

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In view of the increasing number of learners and the imbalance in teacher to learner ratio, instructional materials play a significant role as stated by Shores, L (1960, p.3), “to advance learning.” Cunningsworth (1995, p.v) states, “Probably nothing influences the content and nature of teaching and learning more than the books and other teaching materials”. Adeyanju (1997, pp. 1-2) also agrees that “Learning can be reinforced with learning aids of different varieties because they stimulate, motivate as well as arrest a learner's attention for a while during the instructional process.”

Instructional materials such as textbooks, audio-visual, authentic materials etc. are commonly used in learning activities. Nevertheless, among this sea of instructional materials, the textbook emerges as the pioneer of all materials. Shores, L (1960, p.9) states “The importance of the textbook in learning is inconvertible. It represents an important and fundamental class of Instructional Materials.”

As such, the researcher decided to take into consideration the use of textbooks. Textbooks are acknowledged as tools for all stakeholders as source of reference (Cunningsworth, 1995; Grant, 1994 and Richards, 1998). The stakeholders include teachers and learners who are the direct users. Governments all over the world including the Malaysian Government place major concern over the availability of textbooks. In Malaysia, this responsibility lies with the Ministry of Education. The ministry always ensures there is enough provision and budget provided for textbooks.

On the other hand, parents use the textbooks as reference to monitor their children's performance.

Hence, choosing an appropriate textbook is vital as it is the core to an education performance, as what Vespoor, A. and Wu, KB. (1990, p. 1) put

“Textbooks are important in providing good quality education. Textbook define the scope of the curriculum through selection of subject material, and influence the pedagogy and classroom behaviour through structuring the sequence for instruction and providing questions and exercises. In developing countries, particularly where teachers are poorly educated and inadequately trained, textbooks are crucial in implementing what gets taught and how it is taught in school.”

However, the standard of the textbooks is very much dependent on the syllabus imposed by the authority. Many a time, the quality of the textbooks is neglected and underestimated by authorities. Evaluation on textbooks is necessary to ensure their quality of relevance and effectiveness. Currently, not many evaluations have been conducted by the direct users in the context of primary education. If done, it was not openly made known to the public.

1.2 GENERAL BACKGROUND

The researcher is currently an English teacher teaching in a Chinese primary school, SJK(C) Subang, in the district of Petaling, Selangor, Malaysia. Due to the vast area as well as having the most numbers of students in Malaysia, the district of Petaling is subdivided into two constituents by the end of Year 2009, namely, Petaling Perdana and Petaling Utama. The researcher's school falls within the constituent of Petaling

Perdana. For this research purpose, another Chinese primary school in the same constituent of Petaling Perdana, SJK (C) Tun Tan Cheng Lock, is chosen to participate in this research.

The textbook per se for this research is one of the many materials used to teach the children of Year Four Chinese primary schools in Malaysia. The textbook is the official material chosen by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. In fact, the textbook is designed by a panel authorised by the ministry.

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MALAYSIAN EDUCATION

A brief explanation of the current Malaysian education system is necessary due to the various stream of syllabus such as the one applicable in the Chinese primary school.

The Malaysian education was developed from the time of British colonisation. The arrival of Chinese and Indian immigrants caused the mushrooming of vernacular schools. These schools' curriculum system was adopted from the origin countries. The teaching manpower was also hailed from their respective countries.

The different communities had subsequently developed their own education system. Initially, there were the Barnes Report and the Fenn-Wu Report. The former was favoured by the Malays but the Chinese and Indians preferred the later. Due to the dissatisfaction among the communities, a compromising report, the Razak Report was produced. In 1956, the then newly independent Malayan government adopted the Razak Report as the educational framework. This report laid down a national school system which are categorised as Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil-medium schools for the

primary level, and Malay and English-medium schools for the secondary level. They shared a standard national curriculum irrespective of the medium of instruction. The only difference was found in the name. The Malay-medium was known as “national” whereas the other mediums were given the name “national-type”. To date this system is valid except for the English-medium. Changes were imposed in the 1970s to commemorate with the national language policy. English-medium in both primary and secondary national-type schools was changed into Malay-medium national schools. It was done in stages from Standard One in the primary school and by the end of 1982, the whole revamp was completed.

Subsequently, in 1996, another amendment was tabled and passed at the Cabinet Meeting. The Education Ordinance of 1956 and the Education Act of 1961 were replaced by the Education Act of 1996 which is adopted currently.

There are two categories in the primary schools. The national primary school (*Sekolah Kebangsaan, SK*) uses Bahasa Malaysia in all subjects taught other than English. As for the vernacular (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan*), it is further categorised as Chinese national-type (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina, SJK(C)*) and Tamil national-type (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil, SJK (T)*). The former uses Chinese as the main medium of instruction and the later uses Tamil. However, Bahasa Malaysia and English are taught as compulsory subjects in all schools regardless of the medium of instruction.

During the premiership of the fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammed foresaw the need to lift Malaysia image in the eye of the world as a developed country. In order to reach this aspiration as a scientifically literate nation

by the year 2020, the teaching of Science and Mathematics to the future generations needs to be expedited. Since English is an international language and much knowledge can be accessed through this knowledge, the Cabinet decided that Science and Mathematics would be taught in English.

The implementation came in force in January 2003. The SK and SJK (T) complied fully to the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English but it was not the same for SJK(C) where the subjects are taught in both English and Chinese. Amidst the implementation, the Chinese community put pressure to reverse the policy. Hence, with effect from 2011, starting with the Year 1, Science and Mathematics are taught in the original medium of instruction of the respective schools.

At the end of the six-year primary education, students are required to sit for the Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*, UPSR). English is one of the tested subjects. The assessment will be in accordance with the syllabi of the respective medium of instruction.

1.4 THE STATUS OF ENGLISH IN MALAYSIAN CHINESE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Since Mandarin is the first medium of instruction in the Chinese primary school, followed by Malay and then only English, very few learners consider it important. Most students study English for the sake of fulfilling the requirement of the syllabus determined by the Ministry of Education. Further than that is to score well in the public examination, the Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*, UPSR) in the case of primary education.

Of late, the standard of English has deteriorated amongst the students especially those who only treat English as a “subject” in school. The situation is better for those who communicate in English. This drop in level of performance has caused much worry among the educationists and parents. A look into the cause of the decline in English standard is necessary. One of the areas to look into is the textbook which is the most important instructional material in Chinese primary schools.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In view of the implementation of a new syllabus in primary education with effect from Year 2011, starting with Year 1, the researcher chooses to evaluate the textbook used in the government funded primary education, The Year 4 SJK (Cina/Tamil) English Textbook. My main aim is to find out how far the textbook helps the students in their preparations for the UPSR.

Though many evaluations have been done in the past by researchers, not many were done for English Textbooks at the primary school level. From the researcher’s investigation, a few evaluations were done at the secondary level in other subjects.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the researcher’s study, the main focus will be on the teachers’ and students’ opinions towards how far the textbook helps in the preparation of the UPSR. The following points will be examined:

- i) Do the objectives of learning displayed in the textbook meet the objectives set by the syllabus?
- ii) Are the contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises in the textbook sufficient to prepare students for the UPSR?

- iii) Do the exercises reflect the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy?

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For this study, the following issues will be addressed:

1. What are the teachers' opinions of the textbook in terms of:
 - i) Objectives set in the textbook;
 - ii) Contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises; and
 - iii) Its relevance to the questions set in the UPSR examination?
2. What are the Year 6 students' opinions towards the textbook in terms of:
 - i) Contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises; and
 - ii) Its relevance to the questions set in the UPSR examination?
3. Do the exercises reflect the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy?

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In view of the revamp of the textbook which is to be implemented in year 2014, the researcher hopes this study can be a timely aid to the authority concerned. In addition, the evaluation and some suggestions to improvise the activities which can make lessons more interesting and build individuals who can be more initiative and proactive in their learning. The Ministry of Education has decided to revamp the UPSR examination rubric in the near future to a 60% project based assessment and a 40% centralised summative examination. The project based assessment will be assessed by the school throughout the six-year primary education, whereas, the centralised summative examination will be conducted by the ministry at the end of the six-year education like the current UPSR examination. Hence, the textbook will definitely become the main reference for teachers and learners.

1.9 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

For this study, the researcher will evaluate the English textbook entitled Year Four [Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina/Tamil)] English Textbook by examining the contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises. The evaluation will look at how far the textbook helps in the preparation for the UPSR.

The sample will be limited to Year Four teachers who are teaching in SJKC Subang, a sub-urban school and another school, SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock, an urban school. For the sample students, 36 Year Six students will be selected.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research report is divided into five parts. The first chapter is an introduction to the issues to be addressed in the said research which is an evaluation on the textbook entitled Year Four [Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina/Tamil)] English Textbook. It also defines the aims in carrying out the said research and determines the boundaries of the research to be carried out. This is followed by Chapter Two which deals with the literature review. In the literature review, the theoretical framework on teaching and learning material evaluation will be discussed. Next, Chapter Three touches on the issues of determining a research approach and how the research will be carried out, from designing to collecting of the data. The subsequent chapter, Chapter Four talks about the analysis and the outcome of the research per se. Lastly, in Chapter Five, a summary and conclusion will be drawn on the research done pertaining to the pre-determined objectives.

1.11 SUMMARY

Chapter I is an outline to the introduction of the research per se. In summary, English Language enjoys a special status among the Malaysians. This can be seen from the emphasis placed by the government through her effort in imposing different measures from time to time to ensure the teaching of English in schools can be carried out smoothly. Hence, it is important to ensure that the textbook used must be of good quality.

Although English is considered important and is a compulsory course at schools, students' performance in the recent years showed otherwise. As such, the Ministry of Education realises its role in upgrading the level of English standard among students. It is therefore advisable not to neglect the need to find ways to upgrade the level of English Language among Malaysian students. An evaluation of the textbook used by the students is a kick off to a better performance.

To conduct this evaluation, the direct users, teachers and students, must be approached. Based on their opinions and reaction, the current condition can be improvised by providing realistic and rational steps. Therefore, the teachers and textbooks, learners and textbooks relationship should not be ignored.

At the end of the six-year primary education, students are assessed to determine how much of English Language has been acquired. The Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*, UPSR) is the only public examination set by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia as a summative test of the whole primary school education before the students proceed to the secondary level. The textbooks used

throughout the six-year of primary education play an important role as they are the main reference used and the examinations are based on the contents of these textbooks.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the related literature on textbook evaluation. It consists of theories of language teaching and learning, textbook as instructional materials, explanation on material evaluation, criterion for this study, theories of Bloom's Taxonomy, examination between the related studies and this study on textbook evaluation. Last but not least, a summary on this chapter.

2.2 THEORIES OF LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

When conducting a learning and teaching programme, two most important questions that need to be asked are: first, "what is it that the learners must learn and the teachers teach?" (Brown 2000, p.2) and second, "how does learning take place?" (ibid.). By describing *what language is*, one can become know what is going to be learnt by the learners. Describing the theories of learning can help to answer the second question partially. While the language description helps us to understand the nature of a language, the learning theory helps us to understand how people learn that language (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p.23).

Teaching materials reflect their authors' assumptions about the nature of language and learning which consequently affects indirectly what is taught and learnt in the class. As Hutchinson & Waters (ibid. p. 107) indicate "materials embody a view of the nature of language and learning."

There are three theories to *what is language?*: structural view, functional view and interactional view. As for the theories of learning, they are represented by behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism.

2.2.1 Theories of Language

Language can be defined through its forms and functions. Gass and Selinker (2001, p.8) describe language as systematically featured in the forms of phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. However, Brown thinks that language is more than just forms. He thinks that language is meaningful through the different functions it serves the users. Hence, Brown (2000, p.5) identifies eight general features of language:

- 1- *Language is systematic.*
- 2- *Language is a set of arbitrary symbols.*
- 3- *Those symbols are primarily vocal, but may also be visual.*
- 4- *The symbols have conventionalized meanings to which they refer.*
- 5- *Language is for communication.*
- 6- *Language operates in a speech community or culture.*
- 7- *Language is essentially human, although possibly not limited to humans.*
- 8- *Language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics.*

2.2.1.1 Theories of language teaching

According to Stiles (1974, p.1), there is no single theory for teaching which is appropriate to all teachers and to every situation. Nevertheless, Richards & Rodgers (2001) identified three theoretical views of language that inform current approaches and

methods in language teaching: *the structural view, the functional view and the interactional view* (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 20-21).

2.2.1.1.1 The Structural View of language

In the structural view, language is made up of a system of structures or rules which are used to expressing meaning. The structures comprise of elements, namely “phonological units (e.g. phonemes), grammatical units (e.g. clauses, phrases, and sentences), grammatical operations (e.g. adding, shifting, or transforming elements) and lexical items (e.g. function words and structure words)” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp.20-21).

A typical way of teaching language is using the substitution tables where words of different functions are tabulated. These words can be arranged in various manners or substituted by other words to form phrases and sentences which carry different meanings. The audio-lingual method, the total-physical response and the silent way are examples of structural view of language (Richards & Rodgers, *ibid*). In these methods, one is expected to learn the different structures and rules respectively as well as the combination of them to form meaningful sentences.

2.2.1.1.2 The Functional View of language

The functional view of language as the approach is called, is where one views language from the perspective of expressing the functional meaning in the course of communication. As Nunan (1999, p. 25) says, language is seen as a system for expressing meaning rather than containing abstract systematic rules. Therefore, language teaching pays attention to the semantics and the functional aspects of language instead of only grammatical and structural elements of it. Not only grammar and lexis

are learned but also topics, notions and concepts that the learner needs for communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). According to Hutchinson & Waters (1995, p.32), the structural and functional approaches complement one another as “structure+content=function”. Thus, language learners learn language for a special purpose.

2.2.1.1.3 The Interactional View of Language

Richards & Rodgers (2001, p.21) describe language “as a vehicle for the realisation of interpersonal relationships and for the performance of social transactions between individuals. Language is a means that creates and maintains social relations.” ‘Interactional theories’ focus “on the patterns of moves, acts, negotiations and interactions found in conversation exchanges” (ibid.). Therefore, a learner needs to know the rules of grammar and lexis of the language when using them in the communicative contexts.

All the three views are somehow inter-related. As what Hutchinson & Waters (1995, p. 37) put, they are not “separate entities”. They are stringing from the structural view to the functional view and then to the interactive view to arrive at a meaningful communicative context. The structure and vocabulary in the structural view are exemplified by the rules in the functional view in accordance with the situations in the interactive view and arrive at the intended expression of language.

2.2.1.2 Theories of learning

Brown (2000, p.7) comments “teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning.” Brown (ibid) also identifies seven features of learning:

- 1- *Learning is acquisition or “getting.”*
- 2- *Learning is retention of information or skill.*
- 3- *Retention implies storage systems, memory, and cognitive organisation.*
- 4- *Learning involves active, conscious focus on and acting upon events outside or inside the organism.*
- 5- *Learning is relatively permanent but subject to forgetting.*
- 6- *Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps reinforced practice.*
- 7- *Learning is a change in behaviour.*

According to the schools of thought in second language acquisition, there are three main theories of learning involved: Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism.

2.2.1.2.1 The Behaviouristic Theory of Learning

Theorists like Pavlov and Skinner were active in the study of behaviourism back in the 1940s and 1950s (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006). The theorists believe language is closely knitted to behaviour and learning is a habit. “It was believed that learning is advanced by making a stimulus-response connection, by creating new habits by means of reinforcement and practice of the established links between stimuli and responses” (Johnson, 2004, p. 18). Ellis (1991, p.52) identifies two key notions of behaviourism: habits and errors.

Habits

The characteristics of habits are observable and automatic (Ellis, 1991, p.31). As a whole, behaviourism concerns with aspects of behaviour which are observable.

Therefore, the unobservable aspects such as meaning and thoughts are unresolved in this theory.

Brown (2000, p. 23) describes learning as a type of behaviour controlled by its consequences. When the consequences are rewarding and reinforcing, then the behaviour will sustain. However, the behaviour will get weaker and extinguished finally if the consequences are punishing. All the habits happen automatically without realising whether it is through imitation of stimulus until it becomes automatic, or through the reinforcement where the learners' response is rewarded or punished (Ellis, 1991, pp. 31-32).

Errors

According to the behaviouristic view, old habits affect new habits. This happens to second/foreign language learning. It is believed that the first language habits can interfere with the second language habits. From the point of behaviouristic view, the interference plays an important role in the second/foreign language learning (Ellis, 1991, p. 32). "The difficulty in learning a new habit was associated with interference from the old habit – the learner's first language - ..." (Johnson, 2004, pp. 21-22). Therefore, the errors are considered undesirable as they show that the learner is unable to break the habits acquired in the first language. Hence, it is vital to correct errors as soon as possible before they become a habit.

The language learning in the behaviouristic approach is described "in terms of imitation, practice, reinforcement (or feedback on success) and habit information" (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006, p. 34).

The behaviouristic view of learning may not be perfect but is still adopted by language professions. For instance, pattern practice which is a central activity in this view “still has a useful role to play in language teaching but is only one part of the whole learning process” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p. 42).

2.2.1.2.2 Cognitivism

Chomsky was strongly against the behaviouristic approach for he thought that the learning of the language is only done superficially and not dealt in depth with the structure. He argued that a human mind is rule governed and its creativity can be explored to produce an infinite number of sentences that they have never come across before. This creativity is unexplainable by learning language through stimulus-response and imitation. He also suggested that a learner could produce an infinite number of utterances by acquiring a finite number of rules. As a conclusion, he said that learning is not forming habits but acquiring rules. This is to say that the human mind not only responds to stimuli but uses the stimuli to find and understand the underlying rules or systems (Hutchinson & Waters, 1995, p. 42).

The cognitive approach to learning adopts Chomsky’s linguistic theory of first language acquisition (Johnson, 2004, p. 30). The cognitive view of learning is about mental processes of how a learner manipulates what was learned. As Hutchinson & Waters (1995, p. 43) say, “we learn by thinking about and trying to make sense of what we see, feel and hear”. According to Celce-Murcia (1991, p. 7), the cognitive approach language learning is about rule acquisition, not just habit formation, and instruction is often individualised, that is learners are responsible for their own learning.

According to Johnson (2004, p. 39), the cognitive view has a close relationship with the learning of second language. Prominent cognitive psychologists like Ausubel worked in this area and proposed *meaningful learning* theory.

Ausubel's cognitive theory of learning can best be described by looking at the differences between *rote learning* and *meaningful learning* (Brown, 2000, p. 83). He describes the *rote learning* as “discrete and relatively isolated entities that are related to cognitive structure only in an arbitrary and verbatim fashion, not permitting the establishment of [meaningful] relationship.” In contrast, meaningful learning is a process where new cognitive structure is formed by selecting and putting the ‘relevant puzzles’ of existing and new knowledge together (ibid). Ausubel's theory of learning plays an important role in second language learning. The belief of meaningful context and exercises in the language classroom in place of rote activities stresses the fact that learners learn better and can retain more when the learning is meaningful for them (Brown, 2000).

2.2.1.2.3 Constructivism

In constructivism, it is argued that different people interpret reality differently (Brown, 2000 & Johnson, 2004). According to Nunan, (1999, p. 304), knowledge does not have its own independent existence but is constructed socially. The multiple versions of reality exist because “human beings are exposed in the course of their lives to different sociocultural and institutional settings, where they acquire different voices” (Johnson, 2004, p.16).

Even on the interpretation of constructivism view of learning, it draws various comments. Nonetheless, the main idea revolves around the acquisition of knowledge

which depends on the learner's experience. Among others, knowledge acquisition emphasises constructing knowledge rather than transmitting knowledge and recording of information conveyed by others (Zarei, 2005). It emphasises "the importance of social, cultural, political, historical, and institutional setting" (Johnson, 2004, p.17).

There are four central characteristics influencing learning in the constructivism approach (Bruning, Schraw & Ronning, 1995, pp. 217-218):

- 1) learners' construction of their own learning,
- 2) the dependence of new learning on students' existing understanding,
- 3) the critical role of social interaction, and
- 4) the necessity of authentic learning tasks for meaningful learning.

Hence, in the constructivism's view, knowledge is not received passively but is constructed actively by learners; the learner's experiential world is organised by cognition which is an adaptive process, and all knowledge is constructed socially (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, pp. 113-114).

Two famous constructivists, Piaget and Vygotsky have different views on the importance of social context. Their theories are known as cognitive constructivism and social constructivism respectively.

Cognitive constructivism

Piaget, a cognitive constructivist, divides his theory into two major parts. First, he identifies the different stages and processes in children' learning progress. He predicts what children can and cannot understand at different stages as follows:

- sensorimotor stage (birth to two)

- Preoperational stage (ages two to seven)
- Operational stage (ages seven to sixteen)
- concrete operational stage (ages seven to eleven)
- formal operational stage (ages eleven to sixteen)

(Brown, 2000, p.61)

Secondly, he describes how cognitive structures change through the processes of adaptation: *assimilation* and *accommodation*. Schema is another important term in Piaget's theory. A schema can be defined as "an element in the organism's cognitive structure" (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005, p. 296). While *assimilation* refers to the adoption of a new object into an old schema, *accommodation* describes the situation where an old schema is adapted to a new object. According to Piaget, educational experiences have to be built around the learner's cognitive structure. On one hand, the educational materials that the learners cannot assimilate into their cognitive structure will have no meaning for them. On the other hand, if the learners can assimilate all the materials completely, no learning will take place. Therefore, in order for the learning to take place, the materials must be partly known and partly unknown. While the part which is known will be assimilated, the cognitive structure will accommodate to the unknown part (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005).

Thus, Piaget believes education involves some challenges in experiences for the learner. A balance between accommodation and assimilation helps intellectual growth in the cognitive structure which calls for interaction with the environment. He believes that "cognitive development is at the very centre of the human organism and that language is dependent upon and springs from cognitive development" (Brown, 2000, p.37). According to Piaget's theory, human must construct at their own knowledge to

gain information. This knowledge building is possible through experience which is the result of interaction with the environment (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005).

Social constructivism

On the other hand, Vygotsky, a social constructivist emphasizes the influence of the social and cultural context in learning. He believed that social interaction was essential in cognitive development and rejected Piaget's *ages and stages* (Brown, 2000, pp. 28-29).

Vygotsky (1981) states that "Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane... social relations or relations among people genetically underline all higher functions and their relationships" (cited in Johnson, 2004, p.108). He introduced the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) to explain interpersonal and intrapersonal plane. This concept explains the level of development achieved when learners engage in social interaction. It means that children can, with the help of adults or other children who are more advanced, grasp concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own (Johnson, 2004, p. 109). According to Vygotsky, the most important learning by the child occurs through social interaction with a skilful tutor.

Thus, Vygotsky's opinion is social interaction through communication is fundamental in cognitive development of language.

2.2.1.3 Implication of constructivism on language learning and teaching

Constructivism theorists view language learning in social terms. The classroom is viewed "as a sociocultural setting where an active participation in the target language

culture is taught, promoted and cultivated” (Johnson, 2004, p.180). The language learner has the opportunity to create new ways of meaning through interaction with other users of the language (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p.166).

Therefore, the teacher plays a crucial role in guiding students overcoming problems, encouraging teamwork, solving problems by motivating and giving them advice. In addition, the constructivist view involves a complete change in the focus of teaching and learning, which puts students’ own effort of understanding at the centre of the educational program (Zarei, 2005). As Richard & Schmidt (2001, p.114) state, in the field of language learning “constructivism has led to a focus on learning strategies, learner beliefs, teacher thinking and other aspects of learning which stress the individual and personal contribution of learners to learning.” Nunan (1999b, pp.34-35) also expresses that: constructivist view is in harmony with ruling concepts on the field, indicating communicative language, task-based language teaching, learner centeredness and negotiated curricula.” Nunan (1999, p. 235) describes such a classroom where learners cooperate with others and express their own feelings, ideas and opinions under the teacher’s guidance and learning how to solve a problem systematically.

Many linguists apply constructivism theory in EFL education. William & Burden (1997) propose ten propositions to EFL education. They are as follow:

- 1- There is a difference between learning and education.
- 2- Learners learn what is meaningful to them.
- 3- Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them.
- 4- Learners learn better if they feel in control of what they are learning.
- 5- Learning is closely linked to how people feel about themselves.
- 6- Learning takes place in a social context through interaction with other people.

- 7- What teachers do in the classroom will reflect their own beliefs and attitudes.
- 8- There is a significant role for the teacher as a mediator in the language classroom.
- 9- Learning tasks represent an interface between teacher and learners.
- 10- Learning is influenced by the situation in which it occurs.

(William & Burden, 1997, pp. 204-208)

Brooks & Brooks (1999), also introduce five guiding principles of constructivism as follows:

1. Posing problems of emerging relevance to learners: by considering the important role of the learners, start with the familiar material and build the new material on them in a way that is meaningful for the learners.
2. Structuring learning around primary concepts: mostly curriculum is presented in small and disconnected parts. Students memorise the material but most of the time they are unable to relate those discrete parts to the whole idea. The curriculum should be represented holistically. The students can pay more attention to those parts that are related to them by teacher mediation.
3. Seeking and valuing students' points of view: the students' individual points of view on the material should be considered important s they are "teacher's cues" for ensuring a successful class.
4. Addressing students' suppositions by classroom activities: all students bring to the class life experiences which are based on their beliefs about the world. Meaningful classroom experiences either support or change students' experience by either validating or transforming these beliefs.
5. Assessing student learning in the context of teaching: assessment of student learning is not separate from the classroom's normal activities. Both right and

wrong answers are important as they give insights about the students' understanding.

(Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. ix)

As the debate over the three different learning theories continues, there is no single definite theory of learning. Each theory has a particular paradigm which stresses on particular aspects of learning and ignore the others. "However, within almost every theory, certain aspects of other paradigms can be identified" (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005, p. 49).

While all these theories define the nature of learning in their terms, there is no ultimate answer to 'what is learning?'. Learning is a complex process and as Hutchinson & Waters (1995, p.51) state "we still do not know very much about learning". Therefore, "which paradigm is correct? Probably all of them." (Hergenhahn & Olsen, 2005, p. 49). Hergenhahn & Olson (2005, p. 23) think learning is like constructing a house and the students are like house builders who choose different tools in different learning situations.

2.3 TEXTBOOK AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

The definition of textbooks as instructional tools; their uses and the various views towards the functions of textbooks as main instructional material in English learning will be explained in the following part.

2.3.1 Definition of instructional materials and textbooks

UNESCO (1984, p. 15) defines instructional materials as "software" in the form of programmes, books, materials used in the teaching –learning process. Among others,

textbooks are the most widely used materials (UNESCO, *ibid*, p.16). Other theorists like Tomlinson (2003, p. 2) describe materials as “anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language.” His definition of materials ranges from prints, performances or displays, cassettes, CD-ROMs, DVDs to the internet. Often, materials are chosen based on the needs of the users.

In the early days, Allwright (1981) emphasises the importance of managing materials to relate to the teaching and learning of language. For this purpose, the text materials selected by teachers are designed for teaching and learning. So are the authentic materials which are generated by teachers as well as ‘learner-generated’ materials (McGrath, 2002).

Since textbooks are regarded as the most common materials even in this technologically-advanced era, one could neither deny the important role they play nor the benefit gained from them in the process of learning, particularly language learning.

2.3.2 Uses of textbooks

Learning materials, particularly textbooks share the important roles of teachers and learners in disposition of the learning styles (Hedge, 2000, p. 36). O’Neill (1982) outlined some benefits of textbook materials: offer a grammatical and functional framework for the common needs of a group of learners, allow students to prepare in advance, provide quality of presentation, and do not necessarily prevent a creative spinning-off in the classroom into all kinds of other activities (cited in Hedge, 2000, p. 36). In language learning, “such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking”

(Tomlinson, 2002, p. ix). Generally, a textbook is concisely designed to reflect the respective subject in accordance with the curriculum of a syllabus.

2.3.3 Perception towards textbook

Textbooks as instructional materials, is regarded differently by stakeholders, namely the teachers, students or even parents. For instance, there are teachers who teach from the textbook following as close as possible. Another group teaches according to the students' ability. They may or may not use the textbook. Modification to the textbooks could be done to suit the students' level. The third group, are those who do not use the book at all. They source for materials which are suitable for their students. McGrath (2002, p. 8) uses the terms *metaphors* to describe such a situation. He states that while some believe in *control*, some others believe in *choice* and somewhere between the two are those who believe in *support*.

Cunningsworth (1995, p.11) derived several factors influencing the degree of using textbooks as follows:

- type of educational system
- syllabus/materials imposed by education authorities
- culture and expectations of learners
- nature and amount of training for teachers
- teachers' experience and confidence
- teachers' command of English (if non-native speakers)
- availability of alternative textbooks and resources for materials production

Cunningsworth's (ibid.) statement is true in the current situation of Malaysian Education. As a measure to ensure all young children receive proper education, with

effect from 1 January, 2005, the Malaysian government agreed to sponsor free textbooks to all government-funded schools. The textbooks are written by a panel authorised by the Ministry of Education in accordance with the current syllabi. Hence, in year 2011, a makeover syllabus is undergoing with Year One and will phase out the rest in subsequent years. Malaysia, as a developing country with rich culture, has wanted its culture to be a significant pride of its people. Instilling its own culture in education not only provides a familiar situation but enable its students to understand better. The teachers' training background has a great impact on the students' learning. Since its first teachers' training college, the Sultan Idris Teachers' Training College was established in 1922, teachers' training colleges were upgraded to institutions in 2006 to signify the importance of teaching as a professional career. In fact, the Sultan Idris Teachers' Training College is now a university. The trained teachers from the rest of the institutions are eligible to transfer their credits to pursue a degree. Unfortunately, due to the large number of students, some schools are still unable to meet the demand of having enough teaching manpower. Therefore, some schools have to resort to getting temporary teachers who normally do not have prior training in teaching. The schools have become the training ground. As such, the different manners of the using textbooks arise. The trained and experienced teachers may use the textbooks only for reference. However, the newly trained and the untrained teachers use the textbooks all the time. Another major issue in the English Language teaching is the teachers' command of English. In recent years, the English standard in Malaysia has deteriorated. One reason causing this issue is partly because teachers who teach English are not all trained in teaching the subject. Another is students' interest towards learning English has lessened. As for materials and alternative resources, there are numerous and varieties, ranging from books to e-books.

When all these factors are considered, teachers' close adherence to the textbooks seems justifiable. Textbooks are important in almost any ELT program. In fact, teachers, learners and materials are the most common features of ELT classrooms (Richards, 1998). However, as stated earlier there are different attitudes toward using textbooks as the base of language teaching. There even appears a controversy between theorists on the advantages and disadvantages of using the textbooks.

From McGrath's (2006) survey of teachers and students, he found both positive and negative responses. From the teachers' responses, he categorised them into four groups: *guidance*, *support*, *resource* and *constraint*. *Guidance* is at the top which shows "the apparent acceptance by teachers of at least some degree of *controls* by the textbook and towards the bottom, at the level of recourse a willingness by the teachers to *take control* of the textbook" (ibid. p. 174). The former three categories imply a relatively positive attitude towards the textbook. However, the last one, *constraint*, contains a negative feeling towards them.

McGrath (2002, pp. 10 -11) summarises the advantages of using textbooks as follows:

Why teachers and learners need a textbook?

- A textbook is a map. It shows where one is going and where one has been.
- It provides language samples.
- It offers variety.

Why learners need a textbook?

- It defines what is to be learned and what will be tested.
- It reinforces what the teacher has done and makes revision and preparation possible.

Why teachers need a textbook?

- it provides a structure for teaching.
- It saves time.
- It offers linguistic, cultural and methodological support.
- It is easy to keep track of what you have done and to tell others where you have reached.

However, some linguists think textbooks bring disadvantages. Richards (1998) comments that most textbooks deprive teachers of decision making. The use of readymade textbooks makes the teachers dependent on the book in order to do the real work of teaching. He argues that this situation reduces the role of the teacher as well as *deskilling* the teachers.

Richards (1998) states situations like *reification* may arise due to teachers' lack of confidence acting as a critique. They may believe that textbooks are carefully developed and tested by experts and specialists in the field. Therefore, they do not have the knowledge and authority to make any changes in the book.

Richards (1998) discourages the use of textbooks based on the following reasons:

- teacher-made materials are more relevant and appropriate
- textbooks cannot provide the basis for a comprehensive language course.
- Textbooks are often culturally biased
- Textbooks are not compatible with learner-centred philosophy of teaching
- Textbooks should not be needed by good teachers, who can create their own materials (pp. 126-127)

Allwright (1981, p.8) also declares that “the whole business of the management of language is far too complex to be satisfactorily catered for by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching material.” He (ibid., p. 6) strongly comments a *deficiency view* of the textbooks based on the assumption that teachers cannot be trusted and the materials are needed to save the learners from teachers’ *deficiencies* and to make sure that the syllabus is covered as far as possible.

Although there are flaws in the opinions, generally more people support the usage of textbooks. Many still believe that textbooks can help both teachers and students. They argue that readymade textbooks give teachers time to concentrate on teaching rather than spending time developing material. Furthermore, textbooks can give cohesion to the teaching and learning process (Mares, 2003). Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p. 327) think that education is a complex and messy matter and a textbook is to “create a degree of order within potential chaos.” In addition, while the syllabus clarifies aims, objectives and content of the course the materials can “put flesh on the bones of these specifications” (Nunan, 1991, p. 208).

Sheldon (1988, p.238) asserts that the textbooks are “the invisible heart of any ELT program for both teachers and students.” He also states that textbooks are seen by many as the route map of the ELT program which show “its shape, structure and destination with progress ...” (ibid). He suggests that students are psychologically more comfortable referring to the textbooks than the teacher-made materials even though the textbooks may be inadequate.

More linguists see the advantages of using textbooks. Grant (1994) indicates that textbooks can identify what should be taught and learnt and suggests the methods

which should be used. To the teachers, they help to save time and to the students, they act as a useful learning aid. Richards (2007) is in favour of the use of textbooks because they provide the lessons content, standardized instruction and practice and language source for the students while supporting inexperienced teachers to plan and teach. He comments that if the teachers have to prepare their own materials, they will need some expertise in developing materials. This increases the teachers' burden beside their teaching responsibility (Richards, 1998).

Cunningsworth (1995, p.7) believes that textbooks are the source of achieving aims and objectives that have been set according to the learner needs. Besides teaching language, activities, ideas, grammar, vocabulary and syllabus, they act as a resource for self-directed learning as well as a support for less experienced teachers. Textbooks also displays the new theories and approaches of teaching that lead to researched-based textbooks which are developed by experts (Richards, 1998).

Comparatively, more educators see the importance of textbooks in ELT programmes. Therefore, most educators acknowledge the effective use of textbooks by teachers and learners based on the advantages they offer: a syllabus, show the route, create a sense of security and progress to both teachers and learners, save time and energy of the teacher and provide language samples. Furthermore, the organisation of the materials and type of content and activities are important in shaping the students' view of language. However, there is no single textbook which fits all the learning and teaching contexts. As Sheldon (1988, p. 238) reminds us "the fact is that textbooks are here ... [it] generates expectations about what it [textbook] should contain, what it should look like and how it should be used." Using any suitable textbook is good when

teachers know how to judge and decide which parts of the book are appropriate for their use and how they want to use it (McGrath, 2002, p.18).

2.4 INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS EVALUATION

Since many theories encourage the use of textbooks as the main instructional material, theorists also raise issue of the importance of material evaluation. This part covers the definition of material evaluation, types of material evaluation and in particular, textbook evaluation for this study.

2.4.1 Definition of evaluation

Evaluation implies putting a value on a person or thing. According to the definition in The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, *evaluate* means "to judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount or value of something". Various methods like analysis, appraisal, assessment, critique, interpretation and making judgments are ways of evaluation.

There are two ways of interpreting *evaluation* in language teaching and learning. First, is to evaluate a programme or materials used. On the other hand it can be 'assessment' on a learner's performance. Gronlund (1981) thought they are interchangeably. However, Nunan (1992, p.185) regards them differently though the two terms have certain relationship in some degrees. He explains that evaluation has a wider scope compared to assessment because it does not merely obtain information but also uses the information to make decisions (Nunan, 1988, p.118). Hence, evaluation can be conducted on any point of view in respect of curriculum development, be it the objectives, materials used, learning activities, teachers and learners' performance etc. (Nunan, 1999a).

2.4.2 Materials evaluation

Tomlinson (2002, p. xi) describes material evaluation as “the systematic appraisal of the value of materials in relation to their objectives and to the objectives of the learners using them.” He explains that materials evaluation is making judgements on how the materials influence on the users from the points of:

- the appeal of the materials to the learners;
- the creditability of the materials to learners, teachers and administrators;
- the validity of the materials;
- the reliability of the materials;
- the ability of the materials to interest the learners and the teachers;
- the ability of the materials to motivate the learners;
- the value of the materials in terms of long-term learning;
- the learners’ perceptions of the value of the materials;
- the teachers’ perceptions of the value of the materials;
- the assistance given to the teachers in terms of preparation, delivery and assessment;
- the flexibility of the materials;
- the contribution made by the materials to teacher development;
- the match with administrative requirements

(Tomlinson, 2003, p. 15)

2.4.3 Types of textbooks evaluation

Textbooks evaluation can be divided into three types. Cunningsworth (1995), Ellis (1997) and Tomlinson (2003) have categorised them as pre-use, in-use (whilst-use: Tomlinson, 2003: p. 24) and post-use evaluations. However, Hemsley, M. (1997) named them as an intuitive, impressionistic approach, a formal prior-to-use evaluation,

and a 'process' approach, which are less than similar the former three types. The drawbacks in the intuitive, impressionistic approach are discussed by Ellis (1997:37) and Low (1987:19). The other two approaches resemble more of the pre-use and in-use types.

Pre-use evaluation is a process of making predictions about the potential benefits for the users of the materials, in-use involves measuring the values while using or observing the materials being used and post-use measures the actual effect of the materials on the users (Tomlinson, 2003: p. 23-25). Cunningsworth (1995, p.14) remarks, the pre-use evaluation is the most difficult since the textbook is totally stranger to the user. He regards in-use evaluation as “matching the textbook against a specific requirement including the learners’ objectives, the learners’ background, the resources available, etc.” The assessment on the suitability of continuing using a textbook in future can be done by post-use evaluation. Among the three types, post-use evaluation is regarded the most useful. For the intention of this study to find out the suitability for future use, the researcher chose the post-use method. This evaluation looks at how far the textbook helps the students in their preparation for the central public examination of Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR).

Tomlinson (2003, p.25) commented that post-use evaluation enables one’s to answer the following questions:

- i) What do the learners know which they did not know before starting to use the materials?
- ii) What do the learners still not know despite using the materials?
- iii) What can the learners do which they could not do before starting to use the materials?

- iv) What can the learners still not do despite using the materials?
- v) To what extent have the materials prepared the learners for their examinations?
- vi) To what extent have the materials prepared the learners for their post-course use of the target language?
- vii) What effect have the materials had on the confidence of the learners?
- viii) What effect have the materials had on the motivation of the learners?
- ix) To what extent have the materials helped the learners to become independent learners?
- x) Did the teachers find the materials easy to use?
- xi) Did the materials help the teachers to cover the syllabus?
- xii) Did the administrators find the materials helped them to standardise the teaching in their institution?

For this study, the researcher finds Tomlinson's (ibid.) questions namely, no. v, vii, ix, x and xi relevant in providing information useful in the decision of continuance to use, adapt, modify or replace the textbook per se. In spite of the importance portrayed by the post-use evaluation, not many published works could be found on how to do it (Ellis, 1997). Time factor and expertise to measure reliability (Tomlinson, 2003) divert the choice to the other two methods. McGrath (2002) thinks likewise when he comments that except for a few cases very little research has been done on in-use and post-use evaluation.

Textbook evaluation should not be neglected irrespective of level of learning, from early to tertiary education. In Malaysia, very few studies have been conducted on government-funded textbooks. Real learners and teachers' involvement in real

classrooms gives a true picture of the evaluation (Sheldon, 1998; Nunan, 1999a). This instils the urge for the researcher to conduct the current research.

2.4.4 The importance of textbook evaluation

The different ways of conducting textbook evaluation signify the importance of textbook evaluation. Textbooks represent “aims, values and methods in a particular teaching/learning situation” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.37) and sometimes are the initial teaching/learning aid which have an influence on what teachers teach and to some extent what learners learn (Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath 2006).

Choosing an appropriate textbook is a grave decision. It not only calls for professional and financial expertise but even political involvement Sheldon (1988, p. 237). This is especially true in the case of state-funded textbooks. A good evaluation does not only help to mitigate unnecessary expenses but save teacher and learners’ disappointment (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The heavy reliance on the textbooks proves the need to evaluate their suitability as what Skierso (1991, p. 441) reminds us, “the fact that the teachers and students use the textbook and its ancillary materials as their central guiding force proves the importance of selecting an appropriate text.”

The reasons for conducting textbook evaluation somehow are viewed as having benefits of doing so (Sheldon, *ibid.*). It forms a discrimination among all available choices of textbooks to choose one which is considered the most suitable. The users will be familiar with the content of the book and thus know the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook in use. Through this familiarity, users can optimise the strengths and recognise the weaknesses to make improvement on them.

In the effort to be learner-centred in language instruction, reviewing textbooks is necessary to ensure the materials meet the needs of learners in achieving aims and objectives. Though not necessarily determine the aims of teaching and learning, it should always be at the service of the teachers and learners (Brown, 1995, pp. 46-47). It is important to remember because of the differences in goals and aims of the users, a textbook's context may not work well in another. As William (1983) points out "any textbook should be used judiciously, since it cannot cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting." With the aims in mind, a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks is established to ensure "that careful selection is made, and that the materials selected closely reflect [the needs of the learners and] the aims, methods, and values of the teaching program." (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.7).

Besides developing criteria for learners' aims, textbook evaluation serves to enhance teacher development and professional growth. Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997) suggest that textbook evaluation helps teachers move beyond impressionistic assessments and it helps them to acquire useful, accurate, systematic, and contextual insights into the overall nature of textbook material. Textbook evaluation can be used as a form of conducting action research as well as professional empowerment and improvement. To the trainee teachers, it can be a programme where the trainee teachers learn to look for important features in textbooks and get familiar with vast published language instruction materials.

The textbooks used in Malaysian government-funded schools are sponsored by the Malaysian Government. Every year, the government spends millions in printing new textbooks. Hence, it is appropriate to evaluate the textbooks used in the schools,

suit the learning needs of the students and be the useful tools to help the students excelling in their level of proficiency in English. Furthermore, to ensure the worthiness of money spent. Thus, an evaluation is an important step to make sure that the selected textbooks are the best and most appropriate Cunningsworth (1995).

Since English is taught as the second language in Malaysian schools, many students do not have the opportunity to be in contact with the language. Moreover, in Chinese primary schools, the language is “the third language”. Therefore, the English textbooks are the only bridging instrument between the students and English Language in the classroom. Beyond the classroom, the chances to trace the level of proficiency in English could hardly be reflected. It is true of Richards’ (1998) statement:

In many schools and language programs the textbooks used in the classroom are the curriculum. If one wants to determine the objectives of a language program, the kind of syllabus being used, the skills being taught, the content the students will study, and the assumptions about teaching and learning that the course embodies, it is often necessary to look no further than the textbooks used in the program itself. (p. 125)

As such, for textbook evaluation, the researcher conducted a study on a textbook used by Year Four students in Chinese primary schools. Moreover, to date there is no evaluation conducted onto it since its implementation in year 2005.

2.5 TEXTBOOK EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

Many theories and frameworks were developed while conducting textbook evaluation by prominent researchers over times. Although the intentions and theories do not differ much, various criteria or checklists were established. These checklists are

now referred by teachers as reference while choosing an appropriate textbook. To name a few, Tucker (1975), Allwright (1981), Williams (1983), Breen & Candlin (1987), Grant (1987), Sheldon (1988), Skierso (1991), McDonough & Shaw (1993), Cunningsworth (1995), Littlejohn (2002). Only a few will be discussed in this section.

Williams (1983) has conducted one of the few earliest studies. Due to his experience of teaching in countries like Malaysia and Nigeria, where English Language is taught as second language, his framework takes into account “a number of assumptions about second language teaching” (ibid. p. 251). He lists out four assumptions (ibid. p. 252) as follows:

- currently acceptable teaching method of second language,
- guidance for non-native speakers of English,
- needs of second language learners,
- relevance to the socio-cultural environment.

He includes general, linguistic, pedagogical and technical features in his assumptions. There are 28 items which are distributed under the main categories of *general, speech, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and technical*. Rating is in the form of Likert scale. As Williams (ibid. p. 252) himself states, his criteria are a combination of just linguistic and pedagogical elements of language.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher adopts Williams’ framework as she found the similarity of learning situation. English is taught as second language by non-native speakers. The textbook under evaluation uses thematic context to teach the language so as to provide a familiar setting for the learners. In this way, the language is

taught in a manner the learners could understand better. As for the criteria, the researcher finds Williams' checklist easy to adapt without major changes to the items.

Grant (1987) suggests three stages for material evaluation: *initial evaluation*, *detailed evaluation* and *in-use evaluation*. Initial evaluation checks and helps to decide whether the textbook is worth detailed evaluation or not. He proposes a practical test for the initial stage called "CATALYST" which stands for: Communicative, Aims, Teachable, Available, Level, Your impression, Students interest, Tried and tested. In the *detailed evaluation*, three main questions concerning the suitability of the textbook for the students, teachers and syllabus is questioned (ibid. p. 121). The *in-use evaluation* refers to the continuous evaluation of the adopted book, i.e. to check the appropriateness of the chosen book.

McGrath (2002, p.42) criticises and argues that the "approach is based on two false premises: that the individual items within each category are equal in importance, and the categories are themselves equally important." Furthermore, similar to most other checklists he also stops in the *in-use* stage and does not take into account the *post-use* stage.

Sheldon (1988) introduces an inclusive checklist with two main phases: *factual details* and *assessment* for textbook evaluation. The *factual details* gather information such as the *title*, *authors*, *date of publication*, etc. As for *assessment*, questions on *layout/graphics*, *accessibility*, *linkage*, *selection/grading*, *physical characteristics*, *appropriacy*, *authenticity*, *sufficiency*, *cultural bias*, *educational validity*, *stimulus/practice/revision/flexibility*, *guidance and overall value of money* are enlisted.

Nunan (1991) considers this as an elaborate checklist which can help in selecting the materials.

Skierso's (1991, p. 440) framework suggests a detailed checklist to evaluate: *the textbook, the teacher's manual, and overall value*. Six criteria, namely, bibliography data, aims and goals, subject matter, vocabulary and structure, exercises and activities, layout and physical makeup were listed to evaluate *the textbook*. To him, the checklist is "comprehensive" but is not necessary to use all parts. Instead, he encourages evaluators to "custom-make" their own evaluation checklists to suit their "program and situation" Skierso (1991, p. 444).

Another comprehensive framework by Cunningsworth (1995), is laid down in his book, *Choosing Your Coursebook*. He looks into the different types and purposes of evaluation as well as guidelines for material evaluation. His checklist consists of eight sections including: *aims and approaches, design and organisation, language content, skills, topic, methodology, teacher's book and practical considerations*. He (ibid.) also introduces four guidelines to the criteria

- correspond to learners' needs and match the aims and objectives of the language-learning programs;
- reflect the uses (present or future) which learners will make of the language and help to equip students to use language effectively for their own purposes;
- take account of students' needs as learners and facilitate their learning processes, without dogmatically imposing a rigid 'method';
- have a clear role as a support for learning. Like teachers, they mediate between the target language and the learner (pp. 15-16).

Littlejohn (2002), who concentrates on the pedagogical viewpoint, differentiates between *analysing materials* and *analysing in-use-materials*. His concern is with analysing materials ‘as they are’, not what happens when the materials are taught in the classrooms. He believes that there is a need to separate “assumptions about what is desirable from an analysis of the material” (ibid., p. 192). His framework revolves around what and how to examine the materials and relate the findings to teaching? On what, he identifies two main dimensions: *publication* which refers to the physical aspects of the material and *design* which relates to “the thinking underlying the materials” (ibid., p. 193). The *design* involves considering the aims, selection and sequencing principles, subject matter, types of teaching/learning activities, participation, learners and teachers’ roles and the role of materials as a whole (ibid., p. 193).

By comparing these checklists, most of them are concerned with the pre-use. Not many concern in-use evaluation. Similarity can be found in the criteria such as *physical aspects, organisational characteristics, language content, skills, subject matters* as well as *exercises*. On the other hand, differences can be found “in their scope, form, detailed criteria and the terms used to describe criteria” (McGrath, 2002) and the change in priorities of language teaching (Rubdy, 2003). Nunan (1991) argues that although these checklists are very valuable, they evaluate the material mainly during the pre-use stage. Most of the questions which are asked, such as availability, rationale and layout, are related to out-of-class issues.

A comprehensive evaluation requires data on the actual use of the materials in the classroom. As such, Ellis (2002) points out, the guidelines which have been designed for pre-use evaluation can also be used for post-use evaluation. However, obtaining an exclusive checklist suitable for every person and every situation is difficult.

Some of the offered checklists may be too complex and time consuming or too simple to be used without making any adaptation. Actually no one is sure of which criterion are functional in ELT context globally. Although Sheldon (1988) emphasises the need for a systematic evaluation of material, he declares that the criteria cannot be applied in every situation without making considerable adaptation.

Besides compatibility, checklists criteria can be obsolete as they date as fast as the materials (McGrath, 2002). He suggests that any change to the materials should be updated and reflected in the checklists by making necessary changes to suit own use. Hence, frameworks and evaluation checklist “cannot provide a foolproof formula by which all materials can be unerringly judged for” (Sheldon, 1987, p.5). Furthermore, textbook evaluation is basically “a rule of thumb activity” that “no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick” (Sheldon, 1988, p. 245).

2.6 BLOOM’S TAXONOMY













A taxonomy of learning objectives aims at identifying forms and levels of learning. It is believed that effective learning happens when ones is able to master the lower or basic levels before proceeding to the higher levels. Taxonomy serves as a guideline in categorising levels of learning for the topics expected of the curriculum in a programme (<http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/bloomtax.htm>).

One of the taxonomy models adopted universally in classrooms is the Bloom’s Taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 (Pohl, 2000, pp. 7-8). Bloom categorised learning into three domains: *cognitive*, *affective* and *psychomotor*.

Cognitive Domain

The most used is the cognitive domain which is referred to as the mental skills or knowledge structures and can be viewed as a sequence of progressive contextualisation of the material. (Bloom, 1956). Bloom (ibid) sub-categorised it into six levels.

However, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) revised and renamed this terms as follow:

Original Terms		New Terms	
• Evaluation		• Creating	
• Synthesis		• Evaluating	
• Analysis		• Analysing	
• Application		• Applying	
• Comprehension		• Understanding	
• Knowledge		• Remembering	

(Based on Pohl, 2000, Learning to Think, Thinking to Learn, p. 8)

Affective Domain

The affective domain concerns growth in feelings from mere awareness (receiving), through to being able to distinguish implicit values through analysis. It does not draw much attention compared to the cognitive domain (Kratwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964)). There are five levels (from the lowest to the highest level): receiving; responding; valuing; organising and conceptualising; and characterising by value or value concept.

Psychomotor

Psychomotor is about physical skills. Bloom never completed his work on this domain. However, there were various versions developed. One of the simplest models was developed by Dave (1975) with five levels of learning skills. For this study, the researcher adopted the version suggested by Simpson (1972). In his theory, he

developed seven categories (from the lowest to the highest): perception; set; guided response; mechanism; complex overt response; adaptation; and origination.

Since the three domains are important references for learning evaluation, the researcher attempts to identify their present in the exercises and activities of the said textbook.

2.7 SUMMARY

Generally, the usage of textbooks draws many opinions. Some teachers encourage, others otherwise. However, most regard the textbook as an indispensable tool in language learning. Therefore, evaluation on a regular basis is important to ensure this “tool” is in good working order. Adaptation and changes where necessary, must be made in accordance with the needs of the learners. Evaluation checklists can always adopt various frameworks. However, criteria chosen for the evaluation should be developed based on the suitability for one’s specific context, objectives and goals of the evaluation.

The researcher adopts certain criteria from William’s (1983) checklists and adapts them to suit this study. The next chapter explains how a checklist was designed and used to derive information for the study.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methodology used for this research will be explained in this chapter. The explanation covers how the design of the research was determined to the choosing and adaptation of the conceptual framework for this research purpose. Besides, a description on the selection of samples and how the data gathered being processed will also be explained. Lastly, a summary will be drawn on the whole chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Determining the research title

The need to address the practicability of the textbook used in the Chinese primary school was the foremost consideration in conducting this research. Hence, the designing of instrument and choosing of samples concentrated on Chinese primary education.

Every year, the Malaysian Ministry of Education supplies millions of free textbooks to every pupil in all the primary schools. Since the ministry views it as an important instructional material and has spent millions in ensuring every pupil enjoys the privilege, it is important to evaluate the textbook from time to time. In weighing the role of the textbook and the importance of the UPSR, the researcher decided to look into the suitability of the textbook in today's education context. Moreover, with effect from year 2011, the Year One pupils are using the newly revamped textbooks produced to

suit the newly revamped syllabus. This continues until year 2016 when all the textbooks will be revamped to suit the new syllabus. The researcher hopes that this study is useful and a relevant reference to the parties concerned in the new revamp.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher decided to conduct an evaluation on the Year Four [Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina/Tamil)] English Textbook. One of the reasons for choosing Year Four is because every pupil begins to adapt to the UPSR examination rubric when they start Year Four. Moreover, the researcher's experience in teaching Year Four makes her familiar with the textbook.

3.2.2 Determining the research problem

Nunan (1992, p. 185), considers evaluation as a wider range of processes. He points out two characteristics of evaluation. Evaluation involves not only assembling information but interpreting that information by making value judgments. Evaluation also involves action whereby information collected not only for philosophical reflection but for the use of doing something different next time.

The researcher's intention is to find out how far the textbook helps the Chinese primary school pupils in their preparation for the UPSR. The researcher adopted Williams' (1983) framework concentrating on general, grammar and vocabulary. For the general aspect, teaching methods, language background, culture and learning environment will be considered. As for grammar and vocabulary, the items were checked against past years UPSR examination questions.

As such the research questions portrayed on the teachers and Year 6 pupils' opinions of the textbook in terms of the objectives set in the textbook; contents/topics,

vocabulary, grammar and exercises; and its relevance to the questions in the UPSR examination. The exercises were examined to match against the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy.

3.2.3 Choosing the research method

Prior to 1959, before Campbell and Fiske's use of multiple methods (cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 210), the quantitative approach and qualitative approach were used exclusively by many researchers.

For the quantitative approach, different strategies like experiments, survey questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection. On the other hand, the qualitative approach observes strategies like ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research and narrative research in the data collecting process.

According to Creswell (2003, p.22), "A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches." By considering the research problem, the researcher's personal experience as an English teacher of a Chinese primary school and the audience, namely, the Ministry of Education, English teachers, parents and students, the researcher decided to choose the mixed method approach.

The survey strategy using questionnaires and interviews are suitable for collecting data. Due to the constraint of time of all parties and the incompatible time schedule, the interviews were conducted via different modes. Some were done face to face where opportunity permitted, others were conducted via e-mails.

The sequential explanatory strategy was adopted. This strategy, first collects and analyses the quantitative data. Next, the qualitative data will be collected and analysed. The qualitative data assists in explaining and interpreting the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2003, p. 215). Figure 3.1 explains the procedure.

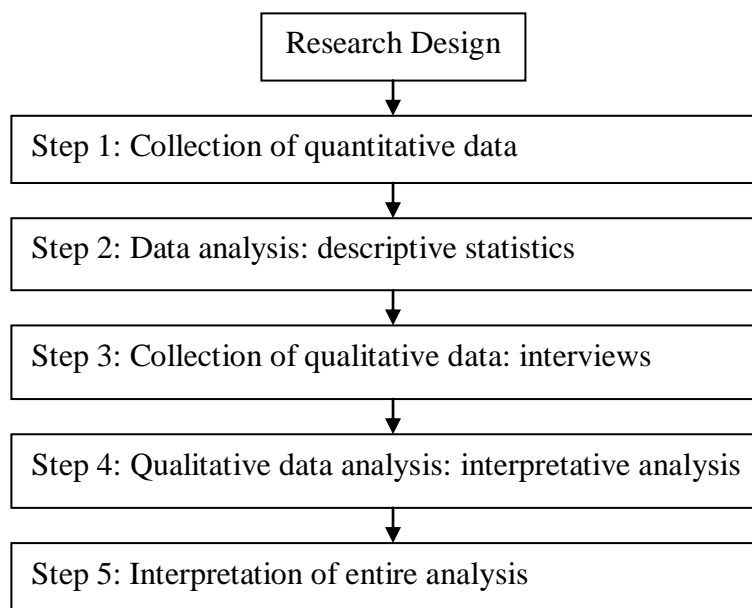
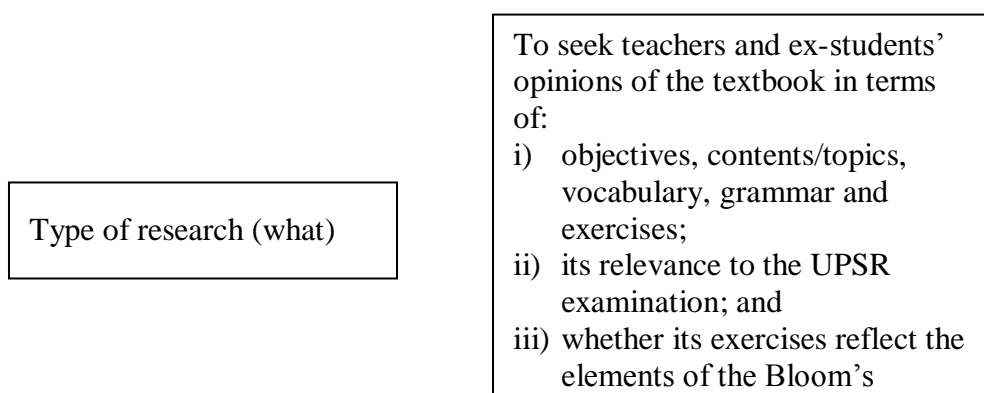


Figure 3.1: Research Design

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As such, it is important to choose a relevant conceptual framework from the beginning as what Creswell (1994, p.97) emphasises on the significance of an early framework “the researcher advances a tentative conceptual framework in a qualitative study early in the discussion.” Miles and Huberman (1984, p.28) describes “On the whole, a framework creates a working outline in order to focus the research process. Figure 3.2 illustrates the flow of the present study.



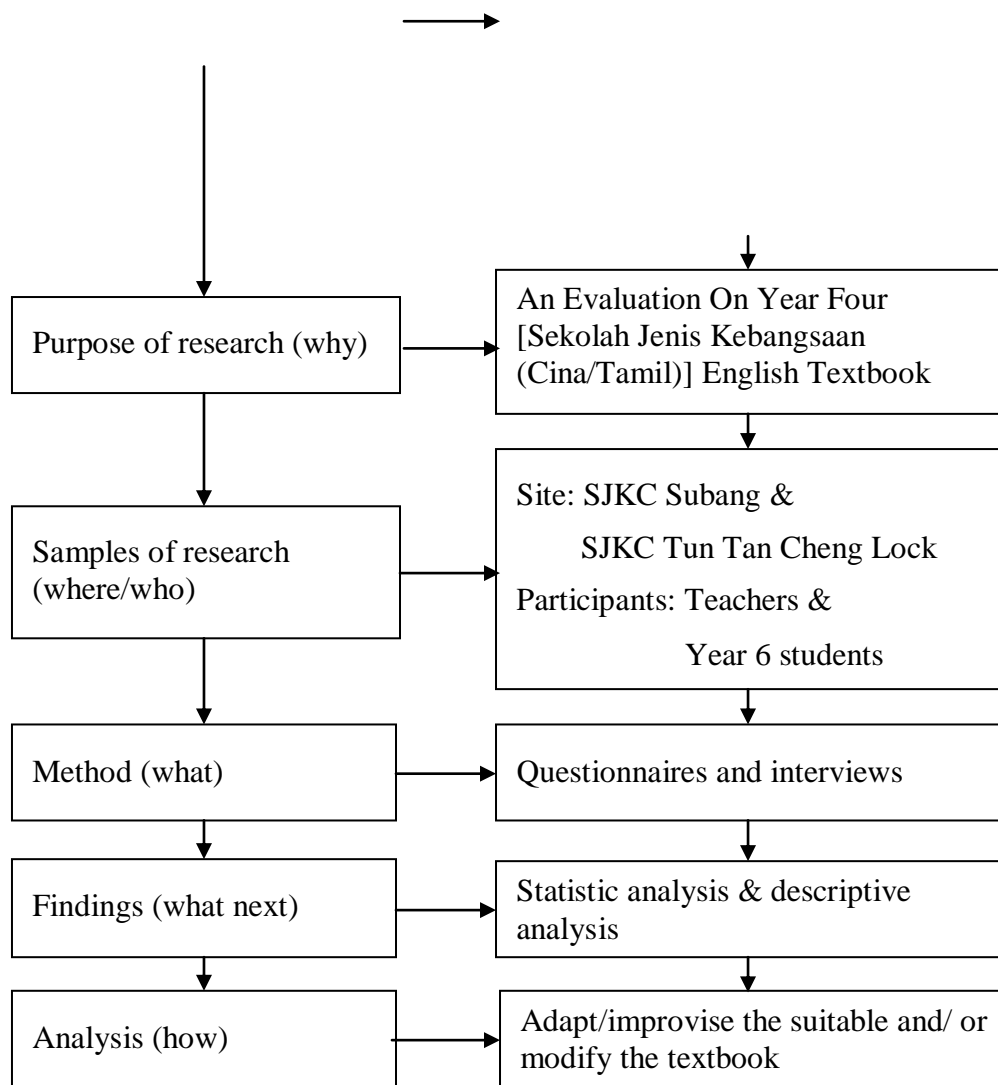


Figure 3.2: Conceptual Framework of the present study

3.4 SELECTION OF SAMPLES

3.4.1 Site of the study

The study was carried out in two Chinese primary schools. One of them is the school where the researcher is teaching. It is SJKC Subang, a sub-urban school. The other is SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock, an urban school. Both schools are two of the ten schools under the administration of Petaling Perdana District Education Department, a district of the Selangor State Education Department in Malaysia. Figure 3.3 illustrates the education structure of both SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock.

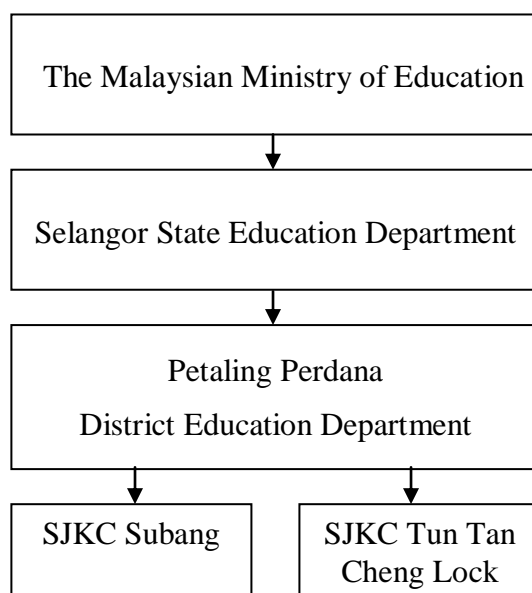


Figure 3.3: The Education Structure

SJKC Subang is a Chinese primary school situated in a sub-urban town in Kampung Baru Subang, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. It was set up more than sixty-three years ago, way before Malaysia's independence on 31 August, 1957. With recent years' economy boost, most of the students originate from middle income families. On the average, the sources of income of the students' parents come from working in the neighbouring factories, plantation and small-scale business. Most parents' level of education of this group of parents is until secondary level. Only around 15% students come from the newly developed housing areas, where their parents belong to the white-collar group.

SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock is a Chinese primary school situated in an affluent suburban city of Subang Jaya, Petaling, Selangor, Malaysia. This means most of the students come from families of white-collar income group. It is part of one of the eight vision schools in Malaysia which comprises National, Chinese and Tamil Schools set up in Year 2002. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, introduced the "Vision School" concept. It involves putting a national school and 1-2 other vernacular schools together at the same site to share common facilities such as the school canteen and sports ground. It is hoped that the close proximity between the students of various races as well as organised activities between the schools will encourage greater interaction between them and foster national unity. According to the New Strait Times, SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock is considered the cream of the crop due to smooth management, experienced teachers and excellent camaraderie between the staff of all three components.

Since the implementation of the current UPSR examination rubric in 2005, SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock has shown high standard of achievement. However, SJKC Subang's achievement was not as good. According to the schools' source, Table 3.1 shows the passing rates in English in both schools.

Table 3.1: Past Years English Passing Rates

School	SJKC Subang	SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock
--------	-------------	-------------------------

Year of Examination		
2005	88.00%	94.44%
2006	85.31%	91.86%
2007	83.72%	93.08%
2008	84.60%	98.90%
2009	85.11%	99.41%
2010	82.49%	100.00%
2011	80.81%	95.12%

When comparing between SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock, the researcher found many differences in the numbers of years of establishment, the surrounding factors such as location of school and the nature of income, the background of the students and the schools' performances in the previous UPSR examinations. The gap in the differences between the two schools' performances in the UPSR examinations drew the researcher's interest to conduct this study. This is obvious especially since both schools were using the same textbook. For instance, the number of enrolment in year 2010 for the UPSR examination in SJKC Subang was 300 whereas 132 pupils in SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock. In addition, since both schools are in the same district, it would be easier for the researcher to gather data for the study, with the advantage of the researcher being a teacher in SJKC Subang.

3.4.2 Choosing the samples

Sampling is important in research because often it is difficult and maybe impossible to study the whole population. Brown (2001, p. 72) states “using a sample, data can be practically, efficiently, and effectively collected”. Sampling a population involves two steps, namely, choosing a strategy and determining the sample size.

Sampling strategies can be divided into two main categories. They are known as the probability sampling and the non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves random selection and non-probability sampling works otherwise. Random selection is where every single unit within a population has an equal opportunity of being picked. Although non-probability sampling does not work like probability sampling, it does not necessarily construe samples to be unrepresentative of a population. So long a sample can shows probability, then it can represent a population.

Lunsford & Lunsford (1995, pp. 105-112) categorize *probability sampling* as *simple random, systematic, stratified, cluster* and *disproportional samplings*. However, non-probability sampling includes *convenience, consecutive, judgmental, quota* and *snowball samplings*.

They further describe (Lunsford & Lunsford, *ibid*, 1995) *simple random sampling* can be established “using an array of random numbers”. The random numbers are organized according to the size of the population. *Systematic random sampling* is carried out by selecting the every nth subject of in the population. The subjects are grouped according to criteria such as age and gender in *stratified sampling*. This method enables sampling of equal numbers of subjects for each group. *Cluster sampling* is suitable for seeking samples within a timeframe and cost among a very large population or one that is geographically diverse. It too, gives each subject an equal opportunity to

be chosen, with no researcher or facility bias. *Disproportional sampling* facilitates the difficulty encountered with stratified samples of unequal size.

However, in most real applied social research, usually there is no one sampling method that enable us to address our sampling needs in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Therefore, this leads to the combination of sampling methods. This is known as multi-stage sampling (Trochim, 2006).

Sometimes, circumstances may not be feasible, practical or theoretically sensible to do random sampling in applied social research. Non-probabilistic alternatives offer several choices namely convenience, consecutive, judgmental, quota and snowball samplings. (Lunsford & Lunsford, *ibid.*, 1995).

Most prefer *convenience sampling* because it is easy to obtain the subjects without incurring much expenses or facing much trouble. However, it is considered biased because of the methods, styles and preferences of treatment employed at a given facility. Contrastingly, *consecutive sampling* is the best choice of the non-probability sampling techniques since by studying every subject available; a good representation of the overall population is possible. *Judgmental sampling* or purposive sampling, just like convenience sampling, subjects are handpicked from the accessible population. *Quota sampling* is used to ensure equal representation of subjects in each layer of a stratified sample grouping. In *snowball sampling*, potential subjects are identified since it is difficult to get suitable ones (*ibid.*).

By looking at the various characteristics of the sampling methods, it is always not easy to keep to one. In whatever manner, it is important to consider the research

purpose, time available and restrictions, data collection methods and the research methodology. Sampling strategy should be suitable “for all these factors if validity is to be served” Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000, p. 104).

Based on an example of multi-stage sampling, by Trochim (2006), the two sample schools were first stratified according to the economics, educational and years of establishment. Sample teachers were chosen using consecutive sampling. However, sample students were first randomly picked from all the Year Six students in both schools but then stratified according to male and female.

3.4.3 Determining the sample size

The other important factor is the size of sample. As what Elley (1989, p. 275) puts “There is, of course, no magic number in making decisions about sample size.” Nonetheless, the more subjects involved in a study, the outcome will be more valid and reliable. This is what Brown (2001, p.73) argues when he stated that “a large sample is generally more representative of the population than a smaller one.” However, he further states that decisions on sample size depends on the situation of the study, the population size, the type and purpose of research, the significance of the results and the types of strategies being used (ibid.).

The present study adopts Yamane’s (1967:886) formula in the calculation of student sample size in attempting the questionnaires.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

where: n = sample size
N = population

e = the level of precision

A description of the participating teachers and ex-students will be detailed in the following two parts.

3.4.4 Teachers

All the 8 teachers participating in this research were selected from those teachers teaching Year Four English in Year 2010 in both SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock. The population of female teachers was obviously dominant. Therefore, the researcher was not able to sample any male English teachers for this research. Their age varied from 34 to 62 years old. As for the number of years of teaching English, the least was 4 years compared to the most, 29 years. It was fortunate, all these teachers had experience teaching English to Year Six pupils, in fact, to date some still do. With the experience of using the textbook, the teachers were able to give feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook. Their feedback and opinions are important to the present study.

Since the sample size of teachers was small, all the teachers were asked to answer the questionnaire. However only three teachers were interviewed, one with twenty-nine years of teaching experience, one with eleven years and another with four years. The restricted number of teachers is because of the lack of suitability in time. However, the teachers' knowledge gained through the different years of teaching experience is able to tell what a good textbook is.

3.4.5 Students

This research was seeking the evaluation of those using the textbook. The researcher chose a group of Year Six students who had sat for the 2010 UPSR examination. All of them aged 12 at the time of gathering the data. Since they had just sat for the examination, it would be a good choice because the students had a clear view whether the textbook helped while attempting the UPSR examination.

In year 2010, SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Cheng Lock had 300 and 132 candidates respectively. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, only 4 samples from SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock suffice. However, a larger sample is always more presentable (Brown, 2001, p.73). As such 30 students made up of 15 boys and 15 girls were chosen from each school.

For the second part of data collection by way of interview, 10% of those answering the questionnaires were interviewed. 3 pupils were chosen from each school. The selection strategy used for questionnaires was applied to the interview. Table 3.2 shows the number of participants answering the questionnaires, whereas Table 3.3 shows the number of interviewees.

Table 3.2: Participants answering the questionnaires

Participants	No. of participants	Type of sampling
teachers	8	No sampling
students	60	Stratified random

Table 3.3: Participants interviewed

Participants	No. of interviewees	Type of sampling
teachers	3	purposive
students	6	Stratified random

3.5 THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook chosen for this study entitled *Year Four [Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina/Tamil)] English Textbook* is used by all the Year Four students of Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools in Malaysia. This book is designed and written by a panel of experienced educationists under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia.

It has thirteen units printed on 136 pages and planned according to the specified learning outcomes stipulated in the Curriculum Specifications of the revised Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools syllabus for Year 4. Four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing were covered. Besides, sound system, grammar and vocabulary were comprised in the language contents. At the end of each unit is a review section. On the front page of every unit, targeted language skills and contents that the pupils are expected to master from each particular unit were listed. Literature based activities are included in alternate chapters and used in English Year 4 (SJK) to develop appreciation and further enhance their understanding of literature.

The textbook is packaged with The Teacher's Guide and The Pupil's CD-ROM (MyCD). It is taught in one schooling year over 7 months.

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In the process of data collection, suitable research instruments are very important. Neill (2004) states "Choosing appropriate instrumentation (surveys, questionnaires, etc.) is a vital part of conducting good quality empirical research and evaluation." He suggests several factors to consider when designing an instrument. Among them are length and complexity, compatibility between objectives and instrument, sensitivity, specificity: The greater the specificity of a measure, the more likely it is to predict actual performance (Blau, 1993), reliability and validity, and ethical or educational issues. Questionnaires and interviews were used for this research.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are widely used in various researches because of the advantages they offer. Some advantages of questionnaires are as follows (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, pp. 172; Nunan, 1999c, p. 145; Gillham, 2000, pp. 5-8; Brown, 2001, pp. 36-38):

- Vast information can be collected simultaneously from participants.
- Easy to administer even with a large number of people.
- Confidentiality is preserved as participants can remain anonymous.
- Closed-ended questionnaires can easily be analysed.
- Low administration cost.

However good, questionnaires have disadvantages too (Gillham, 2000, pp. 8-13; Brown, 2001, pp. 36-38):

- Answers could be inaccurate and questionable.
- Possibility of low return rate if sent by post or e-mail.
- Ambiguity and unclearness of some questions might lead to inaccurate and unrelated responses.
- Both researcher and respondents may have different interpretation of questions.
- Language of the questions might affect the respondents' responses.

Nevertheless, with careful planning, these disadvantages can be minimised.

For this research, two versions of questionnaires were produced, the student questionnaire ([Appendix A](#)) and the teacher version ([Appendix C](#)). Both questionnaires were based on the objectives set in the textbook and the criteria adopted from Williams' theory (1983) concentrating on general, grammar, vocabulary.

Both questionnaires are similar except for the minor differences in participant's details. Teacher questionnaire includes number of years of teaching (English) experience whereas the student's includes language spoken and written by the students. For the parts ranging from contents/topics to exercises and activities, closed-ended questionnaires with Likert scale were designed. However, the teacher questionnaire included an opened-ended questionnaire for comments in every section as well as in a stand alone section. The objectives part was omitted from the student questionnaire too. This is because through the researcher's observation, she found that a 12-year-old student is not matured to decipher the requirement of a good textbook. It is easier for them to grade within closed-ended questions.

To design the present questionnaires, the researcher referred to a few relevant research studies in the field (Mickley, J (2005); Dobakhti, L (2009); and www.crystalsprings.com (2009). The questionnaire was piloted and administered to a class of Year Four and Year Five students, respectively in Year 2009. It then was modified, improvised and changed wherever necessary to produce the present questionnaire in order to suit the objectives of the present study.

The following Table 3.4 illustrates the rubric of the questionnaires for teachers and students. The questionnaires are in Appendix A and C.

Table 3.4: Rubric of questionnaires for teachers and ex-students

Section	No. of items	Contents
A	Teacher 8 / Student 10	Participant's details
B	Teacher 67 / Student nil	Objectives
C	Teacher 14/ Student 11	Contents
D	Teacher 8 / Student 7	Vocabulary
E	Teacher 7 / Student 5	Grammar
F	Teacher 12 / Student 10	Exercises
G	Teacher 5 / Student nil	General comments

3.6.2 Interviews

Another research instrument or rather, method was by way of interviews. According to Burns (1999, p.118) “interviews are a popular and widely used means of collecting qualitative data.” Interviews reveal what and how people perceive and “interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 1998, p.72). Flick (2006, p.160) thinks that the purpose of interview “is to reveal existing knowledge in a way that can be expressed in the form of answers and so become accessible to interpretation.”

Similarly, interviews consist of advantages and disadvantages. Johnson and Turner (2003, p.308) identify some strengths and weaknesses of interviews. According to them, an interview is good for measuring attitudes. It allows an interviewer to probe to obtain in-depth information. Other strengths include the allowance of good interpretative validity, moderately high measurement validity for well-constructed and well-tested interview protocols, relatively high response rates which are often attainable and it is useful for exploration and confirmation. On the other hand, its weaknesses are

in-person interviews are expensive and time-consuming, low anonymity of respondents and data analysis sometimes can be time-consuming for open-ended items.

The gist in any interview is the type of the questions asked. Questions asked must be relevant. For this study, the interview questions were constructed based on the response of the questionnaires (see Appendix B and D). They are meant to find out more information and to clear any doubt arose over the response in the questionnaires. The interview sessions for teachers and students of SJKC Subang were conducted face to face since they were within the proximity of the researcher. However, the sessions between the researcher and the students of SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock were done through the convenience of using e-mails. This was to avoid any interference to their school activities.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is where information is gathered through different sources. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 142) describe data collection as “information, evidence or facts” that are used to gain a “better understanding of a phenomenon.” Therefore, it is important for the researchers to be clear and specific about the type of data that they collect, be it qualitative or quantitative or both (Creswell, 2003, pp. 186-187).

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and interviews in this research. Figure 3.4 illustrates how data were collected.

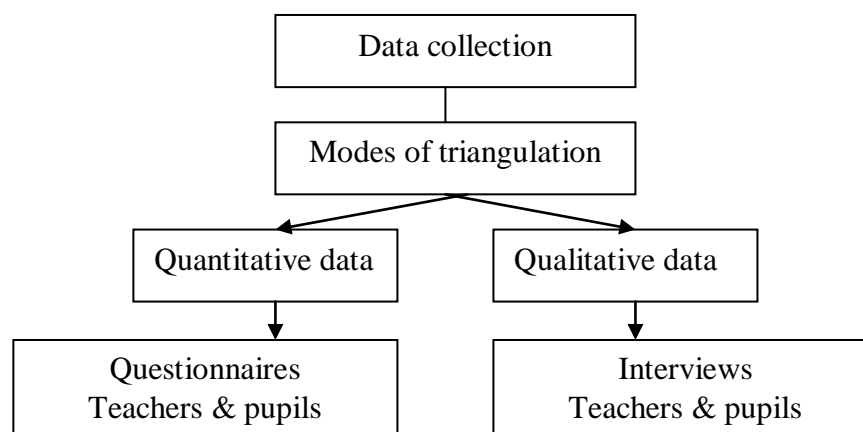


Figure 3.4: Data collection

The following two sections explore the data collection procedures in detail.

3.7.1 Administering the questionnaires

First, the data was collected using mode of questionnaires. For this research, two versions of questionnaires were prepared for the teachers and ex-students, respectively. In Year 2009, the questionnaires were piloted with the researcher's colleagues who taught Year Four English in a class of forty-five Year Four students. They were then modified and improvised to suit the research questions of this study.

In order not to interfere with the pupils' studies and preparation for the UPSR examination, the questionnaires were only distributed to the pupils after the UPSR examination. With the consent from the respective schools' authority, the researcher agreed to conduct the research without interfering the school, teachers and pupils' daily activities in school.

3.7.1.1 Administering teachers' questionnaire

For the teachers' questionnaires, the researcher handed personally to them. In order not to interfere with the participating teachers' daily chores, there was no specific

time set for them to answer the questionnaires. However, they were given a timeframe to return the forms within two weeks. This is to avoid misplacing of the forms. A briefing on the aim of conducting such session and how to answer the questionnaires was given to the participating teachers upon giving the questionnaires. They were ensured of the privacy and confidentiality of their views. The researcher could be contacted via mobile phone and e-mail should the participating teachers have any queries or doubts pertaining to the questionnaires. All the questionnaires were returned in due time.

3.7.1.2 Administering students' questionnaire

The selected Year 6 students were called to attempt the questionnaires at a “questionnaires session” at a predetermined time during school-hour on a specific day in the respective school. This predetermined time was mutually convenient to the participants and researcher. The session lasted approximately an hour.

As a teacher herself, the researcher needed to prioritise her responsibility of teaching, she could not personally administer the “questionnaires session” at SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock in person. However, she was fortunate to get a Year Four teacher in SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock to administer the session in the school. Prior briefing on how to conduct the session was delivered to the said teacher. As for the “questionnaires session” in SJKC Subang, since it is the school of the researcher, it was carried out smoothly. The researcher administered the questionnaire session herself.

Before administering to the questionnaires, the students were briefed on the aim of the questionnaire and how the students were selected. They were also guided on how to answer the questionnaires. To minimise ambiguity and misunderstanding by the ex-

students, due to the mixed ability in understanding English, the questions were read out and translated into Mandarin. They were further explained when the ex-students forwarded their doubts. In this way, the possibility of getting unanswered items could be mitigated.

3.7.1.3 Conducting the interviews

Three teachers were interviewed face-to-face after school hours within the school compound of their respective school. The interviews with the students of SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock were done through e-mails in English. The students in SJKC Subang were interviewed over several sessions within the school compound, at a time convenient to both the researcher and the participants. Most questions were translated into Mandarin for the weaker students so that they could understand the intended questions. Responses were noted down.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the next step after gathering the relevant information. Lynch (1996, p. 139) states that the primary step in the data analysis process is to focus on the research. Figure 3.5 illustrates the data analysis procedures:

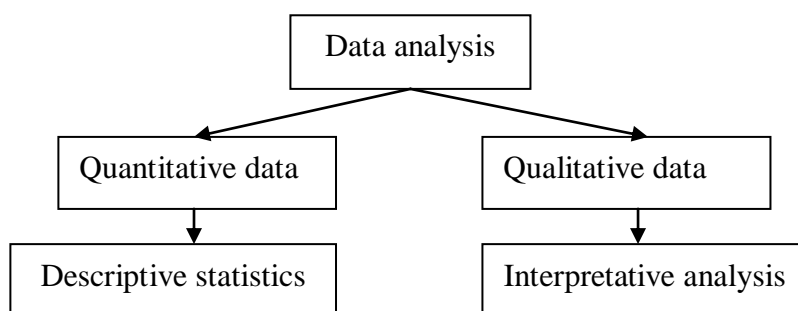


Figure 3.5: Data analysis

3.8.1 Analysing questionnaires

The quantitative data were obtained and analysed using descriptive statistics. Data from the questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. Frequencies and percentages from each question were computed and derived at tables and charts.

3.8.2 Analysing interviews

Interviews were analysed descriptively through thematic analysis to obtain qualitative data. The data was organised, categorised, coded, reduced, summarised, synthesized, interpreted and finally reported. Creswell (2003, pp. 191-195) suggests six steps in analysing qualitative data:

- 1- organise and arrange the data for analysis
- 2- read all the data
- 3- analyse and code the data
- 4- create categories, themes and patterns for analysis
- 5- think of ways of representing themes
- 6- interpret and make sense of data

In the process of analysing, the researcher tried to find some “patterns, categories, or themes” (Creswell, 1994, p.154). Through the patterns, the researcher had a clearer picture to compare and comment on the outcome of interviews arrived earlier. Figure 3.6 illustrates the steps in the interview analysis.

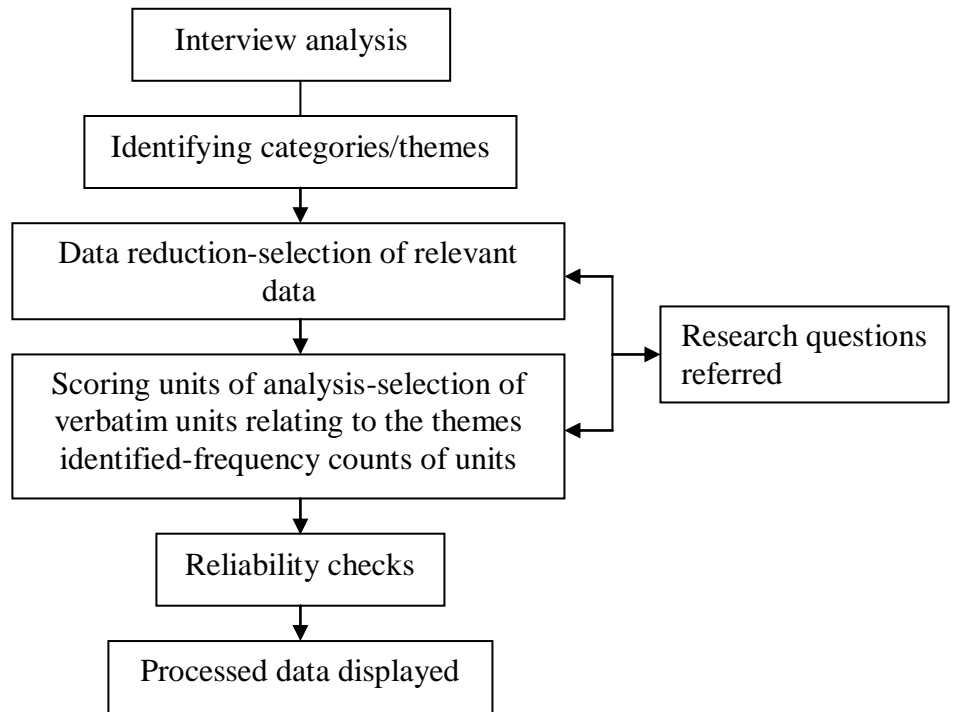


Figure 3.6: Analysis of interview data

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the design and methodology of the present research which was divided into five parts: research methodology, conceptual framework, sampling, data collection and data analysis. A mixed method approach was chosen based on the research questions, the researcher's experience, the prospective audience and the benefit of convenience in data collection for the researcher while juggling with daily busy schedule. Description on sampling was given. Data collection was discussed and lastly, the description on the data analysis methods and procedures.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The data collected by way of questionnaires and interviews was analysed and tabulated in figures and percentages. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 was used in the analysis of quantitative descriptive data, whereas the qualitative descriptive data was analysed by way of interpretation by the researcher.

With reference to the research questions, five criteria, namely, objectives, contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises were selected for this study. They were evaluated against their relevance to the questions set in the UPSR examination. As such, an analysis on the past years examination questions was tabulated for comparison (Appendix E). Last but not least, the exercises in the textbook were evaluated against the elements of the Bloom's Taxonomy. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented in the last part.

4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The two groups of samples chosen for this research were teachers and students.

4.2.1 Teachers' background

Eight teachers teaching Year Four were selected. The following table shows their experience in teaching English. This is reflected in Section A of the teacher questionnaires. The number of years of teaching English varies from 4 years to 29 years. Among them, there were 3 who have the experience of marking the UPSR English

Paper. Questionnaires were distributed to them and all responded and returned the questionnaires. As for interviews, in trying to draw a balance between the numbers of years in teaching English, the teacher with 29 years of teaching English experience, along one with 11 years and 4 years were chosen. The rationale was teachers with different number of years' experience are able to give different views based on their experiences.

Table 4.1: Teachers' years of teaching experience

Teacher	Age	Years of teaching	Years of teaching English
T1	50	29	29
T2	62	40	15
T3	53	30	15
T4	36	11	11
T5	34	11	11
T6	44	20	6
T7	39	6	6
T8	47	7	4

4.2.2 Students' background

All the students were aged 12 at the time of the research. In the Malaysian primary education system, upon reaching 12-year-old, a child is required to sit for the UPSR examination. Since the samples were controlled variables, a number of 30 students were selected from each school. A summary of the sampling is provided as below:

Table 4.2: Distribution of students for Questionnaires

School	Total
SJKC Subang	30
SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock	30
Total	60

For the interviews, 8 students were chosen. The following table shows a summary of the distribution of interview samples for students:

Table 4.3: Distribution of students for Interview

School	Total
SJKC Subang	4
SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock	4
Total	8

4.3 OBJECTIVES OF EACH TOPIC IN THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook itself laid a series of objectives based on the syllabus set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (Appendix F). These objectives are considered as one of the criteria for evaluation in this research. They were included in the questionnaires for teachers to evaluate their relevance to the UPSR examination. The students were excluded because they did not have the knowledge and maturity to evaluate the objectives. The objectives were analysed individually in accordance with the 13 units in the textbook. This was indicated in Section B of the questionnaires for teachers. The following are the results from the analysis of the objectives. The responses of the teachers were analysed in term of the relevance of the objectives to the UPSR examination, which were indicated by *Yes* and *No* or otherwise.

4.3.1 Teacher's Responses to Questionnaires

Table 4.4 portrays the summary of frequency (*f*) and percentage (%) of teachers' opinion in response to research question number 1(i) in the questionnaire.

Table 4.4: Teachers' opinions on Objectives

No.	Response				Topic/Objective	Total no. of items	Total % of items
	Yes		No				
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%			
i	8	100.0	0	0.0	2c, 3d, 5b, 5c, 8b, 8d, 9d, 9e, 10b, 10d, 13c, 13d	12	17.91
ii	7	87.5	1	12.5	1c, 2a, 3c, 4b, 4c, 6d, 7a, 7b, 9c, 11c, 11e, 12c, 12d, 13a	14	20.90
iii	6	75.0	2	25.0	2b, 6b, 8c, 10e, 11a, 11d, 12b, 12e, 13b	9	13.43
iv	5	67.5	3	37.5	1b, 3b, 7c, 8a, 11b	5	7.46
v	4	50.0	4	50.0	1d, 1f, 6a, 6c, 7d	5	7.46
vi	3	37.5	5	67.5	1a, 2d, 10c	3	4.48
vii	2	25.0	6	75.0	2e, 3e, 4a, 4d, 5d, 5e, 6e, 12a	8	11.94
viii	1	12.5	7	87.5	3a ,5a, 10a, 10f	4	5.97
ix	0	0.0	8	100.0	1e, 7e, 8e, 9a, 9b, 11f, 13e	7	10.45
Total no. of items						67	100

For the objectives, the questionnaire aims to look at their relevance to the UPSR examination. All the teachers agreed that items 2c, 3d, 5b, 5c, 8d, 9d, 9e, 10b, 10d, 13c and 13d are relevant to the UPSR examination. These items comprise of 12 items (17.91%) of the total number of 67 items. As for items 1c, 2a, 3c, 4b, 4c, 6d, 7a, 7b, 9c, 11c, 11e, 12c, 12d and 13a, totalling 14 items (20.90%), 7 teachers agreed. However, 1 teacher disagreed. All these items involved the teaching of sounds and its relevant activities. The only teacher disagreed probably due to the reason that sound systems are not tested in the UPSR per se. Nevertheless, the sound systems help in the oral assessment which is a part of the UPSR examination. 6 teachers agreed and 2 teachers disagreed to nine items (13.43%) namely items 2b, 6b, 8c, 10e, 11a, 11d, 12b, 12e and 13b. The difference in opinions occurred because the 2 teachers had overlooked the skills learned in the respective activities, and the pupils' application of such skills during their UPSR attempt. The responses to the 5 items (7.46%) of 1b, 3b, 7c, 8a and 11b as well as the 5 items (7.46%) of 1d, 1f, 6a, 6c, 7d were almost the same (refer Appendix C). This depends very much on how the teachers interpreted the skills learned in these activities, were applicable in the UPSR. The 3 items (4.48%) of items

1a, 2d and 10c drew 3 *Yes*. These teachers probably regarded comprehensions as stories. The other 5 teachers who chose *No*, probably think that since no story text was examined throughout the last 7 years of UPSR, therefore is not relevant to the UPSR. The responses to the 8 items (11.94%) of 2e, 3e, 4a, 4d, 5d, 5e, 6e and 12a has 2 *Yes* and 6 *No*. The teachers' opinions differed because most of these items involved the learning of sound systems except for items 4a and 12a which concerned stories. The teachers' mixed responses were like what mentioned earlier about the skills learned in sound system and stories. For the 4 items (5.97%) of 3a, 5a, 10a and 10f, only 1 teacher agreed to the relevance and 7 teachers, vice versa. This 1 teacher was probably not familiar with the UPSR examination rubric. No teachers agreed to the 7 items (10.45%) of 1e, 7e, 8e, 9a, 9b, 11f and 13e because the skills learned are not tested in the UPSR.

4.3.2 Teachers' Responses to Interview

Three teachers were involved in the interview. 2 from SJKC Subang and 1 from SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock. 2 teachers with teaching English experience of 29 years and 11 years respectively have experience in marking the UPSR English examination paper. The third has 4 years of teaching English experience. The responses to the interview were interpreted by the researcher.

Generally, in their comments on question 1 (refer [Appendix D](#)), all the teachers agree that the objectives comply with the learning outcomes stipulated in the Curriculum Specifications of the revised Integrated Curriculum for Primary Schools syllabus for Year 4 (refer [Appendix E](#)). These objectives can be achieved through the attempt of various exercises and activities in the topics of the textbook. The practice of exercises help to enhance language skills, widen knowledge of language contents especially grammar and vocabulary as well as enrich the different educational emphases.

However, the teachers also commented from the point of the UPSR examination, some objectives are not relevant such as sing songs and recite poems.

4.4 CONTENTS

There are 13 topics in the textbook covering various contents ranging from friends to nature. Generally, they are classified under three main themes i.e. *World of Self, Family and Friends*, *World of Stories*, and *World of Knowledge*. As such the layout of the contents for each topic is different. In some topics, words or phrases are introduced through comprehension texts, others through dialogues or in isolation. Sound systems can be found at the end of each topic. Literature components which are currently not tested in the UPSR examination are found in certain topics. Other items include grammatical items, exercises and activities. Appendix E enlists the topics in the textbook.

4.4.1 Teachers' Responses to Questionnaires

The teachers' perception towards each item was indicated by frequency (f) and percentage (%). Table 4.5 shows the responses of the 8 teachers towards the contents in the textbook, data was collected by way of questionnaires.

Table 4.5: Teachers' opinions on Contents

Item	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
C1					5	62.5	2	25	1	12.5
C2					7	87.5	1	12.5		
C3					3	37.5	5	62.5		
C4			2	25	4	50	2	25		
C5					3	37.5	5	62.5		
C6					1	12.5	7	87.5		
C7					1	12.5	3	37.5	4	50
C8					4	50	2	25	2	25
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
C9			1	12.5	1	12.5	6	75		
C10							8	100		
C11					2	25	6	75		

Responses to item C1: topics are interesting [5 (62.5%) Some, 2 (25%) Many, 1 (12.5%) All]; C2: up-to-date [7 (87.5%) Some, 1 (12.5%) Many]; C3: have enough practical examples [3 (37.5%), 5 (62.5%) Many]; C4: well-organised [2 (25%) A few, 4 (50%) Some, 2 (25%) Many]; C5: easy to difficult and near to far [3(37.5%) Some, 5 (62.5%) Many]; C6: easily understand [1 (12.5%) Some, 7 (87.5%) Many]; C7: within the UPSR examination scope [1 (12.5%), 3 (37.5%) Many, 4 (50%) All] and C8: tested in the UPSR examination [4 (50%) Some, 2 (25%) Many, 2 (25%) All]; C9: suitable for 10-year-old students [1 (12.5%) Disagree, 1 (12.5%) Not sure, 6 (75%) Agree]; C10: fulfilled the themes of World of Self, Family and Friends; Stories and Knowledge [8 (100%) Agree] and C11: culturally appropriate [2 (25%) Not Sure, 6 (75%) Agree].

Generally, the teachers approve of the contents of the textbook except for 2 teachers who think that the topics are less organised. A teacher disagrees on the suitability of the contents for 10-year-old students as she thinks that the topics seem difficult for those who are weak in English.

4.4.2 Teachers' Responses to Interviews

Teachers' responses to question 2 of the interview questions (refer [Appendix D](#)) were interpreted together with the comments given in items C12 to C14 ([Appendix C](#)). Till far, a few of the topics were examined in the UPSR examination, either as a question on its own or implicitly with other topics of other standards. Therefore, the teachers think that to an extent, these contents are important to the UPSR examination.

Nevertheless, they think that the contents can be made more interesting by updating current matters expanding across to other curriculum like, science and technology, civic, arts, physical education, etc. In this way, learners can improve their knowledge. The teachers think that contextual English is more effective because they think that learners are more keen to learn a second language if they find that the language is practical.

4.4.3 Students' Responses to Questionnaires

The following tables show the students' responses to questionnaires which are denoted in frequency (*f*) and percentage (%). Table 4.6 shows students' responses towards contents. The schools' names are abbreviated as SJKC Subang: Sbg and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock: Tcl.

Table 4.6: Students' opinions on Contents

Item	School	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
B1	Sbg	5	16.67	4	13.33	13	43.33	8	26.67		
	Tcl	1	3.33	7	23.33	17	56.67	2	6.67	3	10
B2	Sbg	7	23.33	7	23.33	13	43.33	3	10		
	Tcl	4	13.33	8	26.67	16	53.33	2	6.67		
B3	Sbg	1	3.33	4	13.33	7	23.33	13	43.33	5	16.67
	Tcl			5	16.67	11	36.67	11	36.67	3	10
B4	Sbg	1	3.33	4	13.33	16	53.33	2	6.67	7	23.33
	Tcl	2	6.67	9	30	11	36.67	8	26.67		
B5	Sbg	2	6.67	9	30	7	23.33	9	30	1	3.33
	Tcl	2	6.67	8	26.67	9	30	5	16.67	6	20
B6	Sbg	2	6.67	3	10	13	43.33	5	16.67	7	23.33
	Tcl			2	6.67	9	30	14	46.67	5	16.67
B7	Sbg	3	10	9	30	12	40	5	16.67	1	3.33
	Tcl	4	13.33	6	20	16	53.33	3	10	1	3.33
B8	Sbg	2	6.67	5	16.67	11	36.67	8	26.67	4	13.33
	Tcl	4	13.33	12	40	13	43.33	1	3.33		
Item	School	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
B9	Sbg			3	10	12	40	11	36.67	4	13.33
	Tcl	7	23.33	2	6.67	5	16.67	15	50	1	3.33
B10	Sbg	1	3.33	4	13.33	4	13.33	14	46.67	7	23.33
	Tcl	1	3.33	2	6.67	7	23.33	19	63.33	1	3.33
B11	Sbg	3	10	4	13.33	14	46.67	9	30		
	Tcl					12	40	15	50	3	10

From items B1 to B8, most students of SJKC Subang and SJKC Tun Tan Cheng Lock chose *Some* and *Many*. Unlike other items, B6: easy to difficult and near to far only drew a total of 46.67% agreement by Tcl's students in choosing these choices. All the other items amounted to more than 50%. At least 1 (3.33%) student to 7 (23.33%) students chose the *None* and *All* choices. However, some chose to omit in choosing these two choices. For items B3: have enough practical examples and B6: easily understand, Tcl's students did not choose the *None* choice. This happened to *All* too. Sbg's students did not make any choice in items B1: topics are interesting and B2: up-to-date. So did Tcl's students, who did not choose items B2: up-to-date, B4: well-organised and B8: tested in the UPSR examination. These vary in opinion probably because of the difference in interest of the participating students, who came from different backgrounds and with different levels of English proficiency.

As for items B9 to B11, quite a number of students chose *Not sure* especially in item B11: culturally appropriate [Sbg (14, 46.67%); Tcl (12, 40%)]. 12 (40%) of Sbg's students but only 5 (16.67%) Tcl's students were not sure of item B9: suitable for 10-year-old students. However, the responses on item B10 are almost similar for both schools. This item gets the most agreement from the students of both schools Sbg (14, 46.67%); Tcl (19, 63.33%). Overall, the percentage of agreement is high for all three items except item B11 which gained 30% (9) from Sbg's students. Neither responded to *Strongly disagree* (item B9) nor *Strongly agree* (item B11) by Sbg's students. So did Tcl's students in item B11 (*Strongly disagree*; *Disagree*). The reasons for such response could be the immaturity and lack of knowledge of the students towards the three issues.

4.4.4 Students' Responses to Interviews

The students of both schools thought that only certain topics were interesting. Their interests differ as one's choice did not appear to be another's like. Most of them prefer the contents to be up-to date especially to include the latest technology and contemporary issues and stories.

They agreed that some contents were relevant to the UPSR examination. However, 2 students from SJKC Subang thought that the language used is difficult especially if there was no guidance from their teachers. The rest of them could handle well.

4.5 VOCABULARY

The vocabulary in the textbook ranges from single word to phrases introduced in context or in isolation. They are presented through various manners, in colours, bold, pictures etc.

4.5.1 Teachers' Responses to Questionnaires

The results of the findings are tabled in Table 4.7, Table 4.8 and 4.9 as follow.

Table 4.7: Teachers' Responses on Vocabulary

Item	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
D1	1	12.5			5	62.5	2	25		
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
D2			1	12.5			7	87.5		
D3			3	37.5	2	25	3	37.5		
D4			4	50			4	50		
D5					3	37.5	5	62.5		
D6					2	25	6	75		
D7					2	25	6	75		

The teachers' responses can be analysed from two points of view. First, in D1, 5 (62.5%) teachers thought that new vocabulary items are highlighted in the text. However, 1 (12.5%) teacher thought that none of the new vocabulary items are highlighted in the text. This is odd because probably the teacher concerned is either not familiar with the textbook or hardly used it. Secondly, items D2 to D7 were assessed in terms of the extent of agreement. Item D2 shows that 7 (87.5%) teachers agreed that the new vocabulary items are easy to understand. The 1 (12.5%) teacher who disagreed probably taught those weak students who had difficulty in learning vocabulary. For Item D3, different teachers gave different opinions on whether new vocabulary items are reinforced subsequently. 3 (37.5%) *Disagree*, 2 (25%) were *Not Sure* said 3 (37.5%) *Agree*. This varied because different teachers have different approaches in teaching

vocabulary. Therefore, their interpretation of reinforcement differs. As for number of new vocabulary items, item D4: satisfied with the number of new vocabulary items, 4 (50%) chose A few and 4 (50%) chose Many. This again depends on the teachers' experience in teaching English and their students' level of English. Many teachers agreed to items D5, D6 and D7 where the new vocabulary items are useful for the four skills assessment. 3 (37.5%) said Some and 5 (62.5%) Many were of the opinion that the new vocabulary was useful for listening and speaking assessment. Whereas, 2 (25%) and 6 (75%) teachers thought that the new vocabulary are useful for reading and writing assessment. In comparison with the scope of the UPSR examination (refer Appendix E), no teachers think the vocabulary items in this text and book are sufficient.

4.5.2 Teachers' Responses to Interviews

In this part, the researcher again interprets the teachers' comments on interview question no. 3 ([Appendix D](#)) with their responses to item D8 of the teacher questionnaires ([Appendix C](#)). In relation to the coverage of vocabulary for the UPSR examination, all three teachers think it is not sufficient though more will be acquired in Year 5 and 6. Most of the senior teachers think that it would be appropriate to introduce more vocabulary especially collective nouns, similes and phrasal verbs. Others suggest less common occupations, proverbs and idioms.

According to them, the knowledge of more vocabulary helps in enhancing writing skills which is beneficial to score in particularly, Section C: Note expansion of Paper 2 ([Appendix E](#)) in the UPSR examination. Since, the textbook does not cover much vocabulary, many teachers resort to use other materials like workbooks to help build students' vocabulary. A teacher, whose students are less proficient, suggests the vocabulary need to be introduced in stages: word to phrase, easy to difficult and to be taught in isolation then in context.

4.5.3 Students' Responses to Questionnaires

Table 4.8: Students' Responses on Vocabulary

Item	School	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
C1	Sbg	5	16.67	5	16.67	11	36.67	4	13.33	5	16.67
	Tcl	5	16.67	9	30	8	26.67	5	16.67	3	10
C2	Sbg	1	3.33	6	20	10	33.33	9	30	1	3.33
	Tcl	2	6.67	6	20	10	33.33	6	20	6	20
C3	Sbg	2	6.67	7	23.33	12	40	9	30		
	Tcl			6	20	13	43.33	9	30	2	6.67
Item	School	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
C4	Sbg	4	13.33	6	20	8	26.67	7	23.33	5	16.67
	Tcl	2	6.67	3	10	7	23.33	14	46.67	4	13.33
C5	Sbg	4	13.33	4	13.33	6	20	13	43.33	2	6.67
	Tcl	6	20	5	16.67	3	10	8	26.67	8	26.67
C6	Sbg	1	3.33	3	10	6	20	14	13.33	6	20
	Tcl	4	13.33	3	10	8	26.67	12	40	3	10
C7	Sbg	1	3.33	3	10	9	30	6	20	10	33.33
	Tcl	2	6.67	5	16.67	6	20	11	36.67	6	20

The students' responses on vocabulary are mixed. All the items received certain responses except item C3: new vocabulary items are reinforced subsequently, where Sbg's students did not respond to *All* and Tcl's students to *None*. Generally, most responded to *Some* in items C1: new vocabulary items are highlighted in the text, C2: new vocabulary items are easy to understand and C3: new vocabulary items are reinforced subsequently.

Most students chose the *Agree* choice for items C4: satisfied with the number of new vocabulary items, C5, C6 and C7: new vocabulary items are useful for the four skills (listening and speaking, reading and writing) assessment. About 20% to 26 % students were *Not sure* of these items. Below 20% chose the *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree* and *Strongly agree* choices except 26.67% (8) Tcl's students chose item C5: new vocabulary items are useful for listening and speaking assessment. Since English vocabulary is unlimited, the number of words and phrases to apply in the UPSR examination is also not construed to those gained through the textbook.

4.5.4 Students' Responses to Interviews

The students of TcI said they had no difficulty understanding most of the words in the textbook as they read many other English books. However, a Sbg's student admitted that besides the English materials used in school, he has never read other English books. Throughout the, interview session, this student communicates mostly in Mandarin. Another, said she did not understand some terms. The rest had no problem understanding the textbook.

During their preparation for the UPSR examination, the students attempted the English workbooks implied by their respective school. They have no idea whether the vocabulary are sufficient. A few of them confidently acknowledged they could answer the English Paper in the UPSR examination.

4.6 GRAMMAR

Most of the grammatical items are in context rather than in isolation. They include punctuations, parts of speech, tenses, sequence connectors etc.

4.6.1 Teachers' Responses to Questionnaires

The teachers' responses towards grammar are summarised in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Teachers' Responses on Grammar

Item	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%

E1			2	25	2	25	4	50		
E2	1	12.5			3	37.5	4	50		
E3	1	12.5	3	37.5	2	25	3	37.5		
E4					4	50	4	50		
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
E5			3	37.5	2	25	3	37.5		

The teachers' ideas on item E1: grammatical items are covered extensively, vary. From the table above, except for 1 (12.5%) teacher who thinks that *None* fulfilled items E2: grammatical points are well organised and E3: grammatical points are taught exclusively. However, no teacher chose *All* for items E1 to E4: grammatical points are taught in contexts. 3 (37.5%) disagree with item E5: the textbook covers enough grammatical items for answering the UPSR examination.

4.6.2 Teachers' Responses to Interviews

In response to question 4 of the interview question ([Appendix D](#)), the teachers comment that some grammar items had been taught in Year 1 to Year 3. The new grammar items in the textbook are arranged either under an exclusive sub-topic or blended in text passages. Some of those in context are highlighted in different colours, etc.

The teachers commented that grammar is important in language learning and forms a major part in the UPSR English Paper. Therefore, every new grammar item should be more advance as the lessons go by. According to the suggestions in items E6 and E7 of the teacher questionnaires ([Appendix C](#)), grammar items such as adverbs, present continuous tense and positive and negative statements need to be introduced as these items are commonly examined in the UPSR paper. However, they are not found in the textbook. Students are taught from workbooks. Relevant grammatical items

including subject-verb agreement, sentence connectors, etc. taught in previous lessons should not be left out. Instead, they can be categorised under a sub-title of revision before leading to the new grammar items.

4.6.3 Students' Responses to Questionnaires

The following Table 4.10 is the analysis of data collected pertaining to students' responses towards grammar.

Table 4.10: Students' Responses on Grammar

Item	School	None		A few		Some		Many		All	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
D1	Sbg	7	23.33	3	10	9	30	9	30	1	3.33
	Tcl	2	6.67	10	33.33	11	36.67	7	23.33		
D2	Sbg	3	10	9	30	12	40	3	10	2	6.67
	Tcl			10	33.33	9	30	10	33.33	1	3.33
D3	Sbg	2	6.67	7	23.33	11	36.67	8	26.67	2	6.67
	Tcl			6	20	18	60	6	20		
D4	Sbg			6	20	13	43.33	10	33.33	1	3.33
	Tcl	1	3.33	7	23.33	13	43.33	6	20	3	10
Item	School	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
D5	Sbg	1	3.33	7	23.33	19	63.33	1	3.33	2	6.67
	Tcl	4	13.33	7	23.33	5	16.67	14	46.67		

Tcl's students did not respond to *None* of items D2: grammatical points are well organised and D3: grammatical points are taught exclusively. So did Sbg's students respond to item D4: grammatical points are taught in contexts. On the other hand, Tcl's students also did not respond to *All* of item D1: grammatical items are covered extensively, item D3 and the *Strongly agree* of D5: the textbook covers enough grammatical items for answering the UPSR examination. All the responses in *None* and *All* did not exceed 10%. The choices of *A few*, *Some* and *Many* received responses from at least 6 (20%) to 10 (33.33%) with the exception of 18 (60%) in *Some* by Tcl's students on item D3. A low number of 3 (10%) Sbg's students responded to *Many* in item D2.

For item D5: the textbook covers enough grammatical items for answering the UPSR examination, 19 (63.33%) Sbg's students were *Not sure* and 14 (46.67%) Tcl's students *Agree* to it. Learning grammatical points depends on many factors such as language proficiency, teaching methods, reading and practising extensively, etc.

4.6.4 Students' Responses to Interview

From the interview, the students said that the textbook did not show many new grammatical items per se. Some commented that the grammatical items were insufficient for the UPSR examination and 2 were not sure. They said they learned more through teachers' explanation and attempting practises in the workbooks.

4.7 EXERCISES

Exercises can be found after a comprehension text, grammar practice, in the form of completion of sentences based on pictures, identification of newly learned vocabulary etc. Table 4.11 shows the responses to teachers' questionnaires on exercises.

4.7.1 Teachers' Responses to Questionnaires

Table 4.11 Teachers' Responses on Exercises

Item	No	Yes			
		A few	Some	Many	All

	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
F1			1	12.5	7	87.5				
F2			4	50	2	25	2	25		
F3							8	100		
F4					6	75	2	25		
F5			4	50	4	50				
F6			1	12.5	2	25	5	62.5		
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
F7					1	12.5	7	87.5		
F8							7	87.5	1	12.5
F9			1	12.5	3	37.5	4	50		
F10			2	25	3	37.5	3	37.5		

Again, teachers neither keep a neutral standing by choosing *No*, *Strongly disagree*, *Yes (All)* nor *Strongly agree* for items F1 to F10. Nevertheless, 1 (12.5%) teacher chose Strongly agree on item F8. For items F1: attempting the exercises, F2: organised from easy to difficult, F3: pupils' ability to attempt the exercises without guidance, F4: relevance of sample questions and answers to the UPSR examination, F5: pupils' ability attempting the UPSR format questions, F6: usage of other materials, F7: help pupils to understand lessons better, F8: exercises on vocabulary and grammatical knowledge need to acquire from other resources for the UPSR examination, F9: variety of exercises, and F10: help pupils to be more analytical, creative and critical thinking and enhance teamwork, many teachers agree the exercises are helpful.

4.7.2 Teachers' Responses to Interviews

Due to time constraint, the teachers said most of the time they use the exercises in workbooks which are in the format of the UPSR examination. To save time, they pick those exercises which they think more practical and relevant to the UPSR examination. Moreover, to the teacher, whose students are weak in English, she thinks that some exercises are confusing for her students.

The teachers agree that more exercises of different levels of proficiency are necessary so that students can attempt those that suit their level. To cultivate more analytical, creative and critical thinking students, there needs to be various types of exercises and activities which are interesting and challenging. They can be group activities where all the students can learn through teamwork. In this way, the better ones can help the weaker ones.

4.7.3 Students' Responses to Questionnaires

Table 4.12 shows the students' responses on exercises.

Table 4.12: Students' Responses on Exercises

Item	School	No		Yes							
				A few		Some		Many		All	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
E1	Sbg	4	13.33	10	33.33	7	23.33	6	20	3	10
	Tcl	4	13.33	6	20	5	16.67	8	26.67	7	23.33
E2	Sbg	4	13.33	1	3.33	12	40	3	10	1	3.33
	Tcl	1	3.33	5	16.67	13	43.33	7	23.33	4	13.33
E3	Sbg	4	13.33	4	13.33	9	30	8	26.67	5	16.67
	Tcl			9	30	12	40	6	20	3	10
E4	Sbg	2	6.67	7	23.33	15	50	6	20		
	Tcl	9	30	8	26.67	11	36.67	2	6.67		
E5	Sbg	6	20	10	33.33	8	26.67	5	16.67	1	3.33
	Tcl	6	20	4	13.33	14	46.67	6	20		
E6	Sbg	2	6.67	6	20	11	36.67	9	30	2	6.67
	Tcl			10	33.33	7	56.67	8	26.67	5	16.67
Item	School	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
E7	Sbg	2	6.67	5	16.67	9	30	10	33.33	4	13.33
	Tcl	1	3.33	3	10	4	13.33	18	60	4	13.33
E8	Sbg			4	13.33	6	20	16	53.33	4	13.33
	Tcl			7	23.33	7	23.33	13	43.33	3	10
E9	Sbg	1	3.33	8	26.67	11	36.67	7	23.33	3	10
	Tcl			4	13.33	8	26.67	18	60		
E10	Sbg	4	13.33	3	10	10	33.33	11	36.67	2	6.67
	Tcl	3	10	4	13.33	5	16.67	14	46.67	4	13.33

Concerning the element of exercises, items E1 to E6 are measured in terms of *No* and *Yes*. *Yes* is divided into 4 categories, namely: *A few*, *Some*, *Many* and *All*. E1 concerns the frequency of students' attempts of the exercises in the textbook. For this item, both schools' (Sbg and TCL) students have the same number of 4 (13.33%)

students who said that they have had never attempted the exercises. The rest of the students gave varied responses to *A few*, *Some*, *Many* and *All*. This is probably due to the substitution of the said exercises with those from other resources such as workbooks.

E2 is concerned with the organisation of the exercises from easy to difficult. Only 1 (3.33%) student from TCL thought that the exercises are not organised. 1 (3.33%) student chose to respond *A few* and another (3.33%) said *All* are organised. These differences in opinion probably due to the different learning abilities of the different students. The weak one probably has difficulties in understanding the exercises. Whereas, the moderate one probably chose to respond *A few* and the good one said *All*. These choices could be otherwise since only the students' teachers would have known their level of proficiency. Most students chose *Some* [Sbg 12 (40%); TCL 13 (43.33%)].

E3 looks at the students' ability in attempting the exercises without guidance. In this case, only 4 (13.33%) students of Sbg replied *No*. This means they could not attempt the exercises without any guidance from the teachers. The students of TCL generally have better proficiency in English. Therefore, they have no difficulties in attempting the exercises without any guidance from their teachers.

E4 is regarding the relevance of sample questions and answers to the UPSR examination. For this item, none of the students from both schools chose *All*. However, most students of both schools chose *Some* [Sbg 15 (50%); TCL 11(36.67%)]. The students have different opinions with regard to the relevance of the sample questions and answers to the UPSR. The differences in opinions are probably due to the extent of the students' knowledge and understanding of the said relevance.

E5 concerns the students' ability in attempting the UPSR format questions by doing just the exercises in the textbook. Only 1 (3.33%) student from Sbg thought that the exercises are sufficient for him or her to attempt the UPSR format questions. This is probably not true as all the students from both schools are exposed to the format, one way or another by their teachers.

E6 is about the usage of other materials by the students, other than the textbook. 2 (6.67%) students from Sbg responded *No*. This means they only used the exercises in the textbook. In contrast, 2 (6.67%) from Sbg and 5 (16.67%) from TCL responded *All*, that is, they only used other resources and not the exercises in the textbook. These students' responses to only *No* or *All* are questionable. These students were probably not certain of the resources of the exercises they used. This could be proven by comparing to the responses given by the teachers in Table 4.11. None of the teachers chose *No* nor *All*.

The other part of the questionnaires, items E7 to E10, are measured in terms of *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree*, *Not sure*, *Agree* and *Strongly agree*. E7 concerns the exercises help the students to understand the lessons better. Many students *Agree* that the exercises are helpful [Sbg 10 (33.33%); TCL 18 (60%)].

E8 is regarding the vocabulary and grammatical knowledge for the UPSR examination need to be acquired from other resources beside those from the exercises in the textbook. No students from both schools chose *Strongly Disagree*. Generally the students need to gain their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge from other resources beside the textbook.

E9 looks into the variety of exercises found in the textbook. 1 (3.33%) student from Sbg thought that there is no variety. No students from TCL chose *Strongly Disagree* nor *Strongly Agree*. However, 3 (10%) of Sbg's students chose *Strongly Agree*.

Lastly, item E10 looks at whether the exercises help the students to be more analytical, creative and critical thinking and enhance teamwork. 4 (13.33%) of Sbg's and 3 (10%) TCL's students *Strongly disagree* that the exercises help them to be more analytical, creative and critical thinking and enhance teamwork. 2 (6.67%) of Sbg's and 4 (13.33%) of TCL's students chose *Strongly agree*. This item received various responses because all the students have different experience in using English.

4.7.4 Students' Responses to Interview

The students, in their interview, told the researcher they attempted those exercises asked to do by their teachers. They said some of the exercises are easy, some difficult. However, attempting the exercises help them to understand the lessons better. Most of the time, they used the workbooks prepared by the school.

The students said they like to have more exercises and activities which are interesting, up to date and challenging.

4.8 BLOOM'S TAXONOMY AND THE EXERCISES

According to the Malaysian's National Education Philosophy and the Education Act of 1996, education is an effort to develop an individual's potential holistically by optimising the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical potential. Hence, Bloom's taxonomy is the core to the education development. The English curriculum for primary schools is designed to gear learners to build a strong foundation in the English

language which is handy for various purposes. Based on this fact, it is important to evaluate the textbook to ensure elements of Bloom's taxonomy are not neglected.

The three domains in Bloom's, namely, *cognitive*, *affective* and *psychomotor* can be related to the potential named above. Cognitive to intellectual, affective to emotional and spiritual, and psychomotor to physical.

In Bloom's (1956) and later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), certain keywords are used to define which categories a learning activity falls under. With reference to the explanation of Bloom's theory in Chapter II, the researcher identifies some common instructions of the exercises in the textbook (Appendix G are some exercises extracted from the textbook). Table 4.13 is a summary comparing instruction words used in the textbook and Bloom's keywords.

Table 4.13: Comparison of words used in the Year 4 SJK English Textbook and Bloom's Taxonomy keywords.

Domain	Category	Words used/Keywords and activities	
		Year 4 SJK English Textbook	Bloom's Taxonomy
Cognitive	Knowledge (Recall data or information)	Choose; say; match; make sentences; arrange; make words; describe; let's try; spell, name, join	defines, describes, identifies, knows, labels, lists, matches, names, outlines, recalls, recognizes, reproduces, selects, states.
	Comprehension (Understand and interpret meaning of instructions and problems and respond in one's own words)	Answer the questions (comprehension), What should be said, fill in, rewrite, like/dislike, which picture	comprehends, converts, defends, distinguishes, estimates, explains, extends, generalizes, gives an example, infers, interprets, paraphrases, predicts, rewrites, summarizes, translates.
	Application (Apply what was learned in the classroom into real life situations)	Write, practise, complete, use, act, solve, add, replace, change, keep a record, find other	applies, changes, computes, constructs, demonstrates, discovers, manipulates, modifies, operates, predicts, prepares, produces, relates, shows, solves, uses.
	Analysis (Look into problems from different angles)	Find out, look at	analyzes, breaks down, compares, contrasts, diagrams, deconstructs, differentiates, discriminates, distinguishes, identifies, illustrates, infers, outlines, relates, selects, separates.
	Synthesis (Create something new by putting various parts together)	Group, design, What do you think happen next?	devises, designs, explains, generates, modifies, organizes, plans, rearranges, reconstructs, relates, reorganizes, revises, rewrites, summarizes, tells, writes.
	Evaluation (Give a value to ideas and or things)	Talk about	appraises, compares, concludes, contrasts, criticizes, critiques, defends, describes, discriminates, evaluates, explains, interprets, justifies, relates, summarises, supports.

Table 4.13 (continued): Comparison of words used in the Year 4 SJK English Textbook and Bloom's Taxonomy keywords.

Domain	Category	Words used/Keywords and activities	
		Year 4 SJK English Textbook	Bloom's Taxonomy
Affective	Receiving (Show awareness, willingness to hear, paying attention)	People in the neighbourhood; match the meaning to road signs; greetings used on different festivals; what is the weather like; describes animals	asks, chooses, describes, follows, gives, holds, identifies, locates, names, points to, selects, sits, erects, replies, uses.
	Responding (Participate and respond to something)	What to say in different situations; surf a website to know more; make a poster; tell a tourist directions	answers, assists, aids, complies, conforms, discusses, greets, helps, labels, performs, practices, presents, reads, recites, reports, selects, tells, writes.
	Valuing (Explicitly appreciate someone/something based on the internalization of a set of specified values)	Who are they?; What do they do?; Write about your parents' occupation; write a favourite sport; invite a friend to a house-warming party	completes, demonstrates, differentiates, explains, follows, forms, initiates, invites, joins, justifies, proposes, reads, reports, selects, shares, studies, works.
	Organization & Conceptualisation (Organise values into priorities by contrasting, comparing, relating, and synthesising values)	Write your own house rules; arrange the steps on how to clean a wound; say which is safe or dangerous; arrange sentences in order; what do you think of the story?	adheres, alters, arranges, combines, compares, completes, defends, explains, formulates, generalizes, identifies, integrates, modifies, orders, organizes, prepares, relates, synthesizes.
	Characterisation (Create a value system that controls learners' behaviour)	Tell which food one likes or dislikes; Is a person healthy?; Create a scouting schedule	acts, discriminates, displays, influences, listens, modifies, performs, practices, proposes, qualifies, questions, revises, serves, solves, verifies.

Table 4.13 (continued): Comparison of words used in the Year 4 SJK English Textbook and Bloom's Taxonomy keywords.

Domain	Category	Words used/Keywords and activities	
		Year 4 SJK English Textbook	Bloom's Taxonomy
Psychomotor	Perception (The ability to use sensory cues to guide motor activity)	Play board games; play a "spy" game; sing a song	chooses, describes, detects, differentiates, distinguishes, identifies, isolates, relates, selects.
	Set (Mindset to act upon something)	Design a card	begins, displays, explains, moves, proceeds, reacts, shows, states, volunteers.
	Guided Response (The early stages in learning a complex skill that includes imitation and trial and error)	Play board games; role-play	copies, traces, follows, react, reproduce, responds
	Mechanism (The intermediate stage in learning a complex skill which can be habitual)	Keep a weather record; prepare a scouting schedule	assembles, calibrates, constructs, dismantles, displays, fastens, fixes, grinds, heats, manipulates, measures, mends, mixes, organizes, sketches.
	Complex Overt Response (The skilful performance of motor acts that involve complex movement patterns)	Surf the internet for information	assembles, builds, calibrates, constructs, dismantles, displays, fastens, fixes, grinds, heats, manipulates, measures, mends, mixes, organises, sketches. (with adverbs or adjectives)
	Adaptation (Modify acquired skills to suit special requirements)	What to say in different situations	adapts, alters, changes, rearranges, reorganizes, revises, varies.
	Origination (Create new movement patterns to suit a particular situation or specific problem)	Design an invitation card, create a scouting schedule	arranges, builds, combines, composes, constructs, creates, designs, initiate, makes, originates.

From the table above, it is obvious that the elements of Bloom's taxonomy are no strangers to the learning of English. Some of the exercises involve more than one level of learning. They could be a stand alone or a combination of two or three or more levels of learning. Sometimes, they could involve one domain or more.

Thus, most exercises in the textbook, reach to at least the third or fourth level of learning especially in the affective and psychomotor domain. However, most learning in the cognitive domain concentrates on the knowledge and comprehension levels.

4.9 SUMMARY

The above analyses were derived from the data gathered by way of questionnaires and interviews. The detailed presentation and discussion portray the teachers and students' perceptions towards the textbook used in this study. The results from the analyses highlighted the participants' opinions. Most parts of the textbook are considered appropriate by the teachers except for certain items here and there. The students' opinion was mixed as their background and proficiency differs. However, generally it was sufficient and suitable for pupils of 10-year-old. The weaknesses in the textbook in terms of the objectives, grammar, vocabulary and exercises can be improvised to cater for current development.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the findings in Chapter IV, several interesting facts were found of the Year Four textbook. The analysis of the data are summarised and presented in this chapter. In addition to the summary, the proposed suggestions by the teachers and students will also be included in this chapter.

A summary of the study is presented in the Section 5.2, followed by a summary of the findings for the elements of objectives, contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises, in regard to the *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR) examination in Section 5.3. In Section 5.4, the suggestions by the teachers and students are spelled out, followed by implications of the research in Section 5.5. Then, the recommendations for further studies are put forward in Section 5.6. The last part is the summary of this chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The main intention of this study was to find out how far the Year Four SJK (Cina/Tamil) English Textbook helps in the preparation of the UPSR examination. Pertaining to that, teachers and year six students' opinions were sought through three research questions.

The first question concentrates on the teachers' opinions on the effectiveness of the textbook, while the second question concentrates on the students' opinions. The

questions for the teachers are divided into three parts. First, the objectives set in the textbook. Second, the elements covering the contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises were looked into. The third part relates to the first and second parts above. It was about their relevance to the questions set in the UPSR examination. The questions for the students were similar to those of the teachers except on the objectives. This is because the researcher realised that the students do not have the maturity and expertise in evaluating this issue. In addition to the two questions above, a third research question checks whether the exercises reflect the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy. To obtain data for this question, teachers' opinions were sought as they have the knowledge of the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy.

This research is a post-use evaluation. It is meant to find out the outcome after using the textbook. For this study, the samples were chosen from two Chinese primary schools in the district of Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. For the methodology, questionnaires and interviews were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. To answer research questions number one and two, the data was analysed quantitatively using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16. As for the qualitative data, they were analysed interpretatively.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this session, a summary of the findings to research questions one and two is presented. The answer to research question three is discussed in the suggestions part of this chapter.

5.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE AND TWO

5.3.1.1 Objectives

Objectives are foremost important as they spell out the target learning outcomes a teacher may want to achieve at the end of a lesson. The objectives in the textbook are drawn up based on the curriculum specifications set by the Ministry of Education. In judging whether the objectives are enough to cover the scope of the UPSR, the teachers generally agreed to most parts but not the sound systems. However, in the analysis, it was found that some teachers' opinions differ from the others. In this difference, some opinion gap is wider than the other. Nevertheless, there are certain items which gained 100% agreement and vice versa.

5.3.1.2 Contents

The contents in this textbook cover a variety of themes. All the themes stipulated by the Ministry of Education are included. The teachers and the students considered the organisation of the thematic-based contents well done as they ranged from easy to difficult and from near to far. According to the UPSR examination scope and analysis, most contents are included (Appendix E). Since the UPSR examination is only into its sixth year at the time of research, there is no doubt more of the contents will be tested in years to come before the new revamp in year 2016. Hence, the participating students found some weaknesses of the textbook irrelevant to the UPSR examination. The teachers generally agreed that the textbook is relevant to the said examination.

However, most students seek some improvement to include contemporary updates in various areas such as science and technology. Some teachers also see the need to keep up to the current pace. The students' preference of improvement differs

due to their interpretation of urban and rural settings as well as modern and traditional settings. This happened probably because of the different background of the students.

5.3.1.3 Vocabulary

This element was much debatable. There is not stipulated limit of the scope to be covered in the UPSR examination. However, the curriculum specification listed a word list contending a minimal number of words to be learned by a student at the end of the six-year primary education. Although most of the vocabulary in the examination questions tested words or phrases from the textbooks used in Year One to Year Six, vocabulary such as similes, idioms, collective nouns, synonyms and antonyms, tenses, etc. could hardly be found in the textbooks. As for the writing sections, students' work are often judged by their knowledge and ability to use the language as creatively. Both teachers and students were not satisfied with the range of vocabulary offered in the said textbook except for a small number of students.

5.3.1.4 Grammar

Overall, the parts of speech and other grammatical items were found in the textbook and tested in the UPSR examination. However, most teachers and students found them not equally distributed. This is because most of them realised the grammatical items are blended in context and not in isolation. As for the sentence construction part, which is important in Paper 2 of the UPSR English, no proper or clear examples were displayed in the textbook except for the traditional substitution tables. There was uncertainty among the teachers in determining the relevance to the UPSR examination. Most students commented the irrelevance of grammatical items to the UPSR examination. This probably happened because students were taught using other

materials rather than the textbook. The dependence on other materials resulted in students' opinions that the textbook was not effective in their UPSR attempt.

5.3.1.5 Exercises

With reference to the research questions, first on the relevance of the exercises to the UPSR examination and secondly, the reflection of Bloom's Taxonomy elements in them were revealed in the findings. The teachers and pupils' reactions differed.

The teachers thought that the exercises were not sufficient for the preparation of the UPSR examination. They thought support from other materials is important. The students gave different comments. Those with good proficiency of English commented the exercises provided were insufficient, some gave neutral responses but the weak thought they were difficult and enough.

On the other hand, most teachers thought that exercises with Bloom's elements were interesting and help to train students to be analytical, creative and critical in their thinking and enhance team spirit. The students gave mixed responses. Some like, some dislike them. Their reactions as such were probably caused by their interpretation and approach in attempting the exercises. Due to the limitation of English Language lessons in school, few exercises and activities were carried out. Even though Bloom's elements are present in the exercises and activities, the formats and styles are limited. For instance, matching and answering comprehension questions in the exercises and "Throw a dice and move" are commonly found in the activities except for a crossword puzzle (Appendix G). In this case, the elements of Bloom's taxonomy in the activities were not richly reflected. The students' preference for activities is of more contemporary such as involving the modern technologies.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS

From the findings of the study, some suggestions by the teachers and students can be inferred to improve the Year Four [Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina/Tamil)] English Textbook. Although the objectives met the requirement of the UPSR examination, they can be improved to inculcate a higher order thinking so as to create a much challenging learning. This not only will improve the level of proficiency but creativity and critical thinking among the students. However, flexibility must be allowed to accommodate the various levels of proficiency, especially the weak ones so as not to dampen their spirit of learning English.

For the other elements in study, contents can be widened and varied to enhance students' knowledge and interest. The scope of vocabulary can be enhanced through exercises and activities. With the change in modern technology and the students' knowledge in the field, exercises and activities can be learned through various links of technology. However, measures have to be taken to ensure at least every school has the privilege to access to the technology. In this way, not only creativity in students can be discovered but also enriched. The same goes to grammar. The characteristics of this element are preferred to be taught in isolation so that the students have a clear idea to the basis of the grammatical items. Enhancement and enrichment to this element can be done in the same manner as of the exercises and activities.

Although many parties view the UPSR examination as important, we must remember it is just an assessment to measure what a student has learned. This must not hinder the continuous learning of the English Language.

5.5 IMPLICATIONS

Judging from the responses of the teachers and students, there are certain characteristics of the textbook favoured by them. Among these characteristics, although there are some preferred by both parties, some otherwise, the differences should not be overlooked. This is because the weaknesses could be improvised and become the strengths in future if proper plans to improve are staged. The comments by the teachers and pupils on weaknesses found in the elements of objectives, contents, vocabulary, grammar and exercises should be considered in the next review of textbook. This is especially important in the light of revamping the textbook to accommodate the new curriculum specifications in the near future. It is a good reference for the authorised panel of authors by the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Evaluation of textbooks does not stop at a point. In this study, research was only conducted on five elements, namely objectives, contents, vocabulary, grammar, and exercises. More teachers teaching Year 4 to Year Six students must be sought to obtain their opinions pertaining to the above-mentioned elements and the relevance of the textbook to the questions set in the UPSR examination. A further look into the inclusion of Bloom's Taxonomy elements in the exercises and activities is necessary to ensure the enrichment of English Language learning and teaching.

Due to the limited scope of the above, suggestions to conduct future study of evaluation on textbooks are encouraged. Besides the research questions above, among other researches one can venture into are textbook presentation such as text layout and illustrations, methodology and backwash. Furthermore, this research was only conducted on Year Four level in the Chinese primary schools. Further researches on

textbooks used in other levels in the primary schools are much encouraged because hardly any research can be found conducted on the primary education. Furthermore, it is the basic to all education. The choice of samples could also be widened to include parents and publishers.

5.7 SUMMARY

Since textbooks are such important tools in the teaching and learning process, it is necessary to evaluate the textbooks from time to time. The outcomes from the evaluation are useful to ensure that the textbooks cater to the needs of the stakeholders. Among the stakeholders are the teachers and students who being the direct users of the textbooks.

In the effort to improve the English standard in the country, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has heeded to the public comments to upgrade the English standard in the Malaysian Education. As such, the evaluation of English textbooks used in all levels should not be belittled. Textbooks used in schools could be the only means to expose some groups of students to the English Language. Therefore, the evaluation of English textbooks at primary school level is of utmost importance. As the proverb says, “A stitch in time saves nine”.