A Past Before a Blueprint:
Malaysia's Challenges in English Language Teaching

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Malaysia has invested heavily to develop education and language competencies for national and transnational needs, including English for international communication. Any attempt to meet English language needs of ASEAN partners could benefit from lessons from the past and a focus on productive multilingualism, especially in a linguistically diverse nation There is a history of addressing the urban and rural divide with various projects to build English language skills for a knowledge-based economy, yet there may not always be synthesis from these initiatives when policies change. The most recent aspirations in the form of eleven shifts in the Malaysian 2013-2025 Education Blueprint are presented as transformation and they address many possibilities. Challenges in moving Malaysia up from its PISA ratings for literacy and reading skills are also made complex with a multilingual educational system and questioning of the position of English vis-a-vis the national language. This chapter will argue that capacity building for ASEAN integration, through developing English for effective international communication, depends on long-term strategies built on recognizing linguistic complexity in classrooms. An in-service teacher education project will be used as a case study of the challenges in aligning top-down planning with classroom-based development.

The impact of ASEAN 2015 integration will be felt within the national and linguistic complexities of the Member States. Those nations with a history of multilingual education, such as Malaysia, face many challenges in balancing the need for English as an international medium of communication with the advocacy and support for the politically strong national language, which in Malaysia is Bahasa Malaysia (Asmah,1993). The linguistic landscape of this multicultural country is complex, as the national language is not the only medium of instruction used in primary and secondary schooling. A description of this complexity

provides the backdrop for the position of English language education and its place in national development.

Primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling vary in linguistic complexities. Public primary schools are divided into two categories based on the medium of instruction. The majority of primary and secondary schools are Malay-medium National Schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan, SK). Non-Malay-medium national-type schools (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan, SJK), are known as "vernacular schools" and they are often supported by community associations, as in the case of National-type Schools (Chinese) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan [Cina], SJK[C]) (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012). These are Mandarin-medium schools which use the simplified Chinese script. Community support also sustains National-type Schools (Tamil) (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan [Tamil], SJK[T]) with Tamil as the medium of instruction. Students are admitted on a race and language blind basis. National schools are required to teach Chinese or Tamil. If parents of a minimum of 15 students in a school ask for an indigenous language to be taught, schools must also do so when practical.

Malay and English languages are required subjects in public primary schools. The syllabus is the same at all schools for non-language subjects, regardless of the language of instruction. From 2003, all students learned science and mathematics in English and an additional language. SJK(C), for example, taught science and mathematics in English and Chinese. However, the national policy of teaching these two subjects in English was reversed in July 2009. Beginning in 2012, the languages formerly used for instruction are being gradually reinstated. There continues to be public dissent about this reversal (Asmah, 2012, p.170; Goh, 2013).

At the public National Secondary Schools *(Sekolah Mcnengah Kebangsaan,* SMK), Malay is the main medium of instruction, and English is a required subject. There are a smaller number of religious schools, science-based boarding schools, and sports schools. As in primary schools, National Secondary Schools must teach Chinese and Tamil; there is also the same requirement for the teaching of indigenous languages. Instruction in foreign languages (e.g., Arabic or Japanese) is provided at select schools. The primary and secondary schooling systema therefore involve a complex mix of language use with the main area of contestation remaining the role of the national language vis-a-vis English and the other languages which form part of the everyday communicative setting of Malaysia (Rajadurai, 2004).

The Chinese community has been assertive in supporting the role of Mandarin, resulting in the largest parallel system to the government-funded national secondary system with Chinese independent secondary schools (Soong, 2012). While Mandarin may be dominant,

many students also speak a differing Chinese language such as Cantonese, Hatch, or Hokkien in their home environment along with Malay and English in other settings (Puah & Ting, 2013).

There are also a growing number of English-medium International secondary schools, reflecting a desire among the affluent for the English medium of instruction and internationally recognised qualifications such as the increasingly popular International Baccalaureate (Monitor ICEF, 2014).

Tertiary education in Malaysia is provided by community colleges, polytechnic education, colleges, and public and private universities (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2014). Students undergo a major transition in the medium of instruction as they move from high school to tertiary study. There is little research into language usage within community colleges and polytechnics in which English is the espoused medium. English is foregrounded and more fully described as the medium of instruction for both public and private universities (Ali, 2013). There has been a growth in tertiary education choices as there are currently 37 private universities, 20 private university colleges, seven foreign university branch campuses, and 414 private colleges (Maierbrugger, 2013). All of these institutions use English, a choice linked to the recruitment of international students and supported by government quality assurance agencies so as to build the international ranking of Malaysian universities (MOE, 2012).

The linguistic landscape of Malaysian everyday usage is even more diverse than the educational system, with complexities beyond dialectal differences in Malay and Chinese (Lee, 2003). Code-switching is common in social .settings, classrooms, and in the workplace, as described in research by Hashim and Tan (2012). There are also enclaves of Thai speakers in northern states, Hokkien speakers in Penang and Sarawak (Push & Ting, 2013), Cantonese speakers in the ICIang Valley, Baba Malay speakers in Malacca, and Javanese speakers in Johor, to name but a few. Community languages in use range from unique indigenous languages such as Iban, Melanu, Kadazan, and Semai to the comparatively recent arrival of Punjabi and Foochow. Any macro-planning for English for international communication then needs to be contextualised in this complex linguistic setting.

The complexity of English language teaching and learning will be historically outlined before being related to a case study of implementation challenges for in-service English language teaching. This chapter will therefore argue that before developing further to meet ASEAN needs, there is a need to understand aspects of linking macro-planning with Malaysia's linguistic complexity and implementation in English language teachers' capacity building.

History

• Educational capacity building and relating English language teaching and learning to economic needs has been and continues to be a government priority (Ho & Wong, 2004; MOE, 2012). English language development has often been linked to two factors: the role of English language vis-a-vis the national language Bahasa Malaysia and the implementation of change as seen in policy decisions and implementation (Selvaraj, 2010). Language teaching and learning has been affected by swings in policy, such as the use of English as the medium of instruction for Maths and Science at the primary and secondary level from 2002 until its reversal in 2009 (Asmah, 2012). Such changes often reflect varied visions and political views of how language policy is critical to nation building, especially in the contested area of national language status vis-a-vis English language (Ridge, 2004). Pandian (2002) describes English language education as a very diverse range of developments, syllabi, and projects which have laid the foundation for today's complexities and concerns. In order to understand the alignment of regional aspirations, it may be useful to consider national intricacies and the implementation challenges of capacity building within Malaysia.

Nation Building and Language Policy Changes

Und11970, Malaysia had two school systems, one in Malay and one in English, with a predominantly English-medium tertiary system within which many teachers continued methods and traditions based on United Kingdom practices. The British colonial policy had been one of educating Malays to be better farmers, artisans, fishermen, and labourers while fostering a tiny number of elite schools for the children of Malay rulers. It was dearly recognized, even then, that English for international communication opened up broader perspectives and created social and economic advantages. Since the Razak Report (Government of Malaya, 1956) and Independence, language planners have sought to balance English for international communication with national concerns in a multilingual, multicultural nation (Asmah, 1993; Jeannet, 2013). This chapter will suggest that some of the links to the "source" of the English language and nationally determined policies remain a strong influence, even while ASEAN develops and aims to foster an international framework for English as a shared medium of communication.

Malaysia's primary level system (for students aged 6-12 years old) in the 1970s reflected the cultural complexity that continues to today with strong support for national-type primary schools which use Tamil and Mandarin as the medium of instruction. From 1970 until 1976, the majority of national schools, as opposed to vernacular national-type schools changed in stages to use Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction, while English was classified as a second language. English language instruction was provided a few hours a week in the national syllabus with a smaller allocation in the Tamil- and Chinese-medium national-type schools, a situation which remains in place today (Rajaretnam & Nalliah, 1999). English is therefore a subject and not a medium of instruction, beginning at Year 1 in the six-year national primary schools and at Year 3 in Tamil- and Chinese-medium schools.

Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction was and is still a major influence in how the English language is perceived, developed, and implemented in the highly centralised education system. The role of the national language has strong roots in assertions and advocacy of nationhood through a common national language and is widely used across many sociocultural groups (Asmah, 1987; Ridge, 2004). Translation and the development of the national language have played a significant role as the integration focal point for a bilingual or trilingual approach. This continues with an ongoing 2012 Bahasa Malaysia literacy and numeracy initiative (Kang, 2012) which aims to develop basic literacy skills in Bahasa Malaysia.

The initiative is, however, linked to English language teaching, as literacy skills have been a crucial and much needed foundation for Malaysian educational planning, present and past (Musa, Lie, & Azman, 2012). With a generation of students passing through the system of the Malay medium of instruction, concerns about English language literacy and speaking levels have heightened as Malaysia deals with urban-rural differences and moves towards a knowledge-based economy.

Public perception and concerns that standards of English language have declined may seem to be recent expressions as regional and transnational flows of labour, capital, and expertise have developed. Yet this complexity has deeper roots as national education policy aims to address socio-economic divides and urban-rural differences. Addressing socio-economic differences is central to the current macro-planning in the highly publicised Malaysia Education 2013-2025 Blueprint (MOE, 2012). The first of the "Eleven Shifts to Transform the System" is expressed as "equal access to quality education of an international standard," and the second shift aims to "ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English Language" (MOE, 2012, p. E19, emphasis added). These aims are not new (Asmah, 2012) and this chapter will argue that educators can learn from the past by examining how these aims were prescribed with nationwide detailed directives and then implemented through classroom delivery.

Concerns about 'the poor state of English language competencies were highlighted by the then Prime Minister Mahathir in 1991 (Pillay, 1998, p. 2) after earlier advocacy of the nation-building role of Bahasa Malaysia. Widening achievement gaps between rural and urban learners and the affluent and less affluent with proficiency have been linked to limited exposure to English. It has been suggested that since "English has been relegated to the status of a subject in the school curriculum one must expect the level of competence to drop" (Pillay, 1998, p. 3).

A substantive change and investment in placing English language in a foregrounded role began in 2002 with the change in the medium for maths and science instruction from the national language to English. This change was announced by the then Prime Minister Mahathir in May 2002 and implemented as a new policy in the national education system in 2003 in stages. The purpose of English for Teaching Mathematics and Science (ETMS) was to enable students to acquire proficiency in English while learning the content. The linguistic climate with this change in 2003 appeared to be supportive of English language development in primary and secondary schools with this ETMS initiative and it was at this time that supporting projects were launched.

Projects and Practices

Numerous English language teaching projects have proliferated in Malaysian public educational development in the last two decades (Pandian, 2002). There has been considerable public expenditure in infrastructure and materials from self-access learning centres introduced in 1990 to class reader programmes (Mukundan, Ting, & All Abdul Ghani, 1998) and laptop-based English for Maths and Science modules. The investment to develop teachers' pedagogy and proficiency has led to government partnerships with varied providers.

One such partnership in which the government has invested is focused on in-service education. Challenges and strategies drawn from in-service English language teacher experience and research will be related to the ASEAN Economic Community goals for education.

Malaysia has a long history of teacher education and, unlike much of ASEAN with the exception of Singapore, still has strong links with the United Kingdom (Jeannet, 2013). In early 2002, the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), an international educational trust with headquarters in Reading, United Kingdom, was asked by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) of the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) to provide English Language Coordinators (ELCs), or teacher educators, for selected rural districts throughout Malaysia. In working with Cff3T, which has over three decades of Malaysian

experience, as well as with the British Council, the MOE continued a legacy of links to British providers, an approach which is still occurring on a scale larger than with any other ASEAN nation.

The in-service project which will be the focus of this case study may suggest approaches which could be applicable in similar ASEAN settings in which centralised planning attempts to drive classroom change. The CfBT project began in May 2002, which was when Prime Minister Mahathir announced the medium of instruction for mathematics and science would change from Bahasa Malaysia to English. The Malaysian Schools English Language Project (MSELP) aimed to improve the country's standard of English through in-service English language teacher training, with a focus on rural areas. A needs analysis informed the pedagogy of the project components (Hall, 2009, p. 13). The project concluded in December 2007 with 22,000 teachers involved in over 30 of the 84 educational districts. It also involved principals and local administrators as it did not take long to realise that involving all stakeholders is vital in a hierarchical, centralised system. A subsequent in-service project involving English for Maths and Science involved administrators even further. After a hiatus, in which there was little continuity to support earlier materials distribution and teacher education, tenders were called for another in-service project in September 2009.

The English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP) (British Council, 2013) apportioned nationwide to three providers, began in January 2010 for a three-year period. This project is based on small clusters of five schools per one "native speaker" teacher educator / mentor; the project has 300 mentors. It has been renewed for another two years, beginning January 2014. The ELTDP's reflective approach is central to the intensive mentoring mode. The key performance indicators for 2010-2013 included numbers of teachers trained and observed who completed courses, as well as shared evidence of changes in techniques. In all projects, a quantifiable assessment is requested by the MOE for the qualitative interactions of classroom change - a real challenge. Considerable public investment in an earlier larger scale project is now focused on in-depth development of a smaller group of teachers with arguably more intensive learning and a smaller scale transfer of expertise. Transferable skills in terms of replication are not part of this project, a point which is seen as contentious by some.

The Current English Language In-Service Teacher Development Situation

As English is no longer the medium for maths and science in primary and secondary schools, the focus for English language teacher

development is now part of a wider strategy as seen in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MOE, 2012). The 2009 reversal of English for Maths and Science to return the medium of instruction to Bahasa Malaysia is coincidentally the same year as the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) results were derived from a survey of a broad range of 5,000 15-year-old students. The Malaysia Education Blueprint (MOE, 2012, p. 26) stated that Malaysia was ranked 55 in the 2009 ranking of 74 countries for reading In the 2012 PISA assessment, Malaysia was ranked 59 in reading out of 65 OECD countries (Sedghi, Arnett, & Chalabi, 2013). Clearly, literacy in English poses considerable challenges with such results for the national language reading levels.

Investment continues in English language in-service teacher training. However, there is a tendency for changes and initiatives to depend on top-down planning on a project-by-project basis, which can create a lack of continuity and gaps in implementation. There are many smaller private / public partnerships contributing to development as well, but the intricacy of these localised yet often successful initiatives is beyond the scope of this article. The key to these and larger initiatives lies in implementation, developing teacher confidence, and commitment to continuity. The teaching and learning of English for maths and science policy, for example, has also been critiqued not for what it was but for the problems with implementation (Goh, 2013; Ramachandran, 2013). After policy is decreed at the national or ASEAN level, the implementation stage is very dependent on teachers. Teachers may perceive another change of direction decreed from a centralised system as not being situated in an understanding of rural multilingual complexities. An example of this is the reversal of the English for maths and science policy remaining a contentious issue as ex-Prime Minister Mahathir and others have called for its reinstatement (Darwis, 2013; Tan, 2012). While the politics of English language, especially vis-a-vis the national language and multilingualism, continue to be complex in multicultural Malaysia, the government continues to invest in English language teacher development.

The fourth shift of the eleven shifts in the Malaysia Educational Blueprint (2012, p. E14) states that the MOE aims to "transform teaching into the profession of choice; included are plans to raise the entry bar for admitting teachers as well as "competency and performance-based career progression by 2016." Language proficiency is currently the focus of considerable investment in a new raft of in-service projects. Generally in the past decade, most in-service approaches have fostered proficiency through integration with transferable pedagogy, an approach requested by teachers in an earlier needs analysis (Hall & Dodson, 2004). The development of teachers' confidence is recognised as critical to English language usage and

learning in the classroom, yet the current approach is to assess teachers and develop teachers' language so that students can also improve proficiency. Kabilan (2007) notes that

in a non-native English language teaching and learning environment, the teacher is responsible for espousing effective teaching practices. But when the teacher's Own linguistic competency and proficiency are limited, it undermines the teacher's efforts to improve learners' achievement in English language learning (p 681)

He goes on to state that the issue goes beyond teachers to planning and financial issues as "students with excellent English capabilities and achievements tend to move into other, higher paying professions" (Kabilan, 2007, p. 682). This then suggests that change needs to begin with making the profession itself attractive, while at the same time enhancing the professional life of those already involved in teaching. The larger scale initiatives planned to build national and ASEAN capacity then need to focus on teacher classroom development by building teacher confidence as a profession working in effective bilingual or multilingual interactive classrooms. The challenge will again depend on implementation and teacher engagement in a system driven by national examinations.

Examinations and the status of English language have been an area of contestation as experienced teachers have seen many changes to the status of English. A recent national examination status change is the latest change in multilingual policies, as at the time of writing in 2014. The Minister of Education during 2014 announced that improving students' English proficiency will be a priority, since students must pass the English portion of the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil *P ela jaran Malaysia* [SPM]) in 2016 (Kulasagaran, 2014). This is an important secondary school examination for 15-16 year old students. He also announced a focus on teachers' proficiency development with an upskilling programme. Subsequent to the language proficiency assessment of 61,000 teachers, 9,000 teachers are undergoing training (Kulasagaxan, 2013). Implicit in this program is a two-pronged approach assuming that proficiency is •the dominant factor when teachers aspire to provide engaging pedagogy. It could be suggested that there is a further built-in assumption that once teacher proficiency has improved, student learning will improve as well.

While one cannot deny the role of teachers' proficiency, one hopes that fostering effective bilingual and multilingual English language pedagogy does not get misplaced in the pendulum swings that so often

impact on effective in-service teacher education (Malachi, 2011). In any macro planning and capacity building, there is always the fact that a teacher can close the classroom door and work with his or her own approach to English language development.

<div align="center">A Case Study of Implementing In-Service English Language Teacher Education</div>

The lessons and challenges derived from research and experience within the earlier Malaysian Schools English Language Project (MSELP) will draw on doctoral research into the early phases of teacher educator and teacher interaction (Hall, 2009). Data from the findings will be used to suggest approaches to linking wider national aims to classroom acceptance of interactive English language teaching techniques and the development of more effective bilingualism or multilingualism in rural Malaysia

The Ministry of Education opined that rural teachers engaged in excessive teacher-fronted delivery of content through grammar-translation at the start of the in-service project. The ministry wanted to develop more interactive teaching while teachers experienced interactive in-service learning (Hall, 2009, p. 63). Some of the MOE's needs and concerns may be similar in other parts of ASEAN with other initiatives to build international standards for ASEAN-wide English language development. These could include building change from the ground up, deconstructing reliance on non-ASEAN expertise, and fostering continuity in capacity building.

To foster change, the MOE expected the MSELP to model the processes that teachers would use in their own classrooms. Yet MOE officials were also concerned about the effect of cultural differences on how the "imported" teacher educators might be seen by the teachers. If the teacher educators were seen as all-knowing experts, achieving interactivity, a key aim of the project, would be a challenge. Although the use of foreign experts may have given the project status, these experts could also have been seen as having insufficient knowledge of what would succeed in rural Malaysian classrooms (Hall, 2007). Compounding the situation were issues of how so-called "native speaker" (Timmis, 2004) teacher educators were perceived when working in a rural, generally non-English-speaking setting with speakers of other languages.

The research focused on the early phase interaction when first impressions count, and understanding what teacher trainers, hereafter referred to as teacher educators (TEs), do and say to create positive perceptions of their techniques (Hall, 2009, p. 113) with practicing teachers. The wider implications of acceptance of change being applied within classrooms was based on the assumption that "human learning

is emergent through social interactions" (Singh & Richards, 2006, p. 151). All broader macro aims of educational development are also enabled in classroom change or blocked by the lack of it. Not learning from this aspect is one of the reasons macro planning may remain at the rhetorical level.

The Project Needs Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions

The in-service teacher training initiative began with a needs analysis, Surveying Progressive English Language Teaching (SPELT), in a non-urban Malaysian district, where the English Language Coordinators (ELCs), henceforth called teacher educators, worked (Hall & Dodson, 2004). Responses from 168 English language primary and secondary teachers representing 86^010 of such teachers within the district and interviews with 50 teachers were collected. The data on the rural English teachers' perceptions, approaches, techniques, and needs were analyzed. Perhaps there are implications in the data for developing effective English language teaching in other ASEAN rural settings.

Findings and Implications from the Needs Analysis

The survey showed that a large amount of teacher talk dominated teacher-student interaction, which was often in the national language. Unsurprisingly, the amount of Bahasa Malaysia used correlated with students' English language proficiency levels. Importance was placed on producing evidence of success, such as accurate and neatly written work Teachers reported having students practice model examination tasks. Closed tasks and copying from the blackboard followed. In addition, teachers preferred lessons based on textbook input, with many using reading comprehension exercises, copying from the board, and worksheets (Hall, 2009). Despite responding that they practiced aspects of language teaching in the syllabus such as promoting the use of English in as well as outside the classroom, their responses to check questions revealed this was rare in practice. Primary and secondary teachers indicated a need for training in pedagogical methods and techniques and English language skills. Teachers also wanted the training program to help them build confidence.

Recent Malaysian research aligns with the claim that "real experience in the classroom" is critical to teacher education being meaningful (Malachi, 2011, p.100). As such, MSELP used a "loop input" approach (Woodward, 2003) so that teachers would learn and be able to readily apply task-based learning in more basic or extended forms in their contexts.

It was evident that cascade training approaches previously implemented had been without the expected classroom changes. Although a needs analysis had been done, stipulations of the MOE's Curriculum Development Division included that TEs live in the district to learn the teachers' contexts and that the model involve experiential learning. Previous training may have been 11-fronted and not as interactive, which made implementing the loop input approach more challenging. The MSELP Us worked to increase the interactivity of English language education in the district. Present in-service projects continue with this objective. Research into the early phases of native speaker TE and Malaysian rural teacher interaction will be described to show the challenges in meeting ASEAN objectives at the chalk face.

Teacher educators and the national language. The use of the national language was viewed as beneficial by the teacher educators in this case study. They described the social cohesion arising from the use of the national language, as well as the benefits if used selectively in the classroom (Hall, 2009). The name of one course, "Teaching English Through English," was soon changed to "Teaching English Mainly Through English" (TEMTE). However, the TEs also challenged the use of Bahasa Malaysia when linked to the grammar-translation method. New sections on contrastive analysis teaching techniques in TEMTE addressed the reality in rural classrooms, where English is more a foreign than second language.

Teachers still remember a MOE memo requiring schools to use only English. It had been issued by the Minister of Education, who was bilingual. However, Teacher Educator A (TE A) advocated using the national language selectively, such as when displaying a vocabulary item was not possible or when explaining abstract concepts; this elicited positive responses from teachers, particularly from the early primary level. TE B had asked teachers for Malay translations to use for comparative grammar and used Bahasa Malaysia for largely social purposes. IT C, who spoke basic Bahasa Malaysia, sometimes used it to enliven interaction (Hall, 2009). These usages of the national language in English language educational contexts show increased support and confidence in the use of both languages. The TEs used the national language as a way to connect teacher training and the needs of bilingual or multilingual rural classroom settings. To extrapolate further, any development of English language needs to be contextualised with the use of the national language and a clear understanding of the roles of each. When language change is being implemented, recognition of the complexity of local identity and the multilingual nature of communities appears to aid acceptance (Lee, 2003). Aligned with recognition of the existing linguistic complexity

comes a need to fulfil teachers' everyday needs and the importance of learning transferable tasks.

Teacher educators and teachers perceiving links to classrooms. Teachers expected to learn techniques useful in their classrooms. Everyday classroom needs were their main concern, a view supported by reflective research into Malaysian pre-service teachers' expectations (Kabilan, 2007). They therefore provided practical techniques for primary and secondary level needs. The TEs explained the benefits of the techniques for students and the reasons the techniques would succeed. The approach reflected Clandinin and Connelly's (1987, p. 362) concept of the "personal practical knowledge" of teachers, in this case, the teacher educators, arising from their experiences. In IT A's experience, rural teachers desired practical "plug and play" techniques (Hall, 2009. p. 150). Thus, although the literature on professional development frequently advocates the need to transform the thinking of teachers and then to have those teachers express those changes in beliefs about teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005), from the perspective of rural teachers, techniques which would motivate students and meet everyday classroom needs were of immediate concern.

The TEs therefore used techniques (e.g., group work and chain stories) with the aim of lessening the use of worksheets and copying from the board in the teachers' classrooms. The transferable tasks in this early phase of interaction were well received by the teachers. The TEs soon turned to classroom-related tasks to show the connection to classroom needs. They employed short tasks and positive reinforcement to build teacher confidence. During supportive, non-evaluative class visits, a new approach for many of the teachers, TEs gave direct feedback that further engendered teacher confidence.

The learning culture. Nationally espoused values or visions of ASEAN aims may be publicised, but the cultural context of rural Malaysian in-service interaction derives from more pressing needs with the immediacy of classroom lessons. The complexity of the multilingual situation in Malaysia is very obvious in rural Malaysia, where there can be a gap between plans made in an urban context and language use diversity. The rural classroom culture may therefore be one in which English is as much a foreign language as a second language so that TEs may need to approach teachers' classroom culture recognising the influences of the local and national languages. A more contextual view may be that the TEs developed a "learning culture" (Cortazzi, 2000; Cortazzi & Jin, 2002) absent from previous professional development programs. While national policies underpin the syllabus, consideration of local contexts in observable settings, such as the rural teachers' classrooms, is more realistic.

The project marked the first time for native speaker TEs to be stationed for a longer term in rural communities. While the TEs were very experienced in life and work abroad, cultural differences occurred. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, culture is how "a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas" (1998, p. 6). Culture continuously changes and is related to behaviours. Focusing on actions, tension is apparent between national educational values, particularly hierarchical values and the interaction in large-scale teacher education, and smaller scale interaction where TEs may aim to deconstruct hierarchical values (Hall, 2009). Therefore, within the boundaries of this research setting, it is suggested that a "small culture" (Holliday, 2011) of situated learning develops: successive interactions or behaviours which do not confirm or deny the teachers and TEs' different nationally-based views.

During early phase teacher education, a local learning culture may develop through interactions as tasks and aims are communicated between the TEs and teachers. Costelloe (2006) in her Malaysian research suggests that interactions may override statements or generalizations made on a national level for both teachers and teacher educators. It may be surmised that, as Littlewood (1999) describes in the East Asian context, there is "a powerful role of the learning context" (p. 83). It is possible that in-service courses may not align with nationally prescribed beliefs as the local learning culture is constructed.

Other researchers such as Hofstede (1997) have also found that context may at times override a national model. Gieve and Clark (2005) raised important questions about the role of contextual factors for students from China studying in a situation which differed from earlier learning situations. They argued that "apparently stable, culturally determined approaches to learning are far more flexible to contextual variation than we might expect and that student responses to particular contexts are not stably predicted by macro-scale characterizations of nation scale 'cultures¯ (Gieve & Clark, 2005, p. 263). Gieve and Clark proposed that "an ethnically based notion of culture may be less powerful than commonly assumed compared to local, situationally-based cultures of learning" (2005, p. 274). In the Malaysian context, the district-based MESELP courses, with the TEs' emphasis on cultivating an interactive learning culture, were a distinct departure from other professional development courses the teachers had experienced (Hall, 2009). Teachers noted the difference between the small culture of the local learning context and their previous in-service teacher education experiences. Being positive about the changes and supportive of the use of the national language in classrooms were critical to acceptance of changes.

In summary, any major planning to build English language capacity will depend on the teaching and learning interactions. Research suggests that an English-only approach is not as effective as recognition of the bilingual or multilingual nature of students and teachers' lives. Modelling and applying pedagogy can be effective if teachers perceive the applicability of techniques and gain confidence through an experiential approach. Such an approach needs to balance imported expertise with the culture of learning within classrooms in which English may be more a foreign language than a second language. The effectiveness of English language capacity building may increase if changes are grounded in existing local classroom situations.

Conclusion

The in-service teacher education initiative described in this chapter is but one of many developments which the Malaysian MOE has put into place to upgrade English language teaching in the public sector of education. Numerous current initiatives are aiming to improve teachers' proficiency and pedagogy with many stakeholders offering a range of approaches. These initiatives recognize that capacity building starts in the classroom, especially when one wants to address the urban-rural income gap which affects this and many other nations. It could be argued that there are lessons to be learnt from past investments and it has been suggested that English language initiatives need to take into account the complex multilingual nature of Malaysia and to address the learning culture and pedagogy of classrooms as well as teachers' proficiency and wider national and ASEAN aims. While internationally imported expertise may have much to offer, incorporating effective bilingualism or multilingualism with situated learning may be beneficial to all. It has been suggested that this approach has been effective during in-service teacher interaction. Incorporating the complexities of situated learning in which teacher educators recognize the complexities of a multilingual and multicultural nation may benefit capacity building for English as an international language.

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