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# ACADEMICS

## WHAT IS IT LIKE OUT THERE? SUPPORTING STUDENTS' ENGLISH ENCOUNTERS IN THE UNIVERSITY ECOLOGY

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### **Abstract**

Students' English language development should not be bound only to conventional materials used for English for academic purposes (EAP) or academic literacy courses. In this study, the instructor created an open online space where students contributed English language encounters, which could be a word or phrase, along with its context of occurrence. To strengthen students' awareness, they were also encouraged to notice submitted contributions in new contexts. The contributions came to 229 words and 30 phrases. They were categorized as either functional or discipline-specific; the former refers to the language used to organize meaning, while the latter signals a contribution that is specific to a topic or discipline. It may be observed that students were independently noticing academic language and discourse, many of which were discipline-specific. This information can be helpful to the instructor to better plan support for students' language experience in the wider university ecology.

**Keywords:** Language encounters; language ecology; language awareness

### **Background of Study**

At times, English for academic purposes (EAP) or literacy courses at the university level may run the risk of disregarding students' encounters in the broader university ecology. When this happens, students may perceive the EAP or academic literacy course as being less relevant (Adarkwah & Yu, 2020). To avoid such risk and to support students' university experience, there are calls for educators to embrace the socio-material approach, which recognizes the value of various entities – social and material – found in the broader educational ecology (see Gourlay, 2017). These entities may initiate, facilitate, or even affirm students' learning experiences. For instance, entities such as classmates, readings not necessarily assigned by a course or a lecturer, and even day-to-day experiences are all enmeshed together in working towards shaping students' learning experiences. As stated by Tietjen et al. (2021), “[a] sociomaterial perspective resists viewing things and humans as separate categories, but instead posits them as equivalent or symmetrical in terms of their ability to exert force on one another. Material is conceptualised as capable of shaping human perception and activity in the same way that a human can direct or shape a material thing.” (p. 4).

### **Statement of Problem**

While studies have attested to the value of EAP or academic literacy courses, not many have discussed the impact of such courses on the wider university ecology. In other words, it remains unclear how these courses may shape students' overall learning experience or even contribute to the university programs (O'Dwyer & Atli, 2018). Studies have also indicated that a close and critical collaboration may bridge these seemingly disparate courses (Brown, 2017); however, this privilege may not be afforded to EAP or academic literacy courses (Alhassan, Bora, & Abdalla, 2022). Moreover, students may not immediately see the relevance of such courses (Tann & Scott, 2021). To overcome this issue, EAP or academic literacy instructors may take the initiative of getting to know students' language or communication needs. This may lead to a student-centred classroom where instruction on language use that students deem important may be organized (Okuda, 2020). One way of doing this is by drawing in students' learning encounters into the EAP or academic literacy course (see discussion by Guerrettaz, Engman, & Matsumoto, 2021). Specifically,

students' encounters with language use, such as words, phrases, or expressions, may facilitate their language development (Fievez et al., 2021; Dang, Lu, & Webb, 2022).

### Significance of Study

Findings from this study will demonstrate the wider impact that EAP or other similar courses may possibly have on students' university experience. In particular, by showing how students' contribution can enrich an EAP course, the study will exemplify how the teaching of academic communication or skills is not necessarily removed from other discipline-specific subjects. In other words, what students encounter in their subject courses can be bridged to an EAP course for further deliberation. Besides encouraging student-centredness, such an approach will also promote agency within the instructor. This is because the instructor will need to deliberately plan how these contributions can complement existing teaching and learning materials. When students take notice of learning opportunities in their environment, they are inadvertently setting goals beyond the immediate EAP course. This would subsequently promote versatility in communication – a skill necessary for today's competitive world (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2020).

### Research Question

The main research question for this study is, “What kinds of English language encounters do students experience outside an EAP course?”

### Method

Data for this study comprised students' contributions of words, phrases, or even sentences. These students were international graduate students from various disciplinary backgrounds, all of whom were enrolled in an academic writing course. As mentioned, students could contribute to any language encounters they had beyond this course. Contributions were made to an online open Excel document. Students keyed in the word, phrase, or sentence, along with the context of occurrence. There were no conditions set as to where these contributions could come from. Contributions were made on a rolling basis over 1 semester (13 weeks).

To answer the research question, students' unique contributions were categorized into either functional or discipline-specific. This categorization was done based on the context of the occurrence of a contribution. A contribution is considered functional when the context of occurrence illustrates rhetorical or organizational purposes; while a contribution is discipline-specific when the context of occurrence refers to particular knowledge processes or topics.

### Findings and Discussion

There was a total of 259 unique contributions made by the students. Of these, 229 were single words while the rest were phrases, or strings of words. There were no sentences contributed by the students. The subsequent analysis saw 19 contributions being categorized as having rhetorical functions, and 243 – the majority – being discipline-specific. Some examples of these contributions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of students' contributions according to categories

| <b>Functional</b> | <b>Discipline Specific</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| In the same vein  | Ameliorate                 |
| To name but a few | Disentangle                |
| Lest              | Nascent                    |
| Notwithstanding   | Specious                   |

There were also contributions that were repeated, which could be indicative of students recalling a past contributed encounter observed in a new communicative situation. Examples of these were words such as abstract and abstract (by and from); arbitrary and arbitrarily; and stringent.

The high contribution of discipline-specific items is reflective of what Molle et al. (2021) term as 'sensemaking in the discipline'. This relates to students' process of generating or linking meanings of a concept. Students' encounters with discipline-specific words or phrases are thus indicative of students' academic experience and even progress.

### Limitations

While the study was open to students' contributions from any social or material sources, many of them were derived from students' disciplinary courses. For the study to comprehensively tap into students' wider university ecology, a fully sociomaterial approach needs to be considered. This means that all sources should be accounted for, even if these sources are initially perceived as unrelated or even unimportant. Moreover, students' noticing of recurring contributions should be traced and examined through various language use or output. By doing so, the extent of students' language development may be analysed.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it appears that graduate students' language encounters may be largely centred on academic discourse. This should not be surprising, as there are high expectations for graduate students to excel in their academic and research pursuits. As such, it may be natural for students of this level to be drawn to such language encounters. In terms of teaching, EAP instructors should consider using pedagogical practices that bridge their students' language encounters in other courses. In terms of research, future studies should consider examining undergraduate students' language encounters. This may offer more insights into the (dis)similar foci that undergraduate and graduate students have with regard to language use in the university ecology.

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## PERSPECTIVE-TAKING PATTERNS AMONG MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS READING YOUNG ADULT NOVEL

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### Abstract

The idea that reading works of fiction helps develop character, perspective, and imagination seems to be widely accepted in educational contexts, but researchers have yet to truly understand how and in what ways this happens. To be specific, what are the mechanics or processes during reading that promote, or in some cases, hinder a reader's engagement with a work of fiction? This study draws on sociological concepts of theory of mind and perspective-taking positions (specifically imagine-self, imagine-other, and objective) to examine how adolescent readers perspective-take about issues regarding ethnicity and mental health as they read a young adult novel. The three participants selected for this multiple case study displayed vastly different reading patterns even though all three are avid readers. Findings of note include the observation that readers shift positions while reading depending on whether they were focused on the story, character, or world. Various other aspects were identified in relation to the research question, and, when patterns of reading were traced, differences can be seen in the intensity of engagement in relation to perspective-taking. Surprisingly, readers also conversed with the text as they read. As such, more must be done to understand what happens during reading among adolescents as perspective-taking is related to empathy, global competence, and personal development, which are aspects that are of increasing concern in language education around the world.

**Keywords:** Perspective-taking, reading, adolescents, reader response, fiction

### Background of Study

The value of reading fiction for the formation of character, imagination, and perspective is often promoted by stakeholders within and beyond language education, but when pressed for evidence, most accounts appear anecdotal at best. It is only in the last decade or so that this idea has drawn the interest of psychologists and cognitivists who have provided early empirical evidence that reading can contribute to the development of theory of mind and empathy (Kidd & Castano, 2013; Zunshine, 2006). Theory of mind is the ability to perceive and examine perspectives different from one's own. Psychologists note that this ability develops as a child grows up and involves a subcomponent of perspective-taking which Batson (2009) suggests has three perspective-taking positions; imagine-self, imagine other, and objective. Indeed, perspective-taking is now recognised to be an essential part of global competence (OECD, 2018). Research findings which suggest that reading, particularly the reading of fiction, is important for perspective-taking development would likely not surprise English language educators. Yet there remains the question of evidence on how and why this happens in a non-laboratory setting, evidence which, if produced, would further bolster support for reading fiction and extensive reading in English language education.

### Statement of Problem

While there are a number of scholarly works that have established a relationship between reading and the development of empathy and theory of mind (Wolf & Gottwald, 2016; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Oatley, 2011; Mar & Oatley, 2008; Zunshine, 2006), researchers have not yet been able to explain how this relationship fundamentally occurs. If empathy is defined as emotional perspective-taking, and theory of mind is defined as cognitive perspective-taking (Hynes, Baird, & Grafton, 2006), what is not clear is how perspectives are formed through the experience of reading before one is able to engage in perspective-taking, particularly in a non-experimental setting. Most studies conducted to examine perspective-taking

behaviour have taken place in laboratories where participants were told to assume a perspective-taking position and their responses to stimuli such as listening or reading a story were measured. This begs the question of how does perspective-taking take place in a natural setting, where one might read a book at leisure, for instance? Therefore, this study focuses on the fundamental question of how reading fiction may be connected to perspective-taking in a naturalistic setting. A potentially promising place to start is with adolescent readers who are just beginning to explore a world beyond themselves.

### **Significance of Study**

Understanding how and in what ways perspective-taking takes place while reading fiction contributes to scholarship regarding theory of mind and perspective-taking that have not, as yet, ventured to account for this behaviour in non-experimental settings. The choice to select adolescents for this study not only provides data from a different age group to the body of work but also ties in with the aim of English language education in Malaysia to produce students who have global competence. Identifying patterns of perspective-taking might provide insight that would inform policy and practitioner decision-making, mainly by making this ability more visible in order to explicitly plan ways to target its development among students in the language classroom. Policies and programmes that target extensive reading would also benefit from this study as it provides further justifications for the promotion and purpose of these programmes.

### **Research Questions**

This study is based on one overarching research question as follows:

What patterns of perspective-taking take place during the reading of a young adult novel among selected adolescents?

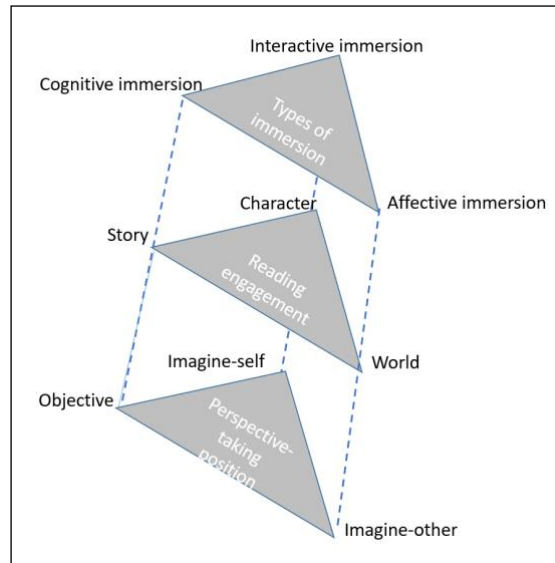
### **Method**

A multiple case study design involving three Malaysian adolescents (coded as P1, P2, and P3) was carried out. Participants were purposefully selected using the main criterion that they liked to read as a hobby, so as to approach a naturalistic a study as possible, and that they were willing to commit their time and effort to read 'Weight of Our Sky', a young adult novel written by Hanna Alkaf published in the year 2019. This novel was chosen because it is set in Malaysia, hence likely familiar to participants, and highlights themes of interculturality and mental health, which provided avenues to trace perspective-taking patterns among participants. After obtaining consent from UMREC and respective parents of participants, an initial interview was carried out to focus on participants' reading histories and preferences before the novel was given to them. Each participant was asked to read it at their own pace and to contact the researcher when they had finished reading the novel. After that, a second interview was scheduled to focus on their experiences reading the novel. Interviews were then transcribed and coded using the simple constant comparative method to identify perspective-taking patterns. (188)

### **Findings and Discussion**

Participants displayed varied perspective-taking patterns. Figure 1 was produced as a framework to which these perspective-taking patterns could be mapped.





**Figure 1.** Preliminary perspective-taking and reading model

P1 assumed an objective perspective-taking position because he was focused on story progression, just wanting to find out what happened next. This position was sustained from beginning to end which fit Batson's (2009) definition of an objective stance in perspective-taking. P2 primarily assumed an imagine-self position, cognitively immersing in the story world as herself. She did shift into an imagine-other position when a character's experiences mirrored her own, thereafter displaying affective immersion. A character experiences extreme anxiety about her mother's welfare so P2 took an imagine-other position because P2 had similar worries. No study thus far has accounted for shifts in perspective-taking behaviour which the data from this study illustrates. P3 took on a primarily imagine-other position as P3 spoke of reading as getting to know characters as friends, displaying intense affective immersion responses. P3 did move into an imagine-self position when the text reflected P3's own experiences or provided P3 with insight, thereby enacting cognitive immersion. P2 and P3 also displayed interactive immersion where they 'talked to' the book, which is an aspect that was new in research on perspective-taking and reading.

### Limitations

This study's main limitation is its size as it only involved three participants. Even with only three, however, the diversity gained through a deep analysis of reading experiences demonstrates that such an approach is useful in capturing the nuances and differences among adolescent readers in Malaysia.

### Conclusion

Perspective-taking in reading is a dynamic experience as readers may shift positions as they read, depending on aspects such as familiarity and novelty which have been theorised in the fields of stylistics and textual analysis, but rarely in the experiences of real readers reading. This study has shown those aspects in action, along with the identification of perspective-taking patterns in which readers interact with texts, particularly in what this study terms cognitive, affective, and interactive immersion. This line of inquiry can be expended by including a greater range of readers reading different types of texts, such as historical or science fiction. By learning more about how perspective-taking happens in reading, the rationale for reading programmes and policies particularly in English language education may be strengthened. Indeed, there is potential for perspective-taking to be explicitly integrated as an objective in syllabi for reading to help English language learners attain global competence.

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## FLIPPING THE GRID: USING IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION TO ADVANCE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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### Abstract

Facilitating teaching and learning of the English language has pivoted into realms where the use of apps has become a typical feature in the classroom. Studies have indicated how using these apps have resulted in some form of increased acquisition of the four skills. Its accessibility has also enabled synchronous and asynchronous focus group discussions, writing circles and formations of other skill-based and interest-group communities to emerge. Utilizing these apps to study how students acquire language and to source for language exercises is limiting. There is literature tracing language usage to the construction of identity, but studies have focused more on social media platforms and their relationship with this construction. Hence, this study explored a commonly used platform in the language classroom, Flipgrid, to trace its bearing on identity in relation to intercultural competence. Through language tasks via video sharing between students in a Malaysian University and a US University, this study gathered empirical material over a 7-week period to ascertain how their conversations provided insights into identity building. This facilitated the educator in choosing context, deciding approach, targeting language skills, and creating informed student-writers in the language classroom as an extension to language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Flipgrid, Identity Construction, Intercultural Competence

### Background of Study

The challenge of language acquisition is one that is dynamic. The onslaught of the pandemic brought about ingenious alternatives to language teaching and learning. The experimentation on online platforms and apps is at an all-new high with studies gravitating towards evaluating the effectiveness of these as teaching tools. Previous literature has been directed to bridging gaps as seen in Vadivel, Mathuranjali and Khalil (2021) where Kahoot!, Quizizz and the like are evaluated for efficiency. This trend is also observed in game-based learning and E-library techniques for reading (Zulkifli et al., 2022; Yusoff & Marzaini, 2021). There are also studies that investigate the affective factors concentrating on adaptation, perception, intention and readiness (Zulkifli et al.; 2022; Bakar & Lynn, 2022; Jiang, Meng & Zhou, 2021). These studies help educators understand strengths and limitations.

Studies that explore online apps for opportunities instead, serve to build on the potential of the platform in extending language acquisition. Indiran, Ismail and Rashid (2022) experimented with the use of WhatsApp in teaching reading to rural students as a reach-out tool. Similarly, Hanafiah and Aziz (2022) have also studied opportunities in terms of collaborative learning. Likewise, the use of Flipgrid has predominantly been studied as a tool for speaking, creating engagement activities and analysing social presence. (Apoko & Chong, 2022; Subiana et al., 2022; Yeh et al., 2022). More often than not, studies in Flipgrid activities are linked to reflections and its collaborative facilities as seen in Stoszkowski, Hodgkinson & Collins (2021). Bauler (2021) does go on to talk about the unearthing of language ideologies in the use of Flipgrid but directs it to the concept of netiquette. There is a dearth of studies that link these opportunities and ideas to identity construction in efforts to facilitate the educator's understanding of the students' needs and wants of the targeted language. Understanding the identity of the learner in the context of exchanging ideas can facilitate the educator in targeted teaching, and the student in directed language acquisition while simultaneously building intercultural competence.

### Statement of Problem

Previous literature in the area has focused on studying the effectiveness and shortcomings of certain applications. Alongside these, are the studies that have illustrated how to implement and use these apps for engagement activities as well as assessments in the light of extending language activities. While these studies facilitate educators' understanding of the strengths and limitations of some of these platforms, it does little to inform us about the learners' needs and wants in terms of language acquisition. What it does do is evaluate the affective factors which are behavioural. Even so, the tendency is for previous work to focus on the level of adaptation, flexibility, perception, intention, and readiness toward using the platform. Many studies also look at how the acquisition of the English language influences the construction and reconstruction of identity as seen in Fang & Hu (2022), Roy & Harthy (2022) and Pre (2021). While there are indications that understanding identity construction can enhance teaching and learning, these studies are not used to advance language acquisition.

Similarly, there is a dearth of studies that link the use of these platforms or apps in a language learning environment to identity in the interest of giving the student the language structures that they need in their language acquisition process. Therein lies the gap. Understanding the identity of the student alongside all the other findings of previous studies can provide a wholesome picture of what targeted language structures to teach and what context of familiarity to build on. In summary, it can provide meaningful details and cultural information that facilitate the educator in designing relevant classroom materials and relatable real-world context as derived from online interaction with others. Hence, this study explored the use of Flipgrid to understand how identity was constructed in an intercultural context. The study sought to determine how understanding students' construction of identity can influence and shape lesson planning for more effective language acquisition.

## Significance of Study

### Educator & Teacher Education

- a) This study can serve to inform educators about exploring the potential of online apps and platforms from a cultural viewpoint as a complement to looking at apps from the effectiveness standpoint only. This will enable a more holistic view of why certain strategies in the classroom may or may not work.
- b) This study to a very large extent will be able to facilitate the educator in determining context, approach, and targeted language skills in a more informed manner in other supplementary activities, assessments, reading materials, speaking tasks and so on.
- c) Language acquisition will be built through relevance, relatability and in a real-world context through intercultural exchanges.

### Student and English Language Acquisition

- a) Lived experiences and local relevancies shape conversations enabling the use of language structures that demand the relevant forms and functions of the language to be utilized.
- b) In the light of teaching intercultural competence, the language structures used by the students will require them to understand and practice inclusivity in word choice and so on.
- c) Sensitivities and a heightened awareness of verbal and non-verbal cues in the process of language practice and acquisition will bring about more informed writers in the classroom.
- d) The language acquisition is a targeted one where students will be able to apply themselves in a cross-cultural setting because the educator has their best interest at hand
- e) The language is shaped to fit the individual- giving the student the language that they need so that they can use it.

## Identity Construction and Intercultural Competence

- a) Language and Flipgrid can be studied to see how new constructions of identity come about in an intercultural context, and how these dictate gender and culture in a language context
- b) The appropriate language forms and functions can be identified for proper support/complementing what they need to express who and what they are in building an identity for themselves.
- c) The teaching and learning of expressions of empathy

## Research Questions

1. How does Flipgrid facilitate identity construction in learners of the English language?
2. How does this identity construction facilitate educators in language teaching and learning?

## Method

### Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by a social constructivist paradigm as introduced by Vygotsky. This paradigm hinges on active participation as a means of knowledge construction. It centres on the idea that knowledge is built when individuals interact, engage and bond with one another. Each individual depends on the other to help create building blocks in their own construction of reality (Schreiber & Valle, 2013), and in this case, intercultural competence. Using the social constructivist lens, this study utilized Deardoff's Intercultural Competence Model to identify the students' attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and internal and external outcome through a series of seven tasks over a seven-week period. These tasks involved video-sharing about lived experiences, societal roles and problems, cultural norms and practices, gender and generational gap in the interest of building intercultural competence through exposure to other multicultural participants.

### Participants and Platform

This study involved 40 undergraduate students, 20 from a Malaysian University, and 20 from a US University, from a language classroom that focussed on all four skills: writing, reading, speaking and listening. These sessions were developed to enable them to have first-hand experiences in learning through collaboration to become informed writers as they produced their projects and research papers in any classroom setting.

Flipgrid was the official platform in which these students carried out the task and collaborated on a weekly basis. Each student was paired up with another student from the collaborating university so that posting and replying were structured, scheduled and easy to monitor. Each student would post twice a week; once to respond to the task, and once to reply to their partners' posts or questions. Students were also required to write reflections at the end of each task to ascertain what they learnt from the process and how it advanced their knowledge.

## Findings and Discussion

### Construction of Visual Identities

Perhaps the most immediate and powerful form of identification is the physical image of the student that shaped perception and created an impression that was both primal and emotional for them. Knowing that they would be 'judged' on first impressions, the way they presented themselves, the literal background setup, was pivotal in 'selling' themselves. Visual identity worked hand in hand with visual language. Words became the building blocks in order to create meaning and tell a compelling story to capture the audience every single time. In fact, Cole (2021) attests to this when her study observed students' culturally preparing themselves to face the video to show they were competent presenters, image-wise.

As educators in the language classroom, this scenario ascertains the verbal and non-verbal cues that need to be taught. The preparation must be geared towards preparing students to literally ‘face’ the world so that the face-time creates an emotional impression on viewers, informs viewers about the correct nature of the meeting, and unifies these many different aspects into a holistic and aligned segment inside or outside the classroom. Flipgrid provides a simulation of reality in a sense. Supplementing students with lessons on body language, making inferences and drawing from contextual cues alongside choice words that build imagery and description can create a cohesive visual identity; one that is respectfully inclusive yet enables differentiation in an intercultural context. Bauler (2021)’s notion of netiquette does in fact find its way forward in terms of language ideologies to be aware of.

### **Construction of Social Identities**

The name identity brought to the fore a dilemma, particularly with Malaysian students. When asked to register on Flipgrid, many resorted to identifying themselves with nicknames. Fergusson- Lutz (2019) talks about the popularity of this phenomenon amongst Asians and argues that it erases one’s identity. While it does trigger questions about why students would not just use their given names, Flipgrid or not, it raises questions about the need to re-fresh, or reconstruct their identities, starting with their names. What was observed in this scenario is that, Flipgrid enabled a clean slate; their partners were strangers. They were free to ‘perform’, free to ‘voice’ and free to experiment. There were elements of empowerment and positioning as they moved away from conformity and conditioning.

The concept of power, hegemony and dominance have been argued before as we observed students’ attempts to negotiate their identities on online platforms (Tamimi, 2017; Anwaruddin; 2017). But how do we as educators of the language classroom leverage these data and empirical material to advance targeted language structures need to be addressed. Anwaruddin (2017) makes headway with suggestions on teaching students about language structures on ‘voice’ and voicing. The unearthing of language forms and functions that build on expressing and accepting opinions diplomatically, assertiveness, constructive type vocabulary that shows empathy is needed if the Asian-Western complex is to be diminished, or at least balanced out. Erasing of identities which Fergusson-Lutz (2019) points out is only problematic if we do not make way for newer ones to emerge. For that to take place students must be given language structures that emphasize affirmation and conviction, argumentation and persuasion. Language teaching and learning that coincides with this, enables students to experiment and explore what language can do, if we create that space in the first place. Subsequent reading materials and context can then be designed to support this need to speak up diplomatically, and accept differences in a composed manner as part of language learning and intercultural competence.

### **Construction of ‘Shifting’ Identities**

Shifting identities should be seen as understanding that there is a time and place for everything; it does not obliterate cultural identities; it intensifies them. In the context of this study, the aim of the Flipgrid tasks was to study practices, beliefs, values and attitudes demonstrated by students through sharing of knowledge of the world, communities and societies from which they came from. Amongst them were transgenders, students with varied sexual preferences, bi-racial students, students with traumatic lived experiences, just to name a few.

The concept of shifting identities is not a new one. Raheb (2016) talks about how these are malleable, fluid and constantly re-shaped as social, political and religious structures change. In these Flipgrid sharings, the role of performativity took centre stage. Performativity as elucidated by Butler (2010) highlights the interdependence of words and actions- the role you play corresponds with actions and utterances that are socially constructed. These students played many roles; each task required a different hat; they slid in and out of identities, adjusting and adapting along the way. They shifted from being family members, to boyfriends and girlfriends, from undergrad students to specific ethnic identities, from Gen Z consumers to national identities. As they went along each task identifying with issues differently, the burden of language was seen in many of their responses as a hindrance to exemplify their stance more effectively.

The approach to language acquisition should be in its context that draws familiarity. Rajandram (2020) in her study indicated how familiarity of context drew vivid responses from students who were otherwise quiet in the literary classroom and concluded as having poor proficiency in the language. In order to grasp targeted language more effectively, the educator must provide relevant and relatable stimulus so that the context aligns with the students' multiple realities, and society's constructed realities. This will enable the student to respond appropriately when needed using accurate language structures. This Flipgrid project was able to identify what reading material to provide for subsequent lessons, what transitional devices can help connect their ideas better as well as how to substantiate, draw inferences and understand contextual clues.

### Limitations

While the method and process are replicable, the findings are not. The findings in this study are determined by the needs and wants of this group of students who have a particular capacity in terms of the English Language. Both classrooms are also geared towards building intercultural competence alongside language acquisition, hence the task-focus may gravitate towards discussions and sharing sessions that enable students to showcase constructions of gender, identity, and culture. This enables the educator to extract cultural elements in the identity construction to advance language acquisition task, teaching, and material in the classroom.

### Conclusion

Whilst many studies have shown how the English language classroom shapes identities, this study showed how identities shape the English Language classroom. The point of this study was for the educator to facilitate the student in their language acquisition. One way forward is to give them what they want so that they would want what they need. This can expedite language acquisition because it is targeted. Hence, this study can be seen to facilitate the educator in choosing context, deciding approach, targeting language skills, and creating informed student-writers in the language classroom as an extension to language acquisition. This project was a short-term one; a longer collaboration that culminated into a project could potentially highlight other details about targeted teaching and learning of the English language. Future research in the area should endeavour to address this.

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## THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL MEDIA UTILISATION AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS OF DIFFERENT TEACHING POSITIONS

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to compare the effects of digital media on different levels of teaching positions. The objectives are to identify the transformation of digital media in education, to determine teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning and to investigate the effects of digital media on teachers. The issue of using digital media in online learning is the indifference among educators in accepting digital media in their teaching. This study used a quantitative approach through an online survey. The respondents comprised 153 English language educators in primary school, secondary school, and university. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the transformation of digital media in education showed that the educators were agreeable to accepting the transformation but found that there were numerous challenges. The results for teachers' perception of utilising digital media indicated that all the educators were positive towards digital media, especially lecturers. Finally, the effects of digital media on teachers showed positive effects except for primary school educators who found that primary school pupils lack focus. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended that studies be done on the effect of digital media on students. It is also suggested that alternative methods be applied to their online learning experience for primary school students as they lack focus in the digital media approach.

**Keywords:** Digital media, English language educators, different teaching positions, transformation, effects of digital media

### Background of Study

The rapid expanding technologies in our lives have become an integral part of education in this 21<sup>st</sup>-century. Technology has changed the paradigm of teaching and learning for educators across different levels of teaching positions. In a traditional classroom, educators use printed media such as textbooks, workbooks and reference books for instructional purposes. Due to the sudden outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2019, educators have moved to remote learning at an unprecedented scale. However, educators were not given prior notice on how online learning should be carried out. There was evidence that teachers were unaware of how to use online technology before the pandemic (Le et al., 2022).

Remote teaching is a new norm for educators. Hence, they must adapt to the norm, familiarise themselves with digital learning and move out of their comfort zone. The pandemic should not stop students' enthusiasm for learning. There are many digital media that can be chosen for online learning, such as e-mail, WhatsApp, Instagram, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, YouTube, and others. Educators can also create quizzes or games through Kahoot! or Edmodo (Nikmah & Azimah, 2020). The closure of educational institutions and the emergency transition to online learning are associated with obvious problems, primarily due to a lack of technical equipment at home and inadequate preparation of both educators and students toward online learning (Ilyasovna, 2022). In view of this, the present study would like to investigate the transformation of digital media in education, teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning and the effects of digital media on teachers.

### Statement of Problem

Most research in recent times have focused on students' acceptance and performance during the Covid-19 pandemic, with lack of literature found on the teachers' perceptions, readiness, and use of digital media. Furthermore, the studies were mostly found to be from the higher education category rather than primary and secondary schools (Choo et al., 2022). A deciding factor in teacher professionalism when it comes to the incorporation of technology is teachers' perception of technology. Previous research focused on online teaching in general, and has neglected the challenges in the adapting process by teachers (Yan & Wang, 2022). The study that had been carried out by Le. et al (2022) mentioned that it had not investigated teachers' beliefs about online teaching and teachers' evaluations of different online teaching activities. They suggested that future research may be carried out on teachers' beliefs and practices for online teaching.

According to Anggeraini (2020), in this digital teaching era, English teachers believe that digital technology has a positive impact on English teaching because it allows English teachers to create an engaging environment in the teaching and learning process, and digital media can assist teachers in implementing digital teaching. However, the challenges for teachers are that teachers must constantly improve teaching methods and develop professional learning in response to new developments, and they must accept and prepare for technological advancement. Bearing all these in mind, it would be interesting to find out and compare the effects of digital media on educators of different teaching positions.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant as it provides insights into the acceptance of the transformation in education and experiences of teaching online lessons with digital tools that might help English language educators and institutes when facing with similar circumstances. The findings provide implications for the professionalism of teachers, such as comparing the experiences of teaching with digital media before and after the pandemic, knowing the readiness of using digital media to teach and acknowledging the purposes and challenges of teaching online. In any case, it is highly likely that online education will play a larger role in education and teacher training than it has previously; and teachers, both pre-service and in-service, play an important role. (Çamlıbel-Acar & Eveyik-Aydın, 2022). The implication of the study is to promote better integration and accommodation of ICT which allows education institutions to improve the teaching and learning activities during the pandemic and post pandemic. The educators should realise the importance of using digital media to leverage the learning. If these results are applied, it allows stakeholders or policy makers to create an educational curriculum with the integration of digital media for the betterment of English Language education.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. Is the transformation of digital media in education during the Covid-19 pandemic accepted by English language teachers of different positions?
2. What are the English language teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning?
3. How has digital media affected English language teachers of different positions?

### **Method**

A quantitative approach was used in this study by means of distribution of an online questionnaire (Google Form) to 153 English language educators of different positions namely, primary school English language teachers (n=91), secondary school English language teachers (n=46) and university English language lecturers (n=16). The questionnaire had 29 items with 4 sections: (1) demographics (2) transformation of digital media in education (3) teachers' perception of using digital media for teaching and learning and (4) effect of digital media on teachers. The data collected from the survey was then analysed descriptively

using SPSS v.26. A reliability test was also run on the questionnaire constructs to test the reliability of the questionnaire.

## Findings and Discussion

Initially, a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted to test the reliability of the constructs of the questionnaire. The construct is considered reliable if the Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value is greater than .70 (Hair et al., 2013). The results revealed that the questionnaire is reliable ( $\alpha = .933$ ) as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1.

*Reliability of Questionnaire Constructs*

| Reliability Statistics |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha       | N of Items |
| .933                   | 21         |

The study considered the acceptance of transformation of digital media in education by the English language teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of 'prior knowledge of digital media', 'experience teaching with digital media before the pandemic', 'acknowledge the purpose of using digital media', 'acknowledge the challenges of using digital media' and 'new experience in applying teaching method'. The results were positive towards digital media as shown in Table 2, with the teachers acknowledging the purpose (P=4.40; S=4.28; U=4.00) and challenges (P=4.20; S=4.15; U=4.88) of using digital media in their acceptance of it.

Table 2.

*Teacher acceptance of transformation of digital media in education.*

|  | Primary School Teachers (P) |                    | Secondary School Teachers (S) |                    | University Lecturers (U) |                    |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
|  | Mean                        | Standard Deviation | Mean                          | Standard Deviation | Mean                     | Standard Deviation |
| Prior knowledge of digital media                           | 3.46                        | 0.896              | 3.35                          | 0.994              | 3.50                     | 0.966              |
| Experience teaching with digital media before the pandemic | 2.35                        | 1.177              | 2.43                          | 1.148              | 2.75                     | 1.390              |
| Acknowledge the purpose of using digital media             | 4.20                        | 0.778              | 4.15                          | 0.788              | 4.88                     | 0.342              |
| Acknowledge the challenges of using digital media          | 4.40                        | 0.728              | 4.28                          | 0.834              | 4.00                     | 0.966              |
| New experience in applying teaching method                 | 4.35                        | 0.721              | 4.37                          | 0.853              | 4.75                     | 0.447              |

In determining what were the English language teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning, it was found that the English language teachers of different positions were agreeable and positive in their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning. The university English language lectures overall however, showed the highest mean scores with mean scores of 4 and above for all items as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.  
*Teacher perception of using digital media for teaching and learning*

|  | Primary School Teachers (P) |                    | Secondary School Teachers (S) |                    | University Lecturers (U) |                    |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
|  | Mean                        | Standard Deviation | Mean                          | Standard Deviation | Mean                     | Standard Deviation |
| Prepared to design my lessons            | 3.68                        | 1.031              | 3.70                          | 0.963              | 4.31                     | 0.873              |
| Prepared to learn from my colleagues     | 4.21                        | 0.863              | 4.17                          | 0.877              | 4.56                     | 0.629              |
| Prepared to learn from YouTube tutorials | 4.13                        | 0.980              | 4.15                          | 0.988              | 4.38                     | 0.806              |
| Confident with digital media usage       | 3.58                        | 0.944              | 3.70                          | 0.866              | 4.00                     | 1.033              |
| Online marking of students works         | 3.55                        | 1.036              | 3.48                          | 0.863              | 4.00                     | 1.317              |
| Adapt lessons to suit the class          | 3.93                        | 0.904              | 4.00                          | 0.816              | 4.44                     | 0.814              |
| Encourage two-way interaction            | 4.02                        | 0.919              | 4.26                          | 0.801              | 4.69                     | 0.602              |
| Share technological skills               | 3.71                        | 1.003              | 3.85                          | 0.942              | 4.13                     | 1.025              |

The study also investigated how digital media affected English language teachers of different positions in terms of 'saves a lot of time', 'provides better quality assessment', 'provides chances for collaboration', 'pupils are more focused' and 'motivated to teach better'. The results as shown in Table 4 indicated that the English language teachers were positively affected by digital media except for 'focus of pupils' which indicated that English language teachers in the primary schools had the lowest mean score for this (M=2.89; SD=1.197) but English language teachers in the secondary schools (M=3.02; SD=1.183) and university English language lecturers (M=3.19; SD=0.655) were also affected by the students' lack of focus.

Table 4.  
*Effects of the digital media on teachers*

|                                    | Primary School Teachers (P) |                    | Secondary School Teachers (S) |                    | University Lecturers (U) |                    |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
|                                    | Mean                        | Standard Deviation | Mean                          | Standard Deviation | Mean                     | Standard Deviation |
| Saves a lot of time                | 3.41                        | 1.064              | 3.74                          | 1.104              | 4.25                     | 0.931              |
| Provides better quality assessment | 3.11                        | 1.080              | 3.50                          | 1.111              | 3.44                     | 0.964              |
| Provides chances for collaboration | 3.66                        | 0.969              | 3.85                          | 0.868              | 4.44                     | 0.629              |
| Pupils are more focused            | 2.89                        | 1.197              | 3.02                          | 1.183              | 3.19                     | 0.655              |
| Motivated to teach better          | 3.45                        | 1.046              | 3.63                          | 0.951              | 4.00                     | 0.894              |

## Limitations

The study is limited to 153 English language teachers from different teaching positions with most of the respondents comprising of primary school teachers, followed by secondary school teachers and university lecturers. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to all teachers of different positions. Further, the instrument was limited to a questionnaire and could have been extended to include interviews and other instruments to provide better insights to how English language teachers accepted utilisation of digital media.

## Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the acceptance of English language teachers of different positions towards the transformation of digital media in education during the Covid-19 pandemic. It also aimed at determining the English language teachers' perceptions of their roles in utilising digital media in teaching and learning, and how the digital media has affected English language teachers of different positions. From the findings, it can be concluded that the transformation of digital media in education showed that the English language educators accepted the purpose of the transformation but found that there were numerous challenges. The results for English language teachers' perception of utilising digital media indicated that the English language educators were positive towards digital media, especially the English language lecturers. Finally, the effects of digital media on English language teachers showed positive effects except for primary school English language teachers who found that primary school pupils lacked focus. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended that studies be done on the effect of digital media on students. It is also suggested that for primary school students, alternative methods be applied to their online learning experience as they lack focus in the digital media approach.

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## USING EMOJIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY (VOMOJI)

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### Abstract

One of the main reasons English language learners have difficulties in using the language is caused by lack of vocabulary. Overemphasis on grammar at the expense of the learner's vocabulary knowledge has also affected learners' English mastery. Therefore, learners should be exposed to meaningful vocabulary before learning grammar. Using emojis to learn vocabulary offers an interesting and innovative approach, as there are hundreds of emojis being introduced every day for communication. These emojis are used on almost all social media platforms. This study aims to develop an emoji-based vocabulary workbook that suits learners of different CEFR bands. A short survey on learners' perception of using emoji-based vocabulary workbooks was given to 160 students at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). The results show that majority of the respondents agreed that using emoji could help them learn English vocabulary better, and they can also understand other cultures. As the majority of respondents have given positive feedback, the researchers have high hopes that the development of these activity books will help learners' acquire the English language.

**Keywords:** Emoji, English language learning, learner's perception, vocabulary, workbook

### Background of Study

VOMOJI is an acronym for Vocabulary Learning Through Emoji. We discovered that vocabulary learning using Emojis is fun and able to expand the students' creative thinking. As the saying goes, "A picture paints a thousand words", thus, emojis help to improve and strengthen the readers' comprehension of the word or phrases (Touch & Kanjo, 2016). Moreover, using pictographs such as emoji has become an important part and new form of modern communication (Alshenqeeti, 2016). Emoji became even more popular after the Oxford English Dictionary announced that the 'word of the year for 2015' was none other than the emoji character the 'Tears of Joy' (Oxford Dictionaries Website, 2015). Looking back at the history of communication, the function of emojis is no different with what the 40,000 year-old pictographs found in the caves. Both are basically telling stories or activities through pictures of humans, animals and other related images (Scoville, 2015). Now, with more new emojis being developed to meet the demand of the social media users, emojis will surely entice learners young and old into learning. It is adding more creativity or spices to the way the newer generations communicate (McGrath, 2006). Another interesting fact is that emojis can be clustered using CEFR. This makes learning vocabulary from lower to higher levels possible, currently an emoji-based vocabulary activity book is being developed starting with VOMOJI Activity Book (Level A1 – A2).

### Statement of Problem

As educators, we always aim at teaching our ESL students to communicate or use English with proper grammar. We overlook the fact that one of the main reasons why our ESL learners are not doing well in applying the language is because they do not have enough or the right vocabulary to use. Harji et al. (2015) found that students at universities have limited vocabulary knowledge and lack of attention is given to teaching and learning approaches to building vocabulary. Therefore, before we start teaching them grammar, we first need to make them learn as many words as possible. "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." Wilkins (1972). Making the teaching and

learning process fun and interesting, we choose EMOJIS - research indicates that visual cues help us to better retrieve and remember information (Kouyoumdjian, 2022).

### **Significance of Study**

VOMOJI allows educators to explore new and interesting ways of teaching and learning vocabulary. With online learning, students will have easy access to all forms of emojis via any Computer Mediated Communication devices (CMC). 10 billions Emojis are sent daily, used by 92% of the online population (ComScore, 2015). Thus, we cannot deny the fact that the usage and demand for emojis will only increase in the future and people from different walks of life, age group, race or religion will be using them frequently in their daily conversation. Emojis are also a form of a universal language, because they can be used to send messages and communicate expressions & emotions across the globe, making cross-cultural communication possible (Azuma, 2012). Currently, there are 3,633 emojis as of September 2022 (based on Emojipedia Statistics) and it is still growing. When it comes to language learning, learners tend to memorise frequently used words in the target language, this means they will focus first around 500 to 1000 words. When they reach 1000 to 3000 words, they will be able to carry out daily and meaningful conversations (Optilingo.com, 2022). Currently, there are more than 3000 emojis to play around with in teaching vocabulary, making language learning a fun process along the way.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are students' perceptions of using Vomojis in learning English?
2. Which emojis are suitable for students at CEFR levels A1 to A2?

### **Method**

A total of 160 English 1 (UBI 1012) students of the Sept 20/21 academic session from seven classes were involved as respondents in this small-scale study. They were asked to complete samples of Vomoji vocabulary exercises taken from the Vomoji (A1 – A2) Activity Book and the vocabulary introduced in the sample is appropriate to the targeted level. After they have completed the task, they were given a short survey in telegram which consisted of eight questions on their perception towards vocabulary learning using emojis. There were two questions on their familiarity with emojis, two questions on the advantages of emojis and three questions on their perception of the content of the work book. The data obtained from the survey were then presented in percentages.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Based on the responses received from the students, it was found that 96% of the respondents are familiar with emojis. 93% of the respondents claimed that they always use emojis in their daily activities such as sending text messages in Whatsapp or writing posts on Facebook. Bai et al. (2019) mentioned that emojis are popular because they have both emotional and semantic functions influenced by individual circumstances, cultures and platforms. Students' familiarity with emoji signifies that VOMOJI can be one of the approaches to teach vocabulary to the university students as they are already using it, especially when communicating in computer mediated communication (CMC).

When the students were asked about the ease of using VOMOJI samples in learning English, 91% of the respondents stated that they learn new words easily and it helps them to acquire the English vocabulary faster. Most of the respondents (97%) think that learning English is easier because of the images, in this case, the emojis. 92% of the respondents also stated that they can understand other people's culture using

emojis. Majority of the respondents (95%) claimed that activity books with emojis are more interesting than the other English vocabulary books in the market and 93% of them are willing to buy emoji-based activity books when they are available.

### Limitations

This present study is limited to non-proficient students (those with MUET Band 1 and Band 2) at one public university in Malaysia. Therefore, the results may not reflect the general vocabulary knowledge of undergraduates in Malaysia. Another limitation is that this present study did not use all emojis because the selection was made according to the topic that the researchers has planned to introduce and may be culturally specific to Malaysian students.

### Conclusion

VOMOJI provides a different and innovative approach towards learning English vocabulary compared to the traditional way of learning new words, such as reading a dictionary. Previous researchers found that using emoji in the classroom improves learning efficiency especially for students who are unable to understand abstract concepts and unable to express themselves (Brody & Caldwell, 2019; Fane et al., 2018). Therefore, it is hoped that VOMOJI satisfies the students' needs as it provides both visuals and context for students to see how particular words can be used meaningfully. VOMOJI is an on-going project, as the researchers are developing the first Vomoji activity book specifically for university students at CEFR level A1-A2. After the completion of this first level, the researchers plan to continue with the VOMOJI activity book for CEFR level B1-B2 and CEFR level C1-C2. It is hoped that VOMOJI activity books can support the English vocabulary learning at higher education institutions, and at the same time, support the English language education reform in Malaysia.

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## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN THE ENGLISH TO CHINESE TRANSLATION OF PROPER NAMES IN J.K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER

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### Abstract

Translating proper names is often challenging, while exploring solutions to these translation problems is important for an in-depth understanding of the source and target languages and cultures. Rowling used proper names to create her wizarding world in 'Harry Potter' series. This study aimed at identifying the problems in the English to Chinese translation of proper names in Harry Potter according to Nord (1991)'s translation problems theory, and applied Fernandes (2006)'s model of translation solutions to suggest the possible solutions of the problems. A total of 400 proper names were first identified, and 34 excerpts containing proper names were purposefully selected from 'Harry Potter' series and analyzed. Nord's (1991) translation problems theory was found effective for the translation of proper names from English to Chinese for this text. Transcription (29.2%), recreation (22.9%) and rendition (20.8%) were the most frequent translation strategies used to solve the translation problems. This study has several theoretical and practical implications for translators, instructors, and students in literary translation.

**Keywords:** Chinese, English, Harry Potter problems, proper names, solutions, translation

### Introduction

'Harry Potter' is one of the masterpieces in fantasy novels (Yan, 2003). Fantasy novel is a kind of fiction that uses surreal techniques to express fictional elements. Fantasy fiction is usually inspired by myths and legends in the real world, and the authors create their own fictional creatures (Clute, & Grant, 1999). In such fictions, magical creatures are commonly shown in fantasy novels. Fantasy novels are considered as popular fictional literature. In 'Harry Potter', a series of seven fantasy novels by the famous British writer J.K. Rowling, a magical world was created with thousands of proper names. The series have been translated into at least 80 languages and 500 million books have been sold worldwide.

In China, the series can be seen as the novel that has initiated Chinese readers' interest in Western fantasy novels. If a fantasy novel is popular in a country, but not popular in other countries, one of the reasons could be poor translation in terms of readability, considering the intellectual level of the target audience, and the complete transfer of content (Schwarz, Stiegelbauer & Husar, 2016). Translators often need to use creative methods to change the proper names from ST into TT so that the text can be associated easily with the target culture (Amini, Ibrahim- González, Ayob, Amini, 2015; Amini, Amini, Alavi, & Esfandiari, 2017).

Proper names are the unique and attractive part of 'Harry Potter's' text as many of them have unique meanings. Chinese translators often use transliteration to translate place names.

Several definitions are operationalized in this study. Character names refer to the names of fictional characters in 'Harry Potter'. 'For example, "Voldemort" is made up of several French affixes (Vole-de-mort), i.e., "flying of death." Voldemort is a black wizard who relies on the Horcrux to escape death and live in the world. At the same time, he is the only wizard with powerful magic to fly.

Magical creatures refer to animals that only exist in fictional literature. For example, the magical creature “Dementor” is a dark creature in the magical world. When it appears, it will absorb all the warmth and happiness of human beings, reminding people of the most fearful things in their hearts. Even more frightening is that such magical creature lives in the human soul.

Magical objects are objects with special powers, especially the power to protect them from bad incidents. For example, the “Horcrux” is formed by “hor” (horror) and “crux” (container).

Magical curse may refer to a kind of spell casted by magic or witchcraft. In the latter sense, a curse can also be called a hex or a jinx. The magic curse of “Expecto Patronum”, for example, was used to call out the patron, thus repelling the dementor.

Proper name is a specific reference to the object, whether it is the form of characters, places, animals or other objects (Zabir & Haroon, 2018), and may refer to “racial, ethnic, national, and religious identity” (Tymoczko, 1999). In this study, proper names are the specific names of individuals, places, or organizations.

Translation problems are encountered by translators in translating from ST into TT. Nord (1991) classifies translation problems into four categories: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and text-specific.

Translation solutions are the translation strategies or procedures for solving translation problems (James, Tan, & Amini, 2018; Yap, Abu Bakar, Amini., & Rafik-Galea, 2018). In this paper, the researcher applied Fernandes (2006)’s model consisting of Rendition, Copy, Transcription, Substitution, Recreation, Deletion, Addition, Transposition, Phonological Replacement and Conventionality.

### **Literature review**

Translating proper names is one of the most difficult parts in translating literary works (Bertillis, 2003). The translation of proper names is “a translation difficulty in any text” (Newmark, 1993). Translators have to be very careful when they translate proper names (Pour, 2009). The uncertainty about what to do is due to the different opinions on the meaning of proper names. Bachman (1990) stated that if the translator does not know the implied meaning, it will lead to inaccurate translation.

In fiction literature, proper names are often chosen carefully by the authors as they can be used to achieve a certain purpose (Zabir & Haroon, 2018). In the context of children’s fantasy literature, by using proper names creatively, authors can use minimum words to portray the character’s personality, beliefs, habits, experiences, feelings and appearances, and they can guide readers to make certain judgments about the fictional world (Yap, & Amini, 2020). When creating names in stories, authors can choose several proper names that already exist in their own culture, or they can invent new, wonderful, absurd or descriptive names for their own roles (Nord, 2003). When proper names appear in literary texts, translators can consider different aspects, such as the use of meaningful names, the explanation of names, the use of special names, the contribution to features, the implication of proper names, and the textual function. Newmark (1988) claimed that a name may be used as a metaphor and its connotation should be put into consideration when translating. Most people may just think that proper names are usually not translated (Pour, 2009).

The specific problem with the ‘Harry Potter’ series is that the proper names have their own meanings (Kapari-Jatta, 2008; Rodríguez, 2003). There are many homonyms in Chinese whereby different Chinese characters can possess the same pronunciation and intonation. Thus, choosing different Chinese characters to translate the same English name will confuse the readers and make it impossible for them to differentiate whether the names given refers to the same person or several different people. For example, the main character, Harry, can be translated into several ways in Chinese, but with the same pronunciation, such as “哈利; 哈莉; 蛤力 /hā li/”. If translated “哈莉 /hā li/” (female name in Chinese), the gender would not match the ST. Therefore, translation errors will occur due to the violation of the norms in a linguistic contact situation (Wills, 1982). As ‘Harry Potter’ has a British cultural background, the Chinese readers may not be able to understand and hence, lose interest in the novel. Translations of Harry Potter have been analyzed

in languages like Arabic, Finnish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German and Italian (Jaleniauskiene, 2009). However, there is limited research on translation difficulties and solutions specifically on the translation of English proper names into Chinese.

Nord (1991) classified translation problems into pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and text-specific problems. Pragmatic translation problems arise from the differences between the extra-linguistic situations and can be identified by checking on the extra-textual factors such as: sender, receiver, medium, time, place, motive and text function. They are present in every translation task and can be generalized regardless of the languages and cultures involved in the direction of the translation process. Furthermore, the translation problems at the pragmatic level occur due to the differences between the original text and the production situation of the translation situation. Culturally translation problems are due to the differences between two different cultures. Translators often find it difficult to understand the implied message by the receiver and were unable to identify and decode the sociocultural type of information in all sorts of allusions. These differences encountered in texts are called cultural elements or cultural references. Linguistic translation problems arise from structural differences in the vocabulary, syntax, and supra-segmental features of the two languages. Analysis of these problems helps us to understand the differences between the two languages (Tan, Amini, & Lee, 2021). compared with topics such as the kind of words, the use of articles and prepositions, time and verbal modes as well as corresponding terminology specific to the field of theory and practice of translation. The specific problems of textuality are due to the misunderstanding of the ST in terms of intra-textual characteristics and extra-textual references including the coherence and cohesion in using textual elements.

Lincoln Fernandes (2006) discussed the process of name translation in children's fantasy literature and emphasized the importance of names in the translation of this special text type. Firstly, he defined the meaning of "name" and presented several types of "meaning" usually conveyed by names. Then, he discussed the problems caused by the translation of these narrative elements. Then, based on the Hermans' (1988) name transfer from L1 to L2, he provided a classification of ten translation procedures in the Portuguese to English translation of children's fantasy literature. The ten procedures. Rendition is a coincidental procedure and is used when the name is transparent or semantically motivated and is in standardized language, that is, when the name in a ST is trapped in the lexicon of that language, thus acquiring meaning should be rendered in the TL. Copy bears resemblance to Vinay and Darbelnet's concept of "borrowing" as the simplest type of translation. In this procedure, the names are reproduced in the translated text exactly as how they appeared in the source text without suffering any sort of orthographic adjustment. From a phonological perspective, however, Nord (2003) points out that these names often acquire a different pronunciation in the TL. Transcription is an attempt to transcribe a name in the closest-sounding letters of a different TL, i.e., when a name is transliterated or adapted at the level of morphology, phonology and grammar, usually to conform to the target language system. In this procedure, the translator may suppress, add, or change the position of letters to preserve the readability of the text in the TL context. In Substitution, a formally and/or semantically unrelated name is used as a substitute in the TT for any existent name in the ST. The TL name and the SL name exist in their respective referential worlds but are not related to each other in terms of form and/or semantic significance. Recreation consists of recreating an invented name in the SL text into the TL text, thus trying to reproduce similar effects of this newly created referent in another target cultural setting. Recreation differs from substitution in the sense that in recreation the lexical item does not exist in the SL or TL. Deletion is rather a drastic way of dealing with lexical items, but even so it has been often used by translators. Deletion involves removing a ST name or part of it in the TT It usually occurs when such names are apparently of little importance to the development of the narrative and are not relevant enough for the effort of comprehension required for their readers. In "Addition", extra information is added to the original name, making it more comprehensible or perhaps more appealing to its target audience. Sometimes it is used to solve ambiguities that might exist in the translation of a particular name. Transposition is defined as the replacement of one's word class with another without changing the meaning of the original message. Phonological Replacement is an attempt to mimic phonological features of a ST name by replacing the latter with an existing name in the TL which somehow invokes the sound image of the SL name being replaced. Phonological replacement should not be confused with transcription. While transcription involves adaptation of a SL name to the phonology/morphology of a TL, phonological replacement involves the replacement of a SL name with a TL name which is phonemically/ graphologically

analogous to it. Conventionality occurs when a TL name is accepted as the translation of a particular SL name. It is commonly used with names of historical/literary figures and geographical locations. These conventionalized names in the TL are usually referred to as exonyms (Fernandes, 2006).

Schwarz, Stiegelbauer and Husar (2016) investigated translation problems and the use of translation strategies to achieve accurate translations in Romanian. They identified four translation problems: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and textual. They concluded that to identify the difficulty of translating their own texts, translators are required to expand their cross-national knowledge in understanding and re-expressing. In addition, proofreading and revision of English translations represented the issue of cultural transfer reference.

Several Studies investigated the translation of proper names in 'Harry Potter'. Often, they concluded that once the translators decided, they should maintain their choice throughout the translation. The choice may not be the best, but at least there will be uniformity which will avoid contradictions and manipulations in the change from languages.

Astrén (2004) discussed translation of names in's first five books of 'Harry Potter' and looked at how the translation of names agreed with and deviated from the original names, as well as features like alliterations, allusions, and inventions. These features created special challenges for translators of literature, and preservation of style as well as context were found crucial as these factors were largely affected even if there was a slight deviation from the original. The Swedish translator retained the original English names in the translation as much as possible, particularly the names of characters.

Jaleniauskiene (2009) analyzed 424 proper names translated from English and German into Lithuanian by three Lithuanian translators in the translations of four popular fantasy books for children to explore the translation strategies applied to translate the proper names in the four books into Lithuanian and provide solutions for any translator. The findings showed that localization was the most frequent strategy (%72). Thus, the translation of proper names was a challenge for translators as it was impossible to achieve perfect equivalence due to the subtle allusions.

Mäkinen (2010) compared the Finnish and German translations to investigate the challenges of translation in 'Harry Potter'. The results portrayed hidden meanings in the names, creative aspects of the names and the original casual style were lost during the translation.

Brazill (2016) pointed out that the Chinese to English translation problems occur frequently in formal and professional settings. Twenty teachers were interviewed and more than 300 students participated in the survey at seven Chinese universities to identify problems and provide solutions to improve the quality of Chinese-English translations. The study classified four problem aspects: Chinglish, cultural awareness, machine translation (MT), and translation profession. The findings showed the difference between Chinese and English expressions. The causes of Chinglish were vocabulary, grammar and cultural level. Cultural awareness was found to be a key factor in improving the quality of translation, especially in idiomatic translation. Finally, developing more intelligible translations were suggested to solve translation problems to improve the quality of Chinese-English translations.

Zabir and Haroon (2018) investigated the procedures in translating proper names in the novel "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire" into Malay and discussed the impact of using a translation program. Fernandes' (2006) theory was used to analyze how the names were translated into Malay. The "translation loss" concept was then used to determine the impact of using the translation program. Several procedures were identified in translation of the names into Malay, resulting in the loss of hidden meanings in the names, creative aspect of the names and the casual style of the original.

## **Methodology**

Using a qualitative research design, this study was an attempt to explore the unknown or less investigated concepts (Creswell, 2009) in translation. The materials were collected from the 'Harry Potter' official

website *Pottermore* and the Chinese version of the ‘Harry Potter’ book (哈利波特百科全书 /Hā lì bō tè bǎi kē quán shū/). To minimize errors, the website *Pottermore* served as a secondary reference to confirm the accuracy of the ST and TT. Four hundred proper names were purposefully collected from the book “Chinese version Harry Potter Encyclopedia”.

For data analysis procedure, first the meaning of each proper name in TT was identified. Then, the problems were classified based on Nord’s (1991) translation problem types (pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, and text-specific) in translating proper names from English to Chinese in ‘Harry Potter’. Finally, solutions to problems were given based on Fernandes’s model of translation procedure (2006).

The book “Chinese version: Harry Potter Encyclopedia” was published by the Beijing Institute of Technology Press in 2015. This book was based on the Chinese version of the ‘Harry Potter’ series published by the translators Ma Ainong and Ma Aixin in People's Literature Publishing House from 1997 to 2007. The English annotations of Chinese entries in the book are based on the “Harry Potter” series published by Scholastic, USA. There are about 1400 entries in this book, including words such as wizards, goblins, monsters, horses, wolf man, ghosts, magic, curses, magical creatures, nicknames, mottos as well as proverbs in the ‘Harry Potter’ series. Most of these entries are proper names.

Purposive sampling method, as a non-probability sample based on characteristics of a population and the objectives, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling (Lavrakas, 2008) were utilized in this study. This study covered four categories of characters names, magical creatures, magical objects, and magical curse. Thus, each category consisted of 100 proper names.

## Results

### *Analysis of Pragmatic Problems and solutions*

Nord (1991) stated that the reason for translation problems at the pragmatic level are the differences between the original text as well as the production situation of the translation situation.

#### *Problems in character names*

Character names in “Harry Potter” were carefully transliterated and the meaning in TT was provided.

|           | ST           | TT                       | Meaning in TT  |
|-----------|--------------|--------------------------|--|
| Excerpt 1 | Harry Potter | 哈利·波特<br>/Hā lì/ /Bō tè/ | 哈: happily; 利 :<br>terrific; 波 : the restless<br>(the life of Harry); 特 :<br>special |

The main character’s name Harry is the Middle English form of the name “Henry”, a popular name among British royal families. The leadership skills and the motif of war perfectly are matched with the name Harry. Harry also means Heri (army) in Old High German words. As one of the founders of Dumbledore’s Army, this seems apposite (Rowling, 2016).

|           | ST               | TT                              | Meaning in TT                      |
|-----------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Excerpt 2 | Hermione Granger | 赫敏·格兰杰<br>/Hè mǐn/ /Gé lán jié/ | 赫: very famous; 敏:<br>intelligence |

According to Rowling, the name Hermione came from the character's parents in *A Winter's Tale*, who were “a pair of professional dentists who love to prove their intelligence”. Rowling (2016) mentioned that Her-My-Own-Knee is a common name used with mythological value, in Greek. Hermione is the daughter of King Menelaus of Sparta and his wife, Helen of Troy.

In Middle English, Granger is an interesting professional term for “bailiff”, which explained Hermione Granger frequently flaunted with Ron and Harry several times for her intelligence and wit. Therefore, the TT should retain similar meanings to highlight the character and talent of the protagonist Hermione.

*Solution for Excerpts 1 and 2: Transcription*

Fernandes (2006) described transcription as an attempt to transcribe a name in the closest-sounding letters of a different target alphabet. The names “Harry Potter” and “Hermione Granger”, with their pronunciation’s forms alien to a Chinese audience, were transcribed into “哈利·波特/Hā lì Bō tè/” and “赫敏·格兰杰/Hè mǐn Gé lán jié/” respectively. The translators marked the tones and stresses in Chinese with Pinyin.

In the name “哈利·波特/Hā lì Bō tè/”, 哈 implies that this person is relatively optimistic and cheerful. It also means hoping others to be happy every day and having the best wishes for the hero of the story. 利 means being great at something, successful and favorable. 波 means that there will be some twists and turns in this person's life. 特 implied that this person is very special, and of course, Harry is very special for the entire “Harry Potter” novel.

In “赫敏·格兰杰/Hè mǐn Gé lán jié/”, 赫 means that this person will be well-known, expressing the translator's best wishes for Hermione. In the end of the story, Hermione did become well known in the wizard world and became the Minister of Magic. 敏 means that this person is very smart, Hermione has a nickname “known as all things”. 格 and 兰 means that this character is noble; 杰 means that this person is very outstanding.

|           | ST     | TT              | Meaning in TT       |
|-----------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Excerpt 3 | Peeves | 皮皮鬼 /pí pí guǐ/ | A mischievous ghost |

Peeves originally means a cause of annoyance. It is a ghost name in “Harry Potter” meaning “to become angry” (恼怒/Nǎo nù/).

*Solution for Excerpt 3: Phonological Replacement+Recreation*

For name “皮皮鬼 /pí pí guǐ/”, 皮 (naughty) usually refers to a person who likes to make trouble, expressing the character of Peeves in the “Harry Potter story. 鬼 (ghost), symbolizes the identity of Peeves. In “皮皮-” Phonological Replacement strategy is used to translate, because the sound of 皮 is similar to “Pee”. Fernandes (2006) explains this as a procedure in which a TT name attempts to mimic phonological features of a ST name by replacing the latter with an existing name in the target language which somehow invokes the sound image of the SL name being replaced. “鬼” is the identity of ghost. The name “皮 鬼 /pí pí guǐ/” is recreated in the TT applying one sound from ST, and without any change in the meaning. The recreation consists of recreating an invented name in the SL text into the TL text, thus trying to reproduce similar effects of this newly created referent in another target cultural setting.

Magical Creatures

A grotesque carved human, animal face or figure projected from the gutter of a building, typically acts as a spout to carry water clear of a wall. The ST, it is to express the weird atmosphere through the weird and ugly gargoyle.

|           | ST       | TT                 | Meaning in TT                       |
|-----------|----------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Excerpt 4 | Gargoyle | 丑八怪 /Chǒu bā guài/ | Very ugly person or animal or thing |
|           | ST       | TT                 | Meaning in TT                       |

|           |       |                    |   |
|-----------|-------|--------------------|---|
| Excerpt 5 | Knarl | 刺佬儿<br>/Cì lǎo er/ | The creature is always provocative,<br>and will immediately try to attack<br>others if he meets any dissatisfaction |
|-----------|-------|--------------------|---|

In the storyline, there is only one behavioral difference between hedgehog and Knarl. A hedgehog tends to appreciate and enjoy the left-over food as a gift, however, Knarl would assume that it is a trap which is used to lure it. Knarl does not trust human and attempt to hurt people when they sense something wrong.

*Excerpt 4&5 Solution: Substitution*

“Gargoyle” in Chinese means “石像鬼/shí xiàng guǐ”, but the meaning in the story context is changed. So, the translator used substitution strategy to change “石像鬼/shí xiàng guǐ” into “丑八怪 /Chǒu bā guài” (weird and ugly statue). In substitution, a formally or semantically unrelated name is a substitute in the TT for any existent name in the ST (Hermans, 1988). In other words, the TL and the SL names exist in their respective referential worlds but are not related to each other in terms of form and/or semantic significance. The magical creature Knarl has no correct direct translation in TT, so the translators substituted the TT into “刺佬儿 /Cì lǎo er”, which means that the creature is always provocative, and will try to attack others if he meets any uncertainty.

|           |        |                    |                   |
|-----------|--------|--------------------|-------------------|
|           | ST     | TT                 | Meaning in TT     |
| Excerpt 6 | Beetle | 大甲虫 /Dà jiǎ chóng/ | Very large beetle |

In ‘Harry Potter’, students were afraid when this creature appeared due to the beetles’ huge body size. Normal and magical beetles could not create any difference if they were to be translated directly.

*Excerpt 6 Solution: Rendition+Addition*

Using addition strategy, “大 /Dà” (big) was added to the beginning of the “beetle”. This is a strategy in which extra information is added to the original name, making it more comprehensible or perhaps more appealing to its target audience (Giles, 1995). Then rendition strategy was used to translate “beetle” into “甲虫 /jiǎ chóng”. The rendition is when the name from the ST is included in the dictionary of the TL and has the corresponding translated text (Hermans, 1988). This allows TT to not lose the original meaning of ST and add a special meaning in context.

**Magical Objects**

Hogwarts can talk and move around from picture to picture. However, the power of the witch or wizard painted determines the degree of their interaction with the people looking at them instead of the skill of the painter (Rowling, 2015).

|           |          |                        |                    |
|-----------|----------|------------------------|--------------------|
|           | ST       | TT                     | Meaning in TT      |
| Excerpt 7 | Portrait | 魔法画像 /Mó fǎ huà xiàng/ | A magical portrait |

The subject of a magical portrait is sentient due to enchantments placed on the portrait by the painter. If translators translate portraits directly into mandarin 画像/huà xiàng/, they would be unable to show the magic of wizarding portraits.

*Excerpt 7 solution: Addition+Rendition*

The magical portrait moves and speaks and has its own thoughts. Therefore, rendition strategy was used to translate “portrait” into 画像/huà xiàng/ adding 魔法/Mó fǎ/ to 画像/huà xiàng/ (magical). It highlights the difference from ordinary portraits and reveals its magical characteristics.



|           | ST          | TT                 | Meaning in TT                               |
|-----------|-------------|--------------------|---|
| Excerpt 8 | Sorting Hat | 分院帽 /Fēn yuàn mào/ | A hat used to assign institutes to freshmen |

Sorting Hat is a thought hat of Hogwarts, a magic item that determines which institute each new student should belong to. The four institutes are Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. Sorting Hat originally belonged to Godric Gryffindor, one of the founders of Hogwarts.

*Excerpt 8 solution: Substitution*

In Chinese, sorting means “sequence” or “arrange”. The translator used substitution to translate the “sorting hat” into 分院帽 /Fēn yuàn mào/ (hat is used to differentiate the institution to the freshmen).

|           | ST     | TT                 | Meaning in TT                        |
|-----------|--------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Excerpt 9 | Howler | 吼叫信 /Hǒu jiào xìn/ | A letter that roars out its contents |

A Howler is a magical letter in a red envelope which enchants the written message into the writer's voice, usually at a very high volume. Instead of simply being a red envelope that can explode, in ‘Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets’, Ron's Howler resembles a mouth with teeth (simulated by the red envelope and white paper, with a ribbon for the tongue). The physical temperature of the Howler begins to rapidly increase upon delivery, and it will explode if leave unopened for too long. This ensures that the recipient will open the Howler, even though he or she knows that it contains an unpleasantly loud message. The original meaning of Howler is just roaring.

*Excerpt 9 solution: Recreation*

The translator used the translation strategy of recreation and produced 吼叫信/Hǒu jiào xìn/ (the letter that roars out its contents)

Magical Curses

No magic curses related to pragmatic problems was found in the data.

Analysis of Cultural Problems

The differences of cultures can cause cultural problems during translation.

Characters Names

“Dumbledore” is an archaic word for “bumblebee”, which is rather sweet. “Albus” (white), like the colour of his beard, portrays him as a white wizard. Dumbledore has complex characteristics.

“Percival” reflects on a history of battle. Percival is one of the legendary knights in King Arthur’s court.

“Wulfric (wolf power) reveals his hidden power as a wolf if he faces the enemies. “Brian” is an old Celtic word, meaning “noble”.

Compared to English, in Chinese culture, the names are usually shorter and there are no middle names. Cho Chang is a student who immigrated to the UK with her parents. Harry has a crush on Cho Chang. She passed away due to mutilation of the black wizard. In Chinese, the first name is followed by the family name/surname.

*Excerpt 10 Solution: Transcription + Deletion*

|            | ST                             | TT   | Meaning in TT   |
|------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Excerpt 10 | Albus<br>Wulfric<br>Dumbledore | Percival<br>Brian<br>阿不思·邓布利多<br>/Ā bù sī/ /Dèng bù lì<br>duō/ | 思 : thought; 布 : arrange or<br>deploy, 利: benefit, 多:<br>many |

The name “Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore” with their graphological forms are alien to Chinese audience. It was transcribed into “阿不思·邓布利多 /Ā bù sī / Dèng bù lì duō/” transcriptly. 思 (thinking) implies that a person is very good at thinking and planning. 利 means this person is successful, favorable, and can cut through the darkness like a sharp sword, implying Dumbledore's contribution in defeating the black wizard.

Deletion strategies is usually used when such names are less important to the narrative and are not relevant to the comprehension required for their readers (Aixelá, 1996). Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore is not significant to the plot development. These names were deleted by the translators of the ‘Harry Potter’ series.

#### *Excerpt 11 solution: Phonological Replacement*

Cho” is a transliteration of Chinese character sound “qiu” to facilitate pronunciation. “Chang” is a Chinese surname that depends on the characters “昌(prosperous)”, “常(common)”, “昶 (bright)”, “唱 (to sing)” or “畅 (unhindered)”. In Chinese, “Cho Chang” is like the tone of 惆怅 / chóuchàng (depressed).

|                     | ST  | TT                | Meaning in TT  |
|---------------------|-----|-------------------|--|
| Excerpt 11<br>Chang | Cho | 张秋<br>/Zhāng qiū/ | 张 is the last name,<br>means expand ; 秋 is<br>the first name, means<br>Autumn. |

“Here, Cho Chang may refer to emotional people after the murder of Cedric Diggory. However, since 惆 is not a surname, the surname 张 /Zhāng/ with a similar tone was used. Cho, translated to 秋 /qiū/ (autumn), expressed a sad atmosphere to show the tragic fate of the characters.

|            | ST          | TT                           | Meaning in TT |
|------------|-------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Excerpt 12 | Sir Cadogan | 卡多根爵士 /kǎ duō gēn<br>juéshì/ | Cadogan Sir   |

Sir Cadogan is a wizard and sworn Knight of the Round Table. Albeit is only included in the tales of King Arthur as a wizard. ‘Cadogan’ (glory in battle) is from Welsh cad. Mabinogion is the son of Iddon. In Chinese, honorific terms, such as ‘Mr, Sir, Miss’ is placed after the name, different from Western culture.

#### *Excerpt 12 solution: Rendition+Transcription*

Due to the influences of the Chinese culture, the honorific title is usually placed after the name, so the translator first translated Cadogan into 卡多根 /kǎ duō gēn/ using a transcription strategy. Then, “Sir” was rendered into 爵士 /juéshì/. Thus, “Cadogan Sir” became “卡多根爵士 /kǎ duō gēn juéshì/.

#### Magical Creatures

Boggart, a term in British folklore, is usually a shift from the family spirit as a liar or malicious mischievous goblin-like creatures. The name is derived from the Welsh ‘bwg’.

|            | ST      | TT                | Meaning in TT   |
|------------|---------|-------------------|---|
| Excerpt 13 | Boggart | 博格特<br>/Bó gé tè/ | 博 means (amount); rich:<br>profound, vast land, vast, but not<br>refined; 格 means particularly, 特<br>means strange, weird |

Boggart is an evil creature in the folklore. However, there is no such creature in Chinese cultural background.

*Excerpt 13 solution: Transcription*

Since there are no similar creatures in Chinese culture, translators used the transcription strategy to translate “Bo” into “博 /Bó/” (profound) to make it difficult to be identified when facing different people, ‘ggar’ is translated as ‘格 /gé/’ (being afraid of something different) to maintain uniqueness, and ‘t’ is translated to ‘特 /tè/’ (strange).

Magical Objects

‘Horcrux’, an object in which a Dark wizard has hidden a fragment of his or her soul for the purpose of attaining immortality, can be created after committing the ultimate act of evil. It is considered as the most terrible of all Dark magics. There is no equivalence for Horcrux in Chinese.

|            | ST      | TT          | Meaning in TT                       |
|------------|---------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Excerpt 14 | Horcrux | 魂器 /Hún qì/ | A magical item that can store souls |

*Excerpt 14 solution: Recreation*

‘魂器 /Hún qì/’ was recreated as the translation of Horcrux 魂 (soul), and 器(container), meaning the container that holds the soul.

|            | ST             | TT                             | Meaning in TT |
|------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Excerpt 15 | Sherbet Lemons | 酸酸柠檬汁 /Suān suān níngméng zhī/ | A lemon candy |

‘Sherbet Lemons’ is a famous real lemon candy brand in the UK. In the story, ‘Sherbet Lemons’ is a candy sold at “Honeydukes”. It is made up of lemon and special magic herbs. It is popular among Hogwarts students. However, there is no such candy in China.

*Excerpt 15 solution: Substitution*

Since the Chinese readers may not understand the background, the substitution strategy was used to translate ‘Sherbet Lemons’ into “酸酸柠檬汁/Suān suān níngméng zhī”, which is a popular drink in China. Candy was substituted with juice as Dumbledore wanted to introduce some famous and delicious snacks in the wizard world, so the substitution does not affect the sense and meaning or the cultural background.

Magical Curses

Avada Kedavra is one of the three unforgivable killing curses. It is one of the most powerful and sinister curses of the wizard. It is an ancient spell in Aramaic which means “let the thing be destroyed”.

|            | ST            | TT                       | Meaning in TT       |
|------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Excerpt 16 | Avada Kedavra | 阿瓦达索命 /Ā wǎ dá suǒ mìng/ | Avada killing charm |

*Excerpt 16 solution: Transcription+Substitution*

This curse plays an important role in the whole ‘Harry Potter’ series. Therefore, the translator used the substitution translation strategy to translate Kedavra into 索命 /suǒ mìng/ (killing someone like an evil spirit). To distinguish it from other killing curses, the translator retained Avada and used the transcription strategy to translate it into 阿瓦达 /Ā wǎ dá/, giving a special name prefix to the killing curse and showing its particularity.

|            | ST       | TT                         | Meaning in TT                           |
|------------|----------|----------------------------|---|
| Excerpt 17 | Densageo | 门牙赛大棒 /Mén yá Sài dà bàng/ | Make your front teeth as big as a stick |

‘Densaugeo’ is the incantation of a hex which caused the teeth to elongate at an alarming rate. The Shrinking Charm can be used to counteract this spell. During the 1988–1989 school year, this hex is taught to fifth year Defence Against the Dark Arts students by the then Professor of the subject Patricia Rakepick. Hermione Granger is hit by this hex from Draco Malfoy's wand. Draco and Harry had begun fighting in the corridor, which eventually led to a duel, but the spells they cast at each other missed and hit Hermione and Gregory Goyle instead.

*Excerpt 17 solution: Recreation*

Using recreation strategy, ‘Densaugeo’ was translated into 门牙赛大棒 /Mén yá sài dà bàng/ (the front teeth are as long as stick). It retained the fun, while expressing the meaning of the spell clearly. The incantation is derived from Latin ‘dens’, which means ‘tooth’, whereas ‘augeo’ is translated as ‘increase’ or ‘grow’.

*Analysis of Linguistic Problems*

According to Nord (1991) linguistic translation problems are the result of structural differences in the vocabulary, syntax, and suprasegmental features of the two languages.

*Characters Names*

The name ‘Sirius Black’ is an Animagus form of a black dog. The star Sirius is known as the Star of Dog and is the brightest star in Canis Major, the Great Dog constellation.

|            | ST           | TT                            | Meaning in TT |
|------------|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Excerpt 18 | Sirius Black | 小天狼星<br>/Xiǎo tiān láng xīng/ | Little Sirius |

‘Sirius’ is referred to the brightest star in the night sky, and his last name, ‘Black’ is referred to the darkest color or the absence of light, which means unfortunate in Chinese.

Professor Sinistra's surname originates from the Latin ‘sinister’. It means ‘left’ or ‘with a direction to the left’. The most probable explanation for this is that most of the planets in the solar system rotate anti-clockwise. Sinistra is also the name of a star of the constellation of Ophiuchus. It can also be a synonym for ‘dark’.

*Excerpt 18 solution: Transcription or Deletion+Rendition*

Two different translations of Sirius Black were found. One used transcription to translate Sirius Black into 西里斯·布莱克 /Xī lǐ sī Bù lái kè/. Another one deleted the last name Black and retained the given name Sirius. Sirius has a constellation, so 小天狼星 /Xiǎo tiān láng xīng/ was rendered.

|            | ST                 | TT                               | Meaning in TT      |
|------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Excerpt 19 | Professor Sinistra | 辛尼斯塔教授<br>/Xīn nísī tā jiàoshòu/ | Sinistra Professor |

*Excerpt 19 solution: Rendition+Transcription*

In Chinese, honorific titles are usually placed before the name of the person. In this context, ‘professor’ was rendered as 教授 /jiào shòu/, Sinistra was transcribed as 辛尼斯塔 /Xīn ní sī tā/, and 教授 came before 辛尼斯塔 (Sinistra Professor).

|            | ST     | TT             | Meaning in TT  |
|------------|--------|----------------|--|
| Excerpt 20 | Fawkes | 福克斯 /fú kè sī/ | 福 means good luck and blessing. At the same time, Fawkes is the phoenix, 福 |

symbolizing the characteristics of the phoenix.

Fawkes is a highly intelligent male phoenix and Albus Dumbledore's animal companion and defender. He is loyal to Dumbledore for years until the death of Headmaster. Like all phoenixes, Fawkes appears to be immortal.

*Excerpt 20 solution: Transcription*

Fawkes is an English conspirator who is executed for his role in the plot to blow up James I and the Houses of Parliament. The translators used the Transcription strategy to translate Fawkes into 福克斯 /fú kè sī/. 福 (good luck and blessing). 福 symbolizes the characteristics of the phoenix too.

Magical Creatures

A maggot is the larval form of some varieties of fly, which includes houseflies, cheese flies, and blowflies.

|            | ST                    | TT                 | Meaning in TT                      |
|------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Excerpt 21 | Aquavirius<br>Maggots | 阿卡危蛆 /Ā kǎ wēi qū/ | A kind of maggot called Aquavirius |

‘Aqua’ is the Latin means water, and a maggot is a fly larva which eats decomposing flesh.

*Excerpt 21 solution: Transcription+Rendition*

Aquavirius Maggots is a magic maggot, a non-existent creature. Rendition strategy was used in translating maggots as 蛆 /qū/, and retaining Akawei. Transcription was used in translating 阿卡危 /Ā kǎ wēi/ (danger) to indicate that Aquavirius Maggots is a dangerous magical creature.

|            | ST                  | TT                         | Meaning in TT                    |
|------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Excerpt 22 | Gulping<br>Plimpies | 大嘴球形鱼 /Dà zuǐ qiú xíng yú/ | Fish with large spherical mouths |

Another proper name, ‘Plimpy’, is a small, round, and magical fish with two legs ending in webbed feet. It lived in deep lakes and fed on water snails. It is not dangerous, but it would nibble on the feet and clothing of unsuspecting swimmers.

*Excerpt 22 solution: Transposition+Recreation*

Using transposition strategy, gulping was replaced with 大嘴 /Dà zuǐ/, meaning the creature has a big mouth. The new magical creature’s name was created with recreation strategy, “大嘴球形鱼 /Dà zuǐ qiú xíng yú/” (fish with a very large mouth and a round body).

Magical Objects

‘The Guardians of Hogwarts’ are in armor or statues, and they only come alive to protect the school and resist it from the from the enemy. The sentence structure would be different if it is translated directly to Chinese

|            | ST                              | TT                                   | Meaning in TT           |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Excerpt 23 | The<br>Guardians of<br>Hogwarts | 霍格沃茨的守护者/Huò gé wò cí de shǒuhù zhě/ | The Hogwarts’s defender |

The Mirror of Erised is a magical mirror. It shows the ‘deepest, most desperate desire’. The name ‘Erised’ is ‘desire’ spelled backwards, as if reflected in a mirror. It is intrinsically inherent for human nature to desire something greater than one's own self.

|  | ST | TT | Meaning in TT |
|--|----|----|---------------|
|--|----|----|---------------|

|               |                         |                         |                  |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Excerpt<br>24 | The Mirror of<br>Erised | 厄里斯魔镜 /È lǐ sī mó jìng/ | The Erise Mirror |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|

*Excerpt 23, 24 solution: Rendition+Transcription*

The ‘Guardian’ was rendered as 守卫者 /shǒuhù zhě/, and transcribed Hogwarts as 霍格沃茨 /Huò gé wò cí/. 格 (*extra*), and 沃 (rich), indicating that Hogwarts is knowledgeable and secretive.

As in excerpt 22, the order of these proper names changes during translation. Using rendition strategy, the ‘mirror’ was translated into 魔镜 /mó jìng/. Transcription strategy was used to translate Erised into 厄里斯 /È lǐ sī/. 厄 meaning the person is trapped in something or someone, and 里 is the heart of people. The combination of the proper names implies that when somebody sees their hidden heart in the magic mirror, they will be trapped in the magic mirror.

|               |        |                   |                                      |
|---------------|--------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
|               | ST     | TT                | Meaning in TT                        |
| Excerpt<br>25 | Howler | 吼叫信/Hǒu jiào xìn/ | A letter that roars out its contents |

A Howler (roaring) is a magical letter in a red envelope which enchants the written message into the writer's voice, usually at a very high volume.

*Excerpt 25 solution: Recreation*

The original syntactical functions were abandoned, and howler was translated into 吼叫信 /Hǒu jiào xìn/, (a roaring letter).

|               |               |                            |                     |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
|               | ST            | TT                         | Meaning in TT       |
| Excerpt<br>26 | Hand of Glory | 光荣之手 /Guāng róng zhī shǒu/ | Hands with glorious |

A Hand of Glory is the dried and pickled hand of a male person who has been hanged, often specified as being the left hand, or, if the man is hanged for murder, the hand that ‘did the deed’.

*Excerpt 26 solution: Rendition*

‘Hand’ was translated as 手/shǒu/, “glory” as 光荣 /Guāng róng/, and “of” as 之 /zhī/. The order of words in TT creates ‘the glory of a hand’. Thus, the proper name ‘Hand of Glory’ was translated into ‘光荣之手 /Guāng róng zhī shǒu/’.

**Magical Curses**

Expecto Patronum is one of the most powerful defense curses in the wizard’s world. This is an extremely complex and difficult curse that evokes a part of the positive energy called the Patronus. It is the main protection against dementors.

|               |                     |                      |                                |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
|               | ST                  | TT                   | Meaning in TT                  |
| Excerpt<br>27 | Expecto<br>Patronum | 呼神护卫/Hū shén hù wèi/ | Summon gods to defend yourself |

The Patronus in Latin means ‘protector’, ‘guardian’ or simply ‘patron saint’. In Old Latin, it means ‘father’, considering that Harry Potter's Patronus is the same as his father's Patronus. The Latin word ‘expecto’ or ‘expecto’ means “I'm looking for” or “I'm waiting”, so the curse of the amulet roughly means “I'm waiting for the protector”.

*Excerpt 27 solution: Rendition*

The translators used the translation strategy and rendition translation to translate “Expecto Patronum” into “呼神护卫 /Hū shén hù wèi/”. The Chinese characters “呼 /Hū/” and “Expecto” correspond (looking for),

and “神 /shén/” corresponds to “Patron”. “护卫 /hù wèi/”, as a noun, can imply “Patron”, or as a verb can indicate the patron saint protecting this behavior of the wizard. This translation not only retains the original meaning of “Expecto Patronum”, but also follows the four-character phrase.

### Analysis of Text-Specific Problems

The Text-Specific Problems are compared to intra-textual characteristics and extra-textual references, including the coherence and cohesion textual elements (Nord, 1991).

### Characters Names

Severus (stern in Latin, severe in English is a Roman cognomen, common to members of the Severan dynasty of Emperors, including the one notorious for his harsh persecution of the early Christians.

|               | ST               | TT                                      | Meaning in TT   |
|---------------|------------------|---|---|
| Excerpt<br>28 | Severus<br>Snape | 西弗勒斯·斯内普<br>/Xī fú lè sī /Sī nèi<br>pǔ/ | 西 is the azimuth of the west, the side where the sun goes down. 斯 used in the phonetic as particles, or means this; 内 means inside; 普 means ordinary.   |
| Excerpt<br>29 | Remus<br>Lupin   | 莱姆斯·卢平<br>/Lái mǔ sī /Lú píng/          | 莱 is a grass name, is a special Chinese herb. 姆 is a noun, often used to refer to a nanny. 卢 describe a person's personality is not straight forward, always care too much. 平 means peaceful. |

Rowling took the surname Snape from an English village in Suffolk. There is also a village called "Snape" in Yorkshire, rebuilt by Septimus Severus. Snape as an English verb means "to be hard upon, rebuke, snub". It is derived from the Old Norse "sneypa", "to outrage, dishonour, disgrace". The name "Remus" comes from the brothers Romulus and Remus, the legendary brothers who fought to the death over the control of Rome. Remus' intense rivalry with Romulus indicates Lupin's ongoing struggle with his other side, the werewolf. "Lupin" is derived from the Latin words "lupinus", "wolf-like"; "lupus", or "wolf", being the basic word. Canis Lupus is the scientific name for the wolf- to be described as "lupine". Lupin is also the name of a plant with edible seeds.

### Excerpt 28 & 29 solution: Transcription

For excerpt 28, the translators used transcription strategy to translate Severus Snape into “西弗勒斯·斯内普 /Xī fú lè sī Sī nèi pǔ/”. 西 is the azimuth of the west, the direction of sunset, which means that in the end Severus will fall like the sun. 斯 used in a phonetic as particles; 内 (*inside*), 普 (*ordinary*), means Snape is not a black wizard, but just an ordinary wizard.

For excerpt 29, the translators used transcription strategy to translate Remus Lupin into “莱姆斯·卢平 /Lái mǔ sī /Lú píng/”. 莱 is a grass name, is a special Chinese herb, just as lupin is sometimes also the name of a plant with edible seeds. 姆 is a noun, often used to refer to a nanny, meaning someone who is good at taking care of people. 卢 describes a person's personality which is not straight forward, always cares too much, as in the story, Lupin is always taking care of others. 平 means *peaceful*, when Lupin is in school, he always persuaded his friends not to bully Severus.

|               | ST             | TT             | Meaning in TT            |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Excerpt<br>30 | Lord Voldemort | 伏地魔 /Fú dì mó/ | The big devil is lurking |

‘Mors’, or ‘mortum’ is the Latin word for death. Therefore, ‘Voldemort’ probably means ‘representative of death’ or ‘ambassador of death’. Yet, the French ‘Vol de mort’ which literally means ‘flight of death’ seems accurate considering the murder sprees he committed and his invention of a spell to achieve unsupported

flight). ‘Vol de mort’ can also literally mean ‘Theft of death’ in French. It is assumed to be accurate according to Lord Voldemort's search for immortality (he would have to steal his life from death). The Catalan expression ‘vol de mort’, also means ‘flight of death’ or, since ‘Vol’ may also be from the Latin root ‘volo’ (I will, wish, want), may mean ‘death wish’.

#### *Excerpt 30 solution: Recreation*

The translators used a recreation strategy to translate Lord Voldemort into ‘伏地魔 /Fú dì mó/’. 伏 (incubation period), which means that a person is hiding in an unknown place, corresponding to the state before Voldemort's resurrection. 魔 (devil in Chinese culture) corresponds to Voldemort's ‘evil’ image in ‘Harry Potter’. 地 means ‘the earth’. Other black wizards must kneel to salute Voldemort when they see him.

#### Magical Creatures & Objects

There were no text-specific issues in the magical creatures and magical objects from the analysis data.

#### Magical Curses

Four excerpts were obviously Western magical curses. In the magical world described by Rowling, if the wizards have the wand in their hands, they can read the magical curses and cast their magic spell to make the magical curses come true.

|            | ST                 | TT                          | Meaning in TT  |
|------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Excerpt 31 | Imperio            | 魂魄出窍 /Hún pò chū qiào/      | Can make the soul out of the body                    |
| Excerpt 32 | Crucio             | 钻心剜骨 /Zuān xīn wān gǔ/      | Let people feel the pain of gouging out bone         |
| Excerpt 33 | Petrificus Totalus | 统统石化 /Tǒng tǒng shí huà/    | It turns people into stone, motionless and petrified |
| Excerpt 34 | Impedimento        | 障碍重重 /Zhàng ài chóng chóng/ | Make the road in front of people obstructive         |

Buddhism and Taoism from the Chinese culture have their own magical curses. One of them is Taoist Mao Shanshu which is closer to the magical curses in Western magic. Taoism magical curses often appear in four-character or four-character idioms to express the meaning of the magical curses. And mostly translators prefer to translate curses into four-character phrases. This has shown the difference magic culture between Chinese culture and English culture. If the purpose is to maintain the syllable and length of the original text, the translator only needs to simply transliterate the name as a person to be faithful to the original syllable, but this will sacrifice the reader's understanding of the magical curses' meaning. Therefore, translators need to adopt other translation strategies in order to achieve the purpose of conveying the original meaning of the magical curses (Yaqubi, Tahir, & Amini, 2018).

#### *Excerpt 31-34 solution: Recreation*

The name of the curse comes from the Latin word ‘imperiosus’ which means ‘command and powerful’, or ‘imperio’ means ‘rule’. The translators used recreation strategy to translate it into ‘魂魄出窍 /Hún pò chū qiào/’, meaning *take soul out of the body*. Crucio means ‘torture’, coming from a Latin word ‘Cruciatus’ meaning ‘pain’, ‘torture’, and ‘excruciating’ and ‘crucifixion’. It was translated into “钻心剜骨 /Zuān xīn wān gǔ/” (force to drill the heart and take a knife to gouge out the bone). In petrificus totalus, a curse that paralyzes at least three targets, makes them stone stiff and unable to move. The curse is made up of three words: first, Petros in Greek, means ‘rock or stone’. Then there's the Latin word facio means ‘make, do or cause’. Finally, a Medieval Latin word totalis, ‘whole’, was translated it into ‘统统石化 /Tǒng tǒng shí huà/’ (petrify everyone). And this TT is used ‘AABC’ types of four-characters phrase. The repeat of ‘A’ is to emphasize the information. This curse implies that it can petrify everyone. ‘Impedimento’, a curse that blocks, slows, or stops a target from moving comes from a Latin word ‘impedimentum’ (traveling equipment), literally "hindrances," on the notion of ‘that by which one is impeded’, was translated into “障



碍重重 /Zhàng ài chóng chóng/” (curse that sets many obstacles for a target). This curse uses the “ABCC” type of four-characters phrase, emphasizing ‘a lot’ (the target cannot get rid of obstacles).

Overall, nine pragmatic translation problems, eight cultural translation problems, 10 linguistic translation problem, and seven text-specific translation problems were identified. The proper names was classified into four categories. The percentages of problems in the English to Chinese Translation of proper names in ‘Harry Potter’ are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1.  
*The frequency of translation problems*

| Problem    | Pragmatic | Cultural | Linguistic | Text-specific |
|------------|-----------|----------|------------|---------------|
| Frequency  | 9         | 8        | 10         | 7             |
| Percentage | 26.5%     | 23.5%    | 29.4%      | 20.6%         |

The most frequent translation strategies used to provide solutions were transcription, recreation, and rendition.

Table 2.  
*Use of strategies as solutions in the English to Chinese translation of proper names in Harry Potter*

| Strategies    | Numbers | Percentages |
|---------------|---------|-------------|
| Rendition     | 10      | 20.8%       |
| Transcription | 14      | 29.2%       |
| Recreation    | 11      | 22.9%       |
| Substitution  | 5       | 10.4%       |
| Deletion      | 2       | 4.2%        |
| Addition      | 3       | 6.3%        |
| Transposition | 1       | 2.1%        |
| Phonological  | 2       | 4.2%        |
| Replacement   |         |             |

As shown in Figure 1, the frequency of the four translation problems is relatively similar.

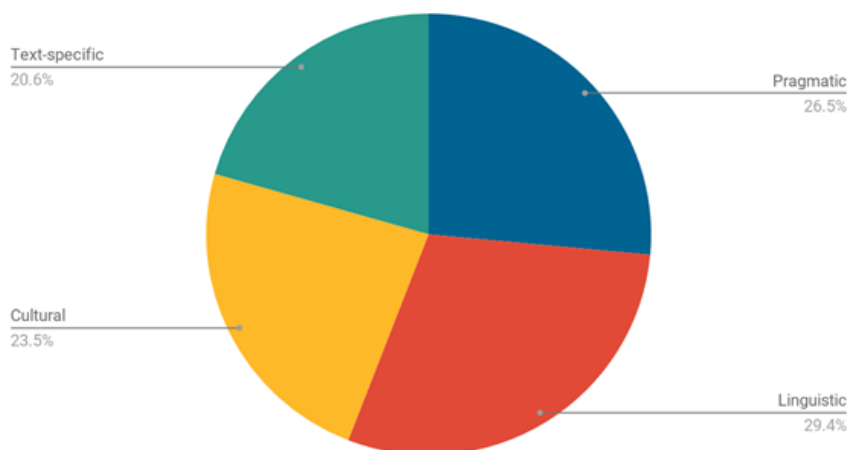


Fig.1. The percentages of Translation Problems

As shown in Figure 2. the most frequently used translation strategy was transcription (29.2%).

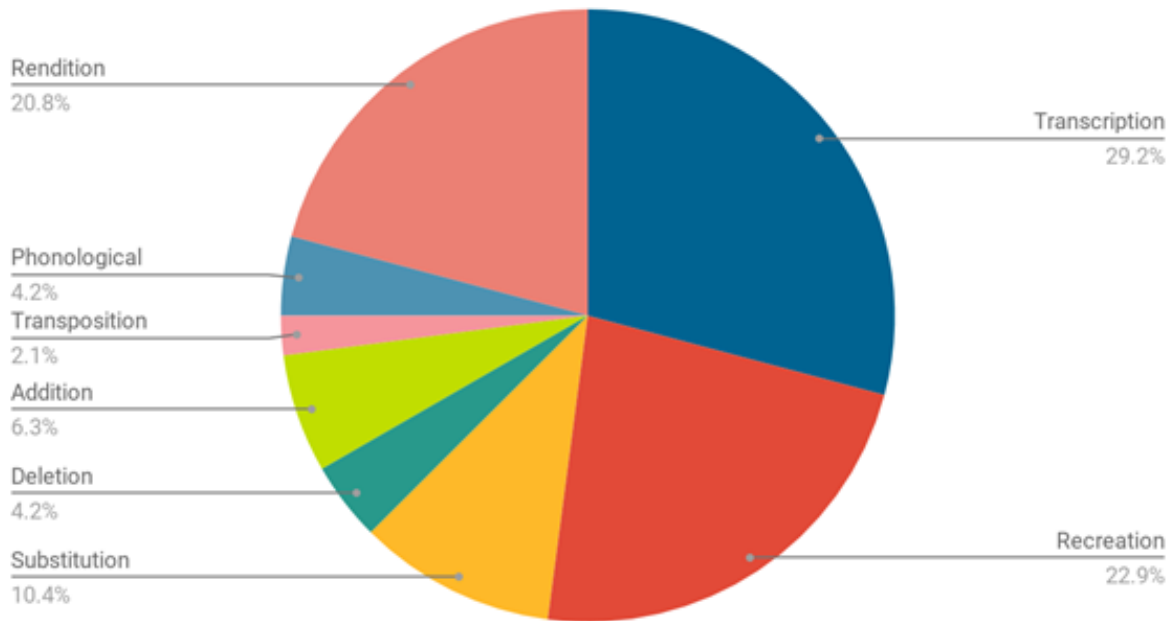


Fig. 2. The percentages of translation solutions

## Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the problems encountered by translators in translating proper names in Harry Potter and suggest possible solutions to the translation problems. Little research has been conducted on translation of proper names from English to Chinese. In terms of exploring the problems and solution, this study is the first details case study on the translation of proper names in Harry Potter from English to Chinese. Schwarz, Stiegelbauer and Husar (2016) 's research on translation issues used Nord's theory, and the findings are consistent with the findings of the present research, in terms of the four translation problems namely pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and textual.

The reasons for translation difficulties could include vocabulary, grammar, and cultural levels. Although the present study is on about translation of proper names from English to Chinese, there are similarities with Brazill's (2016) findings in terms of pragmatic, cultural and linguistic problems.

For the possible translation solutions, in the present study Fernandes' (2006) model of translation solutions were applied. The most common translation strategies identified in the present study were transcription, recreation, and rendition, which can be explained by three main reasons.

First, in transcription strategy, the translator searches for the closest pronunciation letter in the TT for translation (Fernandes, 2006). Because Chinese and English belong to different language families, translators may not be able to find the suitable proper names to translate in Chinese. In such cases the most appropriate translation strategy is transcription, because it can link the ST to TT phonemically, and could maintain the conformity of the meaning between ST and TT. When English proper names are translated into Chinese using transcription, one English proper name usually consists of several Chinese characters. Therefore, the translators may decide to choose the suitable Chinese characters which have similar meaning in English. This is generally applicable to translations of character's names in Harry Potter.

Second, recreation strategy is used to recreate a new proper name in the TT based on the meaning of proper names in the ST (Fernandes, 2006). Because the present study is from the fictional novel Harry Potter, most of the proper names are novel with unique meaning. In translating the text from English into Chinese, when the translator is not able to find an appropriate proper name in Chinese, recreating a proper name could be the simplest solution. This is because translators do not need to locate Chinese characters that are

individually similar in terms of pronunciation and meaning. Therefore, creating a new Chinese proper name according to the meaning of English proper name is opted. In this way, the translators can introduce some novel proper names to the audience, which is more in line with the fictional nature of the elements in such novels, usually more applicable to the translation of magical creatures, magical objects and magical curses.

Third, Rendition strategy is used to translate directly from the ST (Fernandes, 2006). There are always some proper names with the same formal unity in English and Chinese languages, having corresponding TTs. To transfer the uniqueness of Harry Potter's magical world, the rendition is used in combination with the other translation strategies for more acceptable translation.

It was also that the meaning of the ST was often retained, and some proper names using the transcription procedure preserved similar pronunciations. Recreation procedure served the uniqueness and creativity for some proper names.

The strategies of Copy and Conventionality from Fernandes (2006)'s model were not identified in the present study. This could be because the Copy strategy is applicable to the translation between similar languages (family). In such cases, usually the ST is copied directly, but the tone changes, which is impossible to achieve in English to Chinese translation. Therefore, Copy strategy is not often applicable to the translation between English and Chinese. The analysis of findings also indicated that translation strategy of Copy was not identified as a solution in this study, which is in line with Mäkinen's (2010) findings that concluded when the TL is German, the TT is more directly copied from ST, and when the TL is Finnish, there are more different translated texts. On the other hand, Mäkinen (2010) mentioned that when Harry Potter's names were translated into Finnish, the hidden meaning of most of them were no longer associated with the ST. This is different from the results of this study, because when English names were translated into Chinese, the Chinese characters were usually required to form a name. Here, the Chinese translators use transcription procedure to choose appropriate Chinese characters, and appropriate tones without falsifying the meaning of the proper names in the ST. Furthermore, as the genre of Harry Potter is children's literature, the analysis of the data in the present study confirms that most of the audience in China who are children have little background in English.

The findings of the present study about Substitution are supported by Jaleniauskiene's (2009) results in translating the proper names in English and German children's literature into Lithuanian. His study showed that localization strategy was the most strategy for translating proper names. Substitution strategy was used by the translators in facing culture specific items. Therefore, using localization or substitution strategy is useful for the target reader to let them be immersed in the story through direct replacement of the proper names with the appropriate proper nouns.

Conventionality strategy, which is mostly used to translate historical celebrities or place names, was beyond the scope of the present study. Also, no historical celebrities were found in the data. The present study has theoretical and empirical implications for the teachers, students and researchers in the area of literary Translation Studies. For example, after translators identified translation problems, they can examine the cultural background of the SL, consider the text format as well as literal and figurative meaning. Moreover, translators need to pay more attention to structural differences, such as grammar and wording in translating such texts from English to Chinese. Translation problems identification and description can also be a source of translology to be used, as teaching materials when such problems are encountered (Ng, & Amini, 2019). This can be suitable for different languages and texts, not limited to English and Chinese, or even children's literature (Brazill, 2016; Schwarz, Stiegelbauer, & Husar, 2016).

If translators are translating English to Chinese children's literature or fantasy literature, they can first consider applying transcription, recreation, and rendition. For example, when translators need to translate the English name Hermione into Chinese, the most appropriate procedure would be transcription procedure. Hermione is translated into 赫敏 / hè mǐn /. 赫 means prominent and famous, and the 敏 means clever. This preserves Hermione's meaning and highlights the significance of intelligence in Harry Potter's story in

which Hermione becomes famous. The pronunciation of Chinese 赫敏 is like the word in the ST. This preserves both its own meaning and sound.

Use of translation strategies can help the trainers and trainees better understand and learn how to solve translation problems. This can ultimately enhance translation appropriacy and acceptability in English to Chinese translations of fictional texts and help to extend the young discipline of translation studies, especially in terms of research in literary translation by having a more pragmatic approach in identify the translation problems and offering solutions to the problems.

By adopting the theoretical framework of this study, more research can be conducted on the translation of Harry Potter. Other researchers can explore other parts of the speech in this text to identify the problems and offer solutions. The researchers could also investigate the translation of Harry Potter into other TLs to assess the appropriate procedures for the identification and solving the translation problems in such literary texts. The relationship between translation, types of languages, culture, and market demands and expectations (Amini, Ibrahim-González, & Ayob, 2013) could be other interesting areas for further research.

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## CONVERSATIONAL AI IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS AMONG VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

Writing is one of the challenges faced by English language learners in English language classroom. The fear of using the language and making mistakes may influence students' motivation and interest to practice the language in the classroom and may affect their communicative competence at the workplace. Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications have become one of the recent focuses in assisting human lives. AI application advancement offers 'A Friend' for second language learners to practice their writing skills and provide the opportunity for them to practice in authentic conversations. 'Replika' is an AI chatbot where you can message and talk to, in a of a mobile app. It can understand the students' thoughts and feelings, and communicate using natural conversation. By setting the theme for each conversation with the AI, this research used AI Chatbot (Replika Apps) as a platform for the participants to practice their writing skills. The research aimed to study the effectiveness of using AI Chatbot (Replika Apps) in enhancing students' writing skills. It also aimed to explore the students' perceptions and attitudes toward learning English using AI. The research was conducted on 20 students from vocational college using flipped classroom pedagogical approach, where students practice their writing skills outside classroom, and conducted writing activities during classroom hours. Questionnaires were distributed to get the result.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, writing skills, anxiety, perceptions

### **Background of Study**

The widespread (delete) use of technology has impacted many areas, including education sector. The teachers are expected to establish lessons that integrate 21st-century skills in preparing learners for future challenges and impediments especially in facing the industrial revolution 4.0 waves. Based on Malaysia National Artificial Intelligence Roadmap 2021 – 2025, AI is one of the foundation technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution, and works as a game-changer in Malaysia's quest to become a high-tech nation by 2030 (Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation, 2021). In addition, according to UNESCO (2019), the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has potential in improving teaching and learning methods, as well as address some of the largest hurdles in the field of education today.

One of the challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions and employers in Malaysia is the poor command of English among Malaysian graduates (Kamil & Muhammad, 2021). Despite the widespread various kind of technological tools to improve education in English language proficiency, developing a sustainable and suitable approach to improve language skills is still a critical issue.

### **Statement of Problem**

The concern about the poor command of English language proficiency among Malaysian graduates is no longer a new issue in the field. Poor English language proficiency among fresh graduates has also been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues facing Malaysian employers (Malaysian National Blueprint 2013 -2025). One of the most difficult components to master is writing skills (Yunus et.al, 2019). Due to the number of students and the limited time in the classroom, students tend to receive less one-to-one support or individual supervision in writing practice. Therefore, L2 learners in the classrooms face challenges in the lack of an immediate response or feedback to what is written (Kılıçkaya, F., 2020). In addition, some L2 learners face writing anxiety towards making grammatical mistakes. Some students showed a higher level of written apprehension, which could impede their writing skills (Al-Ahdal, 2021).

Since finding an ideal partner to interact with can be difficult in practice, AI Chatbots offers a practicable solution to this problem. Integrating English language teaching with technology has received massive attention from many researchers (Tanner, 2015; Ahmadi, D., & Reza, M., 2018; Huang, et al., 2021), However, not many researchers focus on AI technology in enhancing L2 learners writing skills.

### **Significance of Study**

The integration of AI technology and flipped classroom teaching model strengthen the language teaching design. This research will provide new insights into the application and benefits of using AI in improving students writing skills. Through this research, L2 learners can get the opportunities to practice and use the English language in their own time and place. According to Kessler (2017), technology offers unprecedented opportunities to communicate with others in authentic and compelling, linguistically and culturally contextualized domains. Therefore, since AI technologies have been only recently be made accessible to educators, there has been little detailed study into their effectiveness and the future possibilities in the EFL classroom (Ross,2019). Therefore, this research shed light on the effectiveness of AI technology on L2 learners writing skills.

### **Research Questions**

This research aims to address the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of L2 learners' writing achievement?
2. What is the L2 learners' perception towards learning writing using AI Chatbots?
3. How do AI Chatbots impact students' writing anxiety?

### **Method**

The present experimental research employed a pre-test-post-test design. This quantitative study used a one-group pre-test-post-test design and a questionnaire to survey L2 learners' perceptions and anxiety in writing in English. To avoid treatment diffusion, 20 participants (ages 18 to 25) from a vocational college majoring in Engineering courses in Malaysia were selected as the research sample using a purposive sampling method. It is the process of selecting a research sample that suits certain characteristics of the targeted population (Gay et al., 2011). Since the participants of this research came from the same higher learning institution, a one-group pre-test and post-test design were chosen to avoid treatment diffusion among the research participants. According to Gay et al. (2011), treatment diffusion occurs when different treatment groups communicate with and learn from each other. Using flipped classroom model, students were given 5 themes such as hobbies, travel, sports, culture, and language to communicate with the AI outside classroom and practice their writing skills inside classroom. A set of questionnaires on students' perceptions and anxiety toward writing in English was adapted from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, 1986) and administered to the experimental group. The Pre-test and Post-Test were adapted from <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org>.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Based on the descriptive statistics of learners' perceptions and anxiety towards practicing writing skills with AI revealed that 95% of the participants feel confident using the English language while communicating with the AI Friend (REPLIKA). 93% of the participants are less worried about making grammatical mistakes in conversation with the AI. Most students give positive responses towards learning English using AI technology. The research will further discuss on the significant differences in pre-test and post-test mean scores in the written test during the intervention.

### **Limitations**

The participants of this research are selected from the Institut Kemahiran Tinggi Perda (PERDA-TECH). This institution is the only vocational institute under Penang Regional Development Authority (PERDA)

located in Nibong Tebal, Penang. To avoid treatment diffusion between groups in the same institution, one group experimental group was selected for this research. In addition, due to the financial limitation, the study could not utilize the whole functions in REPLIKA Application, therefore the study is limited to only one language skill.

## Conclusion

This study attempted to measure the impact of AI technology on L2 writing skills. The current initial observation shows that immediate responses from AI technology could help students increase their writing skills. In addition, L2 learners also feel less anxious and worry if their writing has grammatical mistakes while having written conversations with the AI. Since this study has only focused on writing skills, further research could explore other language skills using AI technology. It is suggested that future research in a similar field is carried out using other AI applications and compares their effectiveness in helping students develop their writing skills.

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## EFL DOCTORAL STUDENTS' THESIS WRITING EXPERIENCE IN MALAYSIA: A NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The prerequisite for internationally published works in English before securing an academic position has posed an increasing challenge for non-English speaking doctoral students who are frequently discouraged from publishing in individual native languages. Accordingly, the present study employed the sociocultural theoretical framework developed from Norton's (2013) language learning and learner identity investigation to analyse the narrative inquiry data collected from a doctoral social science students' thesis writing experiences with English as a foreign language (EFL) at a Malaysian university. The narrative inquiry would allow a deeper understanding of doctoral students' thesis development experience, self-perception, and personal requirements. The analysis revealed two themes, namely shortfall and commonality, which highlighted the significance of designing relevant academic writing courses by taking into consideration students' prior English acquisition levels as well as the aspect of autobiographical self that is shaped by their prior social and life history to support their academic progress into bi-literate academic writers, rather than solely focusing on native speakers' privileged position.

**Keywords:** Academic writing, EFL doctoral students, higher education, non-English speaking, thesis writing

### Background

Higher education transformation worldwide recognises the importance of generic and transferable skills to be acquired by doctoral students, specifically writing with authority in relevant discourses within the academic community. To achieve the goals, Malaysia is adhering to the European trend of establishing graduate schools which emphasise general academic and professional skill development (Nerad, 2020). Nonetheless, most Malaysian universities inculcate qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, but not a dedicated doctoral academic writing course. Simultaneously, doctoral students' perspectives, including personal self-articulated needs, English academic writing journeys, and perceptions of the challenges encountered by native versus non-native academic writers, were minimally examined. As such, the current study approached early doctoral students at a Malaysian university to seek to determine the key aspects of developing professional skills in English academic writing and contributes to the contemporary scholarly discussion regarding the foreign or second language (L2) deficit (Hyland, 2016; McKinley & Rose, 2018; Politzer-Ahles et al., 2016). The relevant information gleaned from the doctoral students' narratives would facilitate a deeper comprehension of the experiences and perspectives in personal writing skill development that could subsequently assist academicians in tailoring graduate academic writing support and pedagogy optimally.

### Problem Statement

The continuous pressure to graduate on time and publish in English produces a flow-on effect on doctoral students (Walters, Zarifa & Etmanski, 2021; Xu & Grant, 2020). The circumstances would impel doctoral students to swiftly publish their theses in international peer-reviewed English journals, part of their graduation requirements, during their doctoral studies. In non-native English-speaking countries, such as Malaysia, doctoral students with English as a foreign language (EFL) perceived that English thesis writing and publication was a challenging "practice of a literary elite" (Hyland, 2016, p. 67). Hence, continuing

concerns apropos of the most appropriate method to support the EFL students in Malaysian universities led to the proliferation of numerous workshops on specific academic writing aspects, including writing a thesis in English and publishing internationally (Singh, 2019). A substantial number of past studies also concentrated on second language teaching and writing, especially doctoral students' perceptions of employing a second language to convey research study results (Bolton & Kuteva, 2012; Kuteeva & McGrath, 2014; Olsson & Sheridan, 2012). Furthermore, variance existed among doctoral students and their surroundings in effectively developing English academic writing skills. As such, a research question was formulated to guide the current study inquiry:

RQ: What would doctoral journey narratives reveal about non-native English-speaking doctoral students' challenges and needs in communicating their work in English?

### Significance of the study

The present study implemented the narrative inquiry approach to gather Malaysian social science early doctoral students' expressions and experiences. The findings delineating the challenges encountered by international doctoral students in thesis writing would contribute significant policy implications to various universities. The implications included assessing prospective doctoral students' initial thesis writing motivations during the admission process, applying stricter doctoral admission criteria, and stipulating desired academic characteristics, such as high persistence and perseverance levels in completing the doctoral programme. By applying the current findings practically, positive effects would be witnessed on research quality and student experience to assist in improving doctoral training and higher education practices concerning English language education. In addition, nurturing a supportive intellectual community within and outside of the academic institution and community is essential to doctoral students, which would engender positive mutual construction between individuals and the community.

### Methodology

The current study employed a narrative approach to producing detailed descriptions and exploring the EFL doctoral students' perceptions of academic writing requirements. By adhering to the institutional research governance framework, full-time EFL doctoral social science students were approached in the early stage of thesis writing. Resultantly, an EFL doctoral social science student was recruited to reveal deeper meanings from the participants' experiences. The participant was instructed to write between 1000 and 1500 words about her journey in English thesis writing, with challenges and opportunities encountered during the process. Contrary to survey questionnaires or structured interviews, written narratives would allow doctoral students to possess higher freedom and flexibility degrees in expressing personal perspectives. The narrative approach would enable effective contextualisation of the hindrances and constraints on doctoral students' experiences, such as life history, academic experiences, and institutional constraints (Taylor, 2011). While narrative inquiry into doctoral students' perspectives is less common than oral narratives, written stories are ubiquitous. The present study would employ an iterative inductive analysis process.

### Findings and Discussion

The current findings portrayed a Chinese doctoral student grappling with being a proficient English academic writer during the doctoral experience in Malaysia through the theme *Yu Ling – Finding a Voice as an Academic Writer*.

Yu Ling, who originated from North China, was an EFL writer who did not receive sufficient English academic writing training. Owing to personal limited exposure to English academic writing, Yu Ling is “unaware that each discipline has its own variety of academic English.” Importantly, the expression did not imply that the academic practice was contrasting in every field, but was contingent on the personal

styles and positions of relevant academic writers in determining respective academic credentials which would appeal to the preferred research fields. One difference Yu Ling articulated was between “*citations and [academic] argument created*” educated by previous writing instructors, which Yu Ling identified with. She became highly dependent on frequent citations instead of critically presenting a cogent argument in thesis writing. The utterances might postulate that the EFL doctoral students would be restricted in thoroughly exploring an issue and “as an equal, a conversationalist partner” (Kuhi & Behnam, 2011, p. 103).

## Limitations

The narrative inquiry of solely focusing on one current doctoral student would be inadequate for distinguishing between common doctoral challenges in communicating their research in English and challenges contributing to doctoral dropouts. Moreover, the narrative of one non-native English-speaking doctoral student grappling with English academic writing precluded further examination into the differences between successful EFL doctoral students and non-completers in experiencing English academic writing challenges and difficulties. Thus, identifying the distinctions between the two groups in future studies would elucidate the processes of facilitating doctoral completion while uncovering concealed challenges and issues.

## Conclusion

The present study recommended future studies employ a longitudinal approach in exploring doctoral students’ identity trajectories while raising two additional considerations, namely (i) the underlying factors of English academic writing education scarcity for doctoral students, and (ii) the pertinent methods to reduce cognitive load and anxiety during English academic writing. To resolve the perceived deficit in English academic writing, this study concurred with Hyland (2016) to shift supervisors’ and doctoral students’ attitudes from the deficiency model to focusing on common problems associated with writing in other languages. Particularly, the shift would discover the efficient and effective approaches to assist doctoral students in transforming into elite academic writers. Resultantly, doctoral students would develop personal skills in becoming bi-literate academic writers and concentrate on improving academic writing literacy while developing English language skills instead of grammar and vocabulary for further study and globalised professions, which are frequently highlighted in existing English academic courses.

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## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE USE OF DIGITAL ESCAPE ROOM IN THE READING CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

This research focused on a gamification which was developed by the instructor in the form of a digital Escape Room. The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia, on gamification used in the reading classroom. After completing the Escape Room, the students were required to answer a questionnaire which was adopted from Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) to examine their perceptions and attitudes toward the gamification used in this course. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents were positive about the Escape Room experience because it was fun, and increased their interest in the lesson. It also helped them learn difficult topics easily. Although it was challenging, the students found that once they managed to answer the question, it was regarded as an interesting and informative exercise for their knowledge. However, a number of students found that it can be frustrating when they were not able to answer the questions and move on to the next stage. Gamification also helped in terms of the affective domain such as time management, teamwork and communication skills.

**Keywords:** Gamification, Escape Room, reading, cognitive, affective

### Background of Study

Gamification is the incorporation of game-like elements in non-game settings, in this case, the educational setting. The main aim of gamification in the classroom is to engage and encourage students in the learning process (Bicen & Kocakoyun, 2018) and it is said that the use of gamification in the classroom increases students' motivation and learning (Rajšp, Beranič, Heričko & Wu, 2017). Most studies done on gamification in higher education have focused on existing gamification platforms such as Kahoot! and Quizziz (Ab. Rahman, Ahmad & Hashim, 2018; Bicen & Kocakuyon, 2018; Putra, 2020). The present study, however, aims to explore what students think of the use of a digital Escape Room which was created to meet the objectives of a reading course.

### Statement of Problem

The present research focused on a gamification which was entirely developed by the instructor in the form of digital Escape Rooms. The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions of undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia, on gamification, particularly digital Escape Rooms, used in the reading classroom.

### Significance of Study

The findings from this study are hoped to add to the literature related to gamification and to encourage educators to use digital Escape Rooms in their respective lessons.

### Research Questions

1. What do the students think about the use of digital Escape Rooms in the reading classroom?
2. How has the use of a digital Escape Room helped the students learn, if any?

## Method

The gamification devised for this study was two digital Escape Rooms in two different formats. The first digital Escape Room was developed using a Google Form while the second one was developed using ThingLink to create a more realistic 360-degree room. 70 students, 52 females and 18 males, aged between 20-22 years old, who enrolled in this reading course were the respondents for this study.

After the students completed both Escape rooms, they then had to answer a questionnaire that was adopted from Bicen and Kocakoyun (2018) on Google Form to examine their perceptions and attitudes towards the gamification used in this course. The questionnaire contained 32 questions based on a 5 Likert scale related to motivation, interest, improvement and teamwork/communication. Besides that, the questionnaire also included open-ended questions on the students' understanding and their overall perceptions of gamification. The data was then analysed for their frequencies.

## Findings and Discussion

31.4% of students were familiar with gamification, while 35.7% were not familiar with gamification.

They claimed that the use of the digital Escape Room increased their interest in the lesson (89%), and that it was fun (89%). 81% stated that it helped increase their interest especially in crowded classes while 73% claimed that it increased their study time to be successful in the Escape Room. The Escape Room helped the students to learn difficult topics while having fun (87%). 86% of the respondents stated that the Escape Room allowed them to see their achievement status and improve themselves in the areas that they were weak in. 83% claimed that the use of the Escape Room helped them to understand the lesson better while 80% said that information could be recalled more easily due to the use of Escape Rooms.

The majority of the respondents agreed that the use of the Escape Room motivated them to read and apply what they have learned in the classroom (76%). Besides that, the will to win was also stated as a motivator (86%) together with the race against time (77%). Rewards and badges were also regarded as motivators for the students to carry out the Escape Room (86%). Indirectly, the use of gamification, in this case, the Escape Rooms allowed them to practice time-management skills (69%). However, they also felt that the score which they shared on the social network did not make them feel better regardless of whether it was a good or low score (50%). The Escape Room indirectly made the respondents collaborate with each other and exchange information.

## Limitations

This study only focused on undergraduates who are majoring in English, therefore, they may not represent the opinions and perspectives of undergraduates in other fields. When the students engage in this activity, it was during the MCO time, therefore, they did not collaborate face-to-face and this may affect what they think about the activity.

## Conclusion

Gamification, particularly digital Escape Rooms is one of the teaching and learning methods that can be applied to many other fields and subjects. Even so, the planning involved in creating one needs to take into consideration aspects such as students' interests, and perhaps their level of cognition. With good planning, digital Escape Rooms can be utilized and modified to increase students' interest, motivation and understanding of the lesson as well as establish good communication and teamwork.

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**Ph.D**



## Comparative Studies on the Effectiveness of Dialogue Writing Technique between Higher Institutions from Malaysia and India

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### Abstract

English language teaching and learning has always been the talk of the town due to the fact that the language has been seen vital for everyone. On top of that, writing has been the hardest skills to acquire among countries that consider English as a Second Language. The main goal of this study was to compare the effectiveness of Dialogue Writing Technique of a set of 15 students from Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Malaysia and Hindustan College of Arts and Science, India. Students were asked to write dialogues on an image given after a quick instruction given by the instructors. Results indicated that Malaysian students outperformed the Indian students in almost all the measured areas and the method was a success in gauging students' interest in writing. The findings suggested that both countries should establish a better set of instructions in encouraging students to write better.

**Keywords:** Dialogue writing, effectiveness, learning, English education

### Background of Study

Since English is now the global language, and writing is one of the most vital processes that needs to be acquired, this skill is essential in order to participate competitively in global interactions and business in general. English is the Language of International Communication. Learners are expected to master the language like any other critical subjects such as Mathematics and Science. It should be the responsibility of English language instructors in an educational institute to provide and emphasize a good and correct, fundamental background of writing skills to students. Command of good writing skills is a vital tool for anybody to succeed in their career. Therefore, multiple techniques should be exposed to students to allow them to understand that writing is not a threat but more of a creative activity that can be absorbed and also practiced anywhere. As such, dialogue writing could be a way that can be used to encourage students to write better. It is vital to investigate whether there is difference between the two institution in terms of acquiring the method and also to investigate the effectiveness of dialogue writing which can be practised in higher learning education institution to help gauge the interest in writing among them.

### Statement of Problem

Writing is a multiplex activity claimed by [Ling \(2016\)](#). Asian students tend to just drop the interest in writing as they face more complicated problems, either cultural or linguistic ones (Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012). These problems can create many issues for both educators and ESL learners as a whole. As for India and Malaysian students, many of them gave up learning writing because they tend to face problems in understanding certain words that can be useful in their writing. There are some of them who loses their interest in writing as they cannot spell any words in their writing. Knowing the fact that language learning needs a lot of exposure ([Samer Al Zoubi, 2018](#)), the teacher is left with the sole burden of helping ESL learner to develop good writing skills within the short period of time. Many teachers could not find an effective way to teach in class within the time frame given to them. When writing lesson is not done in an effective way, this eventually creates anxiety and stall effective classroom participation (Kodero et al., 2011) Besides that, the ESL learners' negative attitude towards English poses a great barrier to English Language learning. According to Tella et al. (2010), English lessons have minimum learner participation as learners do not have the necessary competence as it was not developed well during their formative years. That is related to the negative attitudes of learning the structure. Therefore, it is in need to find for a solution to gain students confidence in writing.

## Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to find out the comparative studies on the effectiveness of dialogue writing technique between Tunku Abdul Rahman University College and Hindustan College of Arts and Science. Dialogue writing can be an alternative to gauge students interest in writing better. This study will be able to look at the reason how dialogue writing can be effective in encouraging interest in writing among college students. The result from this research will benefit the future implementation that the Ministry of Education of both the nations. This research will also provide ideas on how they can promote better writing skills within intermediate college students as they are the ones who are facing problems in producing a good piece of work. Besides that, writing is a prominent skill to achieve the aim of enabling students to understand English efficiently. Therefore, the Ministry of Higher Education in collaboration with the state education will be able to benefit from this research by developing long term programmes in making sure that everyone benefits from this particular writing activity. Therefore, it is important for them to learn the right way to acquire writing skills. Besides that, it is also vital for them to be aware of the best way to write well.

## Research Questions

Below are the research questions that to achieve the objectives of this research:

1. What is the level of Malaysian and Indian students' understanding in improving writing skills by creating dialogues?
2. What is the statistically significant difference in dialogue writing between Tunku Abdul Rahman University College and Hindustan College of Arts and Science?

## Method

A mixed method was used to analysis the effectiveness of dialogue writing technique. A set of 15 students from both the institutions Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TARUC), Malaysia and Hindustan College of Arts and Science (HCAS), India were asked to write about an image shown on the screen. They were given some ideas on how to start their dialogue and they were given the space to write in the way that they want to express the image. The written scripts were collected, and they were analysed according to several aspects including vocabulary, command of language, language input and the confidence in expressing their ideas.

## Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Scores

| Number | TARUC | HCAS | Difference |
|--------|-------|------|------------|
| 1      | 76    | 73   | 3          |
| 2      | 65    | 63   | 2          |
| 3      | 53    | 43   | 10         |
| 4      | 45    | 62   | 17         |
| 5      | 54    | 57   | 3          |
| 6      | 65    | 67   | 2          |
| 7      | 78    | 56   | 22         |
| 8      | 65    | 45   | 20         |
| 9      | 64    | 32   | 32         |
| 10     | 56    | 58   | 2          |
| 11     | 76    | 64   | 12         |
| 12     | 75    | 77   | 2          |
| 13     | 87    | 75   | 12         |

|    |    |    |   |
|----|----|----|---|
| 14 | 81 | 76 | 5 |
| 15 | 61 | 65 | 4 |

The findings were conducted on the test assessment that was taken by the students. There were 15 students ( $N=15$ ) who were involved in the dialogue writing activity. As you can see below, a majority of the TARUC students did fairly better compared to HCAS students. Some of the differences are even more than 20 marks. So, there is a statistically difference in terms of achievement of both the institution for the dialogue writing research.

As for the other areas, students from both the institutions made general grammar mistakes. Some of the major problems were tenses. Students from both the institutions were having trouble in getting their tenses right. But, once feedback was given, they tended to understand that if the story is in past tense, the entire story has to follow that flow. Eventually, the method was able to get them to understand rather than the common grammar drilling where students only memorise and not learn or even understand. Besides that, some of them were lack confidence as they did not write much on their sheets and that cause them to lose a lot of marks. There were mainly students from HCAS as they did not show interest in the entire process but some of them did obtain a lot of knowledge through this process. One of the major language interference for both groups of students were their mother tongue influence, where TARUC used “la” and HCAS tended to use “ha”. Since it is a free writing activity, therefore, these were evident in their papers. Thus, proper feedback was given to make sure they do not repeat the same mistakes.

#### **4.2 Observation**

Observations yielded the content of the process (Blandford, 2013; Creswell, 2014) within the activity as well as providing the opportunity to compare and contrast the effectiveness of the dialogue writing between TARUC AND HCAS students. Starting from the very beginning of the activity, the instructor assumed the role of an observer and facilitator to the writing session. Several themes were detected from the observations note-analysis such as sensitivity to context, participants’ roles in the the activity, activity preparedness, giving feedback, and availability of resources such as space and materials.

First, sensitivity to context and participants’ learning histories is a key factor to the success of a writing activity and it is vital to ensure its exclusivity to all participants. It was obvious that the activity was very new for all of them. When instructors were a bit adventurous in terms of hall setting arrangements and they arranged all the participants in a whole class group, students were willing to participate. Therefore, awareness of learners’ educational histories and particularities of the context is significant for the success of any new teaching or new content techniques especially when introducing something which they are not familiar with at all. That was the first thing that was detected when the writing activity session was observed.

Second, intensive training is important for deep internalisation and understanding of the activity. Most of the students acted like they were not aware of anything even though the entire teaching writing session was done in English. They were all confuse when words like theme, characters and plot were mentioned for dialogue writing. At first, they were like at a lost with these unfamiliar words as it is nothing like what they have done in their normal writing lesson. They did not ask thought-provoking questions and the audience participation was limited to answering the questions raised by some of those who have huge interest on the topic. Many of them did not come up with any questions or raise points in regard with the semi topic. However, things were different during the writing session as they tended to be curious to know what the contents were and how they could present the content better. This was obvious in terms of the setting of the audience in a big square, questions were raised about the text that provoked audience’s thoughts, which were not spoon-fed by the anyone from the beginning. Students’ misconception of the nature and purpose of the writing activity can be interpreted as a result of a lack of training. Therefore, students should be given the space to write and once they are done, intensive training should be given so that they do better in the next round.

Third, participants exerted limited critical thinking effort, which can be overcome via the notion of having detailed instructions. When the instructions were leaning towards their interest, they started to pay attention. Students raised different questions when the content was related to them. Those questions were related to story elements such as topic, theme, characters, plot and end. This indicated that students were making the required mental effort and they understood what they were really supposed to do. Moreover, this extensive critical thinking effort may be due to the sufficient time given.

Finally, logistics such as venue does matter for a successful activity. Some presentations suffered from the impracticality of the available space, however, there was no alternative as all other rooms were occupied at the time of the lecture. In addition, trying to change the lecture time was a challenge as the new suggested slot hour clashed with the students' lecture timetables. Therefore, the only solution was to make the most of the available room. This, however, had its effect on the seating arrangement of the writing group and on the students' performance as they did complain of the unsuitability of the classroom. Thus, there should be sufficient space for a successful implementation of the activities.

### Limitations

The limitations were mainly logistics. This was due to the fact that there was no conducive place for the students to write the essay simultaneously. Besides that, the schedule was also another issue faced. This was because the students had different slots with different students at different timing. Therefore, it was difficult for to make sure that everyone was able to gather for the writing research. Nevertheless, we managed to come across all these challenges and managed to complete the written research according to stipulated time frame.

### Conclusion

Therefore, for future research, this study recommends considering the framework of dialogue writing as a teaching and an assessment method which lay emphasis on improving students' capability in grammar and also emphasizes on creativity (the freedom of expression). An intensive training for dialogue writing should be done for students. This includes instruction, discussion and modelling of the entire dialogue writing method, criteria of evaluation for a successful implementation of the dialogue writing evaluation. As a conclusion, with the right approach and correct knowledge sharing, The universities of the two nations will be able to produce competent students by having a variety of methods in teaching writing to their students.

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## Self-Repetition in ESL Spontaneous Speech: Self-Assessment Metacognitive Strategies to Enhance Non-evaluative Speech Production

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### Abstract

Speech experts view speech dysfluencies like self-repetition as cognitive enhancement of ongoing speech production. However, the current understanding of self-assessment metacognition and speaking is limited to students' retrospective reflections on speech outputs. Hence, this exploratory case study explores proficient and less-proficient ESL students' self-assessment metacognitive strategies through introspective reflection on self-repetition in spontaneous speech. Three students in each proficiency level engaged in three video-recorded group discussions. Participants' self-repetition in their discussions were used as the stimulus for stimulated-recall interviews, and the video clips supplemented participants' interview responses. The data was analysed using a conceptual framework based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) metacognitive strategies and Kormos's (2006) speech production model. Analysis revealed that proficient and less-proficient students applied the selective attention strategy while uttering self-repetition for different spontaneous speech improvements. Despite some limitations, this study explains how students' competency levels influence their self-assessment metacognitive strategy applications in spontaneous non-evaluative speech production.

**Keywords:** Self-Assessment, Metacognitive Strategies, Spontaneous speech, Self-repetition, English as Second Language

### Background of Study

Self-assessment (hereafter SA) is well known for acknowledging students' skills in self-directing their assessment. Speaking experts claim that one's cognitive and meta-cognitive attempts to plan, monitor, evaluate, and improve their ongoing speech productions occur when speakers are disfluent (Dornyei & Kormos, 1998; Skehan, 1998). Correspondingly, SA scholars asserted that students' internal resources, such as their ideas, prior knowledge, values, skills, and goals, function as the primary resources to regulate SA actions, making SA a student-led assessment strategy occurring within themselves (Dolosic et al., 2016; Yan & Brown, 2017).

However, most students' SA abilities, specifically in ESL speaking, are recognised in evaluative contexts. Students retrospectively reflect on their speech products based on external feedback resources such as teacher commentaries and evaluations (Babaii et al., 2015; Basak, 2019; Tavakoli, 2010) as well as rubrics and checklists (Chalkia, 2012; Dolosic et al., 2016; Glover, 2011; Maria, 2021). In short, there is a limited understanding of students' internal SA abilities while producing spontaneous speech. Thus, the present case study attempts to demonstrate how proficient and less-proficient ESL students in a Malaysian National Secondary School use their internal resources to introspectively reflect on their self-repetition to improve their spontaneous speech production.

### Statement of Problem

Previous studies examined students' self-evaluation metacognition through their retrospective reflections on speech outputs (Arp, 2016; Ryantika & Lilia, 2020). However, little is known about ESL students' introspective reflections while self-assessing their spontaneous speech. Considering speakers monitor and evaluate spontaneous speech based on dysfluencies (Dornyei & Kormos, 1998; Lennon, 1990), this study explored students' SA metacognitive strategies via their self-repetition in spontaneous speech. A conceptual framework was designed to analyse the data based on Kormos's (2006) speech production model and O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) metacognitive strategies.

Furthermore, Arp (2016) and Ryantika and Lilia (2020) have explored students' SA metacognition in speaking via self-report questionnaires, which is inadequate for presenting detailed data on individuals' internal experiences (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, a stimulated recall interview (SRI) technique, as suggested by Gass and Mackey (2012), was adopted to gather thorough information on ESL students' SA metacognitive strategies.

The relationship between students' language competence and SA internal experiences has left much unexplored (Panadero et al., 2015), particularly in the L2 context. Previous studies aimed to identify self-evaluation metacognition; hence, students' proficiencies were excluded (Arp, 2016; Ryantika & Lilia, 2020). Hence, this study chose proficient and less-proficient students based on their CEFR bands.

### **Significance of Study**

Understanding the relationship between language competency and SA metacognitive strategies explains the speech challenges encountered by specific proficient-level students. Their strategies explain how students overcome speech challenges using available internal resources. Accordingly, ESL teachers can facilitate students' improvements in certain speech aspects and improve the students' speaking.

Additionally, understanding SA's metacognitive strategies through speech dysfluencies, specifically self-repetition, provides a comprehensive understanding that dysfluencies are not speech faults but rather an individual's cognitive process and actions taken for improvement. This understanding changes how ESL communities interpret speech dysfluencies and encourages more non-evaluative speech tasks than evaluative ones in classrooms.

The SRI technique used in this study to gather students' SA metacognitive strategies in spontaneous speech increases ESL students' awareness of how they self-assess their spontaneous speech and use available self-resources to improve speech. Students are better prepared to take ownership of their assessments and recognise SA as a student-led assessment technique.

### **Research Questions**

1. What metacognitive strategies are applied by proficient ESL students in their self-repetition to self-assess spontaneous speech production?
2. What metacognitive strategies are applied by less-proficient ESL students in their self-repetition to self-assess spontaneous speech production?

### **Method**

An exploratory case-study approach unpacked a detailed understanding of the SA metacognitive strategies that proficient and less-proficient students employed while uttering spontaneous repetitions. Three proficient and less-proficient 16-year-old female students from a Malaysian National Secondary School were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. They received the C1 and A2 CEFR bands, respectively, in their Form Three Oral Assessment, a nationwide assessment for lower-secondary students. Each proficiency group partook in ten-minute non-evaluative group discussions thrice. The teacher recorded their discussions using a video recorder. Then, the researcher watched the recording and prepared the discussion transcripts, containing participants' utterances and the timing with which they employed self-repetition. Participants were called for individual SRI in which they watched specific discussion clips and answered the SRI questions adapted from Dornyei and Kormos (1998). Participants' SRI responses were transcribed and sent for member checking. Thematic analysis was performed to analyse the SRI responses, and the video-recorded discussions were cross-checked with their SRI responses to ensure data credibility. The interview transcripts were reviewed recurrently. Manual coding was used to classify words and phrases that fit the study's conceptual framework. The codes were then classified and organised into O'Malley and Chamot's metacognitive methods (1990).

## Findings and Discussion

Table 1 shows that proficient students, C2 and H3, used a selective attention strategy to search for lexical units that fit the speaking contexts. This finding was also reported in Kahng's (2014) study. Proficient speakers' extensive L2 knowledge enables them to select appropriate lexical items (De Jong, 2018). Moreover, O1 and O3 were observed to apply the same strategy to activate formulaic lexical items. Some lexical units are transformed into formulaic units and automated in speakers' procedural knowledge because they are frequently activated in daily speaking (Kormos, 2006). Thus, this strategy's effectiveness in lexical unit retrieval among proficient students relies on its activation frequency in daily speech.

Table 1  
Proficient Case's Stimulated-Recall Interview Responses

| Case | Rationale   | Strategy   |
|------|---|--|
| C2   | I wanted to say <i>definitely a lot better...</i> the word better just didn't come to my head | So, I repeated it again to get <b>better</b>   |
| H3   | I forgot the word <i>century</i>  | I was thinking about 19 <sup>th</sup> , I thought of 1990s and I reached to <i>centuries</i> . |
| O1   | I agreed with Har's statement strongly. But I couldn't say I agree                            | I always use to repeat the word to show that I was in agreement.                               |
| O3   | The so and the repetition of really.  | That is purely out of habitual communication   |

Table 2 demonstrates that a less proficient student, S1 and W2, applied a selective attention strategy to code-switch their thoughts in L1 to retrieve L2 lexical units. This conclusion is congruent with Dornyei and Kormos (1998) and Maldonado (2016), who explain that less proficient speakers' L2 information processing is less automated than their L1. Therefore, they require more processing to retrieve L2 information. Furthermore, S2 and M3 applied the same strategy to search for new speech concepts. Kahng's (2014) conclusion parallels this finding, but those participants' new concept developments relied on other dysfluency markers. Hence, this strategy provides sufficient processing time for less proficient students to associate the speaker's available knowledge to develop new concepts.

Table 2  
Less-Proficient Case's Stimulated-Recall Interview Responses

| Case | Rationale  | Strategy  |
|------|--|---|
| W2   | This one, I already have idea                                    | But at the same time, I think to translate my idea  |
| S1   | Know is easy...to say more easy at that time, difficult to think | I changed my idea from Malay to English language  |
| S2   | When M spoke it's my turn to speak, I became nervous             | I was still thinking of my idea   |
| M3   | I didn't expect Y will ask me to speak                           | I need to think. But I get to think fast because I have use <i>Shopee</i> and <i>Lazada</i> . |

## Limitations

This study has two potential limitations. First, the researcher dedicated significant time to transcribing the video-recorded discussions. This procedure restricted the researcher from reviewing the discussion transcripts several times before the SRI interviews, which were conducted on the same day as the speaking task. Consequently, the researcher might have overlooked some self-repetition before the SRI. Second, several SRI responses reflected participants' retrospective reflections on their self-repetition instead of introspective reflections. This data was ineffective as it portrayed students' self-regulated learning skills.



Hence, it requires the researcher's diligence regarding the participants' SRI responses to meet the study's purposes.

## Conclusion

The study aimed to explore ESL-proficient and less-proficient students' SA metacognitive strategies while uttering self-repetition in spontaneous speech. The SRI responses revealed that both proficient and less-proficient students applied selective attention strategies for different spontaneous speech improvements. For example, proficient students retrieved formulaic units and appropriate lexical units to solve lexical retrieval issues and suit the speaking context, respectively. However, less-proficient students applied the same strategy to translate their thoughts from L1 to L2 and develop new concepts for speech continuation. The data suggest that students' language proficiency affects how SA metacognitive strategies are used to enhance spontaneous speech production. These findings enable ESL teachers and students to comprehend how and why different proficient-level students use dysfluency markers and focus on developing specific speech aspects for better skill representation. Additionally, this study offers the ESL community a fresh perspective on dysfluencies such as self-repetition as an individual's SA metacognitive strategies for improving speech production.

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## Lexical and Syntactical Challenges in Writing for Publication among Iraqi Writers

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### Abstract

Publication productivity is an essential metric of the performance of academics and institutions. Writing for publication is signified as high-quality writing that uses advanced complex lexical units and syntactic structures to convey complex scientific findings. Given the issue of the low publication productivity of Iraqi writers in peer-reviewed international journals, this descriptive study was implemented to evaluate and compare the use of complex lexical items and syntactic structures in the writing of linguistics research articles (RAs) written by Iraqi, English second language (L2), and English first language (L1) writers. Using the Contrastive Rhetorical Theory underpinnings, the corpus of this study includes 150 linguistics RAs published in international journals indexed in the Scopus database, mainly 50 linguistics RAs each by Iraqi writers, English L2, and English L1 writers. The findings revealed that Iraqi writers utilised the lowest number of complex lexical items and syntactic structures in their RAs compared to the texts written by English L2 and L1 writers. This study significantly uncovers and explores the fundamental cause of writing problems in reputable publications among Iraqi writers.

**Keywords:** Iraqi academics; Lexical complexity; Syntactic complexity

### Background of Study

Academic publication of Iraqi institutions is generally described in terms of the low productivity of published RAs in the international academic arena. The total number of Iraqi-indexed RAs (1996-2021) is 79792 (SJR - International Science Ranking, n.d.). Compared with the productivity of regional countries, Iraq has a lower number of published articles than the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Iraqi writers consider writing in English for academic purposes a challenging task. It has been reported that Iraqi undergraduate and postgraduate students face general and academic difficulties in English writing (Yuen & Mussa, 2015; Jasim Al-Shujairi & Tan, 2017; Mohammed et al., 2015). Iraqi writers face different hurdles to achieving international publication in peer-reviewed international journals. The use of the English language as the medium of writing for publication is one of the suggested hurdles that impacted Iraqi writers' productivity (Jameel & Ahmad, 2020). There is a crucial need to explore the practice of Iraqi writers in using the English language for publication purposes.

### Statement of Problem

Iraqi writers publish a low number of RAs in peer-reviewed international journals (Jameel & Ahmad, 2020). The total number of Iraqi-indexed published articles for the period (1996-2021) is 79792 (SJR - International Science Ranking, n.d.). Peer-reviewed international journals pay considerable attention to the quality of writing. Thus, RAs with low-quality text tended to receive low chances of being published in such journals (Lillis & Curry, 2015). Jameel and Ahmad (2020) suggested that the English language barrier is a crucial factor that impacts Iraqi writers' productivity. Yet, despite this claim, no previous studies have probed into the nuances and patterns of Iraqi writers' academic production nor analysed the linguistic features of the English RAs written by Iraqi writers to validate the claim that English as a medium of writing for publication impacted Iraqi writers' productivity. Therefore, there is a crucial need to examine the practice of Iraqi writers in using English for research publication purposes. In order to reveal the impact of using English as the academic language for research publication purposes by Iraqi writers, we need to investigate the lexical and syntactic features of the texts of published RAs.

## Significance of Study

Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Publication recommended to pay more attention to writing quality produced by Iraqi writers intended for publication. This study's findings proved that Iraqi writers are not producing high-quality writing compared to writings of English L2 and L1 writers. Iraqi writers are required to compose high-quality RAs texts that meet international publishers' standards to receive more chances for publication. Therefore, building a specialised English writing course is required to improve Iraqi writing quality. Improving the practice of Iraqi writers in writing for publication tends to improve Iraqi journals as well since most of the RAs published in Iraqi journals are written by Iraqi authors.

## Research Questions

1. To what extents do Iraqi, English L2, and English L1 writers utilise linguistic complexity in their writings of linguistics RAs?
2. Is there a significant difference between the writings of Iraqi, English L2, and English L1 writers in terms of lexical complexity?
3. Is there a significant difference between the writings of Iraqi, English L2, and English L1 writers in terms of syntactic complexity?
4. What are the significantly different lexical complexity measures in RAs written by Iraqi, English L2, and English L1 writers?

## Method

The present study adopts the corpus-based approach to evaluate and compare written texts of linguistics RAs written by Iraqi, English L2 and English L1 writers. A specialised corpus has been compiled of texts of published RAs in the linguistics field. The corpus of this study is classified into three sub-corpora, the corpus of Iraqi linguistics RAs (IRAs) to represent Iraqi group writers, the corpus of English L2 linguistics RAs (L2RAs) to represent English L2 writers, and the corpus of English L1 linguistics RAs (L1RAs) to represent English L1 writers of the linguistics RAs. Each corpus includes 50 linguistics RAs published by publishers indexed in the Scopus database.

This study adopted the computational tool LCA, designed by (Lu, 2012), to evaluate different dimensions of lexical complexity. LCA includes 25 lexical complexity measures, which gauge lexical complexity's density, sophistication, and diversity dimensions. On the other hand, it adopted the automatic analyser of syntactic complexity called SCA to evaluate the syntactic complexity of the linguistics RAs. SCA was designed by (Lu, 2010) as an automatic tool to measure syntactic complexity. It contains 14 syntactic complexity measures, covering global, coordination, subordination, and Phrasal dimensions of syntactic complexity.

## Findings and Discussion

With reference to the lexical level of complexity, Iraqi writers produced low lexical complexity texts of linguistics RAs compared with English L2 and L1 texts. The findings showed that English L2 and L1 writers utilised a comparable amount of lexical complexity in their texts, while Iraqi writers produced significantly different amounts of lexical complexity in their writing. On the other hand, the results of the syntactic level of linguistic complexity revealed that Iraqi writers produced low syntactic complexity texts of linguistics RAs. Iraqi writers scored the lowest mean values in all measures of syntactic complexity compared with English L2 and L1 writers. The low amount of syntactic complexity tends to impact the quality negatively.

Therefore, based on the findings of lexical and syntactic complexity measures, we can conclude that the publication productivity of Iraqi writers of linguistics RAs is affected by the use of the English language since they were not utilising complex lexical items and syntactic structures in their writing of linguistics RAs as their peers, English L2 and L1 writers utilise.

## Limitations

This study analysed and compared the use of lexical and syntactic complexity in the writing of Linguistics RAs.

## Conclusion

Based on this study's findings, we can conclude that Iraqi linguistics RAs are receiving low chances of being accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals due to the low quality of writing. This finding confirms that the use of the English language negatively impacts the publication productivity of Iraqi writers. Iraqi writers of linguistics RAs are not producing high-quality texts of RAs compared to English L2 and L1 writers. Thus, there is a need to improve Iraqi writers' academic writing skills and the use of the English language for research publication purposes.

This study argues the importance of building a specialised English writing course to improve Iraqi writing quality. Improving the practice of Iraqi writers in writing for publication tends to improve Iraqi journals as well since most of the RAs published in Iraqi journals are written by Iraqi authors.

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## Doing dialogue differently: How teachers' collaborative discourse shapes their professional learning, and how they can do them better

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### Abstract

Teachers' collaborative discourse is considered in the literature to be an important driver of transformative and enduring professional learning. Yet, the research on this phenomenon is relatively nascent, fragmented and skewed towards the Global North. Using a novel discourse analytic approach and drawing from existing theory and research, this study examines English teachers' collaborative discourse based on data generated across nine months of fieldwork in two urban Malaysian secondary schools, serving primarily EFL students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The study's contributions are twofold, offering proof of concept that collaborative discourse can be linked to authentic changes in teaching practice, and offering initial hypotheses about the discourse moves or practices that teachers can use to make a difference to their conversational pathways. From the findings, I argue that the analysis does offer proof of concept, and moreover identified three significant discourse moves: explicit reasoning, storytelling and appeals to authority.

**Keywords:** Teacher collaborative discourse, embedded storytelling, situated learning, naturalistic data, facilitation

### Background of Study

This presentation is about teachers' on-the-job learning through collaborative discourse, a process that is at the heart of many of the currently popular models and approaches to in-service professional learning (Hofmann, 2019; Lefstein et al., 2020). Malaysia is no exception, where policies to support collaborative professional learning models like Lesson Study and professional learning communities (PLCs) have been in effect for more than a decade. The PLC policy for example pertains also to English-language teaching in Malaysia, as the English subject was identified as a 'core subject' that became a priority for PLC implementation (Teacher Education Division, 2011; Teacher Professionalism Division, 2019). PLCs have remained a core part of the national strategy to improve teaching quality (Amin Senin, 2019)

### Statement of Problem

Despite the popularity of discourse-based teacher professional learning, the research on *how* teacher discourse facilitates learning, what conditions support (or create barriers) to it, is still relatively underdeveloped, possessing significant gaps which have to be addressed should the relevant stakeholders wish to support teachers in their learning; not least to help teachers themselves reflect on their practice in a research-informed manner (Lefstein, Segal, et al., 2020).

One limitation of the field is that much of the evidence in it has been generated from researcher- and facilitator-led interventions, which while useful calls into question the scalability, sustainability and general applicability of their findings (Avalos, 2011; Lefstein, Vedder-Weiss, et al., 2020).

Adding to that is the complication that most of the extant knowledge is based on studies done in what can be broadly termed as 'Western' or 'Global North' contexts, where the prevailing values, norms and conditions likely vary from 'non-Western' contexts of practice that have nonetheless adopted these practices—consistent with recognisable patterns of transnational policy borrowing driven by discourses of

‘international best practice’ (Hairon et al., 2017; Lefstein, Vedder-Weiss, et al., 2020; Lewis & Hogan, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2013).

### **Significance of Study**

The end-goal of studies like this is ultimately about how the knowledge generated can support teachers’ professional learning (Kennedy, 2016). As I see it, the improvements and reforms needed especially in English Language Education in Malaysia and many other places of the world cannot only rely on initial teacher education but will have to reckon with the ongoing professional learning of the multitude of in-service teachers who are already in position, holding the keys to improving student learning, and setting the pedagogical culture that newly-trained teachers become socialised into upon entering the service. My research brings our attention to the dialogic processes that are at the heart of that socialisation process, and points to specific discourse practices that teachers, school leaders and facilitators can leverage to effect teacher learning. I would describe this as the ‘last mile connectivity’ of ELT reform—examining how collaborative discourse can shape, embed, even inhibit teacher learning.

### **Research Questions**

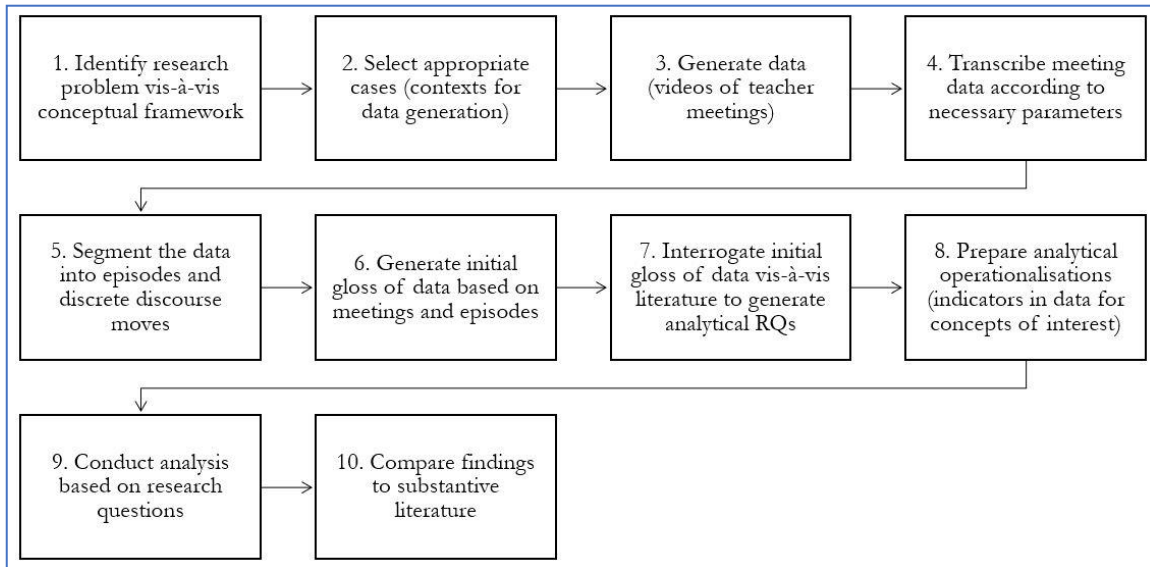
The study conceptualises teacher learning through integrating the theory of cultural models (Gee, 2015) and cognitive dissonance (Beswick, 2017). Using this conceptualisation, it asks the following questions:

1. What are the different outcomes to teachers’ shared cultural models about their students when they (the teachers) discuss discrepant evidence?
2. What observable features appear to make a difference with respect to the outcomes found in RQ1?
3. What are the observable nuances and contingencies to those ‘difference-makers’?

### **Method**

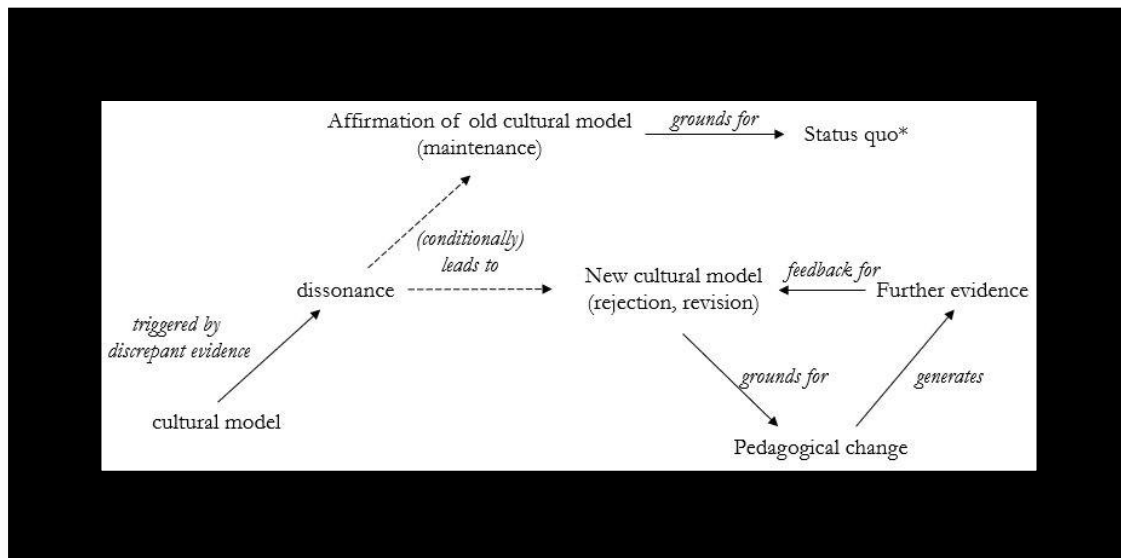
This study is designed to generate and analyse video-based observational data of PLC meetings at two purposively sampled Malaysian national secondary schools (or more precisely, two communities of English-language teachers at said schools) over a period of nine months.

The data collection generated a set of 13 teacher meeting videos, which were segmented into 112 discrete ‘episodes’ i.e., structured social encounters around a central idea/problem (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). A bespoke 10-step discourse analytic approach was developed to answer these research questions, based on a synthesis of the relevant methodological literature (Hofmann, 2020; Mercer; 2008; Miles et al., 2016, Tavory & Timmermans, 2014), and a conceptual framework that defines learning through integrating the theories of cultural models (Gee, 2015) and cognitive dissonance (Beswick, 2017). All in all, this approach enabled the researcher to analyse the unstructured raw data in a structured and theoretically informed manner that generates novel insights while staying close with the concrete data (Hofmann, 2020). The 10-step approach is visualised in the Figure below:



## Findings and Discussion

With respect to RQ1, this presentation reports three distinct outcomes: the teachers' initial cultural models were either 'maintained', 'revised' or 'rejected'. The evidence offers proof of concept that collaborative discourse *can* lead to teacher learning as defined in this study, but that this is contingent, rather than guaranteed. Additionally (and crucially), multi-episode analyses showed changes in teachers' cultural models that supported subsequent changes in practice. This strengthens the argument that collaborative discourse supports *professional change*, i.e. not only conceptual learning but changes in classroom practice (see below).



As for RQ2 and RQ3, three discursive 'difference-makers' were found: (1) explicit reasoning, (2) storytelling, or narrative representations of practice ('replays', 'small stories') and (3) appeals to authority, each presenting implications for the facilitation and conduct of effective collaborative discourse. Explicit reasoning is said to be a feature of generative dialogue, but the findings add a new nuance to the literature, by showing that the 'position' or 'temporal order' of a reasoning utterance has to be taken into consideration. As for teacher storytelling, we found that its efficacy for teacher learning was not stand-



alone, but depended on stories being connected to general pedagogical principles. Teachers' rhetorical appeals to authority, on the other hand, sheds light on how policies and micropolitics frames their everyday discussions.

### Limitations

As a highly intensive, in-depth qualitative study, the study makes no claims of generalisability, focussing only on opening up new paths of inquiry and shedding light on the intricate workings of teachers' collaborative discourse. Moreover, the data were only generated in meetings that the researcher was permitted to access, and therefore do not represent the full breadth of the participants' actual collaborative discourse. Partial sampling is unavoidable in the study of educational dialogue (Mercer, 2008). Finally, the study may have benefited also from different analytical lenses that allow for the analysis of micropolitical or socio-emotional dimensions, which were excluded from the study.

### Conclusion

This presentation reports some of the 'warranted assertions' (Biesta, 2020: 128) my PhD research has added to the existing literature, some of which might already be useful to practitioners in the findings' current form, and some of which whose usefulness will be better realised through subsequent translational/application-type research, whether in the form of action research or researcher-led intervention studies. These add to the store of knowledge which educational practitioners can use to gain more value from their professional dialogue. It is hoped that future research takes up some of the hypotheses and analytical pathways raised by this study, and embark on diversifying the research designs, methods, and theoretical approaches used in the field. In particular, the 10-step methodological approach can be used as a point of departure for those seeking to analyse similarly elusive phenomena. To quote the philosopher Charles Peirce, 'Science is not standing upon the bedrock of fact. It is walking upon a bog, and can only say, this ground seems to hold for the present. Here I will stay till it begins to give way.' (In Misak, 2013: 34)

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## **Analysing the production of the English lexical stress by Arab EFL undergraduates**

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### **Abstract**

Accurate production of English lexical stress enhances intelligible and comprehensible communication. However, research has consistently shown that Arab EFL learners encounter difficulties correctly using the English lexical stress phonetic cues due to cross-linguistic variance between English and Arabic. Using a production experiment, the phonetic cues of stress have been examined in this study. The study involved the participation of three groups: the intermediate and the advanced EFL undergraduates and English native speakers. The findings of the study showed that Yemeni EFL learners could stress the penultimate syllable although the ultimate consist of a heavy syllable. Negative transfer from Arabic to English was applied in the production of English words with different stress rules. The results clarified the significance of lexical stress assignment in producing English words as it influences achieving intelligibility in conveying the message from the speaker to the listener.

**Keywords:** English lexical stress, Arab EFL learners, acoustical cues

### **Background of Study**

Recent studies have shown an increasing interest in the essential impact of English intelligible speech on oral communication (Tuan, 2018). The intelligible speech requires the ability to acquire the segmental features (consonants and vowels) and the suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, tone, etc.) of the English language (Al-Thalab et al., 2018). Lexical stress is one of the fundamental features in controlling the production of the segmental features and the structure of information (Tuan, 2018). During the acquisition of English language, EFL learners need to acquire English specific aspects of stress to attain the correct production of English (Liu, 2017). The ability to assign the primary stress in the production of English words improves the comprehension and the intelligibility of the transmitted message between speakers and listeners (Tuan, 2018, Al-Thalab et al., 2018).

### **Statement of Problem**

There have been a handful of studies that have researched the role of the correct production of English lexical stress by learners of English language. Researchers from all over the world have speculated on the significance of the stress pattern in English speech (Zuraiq & Sereno, 2021). According to their findings, mastering the production of English stress patterns improves the intelligibility of English oral communication. Nonetheless, many EFL learners face numerous challenges in producing English lexical stress correctly, which affects their speaking competence and comprehension (Saha & Mandal, 2018; Zuraiq & Sereno, 2021). Yemeni EFL students, among them, face difficulties in producing clear and accurate English pronunciation. (Al-Tamimi at al., 2020). This condition becomes more prevalent when producing the English suprasegmental features, especially in producing English lexical stress. According to Al-Khulaidi (2017), the wrong placement of lexical stress is one of the reasons for the unintelligibility of Yemeni EFL learners' English speech. This issue poses a significant challenge for Yemeni EFL learners, resulting in communication breakdowns when communicating with speakers from different language backgrounds (Al-Khulaidi, 2017).

## Significance of Study

The current study is attempted to provide a clear understanding of this issue. The study will contribute to giving more insight to understanding English stress patterns difficulties by learners from a new variety of Arabic language (Yemeni-Hadhrami dialect) using closed and open syllabic stimulus. The study will consider the effect of the word length that has been rarely investigated in the production among Arab EFL learners. There is also a need to investigate this study due to the neglect of the lexical awareness that has been found in previous studies among Yemeni teachers and students. This study will emphasize the call for addressing the problems that are related to teaching English speech in general, and English lexical stress production in particular. Finally, the study attempts to identify the reasons behind the difficulties of producing English lexical stress.

## Research Questions

1. To what extent do similarities between English and Hadhrami stress rules affect the production of the English lexical stress by Yemeni EFL undergraduates at the phonological level?
2. To what extent do contrasts between English and Hadhrami stress rules affect the production of the English lexical stress by Yemeni EFL undergraduates at the phonological level?

## Method

The stimuli used for the task encompass real and nonce English disyllabic and trisyllabic words of various positions of stress, which is expected to cause difficulty for Yemeni EFL undergraduates in producing English primary stress. The stimuli used for the task encompass real and nonce English disyllabic and trisyllabic words of various positions of stress, which is expected to cause difficulty for Yemeni EFL undergraduates in producing English primary stress. The subjects were selected randomly using a demographic survey questionnaire to indicate the participants' gender, age, and obtain prior consent. A total of 65 (male and female undergraduates), ranging from 18-23 years old, agreed to participate in this study. All participants were originally from Yemen. After confirming participants' consent, participants took a placement test to indicate their level of proficiency. Accordingly, the 65 learners were divided into 38 intermediate and 28 advanced learners groups. The study also included 10 American English speakers as a control group. Production of the native speakers is essential because English real and nonce words were tested in this study. Correct placement of the primary stress in English words is determined in dictionaries.

## Findings and Discussion

The most prominent finding to emerge from this study for the first research question showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean percentage scores of both language groups in the production of English lexical stress as affected by the similarities between the English and Arabic stress rules. Though the mean percentage scores of the advanced group were higher than the mean percentage scores of the intermediate group, the overall results are almost the same among the English native speakers and Yemeni advanced and intermediate EFL undergraduates. Findings of the current study showed evidence that Arab learners of English will not invariably encounter difficulties when disyllabic or trisyllabic words have closed, or heavy ultimate syllable such as (CV.CVC) and (CV.CVCC).

The second research question addresses the effect of the contrasts between the English and the HA stress rule assigning the stressed syllable in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. Words that are applied to different stress rules from Arabic stress rules induced wrong placement of stress in the production of the Yemeni EFL undergraduates. For example, errors rate increased in words that consist of (CV.CVV), (CVC.CVVC), (CV.CVVC), (CV.CVC.CVVC), (CV.CVC.VC), (CVC.CV.CVVC) (CV.CV.CV), (CV.CV.CVC), (CVV.CVC.CVVC).

## Limitations

First, the recruited subjects of the study were limited to Yemeni Arab learners who speak the Hadhrami Arabic dialect only. Relatively, the study focused on the Hadhrami Arabic syllable structure and stress patterns in the production of English lexical stress. The study investigated the production of English lexical stress regarding phonological scope; syntactic and semantical explanations when necessary. The current study focused on the production of English lexical stress in disyllabic and trisyllabic words. Words that contain more than three syllable were not included in the study.

## Conclusion

The study proves that some of the prosodic erroneousness in the production of English lexical stress was predictable such as L1 interferences. However, when differences increase between English and Arabic, challenges will vary according to the learners' level of proficiency.

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The background features a white canvas with abstract geometric elements. In the top-left corner, there are three diagonal bars: a brown one, a blue one, and a dark blue one. A thin gold line extends from the top-left towards the center. In the top-right corner, there are two diagonal bars: a yellow one and a brown one. A large, solid yellow semi-circle is positioned on the left side of the page. In the bottom-right corner, there are three diagonal bars: a yellow one, a dark blue one, and a light blue one. A thin light blue line extends from the bottom-right towards the center.

# **MASTER DEGREE**

## TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF CAMBRIDGE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE (CEFR) ALLIGNED CURRICULUM ON ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH: A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

The embrace of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) into the Malaysian English language curriculum, Action Oriented Approach is being emphasised for active interaction. In the ideal conditions, English class should offer learners the opportunity to comprehend the use of target language under most possible common and natural situations. The data collection methods are semi-structured interviews, video recordings and lesson documents from the six participants. The data collected will be analysed and discussed based on the action-oriented approach.

**Keywords:** CEFR, action-oriented approach, teaching methods

### Background of Study

According to Hazita Azman (2016), this new system provides a platform for teachers with a well-structured guidance for English language teaching (ELT). Following this, the ministry decided to reassess English education and launched the English Language Education Roadmap 2015–2025, which includes the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) into the curriculum (Abdul Hakim Ali et al., 2018) to scale the students' language ability against internationally recognised levels as a step moving towards globalisation (Ramiaida et al., 2017). The six-level global scale was designed with the aim of being open, dynamic, and adaptable to assist language learners in mapping the CEFR to their assessment and curriculum (Nurul Farehah & Mohd Salehuddin, 2020). Consequently, MOE established imported textbooks in schools to ensure CEFR aligned classrooms on raising the standard of English in ELT (Mohamad Lukman & Parilah, 2020). The training which adopted cascading training model (Abdul Hakim Ali et al., 2018) was meant to train as many among the estimated 60,000 English language teachers as possible on the implementation of the CEFR in the teaching and learning of English in Malaysia (English Language Standards and Quality Council, 2015). CEFR encourages student-centredness closely related to the action-oriented approach in the teaching and learning method. However, Malaysian students are traditionally taught to rely on teachers. Students may be exposed to numerous chances to extend their language abilities as a result of the adoption of a learner-centered approach, but they have to acquire sufficient awareness to make the efforts practicable.

### Statement of Problem

Around 15,000 of Malaysia's 60,000 English teachers were affected by the CEFR adoption. Approximately two-thirds of English teachers have not achieved the required competency level in English which might hinder the progress of the whole process (Nawai & Said, 2020). Teachers' lack of knowledge and teaching skills may also deter the implementation of a curriculum innovation (Nor Haslynda A.Rahman, 2014). The training provided in familiarising CEFR is not enough. The number of teachers attended the course for a school is very low. Most of the teachers in Malaysia are still not aware of the framework although cascading training was in the process (Mohd Sallehudin & Nurul Farehah, 2017). Meanwhile, they also agreed that there are very limited studies and researches have been done after the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. To conclude, it is clear that the teachers are facing the burden on implementing the curriculum due to various factors discussed. The action-oriented approach which is the most significant element in CEFR

might not be applied in ELT due to the awareness of its significance. María Belén Díez-Bedmar and Michael Byram (2018) mentioned that the studies on the impact of the CEFR-aligned curriculum on teachers' teaching practices are limited to the extent that few researchers cited no previous empirical work in their studies. To bridge this research gap, the researcher intends to discover the degree of Malaysian teachers' CEFR implementation practices in the English as the second language (ESL) classroom. This is also to inform the policy makers on the CEFR implementation so that actions could be taken to warrant that the revised CEFR-aligned curriculum is thoroughly used in Malaysian ESL classroom.

### **Significance of Study**

This study intends to focus on aspects which were mentioned in research objectives. The teaching methods from the teachers involved in this study can be a reference for the others on inculcating some of the methods in their teaching and to know the pupils' needs and interests in the future. The researcher focuses on the Teacher guidebook by English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) to thoroughly analyse the teaching practices among the teachers. The findings can help all the teachers to make amendments or adjustments to make a constructive progress for the betterment of the pupils. Similarly, the pupils get the opportunity to learn English language in a better environment. Meanwhile, this study can also shed some light to the education officers, so that they can plan trainings or coaching which can make significant progress for the community in the district or state. The training issue which has been discussed in this study can also let the officials and key people to conduct more trainings to bring awareness and equip knowledge to all the English teachers on government's aspiration. The trainings can be conducted virtually to overcome the budget and financial issues. Online trainings also create a platform for the teachers to look for a reliable source and reference.

### **Research Questions**

Investigating the process of the teaching practices in the classrooms, the activities the teachers are using, the inclusion of the teaching ideas and techniques, the researcher hopes can look for answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the teaching practices being employed by the master trainers in teaching CEFR lessons based on action-oriented approach?
2. How are the teaching practices are being employing by the master trainers in CEFR lessons based on action-oriented approach?
3. Why the teaching practices are being employed by the master trainers in CEFR lessons based on action-oriented approach?

### **Method**

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews will be conducted to obtain data for the study. This design provides the participants adequate time to express their views and also allows the researcher to prompt and follow-up on the views and events. The questions will be validated by two experts from the education field. The suggestions of the experts will be reflected and taken into consideration. Semi structured interviews will be used to obtain information in order to compare these data, as the participants are required to express their views about the same general themes (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). All participants will be asked the same basic questions in the similar order. The participants answered all the questions; therefore, increasing comparability of responses (Creswell 2013). Education researchers have traditionally understood video as a useful tool for collecting and analyzing data in order to study a vast array of learning ecologies William J. Fassbender (2021). In recent years, education scholars have begun recognizing the power of video, primarily for data collection and analysis (Freitas, Lerman, and Parks 2017). The teaching of the participants' will be recorded by themselves for the researcher to observe and do interpretation. Documents in this case study vary accordingly. The researcher collects the documents in regards to CEFR such as the textbook, the syllabus, the scheme of work and other related materials. This is to study the content of the materials related to teaching and learning. In this case study Thematic Analysis will be conducted. The analysis process starts with preparing the data, reading through the data, segmenting and labelling the data and finally coding the data (Cresswell, 2014). In this case study, the research is going to use Interactive



Model proposed by Miles & Huberman (2014). This model is used to classify all the collected from observation, interviews, documents. According to Miles & Huberman (2014), this model is widely used for qualitative analysis where the analysis is a cyclical process and rely among each other.

### Findings and Discussion

This research aims to collect data on the teaching techniques and methods used by teachers. The data collected will be analysed based on action-oriented approach. The research also proposes a checklist for the teachers to teach CEFR using action-oriented approach.

### Limitations

Like any other research this study has some limitations. Firstly, this is a small-scale qualitative study which focuses on 8 English teachers. It is to understand and interpret more local meanings; recognises data as gathered in a context; sometimes produces knowledge that contributes to more general understandings (Braun and Clarke 2013). The findings cannot be generalised to all young ESL settings and contexts in Malaysia. However, the results can represent the ESL classroom. Meanwhile, self-reported data can cause researcher bias. The findings of the study might not be applicable in all primary schools. However, teachers can always adopt and adapt the strategies in their teaching. As such, further studies can be conducted extensively with wider sampling. Although this can be a limitation it doesn't affect the efficacy of it.

### Conclusion

The researcher feels it is a responsibility being an educationist to analyse the implementation of the new curriculum. It is a fact that teachers are the main tool for the implementation to be successful. At the same time, it is vital to check if the process is taking place in a right approach. This is very important for the educators, the administrators, the officers and the government to come out with productive measures to repair whatever is needed for the implementation to achieve its' vision and mission. Implementation solely will not be able to determine the success, case studies like this is important for us to check if we are on the right track. Additionally, the MOE needs to distribute the support in terms of funding, materials, and infrastructure evenly throughout the stages in the teacher training programme. The significance of this study will lead to new ways of conducting the teaching methodology as a whole. Despite the studies which has been conducted in Malaysia, the implementation of CEFR in primary schools is still lacking. Thus, it would be appropriate if someone who is in the field to kick-off on investigating the modus operandi.

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## Students' Perceptions of Non-native English Teachers: A Qualitative Study in an Intensive English Program in a Malaysian Foreign University Branch Campus

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### Abstract

Given the long-standing status of English as an international language, a particular topic of interest and controversy revolved around native and non-native identities of English teachers. While selective hiring practices favouring native English teachers were commonly adopted in institutions worldwide, past empirical studies on student perceptions towards native and non-native English teachers have revealed contradictory findings. As such, this qualitative study investigated students' perceptions of non-native English-speaking teachers in an Intensive English Program (IEP) in a Foreign University Branch campus in Malaysia. The results showed that students generally held positive perceptions towards non-native English teachers for their classroom management abilities and understanding of student learning needs. Nonetheless, non-native English teachers were also reported to be results-oriented and have a tendency to over-correct students' works. Importantly, this study underscored the importance of teacher-student interaction and demonstrated that various factors that can shape students' learning besides their perceptions towards non-native English teachers.

**Keywords:** non-native English teachers, English language teaching in Malaysia, Malaysian higher education, intensive English program

### Background of Study

Mastery of the English language is more crucial than ever in the 21<sup>st</sup> century given its prominence in international communication (Clement & Murugavel, 2018). With an estimated total of two billion English learners worldwide in 2020 (British Council, 2022), a surge in the number of non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) catering to this demand is unsurprising. In spite of this, a commonly accepted view seemed to be that NNESTs are second in knowledge and performance to native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) (Low, 2019). The apparent higher status of NESTs can be observed in Malaysia. An example was the 'English Language Native Speaker Mentoring Programme' in 2011 which recruited NESTs to provide mentoring, training, and professional development workshops to Malaysian English teachers (Senom & Othman, 2014). Some felt that NEST mentors could diversify Malaysian English teachers' teaching activities and improve their classroom practices (Malay Mail Online, 2013). Others suggested that such mentorship and training could have been provided by experienced and qualified Malaysian teachers at much lower pay rates (Malay Mail, 2013). While this study does not aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentorship programme, the programme does set an important backdrop to the division between NNESTs and NESTs.

### Statement of Problem

Despite the debates and discussions among various educational stakeholders on the capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses of NNESTs and NESTs, the intention of the Malaysian Ministry of Education has always been clear: To elevate the effectiveness of English language teaching. This is evident in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025, which outlined a specific area of focus to transform the education system was to upskill English language teachers to enhance students' development and mastery of the English Language (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). However, past research on student perceptions of NNESTs often revealed contradictory results, showing that student perceptions can vary and may

sometimes be contradicting, even within the same context. Additionally, most research on this topic had been conducted in other educational contexts, leaving the Malaysian context relatively unexplored. Therefore, it is imperative that this research gap is addressed so that decision-makers in Malaysian educational institutions would be better-informed on the multi-layered students' needs and preferences and in order to make better informed ~~how~~ decisions regarding teaching and learning.

### **Significance of Study**

This study aimed to echo the efforts of the Malaysian Ministry of Education by providing a better understanding of student perceptions towards NNESTs in order to identify particular teaching styles and activities that could impact on students' learning experiences. While the study does not intend to compare NNESTs to NESTs, it is hoped that the findings could inform NNESTs on how to tailor their teaching efforts to students' needs and preferences. This would subsequently ensure that the teacher guidance needed by students will be made readily available to them. Lastly, it is also hoped that the present study will empower NNESTs in Malaysia by contributing to the current body of knowledge which has shown that students actually valued different qualities of NESTs and NNESTs. In other words, the study hopes to illustrate that effective teaching encompasses an effective command of linguistic and pedagogical skills, instead of native or non-native English-speaking statuses.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the Malaysian IEP students' overall perceptions of NNESTs?
2. What are the Malaysian IEP students' perceptions of NNESTs' classroom management abilities?
3. What are the Malaysian IEP students' perceptions of the activities and topics given in NNESTs' classes?
4. What personal qualities did Malaysian IEP students associate NNESTs with?

### **Method**

The study was conducted in the IEP of the Malaysian branch campus of an Australian University located in Sarawak. The three participants involved in this study were Malaysian students enrolled in Levels Three and Four of the IEP. Each participant took part in one in-depth semi-structured interview for approximately 90 minutes in length. In the interviews, the participants were first asked a series of questions aimed to elicit responses relevant to the research objectives. Following this, the participants wrote down five personal qualities that best described NNESTs and arranged each quality based on the order of influence to them. Follow-up questions were then asked to further gauge the reasons for the participants' perceptions. After the interviews, all audio recordings were transcribed for further analysis. After multiple readings, the transcripts were coded and re-coded to link data segments for highlighting trends in the students' perceptions. The observations and findings were subsequently interpreted and analysed in line with the research questions. Finally, discussions and conclusions were drawn from these interpretations.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In this study, two out of three participants held positive perceptions towards NNESTs. They favoured NNESTs' knowledge of local students' culture and their proficiency in students' L1, which were both viewed as key elements in enhancing students' understanding of class content. These findings were in line with previous studies conducted by Cheung and Braine (2007) and Sung (2014), where it was observed that students showed preference for NNESTs' abilities to explain difficult grammatical rules and English vocabulary in students' L1. The remaining students held overall negative perceptions towards NNESTs due to their exam results and textbook-orientation. This finding echoed other studies in Confucian heritage cultures where classes were often teacher-centred and students' learning needs and preferences were not always prioritized (Chang et al., 2011). Additionally, the participants held overall positive views on NNESTs' classroom management abilities, including their preparation for class, in-class communication, and time management skills.

## Limitations

One limitation to this study is the small number of participants involved. Due to the constraints of time and ease of access to participants, this study was only conducted on a small scale, involving only three participants. As such, the findings of this study may not be able to provide the full picture of the overall perceptions of Malaysian students towards NNESTs. Nonetheless, it is believed that this paper did provide contributions to the current body of knowledge on the teaching performances of NNESTs in the Malaysian context.

## Conclusion

Overall, positive traits of NNESTs favoured by students included their knowledge of students' L1 and culture, choice of class activities and topics, and effective classroom management abilities. Conversely, negative qualities of NNESTs as perceived by students are their results and textbook-orientation, and the lack of opportunities for active participation. Importantly, these findings highlighted that teachers need to prioritise students' individual learning needs. In particular, the link between class content and course objectives should be made explicit to students to help them understand how class activities can help them achieve learning objectives, thereby increasing their motivation in learning English. Given the multicultural and multi-ethnic setting in Malaysia, future research could explore the relationship between Malaysian teachers' cultural backgrounds and upbringing on their teaching styles. This is to enable key decision makers to devise strategies to that best match teachers' backgrounds to students' needs, which can ultimately lead to a better English Teaching and Learning experience in Malaysia.

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## DIFFERENCES OF TEACHERS' SEVERITY WHEN ASSESSING SPEAKING TEST THROUGH MANY-FACETED RASCH MEASUREMENT

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### Abstract

The use of subjective items in language assessment grants teachers the freedom to rate students' answers based on their judgment. Such freedom opens the door to the existence of non-uniform ratings. However, the quality of teachers' ratings particularly in speaking assessment is rarely examined. This study sought to determine the differences of teachers' rating quality differentiated by teachers' rating experience. The study was conducted through a quantitative approach using a survey method involving 164 English teachers teaching lower secondary school students that were selected through multi-stage clustered sampling. Each teacher scored six candidates' answers in a speaking assessment comprising three question items. Three domains that were assessed, were namely vocabulary, grammar and communicative competence. The domains were then calibrated (teachers, students, items and domains) through a multi-faceted Rasch measurement (MFM) model. It revealed that teachers' rating quality measured through severity and fit were not homogenous. Their rating quality was different when compared based on rating experience. Among the implications of this research are the rater training process which should be planned more meticulously, while continuous initiatives should be taken to guide teachers in the hopes of unifying the ability to assess students. Also, MFRM model can be used in rater training to monitor teachers' rating abilities.

**Keywords:** rating quality, severity, speaking test, Rasch model, rating experience

### Background of Study

Rater-mediated assessment is among the types of ubiquitous assessments in the education system around the globe (Wang & Engelhard, 2019). Particularly in language testing, rater-mediated assessment is employed to examine candidates' capabilities in complex domains such as speaking skill. However, evaluating candidates' capabilities in such skill is not an easy task for raters and can challenge the quality of their ratings (Fan & Knoch, 2019). The quality includes objectivity, reliability and fairness that are given to candidates in their examination results which could determine a candidate's future life (Eckes, 2015). Within the context of high-stakes assessment, candidates should be evaluated with such quality so that the marks they received reflect their true capabilities (Xerri & Briffa, 2018). However, previous literature has documented that raters' rating quality is highly influenced by their diverse backgrounds including their experiences (Fan & Yan, 2020). Raters' experiences were investigated in terms of their rating experience, teaching experience, and also their experience in attending assessment training. Contradictory findings emerged from previous research on the effects of raters' experiences and rating quality. Some studies reported that rating quality was not differentiated significantly by raters' experience (Ahmadi Shirazi, 2019; Alp et al., 2018; Park, 2020). However, Attali (2016), Davis (2016), Huang et al., (2018) and Kim and Lee (2015) concluded that raters with varied level of experiences produced different rating quality especially in terms of their severity and leniency level.

### Statement of Problem

Variability among raters is central to the rating process of speaking assessment because each rater brings their own idiosyncrasies and values to the rating scene, including their experiences (Engelhard & Wind, 2018). Fan and Knoch (2019) and Han (2016) reported in their systematic literature review studies that raters' experiences have been examined in a numbers of studies conducted by other researchers previously but is still underexplored, especially in terms of speaking assessment. Importantly, those studies lead to inconsistent findings, and no solid conclusion can be made about whether raters' experience can affect

rating quality. Particularly in a Malaysian context, the initiative to evaluate raters' rating quality is usually executed through moderation procedure during which another group of raters reviewing students' answer scripts after being marked by the first group of raters. The moderation for writing assessment is carried out by reviewing students' answer scripts, but this is not the case with speaking tests as it is a hassle to record students' answers. Therefore, the moderation process for speaking tests is unfeasible; thus, no one can monitor if a rater rates with irrelevant-construct variance. In other words, raters of speaking tests are given full trust to execute the scoring procedure, and the validation of scores awarded to examinees solely depends on the teachers' level of professionalism and expertise. It leaves students' speaking grades on raters' experience in providing ratings. Therefore, this study delved into investigating whether raters' rating quality was affected by their different levels of rating experience.

### Significance of Study

The study is significant as it gives crucial insights to speaking assessment in the context of Malaysian lower secondary schools. Rater training providers need to consider improving the calibration training developed for teachers factoring the way teachers use their personal experience in awarding marks to students. Teachers should be made aware of the tendency for one to fall into becoming a severe and a lenient rater when they let their personal experience to influence the marks they give to candidates. Hence, training should offer teachers the discussion about differential severity, halo effect, central tendency, and randomness. Apart from that, teachers should be given the chances to rehearse assessing students' answers in rater training using sample answers. They should be provided with a variety of answer samples in terms of students' ability levels in different questions. Additionally, MFRM should be optimally used to identify whether teachers can produce reliable ratings. The rich information from the analysis can be used to address teachers' rating skill including rater bias. In fact, the analysis offers more information as compared to the practice of moderation that usually takes places after rating procedures which only provides input on the agreement among raters.

### Research Questions

1. What is the level of teachers' severity when assessing students' speaking assessment?
2. Do teachers of different rating experience assess students with different severity level?

### Method

This quantitative study through survey design was executed by simulating English Language speaking test for lower secondary school students. The students' answers were recorded and then marked by selected teachers. The scores obtained from the teachers were analysed to answer the research questions. The population of the study was English teachers teaching lower secondary school throughout Selangor district. Through multistage clustered sampling technique, a total of 164 English teachers were selected as respondents of the study. All the respondents were teaching lower secondary school students (from one, two, and three) in preparation for the final examination in form three, namely Pentaksiran Tingkatan Tiga (PT3). They have a diversified range of rating experience and were divided into three groups. The instruments used in the study were items for speaking test: students' recorded answers, scoring rubric, scoring form and background questionnaire. A systematic rating system of mapping was established to ensure that enough links were created between teacher, student, item, and domain facets to enable analysis using many-faceted Rasch measurement (MFRM). The data was analysed using the MFRM model with FACETS software version 46.7.1 (Linacre, 2014a). This software can calibrate more than two facets on the interval logit scale. The software is not only able to identify the interaction between item difficulty and examinees' ability, but also raters' severity by through a Wright map, separation statistics, and fit statistics (Linacre, 2014b). MFRM was used because of its suitability, and researchers of rating performance have frequently employed this approach to investigate rater effects either in simulation or real-data studies (Wind & Guo, 2019)

### Findings and Discussion



The findings on Table 1 indicate that the third group of teachers manifested the highest severity level with 0.03 logits, followed by the second group (-0.06 logits), and finally the first group (-0.20 logits). It means that teachers with the highest years of rating experience were the most severe raters and teachers without any rating experience were the most lenient raters. The Chi-square analysis depicted that the differences in severity among the three groups were statistically significant, with the Chi-square value,  $\chi^2 = 26.0$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Furthermore, the Chi-square test has shown that teachers in each group rated with different severity levels, with a p-value  $< 0.01$ .

**Table 1. Teachers' Differences in Severity Based on Rating Experience**

| Group  | Total Score | Total Count | Observed Average | Measure | Model S. E |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------------|---------|------------|
| No experience  | 5062        | 1837        | 2.8              | -0.20   | 0.03       |
| 1 to 3 years of experience   | 6077        | 2384        | 2.5              | -0.06   | 0.03       |
| 4 to 6 years of experience   | 6312        | 2607        | 2.4              | 0.03    | 0.03       |
| Mean   | 5813.7      | 2276        | 2.6              | -0.08   | 0.03       |
| S. D   | 670         | 396.2       | 0.2              | 0.12    | 0.00       |
| Fixed (all same) chi-square: 26.0 d.f.: 2 significances (probability): .00 |             |             |                  |         |            |

The separation ratio for the first and second groups of teachers, as shown in Table 2, were, respectively, 4.35 and 4.21, indicating that their severity was four times higher than the standard errors. Meanwhile, the value for the third group was 5.72, suggesting that their severity was more than five times higher than standard errors. Next, the separation index informs the number of severity strata among the teachers within their respective groups. It was found that the third group were stratified into almost eight different severity groups, while the first and the second groups are divided into six severity strata. The separation reliability of all the groups managed to achieve high values, 0.95 and 0.97, indicating that the separation statistics provided for all the groups are highly reliable.

**Table 2. Rater Facet Report Based on Rating Experience**

| Group                  | No experience | 1 to 3 years of experience | 4 to 6 years of experience |
|------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| $\chi^2$               | 1265.9        | 828.1                      | 1916.6                     |
| df                     | 62            | 43                         | 56                         |
| Sig.                   | 0.00          | 0.00                       | 0.00                       |
| Separation ratio       | 4.35          | 4.21                       | 5.72                       |
| Separation index       | 6.13          | 6.02                       | 7.96                       |
| Separation reliability | 0.95          | 0.95                       | 0.97                       |

### Limitations

The current study is limited to only the assessment of speaking skill within the context of second language learning. Different findings may be discovered in different contexts as each type of assessment examines a distinct set of linguistic domains. Apart from that, the findings emerged from this study only apply to English teachers in lower secondary school setting. The study does not include speaking assessment in primary school level as it is not mandatory for primary school teachers to carry out speaking assessment. Whereas upper secondary school teachers are not included in the study because they are involved in high-stakes-assessments, which are SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysian) and STPM (Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia).

## Conclusion

The comparison of teachers' severity levels based on rating experiences has shown that there was an absence of uniformity in their severity levels when assessing students, which is known as stochastic rating (the existence of a variety of rating quality among two raters and above). This result suggested that teachers' experience in assessing high-stakes-assessments, specifically PT3, impacts the way they assess students in the classroom, including classroom-based assessment. Future studies should endeavour in seeking the potential occurrence of rater bias among teachers and in other assessment elements – not only in speaking but also in other types of testing.

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## SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN ESL LITERATURE LESSONS ACCORDING TO VARYING ENGAGEMENT-DISAFFECTION PROFILES

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### Abstract

Student engagement informs the occurrence of learning in a classroom. Against a dichotomous backdrop of benefits and challenges of ESL literature lessons, this study explored the lived experience of Malaysian secondary school students' engagement in ESL literature lessons through a sequential QUAN → QUAL mixed methods phenomenological research design. Twenty Form 4 respondents completed the 'Engagement versus Disaffection with Learning' survey questionnaire, yielding four engaged and disaffected student profiles across behavioural and emotional domains. Subsequently, four participants with these different profiles were selected for semi-structured phenomenological interviews. Following analysis of qualitative data through Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step phenomenological analysis method, the salience of ESL literature in secondary school; student engagement with reading ESL literature texts, student engagement with ESL literature lesson activities, and student feelings towards ESL literature lessons were found to differ in surprising ways. Notably, close reading of literature texts strongly colours the lived experience of a behaviourally and emotionally engaged student, helping them overcome early ambivalence towards the study of literature. In contrast, generic lesson activities, including games, discussions, worksheets, and presentations, engender limited emotional engagement in forms ancillary to direct engagement with ESL literature, particularly among students whose profiles show disaffection in at least one domain. The study recommends more consistent teaching of ESL literature lessons, judicious consideration for the emotional and affective domains of engagement, and unreserved use of close reading to catalyse student engagement in ESL literature lessons.

**Keywords:** ESL literature, student engagement, secondary school, mixed methods, phenomenology

### Background of Study

Global traction for literature integration in ESL/EFL education systems is evidenced in the Netherlands (Bloemert et al., 2016), Germany (Ahrens, 2012), Hong Kong (Tsang & Paran, 2021), and Malaysia (Suliman & Yunus, 2014). While national curricula provide a course for learning (van de Akker, 2004), student engagement informs whether learning has occurred within the microsystem of the classroom (Sinatra et al., 2015). Since proposed benefits of ESL literature lessons include language proficiency development (e.g. Kuze, 2015) and whole-person growth (e.g. Sivasubramaniam, 2006), investigations into student engagement in ESL literature lessons are warranted to ascertain the extent to which these benefits are reaped. However, given arguments that literature introduces non-conventional language (Savvidou, 2004) and challenging cultural concepts (McKay, 2001), there is likely a range of engagement or disaffection levels within any group of learners. Therefore, ESL literature lessons provide fertile ground for studies on student engagement in language learning. Within the Malaysian context, student engagement in ESL literature lessons is pertinent to explore, especially in light of the recent removal of the literature component from the national standardised English exams. Past studies have shown how standardised testing mediates student engagement with literature lessons (e.g. Anagnostopoulous, 2003). There is presently a lack of studies examining ESL literature lessons when standardised testing on literature has been removed, thereby lending support to the timeliness of the present study set in Malaysia.

## Statement of Problem

A systematic review by Hiver et al. (2021) has found that the body of literature on student engagement in language learning lacks conceptualisation and operationalisation of the construct. On the other hand, research on student engagement that is theory-driven inevitably falls short of capturing a rich and all-encompassing picture of student engagement; this problem is further compounded by the wide variety of engagement-related constructs as well as motivational perspectives that cannot all be included in the development of any single concept or theory of student engagement (Skinner et al., 2009). In addition, consideration must be made about the argument by Kettleby (2007) against the prevalence of categorical and dichotomous thinking in educational research that would yield 'incomplete or incorrect knowledge'. Indeed, past studies on non-native student engagement in literature lessons had muted the experience of less engaged or disaffected students by inferring positive participant engagement from an aggregate of questionnaire survey responses (McElvain, 2010) or selecting case study participants based on active participation (Su & Wu, 2016). The present mixed methods phenomenological study addresses the above research gaps by using Skinner et al.'s (2008) conceptualisation of engagement and disaffection across behavioural and emotional domains, to profile and purposefully select participants whose different lived experiences of engagement in ESL literature lessons are then uncovered through phenomenological interviews.

## Significance of Study

This present study provides a theory-informed orientation towards selection of participants who can provide information-rich experiential accounts of student engagement in ESL literature lessons (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). By foregrounding the multidimensional nature of student engagement at the quantitative phase, this study ensures the inclusion of the experiences of students who have moderate or 'in-between' engagement profiles during ESL literature lessons (Kettleby, 2007). From a pedagogical standpoint, themes gleaned from subsequent phenomenological reduction of students' lived experience can inform practitioners' planning and delivery of ESL literature lessons. Notably, teachers can be guided to address dimensions of student engagement other than the behavioural component, which Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020) has found to be the priority of ESL teachers. Furthermore, in view of how literature in language classrooms has aligned with humanistic education that encompasses appreciation and an understanding of self (e.g. Sivasubramaniam, 2006), it is important for education officers and teachers to glean a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement in ESL literature lessons, in order to enact meaningful and effective plans and interventions to meet these wider humanistic aims.

## Research Questions

The research question that this present study aims to address is framed as follows:

What are the lived experiences of engagement in ESL literature lessons for Malaysian secondary school students who have different engagement-disaffection learning profiles?

## Method

This study employs a sequential quan → QUAL mixed methods phenomenological research design which emphasises the qualitative phenomenological phase (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). The preliminary quantitative data collection phase engaged twenty Form 4 students from a secondary school in Selangor to complete a survey questionnaire on 'Engagement versus Disaffection with Learning' (Skinner et al., 2008) in the context of ESL literature lessons. The survey questionnaire contained four subscales. In the quantitative data analysis, four distinctive student engagement-disaffection profiles were yielded via combinations of subscale scores as described in Table 1.

*Table 1: Expected student profiles and categories of scores for ‘behavioural engagement versus disaffection’ and ‘emotional engagement versus disaffection’*

| <b>Student profile</b>                            | <b>‘Behavioural engagement versus disaffection’ score</b> | <b>‘Emotional engagement versus disaffection’ score</b> |
|---|---|---|
| Behaviourally and emotionally engaged             | Positive value  | Positive value  |
| Behaviourally engaged but emotionally disaffected | Positive value  | Negative value  |
| Behaviourally disaffected but emotionally engaged | Negative value  | Positive value  |
| Behaviourally and emotionally disaffected         | Negative value  | Negative value  |

The four participants purposively selected to participate in semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Bevan, 2014) belonged to each of the four distinctive engagement-disaffection profiles of students in ESL literature lessons (*Table 2*). Using a descriptive phenomenological approach, Colaizzi’s (1978) phenomenological method was applied to analyse the qualitative data obtained.

*Table 2: Selected participants’ engagement-disaffection profiles in ESL literature lessons*

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Engagement-Disaffection Profile</b>            |
|--------------------|---------------|---|
| Participant 1      | F             | Behaviourally and emotionally engaged             |
| Participant 2      | M             | Behaviourally engaged but emotionally disaffected |
| Participant 3      | M             | Behaviourally disaffected but emotionally engaged |
| Participant 4      | M             | Behaviourally and emotionally disaffected         |

## **Findings and Discussion**

The four themes that emerged from the students’ lived experiences of engaging in ESL literature lessons are summarised below, including findings of note:

### **1. Varying salience of ESL literature lessons in secondary school**

Literature lessons have been an inconsistent feature of the student participants’ ESL learning experience in secondary school. Reasons cited include the teacher omitting the literature component, the participant’s own absence from school, and students’ wavering attention during emergency remote learning online. However, participants recall encountering a range of texts from varying genres. Interestingly, Participant 3 recalled coming to understand the content of ESL literature texts without reading, but through watching short videos and listening to the teacher “discuss the story with us, chapter by chapter”. Both Participants 2 and 3 also recall understanding concepts of literary elements, literary devices, and plot devices via peer explanations and the use of online search engines respectively, instead of grappling with the ESL literature texts.

### **2. Students’ engagement with reading ESL literature texts**

The student participants experienced reading ESL literature texts as a mean to an end; purposes include preparing for a supplementary examination and answering quizzes and exercises in class. Limited student agency is foregrounded by Participants 2 and 4 who recall reading ESL literature texts under their teachers’

instruction. Participants 2 and 4 also describe their struggle with cognitive processing of specific details and with the physical act of prolonged reading respectively; their statements support the multidimensionality of student disaffection. In contrast, only Participant 1 relates an experience of undertaking close reading to uncover “things underneath” or the deeper meaning of an ESL literature text. Notably, Participant 1’s close reading of the text does come with some struggle, but her musing that any subtext in literature “requires a lot of thought for the author to put in” implicitly positions close reading as the mechanism through which aesthetic appreciation of ESL literature texts is built.

### **3. Students’ engagement with ESL literature lesson activities**

Student participants describe answering questions, group discussions, and presentations as salient ESL literature lesson activities. The general concession is that some ESL literature questions require critical thinking, with Participant 1’s description of those questions alluding to close reading: “Why do you think the character chose to do this instead of that? And what are your opinions on the author’s final decision?” Thus, the demarcation between reading and other ESL literature activities can be tenuous, while the importance of close reading to student engagement in ESL literature lessons is further cemented. One finding to be critically evaluated is how Participants 2, 3, and 4 describe experiencing some features of emotional engagement during group discussions and presentations; these include enjoyment and satisfaction from interacting with peers or completing the activity. Here, the exclusion of ESL literature texts from the mechanism through which limited emotional engagement is engendered is noticeable, and strengthens the case for leveraging student engagement drivers inherent to the study of literature to kickstart and sustain the flywheel of emotional engagement in ESL literature lessons.

### **4. Students’ feelings towards ESL literature lessons**

Initially missing the point of ESL literature lessons is an experience shared by all student participants, regardless of their student engagement-disaffection profile. Juxtaposed against the whole lived experience of Participant 1, this initial sentiment suggests that behavioural and emotional engagement in ESL literature lessons can be developed through activities that constitute engagement drivers inherent to ESL literature, such as close reading. That Participants 2 and 3 also express experiences of feeling indignant and apathetic respectively towards learning the content encountered in ESL literature classes, can be taken as an indication of having yet to engage with ESL literature lessons in a way that surmounts the initial resistance – the way Participant 1 had. These expressed experiences of already knowing “the main stuff” and not really “feeling anything” during the ESL literature lessons also prompt a critical evaluation of the additional cluster theme on student participants’ positive view of such lessons in hindsight.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of the study is that all twenty survey questionnaire participants were from a private national secondary school. Although the aim of the survey questionnaire is not to generalise findings but to facilitate participant selection for the subsequent qualitative phase, the main implication of all participants coming from a single private school setting is the lack of diversity due to learners’ high socioeconomic status. This may reduce transferability of subsequent qualitative findings to less affluent settings such as public secondary schools that are more commonly found in Malaysia. Additionally, the researcher’s position as an ESL teacher at the school at the time of the study, may cause the possibility of the ESL learners skewing their answers at both the quantitative and qualitative phase.

### **Conclusion**

This sequential mixed methods phenomenological study has provided a holistic description of secondary school students’ engagement in ESL literature lessons, by foregrounding the lived experiences of participants with four distinctive engagement-disaffection profiles. Notably, nuances between the

participants' experiences support recommendations for ESL teachers to deliver ESL literature lessons that promote student engagement specific to the study of ESL literature, in order to engender and maintain high levels of engagement; the method of close reading is posited as a viable catalyst of student engagement with ESL literature lessons. Future research within this scope should involve a different secondary school context where students' engagement-disaffection profiles and their lived experiences may differ. Additionally, the framework used to profile or examine students' engagement in ESL literature lessons can be expanded to include cognitive and agentic dimensions of engagement (e.g. Reeve, 2012); these additional dimensions have already started to surface from the qualitative phase of this present study. On the whole, this study has evidenced the informed application of a theoretical framework and explored ESL literature as a viable context, which may be helpful considerations for future studies on student engagement in language learning.

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## A STUDY ON TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ON PRONUNCIATION TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL ESL CLASSROOM

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### Abstract

This study investigated the beliefs and practices of primary school ESL teachers and identify the consistency between beliefs and practices on pronunciation teaching. The study undertook a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and observations to gather data from three primary school teachers who were selected through purposive sampling method. Findings of this study showed that teachers have a strong belief about the importance of pronunciation teaching, the use of an integrated approach to teach pronunciation with other language skills, and pupils' assessment based on British English Standard. Classroom practices were found to be consistent with teachers' beliefs except for the use of the British English Standard to assess pupils' pronunciation competency which is not practical as pupils' speech output does not fully comply with native-like pronunciation. As a result, teachers adapted their classroom practices so as to be flexible with their pupils' pronunciation – as long as the intelligibility of speech is maintained. These findings led to the implications that these teachers placed importance on pronunciation teaching based on teachers' teaching beliefs that are shaped by their own learning experiences, in addition to professional, and social factors. Future research should expand on the teachers' beliefs and pronunciation teaching practices with learners' perspectives in the Malaysian context. Insights from this study highlighted the need for more training to improve teachers' pronunciation instruction.

**Keywords:** Teachers' beliefs, practices, pronunciation teaching, ESL classroom

### Background of Study

The use of English among Malaysians is very much influenced by the lengthy history of British colonization. Most prominently, it has led to the use of the British model of English as the acceptable standard in the education sector. Kachru's (1985) Concentric Circle Paradigm explains the global spread of English and placed Malaysia, which was once colonised by the British, in the Outer Circle. Within this circle, English is considered as a second language (ESL) whereby the use of English has been subjected to influences from the local cultures and had undergone nationalization or indigenization and institutionalization process as a result.

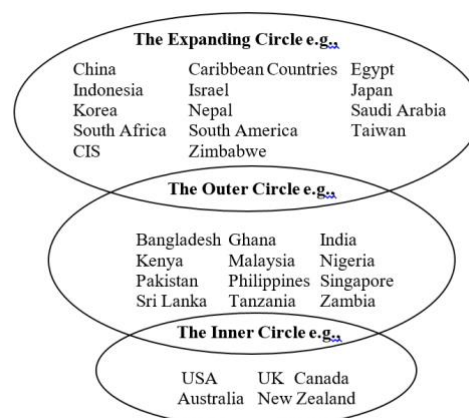


Figure 1: The Concentric Circles Paradigm Adapted from Kachru (1985)

The Education Ministry in Malaysia adopted the native model, British English as the pedagogic model for spelling, grammar and pronunciation in 2015 (Pillai, 2017). This is evident based on the following statements in the curriculum document as stated below:

“Teachers should use Standard British English as a reference and model for spelling, grammar and pronunciation” (Malaysia Education Ministry, 2015: 8).

“Although there are varieties of English used, the Standard British English is considered as the official standard of reference for English where spelling, grammar and pronunciation are concerned” (Malaysia Education Ministry, 2016: 1).

Based on this evidence, it appears that the British Model is accepted as the standard to determine proficiency in English. Pillai (2017) however, was sceptical that British English could become the desired goal model for Malaysian students. The guidelines prepared by the Education Ministry stated that it is better to have a target model as it may be difficult to achieve such language performance due to the dissimilarities in languages, particularly Malay language. According to Gill (2002), students at the tertiary level, leaned toward a pedagogical model whereby their instructors have unmarked accents as if belonging to a higher class of Malaysian English speakers devoid of ethnicity marking. Thus, British English was accepted as a standard for spoken English in Malaysia mainly due to it being a major element of the British legacy. However, the Malaysian English language curriculum had not explicitly accepted British English as the standard of measure (Pillai, 2017).

Speaking is one of the productive language skills besides writing. This is one of the basic language skills enabling learners to engage and interact with others. Yunus and Kaur (2014) stated that speaking is the foundation of communication and considered it as a standard criterion that defines the ability of an individual gaining employment. Nevertheless, acquiring speaking skill can be quite difficult as the learner must be proficient in several areas of the language, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021).

Pillai (2017) highlighted the use of a native model to guide pronunciation teaching in the classroom can be quite misleading as local teachers themselves are speaking with different accent. Malaysian English is spoken in a variety of accents due to influences from speakers' first language, education, socio-economic and geographical background. Thus, most speakers of English in Malaysia would have learned English from their parents and teachers who are more likely to be proficient speakers but not pronouncing English words with a native-like accent (Pillai & Khan, 2011). It becomes imperative and interesting to investigate the issues of pronunciation teaching among primary school teachers and how they deal with the confusion of native-like model of pronunciation when English is spoken.

### **Statement of Problem**

Pronunciation is an important subskill of speaking skill which must be acquired by ESL learners (Priya & Kumar, 2020). Mohd Asikin and Ibrahim (2020) highlighted that many language teachers seem to avoid teaching pronunciation in the classroom despite the fact that it is regarded as a critical component of speaking skill that must be learned by students. Furthermore, some students have shown a lack of classroom participation when pronunciation is taught because they often felt the inadequacy of their pronunciation (Barrera, 2013).

According to the 2003 Malaysian English Curriculum Specification, teaching pronunciation is compulsory as teachers must teach the sound system which includes consonants, vowels, plural forms and contractions. The curriculum specification explicitly stated the importance of teaching pronunciation in the ESL classroom and the English language textbook did provide references in terms of phonemes to guide teachers to teach pronunciation. However, there were no audio resources provided for teachers and students (Mohd Asikin & Ibrahim, 2020). Thus, it is left to the ESL teachers to derive ways and means of teaching pronunciation to their students.

The absence of a clear and systematic guide to teach pronunciation contributes to the lack of emphasis on teaching pronunciation in the ESL classroom (Priya & Kumar, 2020). The introduction of CEFR to guide teachers in second language teaching further added to the confusion on how to teach pronunciation as the teachers are encouraged to follow a native model yet at the same time, students were not expected to be measured against a native speaker or European standard (Ardi Syazwan, 2019). The ambiguity of which model to use further created misconceptions about the proper way to teach pronunciation in ESL classrooms. Hence, it becomes imperative to explore and investigate the current teachers' beliefs and practices about pronunciation teaching in their ESL classrooms and to see whether their teaching practices are consistent with their beliefs about pronunciation teaching.

### **Significance of Study**

This study highlights the teachers' beliefs and practices on pronunciation teaching in Malaysian primary school ESL classrooms. Hence, it brings to the open about the need for teaching materials. Aziz, Rashid and Zainudin (2018) stated that one of the woes of Malaysian English teachers after CEFR was implemented is that the textbooks, which are the main resource for adopting CEFR, have not been coordinated to match the curriculum and plan of work. It was expected that these imported textbooks would positively improve students' performance. However, the internationalized textbook cannot be comprehended fully by the students as it contains foreign cultural aspects that are unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, the foreign accents used in the audio and video materials as support for the textbooks, were also not suitable for Malaysian students as they could not comprehend them. Azli, Noor and Akmar (2019) stated that there is a push for localised materials for the use of Malaysian students. Thus, the evidences from empirical studies on the beliefs and practices of teachers about pronunciation teaching could support such decision to develop more localised contents that deviate from the native-like pronunciation norms.

Besides that, the second significance of this study can be related to the implementation of school-based assessment (SBA). This study was carried out in a primary school setting and thus, could provide insights on the implementation of both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Up to April 28, 2021, the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) has been a key performance indicator supported by SBA and yearly examination before it was abolished (Bernama, 2021). Since Year 6 are no longer required to sit for the examination, SBA was considered as the main means of assessment. This assessment is important as a benchmark for student's learning development after six years in primary school. However, a survey on parents have shown that 49% of them were not comfortable with SBA as they fear that SBA could be bias and not transparent to measure their children's achievement in learning (Selan, 2021). Furthermore, the shift to CEFR indicated that there is greater emphasis on productive skills like speaking and writing to ensure students become competent users of the English language. The investigation of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding pronunciation teaching in this study provides some insights onto how teachers performed assessments based on the SBA approach.

Additionally, the third significance of this study is about the goal of communication which is targeted at the end of schooling. This issue has already been addressed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) as it has been assured that the students will not be measured against native speakers. On the other hand, emphasis is stressed more on the ability of students to use grammar correctly, acquire a good working vocabulary, develop fluency in speaking and becomes more intelligible to others. Gilakjani and Mohammad (2011) stated that ESL teachers had been accused of being defensive about the poor pronunciation competency of their students. They either take a stand to oppose the linguistic influence, or are being said to cover up their own failure to teach their students effectively. Hence, the empirical evidence from this study can show some insights to the contentious issues regarding pronunciation teaching in the ESL primary school classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The followings are the research questions of this study:

1. What are the primary school English teachers' beliefs on pronunciation teaching?

2. How do primary school English teachers teach pronunciation in their English classroom?
3. To what extent are the teaching practices of primary school English teachers consistent with their beliefs about pronunciation teaching?

## Method

The research approach of this study is based on a pragmatic yet an inductive approach that attempts to answer the research questions that were posed in the first chapter. Bryman and Bell (2015) explained that an inductive approach uses a known premise, to generate untested conclusions. In the context of this study, the known premise relates to teachers' beliefs which will be investigated to see its coherence with classroom practices for teaching pronunciation in English. Further to that, this study also applies a qualitative approach which is based on a realistic approach to understand the beliefs and practices of teachers in teaching pronunciation in the ESL classroom (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

A purposive sampling method is used to select all three respondents for this study. Thus, these respondents would be able to shed light about pronunciation teaching and the role of beliefs in influencing teachers' practices in the classroom. By selecting respondents in a purposeful manner, it can be assured that they are capable of providing rich information about pronunciation teaching based on their beliefs and practices. A set of criteria is set for these research participants to maximize the validity and reliability by lowering the risk of other variables influencing the findings which are: (i) must be a qualified English teacher; (ii) must have at least 5 years of teaching experience; and (iii) must be teaching an English class when the study is conducted.

This study employed the use of semi-structured in-depth interview and observation to gather data from the respondents. Semi-structured in-depth interview was used to gather information to satisfy all three research questions while observation was used to gather additional information that could answer the second research question. Data collection refers to an interconnected series of activities with the common goal of obtaining information. In the context of this study, the Data Collection Circle was used to organize the activities for data collection (Creswell, 1997). This study adopted a thematic analysis approach guided by the Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell, 1997). This type of analysis is used mostly in qualitative research as it has superior capabilities compared to other analysis types (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As stated by Creswell's (1997) Data Analysis Spiral, there are several stages with certain activities that are carried out until data is collected. ATLAS.ti software was used to help in the process of labelling, coding and categorizing, and ending with a mind map of data structure.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Teachers' Beliefs on Pronunciation Teaching*

The teachers' beliefs on pronunciation teaching were determined based on the teachers' feedback during the interviews. The findings on teachers' beliefs about pronunciation teaching is also aligned to the first research question, RQ1: What are the primary school English teachers' beliefs on pronunciation teaching? After a thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews from the three teachers, three main themes were derived which are: (i) beliefs about teaching pronunciation; (ii) beliefs on the best model for teaching pronunciation; and (iii) beliefs on pronunciation learning. Findings with regards to each of these themes are presented below.

### **Beliefs on Teaching Pronunciation**

The theme of beliefs in teaching pronunciation explores the teachers' views on how pronunciation should be taught. All three teachers agreed that pronunciation, just like grammar should not be taught in isolation. According to Teacher B, this is a common practice and they have been overtly told many times by Master Trainers during their CEFR Workshops. This is because pronunciation is more than merely parroting a teacher. Instead, it is comprehending the rules and patterns that exist behind the surface of speech. According to Teacher C, teaching pronunciation should not be awkward as it should occur naturally during the lesson. All three teachers also agreed that pronunciation is often seen as a minor and insignificant aspect of language learning compared to the four major skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However,

it does carry a certain amount of importance as evident from the teachers' comments below: Table 1 presents a summary of the interview finding relating to teachers' beliefs in teaching pronunciation. The opinions of the teachers about pronunciation teaching approach, understanding of the teaching approach, and importance of teaching pronunciation were highlighted.

Table 1: *Summary of Interview Finding: Beliefs on Teaching Pronunciation*

| Summary of Interview Findings        | Teacher A                                   | Teacher B  | Teacher C                             |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Pronunciation Teaching Approach      | Integrated approach                         | Integrated approach (don't plan exclusively)     | Integrated approach                   |
| Understanding on Teaching Approach   | Teaching in context as pupils make mistakes | Teaching in context by giving immediate feedback | Teaching in context don't teach rules |
| Importance of Teaching Pronunciation | Yes, teaches pronunciation in every lesson  | Yes, don't tolerate Manglish                     | Yes, converse and communicate         |

The interview findings showed the consensus of the three teachers that it is not necessary and sometimes disruptive when pronunciation rules and phonological explanation were given in isolation. An example here would be Schwa Insertion Rule A (eg: /z/ → [əz] / sibilant \_\_\_#) or Assimilation Rule A (eg: /z/ → voiceless / voiceless \_\_\_#) of the plural morphs. Young pupils would not be able to synthesize this information nor able to apply it later in speech or writing. Hence, teaching in context by giving immediate feedback and correcting pupils in the classroom is the best way of teaching pronunciation. All three teachers believed that pronunciation ~~is~~ should be ingrained in speaking skills. This notion may be influenced by how ~~the~~ teachers ~~were~~ was taught to pronounce words during their training or during their schooling years.

### Beliefs on the Best Model for Teaching Pronunciation

The theme of beliefs on the best model for teaching pronunciation explores teachers' views on the ideal pronunciation teaching method. The findings of the interviews suggested that the native speaker teacher is the best model for teaching pronunciation, as indicated from the responses of the teachers shown below:

“In my opinion, just my opinion, I believe that the best model for teaching pronunciation is British English because they are native speakers. We also had Native Speakers Program you know... Hurmm I don't think I am a good model for teaching pronunciation I am not that confident.”

[Teacher B]

“I have been teaching English for many years. I know it's the Queens English, you know British English... Why ah? Because it is in the syllabus, speaking and writing have to follow Queens English, I know this because when I went to English Workshops, like KSSR and CEFR workshops, trainers point it out for us. You know the term 'Speaking London', both teachers and pupils should be speaking like *mat salleh*. So, I just follow... Example ah? Often, the 't' in the word is silent and it is pronounced as 'off-en' and not 'off-ten'.”

[Teacher C]

The findings of the interview suggest that the best model for teaching pronunciation is the native model which is British English. This is supported by Teacher B who believes that that the native English model has evolved as the goal of language learning and is widely regarded as the ideal reference for pupils everywhere. Teacher A and Teacher C also stated that they have been informed during their professional training about British English as the best model for spelling and pronunciation. Hence, there is a general

assumption that it is the right tool to use although none of them agreed that pupils should be evaluated against native speakers' proficiencies.

### Beliefs on the Pronunciation Learning

The theme of Beliefs on Pronunciation Learning explains how teachers view pupils' pronunciation learning. According to the thematic analysis done after the interview for these teachers, pupils learn pronunciation in many ways such as blending, segmenting, assisted practice, technological resources and real-life communication. As shared by the teachers,

“Oh easy, practice. [laughs] Practice makes perfect. I think they can learn with lots of repetitions. Not just repetitions but a teacher must be there to help when there (they) are struggling. Correct them immediately, if got mistakes.”

[Teacher A]

“I learn pronunciation through television and radio, those days, [laughs]. I listen well, then I can talk miracle right. I think what I'm trying to say is exposure to English materials through technology. I take listening class, the ones with audio and video, seriously because listening helps. After listening, have to practise like speaking activity in classroom. My Year 6 participates very well because got few students who get the ball rolling. Speaking is also equally important. If they don't speak, I can't help them.”

The findings suggest that teachers understood learning pronunciation differently. Teacher A used the repetition method of learning to help pupils to correct their pronunciation and not by reading the word or how it is expressed in their mother tongue followed by feedback. Teacher B on the other hand, used various materials, mostly digital materials to support pupils in learning pronunciation. Teacher C had listed two strategies that pupils can use to learn pronunciation accurately, which is by blending and segmenting. He also stated that parental guidance could help boost the confidence of the pupils in communicating in English.

### Teachers' Practices on Pronunciation Teaching

This subtopic addresses the RQ2: How do the primary school English teachers teach pronunciation in their English classroom? Data collected from the interviews and observations during the listening, speaking, reading and writing lessons were analysed and the following findings were gathered. Teaching pronunciation is a difficult endeavour due to varying goals at each level. Hence, it is important to recognise the focus areas of teaching pronunciation. Table 2 depicts the focused areas in the teaching of pronunciation as stated by the three teachers. It shows that these elements of language are taught in the same lesson and not individually. Pronunciation should not be taught in isolation, and the observed lessons in this study showed no exclusive lessons on pronunciation alone. These areas of focus were identified during the observation period.

Table 2: Focused Areas in the Teaching of Pronunciation

| Focused Areas in the Teaching of Pronunciation | Teacher A | Teacher B | Teacher C |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sound discrimination (vowels and consonants)   | /         | /         | /         |
| Consonant clusters in different combinations   | /         |           | /         |
| Linking  | /         | /         | /         |
| Past tense and plural forms                    |           | /         | /         |
| Sentence stress and intonation                 | /         | /         | /         |
| Homonyms – homographs, homophones              | /         |           |           |

Based on Table 2, the three teachers had taught sound discrimination (vowels and consonants), linking as well as sentence stress and intonation. Sound discrimination was taught the most. According to Teacher C, this is because it is important to perceive similarities and distinctions between phonemes in words as well as distinguishing between words and sounds that are similar, and words and sounds that are dissimilar. Teacher C provided an example during the listening lesson of the distinct sound of the word 'house' /haʊz/ and 'home' /həʊm/. Though both 'house' and 'home' start with a ho-, the vowel and consonant sound that

followed made the word sound differently. Teacher C proceeded to compare the word ‘home’ /həʊm/ and ‘time’ /taɪm/, whereby both words ended with –me, but the /i/ sound was silent in the word ‘home’.

The second most taught focused area was linking. Linking is a strategy for smoothly transitioning from one word to the next while speaking. Teacher A have stated that linking is the process of joining sounds, where words are occasionally merged, new sounds are generated, and sounds are sometimes silenced. Teacher A and Teacher C said that they taught linking of words because they are teaching younger pupils (Year 1 and Year 2). Since phonics is taught during the first eight weeks in Year 1 and Year 2, pupils learn about blending, co-articulation, assimilation, intrusion, elision and geminates.

An example given by Teacher A is the assimilation of /t/ and /y/, whereby the sounds merge into the '-ch sound' /tʃ/. As a result, the phrase ‘don't you’ /doʊntyu/ is pronounced as "donchou" /doʊntʃu/. Both Teacher A and Teacher C also taught consonant clusters in different combinations as part of linking. This happens when two or more consonant sounds exist in a word without any intervening vowels such as /cl/, /bl/, /pl/ and many more. Some examples given by Teacher C are the pronunciation of /cl/ for clock and /sk/ for desk during reading lesson.

Sentence stress and intonation were also taught in the classroom. In spoken language, intonation is the change in pitch. However, sentence stress refers to how a speaker emphasizes key words in a sentence. It assists the listener in focusing on key points and comprehending the speaker's meaning. As an example of usage in the class, Teacher B highlighted the stress on the word ‘exciting’ and ‘like’ in ‘This is exciting! I like fire drills’ during a listening class.

Pronunciation also differs when a word is spoken in past tense or plural form. According to Finegan (1999), past tense inflectional morpheme that marks the past tense of regular verbs in English has three allomorphs which are [t], [d] or [əd]. Meanwhile, allomorphs of the English ‘plural’ morpheme are [əz], [s] and [z]. Pronunciation for past tense and plural form was stressed in reading and writing classes. For example, Teacher B stressed the spelling and pronunciation of the past tense and plural form of yell (yell - yelled – yells) in his lesson. Homonyms were only taught in passing and is not an integral part of the lesson. Teacher A taught homophones which are words that sound the same with different spelling and homographs which are words that are spelled the same with different sound during reading class. Teacher A explained to the pupils how ‘no’ and ‘know’ are spelled differently but sounded the same, and that both words have different meaning.

### ***Consistency between Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices on Pronunciation Teaching***

This subtopic addresses the RQ3: To what extent are the teaching practices of primary school English teachers consistent with their beliefs about pronunciation teaching? Based on the teachers’ beliefs about teaching pronunciation, the best pronunciation model and how pupils learn pronunciation, their actual classroom practices were observed. The summary of interview findings in Table 4.1 shows that all three teachers had stressed the importance of teaching pronunciation so as to enable students to speak sensible and comprehensible English when it comes to good speaking skill. Despite not planning for an actual pronunciation lesson, all three teachers claimed that they teach pronunciation every day. Teacher C claimed that he spends an equal amount of time in each and every lesson to teach pronunciation. Such emphasis is given to pronunciation teaching because the objective of the CEFR curriculum is to use English effectively and accurately in the cultural setting in which the language is used. The teachers’ comment was evident of the importance of teaching pronunciation every day as shown below:

“I teach pronunciation every day. Every day I spend like 10 minutes every day teaching pronunciation. Teaching includes correcting pronunciation, repeating certain words and introducing words they never heard before like ‘cellar’.”  
[Teacher C]

However, a detailed analysis of the teachers’ pronunciation teaching showed different scenario. Although pronunciation was taught in every lesson, the weightage given for each lesson is different. Table 3 shows that pronunciation was stressed and taught more in speaking lesson, whereby the total estimated time is 52 minutes, followed by listening lesson which is 26 minutes, reading lesson 24 minutes and then followed by

16 minutes for writing lesson. Contrary to their beliefs of teaching rules, the teachers spent more time teaching pronunciation in speaking class because they tend to explain grammar rules and pronunciation rules as they teach. Teacher A stated that she wants the pupils to ‘understand why certain way of saying something is wrong’. Teacher B and C admitted that it is sometimes difficult to avoid technical explanations to help pupils to speak better. For example, /c/ starts with k sound. Hence, the explanation becomes necessary.

Table 3: *Estimated Time Spend Teaching Pronunciation*

| Language Skills                                   | Listening | Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|---|-----------|----------|---------|---------|
| Teacher A   | 8         | 18       | 7       | 4       |
| Teacher B   | 9         | 16       | 9       | 7       |
| Teacher C   | 9         | 18       | 8       | 5       |
| Estimated Time Spend Teaching Pronunciation (Min) | 26        | 52       | 24      | 16      |

Findings from the recorded observation videos shows that most of the time, teachers corrected pupils’ mispronunciation and quickly move on with the lesson during the listening and reading lessons. As an example during a reading class, Teacher B corrected his pupils’ pronunciation of ‘Edinburgh’, from [Eh-den-bu-ruh] to [Edin-brugh], and continued with reading. For Listening Lesson, the most common pronunciation focus areas are sound discrimination, consonant clusters and linking. This is because the teachers scrutinized individual sounds made by the pupils. According to Teacher B, since English is a second language to these pupils, there are lots of mother tongue interference. Some pupils found that it is quite tough to say certain sounds. Indian students have the tendency to change the /r/ sound to the /l/ sound; for example, /'ru:lər/ is pronounced as /lu:lər/.

Meanwhile, the pronunciation focus area for Reading Class is past tense, plural forms and sentence stress, as well as intonation. The main focus of the Reading Class is fluency of reading as a whole. Teachers ensure that what is written is read correctly and with ease. The Writing Lesson by far, has the lowest estimated pronunciation teaching time which is 16 minutes or an average of 5.3 minutes per lesson. The focus for writing class is past tense as well as plural forms and sentence stress. Teacher B stated that ‘pupils write what is formed in their heads’ as acoustic information (the sounds) and then they convert that information into writing. Since writing is converting the phonological knowledge into words by using literacy knowledge that pupils have, it is vital to stress the [t], [d] or [əd] for past tense morpheme and [əz], [s] and [z] for plural morpheme. Nevertheless, this aspect of pronunciation teaching is a small part of the writing lesson as a whole.

### Limitations

This study undertakes a qualitative study that is limited to a small sample size of primary school teachers. Although the findings from this study could potentially provide insights on the congruence of teacher beliefs and practice, but it cannot be generalized to the overall population of English primary school teachers. Inasmuch, the findings of this study provide a window to observe current situation faced by some teachers only. Additionally, this study is cross-sectional and only taps into the situational issue at one time only. Thus, it was unable to capture the issues faced by teachers in the long run and the adaptation process done by the teacher to align to the CEFR needs and requirement.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that pronunciation teaching is important although it should not be taught in isolation but rather integrated in the lesson with other aspects of the language. Apart from that, this study showed the teachers’ acceptance of British English Standard model as a yardstick to measure pronunciation accurateness but allowed a certain level of accented pronunciation, as long as intelligibility is maintained.



Hence, to conclude, this study found some beliefs of the teachers are solid and consistent to their practices but some other beliefs are not so. Most particularly, the stress on the importance of pronunciation and the integrated manner of its teaching are consistent between beliefs and practices, but the strict adherence to a native-like pronunciation model differs between beliefs and practices.

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## EUPHEMISM: Extent of Knowledge on Bidayuh Euphemism Between the Younger and Older Generations of Bidayuh Biatah Speakers

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### Abstract

Euphemisms provide insights into a particular cultural community's culture, which reflects the people's worldview. This paper discusses the use and the extent of knowledge of Bidayuh euphemism among the younger and older generations of Bidayuh Biatah speakers of Sarawak. The findings will provide information on the euphemisms used and the formation method used by the speakers, their understanding of the cultural influences on Bidayuh euphemism, and factors that may have impacted the extent of knowledge on Bidayuh euphemism between the generations. The research hypothesized that the younger speakers use lesser Bidayuh euphemisms and resort more to the usage of euphemisms of other languages (borrowing/loan words) and that the older speakers are more knowledgeable on the Bidayuh euphemisms and have a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural influences on Bidayuh euphemism compared to the younger speakers.

**Keywords:** euphemism, Bidayuh Biatah, culture

### Background of Study

Euphemism is a part of the ebb and flow of communication where metaphors are often employed to make life more bearable by obscuring what is considered unthinkable or unsayable (McGloin, 2014) in practicing politeness. Per the definitions and functions of euphemism within a language culture, the study will utilize Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and Goffman (1959) as the basis for studying the extent of euphemism knowledge among Bidayuh Biatah speakers. The occurrences of euphemisms will be interpreted as either an attempt to be polite or an act of saving face and being respectful, depending on the situation in avoiding Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) (Maoncha, 2015). In this study, the extent of knowledge of Bidayuh euphemism will be measured by the usage and formation method of euphemisms used by the Bidayuh speakers according to Allan and Burridge's (1991) nine aspects of euphemism and Warren's Model (1991;2006), and their cultural understanding which includes their understanding on the culture's practices and beliefs and the function of euphemism used according to Pan (2013).

### Statement of Problem

There are about four to six variations of Bidayuh dialects, as suggested, and Bidayuh Biatah is one of them (Omar, 2005; Vasudevan et al., 2011; Bongarra et al., 2017). Although studies on euphemisms within native languages have been conducted, the number of research within the Bidayuh language is still lacking. Only one recent study was found (Ritos & Daud, 2020) studying euphemism of the Bidayuh Bau speakers, which is, however, unable to provide knowledge of other Bidayuh euphemisms as Bidayuh dialects are not mutually intelligible where each dialect shows apparent differences in terms of pronunciation, lexical, and semantics (Riget & Campbell, 2020). Furthermore, previous research on euphemisms used by younger generations often focused on the general usage of euphemisms (Yildiz, 2012; Shukor et al., 2021; Morsalin & Adnan, 2022) but not on the understanding of euphemisms within their native languages. Even so, these studies on native language euphemisms (Wahab et al., 2016; Daud et al., 2017; Ringit et al., 2019; Ritos & Daud, 2020) showed ~~that~~ the preference to employ older speakers, who were expected to have extended knowledge and understanding on their language and culture compared to younger speakers, ~~only~~ to provide information on euphemism within native languages, ~~which~~. Therefore, this study will be studying the knowledge of euphemisms of a native language, Bidayuh Biatah, used by both younger and older speakers.

## Significance of Study

The research is motivated by the broader variation of Bidayuh dialects, yet only one study has been conducted so far within the Bidayuh dialects. As euphemism and culture are deemed inseparable, studying euphemism will allow the research to expand the knowledge on euphemism especially in minority communities such as the Bidayuh language speakers while gaining understanding into the culture of the Bidayuh community, which is mirrored in their language through euphemism. The research will also be able to provide insights on the ~~extent~~ extent of knowledge of euphemism, especially among younger generations of Bidayuh. Although the findings of a qualitative study often cannot generalize the linguistic phenomenon within other languages, the inability for generalization in this study somehow allows room for understanding on what is specific to a particular dialect group.

## Research Questions

1. What euphemisms are used by the younger and older speakers of Bidayuh Biatah within different contexts?
2. How do the younger and older speakers of Bidayuh Biatah form their euphemism?
3. What is the meaning behind each Bidayuh Biatah euphemism?
4. How are the cultures and beliefs of the Bidayuh community influence the choices of euphemism?
5. What factors impact the extent of knowledge on euphemism of Bidayuh Biatah speakers?

## Method

The research employs a qualitative descriptive method consisting of open-ended interviews with informants from a Bidayuh Biatah village in Sarawak. The theoretical basis for the research is Politeness Theory and Face Theory in which the occurrences of euphemism by the speakers will be considered as a strategy of being polite and saving faces while avoiding Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Each interview session will be recorded and transcribed to extract data. First, the euphemisms used by the speakers will be identified according to the nine aspects of euphemisms suggested by Allan and Burrige (1991). The euphemisms will then be analyzed according to Warren's Model suggested by Yetkiner (2006) to study the euphemism formation method used by the speakers. In discovering the speakers' understanding of the cultural influences of Bidayuh euphemism, the researcher will first identify their understanding of the function of euphemism as suggested by Pan (2013) and their understanding of the cultural practices and beliefs that may have influenced the choices of euphemisms used. Next, the demographic information and transcribed data will identify the social factors that may have impacted the speakers' knowledge of Bidayuh euphemism. Finally, all findings ~~will be~~ are provided with detailed justifications based on the data and relevant studies.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings will provide information on the euphemisms used and the formation method used by the speakers, their cultural understanding of the cultural influences on Bidayuh euphemism, and factors that may have impacted the extent of knowledge on Bidayuh euphemism between the younger and older generations of Bidayuh Biatah speakers. The research proposal hypothesized that; 1) younger speakers use lesser Bidayuh euphemism compared to older speakers, 2) younger speakers resort more to the usage of euphemism of other languages through borrowing or loan words compared to older speakers, 3) older speakers have a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural influence on Bidayuh euphemism than younger speakers, and 4) older speakers are more knowledgeable on Bidayuh euphemism than the younger speakers.

## Limitations

The findings of this study will only allow the understanding of euphemism within the Bidayuh Biatah dialect and cannot be used as an assumption of the euphemism phenomenon within other Bidayuh dialects.

## Conclusion

The researcher is hopeful that this study on euphemism will be able to redound to the benefits of the linguist's society, as the knowledge on euphemisms, such as the aspects, strategies, and functions of euphemism, will be analyzed thoroughly within this study. The research will also provide a better understanding of the relationship between Politeness Theory, Face Theory, Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), and euphemism. The researcher is also hopeful that the study findings will provide better insights into how euphemism works within a language culture, especially within the speakers of Bidayuh Biatah. This will enable readers and future researchers to understand the worldview of the Bidayuh Biatah people. Therefore, future research should be conducted to study euphemism within other Bidayuh dialects, such as Bukar-Sadong, Salako, and Rara, so that more knowledge on Bidayuh euphemism and the Bidayuh culture can be studied.

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## Student-Centred Learning in Tertiary Education: Mismatches between Learners' Expectations and Lecturers' Teaching

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### Abstract

At present, student-centred method that focuses on learners' needs has received considerable attention due to its effectiveness in engaging learners. Nevertheless, some instructors in Malaysia still choose to adhere to the conventional lecture format. To investigate the issue, this study explored the reasons that may inhibit university lecturers from adopting the method. Their perspectives were further compared with students' perceptions on student-centred learning (SCL). A mixed method was adopted, employing the complementary methods of quantitative (online survey with 100 students) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews with three students and five lecturers) to examine students' inclinations on SCL and their learning experiences. Results showed that most students held a positive view of SCL, and further revealed mismatches between students and lecturers' perceptions regarding students' learning characteristics and their readiness for SCL. Finally, the study highlighted contradictions between learners' expectations and lecturers' teaching methods.

**Keywords:** Student-centred learning, learning experiences, mixed method

### Background of Study

Conventional teacher-centred learning (TCL) that focuses on lecture format has been widely adopted by university lecturers (Barak, 2017). However, such approach has led to criticisms, including producing graduates who lack communication skills (Paton, 2013). Also, learners are demotivated to attend classes (Herrman, 2013). Consequently, the number of student attrition in the first year of college is increasingly high (Thammasiri et al., 2014), since the classes fail to meet their learning expectations. To improve student motivation, student-centred learning (SCL) which promotes active learning has gained growing recognition (Baeten et al., 2013; Lea et al., 2003). Despite the effectiveness of SCL, teaching remains predominantly traditional (Barak, 2017). Some practitioners labelled their students as "passive learners" who are not ready to take responsibility for their learning (Pedersen & Liu 2003; Chiang et al., 2010). Nevertheless, such stereotype of Asian learners as "obedient listeners" may not be true. Littlewood's (2000) survey data reflected that both Asian students and European students did not wish to be spoon-fed, but to explore knowledge themselves. Since there were discrepancies between the instructors' and students' perception on SCL, there is a need to explore this issue further to improve the learning experiences of university students.

### Statement of Problem

The implementation of SCL is unlikely to be without significant challenges. Despite these potential challenges for practitioners, there has been very little consideration of such issues in the literature (Sadler, 2012). Furthermore, Lea et al. (2003) revealed that some students appeared to be highly resistant to SCL due to mismatches between students' learning expectations of higher education and their experiences in SCL, and he called for more research to ascertain the aspects that lead to the successful implementation of the approach. This study answers this call and hope to explore learners' perceptions on SCL, and the challenges faced by lecturers when adopting SCL, as findings in this area are limited and contradictory in Malaysia. Several quantitative studies have been conducted to examine learners' perspectives on SCL (Thang & Alias, 2007; Neo & Kian, 2003; Ismail et al. 2014), but the data may lack the depth and insight of a qualitative method. Also, the studies merely focused on student perceptions while the instructors'

voices were not heard. This study, thus, aims to fill this gap and further identify possible mismatches regarding the value of SCL between undergraduate students and instructors to improve student motivation and learning experience.

### **Significance of Study**

This study aims to understand learners' learning preference so that ELT practitioners can be made more aware of learners' needs. It may also provide future references for practitioners to examine their teaching and consider adjusting their own expectations and teaching style to suit the learners' cultural background (Flowerdew, 1998). When a suitable teaching approach is employed, students as well as practitioners would have higher chances of benefiting from the learning and teaching experiences. Also, the findings of this project, particularly students' learning expectations and suggestions for improvement in the academic contexts will serve as a guide for course designers when outlining English programmes for potential learners. As such, this helps to increase student engagement and attract students to stay in a course (Lea et al. 2003). Eventually, this will also reduce the problem of drop-out rate in colleges.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are university students' perceptions on student-centred learning?
2. What are the challenges faced by university lecturers in adopting student-centred learning?
3. What are the possible mismatches between undergraduate students' learning expectations and lecturers' teaching method?

### **Method**

This study adopted a mixed methods approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) to explore the research questions. The participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. Students and lecturers were contacted through social networks at the university. The mixed- methods explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) involved collecting quantitative data from 100 university students in Phase 1 through google form, followed by in- depth qualitative data (a follow-up interview with 3 students) in phase 2 to explain the quantitative outcome results. During the interview with students, the researcher used pictures as elicitation tools and discussion points for an ideal learning environment for learners in the beginning. Other issues such as students' expectations on lecturers and suggestions for improvement were also discussed. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission in addition to note taking. Each interview lasted for 20 to 30 minutes. Besides that, five lecturers from different faculties agreed to be interviewed through email invitation, and each semi-structured interview lasted for 40 to 60 minutes. The statistical procedure for data collected from the survey was statistical analysis, while the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for patterns and themes using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Findings and Discussion**

Results showed that that a majority of the students held a positive view of SCL. This can be seen from the findings which indicated students' strong support for peer interactions and two-way communications in class. Such learning mode is in contrast with the traditional teaching method, which hardly allows classroom interaction, given that the lecturer is the one who dominates the class and delivers the lecture content. As such, this result is in contradictory with Thang and Alias's (2007) quantitative study which revealed that most students from three public universities in Malaysia were teacher-centred. Another issue that emerged from the data was the need for lecturers to make learning more interactive. During the interview, all lecturers agreed that this type of teaching approach, which is usually unscripted, is more demanding than TCL mode for both students and lecturers. Other issues faced by them included students'

resistance to participate in class due to students' language proficiency, lecturers' background, and students' past learning experience. Finally, three unexpected discrepant views were found among the lecturers: (1) Asian learners are passive and rote learners; (2) learners' readiness to take responsibilities for their own learning; and (3) the feasibility of SCL in Malaysian context.

### Limitations

Due to time limitation, the researcher was unable to draw on a large sample of students to complete the questionnaire. Thus, there may be issue of generalizability with the findings. To minimize this limitation, follow up interviews were conducted to increase the credibility and validity of the findings. The study was unable to interview western students because none of them left their names in the survey. Since the three interviewees were all Asians learners who opted for a balance between SCL and TCL, future research might address in which ways these students' attitudes may differ from western students.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher suggests that there is a need for a shift from traditional method to a more student-centred learning, since the use of SCL in enhancing students' motivation, satisfaction and retention is proven to be effective. Different lecturers may have different views on SCL due to their teaching experiences or cultural background. Future research might investigate the different views between experienced and novice lecturers. Since many practitioners claim that they have been adopting a SCL in their class, but in reality, they are not (Biggs 1999, cited in Lea et al., 2003), future research should investigate to what extent SCL is implemented in higher institutions. Observations may be needed to see how ELT lecturers conduct their lessons to increase the reliability of the data. The main goal is to improve students' learning satisfaction and experience and to avoid mismatches between learners' expectations with their actual learning experiences.

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The background features several abstract geometric elements: a thin yellow diagonal line in the top-left; a thick blue diagonal line in the top-left; a thick brown diagonal line in the top-left; a thick yellow diagonal line in the top-right; a thick brown diagonal line in the top-right; a thick blue diagonal line in the bottom-right; a thick dark blue diagonal line in the bottom-right; a thin light blue diagonal line in the bottom-right; and a large yellow semi-circle on the left side.

**TEACHER**

## READING FOR CHANGE WITH THE CANDY BOOK

**Noria Anak Bunsun**

*SK Haji Bujang Rangawan Putin,  
Kota Samarahan Sarawak*

### Abstract

Candy Book is specially designed based on Super Minds Student Book 1 from Chapter 1-3. This initiative is driven by the result shown by 14 pupils in my Year 2 class. These pupils have been identified to have low level reading skills and 6 of them are illiterate even after various teaching attempts have been conducted. Few weaknesses were skimmed through. The result showed two main factors that construct and contribute to the weaknesses namely pupils inability to recognize sight words and difficulty in decoding words, phrases and short sentences. Fortunately, after 2 months of delicate teaching reading skills commencement by means of Candy Book, the result was distinctively amazing. From the assessment conducted using Running Record Codes, it showed a significant increase in the respondents' reading skills literacy - Only 5 out of 6 respondents made a simple mistake in reading and pronouncing the words. one pupil needs further guidance. In short no more reading skills illiteracy. In view of effectiveness of teaching reading skills using - Candy Book, I am delighted to recommend teachers/classroom practitioners to indulge in finding relevant approach without hesitation to teach pupils with the appropriate teaching approach

**Keywords:** illiterate, assessment, approach, mechanism, decoding

### Aim of the Study

To help my Year 2 pupils to read and decode words, phrases, and short sentences.

The creation of this candy book is triggered by our Year 2 pupil's inability to read words, phrases, and short sentences. It is based on the Super minds book 1 (selected words) and leaning standard

- 3.1.1 Identify and recognize the shapes of the letters in the alphabet
- 3.1.2 Recognize and sound out with support beginning, medial and final sounds in a word
- 3.2.3 Reread a word, phrase, or sentence to understand meaning

### Target Group

Six Year 2 Fatanah pupils who are weak in reading words, phrases, and short sentences.

### Background of the Study

Based on the result obtained from the pre-test - 16 pupils had low reading skills and 6 were poor reader. In short, 14 pupils had low level of reading skills and 6 pupils were completely illiterate. For the sake of this study, only 6 pupils were selected purposively as study respondents since their illiteracy act as the key to change (primary determinant) in this study finding.

To deal with this issue, I came up with an idea to develop a "Candy Book" which will allow me to closely access and monitor every pupil's performance. A Candy Book is an exciting, 3D, attractive and a source of pupils' inspiration specifically designed based on Super Minds Student's Book 1 to capture pupils' attention and make every lesson engaging. It comprises of selected words out of 58 words based on CEFR standards which have been/ were extracted from Student's Book 1 itself in the hope to address the problems observed.

After completing the design of the "Candy Book" and put to test as physical material, then this study was finally conducted at SK Haji Bujang Rangawan Puti for almost two consecutive months including a month of tireless pre-testing

Teaching English for young learners is different from teaching English for adults especially in teaching reading. This is because young learners need materials that are attractive, colorful, and easy to be understood

### Issues or Problems Tackled by Candy Book

After being assigned to engage with Year 2 Fatanah pupils, I found out that most of the pupils were very passive, shy and had difficulty in reading difficulty so I did formative assessment using Super Mind Book

1. My findings are:

- a. 6 Pupils could not read most of the sight words
- b. 6 Pupils could not decode the words, phrases, and short sentences.

Hence after several attempts of teaching lessons to my 6 experimental pupils by identifying their performance to read words, phrases and short sentence given by me in the form of flashcards and handouts but I find the progress is so slow. So, I decided to deal with the reading problem by using Candy Book because I believe it is more interesting and rewarding for my pupils. The font is large and allows the pupils to see clearly and react to the words. The pictures are colorful and attractive. Undeniably, Candy Book creates secured and relaxing atmosphere for reading -. It is also very user friendly. Almost all materials are taken from Teacher Ash online resource and printed out and assembled nicely in the Candy Book

### Description of Candy Book

#### Materials Needed for Candy Book

|      |                               |                 |
|------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| i.   | Recycled mounting boards (10) | Recycled        |
| ii.  | Metal binding rings           | RM2.00          |
| iii. | Stickers                      | RM10.00         |
| iv.  | Double sided tapes            | RM 2.00         |
| v.   | Printer ink                   | RM 10.00        |
|      | <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>RM 24.00</b> |



### How to Use the Candy Book?

Before the teaching and learning process is carried out, respondents must be made clear of the entire process, either in their mother tongue or Malay language, whichever effective. This introduction stage is vital. Then respondents are asked to sit in front of the teacher while teacher is holding the Candy Book. Next teacher will introduce the Candy Book and tell the pupils the purpose of reading the Candy Book. In this early stage, to the teacher will ensure that pupils understand the entire process. The teacher will then proceed by displaying letters/alphabets and their phonic sounds in the Candy Book as well as few images corresponding with the words. The teacher reads out and the pupils will read to them. It took me 2 days to help my pupils become familiar with the letters and sounds.



LETTERS/ALPHABETS SOUND

In the first level (Letters) I will read the letters and sound one at a time and subsequently read aloud. This process will continue-and of course repetition is a must until pupils are able to say the word correctly and familiar with the sound system. I guide my pupils to sound the letters in pairs and blend them together to master the skill of decoding. We also sing the alphabet song and recite nursery rhyme together. Pupils can also form letters using their hands or move in a rhythmic way that mimics the syllables in a word. Singing, dancing, art activities and plenty of repetition can facilitate the development of their reading skills.

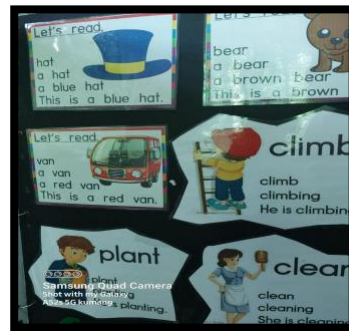
The second level (Words) is similar to the early stage. The pupils learn to say the word by recognizing its written form. Context is important and providing images can be helpful. Familiar words may initially be presented on their own, then in short sentences and eventually in longer sentences. As their vocabulary grows, pupils begin to extract rules and patterns that they can use to read new words. Then I associate the words with other subjects like science and Maths when I talk- about the numbers, shape and colours. So proven that Candy Book is multipurpose and users. Talk about what they see on the page. Use Candy book as a way to spur conversation around a topic and boost vocabulary by learning to read words that are pictured but not written.



WORD LEVEL

Next, I guide them in the phrase level. Phrase reading is a technique that builds fluency, aids comprehension, and improves oral reading. Phrase reading can also be used to teach grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. This type of activity should be a regular part of a reading lesson for non-fluent readers.





PHRASE LEVEL

It is a good idea to exploit pictures to help our pupils -understand and visualize the text. Illustrations can be used to introduce the story, elicit vocabulary, introduce difficult words, and generally excite the interest of my pupils. I always ask questions such as ‘who is this?’ ‘What is this?’ ‘What is this?’ ‘What colour is the hat?’ etc. Pupils will be introduced to vocabulary, will be - able to understand the text better, and will be more engaged in the reading task, because they want to find out what they are going to read. Rapport between teacher and pupil are enhanced. Thus, communication and relationship between teachers and pupils improved?

Finally, we reached the sentence level which is the toughest. However, my pupils have a base vocabulary to begin with. Images in Candy Book help them in the beginning by prompting them to recognize the word they are reading. It helps because words are large enough and printed in bold, easy to read font. One good way to know the pupils progress is by having the pupils read a page and lift a finger for every word they do not recognize. Then I will guide them again.



SENTENCE LEVEL

Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When they read, they use their eyes to receive written symbols and they use their brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to them. Also keep the sentences grammatically correct because they are learning language in the long run.

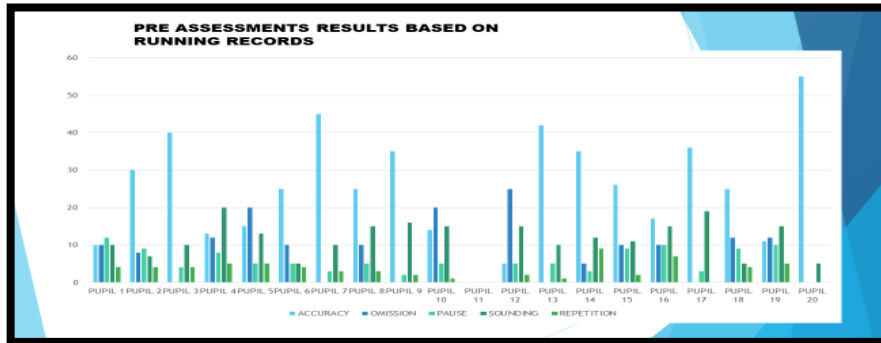
### Effectiveness of Candy Book

#### Before using Candy Book

Six pupils are having difficulties like inaccurate reading, long pause ,pronunciation and repetition.

**PRE ASSESSMENTS RESULTS BASED ON RUNNING RECORDS**

| RESPONDENTS | ACCURATE READING (55 Words) | OMISSION | LONG FAUSE | SCUNING | REPETITION |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------|------------|---------|------------|
| PUPIL 1     | 10                          | 10       | 12         | 10      | 10         |
| PUPIL 2     | 10                          | 8        | 9          | 7       | 4          |
| PUPIL 3     | 10                          | 0        | 4          | 10      | 4          |
| PUPIL 4     | 11                          | 12       | 8          | 20      | 4          |
| PUPIL 5     | 19                          | 20       | 9          | 13      | 4          |
| PUPIL 6     | 28                          | 10       | 8          | 8       | 4          |
| PUPIL 7     | 49                          | 0        | 1          | 10      | 1          |
| PUPIL 8     | 29                          | 10       | 9          | 19      | 3          |
| PUPIL 9     | 18                          | 0        | 2          | 10      | 2          |
| PUPIL 10    | 14                          | 20       | 8          | 19      | 1          |
| PUPIL 11    | 0                           | 8        | 8          | 8       | 8          |
| PUPIL 12    | 8                           | 29       | 8          | 19      | 2          |
| PUPIL 13    | 42                          | 0        | 9          | 10      | 1          |
| PUPIL 14    | 29                          | 8        | 9          | 12      | 9          |
| PUPIL 15    | 20                          | 10       | 9          | 11      | 2          |
| PUPIL 16    | 17                          | 10       | 10         | 19      | 7          |
| PUPIL 17    | 10                          | 0        | 3          | 19      | 0          |
| PUPIL 18    | 28                          | 12       | 9          | 9       | 4          |
| PUPIL 19    | 11                          | 12       | 10         | 19      | 9          |
| PUPIL 20    | 99                          | 0        | 0          | 8       | 0          |



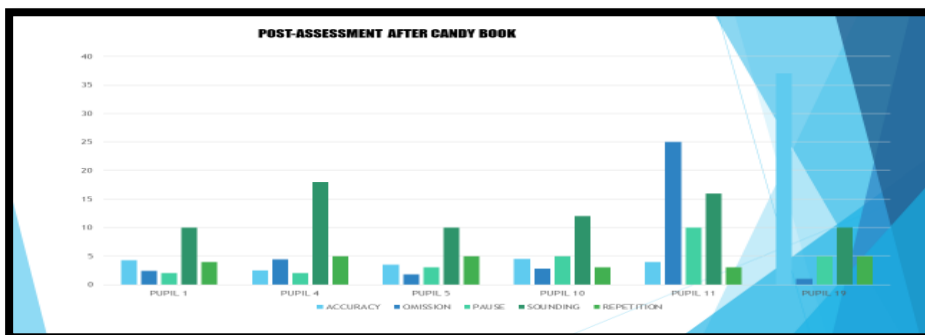
As can be seen from the above graph, red flags for pupils no 1,4,5,10, and 11

**After the intervention with Candy Book**

Only 5 pupils out of 6 made simple reading mistakes. However, one pupil needed further guidance.

**POST-ASSESSMENT**

| RESPONDENTS | ACCURATE READING (58 Words) | OMISSION | LONG FAUSE | SCUNING | REPETITION |
|-------------|-----------------------------|----------|------------|---------|------------|
| PUPIL 1     | 28                          | 7        | 9          | 10      | 4          |
| PUPIL 4     | 23                          | 7        | 5          | 18      | 5          |
| PUPIL 5     | 33                          | 5        | 5          | 10      | 5          |
| PUPIL 10    | 25                          | 10       | 8          | 12      | 3          |
| PUPIL 11    | 4                           | 25       | 10         | 16      | 3          |
| PUPIL 19    | 37                          | 1        | 5          | 10      | 5          |



**Uniqueness of Candy Book**

This Candy Book is unique and has a big potential to be utilized by schools in my district and all over Sarawak because it is a time saver. It shortens the teachers teaching time and gives teachers more confidence to teach. Pupils can acquire the reading skills in a jiffy. It is also cost effective and cheap because it only

cost - RM24.00. It also served as a multi- purpose teaching aids because we can teach and integrate Science, Maths and RBT subject and cater to different objectives. Furthermore, it is environmentally friendly because we used recycled mounting boards. The other materials like double sided tapes and metal binding ring are affordable.

Finally, the Candy Book is very user friendly because we start from letters, words ,phrases and short sentences.



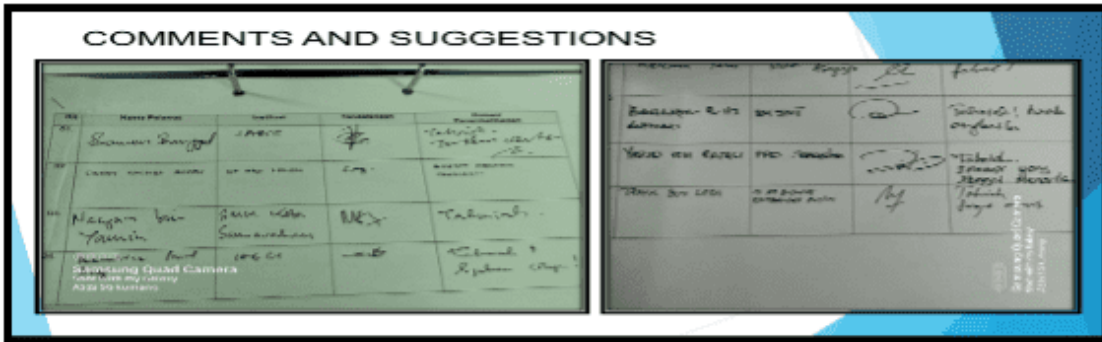
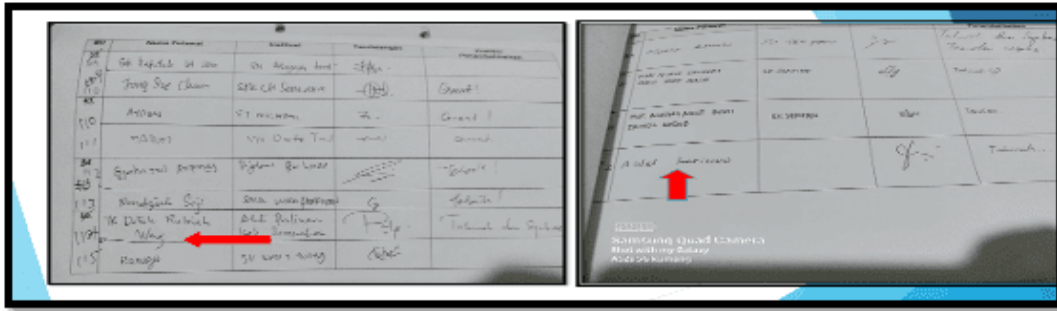
Easy to difficult.

It is also easy to navigate because we just flip the pages and come up with your own activities or songs and rhymes. The planning of our lesson will never be disrupted during fail power supply because we can use it on its own. Other DLP teachers can also use the Candy Book as their reference to the correct sound system.

**Sharing is Caring**

Candy Book had been shared with other teachers in my district as well as other communities like Institut Aminuddin Baki and also IPGs during Conferences, Colloquium and exhibitions.





**Feedback**

Candy Book had received a lot of praises, positive and constructive comments and we take note and improvised. And finally, we make use of Candy Book to help 10 of our Year 4 pupils during Kem Bijak Membaca. Surprisingly the time taken for them to finish reading the whole Candy book is only half an hour even though there are a few mispronunciation of words .



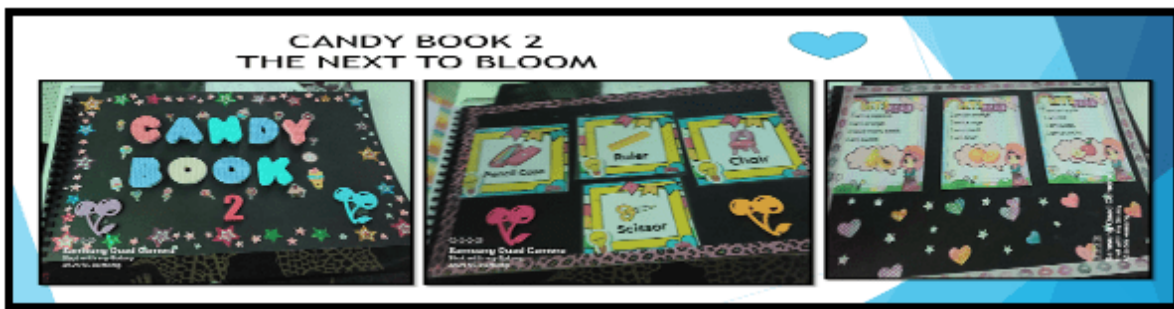
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**Conclusion**

Reading skills is an essential skill. Reading gives many advantages to students because they can receive more information after reading. No one is able to do anything without reading skill. If we ignore reading

illiteracy and kept it unsolved, then learning and teaching may not achieve its objective. Without literacy pupils won't be able to climb the ladder of knowledge. Therefore, make use of Candy Book and change their way of learning. By virtue of the effectiveness of Candy Book in improving reading skills literacy, it is applicable to every school and pupil- because it is an effective tool. Candy Book plus teacher's creativity and passion to teach in whatever environment they are supposed to teach will help to boost literacy. It is designed using 10 pieces of recycled mounting boards, metal binding ring, double – sided tapes and decor from stickers amounting to RM24 or RM22. Total expenses are only RM24 or RM22 which is very cost effective. It is also joyful, attractive and persuasive, where pupils show interest in reading. It meets the criteria in inculcating pupils' ability to decode and comprehend words and short sentences. I strongly believe that if reading problem is dissolved early, pupils will be able to build on those skills to succeed in other areas of their education.

In view of effectiveness of teaching reading skills using Candy Book, I am delighted to recommend every teaching practitioner to indulge in creating appropriate new innovations like Big Books without hesitation to teach pupils creatively. As for my school, our next project is One Candy Book for One class.



Our next project, One Candy Book for Each Class

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## ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ TO ENHANCE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN FORM TWO STUDENTS

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### Abstract

The purpose of this innovation is to improve my teaching practice of speaking skills using ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Board Games method. ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Anita’s Language Board Games (ALBG) can increase students’ motivation during post Covid-19 pandemic to learn selected topics (poetry) and to facilitate better speaking skills among Form 2 students. Students are not mentally and physically ready for face-to-face teaching. Most students are restless after just 10 to 15 minutes in the classroom. Next, the limitation of ICT made students return to traditional teaching and crippled students’ enthusiasm to explore and learn. Hence, ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Language Board Games is used to stimulate and arouse students’ interest to practise speaking skills in the target language. Initially students customized their own board games using project-based learning theory for other non- literature topics. Then, the teacher created ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ innovation to suit students’ ?? according to their learning level. This study is designed and carried out by modelling an action research methodology by Altrichter-., Posch,-. and Somekh,- (2007). A group of 32 mixed abilities Form 2 students from Ipoh participated in the study. The data collection and descriptive analysis of this research include- observation, questionnaires surveys and interviews. Moreover, the findings of this innovation showed an increase in students’ motivation in language learning among the target group who are basically shy, anxious, lack of confidence and scared of making mistakes while practising the speaking skills. Besides, ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Anita’s Language Board Games also activated students’ own thinking skills and helped them to reflect on their learning in a more enjoyable and fun way. It also created conducive 21st-century learning environment which reduces - stress among students to practice the target language. This study has served its purpose and helped me to understand the entire innovation research process.

**Keywords:** ‘MY HERO\_KIT, Innovation, Anita’s Language Board Games (ALBG), Game-Based Learning, Post Pandemic, Communicative Language teaching, Speaking skills.

### Background of Study

Many language teachers are facing the challenging task of helping second language learners to learn the target language effectively to align to the international standard for teaching and learning, namely CEFR and to cope with 21st-century learning skills. Students are expected to integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in order to communicate on particular topics. Also, in any language acquisition, vocabulary, grammar, phonetics and spellings play a crucial role for students to improve their accuracy and fluency of the target language. Though in Malaysia, English language is taught as second language since primary one; yet many students who later enrolled in Form 1 and 2 at secondary school level barely understand and practise the target language for daily use. Moreover, teachers teaching the target language using the traditional method for second language learners worsen the situation by adding stress to them. According to - Larsen- Freeman- (2003); traditional methodologies have often created language acquisition problems and ineffective learning environments in which learners hardly participate and it did not promote learning. Hall (2011) defines CLT as a method that “‘emphasizes meaning and ‘genuine’ communication in the classroom”. Hence, communicative language teaching (CLT) which emphasize on game-based learning (GBL) and task-based learning (TBL) could come in handy. One such activity is through ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Anita’s Language Board Games; used as stimulation to arouse students' interest and motivation in content rather than form which leads to active learning.

## Statement of Problem

Educators are aware of the changes and challenges they face as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Students are not mentally and physically ready for face-to-face classroom. Hence, there is a noticeable change in the attitude of the students. Students are unable to sit in a physical classroom for long periods of time and concentrate on attending lessons. Most students are restless after just 10 to 15 minutes in the classroom. This is because students previously learned in the comfort of their home and in a relaxed manner throughout their Covid-19 virtual class. During virtual class students were able to integrate ICT which makes the lesson more interesting. However, when school resumed to face-to-face teaching and learning, the use of ICT is limited and students are not allowed to use gadgets. Hence, this put students back to traditional setting and crippled students' enthusiasm to explore and learn. So, game-based task would bring a great impact for students in 21st century learning.

Apart from that, our syllabus still focuses on grammar and sentence structures. Literature is a heartbeat of language learning. However, the new CEFR CEFR-aligned KSSM syllabus have failed to give importance to literature. Literature is not emphasized as much as other ESL topics. Besides, students are taught grammar as a set of rules, but even if they can apply the rules to exercise successfully during the lesson, they don't seem to be able to activate their knowledge of the rules when they are communicating during another part of the lesson or outside the classroom context. Just like many other English language course books, Malaysian's Common European Framework (CEFR) aligned Cambridge textbook "PULSE 2" and "Close Up" always have a new unit with grammar towards the end of each topic. These textbooks are well designed with lots of grammar drilling activities that emphasize/ put emphasis on learning grammar rules step-by-step without the involvement of metacognition. However, when it comes to testing, students are lost and they could not apply what they have learned. Below are the three main problems identified; -

1. Students could not apply content and literary features they have learnt when asked to complete a communicative speaking task.
2. Students lack confidence, motivation and are too shy of making mistakes when practising the target language.
3. Students are bored with traditional method and look forward for hands-on game based activities which emphasize on 21st-century learning skills.

## Significance of Study

The innovation of 'MY HERO\_KIT' is meant to help teachers to teach English language communicatively and creatively through ALBG board games to second language learners. Language board games not only have a lot of fun elements to foster students' interest in learning but it can also be used to teach new items, practice language forms and revise what has been learned before to speed up learners' own pace of language development. Through this innovation, teachers will be exposed to an alternate activity that could be used to teach all four integrated skills naturally and authentically by making creative and engaging lessons. According to Thornbury (1999), learners should reorganise their knowledge, integrate new knowledge into old and engage in restructuring. In addition, second language students / learners will get to practise the target language in a meaningful way without the fear of making grammatical mistakes and express their own views confidently. This will enhance spontaneous communication outside the classroom and reinforces fun and joyful learning among the students. To conclude, this research should help second language learners to overcome difficulties in learning the target language structure.

## Research Questions

These are the research questions proposed to guide this study; -

1. How effective is 'MY HERO\_KIT' language board games in learning the target language?
2. To what extent do communicative language board games motivate students to learn the target language?
3. What are the difficulties a language teacher may encounter in using communicative language board games in ESL classroom.

## Method

This experimental study or action research? mainly focuses on the effectiveness of communicative language teaching through ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Anita’sLanguage Board Games (ALBG) in learning the target language among Second Language learners. Language board games will also activate students' own thinking skills and help them to reflect on their learning in a more enjoyable and fun way. Teacher design and custom-made ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ language board games based on the given topic for the experimental group. For this reason, the research includes observation, questionnaires, interviews, qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The enquiry involved in this innovation is visualized as a cyclical process. The process of the intervention of the action research took about 5 weeks as described in Figure 1.

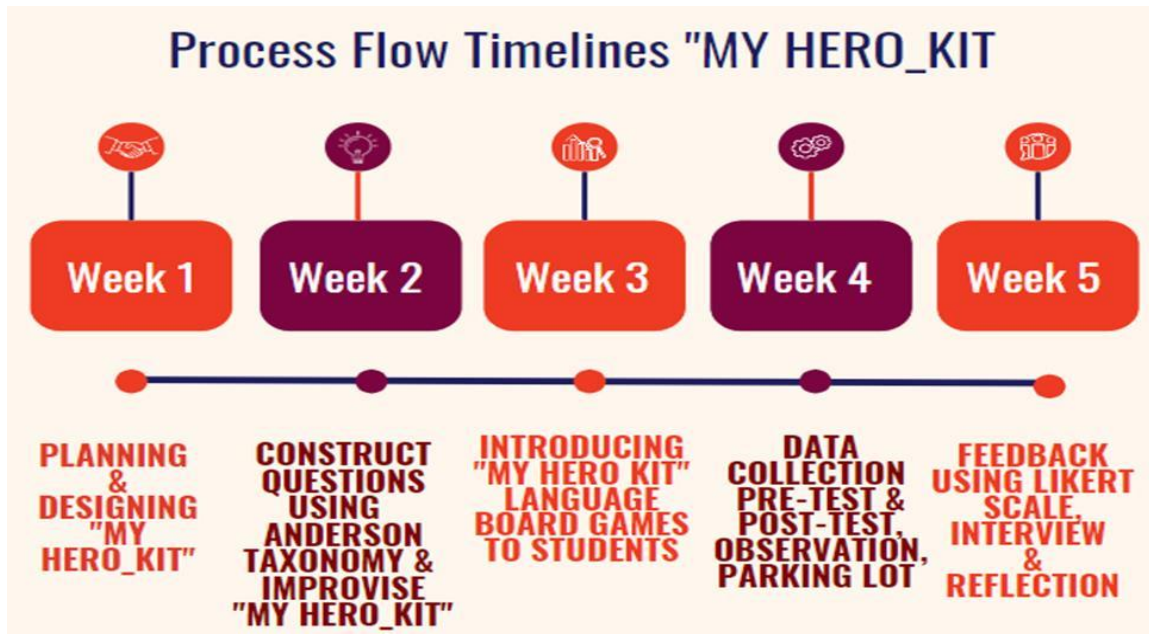


Figure 1: Process of “MY HERO\_KIT

### Participants

A group of 32 mixed abilities Form 2 students from SMK Tarcisian Convent participated. The target group consisted of Malay and Indian students. Students were selected randomly based on their attitudes in the English class and exam score. The students were from my different English classes taught by me. The participants have been learning the target language since primary one with 7 years of experience and all of them have been exposed to classroom-based assessment (PBD) in primary school.

### Instruments

Questionnaires, observation checklists, and interviews were designed for students to measure the effectiveness of language board games in learning English Language and improving communication skills. The questionnaire used was based on five points Likert-scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

### Procedure of Data Collection

The target group was given a pre-test and post-test via Google Forms that contain open-ended and closed questions in order to get students' feedback on the effectiveness of language board games in language acquisition. Next, Likert-scale questionnaires consisting of 20 items were used to investigate students' satisfaction and attitude towards playing the language board games for communicative purposes. All 32 feedbacks, questionnaires, observation, and interviews were collected for descriptive data analysis. The main focus was on students' fluency. For example, the target group students should meet the criteria of



speaking 2.3 Content Standard which is to manage interaction appropriately. Appropriately here refers to the successful communication of a message. The message itself may not necessarily be 100% accurate, but the pupil has communicated his or her meaning successfully. Whereas for speaking 2.3.1 Learning Standard, students should be able to keep interaction going in longer exchanges by checking understanding of what a speaker is saying by playing language board games. The analysis should provide answers on the significant differences between students' attitudes in learning English through project-based language board games.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

In this research, I have used SPSS software to analyse and obtained the output using "Dependent T-test" to study the effect of 'MY HERO\_KIT' Anita's Language Board Games on student's motivation to enhance their speaking skill in English Language.

### **Process and procedure of 'MY HERO\_KIT' Intervention**

'MY HERO\_KIT' board games were introduced - as an intervention to encourage students to speak on a particular topic without the fear of making mistakes and to be able to keep the interaction going. For example, when students are asked to talk about the poem "My Hero" without 'MY HERO\_KIT' board games, students had difficulty in appropriately conveying the ideas. Hence, as a teacher, I created my very own language board games based on the poetry topic "My Hero". Students were divided into small groups consisting up to three to four members. Each group was briefed to engage in reading and to understand the rules of language board games for communication purposes. Students began their serious discussion and did their preparation of knowing and interpreting the message conveyed in the poem before they engaged with 'MY HERO\_KIT' language board games. This is where a lot of questions were asked by students especially, on the subject matter. Students play the game and practise speaking skills related to the topic. Students had few phases of consultation sessions with the teacher to show their progress in playing the board games. Students engage in the 'MY HERO\_KIT' Language Board Games during the lesson and outside lesson time. The QR code of Figure 2 shows a demonstration of students engaging in the 'MY HERO\_KIT' actively.

Figure 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are evidence of students engaging in language board games. The duration given to study the effectiveness of 'MY HERO\_KIT' took about 3-4 weeks. This 'MY HERO\_KIT' were improvised few times. For example, reducing the large size to a smaller size, constructing questions based on the 6 level of Anderson Taxonomy. Students were put in a separate group consisting of 3-4 players to engage in the playing 'MY HERO\_KIT'. The teacher observed students playing and noticed tremendous transformation in their engagement during the game and communication became smooth.

The classroom was noisy with active interaction and communication taking place among the students. Students have forgotten about - making mistakes or feeling shy. Students were seen enjoying themselves and the classroom was filled with laughter. Students knew the content better through playing language board games. So, this proves the claim made by Rachel.M (2018) that games give wide exposure to language practice.

The teacher realised the impact of game-based language board games was great. The next step was taken; a school-level project-based language board games exhibition was conducted during one of the extra-curriculum days. The entire school including all Form One to Form Five students took turns to go on a gallery walk and played a variety of language board games created by students. The students' and other non-English language teachers' feedback were positive and encouraging. A religious studies teacher mentioned that the project was creative and it helped to stimulate higher thinking skills which can be adopted and implemented into the teaching of other subjects.



Figure 2: Demonstration of My Hero\_KIT



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

## Findings and Discussion

### a) Observation Checklist Test Analysis

The test analysis of classroom-based assessment or better known as “Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah (PBD)” shows significant improvement in students speaking and interaction skills compared to before the students got engaged with ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ Language Board Games. Previously, whenever students are asked to respond orally to any questions asked, they will drop their heads and remain quiet and refused to volunteer to answer questions because they are afraid of making mistakes and do not know how to respond spontaneously. But now with the help of the language board games, many stimulation questions related to the topic were asked and 100% of students were able to respond confidently in English language. Besides, students were pleased, as there was no atmosphere of criticism or judgement. Figure 9 shows a bar chart on students’ motivation and confidence in speaking in English language using ‘MY HERO\_KIT’ BoardGames.

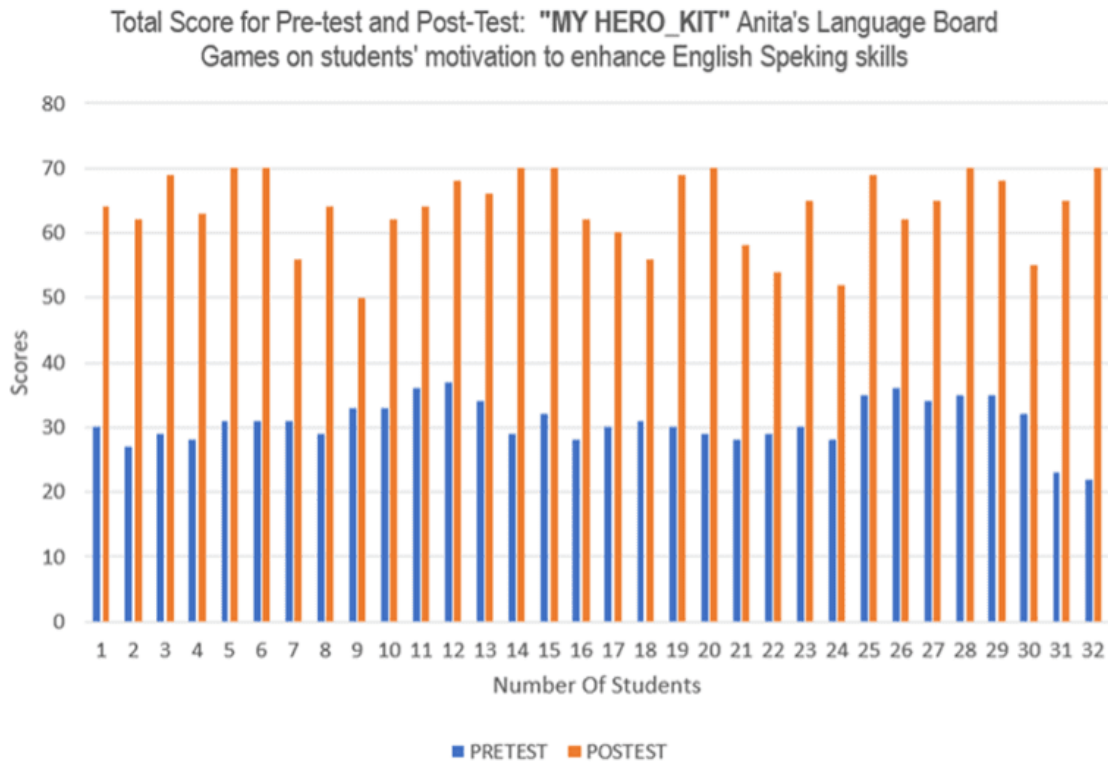


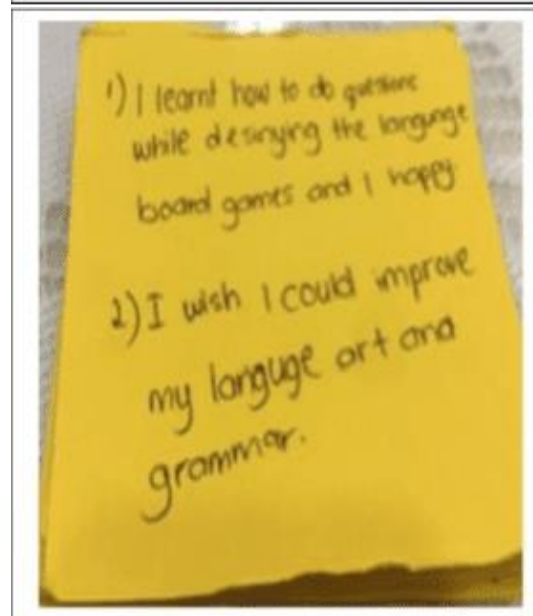
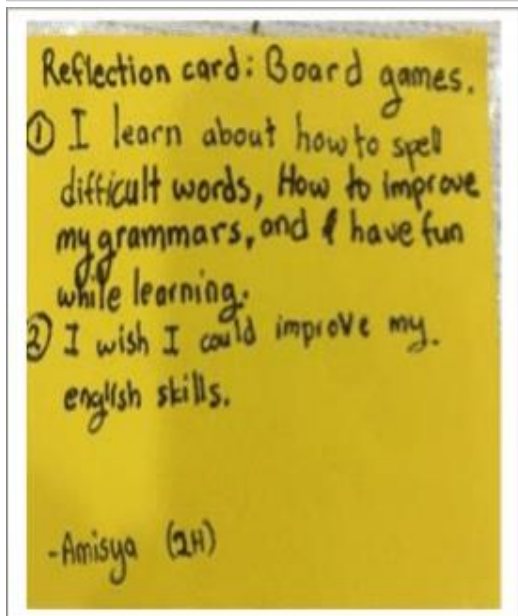
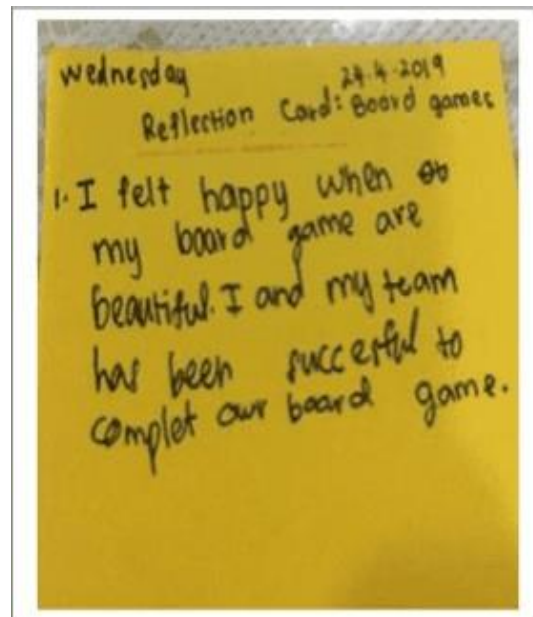
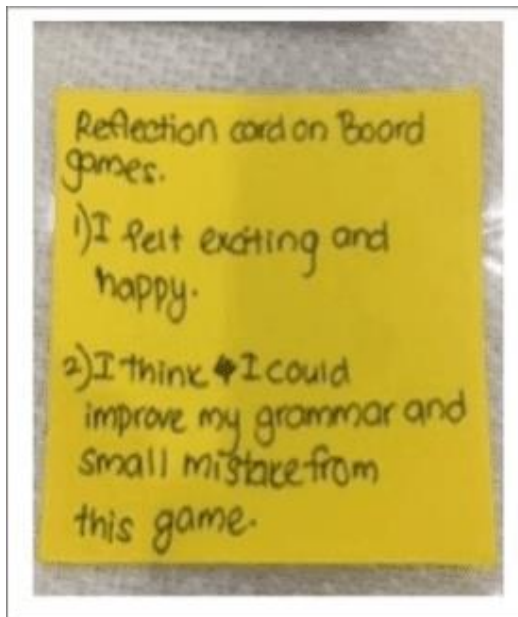
Figure 9: The bar graph shows, Total Score for Pre-Test and Post-Test: “MY HERO\_KIT” board games on students’ motivation to enhance English speaking skills.

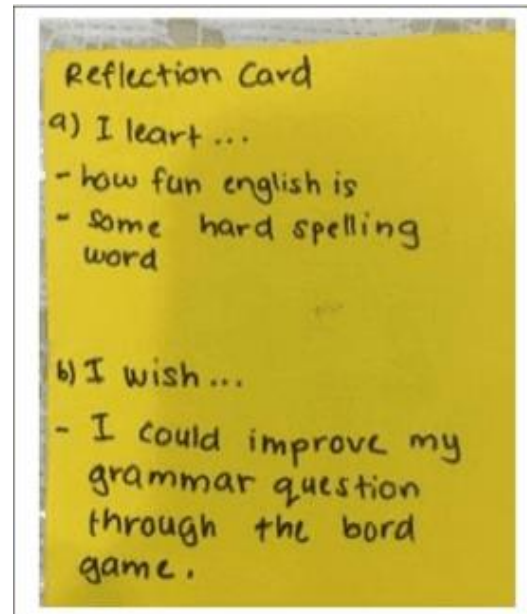
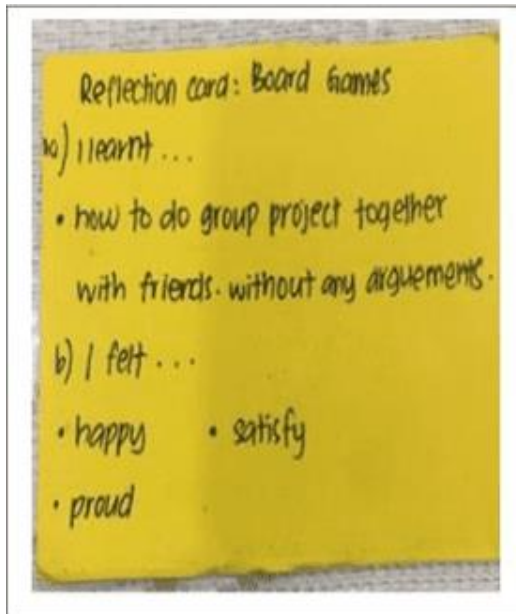
### b) Interview analysis

The findings of interview feedback among Form 2 students prove that students have increased their confidence and improved their speaking skills. Students also developed creativity, teamwork, and communication skills. Many students said that they were - happy to have created their own custom- made language board games. Students also showed a good deal of cooperation among team members and strengthen their friendship. Students agreed that they have broadened their knowledge in learning second language acquisition. Below are pictures of written feedback on reflection cards given by students during the interview session after completing the projects. The feedback on students’ reflection helped me, as a language teacher to understand, that should make more room in our instruction to the teaching of learning strategies. Below is the QR code to scan students oral interview respond.



Figure 10: Interview respond





## Data Analysis Using SPSS

### i. Null and alternative hypothesis.

Formula :  $H_0: \mu d = 0$   
 $H_a: \mu d \neq 0$   
 $d = \text{differences}$

- • There is no significance differences between the mean score obtain before and after the intervention of “MY HERO\_KIT” board games on students’ motivation to enhance English speaking skills.
- • There is significance differences between the mean score obtain before and after the intervention of “MY HERO\_KIT” board games on students’ motivation to enhance English speaking skills

### ii. Assumptions

The assumption was made after outlier are removed for “MY HERO\_KIT” board games on students’ motivation to enhance English speaking skills.

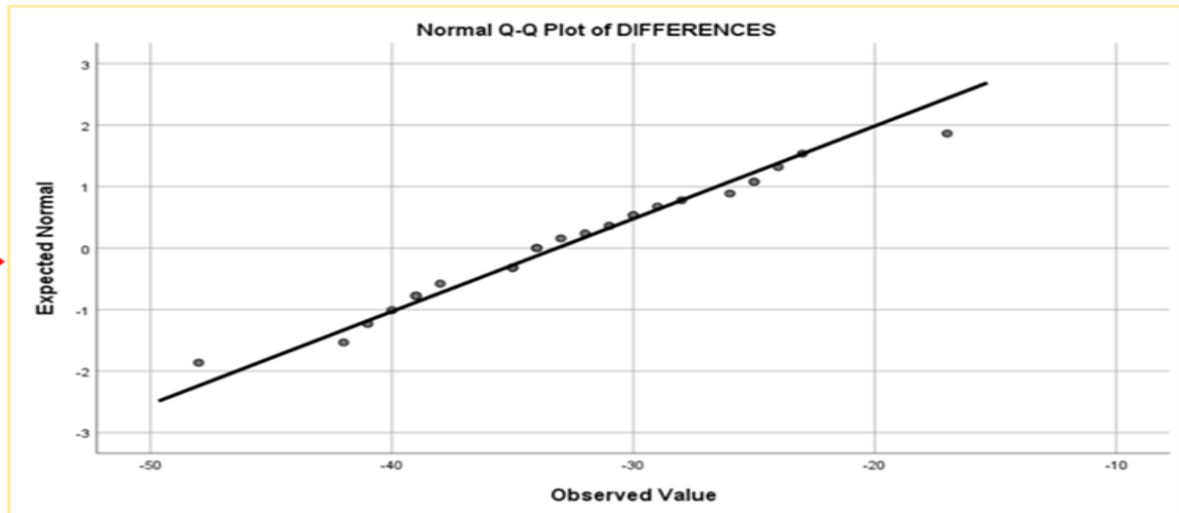
### Tests of Normality

|             | Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup> |    |       | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|-------------|---------------------------------|----|-------|--------------|----|------|
|             | Statistic                       | df | Sig.  | Statistic    | df | Sig. |
| DIFFERENCES | .101                            | 31 | .200* | .984         | 31 | .904 |

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The p value for differences is .90 (p greater than 0.05). Then the distribution of the data is normal and the graph shows linear pattern.



Dependent T-test conclusion.

### T-Test

#### Paired Samples Statistics

|        |         | Mean  | N  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|---------|-------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pair 1 | PRETEST | 30.77 | 31 | 3.566          | .640            |
|        | POSTEST | 63.94 | 31 | 5.831          | 1.047           |

#### Paired Samples Correlations

|        |                   | N  | Correlation | Sig. |
|--------|-------------------|----|-------------|------|
| Pair 1 | PRETEST & POSTEST | 31 | .065        | .728 |

#### Paired Samples Test

|        |                   | Paired Differences |                |                 |   |         |         |    |                 |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|---------|---------|----|-----------------|
|        |                   | Mean               | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         | t       | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|        |                   |                    |                |                 | Lower                                     | Upper   |         |    |                 |
| Pair 1 | PRETEST - POSTEST | -33.161            | 6.634          | 1.191           | -35.595                                   | -30.728 | -27.833 | 30 | .000            |

1. Since the p value is .00 (p value is less than .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significance difference-between the mean score obtain before and after the effect of "MY HERO\_KIT" board games on students' motivation to enhance English speaking skills.
2. The post motivation mean score on students' achievement shows greater than the pre motivation mean score ( $63.94 > 30.77$ ). Thus, the "MY HERO\_KIT" board games on students' motivation to enhance English speaking skills shows an improvement after the intervention.
3. The results show that, there is a significant positive relationship between the mean score obtain before and after the effect of "MY HERO\_KIT" board games on students' motivation to enhance English speaking skills.
4. In conclusion, paired sample of t-test was performed comparing the pre-motivation and post-motivation comparing the effect of "MY HERO\_KIT" board games on students' motivation to enhance English speaking skills. The results show the mean score difference is negative ( $M = -33.16$ ,  $SD = 6.63$ ) these reveal that there is a significant difference ( $t(30) = -27.83$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between the mean score obtain before and after the effect of APBL board games on students'

motivation to enhance English speaking skills Code: PRETEST = before the intervention; POSTTEST = after the intervention

### Limitations

There are no major limitations on this study. The only limitations were time constraints and the students' attitude towards teamwork in playing the 'MY HERO\_KIT' board games. All respondents in this study are my English Language students from three different classes. These students were able to follow the instructions given and showed good cooperation throughout this intervention process using 'MY HERO\_KIT'.

### Conclusion

As a teacher and second language speaker myself, I believe this innovation of "MY HERO\_KIT" will be beneficial for all Malaysian teachers and learners in mastering English Language acquisition through language board games specially to polish students' speaking skills. This research will transform teachers' perceptions towards teaching English language from the traditional method to communicative language teaching which enhances active learning via language board games. Teachers can custom-made language board games as teaching aids as one of the 21st-century learning skills. However, there are many teachers who persist in teaching all four skills, literature, grammar and other sentence structures the traditional way or they don't pay much attention to effective communicative language teaching methodologies. Finally, this research outcome could provide students with better ways to vanquish their common language mistakes made due to mother tongue interference, overgeneralize of the rule, developmental mistakes, and carelessness in learning the target language and build their confidence.

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## ACTIVE LEARNING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY: POSE-PAUSE-POUNCE-BOUNCE-PRESENT (PPPBP) STRATEGY IN ENHANCING ESL STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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### Abstract

Keeping students motivated and engaged in ESL (English as a Second Language) speaking classrooms is a challenge for almost all educators. This study attempted to investigate whether the Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce-Present Strategy (also known as PPPBP Strategy) would help enhance students' speaking performance. 20 college students were selected, and they engaged in four speaking instruction sessions using PPPBP Strategy. Qualitative data were obtained by the means of questionnaires on students' perceptions of the uses of PPPBP Strategy, the instructor's notes on students' speaking performance before and after the PPPBP Strategy and classroom observation. The findings revealed that students demonstrated positive perceptions of the PPPBP Strategy especially in using appropriate language, organizing their speeches and boosting their confidence. Besides, the instructor's observation also supported the findings as the students appeared to be more confident and engaging with the audience by speaking aloud and maintaining eye contact throughout their oral presentation.

**Keywords:** Active learning instructional strategy, speaking instruction, speaking performance, student-centred

### Background of Study

Speaking is one of the components in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) that makes form six college students nervous the most compared to listening, reading and writing as they have to be confident speaking in front of the examiners after a very with. Thus, speaking lessons would usually focus on students' speaking skills by asking them to practise the appropriate language. However, keeping students motivated and engaged in ESL speaking classrooms is a challenge for almost all educators. As supported by Aziz (2017) and D'Silva (2019) in their newspaper articles on students' incompetency in the English language, it has been observed that during oral presentation practices, the underperformed students remain passive and their voices quietly disappear because they are shy, bored, lost, unmotivated or simply unconfident due to insufficient linguistic proficiency. Integrating active learning instructional strategies is regarded as a crucial teaching methodology in speaking especially in gauging students' mastery of the language. Recent literature on active learning has highlighted how active learning instructional strategies are integrated in the process of teaching and learning to enhance students' speaking performance (Askia et.al., 2016; Khan et.al, 2017; Yang, 2022).

### Statement of Problem

This study attempted to investigate whether the Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce-Present Strategy (also known as PPPBP Strategy) would help enhance students' speaking performance. Several studies have proved the effectiveness of active learning instructional strategies (Askia et.al., 2016; Khan et.al, 2017; Yang, 2022). Askia et. al. (2016) conducted a pre-experimental study on twenty students testing the effectiveness of active learning strategies on their speaking skills. The results indicated that the students' speaking skills greatly improved after students gained confidence and motivation through an active learning strategy consisting of small group discussions and games. In a survey conducted by Khan et. al (2017) on exploring various strategies that can be incorporated into the design of online learning courses, they discovered that active learning facilitates student engagement and promotes participation as it can be incorporated in

discussions in online class settings. In her study, Yang (2022) attributed the students' improvement to active learning instructional strategies as they energized students for the learning practices. They decrease anxiety and tension, thus providing a conducive atmosphere for English language production. Furthermore, using active learning techniques that are simple and require minimal preparation like one-minute paper and think-pair-share, is very effective at engaging students, especially when teaching larger groups.

### **Significance of Study**

The study will offer some insights into how teachers can expand their selection of teaching and learning strategies to improve students' speaking skills. This study, in particular, focused on applying active learning techniques namely brainwriting, small group discussion and one-minute paper using three e-learning tools, namely Telegram, Google Jamboard and Padlet respectively, to serve as speaking instruction to teach students with low English proficiency. Other than that, this study also emphasizes the need for teachers to critically evaluate the teaching and learning strategies to benefit the students, especially in engaging them in meaningful learning.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are students' perceptions of the PPPBP Strategy?
2. How do students perceive their speaking performance before and after integrating PPPBP Strategy into their speaking lessons?

### **Method**

Twenty college students who were basic users of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) were selected as participants. The implementation of the PPPBP Strategy was conducted in an active learning routine, namely Pose, Pause, Pounce, Bounce and Present for four weekly speaking sessions. It was designed for ESL speaking classes, purposefully shifting the learning environment to be more student-centred, focused on what students will be 'doing' during the in-class learning process by incorporating three e-learning tools – Telegram, Google Jamboard and Padlet.

The procedure of PPPBP Strategy is as follows. First, in the step of 'Pose', the teacher provides a question on a general theme from a question list to ensure that the students remain reflective. In the second step of 'Pause', using the brainwriting technique, the students are to hold their thoughts within a stipulated time by texting their responses in the private chat of Saved Messages on Telegram. They are allowed to search online for related information on their mobile phones. Next, in the step of 'Pounce', the teacher appoints a student to respond to the question. The fourth step of 'Bounce' is that the teacher immediately asks another student for his or her opinion on the answer given by the first student. The step of 'Bounce' is repeated to get more views from other students to encourage active participation. The students who give their bounce responses are to share their responses on the Jamboard sticky notes. Lastly, in the step of 'Present', using the active learning technique of one minute paper, each student records a 1-minute oral presentation and uploads the video on Padlet as a speaking resource to stimulate collaborative learning.

For this study, qualitative data were obtained from a questionnaire on students' perceptions of the usefulness of the PPPBP Strategy and their speaking performance before and after the intervention of the PPPBP Strategy, the instructor's notes and classroom observation.

### **Findings and Discussion**

1. What are students' perceptions of the PPPBP Strategy?

All students showed very positive attitudes towards the PPPBP Strategy during the study based on the mean scores of their responses to the questionnaires. The keyword of each item was extracted and the mean scores of students' responses to the questionnaire were as follows: useful (M=3.5), engaging (M=3.4), interesting (M=3.7), resourceful (3.5), collaborative (3.55), and motivating (3.7). From the instructor's observation, students seemed to be more enthusiastic and more prepared for the speaking lessons. Some were even seen

scrolling for more relevant ideas from Telegram or Jamboard on their phones during group discussions. In terms of the speaking performance, the 1-minute oral presentation videos taught them how to organize their speeches and using appropriate language. Previous studies also showed a similar pattern where students hold positive attitudes towards active learning instructional strategies in language teaching and learning (Askia et. al, 2016; Khan et. al, 2017).

2. How do students perceive their speaking performance before and after integrating PPPBP Strategy into their speaking lessons?

Based on two rating items in the questionnaire, overall, the students rated their speaking skills higher after learning from the PPPBP Strategy speaking lessons. Before the intervention, most students rated their skills as poor (9) and fair (11). After the intervention, more students rated their skills higher with fair (12) and good (8). At the end of the study, it showed a dramatic improvement as none of the students rated their speaking skills in the 'poor' category. The results indicated that the positive change in students' confidence was significant. Similar findings in recent studies also cited that students felt that their speaking skills have improved after the intervention of active learning instructional strategies (Askia et.al., 2016; Khan et.al, 2017; Yang, 2022). The instructor's notes and observation also supported the findings as the students appeared to be more confident and engaging with the audience by speaking aloud and maintaining eye contact throughout their oral presentation during the intervention.

### Limitations

One major limitation of the study is the generalization of the data. Since it was restricted to a class, the sample size is too small to be generalized as data for the whole nation. Another is the fact that this study limited itself to only a form six college in Tawau within a considerably short time. For more conclusive results, it could be conducted in more form six colleges in Sabah within a longer period of time.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, PPPBP Strategy can be used as speaking instruction to enhance students' speaking performance. The findings revealed that students demonstrated positive perceptions of the PPPBP Strategy especially in using appropriate language, organizing their speeches and boosting their confidence in speaking lessons. Besides, PPPBP Strategy also helped improve students' confidence and engagement in their speaking tasks. The advantages of the active learning instructional strategy which functions as teaching methodology incorporating technology learning tools for enhancing speaking skills should not be neglected, especially by ESL teachers.

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## ***THE BUTTON BOARD GAMES AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR GRAMMAR TEACHING***

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### **Abstract**

Grammar is one of the most difficult elements to master among young learners. It is usually taught by explaining the forms and rules through drilling technique which has made teaching not appealing to learners. Hence, a new teaching innovation named *The Button Board Game* was created as a teaching aid and also serves as an assessment tool of pupils' mastery of grammar. Particularly, this study aims at recognizing the effectiveness of the board game in assessing learners' mastery of a grammar element, that is past simple tense. The board game lets learners play with their peers by rolling the dice, moving their token, taking cards and answering questions by changing present simple to past simple tense. The two types of past simple verbs (regular and irregular verbs) are included. This study adopted an action research design by collecting learners' scores in pre- and post-test as well as qualitative data through an interview. The participants were six Level Two learners who were struggling in changing root verbs to past simple form. The instrument was a written task demanding the learners to write the past simple form of the verbs which was used before and after teaching using the board game. The results of the analysis revealed that the use of the board game enabled the learners to identify the difference between regular and irregular verb and also change the root verbs to past simple verbs. Future studies should consider exploring the potential of the board game in different contexts with different samples.

**Keyword:** Grammar, board games, ESL, past simple tense

### **Background of Study**

Grammar is central to the English language teaching. It cannot be separated from the four linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The knowledge on grammar will support learners' understanding of the targeted language (Wong and Md Yunus, 2021). It will not only help learners to understand what they hear and read, but also will assist their abilities to construct sentences either in written or verbal forms (Zakaria, et al., 2022). However, grammar is always perceived as a boring topic to be learned since it involves learning about language rules which do not apply to all situations (Paris & Yussof, 2012). Thus, apart from learning and remembering the grammar rules, a learned also need to be aware of which situations the rules are not applied (Susanti and Trisnawati, 2019). As a result, it leaves English teachers with the challenge to come up with a creative and innovative method for learners to acquire grammar element. In Malaysian primary school context, grammar is not explicitly taught but it is incorporated into language teaching using different kinds of methods and texts. Nonetheless, grammar is obviously one of the elements to be assessed when learners engage in writing or speaking activity.

### **Statement of Problem**

Verb tense is one of the grammar elements taught to primary school learners in Malaysia. This includes past simple tense consisting/comprising of regular verbs and irregular verbs. Learners do not have problems with the regular verbs as they only have to add either -ed or -d at the end of the verbs to transform the root verbs into past simple verbs. However, some learners find it difficult to change the irregular verbs to past simple since it involves not merely adding letters to the end of the verbs. Learners are confused with different types of irregular verbs as they do not follow the basic rule of past simple for regular verb. Therefore, *The Button board game* is introduced and used during the teaching and learning of past simple tense. Since the board game is newly created, there is a need to examine its effectiveness in assisting learners

to learn past simple tense. Apart from that, the board game can also serve as an assessment tool for teachers to evaluate whether learners can apply what they have learned when they play the board game. To this end, the objective of the study is to determine the effectiveness of the board games as a learning tool for learners and an assessment tool for teachers.

### Significance of Study

Since the teaching of grammar element is part of the English syllabus in primary school context, innovation on grammar teaching is crucial so that teachers can offer appealing and engaging way of learning grammar. However, the innovation may not be perfect since it is newly created. Therefore, the findings from the current study are important to inform teachers on whether board game can enhance learners' mastery of grammar learning. The study also collects qualitative feedback from the participants which can be used to further enhance the quality of the board game. Apart from that, the study gives implication to other teachers to try out using board games in their teaching process by adapting to the context and suitability of their learners.

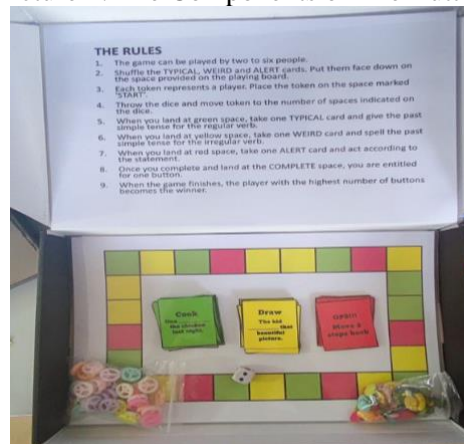
### Research Questions

3. What is the effectiveness of *The Button* board game as a grammar teaching tool?
4. What is the learners' experience in using *The Button* board game?

### Method (200)

The study is mixed method through action research design. The quantitative data is collected twice that are firstly before the participants play the board game and secondly after they play it. Whereas the qualitative data is collected from the participants involving three questions mainly focusing on their feedback of the board game. The participants of the study are six level two learners from a primary school in Johor. They are of different genders and have difficulty in understanding past simple tense based on classroom observation and their score in the pre-test. The instruments of the study include *The Button* board game, the test questions and interview protocol. The board game consists of six components, which are the board, three different types of cards – green cards (for regular verb), yellow cards (for irregular verbs) and red cards (for rewards and punishment), a dice, tokens, buttons and the rules. Picture 1 shows the six components of the board game.

Picture 1. The Components of The Button



The test requires the learners to change the verbs to past simple by writing the verb on the space provided to complete the sentences. The same test is used before and after the game. Picture 2 depicts the test.

Figure 2. The Test

**Fill in the blanks with the correct past simple verbs.**

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ a letter to my pen pal. (write)
2. The boy \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of water. (drink)
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ late last night. (sleep)
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ at the bench this morning. (sit)
5. She \_\_\_\_\_ her hair last week. (cut)
6. A snake \_\_\_\_\_ the boy last Monday. (bite)
7. He \_\_\_\_\_ the mobile phone last year. (buy)
8. We \_\_\_\_\_ extra cash to the market. (bring)
9. He \_\_\_\_\_ his house. (sell)
10. The policeman \_\_\_\_\_ the thief. (catch)
11. The kid \_\_\_\_\_ that beautiful picture. (draw)
12. I \_\_\_\_\_ the fish this morning. (feed)
13. We \_\_\_\_\_ what our teacher meant. (know)
14. My brother \_\_\_\_\_ my shoulder yesterday. (hit)
15. They \_\_\_\_\_ in the old house. (hide)
16. He \_\_\_\_\_ from the top of the building. (jump)
17. We \_\_\_\_\_ around the city last night. (walk)
18. Alya \_\_\_\_\_ to take part in the competition. (want)
19. Ikram \_\_\_\_\_ for losing his pocket money. (cry)
20. We \_\_\_\_\_ our best but we didn't win the race. (try)
21. I \_\_\_\_\_ the bag yesterday. (carry)
22. She \_\_\_\_\_ baking at 6 o'clock yesterday. (start)
23. We \_\_\_\_\_ at the gift shop to buy souvenirs. (stop)
24. Una \_\_\_\_\_ the chicken last night. (cook)
25. We \_\_\_\_\_ our grandparents last month. (visit)
26. The boys \_\_\_\_\_ upset for their loss. (look)
27. Adie \_\_\_\_\_ the book on his way to the class. (drop)
28. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ some pictures to the kids. (show)
29. He \_\_\_\_\_ the door. (close)
30. She \_\_\_\_\_ at the airport at 6 o'clock this morning. (arrive)

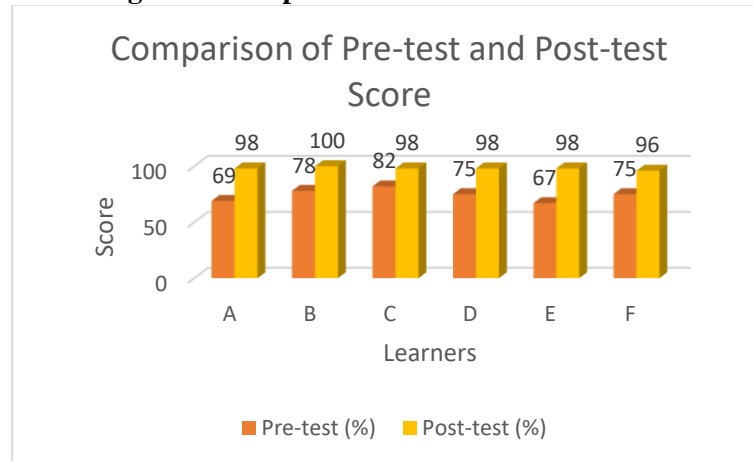
The interview protocol includes three major questions, which are i) how did you feel when you played the board game? ii) what are the difficulties you faced when you played the game?

### Findings and Discussion

The learners answered the test twice, once before the teaching using the board game and then after that. Table 1 and Figure 1 show the scores for each learner for both tests. The findings indicated that all the six learners show positive progress. During the pre-test, all the learners only managed to score between 14 to 20 marks out of 30 full marks with percentage ranged between 47 to 67. The learners managed to achieve between 26 to 30 marks during the post-test with percentage ranged between 87 to 100. This suggests that the use of *The Button* can successfully assist the learners' mastery of simple past tense.

**Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Score and Percentage**

| Learners | Pre-test |                | Post-test |                | Increment |                |
|----------|----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
|          | Score    | Percentage (%) | Score     | Percentage (%) | Score     | Percentage (%) |
| A        | 15       | 50             | 28        | 93             | 13        | 43             |
| B        | 20       | 67             | 30        | 100            | 10        | 33             |
| C        | 17       | 57             | 27        | 90             | 12        | 33             |
| D        | 16       | 53             | 27        | 90             | 11        | 37             |
| E        | 18       | 60             | 28        | 93             | 10        | 33             |
| F        | 14       | 47             | 26        | 87             | 12        | 40             |

**Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test**

From the interview with the learners, they shared their experience when playing the board game. It was revealed that they were excited and eager to play the game because they rarely play games in teaching and learning session. However, some of them commented that they were nervous and reluctant to play at first. This was because they had to answer the questions in English language immediately by spelling the past simple verbs and then reading the complete sentences. Some learners requested to only play the game without having to answer the questions, but their group members did not allow them to play if they did not speak English. This suggests that playing educational board game can further enhance their learning especially when they have to compete with their peers.

### Limitations

The current study is limited only to the usage of board game in grammar teaching in primary school context. Different findings may emerge when board games are used in different context. Apart from that, the study only focuses on grammar teaching. Future studies may be conducted to examine the effectiveness of board games in different teaching focus such as speaking skill. Additionally, the establishment of the board game was done solely by the researcher without the process of validation from any expert panels. To further enhance the quality of the board game, feedback from expert panels may be useful and beneficial.

### Conclusion

The current empirical study reveals that the use of board game in language classroom has proven to be effective in encouraging the learners to use the language when attempting to play the game particularly in the context of primary school learners. By using board game as a supplement to textbook and workbook, learners are motivated to learn grammar because learning become interesting and appealing to their personality as a kid. On top of that, playing board game also assist learners to remember grammar rules. However, young learners still need their teachers to monitor and facilitate when they play the board game. The study provides implications and suggestions for English teachers on the potential of board games to be used in their classroom as a teaching aid.

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## GRAMMCA & GRAMMA KIT FOR ESSAY WRITING

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### Abstract

Teachers face various challenges in assisting learners to write proper and interesting essays. The objective of this action research is to help students to write better essays with accurate grammar. Therefore, to aid students in writing effective essays, especially argumentative essays, the researcher introduces alternative teaching and learning aid namely Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix. The researcher uses Kemmis & Mc Taggart's (1988) one-cycle action research by using the intervention of the Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix in writing an argumentative essay. Error analysis has been carried out among 57 students of Semester One Form Six Students and 5 students are selected for the usage of the teaching aid intervention. Data collection is based on document analysis, unstructured interviews, and classroom observation. Findings show that students have some improvement in writing better and more accurate essays. They give positive feedback on the usage of the Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix.

**Keywords :** Writing, Grammar, Action research

### Background of Study

Writing skill is one of the components of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) and it will carry 25% of the total from 100% in CEFR-aligned MUET. I have to make sure students are well-versed in using correct grammar for the writing component. By identifying and making known the errors made by the learners, teachers can know how students acquire the language. This is supported by - scholars who carried out error analysis research. Based on the literature review on the error analysis as cited by Corder (1976, as cited by Sermsook, Liamnimitr and Pochakorn, 2017) point out that errors made by learners are very significant as they are the indicators of how learners acquire the language. Established from my teaching experience I found out there were some problems encountered by -my students while writing their argumentative essays:

1. Students did numerous grammatical errors when they write their essays during examinations and exercises carried out in the classroom.
2. Students were not able to write correct sentences using sophisticated words/ advance vocabulary. The errors were similar from one year to another. This triggered a question mark me, why did the students make the same errors, and what were the sources of the errors?

### Statement of Problem

The students' errors were similar from one year to another. This had triggered a question mark to myself, why did the students make the same errors and what were the sources of the errors?

**Students did numerous grammatical errors when they write their essays during examinations and exercises carried out in the classroom.**

### Classroom Observation

Based on the classroom observation towards form six students in my classroom, I found out a number of students were not able to write sentences correctly and did numerous grammatical errors. From the observation it showed that these students were having trouble to identify the correct grammar rules.

**Students were not able to write correct sentences with sophisticated vocabulary**

**Interview session**

I did ask some random questioning to the students, why did they face difficulties in writing essays? Some of the students responded that:

‘I am facing difficulties to use subject-verb-agreement (Student 1)

‘I do not know when to write ‘a’ or ‘the’ (Student 2)

### Document Analysis

Based on the document analysis on argumentative essays, it showed that 80% of the students had committed varieties of grammatical errors in their written work. Students were also unable to write correct sentences with sophisticated words/ advance vocabulary vocabulary.

### Significance of Study

The focus of this action research is to identify the types of errors committed by the students, what are the sources of errors, and how to minimize or eliminate these errors. The implications of research would be to suggest ways or interventions to improve students’ performances.

I have implemented the intervention of the usage of ‘Grammar Calendar’ and ‘Grammar Matrix-5W1H’. This intervention is in line with the objective of minimizing or eliminating the grammatical errors committed by the learners. According to Abdellatif (2007, cited in Al-Khasawneh 2014) errors made by learners are beneficial to teachers, learners, as well as researchers. This is because based on the results and findings of the error analysis research; teachers can improve the teaching methodologies and invent new techniques for the students. Not only the teachers can apply critical and creative teaching strategies but also students can benefit from the latest teaching manners.

### Research Questions

List of the research questions:

1. To identify the grammatical (language) errors and sources of errors committed by the learners and minimize them
2. To evaluate the usage of Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix in order to improve writing skills.
3. To examine the progress of the students in using correct grammar.

### Method

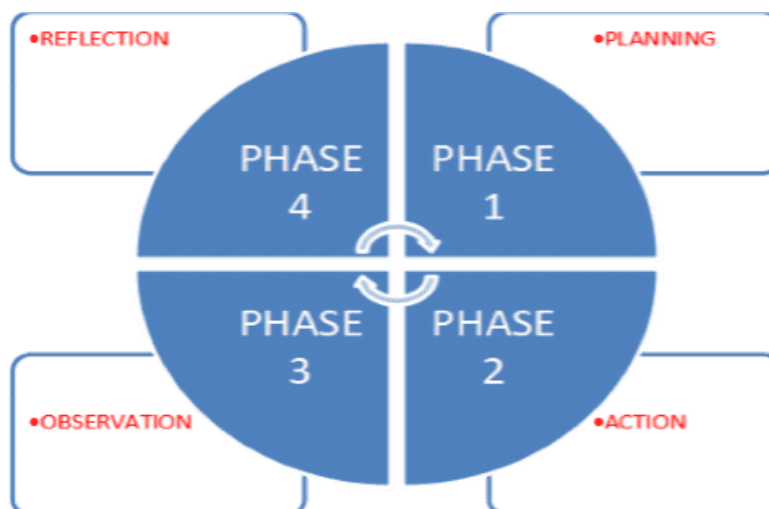


Figure 1: Action research process

The researcher uses Kemmis & Mc Taggart's (1988) one-cycle action research methodology. This data is evaluated in detail according to the intervention of Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix. The description of data collection and data analysis procedures are as follows:

Table 1 : Data instrumentation and data analysis procedures

| Objectives   | Instruments                     |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. To identify the grammatical errors and sources of errors committed by the learners and minimize them. | 1. Document analysis            |
| 2. To evaluate the usage of Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix in order to improve writing skills.      | 2. Interview session            |
| 3. To examine the progress of the students in using correct grammar.                                     | 3. Observation in the classroom |

Table 2: Data collection

| No | Step  | Action/Intervention: Using Grammar Calendar & Grammar Matrix, students will:   |
|----|-------|--|
| 1. | How   | Find out the correct grammar rules and write an introductory sentence using question or general statement and the stand either agree or disagree with the topic given. |
| 2. | What  | Write One topic sentence , elaboration , example and linking sentence  |
| 3. | Why   | Know the reasons to use correct grammar  |
| 4. | Who   | Know the audience of their essays are the examiners  |
| 5. | Where | Know where to minimize or avoid the grammatical errors by referring to Grammar calendar and Grammar Matrix   |
| 6. | When  | Have the reference for the correct grammar rules and try to use better vocabulary.   |

## Findings and Discussion

Students have positive feedback in writing their essays and improving their grammar knowledge. They can refer to the smart notes when they are writing their essays. There are 8 types of errors analysis committed by the students.

### 1. To identify the grammatical (language) errors and sources of errors committed by the students.

There are two types of errors analysis namely sentential and word levels. The errors at the sentential level are tenses and subject-verb-agreement. The errors at the word level are prepositions, singular and plural forms, spelling, usage of root words, article and literal translation of L1. It shows that singular and plural forms have the highest frequency which is 38 frequencies (17%). The lowest is tenses namely 13 times (6%). For subject-verb-agreement and spelling they have the same frequencies listed as 29 times (13%).

### What are the sources of errors committed by the respondents?

There are four types of sources of errors found:

- I) 'Interlingual interference'
- II) 'Intralingual inference'
- III) Carelessness

IV) Limited knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary

**2. To evaluate the usage of Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix-5W1H (GC&GM).**

The usage of GC&GM could assist students in improving their argumentative essays. The students committed lesser errors compared to the previous exercise given to them and this technique helps them to further understand the grammar rules.

**3. To examine the progress of the students in using correct grammar**

Findings show that students need a close guidance from the teacher to improve their writings. Lesser errors are found in the students' essays and I found out that these students have some level of improvement in writing their essays.

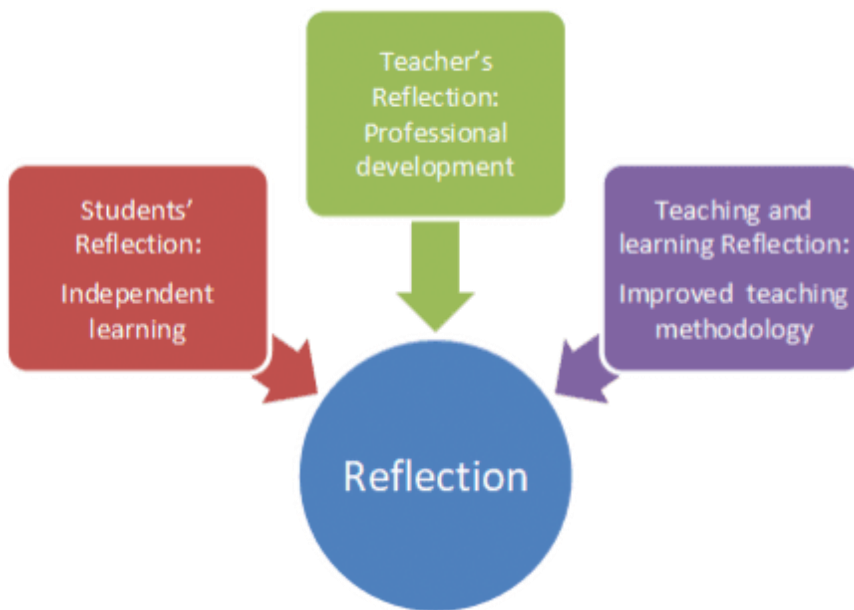


Figure 2: Types of Reflection

### Limitations

There are some limitations in my action research. The fossilization is the main factor that I have - foreseen. Some students were afraid of making mistakes in their writing. The development of a better Grammar Calendar and Grammar Matrix maybe can be implemented in the near future. The use of tangible techniques can be combined with technological advancement so that deep learning is taken place. I have to investigate the real reasons on why my students - repeat the same grammatical errors again and again. What are the linguistic or humanistic factors - involved?

### Conclusion

In conclusion; educators and learners have to work hand in hand and help one another to achieve a better future. Teachers have to give their very best to fulfill the students' needs. By identifying and making known the source of errors it is hoped that it will provide more opportunities for students' to improve their writing. Teachers as researchers should not be frustrated if the first cycle of the action research is not as - expected. There are cycles 2 and 3 to be implemented if it is needed to improve teaching and learning processes.

Other alternatives or teaching aids are available to be invented or adopted so that meaningful learning is achieved. For future research, I do suggest that as an educator, I have to keep my options open -. I need to explore new strategies like mobile applications and digital tools in realizing blended learning with my students.

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## EFFECTS OF ROLE-PLAYING AS SOMEONE ELSE ON SELF-EXPRESSION ABILITY

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects on how well students are able to express themselves in English after a series of classroom activities in which students pretend to be someone else or role-playing was conducted. Three lessons, including role-playing activities, were given to 32 fifth-grade students at a Japanese elementary school. After that, two further lessons where students were communicating in more natural settings were provided. The method of analyses consists of a quantitative text analysis of students' reflective comments written after each lesson. Also, the second author interviewed the first author and conducted a qualitative analysis of the interview data. The results of the analyses revealed the possibility that (1) during the role-playing activity, the students used English as a means of communication rather than a means to an end, and (2) during the communication activity, the students who were lacked confidence in their English continuously tried to speak, forgoing the use of their notes or pre-written speech, instead making presentations with some gestures, suggesting an improvement in their self-expression ability.

**Keywords:** Self-Expression, Role-Playing, Self-Confidence, Communication

### Background of Study

In Japan, teaching English as a subject started at elementary schools in 2020, and students learn communication in English. Some small steps are necessary so that they can express themselves in English, one of which is making use of role-playing, where they pretend to be someone else. In the process of a communication activity, role-playing is often employed. For instance, Yamashina (2017) conducted an English presentation class at a university. She carried out several types of communication activities in order to develop students' presentation skills, and playing a role was included as a step in one of the activities.

The effects of role-playing have been reported. A study shows that role-playing enhances students' expression skills and self-confidence (Mehdiyev, 2020). Fostering self-confidence is closely related to what is called willingness to communicate, which is "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p.547). Self-confidence, like other affective factors, is a crucial component that promotes output in English. Therefore, elementary school teachers need to explore how to incorporate role-playing into English classes.

### Statement of Problem

It is sometimes difficult for English learners to express themselves in English. One possible reason is that when speaking, they have to pay attention to a variety of things including contents, situations, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and so on. This complexity might make it challenging for students to achieve given communication tasks or it would make them lose their confidence to use English. Thus, there is a possibility that role-playing can serve as a mitigating factor for the difficulties. In other words, placing role-playing, which is thought to be an effective way to improve students' self-confidence as well as English skills, before communication activities in more natural settings will get students more ready for practical communication, and the learning burdens will be eventually less. Self-expression ability is integral for communication, and it could be improved with role-playing more efficiently.

However, there are not enough studies that focus on the effects of role-playing on the development of self-confidence or self-expression ability especially at elementary schools.

### **Significance of Study**

As discussed above, taking advantage of role-playing as a step toward a communication activity will contribute to fostering students' self-expression ability along with the enhancement of their self-confidence. Above all, the practice in the present study did not entail complicated or special preparation, so other teachers will be able to reproduce the practice and apply them to their own classes.

### **Research Questions**

- (1) In what ways does pretending to be someone else affect communication between the students?
- (2) Does pretending to be someone else contribute to improving the students' self-expression ability?

### **Method**

The experimental lessons were conducted on one class (32 fifth-grade students) at a public elementary school in Japan. The first author conducted three English lessons, including activities where students pretended to be someone else. The target English expression was "can / can't", and the students pretended to be popular anime characters or their teachers of other classes that they knew well. After that, two further lessons where students were communicating in more natural settings were provided. The purpose of these lessons was for the students to pass on good points of themselves to their friends or teachers in English. They were expected to use "can / can't" or apply what they had learned during the role-playing activities to this communication task.

The students were asked to write reflective comments after each lesson. Those comments were analysed using the qualitative analysis method called KJ method. In addition, the second author interviewed the first author and conducted a qualitative analysis of the interview data. The interview was to clarify what kind of changes were seen in the students from the teacher's perspective.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The results of the analyses revealed the possibility that (1) during the role-playing activity of pretending to be someone else, the students used English as a means of communication rather than a means to an end, and (2) during the communication activity, the students who lacked confidence in their English and were not good at the language continuously tried to speak, forgoing the use of their notes or pre-written speech, instead making presentations with some gestures, suggesting an improvement in their self-expression ability.

As for (1), it seems that the students were able to concentrate on the communication itself because many of them had already known what to talk about. In an actual conversation, they would have needed to contemplate not only contents but also language use. It is true that they had to pay attention to both, but probably it was paid more to language use, and the cognitive load was relatively less.

As for (2), some students succeeded in expressing themselves in English. Through the role-playing activities, those students learned how to make themselves understood in English under the situation provided. That is, role-playing can serve as a good model for students.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that there is no control group because this is a practical study of a single class. In addition, although it is assumed that the class as a whole benefited from this activity, the differences between students were not examined in detail. It is necessary to examine quantitatively what kind of transformation can be observed before and after the class, and to conduct a more detailed qualitative study focusing on individual students. In the future, we would like to move on to a more scientific examination, addressing ethical issues.

### Conclusion

(1) In what ways does pretending to be someone else affect communication between the students?

Students can learn a good model from a role-playing activity and see an entire picture of what they should do, enabling them to participate in the communication activity more confidently and actively.

(2) Does pretending to be someone else contribute to improving the students' self-expression ability?

To some extent, yes. Pretending to be someone else or role-playing allows students to experience fundamental expressions, including English expressions or some other nonverbal expressions. The first author as a teacher observed how each student was working on each activity, and it was found that a few low proficient students repetitively worked on the practice, resulting in the development of their self-expression ability in English.

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## ALPHABET AND SOUND RECOGNITION AMONG LEFT-OUT LEVEL ONE PUPILS USING ALPHABET IQRA' + LEGO (AIL)

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*SK Batu Anam*

### Abstract

Reading skill in children begins with their ability to recognise letters and associate them with sounds. It is an acquired skill that rely on repertoire of linguistic and cognitive domains. Children's reading skill develops with instruction around the time they first enter school. However, the implementation of home-based teaching and learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected some pupils as they were not scaffolded to master basic skill in reading. Without the ability to read, they cannot cope with the learning and instruction in school and worse to worst they will be further left behind. Hence, this study intends to determine the effectiveness of a newly-developed teaching method named Alphabets Iqra' + Lego (AIL) in assisting students to recognise alphabets and make connection between alphabets and sounds. The study adopts action research design by choosing five Level One pupils who have difficulties in recognising alphabets and articulating sounds in English Language as the participants. The instruments of the study include Heggerty's Letter Identification and Sound Assessment which was used before and after teaching using AIL and an observation checklist. Data were collected from the pupils' marks in the assessment and observation in classroom. The result of the analysis depicts that the use of AIL brings positive impact on the pupils' ability to recognize alphabets and articulate sounds. Future trials should consider exploring the potential of AIL in other contexts.

**Keywords:** Alphabet recognition, phonic skill, reading, alphabet iqra', lego

### Background of Study

Reading is recognized as a foundational skill for every aspect of life. Reading skill entails an array of different sub-skills which include the ability to recognise letter symbols and associate them with sound system (Piasta et al., 2018). Their skill in print knowledge (alphabet knowledge) is the beginning of all subsequent reading skills. Their inability to distinguish letters and sound in a targeted language hinders them from reading words and what more comprehending sentences especially for an additional language like English language (Shi Hui et al., 2020). Inability to recognize alphabets and sound system in English will make it hard for pupils to carry on with learning in classroom. However, there are still pupils who are not able to recognise letters and do not master the phonetic skill even after months of schooling due to the home-based teaching and learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Many pupils were left behind during that time due to many reasons including inability to take part in online classes and the absence of adults to assist their learning. These group of pupils have missed the opportunities to learn systematically at the beginning of their schooling years. When school has reopened, they were more left behind as teachers have to cater for other pupils who do not have any issues in reading and carry on with teaching the syllabus based on the planned timeline. Therefore, a new intervention in teaching alphabet and sound recognition was established to assist the left-behind pupils namely Alphabet-Iqra +Lego (AIL). The major goal of the present study is to investigate whether AIL is an effective intervention to teach alphabet and sound recognition for Level One Pupils with alphabet recognition disorder, and whether the pupils can equally benefit from this intervention to master English language sound system. The guiding question of the study is does AIL produce measurable effects on pupils' skills in alphabet recognition and sound system?

### Statement of Problem

From the researcher's experiences and observation in classes, a problem occurred during the phonics teaching sessions. During spelling tests sessions that the researcher conducted on Thursdays, the researcher happened to come across few pupils who did not know the shapes of alphabets. This eventually became a barrier for the pupils to complete the worksheets given. By that time, the researcher had already finished teaching the pupils all the phonemes but these few pupils were not able to pronounce the

phonemes correctly. The thing that shocked the most was there were few of them who did not know the alphabets itself. However, as the researcher marked their books (during the first Oral Blending Test), efforts were made to approach them and later found out that they did not know the shapes of alphabets at all. Thus, the researcher tried to provide them with flashcards and teach them the alphabets from the beginning, but this method did not work well with more than 3 pupils. Thus, the researcher decided to invent the Alphabets Iqra' and use the Lego as the additional remedial activity.

### Significance of Study

In advancing the English language education, the AIL that has been created bring such a huge impact on the left-out pupils. The fact that they never went to get proper education due to their family background problems, has changed the way they look at the terms learning itself. Through the finding, it shows that the use of AIL enables them to know the shapes and sounds of alphabets slowly. Retention and repetition concept that being used really helped these targeted pupils to overcome their fear in learning as this method implies play (with the Lego) too. Attracting their interests in reading is the core business in the AIL method.

### Research Questions

1. Does AIL produce measurable effects on pupils' skills in alphabet recognition and sound system?

### Method

The current study employs an action research design to tackle the issue faced by the left-out pupils through pre-while-post tests. Five Level One pupils with difficulty in recognizing letters and sounds were identified to be the participants of the study. They have diverse background and come from low socio-economic status. Table 1 illustrates their background.

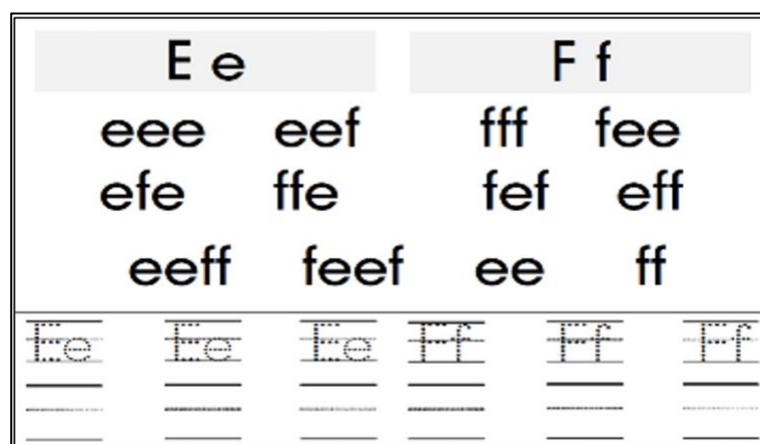
**Table 1. Background of The Pupils**

| Pupils  | Gender | Attendance during home-based teaching and learning |
|---------|--------|--|
| Pupil A | Male   | 3 times  |
| Pupil B | Male   | Never  |
| Pupil C | Male   | 5 times  |
| Pupil D | Male   | Never  |
| Pupil E | Female | 3 times  |

The pupils were involved to be the user of AIL with the assistance from a teacher. The instrument used was the Heggerty's Letter Identification and Sound Assessment which has three components: alphabet recognition for uppercase letters (26 marks), alphabet recognition for lowercase letters (28 marks) and letter-sound identification (26 marks) (Heggerty, 2020). The assessment classifies the children into three categories (pre-developing, developing and proficient) based on the marks they obtain. The assessment was used to determine the pupils' mastery of alphabet and sound recognition to identify whether they have improved their skills with the implementation of AIL. It was tested upon the pupils three times before they finally achieved the proficient level.

### The Intervention

The newly established AIL consists of two components. They are the Alphabet Iqra' reading sheet and LEGO set. The reading sheet was created by the researcher.



**Picture 1. An Extract from The Alphabet Iqra'.**

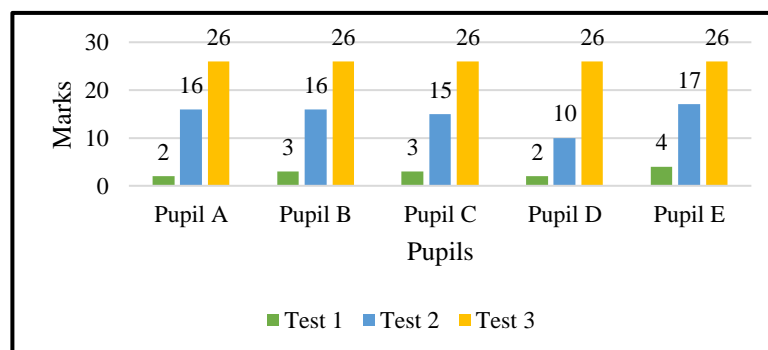
Picture 1 shows an extract of the reading sheet which entails many sets of alphabets combined at random. It is used by the pupils to practice recognizing the letters through drilling methods instead of saying out the letters in normal order. The teacher assisted the pupils to ensure they say out the correct letters and sounds based on the English phonetic system.



**Picture 2. The Pupils Make Letters Using LEGO Blocks.**

After they have completed reading the letters and articulating the sound in one page, they were asked to make letters determined by the teacher using LEGO blocks. This is for them to remember the print, the symbol, and the sound of the letters. It is important since they still could not recognize letters and articulate the sounds. Picture 2 shows an example of letter blocks made by the pupils after reading the Alphabet Iqra'.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION



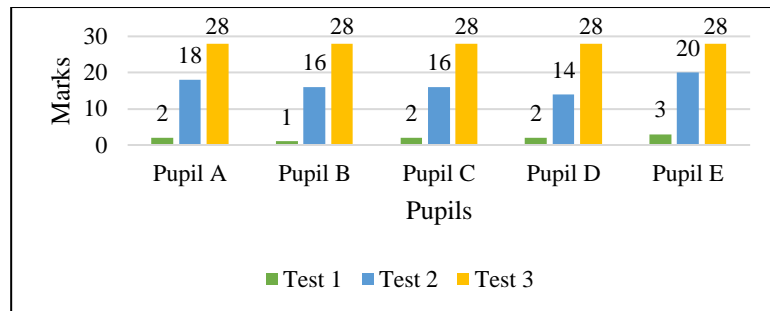
**Figure 1. Students'**

**Uppercase Assessment**

**Result on**

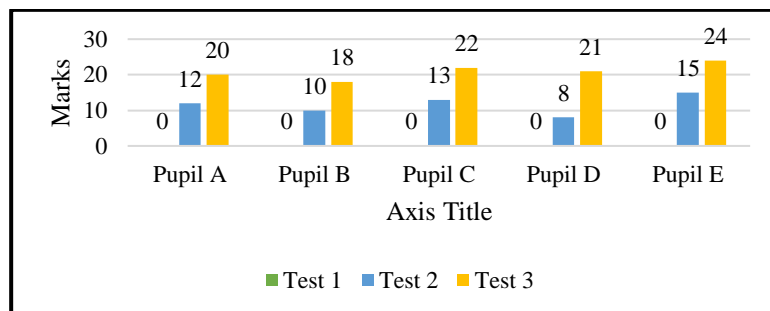
The pupils were tested using the three components of the assessment (uppercase, lowercase and sound) three times throughout the study. Test 1 was done in March 2022; Test 2 was in May 2022 and Test 3 was in July 2022. Figure 1 presents the pupils' achievement in Uppercase Assessment for all the three tests. The findings indicate that all the five pupils managed to show positive progress gradually. They succeeded

in obtaining full marks in recognizing the uppercase alphabets in the last test. This suggests that the use of AIL has successfully aided their mastery of uppercase alphabet recognition.



**Figure 2. Students' Result on Lowercase Assessment**

Figure 2 depicts the pupils' progress in recognizing lowercase alphabets. The same patterns emerged like in the previous component. All the pupils managed to show positive progress and achieved full marks at the third test. This signals that the AIL is an effective way to assist pupils in mastering lowercase alphabets.



**Figure 3. Students' Result on Sound Assessment**

Figure 3 illustrates the pupils' results in the sound component assessment. All the pupils did not recognize the English phonetic sound at the beginning as the results in Test 1 was zero. However, after the use of AIL, all the pupils except Pupil B managed to score more than 20 marks (ranged between 20 to 24) from full mark 26.

## LIMITATIONS

In this study, there are few limitations in order to conduct this method in the classroom. First, the researcher had to deal with the absents of the targeted pupils. Since they cannot seem to realise that education is very important, they tend to skip classes as learning makes them bored. Secondly, as a teacher, the researcher had to find ample and suitable time to conduct extra lesson for them in class only to avoid them from skipping other classes too. Thirdly, before this method is created, the researcher had tried numerous educational books for these pupils but none helped them in remembering the alphabets well. So, this AIL is really helpful for the researcher in helping them with their language learning.

## CONCLUSION

The study reports the effectiveness of a newly established teaching intervention aimed at Level One primary school pupils particularly in alphabets and sound recognition. The findings show that AIL is an effective way to train pupils the ability to recognize alphabets and English sounds. Future trials may consider exploring the potentials of AIL in other context with larger size sample and diverse issues and problems among pupils.

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## USING I-THINK MAP TO PROMOTE HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS IN ONLINE ENGLISH LESSON FOR YEAR 6 PUPILS

**Aida Hartini Abdullah**  
*SK Ampang Pecah*

### Abstract

This research is aimed at improving my practice especially during MCO (Movement Control Order) in the context of using mind maps to promote Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in the learning and teaching process. It was implemented in online learning for primary school pupils. From my observations, the pupils did not comprehend the text, did not enjoy reading and from the data collection, the pupils' achievements were not at the satisfactory level in Reading Assessment. Mind mapping is a visual thinking tool to help pupils remember, understand, analyse and evaluate better. Specifically, the pupils were asked to use Whiteboard.fi website to draw i-Think maps like Circle Map, Bubble Map, Brace Map, Tree Map etc. The type of maps was chosen based on the lesson and the topic. The pupils Reading Skill has improved through the use of i-Think maps. The approach also promoted HOTS and collaborative learning among the pupils.

**Keywords:** mind maps, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), online learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### INTRODUCTION

From my observations during the online class, the pupils did not understand the story or the text because during Question and Answer session, they could not answer the questions correctly. There were minimal participation from the pupils during online English class when I used the traditional standard method.

### PROBLEM STATEMENTS

For this research, I have chosen ten pupils from 6 Inovasi. The pupils had problem in Reading Comprehension lesson such as:

- 1) comprehending the text independently.
- 2) concentrating on reading for a long period.
- 3) enjoy reading story, text and other materials.
- 4) understanding the meaning of the words in the text due to lack of vocabulary.

The pupils' academic achievement was not at satisfactory level, especially in Reading Assessment. From the English Test in March, there were five pupils who obtained D and one pupil failed.

Based on the problem, I have decided to use i-Think maps as teaching and learning tools specifically in Reading Comprehension for year six pupils. Before beginning this Action Research, I have asked a few questions to the pupils about the method that I would use in Reading Comprehension lesson. The questions are:

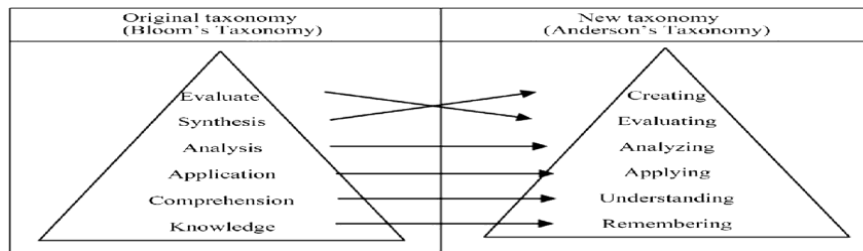
- 1) Do you like learning English using i-Think mind maps?
- 2) Do you understand how to draw i-Think mind maps?
- 3) Do you find it is interesting to use Whiteboard.fi to draw i-Think mind maps during online class?
- 4) Using i-Think mind maps in online learning can make you participate actively during class?
- 5) I-Think mind maps can help you understand the topic?

All of the ten pupils agreed to all the questions asked.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Mind mapping is a technique of taking note created by Tony Buzan. The graphic technique is a universal key to unlocking the potential of the brain. (As'Ari, 2016). Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) is a concept of education reform based on taxonomy, such as Bloom's Taxonomy. Mind mapping is one of the strategies to promote HOTS.

Firstly, the pupils are able to understand the concepts easily. Visual learning helps students to develop visual thinking as Jamal (2016) has pointed out that the learners understand and obtain information better with images. Mind mapping is a visual thinking tool to help the pupils remember, understand and analyse better.



I-Think mind maps can improve the pupils' analytical thinking skills. For example, in my Reading Lesson they were asked to draw a Single Bubble Map for character analysis. Therefore, mind-mapping can generate critical thinking. It also helps the students to improve their innovative and creative thinking (Azman, 2014).

I-Think means 'innovative thinking' which requires the pupils to think critically. I-Think mind maps can also be used to analyse information and problem solving. When the pupils were in group, mind mapping can be used for evaluating and also reasoning as acquired in Critical Thinking Skills.

The objective of this research was to use i-Think maps to promote HOTS in English subject especially for online Reading Comprehension during MCO (Movement Control Order).

There are ten pupils participated in this research. They are from 6 Inovasi in Sekolah Kebangsaan Ampang Pecah, Hulu Selangor.

## METHODOLOGY

There are eight maps in i-Think Maps, which are Circle Map, Bubble Map, Double Bubble Map, Tree Map, Brace Map, Flow Map, Multi-Flow Map and Bridge Map. I used i-Think maps during Reading Comprehension. Reading skill is one of the skills taught to year six pupils in primary schools in Malaysia. I focused on Reading Comprehension as stated in the Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP). The objectives are:

- 1) 2.2.2 Able to read and understand phrases and sentences from;
  - a) Linear texts.
  - b) Non-linear texts.
- 2) 2.2.3 Able to read and demonstrate understanding of texts by;
  - a) Giving main ideas and supporting details.
  - b) Stating cause and effect
  - c) Drawing conclusions
- 3) 2.3.1 Able to read for information and enjoyment;
  - a) Fiction
  - b) Non-fiction

Here are my teaching steps: Firstly, I used Delima Google Meet session to present my Power Point and we read on the text together. The pupils took turn to read the text. I also used Breakout Rooms application, so

the pupils could read the text in Round Robin with their group members. The strategy was to promote collaborative learning among the pupils.

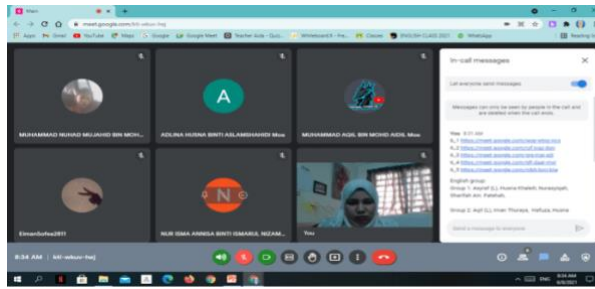


Figure 1: The pupils were divided into groups using Breakout Rooms applications.

Then I asked them to click on the link I have posted in the In-Call Messages (Google Meet) to join Whiteboard.fi website. The pupils could draw i-Think maps with the teacher's explanation. I chose the mind maps that are suitable for the lesson for the particular day. Before the pupils draw any mind maps, I will explain to them about the mind maps.

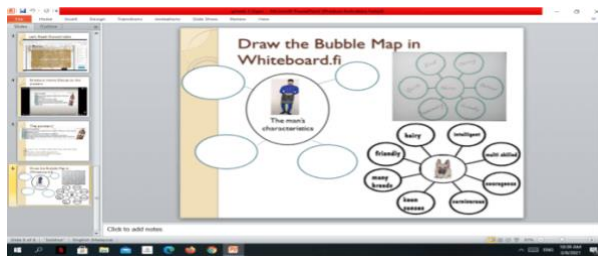


Figure 2

For example:

1) Circle Map.

When I taught the topic Unit 12: Land of Glory, the pupils were asked to draw a Circle Map about Malaysia. They discussed with their friends in the Breakout Rooms, then they came out with the mind map. I also could use i-Think Circle Map in Pre-reading activity during the lesson.

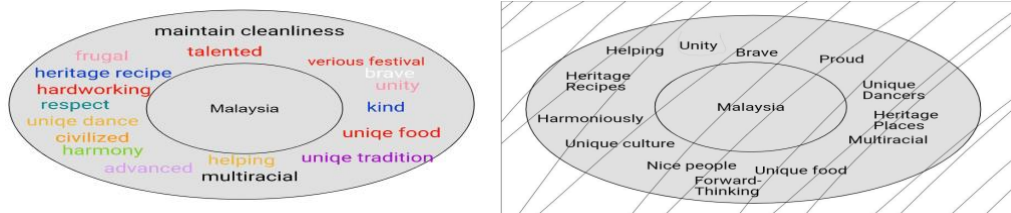


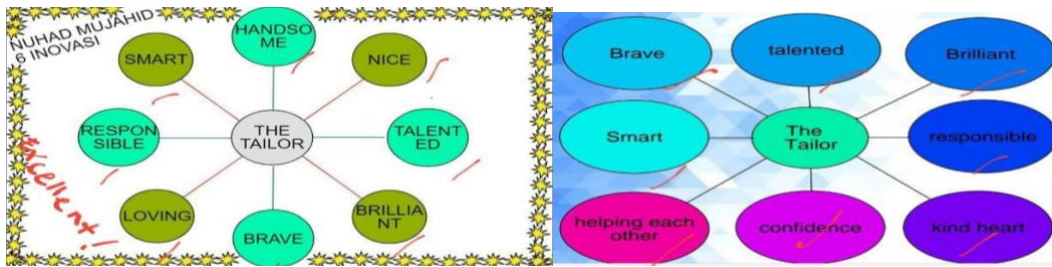
Figure 3

These are the Circle Maps drew by the pupils from 6 Inovasi using Whiteboard.fi applications.

2) Bubble Map.

I-Think Bubble Map can be used for character analysis. The pupils had to write what they think about the tailor from the story, The Brave Little Tailor (Unit 11: Tailor Made) in the form of mind map. This time, I used the mind mapping technique for Post-reading activity.





Examples of i-Think maps produced by the pupils using Whiteboard.fi application.

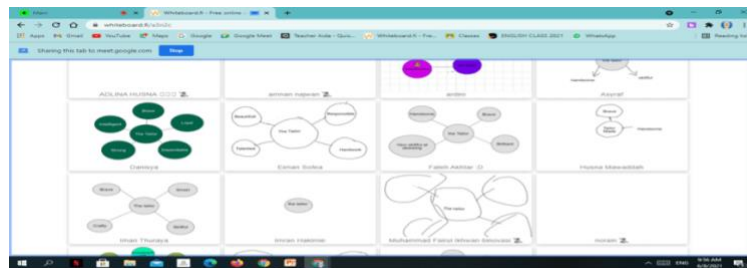


Figure 4

I could view the pupils' works during the online teaching and learning process.

3) Double Bubble Maps.

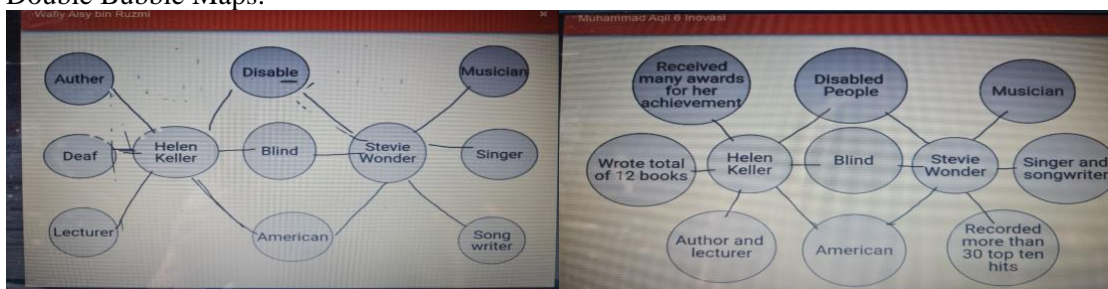


Figure 5

In 'Unit 13: Overcoming the Odds', the pupils drew Double Bubble Map using Whiteboard.fi website. They had to analyse the information and identify the similarities and the differences between the successful people with disabilities, which are Hellen Keller and Stevies Wonder.

4) Brace Map.

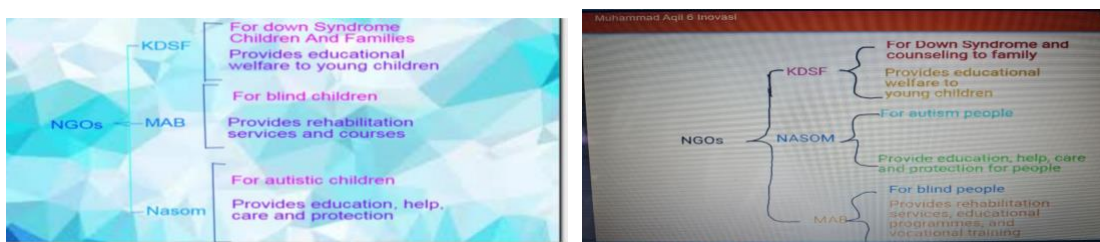


Figure 6

Brace map highlights the 'Whole to Part' thinking process because the learners have to analyse the component parts of the object (Alikhan, 2014). It acquires the learner to identify the relationship of the objects. In the pupils' groups, they had to breakdown the main point into the small points. This type of i-Think map also can be used to write the ideas from the group members.

5) Bridge Map.

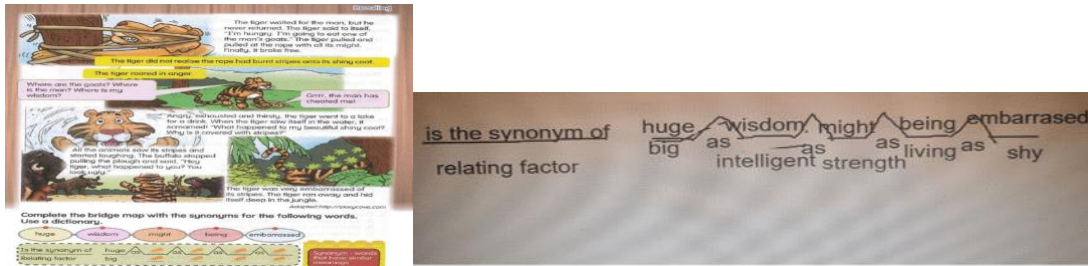


Figure 7

I used Bridge Map to teach the topic from the textbook Unit 8: How The Tiger Got Its Stripes. I asked the pupils to write the synonyms for the words from the story to complete the Bridge Map. Bridge Maps highlight the ‘Seeing Analogies’ thinking process (Alikhan, 2014). The pupils needed to use a dictionary to find the synonyms. The strategy I used was Independent Learning. One of the reading skills acquired in Malaysia syllabus for year 6 is the pupils should be able to apply dictionary skills to identify and understand meaning of words in context (2.2.4)

6) Tree Map.

The last i-Think map I used was Tree Map. The pupils had to complete the Tree Map on ‘Ways to Save Money’. The exercise is in the textbook for Unit 14: A Ringgit Saved is A Ringgit Earned. Tree Maps highlight the ‘Classifying and Identifying’ thinking process (Alikhan, 2014). The pupils had to sort things or ideas into categories.

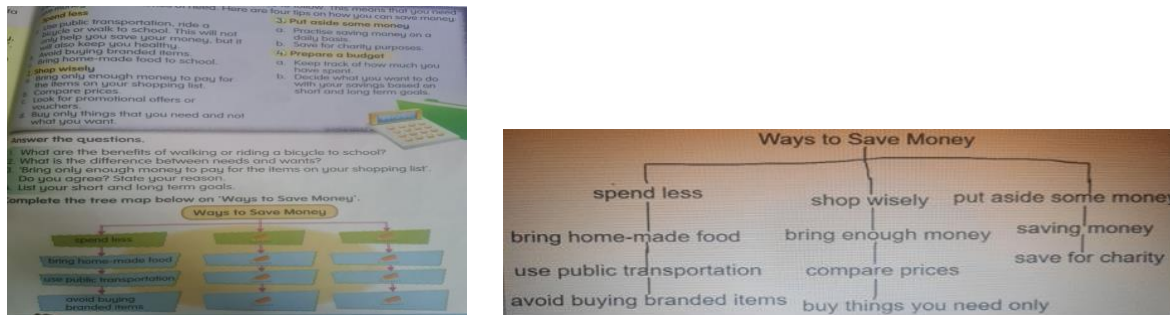


Figure 9

Besides using i-Think maps as teaching tools, the strategy can be used to enhance the pupils communication skills. Selected pupils presented their i-Think maps to the others and explained their work and point of view. For some topics, the pupils collaborated with their group members in building the i-Think maps together. Therefore, using i-Think maps can help me to implement 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning approach because the elements included in my online teaching and learning processes are communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and value and ethics. During presentation and discussion, the pupils soled higher level inquiry-based questions. I applied student-centred learning approach because the pupils participate actively. It is required as stated in SKPMg2 (Standard Kualiti Pendidikan Malaysia Gelombang 2) Standard 4.

FINDINGS

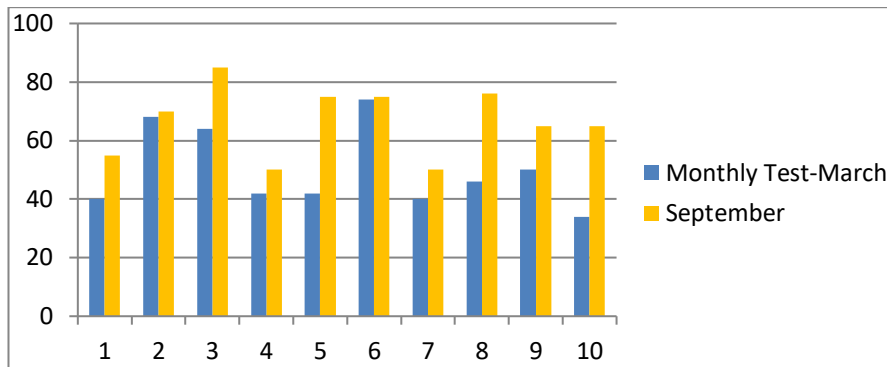
Using Whiteboard.fi to build i-Think maps could promote Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) in English lesson due to the utilization of ICT (Information Technology) because the pupils need to use the application with minimal guidance from the teacher in online learning. The use of ICT enhances the pupils’ ability and helps me to engage with the pupils.

The pupils Reading Skill has improved through the use of i-Think mind maps in online learning for 8 weeks.

Participants’ Reading Assessment Marks:

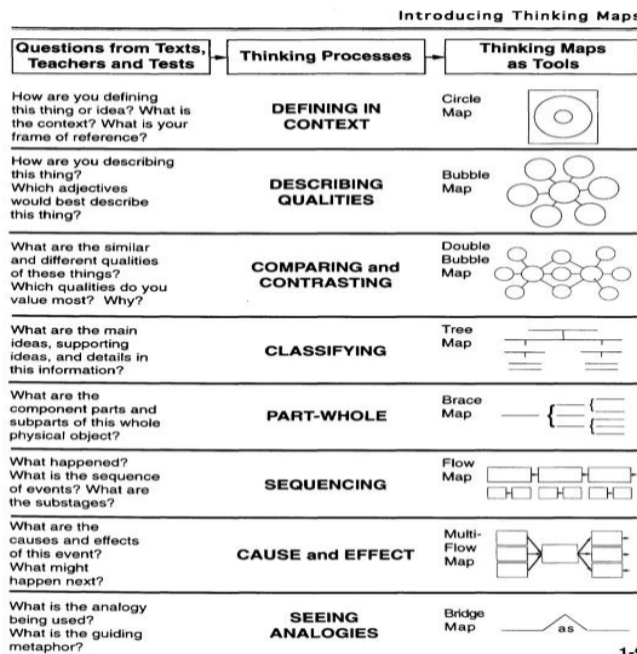
|     |      |                    |           |
|-----|------|--------------------|-----------|
| No. | Name | Monthly Test-March | September |
|-----|------|--------------------|-----------|

|    |                                      |    |    |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|----|
| 1  | Ahmad Imran Hakimie bin Ah. Shahril  | 40 | 55 |
| 2  | Amnan Najwan bin Abdul Jalal         | 68 | 70 |
| 3  | Asyraf Hilmi bin Jasni               | 64 | 85 |
| 4  | Muhammad Fairul Ikhwan b. Fairolezan | 42 | 50 |
| 5  | Muhammad Hakimi Hafif b. Romzie      | 42 | 75 |
| 6  | Muhammad Nuhad Mujahid M. Yusoff     | 74 | 75 |
| 7  | Nur Kaisara Karmila bt Abdullah      | 40 | 50 |
| 8  | Wafiy Aisy bin Ruzmi                 | 46 | 76 |
| 9  | Wardah Hananie bt Mohd Zuhdi         | 50 | 65 |
| 10 | Nur Husna Khaleili bt Azharudin      | 34 | 65 |



**CONCLUSION**

The results have shown improvement in the pupils’ Reading Comprehension skills. The pupils could answer Higher Order Thinking Skills questions correctly written. They could answer HOTS questions orally too. However, most of them still did not achieve excellent result in the Reading Assessment. In order to help the pupils to excel in Reading Assessment, I will use more i-Think maps during the online class from time to time to promote Higher Order Thinking Skills as below.



Furthermore, the approach could also be used for the other pupils in the classroom for enrichment and remedial activity based on their proficiency. I-Think maps could be used in other teaching and learning strategies such as Project-based Learning, Problem-based Learning and Problem Solving too.

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## APPENDICES

The image displays three screenshots from a Google Meet session, illustrating the use of Circle Maps in a classroom setting.

**Top Screenshot:** Shows the Google Meet interface. A grid of participants is visible on the right. The main screen displays a shared whiteboard with a 'Draw a Circle Map' activity. The whiteboard shows a central circle with 'Red Roses' in the middle, surrounded by 'Beautiful', 'Soft', 'Root', 'Valentine's Day', 'Smells', 'It's a Plant', and 'Stem'. Below this, another circle map is shown for 'apples' with words like 'sweet', 'crunchy', 'juicy', 'healthy', and 'smooth' around it.

**Middle Screenshot:** Shows a slide titled 'Draw a Circle Map'. It includes a diagram of a circle map for 'Red Roses' and a diagram for 'apples'. The slide also includes a section titled 'CIRCLE MAP' with the subtitle 'Thinking Skill: Defining in Context & Brainstorming'. It provides a template for creating a circle map with a central 'Main Idea or Concept' and surrounding 'Ideas, examples, definition'.

**Bottom Screenshot:** Shows a grid of multiple circle maps created by participants. Each map has a central concept and surrounding related words or ideas. For example, one map has 'beautiful' and 'graceful' around a central image of a person, while another has 'talented' and 'amazingly' around a central image of a person.

## USING MR. CAP TRAIN IN CONSTRUCTING SIMPLE SENTENCES (SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT) AMONG YEAR 3 PUPILS

Nurwirdathinagiha Hamdan

*SK Rengit, Johor*

### Abstract

This research was carried out to investigate how “Mr. Cap Train” may help pupils to construct simple sentences that consist of subject-verb-object (SVO). The data was obtained from 5 pupils in Year 3 Cerdik from Sekolah Kebangsaan Rengit, Batu Pahat. Three participants who were involved in the study were the average proficiency pupils and another two were at low proficiency level. There were three data collection methods used namely pre-action and post-action tests, interviews and observation. The students were taught to construct simple sentences by using Mr. Cap Train designed based on the Allan Paivoi’s Dual Coding theory and Lev Vygotsky’s Social Development theory. The instruments used for data collection were pre-test, post-test, semi-structured interview, and observation checklist. The findings revealed all 5 participants had shown increment in their test scores after the intervention was carried out in 4 periods of weekly teaching schedule. The data analysis also demonstrates increased motivation and a positive perception among the research participants in constructing sentences using Mr. Cap Train. This study also proposed several suggestions to enhance and improve Mr. Cap Train as an intervention which may expand its usage for other language skills.

**Keywords:** Construct simple sentences, SVO, Mr. Cap Train, motivation, perception

### Background of Study

Nowadays, the world has acknowledged English as one of the most significant languages in this global era. Mydans (2007) stated that riding the crest of globalisation and technology, English dominates the world as no language ever has, and some linguists are now saying it may never be dethroned as the king of languages.

The main focus of this research is writing which is defined as a critically essential skill in the teaching and learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) as it is a comprehensive skill that helps strengthen vocabulary, grammar, thinking, planning, editing, revising, and other elements. According to Saed & Al-Omari (2014), writing also helps to improve all the other skills of listening, speaking, and reading as they are all interconnected.

Hereby, writing simple sentences among primary school pupils is indeed important because it will directly affect their other language skill and ability. In this research, I believe this aspect is highly needing attention to help the pupils to overcome this rising issue regarding constructing simple sentences which is the most basic base in writing skill. Mr. Cap Train is a tool of intervention which aimed to help the pupils in this area of issue. With consideration of pupils’ learning tendencies, interest and proficiency level, Mr. Cap Train is created to not just helping the pupils’ writing skill but also, providing them with fun and conducive learning environment.

### Statement of Problem

In English, there are many issues which are rising gradually and writing skill is one of them. Connelly and Forsyth (2012) assert that most pupils have difficulty acquiring writing skill as they could not organize their ideas, select the right vocabularies and apply accurate grammar to accentuate their written ideas. This is further supported by Len, Yunus and Embi (2017) who claimed that lower primary pupils in schools face difficulty to write even simple sentences with correct grammar. Hence, most of primary pupils in schools having difficulty in English because of their poor sentence structure, grammar and lack of vocabularies.

Based on the analysis of the pupils' work that I analysed, an issue of concern was identified. The pupils' work shown that all participants were having problem in constructing simple sentences (subject-verb-object) with proper sentence structure, grammar, and spelling.

On top of that, the participants were also showing lack of interest and motivation in learning English language. Yunus and Mat (2014) claimed that poor performance in writing among pupils in rural area are caused by limited exposure to English and negative feelings towards the language. Therefore, my participants are also having no exception to this as they are also experiencing difficulty in constructing simple sentences due to similar mentioned reasons.

### Significance of Study

The constructed intervention, Mr. Cap Train has succeeded in helping pupils to construct simple sentences SVO independently as it does not solely focus on teachers' guidance. This intervention offers more than that. The participants also have displayed and proven their development in constructing simple sentences based on their excellent work after each intervention conducted. Before the intervention, the participants have difficulty in identifying the correct subject, verb and object which leads to wrong simple sentences construction. Fortunately, after the final intervention, all participants managed to show remarkable improvement. Hereby, the participants are capable to construct simple sentences SVO without any guidance from the teacher. Compared to their previous performance, the participants now possess a higher and greater writing skill.

This significance is supported by participants' motivation and interest in English lesson with using Mr. Cap Train as a teaching tool. This intervention has also established a positive vibe towards conducive learning among the participants. As a result, the English lesson becomes more interesting and interactive when all the participants are motivated in participating actively.



Pupils were showing great interest and participation throughout the intervention.

### Research Questions

1. How is the use of Mr. Cap Train effective in helping the pupils to construct simple sentences (SVO)?
2. How is the use of Mr. Cap Train as a teaching tool in motivating pupils to learn English?

### Method

#### Pre-test and Post-test

Pre-test and post-test were administered to assess the difference in participants' competency to write grammatically correct simple sentences before and after learning by using Mr. Cap Train. The increment in percentage of participants' marks are significant evidence that showed the effectiveness of the intervention, Mr. Cap Train.

### Semi-Structured Interview

Interviews were one-to-one conversation between an interviewer and an individual meant to gather information on a specific set of topics. In this research, interview helped to provide the information of view and opinion of target participants regarding the intervention. This kind of information is crucial to obtain a deeper understanding of participants' feeling and experience. The interview session used semi-structured interview questions. Semi-structured interviews consisted of several key questions that helped to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill, 2008).

### Observation

In administrating observation, the researcher was able to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen intervention towards the target participant instantly. A checklist, as an instrument, was used in this method. Observation executed emphasised the participants' response during the intervention. This checklist interpreted and explained to obtain the participants' progression as well as to highlight the impacts from the intervention conducted. At the same time, the researcher also did observation on participants' ability in constructing sentences after each intervention completed. The utilisation of observation as data gathering method was very important to increase the validity of this research rather than only relying on pre-test, post-test and interview data.

## Findings and Discussion

### Pre-test and Post-test

| PARTICIPANTS | PRE-TEST SCORES (Percentage %) | POST-TEST SCORES (Percentage %) | INCREMENTS (Percentage %) |
|--------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1            | 15                             | 60                              | 45                        |
| 2            | 55                             | 90                              | 35                        |
| 3            | 25                             | 90                              | 65                        |
| 4            | 30                             | 70                              | 40                        |
| 5            | 60                             | 80                              | 20                        |

The table presents the clear differences of all 5 participants' marks between the pre-test and the post-test. This indicates that the participants have showed significant improvement in constructing correct simple sentences SVO after the intervention has been applied.

### Semi-Structured Interview

As for the interview analysis, the researcher assigned suitable keywords to identify for relevant information aligned with the research questions.

#### Construct simple sentences SVO by using Mr. Cap Train

Based on the data obtained and extracted from the interview session, the participants agreed that Mr. Cap Train assisted and guided participants to construct simple sentences SVO correctly. This could be seen from P2 answer for the second question in the interview. He answered "Ya. Kerana "Mr.Cap Train" mempunyai gambar, colour dan bahagian. (Yes. Because "Mr. Cap Train" contains pictures, colours and parts). Here, we could see that participants admitted that "Mr. Cap Train" was very helpful in construct correct simple sentences easier.

#### Motivation in learning English by using Mr. Cap Train

From the interview conducted, the participants obviously more motivated to participate and engage in English lesson. This is because from the beginning, they were amazed with the new teaching aid presented which is the Mr. Cap Train. This first question was sought to identify participants' first impression towards Mr. Cap Train. For instance, P1 replied "Ya. Bentuknya menarik dan mempunyai pelbagai warna (Yes. It

has attractive shapes and variety of colours).” This response showed P1 loved and admired Mr. Cap Train as it is appealing and consequently made the participants pleased to undergo the intervention.

### Observation

After the intervention employed, the participants showed massive and excellent improvement in writing simple sentences. During the intervention, the participant instantly could construct the correct simple sentences. This result has shown that the participants understand the proper sentence structure, choices of words and grammar.

On the other hand, the participants showed endless focus and attention during the intervention. They demonstrated an active participation as they were excited to make the sentences in their group. The participants were also very enthusiastic and eager to learn by using Mr. Cap Train. This could be seen when they jumped excitedly at the moment they know that they would learn by using Mr. Cap Train. Some of them even screamed “Yay! Mr. Cap Train!” along with a big clap. They were totally immersed to Mr. Cap Train as it allowed them to learn in the independent and creative way.

### Limitations

There are certain limitations in this research and one of them is the sample size. The sample size is too small which only has 5 participants that would not be concrete enough to draw valid conclusions. The larger the sample, the more precise and accurate result could have been generated as this research also used quantitative methods which were pre-test and post-test.

Other than that, the time constraints for completing this research because participants were only available during English lesson which only 3 times in a week. On top of that, the participants also need to catch up with other English syllabus according to the DSKP (Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran) emphasized by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

### Conclusion

In this research study, the researcher has presented the use of Mr. Cap Train to improve the participants’ writing skill in constructing simple sentences as well as to motivate them in learning English. The result of invented intervention proved a significant improvement among the participants’ ability to construct correct simple sentences SVO. Other than that, all participants were showing positive response throughout the intervention which indicated their motivation and interest in exploring English language. Overall, this intervention has achieved the objectives planned and constructed successfully.

Based on the analysis and finding presented, there are several suggestions that can be proposed in order to improve the participants performance in English language. Firstly, larger sample size to increase statistical power. The second suggestion is to boost the intervention to the better one which includes Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

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## STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS ONLINE LEARNING IN THE MIDST OF PANDEMIC: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

With the pandemic COVID-19, online learning had become a new norm of learning. Though online learning used to be a common practice in some higher learning institutes that offer distant learning, the implementation of this learning mode across all education levels only happened since March 2020. Due to the sudden transition of learning mode, most of the students entered the new norm of learning quite unprepared. Despite of numerous reviews and changes implemented in online learning since it was started, there seems to be limited effort made to understand students' perception about the online learning. Literature studies showed there were both advantages and disadvantages experienced by students participating in online learning in many different places around the world. Therefore, this research aimed to identify the issues faced by Malaysian students in online learning and the impact of these sessions on them. Qualitative research design was selected and data from samples were collected through the in-depth interview method. Samples from both primary and secondary school students expressed the issues such as technical interruption, difficulty in staying engaged in the lesson and lack of comfort. In terms of the impact, health and work efficiency were expressed as the students' main concern. Future study in the similar scope is recommended to be conducted with multiple research approach to gather more in-depth insights about online learning in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Online learning, students, interview, issue, impact.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of Study

Learning is defined as a process that can be performed through multiple approaches. For example, cooperative learning, learning based on VARK model or learning individually. However, at the present condition of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning has taken the approach of online learning activity. Online learning is an approach that involves interaction between the teacher and student remotely. In this process, students learn from their own homes while the teacher teaches from another location other than the classroom (Sinecen, 2018). Online learning implemented in synchronous and asynchronous. In the synchronous learning process, the learning occurs live which means the teachers and students meet virtually at the same time. Some of the learning modes used are video conferencing, telephone conferencing, live discussion or live lecture (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2014). The asynchronous learning process is defined as the learning session occurs according to each individuals' timetable and availability. Teachers and students do not have to be involved in the learning process simultaneously. The teachers may provide learning materials and comprehension practices to allow the students to study the material and answer practice questions at a time suitable for them. Examples of asynchronous learning materials are learning modules, pre-recorded lesson videos, teacher's notes and databases such as e-library (Clark & Mayer, 2016).

Implementation of online learning is actually not a new concept because online learning started in certain countries as early as the 1800s. Even though the internet was not developed in that era, Isaac Pitman taught a group of students short-typing through letters in the year 1840. In the year 1924, the first test machine that can allow students to perform self-assessment was launched. Online learning then developed further

until live learning sessions were implemented in the early 2010 (Stephenson, 2018). But all these online learning activities involved long distance courses in higher education institutes.

Online learning at the school level started to gain more attention after the COVID-19 outbreak in the entire world at the beginning of 2020. The health crisis forced education systems all over the world to search for ways to replace face-to-face teaching. It was aimed at solving the problem of students' learning interruption after the school closure. Since school closure all over the world occurred at a sudden rate and under emergency conditions, online learning functioned as a recovery strategy to ensure learning is continued. The new norm of learning has its own differences compared to face-to-face learning. All the communications and activities migrated to digital forms including the assessment and marking (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Online learning in Malaysia has been implemented through various platforms by various institutions. But one platform used by almost all the schools in Malaysia, including the private schools is Digital Educational Learning Initiative, DELIMA. Applications from three technology giants, Google, Microsoft and Apple were integrated in the operation of DELIMA in helping the teachers and students perform online learning (Selvanathan, Hussin, & Azazi, 2020). One of the main characteristics of DELIMA is diversified application and services for education service providers. For example, digital textbooks, google classroom, show my homework, seneca learning, quizizz, quizlet bitsize and zoom (Perumal, Abdullah, Parthasarathy, & Jayabalan, 2020). Therefore, online learning in Malaysia performed widely since the movement control order started.

### **Statement of Problem**

The decision to start online learning and transition to the learning mode occurred very quickly. Unexpected spike in COVID-19 cases resulted in emergency school closures whereby students or teachers did not have adequate preparation. The impact was observed more among the students in terms of using mobile apps or troubleshooting computers. Since there is no opportunity for a face-to-face meeting or consultation, students were not able to express the challenges they experience during the online lessons and find a solution for the issues (Zalat et al., 2021).

The methods and processes used in online teaching and learning sessions were modified and improved since the implementation began in March 2020. Teachers started to use more of the DELIMA applications and teaching schedules were rearranged by considering students' accessibility to devices (Ismail et al., 2020; Chung & Mathew, 2020). However, there are not many studies conducted to analyse issues faced by students. Most of the research discussed challenges of online learning from a general perspective. Therefore, literature provides very limited or no insight on students' perceptions about online learning. The present study is expected to close the existing gap by collecting and analysing students' perspective about their online learning experience.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify current issues faced by Malaysian students in online learning
2. To analyse impact of online learning towards students' learning process

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The research aim is to understand the current issues faced by Malaysian students in online learning and analyse the impact of the issues in their learning process. Therefore, literature review on the general population's view about online learning. Findings from the literature review are presented from two different perspectives as presented below.

### **Effectiveness of Online Learning**

Past research about online learning strategies showed this approach brought many benefits to the school community. Farrell and Brunton (2020) found that online learning increases students' participation in the learning activities. This finding was accompanied with factors such as peer, type of online learning module used by the teachers and flexibility level while learning from a comfortable place. These findings imply online learning still can be equally effective as face-to-face learning if the learning material can be modified to suit distance learning style. Besides this, every student attending online learning sessions from the comfort of their own house is surrounded by a calm environment. Thus, their participation in the learning session increased. Similar views about online learning reported in the studies by Khan, Egbue, Palkie, & Madden (2017), Martin & Bolliger (2018) and Gillett-Swan (2017).

According to the research conducted by Baúarmak & Mahiroglu (2016), online learning is advantageous for students because there are multiple facilities available for them to complete the learning without many obstacles. Research towards the learning process of science and technology showed students achieved learning objectives successfully because they are supplied with complete information through video sharing and caricature animations. Therefore, the students are able to learn effectively just as face-to-face learning. These findings aligned with the outcomes reported by Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo (2020) who identified online learning created more opportunities for the students to express their talents.

Online learning strategy found to be beneficial because teachers gain the opportunity to use various types of tools compared to the face-to-face learning mode. Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell (2017) listed a few learning tools and explained the advantages of using those tools. Online discussion forum was identified as a tool that motivates students to ask immediate questions during the lesson. At the same time, the students have the opportunity to give feedback to their peers through the online discussion forum. Based on the review of this work, online learning can help to prevent students from waiting a long time before getting feedback for their inquiries.

Online learning increases students' interaction through the applications that can encourage them to participate in the class discussion. As reported by Wang & Tahir (2020), Kahoot received wide acceptance among the students when the discussion session began. Kahoot is a game-based learning program that can effectively assess students' understanding. This online learning tool is suitable to be used in any subject because of the feature that allows teachers to construct various types and levels of questions. Based on the research conducted by Licorish, Owen, Daniel, & George (2018), using Kahoot in online teaching and learning had increased students' achievement because they received faster and simple feedback and helped them focus more on the content being taught in the class.

The factor of ease of mobility created an advantage for online learning because students acquire access to the lesson content in multiple ways. This is because learning tools and materials are available in the form of mobile applications and other devices besides the personal computer. Students have the opportunity to upload their work without much hassle. The advantage of mobility of Google classroom was discussed by Heggart & Yoo (2018). Based on the findings in this study, interaction between the teacher and the students increased because teachers are able to assess students' work and send feedback of the work in a short period of time. The research findings also showed teachers do not face any difficulties in students acquiring understanding at different paces. With the application of Google classroom, the teachers are able to extend interaction on a one-to-one basis with their students. Nanthinii (2020) found that mobile applications provided by Google classroom increased students' understanding, provided an interactive learning environment, created ease of assignment submission and obtained the opportunity to view and hear the teacher's instructions multiple times.

Review on the past studies about online learning showed facility, skills and strategies used are in alignment with the current curriculum in Malaysian schools. This is because learning in Malaysian schools in this era is focused on inquiry-based learning that encourages students to explore the concepts related to each topic being taught. Online learning allows the students to acquire unlimited information that can facilitate inquiry-based learning. Researches conducted by Laksana, Dasna, & Degeng (2019) and Andrini (2016) supported the effectiveness of online learning towards inquiry-based learning. Besides this, language learning effectiveness increased through online learning because of the flexibility offered through this

approach. For example, Malaysian students being ESL learners need more exposure in English. Online learning offers the advantages of interactive learning tools, wider opportunity to discuss and more facilities for the teachers to provide feedback.

### **Issues in Online Learning**

Few past researches identified potential issues in online learning that barricades for effective learning especially in the aspects that require hands-on activities. Kebritchi, Lipschuetz, & Santiago (2017) identified issues in online learning related to students, teachers and the lesson content. Issues such as unable to fulfil expectations occur when teachers are not able to offer quick feedback all the time while conducting online lessons. Other than this, lack of unified preparation among all the students prior to the start of online learning creates obstacles for effective lesson delivery. Without a teacher physically monitoring the learning, not all the students in a class prepare adequately for the lesson. This factor delays the actual lesson planned by the teachers and lesson objectives not achieved. There are some students who feel left out while following online lessons because they cannot interact physically with their peers.

Due to online learning in Malaysian schools still new, students' participation level might consume longer time. For example, the initiative to answer assigned tasks or submitting the task. The numbers of students submitting tasks decreased when learning shifted to online mode because students did not have to explain reasons via face-to-face interaction with their teachers. Based on the research performed by Mahyoob (2020), external factors can create issues in online learning. The research identified irregularities in the speed of the internet in different places as a barricade for smooth online learning. The similar factor was supported in the research by Ismail, Bakar, & Wafa (2020). Their study showed the main challenge for online learning is less satisfaction with the internet service. This issue caused some students to not take part in the online learning activity that requires a specific application.

Lack of sufficient tools to take part in the learning sessions is also one of the external factors that created issues in online learning. Based on the news reported by The Star, students that share devices with other family members seldom attend classes on time. They have to skip some classes since one device is used by more people in the house. Therefore, the timetable of online lessons does not fit into certain students' device availability schedules (Teoh, 2020). This issue could be minor among students in the higher income families compared to the lower income families.

Based on the research conducted by Ilias & Baidi (2020), the technical aspects created issues in online learning. For example, knowledge in using certain computer programs to send online assignments is difficult for students who are newly exposed to the internet of things. These students need assistance the entire time in order to learn the methods of using the same mobile app or computer programs used by their teachers. There are situations where the students are unable to take part in class discussions during online learning. For example, when teachers require students to collaborate through google doc or spreadsheet. Students need technical knowledge to accomplish such tasks. The findings were found to be similar to the findings presented by Zaili, Moi, Yusof, Hanfi, & Suhaimi (2019) whose research showed online learning is not beneficial for all the students.

Review on foreign studies also showed issues of online learning due to technical problems. One such study is by Ngampornchai & Adams (2016) among the Thailand school students. This study showed that despite students having a positive attitude towards online learning, lack of experience in using certain applications and programs continue to become obstacles to achieving learning objectives.

Review on the research done by Sarvestani, Afshin, & Raeisy (2019) among the school students in Iran is another evidence of technical issues being the obstacle for online learning. Findings from this study showed technical issues such as slow internet, no access to electronic resources and often being stuck with password logged out without any assistance for troubleshooting. Based on the research done by Fidalgo, Thormann, Kulyk, & Lencastre (2020) among the students in Portugal, UAE and Ukraine students attending online lessons reported time management issues and lack of motivation to participate in the class activities. Not all the students are able to complete the given online activity within the time period. Due to the difference

in the amount of attention given by the teachers in online lessons, some students tend to feel isolated. There seems a disparity in the attention given by the teacher among the students.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

In-depth interview method was selected to conduct the research on students' perception about online learning. It is categorised as the qualitative research approach that will enable verification of the responses provided by young samples such as school students. Interview research design is a highly interactive method that ensures continuous communication between the researcher and the samples. Therefore, the researcher had the opportunity to facilitate samples in the data gathering process. For example, assistance in clarifying questions or rephrasing questions to ensure samples can provide related feedback. Another advantage of using in-depth interviews as the research design is the capability to track the data collection process because researcher and the samples interact with each other throughout the process.

This design is advantageous for researchers since the task of data interpretation can be done simultaneously while data collection is performed. It is convenient for the researchers to relate the responses provided by the samples and research objectives during data interpretation. By using an in-depth interview approach, the researcher had the benefit of establishing acknowledgement of the issue being studied at high accuracy. In contrast to quantitative research design, using qualitative research design is able to gather reasons and justifications for the responses samples provide. Interview questions will be in an open-ended format which provides a wide opportunity for the researcher and samples to continue question and answer sessions and enrich the data (Cardano, 2020).

In-depth interview method was selected since this method was delivered first-hand data to the researcher instead of waiting for data collection completed for a certain number of responses. Here, the researcher was able to control the data amount and quality while collecting the data. The process was completely under the control of the researcher thus removing external obstacles such as biased answers or delay in data collection. Using the in-depth interview method offered the flexibility of improving research instrument at any point of the data collection in accordance to the capability of the samples in understanding the questions and providing compatible responses (Nestek, Hui, & Kunkler, 2019).

Researcher ensured the study was conducted based on ethical practices. Prior approval to conduct the study was attained from Malaysian Ministry of Education (Reference: KPM.600-3/2/3-eras(3756)). Besides the approval, researcher ensured the participation of samples in this research were voluntary basis and there were no monetary or non-monetary incentives involved in motivating samples to take part in the data collection process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

### **Research Sample/Participants**

Samples and sampling techniques used in this study were selected according to the compatibility to the research problem and research objectives. Population of the research was the Malaysian school students since the research purpose was to identify students' perception. Students from both the primary and secondary school were referred to draw out the research samples. Therefore, selecting samples from student population is the most accurate way of ensuring the data will be suitable for analysis (Ros & Guillaume, 2019).

The sampling procedure selected to conduct data collection was stratified sampling. It is a sampling technique that divides population into a smaller group. Each group is states as a strata. In this sampling technique, strata are created according to the characteristics of the strata. It is also referred as proportional random sampling or sometimes as quota random sampling. Researcher selected stratified sampling technique to conduct the research because the technique allows researcher to acquire sample that will most accurately represent Malaysian student population which is very huge and not possible to survey each member in this population (Hanif, Shahbaz, & Ahmad, 2018). The strata of samples for this study were primary stage 1, primary stage 2, lower secondary and upper secondary. One student randomly selected

from these four strata based on the voluntary agreement of the students. The reason to stratify samples into these four categories was the different delivery methods used by the teachers during online learning sessions. By stratifying the sample into different categories, researcher would be able to collect diverse range of data. This was because students in each level of schooling might be exposed to different delivery methods during the online lessons.

### **Data Collection Method/Instrumentation**

Data collection was performed on voluntary basis whereby researcher sent an email invitation with consent forms. Students and parents who agreed to take part in the study were given appointment for a virtual meeting at a selected time. The interview session was recorded to ensure each information shared by the samples was captured. Research instrument for this study was an interview protocol. It was divided into three main sections as there were two research objectives to be answered and samples' demographic information to be filled. Section A captured the sample name, class, numbers of online classes they attend in a week and numbers of offline tasks assigned per week. Questions in section B and C were structured based on the concepts issue and impact of online learning. The interview questions were submitted to head of department to be vetted prior to the interview session.

### **Interview protocol**

#### Section A: Demographic information

Name: [Kept anonymous]

Class:

Number of online classes in a week:

Number of offline classes in a week:

#### Section B: Issues of online learning

1. How excited are you about attending the online classes?
2. How frequent you will be completely focused on online learning sessions?
3. Describe the level you are eager to participate in online class discussions.
4. How much are you interested in joining online classes?
5. Are the activities provided in the online classes engaging?

#### Section C: Impact of online classes

1. Do you understand each lesson delivered to you during the online learning?
2. Compare and describe your understanding in online learning and face-to-face learning.
3. Do you find the online learning schedules align with your day-to-day activities?
4. Did your physical fitness and health level changed after attending online learning?
5. Are you able to complete the homework based on the guidance received during the online learning sessions?

### **Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis was performed by transcribing the recorded responses into a text file. The transcribed information was triangulated to locate themes and subthemes from the responses given by the four samples. Main information outlined in each question was decided as the theme of the results. The procedure involves aligning all the responses for each question and identify the information whether it was similar or different from one another. Similar responses were grouped into one subthemes.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### Demographic characteristics

Summary of the samples' demographic information is presented in table 1 below. Each of the learning levels received both online and offline activities in a week. The higher the learning level, the more times the students have online learning sessions.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

| Level           | Online classes per week | Offline tasks per week |
|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Primary level 1 | 7                       | 5                      |
| Primary level 2 | 9                       | 6                      |
| Lower secondary | 10                      | 7                      |
| Upper secondary | 12                      | 8                      |

Samples' responses for the aspect of issue in online learning is shown in table 2 below. According to the findings, Malaysian students faced issues in certain aspects of online learning while they were quite pleased in few other aspects. The findings imply that non-traditional method of learning mostly exciting for the students and they are eager to attend the lesson. This is because the elements games and competitions excite the students. Findings also showed that students who are isolated at home look forward for online learning sessions to meet their friends. The finding is similar to the information identified in the study by Farrell & Brunton (2020) whom reported students participate actively in online classes and study by Wang & Tahir (2020) that found games like Kahoot increase their attention. Table 2 also highlighted issues such as feeling not comfortable in attending online classes. The result most probably students feel stressed taking the lessons from a static place for a very long time. However, contradicting findings were reported by Khan, Egbue, Palkie & Madden (2017) that students' participation increased since learning from the comfort of their own homes. Technical issues found in the study such as line interruption and background noise were also reported in the past studies such as Ilias & Baidi (2020), Zaili, Moi, Yusof, Hanfi & Suhaimi (2019).

Table 2: Issues in online learning

| Theme      | Sub-themes  |
|------------|---|
| Excitement | Games, Meeting Friends, Line interruption,              |
| Focus      | Not comfortable, Background noise, No hands-on practice |
| Eagerness  | Wait for surprises, Prepared, Follow through            |
| Interest   | Animations, Competitions                                |
| Engagement | Difficult to stay long, tiring, Fascinating discussions |

Data triangulation results from section C of the questionnaire are summarised in table 3. Based on the results it can be concluded that audio and visuals are significant to create understanding among the students. The effect of online learning only possible to offer benefit to the students when integrated with teaching aides. Similar findings reported by Bauarmak & Mahiroglu (2016) whereby video sharing and caricature animations create impact in the learning. But there are different aspects such as learning tools (Gregory & Bannister-Tyrrell, 2017) and mobile applications (Nanthinii, 2020) reported in other studies.

Majority of the responses for this section of the questionnaire admitted adverse effect of online learning session. This includes both physical and emotional discomfort. Based on the responses provided by the secondary level students, the continuous classes might be overwhelming due to the pre-existing stress of confined at one place. As shown in table 3, independent work while on offline mode is uneasy for students as they do not have a teacher to guide them as in a physical classroom. But in contrast to the current findings,



most of the past studies showed favourable impact from online learning sessions. For example, Andrini (2016) and Heggart & Yoo (2018) found online learning is more advantageous than face-to-face learning because students are able to make use of the mobility and unlimited information from search engines.

Table 3: Impacts of online learning

| Theme              | Sub-themes                                     |
|--------------------|--|
| Understanding      | Difficult, videos and pictures help, not clear |
| Schedule           | Flexible, Packed, Need more break              |
| Health and fitness | Muscle pain, eye health                        |
| Work efficiency    | Lost, no instant feedback in offline session   |

## CONCLUSION

Analysis in this study able to reveal findings to answer research objectives. Researcher's intention of identifying Malaysian students' perception about the online learning they have been following for more than a year. According to the findings, there are equally positive and negative issues found in the present online learning sessions. Therefore, online learning has both advantages and disadvantageous similar to any other learning approaches. However, there is apparent adverse of the online learning among Malaysian students since the responses showed problems in understanding, schedule, health and inefficiency in performing the tasks. These results imply online learning in Malaysia needs periodic improvement based on students' feedback. Schools may need to perform reviews on the current methods use in these lesson deliveries. Available time and movement control are the two limitations of this study. Researcher had to limit the numbers of samples to four due to the time constraints. Furthermore, data collection done via video calls faced technical interruptions. Future studies are suggested to be done via mixed mode whereby researchers can collect vast amount of data using quantitative approach and follow up with a qualitative method to increase validity and reliability of the data.

## LIMITATION

This study, however still pose some limitation especially pertaining our findings which need to be interpreted meticulously. Besides. The size of sample was not large enough to generalize the result for a larger segment of people. Also, since research has revealed that online learning has negative and positive sides equally, it was hard to take one solid stance.

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## APPENDICES

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Section B: Issues of online learning

1. How excited are you about attending the online classes?
2. How frequent you will be completely focused on online learning sessions?
3. Describe the level you are eager to participate in online class discussions.
4. How much are you interested in joining online classes?
5. Are the activities provided in the online classes engaging?

#### Section C: Impact of online classes

1. Do you understand each lesson delivered to you during the online learning?
2. Compare and describe your understanding in online learning and face-to-face learning.
3. Do you find the online learning schedules align with your day-to-day activities?
4. Did your physical fitness and health level changed after attending online learning?
5. Are you able to complete the homework based on the guidance received during the online learning sessions?



# **UNDERGRADUATE / STUDENT TEACHER**

## THE INFLUENCE OF PREVIOUS LEARNING EXPERIENCES ON THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR AMONG *PISMP* TESL TEACHER TRAINEES

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### Abstract

The source of knowledge is experienced, but how useful is it for pre-service teachers? The goal of this single-case study is to find out how previous learning experiences affect teacher trainees' implementation of the English language, specifically grammar instruction, in their practicum classroom. This study was carried out with a qualitative research design using structured interview questions, document analysis, and verbal interviews to collect data from the participants. The sample of this study involves five female teacher trainees from the Teacher Trainee Institution in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. The researcher used the Thematic Analysis that revealed that past learning experiences influenced the teacher trainees' teaching practice especially when grammar teaching is concerned. It affects their view and belief of traditional teaching approaches. The researcher believes this study will help educators, particularly pre-service teachers, deliver quality instruction while also providing their students with the best experience as language learners.

**Keywords:** Common European Framework of References, Experienced-Based-Learning, Experiential Learning Theory, Grammar-Translation-Method, teacher trainee, learning experience, grammar teaching

### Background of Study

The Malaysian Teacher Standards (MTS) were founded in 2009 to establish high competency qualifications for the teaching profession and elevate teachers' prestige in Malaysia. According to the research and policy communities, teachers develop significantly in their professions because they continue to learn after gaining extensive classroom experience (Irit, Kalir, and Malkinson, 2020). Therefore, previous learning experiences are critical in providing knowledge about practical modifications in the design and delivery of education to English Second Language (ESL) pupils. Reflection on the experience is essential if they are to transcend its consequences (Siti Noor Aneis Hashim & Nurahimah Mohd Yusoff, 2019). In a similar vein, Çimen and Daloğlu (2019, p. 759) stated that "teachers' previous language learning experiences create cognition about language learning, which forms the foundation of their initial conceptualization of the second language (L2) teaching during their teacher education and may remain significant throughout their professional lives." As a result, it is vital for teachers since they usually reflect on their previous learning experiences that influenced their perspective of English teaching, particularly grammar, and substantially impacted their careers. Eren (2019) stated that the education system should change following the needs and developments of the time. Thus, teachers are challenged to meet the needs of pupils from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds aligned with the current demands. Regardless of how the curriculum has evolved, teacher trainees should adapt to and accept the notion that the curriculum is constantly shifting. They may inadvertently adopt their prior teachers' teaching approaches in some way, whether beneficial or detrimental. Henceforth, this study explores the influence of previous learning experiences on grammar teaching among *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan (PISMP)* teacher trainees in the ESL classroom.

### Statement of Problem

The current English curriculum, CEFR-aligned KSSR, focuses on the four main language components of listening, speaking, writing, and reading, with grammar embedded in the main language skills. Some teacher trainees have trouble integrating contextualised grammar into their lessons due to their learning experiences. This learning experience, as stated by Liyana Ahmad Afip et al. (2019, p. 386), indicates that curriculum design and educational reform are subject to “continuous review, revision, and change.” However, the issue of the best approach to teaching grammar has been debated among scholars in the field of second language acquisition (Hillary & Nolan, 2020). Grammar instruction has changed dramatically over the last few decades, which has concerned researchers.

Teaching methods and practices were rigorous and solid, discouraging learning discovery (Farah Hussan Sahib & Mahani Stapa, 2021). The principal technique employed in the classroom during the use of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was memorising grammar rules, which were criticised as being “too methodical and arithmetical” (Farah Hussan Sahib & Mahani Stapa, 2021, p.16). With that in mind, the researcher has considered teacher trainees as the sample to identify the influence of previous learning experiences in grammar teaching on their current teaching strategies in the classroom. Deficiencies occur when there seems to be a lack of grammar teaching among PISMP TESL teacher trainees.

### **Significance of Study**

The findings of this case study involve several teacher trainees concerning their previous learning experiences with grammar. To some extent, the researcher believes that it will be beneficial for them as it provides insight into the importance of experience for language learners, and in that way, perhaps, they can improve their teaching practice in the classroom. This aligns with the teacher competency statements wherein the teacher’s learning experience is a vital contributor to the profession (Irit et al., 2020). On top of that, this study is expected to contribute to the development of English language teaching in Malaysian ESL classrooms. Several practical pieces of information pertaining to the issues of grammar teaching and experiential learning are concerned with improving the professional behaviour of teachers. Ong et al. (2021) clarified that a reflective model considers experiential knowledge, which leads to practice and reflection into professional competence. As a result, this research is significant because it offers insights that will benefit many future teachers in this noble profession.

### **Research Questions**

1. What prior learning experiences influenced teacher trainees' grammar instruction in the primary ESL classroom?
2. How do prior learning experiences affect teacher trainees' grammar instruction in primary ESL classrooms?

### **Method**

#### **Data Collection Method**

There are two loops of data collection conducted by the researcher

#### **First Loop of Data Collection**

The researcher combines structured written interviews with document analysis in the first loop of data collection. Firstly, the Google Form link is distributed individually to the five participants. Both instruments are classified as Section A and Section B. Eight structured questions in Section A must be answered, simply three or four sentences must be provided in a brief paragraph or a few phrases. The Google system automatically generates the responses and enables the researcher to collect and analyse the data in a systematic way. Then, the participants proceed through the document analysis procedure in Section B which requires them to write a brief reflection on their prior grammar-learning experience as language learners in primary school. This is beneficial as it allows the researcher to connect with their responses in the structured interview. Next, the researcher creates a researcher log that asserts significant terms, relevant quotes, and

various interpretations in a memo journal. Lastly, the researcher constructs relevant questions for the verbal interview.

### **Second Loop of Data Collection**

Instead of preparing any structured specific questions, the researcher prefers to jot down significant points and let the conversation flow naturally. After finalising admissible questions, the researcher conducts a verbal interview via Google Meet. Before creating a schedule, the researcher personally contacts the participants to inquire about their free time. The meeting's link was distributed 15 minutes earlier via WhatsApp. The researcher spends a total of 3 hours, as each participant takes approximately 30 minutes during the face-to-face interview. The meeting is recorded and transcribed through voice typing using the google extension application. This simplifies and expedites the data analysis process that follows.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The written interview is analysed to identify the approaches implemented by the participants' previous teachers and the relevance of their prior learning experiences in the 21st-century classroom. Meanwhile, document analysis performed to determine the significance of their prior grammar learning experience in their story reflection as learners. Lastly, the verbal interview is analysed to clarify the findings from both instruments in the first loop and identify the challenges encounter while teaching grammar during their practicum. Although these analytical procedures and the results collected are discussed in the following chapter, the researcher discusses generally and provides correlation and explanation of the procedures in the Thematic Analysis.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings indicated that a teacher trainee's current teaching strategy is influenced by their past learning experiences, notably when it comes to teaching grammar. It can be evident that most participants have tried multiple approaches to avoid relying on just one strategy. The researcher believed that each strategy has its advantages and disadvantages, so it is the teachers' responsibility to diversify the approaches to fulfil the needs of the students and be congruent with the language-related content. Hence, most of them experimented with trial-and-error strategies with their students while trying to adjust their teaching approaches throughout their practicum. In a contradictory study by Bowen (2020), the author argued that teachers tend to instruct students in the same manner that they were instructed. The author asserted that novice teachers are likely to follow what they were taught by their previous teachers and are generally influenced by their teaching approaches. This is because of the constant shifts and the teachers' transformational ideology in the Malaysian contextualised curriculum. In contrast, these teacher trainees put extra effort into experimenting with diverse teaching approaches and strategies to provide students with the highest quality of education. Although these findings differ from Bowen, they are consistent with previous studies by Warwick et al. (2019) that reaffirmed the need for L2 teachers to understand how their experiences as learners form their beliefs to transcend them. The themes identified in this study are consistent with Kolb's Experiential Theory. Despite having both positive and negative experiences, they worked tirelessly to provide their students with an excellent learning environment.

### **Limitations**

The researcher conducted a purposive strategy when setting up the criteria to look for potential participants to maintain its reliability. The researcher believes that if the same method employed, the same result can be obtained consistently. For example, the participants in this study are five female teacher trainees who are all 22 years old. They went to one school in a suburban residential area for their practicum. The interviews were done in two loops wherein the participants were asked to answer questions from a written open-ended interview and a verbal face-to-face interview. Moreover, keeping the circumstances as consistent as possible can reduce the influence of external factors that might create variation in the results. Henceforth, the researcher ensured participants were given the same information and tested under the same conditions.

However, several limitations hinder the research journey. Based on the researcher's findings, it was evident that the teacher trainees conducted their lessons virtually through Google Meet, Zoom, and other feasible online platforms during their previous practicum experience. Consequently, this has affected the data collection for this study in terms of context and lack of quality assurance processes. For instance, the data collected from the participants' previous experiences occurred in various situations and classroom settings; WhatsApp, Telegram, videlicet. It was difficult to obtain complete and accurate information as there was limited opportunity to confirm information with the participants during the procedure, which resulted in unverified collected data.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the significance of a learner's previous learning experiences. The two research questions were successfully addressed, and the results show that the teacher trainees' practicum teaching experiences were positively influenced by their prior learning experiences. The researcher interpreted these findings constructively and inferred that experience is essential to the learning process. Thus, it is consistent with Kolb's ELT, which saw learning as an integrated process in which knowledge is acquired through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2013). This case study found that the teacher trainees' prior experiences with language learning influenced their beliefs and attitudes toward teaching. As a result, they aspired to be better teachers by varying their teaching methods and in-class activities.

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## CULTURAL AWARENESS: BIBLIOTHERAPY IN A PRIMARY ESL CLASSROOM, LUNAS, KEDAH

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### Abstract

This paper describes the efforts of three teacher educators who utilised bibliotherapy as a medium to eradicate the students' negative perceptions of other races that exist in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak. A bibliotherapy is a therapeutic approach that uses written materials to effect positive changes and promote personality growth and development in the reader. This paper begins by underlining the significance of instilling cultural awareness in students in primary ESL classrooms and the analysis of the cultural issues that have arisen among the students. It is then followed by a narrative on the use of bibliotherapy in overcoming the issues discussed. Data were collected through observation, narratives during lessons of the Year 3 Language Arts lesson, and the responses from the students. The two aspects that can be observed as a result of the use of bibliotherapy were: 1) the change in students' perception towards people of other races and 2) their willingness and enthusiasm to learn about other races in Malaysia. Therefore, this paper suggests that bibliotherapy not only aid personal development and nurture good behaviour but can expose learners to the diverse cultures and ethnicities found in Malaysia: a melting pot of different cultures.

**Keywords:** Cultural Awareness, Bibliotherapy, Primary ESL Classroom

### Background of Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate cultural awareness among Malaysians, especially the young generation. Cultural awareness is concerning as the misconception towards the cultures, especially the East Malaysia culture. The misconception has been passed down from generation to generation, and the cycle continues. This misconception had to be dispelled by exposing them to different cultures. In this study, a digital storybook was used as a tool for bibliotherapy. Instead of simply disseminating a story and message, this digital storybook can assist young learners in learning and practising the values instilled. The targeted subject for this investigation is primary school pupils. Aside from that, bibliotherapy will benefit primary ESL learners by enhancing their language acquisition.

### Statement of Problem

Malaysia is separated geographically by the South China Sea into two parts: West Malaysia and East Malaysia. Despite not sharing geographical land borders with the Peninsular states, Sabah and Sarawak have been part of Malaysia since September 16, 1963. The issue addressed in this study is the misconception about East Malaysian lifestyles, specifically in Sarawak. The children's perceptions of community life in Sarawak are inaccurate, perhaps due to its location on Borneo Island. Children may believe that the people of Sarawak still live in deprivation because they live in wooden longhouses, have no internet or modern technology, travel with *sampans*, bathe in rivers, and so on. The issue highlighted is a small fraction of the multicultural issues commonly experienced in a culturally diverse country like Malaysia. This paper aims to investigate the change in students' perception of the multicultural issue highlighted through digital storybooks using the bibliotherapy technique.

### Significance of Study

Since Malaysia is a multicultural country, diversity is a unique feature of Malaysian culture. Scepticism of other cultures, however, is an inevitable issue that comes together with this uniqueness. One worrying issue that resulted from this situation is racism. Students are more likely to develop prejudices when there is a lack of exposure to other cultures due to attending schools and living in racially segregated areas such as Lunas. The findings of this research will assist in eradicating the students' negative perceptions of other races that exist in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak. By gaining an awareness of many social groups and cultures in the classroom, students taught about diversity can better combat biases and prejudices (Yurtsever & Özel, 2021). They can better draw comparisons between their own lives and those of their peers as a result. By enhancing their cultural competence, diversity also enables students to be sympathetic to the experiences of others, as well as enhances their enthusiasm to gain more knowledge about other races and cultures.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the misconceptions about the people and culture in Sarawak?
2. How has bibliotherapy eradicated these misconceptions?

### **Method**

The data was collected from two sources to explore this issue further. Observation and narrative analysis techniques have been employed in this research. 32 students, all of whom are of the Malay race, were chosen from a class as respondents to gain insight into their thoughts about the various races in Malaysia, notably in Sarawak. The respondents were asked some generic questions about Sarawak before the lesson started. The purpose of the questions was to assess the respondents' general knowledge of and opinions about Sarawak and its residents. The remainder of the lesson was then spent making observations. Some of the components observed were their attitude toward learning about Sarawak and their desire to learn about Sarawak's culture through bibliotherapy. Following the lesson, some inquiries were made to assess the respondents' comprehension of the book's subject matter and the moral lessons they had learned from reading *The Lost Hornbill*. Following the completion of the lesson, respondents were asked about their perspectives on Sarawak's various cultures.

### **Findings and Discussion**

From the research, we observed numerous favourable outcomes. The list of misconceptions about Sarawak and its culture, and the improvement in respondents' perceptions of Sarawak following the bibliotherapy session, were conducted during the Language Arts lesson. At first, the respondents did not instantly know that Sarawak was a big part of Malaysia. They only knew a little about Sarawak because two Sarawak-born teachers were at the school. However, respondents were not exposed much about Sarawak existence and Sarawakians lifestyle because such issues are not covered in their learning syllabi or textbooks. Therefore, through a 90-minute Language Arts class, we hope to expand minds and change their perceptions of Sarawak. After studying the *Lost Hornbill* story, the respondents' understanding of Sarawak expanded. For instance, when constructing a mind map regarding the changes in Sarawak, the respondents could indicate how people in Sarawak currently live. According to the mind maps they have created, they could highlight the changes in Sarawak as mentioned in the story. For instance, the changes in Sarawak that pupils could highlight were good access to internet connections, modern longhouses, bungalows and condominiums, cars and motorcycles as a means of transportation, and more. Surprisingly, respondents recognised additional Sarawak information not mentioned in the story, such as "Laksa Sarawak," "Kek Lapis Sarawak," and "Kek Lapis Sarawak."

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study was the time constraints. This limitation is because the respondents were only available for a certain period. In our case, the respondents were only accessible for 90 minutes. Due to time constraints, researchers could not conduct semi-structured interviews with the

respondents. Next, another limitation of this study is the sample. The sample for this study is thirty-two Malay students from a school which may influence the findings accuracy. Therefore, generalisation is prohibited as the sample also affects the reliability of a research. If this study had been conducted with a substantial and varied sample, more accurate results could have been obtained.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the bibliotherapy technique we deliver through digital storybooks in a Language Arts class can contribute to solving racism issues in a multicultural country. Aside from that, it is an effective tool for introducing students to new knowledge of Malaysian multiculturalism and teaching them the positive values presented in the stories. The project is hoped to be continued to other primary ESL classrooms to widen the children's view of Malaysia and develop a positive insight into the ideas and values of people from different backgrounds that will teach them valuable lessons about tolerance, equality, and cross-cultural friendships.

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## TEACHER TRAINEES' BELIEFS, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING DURING PRACTICAL TEACHING THROUGHOUT MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER

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### Abstract

The Blended Synchronous Learning (BSL) approach should be fully implemented in schools, especially during the nationwide shutdown caused by the Movement Control Order (MCO). To ensure the success of BSL implementation in schools, teachers must have strong and positive beliefs regarding this approach. The study aims to investigate TESL teacher trainees from a Malaysian public university about their beliefs and practices. The study's findings show that TESL teacher trainees have solid and positive beliefs about BSL, such as their readiness to use the BSL approach, students' autonomy during learning activities, and the benefits of BSL for both teachers and students.

**Keywords:** Blended Synchronous Learning, Teacher Trainees, TESL

### Background of Study

The modern blended learning paradigm combines conventional face-to-face instruction with remote instructional methods to enhance and expand student learning experiences outside the learning process through synchronous or asynchronous classes (Fu and Rao, 2020). Blended Synchronous Learning is one of the best learning approaches to address several obstacles raised by the Covid-19 pandemic for the upcoming academic years. The Ministry for Higher Education Malaysia has declared that all higher education institutions will dedicate to conducting online learning entirely till December 31 (New Straits Times 2020). The Ministry of Education suggested that the teaching and learning process to resume through a digital platform throughout the implementation of the (MCO) and conditional movement control order (CMCO). However, switching to online learning is difficult even for experienced teachers, let alone teacher trainees. This transition is why teacher trainees should be well-versed in BSL, as it will assist them in resolving any issues they might face as English teachers after graduation.

### Statement of Problem

Covid-19 has prompted schools to suspend operations and transition to online learning, requiring educators to construct remote and online learning plans shortly. However, not all teachers are ready to take on this role (Ascione, 2020). According to Shukri et al. (2020), instructors have encountered obstacles in migrating to online learning, such as administering online assessments, carrying out classes that integrate synchronous and asynchronous learning, and preparing final exam questions. The transition to online learning is challenging even for experienced educators, much alone teacher trainees. Teacher trainees must have extensive knowledge of BSL for the program to be successful, and all of these elements would impact teacher trainees' performance and acceptance of BSL during the teaching and learning process.

### Significance of Study

The findings of this study offer some significance for future teacher trainees, especially regarding the BSL approach. This study could help them be prepared to implement the BSL approach and provide solutions to the challenges faced by the teacher trainees in this research. The findings of this study are also expected to yield some insight to TESL lecturers in Malaysia into the lack of specific courses in universities that train teacher trainees to use BSL, which has forced teacher trainees to quickly adapt to the online learning shift caused by Covid-19. Furthermore, universities should encourage the use of the BSL approach among lecturers. Having lecturers use the BSL approach in their lectures and emphasise the various salient aspects of the BSL approach during the lesson indirectly encourages teacher trainees to practice and develop positive beliefs about the BSL approach.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the TESL teacher trainees' beliefs on the BSL approach?
2. To what extent do the TESL teacher trainees practice the BSL approach during their practical teaching?
3. What challenges have the TESL teacher trainees faced in implementing the BSL approach?

### **Method**

This study utilised a self-constructed questionnaire for the collection of data. A group of 42 TESL teacher trainees from a Malaysian public university who have completed practical teaching were selected using the purposive sampling method to answer the questionnaire. A few interview sessions with six teacher trainees selected using the Fishbowl method (random sampling) were conducted for qualitative data collection. Standardised, open-ended interview sessions were conducted to allow more authentic information and personal experiences to be shared compared to the data collected from the questionnaire. The interviewer could also inquire for justifications for the answers provided by the respondents.

### **Findings and Discussion**

To answer the first research question, it was noted that the TESL teacher trainees possess positive theoretical beliefs on the different aspects of the BSL approach including its many benefits. Most of the teacher trainees were ready to implement the BSL approach confidently. It was also found that the TESL teacher trainees carried out the BSL weekly. They have taken several steps to ensure the success of the lessons. These include encouraging students to collaborate outside of class hours for group discussions, solving tasks assigned in class, incorporating critical thinking skills and using social media to solve the tasks, embracing student-centered learning during practical teaching by acting as a facilitator and encouraging students to participate actively in the learning activities, and designing materials suitable for self-access learning that allows students to learn independently. Finally, the lack of student engagement, accessibility to excellent internet connection and personal devices, and proper instructions and guidelines were the main challenges the TESL teacher trainees faced in implementing blended synchronous learning during practical teaching through movement control order.

### **Limitations**

This study had a relatively small sample of 42 TESL teacher trainees from a Malaysian public university. Therefore, the findings of this study could only represent the views of TESL teacher trainees in the selected public university. Besides, due to the significant limitation of MCO, the researcher was unable to meet all the respondents face to face to conduct the study in person with all the respondents.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the teacher trainees' readiness to use the BSL approach, students' autonomy in learning activities, and the benefits for both teachers and students indicate that TESL teacher trainees have positive beliefs about the BSL approach. With these positive beliefs about the BSL approach, the teacher

trainees have demonstrated that they have practiced the BSL approach regularly in terms of all the aspects stated in the above discussion, despite facing several challenges in implementing the BSL approach during their practical teaching through MCO.

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## A CASE STUDY ON PRIMARY ESL PUPILS' PERCEPTION OF GOOGLE JAMBOARD IN ENHANCING THEIR ONLINE SPEAKING MOTIVATION

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### Abstract

The relationship between student motivation and the teaching and learning tool should be assessed when designing an effective online speaking activity. The goal of this case study was to investigate primary ESL students' perceptions of the Google Jamboard tool in terms of improving their communication skills. A pre-and post-self-evaluation survey was distributed to explore the varying perceptions of primary ESL pupils of Google Jamboard in enhancing their online speaking motivation. The observation conducted sought to understand how Google Jamboard had impacted ESL primary pupils' online speaking motivation, while a semi-structured interview was held to delve deeper into pupils' thoughts and feelings on the use of Google Jamboard. The findings of this research showed that all five primary ESL pupils who participated in this study had a positive perception of Google Jamboard in enhancing their online speaking motivation. Furthermore, this study discovered a few advantages of using Google Jamboard to promote collaboration and independent learning among primary ESL students.

**Keywords:** Google Jamboard, motivation, online learning, collaboration, independent learning

### Background of Study

Keeping primary ESL students engaged and motivated to speak can be difficult, particularly if the speaking activities occur online. In recent years, online learning and its impacts on pupils' motivation have been the subject of extensive research. There are opposing views on how online learning impacts pupils' online learning and speaking motivation. Purnama (2021) strongly believes that students have high learning motivation and are actively involved in learning activities. In addition, pupils found it easier to express themselves and feel that learning is engaging. Taking this viewpoint into account, another study by Alawamleh, Al-Twait, and Al-Saht (2020) highlights the two sides to this issue. While some students were satisfied with online learning, the majority did not feel encouraged to participate, as they saw online learning as individualised learning and limited interaction with others. In this context, the relationship between pupil motivation and the teaching and learning tool should be closely examined in order to design an effective online speaking activity that meets the diverse learning needs of Malaysian students.

### Statement of Problem



The benefits of Google Jamboard and ways to apply this tool are widely discussed and explored. Zdraveski, Janecka, Sotiroski, and Manceski (2020) conducted a study to investigate students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using G-suite tools, specifically G-mail, Google Classroom, Google Hangouts and Meet, Google Drive, Google Form, and others, which have proven to be beneficial and have transformed online learning. There appears to be a lack of focused research on primary ESL students' perceptions of Google Jamboard in assisting their online speaking motivation. As a result, there are serious concerns about the tool's effectiveness in the context of online learning. This matches the findings of Nuraeni's (2021) study of teachers' perspectives on using G-Workspace applications in the context of distance learning during the pandemic era. According to Nuraeni (2021), Google Jamboard, among a few others, was the least used and preferred because it was difficult to apply to distance learning. While the paper acknowledges the issue, the larger question of whether Google Jamboard has the potential to improve primary ESL students' online speaking motivation is never fully explored.

It can be noted that pupils seem to lack the motivation to engage in online speaking activities. This is proven by Mohammed, Khidhir, et al. (2020), that the learners showed less effort and responses during teaching and learning sessions by switching off their video and audio throughout the online lesson. Hence, many factors must that must be taken into consideration when analysing the causes that lead to primary ESL pupils' lack of motivation when participating in online speaking activities. Sheela Faizura, Siti Hafizah, et al. (2022) have identified several challenges faced by students when participating in online learning that must be considered regarding speaking tasks. These include encouraging pupils to talk in class is difficult because not all learners are comfortable, speaking tasks can negatively affect students' confidence, communication barriers cause difficulty in speaking and uttering words appropriately, or a lack of peer connection.

### **Significance of Study**

Teachers are given the opportunity to consider, explore and implement the Google Jamboard tool as an effective platform to build captivating speaking activities and better support online speaking activities in their English lessons. Hence, teachers will be able to support their lessons and learning activities with essential 21st-century learning skills such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking as well as communication. This research is significant for students because it investigates the impact of their teachers' use of Google Jamboard. Pupils provided with an opportunity to explore the platform encourage them to become flexible and take charge of their learning. To put it simply, they are learning to learn. Pupils are not confined to a set approach to speaking activities but are empowered to create their own, supported by the Google Jamboard platform that acts as a sandbox for independent learning and collaboration with teacher support and constructive feedback. This study can be closely related to policymakers who then may become aware of how the Google Jamboard can be leveraged to enhance education by empowering teachers and pupils through the process of enriching and making teaching, learning, and assessment significant to each individual. Policymakers can implement the Google Jamboard tool in the curriculum and advocate this tool in teachers' guidebooks. They can also disseminate this tool to educators through seminars, courses, workshops, training, and conferences going into detail on the uses, benefits, and ways to work it and implement them effectively to improve productivity and quality of speaking lessons and activities. It would then successfully enable teachers to respond efficiently to complex challenges in the classroom.

## Research Questions

1. What are the primary ESL pupils' perceptions of the Google Jamboard tool in enhancing their online speaking motivation?
2. What are the benefits of using Google Jamboard among primary ESL pupils' online speaking motivation?

## Method

A permission letter was sent to the headmistress of the selected school in Port Dickson. Five primary Year 3 pupils were chosen through purposive sampling. Next, permission letters were sent to the parents of the five chosen pupils for consent. Private online lessons were conducted outside of school hours. A self-evaluation survey is administered twice immediately after the lessons: one before (pre) the implementation of Google Jamboard and another after (post) implementation. The observation was carried out in the second week using Google Meet, field notes, and an observation checklist. A semi-structured interview was carried out in the third week via Google Meet. For quantitative data, the survey data was transferred into a table form and the percentage for pre and post was calculated. Later the values we compared and analysed. On the other hand, thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data, observation, and semi-structured interview data. The field notes and interview transcript were explored and coded using inductive coding. The description and theme were developed accordingly. To represent and report our findings, we used a taxonomy chart. Triangulation was done with all the data collected and validity and reliability were ascertained. Lastly, researchers reported the findings.

## Findings and Discussion

The results of this study suggest that pupils showed a positive perception of Google Jamboard in enhancing their online speaking motivation in relation to collaboration. Melvina Chung's (2021) survey found that respondents were very positive about the use and acceptance of Google Jamboard, especially when performing group activities. Additionally, all five pupils who participated in this study also showed a prominently positive perception of Google Jamboard in enhancing their online speaking motivation in relation to independent learning. In accordance with the present results, a previous study by Carreira, Ozaki, and Maeda (2013) has demonstrated that students' perceptions of teachers' support for autonomy have increased students' intrinsic motivation. The observation findings also revealed that all five showed remarkable enthusiasm by working hard to find interesting information to include in their project to be shared with their friends later. These findings are contradictory to that found by Nielsen (2012), that states that not all learners shared the assumed interest in developing learner autonomy. Some assumptions for the lack of interest were that they might lack the necessary motivation or maybe it leads to an increased workload which they were not prepared to handle. When students were given the autonomy and ownership to regulate, direct, and evaluate their own learning, they tended to be more self-satisfied and prouder of their work, and as a result, they became more eager to participate in speaking activities to show their hard work to others. These results seem to be consistent with the research by Tanaka (2017) which found that the perceived autonomy possessed by students is also significant in cultivating the pleasure of learning which enhances the level of motivation.

In the study, one of the most prominent benefits of Google Jamboard was collaboration. The five participants who took part in this study have declared that they were able to actively collaborate with their friends while completing their speaking material using Google Jamboard. Jamboard, according to Catillo-Cuesta, Ochoa-Cueva, and Cabrera-Solano (2022), is a Google workspace used to strengthen virtual collaboration by allowing students to collaborate on projects, brainstorm ideas, and design concept maps, thereby encouraging collaboration and participation. The current study also found that Google Jamboard promotes independent learning among pupils amidst being involved in online lessons. According Azmat and Ahmad (2022), there is a lack of social interaction during online classes where pupils feel fear of loneliness and feel isolated. While previous studies like such have given prominent stress on the lack of social interaction and connection as well as the increase in the feelings of isolation among pupils during online learning, the results of this study provide a rather vital insight that independent learning can be beneficial if structured to fit into pupils' online learning routine. One pupil brought to attention during the interview session that "not every work needs to work together, sometimes we need to do it on our own and alone" and stated, "get more space to work on my own". This highlights the need for differentiated activities during online learning to ensure the varied needs and learning styles of pupils are met.

### **Limitations**

Some limitations that are recognised in this case study are first, the evaluation of primary ESL pupils' perception of the Google Jamboard tool is restricted to only online speaking motivation. The second limitation is the disadvantages of the Google Jamboard tool on pupils' online speaking are not explored.

### **Conclusion**

This case study found that all five pupils had a favourable perception of the Google Jamboard tool in enhancing their online speaking motivation about collaboration and independent learning. Two prominent benefits were identified which are Google Jamboard promotes collaboration as well as independent learning among primary ESL pupils. Considerations can be taken to explore lower proficient pupils' perception of Google Jamboard in enhancing their online speaking motivation. It is crucial because lower proficient pupils are more vulnerable during online learning. Despite these promising results, the researcher should not neglect the complex motivation process. Since this study was time-bound, the increase in the pupils' online speaking motivation was not analysed in scrutiny. Future study can consider conducting at a more natural pacing by spending a longer period to truly study the increase in online speaking motivation among primary ESL pupils.

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## AN INVESTIGATION ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN MALAYSIAN PRIMARY ESL SPEAKING CLASSES

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### Abstract

The purpose of this survey was to find out about pre-service teachers' perceptions of cooperative learning in Malaysian primary ESL-speaking classes and the difficulties they face. The study implies that the policy-makers, pre-service teachers, and pupils would gain benefits from the cooperative learning strategy. The data for this study came from 120 pre-service teachers at the International Languages Teacher Training Institute in Kuala Lumpur who had practicum experiences. The research instrument used to collect and analyse the data is a four-point Likert scale online questionnaire using Google Forms. SPSS and descriptive analysis which include percentage, mean and standard deviation was used for the data analysis procedures. The findings of this research highlighted that the pre-service teachers perceived that cooperative learning enhances pupils' speaking skills by increasing pupils' motivation, self-esteem, and interaction with others. Furthermore, most pre-service teachers agreed that the challenges of conducting cooperative learning include time constraints and student-group conflicts, but the locus of responsibility and authority are not.

**Keywords:** Cooperative learning, speaking skill, motivation, interaction, challenges

### Background of Study

Speaking is one of the fundamental but challenging productive skills among ESL learners. Although the Ministry of Education has taken several approaches to improve ESL pupils' speaking skills, low proficiency in the English language among some pupils is still inevitable since it is considered a second language in the Malaysian education context (David et al., 2015). Therefore, the ministry, policymakers, and teachers should lay emphasis on implementing cooperative learning to enhance pupils' speaking skills. The implementation of cooperative learning has been shown in many countries to improve student learning (Kandasamy & Habil, 2018). Cooperative learning is defined as an instructional method in which learners work in small groups together to complete the assigned task under teachers' guidance and monitoring (Sijali, 2017). Teachers also play a vital role in creating a highly structured and well-organized learning environment to ensure pupils' active participation. Besides, cooperative learning focuses on social inclusion where teachers consider pupils' proficiency levels while dividing them into groups. According to Parnrod and Darasawang (2018), pupils work towards the shared goal

while doing group tasks, even though they have different learning styles. Pupils learn from a broad perspective when they discuss various ideas in the group.

### **Statement of Problem**

Cooperative learning makes each pupil a stronger individual. Pupils learn together so they can perform higher as individuals. However, one of the common issues is teachers' tendency to use the teacher-centered approach in speaking classes. Students who are not permitted to collaborate with their peers become passive learners. Fakhra and others (2018) also claimed that Asian learners tend to be passive in language classrooms because they are accustomed to merely listening to teachers' input instead of brainstorming actively. Moreover, there is an increase in proficiency gaps between good and weak pupils (Misbah et al., 2017). The data shows that 3500,000 pupils in Malaysia fail to meet the minimum English proficiency required (Ministry of Education, 2013). As a result, the teaching method that focuses on a teacher-centered strategy limits pupils to practice and interact with the language among their peers while learning. This situation raises concerns about cooperative learning used to improve students' speaking skills. As pre-service teachers are responsible to produce successful learners in the future, their perceptions of cooperative learning are vital. Yet, little research investigates the perceptions of ESL pre-service teachers concerning cooperative learning. Thus, the researcher aims to find answers in this survey design research.

### **Significance of Study**

This research promotes the use of cooperative learning in Malaysian primary ESL speaking classes. It also stresses how cooperative learning enhances pupils' speaking skills and identifies the challenges while conducting it. For policy-makers, it helps them to gather information and make recommendations to the schools for the most preferred course of action. They can also incorporate beneficial interventions into educational policy to help teachers and students in the classroom. This research helps pre-service teachers gain knowledge and effectively use cooperative learning in the classroom. Besides, they can understand their roles and improve themselves to ensure the effectiveness of pupils' learning. For the students, cooperative learning allows them to learn from others. It also helps them to value the contributions of others, resolve conflicts and work together as a team. Pupils also tend to be motivated and have more confidence while speaking in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions of the research are listed below:

1. How does the use of cooperative learning enhance pupils' speaking skills?
2. What are the challenges of conducting cooperative learning in Malaysian primary ESL speaking classes?

## Method

In this study, a survey was used as a quantitative research method. The research instrument used was a questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale. The questionnaire comprised three sections. The research participants were 120 pre-service teachers from the International Languages Teacher Training Institute who had completed practicums. The research instrument was validated with the help of various experts, including the researcher's supervisor and an English language expert teacher. Repetitive and leading questions have been improved or removed by taking expert advice. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is used to assess reliability. For the data collection procedures, the researcher consulted and received approval from the supervisor regarding the topics chosen before carrying out the pilot study and actual research. Following that, a pilot study was carried out. Later, the researcher requested permission to conduct the study at the International Languages Teacher Training Institute in Kuala Lumpur. Then, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the research respondents, and examined and analysed the data collected. For the data analysis procedures, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 statistical software was used in analysing the data using descriptive analysis. The researcher calculated the percentage, mean and standard deviation for each item regarding the research questions in this research.

## Findings and Discussion

Based on the findings for the first research question: 'How does the use of cooperative learning enhance pupils' speaking skills?', the total average mean of 3.68 and average standard deviation of 0.534 deduced that most of the pre-service teachers strongly agreed that cooperative learning increases pupils' motivation, self-esteem, and interaction with others while learning. Yang and others (2022) stated that a sense of inclusion ensures a comfortable learning environment for pupils. Furthermore, cooperative learning assists students in developing oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, and responsibility (Nikman, 2008). As for the findings for the second research question: 'What are the challenges of conducting cooperative learning in Malaysian primary ESL speaking classes?', most of the pre-service teachers agreed that cooperative learning is time-consuming as it requires enormous preparation for cooperative activities in speaking classes (mean= 3.70). Group conflicts among pupils are also one of the challenges as it causes pupils who do not have group work skills to stay quiet (mean= 3.47). However, most pre-service teachers disagreed that locus of responsibility and authority is one of the challenges (average mean= 2.18). This disagreement is due to the fact that a learner-centered approach is now encouraged and emphasised (Kaput, 2018). Pre-service teachers were also given input and insights into the 21st-century education approach.

## Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the limited range of research respondents. The study only focuses on pre-service teachers who have completed practicums at the International Languages Teacher Training Institute. Hence, it cannot represent those novice in-service teachers and pre-service teachers from other institutes. Furthermore, this study focuses solely on students' English-speaking abilities; no other skills considered. In addition, this research focuses only on the quantitative method by using an online questionnaire. The respondents do not have a chance to express their opinions on elements of cooperative learning that are not included in the questionnaire.

## Conclusion

In this survey, the researcher discovered that most pre-service teachers have positive perceptions of cooperative learning in Malaysian primary ESL speaking classes. Based on the findings, the pre-service teachers agreed that cooperative learning benefited pupils in learning as it increases their motivation, self-esteem, and interaction with others. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers perceive time-consuming and group conflicts among students as challenges of conducting cooperative learning in speaking classes; however, they disagree that locus of responsibility and authority. Future research should delve into the perceptions of in-service teachers in Malaysia to get a more generalized result for this topic. Moreover, they could investigate ways to overcome the challenges of conducting cooperative learning. They could also include instruments like observation and interviews to collect more in-depth information.

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## A SURVEY ON TEACHER TRAINEES' CHALLENGES IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS FOR PRIMARY ESL CLASSROOM

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### **Abstract**

This survey was designed to investigate teacher trainees' challenges in enhancing students' speaking skills for primary ESL classrooms. The data for this study were gathered from 66 teacher trainees at IPG Kampus Bahasa Antarabangsa. The questionnaire and semi-structured interview were utilised to gather and analyse the data. The data will next be analysed using statistical tools, SPSS and descriptive analysis for quantitative data. Furthermore, it applies thematic analysis to assess qualitative data. Students' challenges include language and psychological issues such as difficulty responding to speakers with different accents and feeling embarrassed to speak English because they lack fluency. The researchers concluded that effective teaching aids, a reward system, and gamification in education are practical approaches to addressing the difficulties that students face when speaking English in an ESL classroom. Lastly, this study advocated extending the research time and conducting it in greater depth, over a bigger geographical area, in a diverse learning environment, and with participants from diverse racial backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Teaching strategy, speaking skills, teaching aids, gamification, reward system.

### **Background of Study**

Language is a tool for communication that everyone uses in their daily lives for interacting, exchanging ideas, understanding others' thoughts, and listening to others' perspectives. Besides, English is widely used in various day-to-day activities in Malaysia, including commerce, education, and management. Nevertheless, most English learners, specifically in English as Second Language (ESL), still struggle to develop their speaking skills (Paneerselvam, & Mohamad, 2019).

During my practicum phase one, most students were hesitant to speak English via online class. According to Paneerselvam & Mohamad (2019), lack of motivation and self-confidence, anxiety, inhibition, and inadequate vocabulary knowledge are the major obstacles that impede ESL learners' speaking skills. Thus, some would merely respond to my queries with 'yes' or 'no.' The majority would stay silent throughout the class, even if I called out their name. They also felt shy and anxious to respond to my questions. Most students then refused to engage in class. Some had low self-esteem, poor internet connections, and no devices. Hence, the process of identifying the potential challenges would assist the teacher trainers in preparing several practical approaches. As a result, the student's proficiency in speaking English in the Malaysian context could be improved over time.

Therefore, this study identifies teacher trainees' challenges in enhancing students' speaking skills and provides practical solutions.

### **Statement of Problem**

Self-esteem affects students' learning, especially their speaking ability. Besides, they also struggle with confidence and practise. Speaking English can be challenging for English learners, especially if they do not have a good command of the language (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). Moreover, the interference of L1 disturbs students' L2 fluency. A strong influence of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, among Malaysian ESL students and the negative transfer of the mother tongue have become barriers to using

English (Normazidah et al., 2012; Wei & Zhang, 2013; Lai, 2015; N. Syafiqah Yacob & Melor M. Yunus, 2019). The interference usually occurs when they often try to correlate the two languages.

Students also struggle to speak English in class due to fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of vocabulary, and peer bemusement. Thus, second language acquisition and personality are strongly correlated. John & Amuthu (2020) found that introverts respond slower in the target second language than extroverts. Thus, language teachers have implemented several methods to improve students' language skills. These methods may not fit learners' learning styles. Therefore, language teachers should use techniques that suit their students' learning styles (Šafran, J., & Gojkov-Rajić, A. 2019).

In essence, by addressing the concerns, teacher trainees can design a variety of practical ways that appeal to students' personalities and learning styles.

### **Significance of Study**

English is being treated as a world language because of its vast presence all over the world (Raja, B., & Selvi, K., 2011). However, the majority of English as a second language (ESL) students are still struggling to improve their speaking skills. Thus, this research will yield a greater understanding of the possible challenges encountered by teacher trainees in enhancing students' speaking skills and how it affects students' engagement in speaking English. Furthermore, this study also highlights several effective strategies to increase learners' speaking skills and class participation. By analysing the challenges, a teacher may face when attempting to improve students' speaking abilities, effective strategies can be used to enhance the learning experience. Consequently, students' speaking skills can be enhanced on occasion.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the challenges faced by the teacher trainee in enhancing students' speaking skills?
2. What are the practical approaches in solving the challenges faced by students in speaking English for ESL classrooms?

### **Method**

This study employed a mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Next, the data were gathered from the questionnaire and interview.

### **Data Collection Procedures:**

Questionnaire:

An online platform questionnaire is used to identify the challenges associated with the teacher trainee in improving students' speaking skills. The questions are then distributed via an online platform, Google Forms, and answered by teacher trainees from various diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and races.

Interview:

The interview was conducted via WhatsApp messages at the request and consent of the participants, who preferred a written interview over an oral interview. The researcher then began the interview with the primary question regarding practical solutions to the issues students have when speaking English in ESL classrooms. The researcher then analysed the responses of all interviews and extracted excerpts that provided answers to the research questions.

### **Data Analysis Procedures:**

Questionnaire:

The data will be analysed using the statistical software IBM Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS). The data then is analysed using descriptive analysis by looking at percentage, mean and standard deviation.

#### Interview:

Thematic analysis aided in the process of analysing data gathered through interviews. Next, all retrieved data will be coded and classified in order to be further developed. Then, the researcher detailed the codes that could be derived from the acquired data, specifically the interview data. Following that, the researcher classified the codes into themes based on their similarities.

### Findings and Discussion

The second component of the questionnaire was designed to address RQ1. The researcher then utilised descriptive statistics to analyse the data acquired from the survey questionnaire. The challenges experienced by the teacher trainee in enhancing students' speaking skills were assessed using fifteen (15) items from the questionnaire. As for the language issue, 41 participants, equivalent to 62.1%, strongly agree that students have difficulty responding to speakers with various accents. Unfamiliar accents, both native and non-native, can cause major listening comprehension issues. In terms of psychological issues, 40-60% of teacher trainees strongly agree that students feel ashamed because they do not speak English fluently. Therefore, students who have low self-esteem regarding their own skills, particularly speaking, will believe they have no grasp of English.

Next, five (5) participants were interviewed over WhatsApp by the researcher in order to glean information regarding RQ 2 and practical approaches in solving the challenges faced by students in speaking English for ESL classrooms. As this is a perception-driven study, the purpose of the interview was for the teacher trainees to reflect on their own views and experiences in relation to the topic at hand. Therefore, the research question was addressed by three emergent themes: utilisation of effective teaching aids, reward system, and gamification in education. Based on the findings and discussion above, all retrieved data is considered reliable throughout the thematic analysis.

### Limitations

In this study, the primary focus will be identifying the teacher trainees' challenges in enhancing students' speaking skills. It will only cover the 66th point of view of a teacher trainee at IPG Kampus Bahasa Antarabangsa. As a result, the findings' scope is limited because different locations, circumstances, and individual experiences may yield different results. Consequently, other teacher-in-training candidates from a different campus may confront distinct obstacles. Moreover, this study will not cover the external factors such as learners' household backgrounds which may influence their performance in class, resulting in them speaking English more fluently. Regarding ways of conforming to the issues, it will only present the perspectives of five interview participants. Therefore, only a limited portion of the participant's practical approach can be collected for this report's data.

### Conclusion

To clarify, this survey research of teacher trainees' challenges in enhancing students' speaking skills for primary ESL classrooms is required because it investigates the challenges experienced by the teacher trainee in enhancing students' speaking skills by employing a mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Importantly, this research contributes to a knowledge of practical approaches to resolving problems in ESL classrooms in order to gradually enhance students' academic performance, particularly in English.

As a suggestion for future research, the challenges associated with enhancing students' speaking abilities for teacher trainees should be investigated in greater depth over a larger geographical area, a diversified learning environment, and diverse racial backgrounds. Future research should also employ a variety of high-level English-speaking students to analyse the group's success study data and make critical comparisons of the factors and causes affecting students' achievement and ability to communicate in

their target language. Overall, it is hoped that the recommendations will help to improve students' speaking skills in ESL classrooms.

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## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR B40 PUPILS' VOCABULARY ACQUISITION AND UNDERSTANDING IN READING COMPREHENSION AT A2 LEVEL: AN ACTION RESEARCH TO PROMOTE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2030

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### Abstract

This study is a reflection of two pre-service teachers' efforts to improve their students' vocabulary acquisition and understanding during their practicum at one of Terengganu's rural schools. It all started when we realised that the students in our class were not interested in participating in the reading sessions. This was a negative situation that prevented us from meeting the syllabus's objectives. To find out what could pique the students' interest in participating in reading lessons, we conducted action research in which we observed, reflected, acted, evaluated, and modified our teaching approach. To achieve the goal, we repeated the action research cycle twice with 52 Year 3 students before developing the Audio-Movement Assisted Reading (AuMAR) Method. We learned a lot from the action research. For starters, reading activities for B40 students must be dynamic. Relying solely on written text will not pique their interest in reading English materials. Second, incorporating audio and movement into reading will assist students in associating low frequency words and making the reading process more meaningful. Simultaneously, audio and movement in reading aid in increasing students' engagement time with the text through meaningful repetition. We hope that by using the AuMAR reading method, we will have improved the educational quality of B40 students, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030.

**Keywords:** Reading Standard 3.3 (KSSR), vocabulary acquisition, audio assisted reading, total physical response, A1- A2 materials

### Background of Study

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and in the future. To that end, each participating country must work on 17 agendas, one of which is to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality education.

Malaysia, like many other participating countries, has been working to improve the quality of its education, and one of the efforts has been to align the ELT curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (ELSQC, 2015). This alignment results in changes to the year-end targets, which are reflected in the Learning Standards (LS) and learning materials (textbooks and workbooks).

One of the English Language syllabus learning standards is that students can read and enjoy linear and non-linear stories (Reading Standard 3.3). The researchers found this reading standard difficult in their classroom due to the students' social backgrounds, as they are all from rural areas. As a result, the reasons for using English are few and far between, and many students do not see the value in reading English language story books. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that their students' participation during reading sessions is frequently low and discouraging, despite the fact that the textbook is aligned to their proficiency level and is accompanied by colourful pictures. If this situation persists, meeting the year-end target will be impossible, and Malaysia's ability to provide quality education by 2030 may be called into question. As a result, the researchers see the need to develop a method that can pique students' interest in participating in their reading session.

### Statement of Problem

By the end of Year 6, all students should be able to read and enjoy linear and non-linear A2 texts (see Reading standard 3.3 in CEFR-aligned KSSR). To achieve this goal, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has aligned the ELT curriculum with the CEFR. These changes can be seen in the syllabus and classroom materials, which are graded according to the end target proficiency, which is A2.

When the researchers compared current CEFR-materials to materials prior to CEFR-alignment, the researchers discovered that CEFR-Aligned materials are more user friendly (with reference to Get Smart 3) than old Year 3 textbooks (before CEFR-Alignment materials). For example, the researchers compared two textbook texts and discovered that the word choice in CEFR aligned materials contained fewer words at C1 and C2 (CEFR levels). Another advantage is that each reading material comes with an audio track, which encourages teachers to use audio-assisted reading during teaching and learning sessions.

However, as student-teachers, the researchers discovered that these advantages did not make their reading sessions more engaging. Because they had to listen to and read at the same time, the audio kept their students quiet during reading. Listening to the audio alone, however, did not improve their comprehension at the post-reading level. Although students were taught the meanings of the words, the process appears to benefit only a small percentage of the population. As a result, after consulting with their supervisor, the researchers decided to conduct action research in their classroom to learn how they could better understand their approach to improve students' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension during reading sessions.

### **Significance of Study**

In several ways, this action research is significant:

1. It is a reflection of two IPG student-teachers who use CEFR-aligned reading materials in their classrooms, which is an important value in promoting quality education as promoted by SDG2030.
2. It assesses students' attitudes toward using CEFR-aligned reading materials in the classroom.
3. It emphasises what B40 students in rural areas require during reading sessions, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.
4. Using action research, this study proposes the use of both audio-assisted reading and movements (TPR) in reading activities, and then suggests how materials containing the aforementioned elements can be produced.
5. It improves the researchers' understanding of designing reading skill lessons based on the DSKP reading standards (syllabus).

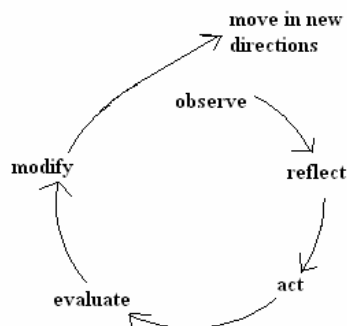
### **Research Questions**

In order to find out what we could do to improve the vocabulary acquisition and understanding of our pupils during reading sessions, our action research was guided by two questions:

1. How did we approach reading in the previous sessions?
2. How could our reading sessions improve our pupils' vocabulary acquisition and understanding?

### **Method**

- a. Context: two student-teachers from one of the Institutions of Teacher Education in Terengganu. The researchers were undergoing their 12 Week practicum.
- b. Participants: 52 Year 3 pupils in one of rural schools in Terengganu.
- c. Instruments: practicum journal, interview, observation (pair teaching).
- d. This is action research following the cycle suggested by McNiff and Whitehead (2006): Observe – Reflect – Act – Evaluate – Modify. The cycle was repeated twice throughout these 12 weeks.



- e. Data were collected by looking at the researchers' lesson plans, feedback from the supervisor, pupils' comments on the researchers' sessions, and researchers' observation on her pupils' behaviours during reading session.
- f. Data were then analyzed and a reflection was written according to the research questions.

## Findings and Discussion

This action research yielded the following key findings:

- a. During the first cycle of the action research, the researchers reflected on their approach to conducting reading sessions. In comparison to the old textbooks, they discovered that the materials in CEFR-Aligned textbooks (with special reference to Get Smart 3) have been pitched to A2 (Basic Level). Because the level of word difficulties has been aligned to their level, this setting should provide a better avenue for students to acquire vocabulary. On the contrary, they discovered that their students were still struggling to work on materials designed at the A2 level. This could happen because of the way they conducted their lessons, in which they read aloud to their students and asked them to read after the researchers. When the aforementioned approach was repeated in the classroom on occasion, they discovered it to be boring.
- b. They then improved their delivery by following the teacher's instruction manual. They used audio tracks that were part of a textbook package. Their students had to listen to the audio while reading the text using this method. This approach (listen and read) was well received by the students, possibly because the audio was much louder than the teacher's voice (since the teacher used a radio to play it). During the lessons, however, they discovered that listening to the audio alone kept the process quiet. Another issue they discovered at this level was how they could be certain that their students understood the text they listened to and read. The post-reading tasks revealed that the majority of students did not achieve the minimum score. This situation demonstrated that audio-assisted reading improves only their attention to the text but not their comprehension.
- c. During observations, the researchers discovered that their students were full of energy and enjoyed moving around. This scene reminded them of one of the webinars they had attended. The webinar focused on Indian dance. The dance tells a story, with each step and movement having its own meaning. This means that the dance is more than just steps performed by the dancers; it is also a story told to those watching. This is the starting point for the next step in answering the research questions; what if the reading process involves movements similar to those found in Indian dance? Would the process assist the students in learning new words and improving their understanding of what they have read?
- d. According to their observations, because the children spent more time with the reading materials, the process of listening and moving at the same time improved their students' vocabulary

acquisition. This finding is consistent with the findings of Aaron et al. (2008), Rayner et al. (2012), Chang and Millett (2015), and Godfroid (2019) that readers have more opportunities to process information at their own pace when they spend more time with the reading materials. Harmer (2007) and Grabe (2009) agree that reading at one's own pace and spending more time interacting with the text allows for deeper reading and helps them make sense of newly encountered words.

- e. It was discovered that using audio-movement assisted reading increased the interest of students in both classes. Students wanted to take part in the reading sessions. We discovered that the movement also assisted students in remembering the words through association (movement and words). We also discovered that students were more engaged in post-reading activities than before. This was demonstrated by their reading score.
- f. f.. We reflected on what can make a reading material engaging to students in our context during the second cycle of our action research. We created a storybook that includes sound (audio) and movement (video) based on our observations from the first cycle (see Picture 1).



Picture 1

### Limitations

Perhaps one of the limitations of this Action Research was the lack of time. We couldn't conduct additional cycles to better understand our approaches because we only had 12 weeks of school. Also, because the plugs in our classroom were broken, we had to bring the kids to the computer lab, which took up some of our research time.

### Conclusion

Overall, our 12 weeks of practicum taught us that students should spend more time before and during reading time before moving on to post-reading activities. The action research cycle (Observe - Reflect - Act - Evaluate - Modify) assisted us in better understanding our current approach to teaching reading and how we can improve our classroom deliverables. Similarly, this process assisted us in comprehending the CEFR- aligned textbook and how to adapt the materials, which led to the creation of our product, the AuMAR Storybook. We hope to experiment with AuMAR storybook and improve its concept in future practicums.

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## TEACHER TRAINEES' PERCEPTIONS ON MINIMAL PAIRS TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE UPPER PRIMARY PUPILS' PRONUNCIATION DURING ENGLISH LESSONS

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### Abstract

Pronunciation problem has been identified as one of the prominent issues among Malaysian pupils. This survey research was conducted to identify teacher trainees' perceptions on the implementation of minimal pairs technique to improve upper primary pupils' pronunciation problems during English lessons. There were a total of 50 respondents for the data that consisted of teacher trainees from three different cohorts, PISMP 2018 Intake, PISMP 2019 Intake, and PISMP 2020 Intake who came from the same teacher trainee institute in Kuala Lumpur. Online questionnaire via Google Form was utilized in collecting the data, and they were given two weeks in answering the questionnaire. Based on the findings, the majority of the teacher trainees showed positive perceptions and views regarding the implementation of minimal pairs technique to improve pronunciation problems. On the contrary, there were also some of the teacher trainees who viewed minimal pairs technique as challenging for pupils, such as confusing and difficult to differentiate.

**Keywords:** Teacher trainees' perceptions, minimal pairs technique, pronunciation problems

### Background of Study

Various ways are identified to improve pupils' pronunciation skills, and one of them is by using minimal pairs technique which can identify the English sounds with similar sound by matching the two words. Hence, it is easier to determine whether the sounds are uttered contextually or not, because incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstanding and inhibit communication fluency (Isna Nur & Indah Fadhillah, 2018). In order for second language learners to be able to speak English fluently, it is necessary for them to have good pronunciation skills. Referring to The Framework for Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Primary School, one of the objectives is pupils should be able to speak confidently and appropriately with peers and adults in formal and informal circumstances by the time they reach the end of Year 6. Thus, this shows the importance of finding a suitable method from an early stage.

Second language learners, especially those who live in rural areas and regions that have their own dialects, such as Terengganu, mostly depend on their dialects whenever they speak. According to Nurul Wahidah Darwis (2018), a dialect is a regional or social variation of a language that differs from others in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The dependency towards dialects when speaking English will eventually affect the fluency of daily conversations, especially during speaking activities in English lessons as some words that are being uttered by pupils can be very confusing to the listeners. In this case, teachers act as the facilitators in enhancing pupils' pronunciation skills. Hence, this study aims to look at teacher trainees' perspectives on the implementation of minimal pairs technique to cater upper primary pupils' pronunciation problems during English lessons.

### Statement of Problem

Based on the researcher's experience from the previous practicum, it was identified that most of the pupils in Year 4 dealt with pronunciation problems, especially during speaking activities. The interference of the native language, the learners' age, attitude, and their lack of awareness of the English language's phonology and phonetics systems are all factors that contribute to pronunciation problems (Anak Agung, Sagung Laksmi & Laksmi Dharmika, 2021). At some times, pupils also often get confused with the similar words in English and they are still unsure of the words' synonyms (Kuswatun,

2017), as some of the words might have the same spellings but different ways of pronunciation. Their lack of understanding of phonetics and phonology contributes to their bad pronunciation (Rusdi Noor Rosa, 2012), hence this makes it even harder for them to improve their pronunciation in daily conversations. Phonetic acquisition is an important part of the English learning process, that is why pupils must master pronunciation and comprehend what others say and to effectively communicate their thoughts to others (Ren, 2017).

However, the gap exists as there is not much study pertaining to the implementation of minimal pairs technique to improve pupils' pronunciation problems. Most of the researchers who conducted this topic for their studies were from Indonesian secondary schools (Refer to Isna Nur, Indah Fadhilah Rahman, Eni Nuraeni, Arifudin). Hence, the researcher felt the need to conduct this research, as to identify other teacher trainees' perceptions on minimal pairs technique which then will benefit her in terms of further implementing the technique to her pupils later in school.

### **Significance of Study**

A lot of research and studies on using minimal pairs technique to improve pronunciation skills in Indonesian schools are found. Nevertheless, there is not much research and studies that focus on the implementation of minimal pairs technique in the context of upper primary pupils in Malaysia, when the fact that improving pronunciation skills is very much important from an early age. This is because people, especially language learners, should not only have a solid vocabulary but also good pronunciation when communicating with others (Novarita, Erwanto, Lasmiatun & M. Rama, 2019).

Henceforth, this survey was conducted to look into Malaysian teacher trainees' perceptions towards the implementation of minimal pairs technique, as they might have different views regarding this issue. As a result, this study could provide an insight for teachers, especially teacher trainees in dealing with pronunciation problems later in school. Teacher trainees could also see the challenges or ways to apply this technique among upper primary pupils.

### **Research Questions**

1. How practical is the minimal pairs technique in catering pupils' pronunciation problems?
2. What are the perceptions of teacher trainees on the implementation of minimal pairs technique?

### **Method**

For the data collection procedures, the researcher created a Gantt Chart to refer to the procedures that need to be done for this research, and to avoid any step from being left behind. Then, to collect the data, the researcher prepared a consent form before getting the respondents' responses. A pilot study was also done by giving and discussing the questionnaires with three teacher trainees from PISMP June Intake 2019 via online, then it was proceeded by giving the questionnaires via WhatsApp to 40 teacher trainees of Institute of Teacher Education in Kuala Lumpur to examine and improve on the questionnaires prepared. After that, the researcher proceeded by giving the questionnaires to the target population, which consist of 70 teacher trainees from the same institution. They have been given two weeks to answer the questionnaires. After getting the responses, the researcher began to make analysis for the research.

Welman et al., (2005:21, as cited in Lutabingwa & Auriacombe, 2007) suggest that using statistical approaches to analyse data helps us investigate variables, their effects, relationships, and patterns of involvement. "Statistical data are data that are collected and/or generated by statistics in process of statistical observations or statistical data processing." (CROS, 2019). Hence, once the data is collected, for the data analysis procedures, the researcher prepared a statistical analysis and chart, then the results were categorised in the cross-tabulation data which can reduce the errors when analysing the results.

## Findings and Discussion

From the study, the majority of the teacher trainees agree that the implementation of minimal pairs technique is able to improve upper primary pupils' pronunciation problems.

There are three items that fall under the aspect of practicality of minimal pairs technique in catering pupils' pronunciation problems. For item 1, 24 (48%) of the total respondents strongly agreed with the statement that minimal pairs technique is practical in catering pupils' pronunciation problems, For item 2, the number and percentage of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that the implementation of minimal pairs technique can create an engaging learning environment is 19 (38%) respondents. Next, the total number and percentage of the respondents for item 3 in strongly agree option is 18 (36%) respondents. 48 (96%) of the respondents agreed that minimal pairs technique is an interesting method for pupils to improve pronunciation. One of the reasons given by the respondent is; "Minimal pairs are a useful way to highlight a sound in a meaningful context and also to show the learner how important correct pronunciation of the sound is."

For teacher trainees' perceptions, it can be seen as positive where the majority of respondents showed positive attitude for all the 8 items, which are 1) I believe pupils will be interested in learning pronunciation with minimal pairs technique. 2) I believe that pupils can engage well during English lessons if minimal pairs technique is implemented. 3) I believe that minimal pairs technique can increase pupils' motivation in improving pronunciation. 4) I believe that teachers need to guide pupils in implementing minimal pairs technique. 5) I believe minimal pairs technique can help pupils to communicate English fluently. 6) I believe minimal pairs technique gives the opportunity for low proficiency pupils to participate well during English lessons. 7) I believe that simple mistakes in pronunciation can be avoided with the implementation of minimal pairs technique. 8) I believe that minimal pairs technique helps pupils to maximize the use of English in daily life.

## Limitations

As for the limitation, there were 70 respondents from three different cohorts, PISMP 2018 Intake, PISMP 2019 Intake, and also PISMP 2020 Intake which are the teacher trainees from an Institute of Teacher Education in Kuala Lumpur who have already gone through practicum. They might have their own strategies to improve pupils' pronunciation skills, as some of them might also think that using minimal pairs is a bit challenging rather than the other simple strategies. Moreover, not every teacher trainee had the difficulty in correcting pupils' pronunciation during their practicum because some of them had practicum in an elite school where the pupils are very advanced and use English as their first language at school and at home with their parents.

## Conclusion

Overall, this study has provided answers to both of the research questions. The findings concluded that the majority of the respondents showed positive perceptions on the implementation of minimal pairs technique. They also stated their own views and opinions on certain aspects, which also benefit in this study.

This study also contributes to English Language Education, as the English department can consider implementing minimal pairs technique during English lessons more frequently. By using songs, it can be an exciting method for pupils. This will also benefit the teacher trainees as they might be having the same issue as the researcher, as it is challenging to cater to pupils' pronunciation problems in a short

period during 3 months of practicum. Henceforth, minimal pairs technique is expected to help teacher trainees in improving their pupils' pronunciation in an engaging way.

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## A SURVEY ON PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS AS COMPARED TO TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

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### Abstract

This survey research investigates pre-service teachers' attitude towards online alternative assessments as compared to traditional assessments. For this particular study, 50 pre-service teachers from year 4 and year 5 currently studying in a teacher training institute located in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur were chosen as the respondents through purposive sampling as the researcher intends to include those who have the experience using both online alternative assessments and traditional assessments only. A questionnaire via Google Forms was distributed to obtain their views on both assessment types. The data was then analysed using numbers and percentage in order to show pre-service teachers' preferred assessment type. It was found that pre-service teachers showed more positive attitude towards online alternative assessments as compared to traditional assessments, citing 'motivation' and 'the ability to develop higher order thinking skills (HOTS)' as the main factors behind their decision. From the findings, the various stakeholders involved in education are able to have a better understanding of the pros and cons of for both online alternative assessments and traditional assessments from the perspective of pre-service teachers.

**Keywords:** Online alternative assessments, traditional assessments, motivation, higher order thinking skills (HOTS)

### Background of Study

Assessment is one of the crucial elements in a classroom. However, there has been debate in recent years within the educational community on whether to use alternative assessment or traditional assessment as the primary medium to assess learners (Quansah, 2018). For the past 3 years, educators have had a clearer picture of the benefits of online alternative assessments in particular courtesy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, all levels of education were forced to adopt online learning as a way for learners to learn from home. As a result, face-to-face examinations were no longer practical due to the need for social distancing. To cope with this issue, online alternative assessments functioned as the primary medium to evaluate and grade student performance (Ahmad Arifuddin, Turmudi and Umami Nur Rokmah, 2021). As of 2022, education in Malaysia is gradually shifting to the post-pandemic era. Despite that, higher education institutes such as the teacher trainee institutes can still be seen maintaining the use of open book assessments by not reverting to traditional face-to-face examinations just yet. Therefore, this raises the question; what are pre-service teachers' attitude towards online alternative assessments as compared to traditional assessments?

### Statement of Problem

Although the use of alternative assessments had been implemented for some time, some were still unconvinced as to whether this method can benefit learning in the long term (Amani Hamdan, 2013). One of the groups who were sceptical of the use of alternative assessments were teachers.

Among the issues faced by teachers was that alternative assessments were too easy for students to pass. A research by Phongsirikul (2018) found that students who were tested using alternative assessment

methods cared less about their learning progress. As alternative assessments were usually open-book tests or practical tasks, students no longer bothered to study as they knew they would most likely get a pass as long as they finished their tasks on time. Hence, this is why some teachers preferred traditional assessments as students would have no choice but to put in the effort by studying beforehand in order to get good grades.

Next, some teachers also felt that alternative assessments were too time-consuming. This is further supported by Norova (2021), who agreed that alternative assessments are highly time-consuming as they demand more effort from the learners. Not to mention, alternative assessments require daily assessment of pupils' work. This becomes difficult considering the workload of teachers and the number of pupils in the classroom (Nowreya A. Al-Nouh, Hanan A. Taqi and Muneera M. Abdul-Kareem, 2014). Therefore, teachers would prefer traditional assessments as they were a one-off solution.

### **Significance of Study**

From this study, educators especially lecturers from higher learning institutes would get practical information about the pros and cons of both online alternative assessments and traditional assessments. The information obtained would assist them in determining the most suitable assessment method to be applied to pre-service teachers as a way to maximise their learning potential. The findings from this study could also function as a guideline for the education ministry to have an in-depth judgement should they wish to partially or fully implement the use of online alternative assessments in the future.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers towards the use of online alternative assessments as compared to traditional assessments?
2. What is the effectiveness of online alternative assessments in terms of evaluating pre-service teachers' academic progress as compared to traditional assessments?

### **Method**

For the data collection procedure, the researcher first consulted his supervisor on the suitability of the research instrument prepared. Upon receiving approval from the supervisor, the researcher prepared a permission letter for all the respondents to ask for their consent to take part in the study. After that, a pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the online questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire link along with the permission letter for the respondents was distributed via Whatsapp to the pre-service teachers from year 4 and year 5 from a teacher training institute located in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. They were given two days to answer the online questionnaire independently. The researcher then started analysing the data gathered by first sampling a total of 50 respondents from the total population to be used as the final data for the study.

As this was quantitative research, the data were analysed using Microsoft Excel. The reason for using Microsoft Excel was to calculate the frequency of answers for each item in the questionnaire in order to determine the preferred assessment type among pre-service teachers.

### **Findings and Discussion**

It was found that pre-service teachers have shown a positive attitude towards the use of online alternative assessment (open book assessment) as compared to traditional assessment (face-to-face examinations). This was further supported by the findings of the study which showed over 90% of the pre-service teachers stating that they would prefer using online alternative assessments as their main medium of assessment by citing reasons such as 'higher motivation' and 'enabling them to think more holistically, instead of simply memorising' as the key factors.

Besides that, this study also showed that the initial hypothesis by the researcher can therefore be accepted as the majority of pre-service teachers also agreed that online alternative assessment was better in terms of evaluating their academic progress. To further support the overall findings of the study, Cirit (2015) conducted a study on a group of 40 English language teaching pre-service teachers studying at Istanbul University in order to investigate their perception towards traditional, online, and alternative assessments using Web 2.0 tools. As a result, the findings of the study indicated that pre-service teachers also preferred the use of alternative assessments as compared to other assessment types.

### Limitations

Like in other studies, this particular study has its own limitations. One of the limitations is the limited range of participants. The targeted population for this study was 50 pre-service teachers from one teacher training institute located in Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, the results might only be generalised to the above population. In other words, the findings might be different if the scope is increased to include universities offering educational courses as they might implement different policies in assessment.

### Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded based on the findings from the study that pre-service teachers have shown a positive attitude towards the use of online alternative assessment (open book assessment) as compared to traditional assessment (face-to-face examinations).

In terms of suggestion for improvements for future studies, the researcher suggests to include other teacher training institutes or universities offering educational courses when conducting the study in order to get more representative and valid data as they might possess different views regarding assessment.

Next, the researcher also suggests to include additional research instruments. For this study, the researcher only used questionnaire as the research instrument. While this did not have a major effect on the overall analysis of the researcher, the validity and reliability of the data can definitely be improved by including additional suitable research instruments such as interview and observation.

Finally, the researcher also suggests having more specific research questions as a way to improve on the current study for future research.

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## FANDOMS AND ITS IMPACT ON ESL TEACHER TRAINEES' ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to investigate ESL teacher trainees' fandom participation and its influence on their English language competence. In order to collect the data, three instruments that were administered are: an online survey, a checklist and an interview. The findings revealed that the teacher trainees found their fandom participation to be positive for their English language learning progress, with those who participated in a higher degree showing deeper mastery on the English language (based on the CEFR). It is significant for fandoms to be taken into consideration as a teaching and learning tool so its usefulness can be optimized for the benefit of Malaysian education systems.

**Keywords:** Fandoms, English Competence, ESL teacher trainees

### **Background of Study**

The Current Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) describes competent language learners as those who can understand, communicate, negotiate, adapt and interact with their environment using their targeted language (North & Piccardo, 2019). In other words, based on the updated CEFR, language competence does not stop at the individual level but also covers the learner's skills in using the language to communicate and interact effectively with others and the environment. This is congruent with the studies done by Glaesser (2018) and Byran (2018) who stated that language competence and literacy must be measured beyond classroom needs and expectations, and should also focus on achieving real-life purposes and meaning.

Fandom refers to a group of individual fans who share the same interests and/or purposes, deriving emotional support and value from one participant to another (Hao, 2020). These interests cover a broad range of subjects and agendas as well as occupy different places in society (Duffett, 2013, p.3).

While the digital revolution played a profound role in expanding niches and interests, the number of its consumers and shared spaces for them to occupy, fandom is not a new phenomenon in all walks of life. Before the third industrial revolution, fandoms such as the rock 'n' roll craze in the mid-50s and hippie subculture in the 60s mostly organised their activities in public. However, nowadays, fandoms occupy beyond physical platforms. Websites such as AO3 (Archive of Our Own), Quotev and Wattpad, and apps such as Twitter and Instagram become well-known gathering places for fandom sharing

### **Statement of Problem**

One of the interests that are usually associated with 'fandom' is pop culture. A growing number of studies have pointed out that pop culture consumption can positively assist ESL learners in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Zhai, Liu & Abu Bakar Razali, 2021; Zunera Malik & Sham Haidar, 2020). However, fandom is not constrained by pop culture alone but it also includes interests (e.g., sports cars and succulents), niches (e.g., Hello Kitty brand) and skills (e.g., knitting).

Pop culture such as music and movies offer linguistic factors with linear association with language acquisition. Their audience's English language development benefits from high engagement (exposure and practice) in English (Sharifova, 2021) and schematic and contextual learning (Zunera Malik & Sham Haidar, 2020).

However, pop culture is just one out of many fandoms existing. Some fandoms do not put much emphasis on linguistic correctness (e.g., grammar and word accuracy) but rather more on the content itself such as the fandoms of manga (Ranalan, 2018) and video games (Vacquez-Calvo, 2018) — and yet significant improvement in English language development is also shown in the fandoms (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Golding & Verrier, 2020). As such, in this case, non-linguistic variables play a more central role in language acquisition.

Therefore, this research is an attempt to address the gaps that previous research regarding fandoms has, particularly in its influence on ESL teacher trainees' English language competence as well as fandoms' suitability as an ESL teacher training tool.

### Significance of Study

This study can help in establishing; (a) whether fandoms discourse benefits teacher trainees as pedagogical instruments, especially in instructional practices; (b) the influences of linguistic and non-linguistic factors in fandoms in learners' language development, and; (c) the connection between fandoms and second language studies.

By exploring these, it is hoped that the teacher training department can consider the effectiveness of fandom discourse as a part of the teacher training curriculum. This is to ensure that all resources are optimized efficiently and thus, subsequently, elevating our education systems to a higher degree at all levels.

### Research Questions

The following three research questions are examined and discussed in this research:

1. How does teacher trainees' participation in fandom communities affect their English language competence?
2. How frequently do teacher trainees participate in fandoms?
3. Do teacher trainees believe that participating in fandom helps their English learning process better than in a formal learning setting (e.g.: lecture)?

### Method

Three research instruments were administered: (a) Frequency of Fandom Participation Survey; (b) English Language Competence Checklist, and; (c) semi-structured interview (main).

1. Fandom Participation Frequency Survey
  - The online survey was administered via Google Forms.
  - In the online survey, the respondents have to rate the frequency of their fandom participation using a 1-5 scale (1 – never or very rarely, 2 – several times a month, 3 – several times a week, 4 – once a day, 5 – several times a day). For better understanding in future data analysis, the respondents were divided into frequent users (40 - 75 score) and infrequent users (0 - 39 score). Range of scores to determine frequent and infrequent users are based on previous research, English Language Learning and Social Media: Schematic Learning on K-pop Stan Twitter by Zunera Malik and Sham Haidar (2020).
2. CEFR English Competence Checklist
  - The participants were observed during their TSLB 3173 (Research in Education Course) Task 3 Assignment presentation.
  - The researcher ticked the checklist according to the participants' performance based on CEFR descriptors (A1 (basic user) — C2 (proficient user)).
  - Each of the English language competence was labelled as 1 mark for A1, 2 marks for A2, 3 marks for B1, 4 marks for B2, 5 marks for C1 and 6 marks for C2.

### 3. Semi-structured interview

- The interview was done face to face in an isolated environment. The researcher used a semi-structured interview with pre-planned questions and made follow-up questions based on the response of the respondents.
- The respondents' clarifications and questions during the interview were addressed. The interviewees were interviewed in one single 10-minute session.
- The interview conducted was recorded and then transcribed for analysis

## Findings and Discussion

From the study, it is found that there is a positive relationship between fandoms participation with ESL teacher trainees' English competence (the result of 1 based on the Correlation Coefficient formula).

From the semi-structured interviews, it is found that this positive result is caused by: (a) increase in motivation and decrease in stress in fandoms; (b) high exposure to English language thus enable them to unconsciously adapt the knowledge; (c) parasocial relationships that exist in the fandoms between the fans and their subject of their interest of which then increase their participation (and thus exposure) and motivation into progressing further in their language studies.

In the question of whether fandoms benefit them better compared to formal English lessons, all 6 respondents agree that it does. The researcher subscribes to the notion that, aside from the subject of the fandoms suiting the teacher trainees' preferences and interests, what makes the teacher trainees believe that fandoms are more effective to their English language learning is the socioemotional connection they experienced and how that connection brought forth meanings and motivations to them.

## Limitations

In conducting this research, the scope focuses on investigating the influence of fandom culture on teacher trainees' English language competence. Due to the research being limited to 6 teacher trainees out of 79 from a teacher training institute in Kuala Lumpur, some aspects that were not present within the samples may have gone unaddressed. Therefore, it is not advisable for the findings to be generalized to a bigger mass of society due to different variables being involved as well.

Other than that, the study mainly focuses on the samples' English language competence. Therefore, issues such as fandoms' influences on teacher trainees' personalities and retrospect were not covered. These uncovered aspects may play a role in shaping the teachers' advancement — or degradation — in the teacher trainees' development.

In addition, the researcher acknowledged that women are the majority in fandoms, thus this unbalanced gender distribution in the samples may affect the result of the study to a certain degree. Failure to balance out the male and female ratio in the study is due to female teacher trainees meeting the requirements of the study in bigger portion as compared to males.

## Conclusion

It was found that generally, teacher trainees found that fandoms do positively help their English competence, citing fandoms to be able to: (a) motivate and evoke interest; (b) make them unconsciously adapt English language knowledge and skills; (c) relieve stress; (d) encourage consumption and production of English, and; (d) establish parasocial relationships.

In conclusion, the overall consensus that is achieved is this: English language learning should be: (a) motivating and interesting; (b) consumptive and productive, and; (c) socioemotionally inducing.

However, being a teacher requires more than just expertise in the knowledge content of their field but also how to conduct oneself properly as an agent of change in society. Therefore, it is advisable for further research and analysis to be done on not just how it linguistically influences teacher trainees but also how they influence their behaviour, psychology and emotions before implementing it in ESL teacher training curriculum.

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## A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON MALAYSIAN PRIMARY ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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### Abstract

English language lessons in Malaysian primary schools prioritise on cognitive learning through textbooks based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Social-emotional learning (SEL) which help create a safe and positive learning environment for students to express emotions, build relationships, and make ethical decisions seems to be neglected. This preliminary study focuses on primary school English teachers' perspective on SEL by identifying challenges faced and possible ways to integrate SEL effectively into their English lessons. A qualitative research approach using phenomenology was employed. Using the purposive sampling technique, four national primary school English teachers from Perak were identified and interviewed. Thematic analysis was then used to analyse the data. Preliminary findings showed time constraints, language background, lack of materials and training as challenges whereas SEL is currently implicitly implemented through teacher-student relationship and in-class activities such as speaking and reading lessons based on discussions, role-plays, and group work.

**Keywords:** Social-emotional learning (SEL), teachers' perspective, primary schools

### Background of Study

Learning English as a second language (ESL) is mandatory for national school students in Malaysia. Presently, a student's language ability is ranked using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Kaur & Jian, 2022). The Primary English syllabus is researched on cognitive approaches, for instance Oktaviani's (2018) study on the Year 5 English textbook. There are limitations on non-cognitive domains namely regulating emotions. However, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 strategized to use the National Education Policy to produce individuals who are balanced intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Non-cognitive skills are achievable via social-emotional learning (SEL) which creates a comfortable, safe, and fun school climate (An, Vaid, Elias, Li, Wang & Zhuo, 2021). SEL improves learners' behaviours, cognition, emotional learning, and social skills (Albright, Marsh, Kennedy, Hough, & Mckibben, 2019). Fundamentally, a teacher's perspective as a facilitator shows the main outcomes for the delivery of SEL in a classroom (Schiepe-Tiska, Dzhaparkulova & Ziernwald, 2021). Therefore, this preliminary study uses the basic psychological needs from Self-Determination theory as a framework to explore primary Malaysian English teachers' perspective on their challenges and possible ways SEL can be infused in English lessons.

### Statement of Problem

Teachers' perspective on social-emotional learning (SEL) in Western and European countries (Burgin, Coli & Daniel, 2021; Dresser, 2013; Dyson, Howley & Shen, 2019), and other Asian regions (Ee & Quek, 2013; Esen-Aygun & Sahin-Taskin, 2017; Huynh, Tran-chi & Ngyuen, 2018; Yadav & Kumari, 2019; Yong, et al, 2021) have been investigated. They associated SEL with multiple subjects ranging from Science, Mathematics, Discipline, Moral, Civics and Language Arts. Malaysian researchers have similarly addressed SEL as a counterintuitive to disciplining students using common punishments (Lee,

Yeoh & Jaffri, 2015), preschool education (Mohamed et al., 2020) and in upper secondary Science subjects (Sathasivam & Rahim, 2021). Nonetheless, Tnay et al. (2020) investigated challenges teachers face to help student's social-emotional development in primary rural schools in Sarawak where possible ways of SEL as a curriculum were subtly discussed. As perspectives of teachers vary, this leaves a gap for different opinions. Besides, Herera (2020) stated SEL and academic learning experiences in language do complement one another but they are not usually antagonistic. As such, Self-Determination Theory's Basic Psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017) acts as a fundamental conceptual framework for the purpose of the study.

### **Significance of Study**

This exploratory study hopes to deduce the possibility of implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) in the Malaysian primary ESL classrooms. SEL will allow young students to not only learn through assessments but acts as a viable asset of social and emotional skills for a holistic education. The perspective of primary school English teachers can build awareness towards implementing SEL in future English lessons at Malaysian national schools. Findings of this study can be a guideline for Malaysian Education policy makers to consider incorporating SEL in English language learning classrooms by providing teacher preparatory programmes, teacher training, and relevant resources. This is to ensure Malaysian English teachers are well-equipped to integrate SEL component while teaching the language skills in future primary ESL classroom. Furthermore, Self-Determination theory can act as a link for future researchers when it comes to exploring teachers' perceptions of SEL in other primary school subjects.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the challenges that Malaysian primary school teachers' may face when integrating social-emotional learning into their English lessons?
2. What are the possible ways primary school English teachers can integrate social-emotional learning effectively in their English classrooms?

### **Method**

The preliminary study uses a qualitative research approach using phenomenology to study SEL as a phenomenon in primary English classrooms. Purposive sampling technique was used for sampling. Teachers' criteria include 10 years of experience and primary school English teachers in national schools within Perak. At present, four teachers were chosen for the study. The data was collected via semi-structured interviews using ten questions adapted from Ee and Quek (2013) and Tnay et al. (2020) respectively. After obtaining consent from selected teachers, interviews were done based on the teacher's availability and selected mode of interview being physical, online or a phone call. The duration of the interviews lasted for twenty to forty minutes using the OPPO A92 audio-recording feature or the available recording feature on Zoom. The audio-recordings were later transcribed manually, and transcripts were analysed thematically through preparation, organizing and reporting modified from Elo and Kyngas (2008). Familiarization, coding, and themes were defined. Lastly, subthemes were branched according to the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness from Ryan and Deci's (2017) Self-Determination theory.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Preliminary findings from four primary Malaysian English teachers showed moderate understandings of SEL as regulating emotions, developing social skills, and building relationships. The teachers faced

difficulties of time constrain similarly to Ee and Quek (2013) and Yadav and Kumari (2019) Three teachers also confirmed trainings and materials are needed to facilitate effective SEL in English lessons. Additionally, teachers also faced challenges from lesson planning due to covering the syllabus and ensuring students understand the lessons while managing a large classroom. Nonetheless, two teachers mentioned the present syllabus supported students acquiring SEL skills due to language arts and creativity being an ideal component (Dresser, 2013). Teachers facilitated similar findings of discussions, group work, and role-playing as possible SEL integrations (Ee & Quek, 2013), where they expressed autonomy towards speaking together with reading as the main skills to integrate SEL in their lessons. Findings also confirm SEL and language intertwines but not antagonistically (Herera, 2019). Teachers stated student genders and language background could affect the expression level of interest in possible SEL English lessons. Furthermore, the study shared similar findings to Dyson et al. (2019) teacher-student relationships as three teachers stated a friendly relationship with students creates a possibility to integrate SEL into English lessons.

### Limitations

The preliminary study was only limited to the state of Perak and did not have representation of teachers from primary schools located in other states. Teachers with 10 years of teaching experience were selected as participants for the interviews. Perspectives from teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience were not obtained. For instance, preservice teachers who are new to the field, or teachers with less than ten years of experience. Responses collected was also limited to teachers where other parties such as school administrators, policy makers, parents and student's perspectives are not considered.

### Conclusion

As an ongoing study, SEL seems to be indirectly integrated in English lessons at Malaysian schools as it is not embedded into the primary English syllabus. The preliminary findings show teachers neglect possible integration of social-emotional learning into English lessons due to time constraints, differences in student language background, school expectation in classroom management, lack of training and proper materials. Furthermore, the possibility of integrating SEL is high as the current syllabus complements language arts and creativity for students to express their emotions and become socially active in discussions during English lessons. Most teachers are aware that teacher-student rapport is important in building confidence while learning a language. Hence, it is essential that the role of social-emotional learning is given a larger role in ensuring that students not only learn English, but too can build meaningful relationships among themselves.

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