allows students to respond in multiple ways. Open questions provide multiple and varied opportunities for students to practise communicating and respond with a variety of verbal and non-verbal responses which may promote sustained and new interaction (Walker et al., 2004).

Another distinction is between display questions and referential questions. Display questions are defined as those questions whose function is to get the students to display knowledge already known to the teachers, or recently acquired knowledge, whereas referential questions are those to which the response is not known by the teacher and directed towards the real world of the students outside the classroom (Nunn, 1999; Thornbury, 1996). Hence, display questions inviting recall, encouraging brief answers involving exchange of information or even one-word answers, rather than speculation and problem-solving, are less likely to get learners to produce large amounts of speech.

In contrast, referential questions increase the amount of learner output. Referential questions stimulate an exchange of ideas and eventually promote discussion (Jones, 2007). They initially provoke thoughtful answers and these in turn provoke further questions, eventually building blocks of dialogue (Alexander, 2006) leading to the creation of a discourse, which “can produce a flow of information from students to the teacher and may create a more near-normal speech (*sic*)” (Shomoossi, 2004, p. 97). The dialogue generated by an increased use of referential questions prevents students from giving yes/no answers, promotes their understanding (Fisher, 2006), helps them become more creative (Jones, 2007) and engages them in learning and being more actively involved in their own learning. In other words, closed or display questions inhibit language learning, because the student’s answer serves to end an interaction pattern and rarely to extend or initiate it (Myhill & Dunkin, 2005).

Another type of question, which is very commonly found in classroom discourse is ‘cued elicitation’, that is the use of a mid-sentence rise in voice intonation that acts as a teacher elicit. It is designed to get a response from the pupils during, or at the end of, an

explanation or following a pupil response. This type of question requires a minimal response from the students, because “the elicitation is usually in the form of a repetition or completion of a phrase or word and is often direct” (Hardman et al., 2009, p. 71). An example is shown in a lesson extract below taken from Primary 6 science lesson on a lesson topic entitled rearing of chicken, taken from a study by Hardman et al (2008. p. 64).

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Move</i>	<i>Act</i>
1	T	Yes ¹² Today we are going to treat rearing of what^	I	m el
2	C	Chickens	R	rep
3	T	Rearing of what^	R/I	ce
4	C	Rearing of chickens	R	rep
5	T	Rearing of chicken is our topic, rearing of chickens. Beware of diseased chickens in our different what^	I	s el
6	C	Homes^	R	rep

(the acts: m = marker, rep = reply, ce = cued elicitation, s = starter, el = elicitation).

Hence, the use of cued elicitation does not promote extended talk or prolonged discussion that can enhance classroom interaction. Interestingly however, studies found that this type of question occurs extensively in most classroom interaction patterns.

4.7.1.2 The effects of feedback

Feedback or follow-up is seen as essential and inevitable in teacher-initiated classroom exchanges (Jones, 2007). Mohd Noor, Aman, Mustaffaa and Teo (2010) note that feedback informs learners about their ‘work in progress’. It is claimed that how teachers receive and use pupils’ spoken contributions is crucial in shaping how pupils will set about learning, and therefore what they will learn, because appropriate and quality feedback or follow-up can enhance students’ learning. A teacher response to a pupil contribution generally makes it clear whether he or she validates or fails to validate the pupil’s attempt to join in the thinking (Barnes, 2008). Hedge (2000) adds that “getting feedback from the teacher and from other students in the class enables learners to test their hypotheses and refine their developing knowledge of the language system” (p. 13).

¹² Indicating rising intonation

A teacher's follow-up or feedback typically functions to accept and evaluate. The former indicates to the student that the response was appropriate and the latter comments on the quality of the response. 'Accept' is usually realized by affirming students' responses, using expressions such as 'yes', 'ok' or repetition of a pupil's reply, with neutral low fall intonation to show that the reply is appropriate. 'Evaluate' is an act that is usually realized by words such as 'good' or 'interesting' which function to praise or comment on the quality of a pupil's reply or reaction. It can also be a 'no', with a high fall intonation and repetition of the pupil's reply (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992). This type of feedback or follow-up is reported as being ineffective in a language classroom that aims to build students' ability to communicate, because employing this type of follow-up or feedback does not result in more active learner participation consisting of longer and more complex turns.

Hardman (2008) emphasizes that the use of constructive feedback, which asks students to expand on their thinking, to justify or clarify their opinions, or to make connections with their own experiences, is likely to enhance active participation by the students in their own learning. Alexander (2006) makes a similar suggestion,

Feedback on responses which: replaces the monosyllabically positive, negative or non-committal judgement (e.g. repeating the respondent's answer) by focused and informative diagnostic feedback on which pupils can build; uses praise discriminatingly and appropriately, and filters out the routine use of 'wow', 'fantastic', 'good boy', 'good girl', 'very good', 'excellent' etc.; keeps lines of enquiry open rather than closes them down; and encourages children to articulate their ideas openly and confidently, without fear of embarrassment or retribution if they are wrong.

(p. 20)

Cullen (2002) suggests that the use of a discursal follow-up move which includes the use of reformulation (i.e. teacher repairs a student's contribution and thus provides the class with the correct model of usage without interrupting the flow of discourse), elaboration (i.e. teacher adds and extends students' original responses and thus provides a richer source of input to the class), comment, repetition (i.e. teacher repeats an individual student's contributions) and responsiveness (i.e. the teacher listens and responds with genuine interest), may help to build a meaningful dialogue between teacher and students in the classroom. These types of feedback promote longer discussions and exchanges of ideas and eventually encourage students to speak and use

the language.

4.8 Approaches to analysing classroom discourse

The patterns of interaction that exist in the classroom can be analysed through an analysis of lesson transcripts or classroom discourse. One of the approaches used to analyse classroom discourse is the Discourse Analysis (DA) approach. DA enables researchers to analyse and understand real-life language data, as it examines language use by members of a speech community, and it identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres, as well as social and cultural factors that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk, by looking at both language form and language function (Demo, 2001). In other words, DA concerns the structural-functional description of discourse found in the classroom (White, 2003). Through DA “the hierarchical systems which depict the overall organization of classroom discourse can be developed” (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 56).

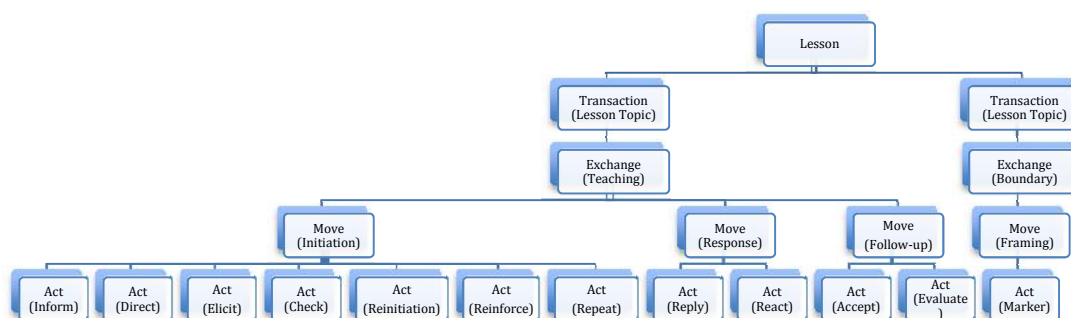
In educational settings, DA is used to uncover the uniqueness of classroom talk and what children must be able to do linguistically to ensure successful language learning (Adger, 2001). DA enables us to understand interaction in the classroom, and comprehend its special nature and therefore to consider how we might vary interaction more and introduce alternative types of sequence. In this study, the DA Approach is adopted as a system of analysis relevant to one of the main aims of the study, namely to investigate how curriculum reform is implemented by looking at the patterns of teacher-student classroom discourse. The DA in this study refers to Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1992) modified Birmingham School model.

4.8.1 System of analysis

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975; 1992) found that language in the classroom is linguistically and pedagogically rich and thus proposed the use of DA to investigate the structure of classroom interaction. DA is widely used and has become well established in studies that investigate classroom interaction patterns in various teaching contexts, such as first, second or foreign languages, from structural-functional perspectives.

The system for analysing classroom discourse developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1992), proposes that lessons can be analysed at five levels or ‘ranks’: lesson, transaction, exchange, move and act. Lesson is the highest unit of classroom discourse and is constituted of one or more transactions, which made up of one or more exchanges, which made up in turn of one or more moves, which made up of one or more acts. Figure 4.1 is a clear illustration of the system analysis.

Figure 4.1. Levels of discourse analysis



(Adapted from Hardman, Smith & Wall, 2003, p. 201 and Yang, 2008, p. 11)

Exchanges are divided into two major classes: ‘boundary exchanges’ and ‘teaching exchanges’. Boundary exchanges include ‘framing moves’ and ‘focusing moves’. Framing moves function to mark the beginning or end of a stage of a lesson. Typical framing moves are indicated by markers such as ‘*Now*’, ‘*Well*’, ‘*Good*’, ‘*OK*’ and ‘*Right*’. Focusing moves usually occur with framing moves and function to talk about the discourse. On the other hand, teaching exchanges consist of initiation, response and follow-up moves, marking the individual steps by which a lesson progresses.

Sinclair and Coulthard (ibid) divide teaching exchanges into two categories: ‘free’ and ‘bound’. The free exchanges are composed of six teaching moves with specific functions and unique structures. The four main functions of these exchanges are informing, directing, eliciting and checking. However, since informing and elicitions can be from the teachers and students, therefore the free exchanges that function to inform and elicit are further divided into: ‘Teacher Inform’, ‘Student Inform’, ‘Teacher Elicit’ and ‘Student Elicit’ along with ‘Teacher Check’ and ‘Teacher Direct’. These are distinguished by their different types of act (see Table 4.2).

Teacher Inform is used for passing on facts, opinions, ideas and new information to the pupils and usually there is no verbal response to the initiation. Therefore, there is no feedback. When pupils offer information that they think is relevant or interesting, this is deemed to be Student Inform. Nevertheless this exchange seldom occurs in the classroom. In contrast to Teacher Inform, Teacher Direct is designed to get the pupils to do rather than to say something (e.g., *'open your book at page 60'* or *'please sit properly'*). Therefore, in this exchange feedback is not essential, although it frequently occurs. Teacher Elicit is designed to obtain verbal contributions from the pupils. As discussed earlier, elicitation by teachers is usually in the form of questions. In the classroom environment, very often the teacher usually knows the answer to the question asked. Nevertheless, in this exchange, feedback from the teacher is expected because the pupils, having given their answer, want to know if it was correct or not. Cases where students ask questions to seek clarification, or get information, are considered as Student Elicit. However, the questions asked are typically of the order *'Do we need to underline?'* or *'May I go to the toilet?'* and therefore feedback is not essential. Teacher check is an exchange used by the teacher to discover how well the students are progressing, whether they can follow the teaching pace, or whether they can hear what is being presented or said (e.g. *'do you understand?'* or *'can you follow me?'*). Feedback is not essential because the questions are real and the teacher does not know the answer.

The bound exchanges consist of five types: four of which are attached to Teacher Elicits and one to Teacher Direct. So, the bound exchanges include: 'Re-initiation (i)', 'Re-initiation (ii)', 'Listing', 'Reinforce' and 'Repeat'. In the analysis system, an exchange is defined as Re-initiation (i) when a teacher receives no response to his/her elicitation from the students. This is where the teacher restarts by repeating, rephrasing, simplifying or giving hints such as using acts like clue, prompt or nomination. Re-initiation (ii) occurs when students give the wrong answer to a teacher elicitation and the teacher spends time with the same student in order to get the correct answer, or the teacher asks other pupil for the correct answer. A listing exchange, on the other hand, refers to an exchange where teachers keep back an evaluation to get more answers. This is usually to ensure that more students know the answer. The Reinforce exchange happens when the teacher re-explains or re-states a statement or an instruction. Lastly the Repeat exchange refers to a situation where the teacher asks the students to repeat their answers.

Table 4.2. Sinclair and Coulthard's system of analysis

<i>Exchanges</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
Teaching	Free	Teacher Inform Teacher Elicit Student Inform Student Elicit Teacher Direct Teacher Check	Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)	Marker Starter Elicit Inform Direct Reply Demonstration Comment Clue Accept Prompt Metastatement Evaluate Conclusion
	Bound	Re-initiation Listing Repeat Reinforce		
Boundary		Framing Focusing		Framing Focusing

Discourse analysis to second language teaching and learning where investigation of actual language use in the classroom can provide information on how teachers can improve their teaching practices, and the way students will learn language through exposure to different kinds of discourse as oral communication is the tool by which teaching takes place and in which students demonstrate to teachers what they have learned (Cazden, 1987). Through classroom discourse analysis teachers are able to monitor not only the quantity of students' output but most importantly the quality.

4.9 Summary of the chapter

In summary, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is recognized as an effective method in language learning as it focuses on developing students' communicative competence by engaging them in authentic communication. Through the CLT approach, students are able to choose what to say, how to say it and when to say it, so that what is communicated is appropriate, purposeful, meaningful and effective given its context. This will develop the learners' competency not only as regards communicative competence but also as regards linguistic competence.

Hence, learners need to engage in communicative activities, because this type of activity provides students with opportunities to speak and share ideas in a relatively relaxing way. Students should be free to choose what to say and how to say things. Through these opportunities, indirectly English environment is automatically created thus

helping students cultivate their sense of the language and creating an atmosphere where students can improve their English ability (Fang, 2010).

The CLT teacher's job is to facilitate communication in the classroom by establishing situations likely to promote communication, because in CLT, language and communication are interdependent. The teacher-student exchanges that take place in the course of educational activities should encourage learning and the acquisition of language. The classroom interaction should encourage longer interactions and extended discussion, to enable the students to practice their spoken English. An understanding of the IRF sequence enables us to model spoken language in the world inside the classroom, suggesting ways of constructing dialogues for teaching, role-plays for practising conversation, etc. (Walsh, 2011).

Therefore, an emphasis on communication in language learning classroom may offer a clearer and more secure understanding of how teacher-student dialogue can be used to good effect and of how opportunities for productive dialogue may sometimes be wasted (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 5). Moreover, analysis of research on classroom interaction reveals that there is not enough emphasis in a lot of educational policy and classroom practice on the value of teaching children the way to use language for learning.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

It was argued in the previous chapter that various factors have been identified to cause limited uptake or unsuccessful implementation of a curriculum reform. One of the factors is where teachers do not understand or have a sound knowledge of the curriculum. How teachers perceive and understand what the curriculum was intended to achieve and what is required of them may determine its effectiveness, as the success of a curriculum reform depends largely on the implementers, i.e. the teachers. Failure to fully comprehend the theoretical concepts underlying the curriculum may result in teachers' unwillingness to change their teaching approaches and strategies as expected by the curriculum reform resulting in minimal impact on its pedagogical implementation. Hence, what is mandated in the curriculum reform is not practised in the classroom (Carless, 2004). In short, failure to understand the curriculum may result in failure to implement it effectively and consequently failure to achieve the desired goal, leading to unsuccessful or ineffective curriculum reform. Lack of understanding or knowledge of the curriculum has often been found to be due to lack of clarity of the curriculum documents and resources and ineffective dissemination process (Carless, 1998; Hayes, 2000; Hu, 2002; Kırkgöz, 2008a; Wang & Cheng, 2008).

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this study. The rationale for the research design will firstly be discussed. Following this, information regarding the location of the study, the selection of the participants and the profiles of the participants will be described. Then, a detailed explanation of the methods and instruments used for data collection will be presented. Finally, an explanation will be provided of the data collection procedures and a discussion of the methods for data analysis.

5.2 Overview of the research

As mentioned in Chapter Three, empirical evidence on the synchronization between policy (i.e. the curriculum) and practice (i.e. the dissemination process and classroom practices) and studies that focus on the implementation of the curriculum with reference to classroom interaction in the context of the Malaysian primary education system are very scarce. Thus, this study sets out to critically examine the effectiveness of the 2011 curriculum reform for primary Year 1 English Language known as the Standard

Curriculum for Primary Schools (henceforth SCPS). The analysis involves three different domains: 1) the clarity and usefulness of the curriculum standard document and curriculum resources, 2) the effectiveness of the dissemination process, and 3) how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom in correspondence with the stated aim “to enable the students to communicate effectively in various contexts” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010, p. 3).

The specific research questions for this study are:

1. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the SCPS?
 - (a) Do the teachers find the SCPS standard document clear and useful?
 - (b) Do the teachers find the supporting materials (text book and teacher guidebook) clear and useful?

2. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the SCPS?
 - (a) What is the model used to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?
 - (b) How successful is the training?

3. How is the SCPS implemented in the classroom?
 - (a) What types of lesson activity are used?
 - (b) What is the quality of teacher-student interaction that accompanies the classroom activities?

Given the nature of the current study, which is related to classroom research that investigates teachers’ general views of a mandated curriculum and how teaching and learning takes place in context, the study employed a mixed qualitative and quantitative research design. Qualitative methods using semi-structured in-depth interviews, document analysis, lesson observations, discourse analysis of lesson transcriptions, video stimulated reflective dialogue (VSRD) of critical moments selected from lessons, and quantitative methods involving the systematic interactive observation of digital recordings were employed to address the three research questions. As each source of data has its own strengths and weaknesses, Patton (2002) recommends that multiple sources of information be used in data collection “because no single source of information can be trusted to provide a comprehensive perspective” (p. 306).

It is argued that selection of the most appropriate methods in a study depends on the research problem or the issue that needs to be addressed (Creswell, 2009). It is recommended to adopt a pragmatic approach and the best research method that can provide answers to the research questions most efficiently. Therefore, since the main research questions of this study deal with perceptions of teachers, which relate closely to their personal opinions and experiences, a major part of this study employed a qualitative research design because “qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2) and thus it allows the researcher to discover and to understand those phenomena from the perspective of subjects in the observed groups (Alwright, 1988). In a study that involves thoughts, feelings, beliefs, views and perceptions, “there is a need to understand the deeper perspectives, which can only be captured through face-to-face interaction and observation in natural settings” (ibid, p. 91). However, a quantitative research design is used in the collection and analysis of data for the classroom interaction patterns, to support findings about the implementation of the curriculum reform.

5.3 Design of the study

Currently, integrating qualitative and quantitative research approaches within the same investigation is claimed to be essential in educational research, as it enables the researcher to look at an issue from a different perspectives to gain a more comprehensive understanding (Dörnyei, 2007). Research studies that involve quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study to investigate a research problem are referred to as ‘mixed methods’ (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009; McMillan, 2004). It is argued that combining several research methods in a study can broaden the scope of the investigation and enrich the researcher’s ability to draw a conclusion (Dörnyei, 2007).

A mixed-methods approach provides rich and comprehensive data, because data from one source could enhance, elaborate or complement data from the other (or another) source (Creswell, 2005). For this study both quantitative data from systematic interactive observation of digital recordings and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, document analysis, classroom discourse transcriptions and reflections on video recorded lessons (VSRD) are employed as they can facilitate the triangulation of data, which can be used to verify and cross-check the research findings in order to achieve greater validity and reliability. Biesta (2012) explains that a qualitative-

quantitative research design helps “to generate interpretive understanding that is giving an account of why people act as they act, where quantitative information can be added to deepen the interpretation and provide a more robust confirmation of the understandings acquired through the collection of qualitative data” (p. 149).

Specifically, this study employs a cross-sectional survey. Such an approach enables the researcher to “explore a phenomenon about which not much is known or to describe something in detail” (Ashley, 2012, p. 102) such as perceptions, attitudes, beliefs or opinions and practices. Creswell (2005) defines “attitudes, opinions or beliefs as ways in which individuals think about issues, whereas practices are their actual behaviour” (p. 356). The approach enables the development of an understanding of the process of implementing curriculum reform in real life contexts and allows us to explore the perspectives of those actually implementing it, in this case from the teachers’ personal viewpoint. The teachers’ perspectives are crucial, because as implementers, they will decide either to follow faithfully, reinvent or reject an innovation. Hence, this approach gives a more complete understanding of the phenomenon being investigated and therefore allows a better understanding of the research problem.

Besides that, a cross-sectional study has the advantage of measuring current attitudes or practices in a short amount of time, such as the time required for administering the survey and collecting the information (Creswell, 2005). As I had only three months (as explained below) for data collection, a cross-sectional study seemed the most appropriate. Moreover, this type of study allows interpretation of situations in ways that are not always amenable to numerical analysis. It is argued that an experimental or survey-based approach would yield only superficial information as to the actual opinions and feelings of those who are involved in the curriculum reform, which is the focus of this research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

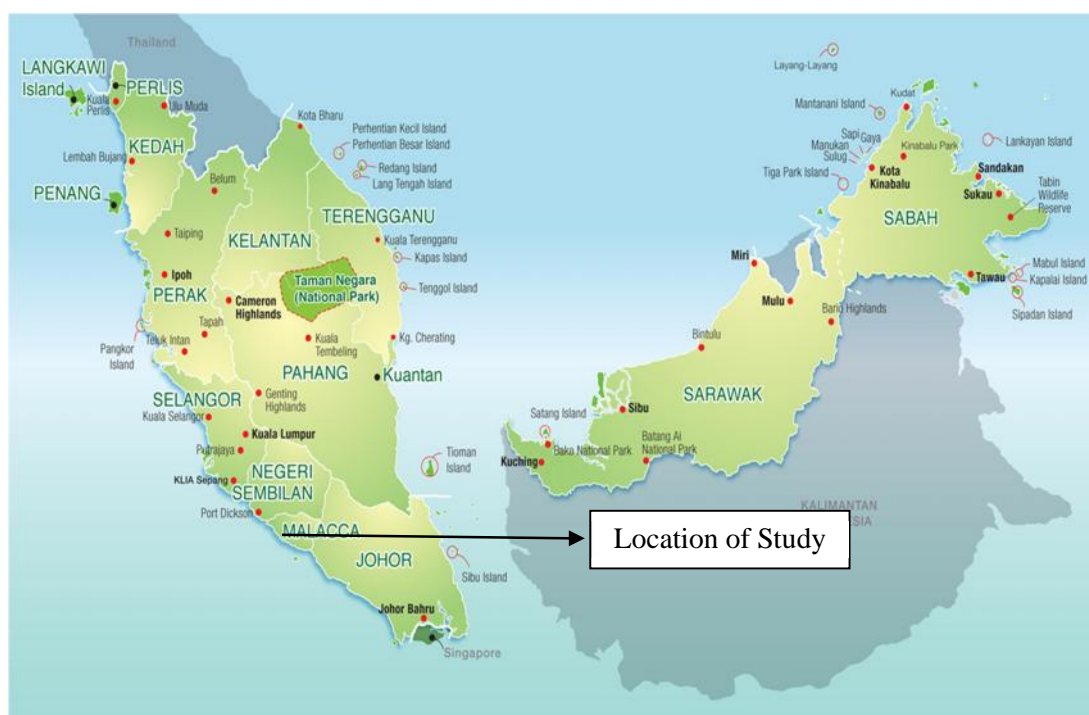
5.4 Location of the study

The research will be carried out in national primary schools. As mentioned in Chapter Two, there are two categories of public-funded primary school in Malaysia: Malay-medium national schools and non-Malay-medium national-type schools. As the names suggest, these two types of school differ in their medium of instruction policy. In all national schools, the medium of instruction is the National Language i.e. *Bahasa*

Melayu (Malay Language), whereas in the national-type schools such as Tamil National-type Schools have the Tamil language as the medium of instruction and Chinese National-type Schools have Chinese. The emergence of these two types of school is a manifestation of the government’s sensitivity toward the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian population. Nevertheless, the national and national-type schools follow a common syllabus and share a common public examination. However, because the largest proportion of primary schools is national schools, this type alone was selected for the present study.

The eight schools, which participated in the study, are located in Malacca, an economically successful state in the region with 60% of Malay population, where I live. Malacca is situated on the Straits of Malacca, towards the southern part of the Malaysian Peninsula. Malacca Town is located between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia. Figure 5.1 clearly illustrates the location of Malacca.

Figure 5.1. Map of the location of the study i.e. Malacca State



Source: http://www.asia-experience.com/images/malaysia_map_larger.jpg

The decision to base the study in Malacca was due to time and budgetary constraints. As a government-sponsored research student, my data collection was expected to extend over a period of three months. Hence it seemed more practical to choose schools, which were within easy travelling distance from my home.

The eight primary schools were selected so as to be representative of four of each of the urban and sub-urban schools. Sub-urban schools are schools that are located in an area, which is out of the town but not in a rural area. A second selection criterion was that I had some knowledge of each school's background. From this sample, I hoped to find out if there were any similarities or differences in the perceptions of the teachers in these schools due to location and/or to students' socio economic backgrounds and whether teachers from the two areas shared any similarities or differed in any way in their classroom practices. The rationale for the selection of just eight participating schools was because it was neither realistic nor possible for me to approach all primary schools in all the 13 different states, given that Malaysia has over 7,752 primary schools.

In addition, the schools were also selected based on discussions and suggestions with one of the curriculum trainers involved in teacher training and the English Language officer in the Malacca State Education Department. Moreover, as a teacher trainer in the English Department of the Malacca Teacher Training Institute, I had to observe teacher trainees during their school practicums in most primary schools in Malacca, and this had enabled me to meet most of the head teachers. Thus it was expected that many of the head teachers would be willing to provide support and assistance specifically flexible access to the participating schools and EL teachers. Apart from that, a colleague who was an English Language Officer (ELO) in one of the Education District Offices in Malacca State was another significant source of support. This colleague helped to gain the head teachers' agreement to allow their teachers who volunteered, to participate in and commit to this study. In other words, my personal networking meant that I had better access to the eight participating schools. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) say accessibility should be an influential factor and a significant issue for consideration in selecting the location, the participating schools and teachers in a study.

5.5 Population and sample

The main participants in this study are the EL teachers teaching primary Year 1. As this study seeks to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, it is important to select participants who "can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn" (Dörnyei, 2007,

p. 126). As implementers and those responsible for carrying out the curriculum in the classroom, these teachers could provide in-depth information on the curriculum, such as its strengths and weaknesses and areas that need improvement. Year 1 teachers were chosen because the current curriculum had only been introduced at this level of primary schooling in the year that this study was conducted, i.e. 2011. To recruit them, a non-random sampling technique to elicit information was adopted, that Patton (2002) refers to as ‘purposive sampling’. Although it is true that purposive sampling can be biased, as the samples are handpicked and non-representative, the technique is nevertheless able to provide “information-rich cases for study in depth which are likely to illuminate the questions under study” (ibid; p. 230).

A total of eight teachers (four different teachers from four different schools in urban and sub-urban areas) were chosen, based on two criteria: 1) they had a minimum of 3 years of English Language Teaching (ELT) experience to Year 1 students, and 2) they were currently teaching the subject to the same level of students using the most recent curriculum (SCPS). Teachers meeting these criteria were chosen for the study because they could be expected to have sound knowledge of both the previous curriculum, the Integrated Primary School Curriculum (IPSC), and the current curriculum, the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for English Language, and thus be able to distinguish any suggested or required changes of classroom practice. As mentioned earlier, such a selection did not necessarily mean that these eight Year 1 English Language teachers were representative of the teacher population under investigation. Rather, they were chosen and studied as detailed cases to illustrate what was happening in English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) primary classrooms.

The table below (Table 5.1) presents the demographic information of the teacher participants. It details their gender, years of teaching experience and educational qualifications. A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H are pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of the teachers concerned.

Table 5.1. Profiles of teacher participants

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Teaching experience (years)</i>	<i>English teaching experience (years)</i>	<i>Experience of teaching Year 1</i>	<i>Qualification</i>
A	F	14	14	7	a) Bachelor in Education TESL
B	M	5	3	3	a) Bachelor in Information Technology b) Diploma in Education (Mathematics)
C	F	7	7	7	a) Diploma in TESL
D	F	8	4	4	a) Bachelor in Accountancy b) Diploma in TESL
E	F	5	5	4	a) Bachelor in Town Planning & Development b) Diploma in Education (English and Mathematics)
F	F	21	21	15	a) Diploma in Education (English Studies)
G	F	3	3	3	a) Bachelor in Information Technology b) Diploma in Education (English Studies)
H	F	5	5	5	a) Bachelor in Linguistic Studies b) Diploma in Education (English Studies)

Notes: F refers to Female, M refers to Male, TESL refers to Teaching English as a Second Language

Based on the information above, the teaching experience of the teacher participants in this study ranged from 3 years to 21 years; the sample thus covered a range from novice teachers to senior teachers. Among the eight EL teachers there was only one male teacher; the other seven were female. The number of male and female teachers represents the gender-ratio of primary school teachers in Malaysia in general. Statistics

shows that the percentage of primary school teachers by gender from 2011-2013 is 70:30 (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, as this study did not aim to differentiate between responses from male or female teachers, gender was not used as a sampling criterion. Looking at the teachers' qualifications, all but one teacher (Teacher B) were qualified English teachers holding either a first degree or a teaching certificate in English Language Teaching i.e. TESL or English Language Studies. Teachers' teaching qualification represents the qualification of teachers at primary level in Malaysia generally as data presented in Quick Facts (2013) shows that the ratio of trained and untrained teachers at primary level is 0:7. Teacher B had a first degree in Information Technology (IT) and gained his teaching certificate majoring in Mathematics. However, since the day he started his teaching career he had been directed by the head teacher to teach English, due to there being a lack of English teachers in the school and to his ability to speak the language.

Based on the belief that there is a need to involve samples from which one can learn the most about the central issues with respect to the purpose of the inquiry (Patton, 2002) and participants who were knowledgeable and informed about the intended curriculum, it was deemed important to supplement the perspectives of the teachers with those of: policy-makers (in this case the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) officer) who were involved in reforming the curriculum from the initial stages, curriculum trainers charged with preparing the teachers to deliver the curriculum, and District English Language officers who were responsible for monitoring the implementation of the current curriculum in the actual classroom. The purpose of conducting interviews with the national policymaker (i.e. the CDD officer) was to explore the intended curriculum, and particularly the rationale behind the proposed curriculum reform, as well as the ministry's anticipation of the extent to which the curriculum would be implemented in primary English Language classroom. The policymaker who was involved in this study had been engaged in developing and designing the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for English Language since its proposal stage.

5.6 Methods of sampling

Since the sampling decisions for this study affect schools, the classes, the teachers and the children, it was crucial that selection was made based on personal networking, so that the head teacher of the schools in question offered full support for the research,

making it much easier to receive cooperation from teachers to participate in the study (in view of the power relationship between the head teacher and their teachers) and to gain flexible access to the schools. In this sort of study it is almost always important to “achieve goodwill and cooperation of the significant figures in conducting a research” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 82).

For the recruitment of the participants, I first contacted the head teachers of the eight schools that I had selected and explained the purpose of my study over the phone. Following these initial conversations, I sent each a letter explaining the study in detail and the characteristics of the EL teachers required as participants, along with a tentative schedule for conducting the interviews and classroom observations. I then invited each head teacher to recommend one English Language teacher who was teaching at Year 1 level who met the criteria (see Sec. 5.5) and would, they felt, be willing to cooperate throughout the duration of the study. It will be recalled that teachers should 1) have had at least 3 years’ experience of teaching Year 1, and 2) be currently teaching Year 1 using the new curriculum, namely the SCPS.

Next, with official permission granted to conduct the research (detailed explanation see 5.7), I went to the schools concerned to meet the head teachers. During my first meeting with the head teachers I was introduced to the EL teachers who had been nominated to participate in the study. As a result of this meeting, I was able to approach the teachers directly and briefed them about the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures, which they were going to be involved in.

To gain participation from an officer from Curriculum Development Division (CDD) Ministry of Education Malaysia, I contacted the Head of the English Language Unit of the Curriculum Development Division (CDD), Ministry of Education Malaysia, and requested an interview with him. But due to his tight schedule, he suggested a senior officer in the same unit as a replacement and provided me with her contact information. During my first contact with the representative from CDD via email, I enquired about curriculum trainers whom I could approach and the officer gave me a list of names to be contacted, based on their active involvement in the design and implementation of the curriculum reform. I then contacted a few names that were within the proximity of where I stay and came from Malacca. After explaining the purpose of the study, two of them volunteered to participate. The two District English Language Officers (DELOs)

were recruited on the basis that the schools involved in the study were within their district. With the permission letters issued by the Prime Minister's Office and the State Education Department, as well as my personal networking with one of the officers (a colleague) I had no difficulty gaining support from the two DELOs.

5.7 Ethical issues and access to the research participants

Educational research usually deals with “humans beings” as research participants and their “learning organizations” as the place where the collection of data is carried out (Wellington, 2000, p. 3), thus there is a need for researchers “to respect the participants and the sites for research” (Creswell, 2009, p. 89). Moreover, as there will be potential intrusion and disruption while conducting research in schools which will affect the schools, the classes, the teachers and the children, gaining official permission from the “institution or organization where the research is to be conducted and acceptance by those whose permission one needs before embarking on the task” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 81) should be at the forefront of any educational research project. This issue is particularly important in deciding for the research design, the participants and the context of the research.

Hence, prior to conducting the research, formal procedures were followed. It started in the UK when a formal ethical review of the Department's Ethics Committee of the University of York had been completed before commencing the research (see Appendix A). Then, the process continued by gaining official permission to conduct the study in schools in Malaysia from the Prime Minister's Office in Putra Jaya (see Appendix B1), followed by an official permission letter from the Malacca State Education Department (see Appendix B2). These consents were needed to gain permission to enter the respective classrooms and observe the teachers teaching in a real classroom situation for one whole lesson plan. However, as the study was sponsored by the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia, gaining the requisite official approval to enter the schools was very smooth and easy.

Before embarking on the interviews and classroom observations, voluntary informed consent was obtained from the different parties involved in the study, namely the CDD officer, District English Language Officers and curriculum trainers (see Appendix C1) and EL teachers (see Appendix C2). The voluntary informed consent provided the

participants with adequate information about the nature of the research, how it would be used and reported, plus its benefits, as well as any potential harm that could arise from it, specifying what participating in the research would mean (for example being interviewed or observed and whether or not this would involve audio or video recording), why it was important, and clarifying that participants had the right to withdraw themselves (or data relating to them) from the study at any time. In addition, a briefing and explanation of what the research involved was provided before embarking on the observations and interviews with all the respective participants during the first meeting with them. All the teachers, the CDD officer, the curriculum trainers and the District English Language Officers signed their informed consent form before taking part in the study.

Other important issues that should be given attention in discussing ethics in research include privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In the case of my research, participants were assured that they would not be identified in the thesis. In an attempt to preserve the anonymity of the eight participating schools, the schools were given pseudonyms. The curriculum trainers are referred to as Curriculum Trainer 1 and Curriculum Trainer 2, and the other officers were referred to by job title rather than name. The eight EL teachers are referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher F, Teacher G and Teacher H throughout the thesis. Additionally, special care has been taken to omit or modify information relating to either the schools or the participants when interview data are presented.

5.8 Methods and instruments for data collection

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the present study involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data via four main methods: 1) semi-structured interviews, 2) classroom observations, 3) stimulated-recall dialogue, and 4) document analysis.

The instruments used for the data elicitation included semi-structured interview guides, field notes, systematic classroom observation schedules and video-stimulated reflective dialogue protocols. These three methods for gathering information are considered primary in mixed method research studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and the use of these three instruments is supported by numerous empirical studies on curriculum development, or curriculum reform and curriculum implementation, which have

established the most effective ways of eliciting data for similar research. The following section discusses each method and instrument in further detail.

5.8.1 Interviews

Dörnyei (2007) and Talmy (2010) argue that interviews are one method most often used as a means of obtaining in-depth information about a participant's experiences, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, knowledge and feelings of a problem being researched. Since the aim of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions and understandings of the Standard Curriculum for Primary School (SCPS), adopting the interview method as a means of data generation is pertinent, as it allows the researcher to enter into the inner world of the teachers and to gain a better understanding of their perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The interviews were intended to elicit in greater depth teacher understanding of the key concepts of the curriculum and the aim of the research. Dörnyei (2007) categorizes interviews into three types:

- a) *A structured interview* refers to a tightly controlled interview that uses a pre-prepared, elaborate interview guide, which contains a list of questions to be covered identically with every interviewee.
- b) *An unstructured interview* allows maximum flexibility to follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions, with only minimal reference from the research agenda. The questions in this kind of interview are often open-ended and broad.
- c) *A semi-structured interview* uses pre-defined guiding questions and prompts. The format is open-ended but it allows for probing, follow-up and clarification.

For the purposes of the present study, a relatively open interview format, involving semi-structured interviews, was employed with the observed EL teachers and representatives from the Ministry of Education, Education District Offices and the curriculum trainers. The aim was to gather specific yet in-depth information. Hence, instead of using scripted questions, a set of primary areas of exploration and a checklist of issues to be explored in an interview were listed and the list was used as a guide to "ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry [were] pursued with each person interviewed" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). However, the order in which the questions were asked was not predetermined because their function was only to act as a guide that provided the themes or areas to be explored (Merriam, 1998). This way the researcher can retain "considerable flexibility over the range and order of questions within a

loosely defined framework” (Wellington, 2000, p. 74). Another advantage of a semi-structured in-depth interview is the fact that it offers opportunities for probing and clarification when greater clarity or additional information is needed from the person being interviewed (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Patton, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Wellington, 2000). This allows for greater depth in the issue being studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and at the same time for clarification and triangulation of data obtained through other means (Mears, 2012). As the purpose of the study was to uncover and describe participants’ perspectives on issues in education, the data that needed to be elicited had to demonstrate teachers’ subjective views, thoughts, values, prejudices, perceptions, feelings and perspectives, which would only be possible through in-depth interviews.

Teachers in the study were interviewed prior to and after the classroom observation in order to build a clear picture about their perceptions, understanding and practices. The pre-interviews were used to assess teachers’ knowledge of the curriculum particularly relating to its goal(s), modular approach, teaching principles and pedagogy. The post-observation interviews employed the video stimulated recall technique that will be discussed in detail in 5.8.3. The final interviews were conducted in order to elicit teachers’ reflections concerning their classroom teaching that was observed, and were aimed at extracting information regarding the thought processes involved in certain pedagogical decisions that teachers were observed to make in their classrooms.

Each interview session lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. All the interviews started in English as all the participants were connected with English teaching. However, there were occasions when the participants code-switched between English and *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay Language), when they felt a need for clarification or elaboration or to express their opinions. This is probably because some teachers were not graduates in English, as described in the background Table 5.1. No objection was raised to use of both languages in the interviews, in an attempt to encourage fluent and clear ideas as well as to maintain rapport between and confidence on the part of all parties.

The interviews were tape-recorded and backed-up for transcribing, translating and analysis. To avoid being affected by the presence of the tape-recorder and to lessen the feeling of apprehensiveness on being taped-recorded, an explanation was given (again) before the interview started on the purpose of the research and an assurance was

provided that the participants' responses would be kept confidential and their identity would be anonymous. This helped to establish rapport between the interviewer (myself) and the interviewees. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), obtaining trust from the interviewee is important to prevent biased research data. Each interview was transcribed verbatim. A copy of the transcription was sent to each of the participants for them to add or revise as necessary to increase accuracy and reliability. Out of the 8 teachers only two of them suggested changes in their answers to the interview questions. The changes were mainly to clarify and explain further.

5.8.1.2 Interview guides

The interviews with all the participants in this study followed what Patton (2002) referred to as the 'interview guide'. Two types of interview guides were prepared: interview guides for the EL teachers and interview guides for the representatives from the ministry, i.e. the CDD officer, the curriculum trainers and the District English Language Officers. Both the interview guides were developed from interview guides used by Karavas (1993), Moyles et al. (2003) and Wang (2006). These studies were found relevant as they involved interviews concerning participants' perceptions, knowledge and attitudes towards new approaches in ELT curricula. These three studies focused on the perceptions and attitudes of teachers in Greece, the UK and China respectively towards the applicability and effectiveness of a communicative learner centred approach. The present study is different in that it examines the effectiveness of a recent curriculum reform in ELT in Malaysian primary schools. Nevertheless, the participants in the three studies were found to share some commonalities with the participants in the present study. The following section will first describe the interview guides for the EL teacher participants and then there is a description of the interview guides that were used with representatives from the Curriculum Development Division, curriculum trainers and English Language Officers (ELOs) of the Education District Office.

5.8.1.2.1 Interview guides for teachers

The interview guides for teachers aim to elicit data on how teachers perceive the usefulness and clarity of the curriculum document and curriculum materials, and the

effectiveness of the dissemination of the curriculum reform. Hence, the interview guides help to provide answers to the first and second research questions.

The interview guide for the teachers was divided into seven themes (see Appendix H3).

The themes were:

- A. Demographic information about teachers' language learning experience, educational background and teaching experience;
- B. Teachers' views on the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS/KSSR);
- C. Teachers' conceptual understanding of active learning, a learner-centred approach, interactive teaching and reports of their classroom practice;
- D. Teachers' training experiences and views of their training;
- E. Teachers' opinions of the resources and modules provided;
- F. Problems teachers faced/teachers' opinions of the innovation;
- G. Teachers' roles.

The first theme included demographic information regarding the participants' education qualifications, language learning experience and teaching experience. The main purpose of gaining this information was to establish the range of teaching experience specifically in English Language Teaching (ELT) among the teachers. Information on their academic qualifications allowed the researcher to obtain a general view of the teachers' English Language backgrounds.

This was followed by themes that centred on the participants' knowledge and understanding, as well as experiences of the current curriculum and their perceptions of various issues with regard to the curriculum implementation in their language classroom. It was hoped that the process of being interviewed would help clarify teachers' understanding of the reform efforts by prompting thought and discussion about relevant issues. The second theme was teachers' views of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for Year 1 English Language because how teachers view and perceive a curriculum will have an influence on how it will be implemented in the classroom. The third focused on teachers' conceptual understanding of three key concepts that made up the new curriculum: 1) interactive teaching, 2) active learning, and 3) a learner-centred approach. The fourth theme dealt with teachers' views

on their experiences of the training provided. The fifth theme was teachers' opinions of the curriculum support materials provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The sixth theme was geared to the problems teachers face in the implementation of the current curriculum. The final theme touched upon their views of the role(s) that they were playing in the classrooms, in view of the demands made by the current curriculum.

5.8.1.2.2 Interview guides for the CDD officer, the curriculum trainers and the DELOs

The interviews with the curriculum trainers and District English Language officers were aimed at discovering and exploring their perceptions and understanding of the current primary English Language curriculum and its implementation. Gathering views from the trainers who are charged with providing professional training to teachers before the implementation of the new curriculum, should allow one to obtain a clear picture of the kind of professional support provided to the teachers. In addition, the data from the interview should also provide information on (a) what the teachers were actually required to do in their actual classrooms and (b) the emphases of the new curriculum about how English should be taught.

Interviews with the District English Language Officers responsible for monitoring the implementation of the curriculum in actual classrooms should yield information on the criteria that they used when observing English Language classroom teaching. Looking at the criteria will shed light on the extent to which the criteria reflect the aim of the curriculum: that is, the development of students' communicative competence. Besides, the information gathered from the interview may indicate whether their understanding of the curriculum and how it is to be implemented is congruent with the views and knowledge of the teachers.

The interview guides for the officer from the Curriculum Development Division, the trainers and the District English Language Officers (DELO) was divided into four topic areas:

- A. Questions on the curriculum;
- B. Questions on active learning and the learner-centred teaching approach;

- C. Questions on the curriculum materials;
- D. Questions on the training.

The first topic area asked about the questions pertaining to the characteristics of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for Year 1 English Language and the rationale for the curriculum reform. The information on the curriculum was intended to provide a general view and better understanding what the curriculum was about and how the SCPS differed from the previous curriculum. The second topic area of the interview questions touched upon the concept of active learning, interactive teaching and a learner-centred teaching approach, as stipulated in the curriculum. It was felt to be particularly important to know the ministry's expectations of the extent to which the curriculum would be implemented (or their beliefs about how far it was being implemented) in the classroom in view of the goal of the curriculum.

The third topic area dealt with the curriculum support materials provided to the teachers to help them with the implementation of the curriculum. This information was intended to give an overview of how far teachers believed the curriculum support materials related to their classroom practice. The fourth dimension of the interview questions focused on the actual training provided to the teachers. The information was considered crucial as it would give an idea of how the curriculum was communicated to the teachers.

5.8.2 Classroom observations

Classroom observation is “a process of gathering information by observing and watching the behavioural patterns of people in certain situations or at a research site, to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest” (Creswell, 2005, p. 211; Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 211). An example would be an investigation of the kind of activities and interaction patterns that exist inside the classroom. Carless (2004) stresses that in analysing the success of an innovation, it is crucial to learn how teachers carry out the innovative curriculum in the classrooms. Hence, in addition to investigating the EL teachers' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum reform, their views of the curriculum support materials and their opinions towards the dissemination process of the curriculum reform, this study examines the implementation of the curriculum in actual classrooms with reference to the classroom activities conducted and teacher-

student interaction and discourse patterns that occur. This is in line with Martin's (1999) point that, "interaction between teacher and pupils constitutes the fabric of the curriculum in the classroom; an investigation of classroom communication patterns is therefore fundamental to an understanding of how the curriculum is realised in the classroom" (p. 127).

"Unobtrusive observations" or non-participant classroom observations (Patton, 2002, p. 291) were employed in this study, where the researcher observes and records or takes notes, but does not take part in the observed activity. This was to ensure the least possible interference with normal activities and that what was being observed would be minimally affected. Classroom observation was adopted due to several factors. First, the dynamics of any classroom interaction discourse cannot be effectively captured without observation. Classroom observation is a "highly developed data collection approach typical of examining learning environments" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 176). Second, the interaction patterns to be observed are not set-up or pre-planned but occur naturally in the context of teaching and learning. Hence, classroom observation yields first-hand data (Dörnyei, 2007) as it provides the opportunity to record information and the description of behaviour as it occurs in a setting, naturally (McMillan, 2004). Recording actual behaviour is better than obtaining reports of preferences or intended behaviour because people do not always do what they say they do (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 211). Third, one of the educational purposes of observation is that it can be used as an effective reflective tool for improvement of teaching practices (see explanation in 5.8.3).

The classroom observations were tape-recorded using a JVC Everio GZ-HM545 camcorder to document the actual classroom interaction between teachers and students. A video camera as the means of recording lessons enables the researcher to capture paralinguistic and non-linguistic features of talk (Smith & Higgins, 2006). Hence, the recordings were used to identify both the function and the patterns of teacher and pupil discourse in the classroom as well as the content of what was actually said and the manner in which it was spoken. In this sense, the recordings captured a reasonable proportion of the whole picture with a concern for the social and historical context of teacher and pupil utterances. Apart from that, video recordings can be repeated and examined many times (Richards & Lockhart, 1996) and therefore enable a close analysis of specific teacher behaviours to ensure consistency.

Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the presence of the recording equipment may be disruptive, as it may affect the naturalness of what was being recorded, referred to by Labov (1994 as cited in Gordon 2012) as the ‘observer paradox’, particularly in rural settings where video cameras or recordings are not common. However, the problem can often be overcome (or at least reduced) by first explaining to the teachers the purpose of the study and by giving them the assurance that their identity will be kept anonymous and data from the observations will be kept confidential. Besides that, sitting at the back of the classroom lessens teachers’ anxiety of being recorded. Hence, once the teachings started, the intrusion of the video camera became less threatening than had initially been anticipated.

5.8.2.1 Field notes

One of the instruments used in classroom observation is field notes. Van Maanen (1988, as cited in Wolfinger, 2002) defines field notes as “shorthand reconstruction of events, observations and conversations that took place in the field” (p. 86). This means transcribed or written notes made at the research setting, derived from data collected during observations and interviews, describing what the observer sees, hears or does, or recording thoughts, ideas, feelings, speculations, questions and concerns based on the observations and interviews (McMillan, 2004). Making field notes was clearly likely to be important in the present study, as information from them would help to explain the recorded observations or interviews, as well as filling gaps in the analysis of other data.

The data collected from field notes were intended to provide answers to whether the reforms in the curriculum were having any marked or noticeable impact on teachers’ classroom interaction patterns and influencing their pedagogical practices, as well as allowing me to see whether the teachers’ current pedagogy was consistent with the curriculum’s emphasis on developing learners’ communicative competence. Moreover, as discussed in the literature review, many studies on curriculum implementation have revealed a gap between what is theoretically intended and what is practically implemented. By observing what teachers did in the classrooms and how they taught it was hoped to establish whether such discrepancies also occurred in this study. In other words, the use of field notes help to provide answers to research questions three on how

teachers implement the curriculum specifically looking at the classroom activities and the teacher-student interaction patterns.

5.8.2.2 Systematic classroom observation schedule

A systematic classroom observation schedule was used to investigate how the curriculum was implemented in the classroom with reference to teachers' classroom interactional patterns. Hence, the Systematic classroom observation (SCO) helps to answer research question three. SCO is a quantitative method used to measure the behaviours within the classroom environment, for instance teacher-student interaction patterns, from direct observations (Waxman, 2003). SCO usually specifies both the events and behaviours that are to be observed and how they are to be recorded. In a study that examines classroom interaction patterns, an SCO schedule consists of "a set of preselected and predetermined categories for describing certain verbal behaviours of teachers and students as they interact in the classroom" (Kumaravadivelu, 1999, p. 455; Mercer, 2010). SCO provides specific and easy identifiable behaviours that can easily be coded. On top of that it helps to discover the cause of any instructional problems and to study the processes of education in naturalistic settings (Chaudron, 2000).

SCO is based on interactive coding system that allows a researcher to code almost every observable phenomenon that happens during a lesson. There are two main methods of coding: 1) event sampling – a tally mark is entered against a category every time it occurs, and 2) time sampling – categories are reported at regular intervals of time. The final scores are obtained by adding up the tally marks for each category. This study adopted the event sampling procedure. It may be argued that SCO cannot tell the whole story of 'classroom life'. There is a tendency to easily miss the insights that could be provided by the participants. To overcome this problem, data from the SCO were triangulated through the use of discourse analysis (detailed explanation see 4.8.1 in Chapter 4). As mentioned earlier this study also brings together various forms of data collection to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The systematic classroom observation schedule used here was adapted from the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) and adopted from the framework used by Hardman et al. (2009). The schedule focused on teacher question-answer-feedback sequences, also known as initiation-response-feedback (IRF) structure, derived from the different types

of discourse moves made by teachers and pupils. The coding system generated data on the types of initiation moves made, such as ‘teacher informs’, ‘teacher directs’, ‘teacher repeats’, and ‘teacher questions’; the responses given and who gave them, such as an individual student, choral-few or the whole class, as well as the types of follow-up provided in response to an answer: whether it was affirmed, praised or elaborated upon. A comprehensive explanation of the model can be found in the previous chapter (see 4.8.1 in Chapter 4).

5.8.3 Video Stimulated Recall Dialogue (VSRD)

Stimulated recall dialogue is a technique used to investigate unobservable mental processes such as, in this case, the perceptions and thoughts of the teachers of what was going on in the observed lessons (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study VSRD was used to surface EL teachers’ personal knowledge and theories of the curriculum and interactive learner-centred teaching, to highlight the assumptions teachers make in their thinking about EL teaching and to reflect upon and articulate aspects of their teaching practice so that teachers’ view of effective EL pedagogy can be extrapolated and teachers’ understanding of the SCPS can be drawn.

During the process, teachers are asked to vocalize what was going through in their minds when performing a task after the task has been completed. As Gass and Mackey (2000, p. 17) put it,

Stimulated recall methodology is one of the introspective methods which can be used to prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event because it is assumed that some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself.

It has been shown that asking teachers to reflect on video recorded lessons provides opportunities for self-reflection and self-monitoring. The very act of reflecting on teacher’s actions and interactions during lessons from videotaped extracts can be “a powerful means of digging deeper into teachers’ knowledge, perceptions, views, beliefs and understanding of a range of pedagogical practices, including various types and forms of interactions” (Moyles et al., 2003, p. 4). Powell (2005) suggests, “video stimulated reflective dialogues are an effective method for revealing teachers’ tacit

knowledge about their pedagogy” (p. 407). Similarly, Walsh (2003) suggests that closer understanding of language use and interactive decision-making in the L2 classroom can be achieved by reflecting on audio- and video-recordings of one’s own lessons. Moreover, to infer why teachers act the way they do in a lesson simply by observing them may well not be accurate. As Breen et al. (2001) note, “we cannot infer the intentions of teacher action or the reason why teachers work in the ways they do in particular lessons with particular students from observed practices...we need to reflect with them upon actual instances of practices in order to deduce language pedagogies on the basis of teacher’s accounts of how they work” (p. 498).

Apart from that, stimulated recall dialogue is also effective as professional development (Moyle, Adams & Musgorve, 2002). Feedback from classroom profiles derived from observations provides teachers with valid and accurate information that could be used to facilitate their professional growth. Waxman (2003) says feedback from classroom observations is a viable and effective mechanism for providing teachers with the information they need about their classroom behaviour and if discussed in clinical sessions helps teachers understand their own strengths and weaknesses and consequently enables them to significantly improve their instruction. It is a purposeful process that teachers can use to critically analyse what happened, why it happened, what they could have done to be more effective and what they would change to improve their teaching performance in order to improve their teaching (Galvez-Martin, 2003). In their study of Chinese ELT teachers, Wang and Seth (1998) found that stimulated recall:

- helped the teachers to understand that they had a responsibility for their own development;
- helped the teachers have better understanding of their own classroom experiences;
- introduced teachers to a more developmental approach to teacher training;
- helped the teachers build a more supportive and trusting relationship with their colleagues, and to realize the mutual benefits that would accrue from this.

(p. 206)

The video stimulated recall dialogue (VSRD) in the present study involves all eight teachers. Following the lesson observations, teachers were invited to view an extract

from the recordings of their lessons and comment on a ‘critical moment’ chosen by the researcher to explore their pedagogical decision-making processes during the course of their whole class, group-based and one-to-one interactions with pupils. The ‘critical moment’ were segments which involved teacher-student(s) or teacher-whole class interaction as the third research question of the study focuses on how the curriculum was implemented with reference to classroom activities and teacher-students(s) interaction patterns. Controlled VSRD where the researcher chose the ‘critical moment’ of the video recorded lesson was employed to avoid irrelevant choice of teaching episodes because “in selecting one discrete pedagogical episode as from the video in VSRDs, teachers very frequently chose an area in which they felt most confident and knowledgeable” (Moyles et al., 2002, p. 471) rather than those required in the study.

The VSRD sessions were conducted on two consecutive days as the teachers needed time to view the video footage before the actual VSRD session. The videoing therefore took place on Day 1 and the VSRD session on Day 2. The video of the teachers in action was used as a shared source of information and a springboard for discussion where teachers were asked to reflect on their teaching practices and on the interactive decisions they made in the class. To accompany this, teachers were given a list of reflective questions as potential prompts to thinking (Appendix H4) to provide supported challenge in considering aspects of the video content for discussion and to stimulate professional reflection on practice. The prompts used to probe the teachers are explained in detail in 5.9.3.

During the VSRD, an issue transpired. Teachers were anxious and concerned about being videoed and having their competence and knowledge challenged during the VSRD session and having to talk openly about their own practice, uncover their thinking around their underlying beliefs and feelings about practice and reflecting upon their strengths and weaknesses. However, the reassurance that they would not be criticised, assessed or compared with other teachers, and, most importantly, that their contribution would be valued by the researcher as a partnership, contributed significantly to the success of the process. Ethical assurances of confidentiality and anonymity also applied and were reiterated during the session. Besides, having the teachers to become accustomed to the presence of the researcher (who was also the video camera operator) and having the camera in the class helps to foster good rapport between the researchers and teachers and lessens their anxiety (Nguyen, McFadden,

Tangen & Beutel, 2013).

Teachers also had difficulties in surfacing and articulating pedagogical values and beliefs. They were not able to identify and articulate effective and interactive aspects of their work. According to Jensen, Foster and Eddy (1997), teachers need opportunities and time to recount the anecdotes and stories of the daily activities in which they are engaged in order for them to locate their voices. However, the process of stimulated recall aided by the use of video-recording enable the teachers to engage in a dialogue with the researcher, promoted deeper thinking and conceptualization of the area of study i.e teachers' perceptions and understanding of the curriculum.

The data from stimulated recall may prompt the teachers to recall thoughts they had while conducting the EL lessons observed and analysed in the discourse analysis. The results of the stimulated recall analysis will complement and be used to cross validate the data from the discourse analysis.

5.8.3.1 Video Stimulated Reflective Dialogue (VSRD) protocol

This section describes Video Stimulated Reflective Dialogue (VSRD) protocol with the teachers, which was adapted from Moyles et al. (2003). The protocol was divided into five sections (see Appendix H4):

- A. intentions
- B. self-awareness
- C. practical reflection
- D. technical reflection
- E. critical reflection

The first section, which related to intentions, explored teachers' intentions and goals of practising a particular teaching strategy in the classroom (e.g., "What were your intentions/aims/purposes in using this strategy?"). The second section, which was on self-awareness, tried to explore the teachers' feeling at the moment of teaching (e.g., "What were you thinking/feeling at this moment?"). The third section which was on practical reflection aimed to explain and clarify the assumptions and predispositions underlying teachers' practices (e.g., "What assumptions are you making about language

teaching and learning?”). The fourth section, which was on technical reflection, involved identifying the educational basis for intentions and providing reasons for actions (e.g., “Why did you choose this strategy?”). The final section, which was on critical reflection, aimed to question and critique the goals and practices of the teaching strategies (e.g., “How does this section fulfil the objective of an active learning and interactive learner-centred teaching?”).

5.8.4 Document analysis

Another valuable source of information are documents. Documents provide understanding about a site or participants in a study, or in other words provide a context in which a particular study is based. They can either be: 1) printed documents, such as books, test scores, or syllabuses, or 2) non-printed documents consisting of pictures, film or videotapes. Creswell (2005) divides documents into two types: public and private documents. Public documents include minutes from meetings, official memos, books, newspapers and archival materials in libraries, while private documents include personal diaries, personal journal entries, letters or personal notes. Analysis of documents provides first hand information (McMillan, 2004) that can be used to verify or support data obtained from interviews or observations.

In this study, “documents” refers to written materials that were obtained from the Ministry of Education through its portal and also from the schools and teachers who agreed to take part in the research. These documents include the curriculum standard document for Year 1 English that discusses the aims, objectives and the curriculum content of the primary English education in Malaysia, the Year 1 English textbook that contains teaching and learning materials and activities, which are introduced through various topics, and the teacher guidebook that provides valuable teaching resources, such as recommended activities and sample lesson plans, suitable teaching strategies and practical suggestions for teaching methods via some suggested materials. It was expected that an analysis of these documents would help to develop a better understanding of what was intended by the curriculum developers and how it was to be successfully achieved.

5.9 Piloting the instruments

Piloting the instruments for data collection is of critical important to ensure that the items are not ambiguous, confusing or poorly prepared (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). A pilot study is conducted sometime prior to the main study to refine the techniques and tools a researcher plans to use (Ashley, 2012). In this study, the pilot study aimed at ensuring the comprehensibility of the interview questions, so that teachers would have no difficulty understanding them. Furthermore, the pilot study also aimed at narrowing down the categories that would be analysed for the classroom interaction patterns to enable the researcher “to refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed” (Yin, 2009; p. 92) so that the most effective methodology for the actual data collection can be designed and consequently enhance the reliability of the instruments used.

5.9.1 Piloting the interview

To test the interview protocols, a trial interview with a Malaysian PhD colleague who was a former EL teacher and a teacher trainer in a teacher-training institute was conducted. The trial session aimed at testing the interview guides designed to elicit data on teachers’ perceptions and understanding of the curriculum reform, the support materials and the training of the curriculum. As a result of the feedback she provided, some defects in the interview protocol were identified. It was found, for example, that there was a need to review the number of questions in order to avoid having a long interview session. In doing so, the content of the interview items was prioritized. In addition, two questions, which were not fully understood and needed further clarification were modified and rephrased in order to make them clearer and more easily comprehensible.

Following this, another pilot study involving two EL teachers (from two primary schools in Malaysia, but not ones selected for the main study) who were selected using the criteria employed for selection of teachers in the study, was carried out using the modified interview protocol. The modified protocol was piloted to ensure the questions were not misleading or ambiguous, would elicit sufficiently rich data and not dominate the flow of the conversation. As a result of the second piloting, several items were

rephrased so that the interviews could be conducted smoothly and the interviewees could speak freely and provide genuine responses.

5.9.2 Piloting the classroom observation

Due to scholarship restrictions that allowed me to stay outside the UK for only three months, piloting the classroom observation (both video recording and stimulated recall dialogue) was done in middle of January 2011 before the actual study. The pilot study was conducted with the same EL teachers selected to pilot the interview. The two purposes of piloting the classroom observation were to enable me to familiarize myself with the equipment (i.e. the camcorder), to better identify the preselected categories in the systematic classroom observation schedule, and to help minimize the effect of ‘observer paradox’ (as explained in 5.8.2 above).

While piloting the classroom observation, two lessons were tape-recorded and one reflective dialogue session was conducted. Based on the responses and feedback gained from the pilot study, some modifications were made to the VSRD protocols including the addition of categories for the systematic classroom observation schedule. For example ‘pupil demonstration’ was included as a category together with ‘choral responses’ as observations during the pilot study suggested both were common practices in Malaysian primary classrooms.

Besides that, when piloting the discourse analysis system, it was discovered that one distinguished teacher initiating move was the employment of a repeat question functioning as a re-initiation move embedded within a teaching exchange, and often signalled by a mid-sentence rise in voice intonation to cue a response. While it was often used following a question, it was also used to get a response from the pupils during or after an explanation from the teacher, or following a pupil response. Usually, the elicitation was in the form of a repetition or completion of a phrase or word. It was often direct and pupils knew from the intonation of the elicitation whether it required an individual answer or a choral response. This was coded as *cued elicitation* and added as a separate category in the discourse analysis.

5.10 Data collection procedures

Now that the main instruments of data collection have been presented and described individually, the steps taken for the elicitation of the data will be explained. The procedures for the data collection were as follows:

- Individual interview
- Classroom observation 1
- Classroom observation 2
- Classroom observation 3
- Classroom observation 4
- Individual video-stimulated reflective dialogue session

Table 5.2 summarizes the data collection procedures in the study, as well as giving a detailed breakdown of each method's purpose, data collection procedures and duration.

Table 5.2. Summary of data collection methods and schedule

<i>Method</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Data collection procedures</i>	<i>Duration</i>
	Getting the research approved	Gaining access to schools Economic Planning Unit	Nov-Dec 2010
	Meeting the head teacher, head subject teacher, the teachers; getting the time table, the school calendar; acquiring the facilities needed (a quiet room for interview, text book, teacher guide book)	Initial visits to the schools Two schools per day	Jan 2011
Interview	Identification of perceptions and beliefs about the curriculum reform	Teacher interviews	Jan-Feb 2011
Classroom observation and interview with representatives from the ministry,	To observe classrooms in the schools	Observation Cycle 1 Classroom observations Audio-video	Mid Feb – Apr 25 2011

curriculum trainer and the EDO.		recordings Interview with the representatives	
	To observe classrooms in the schools	Observation Cycle 2 Classroom observations Audio-video recordings Interview with the representatives	
	To observe classrooms in the schools	Observation Cycle 3 Classroom observations Audio-video recordings Interview with the representatives	
	To observe classrooms in the schools	Observation Cycle 4 Classroom observations Audio-video recordings Interview with the representatives	
Stimulated-recall	Promotion of teacher's critical reflections on professional practice	Stimulated-recall dialogue	Mid Feb – Apr 25 2011

The data collection was conducted for a period of three months. Interviews with teachers started first and interviews with an officer from the Curriculum Development Division, curriculum trainers and District English Language Officers were accomplished in between February to April, whenever classroom observations were not carried out, depending on the availability of the officers. All the interviews with the teachers were done in the school during a free period in a quiet venue of their choice (to avoid disruptions) such as in the meeting room or in the computer lab, and the interviews with the other participants were conducted in their offices.

The interviews with the teachers were then followed by classroom observations to ascertain how far the teachers' knowledge was consistent with their practice. Prior to the observations, a copy of their teaching timetable and a school planner was obtained, in order to work out an observation schedule with the teachers. Since there were eight teacher participants, creating a viable observation schedule was important, since some

lessons overlapped within a particular day. Besides, having the school planner allowed me to avoid dates in which observations might not be possible, due to activities held in the schools, such as monthly tests or other academic or non-academic activities where there was no teaching. Once the observation schedule was ready, a copy of the schedule was emailed to each of the teachers, so that they would know the dates I was coming for the observation. Finally, arrangements about the location of each class period and the content of their instruction were confirmed.

Classroom observations with the eight English Language teachers lasted from Feb. 12 until April 25, 2011, and each teacher was observed on 4 occasions and each occasion lasted for 50 minutes. So altogether 32 lessons were observed and video recorded. The 32 video recorded lessons were used to examine teacher behaviour more closely from a qualitative viewpoint.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) for English Language is modular in structure; one skill is taught (or focused on) per day: for example, Day 1 is for listening and speaking, Day 2 for reading, Day 3 for writing and Day 4 for language arts (refer to Figure 2.5 in Chapter Two). The observations involved the teaching of all modules. The classroom observations on reading, writing, speaking and listening are meant to obtain data on the types of activities carried out in EL lessons. However, for the purpose of eliciting data on teacher-student interaction patterns, the classroom observations focused only on the listening and speaking lessons. This was because to examine how the curriculum was implemented in the classroom was only a small fraction of the whole study (Research Question 3), and where the focus involved looking at just one module of the overall curriculum I selected listening and speaking because it linked closely with the intention of the curriculum to develop students' communicative competence. During the observations, the focus was on the classroom discourse, to see how the English Language teachers interpreted the intended curriculum and how English as a subject was implemented in the actual classrooms. Thus, for each classroom observation, the teacher-student(s) interactions were the focal point of interest to be observed.

To facilitate observations, field notes were taken to record what was heard, observed, or felt as each lesson progressed. I also wrote down any thoughts that occurred to me during the observations. Moreover, I recorded my reflections following every

observation session, so as to reduce any disruptive influence that I might have on the classroom environment.

Then teachers were asked to attend a VSRD session. A few questions based on the reflective questions for discussion were posed to the teacher. The Video-Stimulated Recall Dialogue (VSRD) session gave an opportunity to the teachers to articulate their theories of teaching interactively and to rationalize their actions and practices in the classroom. The information collected from the stimulated recall dialogue was later analysed and triangulated with the data collected during interviews, teachers' classroom practices and the results of the document analyses.

5.11 Data analysis procedures

This section describes how the data collected in this study were analysed. This includes the analysis of data from interviews, documents, video-stimulated recall sessions and recordings of lesson observations.

5.11.1 Analysis of data from interviews and stimulated recall

All the interview data were transcribed verbatim (see example in Appendix I). The transcriptions from the interviews and stimulated recall were reviewed to search for patterns of thinking or behaviour, words or phrases, and events that appeared with regularity for some reason, to gain general impressions and salient interpretations that would form the basis for the conclusions (McMillan, 2004). In the process, notes were made in the form of short phrases, ideas or concepts to understand the meaning. Then the data were characterized using codes or themes that accurately represent the meaning of the responses. Codes or themes are words or phrases that signify categories of data (Gillham, 2000). The process is also called coding or content analysis, whereby texts are labelled and segmented to form descriptions and broad themes (Creswell, 2005; Kumar, 2005). Data from the interview were coded under themes such as views on SCPS, curriculum materials, interactive teaching and training. Data from stimulated recall were coded under themes such as intentions, self-awareness, practical reflection, technical reflection and critical reflection.

The relevant data were classified according to the different themes by identifying, cutting and pasting excerpts from the transcripts that supported or challenged the interpretations. At the same time, information from different data sources and data collection methods were contrasted to ensure accuracy. Finally, the data were interpreted in order by relating it to educational practice.

5.11.2 Analysis of data from classroom observation

Interaction patterns were studied both qualitatively, analysing the functions of talk, and quantitatively, counting the types of exchanges.

5.11.2.1 Analysis of quantitative data (systematic classroom observation)

Out of the 32 lessons that were recorded, a subset of 8 lessons focusing on the skills of listening and speaking are selected for more detailed interaction and discourse analysis. The 8 lessons were systematically coded using an interactive analysis system building on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1992) discourse analysis system; Sinclair and Coulthard suggest that a teaching exchange consists of an initiation-response-feedback sequence (IRF). An *initiation* is usually in the form of a teacher question, a *response* refers to a pupil attempts to answer the question, and a *follow-up* move is one where the teacher provides some form of feedback (very often in the form of an evaluation) to the pupil's response (a more detailed explanation is available in Chapter Four: see 4.8.1).

Within each of the IRF moves, different kinds of teacher initiation, pupil response and feedback were systematically analysed. The coding system captured 6 types of initiation move: (i) *teacher inform* in which the teacher passes on facts, opinions, ideas and information to the pupils about a subject; (ii) *teacher open question* which calls for more than one answer; (iii) *teacher closed question* calling for a single response or offering facts; (iv) *teacher check* on how the pupils are getting on, whether they understand, whether they can hear, whether they can follow the lesson; (v) *teacher direct* designed to get the pupils to do something; (vi) *pupil question*.

The response moves were coded as to whether the response was: (i) *individual*, (ii) *whole-class choral reply*, (iii) *choral-few reply* where just a few students answer at once, (iv) *pupil demonstration of an answer*, and (v) *teacher giving the answer*. The

follow-up move was coded in terms of: (i) *no feedback*, (ii) *acceptance/affirming of an answer*, (iii) *teacher rejects answers*, (iv) *praise*, (vi) *teacher asking another pupil to answer*, (vii) *teacher probing an answer*, (viii) *teacher comment on an answer*.

Having coded the lessons into the different categories of teaching exchange (a tally mark was entered against the specified category every time it occurred and the final scores were obtained by adding up the tally marks for each category), the results then were quantified and converted into percentage scores to compare the patterning of the teacher/pupil interactions across the 8 teachers. It was thought that the quantification and subsequent patterning of the teaching exchanges would provide a useful way of comparing teaching styles across the 8 teachers, and that the results could be cross-validated with the discourse analysis. An example of the process is shown below.

$$\frac{\text{Total of Category 1}}{\text{Total of all categories}} \times 100\% = \text{Percentage for Category 1}$$

For example, based on the data collected from the Teacher X classroom observation as shown in Table 5.3, the percentage score for Category 11 (Choral Response) is:

$$\frac{2}{12} \times 100\% = 16.6\%$$

Table 5.3. A sample of Systematic Classroom Observation Data for Teacher X

Initiation						Response					Follow-up						
T. In	TOQ	TCQ	T. Ch	TD	PQ	I	Chr. F	Chr.	P. Dem.	T. Answ	None	Aff.	Prs.	Rej.	Prb.	Com.	Other
✓																	
				✓													
								✓									
												✓					
				✓													
								✓									
	✓																
							✓										
													✓				
1	1	1		2			1	2				1	1				

The initials used in the classroom observation sheet refer to the following categories:

Table 5.4. The categories and their descriptions

<i>Initials</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Definition</i>
T. In	Teacher Inform	Teacher provides information or explanation
TOQ	Teacher Open Question	Teacher asks a question to elicit a single response or offering facts
TCQ	Teacher Closed Question	Teacher asks a question but accepts more than one answer
T. Ch	Teacher Check	Teacher checks on 'understanding' (e.g., 'do you understand?', 'are we together?')
TD	Teacher Direct	Teacher direct the class: (e.g., 'turn to page 3')
PQ	Pupil Question	Pupil asks a question
I	Individual	Pupil answers the question individually
Chr. F	Choral Few Answer	Group of pupils answer the question together
Chr.	Choral (Whole Class) Answer	Whole class answer the question together
P. Dem.	Pupil Demonstration	Pupil demonstrates an answer to the class
T. Answ.	Gives Answers	Teacher provides the answer to the question
None	No Feedback	Teacher does not provide any feedback
Aff.	Affirms Answers	Teacher simply acknowledges the response is correct (e.g., nods, repeats answer, says 'yes' 'ok' etc)
Prs.	Praise Answers	Teacher gives positive feedback by praising answer (e.g. gives him/her a clap, 'well done', 'good answer' etc)

Prb.	Probe	Teacher stays with the same pupil and asks further questions
Com.	Comment	Teacher comments and elaborates on an answer
Other	Ask Other Pupil(s)	Teacher redirects the question, asking a different pupil or pupils to answer it

5.11.2.2 Analysis of qualitative data (lesson transcripts)

Building on the systematic interactive analysis, the 8 speaking and listening lessons were transcribed and coded using discourse analysis moves (see Appendix J) and representative sections from the lesson transcriptions were selected for analysis and discussion. These sections were those that represent the discourse patterns and types of exchanges under scrutiny.

Under initiation moves I coded *teacher inform*, in which the teacher passed on facts, opinions, ideas and information to the pupils, and *teacher direct*, designed to get pupil(s) to do something. All queries for information, including intonation questions and tag questions, were coded as *teacher question*. Teachers would also use a tag question to ascertain pupil understanding. It typically recognised a pseudo-checking with the concomitant convention that the only attainable response was an affirmative. This was categorised as a *teacher check*. Repeat questions and teacher checks therefore mainly functioned as ritualized participation strategies designed to keep the pupils involved, rather than requiring an answer to a question. Under initiations, the system also coded *pupil questions*.

Response moves to teacher initiations were coded according to whether they were answered by an *individual*, *choral-few response* or *choral response*. *Pupil demonstrations* were coded when a pupil was called upon to work at the chalkboard to demonstrate an answer to a question or to do a seatwork task. In analysing the follow-up move, the transcripts were coded according to whether there was an *evaluation* (i.e. a statement or tag question commenting on the quality of response, including words and phrases such as ‘good’ ‘interesting’ and a high fall intonation or giving a negative evaluation usually indicated by rising intonation), *accept* (i.e. teacher acknowledges that

the response or pupil information is appropriate, usually indicated by a ‘yes’, ‘ok’ ‘fine’ and neutral low fall intonation), *comment* (i.e. a statement or tag question which exemplifies, expands, justifies or adds additional information to the pupil response), or *probe* (i.e. when a teacher stays with a child through a re-initiation to bring him/her round to an acceptable answer, or uses a question or statement to invite further elaboration on an answer) often leading to a more extended teacher-pupil interaction extending across several IRF exchanges.

5.11.2.3 Analysis of document

Documents are analysed by looking at the explanation of the status of the phenomenon at a particular time or over a period of time to discover the relative importance of, or interest in, certain topics or problems. It serves a useful purpose in adding knowledge to fields of inquiry and in explaining certain social events. Content or document analysis should serve a purpose in yielding information helpful in evaluating or explaining social or educational practices (Best & Kahn, 2008, p. 258).

The documents in this study were analysed by first organizing the data in the curriculum standard document according to the constructs such as the aim and objectives of the curriculum, theoretical principles, educational emphases, teaching approach, curriculum content. Then the various pertinent aspects of the data were described and interpreted. The interpretation of the qualitative data is more dependent on the researcher’s background, skills, biases and knowledge. The interpretations were verified by agreement with data obtained from the interviews and classroom observations to enhance validity.

5.12 Reliability and validity

The extent to which what is measured in a study is consistent reflects the reliability of a research procedure and thus concerns whether similar procedures and findings can be replicated (McMillan, 2003). This indirectly relates to validity in data collection, which refers to the interpretation and generalizability of the results (ibid, 2003).

In order to increase reliability, this study used multiple data-collection procedures. A combination of both qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis through

semi-structured interviews, stimulated recall of critical moments based on recorded lessons, discourse analysis of lesson transcriptions and document analysis and quantitative analysis through systematic classroom interaction observation allowed for methodological triangulation of the consistency between teachers' perceptions and understanding of the recent English Language curriculum reform for primary schools and the actual implementation of the curriculum in the classrooms. The triangulation of data collected for this study thus compensates for the strengths and weaknesses of each data source and serves to validate and cross check the research findings.

Apart from that, the use of video recording of the observed lessons also allowed repeated viewings of how the curriculum was implemented in the classroom and hence provided opportunities for consistency checks. The interpretations derived from the analysis of data were also cross-checked with another trained research assistant to avoid disagreements and differences of opinion, to ensure consistency and validity. In addition, in the VSRD session, the process of the retrospection that was conducted as immediate as possible after the recorded event enhances validity. As mentioned earlier, in this study the recordings take place on the Day 1 and the stimulated recall session was conducted on Day 2. Although, there was a one day time interval to allow teachers to view the video footage first, but what had happened in the classroom was still fresh in the teachers' mind.

Besides, the entire 32 lessons were observed and recorded from the back of the class in order to avoid unnecessary disruptions and minimise the effect of the 'observer's paradox' that can affect the reliability of a study. Although, the teachers were at first hesitant and a bit apprehensive of the fact that the interview and their lessons were to be recorded, but as the interview and the lessons continued, they soon forgot the presence of the tape and video recorders. Providing information on the purpose of the study before the recording and the assurance that their identity would be kept anonymous and the data collected would remain confidential helps to lessen their anxiety. The fact that the components that are being observed were not described to the teachers reduces the chances of placebo-effect (Best & Kahn, 2005) where teachers modify the lessons according to what is expected, enhances the reliability and validity of the findings.

Apart from that, the use of interview protocol for both the interviews and the stimulated recall reinforced the validity of the data collection as it ensures that the

questions/prompts do not alter the cognitive process being employed at the time of the event. Best and Kahn (ibid) reinforced that “validity is greater when the interview is based on a carefully designed structure thus ensuring that the significant information is elicited (content validity)” (p. 336). Restating a question in slightly different form at a later time or repeating the interview at another time enhances the reliability or the consistency of response in the interview. Besides, interview is the most effective mean to measure areas where human motivation is revealed through actions, feelings, perceptions and attitudes. A depth of response is possible that is quite unlikely to be achieved through any other means.

A copy of the transcription was also sent to each of the participants for them to add or revise as necessary to increase accuracy and reliability. The goal is to seek confirmation that the researcher’s interpretations are congruent with the views expressed of those on whom the research was conducted (Bryman, 2012).

The focus on classroom interaction and discourse is relevant because of its centrality to the act of teaching and learning and that the teaching repertoire needs to include instructional variety, using and incorporating pupil ideas, appropriate and varied questioning, probing for knowledge and formative feedback to pupils. The application of the discourse analysis approach to analyse classroom interaction is pertinent as discourse analysis is concerned with the investigation of language (Gillen & Petersen, 2006). The employment of mixed-method approach consisted of lesson observations, systematic interaction analysis of digitally recorded lessons, discourse analysis of lesson transcripts, stimulated recall of critical moments selected from lessons, and teacher interviews allowed for the interplay of multiple analytic lenses and procedures and for the lessons to be analysed at the macro and micro level. Such methodological triangulation also allowed for a crosschecking of the reliability and validity of the classroom observation data.

Hence, the instruments used for data collection were carefully designed and piloted before they were administered. This was done to minimize any possibility of producing misleading, ambiguous or vague questions to the interviewees. The equipment used for video recording and audio recording were also piloted to avoid any technical problems that might affect the reliability of the findings.

5.13 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has discussed the research methodology used in the current study. Firstly, the mixed methods approach employed in this study was described, the rationale for the choice of the approach was given and an overview of the research design was provided. Then the selection of the location was justified, sampling strategies in the selection of participants were discussed and the profiles of the participants described. This was followed by an explanation of the instruments used in the interviews, video-stimulated reflective dialogues and lesson observations. To conclude, a detailed explanation of data collection procedures and a discussion of data analysis methods were provided.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE STANDARD CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (SCPS)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained in the present study to provide answers to the first research question: **What are teachers' perceptions of the SCPS?** This chapter examines how the teachers interviewed viewed the recent reform of the primary English Language curriculum known as the 'Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools' (SCPS) in terms of the clarity and usefulness of the curriculum document and curriculum supplementary materials. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two (see 2.5.4), 'curriculum document' refers to the curriculum standard document and 'curriculum materials' means the textbook and teacher guidebook. This issue is especially relevant, as it would inform whether or not the teachers are aware of and sensitive to the changes made in the curriculum; and how much they understand the curriculum and what they are required to do as EL teachers in order to achieve the main curriculum goal, which is to enable the pupils to communicate effectively in different contexts.

The analysis addresses the question of whether the teachers have a deep understanding of important aspects of the curriculum, such as its goals, the role(s) of the teacher, the underlying principles which dominate pedagogical strategies and techniques, support materials and evaluation. Teachers' perceptions and understanding of the curriculum can greatly influence how teachers organize their classrooms, their choice of strategies or activities and their interaction with the pupils. Abdul Rahman (1987) and Shihiba (2011) reinforce the view that teacher's perceptions and understanding of a curriculum are highly likely to affect its implementation. Positive perceptions but limited understanding (or vice versa) of what the curriculum requires will thus have implications for classroom learning.

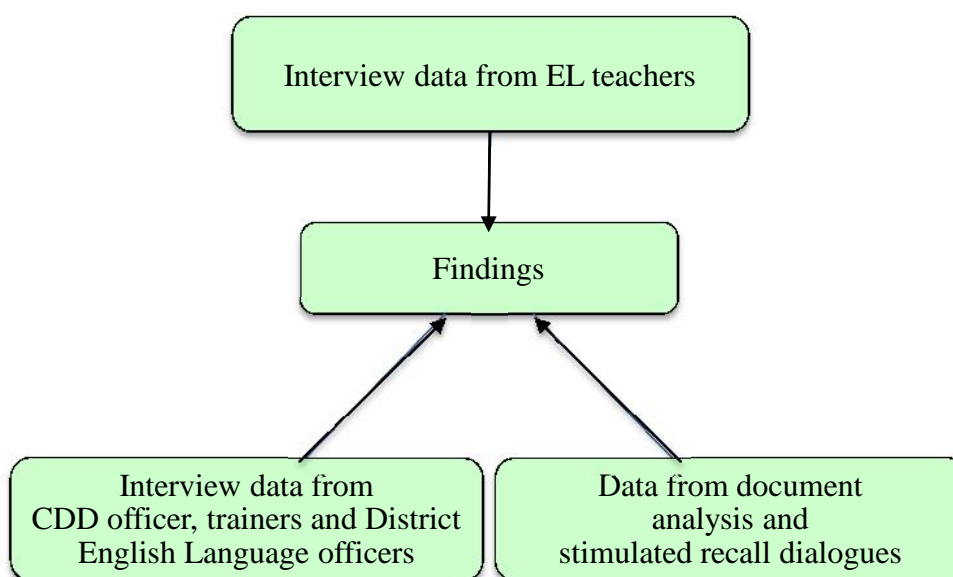
In the context of this study, 'clarity' refers to the curriculum being unambiguous, precisely understood, straightforward or well defined, while 'usefulness' refers to the curriculum being relevant, significant, helpful, favourable, accepted, beneficial, practical, or important. While collecting the data on the EL teachers' views of the recent Year 1 EL curriculum reform, it seemed inevitable for the teachers in this study (given the criteria for selecting them) to compare the salient features of the SCPS with those of the previous curriculum, the 'Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools' (ICPS)¹³ or

¹³ The Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools (ICPS) was first implemented in Malaysian primary schools in 1993 and was revised in 2003 but maintained its name until 2010 before the implementation of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) to replace ICPS in 2011.

the commonly used Malay acronym ‘KBSR’ which was used from 1993 to 2010. As it had been in operation for 17 years, most of the teachers were very familiar with the principles and practices of ICPS. Moreover, the curriculum reform SCPS emerged as a review of the earlier curriculum, ICPS. However, to compare the recent curriculum reform with the previous curriculum is not the focus or the purpose of this study. Nevertheless, the data derived from the comparisons can yield answers to how teachers view and understand the recent curriculum reform and the implications for its implementation.

In analysing and interpreting the data to provide answers to the first research question proposed, triangulation of data from (1) a critical analysis of the curriculum standard document, (2) critical analysis of the supporting materials and (3) content analysis of the data from the interviews and reflective dialogues is used. The validation process is depicted in the figure below.

Figure 6.1. Triangulation of data collection sources (I)



6.2 Teachers’ views of the curriculum

The results show that the teachers had mixed views of the SCPS. Some features of the curriculum reform were clear and viewed as significant. On the other hand, some other aspects of the curriculum were viewed confusing and problematic. This was revealed in the teachers’ contradictory statements, misconceptions and rigid interpretations of the

SCPS. Teachers' mixed views indicate that the curriculum was not fully understood.

The aim of the curriculum was viewed as relevant to the current needs of English in the global market. The underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum were thought significant and beneficial to enhance students' confidence and as able to build good language foundations, in order for the students to master the language skills for the development of their communicative competence. Besides, these principles were also seen as positive because they were appropriate to the students' stage of development and needs. The supplementary materials were viewed as helpful in facilitating the implementation of the curriculum. The teachers also felt that the SCPS was better than the previous curriculum as it reduced their teaching workload and inspired them to learn new, effective teaching strategies and skills to enable them to implement the curriculum successfully.

However, all of the 8 teachers did not have a clear understanding of an interactive learner-centred teaching approach and were also not clear about the modular approach and how to implement it in their EL lessons. In particular, they were uncertain of the effectiveness of the modular approach. The assessment was found very confusing because there was, they thought, a mismatch between the curriculum goal and how the current tests or exams were executed. Apart from that, there was a misunderstanding of the function and the relationship between the textbook and teacher guidebook.

All in all, even though there would appear to be strong support for the recent curriculum reform for primary English Language, some aspects of the curriculum were unsatisfactory and give rise to concern. The present findings are consistent with other research studies, such as those of Abdul Rahman (1987), Alwan (2006), Fitzpatrick (2011), Mohd Yunus (2001), Sidhu, Fook and Kaur (2010), Snyder, Bolin and Zumwalt (1992), Wang (2006), Wong (1996) and Yaacob (2006), all of which found that teachers' reactions to curriculum change usually comprised a cline from approval at one end to confusion over certain concepts and principles of classroom practices at the other end. The following sections provide detailed analysis and discussion of how the eight teachers viewed the SCPS in terms of its clarity and usefulness. Firstly, the findings on teachers' views and understandings of the curriculum standard document are reported; this is followed by the teachers' views of the curriculum supplementary materials, i.e. the textbook and teacher guidebook.

6.3 Did the teachers find the SCPS standard document clear and useful?

This section presents the teachers' views of the SCPS standard document. The SCPS standard document is the blueprint guiding primary schools' English Language education (as attached in Appendix E). It explains the aims and objectives of the curriculum, underlying pedagogical principles, curriculum organisation, modular approach, content and learning standards for all language skills and assessment. The findings show that the teachers were receptive but unsatisfied with the SCPS standard document.

Below is the detailed analysis and discussion of this finding. The analysis and discussion will consider the extent to which teachers' views of the goal and content of the standard document can be characterized as a form of compliance or resistance. By 'compliance' I mean teachers being well informed and having a sound knowledge of the curriculum: their knowledge and understanding is in accordance with what is stated in the curriculum. Conversely, by 'resistance' I mean teachers have not fully understood and have limited knowledge of the curriculum; their understanding and knowledge conflicts with what is intended in the curriculum. The above finding will be unpacked by concentrating on a more detailed examination of several dimensions of the curriculum: teachers' knowledge of (1) curriculum aims, (2) the focus of the curriculum, (3) content and learning standards, (4) curriculum structure, (5) teaching approaches, (6) teaching principles, and (7) assessment. The relationship between the teachers' perceptions of these curricular dimensions and the influence of these perceptions on the implementation of the curriculum will also be discussed.

6.3.1 The aim of the curriculum

Analysis reveals that the main aim of the SCPS (namely to develop students' communicative competence) was viewed by half the teachers as relevant and significant, as shown in the quotation below. The teachers felt that an emphasis on developing students' ability to communicate effectively would enable them to learn the language meaningfully and thus become conversant in English.

it (the aim of the curriculum) is more relevant...it can make the pupils...you know...they can build up their pronunciation...they can speak very well using the correct intonation and stress (Teacher F)

Interestingly however, the results show that the aim of the SCPS was known by and familiar to some teachers but not to others. 5 teachers interviewed showed familiarity, as illustrated by the quotation below, whereby they were able to verbalise the desired goal of the SCPS clearly and even restate word for word what was written in the standard document.

...I think for the primary general aims there after they exit from Year 6 err...the English learning curriculum for primary...they tried to equip the pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupil's level of development (Teacher F)

...now in the KSSR (SCPS) they want the students to master the language [...] KSSR (SCPS) focusing on the...how they can...whether they can communicate properly...effectively in their future lah¹⁴ (Teacher A)

4 of the teachers were also able to distinguish a shift in the aim of the new curriculum, from an emphasis on obtaining good grades to an emphasis on the development of the students' communicative competence, as illustrated in the following account by Teacher B.

KSSR (SCPS)...by the end of the 6 years primary schooling the students will be more like err...they can speak, they can talk and they can produce ideas and they can present them in English. Unlike the KBSR (ICPS), the teaching and learning focus on the students will be a product that can pass the exams. For KSSR (SCPS) I think the students by the end of Year 6 they can talk and present their ideas in English (Teacher B)

The results show that all the teachers were in favour of what the current curriculum reform was trying to achieve. They reported that the ability to communicate in the language effectively was more important than having good grades. There has been an issue that many students have been found to be unable to communicate in English effectively, even though they pass with an A for the English papers in the public examinations (Hiew, 2011; Ler, 2010).

¹⁴ “*lah*” refers to a suffix of no standard meaning used by Malaysians in their very own version of the English language (affectionately named Manglish) to complement almost any sentence available in a social conversation and to express very different meanings according to the way it is said (Goddard, 1994).

On the other hand, the results also reveal that the aim of the SCPS to develop students' communicative ability was not clear to 3 teachers. There were also instances of teachers' insensitivity and inattentiveness to the change in the direction of the curriculum, as mentioned below, where the aim of the SCPS was considered similar to those in the previous curriculum, ICPS,

...the objective is still same for me (Teacher C)

The teachers were not able to notice that in the previous curriculum, i.e. the ICPS, developing students' ability to communicate orally was part of the goal in conjunction with the development of writing competence, whereas in SCPS it was emphasized as the main aim to achieve (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. The difference between the aims of ICPS and SCPS

<i>The aim of ICPS</i>	<i>The aim of SCPS</i>
<i>The English language syllabus for primary school aims to equip pupils with basic skills and knowledge of the English language to enable them to communicate both orally and in writing, in and out of school.</i>	<i>The English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools aims to equip the pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupils' level of development.</i>
(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2003, p. 1)	(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010, p. 3)

In addition, some of the teachers were also not able to recognize a change of focus between the previous curriculum and the SCPS because there were no changes in the types of language skill that the students needed to acquire.

...actually it's just the same...right...we focus on the four skills which is skill of listening and speaking, skill of reading and writing...it's just the same I think (Teacher E)

The above finding suggests teachers' vague understanding of and inattentiveness to the outcome that the SCPS hopes to achieve. There are several factors that could contribute to the vague understanding of the aim of the SCPS. It could be due to a lack of emphasis on the importance of developing students' communicative competence in the standard document itself. Analysis of the standard document shows that the aim of the SCPS was only stated once in the standard document but not emphasized or repeated throughout.

Besides, although the main aim of the curriculum was to enable students to communicate effectively, other language skills were also given similar importance. The four language skills were equally elaborated and explained, so there was no salient emphasis on developing students' communicative competence. Moreover, there was also lack of guidance on how to develop students' communicative competence and there was a lack of information on how activities suggested contributed to the development of communicative skills.

Apart from that, the analysis shows that teachers were not alert to the change in the aim of the curriculum, because the motivation to implement the SCPS was more a result of force than choice due to the top-down approach practised in the Malaysian education system. In this system, teachers understand their role only as implementers, whose job is mainly to carry out the set policy where teachers are required to modify what they do, meet the specifications laid down by policy makers and thus accept the mandated curriculum acquiescently, as clearly demonstrated in the following account.

I just implement the curriculum...I just do what they want me to do
(Teacher H)

Similar results were found in a few published studies: for example Abdul Karim (2006), Alwan (2006) and Mohd Yunus (2001). As implementers, teachers simply had to follow and carry out the directives and instructions from central government promptly. They were not consulted or involved in the process of curriculum development, except to deliver the materials. As a result they had no sense of ownership of the curriculum reform. Fullan (2007) is quite specific, "top-down change doesn't work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment or even clarity about the nature of the reforms" (p. 11). Kennedy (1988) also argues that sense of "ownership that is the degree to which the participants feel that the innovation belongs to them by imposing the responsibility for the project and the decisions to be taken by the implementers can have a considerable influence on the likelihood of any innovation establishing itself" (p. 338). In short, lack of involvement in the development of the curriculum leads to less attention and as a result less commitment to fully understand the curriculum.

In summary, the above finding reveals some teachers' familiarity with the aim of the curriculum but at the same time shows instances of teachers' inability to notice the emphasis on developing students' communicative competence in the SCPS. This

suggests that the aim of the curriculum was not clear to some of the teachers. The importance of teachers' familiarity with the aim of the curriculum in relation to its effectiveness is supported by a study by Medwell, Wray, Poulson and Fox (1998) that investigated how effective teachers of Key Stage 2 in England help children to become literate. They argue that one factor that results in effective teaching is teachers' familiarity with the purpose and requirements of a curriculum because it leads to a clear understanding of what the students should know. A similar finding is reported by Wong (1996) in a study that investigated teachers' understanding and perception of the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) in Hong Kong. She found that failure to explain in detail the main goals of the TOC and how to achieve them resulted in a mismatch between classroom practice and the curriculum. Conversely, in a study to investigate how teachers in upper primary ESL classrooms in Malaysia implemented the Contemporary Children's Literature (CCL) programme, Sidhu, Fook and Kaur (2010) reported that, despite teachers' awareness of the aims and objectives of the programme, the classroom instructional practices were not in tandem with the aspirations of the programme. The reason was that the teachers were aware of the aims of the programme but lacked an understanding of how to achieve the aim. In other words, a positive view should be balanced with full understanding to ensure successful implementation of a curriculum reform, as mentioned earlier.

In short, teachers' insensitivity or lack of knowledge of the aims of a curriculum reform may affect the implementation of the curriculum. Thus, it is vital for the ministry to ensure that the aim of the curriculum is clearly defined so that the desired goal is successfully achieved. It is important for the aims of teaching the language to be clearly expressed and repeatedly stressed in the curriculum standard document. Clear aims may result in well-defined objectives to be achieved and subsequently activities to be planned. On the other hand, lack of clarity in the statement of aims makes it difficult to work out the extent of proficiency expected of the learners and would end in the lack of direction in teaching activities (Mohd Asraf, 1996). In addition, it is important to involve teachers in the consultation process. As implementers, teachers are responsible of the success or the failure of the reforms. Teachers' involvement in the construction of the curriculum can be crucial to successful curriculum change because "the final impact of the reforms largely depends on teacher's perceptions, knowledge and understanding of the changes in the curriculum" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 21).

6.3.2 Content focused learning versus mastery of language skills

In conjunction to the aim of the curriculum, the results show that the teachers seemed to be aware that the curriculum emphasized the mastery of language skills rather than acquisition of knowledge. There was understanding of the shift in the focus of the SCPS to ‘how to use the language in communication effectively’ from ‘what and how much the students should know in the academic subject’, as shown in the extract below. The shift of focus is similar to what Ellis (2005) refers to as “teaching the use of the language for communication” rather than “teaching about the language” (p. 43),

I think KSSR (SCPS) is not focusing on the topic we are teaching. The KSSR (SCPS) is focus on the students to speak for example listening and speaking, on how they respond to the topic not how we teach the topic and the content of the topic. We are producing students that can speak and talk and produce things not the topic. We have 30 topics and in KBSR (ICPS) we have done when we try to force the students to remember each of the topic to sit for exam. But in KSSR (SCPS) I don't think...I never focus on that topic. I only focus on the students, on that students, on how they speak, on how they react, how they read (Teacher B)

Teachers' awareness of the emphases of the curriculum showed that they were responsive to the focus of the reform on skills development. However, teachers' awareness and understanding of the focus of the curriculum did not correspond to how they conceptualised teaching and learning. The majority of the teachers were more concerned about how much content to deliver than about how to effectively develop the required language skills, as an example below shows,

My concern is that...what I have a problem...err...I don't know how much weightage or how much...err...err...time should I be teaching the topic given because there are about 30 topics given to be covered... (Teacher G)

The 30 topics mentioned above refer to the topics listed in the textbook based on the three themes specified in the curriculum. The above issue on the length of time to spend on the development of the language skills points to the rigidity of how the 8 teachers conceptualised teaching and learning: they appeared to focus (metaphorically) on depositing a fixed number of discrete items into the learners within a specified time, as the following account illustrates,

For me teaching and learning is just like a process of input, process and output. And in this lesson the input is the words that I introduced and the process is the drilling exercise. Then the output is that the pupils can repeat back what I teach them (Teacher B)

In other words, despite the fact that the curriculum focused on the development of students' ability to use the language appropriately, meaningfully and effectively, the teachers believed that learning meant providing as much facts and information (i.e. input) as possible and effective teaching was where students were able to remember what was being taught. There was no emphasis on whether students were able to achieve and perform the desired skills and apply them in their daily life.

The teachers' rigid concept of teaching and learning could be related to the fact that they were used to the examination-oriented policy practised in the Malaysian education system, where teaching and learning focuses on the students' ability to acquire as much information as possible in order to enable them to answer exam questions and gain good grades. This has resulted in an imbalance of focus on the development of English language skills among the students, where improvement on reading and writing skills is given more emphasis (tests and exams are on these two skills) and the development of listening and speaking skills (i.e. oral skills) has been neglected (Ler, 2010; Pandian, 2002). Curriculum Trainer 2 (CT2) confirms that, due to pressure from parents and school administrators, who always demand good marks, many EL teachers tend to focus on improving students' exam grades rather than mastery of language skills and the development of students' communicative competence.

Hence, how teachers conceptualise teaching and learning needs to change. Teachers need to realize that the SCPS focuses on providing more practise of the language and not on imparting facts and information. In other words, the SCPS does not emphasize imparting theories, but rather the practical application of the development of language skills. Teachers should also be made clear that how long it takes for a student to develop certain skills does not depend on the time the teachers spend on them, but may vary depending on the student's ability to acquire and be able to perform the specified content and learning standards. A curriculum that emphasizes the mastery of language skills should focus on activities to practise and perform those skills, to ensure that the students eventually achieve the specified standards.

A critical analysis of the curriculum standard document reveals that the focus on mastery of language skills rather than on the acquisition of content knowledge was not in fact explicitly highlighted. Rather, it is embedded in the suggestions on the different skills that need to be acquired in different statements scattered throughout the document, as an example shown below,

This curriculum stresses the development of critical literacy. Teachers will provide opportunities for pupils to question and evaluate texts that they listen to, read or view. These opportunities are essential for achieving personal growth and confidence in functioning as an effective and productive member of our society.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010, p. 3)

This finding suggests that the focus of the curriculum on the development of language skills was not obvious to the teachers and therefore limited understanding. Teachers need to be able to easily infer what they should focus on in the curriculum reform. Therefore, teachers need to be enlightened about the main focus of the curriculum to help them identify their priorities for pupils' development in English. In short, there is a need to clearly emphasize the focus of the curriculum in the standard document: that is mastery of language skills.

6.3.3 Content standards and learning standards

The content and learning standards were not fully grasped by the teachers, as they perceived them as very broad and too general. The standard document mainly listed the content and learning standards (see Appendix E) which the teachers should aim for and achieve in the EL lessons but did not specify the topics or the teaching items to be dealt with in order to achieve the specified standards. Teachers had to determine the subject matter and the language items that needed to be incorporated in a lesson and that were relevant to the specified standards. As Teacher D put it,

...because for the KSSR (SCPS), the teacher has to think what to teach...there is limited guidance for KSSR (SCPS) actually...what I mean is when we look at the standard document err...the teacher has to determine what to teach on that day...there is no specification...there is only skills but what are the contents...what to teach...the teacher must think of...err...I have to think of myself about what to teach [...] we have the topic but the content...(Teacher D)

This finding corresponds with those of Wang (2006), who reported that ambiguous curriculum content resulted in teachers' lack of interest in and understanding of a curriculum reform. Conversely, Deutsch (2004) explained that a curriculum is meant to be broad and general because its function is mainly to determine what learning materials should be taught and how the instruction should be carried out. Teachers then are free to select, adapt and adopt appropriate materials, as well as pertinent teaching techniques and strategies that are relevant to the students' needs and proficiency level in developing pupils' communicative skills. The curriculum allows teachers to interpret and plan their lessons in a way that they think is most suitable and effective for their pupils, which is a characteristic of learner-centred teaching: the approach underpinning the SCPS. In other words, by not being prescriptive, the curriculum encourages teachers' creativity in lesson planning.

Apart from that, the content and learning standards were perceived as too general, in that criteria for each standard were not precisely defined or explained. For instance one of the learning standards that students needed to achieve was being "able to talk about a stimulus with guidance" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 17). But no descriptor for the standard was provided, leaving the teachers to use their own interpretation and judgment. This may result in variation in interpretation as individual teachers differ in their judgement.

The above findings suggest the lack of clarity on the function of the curriculum (as guidance rather than as prescribed material to follow) and on the criteria for the different content and learning standards that the students need to achieve. Hence, there is a need to enlighten the teachers on the function of the curriculum as guidance and the importance of it being broad, to provide opportunities for them to be creative and innovative in planning and preparing lessons. The standard document should also provide clear descriptors of the content and learning standards, so that judgment of the content and learning standard is standardised.

6.3.4 “Back to basics” approach and the “Learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful” principle

The ‘Back to basics’ approach is one of those suggested in the standard document. It is an approach that specifies the importance of introducing basic literacy skills: for example basic listening and speaking, the strategy of phonics and a good foundation of penmanship (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a). The approach was viewed as significant by the teachers, facilitating the building of a good language foundation, in order for the students to master the language skills needed for the development of their communicative competence. As illustrated below, the pedagogical principle was considered relevant to the development of language proficiency of young learners,

I think it is very suitable because the Year 1 are still young... (Teacher C)

The approach was also perceived by the teachers as relevant to the development of students’ language proficiency, because the teaching of basic literacy skills, such as the phonic system where the students learn to pronounce the words correctly, and the basics of penmanship, where they learn the basics of good handwriting skills, can help to build a strong foundation of the language skills, as mentioned below,

...this programme is more relevant...it can make the pupils you know...they can build up their pronunciation...they can speak very well (Teacher F)

However, some teachers were a bit sceptical of teaching the phonic system because they felt ill equipped to teach it, as they had neither the relevant knowledge or skills, and there was no training provided specifically in this area. This is clearly reflected in the following extracts,

H: I think my big problem now is teaching pupils the phonic system...
R: Ok, why?
H: They are learning letters, they are learning words using phonic system...I myself...I’m not master in the phonic system so I have to learn first...then I can teach my pupils...

Note: H = Teacher H; R = Researcher

Thus it can be argued that teachers can be very optimistic towards changes in education and would be committed to its implementation as long as they are well equipped with relevant information and skills and their needs are met immediately. Hence, a clear explanation and examples of how to teach the phonic system should be included in the standard document if its implementation is to be successful.

On the other hand, learning by doing fun-filled activities, through meaningful and purposeful contexts, as proposed in the curriculum standard document (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a) was viewed very favourably by the teachers, inasmuch as the approach could arouse students' interest and stimulate their motivation to learn the language and consequently encourage more language use. These activities are enjoyable to the students, reduce their anxieties and consequently help gain their confidence, which then promotes the development of their language skills, as Teacher D explained,

For example during the language arts, they love to sing the action songs, they do the actions so...I spend more time for them to err...do their work, do their practice...they practise in their group then they perform at the end of the class...the lesson (Teacher D)

This is in line with Savignon (as cited in Lan, 1994), who claimed that the opportunity for students to use the language during the learning process creates interest and identification as well as develops students' confidence with the language. Using the Kennedy (1988) framework on the criteria for acceptance of innovation in education, the finding fulfils one criterion, which states that an innovation is likely to succeed and be accepted if it appears to match the students' level and learning contexts. However, critical analysis of the standard document shows that the concept of fun learning activities through meaningful and purposeful context was not clearly defined. Moreover, no detailed descriptions or examples of what was meant by fun-learning activities and meaningful and purposeful contexts were provided. Teachers have to assume and use their logical sense as guidelines as they are only provided with the following statement as guidance,

Lessons, which emphasize meaningful contexts and the integration of language skills, allow pupils to learn by doing fun-filled activities. Contextualized as well as purposeful activities will promote the fun element in language learning.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 5)

All in all, the “back to basics” approach and the “learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful” principle were well received by all the teachers in this study and they considered them as something new. Both pedagogical principles were also perceived as useful because they were appropriate to the pupils’ stage of development. However, a lack of information and guidance on what the teaching of phonics and the concept of fun learning through meaningful and purposeful contexts is likely to lead to considerable variations in how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom. Hence, clear guidelines on the pedagogical principles are needed, so that teaching and learning can be effectively carried out.

6.3.5 Interactive learner-centred learning

Interactive learner-centred learning is another pedagogical principle underlying the SCPS. Freire (1990, cited in Jones, 2007, p. 9) says that, in learner-centred education “the locus of the learning process is shifted from the teacher to the students” because the classroom activities are based on a cooperative rather than individualistic approach to learning and students do not rely on the teacher for a model. In interactive learner-centred lessons, students are expected to be active participants rather than passive listeners, and to take part in all the activities facilitated by the teachers.

There was a high level of understanding shown by the teachers in this study that interactive learner-centred learning approach was one of the important pedagogical principles underpinning the teaching approaches in the SCPS. All of the teachers, as illustrated in the example below, made some reference to interactive learner-centred learning as a norm in the recent EL curriculum reform.

...but for KSSR (SCPS) we use err...active learning and learner centred
(Teacher E)

The explanation by the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) officer confirmed the teachers’ claim. She said the SCPS curriculum reform required EL teaching and learning to be interactive and learner-centred. It was expected that 70 per cent of the EL lessons would encompass interactions between the teacher and the pupils, as well as among the pupils, and that students would play an active role in the learning process to enable them to communicate confidently, appropriately and coherently in various situations.

The teachers were also very positive about interactive learner-centred learning; it was perceived as beneficial to the development of not only the students', but also the teachers' communicative ability; as Teacher D noted, the SCPS was,

...better than KBSR (ICPS) because it helps the pupils to improve their language and it also helps the teacher to improve their language.
(Teacher D)

The teachers explained that interactive an learner-centred learning approach allowed more opportunities for, and created an environment that encouraged, more practical use of the English Language among the students and the teachers, particularly in the classroom. Hence, it was an approach that was able to encourage communication in the classrooms and eventually help to improve students' communicative competence. In Teacher D's words,

Interactive teaching is very good...the students will have the chance to talk, speak and perform their skills, perform what they have learned and present their ideas and provide the chance to practise what they have learned (Teacher D)

This finding is in line with Weerawong (2004) and Al-Nouh (2008), who mention that in an EFL context where the target language is not the native language, ample opportunities to use the language for communicative purposes and to develop the learners' ability to take part in the process of communicating through the language is needed to compensate the insufficiency of the target language input. The teachers in the present study also believed that interactive learner-centred learning could enhance students' confidence, which is fundamental in the development of students' communicative competence, as mentioned below,

I think this new curriculum help to solve the problems because...err...throughout all these activities err...that we can conduct inside the class...it encourage the pupil to speak and engage with the activities...so the pupils are brave enough (Teacher G)

Schweisfurth (2011) supports the idea that interactive learner-centred learning provides opportunities for the students to actively engage in creating their own knowledge and understanding and thus build their confidence. Building self-confidence in second language learning is important, as research has shown that lack of confidence has always been one contributing factor that inhibits English as Second Language (ESL)

learners from using and speaking the language freely (e.g., Hassan & Selamat, 2002; Weimer, 2002).

The above finding that interactive learner-centred learning is perceived as useful and beneficial however contradicts Fitzpatrick (2011) who found that teachers in Thailand either did not like or did not find the teaching approach useful to their teaching context. Most teachers studied were not sure how the approach could function in a context where the students were not accustomed to asking questions, had very high respect for the teachers and learned in large classes of students of mixed learning abilities, divergent previous knowledge and different interest levels. Besides that, there was not enough support provided to aid the implementation of the approach.

Change in the instructional methods has led to an awareness about the change in teachers' and students' roles. Teachers increasingly understand their role in learner-centred learning is to facilitate students' learning, rather than to simply provide and transmit the knowledge, as the following extract from the present study data illustrates,

As a facilitator...to make them use the language...try to speak up
(Teacher A)

The finding seems to support Weimer's (2002) theory of learner-centred teaching, where teachers play the role of "guides, facilitators and designers of learning experience and [are] no longer the main performer, the one with the most lines or the one working harder than everyone else to make it all happen" (p. xviii). Now teachers should play an active role by "placing children at the centre of the action and recognizing their unique contributions" in the learning process, which Paris and Comb (2006, p. 582) refer to as 'learner-centeredness'. The centrality of the learners in the teachers' thinking was evident in the present data, as the teachers described the process of teaching and learning as focusing on individual students rather than the class as a whole, as mentioned in the following account,

As I can see from the curriculum given err...teachers also have to prepare something err...more interactive and err...more pupil centre...so most of the activities I run in my class will be the pupils is doing the activities...not just me giving the talk or giving the lesson...so most activities is being based on the pupils (Teacher G)

The above finding suggests how the EL lessons are to be carried out and the role that teachers should play in the classrooms, as required in the SCPS, was clearly understood. Nevertheless, there was a lack of guidance in the standard document as to how to carry out the requirement. Carless (1998) and Kırköğz (2008) mention that teachers' understanding of the underlying teaching principles of a curriculum could be an essential factor that determines the degree of implementation of a curriculum innovation. Hence, adequate guidance and support need to be provided to the teachers to ensure any requirements are carried out effectively and to allow successful implementation of the approach.

Interactive learner-centred teaching and learning in EL classes was also seen as beneficial to all of the teachers as it provided opportunities for them to learn and discover new ideas and teaching strategies in order to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum. As Teacher A put it,

I have to make err...activities err...more interactive so that they speak out...they learn how to use the language...they are able to err...speak the language with their friends in the classroom and outside the classroom
(Teacher A)

The curriculum made the teachers realize the need to increase their content and pedagogical knowledge and skills in order for them to do a better job and provide a better service to the students. The teachers' keenness and enthusiasm to learn how to conduct classes as required by the curriculum suggests that the teaching approaches as mandated in the curriculum were found useful and that teachers were indeed receptive to the reforms.

Nevertheless, teachers' understanding of the concept of interactive learner-centred learning seemed somewhat limited. The teaching approach is generally defined in terms of encouraging pupils' participation and contributions. Just one teacher referred to learner-centred learning in relation to designing meaningful and relevant learning materials to address the differing needs and abilities of pupils in order to enhance their full potential and enable them to progressively develop the ability, knowledge and confidence to use the language effectively, as stated in the curriculum standard document,

Teaching approaches, lessons and curriculum materials must suit the differing needs and abilities of pupils. It is important that appropriate activities and materials are used with pupils of different learning capabilities so that their full potential can be realized. The Mastery Learning strategy will ensure that pupils master all learning standards in order to help them acquire the language.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 5)

Limited understanding of the teaching approach was also apparent when interactive teaching was seen mainly in terms of building communication between the teacher and the pupils, as shown in the following definitions,

...two way communication between the teacher and the pupils (Teacher G)

...two ways interaction...three ways...from teacher to students, students to teacher and students to other students...that one is interactive learning (Teacher E)

In other words, interactive teaching meant obtaining responses from the students, as the following shows,

Interactive teaching means err...when we teach we have...we have good...good positive response from pupils...and the pupils can...they can respond... (Teacher F)

Interestingly, feedback and responses from the students were not merely confined to verbal responses, but also included physical responses, that is how students react to and involve themselves in the activities in the lessons, as shown in the following account,

Interactive teaching...interactive learning...try to produce activities which can make them...err...speak among themselves in the classroom...responds to the activities that they need to do...(Teacher A)

Based on the teachers' conceptualisations, the teaching principle was conceptualised as being synonymous with students' participation in communicative activities such as singing, role playing, language games, reading a Big Book, storytelling, jazz chanting and question and answer sessions, as Teacher H mentioned,

In KSSR (SCPS), the learning process is more interactive...we learn English using songs, games, chants, rhymes...(Teacher H)

In the interviews, the reason given was that it was only by involving the pupils in communicative activities as listed above that communication could be enhanced and interactive teaching could be initiated. As Teacher A explained,

I have to make err...activities err...more interactive so that they speak out...they learn how to use the language...they are able to err...speak the language with their friends in the classroom and outside the classroom [...] produce activities which can make them...err...speak among themselves in the classroom...responds to the activities that they need to do on that particular day... (Teacher A)

The above conceptualisation of interactive learner-centred teaching illustrates the teachers' limited understanding of and unfamiliarity with the required teaching approach. The teachers' major concern was mainly to provide as many activities as possible for the pupils to engage in in the EL classrooms. There was no reference to interactive learner-centred learning in terms of initiating quality or meaningful talk or construction of knowledge, although the SCPS emphasized the need to develop critical thinking among the students by involving them in activities such as those stated in the curriculum standard document,

...listen and respond to stimulus, participate in daily conversations, listen and demonstrate understanding of text, talk about stories heard, question, respond, evaluate, express opinions and demonstrate understanding of texts or other stimulus that they listen to, read or view.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 10)

In other words, the development of higher-order thinking skills like those stipulated in the standard document, such as arguing, narrating, critiquing and creating new ideas, were not given much attention in most EL classes. The limited opportunities to develop students' higher order thinking skills in the EL classes suggests that teachers did not perceive the development of critical literacy as crucial to the development of students' communicative competence.

Apart from that, the data from the interviews and the video stimulated recall dialogue (VSRD) sessions show that more than half of the teachers were either unsure or not confident about whether their classes were interactive or learner-centred. Their misgivings suggest that the concept of an interactive learner-centred teaching approach

was not clear to them, despite the fact that interactive learner-centred learning was not a new concept in Malaysian English language policy. The CDD officer confirmed that the teaching principle had first been introduced to teachers in the previous curriculum, the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (ICPS). The interview with District English Language Officer 1 further confirmed that the teachers should already have been familiar with the concept:

Not really new in that sense...I think they all know these aspects that we are talking about...it's just that sometimes maybe through err...you know...demands from the school, demands from parents, demands from the education system somehow they have to forsake those things so it's just telling them it should be done. (DELO1)

However, an analysis of the standard document reveals that the concept of interactive learner-centred learning was only briefly mentioned. Detailed explanation of the principles and characteristics of interactive and learner-centred learning was absent. The lack of comprehensive explanation and information on the teaching approach could be because the ministry assumed that the teachers were already well informed and knowledgeable, since the approach had been introduced in the previous curriculum. The statements by the CDD officer and District English Language Officer 1 above confirmed this assumption.

Even though interactive learner-centred learning needed to be incorporated into EL lessons, there was also concern about the feasibility of the teaching approach, due to students' weak level of English language proficiency and their inability to use the English Language as a means of learning. A shift in classroom instructional practices to learner-centred ones, which require contributions of ideas and participation in pairs or groups was viewed as impractical with a class where only one or two of 25 or 30 pupils were able to speak and interact in the language. Indeed, students' low level of language proficiency resulted in a resistance to classroom participation and communication, as Teacher B pointed out,

...active learning difficult to be done, learner-centred approach... because three quarter of them are remedial it's very hard to use the active learning and learner-centred approach because they are dependent on teachers. They do not know the language. They don't have the words (Teacher B)

Fitzpatrick (2011) reported a similar finding in a study on the implementation of a learner-centred approach to ELT in Thailand, as explained earlier. The Thai teachers felt that their students were incapable of adapting to the new approach due to their low level of language proficiency. Thus getting them to perform activities, to respond to teachers' questions and enquiries, and to contribute actively in the lesson proved difficult. Several other studies have come to a similar conclusion; an example is Abdul Karim (2006), who found that students' limited oral proficiency and lack of confidence to participate made communicative language teaching difficult and unfeasible. Again, Li (1998) found that due to students' limited proficiency in the English Language, teachers in South Korea found it difficult to conduct communicative activities. This finding supports Nunan (2003) and Orafi and Borg (2009) who all reported that a mismatch between what students were able to do and what the curriculum required led to a limited uptake of the curriculum innovation.

In the present study, the teachers recognised that their pupils came from rural areas and had very little exposure to English language and as a consequence would have difficulties speaking in the target language, especially during the listening and speaking lessons, and accordingly decided to teach using the traditional methods of drill and practice, as explained by Teacher B,

In KSSR (SCPS) during the listening and speaking...they must speak but they don't have the language to speak so every time in the classroom what I do for my students...I drill them (Teacher B)

The present finding is consistent with those of Sato and Kleinsessar (1999) who found that the teachers turned to traditional practices where the instruction was more didactic, heavily teacher-fronted and involved very few interactions among the students in the classrooms when they were adamant that communicative language teaching was impossible due to students' low level of language proficiency.

There were also reservations about large class sizes in relation to the effectiveness of the curriculum. In a class with 40 students, it was, they said, impossible for EL classes to be learner-centred and interactive because it would make the class very noisy and hence get out of control. Teacher G admitted that she had tried the approach, but realized that it had not been successful,

My concern of using active learning and centred approach is that err...one first of all I may have less class control [...] and other than that when the class is err...large it is difficult for me to conduct the activities because the pupils at this age especially the Year 1 are very active (Teacher G)

Moreover, it was stated as being impossible to administer pair or group work activities to initiate pupils' active involvement and participation in a class size of 35 to 40, because of the limited space, as noted by Teacher C,

When we do some activities, the pupils will make so many noise because my class is too big...there were 35 pupils...where the boys are more than the girls...the classroom is limit...the space is limit...so if I do the activities it will take a lot of time and the pupils will make noise (Teacher C)

This finding seems to correspond to the study by Wedell (2005), who reports that the difficulty with managing a large number of students in a terribly restricted space was the main issue that inhibited teachers in China from practising classroom techniques or activities for developing young learners' skills in a manner in keeping with national curriculum requirements throughout an English for young learners (TEYL) programme. Similarly, Abdul Karim (2006), Kırköğz (2008), Kizildag (2009), Li (1998) and Littlewood (2007) all report that one factor that held teachers back from implementing a learner-centred teaching approach was large class size. This was primarily because large class sizes "posed a serious problem to teachers since class control was difficult and organizing the students to participate in the activities was very time-consuming" (Abdul Karim, 2006, p. 135). Besides, "crowded classrooms obstruct the communications among students" (Kizildag, 2009, p. 195) and developing students' communicative competence thus becomes impossible. This issue echoes what Kennedy (1988, p. 336) refers to as the "feasibility" of an innovation, meaning that an innovation is likely to be rejected if the condition within which the teachers are working is incompatible with the kind of methodology expected.

However, in the case of the Malaysian reforms, realising that large class sizes might well impede the implementation of learner-centred learning, the ministry of education had altered seating arrangements in all the classrooms concerned, so that pupils could sit in groups (Ministry of Education Malaysia, n.d.). This was to enable group activities or pair work to be undertaken more effectively without involving a lot of movement by

the students. However, due to the large number of students in a class, usually the seating arrangement consisted of groups of 6 to 8 members. But research shows that “in order for group activities to function independently, a group of 6-8 might need to be smaller” (Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines & Galton, 2003, p. 164). Therefore a group of 6 or 8 poses a challenge for group work activities. This then suggests that classroom situations need further review to enable successful implementation of learner-centred learning and as such the implementation of the curriculum generally.

A great deal of concern has also arisen over Malaysian teachers’ limited competence in the English Language, which many participants in this study, like Teacher B, openly admitted,

...because as a teacher himself has a problem in speaking (Teacher B)

Obviously, teachers’ lack of language ability will influence how they teach in the classroom and is likely to prevent the curriculum from being implemented as intended (Mohd Yunus, 2001). Most teachers tend to use methods that require only a certain amount of spoken language such as drilling practices (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This finding is in accord with Li (1998) and Littlewood (2007), who all found that teachers’ insufficient language proficiency constrained them from engaging in and conducting communicative language teaching. The finding also replicates Unyakiat (1991) who reported that EFL teachers in Thailand avoided using English in their classes because of their low language proficiency and language anxiety. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) reported a similar finding that LOTE (Languages Other Than English) teachers’ lack of proficiency in second language (L2) created tensions in promoting communication in the L2.

In the context of this study, the limited competence in English among the EL teachers was related to the fact that most EL teachers especially those teaching in the primary schools have not majored in English. Based on the teachers’ demographic information (see Table 5.1 in Chapter Five) five of the EL teachers in this study majored in fields other than English Language teaching. They were recruited as English Language teachers after attending a Post-Degree Teacher Training Course in English Language Studies and granted a teaching certificate as EL teachers. One of the teachers was even instructed to teach English due to a lack of English teachers.

The above finding is also related to the next issue, which is the teachers' lack of methodological and pedagogical skills in EL teaching. In their post-degree teacher training courses, which lasted one year, only about three months were allocated for the teacher trainees to be exposed to EL teaching and learning methodologies: this was clearly insufficient. Hence, there is a need to review the structure of pre-service training and also the process of teacher selection, particularly as it relates to teacher qualifications. Since the quality of the school system depends largely on the quality of the teachers, therefore entry to teacher training should be highly selective, and effective processes for selecting the right candidates to become EL teachers can be developed. Barber and Mourshed (2007) in a report analysing the achievements of the world's best-performing school system, Finland and Singapore, found that one of the things that mattered most in selecting teachers in the respective schools included getting the right people to become teachers. Only those who possessed the following characteristics: "a high overall level of literacy and numeracy, strong interpersonal and communication skills, a willingness to learn and the motivation to teach" (ibid, p. 17) were selected as teachers for teacher training. Hence, similar mechanisms could be adapted and adopted to suit the local context.

All in all, the finding shows that the concept of interactive learner-centred learning in the SCPS is ambiguous. It is interesting to note that a clear definition of interactive learner-centred learning may lead to clear definitions of the practices, programmes and policies that characterize interactive classrooms and schools. There is a need for an in-depth understanding of one of the underpinning pedagogical principles of the primary English language curriculum in order to implement it as intended. The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that schools and teachers are better prepared, in order to allow this approach to have an improved chance of being implemented. Besides, reservations about contextual issues, such as students' low level of language proficiency, large class sizes and teachers' limited language proficiency, methodological knowledge and teaching skills, has an effect on the choice of teaching approach and eventually the effectiveness of the curriculum. Hence, careful attention is needed to address the above contextual issues to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum.

6.3.6 Modular curriculum design

On the whole, there seemed to be an awareness of and mutual agreement on the significance of the current structure of the curriculum, which emphasized modularity. All the teachers interviewed were cognizant that the teaching and learning of each language skill should be distributed in separate lessons on different days, unlike with the previous curriculum, where all the four language skills were integrated in a single lesson, as noted below,

...by using KSSR (SCPS), it means that we split the skills into four skills and into days err...unlike the KBSR (ICPS) where we put all together in one lesson...in KSSR (SCPS) in each lesson we focus only one skill (Teacher B)

Clarification by Curriculum Trainer 1 (CT1) confirmed that the recent curriculum reform emphasized the development of one language skill in a lesson.

6 of the teachers were optimistic that the modular curriculum design was important for the development of students' language proficiency. Focusing on the development of one language skill in a lesson, where more time and attention and balanced concentration is allocated to the development of a particular skill, was considered to enable the pupils to focus and consciously learn and acquire each language skill, as claimed in the following account,

...the pupils err...at least they don't learn many things but they are expert in certain things...in one day they don't have to learn so many things (Teacher C)

In addition, the modular curriculum design may prevent confusion and boredom from doing the same thing every day, because apparently each day a different skill is emphasised, where different content standards are set and different learning standards are mapped out. As a consequence the teachers said they were able to monitor and ensure that the students really acquired and mastered the specified skill.

Moreover, the teachers said that the modular curriculum helped them to teach more effectively because it was focused. This finding seems to concur with the results

obtained when the curriculum reform was piloted in selected primary schools as reported by the CDD officer,

...some teachers have perceived it well so they say that it is more focused and if I can relate our experience with piloting Year 1 and Year 2 curriculum...I would say that when we went out to schools to speak to teachers and all that...they were very happy with the new curriculum because you have a focus so they said it helps them... (CDDO)

In other words, the modular structure of the curriculum made lesson preparation more systematic and effective since the pertinent language skill to be taught was specified on daily basis, as mentioned below,

Of course...I strongly agree of using KSSR (SCPS) err...because it is easier for teachers to prepare their lessons...easier to prepare worksheets for students...using KSSR (SCPS), we only focus on the skill that we are teaching on that day...the worksheets, the lesson, the language in the classrooms, only focus on that skill (Teacher B)

Their awareness of the benefits of the modular approach suggests that the teachers were perceptive and showed an awareness of the structure of the SCPS. However, it is also revealed that there was lack of clarity on how to carry out the lessons using the modular approach, as expressed by Teacher A,

...how to carry out the lesson in the class? Before this in the KBSR the skills can be integrated...but now in KSSR they stand alone...is it...if we integrate them is it correct or wrong? (Teacher A)

The lack of clarity about how to carry out the modular approach could possibly be due, in part at least, to the contradictory explanations in the standard document. It is stated in the standard document that the SCPS reform adheres to a modular curriculum design which consists of complementary language-related modules (refer to Figure 2.5 in Chapter Two) that emphasize optimal learning of specific skills set against clear content standards¹⁵ and learning standards¹⁶ (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a). But at the same time there is another statement that specifies the need for integration of language skills (bold type mine),

¹⁵ Content standards specify the essential knowledge, skills, understandings and strategies that pupils need to learn (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a).

¹⁶ Learning standards describe in detail the degree or quality of proficiency that pupils need to display in relation to the content standards for a particular year (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a).

Lessons, which emphasize meaningful contexts and **the integration of language skills**, allow pupils to learn by doing fun-filled activities.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 5)

The teachers said that the above contradictory statements made them confused. Moreover, despite the requirement of the curriculum to focus on the development of one single skill in a lesson, teachers believed that for language learning to be effective and successful, the four basic language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) needed to be incorporated in one lesson, as Teacher H pointed out,

I prefer to integrate all the skills in one lesson because err...learning English is not just speaking...just listening for one day...how can the pupils just listen...they have to speak then they have to read, they have to write...I myself...I prefer to integrate all the skills in a day. (Teacher H)

Furthermore, the teachers felt that focusing on just listening and speaking skills in a one-hour lesson is challenging, as Teacher C explained,

...for example listening and speaking, some of the pupils will become bored because they have to pay more attention to the teachers...they only do their part on speaking when the teachers ask questions [...] they only have to listen...they have to pay their full attention to the teachers err...that is why sometimes I do a bit of writing in my listening and speaking (Teacher C)

The teachers rationalised that they were used to integrating all the skills in the previous curriculum and they spent only about three to five minutes on these two skills in most of their EL lessons, since listening and speaking were usually conducted as a short induction to a lesson. Thus sufficient time to practise and enable them to implement the modular approach was needed. However, the hasty implementation of the curriculum did not provide sufficient time for the teachers to understand the modular teaching approach and change their teaching style accordingly. Prior to the implementation of the curriculum in January 2011, training was given in November 2010, giving them very little time to digest, fully understand the curriculum and prepare for what was required of them as implementers. Teacher B drew an analogy:

We use analogy in maybe car production...computers or soft ware...they have some time to try...they gave trial product...they use some sort of

instructional design in implementing new things or new products...ours...just what...produce...then implement...use...produce and use...where have the users have the time to respond...to give their thoughts on how to improve that thing (Teacher B)

Thus it is suggested that the development and implementation of a curriculum reform should align with the readiness of teachers and schools. A sufficiently long transition period from the old to the new should be allowed. This finding finds support in other studies such as those by Abdul Rahman (1987), Abdul Rahman (2007), Carless (1998), O'Sullivan (2002), Schweisfurth (2011) and Kırkgöz (2008, p. 1863), the latter suggesting that “the time span for a nationwide curriculum innovation must necessarily be long and extensive rather than intensive to allow teachers to take on new ideas and have enough time to try them out and adapt them to their situations”.

In summary, the implementation of the modular approach was confusing and problematic. Although the modular design was perceived favourably and felt to be significant, uncertainties and confusion persisted in how to carry out the modular approach, which may in the long run result in teachers' resistance to carry out lessons as mandated in the curriculum. In a nutshell, there should not be any confusing statements in official documents because they may affect the implementation of the curriculum. Besides, there is a need for detailed information on how to focus on a single skill in a lesson and guidance on how the modular approach can result in effective teaching and learning, as well as allowing sufficient time for teachers to get used to the change.

6.3.7 Assessment

One topic that emerged from the interviews was the issue of assessment. The assessment proposed by the SCPS consists of formative and summative assessment procedures in order to gauge students' performance. Formative assessment is to be conducted as an on-going process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of a particular unit or term (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a). The eight teachers were more concerned about the formative assessment. For this reason, 'assessment' in this section mainly refers to formative assessment or what the teachers referred to as 'school-based assessment' (SBA henceforth). Teachers' views on the assessment of SCPS were both positive and negative. All teachers described school-based assessment as meaningful, but inexperience made teachers feel it was problematic and confusing.

The SBA of the SCPS, which is continuous and on going, was perceived as being able to contribute to the development of students' communicative ability. This was because students would have no choice but to speak the language in order to gain marks in the evaluation of their speaking skill. In other words, the assessment would eventually encourage more verbal use of the language,

...because we have to evaluate them in speaking so the students must speak to gain the marks in their evaluation for the assessment. (Teacher B)

As a result, students would, they felt, not merely aim to pass and get good grades but be able to achieve certain standards as target of learning. The finding supports the finding on a study on the benefits of School Based Assessment by Mansor, Leng, Rasul, Raof and Yusoff (2013) which reports that the SBA benefits the students in that it moves from an exam-oriented culture to a more relaxed and exam-free environment. Hence, the students have more confidence and learn better because they do not have tests or exams to worry about. Besides the students can even communicate better and be better team players when working as a group.

Moreover, the school-based assessment could operate as a way of gaining essential feedback and of keeping track of pupils' progress; greater awareness of pupils' capabilities would alter teachers to arrange activities for further development. The present finding lends support to Wong (1996), who reported that teachers felt continuous and formative assessment useful and relevant because it could provide opportunities to recognize students' strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the finding concurs with the evidence from teacher effectiveness studies which shows that "assessment that is learner-centred – i.e. assessment that is geared to help the learners make progress – is a major characteristic of successful teachers' practice" (Hall & Burke, 2004, p. 1). However, Hardman (2012) suggests "a need for teachers to have knowledge of and skills in both formative and summative forms of assessment to help identify what students know and can do so as to inform future planning and teaching" (p. 7).

The analysis of the data also shows that the rationales for formative and continuous evaluation and how to evaluate the development of individual potential did not seem to be fully understood by most of the teachers, as explained by Teacher G,

...yes...yes...most of us are not clear with...clear with the school based assessment which is also...err...err...part of the new curriculum (Teacher G)

It is worth noting that at the point of data collection, the statements below from the standard document were the only description of assessment that the teachers had access to,

Continuous assessment is an integral part of learning which enables teachers to assess whether pupils have acquired the learning standards taught. Formative assessment is conducted as an on-going process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of a particular unit or term. A range of activities can be utilised in order to assess pupils' performance orally or in writing. The formative and summative assessments will be used to gauge pupils' performance.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 5)

In standard-based units of study, pupils' products and performance are assessed by criteria that are directly linked to the content and learning standards. Multiple sources of evidence like checklists, observations, presentations, quizzes and tests are used to document the attainment of any one standard. Through this process, teachers will build a profile of pupils' language development and assess them individually. Pupils' competence in the language is assessed by a combination of formative and summative assessment methods.

(Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 15)

As the above statements were the only information on assessment that was made available to the teachers, it is unsurprising that they had very limited knowledge, exposure and guidance to carry out the formative assessment.

Besides this, the teachers were provided during the curriculum training with a checklist (see Appendix G) for them to monitor the students' progress. The checklist mainly contains each of the learning standards that the students need to achieve through various types of activity. The teachers were required to put a tick in the relevant box to indicate that students had achieved a target. But there was neither a thorough explanation of each of the criteria written in the checklist, nor specific training or guidance on how to evaluate the students. However, studies on educational assessment state that for an educational assessment to be effective, the implementers i.e in this context the teachers

must possess the knowledge and skill on how to implement it successfully (Talib & Abd Ghaffar, 2008). Md Omar and Sinnasamy (2009) provide evidence in a preliminary study conducted on teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the English Oral School-Based Assessment, that the reason that the oral SBA was not implemented according to guidelines and objectives provided by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate was because teachers lack of knowledge and skills in conducting SBA. Hence, clear explanations plus sufficient training are needed for teachers to understand the assessment and how to conduct it.

The teachers were also unconvinced of the value of the present assessment because of a mismatch between the assessment and the curriculum. They said the curriculum promoted communication and critical thinking whereas the examination tested students on discrete items, notably writing, reading and grammar exercises, leading to a clear mismatch in goals. As Teacher H noted,

But we have to realize here in Malaysia all the pupils evaluate using exams...examination...they have to write...so we focus on writing...because here we have tests...monthly test, mid-year exam...all the tests and exams are on writing so we have to teach students how to write...not on communication [...] because all the assessment based on the communicative way but err...at last we have the monthly test...that's how (Teacher H)

This finding corroborates the findings of Fitzpatrick (2011) and Wang (2006) who both reported that a mismatch between a curriculum objective and the assessment procedure produced discouraging results, such that students lost interest in studying and participating in classroom activities and teachers lost faith in implementing the approach.

Lack of clarity about the assessment criteria also resulted in a lack of confidence in carrying out the assessment as instructed in the curriculum. The majority of the teachers had difficulties in making judgments through observations and interactions with the students because both involved subjectivity and accountability. As mentioned in 6.3.3, no precise descriptors were included for the assessment criteria. For instance, one of the learning standards aims for the students to be "able to listen and respond to stimulus given" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 16). But there were no descriptions to illustrate the quality of 'listening' and 'responding' needed. The teachers had to rely

on their own interpretations. And since students vary in their language competency, intelligence and abilities, evaluation of students' progress and development became increasingly difficult. The present finding lends support to the study by Wong (1996) who reported that most teachers accepted that formative assessment and criterion referencing useful, but had difficulty understanding and interpreting the assessment criteria, resulting in resistance to implement them. Furthermore, due to constraints such as time and the large number of students in a class¹⁷, there was a possibility that teachers might evaluate the students simply to produce the required report that teaching and learning had taken place. The following account by Teacher C reflects this,

The assessment because we have to value them through the skills...I'm afraid that the teachers will simply give marks because of the time constraint (Teacher C)

All in all, the study suggests that teachers in this study have positive perceptions on SBA. The assessment was considered an important component of the SCPS curriculum and the teachers placed great emphasis on it. They acknowledge the fact that the SBA benefits the students; it increases their confidence in communicating and has impacted learning positively. However, although they were optimistic of SBA, they still had some uncertainties. Similar to the finding by Majid (2011) in her study on the concern of the teachers on the School Based Assessment in Malaysian schools, "the respondents are concerned about the innovation and that their concerns are multidimensional regardless of their experience in the innovation" (p. 398) and these concerns deserve due attention from the ministry.

It is evident that the teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing SBA is still quite poor. Unclear information on the new assessment and a mismatch between the policy goal and the content and style of the assessment may greatly affect the implementation of the curriculum, as teachers were confused about its relevance. Besides, teachers were uncertain of the vital role they needed to play in the new assessment system. Teachers were not aware of the fact that under this approach, teachers are given greater responsibility to design quality assessments that align with their students' learning outcomes. All students will be appraised based on their ability and readiness. Teachers need to continuously monitor the students and to give constructive feedback to improve

¹⁷ It is important to note that in the present study each teacher was teaching between 2 to 3 classes of English and each class consisted of between 35 to 40 students.

students' learning abilities. Based on the assessment outcomes, teachers can make further decision whether to continue to a new topic, give necessary help or send the more academically challenged students to remedial class.

This suggests that a clear understanding of the assessment and its relevance to the curriculum aims needs to be conveyed if the curriculum is to be implemented successfully. Sufficient knowledge and skills in using varying effective teaching strategies to enhance the learning for students with different abilities and exploiting various informal methods of assessing students such as quizzes, question and answer sessions, short writing, dramas, and role-playing are necessary besides a need for exposure on how to conduct the assessment more efficiently. Since formative assessment is a new element in the curriculum and as teachers have no experience of this type of assessment, there is a need for teachers to know how the assessment should be carried out and how the assessment relates to the aims of the curriculum.

At this juncture, it is obvious that in-service trainings are much needed in order to ensure the smooth running of SBA. It was feared that if no in-service trainings were provided, there was a possibility that the teachers would implement SBA "superficially, go back to more comfortable old assessment practices, or develop a negative attitude toward SBA" (Cheung , Hattie & Ng, 2001, p. 5). More hands-on sessions, such as workshops and open discussions on the challenges and issues in implementing the assessment, need to be carried out. This means that teachers must therefore be properly trained and given meaningful and relevant input in regards of the new assessment. It is very important for teachers to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. In doing so will ensure the quality of teaching and learning process in classroom. Not only that, teachers must also be made clear of the demands of the new procedure; what it wanted students to achieve and what criteria that display students have actually achieved mastery.

It was evident that the SBA, required serious changes in teachers' perceptions of their own role in relation to their students and their classroom practice. This was an obvious indication that the ministry needed to consider necessary revision and modifications to the SBA. The feedback gathered from the teachers as well as the students should be able to provide relevant information to the ministry with their attempt to decide on the necessary changes and modifications to the existing assessment's policies and

guidelines.

6.4 Did the teachers find the supporting materials (i.e. the textbook and teachers' guide) clear and useful?

Another major aspect of the SCPS is the effectiveness of the supporting materials. As mentioned in Chapter Two, there are two types of supporting materials for the SCPS: 1) the textbook and 2) the teachers' guide. The teachers' guide provides valuable teaching resources such as recommended activities and sample lesson plans, suitable teaching strategies and practical suggestions for teaching methods via some suggested materials (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010c). The function of the teachers' guide is primarily to supply teachers with ideas for lesson planning to help them organize their daily lessons. Meanwhile, the textbook contains teaching and learning materials as well as activities, which are introduced through various topics. The function of the textbook is to help the teachers organize their lessons to make learning more meaningful and purposeful for the pupils. Hence, neither type of supporting materials represents teaching modules for teachers to closely follow but both serve as a guide and reference for teachers to fall back on, in order to achieve the content and learning standards envisaged in the curriculum. Detailed analysis of the supporting materials was provided in Chapter Two. Thus, this section aims to explore the teachers' views of the textbook and teachers' guide that supplement the curriculum standard document.

On the whole, the textbook and teachers' guide were perceived as important and useful in facilitating and providing support. The textbook and teacher guidebook were viewed favourably as regards both contents and technical aspects. The teachers mostly consulted the textbook and teacher guidebook as their main reference because both supporting materials provided interesting ideas and sample activities, which were felt to be relevant for the EL classes. As Teacher C explained,

Yes...because inside the modules we can get many ideas...it gives us many examples to do the...let's say the listening skills they give us err...many ideas to do the activities and then the reading, they give us some ideas on how to teach...we just use the ideas for our topic (Teacher C)

The textbook and teacher guidebook not only provided interesting classroom activities but also instructions on how to conduct the activities. The instructions were clear and precise and found to be very helpful, as Teacher G mentioned,

The textbook is err...very helpful because it gives us pictures on how to conduct the activities...err...for example on games...they give us how to err...allocate the pupils...how to rotate the pupils on the games...ah...very clear example (Teacher G)

Hence, the various suggestions for classroom activities, the thorough explanations and instructions for carrying out those activities, as well as detailed sample lesson plans provided the teachers with useful guidance on planning and preparing their EL lesson. Moreover, all the activities recommended in the textbook and teacher guidebook offered clear examples of the kind of activity that was considered relevant to achieve the aims of the curriculum.

The teaching contents and activities suggested in both types of supporting materials were also highly appreciated because most of the resources and activities, for example the games and songs in the textbook and teacher guidebook, were new to the majority of the teachers interviewed and the pupils. Teacher C claimed that new and unfamiliar teaching materials made lessons livelier and more enjoyable as they arouse students' interest. In classrooms especially those, which centre on developing students' communicative competence, fun and interesting materials are necessary to gain and sustain students' interest.

The illustrations and pictures that accompanied the suggested activities in the textbook were viewed very favourably, as Teacher D pointed out,

I think yes...because it is interesting and attractive because there are more colours...the illustration is better than before...it is more interesting...yes I like the new textbook (Teacher D)

The teachers explained that the illustrations and pictures in the textbook provide clear visual image of how the activities could be effectively conducted to ensure successful teaching apart from enhance their understanding of the kind of activities that could be conducted in the EL classes in order to achieve the content and learning standards specified for a lesson. They also believed that the illustrations and pictures could attract

pupils' attention and arouse their curiosity, and eventually develop their interest in learning the language. This finding corroborates that by Abdul Rahman (2007) who reports that teachers and students enjoyed the visual support to help them understand the literary texts, which were provided as resources for classroom practice in the CCL programme.

The supporting materials were felt to be as they allowed teachers to be creative and innovative in their lessons. The fact that the contents of the textbook and the teacher guidebook are mainly suggestions allows teachers to adapt, adopt, make changes to a lesson and even create their own teaching materials, as mentioned in the following account,

This year textbooks give teachers a lot of space to be creative...in the textbooks, they only provide example lessons...one or two sample activity and teachers have to think and create more activity and not depend on the textbooks only (Teacher G)

As a result, teaching and learning need not be rigid. Teachers can make choices, which they think appropriate for their students. A critical analysis of the textbook and teacher guidebook suggests that teachers are not intended to rely solely on the supporting materials when planning their lessons, but to make appropriate changes, especially in addressing the needs of students with different language ability, previous knowledge and interest levels. Teachers are expected to use “their pedagogical content knowledge, experience, skills and creativity to plan their lessons in order to help their pupils learn better because they are in a better position to make appropriate and relevant decisions when planning their lessons” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010c, p. iii).

This finding lends support to Abdul Rahman's (1987, p. 303) study on the implementation of the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School; Abdul Rahman reported that “flexibility in approach”, where teachers adapt and modify wherever necessary, was considered the most important aspect of the KBSR. In line with this, Wang (2006) found that the advantage of the national college English curriculum in a Chinese tertiary context being open-ended was to offer teachers enough freedom and space to explore or create particularly Chinese ways of language teaching in classrooms, so that teachers could employ flexible and practical methods according to the stages that the learners had reached. Allowing teachers to be creative with their lessons is important

because too rigid a curriculum kills teachers' interest and may affect the implementation of the curriculum (Alwan, 2006). As reported in her study, Alwan (ibid) found that the rigidity and inflexibility of the curriculum materials, such that UAE teachers were forced to teach the content in ways that were compatible with the exam, meant there was no change in how the teachers taught.

Despite the Malaysian teachers' generally positive views of the support materials, some of the teaching resources were perceived as unsuitable for the majority of the students. The level of difficulty of some of the teaching resources and activities in the textbook or teachers' guide was considered to high and the activities were too difficult for the students to understand or follow. As Teacher H put it,

Because in the KSSR syllabus only err...in the text books itself I have to pick the activities that suit the pupils because err...some of the activities in the textbooks do not suit my students' level (Teacher H)

This finding seems to agree with a study by Abdul Karim (2006), who found that the teaching materials provided for the implementation of the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (Revised) for English Language which were not compatible with the students' proficiency levels, resulted in a low degree of implementation of the skills specifications in the curriculum. For this reason, the majority of the teachers in the present study supplemented the textbook activities with materials from workbooks or the Internet, as Teacher H said,

Yes...err...I have to find additional resource [...] sometimes it helps sometimes it's not...I have to pick the best...in the teacher's guide...in the textbook...sometimes I have to down the level (Teacher H)

This suggests that the teachers did not strictly follow the activities and the teaching suggestions prescribed in the textbooks. All of the eight made changes, modified, adopted, adapted and incorporated supplementary materials from other resources such as workbooks or the Internet to suit their students' needs and levels. The present finding confirms earlier results that the recent curriculum reform allows teachers to be creative and innovative in their lessons. This finding seems to correspond to Alwan (2006) and Fitzpatrick (2011) who both found that most teachers incorporated supplementary materials from other books or from the Internet into their lessons because the materials

in the textbook were unsuitable for the students' learning abilities, previous knowledge and interest level.

Surprisingly however, the teachers also felt that the teaching materials and activities were inadequate. Most of the time they said they had to find additional materials or create their own for their EL lessons. In many cases, the textbook was mainly utilised for reading lessons, because using the reading passages prepared in the textbook saved the teachers time finding suitable passages for the students, preparing copies for the whole class and planning the follow-up activities. In Teacher D's words,

I think before this also I don't use the textbooks all the time...I use other materials...many materials...I don't only depend on the textbooks...I use the textbooks especially for reading skills because I find that the reading materials in the textbooks are good and suitable for the pupils (Teacher D)

Hence, despite the fact that the support materials were considered useful and significant, they were felt to be insufficient in number.

There was also a misunderstanding about the function of and relationship between the textbook and teacher guidebook among most of the teachers. An analysis of both documents reveals that the textbook is divided into 30 topics, whereas the teacher guidebook is not topically based, though the materials in both were basically language activities. However, the activities recommended in the teacher guidebook did not cover all the topics, as the following account shows,

...because the modules will just limit of the...the modules give only activities for some topics but not for all the topics... (Teacher G)

The teachers expected the contents of the textbook and teacher guidebook to be congruent. This implies that they were unclear about the function of the two sets of the supporting materials and how they related to each other. Of the eight teachers, only Teacher B showed a good understanding of the function of the teacher guidebook, which is to supply suggestions for activities and lesson plans in order to assist teachers to find and prepare relevant materials based on the students' needs,

I rarely use the guidebook. There are a lot of activities in the guidebook and not all the activities are suitable for my students. I feel that as a

teacher we know the students, it's better for us to create our own activities based on our students. The teacher's guide is guide kan <right>. It is just a guide not a module (Teacher B)

It is interesting to note that a lack of understanding of the relationship between, and the functions of, the supporting materials could influence how teachers implement the curriculum. Thus, teachers' knowledge about how to use and reconcile the diverse curriculum materials needs to be improved to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum. Teachers need it to be made clear that the standard document, textbook and teachers' guide should be coordinated for successful teaching and learning to take place.

One very salient result obtained from the data analysis is the high degree of reliance by the teachers on the textbook, as against the standard document. As stated many times earlier, the teachers used the textbook most of the time; they said they usually used the textbook as a reference tool in planning their lessons rather than the standard document. The result is not surprising. The teachers did not refer to the curriculum document and relied more on the textbook because textbook contained suggested activities, sample texts, examples of language games and model questions which they could apply and use in their lessons, whereas the curriculum document contained only teaching theories and pedagogical principles. When preparing lessons, teachers usually need practical guidance more than theories. As a result, in the context of the Malaysian education system, although the curriculum standard document is easily accessible through the Ministry portal and teachers can simply download the document for reference, teachers tend to rely more on the textbook than the standard document, because the document is only at policy level. Hence, as I argued earlier, the curriculum standard document should contain clear information and adequate guidance so that teachers will refer to the curriculum document in planning their lessons and use textbook or teacher guidebook as supplementary materials.

All in all, the findings reveal that teachers were perceptive about the curriculum support materials (i.e. the textbook and teacher guidebook). Nevertheless, some aspects of both were deemed unsatisfactory. Hence, it is important to ensure that the supplementary materials fulfil the needs of the teachers and the students. As Sidhu, Fook and Kaur (2010) and Wang (2006) argue, good resource support positively contributes to teachers' curriculum implementation activities. Conversely, one of the factors that has

been found to inhibit effective implementation of the curriculum is precisely teachers feeling dissatisfied with the curriculum materials (Abdul Karim, 2006; Alwan, 2006).

6.5 Summary of the chapter

In conclusion, the SCPS was perceived by the teachers with mixed views. Some features of SCPS were felt to be clear and significant, but some other features were reported as confusing and problematic. The teachers found the curriculum beneficial, in the sense that it was likely to help improve the students' language proficiency and to enhance their confidence with respect to the development of their communicative competence. Nevertheless, contextual issues such as students' low level of language proficiency, large class sizes and the teachers' limited language competency as well as their limited teaching/ methodological knowledge and skills raise concern about the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving the desired goal.

The main aim of the curriculum was perceived to be relevant and was familiar to most of the eight teachers, although there were some who were not able to identify the ideas that were emphasized in the SCPS. This inability could be related to a lack of sense of ownership of the curriculum, as teachers had not been involved in the process of designing it and mainly played the role of implementers. There was also an awareness of the shift of focus of the curriculum from content knowledge to mastery of language skills, but lack of clarity in the document mean that points intended to be salient were not always picked up. Besides, the content and learning standards were considered very broad and too general as they lacked comprehensive explanations of the criteria for each standard. The underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum such as 'back to basics' and the 'learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful' approach were viewed as relevant and important for building a good language foundation, in order for the students to master the language skills and develop their communicative competence. The underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum were also viewed favourably, because they were seen as appropriate to the students' stage of development and their needs.

There was also an awareness of the importance and benefit of interactive learner-centred learning and the teachers were able to relate the approach to focus on the students. But the teachers' definitions of interactive teaching and learner-centred learning showed that

teachers did not have a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and the relevance of the approach to developing students' communicative competence. Teachers' understanding of interactive learner-centred approach was somewhat limited. Apart from that, the modular approach was very much appreciated, because it enabled students to consciously learn and acquire the required language skills, because it made lesson preparation more systematic and because it led to EL teaching being more effective. However, lack of clarity on how to apply it in the classrooms and insufficient time to get used to the change impacted on the effectiveness of the approach.

The teachers' view of the assessment was both positive and negative. They found it confusing but meaningful. The assessment of the SCPS, which incorporates the use of formative assessment was felt to be useful because the school-based assessment could function as a means of gaining essential feedback to keep track of pupils' progress and it could help teachers plan activities for further development. However, the assessment was also found to be very confusing, due to a mismatch between the curriculum goal and how the current tests or exams were executed. The examination system still primarily tested for writing, reading and grammatical proficiency while the curriculum was aimed at developing communicational ability in the learner. The curriculum support materials received diverse views. The teachers acknowledged the significance of the textbook and the teacher guidebook and were positive about the use of illustrations, but expressed concerns over the level of difficulty of the materials provided and confusion over the function of, and relationship between, the various materials.

Based on the discussions above, it can be concluded that the SCPS was perceived as significant and useful for the development of students' language proficiency. The modular approach, 'back to basics' and the 'fun-learning through meaningful and purposeful learning' principle, the interactive learner-centred approach and the school-based assessment system introduced in the SCPS was viewed as effective in building students' communicative competence. Besides that, the supporting materials (i.e. the textbook and teacher guidebook) were seen as helping to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. However, despite its usefulness there were some features of the SCPS that were ambiguous. Knowing how teachers view and respond to the curriculum materials is important because the way teachers perceive a curriculum document and its supporting materials will have an influence on their implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Therefore, there is a need to review and improve the curriculum

document and the support materials before pupils progress to later levels of primary education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

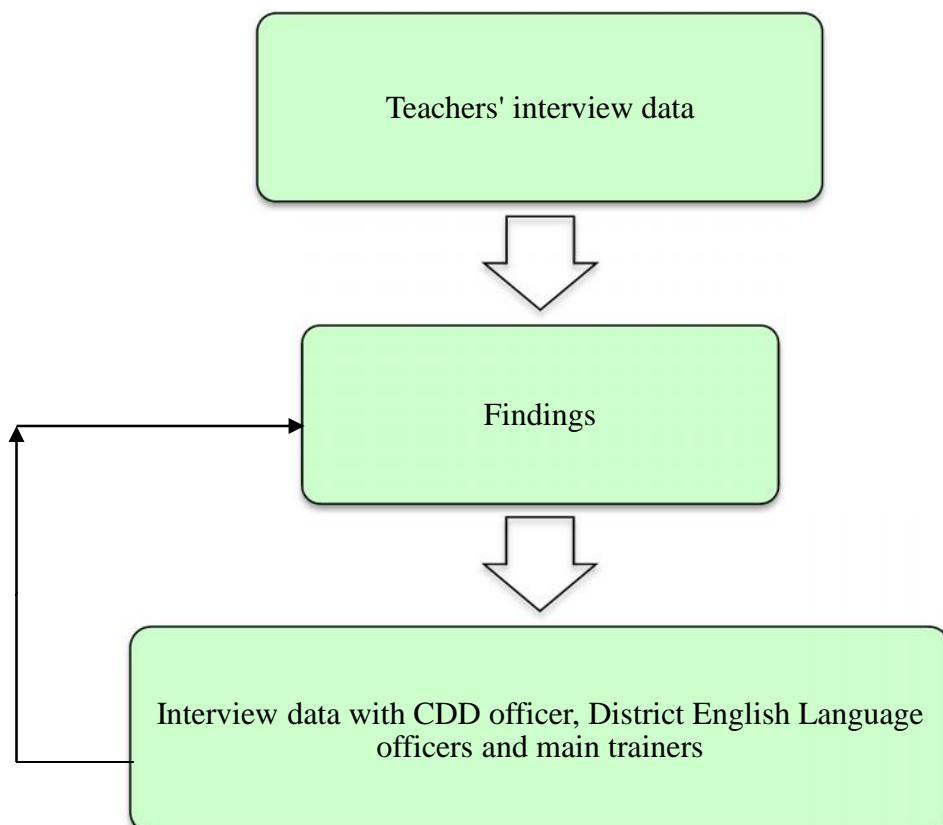
ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS ON TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DISSEMINATION OF THE STANDARD CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (SCPS)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides answers to the second research question: **What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the SCPS?** To this end, it discusses the results on the effectiveness of the dissemination model used to disseminate the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS) at grass-roots level (i.e. to the school and teachers) in terms of its processes and outcomes and examines the effectiveness of the training.

The results presented below are based on the analysis of the teacher interview data. Similarly, triangulation of data collection sources was used to interpret and analyse the data. The interview data with the teachers were firstly reviewed and categorized before they were confirmed with the respondents and further validated with the interview data from the secondary sources: interviews with the Curriculum Development Division (CDD) officer, the District English Language officers and the curriculum trainers. The validation procedure is depicted in the figure below.

Figure 7.1. Triangulation of data collection sources (II)



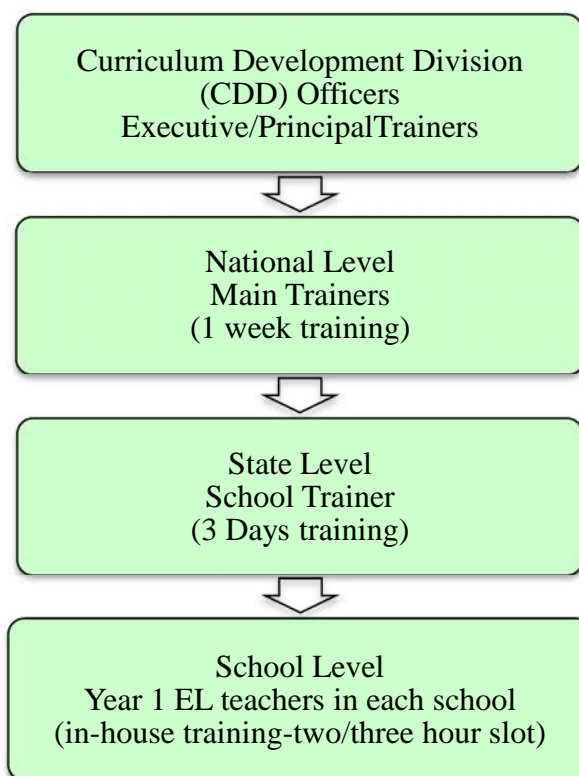
7.2 The dissemination model used

This section focuses on the process, i.e. the dissemination model used by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to transmit the curriculum and relevant resources for use in the implementation of the curriculum. The Curriculum Development Division (CDD) is the body responsible for ensuring that appropriate and adequate in-service training and support is provided to the teachers. However, due to constraints such as time, cost and human resources, a face-to-face training session for each and every one involved in the delivery of the SCPS Year 1 English Language was not possible. Therefore, the three tier cascade model of training – national, state and school – was adopted as a means of informing and familiarizing the teachers with the content and the fundamental changes embodied in the recent curriculum reform of the primary English Language, as the CDD officer confirmed,

The cascade model...what happened last year we did not have enough funding [...] we received some form of funding you know but we were not able to train many JUs (main trainers) for states. So what happen is we had limited number of JUs (main trainers) per state. So we were hoping that once they received the training then they will go out to the respective districts and train you know...so we had a model, a number of JUs (main trainers) in relation to the number of schools in each state, how big or how small the state is. But unfortunately state has a constraint because money, funding came very late for them to conduct courses (CDDO)

The rationale for using the cascade model, involving separate courses at national, state and school level, was that it allowed in-service training to be provided to a very large number of teachers with restricted financial support and within a relatively short period of time. The fact that the course participants at state level and school level who were trainers in the subsequent level were all practising EL teachers helped to reduce the expense; both Hayes (2000, p.138) and Ono and Ferreire (2010) mentioned that a cascade training model can be very economical because it “uses existing teaching staff as co-trainers”. Other researchers, such as Barrett (2010), Bax (2002), Dichaba and Mokhele (2012), Hayes (2000), McDevitt (1998), Suzuki (2011) and Wedell (2005) have come to a similar conclusion.

Figure 7.2. The structure of the cascade model of training for SCPS



The structure of the cascade model training for SCPS as depicted in the figure above shows that the training was linear and traditional in its top-down approach (from the Ministry, to the main trainers, to the teacher trainers and lastly to EL teachers in schools). Training at the national level, organised by the MOE, was held at the CDD and was run by the officers from CDD who are identified as executive or principal trainers. These were language experts who were involved in designing, planning and developing the SCPS. The training at the national level involved a small number of trainers: course participants who were identified and selected by the State Education Department (SED). They were known as main trainers and were practising EL teachers in primary schools who had been acknowledged for their excellence in teaching and commitment to programmes related to English Language Teaching (ELT). The number of main trainers for each state depended on the number of schools in the state. Since the size of each state in Malaysia differs, some states had a larger number of primary schools than others and therefore more main trainers. The training at the national level to introduce the SCPS reforms lasted one week.

After the national-level training, these main trainers returned to their home states to prepare for training sessions at state level that was organized by the SED. The course

participants were representatives of EL teachers from each school in a state who were identified and appointed by the school headmasters and headmistresses. The training at state level was conducted over three days. Upon completing the course, the teacher representatives who attended the state-level training returned to their respective schools and were required to carry out in-house training to the other English Language teachers who would be teaching SCPS Year 1 English. There were no clear guidelines as to how the in-house training should be carried out, but the general understanding was that the teacher representatives (course participants in the state-level training) shared the knowledge that they had gathered from the course they attended, including pedagogical approaches, teaching materials and suggested activities to be carried out in class with the other Year 1 EL teachers in their respective schools.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the curriculum was to be implemented in January 2011 and the training at national level started in November 2010, thus giving very little time to go through all the process of disseminating the curriculum. When comparing the three different levels of the training, it is possible to observe important changes in the structure of the dissemination model between national, state and school levels in terms of duration, aims and coverage of the training materials at each level. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the dissemination model to successfully disseminate and communicate the necessary information on the curriculum to all the primary EL teachers and ensure a deep enough understanding of the curriculum reform and the process of implementing it. Hence, the following sections aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the cascade model used to disseminate the SCPS.

7.3 The effectiveness of the dissemination model of the SCPS.

This section evaluates the training model adopted by the MOE by making use of a set of criteria based on the work of Hayes (2000). Hayes proposed that, in order for cascade training to be successful, it has to meet the following five key criteria (p. 138):

1. The method of conducting the training must be experiential and reflective rather than transmissive;
2. The training must be open to reinterpretation; rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working should not be expected;
3. Expertise must be diffused through the system as widely as possible, not concentrated at the top;

4. A cross-section of stakeholders must be involved in the preparation of training materials;
5. Decentralisation of responsibilities within the cascade structure is desirable.

Before assessing the effectiveness of the dissemination model using the above criteria, it is necessary to first describe the criteria. The following section provides an explanation on what each criterion entails. Hayes (1995) mentions that a purely transmissive mode of training at all levels is one of the prime causes of failure of the cascade model, because one-way communication and theory alone are insufficient and ineffective. Training needs to involve two-way communication between trainers and trainees to encourage active participation and commitment from all the participants involved at all levels. Theoretical knowledge needs to be accompanied by practical skills, to develop a sense of ownership of the materials learned and hence ensure deep understanding. Thus, apart from learning the theories, the trainees should be involved in the training as much as possible by engaging them in hands-on activities, and demonstrating what they need to do when they go back to their schools, given the environment and context to which the training ideas and activities will be applied. In short, the knowledge required is better learned through experience (Merriam, Cafarella and Baumgartner (2007) refer to this as ‘experiential learning’).

Involving the trainees in the training by taking into account their practical experiences, such as the environment the teachers are working in, provides good opportunities for them to reflect and consider the relevance of what they have learned and think how best their newfound knowledge, skills and competences could be adapted and applied to their own situation. It is believed that training that gives opportunities for hands-on work and is related to the situational context is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2011). Hence, a successful training programme should be reflective: as Wedell (2005) put it, “the trainees listen to and reflect on others views, [and this] gives them the opportunities to plan and manage the new techniques and activities, and chances to think about and obtain feedback on such practice from peers and trainers” (p. 639). Furthermore, a reflective session also enables the trainers to monitor the progress of the training and identify areas that need improvement or special attention or by reviewing feedback for further refinement (Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; Mathekga, 2004; McDevitt, 1998).

Successful training also should be open to reinterpretation, where teachers are able to select appropriate knowledge learned and resources gained from the training and adapt and adopt those that are relevant to the needs and the context with which they are working. All teachers will go through the process of determining and deciding what is appropriate for their classroom and “make informed choices about how best to teach in their own classes considering the context they work in” (Hayes, 2000, p. 143). Hence, knowledge and skills gained from the training should be sensitive to emerging features of context and be flexible and responsive to the local needs (Shezi, 2008) to allow for modifications. Rigid adherence to prescribed ways of working limit creativity, and will not support the application of the training ideas and activities if they do not fit the contextual realities of environments in which the teachers are operating, resulting in the success of the programme being compromised.

For training to be successful, expertise should be spread out throughout the cascade system as widely as possible and not only concentrated at the top level. Participation of expertise at all levels (i.e. from the topmost level to the lowest level) is needed to ensure that the potential of everyone involved in the cascade is maximized and that they all develop a better understanding of the programme (Mathekga, 2004). Thus, everyone in the cascade will be active agents, due to their active participation (Hayes, 2000). Diffusion of expertise in the cascade can be achieved either by asking the personnel who have undergone training at national level to go directly to districts to train the personnel at that level, or by inviting the state training personnel to attend training at national level.

Apart from that, the preparation of training materials must involve a cross-section of stakeholders at various levels, so that related activities throughout the cascade are coordinated. Cooperation, or joint development, in the preparation of training materials between the top-level personnel, and trainers and teachers in the subsequent levels encourages active participation by all those involved in the programme and promotes a sense of ownership in teachers and trainers of the programme in which they are involved; the eventual effect is to develop sustainability. McDevitt (1998) suggests that the involvement of the various stakeholders could be achieved by “incorporating a small amount of production work at each level of the cascade. Thus, whenever a technique is demonstrated, the participants should be required to implement it using a real part of the

syllabus. This material could be refined and standardized then added to the package for the next level, where a new area of the syllabus is worked on. This snowball effect means that the end user, the teacher, at least has a small kit of resources, which can be used immediately as well as the skills to develop his/her own materials” (pp. 426-427).

Finally, a successful training programme should decentralize the responsibilities within the cascade structure. Decentralization means transferring power to the state governments and granting autonomy to the district authority and to the individual schools to disseminate the information. That way, responsibilities are shared out respectively at national, local and school levels. The collaboration between the top authority and the lower authority will increase the feeling of ownership of the programme and develop better understanding. Basically, the last three of Hayes’s criteria for a successful cascade concern the function of the stakeholders in the cascade structure. However, based on my review of the criteria, criteria 3 and 5 seem to overlap, because essentially they deal with similar things. Therefore, for the purposes of the present evaluation, I am going to combine these two criteria. The results discussed below will provide answer to Research Question 2.

7.3.1 Criterion 1: Has the dissemination model for SCPS been transmissive or experiential and reflective?

The dissemination model for SCPS was a combination of the transmissive and experiential but not the reflective. Hence, the training only partially meets the first criterion for successful cascade training. The training at national, state level and the in-house training at school level were largely transmissive (Bax (1995, p.263) calls this as “one-directional” training). Knowledge on the philosophy, rationale and theoretical pedagogical principles of the SCPS for English Language was presented in the form of a lecture or a briefing, whereby the trainers imparted the details of the curriculum to the trainees; that the mode of communication was mainly one-way is shown by the following account,

...because err...in the...in the training lah...they just tell us in KSSR there are day one, day two, day three and day four...what is day one until day four and then they give us example of on lesson plan and activities on listening and speaking, reading and writing (Teacher A)

The transmissive mode of communicating the information on the SCPS was further confirmed in the interview with the CDD officer,

In terms of the curriculum in general, we had to my style lecture you know. We tell them about it (CDDO)

There was a strong perception on the part of the teachers that the transmissive mode of the training was not successful in communicating the information on the curriculum, because it did not provide all the necessary information for a profound understanding of the curriculum, as the following ‘confessions’ show,

...after the training I still...I still was wondering what I should do with the kids with the new curriculum... (Teacher A)

I think the training is in chaos. I think maybe 90% of the teachers that attend the course did not understand what is KSSR (SCPS) and how to conduct the class (Teacher B)

The input on the theoretical concept underlying the SCPS, such as the reasons behind, and the need for, the curriculum reform, the differences between the previous and the present curricula, the rationale for the emphasis on developing pupils’ communicative competence, the principles that the SCPS was based upon, the roles and functions of the teachers in the curriculum and what the ministry hoped to achieve through the changes in the curriculum was only vaguely communicated and insufficient. As Teacher A commented,

...by right I think before that they should explain to us what the ministry want from the KSSR (SCPS), what is the difference between KBSR (ICPS) and KSSR (SCPS), so that all the teachers can have a clear idea what they should do, what they needs to do in the classrooms” (Teacher A)

There was thus a perceived need for a more effective and lucid approach to addressing the theoretical concepts of the curriculum reform; as Fullan (1985, p. 396) noted, “the most fundamental breakthrough occurs when people can cognitively understand the underlying conception and rationale with respect to why this new way works better”. Carless (1998) and Kirgk z (2008) both affirm that a lack of understanding of the theoretical principles and classroom applications of the proposed changes, or what Smit (2005) refers to as teachers’ local knowledge, may result in no changes in the teachers’

classroom instructional practices – which will have a significant effect on achieving the aim and objectives of the curriculum.

Surprisingly, not only the theoretical concepts of the curriculum were unclear, but the pedagogical principles and teaching approaches that specified how the EL lessons were to be delivered (the core of the curriculum) were also vague to the majority of the teachers. The information on the requirement to emphasize the development of one single language skill on a daily basis, following the modular curriculum design, to conduct EL lessons interactively and to involve pupils in active lessons was perceived as complicated and confusing. One result was hesitations in the interviews, as shown in the following account,

How to carry out the lesson in the class? Before this in the KBSR (ICPS) the skills can be integrated...but now in KSSR (SCPS) they stand alone...is it...if we integrate them is it correct or wrong? (Teacher A)

The teachers had to seek more information through reading and researching to gain a clear understanding of the SCPS. The finding is similar to the results obtained in a study by Lamb (1995) evaluating the ‘Teaching Reading Skills to Undergraduates’ course for Indonesian schoolteachers; Lamb reported that most of the course participants were confused and frustrated with the training provided. Consequently, many of them did not ultimately apply the principles taught and to which they were exposed during the training.

The vagueness of the information on the curriculum could be a result of the transmissive mode of training, as such a delivery mode does not encourage teachers’ active participation and commitment (Suzuki, 2011). The teachers were not involved in the training process and were only recipients of the information and directives, a situation which Abdul Rahman (2007) considers unproductive for developing a deep understanding of the curriculum. Hence, the insufficient understanding of the curriculum (as discussed in Chapter Six) could be related to the ineffective method of relaying the information to the teachers. An unclear and vague understanding of the curriculum suggests teachers’ dissatisfaction with the dissemination model for the SCPS. The finding lends support to the study by Hayes (2008), who reported that Korean teachers did not view INSET courses positively because they were made up of theoretical and formal lectures, which were not applicable to the class teaching.

Hardman (2011) and Timperley (2008) claim that theory and skills needs to be integrated so that teachers are able to use their theoretical understandings and apply them into practice. The limitation of the transmissive mode of training is in line with the results obtained in other studies, such as Crawford (2003), Kavak, Yamak, Bilici, Bozkurt, Darici and Ozkaya (2012), Mukundan, Nimehchisalem and Hajimohammadi (2011), Rafi (2010) and Uysal (2012), who reported that one of the factors accounting for why teachers were highly positive and satisfied with the training programmes was that it encouraged teachers' participation.

Although the training for the SCPS was largely transmissive, some sessions were conducted using an experiential learning approach, but these sessions focused on creating communicative activities for the EL classroom. The teachers were assigned to work in groups and engaged in hands-on activities, such as producing activities and teaching strategies that were suitable for the students, fun and enjoyable, like creating games, songs and teaching materials, as the following accounts illustrate,

...during the workshops...err...the teachers have to create activities that suit err...using the textbooks and then we have to create our own activities [...] we learn on how to create games, we learn how to implement the songs in the teaching (Teacher H)

...how to create a learning through fun activities...yes...we have now new ideas how to create a fun and very enjoyable activities to prepare for the students (Teacher G)

The sessions where the teachers were personally involved in the preparation of the teaching materials and experienced how to actually carry out the activities were perceived positively and as more effective, because the hands-on sessions provided a clear understanding of appropriate and different types of classroom activity that could be conducted. One of the curriculum trainers (Trainer X) reinforced the view that where the training for the SCPS involved hands-on activities, the result was a clearer picture and understanding by the teachers of the kinds of activity expected in the EL classrooms. Teachers' positive perceptions of getting first-hand experience is in line with Hayes's (1995) conclusion that, "providing opportunities for course participants to put into practice and to try out what they have learnt in a non-threatening environment such as outside the classroom may bring teachers to a deeper understanding of some aspect of a new method, idea, or technique, which they will be encouraged to implement

in their own classes, secure in the knowledge that what they are doing has pedagogic validity and is based on sound principles” (p. 260). The literature on educational change also states that one of the characteristics that supports significant change involves learning new skills through practice and feedback (Fullan, 1985). Teachers’ active participation in training programmes can facilitate the process of teacher learning as they reshape their own knowledge, beliefs and practices while interacting with new knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

In short, due to its transmissive nature, the dissemination model for SCPS lacked opportunities for teachers to reflect on the new curriculum and its significance to their own teaching environments. Training which largely involves a transmissive mode of delivery does not provide professional development opportunities for teachers to self-assess, reflect and rethink the new theories and teaching methods exposed during the trainings or professional development to their classroom situations (Barrett, 2010; Borovikova, 2010). In contrast, a more participatory mode of training promotes reflectivity, as it draws upon teachers’ own practical knowledge and takes into account the contextual factors that influence how teachers work (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Johnston & Kirschner, 1996). Reflecting on the new curriculum and contemplating its application by connecting with teachers’ actual experiences and teaching contexts is important, as different teaching and learning environments may require different strategies and modifications to enable reforms to influence classroom practices. As Bennie and Newstead (1999, p.155) put it, “teachers can be forced to implement changes, but if they are not given the opportunity to reflect on the innovation and their experiences, they might not be convinced of its value.”

In the present study, the teachers’ inability in their interviews to reflect on the new curriculum, to identify aspects of the curriculum that had undergone changes, or to discover and learn how best to implement the curriculum to suit the context in which they were operating, resulted in them having serious difficulties implementing the curriculum. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter Six, almost all the teachers faced problems with adjusting and applying their knowledge about interactive learner-centred learning in large class situations, where the majority of the students had low level of language proficiency. The lack of reflection in training sessions corresponds to the theory for effective professional development proposed by Barrett (2010), Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), Hayes (1995, 2000), Lee (2011) and Wedell (2005)

who all suggested that teacher professional development is only effective when teachers are able to reflect, connect, apply and adapt new concepts and strategies exposed in the training to their own classroom contexts, as the ability to reflect critically can enhance the process of teacher learning. Due to the lack of reflectivity and not connecting new knowledge with their own unique contexts, the teachers were tempted to maintain their old classroom practices and reject changes to new methods, as described below,

I'm teaching in Year 1B and maybe $\frac{3}{4}$ in that class they are remedial...very hard lah because err...in KSSR during the listening & speaking, they must speak but they don't have the language to speak so every time in the classroom what I do for my students, I drill them, I drill them the language (Teacher B)

The lack of opportunities to reflect on teaching practices prompted the suggestion from Teacher B that providing videos of sample lessons of interactive teaching and active learning, would enable the teachers to have clear ideas and understanding of what constitutes good interactive classrooms,

...for the KSSR (SCPS) I think the only thing that we all need...all the English teachers, all the Mathematics teachers, all teachers in Year 1 need is the sample lesson...a video maybe, a micro teaching maybe on how the lesson should be conducted...(Teacher B)

By viewing sample lessons, teachers could gain input on how lessons should be conducted and what needed to be done and they could compare them with what they have been doing. The teachers' expectations for model lessons parallel the findings and recommendations of other studies, such as those by Hayes (1995), Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) and Lamb (1995) for example, proposed that it is important for teacher development activities to "provide models of the new practice to enable the teachers to see the innovation in practice" Hayes (p. 259), These models can be live demonstrations, video viewing, listening to audiotapes, examining tape scripts or involve lesson plans and teaching materials. Viewing the innovation in practice enables teachers "to relate this experience to their own knowledge of teaching and learning, to take apart and put together again the models of practice, to examine an issue from every aspect, to uncover the principles underlying any proposed change in practice and relate principles to practice and to be able to extend knowledge gained from such an in-depth analysis to other, comparable, teaching-learning situations" (Hayes, *ibid*). Hence, such viewing can raise teachers' awareness of the teaching-learning issues behind the

innovation and lead to a better understanding; as Joyce and Showers (1980) point out, “teachers understand better what is illustrated to them” (p. 382).

In addition, the ability to be reflective was reduced by a lack of monitoring and the absence of follow-up work in the classrooms. No guidance or on-site supervision from the relevant authorities at district, state or national level was offered to the teachers during the initial stage of the implementation (up to the point when the data were collected for the present study). Without any follow-up from the pertinent officials, teachers were not, they reported, able to reflect and check whether what they had been doing was correct. Jovanova-Mitkovska (2010) stresses that continuous monitoring of the effects of training is important to assess the impact of the context and process factors on the success of cascade training and to enable better planning for future teacher professional development.

...because we need to give somebody our input, our reflections on how we feel on doing the KSSR (SCPS) [...] it should be maybe a quarter of the year we gather back every teachers and we discuss...are we doing the right thing?...are you doing the right thing?...am I doing the right thing?
(Teacher B)

The situation concerning monitoring and observing how the SCPS curriculum is implemented is that it is the responsibility of EL officers at district, state and ministry levels to provide teachers with constant guidance and assistance to ensure that teachers’ classroom practices are consistent with the new curriculum, as District English Language Officer 2 confirmed,

It’s the main part of what I’m here for but because of the outside activities I’m only limited to visit one per week (DELO 2)

However, due to financial and workload constraints, the district officers were not able to provide adequate support or to monitor the implementation of the curriculum very closely or frequently, as District English Language Officer 1 explained,

There is no fix numbers that we have to visit but it is dependent on the time that we have because we have so many other things to do so whenever I’m free I will make it a point to go and observe the teachers. So it is basically up to us unless you find a day it comes when you know suddenly you find the grades falling then it will be a priority but for the

time being I make it a point to see as many teachers as possible (DELO 1)

A similar situation was observed by Hardman, Abd-Kadir, Migwi, Ndambuku and Smith (2009) and Hardman (2012, p. 17) who found that the Key Resource Teachers (KRTs) in the School-based Teacher Development (SbTD) programme in primary schools in Kenya were not able to provide adequate coaching and feedback due to their heavy workload. As a result, the impact of the programme was less than had been expected.

Nonetheless, the Malaysian teachers were free to request assistance and further support from the main trainers and the District English Language officers when the need arose. This suggests that the responsibility for pursuing further assistance and training resides with the teachers. Interestingly, the EL teachers in this study were unaware that this was the case. The exchange below illustrates the situation,

- R: Have you ever called the state department officers or the state education or the CDD officer or the instructors...the JUs (main trainers) that conducted the training?
A: No
R: You did not...ok...why didn't you?
A: Errm...I can do that eh?

Note: R = Researcher, A = Teacher A

As a consequence the teachers were left without assistance or guidance during the implementation of the curriculum reform, thereby in many cases creating a large gap between theory and actual classroom practice. Hence, there is a need to ensure that teachers receive some feedback through monitoring and follow-up after their training and that they are informed about whether their classroom practice is in accordance with what is expected of them. Basically, teachers need to know if they have successfully implemented the curriculum as required.

7.3.2 Criterion 2: Has the dissemination model of SCPS been prescriptive?

As discussed in Chapter 5, the curriculum is very broad and general and its function is one of guidance. Similarly, the dissemination model for SCPS did not prescribe procedures for teachers to strictly follow, but was aimed at guiding teachers; it thus

meets criterion 2 for a successful cascade. Teachers could interpret the curriculum and were encouraged to use their own initiative to set more creative, enjoyable, stimulating and challenging tasks and activities, based on the needs and interests of the pupils, as long as the pupils achieved the specified standards, as the following account shows,

Err...actually in the new curriculum syllabus err...they stated it as err...very basic err...content. Like not like previous curriculum they have it specific...they have it very specific. Like for example very specific on each activities like now they put it in a basic ways so we teachers are able to err...err come out with anything that is related to the activities that we want to do in the class. So what I can see is err...they give the opportunity for the teachers to find ways to make the lesson more understandable to the pupils (Teacher G)

Moreover, the parts of the training that provided samples of recommended activities as guidelines on “*what and how to teach*” were viewed by the majority of the teachers as “*important*”, “*helpful*”, “*good*” and “*interesting*”, because they offered new teaching ideas and strategies to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. As mentioned earlier, the teachers were given first-hand experience in creating examples of communicative activities, such as different types of games, songs, rhymes, jazz chants, role plays, simulations; they were also given sample materials, involving different types of written exercise, reading materials, and listening and speaking activities. This experience assisted the teachers in planning and preparing their EL lessons that were fun, enjoyable and meaningful to the pupils, as required in the curriculum reform. This finding seems to be in line with Eraut (1987), Hayes (1995) and Jovanova-Mitkovska (2010) who all highlighted that in-service or professional development should facilitate the acquisition or renewal of basic subject knowledge and develop teachers’ pedagogical skills. Besides, the training in the Malaysian case was effective because it provided various teaching strategies and samples of communicative activities that were relevant and feasible. Feasibility is an important concept, because “professional development is only effective when it is directly relevant, practical and applicable to each participant” (Teacher and Development Agency, 2008, p. 6).

Ironically perhaps, the interviews with the teachers revealed that they wanted the training to be prescriptive, particularly in terms of training them on pedagogical skills. 6 of the teachers perceived the curriculum as unsatisfactory and insufficient in enriching their pedagogical knowledge and skills with respect to interactive learner-centred learning, due to lack of guidance on how to carry out the teaching approach. The

teachers expected greater clarity about the approach. As mentioned earlier, the training sessions that involved them in practical work and active participation were limited to preparing different types of communicative activity that could be utilized in the teaching of the different language skills. None of the sessions provided the teachers with first-hand experience of interactive teaching or the active learning approach, which they were required to incorporate into their EL lessons.

The absence of training and coaching on interactive learner-centred learning indicates that the Ministry assumed that all teachers were already well informed and knowledgeable about the different teaching approaches needed, since these approaches had been introduced in the previous curriculum. An account by the CDD officer seems to confirm this assumption, as she mentioned that the underlying pedagogical principles of the curriculum were not new and teachers should be very familiar with them. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, the teachers' understanding of interactive learner-centred learning was very limited. The majority of them were clearly unsure about the status of their own classroom practices, since they did not have a clear understanding or comprehensive knowledge of interactive learner-centred learning (see 5.2.5). This may well result in a failure to change instructional approaches or classroom practices to fit what is required by the reform. This matches the results of a study by Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), which found that the teacher development course that the LOTE (Language Other Than English) teachers attended provided theoretical ideas of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) but did not offer practical experience of what CLT meant; the result was no change towards using CLT activities at classroom level. Similarly, Mohd Yunus (2001) found that because the in-service courses for Malaysian science teachers were limited to the presentation of theories through lectures, and excluded classroom support to realise the new skills, the resulting lack of pedagogical knowledge and understanding of the curriculum led to teachers having difficulties implementing it. Hence, practical exposure, or what Joyce and Showers (1980, p. 381) call "coaching for application", (i.e. support while practising the new skills) is essential, because teachers' background training is likely to significantly influence and affect the degree of implementation of a curriculum (Kırkgöz, 2008).

There was also an expectation that the SCPS training would include professional development on the teaching of the different language skills. The training was, however, most of the teachers reported, too focused on providing them with suggested activities

and teaching strategies, and how to teach the different language skills was not prioritized. Teacher B and Teacher F for instance expected that training for developing communicative competence should emphasize how in practical terms to encourage students to communicate. The finding implies the need for training to include not only the ‘what’ but also the ‘how’ of EL teaching strategies and approaches. The teachers were equipped with the different teaching strategies and the various types of activity but they wanted to be taught how to apply the different teaching strategies and the vast range of sample activities effectively in developing, for example, writing, reading, listening and speaking in order to achieve the desired curriculum goal. The teachers’ desire (reported above) for the training to prescribe what they should do is probably due to their own limited English language competency or to the fact that the majority of the teachers had not majored in English language studies or ELT, as discussed in Chapter Six.

The teachers’ desire for the training to provide practical guidance on interactive learner-centred learning and the teaching of the four language skills suggests a mismatch between teachers’ expectations of the training and what was actually presented to them in the event. This in turn implies a misunderstanding of the purpose of the curriculum training. As mentioned earlier (see 7.3.1), the purpose of the training, namely to familiarize the teachers with the new curriculum, was not made explicit. Suzuki (2011) suggested that one of the components of maintaining the quality of cascade planning and implementation is that the objectives of the training should be clear to the course participants. Misunderstandings and unfulfilled expectations may thus affect the effectiveness and success of the training.

7.3.3 Criteria 3 and 5: Are the responsibilities within the cascade structure decentralised and is the expertise diffused through the system as widely as possible, or concentrated at the top?

As presented in the structure of the cascade model of training for the SCPS (see Figure 6.2), the dissemination was carried out using a decentralised mode. The responsibility for disseminating the curriculum to the teachers in the schools was divided between the Ministry, the main trainers and the teachers. At the top-most level, the CDD, the highest policy-making body in the organization, carried out the training for the state-level trainers. Following this, the state-level trainers (i.e. main trainers) conducted the

training for teacher representatives from each school who were in return responsible for conducting the in-house training for the other EL teachers in their respective schools. The collective and participatory nature of communicating the curriculum is one of the strengths of the dissemination model for SCPS, where although certain agencies were responsible for the planning and designing of the school curriculum, the process of disseminating the curriculum was shared out.

However, the findings also show that the training at school level was not well executed. The in-house training was not conducted in more than half of the eight schools observed. And unexpectedly, in one of the schools, Alpha Primary School (a pseudonym), no in-house training had ever taken place in the school up to the point the data for this study was collected (that is to say after four months of implementation of the SCPS) although the Head of the English Department in that school was one of the main trainers for the state-level training. It was a surprise to note that although a school had the privilege of having the Head of the English Department as a main trainer for SCPS, the in-house training was not carried out. This might be related to the directive by the ministry that the teacher representative who went for the state training was the one responsible for the in-house training. The fact that the majority of the schools in the study did not carry out the in-house training implies the low priority given to the training at school level.

Unlike in Beta Primary School (a pseudonym) where another main trainer was also the Head of the English Department, the responsibility to conduct the in-house training was shared by both the main trainer and the teacher representative who attended the training at state level. In other words, expertise was diffused. In addition, the in-house training was not only carried out for the teachers teaching Year 1 English Language, but also for all the EL teachers teaching from Year 1 to Year 6. The Curriculum Trainer 2 explained that she thought it was relevant for her to share her knowledge with everyone, since she had attended the training at the national level and was the facilitator for the state level. According to her, the reason that the in-house training involved all the EL teachers in the school was to create an awareness among all the EL teachers in the school of the new curriculum and to share the knowledge, so that every individual would be well-informed about the curriculum. The above scenario indicates the level of initiative and attempt made on the part of the main trainer and the teacher representative to get the

information regarding the recent curriculum reform across to all EL teachers in the school.

Several concerns arise with regard to the in-house training. One of the concerns includes the teachers' ability to adequately 'cascade' what they had learned. Most of the teachers felt that they were incompetent, since they were either inexperienced English Language teachers or had limited language proficiency. This reaction is understandable, since the demographic profiles of the eight EL teachers in this study (see Chapter 4) shows that five had not majored in English (English Studies or English Language Teaching) for their first degree and six had less than ten years of teaching experience. The teachers' backgrounds led to low levels of confidence about their ability to transfer the relevant knowledge to the other EL teachers at school level – they were worried that they might give the wrong information.

Moreover none of the teachers had the experience of being a facilitator in any training sessions. And the three days training at state level did not equip them with techniques for transferring skills and knowledge to colleagues and develop their skills as trainers, except as regards the content of the curriculum. In other words, the teachers were expected to train other teachers with the absence of any skill as trainers. This contrasts starkly with Wedell's (2005) report of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in-service training course in China, which lasted for three months. Wedell found that during the final month of the level one training, the trainers were given the chance to practise training skills and techniques needed to train, following INSET principles. The principles include:

1. The need for trainers to begin by finding out about teachers' previous experiences, and their existing beliefs and behaviours in order, wherever possible, to make links between these and the new ideas/practices to be introduced.
2. The need for the trainers to help teachers to understand and be able to explain to others why different practices were being recommended.
3. The need to provide opportunities for teachers to experience and think about new ideas and activities themselves, through trainer demonstrations, before expecting them to apply them.

4. The need to provide teachers with opportunities to practise planning and managing new techniques and activities, and chances to think about and obtain feedback on such practise from peers and trainers

(ibid, p. 639)

The cascade-training model requires a quick transition from a passive participant to an active facilitator who should possess a more thorough understanding of the curriculum and be able to run the in-house or workshops effectively. However, in the present study not only did the teachers have no experience as trainers, but they also had a vague understanding of the curriculum, all of which resulted in a lack of self-assurance about carrying out in-house dissemination to their colleagues. Teacher E summed up the situation:

I think there should have another training for the teachers...like last time when I make in house training for Year 1 English teachers in this school, I also not 100% understood of the curriculum standard and I have to ask them to do this and this...so the other teachers feel that very... (Teacher E)

The present finding seems to correspond to the results of Suzuki (2011) on cascade model training in Nepal; Suzuki found that if the trainers at lower level were not able to internalize the messages from their own training, their performance for some steps of the training were adversely affected.

The above concerns about low confidence levels due to limited language competency and lack of self-assurance due to a lack of experience of conducting in-house training could be overcome by diffusing the expertise throughout the cascade structure. In most cascade models, expertise is mainly located at the topmost level of the cascade instead of being equally distributed at all levels (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; McDevitt, 1998; Suzuki, 2011; Uysal, 2012). In the training for the SCPS, the CDD officers (the executive trainers) responsible for designing the curriculum and with a good understanding of the curriculum were mainly placed at the top level of the cascade. During the training at state level and school level, the main trainers and the teacher representatives were expected to conduct the training on their own. In contrast, in the TEYL training course in China, “members of the level one groups were encouraged to participate in level two training as assistants...to enable them to experience the level two training materials and training process in action and so have this experience to refer to during their own month of materials design and trainer training” (Wedell, 2005, p.

639). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, there was no supervision by the top-level officials during the training at school level, in which Suzuki (2011) found it important “to ensure the following of training procedures and the accountability of the trainers” (p. 32).

Although some schools did carry out the in-house dissemination to their colleagues, the quality of the result is questionable. Judging by my own experience as a schoolteacher and a teacher trainer, in-house training in schools in Malaysia is often accorded a low priority. It is common practice for schools in Malaysia to allocate as little as one to two hours for staff or professional development, which is clearly not long enough to cover all the topics included in earlier training which has extended over a number of days. Normally, teachers who attend courses either at the state or national level will give a briefing or a summary to the Head of the English Department or sometimes they simply photocopy the materials that they have received and distribute them to other teachers. Most of the time the in-house training I experienced was merged into English departmental meetings as one of the items on the agenda or information was shared through informal discussion.

As expected, the in-house training for the SCPS was not as extensive as the training conducted at national level or at state level in terms of its aim, content, duration and approach. The training at school level was conducted, when it did take place at all, within a two to three hour slot and involved briefly explaining and providing the teachers with printed materials for use in the implementation of the curriculum reform. In other words, the purpose of the in-house training was only to *inform* rather than to *educate* the other teachers about the recent curriculum reform. Hence, the in-house training was primarily transmissive. There were no hands-on experiences of the proposed teaching strategies to ensure maximum impact on the classroom. This unfortunate situation seems to correspond to Hayes’s (1995) observation of courses held as part of the Project for the Improvement of Secondary English Teaching (PISET) in Thailand, which usually followed transmissive models, where trainers demonstrated a series of techniques or activities for various skills and then provided written hand-outs, which detailed the steps to carry them out. The training materials for the SCPS, which were covered in three days, were compressed into a two/three hour training session, implying a reduction in the amount of information delivered to the EL teachers in order to fit the allocation of time. This finding seems to lend support to studies of the cascade model such as Hayes (2000) and Suzuki (2011), who both reported that one of the

disadvantages of the cascade training was the potential for the information to be distorted, since messages were often altered and their effects were diluted, resulting in less and less understanding as information was passed down through different levels of trainers. Surprisingly, in the present study, the Ministry, as mentioned by the CDD officer, suggested the approach that was used for the in-house training,

One teacher attended the course so that when this teacher went back, the teacher is supposed to conduct in house training for the other teachers, in house training was in the form of a discussion, not as comprehensive as the training that they went through. Just to inform their partners or their friends what is this new curriculum is all about and how are you supposed to teach, that's about it (CDDO)

This suggests that at the Ministry level itself, training at school level was not given equal importance. Thus, the low-priority of the in-house training was not only at school level but also at the central level.

All in all, the data show that although in-house training at school level was conducted as instructed, there were several obstacles to its success. These obstacles included teachers' lack of belief that they could carry out in-house training to their colleagues, teachers' limited understanding of the underlying principles of the curriculum reform and teachers' limited language competency. On the whole, the dissemination model of the SCPS seems to meet the criteria, but the implementation of the cascade training was not effective. This finding seems to support the results in a survey to find factors that are critical to the success of cascade models presented by Barrett (2010) and the view by Hayes (2000, p. 138) who reported that "it is not the cascade model *per se* which is the problem, but the manner in which it is implemented". The finding suggests a need to review the final stage of imparting the information to the other EL teachers at school level, which is a very critical stage as it directly influences the implementation process.

7.3.4 Criterion 4: Does the preparation of training materials involve a cross-section of stakeholders?

The dissemination model for the SCPS did not involve a cross-section of stakeholders, as the interviews with the teachers reveal that none of them were consulted in the preparation of the training materials. The content of the training materials was predetermined by the topmost-level trainers and handed down to the lower-level trainers

to be transmitted to teachers at school level. There was no negotiation or discussion of appropriateness with the teachers at lower levels, which resulted in a lack of ownership of the curriculum and minimised the chances of relevance to the teachers. Barrett (2010) and Hayes (1995) specifically note that consultation with all the stakeholders in the preparation of the training materials could increase the level of ownership of the change, which is a critical success factor in cascades. The finding also corresponds with Abdul Rahman (2007, p. 12) who found that “teachers at the school level find themselves detached from the planning process and see themselves as passive participants in the change process. Their responsibility is reduced to that of a ‘receiver of information’ as they are not directly involved in the preparation of materials or any other crucial planning process”.

The involvement of the trainers at lower levels (state level and school level) was limited to restructuring the content of the training according to what they thought was suitable for trainees at each respective level. Considering constraints such as time and the limited teaching experience of the teachers, there is a perceived need to simplify the training materials. Nonetheless, the process did not include the trainees. The non-involvement of the trainees in the process of selecting the best materials to be presented in the training may affect the implementation of the curriculum, because,

...the ideas and agendas of stakeholders from the source culture may clash with those of the stakeholders in the recipient culture. The problem may be attributed to a kind of culture conflict, since the proponents of change are by definition outsiders, who do not share the priorities and concerns of those who have to implement the new policies and, eventually, manage the project. If this conflict is not taken into account, the risk of failure is high

(Bax, 1995, p. 262)

As illustrated in Figure 7.2, prior to the implementation of the curriculum, a representative (one Year 1 EL teacher) from each school in a state was called to attend a short training at state level. The interviews with the teachers show that the state level training involved different lengths of time: two, three and four days. This variation suggests the possibility that the training was modified and simplified either to fit the time allocated for the training at state level or to fulfil the needs of the course participants who attended the training sessions. The restructuring of the training materials at state level was confirmed in the interview with the CDD officer, who noted

that while some training sessions strictly followed the sessions that were held at national level, most were modified. For instance, in one training session in one of the states, one slot of the training involved a session on practicing the songs, rhymes and jazz chants provided in the textbook, because by the time the training took place, the textbooks had been distributed. The trainers utilized the textbook as training materials because the contents of the textbook were considered directly relevant to the teachers.

Thus, a dissemination model “should be designed to allow more scope for trainees to negotiate and offer content arising from their own experience, because this will maximize their involvement and increase the chances of new ideas being implemented in the long term” (Bax, 1995, p. 268). Morrison, Gott and Ashman (1989) agree that incorporating the teachers in the actual training process rather than leaving them to be passive participants in the change process may help to address the different needs of teachers who differ in age, stage of career and teaching experience.

7.3.5 Duration of the dissemination model for the SCPS

A critical review of the five criteria for a successful cascade listed by Hayes (2000) and an analysis of the interview and documentary data show that the criteria do not cover everything. There is another aspect of training, which is revealed from my data analysis that may influence the success of the cascade model: the duration of the training at all levels. Comparing the dissemination model of the SCPS (see Figure 7.2 earlier) with other cascade training programmes in other studies, for instance that by McDevitt (1998) on the in-service cascade programme for mixed ability teaching in Botswana, or Suzuki (2011) on Multigrade Teaching Training in Nepal, shows a difference in the time allocated in the cascade structure from top to bottom level. In both studies, the time allocated increased not decreased from stage to stage: for example in Nepal, the zone level was conducted for 1.5 days, followed by 4 days at district level and 10 days at resource centre level. The cascade model for the SCPS, however, started with one week at national level, involved three days at state level and just two to three hours at school level.

The difference in time allocation at the different levels of the cascade structure suggests which level of the training was given priority. In the dissemination model for the SCPS, priority was given to the topmost level when the CDD officers disseminated the

curriculum to the main trainers, but not to the level where the curriculum was disseminated to the implementers (i.e. the teachers, on whom the success of the curriculum depended). The approach to carrying out the in-house training suggested by the Ministry (i.e. informal short discussions, as mentioned earlier in 7.3.3) further confirmed the fact that the training at school level was given little priority. This could have been a contributing factor to the teachers' lack of understanding of the curriculum, as discussed in Chapter Six. The finding confirms the suggestion about the importance of duration of training for professional development by Weiss, Montgomery, Ridgway and Bond (1998), who argued that the duration of training could greatly affect the 'depth' of teacher change, because "sufficient duration of training provides teachers with sufficient opportunities for in-depth study, interaction and reflection" (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001, p. 922).

The three days training for SCPS at state level and the time allocated for the in-house training at school level were perceived as insufficient to convey all the necessary input, to enhance teachers' understanding of the curriculum and to foster learning: in short, to absorb reforms which fundamentally altered what teachers taught and how they should teach. Teacher B commented that shorter durations at lower levels resulted in much of the information being compressed and omitted, and as a consequence many things remained unclear,

...three days course is a compact course. There was so many input in a very little time...everything was cramped in three days. (Teacher B)

Besides that, the curriculum training was very much of a one-off nature, with no follow-ups. As mentioned earlier, training for the SCPS was carried out in November 2010, prior to the implementation of the curriculum in January 2011, and since then (up to the time of writing) no follow-up courses have been held. The teachers were particularly concerned about their lack of training and professional development to support the implementation of the recent curriculum reform and thus suggested a few ways to resolve the problem. One suggestion was that the training be conducted for a longer period of time or spread out over a longer period, so that teachers would be able to assimilate the new features of the curriculum and to provide feedback if there were things that they misunderstood:

Yes...although we are experience teachers but I think we need more...more duration for that course lah...let's say for a month course perhaps (Teacher F)

...I think the training...it should be another training aside from that one major training...there should be a progressive one...professional development (Teacher B)

To avoid teachers missing classes and the training consequently affecting the teaching and learning process in a negative way, a training course which is spread out over one month is desirable and was perceived as more effective in allowing the teachers to digest and understand the rationale for new policies and to reflect on how best to adapt and apply new knowledge and skills in their classroom practices. In addition, there should be follow-up professional development after the main training session(s), so that teachers could reflect on and assess their classroom practices. Teacher B explained that a series of follow-up training sessions after a few months might provide opportunities for the teachers to discuss problems that had arisen during the implementation process,

I think the workshops have to be expand for a week...or two weeks...or continuously...maybe after a few months there should be another meetings so that we can discuss our problems (Teacher B)

The teachers' desire for follow-up training corresponds to recommendations by Carless (1998), Crawford (2003), Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001), Hardman (2012) and Kirgk z (2008), who suggested that training for teachers needs to be sustained, developmental and intensive, especially during the initial critical stage of curriculum reform, rather than one-off in nature, so as to provide teachers with the necessary support and to update their knowledge of latest practices. Dichaba and Mokehele (2012) add that follow-up training can also function for consolidation purposes, to close gaps left by the initial training (p. 250).

There was also a suggestion to allocate a trial period for teachers to implement the curriculum, in order to avoid misunderstandings and misperceptions. After a few months of the trial period, the ministry could get feedback from the teachers involved on issues such as problems experienced.

I think apart from training, we teachers teaching Year 1 should be given some trial period before we started on that err...KSSR (SCPS) is very big

subject. Why don't we give apa (what)...the ministry or the department give us some trial period maybe one year...conduct the training in January maybe so then we have the trial...we can try the skill, the lesson throughout the year. Then the next year...err...at the end of the year we gather back in one course that we can give them some of our experience, reflections, reflect back on what we have done. Then the next year, we can start with the improved one (Teacher B)

The idea for follow-up training sessions or continuous professional development was to enable the teachers to assimilate the relevant information, so as to ensure a full understanding of the curriculum and help them carry out their role as the implementers of the curriculum. This seems to lend support to the issue of speed of change, which was discussed in the previous chapter (see 5.2.3), where it was concluded that the development and implementation of the recent curriculum reform for primary English Language did not take into consideration the time the teachers needed to digest, adapt and practise the new knowledge to/in their own contexts. This finding approximates to the conclusion by Carless (1998) that “teachers needed both on and off site training; the former to relate the innovation to the realities of their own school context and the latter to permit the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the innovation away from the pressures of daily routines” (p. 355). Similarly, in its most recent review of teacher education covering 65 countries from around the world, the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) study (2011) also reported, “the most effective professional development programmes upgrade pedagogic knowledge and skills over a sustained period of time rather than through disjointed one-off course” (p. 19).

Based on the above findings, (namely the short duration and the fact of being the only training opportunity provided), all the teachers in this study perceived that the state level training was not effective. It was deemed so ineffective that Teacher A did not call it professional teacher development support, or teacher in-service training, but more of a briefing. Even the CDD officer admitted that, “proper training was not offered to the teachers” given the insufficient time to carry out the training at lower levels. This seems to indicate that while planning and preparing the training for the SCPS, neither its quality and effectiveness nor its outcome(s) (e.g., whether it could be fully understood by the teachers), were given major attention. What is important is to guarantee that the cascade reaches its target groups (Hayes, 2000).

Therefore, each stage in the cascade structure has to provide sufficient time for trainers to prepare and for trainees to absorb the messages. Cascade training is only effective and is likely to be of high quality if it is both sustained over time and involves a substantial number of hours (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001). Thus, the amount of time given to the different stages of the cascade needs careful review “to allow time for reflection, trialling in school – maybe to have intervals between the total number of days on Inset courses” (Morrison, Gott & Ashman, 1989, p. 159).

All in all, proper training is important, as it can be an influential factor in the failure to change the instructional approach and classroom practices towards those of the new methodology. This seems to agree with Li’s (1998) study of South Korean secondary school English teachers’ perceived difficulties in adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); Li concluded that lack of proper training was the main reason for the teachers’ misunderstanding of some elements of CLT.

7.4 Summary of the chapter

On the whole, the dissemination model of the SCPS does not seem to fulfil all the criteria for successful cascade training (the criteria are set out in 7.3, except for the additional criterion of duration, which was added as the evaluation proceeded). The overall conclusion is that some criteria are fully met, some are partially met, but some are not at all met.

The first criterion of a successful cascade is only partially met, as the training for SCPS was largely influenced by traditional models of knowledge transmission and knowledge consumption rather than being experiential. The mode of training was mostly through one-way communication with little participation and involvement from the trainees. In other words, the training focused more on the theoretical knowledge of the curriculum than on providing practical experience. As a result, the training did not successfully provide the necessary information about the curriculum and teachers had only a vague understanding of the SCPS. Due to the transmissive nature of the mode of training, the dissemination model also lacked opportunities for teachers to reflect on the new curriculum and to think how best to implement the curriculum in the light of their own experience.

Moreover, during the implementation of the curriculum, there were no opportunities for the teachers to reflect and to gain feedback on their classroom practices, due to the lack of monitoring and follow-up from the relevant authorities. Thus, for the curriculum training of the SCPS to be successful, and if the desired teaching principles are to become visible in most trainees classrooms, involvement of the trainees in first-hand experience should form the major part of the training; such a procedure can facilitate the process of teacher learning, which does not result from merely having trainers impose new ideas, new theories or new methods on teachers via a transmissive mode of training. Involving trainees from the start as active participants provides opportunities for them to reflect on their current knowledge and skills concerning the curriculum with respect to their own teaching contexts, in order to support the post-training implementation attempts which will ultimately influence their classroom practices.

The second criterion for a successful cascade is fully met, because the dissemination model of SCPS was not prescriptive. The dissemination model did not prescribe procedures for teachers to follow; rather it provided guidelines to facilitate teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. Hence, “reinterpretation of the training experience, rather than unthinking acceptance, was encouraged” (Hayes, 2000, p. 138), and trainees were able to use their own wisdom to choose relevant and appropriate teaching practices that suited their teaching environments. However, the teachers in this study wanted the training to be prescriptive: telling them how to teach the different language skills and how to carry out interactive learner-centred learning. Hence, there was incongruity between the teachers’ expectations and what was presented in the training – probably due to a lack of understanding on their part of the purpose of the curriculum training. Thus, the cascade training was successful inasmuch as it was open for reinterpretation, but the purpose of the curriculum training needed to be explicitly explained to the trainees so that their expectation would not go beyond what they should receive in curriculum training.

The third criterion for a successful cascade was only partially met, because although the responsibilities to disseminate the curriculum were decentralized, expertise was not diffused within the cascade structure. The dissemination model of the SCPS involved various agencies at different levels: from the Ministry, main trainers, and teacher trainers to teachers in school. Thus, the responsibility for disseminating the curriculum was shared out. Nonetheless, the in-house training at school level was not conducted by

a majority of the schools, which suggests that the responsibility at the lowest level of the cascade was not properly implemented. Factors such as limited language (L2) proficiency, lack of confidence and lack of expertise and experience as trainers appear to have contributed to the non-implementation of the in-house training. One possible reason for these problems was that expertise was mainly concentrated at the top level and was not equally distributed across levels. Although the in-house training was conducted in some schools, the quality even of that training is questionable, because of the manner in which it was conducted: involving only a two to three hour briefing session, or an informal discussion, as compared with a more comprehensive and extensive course. This all reflects the low priority given to in-house training. Ultimately, the dissemination model of the SCPS could be very effective if the responsibilities continue to be decentralised, but at the same time the expertise is equally distributed across all levels, particularly the lower, school, level.

The fourth criterion of a successful cascade (the involvement of a cross-section of stakeholders in the preparation of training materials) is not met, because the teachers as trainees were not consulted in the process. The training materials were pre-determined by the executive trainers at the topmost level and handed down to the trainers of the following levels without negotiating or discussing with the relevant trainees. Teachers' involvement was limited to restructuring the content of the training materials to suit the shorter time allocated and the needs of the trainees in the following level. Trainers of the respective level decided what was appropriate and how best to present the training materials to their trainees. However, teachers should be involved in the preparation of the training materials, so that chances of relevance can be maximised. Involving teachers in the preparation of training materials may address issues such as the different needs of the teachers and their relevance to their teaching contexts, so that "innovation is not grounded in theory or alien to current practice and take[s] little account of the practicalities of the process of change for individuals at a personal level" (Hayes, 2000, p. 135).

Another criterion was added to the list as the data showed that it may influence the success of cascade training; time duration for the training at each level. The different lengths of time allocated at each level implies which level is given priority in the cascade structure. In the dissemination model of the SCPS, the time to conduct training became shorter the further one went down the cascade. The three-day course at state

level was ineffective at relaying all the necessary information related to the curriculum reform. A lot of information remained unclear and vague to the teachers. Teachers as implementers need time to digest and internalize new knowledge and skills. Besides, the SCPS training was made up of disjointed one-off short-term training sessions delivered through cascading workshops with no follow-up in the classroom to complement the main training. There were no prospects for teachers to gain feedback or to check their understanding or evaluate their classroom behaviour. Therefore, sufficient time for training at each level is needed, along with follow-up training, to foster a deep understanding of the primary English Language curriculum reform. Effective training (or professional development) which is “on-going, include[s] practice and feedback, and provide[s] adequate time and follow-up support” as suggested by OECD (2011, p.19) is important, because how teachers implement the curriculum in the classroom is based on how they have understood what is delivered during the training or professional development.

All in all, it can be suggested that the dissemination model of SCPS was not fully effective. The training was not successful to enhance deep understanding of the curriculum or to facilitate the implementation of the curriculum. It is important to review and strengthen the training for the SCPS, because improper and ineffective training will affect teachers’ theoretical understanding of the SCPS for English Language, which is critical to the implementation of the curriculum, where the teachers make on-going, principled decisions about their classroom practices.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARD CURRICULUM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS (SCPS) IN THE CLASSROOM

8.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study is to critically examine the effectiveness of the Standard Primary School Curriculum (SCPS) from three angles: 1) the clarity of the SCPS document, 2) the effectiveness of the curriculum dissemination model, and 3) the implementation of the SCPS. This chapter explores the third dimension, the practical aspects of the SCPS, and addresses the question: **How is the curriculum implemented in the classroom?** Curriculum implementation is the most crucial and difficult phase of the curriculum development process, because it is a stage where the written curriculum is translated into classroom practices to determine its impact on student learning. What happens in the classroom provides valuable information on, and evidence of, the success or failure of the planned curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum therefore may indicate how successfully the curriculum has achieved its intended outcomes.

The literature on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) suggests that, in the development of students' communicative competence, communicative activities and interactive teaching are two important elements that should be included in all classroom practices (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hiep, 2007; Littlewood, 1981; Nattinger, 1984; Nunan, 1991; Richards, 2006; Ying, 2010). Hence, in the context of this study, the effectiveness of the implementation of the SCPS is examined with special reference to: 1) the types of lesson activity carried out in the classroom, and 2) the quality of teacher-student interaction that occurs in the classroom activities.

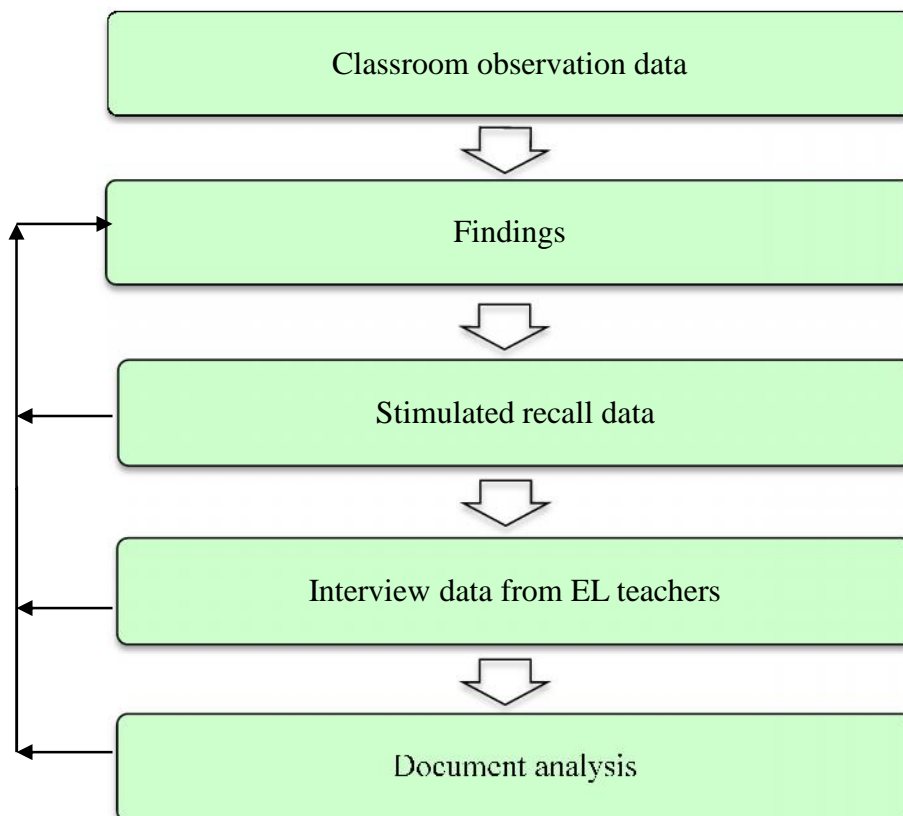
As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, the SCPS follows a modular approach, whereby each module focuses on the development of one language skill (namely, writing, reading, listening and speaking, or language art). The focus of this chapter is on one module of the overall curriculum, 'listening and speaking'. The aim of the listening and speaking component of the SCPS is "to develop pupils' ability to listen and respond to stimuli, participate in daily conversations, listen to and demonstrate understanding of text, talk about stories heard; and listen to and follow instructions" (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 10). Clearly, students need to develop the ability to listen and speak their thoughts, ideas and feelings in order to be able to communicate clearly, appropriately, coherently and confidently in any given context. Thus, this study examines the implementation of the listening and speaking module, because it is closely

connected to the aim of the curriculum, which is to develop students' communicative competence.

The analysis in this chapter uses the different sets of data collected via three different methods of data collection. The first part is based on the data collected from the 32 classroom observations and eight interviews with the teachers. The quality of teacher-student interaction that forms the second part of the chapter is based on the data from the eight systematic interactive observations of digital recordings, discourse analysis and video stimulated recall dialogue (VSRD). It is worth noting that since this study focuses on the teachers, the classroom interaction patterns that are examined in this study comprise only 'teacher-individual student' and 'teacher-whole class' interactions and not student-student interactions.

Triangulation of data collection sources was used to analyse and interpret the data. The data collected from the classroom observations were initially studied and analysed in isolation. Later, the data were validated with the data from the teachers' interviews, video stimulated recall dialogue (VSRD) and analysis of the curriculum standard document. The validation process is depicted in Figure 8.1 below.

Figure 8.1. Triangulation of Data Collection Sources (III)



8.2 The types of lesson activity used in the classroom

One of the elements involved in the process of implementing a curriculum includes selecting learning experiences, which comprises determining appropriate teaching strategies and classroom activities to achieve the desired results (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). Richards (2013) describes this stage as “how teaching is carried out and [it] constitutes the domain of methodology in language teaching i.e. the types of learning activities, procedures and techniques that are employed by teachers and the principles that underlie the design of the activities and exercises in their textbooks and teaching resources” (p. 6).

In the context of the implementation of the SCPS, a close examination of the types of learning activity carried out in the classroom may provide evidence of whether the instructional strategies and teaching techniques and the learning outcomes (or what the curriculum aims to achieve) match, allowing one to establish whether the curriculum was being implemented as intended and specified in the standard document. It is stated in the curriculum standard document that the aim of the curriculum reform is to develop students’ communicative competence and in order to achieve this, the document advocates the need for English Language (EL) lessons to be learner-centred and interactive, while at the same time fun and contextually meaningful and purposeful (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a). Finding whether the classroom activities match the learning outcomes or the curriculum goal may also suggest whether the teachers were clear about the aim of the SCPS and indicate their level of understanding of the nature and the importance of communicative activities in developing students’ ability to communicate effectively.

This section presents the findings on the types of classroom activity used in the classroom. The data from lesson observations shows that a wide range of activities was employed in the 32 lessons observed. The learning activities carried out in the classroom seem to meet the criteria for lesson activities specified in the curriculum standard document, namely that they should be: communicative, learner-centred, fun, meaningful and purposeful. The activities that were utilized in the EL lessons observed included singing, reading aloud, language games, role-plays, pronunciation practice, naming of objects/pictures, describing pictures, classroom presentation, jazz chanting,

rhyiming, demonstrations of instructions, comprehension exercises, sentence completion exercises and story telling.

The data from the teachers' interviews confirmed that similar activities as observed above were used on a regular basis. The justification given was that these activities would provide opportunities for the students to use the language and therefore would be relevant to the development of communicative competence, as shown in the following account,

I have to make err...activities err...more interactive so that they speak out...they learn how to use the language...they are able to err...speak the language with their friends in the classroom [...] activities like singing...activities like role play...err...dialogues (Teacher A)

The activities such as role-play and classroom presentation were perceived by all of the teachers as enhancing the use of the language, as illustrated below, since the students had to act out and present or perform in front of the classroom;

...because every lesson is focus on the skill, so the students must give some sort of feedback in terms of listening and speaking...during listening and speaking...they must talk, they must speak [...] prepare and perform some sort of singing and role play like that ahh...for them to use the language (Teacher B)

On the surface, the activities as observed in the classroom appeared to conform to the principles of communicative activities. However, a closer look at how the activities were carried out showed that several of them were not fully communicative. They did not provide opportunities for practice in communicating and negotiating meanings. There was also little possibility for actual use of the language, whereby students could learn to communicate. The language activities carried out mainly involved basic pronunciation, and were at word-level, focusing on language items as discreet entities, but not on language for communication.

Most of the activities listed above did not provide opportunities for the students to engage in interaction between a speaker and a listener, where the main purpose was to communicate meaning effectively, inasmuch as there was no exchange of knowledge, ideas, information, opinions or feelings. The classroom interaction was largely confined to choral chanting and answering questions that tested memory and attentiveness. In

other words, the activity did not emphasise learning to communicate through interaction in the target language, which Nunan (1991b) refers to as one of the important principles underlying the development of communicative ability. For instance, in Teacher B's and Teacher E's lessons, entitled 'Look At Me', where the lesson centred on teaching the different parts of the body, singing was one of the activities designed to introduce the students to the various body parts. However, the activity was carried out mainly by asking the students to point to the different parts of the body while singing the song, which effectively merely meant memorizing the words. This activity could have been extended by critically analysing the lyrics of the song, for example by discussing how the different parts of the body work and how they differ in their functions. A similar finding was observed in reading aloud activities: for example, in those carried out in the lessons by Teacher C, Teacher B and Teacher E. The usual practice in reading aloud activity was that the students were simply asked to read the sentences pasted on the blackboard in chorus with controlled guidance from the teachers. The activity did not encourage or require the learner to discuss, speak with or listen to other learners, or indeed to communicate and negotiate meaning.

The two examples of activities above deprived students of the opportunities to establish how well they could understand others and make themselves understood. The ways in which the activities were carried out seem to contradict principles of communicative classrooms that emphasize the learners as active participants to promote interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning, as emphasised by studies such as those by Canale and Swain (1980), Mangubhai, Dashwood, Berthold, Flores and Dale (1998) and Savignon (1991).

A close examination of the teaching activities also revealed an imbalance of focus between language forms and meanings. In the majority of the lessons observed, the activities focused more on language forms (i.e. discrete items that needed to be learnt), rather than on meaning to be communicated. In two lessons entitled 'My Family', which centred on introducing members of a family by Teacher C and Teacher G, for instance, the singing activity focused more on memorisation of the different names of family members. The task was for the students to be able to pronounce and remember the words used to address different family members. Hence, when the students were doing the activity, they were not concentrating on what they were saying but how they said it.

The above observation again contradicts the principles of the communicative approach that focuses on a balance between fluency and accuracy in order to develop confidence in speaking and conversational abilities. The ways in which the activities were carried out as described above also correspond with the focus on accuracy as described by Harmer (1982) below;

Where students are involved in repetition or substitution drills, for example, they will be motivated by a desire to achieve a communicative objective, but by the need to attain accuracy. The emphasis will be on the form of the language, not the content, the teacher will intervene to ensure accuracy, and the materials used will often be designed to concentrate on a particular item of language

(p. 167)

Besides that, the classroom activities did not foster spontaneous and natural language production, as in real life communication. As mentioned above and as observed in the implementation of the activities such as role-play, the teachers usually provided a prescribed dialogue for the students to practise, rather than asking them to come out with their own dialogue. For instance, in an activity where the students were asked to role-play the characters in a story they had read and discussed, entitled 'Dilly Duck's Doughnut', Teacher A prepared a dialogue and the students simply read it out aloud. There was virtually no communication in English in the class.

Another example, in a follow-up activity on the lesson entitled 'My Family', where a student role-played as father, mother, brother or sister, the activity was carried out using a controlled dialogue that involved repeated practice of a sentence structure, for example "*This is my family*" and "*I am the father/mother/brother/sister*". The dialogue was short and consisted of very simple sentences comprising a very small number of words. Similarly, the language use was only at word-level and the focus was on correct sentence structure. There were no opportunities for the students to experiment and use the language as in natural conversation or interaction. The students were not given any opportunities to be creative with the language. Although the literature in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) categorizes a role-play as a communicative activity, due to the emphasis on encouraging accurate reproduction of prescribed language, the activity here become non-communicative.

Surprisingly, none of the teachers had ever tried asking the students to create their dialogue. Students were not given the opportunity to explore or be creative with the language, no matter how simple and basic the language was. The reason given that the students had a very low level of language proficiency and were not able to write their own dialogue. The following exchange with Teacher A illustrates the point.

- R: Ok...and...so how do you approach these passive students? How do you encourage them to speak then in the classrooms? What do you do to encourage the students to use the language...to speak...to speak up?
- A: Make activities...peers activities
- R: Peers activities such as? Can you give some examples?
- A: Dialogues
- R: Dialogues...were they able to come out with their own lines...their own scripts?
- A: Err...no
- R: So what did you do?
- A: Err...help them to...give them err...help them by giving them the text make them practice

Note: A = Teacher A, R = Researcher

The finding suggests that the teachers' preconceived beliefs about their students' low language ability can be detrimental to students' language learning and development. Teachers' preconception of students' low level of language proficiency led them to take interactional and semantic control of the classroom discourse, which led to the tendency to maintain more traditional patterns of classroom talk, where students played a passive rather than an active role in the classroom interaction and this in turn produced a teacher-centred rather than learner-centred lessons. Interestingly however, despite the fact that the dialogue was prescribed, some students were confused as to which lines they were supposed to read. This suggests that as the students did not produce the dialogue themselves, it was difficult for them to engage in the activity.

The interview data also reveals that drilling was viewed by the teachers as a communicative teaching activity and thus could contribute to the development of students' communicative ability. Teacher B asserted that drilling was good practice to enable the students to use the language, simply because the students practise saying out the words or sentences aloud. Teacher E reiterated that she used drills to make the lessons interactive. The finding contradicts Harmer's (1982) view of the use of drills; he

notes that choral repetition is a technique that would not fit into communicative methodology because “drills are form-based and deal with only one or two language items at a time whose purpose is largely manipulative i.e. to encourage the accurate reproduction of prescribed language” (p. 167) and therefore would not contribute to the development of students’ communicative competence. The teachers’ views on the use of drilling suggests that teachers were confused between Audio-lingualism and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Hence, there is a need to train the teachers concerning what the different English teaching methods are meant to achieve and how they should be carried out in the classroom.

Apart from that, there was a contrast in the focus of carrying out the communicative activities. The teachers’ interview data reveals that the main focus of the communicative activities (such as role-play, language games, singing, classroom presentation and jazz chanting) was to let the students to enjoy themselves and have fun. In other words, the communicative aspect of carrying out the lesson activities in the classroom was not emphasised. The following account by Teacher C serves as an example,

They will do some fun activities maybe some craft art, they will sing, do some group activities, only one day. So the pupils will be excited on this day because no teacher’s talking, they don’t have to speak, no writing but they will do something fun and interesting (Teacher C)

Undeniably, communicative activities are designed to be lively, interactive and fun. However, it should be noted that the main objective of communicative activities is to achieve communicative competence. Classroom activities can be enjoyable and fun as long as oral skills are also promoted. Interaction must accompany ‘learning by doing’ in order to gain positive benefits. The above finding suggests a lack of understanding of the concept of fun and interesting activities in the development of students’ communicative competence. Teachers need to be aware of the importance of designing and implementing communicative activities and the effect of communicative activities on achieving communicative competence, because fun and stimulating activities promote learning if they are used effectively.

There was also very little evidence of collaborative learning in terms of group work or pair work being utilized in the EL lessons observed. Although seven classes had the students permanently seated in a group formation of six or eight pupils (the rationale as

mentioned earlier in 6.3.5 in Chapter Six was to enable group activities or pair work to be done more effectively without involving a lot of movement), no cooperative group work was observed in any of the classes. In other words, even though there was plenty of room for group work because of the seating arrangements, the lessons remained teacher-centred.

Technically, the group work that the teachers claimed was carried out in fact referred to the seating arrangements, where the students 'work in smaller group'. Closer examination of the group activities revealed that they did not provide opportunities for the students to develop conversation or practise communication. The group activities that were carried out limited the opportunities for the students to explore and share ideas among the group members and in so doing practise the language. An example of group activity that was claimed to be group work was where the teachers assigned the students to smaller groups of five or six, where they were required to rehearse within their respective group the song introduced to them, before performing the song in front of the classroom, as shown below,

...they love to sing the action songs, they do the actions so...I spend more time for them to err...do their work, do their practice...they practise in their group then they perform at the end of the class...(Teacher D)

Obviously, the group activity that the teachers claimed they organised in the classroom did not involve discussion or the use of genuine language for interaction, but simply memorisation of the lyrics of the song and practising the actions. Obviously, there is little conceptual or cognitive benefit from memorising, drilling and reciting and certainly no development of students' verbal skills.

In seeming contrast, the interviews with the teachers revealed that the teachers claimed that they often conducted group work to encourage discussion and cooperation among the students; but classroom observation data revealed that in instances where students were claimed to work in groups, the teachers actually simply instructed and supervised without attempting to initiate conversation or interaction with the individual students. The finding suggests that theoretically teachers were aware of the importance of group work in the development of students' communicative competence, but lacked knowledge on how to carry out group or pair work that focused on initiating communication and interaction among the students. The findings revealed that teachers

had a vague understanding of the way group work in language learning could foster students' oral skills.

Similarly, in a language game activity by Teacher F and Teacher D, the students were assigned to groups of eight and were required to spell each of the words announced by the teacher by arranging the alphabet cards provided. The activity involved neither discussion nor thinking among the group members. In the same vein, Teacher C used a game with the students. However, the game simply required the students to look at the word cards and choose whether the word started with an [m]¹⁸ or [n] by throwing a ball to the correct sound. There were no sentences or negotiation of meanings and ideas, where language use was promoted.

The above finding indicates teachers' lack of understanding of the concept of using language games in EL lessons. The data collected through classroom observation contradicts the aim of using games in language learning, namely for students to use the language, because during game play learners use the target language to persuade and negotiate their way to desired results which involves the productive and receptive skills simultaneously (Chen, 2005). Moreover, as games offer students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere, they reduce students' anxiety and generate speech fluency, thus building students' communicative competence.

The above findings suggest teachers' limited understanding of the concept of communicative activities and of how these activities contribute to the development of students' communicative competence. The finding corresponds to Ying's (2010) study on how to use communicative activities effectively in ELT classrooms in China; Ying found that the misunderstanding of the nature of communicative activities resulted many ESL teachers thinking that the activities they had designed and carried out in the classroom were communicative, though in actual fact they were not.

As a language teacher it is important to know what counts as communicative and interactive in language learning and how to promote such skills. Many teachers think they are getting their learners to talk and interact, when in actual fact they are not. Teachers need to know how to supply support and what kind of support should be

¹⁸ [] indicates the phonetic sound

offered. This can mean more time is needed for planning and preparation of classroom activities. Also teachers need training in terms of how to use ‘group work’ effectively.

8.3 The quality of teacher-student interaction that complements the classroom activities

This section is based on the classroom data collected by means of systematic interactive observation of digital recordings, discourse analysis and stimulated recall (all of which are explained in detail in the Methodology Chapter – Chapter Five), in order to examine the characteristics and structure of teacher-student interactions that complement the classroom activities used to promote the students’ oral skills. Interaction plays a significant role for teaching strategies and lesson activities because everything that happens in the classroom happens through live interaction between all the individuals present in the classroom, i.e. teacher and students (Edwards & Westgate, 1994). Interaction is the pedagogical tool for teaching and learning to happen, or in the words of Allwright (1984), “classroom interaction is the sine qua non of classroom pedagogy” (p. 159). Myhill, Jones and Hopper (2005) reiterate that “talk or interaction is the dominant medium for teaching and learning because both teachers and students interact to support teaching and learning” (p. 52).

In addition, classroom interaction enables the students to practise communication. Savignon (2007) emphasises that students’ engagement in communication is vital to allow the development of their communicative competence. Hardman and Abd-Kadir (2010) echo that “talk is seen as being central to the learning process, enabling pupils to become more adept at using language so they can express their thoughts and engage with others in joint intellectual activity to develop their communication skills and to advance their individual capacity for productive, rational and reflective thinking” (p. 254). Obviously, classroom interaction does not only function as a medium for teaching and learning to take place, but it also contributes to second language learning and acquisition (Ellis, 1999; Swain, 2000).

Thus, a close examination of the types of lesson activity conducted in the EL classroom shows the nature and structure of teacher-student interactions. Indeed, a close analysis of classroom interaction patterns allows the researcher to examine the type of language communication that is practised while carrying out the lesson activities, which, as

mentioned earlier, could contribute to the development of students' communicative proficiency. Hence, the findings will show the degree of alignment between what was intended in the SCPS and what was actually taking place in the classroom in promoting higher levels of interaction and critical and creative thinking skills. The results obtained can reveal much about the teachers' pedagogical practices and how they might be improved.

In order to study the teacher-student interaction patterns in the present case, lessons were video recorded and systematically coded using a systematic observation schedule. The systematic observation schedule was based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1992) discourse analysis system and adopted the framework used by Hardman et al. (2009) primarily focusing on teacher question-answer-feedback sequences, also known as the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) or Initiation-Response (IR) exchange structure. It is argued that in order to analyse the dynamics of the classroom discourse, the analysis should focus on the types of question posed by teachers and pupils, and the nature of the response and the follow-up to the response (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, 1992). A critical review of the model was presented in the Literature Review Chapter (Chapter Four) and Research Methodology Chapter (Chapter Five).

Briefly, in IRF structure, an initiation is usually in the form of a teacher statement or question, a response refers to a pupil attempt to answer the question, and a follow-up move is one in which the teacher provides some form of feedback to a pupil's response. The coding system identified six types of initiation move: (i) *teacher inform* which refers to the teacher passes on facts, opinions, ideas and information to the pupils about a subject; (ii) *teacher open question* which refers to a question to which the teacher accepted more than one answer; (iii) *teacher closed question* calling for a single response or offering facts (i.e. having a predetermined answer); (iv) *teacher check* on how the pupils are getting on, whether they understand, whether they can hear, or whether they can follow the lesson; (v) *teacher direct* designed to get the pupils to do something; and (vi) *pupil question*.

Responses were coded according to whether the reply was 'individual', 'choral few' (a few students reply at once), or 'choral' (whole class reply) and also included the use of 'pupil demonstration' as a way of answering a teacher's elicitation and teacher provides answers to the questions asked. Besides that, responses were also analysed in terms of

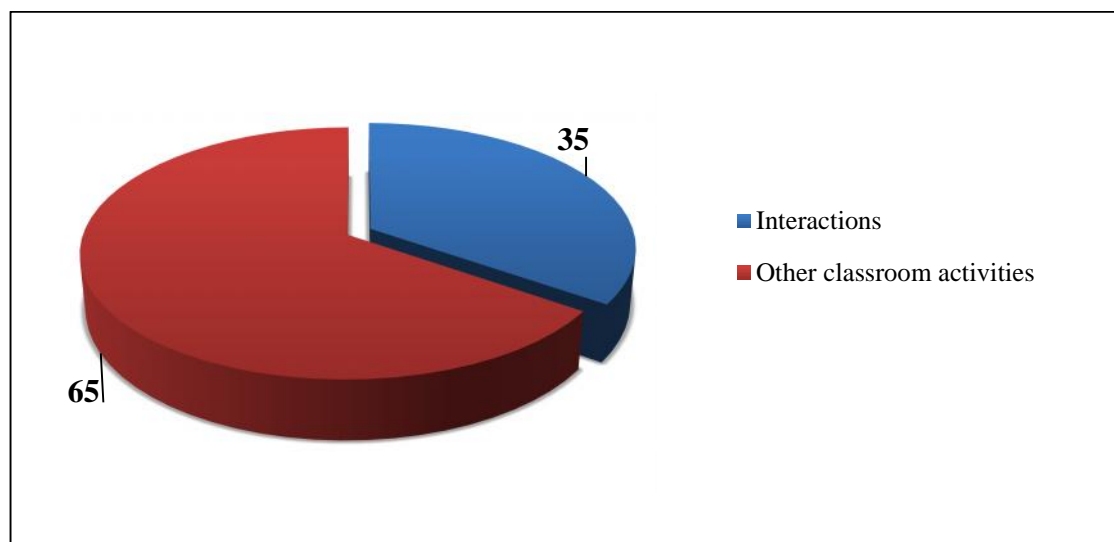
whether they were short or elaborate responses. Teacher follow-up to a pupil response was coded according to whether there was a response, whether it was accepted or rejected, whether it was praised, whether it was probed, whether the answer was commented upon, and whether the teacher asked another pupil to answer. Similarly, the nature of the follow-up moves and whether they were ‘simple praise’ or ‘elaborate feedback’ was also analysed.

A subset of eight listening and speaking lessons was coded using the interaction analysis framework. The results were then quantified and turned into percentage scores and graphs to illustrate the teacher/pupil interaction patterns and discourse styles across all eight lessons. As the analytical framework used for the data analysis of the current study has been briefly described, the following section presents the findings of the classroom observation. The coding system used in the transcription refers to the categories as illustrated in Table 5.4 in Chapter Five.

8.3.1 Overall findings

The recording timeline activities of the lesson observations across all 32 lessons revealed the lesson time spent interacting with pupils was relatively little: on average it occupied only 35 per cent of the time. Other times were taken by other classroom activities such as singing songs, role-playing, reading aloud, spelling, naming of objects or pictures, playing games, drillings/recitations and seatwork such as drawing, book work and colouring. Figure 8.2 below illustrates the finding.

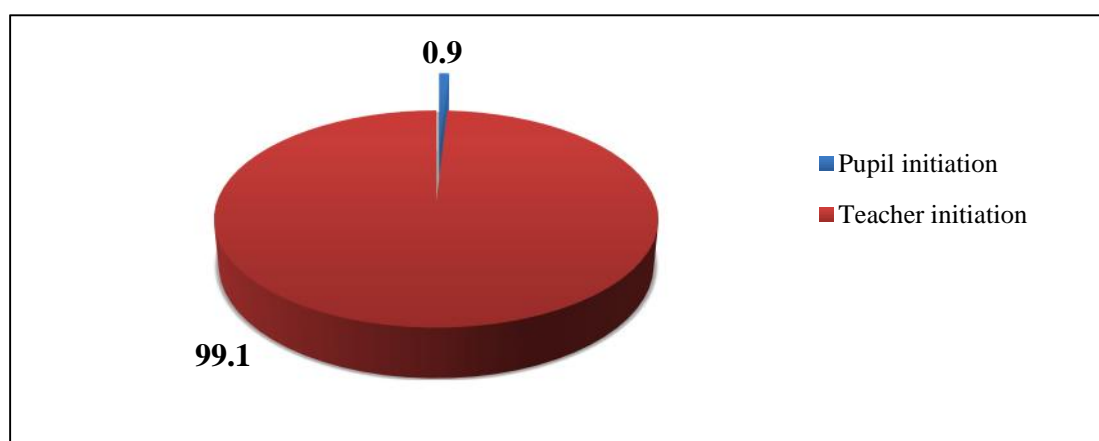
Figure 8.2. Means of teacher-student interactions and other classroom activities (in %)



Generally lessons started with action-based classroom activities such as songs and games, followed by teacher-fronted talk and ended with individual seatwork based on tasks taken from the chalkboard or textbook. The teacher-fronted talk where teacher explains, informs or ask questions was usually in the form of whole-class work rather than in smaller groups or between individuals (i.e. teacher-student).

Besides that, as mentioned earlier, although seven of the eight classes had the children permanently seated in a group formation of six or eight pupils, no cooperative group work was observed in any of the classes. It was noted that individual seatwork on average occupied only 31 per cent of the lesson time. Very often the lesson ended with teacher supervision of the class or the marking of work with little teacher-pupil interaction taking place. Teachers also seldom shared the learning objectives with the pupils and used a plenary to draw the whole class together at the end of the lesson, to summarise, consolidate and extend what had been learned, and direct pupils to the subsequent stage of learning, which was designed to reinforce teacher-student interactions. The analysis of the systematic observation of all eight teaching lessons also reveals that teacher initiation moves overwhelmingly dominated the classroom discourse. There was an overwhelming predominance of teacher-presentation sequences as reflected in the form of teacher informing, directing and teacher-elicitation in the form of teacher questions in all the classroom discourse.

Figure 8.3. Initiation move types (in %)



The finding shows that within the 168 minutes of lesson transcriptions, teacher initiation moves accounted for 99.1 per cent, while student contributions were very low, at only 0.9 per cent, as illustrated in Figure 8.3 above. Students rarely made initiations in the form of questions or statements to teachers, except to answer questions. Even if they did

ask, their questions were limited to requesting permission for instance *'Teacher, may I go to the toilet?'* or checking if they understood the teachers' instructions correctly such as *'Teacher, English One or Two?'* or *'Teacher, do we colour red first?'* and whether they had performed the required task adequately for example *'Teacher, is this ok?'*. Garton (2012) refers to this type of learner initiative as confirmation checks oriented to activity or to language. Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 123) define confirmation checks as "the speaker's query as to whether or not the speaker's (expressed) understanding of the interlocutor's meaning is correct".

Among the 32 questions initiated by the students, only one was related to the topic under study; *'What is comb?'* (the topic of the lesson was 'Cleanliness' and centred on the importance of being neat and clean. The teacher was describing to the class items such as a toothbrush, shampoo, and shower foam). The low frequency of student initiations shows that teachers monopolized the interaction in the classroom. The finding agrees with Yu (2009), who concluded that the English language classrooms in Hong Kong were not interactive and were teacher-centred, as teacher-initiation dominated as much as 65 per cent of the classroom discourse.

The high levels of teacher initiations turned the classroom into a monologic teaching atmosphere, which led to the absence of a meaningful talk and constructive communication process between teachers and students, as well as among the students. The present finding corresponds to a study on teacher-student verbal interaction in secondary level classes in Pakistan by Inamullah, Hussain and Din (2008) who found that two-thirds of the classroom time was devoted to teacher talk which Vaish (2008) refers to as whole class lecture. Similarly, Hall, Allan, Dean and Warren (2003) found that the traditional recitation script in the classroom discourse in the Literacy Hour in England resulted in monologic interaction. In the context of Turkish primary EL classrooms, Kırgköz (2009) reported a similar teaching and learning atmosphere, which he refers to as transmission pedagogy, as it involves supplying textual knowledge and information to students, leaving little room for authentic communication involving English. In a similar vein, Hamid and Honan (2012) in a study on the implications of the spread of global English and the introduction of learner-centred pedagogy in Bangladeshi primary English classrooms, also found that there was little evidence of learner-centred pedagogical approaches as classroom instruction and activities in the classrooms were overwhelmingly dominated by teacher talk.

The above findings show that the teachers gave very little attention to offering opportunities for the students to be involved in quality or meaningful interaction, in order to foster oral ability. This seems to suggest that the teachers had an unclear understanding of the significance and the role of interaction in language learning, specifically in the development of communicative competence. This finding then supports the result discussed in Chapter Six, that the teachers had limited understanding of interactive teaching approach (see 6.3.5). There is therefore a need for the teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the role of talk in the development of pupils' communicative competence.

8.3.2 Interaction analysis

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses only on the listening and speaking module as it directly links to the aim of the curriculum (the development of students' communicative competence). Each module was timetabled for an hour lesson (60 minutes). However, the systematic observation reveals that the teaching of listening and speaking observed ranged from 45 minutes to 53 minutes. Table 8.1 below gives a detailed breakdown of the time spent in each lesson. The total time for the eight lessons is 390 minutes.

Table 8.1. Time spent teaching in each lesson

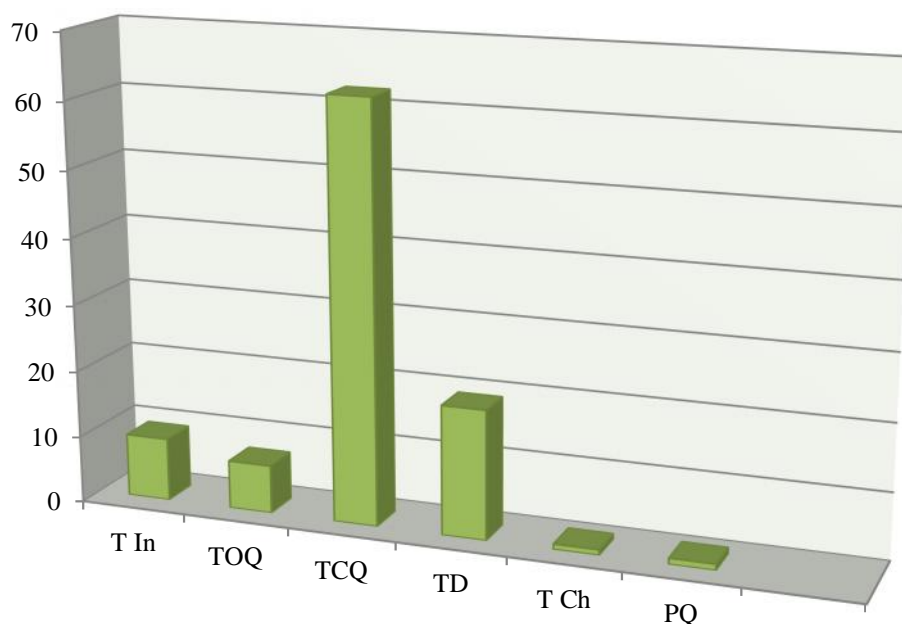
<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Time Spent</i>
1	47 mins
2	52 mins
3	48 mins
4	53 mins
5	49 mins
6	48 mins
7	45 mins
8	48 mins
Total	390 mins

The following sections present the findings of the interaction analysis.

8.3.2.1 Initiation moves

Within the eight listening and speaking lessons, I coded and analysed 1014 initiation moves. Figure 8.4 below illustrates the percentage breakdown of the analysis of the I-moves.

Figure 8.4. Means of initiation moves



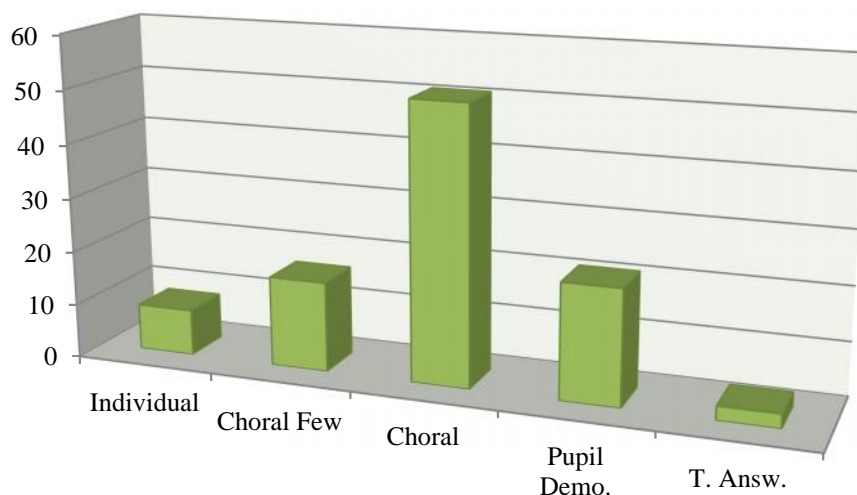
Notes: T In = Teacher Inform, TOQ = Teacher Open Question, TCQ = Teacher Closed Question, TD = Teacher Direct, T Ch = Teacher Check, PQ = Pupil Question

As depicted in Figure 8.4, initiation moves were mostly made up of teacher questions, teacher directs and teacher informs. Most of the questions asked by the teachers were closed or were repeat questions (TCQ) (62.4%), often signalling an elicitation from pupils in chorus. More thought provoking, open-ended questions (TOQ), eliciting a range of responses, were very rare, making up only seven per cent of the questions. Teacher directs occurred in nearly a fifth of the I-moves (19.3%), reflecting a considerable use of action-based activities such as songs and games and individual seatwork. Teacher informs accounted for 10 per cent of the I-moves, as teaching revolved mainly around asking pupils to repeat after the teacher and to read aloud from a chalkboard or textbook. Teacher checks and pupil questions were very rare (less than 1%).

8.3.2.2 Response Moves

Altogether, 918 response moves were coded in the analysis. A percentage breakdown of pupil responses is given in Figure 8.5 below.

Figure 8.5. Means of response moves



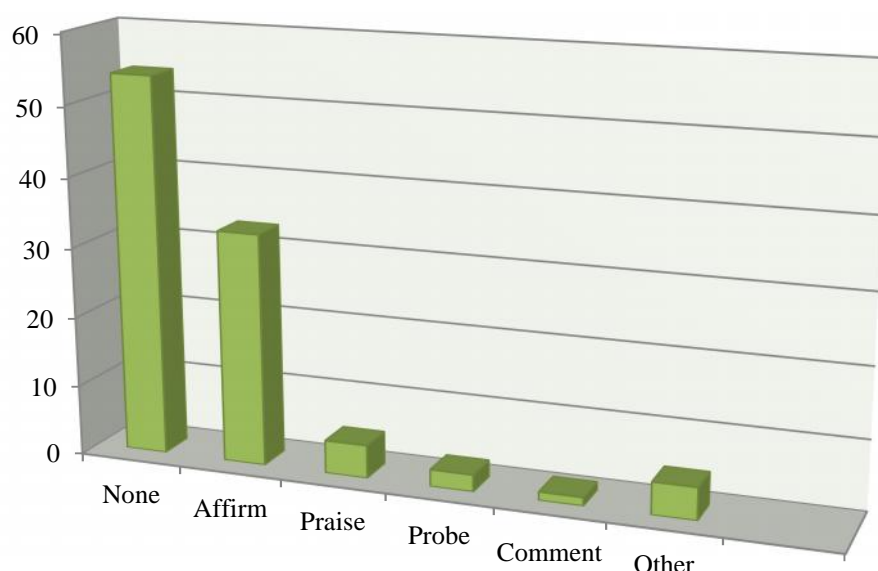
The breakdown shows there was little variation in the pupil responses across the eight lessons: a combination of whole class and choral few answers accounted for the largest proportion of pupil input (67.6%) as compared with other types of response. Choral responses are commonly used following a questioning discourse move categorised as ‘cued elicitation’, designed to get a response from the pupils during or at the end of an explanation, or completion of a phrase or word as described later (see 8.3.3.3). This type of teacher elicitation was usually direct and pupils usually knew from the intonation of the elicitation whether or not it needed an individual answer or a choral response. Choral responses were often very brief because the responses usually took the form of repeating the teachers’ utterances or completing teachers’ cued elicitations or statements or answering Yes/No questions, which resulted in just one- or two-word answers. They were also fast-paced and ritualised. Hence, the students’ contributions were usually of low quality cognitively and linguistically, as they required little demonstration of understanding on the part of the pupils. The frequent use of cued elicitations inhibited longer contribution from the students and minimized the opportunities for more language use and meaningful interaction.

On the other hand, individual pupil responses that could be used to genuinely check on understanding through teacher probes, where the teacher stays with the same pupil and asks for further elaboration or explanation as to how they arrived at the answer, accounted for under a tenth (8.5%) of the responses. Pupil demonstrations accounted for 21 per cent of the responses. The finding reflects the activity-based nature of the lessons made up of songs and games.

8.3.2.3 Follow-up Moves

Of the 918 response moves coded, 423 were followed up with feedback. Figure 8.6 below shows the percentage breakdown of F-moves. Across the eight lessons analysed, over half of all the teaching exchanges identified (54%) lacked feedback moves.

Figure 8.6. Means of follow-up moves



The bar chart shows that it was very common for teachers to make no reaction to students' responses. This was not surprising as a similar proportion of pupil responses (R-moves) were choral, taking the form of fast-paced and brief answers. No feedback strategy was forthcoming when a teacher elicitation called for a whole class choral response. The finding is in line with other studies such as Ackers and Hardman (2001), Hardman, Abd-Kadir and Smith (2008) and Smith, Hardman and Tooley (2005), all of whom found that it was common for teachers not to provide feedback on students' responses in EL classes. Teacher feedback in the form of accepting an answer accounted for just over a third (33.1%) of the F-Moves. However, this kind of feedback was often of a low level, simply accepting or affirming the answer by a 'yes' or 'right' or simply

repeating the answer given. Higher levels of feedback, such as probes where the teacher asks the students to elaborate or explain, or to exemplify, expand, justify or provide additional information on an answer, were rarely used, making up 3.6 per cent of the feedback. Asking another pupil to answer a question and 'teacher praise' (often phatic praise with no comment on the quality of the answer) accounted for 4.6 per cent and 4.7 per cent of the feedback respectively.

The no follow-up or feedback strategy suggests that teachers rarely interacted with the substance of the pupils' answers, such as by probing or commenting. As a consequence, extended discussion and conversation-like quality, with teachers and students taking turns at speaking to encourage more pupil-initiated ideas and responses, scarcely occurred. This resulted in prolonged sequences of teacher initiation and therefore less communicative EL lessons.

8.3.3 Patterns of teacher-pupil discourse

As mentioned earlier, in order to triangulate the quantitative data from systematic observation analysis, eight lessons (one from each teacher) were transcribed and coded, building on the system of analysis adapted from the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) to represent a qualitative analysis of the classroom data. Using the IRF structure, the different forms of teaching exchange that occurred in the transcripts were analysed to compare the patterning of the teacher-pupil interactions across all eight teachers. Accordingly, extracts from the teaching transcripts were chosen to illustrate the general patterns prevailing across the eight classrooms. In the analysis of the teaching exchanges, where appropriate, excerpts from the interviews and stimulated recall dialogues held with the teachers are also included in the analysis to further validate teachers' views and perceptions of ELT.

8.3.3.1 Strict use of IRF structure

Similar to the quantitative data from the interaction analysis, the qualitative data from the discourse analysis of the 168 minutes of transcribed lessons revealed little overall variation in the pattern of the teacher-pupil interaction. In practice, the discourse patterns in all the lessons observed and analysed often followed a strict use of the IRF/IR structure as illustrated in Table 8.2 below.

In this extract, the lesson explores the topic ‘My Family’ via learning about members of a family. It was the first lesson on this topic. One third of the 60 minute lesson was spent on teacher-fronted interaction with the whole class, followed by individual seat work where the pupils mainly worked from the textbooks used in the whole class interaction (the *moves*, Initiation, Response, Feedback, make up the three-part teaching exchange which in turn are made up of *acts*: el = teacher question; n = nomination; p = prompt; rep = reply; s = starter; acc = accept; com = teacher comment; d = teacher direct; ch = teacher check; e = teacher evaluation. Boundaries between teaching exchanges are indicated by a marker (m) to show a change in lesson topic; ^ indicates rising intonation; T = teacher; Ss = choral response; S = individual response):

Table 8.2. IRF pattern of discourse

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Move</i>	<i>Act</i>
1	T	Boy use^	I	el
2	Ss	He	R	rep
3	T	He	F	acc
4	T	Woman and girl use^	I	el
5	Ss	She	R	rep
6	T	She	F	acc
7	T	Man and boy use^	I	el
8	Ss	He	R	rep
9	T	He	F	acc
10	T	Ok, come Danish. Is he a boy or a man?	I	el
11	Ss	Boy	R	rep
12	T	a^...boy. Because he is small. Small we call boy	F	acc c
13	T	What about your father? Your father, is he a man or a boy?	I	s el
14	Ss	Man	R	rep
15	T	a^...	R/I	el
16	Ss	Man	R	rep
17	T	What about your grandfather?	I	el
18	S	Father	R	rep
19	T	Man or boy? Grandfather?	R/I	el
20	S	Man	R	rep
21	T	a^...a^...	R/I	el
22	Ss	Man	R	rep
23	T	Man	F	acc
24		Aliya, what are you doing Aliya? Ok Aliya, your	I	n/el

		grandmother, a girl or a woman? Keep your book. Keep. Ok Izat, your grandmother, she a woman or a girl? Grandmother? Who can tell me, grandmother is she a woman or a girl? Ok Adriana?		el/d n/el n/el
25	S	Woman	R	rep
26	T	Woman	F	acc
27	T	Your grandmother small or big?	I	el
28	Ss	Big	R	rep
29	T	Ok	F	e
30	T	What about your Cikgu <teacher> Fauzi?	I	el
31	S	Man	R	rep
32	T	Is he a man or a boy?	R/I	el
33	Ss	Man	R	rep
34	T	Ahmad stop talking Ok, your Cikgu <teacher>Fauzi is he a man or a boy?	R/I	d el
35	Ss	Man	R	rep
36	T	A man	F	acc
37	T	Ok, your teacher, Cikgu <teacher> Hidayah, is she a woman or a girl?	I	el
38	Ss	Woman	R	rep
39	T	Woman So she for who? Woman and girl. And he is for man and^...boy.	F	acc com
40	T	Ok look at here Mother^	I	s el
41	Ss	Mother	R	rep
42	T	Ok	F	e
43	T	What does your mother do at home? What does your mother do at home?	I	s el
44	S	Masak <cooking>	R	rep
45	T	Masak <cooking> cooking	F	acc
46	T	Some more?	R/I	el
47	S	Cuci mangkuk <wash the dishes>	R	rep
48	T	Ah, wash the dishes.	F	acc
49	T	Some more?	R/I	el
50	S	And glass	R	rep
51	T	And glass	F	acc
52		Some more? Sewing. Jahit baju <sewing a shirt> ok what about your father? What does your father do at home? Dekat rumah ayah buat apa? <what does your father do at home?> What does your father do at home?	R/I	s el el el
53	S	Buat computer <make computer>	R	rep

54	T	Do some work on computer.	F	acc
55	T	Read the news^...paper. Do you know what is newspaper?	I	el
56	S	Surat khabar <newspaper>	R	rep
57	T	Haa	F	e
58	T	Ok. What else your father do? Washes the^...car. Betul? <right?>	I	s el
59	S	Yes	R	rep
60	T	Ok. What about...?	R/I	el
61	S	Wash aquarium	R	rep
62	T	Ha, wash aquarium.	F	acc
63	T	Ok, brother. Who has a brother at home? Put up your hand. Ok brother, adik lelaki <younger brother> or abang <older brother> Who has brother? What does your brother always do at home? Alyana?	I	s el el/n
64	S	Padang <field>	R	rep
65	T	Go to the field.	F	e
66	T	Playing foot^...football. Playing^...	I	el
67	S	Badminton	R	rep
68	T	Badminton	F	acc
69	T	Playing the toy^...car. Ok, next sister. Who has a sister at home? Ok Intan? What does your sister do at home?	I	s el n/el
70	S	Saya tahu <I know>	R	rep
71	T	Ha, what does your sister do at home?	R/I	el
72	S	Main masak-masak <play cooking>	R	rep
73	T	Ha, playing some games. Playing with a^...doll.	F	e com

There are 27 teaching exchanges in the extract above and all are restricted to either three-part structure (18 IRFs) or two-part structure (9 IRs). The discourse moves of the lessons observed were often made up of teacher informing sequences or teacher initiated question-and-answer sequences, where teacher initiations were usually in the form of questions, followed by student responses and teacher feedback or no feedback. The IRF/IR exchanges tend to occur throughout the lesson. Besides, as can be seen in the above extract, the teacher neither deviated from the strict IRF/IR pattern, nor attempted to extend the interaction, except in Turns 43, 46, 49 and 52, when she accepted more than one answer to her open question. The teacher initiated all the exchanges and the students provided answers, which were often only brief answers limited to one or two words, due to the nature of the question and elicitation. The analysis showed that in the

process of providing responses, students were mainly expected to be passive when they were asked to recall what they had learned, to repeat or to complete teacher statements. There was a lack of linguistic and cognitive demands made on the students and on the communication options for the students. Hence, the responses provided by the students did not contribute much to the development of oral skills.

The finding suggests the teachers had a limited understanding of the significance of interaction in the development of communicative competence, and thus of the interactive learner-centred approach as presented in Chapter Six. The teacher seemed to understand the role of interaction, but did not have a clear idea what effective interaction should be like.

Besides that, it was also discovered that in many lessons, apart from the discourse patterns of IRF and IR, there were also some instances of teaching exchanges formed only with I-moves. Examples of I-moves can be seen in Turns 41, 45 and 53 in Table 8.3 below. In the extract the lesson was on a short story entitled ‘Dilly Duck’s Doughnut’. The lesson centred on a comprehension check of students’ understanding of the short story read.

Table 8.3. IR/I pattern of discourse

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	What word is this?	I	el
2	Ss	Delicious	R	rep
3	T	Delicious	I	el
4	Ss	Delicious	R	rep
5	T	A delicious meal	I	el
6	Ss	A delicious meal	R	rep
7	T	Ok. All right. This story is about a^	I	el
8	S	Duck	R	rep
9	T	About a^	I	el
10	S	Duck	R	rep
11	T	About a^	I	el
12	Ss	Duck	R	rep
13	T	Ok...What is the name of the duck?	I	el
14	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
15	T	Ha?	I	el

16	S	Dilly	R	rep
17	T	What is the name?	I	el
18	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
19	T	Dilly. Ok, what happened to Dilly?	F I	acc el
20	S	He's lost his doughnut	R	rep
21	T	Ha?	I	el
22	Ss	He lost his doughnut	R	rep
23	T	Dilly lost his^	I	el
24	Ss	Doughnut	R	rep
25	T	Ok. How does Dilly feel?	F/I	el
26	S	Mad and sad	R	rep
27	T	Alright good. Mad and^	F/I	e/el
28	Ss	Sad	R	rep
29	T	Mad and^	I	el
30	Ss	Sad	R	rep
31	T	Mad and^	I	el
32	Ss	Sad	R	rep
33	T	Ok, who helped Dilly to find for his doughnut?	I	el
34	S	Motty the kitten	R	rep
35	T	Ha?	I	el
36	Ss	Motty the kitten	R	rep
37	T	Who helped Dilly to find his doughnut?	I	el
38	S	Motty the kitten	R	rep
39	T	Motty the^	I	el
40	Ss	Kitten	R	rep
41	T	This ok, one of his friends Motty helped him to search for his lost doughnut. Ok, who did they met when they searched for the doughnut? In the garden. He met with^...He met with^	I	acc el
42	S	Fury the rabbit	R	rep
43	T	Yes. Fury the^	F/I	acc/el
44	S	Rabbit	R	rep
45	T	Ok, Fury told the rabbit...Fury told the duck and the kitten, Dilly and Motty, that he had just finished a delicious meal. Taken a delicious meal. Ok, what do you think happened to the doughnut? What do you think happened to the doughnut?	I	acc el
46	S	Fury ate the doughnut	R	rep
47	T	Ok. Fury^	F/I	el
48	S	Ate the doughnut	R	rep

49	T	The most possible answer is^...This rabbit Fury ate Dilly's^...Dilly's^	I	el
50	S	Doughnut	R	rep
51	T	Doughnut. Ok, can you understand class?	F/I	ch
52	Ss	Yes	R	rep
53	T	This sentence, Fury told that he had just had a delicious meal and then what happened to Dilly? He get mad and he stormed away. Ok because the rabbit have already taken or finished eating his dough^	I	el
54	S	Nut	R	rep
55	T	Can you understand the story?	I	ch
56	Ss	Yes	R	rep
57	T	Everybody can you understand the story?	I	ch
58	Ss	Yes	R	rep

The teaching exchanges formed only with I-moves indicate prolonged sequences/protracted moves of teacher initiation that reflect the fact that the teacher did most of the talking. This finding supports other studies such as Ruby (2008) and Yu (2009) who also found I-move structures also existed in the teaching discourse of lessons in Chinese universities. Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) reported that the 'I-move' is the only obligatory element while R and F are optional moves. The strict use of IRF, IR and I-move structure suggests a high level of teacher control as a key characteristic of the EL classrooms. The teachers were in control of the content, topic and direction of the knowledge to be pursued in the learning process, thus making the lesson less communicative.

The above findings show that the IRF interaction pattern was typical and could often be found in the EL classrooms as teacher-led recitation, where teacher explanations and teacher interrogations of the pupil's knowledge and understanding were the most common form of classroom interaction. This finding corresponds to those of other studies, such as those of Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007), Ackers and Hardman (2001), Aman & Mustaffa (2006), Hall et al. (2003), Hardman, Abd-Kadir and Smith (2008), Hardman, Smith and Wall (2003), Mroz, Smith and Hardman (2000), Pontefract and Hardman (2005), Smith, Hardman and Tooley (2005) and Smith, Hardman, Wall and Mroz (2004), who all found that the discourse strategies of teaching and learning presumably across a range of countries and levels of learner showed an overwhelming predominance of teacher explanation and question-and-answer exchanges.

Thus, teachers need to be made aware of the importance of promoting broader student participation, beyond the role of listeners or respondents, in order to raise the quality of teacher-student interaction. Teachers need to pay attention to their use of questions and follow-ups so that students can be actively engaged in their own learning. Teachers need to listen to pupil's answers too. They tended in this case to mindlessly repeat themselves and sometimes answer their own questions.

8.3.3.2 Closed questions

The discourse analysis also indicates that the overwhelming majority of the types of question posed by the teachers during classroom interactions were closed questions. As mentioned earlier in the interaction analysis, within the 168 minutes of the IRF exchanges that occurred in the eight lessons transcribed, there were 62.4 per cent closed questions as compared with only seven per cent open questions. The pervasive use of closed questions indicates that the teachers did not provide opportunities for students to speak more or express their opinions and thus were unlikely to elevate students' level of thinking. This is because the teachers limited the student responses/answers to just one or two words or simply a 'yes' or 'no'. David (2007) and Nunn (2009) referred to closed questions as 'display' questions, whose only purpose is to get the student(s) to display knowledge already known to the teacher or recently acquired by the students. These are considered as 'low-level' questions, as they require only factual answers (Hussin, 2006). This type of teacher questioning did not encourage and extend pupil contributions or assist the students to provide more complete and elaborate ideas. Teacher questions were mostly text-based and had a comprehension-checking orientation, where only one possible answer was usually pursued.

Questions that required more thought and elicited a range of responses were very rare. This type of question could help the students to consolidate their own thinking and the explanation it initiated could probably help in scaffolding the thinking of the other students. This is because in answering such questions, students are required to explain and elaborate and in the process of doing so, they need to think and contemplate to convince the listeners. Unfortunately, learners rarely have the opportunities to explain their ideas.

This finding is similar to that of Vaish (2008) who found a predominance of closed questions in the pedagogic practice of primary and secondary Singaporean English classrooms. The above finding corroborates Karavas's (1993) study on the classroom practices and attitudes of English language teachers in Greece towards methodological and materials innovation. The study reported that the teacher questioning practices did not emphasize creating opportunities for genuine communication in the classroom. The teachers overwhelmingly favoured questions whose answer was known beforehand by them and to which student output was necessarily extremely limited (i.e. evaluative questions, comprehension checks and correcting questions were the ones most frequently asked). Questions which provided evidence of real communication and a two-way flow of information, questions which had the potential of generating extensive student output or making input comprehensible to learners (i.e. clarification requests, confirmation checks and communicative questions) were only sporadically asked in Karavas's classrooms.

In the analysis of the Malaysian data, although there were examples of factual broad questions to elicit a more thoughtful response, as in Turn 1 in Table 8.4 below, the teachers did not take the opportunity to probe the pupils' response albeit such a technique could have helped the teacher to establish the pupil's understanding further as explore that of the other pupils (Pontefract & Hardman, 2005).

Table 8.4. Types of questions (I)

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	Ok. What can you see at the zoo? What can you see?	I	el
2	S	(students spell the word 'zoo')	R	rep
3	T	What can you see? You can see many^... animals in the zoo. Such as^ Contohnya apa <what are the examples>	I	el
4	S	Saya dah pergi <I have gone>	R	rep
5	T	Yes you have go. So such as^ Contohnya apa kat zoo <what are the examples of animals in the zoo> You can see^	F I	acc el
6	S	Gajah <elephant> Penguin	R	rep
7	T	Penguin, Malacca zoo?	I	el
8	Ss	Harimau <tiger> Elelphant	R	rep
9	T	Yes. One of the animal is^ Elephant Haikal	F I	acc/el n
10	S	Harimau <Tiger>	R	rep
11	T	Harimau <Tiger> in English?	I	acc/el

12	S	Tiger	R	rep
13	T	Yes, tiger Nadirah?	F I	acc n
14	S	Zirafah <Giraffe>	R	rep
15	T	In English?	I	el
16	S	No	R	rep
17	T	Ha? Apa pulak no pulak <What do you mean by no?>. In English Zirafah ? <Giraffe>	F I	el
18	S	Zebra	R	rep
19	T	Not Zebra. Zebra yang horse tu <Zbera is the horse>. Yang ada stripes tu <Is the one with stripes> In English Zirafah <Giraffe>? Who can help Nadirah?	F I	rej el n
20	S	Elephant	R	rep
21	T	Elephant tu apa? Giraffe in English, zirafah is giraffe.	F I	el

In the extract above, the answers to the question ‘*What animals can you see in the zoo?*’ (Turns 1 and 3) may vary and any logical answers referring to the types of animal kept in the zoo could be accepted. Although the question above could be used to elicit more extended responses where the teacher could elaborate, describe the animals, or relate to the students’ experience of visiting a zoo, the teacher did not take the opportunity to probe the student’s response or go beyond merely repetition, acceptance and rejection of student’s answer to encourage interaction in the classroom. A similar instance happened in a lesson where a teacher used a ‘Big Book’ as teaching material in the extract in Table 8.5 below. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked, ‘*Then what happened to the lions?*’ (Turn 7), ‘*What do you think? What happened?*’ (Turn 16) and ‘*What happened to all these people?*’ (Turn 18). Such questions could be used to initiate an elaborated discussion and more thought provoking contributions, where students could speculate and give reasons for their responses. However, such opportunities for the children to engage in more lively interaction and to encourage higher levels of participation were hampered when the teacher accepted only the answer based on the text read.

Table 8.5. Types of questions (II)

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	So lagi sekali <once again> Sam is counting the lion. Sam kira lagi <count again>lion tu <the lion> One ok. Two ok. Number three dia kira macam mana <how did he count> Dia buat apa? <What happened to him?> Number three dia dah ^...<he is already^...> Menguap <Yawning>	I	el

		Yawn, yawning. Number four?		
2	Ss	(pupils demonstrate the action of stretching)	R	rep
3	T	Stretch. Number five?	I	acc/el
4	Ss	(pupils demonstrate the action of yawning)	R	rep
5	T	Yawning. Number six?	I	acc/el
6	Ss	(pupils demonstrate the action of sleeping)	R	rep
7	T	Yes dia dah tidur <he is already sleeping> He is sleeping. Then what happened to the lions? Apa jadi pada lions tu? <What happened to the lions?>	I	acc/el
8	S	Terlepas <They escaped>	R	rep
9	T	Yes. The lions run away. Lion makanan dia apa? <What do lions eat?>	F I	acc/el
11	S	Orang <People>	R	
12	T	The lions eat^...	I	
13	S	Daging <Meat>	R	
14	T	Yes, dia makan daging. Dia makan orang <they eat meat, they eat people> So lari lagi <run again> How many lions?	F	
15	Ss	(counting the lions in the picture)	R	
16	T	Six lions dah terlepas <have escaped> So dah terlepas dia buat apa? <What did the lions do after they have escaped?> Look here. Semua lions dah terlepas <All the lions have escaped> Lions ni makan orang <eat people> Dia pergi kampung tu dia buat apa? <What did the lions do in the village?> What do you think? What happened? What do you think, tengok lidah dia <look at their tongues> Look at its tongue	I	
17	S	Eat	R	
18	T	If the lions do this, dia buat apa? <What does it mean?> What happened to all these people? What happened to all these people? Apa jadi pada semua orang ni? <What happened to all these people?>	I	
19	Ss	Mati <Died>	R	
20	T	Ha... The lions will eat all the people sebab <because> Sam cuai <careless> Sam is careless, always sleeping. Then the lions run away and eat all these people. All these people will die. Ma^...Mati <die>	F/I	

The above finding shows that the teachers did not realize the impact of their current practice on children's learning. One reason could be related to the fact that the teachers had no clear concept of engaging the students in extended discussion or higher-level interaction to implement interactive learner-centred teaching in the classroom. Thus, professional development or training, especially that which provides more practical guidance on how to implement interactive teaching, is needed. The analysis shows that the main function of asking questions was only to reinforce pupils' participation in the

lessons, rather than to initiate interaction and more opportunities for language use. In other words, the questions asked served the social function of encouraging students' contributions and participation. The teachers rationalised that asking questions is important to make the students speak and use the English Language especially during the English lessons, as stated below,

Why I asked them questions?...First I want to let them to speak out err...what they know about that err...what I'm asking them, whether they understand or not on my questions and they can share their knowledge, their understanding about what I'm asking on that time (Teacher D)

...interactive teaching means err...when we teach we have...we have good...good positive response from pupils and the pupils can...the pupils can understand what we are teaching...they can respond...we can...we can have question and answers...with questions they can answer...they can answer our questions...(Teacher F)

The above view implies that the EL teachers in this study assumed that only by asking questions and getting students to respond could they encourage the students with low levels of language proficiency and who had no English Language background to participate and contribute in EL lessons. Being in a situation where the students' had a lack of vocabulary to express ideas and did not have the ability to provide spontaneous and longer contributions, a questioning technique seemed to the teachers to be the most effective means of initiating interactions in the EL lessons. Nevertheless, the types of question asked limited the opportunities for meaningful interaction to take place.

However, David (2007) reported that a high frequency of display questions can be useful to encourage language learners to participate actively in an ESL classroom, because they are often short and closely related to comprehension of the lesson taught. Whilst display questions are useful to encourage students' participation in the classroom especially among students whose level of proficiency is very low, sole dependency on them does not foster the ability to think critically, as this type of question demands little cognitive effort: students merely provide known answers. Hence, the questions that teachers ask should include those that go beyond a strategy of simply getting participation from the students, or those that provide known answers. The questions asked in the classroom should encourage critical thinking.

The above finding suggests that teachers have a very vague understanding of interactive teaching and the significance of quality interaction in the development of students' communicative competence. Interactive teaching was identified almost exclusively with students' participation in the teaching and learning process. Teachers seemed satisfied when students responded to their questions, even though the responses comprised mainly one-word or two-word, or Yes/No answers.

Interestingly, the interview data revealed teachers' realisation of the importance of asking open questions to initiate the use of the language and to enhance quality interactions in the classroom. There was an agreement that more thought-provoking questions were needed to ensure a wider use of the language by the students in order for a class to be interactive. As Teacher D reflected,

I should have asked more general questions related to the pupils' experience. I realized that I need to provide more opportunities for the students to speak and use the language more during the lessons (Teacher D)

The teachers believed that the students should speak more if teaching and learning was to be more effective and to achieve the desired aim of the curriculum. They realised that the questions that they asked in the classrooms limited the opportunities for the students to elaborate and extend their talk to discussion, which required them to interact and practise the language.

They don't share their ideas. They just answer for my questions. They don't elaborate and explain. I should give more general questions so they can share what they know, what are their experience (Teacher F)

The prevalence of closed questions from the teacher leads to minimal talk in the classroom as this type of elicitation minimizes the opportunities for the students to extend the interaction and experiment with the language. In other words, the classroom becomes less communicative.

8.3.3.3 Cued elicitations

The analysis of the lesson transcriptions also shows that initiations and re-initiations, often signalled by a rising intonation referred to as cued elicitations, were a common

feature of the teacher talk in the Malaysian primary English classrooms, and were found to play a dominant role in the unfolding of the lessons. Cued elicitation is a ‘questioning’ discourse move that refers to the use of a mid-sentence rise in voice intonation that function to elicit responses from the students. It is designed to get a response from the pupils during, or at the end of, an explanation, a sentence, a phrase or a word, or following a pupil’s response, as shown in Turns 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 19, 21, 25, 27, 31, 35, 39, 41, 43 and 45 in Table 8.6 below. Wedin (2010) refers to them as ‘call-response’ sequence.

Table 8.6. The use of cued elicitations

<i>Exchanges</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	This is about the King [^]	I	el
2	Ss	Monkey	R	rep
3	T	Monkey What animal is this? (pointing to a picture on a storybook)	F I	acc el
4	Ss	Wolf	R	rep
5	T	This is a [^]	I	el
6	Ss	Wolf	R	rep
7	T	Wolf. Ok can you tell me a little bit about this picture? What is the monkey doing?	F I	acc el
8	Ss	Eat, sleep, eat, sleep	R	rep
9	T	Ha? Smiling maybe already full, his stomach already full. Ok, this wolf is actually [^]	F I	com el
10	Ss	Clever	R	rep
11	T	Clever. A wise wolf. Ok now, let’s go through the story. Here, see.	F I	acc el
12	Ss	(students reading aloud from the Big Book)	R	rep
13	T	Passed away that means died already. King Lion already died. All the animals were [^]	I	el
14	Ss	Sad	R	rep
15	T	Sad. Show me your sad face.	F I	acc d
16	Ss	(students show sad expression)	R	rep
17	T	Sad. Ok sometimes if we are sad we will [^] ...we will [^]	I	el
18	Ss	Cry	R	rep
19	T	Cry Ok so they had to choose a new king. So the first animal they go...ah they went was the [^]	F I	acc el
20	Ss	Rhinoceros	R	rep
21	T	Rhinoceros. So they went to see the [^]	F/I	acc/el
22	Ss	Rhinoceros	R	rep
23	T	Ok follow teacher, rhinoceros [^]	I	el

24	Ss	Rhinoceros	R	rep
25	T	Ok they went to ask the rhinoceros to be the king. The rhinoceros [^]	F I	acc el
26	Ss	Did not want to	R	rep
27	T	Did not want to be the [^]	I	el
28	Ss	King	R	rep
29	T	King Maybe it has its own reason, ok. Then, then, then what happened?	F I	acc el
30	Ss	(students read from the Big Book)	R	rep
31	T	Yes when the rhinoceros refused...when the rhinoceros refused...refused means did not want ok. So they went to see the [^]	F I	acc el
32	Ss	Elephant	R	rep
33	T	Elephant But unfortunately the elephant also did not want. Why? Because [^] ...because he was weak and old. Old already cannot become the king.	F I	acc el
34	S	Dia dah tua <he is old already>	R	rep
35	T	So he also did not want to be the [^]	I	el
36	Ss	King	R	rep
37	T	King So the animals were very worried. Ok they were very worried. See what happened. They were worried. They needed a king to protect them. They needed a king to protect the jun [^]	F I	acc el
38	Ss	gle	R	rep
39	T	Jungle So what happened?	F I	acc el
40	Ss	(students read from the Big Book)	R	rep
41	T	Who said? Said the [^]	I	el
42	Ss	Squirrel	R	rep
43	T	Squirrel Do you know, this is the [^]	F I	acc el
44	Ss	Squirrel	R	rep
45	T	Ha, this is the [^]	I	el
46	Ss	Squirrel	R	rep
47	T	This is the squirrel. Dia kata <he said>lets	F/I	acc/el
48	S	(reading loudly... I looked like a man so I can be the king.)	R	rep
49	T	Wait Lesley. Ok I think you have learned this word before [m], [a], [n]	I	el
50	Ss	Man	R	rep
51	T	/m/ ¹⁹ , /æ/, /n/	I	el
52	Ss	Man	R	rep
53	T	Are you a man?	I	el

¹⁹ Indicating the phonic sound

54	Ss	No	R	rep
55	T	Are you a man?	I	el
56	Ss	No	R	rep
57	T	Who is a man?	I	el
58	Ss	Ayah <daddy>	R	rep
59	T	Your father. Some more?	F/I	acc/el
60	Ss	Brother	R	rep
61	T	Your elder brother Your teacher right? We have man teacher right? Ha so that is a man. So, let the man be our king, said this squirrel. The squirrel said let the man be the king. So what happened?	F I	acc el
62	Ss	I looked like a man so I can be the king.	R	rep
63	T	This monkey said, I looked like a man I can be the king. So he offered himself. I am like a man, why don't you choose me right? So he wanted to be the^...king. Then what happened?	F I	acc el

Cued elicitation was normally used to revisit what had been taught previously, where teachers commenced the lessons by asking revision questions pertaining to what the pupils had been introduced to or learned earlier. The lessons therefore placed the emphasis more on factual knowledge, or what the students should know, rather than how language should be used. In other words, the focus of asking questions using cued elicitation was on the content of the lesson rather than encouraging the use of the language or classroom interaction. In the lesson extract in Table 8.6 above, cued elicitation was used in order to enable the students to fill in the gap as a means of checking their understanding, as well as to recall their memories of the short story entitled 'King Monkey'. The lesson is actually a revisiting of the previous lesson.

Students' responses based on cued elicitation were very brief, consisting merely of one-word or two-word short answers, given either chorally as a whole class, in small groups, or individually. Students' answers were not expanded and thus limited their opportunities for experimenting with the language and higher order thinking, as there were no opportunities for further discussion. The minimal opportunity for the majority of children to participate in class discussion or to respond at length to teacher initiations meant the students were unlikely to develop their oral skills. In short, the fact that their answers consisted of just one or two words or were simply a completion of teacher initiations shows that the use of cued elicitation prevented the students from partaking in more creative and higher levels of thinking and restricted their exposure to different functions of language. Interestingly, this type of chorus completion, or slot filling, or

also referred to as ‘oral cloze’, occurs not only at sentence level but also across morpheme boundaries, as in Turn 37 in Table 8.6 above (*‘They needed a king to protect them. They needed a king to protect the jun^...’*).

It was also interesting to note from the stimulated recall and interviews with the teachers that the use of cued elicitations was seen to perform a participatory function. The rising intonation in the middle of a word (*‘news^...paper’*, *‘foot^...football’*, in Turn 55, Table 8.2 above), or a phrase (*washes the^...car*, in Turn 58, Table 8.2) was viewed as a strategy for making pupils feel they were contributing to the lesson and keeping them involved as a collective unit. Wedin (2010) suggests that although the use of cued elicitation may lack cognitive value, it fills a social function. It was found that in ‘poor’ discourse settings, where teacher talk is the main teaching tool, the use of cued elicitation “helps students to focus on what is taught, to concentrate and to memorize what is taught” (p. 149).

Cued elicitation was also felt to compensate for the perceived lack of proficiency and confidence in the use of English on the part of pupils. However, the discourse analysis of the transcripts suggested the use of cued elicitations, through the completion of phrases, the repetition of words and choral affirmation of ‘understanding’, often prevented pupils from engaging in more creative and higher levels of thinking.

8.3.3.4 The predominant practice of choral responses

The data from the discourse analysis also shows that whole-class choral responses were the dominant method of responding to teacher initiations (67.6%). The lesson extract in Table 8.2 earlier shows the frequent practice of choral responses in replying to teacher elicitations (Turns 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 16, 22, 28, 33, 35, 38 and 41). The lesson extract in Table 8.6 above also reflects the common use of choral responses to teacher elicitations (Turns 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 14, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 32, 36, 38, 42, 44 and 46). It is interesting to note that choral responses were used mostly to respond to teachers’ cued elicitation. As explained earlier (see 8.3.3.3), cued elicitation is a ‘questioning’ discourse move to prompt responses from the students by using a rising intonation at the end of an explanation, a sentence, a phrase, or a word. Cued elicitations were often direct and therefore the responses from the students were always expected or known answers (Martin, 1999). The rising intonation of the elicitation invariably often called

for a choral response as a whole class, in small groups or individually, that encouraged the recalling of information, rather than allowed the students to discuss, explain and demonstrate their thinking to the class.

The prevalent practice of choral response could be related to the large class sizes. With the teacher/student ratio of ranging from 1:35 to 1:40, attending to individual students seems unachievable. The study shows that individual responses took place only when teacher nominated a particular student to respond to teacher questions, such as those in Turns 24, 63 and 69 in Table 8.2, or when contributions were spontaneous. However, it is interesting to note that teachers challenged the problem of low levels of participation by also calling on those students who did not volunteer, such as those at the back of the classroom — especially when the same students kept raising their hands.

In summary, the predominant practice of choral responses suggests the opportunities for the students to be engaged in extended classroom discussion where it involved extensive use of the language were limited. The completion of words or phrases that resulted in choral responses prevented the students from engaging in more creative or higher-order thinking (HOTS), inasmuch as choral responses are unlikely to encourage pupils to experiment with ideas or language. Thus, teachers need to be aware of the types of elicitation that are most effective at initiating responses from the students, especially those that could provide more opportunities for them to practise the language and which might eventually contribute to the development of communicative competence. Teachers should use a range of question types and not depend solely on one type (i.e. closed questions). Training is needed to help develop teachers' questioning skills.

8.3.3.5 Repetitions

One interesting finding in the discourse analysis of the classroom interaction across the eight teachers was the pervasive use of teacher self-repetition. It was noted that very frequently teachers would repeat themselves over the course of a lesson with no incremental linguistic input or teaching content provided for exposition or clarification purposes. This is illustrated in Turns 7, 11, 13 and 15 in Table 8.7 below.

Table 8.7. Teacher self-repetition (I)

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Move</i>	<i>Act</i>
1	T	Ok...what is the name of the duck?	I	el
2	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
3	T	Ha?	R/I	el
4	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
5	T	What is the name?	R/I	el
6	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
7	T	Dilly ok	F	acc/e
8	T	How does Dilly feel?	I	el
9	S	Mad and sad	R	rep
10	T	Alright good	F	acc/e
11	T	Mad and^	R/I	el
12	Ss	Sad	R	rep
13	T	Mad and^	R/I	el
14	Ss	Sad	R	rep
15	T	Mad and^	R/I	el
16	Ss	Sad	R	rep

Similarly it was also found that teacher self-repetition frequently occurred in the I-moves as shown in Table 8.8 and Table 8.9. Teacher-self repetition in Table 8.8 normally happened when the teacher was cuing and repeating the correct response she wants from the children.

Table 8.8. Teacher self-repetition (II)

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Move</i>	<i>Act</i>
1	T	What is the colour of the bird? Colour? What is the colour of the bird? Maslizam, you want to try? What is the colour of the bird? What is the bird's colour? Is it green? Is it green class?	I	el n/el el
2	Ss	Green	R	rep
3	T	Green	F	acc

When asked, the teachers justified self-repetition by arguing that it was to ensure optimum understanding of the lessons learned, given that the students had a low level of language proficiency. However, the above extract clearly shows that repetition is utilized mainly for the purpose of increasing comprehension, and less for the purpose of

adding new information or eliciting more information from the students. Interestingly, this use of self-repetition contrasts with that reported by Viaño and Conejos (1996), who found that the frequent use of self-repetition by the teachers was “to increase the amount of input, especially when giving information and correcting” (p. 133).

In Table 8.9 below, teacher self-repetition was also practised to get the students to act upon the directives, especially when the students did not act or respond appropriately the first time the instruction was given. The students were so excited to be called by the teacher for a language game that many got up from their seats and moved to the front, resulting in a noisy classroom. To sum up, one can say that overall, the function of repetition is mainly for managerial purposes (i.e. to direct students what to do) (Duff, 2000; Viaño & Conejos, 1996). However, the analysis shows that the students simply ignored the teacher’s instruction, not because they were not paying attention to what the teacher said, but because they were so excited to take part in the language game. The act of repeating the instructions thus had no effect on the students.

Table 8.9. Teacher self-repetition (III)

<i>Exchanges</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	Ok now. I want to paste the pictures. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. I want to paste the pictures on the blackboard. Sit down Fakhrol. Sit down Fakhrol. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Thank you. Thank you. Sit down. Sit down please. Sit down. Sit down. Eh Aiman come here. Ok sit down. Ok, thank you Leslie. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Why are you eating? Bring it here. Ok sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Don’t stand on the chair. Don’t stand on the chair.	I	s d d d n/d n/d el/d d d

It was also noted that some statements or instructions were also rephrased or simplified in the act of repeating, as illustrated in Table 8.8 above. Reflecting on this tendency, the teachers commented that they rephrased and simplified their instructions when they had received no immediate or prompt feedback, or reply from the students, and they assumed that the students were having difficulty in understanding the instructions given, because of their low language proficiency level. Fascinatingly, some of the rephrased sentences were simplified to the very minimum, losing the ‘normal’ structure of a

sentence. Sentences (either instructions or statements) were also fragmented and repetition made them even more difficult to understand or follow.

It was also noted that repetitions were used as a teaching and learning strategy. The following extract in Table 8.10 further illustrates this.

Table 8.10. Repetitions as teaching strategy

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	Ok, today class we will learn from the top of our hair until your toes eh! Now starting from our head. Now this class we call head.	I	s el
2	Ss	Head	R	rep
3	T	Head	I	el
4	Ss	Head	R	rep
5	T	Head	I	el
6	Ss	Head	R	rep
7	T	Head	I	el
8	Ss	Head	R	rep
9	T	Head	I	el
10	Ss	Head	R	rep
11	T	Head	I	el
12	Ss	Head	R	rep
13	T	Head	I	el
14	Ss	Head	R	rep
15	T	Show me your head	I	d
16	Ss	Head	R	rep
17	T	Where is your head?	I	el
18	S	Kepala <head>	R	rep
19	T	Where is your head?	I	el
20	Ss	Head	R	rep
21	T	Hold your head	I	d
22	Ss	Head	R	rep
23	T	Head. Head. Head. Where is your head?	I	el
24	Ss	Rambut <hair>	R	rep
25	T	Where is your head? Head	I	el
26	S	Head	R	rep
27	T	Head	I	el
28	S	Head	R	rep
29	T	Head	I	el
30	S	Head	R	rep

31	T	All of this we call^	I	el
32	Ss	Head	R	rep
33	T	Head	F	el

In the extract above exploring the topic ‘Look At Me’ the lesson was conducted through recitation-led whole class teaching in order to enable the students to identify and name the different parts of the body. The rationale for using repetitions was strongly associated with their perceived value in helping students to remember the vocabulary learned,

...repeating the word as many times as possible, will enable the students to remember better (Teacher B)

The teachers believed that when students repeated some structure or vocabulary items they had heard, they would be able to internalize it. This assumption is related to behaviourist learning theory. The practice of direct repetition reflects the teacher’s knowledge and perceptions of effective teaching and learning — as Teacher B claimed, what was important in teaching and learning was the students’ ability to “*repeat back what I teach them*”.

Undeniably, the technique of repeating has its pedagogical value and importance. Duff (2000), Knutson (2010) and Viaños and Conejos, (1996) argue that the use of repetitions in the language classroom contributes to the successful sequence and flow of talk. However, simple repetition such as drillings, like those practised by the teachers in this study, is too mechanical and is almost always non-communicative. Simple repetitions such as drillings did not provide opportunities for the students to practise using the language for oral communication. As a consequence, students become passive learners because there is very minimum interaction. Learning to memorise by repetition is based on the Audio-Lingual method, which is very different from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that was promoted in the SCPS.

Thus, the use of repetitions in classroom interaction as a learning strategy needs to be made clear to the teachers. Teachers need to be informed of the best forms of repetition that could promote language learning and shown different ways of repeating, such as paraphrasing and summarising.

When asked during the stimulated recall and interviews why they repeated themselves, the teachers felt it compensated for the pupils' low level of proficiency in English. However, many admitted during the stimulated recall sessions that they were not aware of the extent to which they used repetition, and agreed it was highly entrenched in their discourse practices. They also agreed that a heavy reliance on the use of simple repetition restricted the use of genuine and meaningful interaction in the classroom, and denied the pupils opportunities to engage in genuine dialogue, where exploratory talk is encouraged and valued.

8.3.3.6 Teacher feedback

Based on the analysis, it was also found that it was very common for pupils' answers to receive no feedback or follow-up. The lesson extract in Table 8.10 above illustrates the patterns where student answers receive no follow-up (Turns 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30). The analysis also shows that the absence of teacher feedback or acknowledgment of the students' responses had resulted in students changing their answers (Turn 24 – '**Rambut** <hair>'). The act of repeating the question even after the student had responded correctly had resulted in confusion on the part of the student. This is probably due to the reason that, without teacher feedback, students were not able to know whether they had performed adequately or their answers were correct. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) state that it is important to evaluate students' responses to enable them to know whether their answer is right.

The above finding suggests that the lack of follow-up impedes systematic building upon pupil answers, as there were very few opportunities for the pupils to develop more creative ideas, engage in higher levels of thinking or experiment with language. Besides as shown in the analysis, the absence of follow-up feedback resulted in prolonged sequences of teacher initiations. Giving no feedback therefore means teachers miss the opportunity of getting students to think and to provide more answers, which implies less communicative EL lessons.

Where the teacher offered feedback, it was usually in the form of an evaluation or an acknowledgement of the answer. Very commonly, acts in the accepting moves by the teacher involved affirming the answers, by the use of expressions such as '*Ok*', '*Erm*', '*Ahh*', '*Yes*', as in the follow-up moves in Turns 8, 17, 26, and 36 in Table 8.11 below.

Evaluative feedback using praise like ‘good’, ‘very good’ or asking the class to clap, were also commonly used to indicate that the learner’s response was acceptable. Expressions such as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ were commonly utilized following verbal responses from the students, whereas clapping hands was usually exploited after activities that required the students to demonstrate, say in role-playing or matching activities, in front of the class. Nunn (2001) classified evaluative feedback as forms of ‘judgement’ made about the learners’ performance. Examples of this type of evaluative feedback can be seen in Turns 5 and 13 in the extract below.

Table 8.11. The types of teacher feedback

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	Alright, let’s do some revision. Who can spell eyes?	I	el
2	S	[e], [y], [e]	R	rep
3	T	[e], [y], [e], [s]	I	el
4	Ss	[e], [y], [e], [s]	R	rep
5	T	Yes, good So [e], [y]^...[e], [s] because we have both eyes. Ok, two eyes. Who can spell nose? Aiman?	F I	e el/n
7	S	[n], [o], [s], [e] nose.	R	rep
8	T	Yes. Alright, who can spell hands, Hadif?	F/I	acc/el
10	S	[h], [a], [n], [d]	R	rep
11	T	Hands? Again, spell again.	I	el
12	S	[h], [a], [n], [d], [s]	R	rep
13	T	Alright, good. Very good you still remember the words. Ok, I have here...what are these? Do you know what are these?	F I	e el
14	S	Stokin <socks>	R	rep
15	T	Not stokin <socks> In English!	F/I	r/el
16	S	Socks	R	rep
17	T	Yes socks. Ok we have two socks here. Alright. The first sock^	F I	acc el
19	Ss	Dirty	R	rep
20	T	Is a^	I	el
21	Ss	Dirty	R	rep
22	T	Dirty sock. Look at the...what do you call this?	F/I	acc/el
23	S	Kotor...ada hitam <dirty...a black spot>	R	rep
24	T	Ada <there is a> stain, kekotoran <stain> The second sock is^	F/I	el
25	Ss	Bersih <clean>	R	rep
26	T	Yes, a clean sock. So which of these that you want to wear? Is it the dirty sock or the clean sock? Clean or dirty? Hadif are you wearing dirty socks? Is it dirty or clean socks? Today is the first day of	F/I	acc/el n

		school, is it clean or dirty? Is it a new one? Is it clean or dirty socks?		
27	Ss	Clean	R	rep
28	T	Clean or dirty? Do you like to wear clean or dirty socks?	I	el
29	Ss	Clean	R	rep
30	T	Umairah? Umairah do you wear clean or dirty socks? Which one? Yes?	I	n/el
31	S	Clean	R	rep
32	T	The clean sock. You must wear, we must wear the, put on the^	F/I	acc/el
33	Ss	Clean socks	R	rep
34	T	Clean socks The boys must wear the clean^	F I	acc el
35	Ss	Trousers	R	rep
36	T	Yes, trousers or pants. And clean^	F/I	acc/el
37	Ss	Tie or neck tie	R	rep
38	T	Tie or neck tie. Ok, why do we must put on the clean shirt? Mukhriz? Why do we must put on the clean shirt? Why? Can you wear dirty shirt? Can you wear dirty shirt?	F/I	acc/el n
39	S	Why tu kenapa? <means why>	R	rep
40	T	Yes why? Why is it? Why do we must put on the clean shirt? Why?	F/I	acc/el
41	Ss	Dirty basuh <wash>	R	rep
42	T	Because we feel more^...We feel more comfortable. Comfortable. Comfortable. What is comfortable? Comfortable?	I	el
43	S	Basuh <wash>	R	rep
44	T	No. Basuh is wash	F	r
45	S	Kotor <dirty>	R	rep
46	T	We feel more comfortable means lebih selesa <more comfortable> More comfortable. Alright Alright the first object, toothbrush	I	el
47	Ss	Toothbrush	R	rep
48	T	Toothbrush	I	el
49	Ss	Toothbrush	R	rep
50	T	Can you see it? Can you see it?	I	ch

The analysis also revealed that the practice of repeating students' responses to affirm or accept an answer was also prevalent in this study. By repeating the students' responses, the teacher is in effect approving them, as illustrated in Turns 17, 22, 32, 34, 36, 38 and 48 in Table 8.11 above. Examples of this type of feedback can also be found in Tables 8.2 and 8.3 presented earlier. This finding agrees with that of Nunn (2001), who found

high levels of repetitive patterning in teacher feedback in Qatar where a teacher repeated the student's response verbatim, whether it was grammatically well-formed or not. Gattulo (2000) said that this form of feedback has been found to be the most dominant type of feedback used in second and foreign language classrooms. A similar finding was reported by Mohd Noor, Aman, Mustaffa and Teo (2010) while exploring the corrective feedback strategies among Malaysian primary teachers; they reported that one of the most common forms of teacher feedback was the teacher repeating the answers (response) given by the students.

Evaluative feedback also took the form of rejection or negation of students' answers to show disagreement; teachers usually rejected incorrect or unacceptable answers by using expressions such as '*No*' or '*Wrong*'. An example is in Turn 44 in Table 8.11 above. The teacher feedback in Turn 15 in the above extract shows how the teacher refused a student's answer, but provides clues about to reach to the desired response.

However, teachers' comments on pupils' answers, which exemplify, expand, justify or provide additional information were very rare. As described earlier, they accounted for the lowest percentage of teacher response moves (1.2%). Similarly, teacher probes, where a teacher stayed with a pupil and asked for further elaboration on the pupil's answer, accounted for only 2.4 per cent. In other words, there was an absence of explicit follow-up by the teachers because teachers rarely interacted with the student's answer. The low percentage of teacher comments and teacher probes limited the opportunities for the students to practise the language and to explore the topic, in order to enable higher order thinking. Alexander (2002) says that "interaction is important because of the psychological evidence which shows that structured, challenging and extended talk is one of the key ingredients in children's learning and understanding" (pp. 7-8).

The above findings suggest failure on the part of the teachers to build in any significant way on the students' contributions. In what was essentially a very teacher-centred approach, children were seldom given the opportunity to make spontaneous contributions, or ones, which were longer than one word or phrase. Students' answers were not expanded to allow for discussions or comments. This is probably due to the nature of the answers, which were generally single-word or involved only 'yes' or 'no' and the teachers seemed to be satisfied when the students gave desired answers.

8.4 Summary of the chapter

All in all, the data analysis, supported by a mixed-methods approach, showed that although a wide range of classroom activities was used, such as language games, role-plays, pronunciation practice, naming of objects/pictures, describing pictures, classroom presentation, comprehension exercises and story telling, these were not fully communicative; they did not provide opportunities for the students to be engaged in interaction between a speaker and a listener, where the main purpose was to communicate meaning effectively, they did not focus on meaning to be communicated, and they did not foster spontaneous language production. In short, teachers generally misunderstood the nature of communicative activities; all thought that the activities they carried out in the classroom were communicative, but in actual fact they were not.

Apart from that, the nature of the classroom interactions did not promote the development of students' communicative competence. The time spent interacting with the students during lesson time was in all cases minimal. Besides, the observations revealed that there was little variation in classroom interaction patterns across the eight lessons and that the patterns generally maintained a strict use of IRF structure. Teacher use of tightly-controlled IRF/IR structure led to the domination of teacher talk, which tends to lead to stifled interaction and severely restricted opportunities for dialogue and discussion, which in turn are seen as being fundamental to the teaching of oral skills. Classroom interactions were thus found to be not very communicative.

In addition, there was high frequency of closed questions or display questions requiring recall of memorised information and whose answers the teacher already knew. This type of question did not encourage thought provoking answers and did not initiate interactions in the classrooms. The pervasive use of closed questions stops students from engaging in more lively interaction and fails to encourage higher levels of student participation, by limiting responses/answers to just one or two words or simply to a 'yes' or 'no'. When open questions were used teachers seldom took the chance to probe pupil responses, raise them to clarify their understanding or build pupil answers into subsequent inquiries to open up the IRF sequence and permit for larger pupil participation.

Furthermore, choral responses outnumbered individual responses. The choral responses and low level of individual participation limited the opportunities for the students to be involved in extended classroom discussion. The extensive use of cued elicitations that required the students to complete words or phrases, or to repeat teacher statements that encouraged choral response prevented the students from engaging in more creative and higher levels of thinking, as choral responses are unlikely to encourage pupils to experiment with ideas or language.

Besides that, providing no feedback in the follow-up moves (F-moves) was a common practice. The lack of follow-up, again offers no opportunity or encouragement for students to think, or to provide more answers and thereby use more language. The result was not very communicative EL lessons.

Overall, it can be concluded that the EL lessons were not conducted in a communicative and interactive manner and did not promote cognitive and linguistic development in the students. In other words, the teachers' classroom practices indicate a mismatch between what was stipulated in the curriculum (the SCPS) and how teachers actually taught, with respect to the curriculum goal of developing students' communicative competence. The classroom activities and interaction patterns that occurred did not provide maximum opportunities for the students to practise the language and did not encourage interactive teaching, something, which is essential if the aim is to develop communicative competence. Thus, it is imperative to review the implementation of the SCPS and that teachers are made aware of the features of their lesson activities and classroom conversations, so that they are able to provide more opportunities to facilitate students' communication in the classroom and eventually promote the development of their oral skills in English.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together findings from the data analysis to answer the three research questions set forth in Chapter One and presents the conclusion of the study. The purpose of the study, the main question and the research questions the study seek to answer will be restated in the first section. Then a summary of the findings will be presented. Next recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum are offered. Following this, contributions of the study are discussed. Then limitations of the study are explored prior to the conclusion.

9.2 Study purpose, main question and research questions

Recognising that the effectiveness and the success of educational reform involve a wide range of “educational elements, variables and factors” (Curdt-Christiansen & Silver, 2012, p. 146), this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Malaysian primary level of the Standard Curriculum Primary Schools in three domains: (1) how teachers perceive and understand the curriculum, (2) how the training for the curriculum is carried out and (3) how the curriculum is delivered in the classroom. This study is an attempt to see if the recent curriculum reform has fared any better than the previous curriculum and on that basis to provide recommendations for improvement. This study aimed to address the following research questions:

4. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the SCPS?
 - (c) Do the teachers find the SCPS standard document clear and useful?
 - (d) Do the teachers find the supporting materials (text book and teacher guidebook) clear and useful?

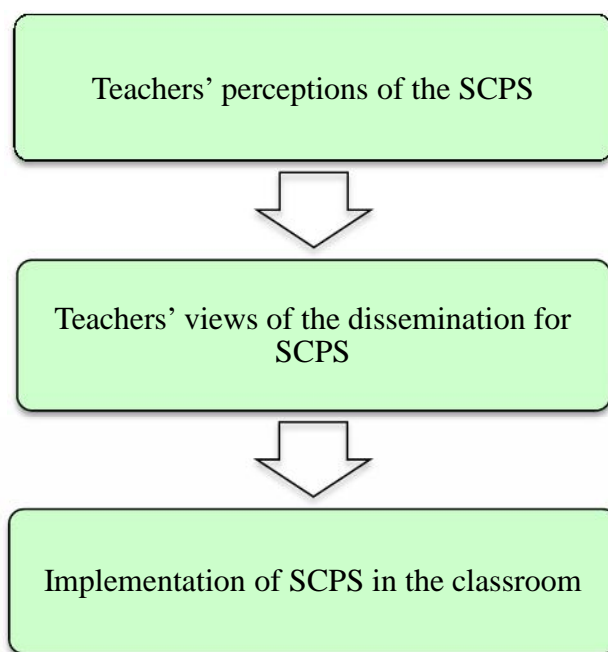
5. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the dissemination of the SCPS?
 - (c) What is the model used to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers?
 - (d) How successful is the training?

6. How is the SCPS implemented in the classroom?
 - (c) What types of lesson activities are used?

- (d) What is the quality of teacher-student interaction that accompanies and complements the classroom activities?

Figure 9.1 below demonstrates how these three research questions are interrelated.

Figure 9.1. Conceptual map of the research findings



9.3 Summary of findings

This section will briefly discuss and present the overall findings of this study. Table 9.1 below lists a summary.

Table 9.1. Summary of findings

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Challenges/Obstacles</i>	<i>Recommendations</i>
What do the teachers think of the SCPS?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The curriculum was important for students' development of English language competence. 2. Teachers were familiar with the aims of the curriculum. 3. There was an awareness of the shift of focus of the curriculum from content knowledge to mastery of language skills. 4. There was an awareness of the interactive learner-centred approach and modular teaching approach. 5. There was a recognition of the need for a new teacher role. 6. There was an awareness that a combination of formative and summative assessment is important to the development of students' communicative competence. 7. The curriculum materials were found helpful and useful in facilitating and providing support for teachers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of clarity of the teaching principles, interactive learner-centred teaching approach, modular approach and the assessment procedures. 2. Contextual constraints, such as large class sizes, limited competence in the English Language among teachers and students, lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills hindered the implementation of the curriculum. 3. Teachers' own beliefs about effective teaching and learning that focused on the transmission of knowledge and the integration of language skills. 4. A mismatch between the curriculum that aimed to develop students' communicative competence and the examinations that focused on testing discrete skills. 5. Confusion over the functions of the textbook and teacher guidebook. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More emphasis is needed on the aim of the curriculum to ensure full understanding and commitment from the teachers. 2. The teaching theories and principles embedded in the curriculum need to be thoroughly defined, explicitly stated and adequate guidance needs to be included in the standard document. 3. Careful attention is needed to address contextual issues such as large class size and teachers' limited language proficiency. 4. Clear guidelines on how and when the new assessment should be carried out are needed, to ensure that teachers are well-informed and able to carry out the assessment effectively. 5. There is a need to enhance teachers' knowledge on how to use the textbook and the teacher guidebook, and clear understanding of the function of the curriculum materials as guidance and support rather than as the main source of reference.
How effective is the dissemination of the SCPS?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cascade training model was appropriately prescriptive in nature. 2. The responsibility for disseminating the curriculum was decentralized. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cascade training was largely transmissive, where information was transmitted and teaching behaviour modelled through a series of hierarchical levels via a top-down process. 2. A lack of opportunities for reflection by the teachers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The dissemination model needs to be experiential and reflective. 2. Expertise on the curriculum needs to be equally distributed at all levels of the cascade.

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. A lack of monitoring and follow-up in terms of guidance and support from relevant authorities. 4. Teachers' lack of confidence and ability to function as trainers, because expertise on the curriculum was not diffused at all levels of the cascade. 5. No sufficient guidelines on the approach to carry out the in-house training. 6. Limited time allocated for in-house training. Lack of ownership by the teachers because of their non-involvement in the dissemination process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Teachers should be active participants in the preparation of training materials and the construction of the curriculum. 4. Sufficient duration of time for training at all levels and follow-up training are needed to foster deep understanding . 5. Training should be on-going and include practice and feedback. 6. Teachers need training as trainers The in-house training should be properly guided and planned.
<p>How is the SCPS implemented in the classroom?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The classroom teaching practices included a wide range of activities. 2. There was an attempt to carry out group work and to involve students as active participants. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesson activities were not fully communicative. 2. Classroom interactions were not interactive due to lack of understanding of the communicative approach, an interactive learner-centred approach and group work. 3. Strict IRF structure was observed that constrained student language learning and practice. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers need clear definitions, detailed explanations and more practical guidance on how to carry out interactive learner-centred teaching. 2. There is a need to train the teachers on what the different EL teaching methods are meant to achieve. 3. Teachers need a clear understanding of the importance of increasing students' participation, to raise the quality of interaction through the use of effective questioning and follow-ups. 4. Teachers need to be informed about the best form of repetitions and shown the different ways of repeating that could promote language learning.

The study indicates that the teachers' perceptions of the curriculum are consistent with the philosophy of the recent curriculum reform for primary education. The SCPS was perceived positively by the teachers for its importance and usefulness in developing students' communicative competence. In accordance with the guidelines, teachers were aware that the main aim of the curriculum reform was to help students develop effective communicative skills. This breakthrough requires a more interactive learner-centred approach and a change in teachers' role – from a unidirectional transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning. The shift in the focus of the curriculum from content knowledge to a mastery of language skills was perceived as congruent with the aim of the SCPS. Furthermore, the teachers viewed the teaching and learning principles such as the 'back to basics' approach and 'fun but meaningful and purposeful learning' as being relevant and suitable to young pupils' stage of development.

The modular approach was also appreciated, as it enables the students to focus and consciously acquire the salient language skills. The new school-based assessment was considered as something new and useful in encouraging and motivating the students to speak in the classrooms, which is essential to the development of students' communicative competence. Besides that, the supporting materials (i.e. the textbook and teacher guidebook) were viewed as helpful in facilitating the EL teaching and learning process. The interesting ideas and sample of activities suggested in the curriculum materials provide support to develop the relevant language skills needed to achieve the aim of the curriculum. However, this study has revealed that while the intention of the SCPS was good and well perceived, some other important features of the curriculum were found confusing and problematic, posing a set of challenges to the curriculum reform.

9.4 Challenges

The challenges that teachers faced in the implementation of the SCPS are diverse. In this chapter it will be discussed by dividing them into five broad themes:

- 1) Conceptual constraints
- 2) Confusion over the function of the support materials
- 3) Contextual issues
- 4) Ineffective dissemination model
- 5) Teachers' beliefs about effective teaching.

The section below briefly summarizes these challenges.

9.4.1 Challenge 1: Conceptual constraints

One of the major challenges in the implementation of the SCPS was the teachers' lack of adequate understanding of the aim of the curriculum and the theoretical and pedagogical understanding of the English language teaching principles and key concepts such as the communicative approach, an interactive learner-centred teaching and group work. The teachers conceptualised communicative and interactive teaching in terms of getting students' to participate in the lesson activities and respond to teachers' questions, even though the responses only contained single- or two-word answers or simply a 'Yes' or 'No', and learner-centred teaching was defined as getting the students to work in smaller groups. There was a lack of emphasis on promoting the use of the target language during discussion and there was no evidence of prolonged discussion and interaction. Teachers' limited understanding of the teaching principles and of the aim of the curriculum resulted in a lack of emphasis on, and commitment to, the development of communicative competence.

Due to a lack of understanding, the lesson activities carried out in the classroom were not fully communicative, as they did not promote maximum opportunities for students to engage in, or to practise, the language in communication such that they negotiated meaning as active participants. Besides, the opportunities for the students to experience using the language and to be creative with it were hampered when the language used in the communicative tasks was not authentic or produced 'naturally'; rather, it was pre-determined by the teachers, which resulted in drilling, repeating and copying practices, rather than self-expression or creativity. Moreover, the focus of the majority of the activities observed, which was more on forms rather than on communicating meanings, clearly contradicted any communicative purposes. Apart from that, due to misconceptions and misunderstanding of an interactive and communicative approach, the classroom teaching practices showed the predominance of a strict use of I-R-F structure, where teachers took control of the discourse patterns and the topics to be discussed. The teachers' tight control of the classroom discourse through teacher-led recitation and question and answer sequences limited student involvement during interaction in classroom discourse production resulted in a less communicative and less interactive classroom.

A lack of understanding of the teaching and learning principles and approaches underpinning the curriculum was primarily due to the lack of clarity of these topics in the curriculum standard document: the most important document that guides primary school EL education. One of the reasons for the lack of comprehensive explanation and information on the concept of learner-centred teaching and interactive teaching in the standard document and the lack of practical guidance, like specific training on these teaching principles, is that the Ministry assumed that teachers would be well-informed and knowledgeable, since these approaches had been introduced in the previous curriculum.

The teachers' limited knowledge and understanding of the school-based assessment poses another challenge. There was a lack of information, exposure to and guidance on how to carry out the assessment. The information on the assessment to which the teachers had access in the curriculum document was very sparse. The only information they were given was that it should be a combination of formative and summative and should be continuous. There was neither explicit guidelines, such as clear and precise assessment descriptors to assess whether students have acquired the content standards and learning standards, nor specific training on how, when or how frequently the formative and summative assessment were to be conducted. In addition, a mismatch between a curriculum that promoted communication and critical thinking, and an examination that focused on testing discreet skills, such as writing and reading, caused confusion among the teachers. They just did not see the relevance of the assessment to the aim of the curriculum.

9.4.2 Challenge 2: Confusion over the function of the support materials

Although both the curriculum materials (i.e. textbook and teacher guidebook) were found useful and helpful, some of the contents were found unsuitable to the students' level and/or were inadequate in terms of quantity. Apart from that, the teaching resources and activities were also pitched at too high a level, causing difficulty for the students to understand and follow. This resulted in the teachers producing or finding additional materials or resources from other sources, such as the Internet or commercial books. In other words, extra effort was required in lesson preparation.

Besides that, there was a misunderstanding about the function of, and relationship between, the textbook and the teacher guidebook. There was confusion as to why the contents of the two were incongruent. The confusion shows that there was a lack of understanding about the function of both teaching materials as guides simply providing support, rather than acting as the main reference. The misunderstanding indicates that the teachers tended to rely more on the textbook and teacher guidebook than on the curriculum standard document in preparing their lessons. Awareness of the importance of referring to the curriculum standard document needs to be urgently addressed and emphasised to the teachers. Teachers need to be very well versed concerning the content and learning standards that the students need to acquire. They need to be made aware that the content and learning standards that the students need to achieve in the curriculum should be given major attention in the learning process, rather than focusing on the different types of activities that can be carried out.

9.4.3 Challenge 3: Contextual issues

Contextual issues such as large class sizes, students' low level of language proficiency, teachers' limited language competence and teachers' lack of teaching repertoire was another obstacle in the implementation of the SCPS. The findings show that with a class size of 35-40 students, where majority of the students were at a low level of language proficiency teachers were less likely to incorporate and practise interactive teaching and learner-centred learning. This was due to the difficulty of managing a large number of students in a very limited space (see Wedell, 2005) and the unfeasibility of initiating contributions of ideas or active participation from students with a low level of language proficiency (see Li, 1998). Although in the context of the Malaysian education system, the MOE has taken the initiative, by introducing grouped seating arrangements, it has not succeeded in encouraging a learner centred learning style. The large number of students in a class makes it impractical to have group activities to encourage students' active participation (see Chang, 2011b).

Other contextual issues include the teachers' own lack of an appropriate or acceptable level of language proficiency and teaching repertoire. The data on the teachers' profile shows that majority of the teachers had no English Language qualifications: i.e. their degrees did not involve majoring in English language teaching, for example English language studies or Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Many had a

degree in another field of study, such as Information Technology (IT), Town Planning or Accountancy. In other words, these teachers did not have an adequate content knowledge of English, because they did not possess in-depth knowledge of linguistic aspects of English, such as its grammar, semantics, syntax, literature, phonetics or phonology. They were recruited as English teachers simply because they could speak the language. But the literature on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) indicates that competent English speakers require knowledge about the language, linguistic skills and communicative ability.

Besides that, the teachers also lacked pedagogical knowledge and skills of English language teaching. The majority had gained their ELT knowledge and skills mainly during their one-year Post-Degree Teacher Training Course. The course was divided into two semesters, during which the theoretical aspects of ELT were taught in the first semester and application of theoretical knowledge to actual classrooms in the second. In contrast, a teacher who has undergone a full-time training course on ELT will have to spend three or four years acquiring the necessary theoretical and practical skills. Clearly, the one-year Post-Degree Teacher Training course proved insufficient to provide adequate methodological and pedagogical skills to the teachers. Due to their limited language competency and lack of teaching skills, the teachers were not confident about teaching and as a consequence there was a tendency for them to use methods that require very minimum use of spoken language in the classroom, such as the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), rather than Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and to continue using methods that were not in keeping with the principles of the curriculum reform.

9.4.4 Challenge 4: Ineffective dissemination model

Another major challenge includes the dissemination model used for the SCPS. The cascade-training model adopted was not fully effective, as the training was largely transmissive (Hayes, 2000), focused on theories more than practice, and did not involve the teachers in the preparation of the training materials. Furthermore, there was lack of follow-up and monitoring in the classroom by the relevant authorities which would have given teachers feedback and confirmed how far their classroom practices were appropriate. As a consequence, there were no opportunities for teachers to reflect on the new curriculum, or to think how best to implement it in line with their actual teaching

contexts and there was little room for a sense of ownership, which in turn affected their understanding of, and commitment to, carrying out the in-house training at school level.

Apart from that, the in-house training was not carried out at all, or else was not carried out properly, because the most important level of training (i.e. at school level, to disseminate the curriculum to the teachers who were going to implement the curriculum) was accorded low priority in the cascade model. Several factors contributed to this situation. One was that there were no proper or clear guidelines on how to carry out the in-house training. The suggested approach was to simply to share the information, which led to it not being carried out as comprehensively or extensively as the training at upper levels (Ministry or state). The in-house training was usually either in the form of informal discussion or a briefing session.

Apart from that, there was a lack of confidence due to a lack of expertise and experience as trainers among the teachers. In the cascade model, expertise was only located at the topmost level. In other words, teachers at school level were not assisted, but were expected to carry out the training to their colleagues on their own. However, almost none of the teacher representatives who attended the course at state level and who were supposed to train the teachers at their respective schools had any experience of training others. Hence, many were not confident to cascade the knowledge they had gained to their own colleagues.

Besides that, the time allocated for the in-house training was more limited than, or much reduced from, that at the upper levels of the cascade model. Indeed, the time allocated became shorter the further one went down the cascade, so that the time for the in-house training was the shortest: a two- to three-hour slot, versus one week at national level and three to four days at state level. For this reason, the in-house training tended to be neglected and considered unimportant. Moreover, the disjointed one-off nature of the training did not provide sufficient time for the teachers to digest and understand the philosophy of the curriculum, or to reflect on how best to adapt and apply the new knowledge and skills to their own classroom practices. This was also a factor behind their lack of confidence about cascading their knowledge to the other teachers in their own schools.

9.4.5 Challenge 5: Teachers' beliefs about effective teaching

Another challenge was the teachers' beliefs about effective teaching and learning, that focused on the transmission of knowledge. The teachers seemed to be more concerned with how much input should be transmitted and the different types of activities to carry out in a lesson, rather than mastery of language skills. This consequently affected what they assumed their role(s) to be in the curriculum reform and in the classroom. Instead of playing the role of facilitator in the teaching and learning process (which is a characteristic of learner-centred teaching), the teachers merely performed the roles of knowledge transmitter and evaluator. Thus the classroom interactions that complemented the classroom activities were dominated by teacher talk, due to the prevalence of transmissional teaching, which focused on rote-learning, recitation and repetition of memorised information.

Such a mode of teaching does not reflect the focus of the recent curriculum reform, (i.e. the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools, the SCPS). The SCPS for primary English language demands interactive learner-centred teaching and an emphasis on the development of students' creative and critical thinking skills (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010). Students should be engaged in more active and effective activities such as problem solving, decision making, reasoning, expressing thoughts and exchanging viewpoints, to enable them to become confident speakers who can communicate clearly, appropriately and coherently in any given context. But analysis reveals that the students' role in the classroom remained passive, as participation was mainly restricted to answering the teacher's questions, or confirming or repeating the teacher's statements.

Teachers' questions, the majority of which were closed questions, did not encourage thought-provoking answers and did not initiate interactions in the classrooms, as the answers were already known (to the teachers). Moreover, the whole-class choral responses, which were prevalent when the students responded to the teachers, limited the opportunities for the students to be involved in extended classroom discussion that might lead to extensive use of the language: students' responses mostly consisted of a single word, or two to three words, or Yes/No answers. The absence of teacher follow-up and the rigid habit of merely affirming or rejecting students' answers, rather than extending the students' contributions, did not encourage more pupil-initiated ideas,

thereby reducing students to passive participants. As a result, higher-order questioning and extensive discussions to allow pupils to develop more elaborated ideas and extend their contributions, which are characteristic of interactive teaching, were hampered. This finding echoes that of a study by Aman and Mustaffa (2006), who found that the classroom discourse of the teaching of the Malay Language was full of “teacher domination practices” (p. 21) which contradicted the principles of the Integrative Curriculum for Secondary Schools, because the learning process hardly focused on developing students’ thinking skills.

Related to this is the challenge that teachers believed that, for language learning to be successful, it needs to integrate the four basic language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, writing and reading). Breen et al. (2001) argue that “the diverse reasons teachers gave for particular techniques that they adopted during language lessons revealed a finite set of guiding principles that appeared to derive from underlying beliefs or personal theories the teachers held regarding the nature of the broader educational process, the nature of language, how it is learned and how it may be best taught” (p. 472).

In this study, the beliefs that teachers held contradicted the modular approach proposed in the SCPS, that promoted a focus on emphasising a single language skill in a lesson. One reason was that the teachers were so used to integrating all the skills in a lesson that to focus on just one was found challenging. The findings accordingly show that a lesson usually started with listening and speaking activities, but combined with writing activities even though it was part of a listening and speaking module. Moreover, integration of language skills is one of the criteria of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT considers the four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – as integrated skills, which should not be taught separately (Chang, 2011a). In contrast, to focus on one skill in a lesson reflects an Audio-Lingual Method (ALM). Hence, there is confusion over the curriculum that promoted CLT, and the teaching practices, that focused on a characteristic of ALM.

All in all, the primary English language classroom still preserves the traditional way of teaching, with teacher-centred and lecture-driven pedagogy overwhelmingly prevalent in the classroom discourse. In other words, the classroom practices indicate a mismatch between what is expected and required in the SCPS and the actual classroom teaching

practices, in the light of the aim of the curriculum: i.e. to develop students' communicative competence.

9.4.6 Summary of the challenges

On the whole, the study shows that the intention behind the curriculum reform for primary education was good and well perceived. However, there were several obstacles that impeded its effectiveness and success. Some of the same issues are reported by other studies, such as de Segovia and Hardison (2009) and Nunan (2003). Apparently, these obstacles were similar to those that impeded the implementation of the previous curriculum, the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (ICPS): students' low level of language proficiency, teachers' limited language competency, large class sizes, lack of understanding of the curriculum, insufficient and lack of proper training, lack of monitoring and supervision, little time for teachers to digest and fully understand the curriculum, and teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills (Abdul Karim, 2006).

Many of the findings of the present study are not unique to Malaysia. They are also consistent with curriculum experiences in primary education in some other countries such as Turkey (Gömleksiz, 2005; Kırgköz, 2008a), Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012), Libya (Orafi, 2008), Kuwait (Al-Nouh, 2008), Thailand (Phungphol, 2005; Unyakiat, 1991), Kenya (Hardman et al., 2009), Greece (Karavas, 1993, 1995), the Philippines (Waters & Vilches, 2008), Hong Kong (Carless, 1998), Taiwan (Chang, 2011b), China (Wang, 2008; Wu, 2001), Singapore (Vaish, 2008), Japan (Mondejar et al., 2012) and Namibia (O'Sullivan, 2002). In short, the findings of this study fit in previous studies, which repeatedly found that when there was a reform, the implementation and the curriculum did not align very well.

The challenges in introducing and implementing curriculum change should not be underestimated. Problems such as misconception and misunderstanding of the curriculum, resistance to change, inadequate resources or insufficient time for teacher training should be anticipated in advance, so that strategies for tackling them can be formulated (Carless, 1997). This indicates the critical need to look into these factors before introducing innovation or reforms in the curriculum, in order to ensure the desired end results and outcomes.

As can be seen from the three different perspectives that this study adopts, by looking at the curriculum standard document, the dissemination model and classroom implementation, the SCPS is not fully effective. Therefore, there is a need to review and evaluate the actual documentation of the SCPS, the dissemination model and the practice (how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom). This review is very important and urgent before the SCPS is rolled out over the subsequent phases of the primary schooling in Malaysia as the pupil progress to the subsequent levels of primary education in all national and national type schools.

9.5 Recommendations

The following section provides recommendations on how to ensure the effectiveness of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS). As mentioned above, the findings suggest that the curriculum needs a review and it is significant that important elements of the SCPS, such as the curriculum document, the dissemination model and the classroom practices, are reviewed on on-going basis to avoid failures of the previous curriculum. Nevertheless, the recommendations below may involve an investment of extra cost and time. However, unless obstacles to the curriculum are dealt with and measures for improvement are taken, the curriculum reform, where the aim is to produce students who are communicatively competent, can never be successfully or effectively achieved.

9.5.1 A review of the SCPS

As mentioned earlier, one of the obstacles to the implementation of the SCPS was the lack of clarity of various important aspects of the curriculum, such as its aims and focus, the pedagogical principles underpinning it, the modular approach, the use of curriculum support materials, EL teaching and learning principles, and curriculum knowledge. Lack of knowledge and understanding of these important aspects of the curriculum led to misconceptions and confusion. This eventually jeopardized the teachers' ability to maximize teaching potential, specifically the development of students' communicative ability, through the various activities carried out in their lessons (see also Yieng, 1999). Hence, it is vital that the standard document is clear and comprehensive. The important aspects of the curriculum need to be thoroughly defined and explicitly stated, and

proper guidance needs to be included. For instance, the aim of the curriculum needs to be frequently emphasized and highlighted to ensure full understanding and commitment from the teachers. This can be done by frequently connecting any definitions or explanations of the other features of the curriculum to the development of students' communicative competence.

In addition, the teaching principles, such as the 'back to basics' approach and 'fun but meaningful and purposeful learning', and teaching approaches, such as interactive teaching and the learner-centred approach need to be clearly defined and explained in the curriculum document and sufficient guidance, for instance examples or models of communicative and interactive lessons, should be provided for reference. Clear definitions and examples of the teaching principles and approaches will help teachers to conceptualise and deeply understand the theoretical concepts and their pedagogical implications, which in turn will help them achieve the aim of the curriculum. Even though the teaching approaches such as learner-centred teaching were introduced long before in the previous curriculum and were only reemphasised in the current curriculum, the Ministry should not assume that all the teachers would be familiar with, or knowledgeable about, the teaching approach. Teaching knowledge and skills need to be frequently refreshed and updated to keep up with the latest teaching ideas, especially in the case of novice teachers.

In addition, the evaluative instruments for school-based assessment need to be clearly described and standardized to avoid confusion. The instruments should specifically focus on the development of students' communicative competence, such as the ability to express thoughts, engage in discussion, solve problems, express meaning, pose questions, communicate confidently and appropriately, and argue and give comments. Focusing on higher cognitive skills would force the teachers to plan and carry out lessons that focus on accuracy and fluency, thus creating more interactive lessons. In addition, the Ministry should ensure that the assessment corresponds with the emphasis of the curriculum so that its relevance is clear. As the curriculum aims to develop students' communicative competence, the assessment should focus on the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently. All in all, there is a need to review and evaluate the curriculum document from time to time in order to provide clear and sufficient guidance to teachers to ensure effective implementation of the SCPS.

9.5.2 A review of the dissemination process

Vague information on the curriculum was also a result of the dissemination model adopted for the SCPS, which did not seem to be effective in providing the teachers with the skills and understanding necessary to implement the recent curriculum reform for primary English language. The pros and cons of the cascade model have been discussed and presented in Chapter Seven. It is recommended that the dissemination model for the SCPS should place more importance on experiential learning and provide opportunities for reflection. The training should engage the trainees (i.e. the teachers) in hands-on and practical sessions, as this will enable them to digest, reflect on and rethink the new theories and teaching methods and decide how best to adapt them to their own teaching contexts (Chang, 2011). Garet et al. (2001) suggest teachers' active involvement in meaningful discussion, planning and practice. One way of doing this is to get the teachers to create and prepare samples of communicative activities and be shown samples of interactive lessons based on the new knowledge and teaching methods introduced in the training, so that they are able to see the benefits of these techniques and convince them of their effectiveness and relevance to what the curriculum is aiming to achieve: namely the development of students' communicative competence.

Besides that, the training should provide sufficient time at all levels of the cascade to foster deep understanding of the curriculum. Sufficient time should be allocated for training at the national, state and school level, in order to convey all the necessary input. Having a shorter time allocation at the lowest level in the cascade may result in the dilution of information, as teachers need to be selective about what to cascade. Sufficient time is needed especially at lower levels of the cascade, so that practical sessions can be carried out and not merely theoretical explanations of the curriculum, as suggested above. The findings of this study also suggest that training for the SCPS should be sustained over a period of time, so that teachers are able to adapt progressively to the curriculum. The findings show that one-shot training is inadequate for implementing and sustaining new curriculum initiatives. According to Garet et al. (ibid), sustained and intensive professional development "provides opportunities for in-depth discussion, interaction and reflection" (p. 922) and is more likely to have a positive impact. Continuous training over a period of time will inevitably incur a financial cost and time; however, improvements in pedagogical practices require

professional development programmes that develop and upgrade pedagogic knowledge and skills continuously.

The findings indicate that the dissemination of the SCPS at school level was given low priority due to the limited guidelines on the approach of conducting the in-house training. Hence, it is suggested that the in-house training be properly guided and planned. Given that teachers are the most important elements in the implementation process, training and support at school level is central to the success of curriculum implementation. The Ministry should prioritise the training at school level by providing proper guidelines on how to carry out the in-house training and monitor its implementation. One example is through the use of a training module. This is simply to ensure that the in-house training is carried out at school level and the information that is communicated to the teachers is accurate. As suggested by Barrett (2010), a more robust cascade model which integrates monitoring and evaluation systems which assist change managers, trainers and teachers in planning and implementing cascade models which are more successful in achieving their stated outcomes should be developed.

In addition, it is acknowledged that, in order for training to have any impact, there should be follow-up in the classrooms, to enable teachers to reflect or provide feedback on any misunderstandings or problems that arise out of their teaching activity (Bitan-Friedlander, Dreyfus & Milgrom, 2004). Monitoring of how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom should be retained over a period of time especially at the initial stage. White (1987) emphasizes the importance of scheduling periodic review meetings, so that teachers are able to report achievements to date, and problems encountered, plus make proposals for further action. All in all, to ensure successful implementation of curriculum reform, it is crucial to boost the standard of teaching through large-scale, prime quality and high-efficiency training and continuous education (Lee, 2009).

9.5.3 A review of classroom practices

The classroom teaching practices show that the EL lessons carried out in the classrooms were not congruent with what the curriculum intended it to be and what its designers hoped to achieve. This study found that the EL teaching in the eight Malaysian primary schools observed did not aim at communication. Rather, the mode of teaching was

transmission-based, where teacher talk dominated the interaction patterns, resulting less communicative classrooms. As a result, teachers' classroom practices need to be reviewed and the following are the recommendations to improve them.

First, teachers need to be made aware of the importance of using language appropriate to the goal of the curriculum. By considering the link between language use and pedagogic purpose, teachers will be made aware of the need to use language appropriately, in line with their teaching aim, because if language use and pedagogic purpose coincide, learning opportunities are facilitated. Therefore, in the context of the SCPS, as the aim of the curriculum is to produce communicatively competent students, the language that is used in the classroom and the activities carried out should scaffold the development of the students' ability to communicate meaningfully, purposefully, interactively and effectively.

In relation to this, the concept of effective communication and interaction in language learning needs to be enhanced and more deeply understood. Exhaustive definitions, precise explanations and clear examples of the communicative approach and interactive learner-centred teaching need to be provided to teachers. Apart from these concepts being clearly and thoroughly described in the curriculum document as mentioned above, adequate professional development is required, to provide practical applications to integrate communicative elements and to focus on communication in EL lessons, due to the fact that practical guidance is more effective than theoretical support. One of the strategies that could be employed is to show, and ask trainees to reflect on, videos of sample lessons that portray quality and effective learner-centred interactive teaching in the classroom. By witnessing how such lessons are carried out teachers will have clear ideas of what communicative activities are, what learner-centred interactive teaching means and how group work can be carried out effectively.

Besides, teachers need to be shown and trained how to create more opportunities for students to use English, how to encourage more spontaneity in the use of English and how to foster natural conversation, so that the classroom discourse is not tightly controlled by the teachers, thereby closing down the opportunities for student initiations. Teachers need to differentiate between the talk for teaching and the talk they hope to inspire their pupils to use for learning.

The study suggests a review of classroom practices to enhance the quality of interaction in EL lessons, because meaningful interaction supports the development of oral ability. The review should focus on the ways teachers use classroom talk to engage with students, which includes the choice of questions, the quality of feedback and promoting students' contributions. The dominant use of closed questions needs to be reduced and replaced with conscious selection of open referential questions whose answers are not known to the teachers. Open-ended questions will open up opportunities for students to engage in more extended discussions and elaborated answers, by doing which they will speak more and increase their use of English. Hence, students' responses will not merely take the form of single-word or two-word answers or Yes/No answers, but will involve a higher level of contribution. For instance, rather than simply applying comprehension check questions after the reading of a story or a role-play of a story, discussion on the story read or the moral values behind the story can be held, to encourage not only students' participation but also higher levels of thinking. In other words, the classroom interaction should encourage the students to elaborate more on their responses, instead of simply settle for brief and syntactically easy answers.

One way for teachers to be able to provide more opportunities to facilitate students' communication in the classroom is by analysing features of classroom conversations. This can be done by making audio and video recordings of their lessons and reflecting on them. Only by working with their own data are teachers likely to be able to modify their classroom verbal behaviour. Listening to recordings or analysing transcripts, can significantly raise teachers' awareness of the types of question they ask, so that they may avoid asking too many Yes/No.

Teachers' responses to students' answers, the majority of which are either accepting or rejecting, or simply evaluative in nature, should also be modified. In responding to students' answers, teachers should provide comments or opportunities for extended discussion or elaboration by using more probes, where they ask students to elaborate their answers, or more uptakes, where they build subsequent questions based on students' answers. By using this type of follow-up, teacher-student talk time is extended, students' output is increased and inevitably students' communicative competence is enhanced. Professional development on questioning techniques, the types of question and the quality of feedback needed to facilitate a more interactive learning environment, and how to effectively promote discussion in the classroom, is urgently

needed, because discussion provides opportunities to expand students' understanding, maintain their motivation, nurture their skills and cultivate thinking (Alexander, 2010; Ellis, 2006).

Apart from that, a review on how to carry out group work during classroom activities is also needed. In this study, group work was not effectively executed and there was a misconception of how group work should be carried out; group work was used simply to vary the types of activity in the classroom (individual, pair, or group work), and to get the students to complete a task without emphasising the need for them to talk to one another. Group work should be used to initiate discussion and enhance the productive use of English. Working in small groups means that students talk to one another in the process of negotiating meaning, communicating ideas, arguing thoughts and commenting others opinions. Through these processes, practice in using English increases and consequently communicative ability is developed. Teachers need to be trained how to organize group work in the classroom effectively and to be shown how to facilitate communicating and discussing.

Next, there is a need to train the teachers what the different EL teaching methods are meant to achieve. The findings show that there seems to be confusion between the theories of Audio Lingual Method (ALM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Teachers seem to have believed that they were practising CLT as required by the SPCS, but actual classroom observation showed that there was extensive use of mechanical oral drills and minimal pair drills; i.e. they focused on accuracy, which is a characteristic of ALM. Hence, teachers need to be able to control and balance the focus of teaching and their classroom techniques between these two teaching methods. The ability to differentiate between ALM and CLT indicates a clear understanding of the goal of each teaching method. Finally, it is necessary to educate the teachers about the pedagogical implications of repetition in EL teaching. The findings reveal that teachers simply repeated statements, instructions and students' answers without thinking. Teachers need to be informed about the best form of repetitions and shown the different ways of repeating that could promote language learning.

All in all, in order to ensure the curriculum is implemented successfully in the classroom and in keeping with what is envisioned in the curriculum, teachers' knowledge of and pedagogical skills concerning communicative language teaching need

to be improved. In the context of the SCPS, full understanding of the theoretical concepts of interactive learner-centred teaching need to be developed in order to produce more communicative and interactive EL classrooms, so that the main aim of the curriculum (the development of students' ability to communicate effectively and efficiently) can be achieved.

9.6 Contributions of the study

Even though this study focuses on teachers, the results would seem to be useful for a number of people for improving their professional careers. Firstly, teachers could express and reflect their attitudes, problems and challenges regarding CLT implementation in Malaysia, to help improve the official English curriculum in Malaysian primary schools. Then teacher educators who are responsible for the country's teacher development, could improve the pre-service and in-service training of teachers by providing more effective measures or training models.

The executive administrators in the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Malaysia can benefit from the results of the study by finding out about students' and teachers' problems and challenges regarding the CLT implementation in the context of Malaysia. Curriculum developers and materials designers can also revise the curriculum in a way that fits the pedagogical purposes and students' needs in a Malaysian context. Apart from that, this study may add to the knowledge of the various fields related to the study such as curriculum development, educational reform, English language teaching and future research.

9.6.1 Contribution to teaching practice

The results from the interviews and classroom observation data show there is a need for a reflective practice approach to teaching. The findings of this study can be used by teachers to reflect on current practices, more importantly on the lesson activities carried out in the classroom and the interaction between them and the students, which may or may not contribute to students' learning. Analysing or reflecting on what is happening in classrooms will allow teachers to learn lessons from good practice (Eke & Lee, 2009). Reflective practice among English teachers can be "a means to promote

interventions for classroom events and to consider implications for the future” (Johari, 2006, p. 103).

One recommendation is through the use of Video Stimulated Recall Dialogues (VSRD). English et al.’s (2004) study has demonstrated how teachers could modify their practices through VSRD. Hardman (2008) supports that the use of reflective dialogue enables teachers to better understand their own interactive styles as it provides opportunities for self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

The process of VSRD allowed some of the teachers in our project to identify their contributions and refine their understanding and use of interactive teaching.

(English et al., 2004, p. 24)

Through this reflection, teachers will be made aware of the importance of quality interaction in the development of students’ communicative competence, such that they can modify their classroom practices. Moreover, reflecting on one’s own classroom practices through video recordings lessens the anxiety of being observed by others: for instance, head teacher, head of department, inspectors or even one’s own colleagues. Chávez (2006) explains that classroom observation by administrators continuously incorporates negative connotation for teachers, since supervisions are most of the time geared toward providing judgmental feedback regarding their performance. Hence, this misconception needs to be changed. Reflections and feedback from the authorities should be viewed as an opportunity for improvement rather than criticism.

In addition, the findings on how the curriculum is implemented in the classroom will hopefully increase the realisation that the purpose of communicative activities and classroom interaction is not primarily to promote student participation. Rather, it is to engage the learners in learning and thinking. Hence, this study has, I hope, increased awareness of the pedagogical implications, and the importance, of talk for learning and not for teaching (Myhill, 2006).

9.6.2 Contribution to teacher education

The findings show that in terms of professional competence, many EL Year 1 teachers are in need of further professional training. Hence, the research findings have certain

implications for the pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development.

9.6.2.1 Pre-service teacher training

This study implies the importance of recruiting EL teachers with English backgrounds or qualifications. In other words, a stricter measure in the selection of EL teachers is needed. The Education Ministry must be more transparent and fair in the selection of teachers, because better teachers will ensure student development (ASLI-CPPS, PROHAM & KITA-UKM, 2012, p. 3). As far as possible, English teachers should only be those who have had formal training in ESL and who are competent in the language. The Ministry should not allow teachers to teach a subject for which they are not qualified (Mohd Asraf, 1996). In fact, apart from attending courses that focus on theoretical foundations for language teaching and on language pedagogy, EL teachers should also be asked to undergo courses that would help them increase their English proficiency from time to time (*ibid*).

Good language proficiency is important, because the language that a teacher uses is a model for the students and lack of fluency in English deprives the students of exposure to the language. According to Cazden (1987, p. 10) “the development of trainees’ language awareness is obviously a priority. Highlight practical concerns in language education for trainees such as meta-linguistic awareness, target language proficiency and pedagogical skills with regard to teaching language”. However, it is important to note, as Hayes (2010) suggests, that good language proficiency does not mean conformity to native-speaker norms, but the ability to use the language for communicative purposes in one’s own ways.

Another contribution of the study involves awareness of the need to improve the teaching module of the pre-service teacher training, by including the knowledge of, and exposure to, strategies for communication to improve teacher-student interactions in the classroom, in order to achieve the curriculum’s desired goal. As Arfah (1987) suggests,

The focus of teacher training programmes had been on strategies for teaching and learning in the classroom, and not on the selection of strategies for communication for use in the classrooms. Thus, there were no conscious efforts to change the patterns of teacher-pupil classroom

interactions. But it is suggested that changes in the teaching-learning strategies would imply changes in the patterns of classroom interactions. Thus it is proposed that the development of teacher training programmes should look at the selection of teacher-pupil interaction patterns, so that appropriate recommendations could be made to link patterns of teacher-pupil interactions to the innovations introduced in the classrooms
(p. 74)

As the Malaysian curriculum emphasizes students' development of communicative competence, teacher education programmes should devote more time and attention to language use in the classroom. Teachers need to be exposed to, trained in and have demonstrations of the types of classroom interaction that can enhance students' ability to interact and communicate effectively and develop their critical thinking skills. At present, pre-service and in-service programmes consist of methodology and a language awareness strand, where the emphasis is on introducing teachers to teaching strategies and methodologies, but little attention is paid to the importance of good communication while teaching, or to the kind of interaction patterns that can promote meaningful interaction and eventually students' language and cognitive development.

9.6.2.2 In-service teacher training or professional development

This study implies that in order for training to be effective, professional support should comprise both theoretical knowledge and practical guidance intertwined in teachers' actual teaching contexts. According to Bitan-Friedlander et al. (2004), the introduction of a curriculum reform or any educational innovation, which includes using a new teaching strategy, will require the development of both the theoretical knowledge and the relevant experience of the teachers. Professional development that focuses on content knowledge, along with opportunities for experiential learning, and which is integrated into actual teaching experience, is more likely to enhance knowledge and skills and therefore improve classroom practices (Garet et al., 2001).

Another contribution of this study is the realisation of the continuous need for in-service training on how to teach and implement the new teaching strategies and approaches. The study reveals the need to develop technical skills and techniques in implementing the curriculum reform: specifically on how to focus on the development of language skills (particularly oral skills) and critical thinking through the acquisition of knowledge. The training should be continuous, sustained over time and intensive, so that knowledge and skills are constantly refreshed. This is especially desirable for

novice teachers who have had little or no exposure to or experience of the teaching techniques and approaches.

The study also discovered that the current method of selecting trainers for in-house training at school level by the Ministry of Education (whereby the head teachers select a representative from each school and he/she is responsible for disseminating the information on the curriculum to the other teachers in their respective schools) has to be reconsidered. A detailed explanation of the process of trainer selection for in-house training was given in Chapter Seven (see 7.2). This current method does not guarantee that the information is communicated to the rest of the teacher community, for reasons such as lack of confidence and lack of competency as trainers. In this study, the majority of the representatives had no experience being a trainer or a facilitator for training and they were not provided with the skills to train others. In order for in-house training to be successful and the outcome for quality education to be achieved, it is necessary to allocate a session on how to cascade the materials (i.e. provide some training for trainers).

Clearly, the implementation of the curriculum can be successful if teachers are able to translate the aspiration of the curriculum developers into a form that can be accepted and understood by the students. Teachers should be able to understand and appreciate the changes that the curriculum is attempting to implement. Initial teacher training should, among other things, prepare teachers to be ready to handle changes in the curriculum (Noor Azlan, 1995 cited in Zanzali, 2003).

9.6.3 Contribution to curriculum planning and policymaking

Even though this study focuses on the perspectives of the teachers, it also has benefits for policy makers and curriculum planners. The findings can create an awareness of the problems and challenges the SCPS has posed for teachers, with a view to improving language education in Malaysia. They can lead to a better understanding of the primary English curriculum reform and of the impact of the current curriculum on the English as a second language (ESL) teaching and learning. The findings of this study may be useful in revising the curriculum in a way that is beneficial for the students' pedagogical and communicative needs. This study implies that although changes may be the most desirable outcomes of the recent curriculum reform, change is not easy to achieve,

because it involves so many factors. Firstly, the Ministry has to consider the existing obstacle of the limited English language proficiency level and lack of teaching competency among the EL teachers. It is well known that well-trained and proficient EL teachers are necessary to teach young children. Thus, the Ministry may have to reconsider and reevaluate its recruitment process. As recommended earlier, the Ministry should consider selecting those with an English language background or qualification to be EL teachers.

The other problems that the ministry has to consider are contextual issues such as large class sizes and the students' low level of English language proficiency. The Ministry has to reconsider and rethink the suitability of the reform effort to the current Malaysian teaching and learning environment. Thus, there is a need for the Ministry to review and reallocate the number of students per class and to review the curriculum to suit the needs of less proficient students, in order to ensure effective implementation of the SCPS and for the aim of the curriculum reform to be successfully achieved. Carless (1997) says improvement of the present conditions in schools before renewing the curriculum (via things such as better physical conditions in schools, increased teaching and learning resources, better teacher-pupil ratios, or improved remuneration and conditions of service for teachers) is essential to ensure the successful implementation of a curriculum change. Wedell (2005) sums up the situation by arguing that coordination between the aim of the curriculum and teachers' immediate working environments is important to confirm the curriculum change is enforced as meant.

As suggested earlier, continuous follow-up in the classrooms and monitoring is one of the essential elements of improving the effectiveness of the curriculum. Thus, the process of follow-up in the Malaysian education system that is regulated by the Ministry of Education through the Inspectorate who is responsible for undertaking the tasks of pedagogical inspection and evaluating the teachers' performance and competency, and Quality Assurance authority should be re-examined. According to the teachers such inspection was seldom carried out. Hence, instead of occasional visits to schools, inspectors for English language should carry out more regular visits to observe more classes, so as to enable teachers to give feedback and discuss problems that arise. The instrument used during the inspection should also be reviewed and classroom interaction should be included as one of the evaluative criteria.

9.6.4 Contribution to knowledge in the field of study (e.g., language curriculum design and evaluation and English Language Teaching) and further research

This study contributes to the knowledge in the relevant literature such as that on language curriculum design and evaluation, educational change or curriculum reform, and English Language Teaching (ELT) in several ways. It offers useful and detailed insights into current classroom practices of ELT and provides information on the range of challenges that shape, help and hinder teachers' achieving the MOE educational and pedagogical goals. Since the SCPS was still at its initial stage of implementation, having just been implemented when this study was started, this study acts as the pioneer. The findings will be of educational value to the relevant literature. Besides, this study shows the value of a mixed methods approach to researching curriculum change, as it involved observations, interviews and systematic observation.

9.7 Summary of recommendations and contributions

In sum, based on the interpretation of the results, several recommendations can be proposed which include all aspects of the curriculum reform as well as general issues such as the selection of EL teachers, training and improving the language proficiency of the teachers. However, as the curriculum is already in full swing, priority should be on those aspects related to practicing teachers already in school. Hence, improving the language proficiency of the teachers should be a priority to ensure that only teachers with adequate level of competence and proficiency in English language teach the subject. This is urgently important as it was reported that two-thirds of English teachers in Malaysia did not meet the proficiency level (Jalleh, 2012). This means that about 47,000 teachers out of the 70,000 teachers who sat for the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) did not possess the adequate level of proficiency as English teachers who teach the language. It is vital for a teacher, who is to teach her students competency in the language, to be competent in the language herself (or himself), in all language skills and beyond (Kwan & Md Yunus, 2014).

However, good language proficiency does not mean conformity to native-speaker norms, but the ability to use the language for communicative purposes in one's own ways. In Malaysian context where English is not the language of the community, it is

important for teachers teaching English to be competent in the language in order to provide the correct model of the language and to create the appropriate English environment, which can have great influence on how students acquire and learn the language. Once teachers have the adequate language proficiency training on relevant teaching approaches or strategies can be provided to ensure that teachers' classroom practices are aligned with the teaching principles and theories underpinning the curriculum. Training that involves theoretical and practical components should be incorporated. Teachers should be given visual models of the teaching approaches that need to be practiced and ample opportunities to experience or try out the teaching approaches during training. This is to ensure that they have the opportunity to adapt and make necessary changes in accordance to the teaching environment and context that they are in.

The decision to adopt curriculum innovation and new teaching approaches is crucial as they impact on the teachers and their attitudes and beliefs about such changes and most importantly on students' learning. The findings of this study may benefit not only the teachers but also other relevant authorities, such as teacher educators, policy makers and curriculum developers. Teachers may use these findings to establish better practices, teacher educators can benefit in terms of future teacher development and evaluation of pre-service and in-service teacher programmes, and policy makers and curriculum planners may reconsider some of the issues raised by the teachers and their current practices before implementing a change in the education system.

9.8 Limitations of the study

Despite its contributions, this study like any other has its limitations.

9.8.1 The timing of the data collection

This study was carried out at the initial stage of the implementation of the curriculum (after just four months of implementation). The reform was still new to the teachers and some might well have still been trying to adjust and adapt to the new curriculum. Hence, their views, understanding and practices may have changed over the course of the study. Although the classroom practices identified were typical of the classes

observed, the picture described in this thesis might not reflect fully what is happening in every EL primary classrooms in Malaysia.

9.8.2 The problem of generalisation.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Malaysia is a large country comprising 13 states and 3 federal territories that differ in their cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Thus, the findings in one geographical location may not be representative of the overall EL primary classrooms in the country. However, the teachers involved in this study were typical in their qualifications and educational backgrounds, which implies that the findings that emerged from this study are likely to be relevant to an understanding of how teachers' view the curriculum and what happens in primary EL lessons generally.

Secondly, looking at one module of the curriculum from small samples may not lead to findings representative of the whole curriculum. However, the findings obtained in this study do offer an evidence-based view of how the curriculum reform is represented within the teaching context and represent eight different primary schools.

9.8.3 The lack of time prevented a longitudinal study.

The fact that my scholarship regulations allowed only three months for data collection in the home country prevented a longitudinal study. A longitudinal study over several years would have provided richer information with regard to the implementation of the recent curriculum reform. A future study could be carried out to look at how the same eight teachers perceive and view the recent curriculum reform and the impact it has on their classroom practices over time. In addition, teachers' questioning techniques and follow-up strategies after receiving feedback and professional development could also be investigated. Furthermore, since this study has mainly focused on the teachers, investigating the students' views and perceptions of the curriculum reform and the impact of the curriculum implementation on students' learning over the next few years could provide enlightening insights into the teaching and learning process in EFL/ESL classroom contexts in Malaysia.

9.9 Conclusion

This study has outlined and highlighted the effectiveness of the SCPS from three perspectives: teachers' views of the curriculum document and support materials, the dissemination of the recent curriculum reform and the teaching practices of the curriculum in actual classrooms. Although the curriculum was positively perceived and well accepted by the teachers, the curriculum was not fully effective. From the perspectives of the curriculum standard document, the curriculum was not clear to the understanding of the teachers in many respects, such as its aim, the teaching principles embedded in the curriculum and its assessment procedure. Meanwhile, from the perspectives of the dissemination of the curriculum and the classroom practices, the effectiveness of the recent curriculum reform was less evident, as the training did not reflect a successful cascade model and the classroom practices did not mirror the aim of the curriculum. This study also supports other research in international contexts, confirming that the implementation of curriculum reform frequently faces numerous difficulties and challenges (Aksit, 2007; Azmi, 2000; Chang, 2011; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Shihiba, 2011; Wang 2006).

In an effort to improve the standard of English among the students, the curriculum for ESL teaching and learning in Malaysia has undergone several transformations. Nevertheless, challenges to the curriculum keep occurring and surprisingly these challenges were similar to those found in the previous curriculum. It is widely known fact that teachers will be affected significantly by the development and implementation of any curriculum reform and if teachers are not helped to deal with the stress and challenges led to by changes in the content of a programme as well as pedagogical changes, the implementation process will be ineffective (Zanzali, 2003). Obviously, the need to overcome these obstacles is of great importance if the desired aim of the curriculum is to be achieved and the level of English language proficiency among the students is to be improved.

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL ISSUES AUDIT FORM

Ethical Issues Audit Form

This questionnaire should be completed for each research study that you carry out as part of your degree. You should discuss it fully with your supervisor, who should also sign the completed form

Surname / family name:	A.Rahman
First name / given name	Nor Haslynda
Programme:	PhD in Educational Studies
Supervisor (of this research study):	Prof Frank Hardman
Topic (or area) of the proposed research study: The National Standard-Based Primary English Language Curriculum: teachers' perceptions and classroom implementation with special reference to classroom interactions.	
Where the research will be conducted: Malaysia	
Methods that will be used to collect data: Document Analysis, Interviews, Classroom Observation, Stimulated Recall	

Data sources

- 1 Does your research involve collecting data from people, e.g. by observing them, or from interviews or questionnaires. **YES/NO**

Note: The answer to this will normally be 'yes'. It would only be 'no', if the research was entirely based on documentary sources, or secondary data (already collected by someone else). If the answer is 'no', then please go straight to question 12.

Impact of research on the research subjects

For studies involving interviews, focus group discussions or questionnaires:

- 2 Is the amount of time you are asking research subjects to give reasonable? Is any disruption to their normal routines at an acceptable level? **YES/NO**
- 3 Are any of the questions to be asked, or areas to be probed, likely to cause anxiety or distress to research subjects? **YES/NO**
- 4 If the research subjects are under 16 years of age, have you taken steps to ensure that another adult is present during all interviews and focus group discussions, and that questions to be asked are appropriate? **YES/NO**

For studies involving an intervention (i.e. a change to normal practices made for the purposes of the research):

- 5 Is the extent of the change within the range of changes that teachers would normally be able to make within their own discretion? YES/NO
- 6 Will the change be fully discussed with those directly involved (teachers, senior school managers, pupils, parents – as appropriate)? YES/NO

Informed consent

- 7 Will steps be taken to inform research subjects in advance about what their participation in the research will involve? YES/NO
- 8 Will steps be taken to inform research subjects of the purpose of the research? YES/NO

Note: For some research studies, the data might be seriously distorted by informing research subjects in advance of the purpose of the study. If this is the case (and your answer to question 8 is therefore 'no'), please explain briefly why.

-
- 9 Will steps be taken to inform research subjects of what will happen to the data they provide (how this will be stored, for how long, who will have access to it, how individuals' identities will be protected during this process)? YES/NO
- 10 In the case of studies involving interviews or focus groups, will steps be taken to allow research subjects to see and comment on your written record of the event? YES/NO
- 11 Who will be asked to sign a statement indicating their willingness to participate in this research? Please **tick all categories** that apply:

Category	Tick if 'yes'
Adult research subjects	
Research subjects under 16	
Teachers	✓
Parents	
Headteacher (or equivalent)	
Other (please explain) Curriculum officer Key Personnel (trainers)	✓

Reporting your research

- 12 In any reports that you write about your research, will you ensure that the identity of any individual research subject, or the institution which they attend or work for, cannot be deduced by a reader? YES/NO

If the answer to this is 'no', please explain why:

Signed: *[Signature]*

Date: 7/12/2010

Please now give this form to your supervisor to complete the section below.

NOTE:

If your plans change as you carry out the research study, you should discuss any changes you make with your supervisor. If the changes are significant, your supervisor may advise you to complete a new 'Ethical issues audit' form.

To be completed by the supervisor of the research study:

Please one of the following options.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I believe that this study, as planned, meets normal ethical guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am unsure if this study, as planned, meets normal ethical guidelines
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe that this study, as planned, does not meet normal ethical guidelines and requires some modification.

Signed: *F. Hardman*

Date: 14/12/10

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

APPENDIX B1

**APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM
ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT**



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
JABATAN PERDANA MENTERI
Prime Minister's Department
BLOK B5 & B6
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



EPU
ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT
PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT, MALAYSIA

Telefon : 603-8872 3333

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref:

UPE: 40/200/19/2751

Ruj. Kami:
Our Ref:

18 January 2011

Tarikh:
Date:

Nor Haslynda A.Rahman
No 28, Jalan Tu 30
Taman Tasik Utama
Ayer Keroh
75450 Melaka
Email: lynd6870@yahoo.com

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been *approved* by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name : **NOR HASLYNDA A. RAHMAN**

Passport No. / I. C No: **701228-01-5236**

Nationality : **MALAYSIAN**

Title of Research : **"THE STANDARD-BASED PRIMARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION"**

Period of Research Approved: **THREE MONTHS**

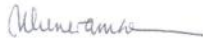
2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya and bring along two (2) passport size photographs. You are also required to comply with the rules and regulations stipulated from time to time by the agencies with which you have dealings in the conduct of your research.

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
- b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



(MUNIRAH ABD. MANAN)
For Director General,
Economic Planning Unit.
E-mail: munirah@epu.gov.my
Tel: 88882809
Fax: 88883961

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and **cannot be used as a research pass.**

Cc:

Ketua Setiausaha
Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan
Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia
Aras 1-4, Blok E-8
Kompleks Kerajaan Parcel E
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62604 Putrajaya.



BAHAGIAN PERANCANGAN DAN PENYELIDIKAN DASAR PENDIDIKAN
KEMENTERIAN PELAJARAN MALAYSIA
ARAS 1-4, BLOK E-8
KOMPLEKS KERAJAAN PARCEL E
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62604 PUTRAJAYA.

Telefon: 03-t: 846591
Faks : 03-: 846579

Ruj. Kami : KP(BPPDP)603/01/Jld13(21)
Tarikh : 13 Januari 2011

Ketua Pengarah
Seksyen Ekonomi Makro
Unit Perancangan Ekonomi
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Blok B5 Aras 4
Kompleks Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
(u.p. Pn. Munirah Bt. Abd. Manan)

Puan,

**Pemohonan Untuk Menjalankan Penyelidikan di Malaysia
NOR HASLYNDA A. RAHMAN**

Dengan hormatnya saya merujuk kepada perkara di atas.

2. Adalah saya diarahkan memaklumkan bahawa Bahagian ini tidak mempunyai apa-apa halangan dan menyokong cadangan yang dikemukakan oleh penyelidik berkenaan untuk membolehkan menjalankan penyelidikan :

" The Standard-Based Primary English Language Curriculum: Teachers' Perceptions And Classroom Implementation "

3. Bersama-sama ini disertakan ulasan Bahagian ini ke atas cadangan penyelidikan yang dikemukakan.

Sekian dimaklumkan, terima kasih.

" BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA "

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(DR. SOON-SENG THAH)

Ketua Sektor
Sektor Penyelidikan Dan Penilaian
Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan
b.p. Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia

APPENDIX B2

**APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM
STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**



JABATAN PELAJARAN MELAKA
JALAN ISTANA,
PETI SURAT No. 62,
75450 MELAKA

Pengarah : 06-2323782
Timbalan : 06-2323781
Pejabat Am : 06-2323777
: 06-2323778
: 06-2323779
Peperiksaan : 06-2323780
Fax : 06-2320500

JPM.SPS.UPP.100 -2/5/2 Jld 6(12)

Tarikh : 10 Februari 2011

Nor Haslynda Bt A. Rahman,
No.28, Jln. TU 30,
Taman Tasik Utama,
75450 Air Keroh,
Melaka.

Tuan,

KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH DI NEGERI MELAKA.

Dengan segala hormatnya merujuk surat tuan yang bertarikh 10 Februari 2011, mengenai perkara di atas.


2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa Jabatan ini tiada halangan bagi pihak tuan untuk menjalankan aktiviti seperti yang dinyatakan. Dimaklumkan juga di sini bahawa kajian ini adalah semata-mata untuk memenuhi syarat kursus yang diduduki sahaja dan bukan untuk tujuan lain.

3. Walau bagaimanapun, pihak tuan adalah dinasihatkan menghubungi Pengetua/ Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan terlebih dahulu untuk berbincang dan mendapatkan persetujuan. Sebarang pertanyaan, sila hubungi Hj Shahidin bin Mohd Shah di talian 06-2325541. Sekian untuk makluman tuan.

Terima kasih.

'1MALAYSIA, MELAKA MAJU 2010'
"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,


(HAJI ASHARI BIN JOHARI)
Ketua Sektor Pengurusan Sekolah
b.p Pengarah Pelajaran Melaka

s.k

1. Fail Penyelaras

(Sila catatkan rujukan Jabatan ini bila berhubung)

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX C1

**LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
(CDD OFFICER, ELOs AND CURRICULUM TRAINERS
INTERVIEW)**

**Letter of Information (CDD Officer/DELOs/Curriculum Trainers Interviews)
for
From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English
primary curriculum in Malaysia**

I, Nor Haslynda A.Rahman, a Ph.D. student at the Department of Education, University of York, United Kingdom under the supervision of Dr Jan Hardman, am inviting you to participate in the study entitled **“From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia”**. The purpose of my study is to critically examine the effectiveness of the new primary English curriculum, known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS or its Malay equivalent, KSSR) by investigating teachers’ views of the curriculum reform. This study will take place in primary schools in Malacca Historical City beginning in 2011.

I will conduct an interview with you which may last 30-45 minutes in English. The interview will be arranged at a time and a location that is convenient and acceptable to you. The interview will be audio taped with your permission and the taped interview will be transcribed verbatim afterwards. I will send the transcriptions to you for verification later and then the tape will be erased after the thesis is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data. You are not obliged to answer any question that you find objectionable or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. No identifying information will be included in the document and confidentiality is absolutely guaranteed. Access to the data is strictly restricted to the researcher. I will report the results of the study in my Ph.D. thesis and may also report in publications of various types, conference presentations, journal articles, professional publications, and books. However, under no circumstance, will your name be released to anyone or appear in any publication created as a result of the study.

If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Nor Haslynda at email: nar506@york.ac.uk. For questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, you can contact Department Ethics Committee, University of York, UK.

Consent Form (CDD Officer/ELOs/Curriculum Trainers Interviews)
for
From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia

I have read, understood and retained a copy of the Letter of Information concerning the study “**From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia.**” The purpose of this study is to critically examine the effectiveness of the new primary English curriculum, known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS or its Malay equivalent, KSSR) by investigating teachers’ views of the curriculum reform. This study will take place in primary schools in Malacca Historical City beginning in 2011 by analysing and investigating both the intended and the enacted curriculum. All the questions regarding the study have been sufficiently answered. I am aware that I will participate in a case study. I will participate in interviews that will take about 30-45 minutes. I understand the purpose and data collection procedures of this study.

I have been notified that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I may withdraw at any point during the study without any consequences to myself. I understand that I can choose to be or not to be audio taped. I understand that I can choose not to answer any questions that I find objectionable or uncomfortable.

I have been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information. If I have questions about this study, I know that I am free to contact Nor Haslynda at email: nar506@york.ac.uk.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can also contact Department Ethics Committee, University of York, UK.

Participant’s Name :

Signature :

Date :

APPENDIX C2

**LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
(TEACHER INTERVIEW)**

Letter of Information (Teacher Interviews)
for
**From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English
primary curriculum in Malaysia**

I, Nor Haslynda A.Rahman, a Ph.D. student at the Department of Education, University of York, United Kingdom under the supervision of Dr Jan Hardman, am inviting you to participate in the study entitled **“From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia”**. The purpose of my study is to critically examine the effectiveness of the new primary English curriculum, known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS or its Malay equivalent, KSSR) by investigating teachers’ views of the curriculum reform. This study will take place in primary schools in Malacca Historical City beginning in 2011.

I will conduct four classroom observations, each lasting 30-60 minutes depending on the lesson period teachers are teaching. With your permission, I will tape-record your instruction and may take field notes when necessary to document what and how you conduct your teaching. I will also conduct an interview with you which may last 30 minutes in English after the observations. There will also be a ‘reflective dialogue session’ in which you will be invited to select and discuss a 15-minute section from one of your recorded lessons. The interviews and the reflective sessions will be arranged at a time and a location that is convenient and acceptable to you. The interview will be audio taped with your permission, and the taped interview will be transcribed verbatim afterwards. I will send the transcriptions to you for verification later and then the tape will be erased after the thesis is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data. You are not obliged to answer any question that you find objectionable or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. No identifying information will be included in the document and confidentiality is absolutely guaranteed. Access to the data is strictly restricted to the researcher. I will report the results of the study in my Ph.D. thesis and may also report in publications of various types, conference presentations, journal articles, professional publications, and books. However, under no circumstance, will your name be released to anyone or appear in any publication created as a result of the study.

If you have questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Nor Haslynda at email: nar506@york.ac.uk. For questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, you can contact Department Ethics Committee, University of York, UK.

Consent Form (Teacher Interviews)
for
From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia

I have read, understood and retained a copy of the Letter of Information concerning the study “**From curriculum reform to classroom practice: An evaluation of the English primary curriculum in Malaysia.**” The purpose of this study is to critically examine the effectiveness of the new primary English curriculum, known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS or its Malay equivalent, KSSR) by investigating teachers’ views of the curriculum reform. This study will take place in primary schools in Malacca Historical City beginning in 2011 by analysing and investigating both the intended and the enacted curriculum. All the questions regarding the study have been sufficiently answered. I am aware that I will participate in a case study. I will have my classroom teaching observed and will participate in interviews that will take about 30-45 minutes. I understand the purpose and data collection procedures of this study.

I have been notified that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I may withdraw at any point during the study without any consequences to myself. I understand that I can choose to be or not to be audio taped. I understand that I can choose not to answer any questions that I find objectionable or uncomfortable.

I have been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information. If I have questions about this study, I know that I am free to contact Nor Haslynda at email: nar506@york.ac.uk.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can also contact Department Ethics Committee, University of York, UK.

Participant’s Name :

Signature :

Date :

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION LETTER TO PARENTS

Nor Haslynda Binti A.Rahman
No 28, Jalan TU 30,
Taman Tasik Utama,
Ayer Keroh 75450,
Melaka.

Dear Parent/Guardian

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO BE A PART OF A RESEARCH STUDY

I am writing to request your permission for your child to participate in a study which I will be conducting in his/her classroom. This study will be looking at the recent curriculum transformation in primary schools. By exploring both students' and teachers' experiences of this new curriculum to English Language teaching, I hope to be able to make recommendations about how to improve the English Language Teaching in the future.

This study is part of the requirements for a Doctoral Degree which I'm currently pursuing at the University of York, United Kingdom. It will involve me observing and video recording some of your children's English classes. All information gathered will be dealt with in strictest confidence and used only for the purpose of this educational research. None of the children will be identified by name.

I hope you will accept this request and allow your child to participate in this study. If, however, you are unsure about any of the information given above, please do not hesitate to contact the Headmaster or myself for further clarification. Thank you for your time and interest.

If you have not contacted the Headmaster by the 15th of February, I would assume that you have no objections to your child being included in the study.

Sincerely,

.....
(Nor Haslynda A.Rahman)

To,
Nor Haslynda Binti A.Rahman

Re: Permission to be a part of a research study

I wish to inform that I

Approve

Do not approve

for my child

from Standard to participate in the research project that will
take place in his/her classroom.

Parent/ Guardian: Name

Signature

Date

Kepada,
Nor Haslynda Binti A.Rahman

Per: Kebenaran untuk pelajar mengambil bahagian dalam penyelidikan di sekolah

Saya ingin menyatakan bahawa saya

Membenarkan

Tidak membenarkan

anak saya

dari kelas.....untuk mengambil bahagian di dalam
penyelidikan yang akan di adakan di sekolah.

Ibubapa/Penjaga: Nama

Tandatangan

Tarikh

Nor Haslynda Binti A.Rahman
No 28, Jalan TU 30,
Taman Tasik Utama,
Ayer Keroh 75450,
Melaka.

Kepada Ibubapa/Penjaga

**MEMOHON KEBENARAN UNTUK PELAJAR MENGAMBIL BAHAGIAN
DALAM PENYELIDIKAN DI SEKOLAH**

Saya ingin memohon kebenaran dari pihak tuan/puan untuk membenarkan anak tuan/puan untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian yang akan saya jalankan di dalam kelas beliau. Kajian ini akan melihat persepsi guru terhadap transformasi kurikulum baru sekolah rendah dan pelaksanaan kurikulum berkenaan di dalam kelas. Dengan meneroka persepsi guru berkenaan kurikulum baru dan bagaimana pelaksanaan kurikulum tersebut dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris, saya berharap dapat menyumbang untuk meningkatkan Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di masa depan.

Kajian ini adalah sebahagian daripada keperluan bagi Ijazah Doktor Falsafah yang sedang saya ikuti di Universiti of York, United Kingdom. Kajian saya akan melibatkan pemerhatian dan rakaman video beberapa kelas Bahasa Inggeris yang akan melibatkan anak-anak tuan/puan secara langsung. Semua maklumat yang dikumpul dianggap sulit dan hanya digunakan untuk tujuan penyelidikan ini. Tiada kanak-kanak yang akan dikenal pasti dengan nama.

Saya harap tuan/puan akan menerima permintaan ini dan membenarkan anak tuan/puan untuk mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Walau bagaimanapun, jika tuan/puan mempunyai sebarang pertanyaan tentang apa-apa maklumat, diharap dapat menghubungi Guru Besar atau diri saya untuk penjelasan lanjut. Terima kasih untuk masa dan minat tuan/puan.

Jika tuan/puan tidak menghubungi Guru Besar sehigga 15 Februari, saya menganggap bahawa tuan/puan tidak mempunyai bantahan untuk anak tuan/puan terlibat dalam kajian saya.

Sekian, terima kasih.

Yang Benar,

.....
(Nor Haslynda A.Rahman)

APPENDIX E

**STANDARD DOCUMENT
PRIMARY CURRICULUM YEAR 1 AND 2**

DRAFT



KEMENTERIAN PELAJARAN MALAYSIA

**DOKUMEN STANDARD
KURIKULUM SEKOLAH RENDAH**

MODUL TERAS ASAS

BAHASA INGGERIS SK

TAHUN SATU & DUA

INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. The mastery of English is essential for pupils to gain access to information and knowledge written in English. In line with the government's policy on strengthening English, the curriculum has been designed to produce pupils who will be proficient in the language. The goal of the English language curriculum is to help pupils acquire the language in order to help them use it in their daily lives, to further their studies, and for work purposes.

English which is also the dominant language used in Information Communications Technology (ICT) needs to be mastered to enable our pupils to have easy access to information that is available on the electronic media such as the Internet.

This curriculum stresses the development of critical literacy. Teachers will provide opportunities for pupils to question and evaluate texts that they listen to, read or view. These opportunities are essential for achieving personal growth and confidence in functioning as an effective and productive member of our society. This is in line with the goals of the National Philosophy of Education which seeks to optimise the intellectual, emotional and spiritual potential of pupils.

AIMS

The English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools aims to equip pupils with basic language skills to enable them to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the pupils' level of development.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of Year 6, pupils should be able to:

- i. communicate with peers and adults confidently and appropriately in formal and informal situations;
- ii. read and comprehend a range of English texts for information and enjoyment;
- iii. write a range of texts using appropriate language, style and form through a variety of media;
- iv. appreciate and demonstrate understanding of English language literary or creative works for enjoyment; and
- v. use correct and appropriate rules of grammar in speech and writing.

UNDERLYING PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE CURRICULUM

The approach adopted in the Standard-based curriculum is underpinned by the following principles:

- i. Back to basics

It is essential for teachers to begin with basic literacy skills in order to build a strong foundation of language skills. Basic listening and speaking are introduced in order to help pupils enrich their understanding of the language. The strategy of phonics is introduced in order to help pupils begin to read and a good foundation in penmanship will help pupils acquire good handwriting.

ii. Learning is fun, meaningful and purposeful

Lessons, which emphasise meaningful contexts and the integration of language skills, allow pupils to learn by doing fun-filled activities. Contextualised as well as purposeful activities will promote the fun element in language learning.

iii. Teaching is learner-centred

Teaching approaches, lessons and curriculum materials must suit the differing needs and abilities of pupils. It is important that appropriate activities and materials are used with pupils of different learning capabilities so that their full potential can be realised. The Mastery Learning strategy will ensure that pupils master all learning standards in order to help them acquire the language.

iv. Integration of salient new technologies

In line with growing globalisation, technology is used extensively in our daily communication. Hence, emergent technologies can be used in language learning in order to enhance communication. Information available on the internet and other electronic media will be vital for knowledge acquisition. Networking facilities will be useful for pupils to communicate and share knowledge.

v. Assessment for learning

Continuous assessment is an integral part of learning which enables teachers to assess whether pupils have acquired the learning standards taught. Formative assessment is conducted as an on-going process, while summative assessment is conducted at the end of a particular unit or term. A range of activities can be utilised in order to assess pupils' performance orally or in writing. The formative and summative assessments will be used to gauge pupils performance.

vi. Character-building infused

An important principle which needs to be inculcated through the curriculum is character building. Lessons based on values have to be incorporated in teaching and learning in order to impart the importance of good values for the wholesome development of individuals.

CURRICULUM ORGANISATION

The Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Malaysian National Primary Schools (SK) is designed to provide pupils with a strong foundation in the English language. Teachers should use Standard British English as a reference and model for teaching the language. It should be used as a reference for spelling and grammar as well as pronunciation for standardisation.

Primary education is divided into two stages: Stage One refers to Years 1, 2 and 3 and Stage Two, Years 4, 5 and 6. In Years 1 and 2, the English language curriculum emphasises the development of basic language skills so that pupils will have a strong foundation to build their proficiency in the language. In this initial stage, there will only be four modules; namely:

- ▶ Module One : Listening and Speaking
- ▶ Module Two : Reading
- ▶ Module Three : Writing
- ▶ Module Four : Language Arts

In Years 3 - 6, where pupils build on the skills they have acquired in Year 1 and 2, a fifth module, Grammar is added to the above four modules. Therefore, the modules are:

- ▶ Module One : Listening and Speaking
- ▶ Module Two : Reading
- ▶ Module Three : Writing
- ▶ Module Four : Language Arts
- ▶ Module Five : Grammar

English is the second language for pupils in schools. It is believed prudent and pedagogically sound to defer the learning of grammar to a later stage. Pupils should be given the opportunity to develop an awareness of grammar in their first language and this awareness may then be exploited when English grammar is introduced in Year 3. This approach will reduce the load and stress of learning in the early years where the emphasis is on learning through fun and play.

A MODULAR CURRICULUM

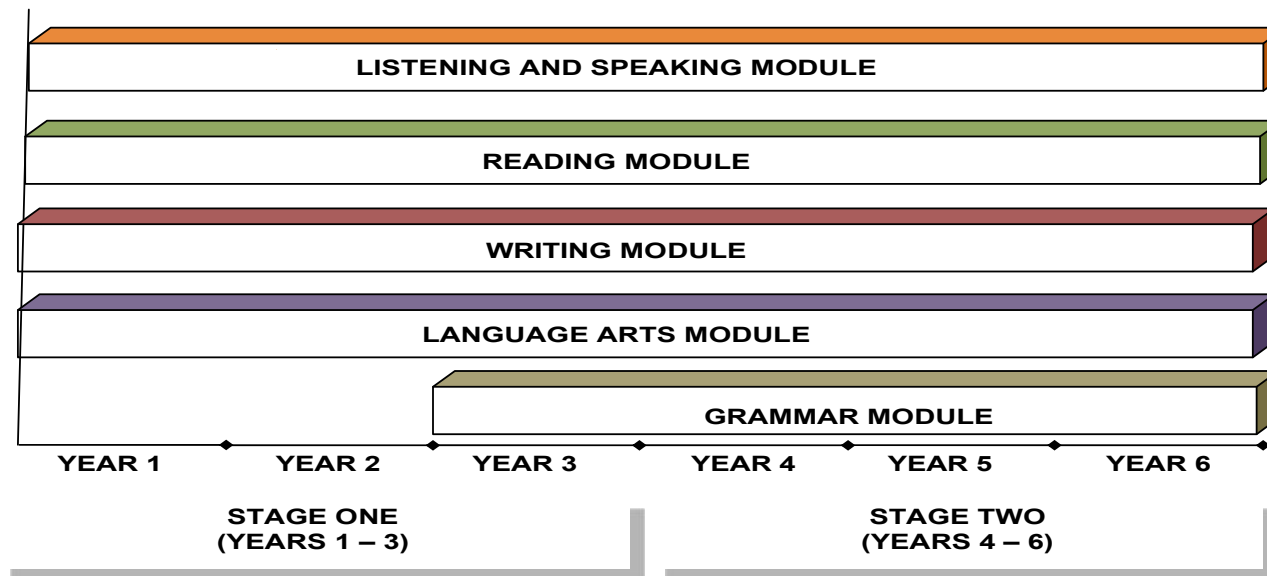
The modularity of the Standard-based English Language Curriculum is of a modular structure. By organising the curriculum standards under five modules (four for Years 1 and 2), pupils will be able to focus on the development of salient language skills or sub-skills under each module through purposeful activities in meaningful contexts. This modular approach does not exclude integration of skills. However, skills integration is exploited strategically to enhance pupils' development of specific language skills as described in the content and learning standards in a module. The curriculum is modular in design and this is reflected in the organization of the content and learning standards.

In order to make learning more meaningful and purposeful, language input is presented under themes and topics which are appropriate for pupils. Three broad themes have been identified in the curriculum.

- ▶ World of Self, Family and Friends;
- ▶ World of Stories and
- ▶ World of Knowledge.

The following diagram shows the conceptual framework of the curriculum model.

THE MODULAR CONFIGURATION



The above interrelated modules will contain content and learning standards that describe the knowledge, skills and understandings that pupils need to demonstrate as they progress through the different stages of schooling. The standards specify the knowledge and skills that pupils need to demonstrate as they talk, listen, read and write in English. When pupils engage in English learning experiences as described in this curriculum, they will develop the ability to speak, listen, read and write in English meaningfully, purposefully and with confidence. The inclusion of the module on Grammar emphasises the importance of having pupils develop a sound grasp of the language structures and grammar of Standard British English.

The approach taken in this syllabus stresses the need for pupils to develop all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Pupils will, for example, learn how to interact with peers, listen attentively, express themselves orally or in writing with confidence, read with comprehension, and write with minimal grammatical errors. In the language arts module, pupils are trained to show appreciation of and demonstrate understanding of texts read, sing songs, recite rhymes and poems as well as produce creative works for enjoyment.

CURRICULUM CONTENT FOR YEAR 1, 2 & 3

This document lays out the English language curriculum for Year 1, 2 and 3. The curriculum content is organised in terms of Content Standards and Learning Standards.

Content Standards specify the essential knowledge, skills, understandings and strategies that pupils need to learn. Learning Standards describe in detail the degree or quality of proficiency that pupils need to display in relation to the Content Standards for a particular year.

In the initial stages of learning English, pupils will have the opportunity to listen to meaningful English input, in the form of stories or oral descriptions by teachers based on graphic texts. Through listening, pupils will become familiar with words that will be introduced in their early reading and writing lessons. The emphasis in the initial stages will be on vocabulary acquisition.

1.0 LISTENING AND SPEAKING

By the end of Year 2, the component on listening and speaking aims at developing pupils' ability to listen and respond to stimulus with guidance, participate in daily conversations, listen and demonstrate understanding of text, talk about stories heard; and listen and follow simple instructions. The learning standards for listening and speaking range from the discrete sound, word and phrase recognition to an understanding of chunks of heard texts. Listening and speaking are seen as core skills of early literacy. Pupils should be taught how to listen carefully as well as feel encouraged to speak from the basic level of sound, word, phrase and move on to structural sentences in various situational contexts. At every stage, the stress, rhythm and intonation patterns need to be used correctly. In addition, pupils are also encouraged to recognise, understand and use verbal and non-verbal communication. Oral communication practice by means of repeating, responding, understanding and applying what pupils have heard sensitises their senses to be ready for communication.

Relationships are established through the ability to communicate by listening first then speaking thoughts, ideas and feelings. It is hoped by the end of primary school, pupils should become confident speakers who can communicate clearly, appropriately and coherently in any given context. Pupils need to listen carefully and respond to what others say and think about the needs of their listeners. Social conventions in listening and speaking such as turn taking, politeness and courtesy need to be observed. These are crucial especially in group discussions where viewpoints and opinions are exchanged. The use of various text types is recommended; ranging from teacher-simulated texts to media broadcasts and authentic dialogues.

2.0 READING

The Year 1 and 2 learning standards for reading addresses basic literacy using the strategies of phonics and moves on to enable pupils to become independent readers. In the beginning, pupils' phonemic awareness will be developed by means of phonics. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words. This ability to recognise letter sounds is an essential and useful early reading skill. Pupils should be made aware of the relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spelling that represent those sounds in written language). The ability to recognise letter sounds is further developed by blending individual sounds to build words. After pupils have begun to read words, this ability is further

honed by reading rhyming phrases. In order to spell, pupils are taught segmenting, in which pupils segment or break the word into individual sounds.

As pupils begin to read words, phrases and then move on to simple sentences, their skill to read should be supported by appropriate reading materials which will further develop their reading ability. This further enables them to increase the pace of their reading, and equally, enable them to comprehend a text more effectively and efficiently. However, in a second language context, it is appropriate for teachers to begin phonics instruction by first letting pupils listen to rich language input in English. The guiding principle in using phonics to teach reading is for the pupils to enjoy the activities selected. Hence the use of songs, rhymes, poems, stories and pictures to make phonics instruction more enjoyable is encouraged.

Teachers are encouraged to gauge the literacy level of their pupils in Year One, if pupils are able to read well, teachers will not have to deal with the phonemes individually. Teachers can then develop challenging language activities and games which will hone their vocabulary development. If pupils have difficulty articulating particular phonemes then teachers will have to deal with problematic phonemes individually although pupils may be reading well.

3.0 WRITING

The learning standards for writing begin with pre-writing skills, which addresses penmanship, the formation of letters, words as well as numbers in clear print. Specific learning standards are attributed to penmanship so that even from a young age, pupils are taught good writing habits. Special attention should be given in order to strengthen the muscles of the hand, develop visual skills, enhance gross and fine motor skills as well as develop hand-eye coordination to help pupils acquire penmanship. Correct formation of letters of the alphabet is important in order to help pupils write neatly and later write words, phrases and sentences legibly. By the end of Year 2, pupils will master the mechanics of writing and then learn to write at word, phrase and sentence levels. Specific writing activities devised during lessons will enable pupils to begin writing for a purpose as stipulated in the learning standards.

4.0 LANGUAGE ARTS

The standards for language arts in Year 1 and 2 will explore the power of story, rhyme and song to activate pupils' imagination and interest, thus encouraging them to use English language widely. This component will ensure that they benefit from hearing and using language from fictional as well as non-fictional sources. Through fun-filled and meaningful activities in this component, pupils will gain a rich and invaluable experience in using the English language. When taught well, pupils will take pride in their success. They will also benefit strongly from consistent praise for effort and achievement by the teachers with the aim of making their learning as rewarding as possible. Pupils will also be encouraged to plan, prepare and produce simple creative works. In addition, the Language Arts module also provides pupils an opportunity to integrate, experiment and apply what they have learnt in the other modules in fun-filled, activity-based and meaningful experiences.

5.0 GRAMMAR

The learning of grammar is deferred to Year 3. In Year 1 and 2, the emphasis is for pupils to develop an understanding of grammar in their first language and this understanding may then be exploited in Year 3 onwards when English grammar is learnt.

6.0 WORD LIST

The list of words selected for teaching is based on common words and high frequency words that can be used repetitively in different contexts. The suggested word list can be expanded upon if pupils demonstrate an ability to acquire more words.

7.0 EDUCATIONAL EMPHASES

The Educational Emphases reflect current developments in education. These emphases are infused and woven into classroom lessons to prepare pupils for the challenges of the real world. In this respect, Moral Education, Citizenship Education, Patriotism, Thinking Skills, Mastery Learning, Information and Communication Technology Skills, Multiple Intelligences, Constructivism, Contextual Learning, Learning How to Learn Skills, Creativity and Entrepreneurship are incorporated where appropriate and relevant in lessons. The educational emphases included are explained briefly below:

Thinking Skills

Critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning standards to enable pupils to solve simple problems, make decisions, and express themselves creatively in simple language.

Mastery Learning

Mastery Learning will ensure that all pupils master the learning standards stipulated in the Standard Based Curriculum. Mastery Learning requires quality teaching and learning in the classroom and teachers need to ensure that pupils master a learning standard before proceeding to the next learning standard.

Information and Communication Technology Skills (ICT)

Information and Communication Technology Skills (ICT) include the use of multimedia resources such as TV documentaries and the Internet as well as the use of computer-related activities such as e-mail activities, networking and interacting with electronic courseware.

Multiple Intelligences

The theory of Multiple Intelligences encompasses eight different intelligences human beings possess. These intelligences are essential in order to maximise teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, interpersonal

intelligence is reflected when pupils are taught the polite forms of language expression so as not to offend the people they communicate with. In getting pupils to role-play or dramatise sections of a text, their kinaesthetic intelligence is nurtured. When pupils sing songs, recite poems and chant *jazz chants* either individually or in chorus, their musical intelligence is developed.

Constructivism

Constructivism will enable pupils to build new knowledge and concepts based on existing knowledge or schema that they have. The teacher assists pupils to acquire new knowledge and solve problems through pupil-centred active learning.

Contextual Learning

Contextual Learning is an approach to learning which connects the contents being learnt to the pupils' daily lives, the community around them and the working world. Learning takes place when a pupil is able to relate the new knowledge acquired in a meaningful manner in their lives.

Learning How to Learn Skills

Learning How to Learn Skills are integrated in the learning standards and aim to enable pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. These skills incorporate study skills and information skills to equip them to become independent life-long learners.

Values and Citizenship

The values contained in the Standard Based Curriculum for Moral is incorporated into the English language lessons. Elements of patriotism and citizenship is also emphasised in lessons in order to cultivate a love for the nation and produce patriotic citizens.

Knowledge Acquisition

In teaching the language, content is drawn from subject disciplines such as science, geography, and environmental studies. Content is also drawn from daily news items as well as current affairs.

Creativity

Creativity is the ability to produce something new in an imaginative and fun-filled way. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 will display interest, confidence and self-esteem through performance and producing simple creative works.

Entrepreneurship

Fostering entrepreneurial mindset among pupils at their young age is essential in this new world. Some of the elements that are linked with entrepreneurship are creativity, innovation and initiative, which are also attributes for personal fulfilment and success. In Year 1 and 2, elements of entrepreneurship are incorporated in lessons through activities.

Assessment

In standard-based units of study, pupils' products and performance are assessed by criteria that are directly linked to the content and learning standards. Multiple sources of evidence like checklists, observations, presentations, quizzes and tests are used to document the attainment of any one standard. Through this process, teachers will build a profile of pupils language development and assess them individually. Pupils' competence in the language is assessed by a combination of formative and summative assessment methods.

Content and Learning Standards Years One and Two- Listening and Speaking

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>1.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to pronounce words and speak confidently with the correct stress, rhythm and intonation.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Able to listen and respond to stimulus given with guidance :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) environmental sounds b) instrumental sounds c) body percussion d) rhythm and rhyme e) alliteration f) voice sounds g) oral blending and segmenting <p>1.1.2 Able to listen to and enjoy simple stories.</p> <p>1.1.3 Able to listen to, say aloud and recite rhymes or sing songs with guidance.</p> <p>1.1.4 Able to talk about a stimulus with guidance.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Able to listen and respond to stimulus given with guidance :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) environmental sounds b) instrumental sounds c) body percussion d) rhythm and rhyme e) alliteration f) voice sounds g) oral blending and segmenting <p>1.1.2 Able to listen to and enjoy simple stories.</p> <p>1.1.3 Able to listen to, say aloud and recite rhymes or sing songs.</p> <p>1.1.4 Able to talk about a stimulus with guidance.</p>

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>1.2 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to listen and respond appropriately in formal and informal situations for a variety of purposes.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Able to participate in daily conversations :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) exchange greetings (b) introduce oneself (c) make polite requests (d) thank someone (e) express a simple apology <p>1.2.2 Able to listen to and follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) simple instructions in the classroom. b) simple directions to places in the school. 	<p>1.2.2 Able to participate in daily conversations :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) exchange greetings (b) make polite requests (c) express apologies (d) talk about oneself (e) introduce family members and friends. <p>1.2.2 Able to listen to and follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) simple instructions in the classroom. b) simple directions to places in the school. <p>1.2.3 Able to give:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) simple instructions in school. b) simple directions to places in school.
<p>1.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to understand and respond to oral texts in a variety of contexts.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Able to listen to and demonstrate understanding of oral texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) giving Yes/No replies b) answering simple Wh-Questions 	<p>1.3.1 Able to listen to and demonstrate understanding of oral texts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) answering simple Wh-Questions b) giving True/False replies

Content and Learning Standards Years One and Two- Reading

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two																																																																																										
<p>2.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to apply knowledge of sounds of letters to recognise words in linear and non-linear texts.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Able to identify and distinguish the shapes of the letters in the alphabet.</p> <p>2.1.2 Able to recognise and articulate initial, medial and the final sounds in single syllable words within given context:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>(a)</td> <td>/s/ (s)</td> <td>/æ/ (a)</td> <td>/t/ (t)</td> <td>p/ (p)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(b)</td> <td>/i/ (i)</td> <td>/n/ (n)</td> <td>/m/ (m)</td> <td>/d/ (d)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(c)</td> <td>/g/ (g)</td> <td>/o/ (o)</td> <td>/k/ (c)</td> <td>/k/ (k)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(d)</td> <td>/k/ (ck)</td> <td>/e/ (e)</td> <td>/u/ (u)</td> <td>/r/ (r)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(e)</td> <td>/h/ (h)</td> <td>/b/ (b)</td> <td>/f/ (f,ff)</td> <td>/l/ (l,ll)</td> <td>/s/ (ss)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(f)</td> <td>/dʒ/ (j)</td> <td>/v/ (v)</td> <td>/w/ (w)</td> <td>/ks/ (gz)</td> <td>/x/ (x)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(g)</td> <td>/j/ (y)</td> <td>/z/ (z,zz)</td> <td>/kw/ (qu)</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(h)</td> <td>/tʃ/ (ch)</td> <td>/ʃ/ (sh)</td> <td>/θ/ (th)</td> <td>/ŋ/ (ng)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	(a)	/s/ (s)	/æ/ (a)	/t/ (t)	p/ (p)		(b)	/i/ (i)	/n/ (n)	/m/ (m)	/d/ (d)		(c)	/g/ (g)	/o/ (o)	/k/ (c)	/k/ (k)		(d)	/k/ (ck)	/e/ (e)	/u/ (u)	/r/ (r)		(e)	/h/ (h)	/b/ (b)	/f/ (f,ff)	/l/ (l,ll)	/s/ (ss)	(f)	/dʒ/ (j)	/v/ (v)	/w/ (w)	/ks/ (gz)	/x/ (x)	(g)	/j/ (y)	/z/ (z,zz)	/kw/ (qu)			(h)	/tʃ/ (ch)	/ʃ/ (sh)	/θ/ (th)	/ŋ/ (ng)		<p>2.1.1 Able to recognise and articulate initial, medial and the final sounds in single syllable words within given context:</p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>(a)</td> <td>/eɪ/ (ai)</td> <td>/i:/ (ee)</td> <td>/aɪ/ (igh)</td> <td>/əʊ/ (oa)</td> <td>/u:/ (oo)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(b)</td> <td>/ɑ:/ (ar)</td> <td>/ɔ:/ (or)</td> <td>/ɜ:/ (ur)</td> <td>/əʊ/ (ow)</td> <td>/ɔɪ/ (oi)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(c)</td> <td>/ɪə/ (ear)</td> <td>/eə/ (air)</td> <td>/ʊə/ (ure)</td> <td>/ɜ:/ (er)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(d)</td> <td>/eɪ/ (ay)</td> <td>/aʊ/ (ou)</td> <td>/aɪ/ (ie)</td> <td>/i:/ (ea)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(e)</td> <td>/ɔɪ/ (oy)</td> <td>/ɜ:/ (ir)</td> <td>/u:/ (ue)</td> <td>/ɔ:/ (aw)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(f)</td> <td>/w/ (wh)</td> <td>/f/ (ph)</td> <td>/ju:/ (ew)</td> <td>/əʊ/ (oe)</td> <td>/ɔ:/ (au)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(g)</td> <td>/eɪ/ (a-e)</td> <td>/i:/ (e-e)</td> <td>/aɪ/ (i-e)</td> <td>/əʊ/ (o-e)</td> <td>/u:/ (u-e)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	(a)	/eɪ/ (ai)	/i:/ (ee)	/aɪ/ (igh)	/əʊ/ (oa)	/u:/ (oo)	(b)	/ɑ:/ (ar)	/ɔ:/ (or)	/ɜ:/ (ur)	/əʊ/ (ow)	/ɔɪ/ (oi)	(c)	/ɪə/ (ear)	/eə/ (air)	/ʊə/ (ure)	/ɜ:/ (er)		(d)	/eɪ/ (ay)	/aʊ/ (ou)	/aɪ/ (ie)	/i:/ (ea)		(e)	/ɔɪ/ (oy)	/ɜ:/ (ir)	/u:/ (ue)	/ɔ:/ (aw)		(f)	/w/ (wh)	/f/ (ph)	/ju:/ (ew)	/əʊ/ (oe)	/ɔ:/ (au)	(g)	/eɪ/ (a-e)	/i:/ (e-e)	/aɪ/ (i-e)	/əʊ/ (o-e)	/u:/ (u-e)
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CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>2.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to apply knowledge of sounds of letters to recognise words in linear and non-linear texts.</p>	<p>2.1.3 Able to blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words and read them aloud.</p> <p>2.1.4 Able to segment words into phonemes to spell.</p>	<p>2.1.2 Able to blend phonemes into recognizable words and read them aloud.</p> <p>2.1.3 Able to segment words into phonemes to spell.</p>
<p>2.2 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to demonstrate understanding of a variety of linear and non-linear texts in the form of print and non-print materials using a range of strategies to construct meaning.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Able to read and apply word recognition and word attack skills by matching words with: a) graphics b) spoken words</p> <p>2.2.2 Able to read and understand phrases in linear and non-linear texts.</p> <p>2.2.3 Able to read and understand sentences (3-5 words) in linear and non-linear texts with guidance.</p> <p>2.2.4 Able to read a paragraph of 3-5 simple sentences.</p> <p>2.2.5 Able to apply basic dictionary skills using picture dictionaries.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Able to read and apply word recognition and word attack skills by: a) matching words with spoken words. b) reading and grouping words according to word families.</p> <p>2.2.2 Able to read and understand phrases in linear and non-linear texts.</p> <p>2.2.3 Able to read and understand simple sentences in linear and non-linear texts.</p> <p>2.2.4 Able to read and understand a paragraph of 5-8 simple sentences.</p> <p>2.2.5 Able to apply basic dictionary skills using picture dictionaries.</p>

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>2.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to read independently for information and enjoyment.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Able to read simple texts with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) fiction b) non fiction 	<p>2.3.1 Able to read simple texts with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) fiction b) non fiction

Content and Learning Standards Years One and Two- Writing

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>3.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to form letters and words in neat legible print including cursive writing.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Able to demonstrate fine motor control of hands and fingers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) handling objects and manipulating them. b) moving hands and fingers using writing apparatus c) using correct posture and pen hold grip d) scribbling in clockwise movement e) scribbling in anti-clockwise movement f) drawing simple strokes up and down g) drawing lines from left to right h) drawing patterns <p>3.1.2 Able to copy and write in neat legible print:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) small (lowercase) letters b) capital (uppercase) letters c) numerals d) words e) phrases f) simple sentences 	<p>3.1.1 Able to write in neat legible print:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) words a) phrases b) simple sentences <p>3.1.2 Able to write numerals in neat legible print:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) numeral form b) word form

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>3.2 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to write using appropriate language, form and style for a range of purposes</p>	<p>3.2.1. Able to complete with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) forms with personal details b) lists <p>3.2.2 Able to write 3-5 word sentences with guidance.</p> <p>3.2.3 Able to punctuate correctly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) capital letters b) full stop c) question mark <p>3.2.4 Able to spell common sight words.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Able to complete with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) simple messages b) posters <p>3.2.2 Able to write simple sentences with guidance.</p> <p>3.2.3 Able to punctuate correctly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) capital letters b) full stop c) question mark <p>3.2.4 Able to spell common sight words.</p>
<p>3.3 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to write and present ideas through a variety of media using appropriate language, form and style.</p>	<p>3.3.1 Able to create simple non-linear texts using a variety of media with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) greeting cards b) lists 	<p>3.3.1 Able to create simple non-linear texts using a variety of media with guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) posters b) signs

Content and Learning Standards Years One and Two- Language Arts

CONTENT STANDARDS	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>4.1 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to enjoy and appreciate rhymes, poems and songs, through performance.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Able to enjoy nursery rhymes, jazz chants and action songs through non-verbal response.</p> <p>4.1.2 Able to recite nursery rhymes , jazz chants and sing action songs with correct pronunciation and rhythm.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Able to enjoy action songs and jazz chants through non-verbal response.</p> <p>4.1.2 Able to sing action songs and recite jazz chants with correct pronunciation, rhythm and intonation.</p>
<p>4.2 By the end of the 6-year primary schooling pupils will be able to express personal response to literary texts.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Able to demonstrate skills in handling books appropriately.</p> <p>4.2.2 Able to respond to:</p> <p>a. book covers b. pictures in books</p> <p>with guidance.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Able to respond to:</p> <p>a. book covers b. pictures in books c. characters</p> <p>with guidance.</p>

CONTENT STANDARDS	LEARNING STANDARDS Year One	LEARNING STANDARDS Year Two
<p>4.3. By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to plan, organize and produce creative works for enjoyment.</p>	<p>4.3.1 Able to produce simple creative works with guidance based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) nursery rhymes b) action songs c) jazz chants d) stories <p>4.3.2 Able to take part with guidance in a performance based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) nursery rhymes b) action songs c) jazz chants d) stories 	<p>4.3.1 Able to produce simple creative works with guidance based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) action songs b) jazz chants c) stories <p>4.3.2 Able to take part with guidance in a performance based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) action songs b) jazz chants c) stories

APPENDIX F

**SAMPLE OF:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM FOR MALAYSIAN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS YEAR ONE: A TEACHER'S GUIDEBOO**

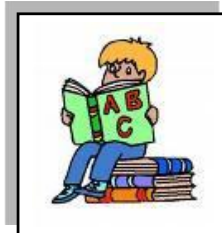
DRAFT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

for Malaysian Primary Schools



YEAR ONE



a teacher's guidebook



**CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MALAYSIA**

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MALAYSIA



THE READING SKILL

At the end of primary education, pupils should be able to apply

knowledge of sounds of letters to recognize words in order to begin reading and then move on to the more complex skill using a range of strategies to construct meaning from the text read. The ultimate goal of the reading component in primary school is to produce pupils who will be able to read independently for information and enjoyment.

The standards covered in Year 1 are as follows:

CONTENT STANDARD	LEARNING STANDARD
<p>By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to apply knowledge of sounds of letters to recognise words in linear and non-linear texts.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Able to identify and distinguish the shapes of the letters in the alphabet.</p> <p>2.1.2 Able to recognise and articulate initial, medial and the final sounds in single syllable words within given context: (a) /s/ (s), /æ/ (a), /t/ (t), /p/ (p) (b) /i/ (i), /n/ (n), /m/ (m), /d/ (d) (c) /g/ (g), / / (o), /k/ (c), /k/ (k) (d) /k/ (ck), /e/ (e), / / (u), /r/ (r) (e) /h/ (h), /b/ (b), /f/ (f,ff), /l/ (l,ll), /s/ (ss) (f) /d / (j), /v/ (v), /w/ (w), /ks/ /gz/ (x) (g) /j/ (y), /z/ (z,zz), /kw/ (qu) (h) / / (ch), / / (sh), / / /ð/ (th), / / (ng)</p> <p>2.1.3 Able to blend two to four phonemes into recognizable words and read them aloud.</p> <p>2.1.4 Able to segment words into phonemes to spell.</p>
<p>By the end of the 6-year primary schooling, pupils will be able to demonstrate understanding of a variety of linear and non-linear texts in the form of print and non- print materials using a range of strategies to construct meaning.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Able to read and apply word recognition and word attack skills by matching words with: a) graphics b) spoken words</p> <p>2.2.2 Able to read and understand phrases in linear and non-linear texts.</p> <p>2.2.3 Able to read and understand sentences (3-5 words) in linear and non- linear texts with guidance.</p> <p>2.2.4 Able to read a paragraph of 3-5 simple sentences.</p> <p>2.2.5 Able to apply basic dictionary skills using picture dictionaries.</p>

The content of this section covers learning standards 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1 (a) & (b) and 2.2.4. Although, this module does not provide suggested activities for the other learning standards, it is hoped that teachers would be able to plan lessons and activities on their own for the other Learning Standards.


In Year One, reading **should** be taught in a fun learning environment using phonics. First, pupils are taught to articulate the phoneme(s) (/s/, /æ/, /t/, /p/, /i/, etc) and then to recognize the grapheme(s) (s, a, t, p, i, etc).

Note : A phoneme is a unit of sound in a language. A grapheme is a letter or group of letters that represents a phoneme.

Example : The sound /s/ is represented by the letter ‘s’ which is called “ess”.

The English sounds to be learnt in Year One, have been divided into consonants and vowels; the following are the phonemes which pupils need to learn in Year One as stipulated in the standard document. Possible actions are suggested for teachers to use in the classroom to help pupils remember the phonemes. Children then become aware of the phonemes learnt and then to the letter sound correspondence. They can be introduced using various teaching strategies such as singing songs, telling stories, reciting rhymes, playing games as well as drilling in order to reinforce the learning of these phonemes.

The consonants are as follows:

Activity	Content	Teacher's Notes
<p>Naming the objects</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Put some objects that start with the phoneme /s/ in a big bag. Pick an object and name it aloud, stressing the phoneme /s/ as the word is said. Pupils repeat the word individually or in groups. Repeat steps (1,2,3) to introduce other objects. 	<p>Suggested Objects :</p> <p>suit, soap, sand, six, sock e.g.</p> <p>Teacher : Soap. Please repeat after me. Pupils : Soap .</p>	<p>Materials: big bag objects Follow up with Step 3 to reinforce pupils' thinking skill and to identify the objects with the phoneme /s/.</p>
<p>Yes ,Yes ! No, No !</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Put objects in a big bag. Prepare two big boxes labelled (Yes , Yes) and (No , No). Get pupils to take turns to come out in front and pick any object from the bag. The pupils identify: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the object with the phoneme /s / and put it into the 'Yes ,Yes' box . the object without the phoneme /s/ and put it into the 'No, No' box. 	<p>Objects: soap, , sand, six, sock, rat, bat, apple, ant, cat banana, elephant, ball 2 big attractive boxes</p>  <p>e.g.. Teacher : What did Ahmad take from the bag? Class : soap</p>	<p>Materials : objects two big attractive boxes</p>

APPENDIX G

CHECKLIST

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

APPENDIX H1

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CDD OFFICER

**SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS FOR THE CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (CDD, MOE)
OFFICER**

E. Questions on the curriculum

1. The difference between the new and the previous curriculum
 - Aspects of the curriculum which have undergone transformations (textbooks, assessments, teaching approaches)
 - Appropriateness/relevance to Malaysian teaching context
 - Practicality for teaching and learning
 - Teachers' understanding
2. The rationale for the curriculum transformations
 - Any needs analysis carried out?
 - Perceived needs specified?
 - Rationale of the design of the curriculum
3. What is the impact of the new curriculum on
 - Teachers' classroom practice
 - Students' learning
4. How is the curriculum communicated to the teachers?
5. How do you see the role of the teachers in the new curriculum?

F. Questions on active learning and learner centred teaching approach

1. Definitions of active learning and learner centred teaching approach
 - The characteristics
 - The rationale to reemphasize active learning and learner centred approach
 - Expectation on the implementation of active learning and learner centred approach in real classroom practices
2. Monitoring procedures or follow up system
 - Gauge teachers' understanding
 - Monitor teachers' implementation in real classrooms

G. Questions on the curriculum materials

1. What kinds of curriculum materials are provided for the teachers?
 - Rationale for using modules/executing modular approach
 - Contents of the modules
 - Difference between modules and textbooks
 - Appropriateness and relevance of modules in Malaysian teaching context
 - Rationale of the design
 - Coverage of the curriculum content and goals – to what extent?
 - How helpful in promoting active learning and learner centred approach – to what extent?

2. How are teachers expected to deal with the curriculum materials? (follow strictly the modules, select own materials, adapt these materials, create their own)
 - CDD's expectations for teachers to use the modules in the classroom?
3. Teachers' involvement in the development of the modules

H. Questions on the training

1. What type of training is provided?
 - Structure of the training
 - Training model used
2. Who are the trainers
 - Selection criteria
 - Required qualifications
3. How does the training help teachers to understand and implement the curriculum?
4. Trainers' and teachers' responses on the training – any analysis done (as proof)

Adapted from: Wang, 2008.

APPENDIX H2

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CURRICULUM TRAINERS

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS FOR THE TRAINERS

A. Profile questions

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?
2. Can you say something about your educational background?
3. Can you tell me about your experience as a trainer?
 - Selection methods/procedures
 - Years of experience
 - Required qualifications

B. Content questions on the curriculum transformations

1. What do you understand of the curriculum transformations or also known as the National Standard-Based Primary School Curriculum (KSSR)?
 - Characteristics?
 - Goals and objectives?
 - Differences or similarities between the previous and the new curriculum?
 - Positive and negative aspects?
 - Practicality and appropriateness in teaching context?
 - Benefits?
2. How do you see the role of the teachers in the new curriculum?
3. Do you think the new curriculum have any impact on teachers' classroom practice and students' learning?
4. How do the teachers respond to the transformations in the curriculum during the training?

C. Views on active learning and learner centred approach

1. In your view, what is active learning and learner centred approach?
 - Characteristics?
 - Definitions?
 - Wider examples of active learning and learner centred approach?
2. What do you consider to be the aims and purposes of active learning and learner centred approach?
 - Own views/others?
 - School issues?
 - Policy/teaching issues?
3. What is your attitude to active learning and learner centred approach?
 - Feelings about it?
4. Do you think teachers are implementing active learning and learner centred approach in their classroom practice?
 - Effectiveness?

D. Views on the training

1. In your view, have the training successfully provided the teachers with the necessary information on the underlying concept of the National Standard-Based Primary Curriculum (KSSR)?
 - Content of the training?
 - Benefits?
 - Importance?
2. What is your attitude to the training?
 - Feelings about the training? (suitability?, meets expectations?)
 - Expectations on the training?
 - Recommendations?
 - Implementation time?
3. Do you think that the way the training was conducted is effective?
 - Method employed?
 - Strategies used - Interactive?
 - Theories only or practical implementation/teaching model?
4. How do the teachers respond to the training?

E. Views on the training materials/curriculum materials

1. How do you find the curriculum materials and the modules provided?
 - Suitable?
 - Effective in teaching, students learning, achieving the curriculum goals?
 - Fulfil the English language needs of the Malaysian primary school students?
2. Do you think that the modules help to enhance teachers' understanding and practice of active learning and learner centred approach?
 - How?
 - Examples?
3. What do you consider to be the aims and purposes of advocating modular approach?
 - Own views/others?
 - Policy/teaching issues?
4. How have the teachers responded to the modules?
5. Are there any aspects of the modules need improvement or changing?

Adapted from: Wang, 2008

APPENDIX H3

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS FOR THE TEACHERS

H. Demographic information about teachers' language learning experience, educational background and teaching experience

1. Can you tell me something about your language learning experience?
2. Can you say something about yourself, such as your educational background and teaching experience?
3. How long have you taught English to Year 1 students?

I. Teachers' views on the Standard-Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS/KSSR)

5. In your view, does the new curriculum have any impact on your classroom teaching and students' learning?
 - How?
 - Examples?
6. What do you understand of the curriculum transformations or also known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary School (SCPS/KSSR)?
 - Characteristics?
 - Goals and objectives?
 - Differences or similarities between the previous and the new curriculum?
 - Positive and negative aspects?
 - Practicality and appropriateness in teaching context?
 - Benefits?
7. What is your attitude about having to deal with the new curriculum?
 - Feelings about it?

J. Teachers' conceptual understanding of active learning, learner centred approach, interactive teaching and reports of their classroom practice

5. In your view, what is active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
 - Characteristics?
 - Definitions?
 - Wider examples of active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
6. What do you consider to be the aims and purposes of active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
 - Own views/others?
 - School issues?
 - Policy/teaching issues?

7. What is your attitude to active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
 - Feelings about it?
8. Do you have concerns about using active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
 - Implications?
9. How knowledgeable do you feel about active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
10. How far do you employ active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred strategies at the moment?
 - English class?
 - Future intentions?
 - Language Arts?
11. What influence your use of active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
 - Resources?
 - Class management?
 - Impact on pupils?
 - Own knowledge/limitations?
 - Curriculum demands?
12. Has your use of active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach changed since the implementation of the new curriculum?
 - In what ways?
 - What prompted changes?
13. In your view, what, if any, are useful alternatives to active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?
14. Do you have any other comments to make about active learning, interactive teaching and learner centred approach?

K. Teachers' training experiences and views of their training

5. In your view, have the training successfully provided you with the necessary information on the underlying concept of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (SCPS/KSSR)?
 - Content of the training?
 - Benefits?
 - Importance?
6. What is your attitude to the training?
 - Feelings about the training? (suitability?, meets expectations?)
 - Expectations on the training?
 - Recommendations?
 - Implementation time?

7. Do you think that the way the training was conducted is effective?
 - Method employed?
 - Strategies used - Interactive?
 - Theories only or practical implementation/teaching model?
8. Do you seek any personal development attempts to complement training?

L. Teachers' opinions of the resources and modules provided?

1. How do you find the curriculum materials and the modules provided?
 - Suitable?
 - Effective in teaching, students learning, achieving the curriculum goals?
 - Fulfil the English language needs of the Malaysian primary school students?
2. Do you think that the modules help to enhance your understanding and practice of active learning and learner centred approach?
 - How?
 - Examples?
3. All this while, teachers and students have been provided with text books. But now teachers and students are provided with modules instead. Would you prefer to use the textbooks or the modules?
 - Why?
 - Do the curriculum materials limit/enhance your (the teacher's) freedom in the classroom?
4. What do you consider to be the aims and purposes of advocating modular approach?
 - Own views/others?
 - Policy/teaching issues?
5. Do you have concerns about using modules?
 - Implications?
6. How do you use the modules?
 - Follow the modules strictly?
 - Make changes to the modules?
 - Supplement the modules with your own activities and materials?
7. Have you encountered any problems when using the modules?
 - Aspects of the modules need improvement or changing?
 - Any teachers' guide on how to use the modules?
8. How have the students responded to the modules?
 - Do they enjoy them?

M. Problems teachers face/teachers' opinion of the innovation

1. What do you think are the most significant problems Malaysian primary schools English language teachers face in their everyday teaching?

- The most pressing problems for your students as language learners?
 - To what extent are they met in the new curriculum?
2. Does the new curriculum help to solve the problems that teachers are facing?
 3. What are the most challenging aspects that you face regarding implementing the new curriculum?

N. Teachers' role

1. How do you see your role in the new curriculum?
 - Your roles during the course of a lesson
 - Has it changed in relation to the past?
 - Difference from your role in the former curriculum?
2. To what extent do you think that you as a teacher are playing the role you should be playing in the curriculum?

Adapted from: (Karavas, 1993; Moyles, et, al. 2003; Wang, 2008)

APPENDIX H4

STIMULATED-RECALL PROTOCOL

After the final classroom observation (reflection on practice based on the video recorded teaching session)

Intention

- What was your intentions/aims/purpose in using this strategy?

Self awareness

- What were you thinking /feeling at this moment/

Perceptual awareness

- What do you notice now that you were not aware of during the lesson?

Practical reflection

- What assumptions are you making about teaching and learning?

Technical reflection

- Why do you choose this strategy?

Critical reflection

- How does this section fulfil the objective of an active learning and interactive learner-centred teaching?

Adapted from: SPRINT Project
(Moyle, Hargreaves, Merry, Paterson, & Esarte-Sarries, 2003)

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

R= RESEARCHER

B=TEACHER B

- R: First of all can you tell me your full name?
- B: My name isfrom SK.....
- R: Can you just briefly tell me about your educational background?
- B: Err...I've been teaching in this school for about 5 years and teach English for about 3 years...err...my option is Maths and now I'm teaching English...I have a degree in Science Computer...then I did my Diploma in Education (KPLI) majoring in Mathematics in.....I started teaching in 2007...when I started teaching I taught Mathematics first...and SK.....is my first school
- R: How long have you been teaching Year 1 English?
- B: 3 years...since 2009
- R: Ok last year you were using KBSR and now you are teaching using the KSSR, do you see any difference between these two curriculums?
- B: By using KSSR, it means that we split the skills into four skills and into days err...unlike the KBSR where we put all together in one lesson. In KSSR in each lesson we focus only one skill meaning that it makes err...the teacher easy to teach because only one skill and prepare for that only one lesson. However, for example if we want to teach listening & speaking, it will be a little bit hard because the whole lesson must only focus on that skill. Usually in KBSR, we can integrate more than one skills right?
- R: What about the teaching of reading or writing or language arts, do you find it as difficult as teaching listening & speaking?
- B: I think that three skills are very easy to teach *lah* with this KSSR
- R: Why is teaching listening and speaking is so difficult for you?
- B: Because as a teacher himself has a problem in speaking
- R: So you mean that teaching listening and speaking is difficult because of the proficiency level of the teachers...how about in terms of aims and goals of the curriculum, do they differ in any way?
- B: In KSSR err...for my perceptions, KSSR...by the end of the 6 years primary schooling the students will be more like err...they can speak, they can talk and they can produce ideas and they can present them in English. Unlike the KBSR, the teaching and learning focus on the students will be a product that can pass the exams. For KSSR I think the students by the end of Year 6 they can talk and present their ideas in English
- R: So are you saying that the focus of these two curriculums, KBSR is exam oriented whereby KSSR is not exam oriented?
- B: No because in KSSR they introduce school based assessments whereby the students are evaluate in every aspects, their social, how they speak, how they present their ideas, how they write and in language arts, they are also assessed on how they cooperate among their peers. In KBSR the evaluation is on writing and reading but in KSSR the students are evaluate in every way possible...it is ongoing process.
- R: So they differ on the types of assessment where the assessment for KBSR is more exams oriented and KSSR is more on ongoing progress of the students. Ok...how does the new curriculum impact your students learning? Do the students learn better now as compared to before?
- B: From my personal opinion, KSSR is better in terms of err...teaching the students and the feedback from the students...whereby in KBSR usually we do not require any feedback from the students. They just doing the exercise that's all.

But for KSSR, because every lesson is focus on the skill, so the students must give some sort of feedback in terms of listening and speaking. In language arts, they must give us some feedback, some sorts of speaking, performing...during language arts, during listening and speaking...they must talk, they must speak so they are forced to speak...the teachers also are forced to speak in English whereby in KBSR, listening and speaking is not as important as reading & writing but in KSSR, the focus of the lesson itself is listening...speaking & performing.

R: So you are saying that in the new curriculum the students respond better as compared to before in terms of their speaking skills and their communicative competence?

B: Yes

R: What about you as a teacher, does this new curriculum impact your teaching styles and methodology in the classrooms?

B: Of course...I strongly agree of using KSSR err...because it is easier for teachers to prepare their lessons...easier to prepare worksheets for students and it is easier for teachers in every way...for example last year when I teaching English, we have to prepare, for example in that lesson we focus on reading and we integrated some writing or listening & speaking, and we have to prepare worksheets that can cover all those skills but this year by using KSSR, we only focus on the skill that we are teaching on that day...the worksheets, the lesson, the language in the classrooms, only focus on that skill

R: Is there any integration of skills in the new curriculum?

B: For me I don't integrate any other skills in that lesson...I only focus on one skill only

R: Do you think this new curriculum encourage the students to use the language more?

B: Of course...because we have to evaluate them in speaking so the students must speak to gain the marks in their evaluation for the assessment

R: What about your teaching in the classroom...err...does this new curriculum change your teaching styles?

B: Maybe a little bit...for example last year by using KBSR maybe almost all teachers doesn't have any guide on how to teach Year 1. Different from KSSR, I think every teacher during the course are taught on how to teach in every lesson, on every skill. They even provide us with some sort of guide on teaching so overall I think that...maybe some sort of different *lah* between last year and this year.

R: Do you think that this new curriculum is more practical and beneficial to the students and to you as a teacher?

B: Yes I agree...the new students are better than the last one. For the new curriculum we are focus on the students' maturity ahh...in terms of every aspect of that students and every student is different in the classrooms whereby the KBSR we focus on the class...class A, B, C. In this KSSR we focus on each and every student because we have to assess every student and we have to make sure that the student can move from one band to another band

R: What about the level of your students?

B: I'm teaching in Year 1B and maybe $\frac{3}{4}$ in that class they are remedial

R: Do you find it difficult for you to teach this group of students?

B: Very hard *lah* because err...in KSSR during the listening & speaking, they must speak but they don't have the language to speak so every time in the classroom what I do for my students, I drill them, I drill them the language, I drill them the words, I drill them, drill, drill.

- R: How do you drill them?
- B: I give them words for them to remember. I give them papers for them to write for improve...and I give them chance to speak to each other. I also sometimes give them chance to perform in class. Prepare and perform some sort of singing and role play like that ahh...for them to use the language
- R: You are providing these types of activities to provide them with the opportunities to use the language?
- B: Every teacher has different strategies and for me I think I divide this year into 2 stages. The first stage maybe from January until May, I drill them, a lot of words. Then in the second phase of the year, I will let them to talk, to speak, to use the language
- R: How? In what activities they are going to use the language? How are you going to do that?
- B: Maybe some sort of like role-play, group discussion. The first phase from January to May, I give them some space to speak in Bahasa maybe in the next phase, there will no Bahasa Melayu. Everything must be in English.
- R: Do you use Bahasa in your classrooms?
- B: For the first phase yes because in January I conduct the class 100% in English but sadly most of the students, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students do not understand anything. They looked blank.
- R: So you did try to use 100% English in classrooms but it seems that it was not working.
- B: Yes...so I changed my teaching strategy to drilling maybe and hopefully in June until the end of the year, they can some sort of speak to their friends in English
- R: Do you think that teaching English in Bahasa Melayu will help the students especially the weaker ones?
- B: Err...I think yes because the first thing when they want to speak in some sort of language they must have some sort of words of that language. They must understand that words so that they can use the words.
- R: But don't you think that when you use Bahasa Melayu in the classrooms, so it depicts the purpose of teaching them English because they don't use, they rely more on the Bahasa Melayu than the English words?
- B: Like I said err...we are using Bahasa Melayu to introduce the words, to introduce the language then when they have the words then we can cut off Bahasa Melayu
- R: In what circumstances do you normally use Bahasa Melayu for example do you use Bahasa Melayu only to translate difficult words or do you use Bahasa Melayu to translate instructions or do you translate all the words from English to Bahasa Melayu?
- B: The instructions in the classrooms is in English because we can show them...for example open your book, we can show them how to open the book, take out your pencil, we can show them how to take out the pencil...simple instructions they can understand...we can show them what is the instructions. The thing that I use Bahasa Melayu is the difficult words
- R: Do you use pictures?
- B: Sometimes I use pictures, sometimes I use videos.
- R: In the new curriculum it is stated that teaching has to be interactive, learner centred and involve active learning. As a teacher, how do you define all these terms and what do you understand about interactive teaching?
- B: Err...interactive teaching, active learning and learner centred approach is an constructivism theory that we have to integrate in the classrooms whereby the students...we give some sort of problem or topic then the students will develop or come out with the solution or knowledge. When refer back to my classroom,

interactive teaching can be done, active learning difficult to be done, learner centred approach because $\frac{3}{4}$ of them are remedial it's very hard to use the active learning and learner centred approach because they are dependent on teachers. They do not know the language. They don't have the words. Maybe among the 30 topics, they don't even hear the words outside. This is the first time they hear the words in English and so to ask them to sit in groups and discuss...I think it will be a chaos in the class.

R: But you are saying that err...referring to the class you are teaching now, interactive teaching is possible to be conducted in the classrooms. What do you mean by that?

B: Interactive teaching in my perception that the students interact with the teacher and interact with the err...peers...it can be done

R: What kind of interaction do you think should happen in the classrooms?

B: For example like listening & speaking, they can talk to their friends, they can ask to borrow things from their friends...that can be done. For the active and learner centred approach, I have tried in another class last year...it can be done...the active learning and learner centred approach can be done...whereby they already have the language err...so in that class they only practise it...they do some projects and the problem is that when we are doing active learning and learner centred teaching in the classroom, the class will be in a very apa...very noisy and I have done it a few times and then I get some complaints from teachers lah because the Year 1 class is under the Year 6 classes...err...when we are doing some sort of that activities...so noisy... disturb the Year 6 classes

R: What approach do you use in the classroom to make the lessons interactive?

B: I asked them to prepare...prepare things for them to present...err...such as reading aloud, reading in groups, singing...that trigger them to speak with their friends. Another one is I force them to speak in English or interact with their friends whenever they want to borrow things...some sort like that lah...very simple interactions

R: But when it comes to teaching, let's say you are teaching a topic for example, how do you make your lesson interactive? What do you mean by interactive classrooms when it comes to a lesson that you are teaching?

B: No...there will be some problems with err...perception in KSSR. I think KSSR is not focusing on the topic we are teaching. The KSSR is focus on the students to speak for example listening & speaking, on how they respond to the topic not how we teach the topic and the content of the topic. We are producing students that can speak and talk and produce things not the topic. We have 30 topics and in KBSR we have done when we try to force the students to remember each of the topic to sit for exam. But in KSSR I don't think...I never focus on that topic. I only focus on the students, on that students, on how they speak, on how they react, how they read.

R: So regardless of the topics you are teaching, so your main focus is more on the skills that they have to acquire. So how do you make...what do you mean by making the lesson interactive while teaching them to acquire all the skills for example let's say if you are teaching reading or writing, do you think that interactive approach can also be done during the reading & writing, listening & speaking or language arts lessons?

B: Reading & writing is more on individual task only...individual skill. The listening & speaking only that I think that I integrate some sort of err...interactive learning. Like I said before, the reading & writing, that is the only...lesson err...that I integrated...I introduce the words to them and drill them the words in the reading & writing lessons lah.

- R: And err...do you think that it is difficult to teach interactively in the classrooms especially to Year 1 students in our Malaysian context now?
- B: It depends on the students...the level of the students that we have. If we have students with some sort of background, it will be easier. No problem at all then we focus on the what sort of ni lah. If we have a very low level students err... remedial type students, we cannot use that constructivism. We have to move back to the traditional way of learning theories just like behaviourist or cognitive. That's better for them.
- R: So since $\frac{3}{4}$ of your students are at remedial stage, so you are saying that it is quite difficult to conduct interactive teaching in your classrooms because of the low level proficiency of the students.
- B: It comes back to the theories that we are using in the classrooms right... interactive and active is more on constructivism. Now, in my classrooms I tried very hard to introduce...I have tried the constructivism. For now I think that constructivism is not very useful in that classrooms. So I convert back to behaviourism whereby we drill them so that they can produce something. And in my classrooms also I integrate some sort of minimalism so that the pupils focus on one single thing...very simple thing so that they can remember for a very long time.
- R: Can you give me an example for that?
- B: For example in my classrooms, I only present them a few words a day for example err...when I'm teaching about family, I only introduce them four words, father, mother, brother, sister. I don't introduce other words like cousin...no way because last week I teach about family. I teach the father, mother, sister on Monday...only four words and until Friday they cannot remember. Father? What is father? Apa dia father? Tak tahu father dah? So I have to drill them back.
- R: So because of their low level of proficiency, you have to go very slow with them. And do you think that this new curriculum can actually encourage interactive teaching in the classrooms?
- B: Yes...yes lah. KSSR is more on that actually. But then we cannot expect every student is the same. Some students are very...have no knowledge in English. We have to be very flexible lah.
- R: So are you saying that this new curriculum is inappropriate to certain level of students?
- B: No...no...no. I think KSSR is very good but when you said about interactive teaching and active learning, we have to be very flexible about that.
- R: In general, what do you think of interactive teaching? Having the classrooms in an interactive way, is it beneficial, good and practical?
- B: Interactive teaching is very good. The students will have the chance to talk, speak and perform their skills, perform what they have learned and present to us...in providing the chance to practise what they have learned.
- R: Did you attend any training on KSSR?
- B: Yes
- R: And how long was that?
- B: Three days
- R: What was the content of the training?
- B: Err...they showed us and err...informed us what do we need to do in the classrooms on KSSR.
- R: What did they show you? The activities or how to conduct the classrooms or the techniques that you have to do in the classrooms? Do they explain to you what the new curriculum is all about and how does the new curriculum different from the previous one?

- B: They showed us some sort of like that but I think the training is in chaos. I think maybe 90% of the teachers that attend the course did not understand what is KSSR and how to conduct the class.
- R: Why is that?
- B: I think the instructors also have very little information or...they also do not understand what is KSSR...last year lah, when they gave the course.
- R: So when you attended the course, the training did not provide you with sufficient knowledge how to conduct the class?
- B: Yes
- R: Were you able to understand what the curriculum is all about after the training?
- B: After the training we have...for me I have to read myself lah what is the curriculum. We have to take our own initiative to read more on KSSR. The training was not enough.
- R: So apart from reading, did you contact the JUs or the state department or any of the ministry's officers regarding the new curriculum?
- B: No
- R: So how does your understanding now different from your understanding before when you just received the training?
- B: When I received the training I thought KSSR is very difficult to be done. A lot of things to be put in the class in one lesson...the penmanship, all the bombastic words and err...one of the instructors that day also said that we have to produce some sort of err...teaching and learning aids that can be used throughout the weeks. One topic actually we produce a theme or lesson that can be used throughout the week. It is very difficult for many teachers lah. But when I read about the KSSR and the standard document, from my understanding and my perception, KSSR is very simple thing. Teaching skill err...we are focusing a skill in one lesson. A very simple thing...err...so that apart from that today I think KSSR is very good. And for my perception KSSR is far more better than KBSR.
- R: Do you think that training is important before the implementation of the new curriculum?
- B: No...I think apart from training, we teachers teaching Year 1 should be given some trial period before we started on that err...KSSR is very big subject. Why don't we give apa...the ministry or the department give us some trial period maybe 1 year...conduct the training in January maybe so then we have the trial , we can try the skill, the lesson throughout the year. Then the next year...err...at the end of the year we gather back in one course that we can give them some of our experience, reflections, reflect back on what we have done. Then the next year, we can start with the improved one.
- R: So it's just like one year is given for teachers to pilot it first.
- B: Why don't give us the chance to give some input on that?
- R: So whatever that you find during the implementation, you can give feedback then work on the feedback and the reflections, then only the actual implementation.
- B: Maybe from one district to another district will be very different in terms of implementation.
- R: So you are saying that instead of giving only a three days course where you explain what and how, so it should be a hands-on experience for the teachers to try to use the curriculum first. So since you are already in the implementation stage, do you think you need extra trainings or help?
- B: I think yes...because we need to give somebody our input, our reflections on how we feel on doing the KSSR...we have to...

- R: So now it's like you don't know which channel to go through to post your problems and queries, is it?
- B: Ha...maybe...ha yes, yes, yes...it should be maybe a quarter of the year we gather back every teachers and we discuss...are we doing the right thing?...are you doing the right thing?...am I doing the right thing?
- R: So it's now like you are left just like that and you yourself have no idea whether you are doing the right thing or not...whether you are doing what the curriculum required you to do.
- B: Yes
- R: Do you think that the way the training was conducted was effective?
- B: 3 days is a very compact course. In 3 days we have to cover a lot of things and there were 100 over teachers. So how can we focus in a very large crowd right!
- R: Was the input useful and helpful?
- B: There was so many input in a very little time...everything was cramped in 3 days.
- R: Things are very new...the new curriculum is very new to you and the input was given in a very short time and everything was cramped ok?
- B: It's just like giving us (incomprehensible) and left us in the Amazon lah...then go and find out the way on how to survive
- R: Do you have any suggestions or any comments on the training?
- B: I think the training...it should be another training aside from that one major training. There should be a progressive one...professional development. Maybe the department or the ministry should produce some sort of a portal for us to post our thoughts or queries and someone should be responded to us than left us here to make our perceptions on KSSR.
- R: And as a teacher, what do you expect the ministry or the state department to provide to you?
- B: If I have the chance to speak to the ministry or some sort like that, it should be that the first one it should be err...give us some time to what...to digest the training, the input so that we can think, reflect and try before we can implement ahh. Like this year they gave us the course in November and then this year January starts of. I think, not only me, many teachers have problems in understanding the course. In every...we use analogy in maybe car production, computers or soft ware, they have some time to try. They gave trial product. They use some sort of instructional design in implementing new things or new products. Ours err...just what...produce, then implement...use... produce and use. Where have the users have the time to respond, to give their thoughts on how to improve that thing...should be like that lah.
- R: What about in terms of teaching, do you need more information on how to teach for example?
- B: Ok...maybe many teachers doesn't have any problems unlike those in KPLI because we only attend err...pedagogy classes for about 3 months maybe...there are 10 months in the KPLI. So many KPLI's have some problems in pedagogy and learning strategies because we came from different background.
- R: So what do you need then?
- B: It depends on the individuals. For the KSSR I think the only thing that we all need...all the English teachers, all the Mathematics teachers, all teachers in Year 1 need is the sample lesson...a video maybe, a micro teaching maybe on how the lesson should be conducted...we need to know how the lesson should be conducted...the right way!
- R: Were you not provided with that during the training?

- B: No...sample lessons no. We only given some videos during the assessment training ahh.
- R: During the training, were there any hands-on sessions where you were asked to come out with sample lessons and conduct the lessons?
- B: Yes but we are given the chance to produce sample lessons but before that we do not know what sort of lesson we have to do...are we doing the right thing...is it correct. I think that day most of us did a very...lesson that same as before lah. When we come out and teaching other subjects than English, we will make a very big sin...dosa besar sebab kita memang tak pandai in English. Most of us memang tak pandai English lah. Saya pun fikir-fikir juga saya mengajar dah 5 tahun kan, mungkin banyak sangat lah dosa saya mengajar Bahasa Inggeris cakap Bahasa Melayu kan...cakap Bahasa in English classes. Saya fikirkan satu cara nak cover balik dosa-dosa saya tulah. So now saya punya personal mission is perkenalkan new way of teaching strategy...the project based learning.
- R: For me it is not wrong you know, because project is actually one part of a learning process. It is just a matter of maybe what you can do is err...while doing the project as long as the project does not go out of the curriculum. It concerns whatever that is in the curriculum. This is what we have been doing in the college. We don't implement that in schools because the kids are very young. But this is what we have been doing in college and secondary schools. I know sometimes students learn better through project work. Sometimes you as a teacher I feel that you have to find your own special area and I know that you are good in ICT and you are not only good but you are very interested in ICT. And I think learning will be more fun when you yourself...not only the students will enjoy the lessons but you as a teacher will enjoy the lessons too when you use something that you are very interested in. And I think using a project would be very beneficial to the students because they have to read, they have to write and they have to listen and all these skills actually help them in learning a language.
- B: Just like the project that you read just now kan, I'm very surprised that the Year 5 students can write that long passage.
- R: Did you seek any personal development to complement training?
- B: I did some reading and research on how to conduct the lessons lah. I read many books on how to teach English and I also refer to the britishcouncil.org on the sample lessons on how to teach reading. I also take some sort of their worksheets to be done in the classrooms, the games.
- R: How do you find the curriculum materials provided to you? Do you find the textbooks, activity books and teacher's guide useful?
- B: I always use textbooks in the classrooms because we are provided with that and every student have the textbooks so we have to use the textbooks. Err...this year textbooks give teachers a lot of space to be creative. In the textbooks, they only provide example lessons, one or two sample activity and teachers have to think and create more activity and not depend on the textbooks only.
- R: So you also supplement your own materials, your own worksheets in the classrooms apart from using the textbooks...do you find the teacher's guide useful?
- B: I rarely use the guide book. There are a lot of activities in the guide book and not all the activities are suitable for my students. I feel that as a teacher we know the students, it's better for us to create our own activities based on our students. The teacher's guide is guide kan. It is just a guide not a module. If you want everyone have the same or use the teacher's guide, I think it's better to create...the government...err the KPM must create a module

- R: But then don't you think it will restrict teacher's creativity? And some teachers may find that this is very easy for my students or this is very difficult for my students and some teachers may have their own ideas of doing things you know.
- B: Teachers always have ideas but then when the time comes to implement the ideas, many teachers wouldn't do...maybe the modules is a very good idea to supplement the training. Training is a training but the module is important.
- R: Do the curriculum materials provided help you to understand and implement the curriculum better?
- B: Yes...among all the materials provided to me, I only refer to the textbooks and the standard document. That's the only thing that can explain to me what is KSSR and how to conduct my lessons. The other things no.
- R: Do you think all these curriculum materials can help to achieve the goal of the new curriculum?
- B: Yes...the standard document definitely. If every teacher use the standard document and follow everything inside it, yes it will be a successful curriculum. But then we have to consider a few things aside from the curriculum, the teachers have to...in KSSR for every single topic and for every single skill that we introduce in the classrooms, we have to do some marking. There are a table for that for example topic number 1 what skill, 1.1 we have to tick.
- R: Is this the assessment?
- B: No...this is not assessment. This is how we keep track what skill we introduce in the class. Everything is stipulated in the curriculum standard document and teachers just have to follow.
- R: So far do you have any problems using the textbooks or referring to the standard documents?
- B: No...no problem at all.
- R: What do you think is the most significant problem that most English teachers in Malaysia is facing?
- B: Of course the English proficiency among the teachers. I think many teachers that teach English are not err...have some sort of background in English... maybe majoring in other subjects.
- R: You are referring to all English teachers in primary schools?
- B: Yes in primary schools. Maybe a lot of them that teaching English now are not majoring in English. That's why they have problem in speaking in English or teaching in English.
- R: But now the government has a programme called MBMMBI which aims to improve the teachers' proficiency?
- B: How can a 12 days programme improve our English? It is better that people who are majoring in that subject to teach the subject. We are major in that and we know the subject in depth rather than other people from other subject area teaching that subject.
- R: Ok...as a teacher what do you find is the most challenging aspect in implementing the new curriculum?
- B: The most challenging aspect of teaching in KSSR is the teachers itself or myself have to improve a lot err...I also have to learn English more before I teach my students. When talking about the new curriculum, maybe the challenging factor is not the students. The most challenging factor is the teachers on how we perceive, on how we accept the class and how we conduct the classes.
- R: And how do you see your role in the new curriculum? Is it different from your role when you are teaching in KBSR?
- B: It is different err...in KBSR we prepare our students for the exam whereby in KSSR we prepare our students to face the world...to prepare them to be able to

Speak and communicate rather than to sit in the exam. Last year in KBSR, maybe all teachers are very...we must prepare the students for exams. The students are stressful, teaches ok je. For this year, in my class lah I did not prepare them for any exams because I'm using the school based assessment so we focus on their development.

R: Ok thank you.....

APPENDIX J

EXAMPLE OF A LESSON TRANSCRIPT

<i>Exchange</i>			<i>Moves</i>	<i>Acts</i>
1	T	Anybody absent?	I	el
2	S	Aina dengan <and> Nazirah	R	rep
3	T	Ha?	I	el
4	S	Aina dengan <and> Nazirah	R	rep
5	T	All right stand up. Say good morning. Good morning.	I	d
6	Ss	Good morning teacher.	R	rep
7	T	Good morning. Ok. Sit down. (Preparing the teaching materials). Ok are you ready?	F/I	acc d/el
8	Ss	Yes.	R	rep
9	T	Ok, yesterday we have read a story about^	I	el
10	Ss	Dilly Duck	R	rep
11	T	Ahh. This is the picture right? Ok this is the^	F/I	acc/el
12	Ss	Dilly	R	rep
13	T	Ok. Can you tell me about the story that we read yesterday. About this Dilly Duck.	F/I	acc/el
14	Ss	Mad	R	rep
15	T	Ok. Dilly Duck is^	F/I	acc/el
16	Ss	Mad	R	rep
17	T	Mad. Dilly Duck is^	F/I	acc/el
18	Ss	Mad	R	rep
19	T	Mad and^	I	el
20	Ss	Sad	R	rep
21	T	Sad. Ok, what happened to Dilly Duck? What happened to Dilly Duck?	F/I	acc/el
22	Ss	Rabbit	R	rep
23	T	Rabbit? He mad and sad because^	F/I	e/el
24	Ss	He lost his doughnut	R	rep
25	T	Ah. Ok, good. He lost his^	F/I	acc/el
26	Ss	Doughnuts	R	rep
27	T	He lost his^	I	el
28	Ss	Doughnuts	R	rep
29	T	Ok alright. I will put again the story that we read yesterday on the blackboard. Ok this is the text. We are going to read again this text. Ok we read together the text. Ok, can we read?	F/I	acc/el
30	Ss	Yes	R	rep
31	T	Ok. (Reading aloud session with teacher guidance). Ok now, can you read on your own?	I	d
32	Ss	Yes	R	rep
33	T	Are you sure?	I	el
34	S	Yes	R	rep
35	T	Ok, 1 2 3	I	d
36	Ss	(Reading aloud whole class)	R	rep

37	T	Ok. Can you repeat all the words with [d] sound?	I	el
38	S	Dilly Duck...sad...doughnut...mad	R	rep
39	T	Ok	F	acc
40	S	Dolphin	R	rep
41	T	In the text. In the text first. Shafie stand up. Say out all the words.	I	d
42	S	Dilly Duck...sad...doughnut...mad...Dilly... Delicious...mad	R	rep
43	T	All the [d] sound in the text, what are they? Dilly Duck ok...	I	el
44	Ss	Sad, mad, doughnut, delicious	R	rep
45	T	Sad, mad, doughnut, delicious. Deli^	F/I	acc/el
46	Ss	cious	R	rep
47	T	Delicious. Ok now I put down this text. We look at these sentences. Ok these sentences is about the story we have just read just now. And I have the answers here. Ok the answers here, I put on this desk. Ok I have the words 'sad' here, 'mad', 'Dilly', 'doughnuts' and 'Dilly duck'. Ok I want you to try to complete the sentences. Complete the^..... Sentences. Ok, who wants to try? Ok I read out the five sentences eh. This is.....He is.....Ok. Choose the correct answer here and fill in the sentences here to complete the sentences on the board here. Ok, who wants to do the first one? The first one here? This is number 1, number 2, number 3, number 4 and number 5. Ok, who wants to do the first one? Ha? Put up your hands. All right try (pointing to a student).	F/I	acc/el
48	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
49	T	Try which one is the answer. Pick the card. Pick the card. You pick the card. Pick the card. Which one? Put them up. All right class, is the answer correct?	I	d/el
50	Ss	Yes	R	rep
51	T	Ha?	I	ch
52	Ss	Yes	R	rep
53	T	Is the answer correct?	I	el
54	Ss	Yes	R	rep
55	T	Are you sure?	I	ch
56	Ss	Yes	R	rep
57	T	Ok read out the sentences.	I	d
58	Ss	This is Dilly Duck.	R	rep
59	T	Ok. This is Dilly^	F/I	acc/el
60	Ss	Duck	R	rep
61	T	Ok. Right number 2. Ok Rashid.	F/I	acc/n
62	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
63	T	Ok. Class^	F/I	acc/el
64	Ss	He is sad (Read the answer)	R	rep

65	T	Dilly Duck is sad. Number 3. Number 3. Nayli.	F/I	acc/n
66	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
67	T	He is^	I	el
68	Ss	Mad	R	rep
69	T	He is^	I	el
70	Ss	Mad	R	rep
71	T	Mad. Ok now, number 4. Number 4. Nurin.	F/I	acc/n
72	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
73	T	Ok. He lost hisIs it correct?	F/I	com/ el
74	Ss	No	R	rep
75	T	He lost his^	I	el
76	Ss	Doughnut	R	rep
77	T	Ha...doughnut. Nurin, could you please correct the word. Change the answer. Change.	F/I	acc/d
78	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
79	T	So he lost his^	I	el
80	Ss	Doughnuts	R	rep
81	T	Doughnuts. Last one. Who ate the doughnut? Maslina.	F/I	acc/el /n
82	S	(Do the activity on the board)	R	rep
83	T	Ok. So, these are the five sentences about the story. Very simple and short sentences. Can you read? Class, can you read?	F/I	acc/el
84	Ss	Yes	R	rep
85	T	Read from the first one. Read together.	I	d
86	Ss	(Reading aloud whole class)	R	rep
87	T	Ok, all boys stand. Up Please. I want you to read louder. Read. Louder. One, two, three. Ok read.	I	d
88	Ss	(Reading aloud)	R	rep
89	T	Spell 'sad' boys.	I	d
90	Ss	s...a...d	R	rep
91	T	Spell 'doughnut'.	I	d
92	Ss	d...o...u...g...h...n...u...t	R	rep
93	T	Spell 'mad'	I	d
94	Ss	m...a...d	R	Rep
95	T	Spell 'duck'	I	d
96	Ss	d...u...c...k	R	rep
97	T	Ok, thank you. Right the girls now stand. Up. Challenge the boys ok. One, two, three.	F/I	acc/d
98	Ss	(Reading aloud)	R	rep
99	T	Sit down. Ok after this I will give you exercise on completing sentences. Ok, when you write the sentences after this, please remember your full^...full^	I	d/el
100	S	stop	R	rep

101	T	Stop, ok. Ok, when you write a complete sentences, remember to use capital letter at the beginning of your sentence. The beginning letter. And at the end of your sentences you should put your full^	F/I	acc/el
102	Ss	stop	R	rep
103	T	Your full^	I	el
104	Ss	stop		
105	T	Full stop ok. For today's exercise, I have pasted the paper inside your book. This exercise is similar to what you have done on the blackboard. Ok? I have two columns. Column A and column^	F/I	acc/el
106	Ss	B	R	rep
107	T	B. I want you to read the sentences and match the correct phrases in column B to complete ...to make a complete sentence. Complete^	F/I	acc/el
108	Ss	Sentence	R	rep
109	T	And when you copy back the sentences into your exercise book, make sure you write correctly. Ok, you start your sentence 'This is....' And at the end don't forget your full^	I	el
110	Ss	stop	R	rep
111	T	your full^	I	el
112	Ss	stop	R	rep
113	T	Stop. Ok for number one. When you copy the sentence for number one to go to number two, please leave a...line eh. Please leave a^...line. And please copy the sentences neatly. Neat^	F/I	acc/el
114	Ss	ly	R	rep
115	T	Neatly. (Teacher distribute the exercise book). You match the sentences first then you write.	F	acc
116	Ss	(Students complete the work)		

List of abbreviations

EL	English language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a second language
EFL	English as a foreign language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
LCT	Learner-Centred Teaching
MOE	Ministry of Education
SED	State Education Department
EDO	Education District Offices
CDD (O)	Curriculum Development Division (Officer)
CCC	Central Curriculum Committee
SCPS	Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools
ICPS	Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools
NCPS	New Curriculum for Primary Schools
KBSR	Old Curriculum for Primary Schools
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
SAL	Self-Access Learning
SAC	Self-Access Centre
CCL	Contemporary Children's Literature
INSET	In-service Teacher Training
VSRD	Video Stimulated Recall Dialogue
IRF	Initiation-Response-Follow-up
LOTS	Lower-Order Thinking Skill
HOTS	Higher-Order Thinking Skill
DA	Discourse Analysis
DELO	District English Language Officer
SCO	Systematic Classroom Observation

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