

Promoting Intercultural Understanding among School Students through an English Language Based Reading Programme

Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh (Corresponding author)

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

E-mail: manjeet@usm.my

Fatin Najwa Amelia binti Marsani

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Paramaswari Jaganathan

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Ahmad Sofwan Nathan Abdullah

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Premalatha Karupiah

School of Social Science, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Doi:10.7575/aiac.all.v.7n.5p.128

Received: 02/06/2016

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.7n.5p.128>

Accepted: 09/08/2016

This work is supported by Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Education Ministry Malaysia under Grant 203/PBAHASA/6711390

Abstract

Malaysian intercultural society is typified by three major ethnic groups mainly Malays, Chinese and Indians. Although education system is the best tool for these three major ethnic groups to work together, contemporary research reveals that there is still lack of intercultural embedding education context and national schools are seen as breeding grounds of racial polarisation. In Malaysian context, there is a gap in research that focuses on the design of a proper intercultural reading framework for national integration and such initiatives are viable through schools. The main objective of this conceptual paper is to introduce the English Language Intercultural Reading Programme (ELIRP) in secondary schools to promote intercultural understanding among secondary school students. The proposed framework will facilitate the acquisition of intercultural inputs without being constrained by ideological, political, or psychological demands. This article will focus on elucidating how ELIRP could affect cognitive (knowledge) and behavioural transformations to intercultural perceptions harboured by selected Form 4 students of 20 national schools in Malaysia.

Keywords: behavior, knowledge, intercultural reading framework, intercultural understanding, English Language Intercultural Reading Programme, secondary school students

1. Introduction

Malaysia is a country that is characterized by multiple racial, ethnic, and cultural differences. The pillar of intercultural oriented countries like Malaysia is none other than its national unity. As a country with a plural society, Malaysia is made up of many ethnic groups, for each has its own unique culture and heritage such as languages, identities and values that sees unity as the key for the citizens to live harmoniously.

There are three major races in Malaysia: The Malays (50.1%), who are Muslims are the majority community in the country. The other two major racial groups are the Chinese (22.6%), who generally follow Buddhism and Confucianism, and the Indians (6.7%), who mostly follow Hinduism. The Chinese community in Malaysia, for example uses a number of dialects including Hokkien, Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin. For the Indian society, the language spoken is Tamil and for the Malay is *Bahasa Melayu*. Other groups (8.9%) that make up the population include the Eurasians and indigenous groups in the Sabah and Sarawak regions like Kadazan, Dusunus, Muruts, Ibans, Bidayus, Penans, just to name a few (Malaysia Demographic Profile, 2014)

Agreeing with the concept of being an intercultural oriented country, prime ministers of Malaysia have been heralding a more idealistic future of greater equality between cultures to promote healthy environment of intercultural understanding within Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. As mentioned in series of government announcements in

'*Bangsa Malaysia*' (Malaysian Nation), 'Smart Partnership' (Mahathir, 1991), 'One System for Malaysia' (Abdullah, 2004) and 'One Malaysia' (Najib, 2009), the revised vision of the government is to focus on intercultural society and equality between the ethnic groups (Tong & Robertson, 2008).

Digging into the perspective of intercultural Malaysia, the ethnic conflict incident of 16 May 1969 that resulted in bloodshed has a long lasting effect in solving any racial issues by the government. According to National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), unity is the process of uniting the members of a society and the country as a whole through national ideologies, so that the members of the society can build one identity, common values and a sense of belonging (INTAN, 1994).

In Malaysia, the objective of nation building and implementing national unity amongst the various ethnic groups ranks very high in the educational and political agendas. As a matter of fact, national unity and integration is the foundation of the education policy. It is one of national education policy's major goals to inculcate and nurture national consciousness through fostering common ideas, values, aspiration and loyalties in order to mould national unity and national identity in a multi-ethnic society. Anderson (1991) states that this, in line with the common reality of education contributing in all societies to the creation of the 'imagined community' which is the nation.

2. Background of the Study

In the nineteenth century, Malaysia or Tanah Melayu was quite homogenous as far as the demographic distribution was concerned. It was a singular society of Malay, the native of Tanah Melayu. The history of ethnic pluralism began with the British who colonized the country in 1726, and their "divide and conquer" policy laid the foundation for communal division in Malaysia. Under colonial rule, from 1874 – 1957, primary and secondary school education was almost entirely ethnically segregated (Abd Rashid, 2002). During the British colonial rule, they encouraged migration, especially from China and India and changed the nature of their ethnically homogeneous society to a more pluralistic society (Santhiram, 1990).

The three major groups in Malaysia, mainly Malay, Chinese and Indian follow different cultures and traditions, and commonly profess different religions. They have different codes of dress, customs, value systems, and beliefs (Jamil & Abd. Razak, 2010). Although each of these ethnic groups has its own culture, and has vigorously maintained its traditions and community structures, these cultures have also blended together to create Malaysia's contemporary and uniquely diverse heritage.

Looking into Malaysia's socio-political construct, the unity concept in intercultural Malaysia is essentially premised on the notion of tolerance. This notion, premised on an ideology designed to manage diversity and plurality, expounds that society not only acknowledges but also respects the very nature of plurality as being an inalienable right of mankind. In other words, in a cultural pluralism context, tolerance implies that members of the diverse groups are permitted to retain many of their cultural ways, as long as they confirm to those practices deemed necessary for the survival of the society as a whole (Bennet, 1995).

As unity is one of the national objectives since independence, all the enacted educational policies have stated that unity as one of their main objectives. The Razak Report of 1956 became the foundation for subsequent national policies on education such as the Rahman Talib Report (Federation of Malaya, 1958; 1960). Many of its recommendations were included into the National Language Policy, which made Bahasa Melayu as a unifying factor, the national language, and medium of instruction in the national schools. The centralised school curriculum and examination, and the inclusion of subjects like civic studies, are attempts to ensure integration, tolerance, and national consciousness.

Education plays a significant role in building a society that is cohesive and culturally diverse. Matveev and Mitler (2004) argue that having thorough intercultural knowledge, which is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts as mentioned by Bennett (2008) and intercultural skills such as listening, analysing and relating pieces of information and processing them (Bok, 2006) stimulate intercultural competency in the society.

According to Kalantzis and Cope (2005), intercultural understanding identifies knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviour that assist students in developing and reacting with intercultural understanding at schools and in their lives outside schools. Through education, students are encouraged to engage with their own and others' culture, building both their sense of belonging and the flexibility to move between their world and world of others.

Intercultural reading has always been a tool that takes us across borders, build bridges across cultures and communities, and enable us to see and hold up to critical scrutiny the competing and complex texts that fight to influence our beliefs, everyday lives, moral commitments, and social investments (Luke, 2003, p. 20). Text for intercultural reading raises students' motivation because it makes a genuine demand on them to communicate ideas, attitude, and feelings, as well as a genuine interest in what others have to say. Thus, they provide a context for meaningful social interaction (V. Beli & N. Jeffery, 1998). Highlighting the needs of intercultural understanding, this study will focus on two of the aspects, which are knowledge and behaviour to develop intercultural reading framework via English Language Intercultural Reading Programme (ELIRP).

3. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research study is to determine the efficacy of ELIRP in modifying cognitive and attitudinal behaviour perceptions towards cultures by

- exploring the level of intercultural knowledge of Malaysian secondary school students in the pre and post ELIRP stage, and

- exploring the level of intercultural behaviour of Malaysian secondary school students in the pre and post ELIRP stage.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Reading

According to Hansen-Krening and Mizokowa (1997) various version of book clubs and literature study circles that focused on the discussion of cultural issues have been found to increase multicultural awareness. Brandt (1990) sees literacy as involvement in the sense of readers needs to participate into text and relate them with personal experiences. Students exchange each other's feelings and experiences based on the reading. Mac Gillivray, Tse and McQuillan (1995) pointed out one important benefit of reading in circle, which is the group members can develop their relationship with people from different cultural background and trust among them. Unintentionally, the students learn to take full responsibility to not only themselves and how they behave but others' reactions on their behaviour as well.

4.2 Intercultural Understanding

Observable behaviour as according to Byram (1997) includes learner's actions, answers, texts, and responses towards other cultures. According to Byram and Nichols (2001), while reading the literature component, students can identify and recognise the elements of foreign cultures. Thus, they are able to compare the foreign cultures with their own culture and elucidate any cultural based prejudices and overgeneralisations. Adding to that, Byram and Nichols (2001) also highlighted that reading can help to clarify and explain the misconceptions and conflicts in cultures. Therefore, it helps students to reflect their own feelings and clarify their actions and decisions.

Intercultural behaviour does not obtain, shape, nor change overnight. Garza's (2008) experiment to promote intercultural behaviour through reading requires restructuring of students' self-confidence and building trust among them. Stahl (1990) suggested that cultural reading is consistent with students' own culture in classroom learning environment. The idea of reading to promote intercultural behaviour is to develop cultural understanding and embrace cultural differences.

In a classroom, it is important to have a library that filled with books that relate to English as Second Language (ESL) children's own culture. Not only it will help the ESL children's self-esteem but also supports the growth of the children's awareness and respect for the cultural groups of the others that make up the society (Spangenberg- Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994). Delpit (1995) suggested that not only should teachers and students who share group membership delight in their own culture and linguistic history, but all teachers must revel in the diversity of their students and that of the world outside the classroom community. Garza (2008) agreed that it is common for teachers to teach students about customs, traditions, and history of cultures in one country, but not exclusively excluding the voices of the other cultures that are minority in one classroom.

An experiment conducted by Garza (2008) in a classroom of one student from Vietnam and the rest are from Texas, United States of America, Garza used classroom reading as an approach to promote the Vietnamese girl's culture and customs to the others. Garza used a bilingual book titled *Going Home, Coming Home* by Truong Tran and the Vietnamese student read in her mother tongue language; Vietnamese language, while Garza translated and read in English. The results of the activity is overwhelming as other students showed their interest in wanting to know more about the girl's culture customs back in her hometown. Garza (2008) realised that such activity does not only promote reading among students but promotes intercultural knowledge and become a lesson of cultural awareness at the same time.

Such activity however, requires a strict selection of books. Spangenberg-Urbschat and Pritchard (2008) suggested that it is important to avoid books with stereotype views. Similar with Garza (2008), selecting the right reading materials to promote intercultural knowledge is important as it can affect students' perspective and sensitivity of cultures other than their own. Besides that, Garza too experimented in exposing students in reading plays of other cultures. According to Garza (2008) reading plays does not only allow students to activate their schemata but also increase their interest level. Similar to Spangenberg Urbschat and Pritchard (2008) that support the idea of the more prior knowledge that the students have about a particular subject, the easier for them to read and understand. The experiment proves that reading plays help to aid retention of the students' newly acquired language.

Books also provide reasons to talk (Spangenberg- Urbschat & Pritchard, 1994). Agreeing together is Moran (2001) that every student has a distinct story to tell, and teaching culture is about constructing and hearing these stories. Promoting intercultural knowledge through reading is possible with the right reading materials. Garza (2008) agreed that it is mutually beneficial for students with culture being learned and students who are learning new culture if both sides can embrace the differences based on the knowledge that they learn via reading.

Therefore, to further explore how gauging students' level of intercultural knowledge and intercultural behaviour can promote intercultural understanding among the multicultural student composition in schools, this study conceptualises Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and the schema theory by Tierney and Pearson (1994) to realise the ultimate aim of the national objectives that is unity among its people through the ELIRP.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1 Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was developed by Bennett that provides a structure for understanding on how people experience cultural differences. According to Bennett (1993), DMIS theory describes that cultural sensitivity and cultural differences represent a potential barrier or benefit in developing relationships and communicating effectively with people of different groups or cultures.

Bennett (1993) categorised DMIS into six stages that represent a set of perspectives with the ability to understand and have a more complete experience of cultural difference. He differentiates the stages as denial, defense, minimisation, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Generally, the six stages of DMIS as described by M. Bennett (1986, 1993), J. Bennett and M. Bennett (2003, 2004) are:

Stage 1: Denial

A person is comfortable with the culture that they are familiar with. Not anxious to complicate life with “cultural differences”. Not noticing much cultural difference around them. Establish separation from others who are different.

Stage 2: Defense

A strong commitment to thoughts and feelings on culture and cultural differences although there is some distrust of cultural behaviour or ideas that differ from one’s own. Realise about the existence of other cultures around, but with a relatively incomplete understanding, fairly strong negative feelings, or stereotypes about other cultures or some of the cultures. Reversal is the opposite of Defense. The person feels that some other cultures are better and tends to exhibit distrust of their own culture.

Stage 3: Minimisation

People from other cultures are just like you, under the surface. Realise about the existence of other cultures around, with some knowledge about differences in customs and celebrations. Not putting down other cultures. Treating other people as you would like to be treated.

Stage 4: Acceptance

Seeing own culture as just one of many ways of experiencing the world. Understand that people from other cultures are as complex as you are. Their ideas, feelings, and behaviour may seem unusual, but their experience is just as rich as your own. Curious about other cultures and always try to seek opportunities to learn more about them.

Stage 5: Adaptation

Recognize the value of having more than one cultural perspective available. The ability to “take the perspective” of another culture to understand or evaluate situations in either your own or another culture and the ability to intentionally change own culturally based behaviour to act in culturally appropriate ways outside your own culture.

Stage 6: Integration

The ability to move easily among cultures to varying extents, have integrated more than one cultural perspective, mind-set, and behaviour into one’s identity and worldview.

Bennett divides the six stages into two groups. The first three stages are ethnocentric stages; in which one’s own philosophy of life and culture are central to understand reality and the last three stages are ethno relative stages; in which one’s own culture is understood in relation to cultures of others. An increase of cultural experience encouraged the development from one stage to another. According to Lange (2011), the DMIS model reveals that the development of intercultural competence needs time to progress and is a continuous process.

5.2 Schema Theory

The theoretical framework of this research study included the theoretical assumption of schema theory because schema theory describes in detail how the background knowledge of the learner interacts with the reading task and illustrates how a student’s knowledge and previous experience with the world is crucial in deciphering a text. The ability to use schemata or background knowledge is seen to play an important role in one’s trial to comprehend a text (Pardede, 2010).

Kitao (1990) describes that schema theory involves an interaction between readers’ knowledge and the text which results in comprehension. Alternatively, Gunning (1996) defines schema theory as the organised knowledge that one already has about people, places, things and events while schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences lead to the creation of mental frameworks that help a reader make sense of a new experience.

According to Smith 1994, theorists differentiate formal schemata from content schemata. Formal schemata as mentioned by Smith (1994) are knowledge about the structure of a text that refers to the way the texts are different from one another. A reading text could be a formal letter, a fictional work, or a scientific essay. Knowledge of this genre structure can aid reading comprehensions, as it gives readers a basis for predicting what texts will be like (Smith, 1994). Content schemata however, refers to the knowledge about a subject matter of a text or the message of the text (Smith, 1994). Anderson (1994) explained that readers comprehend messages when they are able to bring to mind a schema that gives account of the objects and events that are described in the messages.

Anderson (1994) mentioned that when readers cannot locate a schema that fits a text, readers may find it incomprehensible. In some cases, readers might not have a schema that is significant to the text or assistance is needed in order to activate the pertinent schema to be able to comprehend the text. In such cases, Carrell (1988) suggested teachers must be ready in building new background knowledge as well as activating existing background knowledge because it may not be possible for readers to understand the text.

In parallel with this, Bransford (1994) points out that difficulties in comprehension may be caused by the lack of background knowledge presumed by the text, and he sees the responsibility of instructors as being twofold: to activate pre-existing schemata and to help students to integrate isolated “parcels” of knowledge into a schema or to build a new one.

This research study specifically uses the schema theory proposed by Tierney and Pearson (1994) with 3 different stages of activities that can be used to activate and build students’ schemata:

Stage 1: Pre-reading Activities

Teacher have students think, write, and discuss everything they know about the topic, employing techniques such as prediction, semantic mapping, and reconciled reading. The objective of pre-reading stage is to make sure that students have the relevant schema for understanding text.

Stage 2: During Reading Activities

Teacher guide and monitor the interaction between the reader and the text. Note taking is an essential skill for the teacher to apply on the students at this stage because it allows students to compile new vocabulary, information, details, summarize information, and to record their reactions and opinions.

Stage 3: Post-reading Activities

This stage facilitates the opportunity to evaluate students' adequacy of interpretation, while bearing in mind that accuracy is relative and that "readership" must be respected as long as the writer's intentions are addressed. It focuses on a wide range of questions that allow for different interpretations.

Based on the idea of building schemata according to stages, Tierney and Pearson (1994) suggested that in order to teach reading effectively, teachers play an important role in selecting the reading material that are relevant to the students' needs, preferences, individual differences, and cultures in order to provide meaningful texts. This is for the students to understand the message and thus, make use of the knowledge to build their own schemata.

In building ELIRP for this research study, schema theory together with DMIS by Bennett (1986, 1993), J. Bennett and M. Bennett (2003, 2004) are used and based on the conception of the two theories, conceptual framework of the present study is formed.

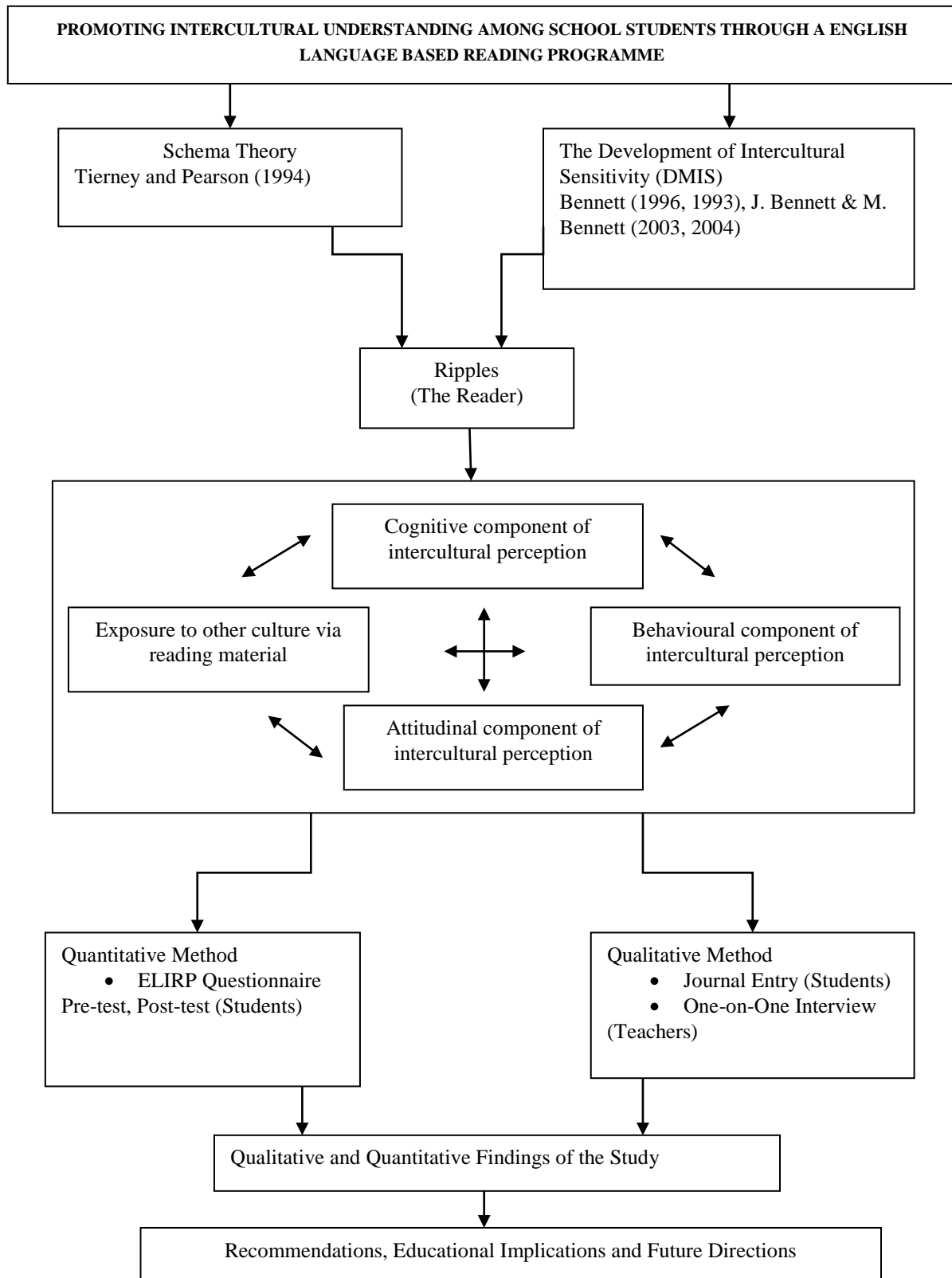


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

6. Methodology

This study will be implemented via five phases:

Phase One

Phase one involved the process of developing the ELIRP module for teachers. Other than that, the development of ELIRP instruments for pre-test and post-test took place during this phase. A pilot study was conducted during phase one in order to test the instrument by using a sample of 30 Form Four students. Finalised questionnaire was distributed to selected Form Four students from 20 schools in Penang.

Following the pilot study, a training session was conducted to train teachers on the process of conducting ELIRP. Twenty teachers were selected from schools in Penang Island and mainland Penang by using purposive sampling technique. The programme was integrated into the students' English language teaching schedule. The teachers participating in this project are the teachers who are teaching English for Form Four class. The selected teachers were invited to join this ELIRP training after consulting and getting the approval of the school principals.

Phase Two

Phase two involved a total of 335 Form Four students from the shortlisted 20 schools. During the first meeting, the teachers distributed the pre-questionnaire to the students. After the completion of the questionnaire, the students were given the selected text and briefing on ELIRP. The students were expected to read the text and discuss various issues related to the text based on the guidelines provided during the selected scheduled English periods in the school timetable. Students were then asked to document their experiences while reading the text by writing a journal entry according to the journal questions prepared.

The students were briefed on the process of journal writing by their teachers. ELIRP uses four different cultural related short stories and it took 8 weeks to be completed. During the last meeting, students were asked to answer the post-questionnaire.

Phase Three

Selected students from each class of the 20 schools were invited for the focus group interview. About four to five students from each class of each school were selected randomly by the teachers to take part in the interview. The four to five students' groups were interviewed by the researcher based on the interview guidelines. The purpose of the focus group interview is to triangulate the data from the questionnaire.

Phase Four

One-to-one interview was conducted with all teachers participating in this research. During this one-to-one interview, teachers were asked to provide feedback in conducting ELIRP and their personal assessment of this programme.

Phase Five

Phase four is data analysis. Data from the pre-test and post-test questionnaires was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Qualitative data analysis was done for data from journal writing entry, focus group interview, and one-to-one interview with the teachers.

The researcher first got familiar with the data before identifying recurring patterns, similarities and differences regarding the experience of the teachers and students while participating in ELIRP. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used in developing an intercultural reading framework which can be used in secondary school students.

Based on the five phases discussed above, Figure 2 summarises how this quasi experimental research was implemented in the Form Four English language classrooms for a period of 8 weeks.

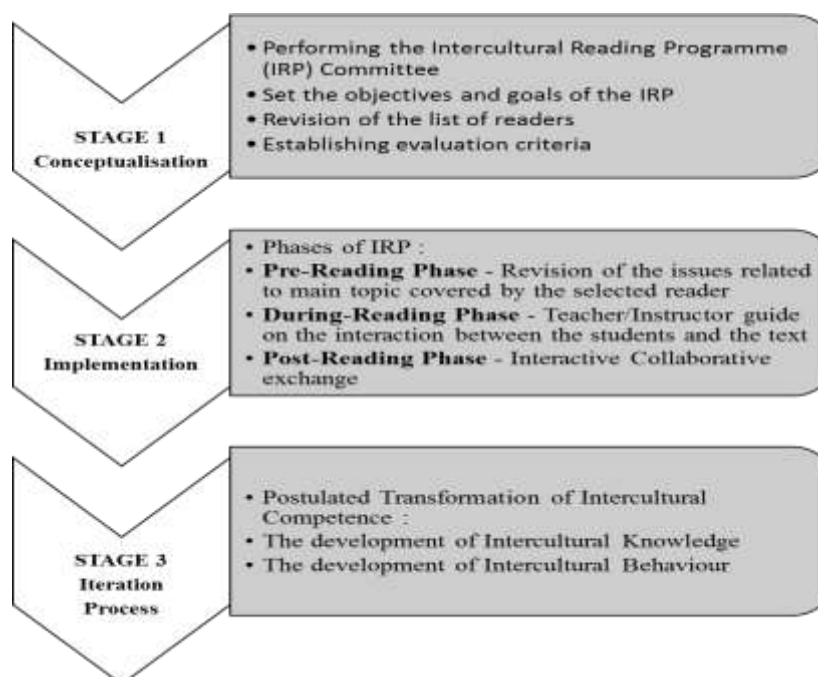


Figure 2. The Implementation of English Language Intercultural Reading Programme

6.1 The Instruments

The instruments used for this study are Pre-test Questionnaire, Post-test Questionnaire, journal writing entries, focus group interview, and one-to-one interview with the teachers. These instruments are based on the four selected short stories that were chosen from the reader titled *Ripples*, written by Shih-Li-Kow and published by Silverfish Books Sdn. Bhd. in the year 2008. The reader consists of 25 stories but only four stories were selected in order to match the time frame of this research study. These four short stories were selected due to its culturally embedding context that suits Malaysia's multi-cultural environment. The four stories are as described below.

Story 1: One Thing at a Time

Value Enculturation: Interracial Harmony

Topic: Interracial Marriage

Story 2: Deep Fried Devil

Value Enculturation: Interracial Harmony

Topic: Traditional Food Customs

Story 3: Courting of Cik Zahirah

Value Enculturation: Intercultural Values

Topic: Cultural Beliefs

Story 4: The Prize

Value Enculturation: Intercultural Values

Topic: Religious Beliefs

6.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this research study is known as pre-test questionnaire and post-test questionnaire whereby a set of questions was distributed before the ELIRP starts and after the ELIRP finished. The same set of questions was used in order to see the knowledge development and changes of perceptions of the students before and after the ELIRP intervention. The questionnaire comprises of two different sections. Section A comprises items to identify the students' intercultural knowledge whereby Section B comprises items to identify the students' intercultural attitudinal behaviour based on four selected short stories.

6.1.2 Journal Entry Questions

The primary qualitative data gathering used for this study is journal entry questions for the students. Students were given and required to answer 2 questions per story as prompts to extract responses and feedback based on the stories given at the end of each story in the form of journal entry. The questions are mainly opinion based and students are required to write in about 50 words per story. The purpose of these questions for journal writing entry is to get the students to be more expressive according to their personal views on related issues.

According to Neuman (2000), the advantages of using open ended questions allows; (1) respondents freedom for unlimited number of answers; (2) respondents freedom of expression, creativity, and richness of information; (3) respondents to elaborate, clarify and qualify their explanations hence, reduce biased answers.

As for journal entry questions, students are allowed to answer the questions outside classroom as they are required to update their journals from time to time based on their knowledge, perceptions and opinions. There are total of 8 numbers of questions that students must complete at the end of this research study. The questions are based on the stories that they have read and discussed during ELIRP session. Students' journal entries was monitored by the teachers every fortnight after they have finished one story in order to make sure that the students complete the given task.

6.1.3 One-to-one Interview with Teachers

The purpose of one-to-one interview with the teachers involved is to gain better understanding of the students' development of intercultural knowledge and intercultural behaviour throughout the study of ELIRP. The one-to-one interview session offers comparison and verification for the data gathered from the pre-test and post-test questionnaire and journal entry questions.

20 English language teachers from 20 schools involved in this research study agreed to take part in the one-to-one interview. The interview was held after the completion of ELIRP and the interview took place at their respective schools. Five questions are prepared and an interview session will between 30 to 45 minutes.

Although the teachers were guided by the questions for this one-to-one interview session, they were still been given the opportunity to discuss and share issues concerning the progress and changes of their students' cultural perception and behaviour, the difficulties in encouraging reading habits among the students and the measures taken by them to overcome the challenges in making the ELIRP a success. The interviews were audio taped and the researcher did the transcription immediately after each interview ends. The transcriptions were analysed and the data was coded and assigned into themes by using qualitative data analysis software, NVivo.

6.1.4 Focus Group Interview

Focus group interview was conducted among the students from 20 schools. Four to five students were randomly selected for the focus group interview. Five prepared questions served as interview guide to extract their response and feedback on intercultural knowledge and intercultural behaviour perspective in the ELIRP. The interview session ranged from 30-45 minutes. The interview was audio taped and the researcher conducted the transcription after each interview. The transcription was analysed and the data was coded and the codes were grouped into themes by using NVivo, the qualitative data analysis software.

7. Conclusion

The use of Malaysian based literature is crucial to promote intercultural understanding among secondary school students in Malaysia. ELIRP that heightens students' intercultural knowledge and brings positive changes in their intercultural behaviour will contribute towards the development of students' intercultural competence. In addition, due to the intercultural nature of Malaysia, which consists of citizens of different cultures, racial and religion background, it is pertinent to nurture the intercultural values among its citizens since young. Finally, based on students' understanding, their behaviour in communicating with each other will help the Education Ministry of Malaysia to incorporate the process of intercultural competence development within meaningful learning activities.

In the context future studies, research can focus on studying the effectiveness of the use of ELIRP in promoting intercultural understanding among secondary school students in Malaysia. Furthermore, studies can also look into the effectiveness of the literature used in the teaching and provide reliable suggestions on more suitable literature for discussion in classroom learning.

References

- Abd Rashid, Abd Rahim. (2002). *Education and Nation Formation in Malaysia: A Structural Analysis*. University of Malay Press: Kuala Lumpur.
- Anderson, R. (1994). "Role of the reader's schema in comprehension, learning, and memory." In Ruddell, Ruddell, and Singer 469-82.
- Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 179-196.
- Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed.), *Cross cultural orientation* (pp. 27-69). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Bennett, M., & Wurzel, J. (2004). *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education. Becoming Interculturally Competent*, 62-77.
- Bennett, J.M. (2008) *Contemporary Leadership, and Intercultural Competence: Understanding and Utilizing Cultural Diversity to Build Successful Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Beli, V. & Jeffery, N. (1998). Intercultural Reading of A.S. Byatt's *The Chinese Lobster*. *Studia Romanica Et Anglicae Zagrabiensia (SRAZ)*. XLIII, 61-68.
- Bok, D. (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should be Learning More*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Brandt, D. (1990). *Literacy as Involvement: The Acts of Writers, Readers and Texts*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Bransford, J. (1994). *Schema activation and schema acquisition: Comments on Richard C. Anderson's remarks*. In Rudell, Ruddell, and Singer, 483-95.
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A., Stevens, D. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Carrell, Devine & Eskey (1988). *Interactive approaches to second language reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Method Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Delpit, L., (1995). *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York, NY: The New P.
- Garza, T. (2008). "Culture in Foreign Language Teaching: The Fifth Skill," teacher training module for on-line methods course, funded through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2008-2010.
- Hofstede, G. (n.d.). *Culture and Organization: International Studies of Management and Organization* (4th ed., Vol. 10, pp. 15-41). M.E Sharpe.Inc.
- Gunning, Thomas, G. (1996). *Creating Reading Instruction for All Children*, Chapter 6, 192-236.

- Hansen-Krening, N., & Mizokawa, D.T. (1997). Exploring ethnicspecific literature: A unity of parents, families, and educators. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 41, 180–189.
- INTAN (1994). *Dasar-dasar pembangunan Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara.
- Jamil, H. (2004). *Ethnic Interaction among Students in Secondary Schools in Malaysia*. Pulau Pinang: School of Educational Studies. Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Jamil, H., & Raman, S. (2012). Malaysian Educational Policy for National Integration: Contested Terrain of Multiple Aspiration. *Language and Culture*, 3(1), 20-31. doi:10.5897/JLC11.025
- Kalantzis, M. & Cope, B. (2005). *Learning by Design*, Common Ground Publishing, Melbourne.
- Khader, F. (2012). The Malaysian Experience in Developing National Identity, Multicultural Tolerance, and Understanding through Teaching Curricula: Lessons Learned and Possible Applications in the Jordanian Context. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(1).
- Khemlani, M. (2010). *Ethnic Relations and Nation Bulding: The Way Forward*. Strategic Information and Research Development Centre.
- Kitao, Kathleen, S. (1990). Textual Schemata and English Language Learning, *Cross Currents*, Issue 3, 147-155
- Landis, D., Bennett, J., & Bennett, M. (2004). *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Lange, K. (2011). Perspectives on Intercultural Competence: A Textbook Analysis and an Empirical Study of Teachers' and Students' Attitudes. *Master's thesis Freie Universität Berlin*.
- Leigh, J. (2000). Implications of Universal and Parochial Behaviour for Intercultural Communication. Retrieved June 14, 2015, from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/>.
- Luke, A. (2003). Literacy Education for a New Ethics for a Global Community, *Language Arts*, 81 (1). pp. 20-23.
- MacGillivray, L., Tse, L. & McQuillan, J. (1995). Second Language and Literacy Teachers Considering Literature Circles: A Play. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 39, 1: 36-44.
- Malaklolunthu, S., & Rengasamy, N. (2011). *School Redesign for Fostering Multiculturalism in Malaysia: Augmenting the 'Vision School'*, 84-88.
- Malaysia Demographics Profile 2014. (n.d.). Retrieved December 15, 2015, from http://www.indexmundi.com/malaysia/demographics_profile.html
- Matveev, A. (2002). *Collected Research Articles, Bulletin of Russian Communication Association: Theory of Communication and Applied Communication* (pp. 59-67). Law Publishing.
- Matveev, A. V., & Milter, R. G. (2004). The value of intercultural competence for performance of multicultural teams. *Team Performance Management*, 10(5/6), 104-111.
- Mohd. Yusof, N. (2006). Patterns of Social Interaction between Different Ethnic Groups in Malaysian Secondary Schools. *Jurnal Pendidik Dan Pendidikan*, 21, 149-164.
- Moran, Patrick, R., (2001). *Teaching Cultural Perspectives in Practice*. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle.
- Mustapha, R., Lubis, M., Azman, N., Karim, F., & Ahmad, A. (n.d.). *Social Integration among Multi-Ethnic Students at Selected Malaysian Universities in Peninsular Malaysia: A Survey of Campus Social Climate*, 1, 35-44.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. (2007). *Sampling Designs in Qualitative Research: Making the Sampling Process More Public* (Vol. 12, pp. 238-254).
- Pardede, P. (2010). A Review on Reading Theories and its Implication to the Teaching of Reading. Retrieved December 15, 2015, from <https://parlindunganpardede.com/articles/language-teaching/a-review-on-reading-theories-and-its-implication-to-the-teaching-of-reading/>
- Rahimah., H.A. (1998), Educational Development and Reformation in Malaysia: Past, Present, and Future, *Journal of Educational Administration* 36(5).
- Santhiram, R. (1997). "Curriculum materials for national integration in Malaysia: Match or mismatch"? *Asia pacific Journal of Education*. Vol.17 Issue 2 p. 7-18
- Smith, F. (1994). *Understanding Reading*. 5th ed. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Spangenberg- Urbschat, Karen & Pritchard, R., (1994). *Kids Come in All Languages: Reading Instruction for ESL Students*. Newark, Delaware International Reading Association, Inc.
- Stahl, S. A. (1990). Riding the pendulum: A rejoinder to Schickedanz and McGee and Lomax. *Review of Educational Research*, 60x 141- 151.
- Stier, J. (2006). Internationalisation, Intercultural Communication and Intercultural Competence. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, (11).
- Tierney, R. J., and P. D. Pearson. 1994. "Learning to learn from text: A Framework for Improving Classroom Practice." In Rudell, Ruddell, and Singer, eds. 1994. 496–513.
- Tong, M. C. & Robertson K. (2008) Political and Cultural Representation in Malaysian Websites. *Intercultural Journal of Design*, 2(2), 67-69.
- Tunku Mohtar, T. (2010). Raising Teachers Consciousness of Cultural Sensitivities in the Classrooms.