

**EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL LITERACY WITH AN
ENGLISH GRAPHIC NOVEL AMONG YEAR FOUR PUPILS**

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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

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**EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL LITERACY WITH AN ENGLISH GRAPHIC
NOVEL AMONG YEAR FOUR PUPILS**

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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

To be critically literate is considered one of the crucial objectives in an era in which we have instant and unrestricted access to a variety of information. Individuals should be able to reflect, evaluate and critique whatever information received instead of being passive recipients. However, current research in the field suggest that even tertiary level learners in different countries of the world lack the ability to read in between the lines and to think critically. Therefore, developing learners who are critically literate is a major concern in the current educational research. Employing the dimensions of disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple perspectives from the Four Dimensions Critical literacy framework developed by Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002), this study examine how critical literacy is facilitated during the English Language Arts lessons in the Malaysian primary school settings. Using qualitative data from audio recordings of the classroom lessons, pupils' interviews, teacher interviews and pupils' artefacts in the form of reflective notes and work samples, this study provided detailed examples of how Malaysian primary learners responded to the two dimensions of critical literacy when they were guided by their teacher during the class discussions and activities revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. The findings of the study suggest that with various forms of support, learners, even at a young age are already capable of handling critical literacy work. This study also suggests possibilities of how examining young learners' responses as they disrupt the common place and interrogate multiple viewpoints in the text can provide information to education practitioners to better support young learners in their development of questioning, challenging, and evaluating the meanings and purposes of texts from an early age.

EXPLORASI LITERASI KRITIKAL MENGGUNAKAN NOVEL GRAFIK BAHASA INGGERIS DALAM KALANGAN MURID TAHUN EMPAT

ABSTRAK

Literasi kritikal merupakan satu kemahiran yang amat mustahak di era dimana kita mempunyai akses yang tidak terbatas kepada pelbagai maklumat. Dalam konteks ini, setiap individu perlu berkemahiran dalam menyoal, menilai dan membuat kritikan dalaman terhadap maklumat yang diterima tanpa menerimanya dengan pasif. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian yang dijalankan di dalam dan luar negara menunjukkan para pelajar termasuk di peringkat pengajian tinggi belum mempunyai keupayaan yang tinggi dalam membuat penilaian dan penaaakulan dengan kritis terhadap apa yang dibaca, dilihat mahupun yang didengari. Oleh itu, membantu para pelajar meningkatkan kemahiran literasi kritikal mereka merupakan salah satu keutamaan dalam bidang pendidikan semasa. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini yang mengaplikasikan dua dimensi daripada rangka kerja literasi kritikal yang dibangunkan oleh Lewison, Flint dan Sluys (2002); khususnya dimensi mengenalpasti dan mencabar idea-idea yang dikemukakan penulis dan dimensi menganalisis teks daripada pelbagai perspektif, berobjektif untuk mengkaji bagaimana pedagogi literasi kritikal dikendalikan semasa pengajaran Seni Bahasa Inggeris bersama pelajar tahun 4 di sebuah sekolah rendah. Menggunakan data kualitatif dari rakaman audio pengajaran bilik darjah, temu bual guru dan pelajar, artifak pelajar dalam bentuk refleksi dan sampel kerja, kajian ini memberi contoh terperinci bagaimana pelajar sekolah rendah memberi respon kepada kedua-dua dimensi literasi kritikal apabila dibimbing oleh guru mereka semasa perbincangan kelas dan aktiviti berpadukan teks cerita “The Jungle Book”. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa dengan pelbagai bentuk sokongan yang diterima, pelajar, walaupun pada usia muda, sudah mampu mengendalikan konsep-konsep literasi kritikal yang dianggap kompleks atau rumit. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan kemungkinan bagaimana penelitian terhadap responsi pelajar dalam mengenalpasti dan mencabar idea-idea yang dikemukakan penulis serta

menganalisis teks daripada pelbagai sudut perspektif dapat memberi maklumat yang penting kepada golongan pendidik untuk membantu peningkatan kemahiran penilaian dan penaaakulan dengan kritis di kalangan pelajar terhadap apa yang dibaca, dilihat mahupun didengari dari usia muda.

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Preena Nair Unnikrishnan

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR :	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DSKP :	Standard Based Curriculum Document
ELL :	English language learners
EPRD :	Planning and Research Division
ESL :	English as second language
KSSR :	Standard-based curriculum for primary school
MOE :	Ministry of Education Malaysia
PTA :	Parent Teacher Association
PLC :	Professional Learning Community

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In an era in which we have instant access to a variety of information, mastery or reliance on basic set of language skills are hardly seen as adequate for English Language learners (ELL) (Harste, 2003). Instead, learners are required to have the ability to assess information from various sources, such as online materials, articles and printed books to develop critical capabilities in the four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. To meet the demands of universal developments, the landscape of education in many countries has changed and schools, as Giroux (2012) contends, are seen as places that should propel the development of analytical capabilities, morality, and knowledge among learners. He further argues that education should prepare learners:

... to enter adult life as critical citizens capable of questioning 'common sense', official knowledge, public opinion and the dominant media. Developing the conditions for students to be critical agents was viewed as central to the very process of teaching and learning.... shape and expand democratic institutions (Giroux, 2012, p.1).

In the local contexts, the education system in Malaysia has seen a myriad of developments since independence. The initial education system emphasised on communal needs but it has progressed in stages towards an integrated national system that focused towards developing economic and technological changes to achieve national aspirations (Millennium Development Goals, 2015). Later in 2003, Malaysia stressed on compulsory education with the aim to achieve universal primary education.

The launching of Malaysian Education Blueprint [MEB] (2013-2025) showed a milestone in Malaysian Education System which emphasised on the three waves of changes (Ministry of Education Malaysia [MOE], 2013). This model focused on establishing education based on the five system aspirations namely, access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency. The stakeholders had stressed that “quality” should be at individual learners’ level. Thus, to have a holistic development of children, The Malaysian Education Blueprint [MEB] has put emphasis on a balanced education through the six key attributes that a learner requires to compete globally (MOE, 2013). One of the key attributes is in the development of thinking skills in which learners will be able to interconnect different scope of information to create new knowledge. In this way, every learner will master a spectrum of vital cognitive skills, consisting of critical thinking, reasoning, creative thinking and innovation.

Considering the need to equip pupils with good cognitive skills, the Malaysian Education Language Curriculum in primary schools emphasised ‘the development of literacy and critical literacy’ in school, with the aspiration of developing learners who exude confidence and personal growth in functioning as an effective and prolific member in the society, in line with the goals stated in the National Philosophy Education (MOE, 2014, p. 4).

1.2 Critical Thinking and Critical Literacy

Critical thinking is a rationale and clear thinking strategy, which includes thinking specifically and analytically by following the rules of logic and scientific reasoning (Lau, 2011). This notion of critical thinking is related to Bloom’s Taxonomy as it involves skills in hierarchy namely, comprehension, analysis, interpretation, reasoning

and evaluation (Lee, 2011). By exposing learners to these skills in stages, they allow learners to acquire language skills systematically.

The term critical thinking, however, does not include concepts such as social practices of understanding the world, identifying imbalanced power relationships and considering actions that can be taken to promote societal justice, which are central to critical literacy (Lee, 2011; Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2014; Temple, 2005). (Refer to Chapter 2, page 17 for detailed discussion on the distinction between the concepts).

According to Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002), critical literacy has four specific dimensions namely, disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on socio-political issues and taking action and promoting social justice. A brief summary of what each of these dimensions entails by Lewison et. al (2002) is presented in Figure 1.1. Learners require the knowledge of these domains to have a better understanding of texts.

Disrupting the commonplace	Interrogating multiple viewpoints	Focusing on Socio-political Issues	Taking action and promoting social justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to question the common understanding, existing beliefs and practices that have been widely accepted • to interrogate texts by asking ‘what does the author wants me to believe?’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to invite learners to imagine standing in the shoes of others as well as try to comprehend experiences and texts from own standpoint • to seek voices of those who have been marginalised and silenced in texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to go beyond the personal to understand how a socio-political system in which one belongs shapes perceptions, responses and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to engage in praxis reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it

Figure 1.1: Summary of each dimension in the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework

The main focus of this study is critical literacy and how carrying out class discussions and activities around the dimensions of critical literacy, ‘Disrupting the commonplace’ and ‘Interrogating multiple viewpoints’ developed by Lewison et al. (2002) can assist pupils’ understanding and appreciation of the prescribed literary text. These specific dimensions were focused in this study as they are in line with the requirements stated in the Standard-Based Curriculum Document [DSKP] of Year 4. According to this document, pupils are only required to respond to literary texts in terms of characters, settings and values (MOE, 2014), instead of going beyond personal or psychological responses to texts and implementing social actions to promote social justice, as advocated in the latter dimensions of the Critical Literacy Framework.

Accordingly, this study aims to gather better understanding on how critical literacy is facilitated in the English Language Learner (ELL) primary classroom settings to scaffold pupils to consider multiple viewpoints, to be engaged in thoughtful problem solving situations and to explore and openly discuss social and cultural issues conveyed in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. The employment of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel lends itself well for the study as it is one of the books prescribed under the current KSSR curriculum. Moreover, issues related to power, authority and social imbalance allow the story to be studied through the critical literacy lens.

1.3 The Need for Critical Literacy

Teaching for Critical Literacy (CL) is deemed timely and important as it can help learners to read between the lines, evaluate texts based on factors such as social, political and cultural elements. Besides, learners will also gain exposure on how texts and discourses work, in terms of their purposes and to whose interests they serve Luke,

2012). From this perspectives, critical literacy is not seen as a 'piece of knowledge' to be taught to learners but rather 'a culture of thinking' that involve learners to observe their world and make positive changes to the world that they live in by considering issues of equity and access (Hadjioannou & Fu 2007). Moreover, learners are also expected to be able to accept multiple views, emphasising the need to listen and respect those opinions which differ from theirs (MOE, 2014). The ability to understand and use critical and democratic values is highly imperative, bearing in mind that Malaysia is home to more than 300 ethnic communities. Therefore, teachers are required to develop 'the dispositions, discursive resources and repertoires of practice to do critical literacy work in classrooms' (Comber, 2006, p.60).

While engaging learners with critical literacy, teachers may face difficulties due to their own biases, beliefs and inability to manage the heated discussions that may arise in the classroom. However, it is important to note that learners will be able to reap the benefits of asking and responding to challenging questions during their discussions as they build connections between the texts and their current reality. Enacting critical literacy with the employment of literary texts in the primary English Language Learners (ELL) curriculum could be a great alternative to expose learners to real life issues while developing their ability to read between the lines, consider various viewpoints, to be mindful while attempting to problem solve.

In the current primary education (KSSR) curriculum, four areas namely listening and speaking, reading and writing have been deemed as crucial in the teaching of English. Language Arts is also included in the KSSR curriculum and Contemporary Literature is offered and taught during this hour. Despite the fact that it is embedded in the curriculum, this area is not given much emphasis as teachers

lacked awareness on the importance of this area in enhancing learners' overall mental growth.

With reference to the Standard-Based Curriculum Document [DSKP], the teaching and learning in the classroom using literary texts should focus on providing learners with fun and enjoyment (MOE, 2014). In this situation, short stories, poems and graphic novel such as *The Jungle Book*, *Gulliver's Travel* and *The King of Kites* are more often than not taught at a superficial level, whereby learners are required to answer questions on recall and comprehension level. Furthermore, questions about texts posed by the teachers to pupils usually only require answers that they are already aware of (Bourke, 2008). Learners neither are involved in deep critique of the texts nor do they interrogate the author's message in the text. This scenario could be due to the general view that young learners do not possess the cognitive capacity to grapple with issues related to the social world around them (Comber, 2006). In this case, learners benefit very little from their experience of reading and the teaching of literature in the classroom as it hardly encourages them to go further into the subtle interpretations of the texts (Becks, 2015). Indeed, this very much goes against the Malaysian Philosophy of Education that is to produce cultured and informed citizens, who are able to form opinions, evaluate and make judgements.

The findings from Pisa in 2012 indicated that at least 44% of those learners who sat for the assessment hardly achieved minimum proficiency level (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014). This indicates that learners were neither able to locate main ideas in a text nor make comparisons and inferences by linking information read to everyday knowledge. To worsen matters, it was noted that only 0.1% is placed at advance level for their ability to make multiple inferences and develop critical evaluation (MOE, 2012). Perhaps, this situation could

be owed to the current (and common) practices of teaching English in the classroom. After all, school experiences do greatly influence learners' psychological, cognitive and social development (Normazidah Che Musa, Koo & Hazita Azman, 2012).

Based on the situations mentioned above, it is clear to the researcher that there is a necessity to form and address the shortcomings identified. It is believed that if critical literacy practices is deployed in the discussions of literary text in the classroom, learners who come from a myriad of backgrounds and experiences would be prompted to go beyond themselves to examine and question what they read, identify the author's intentions and evaluate whether the information gained is accurate and worthy of scepticism from various standpoints (Cervetti, Pardales & Damico, 2001); thus, enabling them to connect what they have learnt in the classroom to the real world. This is similar to Shor and Freire's philosophy (1987, p.135), of not only 'reading the word but reading the world', which underscores the importance of critically evaluating the world that we live in and work and identifying biases and inequities, in an effort to pursue equality through the power of words in the form of (spoken, written and read).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

There is an increasing number of studies done on what critical literacy for young children can look like in the context of the real classroom. Several themed issues of academic journals such as *Language Art* (2002), *Primary Voices* (2000), along with other works by Allen (1997), Ballentine and Hill (2000), Lehr and Thompson (2000), Leland, Harste and Huber (2005) and Kim and Cho (2017) describe the classroom enactments of critical literacy in the primary young learners setting. These works highlight efforts of educators to bridge the gap between critical literacy and classroom practice for primary young learners. Some studies looked into the implementation of

critical literacy in Social Studies (Schramm-Pate & Lussier, 2003; Wolk, 2003), Language Arts (Bean & Moni, 2003). These works emphasise the need for teachers and learners to collaborate and to cultivate critical perspectives so as to develop an awareness of the biases embedded in text. Despite this burgeoning body of work, gaps remain especially in the ELL primary classroom (Alford, 2001; Kim, 2012; Kuo, 2013; Vasquez, 2017).

1.4.1. Lack of comprehensive contributions from teachers / researchers

While accounts from classroom teachers and studies from researchers continue to build our knowledge of critical literacy practices, there remain very few comprehensive studies of critical literacy in individual classrooms (Damico, 2003). Although journal articles and book chapters provide critical windows into substantive teaching and learning in the classroom for critical literacy, by necessity, these journals and book chapters tended to sacrifice depth to meet space limitations. In this case, it is not possible to gather an in depth and comprehensive picture as to how the enactment of critical literacy is played out with a class of learners.

1.4.2. Few accounts on the Implementation of Critical Literacy in the Primary Classroom in Malaysia

With reference to the Malaysian Education Language Curriculum, the development of literacy and critical literacy is emphasised in the teaching of English in the Malaysian primary schools (MOE, 2014). Despite the emphasis on critical literacy, most research revolving around critical literacy in the Malaysian context had only consist learners from the tertiary level (Lee, Lee, Wong & Azizah Ya'acob, 2010; Normazidah, Koo & Hazita Azman, 2012; Koo, Wong & Kemboja Ismail, 2012). Presumably, this could be because no guidelines were made available to assist educators in implementing critical literacy practices in their classrooms. Additionally,

scepticism related to the feasibility of implementing critical literacy pedagogy in the primary schools could be another reason why there are very few accounts of it. Therefore, this inquiry hopes to shed light and awareness into the implementation of critical literacy during the discussion sessions of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel in the ELL primary Year 4 classroom. The study will focus on providing insights as to how learners respond to the graphic novel during classroom instructions based on the dimensions of critical literacy such as ‘Disrupting the Commonplace’ and ‘Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints’.

1.5 Research Purpose

The study has one goal in mind. It aims to explore how the teacher and learners engage in critical literacy in the ELL primary classroom during the discussion sessions of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. Based on the two out of the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy Framework developed by Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002), this process of enquiry is focused on the need to unearth how learners participate in critical discussions by problematizing the situations and characters in the text, considering multiple viewpoints and engaging in thoughtful problem solving by moving between the personal and social level. This study undeniably hopes to promote learners who are critical thinkers as aspired in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MOE, 2013). The success of this study could help researchers and practitioners in envisioning the potential of drawing on critical literacy to teach in the ELL classroom.

1.6 Research Objectives

Based on the purpose of this study, the following objectives are pursued.

1. To explore Year 4 pupils' responses to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace.
2. To identify the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace.
3. To explore Year 4 pupils' responses to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints.
4. To identify the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints.

1.7 Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do Year 4 pupils respond *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace?
2. What are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace?
3. How do Year 4 pupils respond *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints?
4. What are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints?

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study attempts to link ELL and critical pedagogy, specifically employing critical literacy in the ELL classroom. This study hopes to provide a contribution to the ELL field in terms of offering an insight on the process of how learners engage in critical literacy based on the initial two dimensions from the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy Framework introduced by Lewison et al. (2002). The findings from this study is hoped to add on to the existing body of knowledge on the implementation of critical literacy in the ELL primary context considering the fact that there is scant research conducted in the Malaysian context.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

Due to research limitations, this study only focuses on one Year 4 class in a National Type Chinese School in Selangor. Therefore, the researcher is not able to make comparison with other contexts. This study consists of a class of learners with intermediate level of English proficiency because this study was intentionally designed for ELL primary learners who were able to converse in English with a reasonable degree of ease and confidence when they engaged in discussions. As such, the findings of the present study may not be generalizable to other ELL learners of low proficiency, who generally find communicating with others a challenge due to a small repertoire of English words and phrases.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

This study draws from the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy Framework developed by Lewison et al., (2002) to clarify what exactly constitutes critical literacy practices.

They explored the teaching practices of educators who were at the beginning of their careers. In reviewing existing research at that point, the researchers noted that critical literacy could be organised into four specific components which are: disrupting of the commonplace; analysis of multiple (and, at times, contradictory) perspectives; a focus on socio-political issues; and taking action and promoting social justice.

The first dimension, disrupting the commonplace calls for one to look and question at the ‘everyday practices’ which are considered common. Lewison et al., (2002) describe this process as problematizing existing and accepted ways of thinking and interrogating the text.

The next dimension, interrogating multiple viewpoints requires one to “stand in the shoes of others so as to understand experiences and texts from our own perspectives and the viewpoints of others and to consider these various perspectives concurrently (Lewison et. al., 2002, p. 383). This entails not only juxtaposing the texts and reading from alternative perspectives, but reflecting on them. This dimension also encourages one to question about voices that are silenced and those that are privileged in the text. The notion of examining conflicting perspectives disrupts the notion that there is always one “correct answer”.

The third dimension focuses on socio-political issues where learners are made aware of societal issues and are guided to make connections between the text and their everyday experiences (Lewison et al., 2014).

Taking action and promoting social justice is the last dimension of this framework and it is argued as being the heart of critical literacy (Van Sluys, Lewison & Flint, 2006). A full alignment with this component amounts to more than just talking about, or reflecting on, past actions or the actions of others. Instead, it involves learners deploying what they learn in the classroom beyond the confines of the classroom.

Figure 1.2 displays the conceptual framework on how the initial two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework by Lewison et al. (2002) are employed during the reading and discussions of *The Jungle Book* for the purpose of the study.

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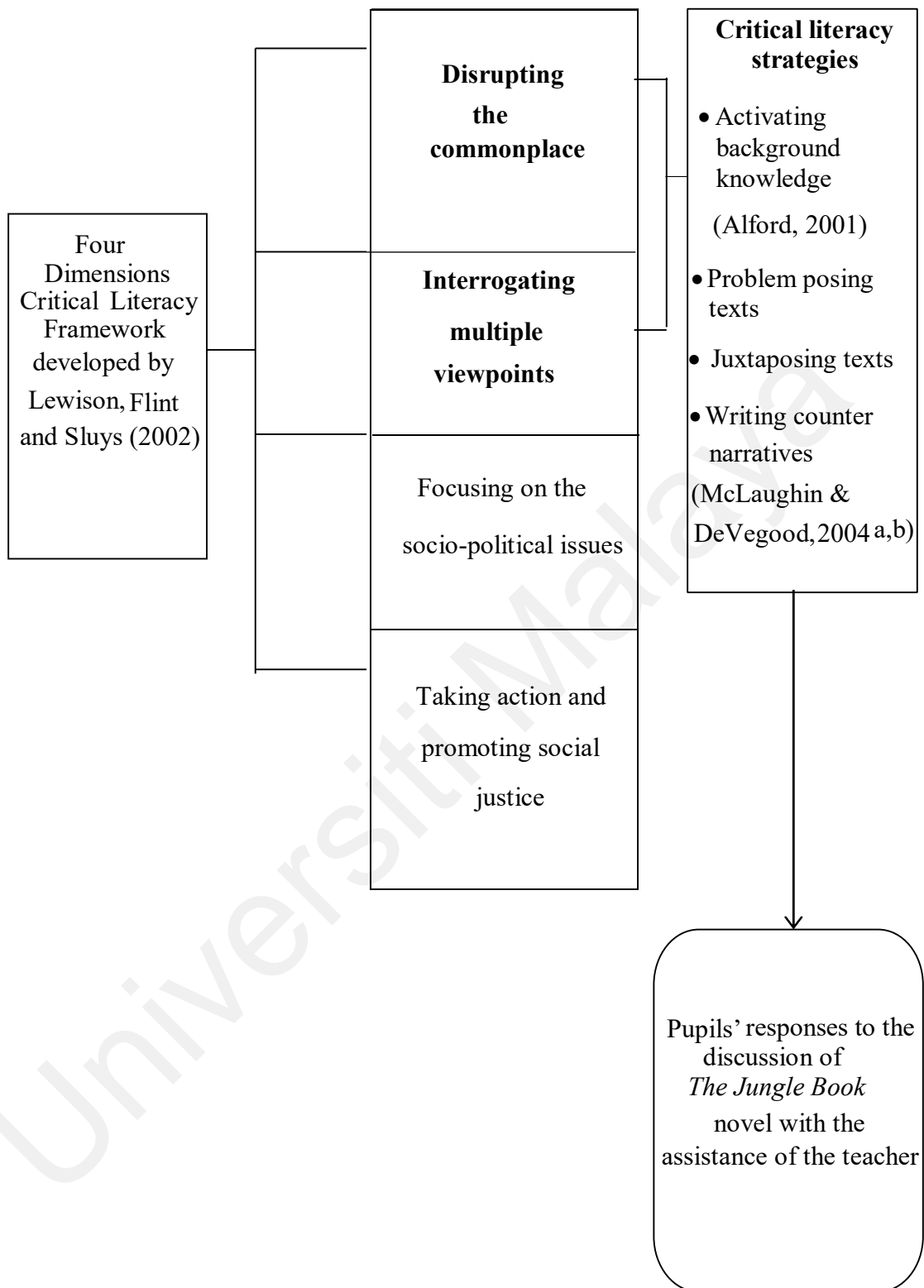


Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.11 Definition of Terms

The following are important terms used throughout the study:

1.11.1 Critical literacy

Critical literacy connotes learning practices, by which learners analyze and critique language and power relationships within written texts (Vasquez, 2017). Readers engage in analysis and critique of texts that deal with socially and culturally complex issues in terms of power and inequity such as issues of race (between human and animals), class and language. The rationale behind this is so that they can raise their critical awareness as well as generate knowledge of English literacy which challenges common assumptions in texts, which include sociocultural values, beliefs, and attitudes, and finally enabling them to take action for a better and more humane society.

The term ‘critical literacy’ used in this study is distinguished from critical thinking by areas and goals. First, critical literacy practices focus on a specific area of interest related to social and cultural power and inequity (Luke, 2000; Pennycook, 1999). More importantly, while the goal of a critical literacy is the “development of critical consciousness,” the goal of a critical thinking approach lies in “development of higher level cognitive skills of comprehension and interpretation” (Cervetti et al., 2001, p. 10); by focusing on skills to analyze or critique the logic of texts and lack of clarity (Beck, 2005). In other words, this study does not focus on the concept of ‘critical thinking’, but rather on raising critical consciousness in texts about social and cultural inequity that are embedded in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel.

1.11.2 Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework

The four dimensions of critical literacy which is introduced by Lewison et al., (2002) include disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints,

focusing on socio-political issues, and taking action to promote social justice. This study will be focused on providing insights on how Year 4 pupils respond to the issues in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel when dimensions of critical literacy such as disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints are employed.

1.11.3. ELL learners & Pupils

ELL learners refer to learners in general from different education levels. However, in this study, the term ‘pupils’ will be used for the learners who participated in this study. These pupils are in primary Year 4 and they learn English as a second or third language besides Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia. Generally, these pupils are fairly proficient in the target language, obtaining Grade A and B in their school-based oral assessment and their school written assessment.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There are two central aims that the researcher intended to achieve in this dissertation. First, it is to examine how critical literacy could be enacted in the ELL primary classroom during the discussion sessions of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. The second and probably the most pertinent element in this dissertation is how do pupils respond to the issues in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel when two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework are employed. Also, how critical literacy and the understanding of social and power issues are established during the discussion session of the story. In effort to achieve these aims, this chapter will review the notion of critical literacy and introduce the issues of critical literacy in the ELL (English Language Learners) classroom. Following that, a section will be devoted to review literature on the risk and resistance that a teacher might encounter from ELL learners when trying to implement critical literacy in the classroom.

2.2 Critical Literacy

Before defining critical literacy, one should grasp what is meant by literacy. The common conception of literacy among policy makers, governments and the general public is that literacy denotes the functional skills of reading and writing, which need to be acquired by an individual (Norton, 2007). While this definition is still useful and important, Brown (1999) proposes that the term 'Literacy' will require a current definition considering the needs of 21st century world. Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot (1992) explained that learners should not merely be focused on

comprehending texts which they read per say, but emphasis should be given to the construction and the way they are positioned within or by the text. Hence, the coining of the term 'critical literacy' (Brown, 1999).

Since critical literacy is an emerging field of study, it has evaded attempts of scholars and researchers to arrive at a single universal definition. There is a suggestion that this could be due to the term's fluid meaning; thereby, assuming multiple definitions (Iyers, 2007). Wong-Kam and Vasquez (2003, p.1) define critical literacy as 'language which is used to exercise power, to enhance everyday life in school or communities and to question practices of the privileged and injustice.' Meanwhile, Shanklin (2009) posits critical literacy to be the development of a set of beliefs about reading that transcends the perception that reading is simply the comprehension of the author's message. Rather, it invites readers to analyse, interrogate, or dispute the power relations that exist between the readers and authors. Nevertheless, critical literacy may not necessarily mean that one should always take a negative stance while playing the role of a reader or writer. Instead, one should pay attention to the issues embedded in the text by scrutinizing them from different perspectives and suggesting possibilities for change and improvement (Vasquez, 2014).

Several researchers such as Luke (1997), McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004b) and Beck (2005) echoed Freire's (1987, p.216) views in which, literacy is considered not only as a set of skills that needs to be mastered or 'purely technical action' but a practice that is socially constructed, followed by 'reflection, intent and action'. In other words, by defining literacy as a social practice within a community of learners, critical literacy is viewed as a pedagogical approach that engages learners to apply critical thinking, to obtain an insight on the existing 'social conditions and power relations' (Nussbaum, 2002 p. 488). Jones and Clarks (2007) stress on the importance of learners

reflecting and questioning the commonly held understanding, experiences and beliefs. Presumably, this could be because if learners are not taught to scrutinise taken for granted assumptions, they could be in danger of deeming a particular attitude or conduct towards others as acceptable. In this context, critical literacy serves as a vehicle to promote positive social change, culture, economic equity and political liberation (Luke, 1997).

While a number of critical literacy scholars emphasise the critique of society, there are other school of thoughts that suggest personal involvement and social action with texts could be a form of critical literacy. To illustrate an example, Shor (1999) puts forward that by encouraging learners to consider their identities and personal experiences while reading a text, they are indirectly engaging in critical literacy. He further raises the question: "If language helps make us, how can we use and teach oppositional discourse so as to remake ourselves and our culture? (p. 1)." In his article, Shor explicates his personal experiences of being a working class and how those experiences influenced the way he reads the world.

Overall, despite the varied interpretations in the definition of critical literacy, there are some common guiding principles, which critical literacy draws on, namely inviting learners to reflect, think and dialogue; developing their own perspectives and listening to those of others as they ponder upon life issues that are socially relevant (Shanklin, 2009).

2.3. Distinction between Critical Literacy and Critical Thinking

With reference to the discussion above, it can be surmised that the ultimate goal of critical literacy is social justice. This inherently provides the concept of critical literacy with a slightly different slant from critical thinking. With reference to Bloom

Taxonomy, critical thinking involves skills related to comprehension, analysis, interpretation, synthesis, reasoning and evaluation (Bloom et. al, 1971 as cited in Forehand, 2010). However, this may not accurately describe the notion of critical literacy which emphasizes the social practices of understanding the world, identifying unequal power relationships and considering actions that can be taken to promote social justice (Lee, 2011; Temple, 2007). According to Lee (2011) critical literacy is built on sociocultural theories that focus on issues related to power, social practice, systems and language. On the other hand, critical thinking is grounded in psychological theories that give emphasis to individual thinking. This argument is further highlighted in Lewison et al., (2014), who write:

Critical literacy practices encourage students to use language to question the everyday world, to interrogate the relationship between language and power, to analyze popular culture and media, to understand how power relationships are socially constructed, and to consider actions that can be taken to promote social justice.... These practices are substantively different from what are commonly referred to as critical thinking approaches. Although critical thinking approaches have focused more on logic and comprehension, critical literacies have focused on identifying social practices that keep dominant ways of understanding the world and unequal power relationships in place. (p. 3)

In contrast, there are other school of thoughts which contradicts the term critical thinking as merely a set of thinking skills. For instance, Martin (1992) argues that critical thinking is stimulated by the concern for a humane world and that it has a morally grounded goal. Parallel thoughts about critical thinking also resonate in the works of Thayer-Bacon (2001) and Alston (2001). From this perspective, there are definitely overlaps between critical thinking and critical literacy. In the context of questioning, both concepts entail the teacher employing open questions to stimulate the learners' higher order thinking. However, Pennycook (1999) notes that questions related to critical thinking often do not link questioning to a broader social agenda,

which is a pertinent and distinctive element of critical literacy. Indeed, what emanates clearly from the critical literacy which seems absent in critical thinking is that it is set in a socio-political context (Lee, 2011). Exposing learners to social-political issues in texts indirectly may stimulate them to uncover biases related to everyday life issues embedded in texts and, subsequently guide them to become critically informed and take rightful actions.

To summarise, we can deduce that there are overlapping features between critical literacy and critical thinking, namely engaging learners to reflect, question, evaluate ideas and thoughts in text from a multiple points of view and to problem solve. These overlaps between the two concepts and the fact that critical literacy focuses on socio-political context of everyday lives makes researching critical literacy relevant in the educational settings in Malaysia. Moreover, although the developments of critical literacy and critical thinking have been stressed in the Primary School Standard Curriculum Document (MOE, 2014), there is still lack of research in the field of critical literacy in the Malaysian primary school settings as opposed to critical thinking. Discussion on this issue is done thoroughly later on in the chapter. In this context, this study can offer a guideline to those education practitioners in the primary school, who are keen in employing critical literacy in their classrooms.

2.4. Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework

In exploring what critical literacy might look like in a beginner or novice teacher's classroom, researchers such as Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002) found that the degree to which an early career teacher implemented critical literacy could be understood using four components. These components, which form the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework include 'Disrupting the Commonplace', 'Interrogating Multiple

Viewpoints’, ‘Focusing on Socio-political Issues’ and ‘Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice.’ Since then, numerous studies such as Avila and Moore (2012); Johnson and Vasudevan (2012); Mclaughlin and Devoogd (2004b) have drawn on these four components to make sense out of the classroom practices that relate to critical literacy. In addition, Vasquez, Tate, and Harste (2013) have also employed and updated these components to include a wider range of classroom practices, specifically in digital contexts. In this section, I will review literature related to the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework for a better understanding of the components.

2.4.1. Disrupting of the Commonplace

As mentioned earlier, critical literacy consists of teaching and facilitation of the critique of ideologies that exist in societal contexts (Luke, 1997). At the same time, it places emphasis on a cultural analysis, in terms of cultural differences so as to disrupt the forces that marginalize other members of the non-dominant Discourse communities (Luke, 1997). In critical literacy classrooms, teachers and learners may pose questions related to the existing ways of thinking, political influences and whose culture gets defined as common sense (Lewison et al., 2002). This enquiry, on one hand, may disrupt dominant discourse systems of meaning and on the other, critique the Discourse to which one belongs. Thus, it stresses “unpacking social practices that perpetuate [certain] forces” (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 9).

Teachers and learners who engage in literacy practices aligned with this component would participate in activities that uncover subtle systems of meaning embedded in texts, which we interact on a day-to-day basis. Janks (2010) asserts that fostering learner’s critical awareness is crucial as social practices highlighted in those texts are often bias towards a certain dominant group.

In the case of teachers who draw on critical literacy teaching practices, disrupting the commonplace involves working with learners to recognise and analyse the social practices that construct and maintain inequities associated with race, ethnicity, gender, and class. In other words, teachers who employ a critical literacy perspective, often seek to establish democratic classrooms that take on a dialogic structure. Ultimately, in such classrooms, the traditional binary distinctions between learners and between learners and teachers are disrupted (Luke, 2012). Thus, a critical literacy perspective takes both an active and reflective stance towards literacy learning whereby the understanding and critique of an existing social structure are considered and emphasised.

2.4.2. Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints

This critical literacy component centres on negotiating one's own views in relation to the views of others (Vasquez et al., 2013). This entails not only reading alternative texts but reflecting a particular text from different perspectives. Put in another way, Lewison et al. (2002) explicates that teachers and learners may ask such questions such as, "whose voices are heard and whose are missing in the story?" In doing so, they focus on identifying and critiquing social practices that marginalize some while privileging others. They may even engage in constructing their own counter-narratives. However, despite its notable benefits, learners may find it slightly challenging to view things from different viewpoints as they are often focused on one 'correct' answer. On the other hand, this practice of examining diverse viewpoints could be a way to expose learners to the idea that there is no such thing as only one 'correct answer', leading them to challenge precise and convenient conclusions (Lewison et al., 2002).

Teachers' critical literacy practices that are in line with this component usually find themselves engaging learners in open-ended inquiries. According to Vasquez et al. (2013), learners will be given opportunities to analyse multiple texts that highlights different perspectives towards an overall concept or topic. The authors suggest that these "text sets" usually consist of multimodal texts (Leland et al., 2005). In these situations, learners may be asked to consider how various texts can be read from, or against, certain perspectives and what meanings might be drawn from doing so. In using multimodal text sets, and Vasquez et al. (2013) suggest that critical educators encourage all learners to participate in critical conversations that analyze "contradictory and competing points of view" (Janks, 2010, p. 63).

2.4.3. Focusing on Socio-political Issues

The third dimension of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework emphasises the ways larger societal issues are brought into the classroom to help learners make connection with their everyday experiences (Lewison et al., 2014). According to Vasquez et al. (2013, p.13), when educators help learners make "inferences and connections between things that are not immediately obvious" they provide opportunities for learners to consider the relationship between what is local and what is societal.

For teachers to foster such literacy practices associated with this critical literacy component, it is important to make the distinction between politics with a capital P and politics with a little p. Big P politics involve concerns that centre on governments and social unrest while Little p politics refer to those personal "micro-politics of everyday life" (Janks, 2010 p. 188). To state an example, a teacher and her learners may examine the relationships between the wolves, and Mowgli, within *The*

Jungle Book graphic novel and how this relationship relates to their existing context of lives.

2.4.4. Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice

Taking action and promoting social justice is the last dimension of this framework and it is frequently considered the heart of critical literacy (Van Sluys et al., 2006). As critical educators engage their learners in social action, they may provide an alternative to shift the school curriculum to the community for learners (Vasquez et al., 2013). In other words, the learning in the classroom is made relevant for learners in the real world. In this context, a full alignment with this component amounts to more than just talking about, or reflecting on, past actions or the actions of others. Instead, it involves learners deploying what they learn in the classroom beyond the confines of the classroom. Such a stance involves Freire's (1970) notion of praxis, or reflection on (and action in response to) problems associated to social inequities (Lewison et al., 2002). To state an example, this dimension can be explored by offering opportunities to learners to consider themselves as social activists who reflect on the degree to which their own and others' actions maintain the status quo and to consider future actions that may challenge a certain social practice. Conversely, Lee (2011) argues that taking action may not always require learners to play the role of a social activist. She further maintains that a shift in reading from superficial reading to resistant reading can be considered as taking action. Adopting a similar view, Van Sluys et al. (2006) add that encouraging learners to communicate new lines of thinking and pushing them to question how their peers come to see the world are some of the alternatives which can be categorised as taking social action. They may also compose their own "narratives, counter-narratives, letters, essays, reports and poems" to address a particular issue (Vasquez et al., 2013, p. 17).

While findings by Lewison et al. (2002) has suggested that this could be difficult to foster, recent research by Avila and Moore (2012) has shown that providing opportunities for learners to use digital tools such as weblogs or videos that call specific audience to action may promote critical literacy practices that is aligned with this critical literacy dimension.

2.5. Critical Literacy in ESL/EFL Settings

Although there is vast development of literature in the field of critical literacy for English language learners (ELL) as highlighted in the previous chapter, in terms of volume or numbers of paper published on critical literacy still remain underdeveloped (Huang, 2011; Huh 2016; Kuo, 2013; Ko & Wang, 2009). For this reason, this section will include the review of literature not only from English as Second Language (ESL) settings but the ones from bilingual and English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings too. While it is acknowledged that the amount of research conducted in the area of critical literacy is moderate, the existing literature still covers a wide range of issues pertinent to critical literacy. This study builds on and contributes to the body of work on critical literacy in the ELL primary classroom.

2.5.1 Critical Literacy Curricula

One aspect that is addressed in critical literacy for ESL/ EFL settings is the nature of its curriculum and implementations. In a study conducted in a Canadian high school bilingual classroom, Chun (2009) demonstrated that graphic novels can be employed to facilitate critical literacy by developing learner's multiliteracy practices and deepening their reading engagement. The use of Spiegelman's (1986) graphic novel in Chun's study comprised drawings of mice and cats as its characters and they are found to stimulate learners' critical and imaginative engagement. The study also

reports that learners were exposed to the seriousness of the Holocaust issue and depicting the issue with graphic images could compensate for learners' lack of linguistic knowledge. Presumably, this could be because multimodal texts instigate the learners to use their thoughts and imagination, subsequently increasing their reading engagement.

Similarly, Jennings (2010) also employed a framework of critical literacy in her ethnographic inquiry involving the issue of the Holocaust. While Chun looked into older learners, Jennings' study included younger participants from a class of Year 5 Spanish English bilinguals. The year-long study saw learners visiting a local tolerance museum and composing essays to promote a just and tolerant community. They also produced a video to summarise their learning and build their awareness. It was concluded at the end of the study that critical experiences with multiple texts helped learners to understand and produce complex ideas and language in a highly stimulating academic environment.

Instead of limiting English as a mere skill, it is interesting to note that English can be a medium for learners to share their real life issues such as bullying through the employment of critical literacy. For instance, in a study conducted in the Canadian Middle School bilingual classroom, Lau (2013) found that grade seven bilingual learners are capable of engaging critically in terms of their reading and writing while carrying out discussions related to real life issues. This study further reveals the possibility of creating a critical literacy curriculum revolving around learners' concerns to promote their critical engagement. Throughout the study, learners were guided by the teacher to take action by practising phrases such as "Cut it out!" "Leave me alone!", or "That's not cool" (Lau, 2013, p.16) and producing posters representing

anti-bullying messages. This subsequently offered the learners to see a possibility for a change; albeit only at a personal level.

Danzak's (2011, p.194) study of critical literacy practice entitled 'Graphic Journeys' among bilingual learners between grade 6 and 8 in the United States revealed that learners can be empowered to 'simultaneously express their identities and advance confidently in their language and literacy abilities.' This study which encourages learners to narrate their family immigration stories through multiple modalities such as family pictures and comic demonstrated the role of language as 'constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity' (Norton, 2000, p.5). In other words, by narrating their immigration stories through language, the learners in this study did not just represent but they constructed and reconstructed their identities, vesting themselves as the authors of their lives. Based on these four studies, it appears that by associating learners' literacy practices with social issues such as bullying, migration stories and human rights, learners' critical literacy can be unleashed.

Although there is substantial evidence for the feasibility of the critical literacy pedagogy implementation, looking closer to home, there is scant research that focuses on analysing learners' critical literacy in reading text (Pramela Krish, Hafizah Latif & Zalina Mohd Lazim, 2012). Moreover, most research revolving around critical literacy in the Malaysian context tend to only include learners from the tertiary level (Lee, Lee, Wong & Azizah Ya'acob, 2010; Normazidah, Koo & Hazita Azman, 2012; Koo, Wong & Kemboja Ismail, 2012). Even then, these researchers have lamented that such studies are small in number and that more research is required to better situate critical literacy issues of ELL learners. If those researchers' claims are true, it could be assumed that there is hardly any research conducted in the secondary level much less

in the primary with regards to the implementation of critical literacy in the Malaysian context. Accordingly, this inquiry aims to provide insight into the implementation of critical literacy during the discussion of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel in the primary Year 4 classroom.

Sarjit Kaur (2013) asserts that most tertiary level learners lacked the flair to think critically. Instead, they merely accept information presented to them as it is, without questioning them further. Studies by Koo (2008) and Ambigapathy Pandian (2007) also provided empirical data that corroborates with the claims that Malaysian undergraduates are indeed lacking in their ability to thinking critically. However, it is the researcher's view that learners should not be blamed outright for this issue. In line with Koo (2008), this scenario could have stemmed from the structural socio-political nature and cultural norms of the Malaysian education system, which are often top down, exam oriented, hierarchical and dependent on patronage and compliance. Such hegemonic power relationships tend to produce learners who are reliant on their lecturers to shape their thoughts as they are afraid to lose face (if their views are found to be fallacious or different from the norm) (Koo, et. al. 2010).

2.5.2. Advantages of Implementing Critical Literacy in the ESL/ EFL Classroom

Taking into account the fact that ESL and EFL education in Asian countries tend to emphasise improvement of skills and examinations, ESL and EFL teachers may be more receptive towards applying critical literacy in their classroom, since there is evidence that critical literacy practices can help improve learners' language skills and test performance. According to Huang (2011) in her research, one of the many advantages of critical literacy is the improvement of learners' literacy skills which involve skills such as decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension and

writing. Relating her research findings to Luke and Freebody's Four Resources Model for reading, Huang (2011, p.151) states, "Specifically, not only are code breaking and meaning-making prerequisites for assuming the role of a text critic, but acting as a text critic also enhances a reader's command as a code breaker, meaning maker and text user".

The findings of Huang's (2011) study challenges the findings of Eastman's (1998) study that questioned the feasibility of critical literacy in the ESL and EFL classroom. Eastman notes that some learners are keener to learn the language itself than to be critical of it. In response to this argument, Huang (2011) asserts that teachers may need to overtly and purposefully structure the class in a way that learners are aware that conventional literacy which includes grammar accuracy, spelling, reading and writing per se is not compromised in any way for critical literacy.

Findings from Kuo's (2009) study which look into the use of picture books to address social issues suggests that learner's critical engagement can be promoted by producing relevant and meaningful themes for learners to discuss; guiding them to move between the personal and social level. Kuo's study further indicated that while most of the learners showed genuine interest and positive attitudes towards critical literacy practices, there were some that had doubts if such practices would actually have direct benefits towards enhancing their performance on skill based language tests. As a solution to this issue, mirroring Huang's (2011) view, Kuo (2009) also suggested that teachers should not be in a rush to push learners to become critically aware at the expense of spelling and grammar correctness. Instead, they should flexibly apply critical literacy based on the learners, teaching purposes and teaching contexts. Similarly, in this study, *The Jungle Book* graphic novel is intentionally made used in

a Language Art class to implement the critical literacy, reflecting the specific context of the Year 4 class.

In another EFL study conducted in two Korean high school classrooms with no fixed curriculums, Shin and Crookes (2005) noted that learners can engage in critical dialogues with no resistance to critically oriented activities or materials. This finding confirms that the view of Asian learners from a Confucian heritage culture such as Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese as passive learners is a misconception. Tran (2013) reveals that the passive learning style of Asian learners is attributable not to cultural factors but rather to context-specific factors such as teaching methodologies, learning requirements or language proficiency. As demonstrated in the studies of Huang (2011), Kuo (2009), and Shin and Crookes (2005), critical literacy can bring about positive consequences in terms of learners' language skills and also help learners make connections between what they have learnt in the classroom and their real life experiences. The authors further offered that ESL/EFL teachers can help their learners to actively engage in critical literacy practices using multimodal texts, or focusing on both conventional literacy skills and critical orientations.

Observation from all the empirical studies mentioned above which employed critical literacy in ESL/EFL settings suggests that the selection of texts or discussion topics was based on students' or teachers' interests and needs. In other words, these studies assumed a condition in which a teacher can freely develop curricula for critical literacy practices with a variety of texts such as graphic novels (Chun, 2009), multimodal texts (Lau, 2013), graphic journals (Danzak, 2011), social-issue picture books (Kuo, 2009) and social issue articles (Huang, 2011). Conversely, since the teachers and learners of the Malaysian context typically use textbooks selected by Ministry of Education, the focus will be teaching critical literacy using *The Jungle*

Book, a graphic novel prescribed for the Year 4 learners, corresponding to one of Norton and Pavlenko's (2004) categories which is combining critical issues with the existing curriculum.

2.5.3. Challenges of Implementing Critical Literacy in the ESL/ EFL Classroom

The focus of research on critical literacy teaching in the ESL and EFL classroom tend to revolve around the challenges faced by learners and teachers in the settings. For instance, in the Malaysian context, numerous researchers contend that critical literacy is difficult to put into practice (Koo, 2008; Koo, Wong & Kemboja 2012; Sarjit Kaur, 2013; Sarjit Kaur & Gurnam Kaur 2014.) Similar findings were reflected in Curdt-Christiansen's study (2010), in which she claimed that Singaporean primary and secondary level teachers had less confidence in teaching critical literacy in the classroom despite their beliefs that literacy is a social practice. The study further revealed the reality of the Singaporean educational system, which puts emphasis on college entrance exams, impinged on the teachers' beliefs.

Other researchers identified at least five challenges that could be encountered during the implementation of critical literacy in the ELL classroom. These encompass teachers' inclination towards banking pedagogy (Ko, 2013); insufficient understanding of the need for critical literacy together with the lack of implementation skills (Kim, 2012); the underestimation by language educators of learners' abilities to take a critical perspective (Falkenstein, 2013); learners' language proficiency and beliefs in skills on function-based language learning (Eastman, 1998); cultural impropriety and learner resistance (Kuo, 2009). In another research implemented in an EFL/ESL teacher education course in a US university, Crookes and Lehner (1998) also noted that Asian origin teachers tended to be slightly pessimistic about the

implementation of critical literacy in their classroom, in their home countries due to the constraints on their actions.

The pessimism by teachers' in the above study towards the application of critical literacy could have been formed simply because of the inherent contrast between the learners in the bilingual setting and the ESL and EFL settings. As observed in the studies by Chun (2009), Jennings (2010), Lau (2013) and Danzak (2011) mentioned earlier, English is employed in and out of the classroom and can be presumed as an integral part of learners' life and identities. Conversely, in the ESL and EFL settings, English is less inclined to be used unless it is in the classroom and is seen more of a subject or skill that needs to be learnt (Ko, 2013). In this context, by grasping the idea that language is a social practice in which identities, ideas, norms and beliefs are established, negotiated and recreated (Auerbach, 1995; Giroux, 2012; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Pennycook, 2001). ESL and EFL teachers might acknowledge the advantages of critical literacy practices in their classroom supersede the challenges.

2.6 Teachers' roles

In a classroom that employs critical literacy, the role of teachers differs from the chalk and talk method. A number of studies have recommended roles that a teacher has to assume in implementing critical literacy in the classroom. For instance, Wallace (2001), who examined teachers' roles and lessons using critical literacy practices, proposed three concrete roles to manage talk so as to offer equal opportunities for learners' participation in the classroom and to provide them guidance as they discern and unveil ideological meanings within the texts. These roles are termed as principal, animator and author. As a 'principal', the teacher is responsible for controlling critical

talk in the classroom, drawing on the institutional authority while trying to balance sharing among groups. As an ‘animator’, the teacher should be able to encourage learners’ participation in the classroom discussion by praising them for their contribution in the discussion or repeating what they have uttered. Finally, as one who has the capacity to make substantive contributions to the discussion, the teacher can play the role of an ‘author’ in which they can ask for clarification, trigger argument, offer his or her voice in discussing an issue as a co-participant or provide feedbacks on learners’ contribution.

While it was noted that the roles proposed by Wallace (2001) are quite appropriate, to what extent the teacher should make contributions to the classroom discussion is a concern. Rocha-Schmid’s (2010) for instance noted that the teacher may end up dominating class discussion and influencing learners while playing the role as an ‘author’. On the other hand, learner-led discussion could also prove to be problematic as they do not always yield high levels of exploratory or critical talk (Mercer & Littleton, 2007). In this context, it is important for the teacher to apply a sense of balance in her role. In other words, if she finds that learners are in need of affirmation or are not going anywhere with the talk, she could offer her own voice. After all, the teacher’s voice could contribute to enhancing learners’ conceptualization process or producing multiple perspectives. On the other hand, if learners are found to be capable of making critical talks with each other, the teacher may then play the role of an ‘animator’ to stimulate and extend learners’ talk.

2.7 Strategies for promoting critical literacy practices

As acknowledged in the previous sections, critical literacy helps one to move beyond surface level understanding of texts. Scholars and researchers of critical literacy have

discovered and theorised the potential of critical literacy practices to guide learners' understanding of texts from a critical perspective; thus promoting deeper levels of comprehension (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004a). McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004a) further explicate that establishing critical understanding of texts not only involves learners' understanding of printed words, but also the context and purpose of the texts. For the effective promotion of critical literacy practices among learners, it is important for teachers to be aware of strategies for the implementation of critical literacy. This section will review some of the strategies employed in some of the language classroom, which are deemed effective.

2.7.1 Activating Background Knowledge of Contexts

In a study conducted by Alford (2001), she found that adolescent ESL learners were often marginalised during classroom discussions as they were found to lack background knowledge that was key to understanding and critique. This finding is also in line with the one put forward by Nunan (1989) who states that the lack of background knowledge is a more significant factor in the ability of ESL learners to comprehend school texts in comparison to linguistic complexity as measured by various readability formulae. To address the issue of providing the ESL learners with required background knowledge, Alford (2001, p.239-240) proposed three strategies: "activating existing prior knowledge", building on that knowledge from a contemporary localised perspective, for instance, by first discussing an article related to issues in the main text; and; using these two strategies as roots for 'adding new information during reading'. Apart from activating prior knowledge, since this study deals with primary school learners, providing learners with linguistic support to understand vocabulary or main ideas is also seen as a necessity to determine the success of the critical literacy implementation.

On the other hand, Alford (2001) also acknowledges that the ESL learners who lack background knowledge in her study may actually have an advantage at approaching issues more critically from multiple perspectives as compared to the mainstream learners. Presumably, this standpoint is made based on the contrast between insider and outsider perspectives (Kramsch, 1998). ESL learners usually assume an outsider's perspectives on the cultures and values embedded in their textbooks using the experiential knowledge that they have gained as insiders in their own cultures. Put in another way, originating from different cultural backgrounds may provide learners with insider perspectives that mirror cultural varieties; hence enabling them to view things from multiple perspectives, as advocated in critical literacy practices (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004; Lewison et al., 2014). Considering this aspect in mind, the researcher hopes that this study, which involves a classroom of Malaysian primary school pupils, will demonstrate the different perspectives that pupils take on especially since the settings and society reflected in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel is from India.

2.7.2. Juxtaposing Texts for the Exploration of Multiple Perspectives

The other strategy is to juxtapose texts by encouraging learners to use multiple resources and texts to create intertextuality; subsequently gaining insights from multiple perspectives (Heffernan & Lewison, 2000; Janks, 2002; Kempe, 2001; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b). For instance, in Spector and Jones' study conducted in (2007), a teacher shared a variety of texts to challenge her learners to re-establish their understanding of the social and historical contexts related to Anne Frank's experiences during the Holocaust. Prior to the study, Spector and Jones (2007, p.45) observed that the learners in the study held "exoticized" beliefs about Nazis and often referred to them as "demonic". Therefore, in this context, juxtaposing a variety of texts

in ways that “question and subvert received disciplinary knowledge” is seen as an alternative to help learners distance themselves from dominant texts and discourses or to challenge their previously held notions (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005; p.157). Besides, requiring learners in the study to create monologues to explore, interrogate the Nazi’s point of view was also another strategy employed in the study to help learners comprehend things from different perspectives.

2.7.3. Questioning Authorial Power by Problem-posing the Texts

McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004b) posit the use of questioning authorial power that includes the author’s prerogative to compose text from a particular angle and to include ideas while excluding others through the problem-posing strategy. They assert that when learners are offered opportunities to disrupt and question the author’s message, they are increasingly empowered to become critical text users. Besides, these opportunities might also enable learners to closely examine their language use, cultural values, beliefs and life experiences as they pose questions that problematize the text (See Appendix A for a list of questions that promotes critical literacy). In this context, learners are able to read critically and construct powerful insights about the texts in ways that make sense to them (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b; Chafel et al. 2007). Subsequently of this process, learners are thrust into the role of active meaning makers with the ability to critically understand the function and context of the text under study.

This strategy, however does present one of the struggles with teaching questioning that is, as learners construct their own meaning from a text, they might not arrive immediately at the same meaning that the teacher expects. In this context, instead of feeling compelled to stick to the pre-planned lesson, the teacher should accept the fact that sometimes learners’ interpretations and discussion take another direction. Hence, the teacher should follow their lead. This view is also echoed in

Labadie, Pole and Rogers' (2013) study which focuses on how critical literacy read-aloud is facilitated in an early childhood setting. Furthermore, as guides for learners' learning, the teacher can certainly put forward her own theories and thoughts into the discussion.

2.8 Critical literacy and Young Learners

Despite the debate as to whether young learners are capable in engaging in critical literacy, a growing number of researchers have demonstrated the feasibility of critical literacy in early childhood settings (Comber, 2006; Labadie et al., 2013; Vasquez, 2014; Kim & Cho, 2017). This section reviews some of the studies in the young learner and elementary settings in order to demonstrate how critical literacy is implemented in such settings and the findings of the studies.

Allen (1997) describes his critical literacy approach with seven-year-old learners. He helped learners to recognize bias related to gender inequities in classroom materials through discussion and read aloud. Activities included discussion to highlight biases in text, finding ways to change biases, and empowering learners to voice their views against the injustices. Allen also addressed challenges, such as learners' lack of awareness towards bias in curriculum. By the end of his study, Allen (1997) observed that the learners in his class were willing to take risk and question the content of their teaching materials. They were also exposed to the ways of identifying and comprehending oppression across various groups. Sweeney's (1997) study with fourth graders also expands possibilities for critical literacy as learners wrote and produced a play exemplifying the conditions of apartheid and resistance in South Africa. The project was considered a success as it helped learners to feel empowered in making a difference to society.

Comber, Thomson, and Wells (2001) describes critical literacy in a second and third grade classroom. Learners took on a critical literacy project embedded with multiliteracies in their neighbourhood while learning how people used language as power. They used a critical literacy stance to problematize, combat, and change injustices. Comber et al. (2001) also highlighted how learners in a fourth-grade classroom stood up against a mining company to save a historical mountain in their area. This movement was not purposefully instigated by the teacher. Instead, it was conjured after learners' learnt about the mining industry in their area which led them to fight for preservation. Learners presented their research to the mining company and demanded a response to the findings. Later in the school year, learners, the company, and the state of Kentucky entered a compromise (Powell et al. 2001). This study exemplifies the power of critical literacy in bringing social justice.

Vivian Vasquez (2003), a renowned researcher in the field of critical literacy, describes what critical literacy looked like in a third-grade public school classroom in the Midwestern U.S. A six-step model was used by the teacher to carry out a critical literacy study with her learners based on a social issues picture book. Vasquez (2003, p.37) defines the process as "lingering with a book". The sessions consisted of activities such as read aloud, picture walk, small-group conversations, whole-group meeting and journal writing. The picture walk activity required learners to complete a response sheet asking questions like "What is important to remember about this book?" and "What questions do you have?" During their journal writing, learners revisited the response sheet and expanded upon their initial ideas of the topic.

Bourke (2008) reflects on his implementation of critical literacy with his first grade classroom. He and his learners approached traditional fairy tale texts with a problematizing stance on the notion of 'the dark-is-evil and white-is good' in fairy

tales. Although at times during their discussion, both the teacher and learners were slightly uncomfortable by the discoveries they made over the texts, the learners were able to demonstrate critical skills gained from Bourke's critical literacy curriculum to discern the biases presented in various text types and deconstruct them in their writing and conversations. Based on these findings, Bourke (2008) urged other educators to employ critical literacy in all classrooms to transform current curriculum from the traditional focus of reading as basic skills. However, he did not offer any solid framework for classroom execution.

A small-scale case study conducted by Kim and Cho (2017) also corroborates with Bourke's (2008) findings. They delineate ways in which a Korean preschool teacher interacts with four-year-old learners during literacy activities to promote multiple perspectives and challenge dominant ideologies about the characters in a few selected texts on fairy tales. The Korean preschool teacher and her learners approached the traditional fairy tale texts with a problematizing stance. The findings of the study suggest that young learners have the capacity to engage in critical literacy in terms of negotiating their diverse views and recreating their own stories through social interactions with their teacher and peers. Moreover, the findings also highlight the relevance of problem-posing strategy to help learners generate ideas and shared meanings about the texts.

2.9 Resistance from Young Learners towards Critical Literacy

There is a notable amount of mainstream ELL learners that come from cultures of learning, in which the authority of the text is not questionable (Alford, 2001). Hence, implementing critical literacy may not be smooth or easy as such pedagogy encourages teachers and learners alike to question what they see, hear and read and to put it simply,

to adopt a critical stance. Wallace (2001) also supports this view, stating that ELL learners generally have a tendency to practise over deference to text. Rogers (2007) explained that learners usually preferred silence rather than debate when topics of discussion appear difficult or uncomfortable because they are often perplexed on how to respond should a discussion move from “Who is the narrator of this story? How do we know?” to “How are the characters’ identities constructed through language in the text?” and “Why are the characters constructed that way?” It is therefore crucial that teachers make their classrooms a “safehouse” (Canagarajah, 1997). Hynds (1997) suggests giving learners opportunities to form “coalitions,” smaller groups, chosen based on comfort level and affinity for collaborative work. In addition, children must be given space to explore, argue, listen, debate, expand on their opinions and those of their classmates, and take risks in their thinking and learning (Beck, 2005; Comber & Nixon, 1999). In other words, teachers should model and present clear expectations to encourage learners’ participation in ways that they feel safe and comfortable besides rejoicing in the work of all learners. Through time and experience, teachers and learners will gain deeper awareness and appreciation for critical literacy as problematizing and questioning becomes second nature to them.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research design used to answer the research questions. The chapter begins with the rationale for adopting the qualitative methodology, specifically a case study, and a detailed information pertaining to the case selection, selection of participants; approval sought from authorities, data collection and data analysis methods. The chapter, then, concludes with the discussion of issues related to trustworthiness and ethics considered in the study.

3.2 Research Design

This research adopted the qualitative case study design since it fulfilled the following criteria:

- i) the natural setting of a Year 4 classroom during Language Arts lessons was the direct source of data and the researcher was the key instrument.
- ii) the data was collected in the form of words by transcribing audio recordings of the lessons, written reflective notes and analysing pupils' artefacts, instead of numbers
- iii) the researcher was interested in the process as well as the product
- iv) the data was analysed inductively using two of the dimensions found in the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy framework by Lewison et al. (2002)

- v) the Year 4 pupils' thinking processes and their perspectives about the characters and the events in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel were the major concerns to the researcher.

(Bodgan & Biklen, cited in Fraenkel and Wallen, 2007)

In line with Merriam (2001), Yin (2003) and Creswell (2012), a qualitative case study design was used as it enabled the researcher to explore and obtain in-depth descriptions and understanding on how Year 4 pupils responded and interacted around the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework, namely disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints, while discussing *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. Furthermore, this research design provided the researcher with an opportunity to narrow down a very broad field of critical literacy research into one easily researchable topic related to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, this study was aimed at describing the discourse moves made by Year 4 pupils during their Language Arts lessons and to explore their wonderings and thoughts revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. As such, a detailed analysis on pupils' classroom discourse was deemed necessary. In this context, the case study design suited well especially since data analysis took a qualitative approach. Additionally, Gulsecen and Kubat (2006) elucidate that the role of a case study is pertinent to this current study as it assists the researcher to focus on understanding Year 4 pupils' thoughts and responses made as they discuss the Language Arts graphic novel, *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework advocated by Lewison et al. (2002): disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints.

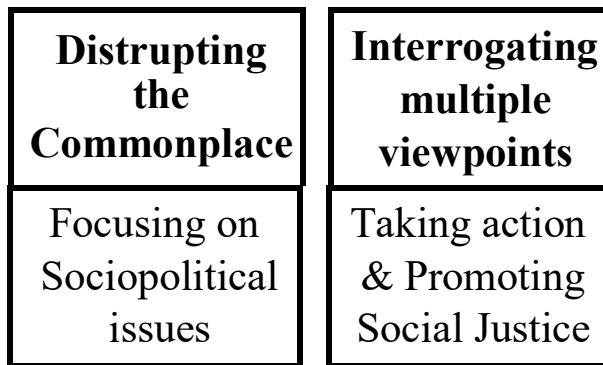


Figure 3.1 Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework for the study

3.3 Context of the Study

In this study, the research site involved a classroom at a suburban primary school. The context of this study was a Year 4 classroom during the Language Arts lessons. This section describes the research site and justifies the choice of context used to carry out this study.

3.3.1 The site

The setting of the study was in a semi-urban Chinese vernacular primary school situated in the district of Hulu Langat. This setting was chosen due to the lack of research into the implementation of critical literacy at the primary school level (see details in Chapter 2). There are about 2500 pupils enrolled in the school. The racial composition of the school is 95% Chinese, 2% Malays; 2% Indians and 1% comprising others. The pupils in this school are diverse in their economic background. There are pupils who come from affluent families at one end of the continuum, and at the opposite side of the continuum, there are those who are poor and come from broken families.

English is taught for about six periods per week (with each period consisting of thirty minutes) in the Year 4 timetable. Two periods are allocated per week for lessons related to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel during the Language Arts sessions. Besides, the researcher is familiar with the research site and has developed good

rapport with the participants in the school; hence, minimising the possibility of the researcher being perceived as an ‘interfering outsider’ (Stringer, 2007). Moreover, familiarity with the research setting may enhance the credibility of qualitative research because the researcher has had the opportunity to develop mutually trusting relationships and to share understandings about the hoped-for benefits of the research with all the stakeholders.

3.4 Participant selection

This section aims to provide general background information of the participants in the study. They include the participating teacher, Ms Crystal and her Year 4 pupils.

3.4.1 The Teacher, Ms Crystal

Ms Crystal, in her early thirties, is an English teacher (Teacher’s name is a pseudonym). She obtained her bachelor’s degree from one of the prestigious local university. Later while working, she pursued her Master’s degree part time in the same university and graduated with a specialisation in Literature. In school, she holds responsibility as the Head of the English Panel, (also known as Ketua Panitia Bahasa Inggris) and often becomes point of references for the English teachers in school.

The researcher first became acquainted with Ms Crystal when they participated in a National English Camp during their tenure in teacher’s training. Then, both, the researcher and Ms Crystal began their teaching careers in the same school. Teaching in the same school enabled them to shadow and learn from each other professionally. They also had numerous opportunities to share ideas and views on various pedagogical techniques and strategies to improve themselves professionally. It was through these exchanges that the researcher found out about Ms Crystal’s keen interest in critical pedagogy and her attempts on experimenting different strategies and approaches to get

her pupils to 'dig' deeper into the texts, which they are engaged with. Over time, the discussions held between them around this issue intrigued the researcher to pursue her research in this area of study.

The selection of Ms Crystal as a participant in this study focused on several factors. One of the most crucial factors was Ms Crystal's willingness to explore critical literacy in her Language Arts lessons, abiding to the Standard-based English Language Curriculum for Malaysian Type Primary Schools (SJK) (2014). Moreover, despite not having any formal training or professional exposure in critical literacy, Ms Crystal and her class were considered for the study as she was noted exploring the critical pedagogy with her pupils in a variety of lesson structures, which included whole class discussions, small group discussions and collaborative projects during peer observations conducted under the Professional Learning Communities [PLC] programme in the past year. During many of these observations, Ms Crystal was seen posing thought-provoking questions to her pupils, prodding them about the issues raised in their readings and encouraging their expression of ideas, views and experiences, while establishing a classroom culture of considering and respecting diverse perspectives.

In addition, Ms Crystal makes efforts to demonstrate to her pupils the significance of learning by linking the issues and topics raised during lessons to their real world experiences. While doing so, she also infuses humour and fun into her lessons by sharing about her own life experiences as well as inviting pupils to share about theirs. Series of informal interviews with Ms Crystal, prior to this research, indicated her beliefs on the importance of establishing positive relationships with pupils. She felt that demonstrating genuine care and interest towards them are central to their success in learning as pupils are most likely be engaged in the lessons.

Lastly, peer observations carried out in Ms Crystal's class also indicates her efforts in employing a democratic approach with her pupils. In her class, pupils' voices are heard and they are given freedom to make decisions on how they should go about doing a specific task or assignment. In other words, with the autonomy given, she holds her pupils accountable for their actions in ensuring that they produce work of quality. She also expects her pupils to know their priorities and to use whatever resources available such as their peers and herself to improve themselves academically. This became another rationale for the consideration of Ms Crystal and her class of pupils as potential participants in this study.

3.4.2 The Pupils

Purposive sampling strategy was used for the selection of pupils for this case study. There was a need for the researcher to choose a sample in which she could gain ample information since the researcher intends to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2001). The main criterion for the choice of participants in this study was their ability to respond to the teacher expressively, both in oral and written form in the target language.

In this school, there are 10 classes of Year 4 pupils. The first four classes comprised of pupils who were streamed according to their overall academic achievement in their Year 3 final examination, in the previous year. The pupils were assessed following their performances in subjects such as Bahasa Melayu, English, Mandarin, Mathematics, Science, Visual Arts, Health and Physical Education and Music. The rest of the Year 4 classes consisted of pupils of mixed abilities. For the purpose of this study, the administrators, Ms Crystal and the researcher collectively agreed on the first class in the Year 4, 4A, to be chosen, with the assumption that the pupils would participate in the research well.

Year 4A comprised of 40 pupils. The majority of these pupils came from upper middle class families, and whose parents were doctors, engineers, lawyers, private tutors and business entrepreneurs. These parents put a lot emphasis on their children's academic and extra co-curricular successes. As such, they tried their best to support and enhance these pupils' capabilities by enrolling them in additional classes related to their academics, music, dancing, public speaking, robotics and sports (outside schooling hours). Furthermore, many of these pupils' parents were also actively involved in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of the school. They were noted to voice their concerns and provide suggestions regularly to the school administrators as to how best the teachers could support their children's learning.

In terms of English language proficiency, pupils in this class were of upper intermediate level (comparable to a B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]). However, pupils showed limited effort to speak in the target language outside the English Language class. They only spoke in the target language when communicating with their English Language teacher, Ms Crystal and when the need arises. Their preference was to communicate in Mandarin as they use it in learning all the subjects taught in school except for the national language, Bahasa Melayu and the English Language. Besides, being the mother tongue for most of the pupils, Mandarin was used as their primary medium of communication at home and in their surrounding environment. As such, pupils were observed speaking in the target language with a strong influence of the first language.

An important aspect to note is that Ms Crystal had not taught these pupils in the previous years. Therefore, they were still in the process of getting to know each other when the data collection started. All the parents of the 40 pupils were informed about the purpose of the study and all of them gave written consent for their children

to participate in the study. However, pseudonyms were used to protect pupils' privacy. The pupils participated in all activities throughout the research unless they were absent. Prior to the study, pupils were informed that their class discussions, presentations and interviews would be observed and recorded during the lessons on *The Jungle Book* to guide the improvement of the teachers' pedagogy skills. Pupils were unaware of the true purpose of the study to avoid Hawthorne effects on the data yield. (Explanation on Hawthorne Effects will be discussed in the following subsection.)

3.5 The Researcher and her Roles

Through this case study, the researcher intended to understand and explore how pupils responded to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel when two out of the Four Dimensions of the Critical Literacy Framework were used to interrogate the text. The researcher was initially introduced to critical literacy during her undergraduate studies and her interest in critical literacy was piqued throughout her graduate studies.

The researcher has been teaching in the research site since 2012. This aspect proved to be an advantage in conducting the study. Firstly, teaching at the site provided the researcher an easy access to the research site and it also helped her to get permission from the administrators to conduct the study. Moreover, as pupils and parents were aware of the researcher as a teacher in that school, it helped her to establish and gain their trust easily.

At the year end of 2018, the researcher sought approval from the Planning and Research Division (EPRD) of Ministry of Education Malaysia to carry out her research. However, the department gave her an oral reply stating that her application could not be approved due to the new regulation that prohibited researchers from observing teachers during their lessons. Therefore, she had to modify her research

proposal by stating that there would not be any formal observations or video recordings of the lessons in order to reapply for her approval. In spite of this, Ms Crystal was obliging and she allowed the researcher to sit in her Language Arts classes as a peer observer.

Ms Crystal's approval to allow the researcher to be in the class enabled her to respond to the data collected during the lessons. The researcher also had the opportunity to present her findings descriptively as she was able to understand the phenomenon clearly. Nevertheless, the close relationship in which the researcher developed with her data might result in the increased risk of personal bias or tendency to make errors. One way to account for the bias that such studies carried was for the researcher herself to acknowledge the biasness, a quality that is deemed unique to qualitative research (Merriam, 2001).

The researcher played the role of a participant-observer as participant observation was found to be one of the most comprehensive research strategies (Patton, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2012). This was because the researcher would be able to observe the event taking place and reflect upon the events later. Hence, reflective field notes were taken throughout this study by the researcher while conducting her observations on the participants' responses during the class discussions to capture the significant moments of the participants' interaction (Creswell, 2012).

However, there was a need for the researcher to be aware of the risk of Hawthorne effects while carrying such observations. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2012), Hawthorne effects refer to the change of attitude in the subjects after having the awareness that they are being observed and this may affect internal validity. The researcher addressed the issues related to Hawthorne effects by ensuring that her visitation to the classroom occurred before the actual observations. The rationale for

this was so that the pupils got used to the presence of the researcher. Moreover, under the (PLC) programme introduced by the Ministry of Education, the researcher had already gained access to the research site while conducting peer-coaching and she believed pupils were accustomed to being observed by her. In addition, although the pupils were aware of being observed for a study, the true objective of it was unknown to them, in the quest to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected for the study.

3.6 Ms Crystal's Critical Literacy Sessions

This study employed two dimensions of the Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy Framework developed by Lewison et al. (2002). The two specific dimensions used in this study encouraged pupils to explore and critically examine a graphic novel by disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints of the characters and issues in it. This section includes the description of the prescribed text that was used by Ms Crystal in her Language Arts lessons as well as how she facilitated the discussion sessions with her pupils based on those two dimensions of critical literacy to support their exploration and interrogation of the text.

3.6.1 The Text Used

The graphic novel selected for this study was *The Jungle Book*. This text was originally written by Rudyard Kipling. However, the version of *The Jungle Book* that was prescribed to all Year 4 pupils in the national and national type schools under the KSSR curriculum was the one written by Carl Bowen, in the form of a multimodal text. Appendix B shows the book cover and the way the book displays the story. Brief details of each chapter in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel are presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: *Important Details in Each Chapter in The Jungle Book Graphic Novel*

Chapters	Important Details
Chapter 1: Mowgli's Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shere Khan, the tiger entered the hunting territory of the wolves to kill a man-cub named Mowgli and was stopped by a pair of wolves. • The wolves referred to their elders at Council Rock to decide whether to let Mowgli stay or leave. • With agreement of the council, Mowgli was allowed to be raised in the wolf pack.
Chapter 2: Kaa's Hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowgli grew up and continued to learn the customs and rules of the jungle with the guidance of Baloo and Bagheera. • Mowgli was captured by the Monkey People. • Baloo and Bagheera requested Kaa, a rock snake to help them rescue Mowgli from his captivity.
Chapter 3: The Red Flower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shere Khan continued his pursuit to kill Mowgli. • Baloo advised Mowgli to go to the human village to find the Red Flower to protect himself from Shere Khan. • Mowgli used the Red Flower against those who wanted him to leave the wolf-family. Mowgli left his wolf pack.
Chapter 4: The Tiger, Tiger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mowgli left the jungle and decided to stay at a nearby human village. • A woman named Messua recognised him as her lost son, Nathoo. • Mowgli tried to fit in with the humans but he failed. • Mowgli killed Shere Khan. • Fearing Mowgli, the villagers chased Mowgli out of the village. • Mowgli returned to Council Rock to lay the hide of Shere Khan.
Chapter 5: The Red Dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pack of dholes attacked the Jungle Folks. • Mowgli killed the dholes by leading them to the homes of the Little People, with the help of Kaa. • Akela died. Before dying, Akela told Mowgli that one day he would leave the jungle because he did not belong there. • Mowgli pondered on Akela's last words but he was not ready to leave the jungle at that moment

3.6.2 Language Arts Sessions Revolving *The Jungle Book*

The Jungle Book graphic novel is one of the prescribed text used in the Year 4 Language Arts class. In this study, the lessons revolving *The Jungle Book* were scheduled once a week for an hour over a span of 6 weeks. During the reading sessions, pupils were guided to use critical literacy strategies such as activating background knowledge (Alford, 2001), problem-posing the texts and writing counter-narratives (McLaughlin & DeVegood, 2004a). Exposure to these strategies was noted important as it enabled the pupils to engage in deeper critical analysis which supported their understanding of the text (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004b). Besides, opportunities to engage in critical conversations meant that pupils were given a platform and a sense of comfort to express their own views and critique texts without feeling threatened (Wood & Jocius, 2013). In addition, it also implied that pupils would be getting the practice to harness their critical literacy skills.

The reading sessions were organised based on the Critical Literacy Lesson Framework adapted from McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004b). To begin with, the reading sessions had three phases namely 'Introduction and Review', 'Reading' and 'Pupils' Reflection.' Before reading each chapter, pupils were given quizzes to activate their background knowledge and to review the content of the previous lesson.

The 'Reading' phase of the lessons involved Ms Crystal reading aloud a chapter from the graphic novel expressively and this is followed by the class discussion. The class discussion focused on problem posing the situations found in the particular chapter that Ms Crystal read. This strategy was used to help pupils to disrupt the commonplace and consider multiple viewpoints of different characters in *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. By problem posing, pupils had the opportunities to challenge the author by questioning and analysing the situations found in the text;

hence, moving them beyond the surface level understanding of the text. It also empowered the pupils to practise viewing the text from multiple perspectives. When employing the problem posing strategy, McLaughlin and Devoogd (2004b) found the following questions to be useful when analysing texts from a critical perspective:

- a) Who and what is the focus in the text and whose viewpoint is expressed?
- b) Whose voices are missing, silenced, or discounted?
- c) What does the author want readers to believe?
- d) How might alternative perspectives be represented?
- e) How would examining alternative perspectives contribute to understanding the text from a critical stance?
- f) What actions might readers take based on what they have learned?

(McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004b)

These questions make it apparent to readers that texts are created by authors in favour of specific types of people, specific perspectives and activities while disregarding and silencing others. Hence, de-constructing the message in the text through these questions is an important element in critical literacy. Nevertheless, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004b) suggest that it is not necessary to go through all the questions with pupils. Instead, the emphasis should be on choosing the type of question that can facilitate critical understanding of the text among pupils. Ms Crystal and I modified the list of problem posing questions as needed to accommodate to pupils' level of understanding and to prompt their responses.

The 'Pupils' Reflection' phase presented opportunities to pupils to offer written responses to the critical literacy activity for that particular session. During that

time, the pupils worked either individually or in groups to produce an artefact to capture their thoughts about the text and critical literacy experiences in relation to ‘the context’ in the graphic novel (Dyson and Genishi, 2005).

Table 3.2: *Summary of Ms Crystal’s critical literacy lessons revolving ‘The Jungle Book’*

The Jungle Book	Critical literacy strategies	Introduction & Review	Reading	Pupils’ Reflection
Lesson 1 : Book cover review	Activating background knowledge Problem posing	Illustration of pupils’ version of a person who lives in the jungle	Reading of the book cover and discussion on the comparison between pupils’ version and the author’s version	Personal responses about their reactions if Mowgli appears in their class
Lesson 2: Mowgli’s Brothers	Activating background knowledge Problem posing Exploring various viewpoints	Review on the previous lesson	Teacher read-aloud and discussion on the characters and the situations in the chapter	Pupils’ evaluation of the wolves’ decision to raise Mowgli in the jungle and the reasons
Lesson 3 Kaa’s Hunting	Activating background knowledge Problem posing Writing Counter narratives	Review the previous lesson Characteristics of monkeys in ‘reality’	Teacher read-aloud Discussion revolving the questions posed by pupils about the chapter	Pupils take on a character and writing from the character’s perspectives

Lesson 4 Red Flower (Part 1)	Activating background knowledge Problem posing Exploring various perspectives	Review the previous lesson The concept of 'council'	Teacher read aloud Discussion on the issues raised in the chapter	Pupils reflect on their experience influencing or being influenced to not be friends with someone
Lesson 5 Red Flower (Part 2)	Activating background knowledge Problem posing Exploring various viewpoints Writing counter narratives	Review the previous lesson The concept of 'council'	Teacher read aloud Discussion on the issues raised in the chapter	Imagining themselves as Mowgli, pupils write letters to Shere Khan and the wolf pack.
Lesson 6 Tiger Tiger	Activating background knowledge Problem posing Exploring various viewpoints		Teacher read aloud Discussion on the issues raised in the chapter and characterizat ion	In small groups, pupils share with each other about the best solutions to solve problems they have with people Character which pupils admire in the graphic novel

3.7 Data Collection Method and Sources

The four methods of data collection employed in the study were peer observations, audio-visual materials, interviews, and document analysis. Data collected from these methods guided the researcher to understand how pupils responded to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel, based on the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework. The methods and data sources used are shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Summary of the Data Collection Methods, Sources and Focus

Method	Data Sources	Focus
Peer observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field notes • Observational Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' verbal behaviour and interactions in the classroom during the discussion of the texts and subsequent critical literacy activities • Pupils' physical behaviour and gestures during the discussion sessions • Pupils' display of critical literacy strategies during the discussion of <i>The Jungle Book</i>.
Audiovisual materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings of the story readings, discussions and subsequent critical literacy activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' responses to the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework during the discussion of the text • Pupils' social interactions with the teacher and between each other during the discussion sessions
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Interview Protocol • Pupils Interview Protocol • Interview transcripts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher's perceptions on each of the sessions, pupils' responses and the challenges faced by them while responding to questions about the text based on the critical literacy dimensions • Pupils' explanation about their written works and the challenges they faced during each session
Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' written artefacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All written artefacts created by pupils during the critical literacy activities

3.7.1 Observations

Classroom observations were conducted in this study. In the classroom, the researcher was allowed to be in the classroom as a peer observer. The researcher's main focus was on the pupils' responses based on *The Jungle Book* graphic novel.

During the lesson, the researcher was a passive observer on how the teacher carried out her lesson but her focus was on how the pupils interacted and presented their oral and written responses based on the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework adopted in this study. An observation protocol (refer to Appendix E) was used during the observations to note how the pupils reacted, responded and questioned based on their understanding of the text.

Fieldnotes were jotted down during the researcher's observations. It had details of the pupils' classroom behaviour and mannerisms, which included non-verbal or paralinguistic features during the interactions between the pupils and the teacher (Creswell, 2003). The rationale for the expanded accounts was to support a more fine-grained analysis for the study.

3.7.2 Audio-visual materials: Audio recording

To support the researcher's observations, the audio-visual material was used for the data gathering in this study. Audio recording was the primary data collection tool used in the study, although the initial plan was to conduct video recording. Video-recording was not carried out as initially planned as the school administrators did not approve it. However, they allowed audio recording with the permission of Ms Crystal and the pupils' parents. Despite this change, the researcher was still able to achieve the goal of the study by closely examining pupils' discussion. The researcher relied on her recorded data to review the interaction and to ascertain and confirm whatever she had observed and experienced while playing the role as a participant observer.

Subsequently, this provided her more time to contemplate, deliberate and ponder upon the data received before drawing conclusions; thus, preventing premature interpretations of the data. This type of observation may not be necessarily obtained from real time observations (Erickson, 1992 cited in Dufon, 2002).

The researcher reviewed the data at home on the same day after each session was carried out. They were transcribed completely to capture important details from the sessions. Later, the audio logs were used to analyse the critical literacy sessions to capture detailed actions and interactions of the pupils and the teacher.

3.7.3. Interviews

The dynamics of interaction between participants may not be well-captured by the recording equipment alone; therefore, interviews need to be carried out as another mode of data collection in order to gain a holistic view of the discussions and to discover the participants' interpretation of the activities during the lessons (Merriam, 2001).

Interviews with Ms Crystal were conducted based on a mutual understanding as the researcher was a peer observer in her class. The interviews were conducted at her convenient times after school hours. On the other hand, interviews with pupils were carried out during school hours but in casual situations (for instance during recess and library period). The interviews with pupils were carried out principally to ensure that their voices were included, specifically about their feelings and thoughts in relation to the critical literacy lessons carried out.

Before the interviews were conducted, interview protocols were prepared by the researcher (refer to Appendix C and Appendix D). An interview protocol, with reference to Creswell (2012), is a form prepared which states the interview procedures, the questions to be asked and space to take notes of the participants' responses during

the interview process. The interview protocol used in the study served as a reminder to the researcher in terms of the question to be asked as well as a tool to record her notes.

Besides, the researcher also developed semi-structured interviews for the interview protocol. The usage of semi-structured interviews for this case study was to ensure that the researcher focused on her original inquiry while still having the flexibility to explore and probe into new ideas brought up during the interview (Creswell, 2012). All interviews were audio-taped with the participants' consent to maintain authenticity.

After the interview sessions, the recordings of the interviews were listened and transcribed for data analysis. Transcriptions of verbal recording were done for all interviews, with the researcher re-reading through the notes so as to facilitate the improvement of the researchers' questioning skills.

3.7.4 Documentary Analysis: Learners' Artefacts.

Pupils had opportunities to produce a wide range of written responses at the end of the discussion of each chapter from *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. These included their writing tasks, reflective notes and illustrations to convey their personal impressions or thoughts on the issues raised in each chapter. The writing activities conducted also encouraged them to produce written texts representing the different perspectives of the characters in *The Jungle Book*.

The written samples collected from February 2019 to April 2019 were photocopied and all identifications were removed. The work samples were then categorised chronologically by date and chapters. Following that, they were analysed to capture pupils' feelings about the activity as well as their interpretations of the issues and characters in the graphic novel. Findings gained from this method were used to

corroborate information from the researcher's fieldnotes, Ms Crystal's reflective notes and the transcriptions of the audio recording and interviews.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The procedures in data collection required the researcher to request permission from the relevant authorities to gain access to the research sites and gather data through various sources such as audio recordings, fieldnotes, interviews and document analysis of the pupils' written works (Merriam, 2001).

The initial step was to seek and obtain approval from the Ministry of Education to carry out this study in the selected school. The research proposal was submitted to the Educational Planning and Research Division [EPRD] of the Ministry of Education for their scrutiny and comments. The department gave its approval provided no formal observations were done in the class during the Language Arts hour. However, the researcher still managed to sit in the class as a peer observer, under the PLC programme. Following this, the researcher obtained permission from the Selangor State Department and the Hulu Langat District Education Department to carry out this case study.

The researcher also sought permission from the school administrators to gain access to the research site and to seek collaboration from Ms Crystal. The proposed plan for data collection was scheduled in the second semester of 2019, that was from June to August. This was ideal, bearing in mind that both Ms Crystal and the pupils would have established a comfortable relationship and a culture of openness with each other. However, the school administrators were not too keen with the proposed timing for data collection as it might coincide with important school activities and pupils'

preparation for the year-end assessment. Therefore, data collection for this study took place between February and April 2019.

Upon approval by the school administrators, the researcher met Ms Crystal to plan and discuss how the readings of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel was to be carried out and the type and example of questions she should pose during the discussion of the texts based on the two dimensions of the Four Dimension Critical Literacy Framework. Besides, the meeting with Ms Crystal also included the designing of activities that was to be conducted with pupils following the discussion of each chapter. These meetings which were conducted in January 2019, were held after school hours and the researcher jotted down fieldnotes of their discussions. With Ms Crystal's approval, the researcher visited the classroom while she was teaching a few times prior to the study as a peer observer so that the researcher could get to know the pupils better and about the relationship that has been established between Ms Crystal and the pupils. The researcher, known as a teacher, came into the classroom from time to time to see how lessons were carried out so that both the researcher and Ms Crystal could get ideas from each other to improve their teaching.

The methods of collecting data stated in sub-section 3.7 were used throughout the study. The researcher collected the data until it reached a saturation point. Saturation point in this context meant that the participants no longer had information to give or when similar ideas were repeated. However, if there was a need, the researcher made contact with the participants during school hours.

3.9 Analysis of Data

Qualitative data analysis procedures were employed since the main focus of this study was on how Year 4 pupils responded and made sense of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel

based on the dimensions of ‘disrupting the commonplace’ and ‘interrogating multiple viewpoints’ from the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework. Stake (1995, p.71) provides a useful reminder that data analysis does not require a specific time to begin and that analysing the data is not only limited to understanding the ways pupils use and make sense of texts, but also in identifying and defining patterns that emerged from the meaning making process.

In this case, the data sources gathered during the study – audio recording transcripts, interview transcripts, field notes, pupils’ written work and teacher’s reflective notes were sequenced according to dates and triangulated to seek out emerging themes and patterns, which clarified how pupils responded to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the two dimensions from the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework.

The data analysis for this study started from the time the researcher conducted her first interview with Ms Crystal, observations of the lessons, and when the documents for this study were reviewed. To be specific, the researcher took these steps to analyse the data. Firstly, the researcher coded and labelled the data to form descriptions and broad themes to the data collected, as stated in (Creswell, 2012). The codes were regrouped and recoded to highlight and explain the specific information that formed the main concepts of the study. The researcher’s list of codes consisted of priori codes, which were codes derived from the literature and open codes drawn from the transcriptions of the lessons, interviews with the participants as well as from the documents gathered during the study (Bazeley, 2007). The codes needed further regrouping and, axial codes were formed. These axial codes were then scrutinised to develop themes, which answered the research question of this study. Table 3.4 states the type of codes and their descriptions.

Table 3.4: *Types of codes & descriptions*

Type of codes	Description
Open codes	Words that participants use
Axial codes	Coded data from open codes Created by the researcher Academic terms
Themes	Coding done based on related core variables

These emerging themes would be presented as findings and discussed in the following chapters.

3.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to a set of criteria used to evaluate the quality of a qualitative research (Marshall & Rossamn, 2006; Schwandt, 2015). It is new term used in qualitative studies, alongside with terms such as authenticity and goodness of fit. These terms have been employed to replace the commonly known terms such as validity and reliability (Jenning, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) explain that in qualitative research, terminologies such as credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability are used instead of internal validity, external validity and reliability. Naturalist researchers define credibility as a parallel term for internal validity, that is the researcher's effort to establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings while dependability is a term used to refer to the consistency of the findings over time. On the other hand, confirmability also known as objectivity, is the extent to which the findings are neutral and free from bias by the researcher and the level to which the findings of the study can be substantiated by other researchers. Lastly, transferability, commonly termed as external validity, is the applicability of the findings in other contexts (Anney, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Schwandt, 2015).

In establishing the trustworthiness of this study, several steps recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were taken to ensure that the findings were substantiated. These steps included prolonged time in the field, triangulation of data, member-checks, peer examination, audit trails and inclusion of rich and descriptive data in the research report.

3.10.1 Prolonged Time in the Field

One way to maintain the credibility of the study is by ascertaining that data collection stretched over six weeks of an hour classroom interactions and activities, through the means of pupils' artefacts, audio recordings and transcripts, fieldnotes and interviews. Through this extended engagement with the participants, the researcher was able to gain the participants' trust and to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' classroom culture and the phenomenon under study; subsequently, minimizing Hawthorne effect or distortions of information that could occur due to the researcher's present at the site (Anney, 2014).

3.10.2 Triangulation of Data

Triangulation is another strategy taken to warrant trustworthiness. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define triangulation as establishing fact from more than one source of information so that the validity and reliability of the study could be intensified (Merriam, 2001). In this study, besides ensuring validity, data from multiple sources namely, transcripts of class interactions, transcripts of interview with participants, pupils' artefacts and teacher's reflective journals were collected to compare and verify emerging patterns of similarity and themes. Besides, diverse instructional methods such as classroom discussions and pupils-created alternate texts were undertaken to provide insights into shared understanding across pupils and how they interacted and responded to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel when the two dimensions of critical

literacy were incorporated. Comparing and searching for emerging patterns and themes over the course of the study and across multiple data sources and methods assisted the researcher to achieve data triangulation (Creswell, 2012).

3.10.3 Member Checks

Member checks were carried out to get the participants in the study to check the accuracy of the recorded accounts (Creswell, 2012). Both, Ms Crystal and pupils read the transcriptions of the interviews and Language Arts lessons to validate the accuracy of the content. This also enabled the researcher to clarify further with the participants to prevent any inconsistency or misinterpretation of data.

3.10.4 Audit trail

An audit trail was used from the start to the end of the study to establish the dependability of the research findings (Merriam, 2009). The researcher kept detailed accounts of her case selection, data collection and data analysis in addition to a list of all her raw data, transcripts, fieldnotes and pupils' artefacts for transparency cross-checking (Anney, 2014). The researcher also kept a personal journal, consisting of her notes and observation of Ms Crystal's Language Arts lessons, "Aha" moments which she had experienced throughout the course of her study, in addition to the ideas, questions or issues encountered during the process of collecting and analysing data (Merriam, 2009). Keeping this journal enabled the researcher to reflect on the phenomenon easily from the beginning to the end and evaluate if the findings of the study were consistent throughout. At the same time, it also guided the researcher to be more critically aware as to how her own biases could influence her perception and interpretations of the data gathered.

3.10.5 Peer Examination

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a researcher should seek assistance from a knowledgeable peer to uncover taken for granted biases, perspectives and assumptions; subsequently ensuring the confirmability of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, the researcher shared her research processes and findings with her postgraduate colleagues; prior, during and after her data collection to assist her to view her methods of data collection and analyses from diverse perspectives and also, to help her become more reflexive. In addition, the researcher also shared her analysis and findings during informal academic meetings with the participating teacher, Ms Crystal, and some colleagues, whose have 10 years of experience in teaching English. Exchange of ideas gathered through these discussions enabled the researcher to deepen her data analyses as well to provide her with alternative interpretations to the findings obtained; thereby establishing the confirmability of the research findings.

3.10.6 Rich and Thick Descriptions of Data

Lastly, following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) suggestion to make transferability of her research possible, the researcher provided rich and descriptive accounts of the methodology and context, which included detailed explanation of the data collection procedures employed, research site, the reporting of the findings and production of the final report (Anney,2014). By describing the study in great detail, other researchers can determine the extent to which the conclusions drawn from this study are transferable to their contexts.

3.11 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are essential in any research. The researcher should hold the responsibility of respecting the rights, needs and desires of the participants in the study (Creswell 2012). Informed consent from pupils and their parents, adhering to basic ethics while collecting data and presenting the findings and matters relating to confidentiality, are some of the concerns in ethics in research.

Informed consent was obtained from the Ministry of Education, specifically the Education Planning and Research Division [EPRD], the relevant state and district departments, school administration, teachers and parents before the start of the study. The involvement of pupils in this study was entirely voluntary. The participating pupils' parents were informed of the researcher's intentions and the objectives of the study.

Moreover, following Leedy and Omrod's (1995) suggestion, the researcher also assured the parents that their children would not be exposed to any kind of adverse physical, emotional or psychological impairment throughout the study.

The identities of the case selection were kept strictly confidential. Only the school selected was known to the State and District Education Department. Consent forms were distributed to the participating teacher, Ms Crystal, pupils and their parents for their written consent to be voluntary participants in the study. The pupils in this study were not known by their original names but by pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. All interviews, audio recording transcriptions, researcher's fieldnotes and pupils' artefacts were kept confidential in a password encrypted folder in the researcher's home.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the analysis of data which was gathered from the researcher's fieldnotes based on her classroom observations, transcriptions of the classroom discussions on *The Jungle Book*, participant interviews and documents consisting pupils' reflective notes, written work and teacher's reflective notes. The interview transcripts with both, Ms Crystal and pupils as well as their written work and reflective notes served as additional source of data for triangulation, as means to warrant the validity and the reliability of the findings.

The findings derived from this study were based on the following research questions:

1. How do Year 4 pupils respond to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace?
2. What are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace?
3. How do Year 4 pupils respond to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints?
4. What are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints?

Answering the research questions necessitate the researcher to analyse the teaching and learning activities and the manner it was carried out in the class. The main focus of the study was on how pupils generated critical and personal responses based on the dimensions of critical literacy such as disrupting the commonplace and

interrogating multiple viewpoint when they were given opportunities to do so through the teaching and learning activities revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel. The researcher's interaction with Ms Crystal revealed that she had a very pertinent role in encouraging pupils to dialogue and engage in critical literacy.

4.2 Year 4 pupils' responses to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace

With reference to the definition provided by Lewison et al. (2002), pupils were considered disrupting the commonplace in the text when they could identify the author's and illustrator's purpose and messages conveyed in the text as well as challenge the ideas and messages embedded in the text. Several themes emerged during the analysis of the data as to how pupils responded to the discussions in relation to this dimension. These included, insightful personal views, moral perspectives and awareness of grey areas and creative participation by making connections.

4.2.1 Insightful Personal Views

During the introductory lesson in week 1, pupils were not merely exposed to what is meant by 'author', 'illustrator', 'synopsis' and 'title', like it was commonly done in other Language Arts class. Instead, pupils were required to examine the illustrations and the title on the book cover in order to hypothesize what the author and the illustrator wanted them, as readers to believe.

When pupils were initially posed with the question 'Why is the title called *The Jungle Book* and not *Forest Book*?', pupils were found to be quite irresponsible. After some elicitation, a few pupils offered responses such as '...cause it's more interesting' and 'it has a nice ring to it'. Upon further interrogation, they, once again had difficulty elaborating and justifying their responses. This indicated that pupils might not have

had clear understanding on the concepts, ‘jungle’ and ‘forest’; thus, needed guidance in differentiating them so as to identify the intention of the author by his choice of title. To guide their understanding around these concepts, Ms Crystal had to activate their prior knowledge using questioning prompts. Questions such as ‘How are they different based on the cartoon you have watched?’, ‘How does the word “jungle” make you feel?’ and ‘What comes to mind when you think of “forest”?’ invited their responses and pupils drew on their knowledge inventory gathered through their past readings, movies, visits to the zoo and cartoon series to arrive at the similarities and differences between both concepts.

Table 4.1 : *Pupils’ Feedback on the Similarities and Differences of ‘Jungle’ and Forest’*

Forest and Jungle		
Similarities	Differences	
	<u>Forest</u>	<u>Jungle</u>
hunting	big	huge
trekking	more pleasant	lot of trees need a
animals	colourful with	guide dark lion
trees	flowers	tiger elephants
camping	friendly	very big place big
need a guide	animals	snakes wild
monkeys	not as thick as	
eagles	jungle	
wild boar		
snakes		
birds		
can get lost has		
river		
fresh air		
No customs		
No laws		

The pupils’ responses reflected their senses of sight, touch, hearing and smell. There were lots of interaction recorded among pupils during this brainstorming session, as they were noted seeking help from each other in order to translate words

such as ‘scary’ and ‘easy to get lost’ from their mother tongue to the target language in order to participate in the discussion.

Through this brainstorming session, pupils were able to compare and contrast both concepts by drawing on the fairy tales that they have read such as *Snow White*, *Tarzan* and *The Sleeping Beauty* to arrive at a conclusion that ‘forest’ is not as scary as being in the ‘jungle’.

- Winson : Jungle is creepier right... so he can make the story more interesting... like make it more mystery
- Darla : Ohh ya.. he use ‘jungle’ cause got more wild animals there...
- Ms Crystal : Why?
- Fung Xuan : to make the story interesting...
- Ms Crystal : And why does he want to make the story interesting?
- Jia Ying : More people will read...
- Ms Crystal : And...?
- Winson : He can sell his book more..

(Excerpt 4.1, Class Recording on February 18th, 2019)

Pupils were probed further by Ms Crystal to enable them to make links between what they had gathered from their brainstorming session and the author’s rationale with regards to his choice of title. They collaboratively established a theory that the author preferred the title *The Jungle Book* as the author wanted to make the story darker and scarier by including fierce wild animals. They justified that these aspects would make the story more interesting and thus, help the author to sell his story.

Similarly, those pupils who read the book were able to express their opinions by stating that it made sense for the author to use the word ‘jungle’ as the story took place in India and trees, in the rainforest in Asia tended to be more huge, darker and taller as compared to the ones in the forest.

Another example that highlighted how pupils made personal connection to formulate insightful opinion on the intention and purpose of the author and illustrator was during the discussion of the use of illustration. Ms Crystal asked the pupils to look at the book cover and juxtapose the character on the cover with that of their own drawings. Most pupils showed similarities in ideas with the illustrator in terms of the characters' physical attributes. They agreed that a person who lived in the jungle tended to be strong, toned, dark and with long hair. They were able to rationalise by stating reasons such as 'need to hunt', 'need to live with wild animals' 'always in the sun' and 'being clean and neat is not a priority in the jungle' to support their views.

Interestingly, many pupils depicted their characters with happy expressions in contrast to the character illustrated on the book cover (see Appendix B for example).

When the pupils were asked about their reasons, some responded:

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Winson | : | ...cause he gets to be with animals...so it's fun |
| Ee Zen | : | He plays with animals and he can talk to them... that's cool! |
| Jia Ying | : | He got not homework to do... he just swing from tree to tree... |

(Excerpt 4.2, Class Recording on February 18th, 2019)

They theorized that the character would be happy because he got to interact with animals and unlike them, he could play in the jungle by swinging from tree to tree instead of needing to complete school homework.

Another significant example during the lesson was when Ms Crystal inquired one of the pupils, Jia Jay about her illustration. She was the only learner in the class

who illustrated a female character in the jungle (see Appendix I for example). The interview excerpt below illuminates Jia Jay's thought when she was asked about her illustration.

- R : Tell me more about your drawing.
Jia Jay : She is strong... tough...
R : I find it very interesting that your drawing shows a girl...I'm not saying that because it is wrong but your drawing is very unique because you are the only one who drew a girl as a person who lives in the jungle.
Jia Jay : Hmm... cause... cause... girl can be strong too...(quiet tone) not only boys...

(Excerpt 4.3, Interview Excerpt with Jia Jay, February 20, 2019)

Through this excerpt, it can be acknowledged that Jia Jay had the courage to disrupt the text by challenging the widely accepted idea that 'boys are strong' by stating that 'girls are strong too' to live in the jungle.

With these responses, it is clear that pupils were capable of engaging in critical literacy by disrupting the commonplace of the story, even from the initial lesson, although they needed a lot of coaxing and prompting. Ms Crystal was also able to raise pupils' awareness that as readers, they were entitled to their views and that just because it differed from what they see or read, it did not mean that they were wrong.

4.2.2. Moral Perspectives & Awareness of the Grey Areas

The discussion revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel also gave a platform for pupils to explore their moral beliefs while disrupting the commonplace in the text. Pupils were observed stating views that demonstrated strong moral codes during the discussion on the law of the jungle that forbade animals from killing humans and Shere Khan's intention of wanting to kill Mowgli, a human.

The excerpt below is a conversation among pupils and Ms Crystal in evaluating Shere Khan's action in killing Mowgli's father.

Ms Crystal : So, what kind of person is he?
Winson : Bad guy! Bad guy!
Ms Crystal : He... is a... bad... person
Winson : Teacher, teacher, if he do it in real life he will be in the jail...

(Excerpt 4.4, Class Recording on February 26, 2019)

In this conversation, Winson concluded that Shere Khan was a 'bad' character for killing Mowgli's father. He made links to the real world and voiced out that if that action was committed in reality, the punishment would have been imprisonment. This thought put forth by Winson was considered very significant as it invited responses from his peers.

For instance:

Xin Yan : ... no one has rights to take anyone's life...
Yong Xuan : ... but he is a tiger...what if he is hungry... surely he has to eat...
Darla :Shere Khan killing animals is okay... only not humans
Winson : Hmm ... it's only okay to kill... if Shere Khan is hungry.

(Excerpt 4.5, Class Recording on February 26, 2019)

Based on this excerpt, Xin Yan was able to support 'the law' by justifying the fact that no one has the rights to take anyone's life. She had a rather straight-forward view about the act of killing. On the other hand, Yong Xuan presented a strong counter-argument and disrupted the author's idea by stating that Shere Khan could have engaged in the

act of killing to fulfil his hunger. Through this perspective, the act of killing was then considered acceptable. Darla's contribution was rather an ambiguous one. It was difficult to interpret her response as it did not clearly ascertain if she had responded in such a way due to the fact that she empathised with the human race because she herself is a human or it was because the law was such that forbade animals from killing humans. However, her response guided Winson to modify and come up with an insightful response, expressing that the act of killing was only permissible if Shere Khan was truly hungry, be it killing animals or humans.

This discussion showed some ability in the pupils to disrupt the message conveyed by the author by offering their personal views which are deemed rather insightful. By sharing multiple viewpoints based on their moral perspectives, pupils made connections, built on each other's responses and came up to a collective understanding that – sometimes, it was all right to kill to fulfil one's basic needs in such situations, where the needs for survival was more crucial than to think about the rules of the place. From the excerpt, pupils' responses indirectly conveyed their awareness that judging one's action as right or wrong may not be as clear-cut as it seemed. In this context, the importance of thinking something through is then seen as a necessity in contrast to blindly agreeing or disagreeing with a point of view put forward in a text.

4.2.3 Creative Contributions through Making Connections

The discussion on Shere Khan's actions, killing Mowgli's father as well as his intention to kill Mowgli also stirred pupils to extend their imagination, to think about the rationale as to why there was a rule that forbade animals from killing humans and the notion of revenge. During the discussion, the pupils in Ms Crystal's class

participated creatively by making connections to the text, themselves and to the real world. Conversation excerpt 4.6 captures pupils' creative participation.

- Ms Crystal : Why was there a rule that forbade animals from killing humans? Any ideas...?
- Darla : because....
- Jia Ying : (interrupting) ...because humans will kill back the animals
- Ms Crystal : Yes! Good point... one of the reason the animals might come up with such a rule is that if they kill humans....
- Darla : [Humans will get their revenge]
- Ms Crystal : Yes... human will seek revenge... by doing what?... any idea?
- Winson : Tranquilise the animals...
- Darla : In real ar ... teacher?
- Ms Crystal : Yes... in reality...
- Leanne : They chop the trees in the jungle...
- Ms Crystal : What about chopping trees in the jungle... what will they do to the animals there?
- Winson : They are damaging and destroying the jungles... so animals are afraid...
- Ms Crystal : Afraid of what....
- Ms Crystal : Please raise your hand to speak.... Yes?
- Winson : They are afraid of losing their homes... and they do not want humans to kill them.

(Excerpt 4.6, Class Recording on February 26, 2019)

In this conversation, the pupils, Darla and Jia Ying could justify that the rule forbidding animals from killing humans was created because humans would seek revenge by killing them. Although the graphic novel did not specifically state the rationale for the rule, the probing questions posed by Ms Crystal from the beginning of the discussion and the textual gap invited their imagination into the text. They were able to travel through the text and the textual gap provided them with the chance to extend their thoughts creatively into their current realities and identify the reason for the rule. Also, pupils' imagination was stretched further when Ms Crystal inquired

how humans might exert their revenge. Winson and Leanne made connections to the current global issues such as deforestation and illegal poaching and this helped them to respond creatively that humans might exert revenge on animals by destroying their habitats and killing them.

In summary, the discussion in Week 2 guided pupils to identify the notion of revenge as one of the message conveyed covertly through the text. The textual gap that exists in the graphic novel guided pupils to establish connections between the text and the real world to predict the reason for the rule and how humans might seek revenge. However, up to this point of the study, pupils' genuine feelings towards the notion of revenge and their views, if revenge was truly the way one should seek justice was absent from the discussion.

4.2.4 Personalizing the story for Further Exploration on the Notion of 'Revenge'

The idea of revenge was revisited in week 3 as well. This time, when pupils were discussing about the possible motives of the monkeys for kidnapping Mowgli during his lessons on the laws and customs of the jungle with Baloo, the bear. Some pupils were able to respond by drawing on the text to come up with several reasons as to why the monkeys decided to kidnap Mowgli. The snippet of the conversation below illustrates some of the reasons rationalised by pupils:

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| Fung Quan | : | ...they (the monkeys) want to learn to be human... |
| Darla | : | ...caught Mowgli for revenge... |
| Ms Crystal | : | But, Mowgli did not speak badly about them right, did he? |
| Siew Thong | : | No, he didn't. |
| Ms Crystal | : | Then, why catch Mowgli? |
| Ee Zen | : | ... angry with Baloo for saying bad things about them, so they wanna hurt him by kidnapping Mowgli. |
| Ms Crystal | : | How does catching Mowgli hurt him? |
| Ee Zen | : | ... cause Baloo loves Mowgli. |

(Excerpt 4.7, Class Recording on March 4th, 2019)

Fung Quan's response was inferred directly from the text. On the other hand, Darla showed some analysis in her response by associating the monkeys' negative reaction as a means of revenge. However, her response did not show clarity in conveying if the revenge was directed towards Mowgli or Baloo. In this context, through Ms Crystal's repeated questioning, pupils were empowered to work on each other's ideas to develop the precision in their expression of ideas. For example, Ee Zen built up on both Darla's and Siew Thong's responses to suggest that the monkeys were angry with Baloo for badmouthing and labelling them as show-offs and liars. Kidnapping Mowgli appeared to be a good form of revenge as they (the monkeys) knew that it would hurt Baloo.

This discussion about the monkeys' motives and feelings led pupils to begin personalising the story. When Ms Crystal asked the pupils about how they would have reacted if they were the monkeys, an intense discussion was observed in the classroom, as shown below:

- Jeff : get all the monkeys, carry Baloo and throw him off...
Hau Kit : I will ask Baloo why he say like that...
Darla : I will tell Mowgli that it is not true and that Baloo is lying...
Ee Zen : If I were the monkeys, I don't think I will kidnap Mowgli.. cause it is not fair for him. He did not say anything bad about them... he even said he was just like them...
Ms Crystal : Interesting... then, what would you do then?
Ee Zen : I'll ask him (Baloo) straight away why he talk bad about me... and then I'll tell Mowgli it isn't true. He should not believe everything that someone says without proof.

(Excerpt 4.8, Class Recording on March 4th, 2019)

As pupils became more involved in the story by putting themselves in the character's shoes, the text, then, became a springboard for them to explore their beliefs and they were able to personalise and recreate different possibilities to the text. For

instance, while they could generally understand the monkeys' anger towards Baloo for speaking negatively about them, they covertly challenged the text by offering other alternatives as to what they would do if they were the monkeys. Jeff preferred to inflict hurt directly at Baloo while other pupils' responses demonstrated that they preferred to confront Baloo directly and deny his allegations as compared to kidnapping Mowgli. On the other hand, Ee Zen, who was already comfortable in expressing his views at this stage of the study, took risk, by directly challenging and stating that the monkeys' action in kidnapping Mowgli was unjustified as Mowgli did nothing to deserve such a treatment.

Interestingly, the conversation above became a catalyst for some pupils, who remained passive through the first two weeks during the study, to open up. They shared their own personal experience related to the issue of bullying and labelling. The following excerpt is an example of one of the pupil's experience.

- Zhe Anne : Last year a girl brainwashed me to not friend Darla. She said Darla is a black Negro, who is ugly and dirty...I listened to that person and stop befriending Darla.
- Ms Crystal : Why did you follow what the girl asked you to do?
- Zhe Anne : I'm afraid of her.
- Ms Crystal : Why is that? Don't worry, you can share...she is not here, is she?
- Zhe Anne : No... Hmm...I used to copy her.
- Ms Crystal : You mean homework?
- Zhe Anne : No...Not work. I used to copy her clothes and what she do ...
- Ms Crystal : Ahh.. I see...You considered her as your role model...?
- Zhe Anne : Yea...I wanted to be like her and I want her to like me so I followed what she said...
- Ms Crystal : All right, how do you feel about it now?
- Zhe Anne : I know it is wrong and I feel stupid for doing it. I don't talk to her anymore. I am happy Darla did not keep in her heart and agreed to be friends with me.

(Excerpt 4.9, Class Recording on March 4th, 2019)

Zhi Anne, who hardly contributed in the discussion from week one courageously expressed how she blindly followed one of her peers not to be friends with Darla, her classmate, as Darla is claimed to be ‘a black Negro who is ugly and dirty’. She was able to reflect on her action and come to a realisation that she was wrong to be influenced by her peer’s malicious remark. She also expressed happiness that Darla was not revengeful and agreed to be friends back.

What can be understood is that, gradually, pupils’ engagement towards the text and willingness to personalise the text in order to challenge it, made the discussion a great teachable moment. Pupils could openly express themselves, discuss their feelings and what they went through without the fear of being judged; thereby, guiding them to reflect and make better decisions with regards to their actions. The discussion also helped pupils to connect with the text by interacting with it and making it their own, steps that are prerequisite for real comprehension, which may not be present just by mere reading.

4.3 Year 4 pupils’ responses to *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints

Interrogation of the text using multiple viewpoints, by focusing on the voices which have been quieted or disregarded in the text and identifying different perspectives that could be established based on the text are how Lewison et al. (2002) defined interrogating multiple viewpoints, the second dimension of critical literacy. Adopting this view, the analysis of data related to this dimension is focused on the ways pupils view, think and talk about a particular event from the viewpoints of different characters involved in the story. Pupils were also guided to understand how one’s views and experiences

could influence their reaction to a situation. Some of the themes that emerged from the analysis of data are multiple lenses and empathetic connections.

4.3.1 Multiple Lenses

Throughout the discussions, pupils were constantly encouraged to explore the events in the text from the lenses of the different characters in the story. As the text was presented in the form of a comic, it was easier for pupils to identify the views of the characters in the graphic novel and what they were saying. Through repeated readings and the collaborative meaning making sessions, pupils had opportunities to familiarise themselves with the text.

Although understanding someone else's perspectives was a difficult task initially, by reading the same text and at the same time guiding pupils to engage in different perspectives through Mind Portraits (McLaughlin and DeVogd, 2004b), they were able to show comprehensive understanding of a particular event in the graphic novel by considering it from the points of view of different characters in the story. For example, in week 2, after the read-aloud and discussion of the chapter, pupils were initiated to reflect and evaluate if the wolves made the right decision to raise Mowgli in the wild with the rest of the cubs. Pupils were given the freedom to present their responses in any form that they preferred. Most pupils were able to identify the pros and the cons of the decision from multiple lenses, particularly on how this decision affected the characters in the story. Majority of the pupils tabulated their responses in the form of a table. Below were some of the pupils' original written reflections.

Yes, I think the wolves made a good decision to make Mowgli stay in the pack because I think Mowgli's parents were dead and if they take care of him, Shere Khan won't eat Mowgli. And, Mowgli can help the wolves to hunt when he grows up. Afterwards, Mowgli can help the wolves to speak with the humans so the humans won't chop down the trees and damage their home in the jungle. Also I think it is not a good idea because Shere Khan will probably eat Mowgli

and, Shere Khan will revenge because the wolves kept Mowgli. The wolves that raised Mowgli will be attacked by Shere Khan and at last, Shere Khan will try to turn the young, naïve wolves against Mowgli and if he succeeded, he can eat Mowgli and neither one of the wolves will stop Shere Khan.

Zen Xuan, Reflective note 2/7

Table 4.2: *Ting Ting's written reflection*

Did the wolves make a right decision in raising Mowgli in the jungle?	
Yes, it is a good decision	No, it is a bad decision
...if they don't take care of Mowgli, Shere Khan will kill Mowgli	... if Mowgli's parents are still alive they will search of Mowgli in the jungle and get killed by Shere Khan
...if they don't take care of Mowgli, he will starve to death because he does not know how to find food for himself	... Mowgli will grow up more like an animal than a human being
... it shows the kindness of animals to humans	... it will split the wolf pack due to different attitudes towards Mowgli

Zen Xuan and Ting Ting were pupils who hardly spoke during the class discussions. It was particularly intriguing how they were able to draw on the discussion held in the classroom to present their views with strong justifications despite having some grammar, spelling and structural errors. Moreover, although both pupils did not actually state their conclusive views as to whether the decision of the wolves was actually wise, they did weigh that decision by presenting the pros and the cons while taking account of Mowgli, the wolf pack as well as Shere Khan. Reflecting on Mowgli, both pupils felt that the wolves made a good decision as they could protect him from Shere Khan since his parents were not alive. Zen Xuan and Ting Ting also took a step further by predicting the impact of that decision to the other characters. Zen Xuan stated that in the long run, it would benefit the wolf pack as Mowgli could return the

wolves' kindness by helping them to hunt for food when he grows up. Mowgli could also become a mediator between the animals and humans whereby he could appeal to humans to not cut down trees and destroy the forest.

On the other hand, being in Shere Khan's shoes, Zen Xuan mirrored similar negative feelings as the ones portrayed in the graphic novel. Feeling betrayed by the wolves for keeping Mowgli, the enemy, Zen Xuan postulated that Shere Khan may exert his revenge by turning the wolves against each other and finally, killing Mowgli. Conversely, Ting Ting was of the opinion that raising Mowgli in the wild may prove to be a disadvantage for Mowgli as he would grow up to be 'wild' like an animal instead of having a 'refined' personality of a human being. Interestingly, despite the fact that the author had already mentioned that the wolves were all in agreement to raise Mowgli as part of the pack, Ting Ting indirectly disputed the text by stating his view that the decision made would split the wolf pack as not all of them would have a welcoming attitude towards Mowgli.

Table 4.3: *Darla's Table of Thoughts*

Did the wolves make a right decision in raising Mowgli in the jungle?	
Yes, it is a good decision	No, it is a bad decision
...if the wolves didn't take care Mowgli,, Khan may kill Mowgli	Mowgli's parents may not be Shere and they are still looking for Mowgli ...jungle animals don't speak, if Mowgli stay's with the wolves he may not be able to speak. able to speak.

I think the wolves make a bad attitude because they did not ask Mowgli if his family were alive

Darla, Reflective note 2/7

Table 4.4: *Winson's Table of Thoughts*

Did the wolves make a right decision in raising Mowgli in the jungle?	
Yes, it is a good decision	No, it is a bad decision
...the wolves can protect Mowgli	... Mowgli's family might want to find Mowgli and they would be sad to lose Mowgli
...there have many animals like him	...Mowgli might easily be killed by Shere Khan if the wolves leaves Mowgli alone
... Mowgli will eat or do whatever he want because did not have any people stop him to do anything	... Mowgli will not speak if he lives with the animals
	... if he want to go back to study with the humans he will not have friends because his attitude is like wolf

The wolves made a bad decision, because Mowgli's parents will be sad and he may not be able to speak.

Winson, Reflective note 2/7

Unlike Zen Xuan and Ting Ting, Darla and Winson were two notable pupils who were active participants in the classroom discussions. They were also known to come up with interesting ideas during the discussions. In this context, one would expect them to produce some insightful views when it came to their written tasks too. Both, Darla and Winson, however, seemed to only produce their conclusive reflections in brief. Presumably, this could be because they were not very strong in their writing, as shown in their other written tasks and they admittedly preferred to express their thoughts verbally as compared to in writing. Nevertheless, the pros and cons which they presented on the table 4.3 and 4.4 respectively showed that they did weigh the decision made by the wolves using multiple lenses, taking account of the impact of the decision towards Mowgli, Shere Khan and Mowgli's parents. In the end, putting sole emphasis on Mowgli's parents' feelings, Winson and Darla deliberated that a much

better decision would be for the wolves to locate Mowgli's parents instead of taking care of him in the jungle and exposing him to danger such as Shere Khan. Furthermore, considering Mowgli's well-being, Winson felt that Mowgli should not be taken care by the wolves as animals do not have skills in verbal communication and therefore, Mowgli may not be able learn human communication skills.

The reflective written task given to pupils certainly invited them to assess the situation in the text through different lenses. Pupils were given the opportunity to challenge the basic rule of the text, "what is present and stated in the text" is not final and pupils demonstrated their ability to question, express or reconstruct ideas and assumptions about the characters' thoughts and feelings. In the process, they gained opportunities to think critically and flexibly from all angles. In this way, pupils were made aware that there may be many aspects or versions of an event or episode that help to enrich their understanding of the story.

4.3.2. Empathetic Connections

As pupils explored the story from multiple lenses, the discussion then became a medium to open up empathetic spaces within the classroom. While responding to the issues related to bullying, betrayal of peers and the loss of parents, which Mowgli encountered, pupils were noted to be 'right there' by Mowgli's side. Perhaps, familiarity with the issues embedded in the story stirred pupils to sympathise him for his predicament and this connection felt enabled them to identify with him in many ways. For instance, when pupils were asked to write about the character which they admired in the story, most of them revealed in their reflective notes how they admired

Mowgli for his resilience against the hardship faced. Below are some of the pupils' reflective notes:

I really like Mowgli the most in the story. Although many bad things happen to him like the wolf pack betraying him and he don't have his real parents, he did not give up. He still be strong and patient...

Ee Zen, Reflective note

7/7

Mowgli is my favourite in the story. He is strong and he try to be happy even when he is hunted by Shere Khan.

Winson, Reflective note

7/7

Mowgle is the best character for me in the story. He is good to his wolf family although they did many wrong to him. Mowgli still take care of them and his wolf mother by hunting food for them.

Ting Ting, Reflective note 7/7

Conversely, when it came to Shere Khan, pupils were seen yielding to the author's descriptions of Shere Khan as the antagonist in the story during the initial stages of the study. Since they were only beginning to learn to question what they have read at that point of time, it was expected that they would accept the author's views and whatever representations in the text, without any question. Almost turning him into an evil monster, pupils were noted describing Shere Khan as 'mean', 'bad', 'cruel' and a 'trouble-maker' during the discussions. This could be because, in the story, pupils only received information about Shere Khan's feelings of hatred towards Mowgli and the mean things that he did to him. However, factors leading to Shere Khan's hostility towards Mowgli were not disclosed in the graphic novel. The answers to this question were left completely to the readers' imagination and speculations.

In depth conversations held in the later weeks of the study enabled pupils to seek understanding on the events in the graphic novel from Shere Khan's perspective. Through Ms Crystal's questioning about Shere Khan's feelings, thoughts and situations which led to his reactions, pupils were guided closely to deconstruct the story from Shere Khan's perspective. The following is an example of how Ms Crystal's questions aided pupils to speculate on the reasons behind Shere Khan's animosity towards Mowgli:

- Ms Crystal : Why do you think Shere Khan was against Mowgli?
- Obee : ..because Shere Khan wants to eat Mowgli.
- Ms Crystal : Ya, but why does he hate Mowgli?
- Claire : because in the jungle, Shere Khan wants to be the king.
- Ms Crystal : but how does that link to him disliking Mowgli?... Try to think from his shoes...
- Claire : Mowgli is a human. The law of the jungle says cannot kill human. So, by killing Mowgli, he can show to all the other animals that he is powerful.
- Ms Crystal : Good idea! But, we still have not answered why Shere Khan dislikes Mowgli.
- Yung Kuan : Ehhh...why the law of the jungle says they cannot kill humans?
- Darla : ...if the animals kill humans, the humans will revenge by killing them back or destroying the forest... so they were afraid.

(Excerpt 4.10, Class Recording on March 11th, 2019)

The initial stages of the conversation in week 4 demonstrated pupils' difficulties in making specific links to the text to suggest reasons for Shere Khan's animosity towards Mowgli. Obee, one of the reticent pupils, linked Shere Khan's action of wanting to eat Mowgli as a reason for Shere Khan's hatred towards Mowgli. Although the response in itself was inaccurate and it showed that he might not have

understood the question well, Obee could still be applauded for his courage to come out of his ‘shell’ to volunteer what he thought could be the reason for Shere Khan’s hatred towards Mowgli. Claire, on the other hand, responded to the question by suggesting that Shere Khan’s desire to kill Mowgli lies in the fact that he wanted to be the king of the jungle. While her response might indicate an interesting possibility into Shere Khan’s motives, it did not truly answer what it was about Mowgli that made Shere Khan dislike him so much.

After a few repetitions of the questions by Ms Crystal and also perhaps Darla’s explanation as to why the law of the jungle forbid animals from killing humans, Claire as well as other pupils were able to ‘fill in the gaps’ in the text using their imagination.

- Ms Crystal : So, imagine you were Shere Khan, why would you hate Mowgli?
- Claire : ...Mowgli is human. That makes him powerful... Shere Khan is very scared that Mowgli will be the king of the jungle...
- Jeff : Teacher, he is also scared that Mowgli will grow up and join other humans and try to hurt the animals in the jungle.
- Ms Crystal : I would never have thought of that. Well done, Jeff!
- Winson : ... maybe humans had hurt Shere Khan or his family like his parents... so he has so much hatred for humans...
- Ms Crystal : I see... So, you are saying that he hates Mowgli because he was afraid that Mowgli would become the king of the jungle, Mowgli may join other humans and hurt the animals in the jungle and that in the past, he and his family might have been hurt by humans too.. So how do you think he felt when he realised that the wolves and other animals agree to raise Mowgli, a human and is in support of Mowgli?
- Jeff : Angry
- Winson : Upset and hurt

(Excerpt 4.11, Class Recording on March 11th, 2019)

Claire speculated that Shere Khan's insecurities of not being as powerful as Mowgli caused him to hate Mowgli. She conjectured that Shere Khan was afraid that Mowgli would become the king of the jungle and thus, making Shere Khan less popular and respected in the jungle. Jeff's and Winson's responses indicated empathy and compassion towards Shere Khan in that his animosity towards Mowgli was caused by the fear that he was hurt in the past, or that he had lost his parents because of humans. Hence, they understood that Mowgli, being a human, presented a threat to Shere Khan as he feared Mowgli would join other humans to once again hurt him and the animals in the jungle. The speculations offered by Winson and Jeff were considered significant as Jeff was known for his reticence while Winson was known to respond negatively towards Shere Khan, in the beginning of the study. Here, all three pupils demonstrated some level of understanding and compassion towards Shere Khan as to why he might have some reservations towards Mowgli, a human.

By getting pupils to engage in a dialogue about what had caused Shere Khan to hate Mowgli, pupils were offered opportunities to speculate on Shere Khan's points of view and this helped them to empathise and come to an understanding that sometimes, people are not actually what they seemed to be. Sometimes, the way they react to someone or something could be due to the experience that they had gone through. The discussion based on Shere Khan's perspective then became a catalyst for pupils to empathise with him and to understand the frustration that he might have experienced when the wolves decided to raise Mowgli in the jungle. The pupils' empathetic connections towards Shere Khan was also noted through their group letter writing from Mowgli to Shere Khan.

Dear Shere Khan,

I feel very sad that you brainwash my wolf brothers to hate me. I want to tell you that I am not like other humans. I am not bad like other humans. I did not hurt your family. I know what the other humans did to your family. That's why you kill my father. I have no one now. I only have my wolf family. Can we forgive each other? Enough of fighting and hate... I just want us to be happy.

-Mowgle

Written task by Yoke Tong, Xin Yan & Leanne

Dear Shere Khan,

How are you? I hope you are happy now when I left the jungle! Please stop brain washing the wolves. I just don't understand why do you keep wondering to kill me. I know your family has been kill by humans, but I am nothing like them. Why are you punishing me for ? I just want to be a part of the pack. I hope that you can stop hating and wondering to kill me. Please have mercy on me. I also hope that you can let me stay in the jungle happily. Let's be friends and let's put all the bad things behind us...

*From your enemy,
Mowgli*

Written task by Alice, Zen Xuan, Ting Ting, Rou En, Yoke Thong

In the original story, the relationship between Mowgli and Shere Khan could not be salvaged. The relationship between them ended tragically with Mowgli killing Shere Khan. However, through the letter writing activity, pupils had opportunities to recreate a new possibility between Mowgli and Shere Khan as exemplified from the two letters above. In those letters, Mowgli expressed empathy and understanding towards Shere Khan's feelings and the plight which he would have gone through with humans. Also, Mowgli was noted persuading Shere Khan to mend their broken relationship and to live in the jungle in harmony. In the context of the letters, discussing Shere Khan's perspective afforded the pupils a chance to contemplate the possibility

that Shere Khan might not actually be evil but a victim, who was subjected to the wrong doing of humans; hence, his negative reactions and reservation towards Mowgli. Not all of the pupils, showed enthusiasm or demonstrated signs of empathy towards Shere Khan. For instance, one of the group wrote:

Dear Shere Khan,

I hope you are happy because I left the jungle. Stop brain washing my wolf brothers you monster. If you brain wash them again, I will kill you and skin your hide. If I find you trying to hunt me and kill me, you will rue the day you tried to kill me, Shere Khan. When I return to the jungle, it will be me who will be taking you down. You will pay for what you have done to me and the wolves, Shere Khan!

*From,
Shere Khan*

Written task by Eezen, Kok Hoe, Ching Feng, Jeff

While this group of pupils showed that they were able to immersed themselves into the role of Mowgli, their letter exhibited fury towards Shere Khan for all his wrongdoings. The letter was also a symbol of warning and a blackmail to Shere Khan. It also showed that by imagining themselves as Mowgli, they too showed the need for revenge. This finding was particularly intriguing as Eezen, Kok Hoe and Jeff made strong arguments against seeking revenge in the previous discussions as exemplified in the conversation below:

- Eezen : I won't. Because revenge is bad and if we kill people...people will kill us.. It will not stop...It's like I kill you after that your family members will kill me and then my family members will try to kill your family members. It will be never- ending.
- Kok Hoe : Like Infinity War Like that... they are always fighting with each other.
- Ms Crystal : Now that you know that Shere Khan may have gone through a very painful past because of humans. Do you still think that he is bad for wanting to hurt Mowgli?

Pupils in chorus:	Yes, he is still bad.
Ms Crystal :	You still consider him bad?
Eezen :	Yes because he want to kill and revenge...that's not good.. it's bad. because then the war between humans and animals will never end..
Jeff :	Yes, because he is revengeful.

(Excerpt 4.12, Class Recording on March 11th, 2019)

They stated that Shere Khan was still considered 'bad for wanting to seek revenge against humans for what had happened to him in the past.' Another reason as to why some of the pupils were not able to connect with the characters in the story could be because of their lack of background knowledge and experience and possibly the language to understand the story comprehensively. A detailed discussion on this matter will be covered in following subsection.

4.4 Challenges that Pupils Faced While Responding to the Dimensions of Disrupting the Commonplace and Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints

Throughout the discussions revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel, data revealed that pupils faced challenges at varying degree while responding to the dimensions of critical literacy: disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints. While there were some challenges that were dimension specific, most challenges identified were experienced by pupils across both dimensions. Since there are overlaps of challenges between the dimensions, this section is structured to answer research question 2 and research question 4 simultaneously: What are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of disrupting the commonplace and what are the challenges (if any) faced by the Year 4 pupils when responding to critical literacy dimension of interrogating multiple perspectives?

The section begins with the discussion of challenges that were experienced by pupils in both the dimensions. The challenges identified were inability to express thoughts effectively; perception that ‘Thinking is Hard’ and forced democracy.

4.4.1 Inability to express thoughts effectively

During the initial stage of the discussion, pupils in the class stated that they found expressing their opinions a challenge as they were constantly in search for words to convey their thoughts. The excerpt below states the challenge faced by a learner during the discussions held revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel.

Darla : I find it hard to find the correct English words to explain what I think... but actually teacher, I know how to say in Mandarin but dunno how to change it to English.... But I will still try to say my idea in the class ...And, sometimes, I go home and I talk to my parents about it...Later... during the Jungle Book lesson when you have the pop quiz, I will share...’

Darla, Interview Exerpt 1 (February 25th, 2019)

This inefficiency to express herself is due to the fact that she lacked the practice in using the language to formulate her thoughts. As stated in the initial chapter on page 44, most of these pupils are accustomed to speaking Mandarin both in and outside the school environment. In Darla’s case, English was only spoken with her father and during the formal English lessons in school. Hence, the practice of using the language is deemed insufficient to enable her to articulate her thoughts effectively during the discussion. However, what was interesting to note about Darla was that despite her awareness of her language inadequacies, it did not inhibit her from wanting to participate actively during the classroom discussions. Darla shared some interesting comments in the following interview excerpt, which highlighted her reasons for participating and offering her thoughts during the discussion.

Darla : At first... it is very challenging cause you have to think very hard...deep...about it... but after that...It is...hmm...interesting cause you get to think really deep about stuff like a adult ...and then...thinking becomes easier because you keep doing it...Then when grow up and go out to work... you won't be scared to think of difficult things cause you already start doing from now.

Darla, Interview excerpt 2 (April 8th, 2019)

Interview excerpt 2 revealed Darla's motivation to participate in the discussion was due to the fact that it gave her the opportunities to think and discuss issues that she considered important. Initially, she found thinking about the issues embedded in the graphic novel difficult to grasp. However, as the lessons progressed on topics such as the author's intentions, settings and character analysis, Darla expressed that the practice of reading with a critical stance enabled her to reflect and express herself easily.

Unlike Darla, other pupils, who experienced similar challenge, remained quiet and non-committal for most of the discussion. They only uttered their thoughts after much probing and persuasion by the teacher.

....I don't like to talk much because I bad in English and I don't know how to explain... I scared I say wrong

Kang Yi, Reflective note 2/7

Because....(long pause)...I was afraid and ... and I dunno if what I'm saying will be right or wrong

Sook Win, interview excerpt 1

The above note and excerpt highlight the popular reasons among reticent pupils for their discomfort in expressing themselves. They felt that they lacked proficiency in the target language and feared misinterpreting the texts.

In addition, during the study, Ms Crystal prohibited her pupils from speaking in their native language, Mandarin. This scenario somehow prevented some pupils specifically, those who had average proficiency in the target language from comprehending certain scenes in the graphic novel. To state an example, in the fourth lesson, some pupils did not take part in the discussion as they could not grasp the meaning of 'brainwashing' even though most of the pupils in the classroom seemed to show understanding based on what the teacher had explained by nodding and sharing their experiences.

...I did not concentrate in the class discussion. I do not understand the meaning of brainwashing so I asked my friend the meaning in Chinese. When I know the meaning, I share with my friend my own experience...

Yi Jing, Reflective note 4/7

This episode highlighted that language barrier made the pupils irresponsible to the class discussion. Moreover, while the benefit of creating an 'English only' environment for pupils' target language proficiency improvement is acknowledged, discouraging them from speaking in their native language all together, had certainly deprived them the chance to be focused and engaged in the critical literacy discussions held in the classroom. Perhaps, if they were allowed to use their native language, pupils of average

language proficiency would have been able to make connections at a quicker pace and increased their motivation to contribute to the class discussion.

4.4.2 The perception that ‘Thinking is Difficult’

Another challenge identified among some of the pupils during this study was their preconception that the act of thinking itself was difficult. Their negative reactions towards thinking is reflected in many of their reflective notes as well as the following interview excerpt:

- R : What did you learn from the whole experience of reading and discussing the chapter (2) yesterday?
Jeff : Hmm... I ... I don't know what to say. I don't know, teacher...
R : How about answering questions? Were you able to share what you think?
Jeff : A little la...
R : Why only a little?
Jeff : Because...answer questions need to think mah... so I don't really like...
R : What makes you dislike it (thinking)?
Jeff : It is difficult

(Jeff, Interview excerpt 1 March 6th, 2019)

Jeff showed reluctance to share and participate in the initial stages of the study. Even if he did, he was seen shouting out nonsensical responses at times just so that he could distract his peers from the discussion. Presumably, these feelings Jeff as well as other pupils had, were justifiable as they had received very less exposure to this type of questioning and activities except during Mandarin lessons.

A slight change in pupils' attitude towards the discussions held was noted towards the subsequent weeks, ending of the study. His participation in class improved. At times, he was also found saying ‘Teacher, wait... I know the answer...’, ‘Teacher, teacher, I know... wait first ar... I want to think’ indicating that he was one

of the pupils who had begun to accept and welcome the idea of thinking, as part of his learning process.

4.4.3 False Democracy

During the class discussion revolving *The Jungle Book*, Ms Crystal occasionally initiated the topic discussion by calling out a particular pupil to speak. During those times, she was observed requesting pupils who seemed passive to share their thoughts. While doing that, she had the tendency to ignore those pupils who truly wanted to speak during the discussion. This action of hers proved to be another challenge for some of the pupils.

...I don't like it when the teacher just simply call out my name to answer questions. I don't know what answer the teacher want me to give and then I get stuck. I don't know what to say...

Amber, Reflective note, 5/7

...My challenge is I got the answers and I raise my hand to share but sometimes the teacher won't call me to answer. I feel very frusated because the teacher ignore me...

Darla, Reflective Note 5/7

... I want to answer but sometimes the teacher never pick me to answer...

Siew Thong, Reflective Note 5/7

By forcing some pupils to speak while silencing others, it seemed that at times, Ms Crystal assumed the position of power and authority despite her wishes to nurture a safe and comfortable environment for her pupils. Amber expressed her anxiety about being placed in a spot, in which she felt pressured to provide the “correct” answer which the teacher was looking for, when she actually had nothing to say. On the other hand, Darla, who was known to be one of the active contributors to the classroom

discussions revealed her disappointment when she was not chosen at times by Ms Crystal to share her responses.

Based on the researcher's classroom observation, pupils encounter this form of challenge probably due to Ms Crystal's reliance on the traditional style of getting pupils to bid for their turns by raising their hands and then calling on them to share their responses or by suddenly calling out a pupils' name. Her rationale for doing this is justified through the following interview excerpt:

Ms Crystal : There are many reasons for this. Firstly, I get to limit them from talking all at the same time. Can you imagine how chaotic and noisy the class will be if all 40 of them were speaking at the same time? Second, I wanted to give opportunities to all learners to contribute to the discussion and also I can check to see if they were following the discussion or they were just having empty talk among themselves...

Ms Crystal, Interview excerpt 4

Ms Crystal's need to exert control over which pupil should speak during the class discussions is attributed to the fact that she viewed overlapping talks among pupils as "noise" that she needed to keep in check considering that she has a large class size and that she wanted to monitor the pupils' conversations so that they do not go off topic.

4.5 Challenge specific to the dimension of Disrupting the commonplace:

Concepts that are Beyond Learner's Prior Knowledge and Experience

In order to challenge the texts or to identify the author's purpose in conveying a particular message through the text, pupils should have sufficient prior knowledge about animals and experiences in the jungle. Having access to this knowledge will enable them to make sense of the situations in *The Jungle Book* and formulate their

voices in support or against the situations in the texts. However, in this study, some pupils were not able to make connections between the newly acquired information from the graphic novel read to their previously acquired understanding. For instance, the reflective notes below disclose the difficulty that some of the pupils experienced in understanding the story and following the discussion held in the classroom.

... 'I sometimes don't understand the story and how to think for the discussion...

Shou Win, Reflective Note 5/7

...I take time to understand cause the story abit no logic for me...but the discussion is helpful to write cause I get many ideas from my friends...

Hoe Loong, Reflective Note 5/7

...Sometimes, I can't think about the thoughts of the questions that are asked by the teacher...

Zi Qin, Reflective Note 5/7

What could be then interpreted here is that, since these pupils are from the city, the concepts of jungle and power relations between wild animals may be foreign to some of them. In addition, they might not also be exposed to concepts such as power struggle, jealousy and diversity unless they were exposed to them through books, movies and documentaries. In this contexts, those pupils with limited access to these inventories of knowledge may face difficulty as they are yet developed the schemata, enough to comprehend the information transmitted by the text or during the classroom discussions; resulting to their challenge in disrupting the commonplace of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel.

4.6 Challenge specific to the dimension of Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints:

Writing from the Perspectives of Different Characters

While encouraging pupils to respond to the dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints, one challenge that became quite apparent among pupils was their struggle to write from the perspectives of different characters in *The Jungle Book*. For instance, on the third lesson, pupils in groups were required to choose a character: Mowgli, Baloo or the Monkeys and compose a diary entry from the perspectives of the selected characters. Similarly, on the fourth lesson, pupils needed to imagine themselves to be Mowgli and compose letters collaboratively in groups to both Shere Khan and the pack of wolves after being forced to leave the jungle.

During both these activities, pupils in their groups were observed taking an extensive amount of time and working very hard in terms of consulting each other for ideas, asking for the spelling of words and ways to express themselves in writing in order to compose their diary entries and letters from the perspectives of the characters in *The Jungle Book*. They even requested Ms Crystal for a week extension to complete each of their writing tasks.

In the subsequent round-up discussion, pupils shared their experiences and mixed reactions to the activities. The following reflective notes captures the overall feelings among pupils towards the writing activities.

... When the teacher asked us to pretend to be the characters in the jungle book, we got no idea what to write. It is hard to imagine and think to be the characters and write what they think cause we never learn to write like this before... So, we all ask our parents to help us give ideas. And then, we arrange our ideas and wrote...it started becoming fun to write as we had a lot of ideas to write...

Leanne, Reflective note 3

In the beginning, my group members found it so difficult to write. They keep complaining that they dunno how to think from the character's feelings and what is the character thinking about. But, after I explained to them again. they get it a little bit. So, I thought of all the ideas and told them to write it down... I don't really mind cause I love imagining and writing...it is just so fun!

Eezen , Reflective note 3

It is easier when we just talk about it... we don't really like when we have to write.. it is harder to think when we have to write so we asked teacher for help and the teacher teach us how to arrange our points...

Winson , Reflective Note 3

The reflective notes above were clear indication of the difficulty faced by pupils in writing collaboratively in their groups from the perspectives and point of views of the characters. Despite the challenges faced during their writing process, further analysis on pupils' reflective notes indicated they did not display any major resistance towards the tasks. Instead, they took it in their stride and the products of their work were further evidenced of the amount of effort, thoughts and enthusiasm pupils had put into completing the writings tasks (see Appendix J-K for examples of pupils' written tasks). This mainly could be attributed to the presence of a knowledgeable other in the form of a teacher, parents and peers to help engage pupils in their thought processes in exploring and writing from the perspectives of different characters in *The Jungle Book*. In retrospect, it is evident that some positive consequences have emerged from this challenging experience. The difficulties pupils encountered provided valuable information to the researcher and Ms Crystal to modify future lessons in order to make the learning process among pupils towards critical literacy an enjoyable and a comfortable process. Besides, despite the initial setbacks and challenges, the pupils' thoughts and opinions revealed during their discussions as well their writing tasks indicated that the whole experience had gradually helped them to get used to the idea

of questioning what they see and read in the quest for critical literacy and that young learners are capable of critical literacy provided they are given practice. Of course, critical thought processes take time before it could become second nature to learners.

4.7 Summary of Findings

Capturing pupils' participation in the classroom discussions and activities and examining pupils' feedbacks through their reflective notes and interview provided considerable insights into answering the research questions. The findings yielded valuable information to bridge our understanding as to how the Year 4 pupils responded to the discussions revolving *The Jungle Book*, which was carried through the critical literacy lenses, specifically based on the dimensions of disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints and if they were capable of critical literacy. The findings revealed that the predominant factor in the development of critical literacy is the self, who has to be actively acting on the experiences provided by a supportive adult within an environment of learners.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The main aim of this qualitative case study was to gain insights on how Year 4 pupils engage and respond to the discussion sessions of *The Jungle Book* graphic novel based on the two dimensions of the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework developed by Lewison et al., (2002). The two dimensions selected for this study were the dimension of 'Disrupting the Commonplace' and 'Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints'. The study also scrutinised the challenges faced by the learners when these critical literacy dimensions were taught in the Language Arts classroom.

As noted in Chapter 4, Year 4 pupils were capable of responding to the dimensions of critical literacy, specifically on disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints with Ms Crystal's close guidance during the discussions revolving *The Jungle Book*. Although this study did show that pupils required long lead time and pacing was slow in the beginning due to the challenges experienced, pupils demonstrated progress in the following weeks through their increase in participation and insightful responses. Most importantly, the findings did show that primary school pupils, even at the beginning stage; with close guidance of the teacher in terms of activation of their prior knowledge, exposure to critical literacy strategies, questioning and modelling ways of thinking, were completely capable of handling critical literacy works.

This follow up section encompasses the discussion of the findings. The discussion of the findings will be placed within the context of other studies. From there on, the researcher will consider the implications for practice, limitation of the study and suggest the directions for future research that stem from this study.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings

Ms Crystal's pupils showed progress in their participation and active collaboration with each other and with her during the critical literacy discussions and activities related to *The Jungle Book*. This section will cover the discussion of the key findings gathered through this study.

An important aspect revealed in the initial stages of the study is the finding that pupils did not naturally read the text with a critical eye. Instead, most of them tended to give authority to the text by blindly consuming the text instead of questioning what they read. This became quite apparent in the discussions when they were always in support of Mowgli and were against Shere Khan. This could be attributed to the factor that pupils neither had the exposure nor were taught explicitly to read from a critical lens (Franzak, 2006; Hall & Piazza, 2008; Lau, 2013). However, over time, with Ms Crystal's substantial support in terms of her questioning, and modelling ways of using different critical literacy strategies, pupils' involvement in the discussion increased. They voiced out a wide range of ideas creatively as they developed ease in responding to the text based on the two dimensions of critical literacy. Pupils also demonstrated abilities to extend their comprehension beyond the explicit ideas portrayed in the text by identifying the hidden messages embedded in the text. This finding echoes the views by Lapp and Fisher (2010) and McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) on the significance of modelling appropriate strategies to help pupils read from a critical stance in order to successfully engage in critical literacy. Without the guidance of Ms Crystal in terms of questioning and modelling ways of using different critical literacy strategies around the text, pupils would not have been able to handle critical literacy works.

While the findings of this study underscores the significance of extending pupils' thinking by questioning them about the text across the two dimensions during the discussions, the findings of this study also points out that the questions should not be directed at a specific pupil in the class. In this study, some pupils became increasingly frustrated when their names were called to answer specific questions during the discussion. They felt compelled to say something even if they did not know what to say or how to respond to the question posed. This frustration felt by some pupils when they were encouraged to share their views and thoughts while engaging in critical literacy discussions was also noted in studies by Janks (1991) and Hall and Piazza (2008). Horwitz and Cope (1986, as cited in Shu, 2008) explained that pupils' frustration is due to factors such insecurity and feelings of fear and panic when they required to be engaged in oral activities that revealed their shortcomings. In this study, pupils' main sources of concern were their language inadequacies and the fear of voicing 'the wrong answer'. In this context, forcing one to speak while silencing others by directing questions to a particular pupil indirectly goes against one of the essence of critical literacy itself, which advocates for democratic teaching and a safe and comfortable environment for pupils to open up to dialogue. What the findings of this study then suggest is that discussions with the focus on critical literacy should be voluntary and not be forced. It is important that the discussion in the class is conducted in a way that pupils themselves feel comfortable to speak up. Realizing this, Ms Crystal tried to improve the situation by permitting the use of the first language when the pupils found it a challenge to voice their views and thoughts. She also constantly assured pupils that there is no one correct answer and that their views were always welcomed in the classroom.

With the comfortable environment created in the classroom through Ms Crystal's approval of pupils' languages switch from Mandarin to English and English to Mandarin, when the need arises to explain and negotiate meanings during the discussions, pupils were observed to be more responsive to the discussions in the classroom, as the study progressed. They displayed openness, positive change of attitude and confidence in sharing their views, which led to their creative participation in the discussions. This finding corroborates with Kim's (2015, p. 10) suggestion on the significance of using two languages. She maintained that pupils would enjoy "the polyglossia of the texts" and multiple voices to deepen their thoughts on the texts and to develop their responses while freely switching their languages. Conversely, a surprising observation made in the study was that after pupils were given approval to use both languages, they contributed in the discussions mostly in the target language as compared to Mandarin. Pupils only made use of Mandarin when they needed to translate certain vocabulary or concept during the discussion. Perhaps, this could be because pupils were no longer feeling pressured to maintain accuracy in speech when conveying their views. Moreover, by having the option to use Mandarin as an aid to convey their views, pupils probably felt comforted with the fact that they could rely on their peers in terms of translation in case they got stuck while expressing their view; hence their willingness to engage in the discussions. While sharing their thoughts with peers and Ms Crystal through the class discussions in a safe and comfortable atmosphere, the pupils were able to have deeper layers of conversation about the text. Subsequently, this led to their increase of understanding revolving the story and they could expand their responses across the two dimensions of critical literacy as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Ms Crystal's Year 4 pupils showed capability to disrupt the commonplace in the text by identifying the author's message and motives in writing the story, through the examination of the book title and the illustrations in the book. Involvement in such conversations related to the illustrations and the book cover was the first step taken to help them realise that no text is neutral (Leland, Haste & Huber 2005; Lewison et al., 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1997). Pupils were noted capable of analysing and theorising reasons for the author's choice of title based on their existing knowledge. Besides, while juxtaposing their own illustrations against the book cover, pupils were observed agreeing with the general ideas put forward by the author and illustrator. However, they challenged the negative emotions conveyed by Mowgli in the book illustration; drawing upon their personal experience that a person living in the jungle was supposed to be happy since living with animals is considered fun and there is no need of fulfilling responsibilities such as completing homework. This particular finding is in line with several other researchers' claim that young learners draw on their personal experiences and existing schemata as ways in which they disrupt the commonplace in the text and engage in critical literacy (Comber, 2001; Harste et al., 2000; Heffernan & Lewison, 2000; Janks, 2000; Lewison et al., 2014).

In addition, the findings of this study also revealed the significance of how engaging pupils in discussions with the focus of interrogating a text for multiple perspectives encouraged them to examine situations in the text through multiple lenses. During the discussions in the study, which took place in the form of small group and whole class discussions, pupils were observed sharing diverse views, perspectives and interpretations about the characters, situations and issues embedded in the text with Ms Crystal and their peers. With reference to Bakhtin (1986), learning can only exist with the involvement of another person as it cannot take place without the unique

participation in internal and external social context. Thus, in the context of this study, as pupils 'internal voices' surfaced in their external social context, pupils collaboratively co-construct knowledge and establish meanings together (Dyson, 2006). In the process of sharing, negotiating, creating and recreating voices with each other, pupils were exposed to various ideas and perspectives, which enabled them to examine the situations in the text through multiple lenses easily. One salient example of their engagement in multiple lenses that was noted in the study was when the pupils were asked to evaluate the decision made by the wolves in raising Mowgli in the jungle such as discussed previously in subsection 4.3.1. Many pupils were able to examine the decision through the lenses of different characters in the story, specifically predicting how this decision would impact the characters in the text such as Mowgli, Shere Khan, the wolf pack and other jungle creatures. Pupils showed capability both in terms of logic and analytical skills in their predictions and rationalisation of thoughts based on the characters. They could even reveal hidden perspectives of Mowgli's parents and the wolf pack such as "... Mowgli's family might want to find Mowgli and they would be sad to lose Mowgli" and "Mowgli can help the wolves to speak with the humans so the humans won't chop down the trees and damage their home in the jungle". These perspectives were completely absent in the graphic novel and they only came to light through the discussions held in the classroom. Thus, the findings of this study is in support of Moller 's (2004, cited in Kim & Cho, 2017) view that social interaction is crucial for the development of pupil's critical and analytical skill; which in turn helps them to engage in multiple lenses.

The constant analysis of the situations in the text through the lenses of the characters and perspectives enabled pupils to develop empathetic connections with the characters particularly, Mowgli. According to Jamieson (2015), developing

empathetic connections is an important component in creating compassionate citizens, as it allows us to remain ourselves while living and learning vicariously through the lives of its characters. In the study, pupils were able to build a deep connection with his character. They could easily relate to him and the experience that he had gone through from the description of him by the author. On the other hand, pupils found it difficult to imagine Shere Khan's perspective due to limited voice. This became a significant teaching point as Ms Crystal had to show pupils how the author's preference of one character over the other affect their views of Shere Khan. They could not imagine how he felt and thought. It was through a step by step process of helping them to understand Shere Khan's perspectives through activities such as Character Interview and Mind Portrait that some pupils learnt to empathise with him. This was evident thorough some of the letters they composed from Mowgli to Shere Khan as discussed in sub-section 4.3.2.

5.3 Implications

5.3.1 English Language Teachers

Critical literacy is a new phenomenon in our education system. The call from MOE Malaysia through the DSKP to introduce critical literacy to Year 4 pupils emphasises that critical literacy is perceived as a necessary approach to improve the quality of education. As stated by Luke (2011), critical literacy has two main scope of inquiry namely, critical text analysis and the critical pedagogy. The teacher's critical approach is noted by getting the pupils to analyse the episodes in the graphic novel and the critical pedagogy is noted through the teacher's strategies. The teacher was guided by the two domains of the critical literacy undertaken in this study. Subscribing to Freire (1972), the teacher guided pupils to engage in the text through the questions

she posed around the two dimensions of critical literacy. Pupils' responses improved as they were able to make personal and real connections to the text. The critical literacy strategies employed also helped pupils to express themselves both orally and in writing. By exploring critical literacy with pupils, they were able to ponder, reflect and express themselves through images and textual features. This helped pupils to question the author's intention as stated by Burnett and Merchant (2019).

Furthermore, the teacher also explored the multiple perspectives domain in critical literacy in her class and this enabled pupil to understand that there is no single version of an event that tells an entire story. By engaging the pupils in activities such as rewriting texts, drawing, role plays, think aloud, and juxtaposing text, the teacher has provided opportunities and guided pupils to present their own views and compare that of their friends as Alford (2001) expressed that listening and sharing different perspectives does not mean changing or disagreeing one's stance on a particular issue, and Ciardiello (2004) too expressed that a single version of an event will not tell the entire story. These creative approaches by teachers may help pupils to remain engaged and understand the text from various perspectives and not just become passive recipients of the information conveyed by the text or by the teacher as the finite truth.

These experiences which pupils had undergone during the Language Arts class in the study suggest that they are capable of engaging in critical literacy by disrupting and interrogating the text. Pupils demonstrated maturity and were capable of responding to issues related to power, revenge and justice which are deemed complex for them. This indirectly implies that education practitioners should avoid engaging young pupils in "simplistic and reductive" learning (Comber, 2001) as this does not harness their existing cognitive potentials. In contrast, by encouraging pupils to engage in critical inquiry from young, pupils would be acculturated to question, analyse and

evaluate what they see, read or hear; and gradually this practice becomes second nature.

5.3.2. Curriculum Designers and Policy Makers

There is also a great need for professional development in the area of critical literacy for in service teachers. Although the emphasis of teaching pupils for critical literacy has been mentioned in in the DSKP, some teachers are reluctant to implement critical literacy approaches in their classroom due to having lack of awareness or knowledge about the use of critical approaches to instruction (McNair, 2002). Ms Crystal, herself admitted that she was not aware of the term critical literacy and how it was different from critical thinking. However, as she began doing her research and implementing the critical literacy pedagogy on her own pro-activeness, she understood how critical literacy practice actually looked like in the classroom. In light of this, it is important for the MOE to provide teachers with platforms; which include professional development workshops on critical literacy pedagogy and how it can be implemented in the classroom. This is especially pertinent as there is no standardized model or guidelines to implement critical literacy to date (Hall & Piazza, 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; Norris, Lucas, Prudhoe, 2012; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998; Vasquez, Janks & Comber, 2019). Through these experiences received, teachers will have opportunities to explore ways to implement critical literacy in the classroom; thus, enabling them to take a step forward in critical literacy practice. As Lee (2017) maintained, when teachers themselves are given opportunities to improve their ability to take a critical stance on their teaching and the world around them, they are likely to cultivate their own critically literate class.

5.4 Contribution and New Directions for Research

This study adds up to the field of critical literacy, by focusing on the primary or elementary school pupils. As mentioned in chapter 1 and 2 of this study, research on critical literacy focusing on young pupils were considered scarce and more research is needed to portray the possibility of critical literacy with young learners (Vasquez, 2017). To this end, this study bridges one's understanding on how critical literacy is played out in a large class of Year 4 primary school pupils which has been called for by researchers such as Fajardo (2015), Lau (2012) and Lau (2016). Specifically, this study offers insight on how a classroom of Year 4 pupils respond to the two dimensions of critical literacy, disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple viewpoints, during the discussions revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel.

The study revealed that pupils demonstrated potential in critical literacy works and were gradually getting 'acculturated' in the culture of critical inquiry through their increase in participation in the classroom discussions. They were able to formulate their views by making personal and real world connections, justify their responses, raise questions, conduct evaluation and predictions while disrupting the commonplace in the text and interrogating the text from multiple viewpoints, with the support of their teacher, Ms Crystal. This finding is important to note as critics of critical literacy contended that young learners are incapable of handling critical literacy or complex social issues related to power, injustice, revenge and retributions. However, this study which was conducted only over a 6-week span could not conclusively determine pupils' development of critical literacy or if they have truly achieved critical literacy. Perhaps, in the future, similar studies can be carried out over an extended period of time to give more detailed and substantial findings into young learners' development

of critical literacy. Moreover, it is also recommended that future research trace and explore how pupils' discourses shift over time based upon themes embedded in the text, according to the Four Dimensions Critical Literacy Framework by Lewison et al., (2002). An example of this would be how pupils' discourses about empathy or revenge change over time from beginning to the end of the study.

In addition, this study sheds light on pupils' experience and challenges faced while responding to the two dimensions of critical literacy, disrupting the commonplace and interrogating viewpoints. Such findings will be useful consideration for researchers and education practitioners, who wish to embark on a critical literacy journey with their learners. Conversely, this study which focuses on primary school pupils also points to another direction of research, which is to uncover the challenges faced by an education practitioner in planning and implementing critical literacy lessons and how her understanding of critical literacy changes over time since there is no standardized model or guidelines to implement critical literacy to date (Hall & Piazza, 2008; Lewison et al., 2002; Norris, Lucas, Prudhoe, 2012; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998; Vasquez, Janks & Comber, 2019).

Lastly, further research into critical literacy practice in the ELL classroom is needed especially on ways to encourage learners to engage in the last dimension of critical literacy which is, taking action to promote social justice. In this study, Year 4 primary school pupils engaged in critical literacy only by disrupting the commonplace and considering multiple viewpoints. While pupils were offered chances to generate, share, negotiate, and restructure their ideas in response to the discussion revolving *The Jungle Book* graphic novel, they had no opportunity to take real action for social change in relation to their personal experiences related to bullying. As one of the main aim of critical literacy is to promote taking action for social justice, both learners and

education practitioners as transformative beings, should have the chance to transform themselves through critical self-reflection and further engage in social action, a requisite for transforming the world (Freire, 2000). As Vasquez, Jank and Comber (2019, p. 300) so aptly put, critical literacy is “as a way of being and doing”.

5.5. Conclusion

The process of working with primary school pupils in this study illuminated many insights as discussed in the previous sections. To sum them all up, pupils at a young age are already capable of handling critical literacy works and discussing social issues related to power, injustice, revenge and retributions, disputing the adult centric view put forward by Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman and Johnson (2007) and Polite and Saeger (2003) that children being innocent and simple beings are incapable of fathoming such topics. Instead, this study is in support of Comber’s (2001) argument that children are “only too aware of what fair, what’s different, who gets the best deal long before they start school” (p.2) and are completely capable of thinking and questioning like adults do when they are offered opportunities to do so.

In this study, Ms Crystal was able to encourage pupils’ creative participation in critical literacy by questioning them, activating their background knowledge, exposing them to different critical literacy strategies, providing them time and space to formulate their thoughts and making them feel safe in the classroom through the emphasis that there was no ‘one right answer’ and that their voices matter. In light of this, it is important that education practitioners avoid engaging young learners in “simplistic and reductive” learning, with the view that “the complex and sophisticated” (Comber, 2001) ways of thinking will naturally come with the gradual advancement of age and improvement of language ability. As literacy is a social practice as

succinctly pointed out by Gee (1996) and Luke and Freebody (1997), young learners such as the ones involved in this study, demonstrated gradual acculturation into questioning, talking, reading, and writing with a critical orientation when they were engaged in literacy practices despite the challenges encountered in the process.

The take away from this study is that when education practitioners pay attention to help young learners engaged critically with what they read, see and listen to, through questioning, making analysis, formulating justifications and making evaluations, learners are guided simultaneously to imagine, personalise, recreate other possibilities for the text and strengthen their moral compass. Eventually, through the continuous engagement in critical literacy, learners would gradually be nurtured to become critically aware thinkers who could “talk back” (Enciso, 1997, p.13) to the world that they are in and reinvent possibilities to make the world a better and kinder place to live in.

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