MALAYSIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES TEACHING
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear son, Ronas. You are the reason I kept moving forward, making the completion of this work possible. Thank you for your love, patience, and understanding.
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This research drew upon the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) proposed by Engeström (1987/2015) and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Ladson-Billings (1995) as theoretical frameworks. This study was guided by three research questions: (1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students? (2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students? (3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction?

Six Malaysian English language teachers teaching in Malaysian national secondary schools were identified as research participants in this study. Data was primarily gathered from interviews with each research participant to explore their experiences teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. The findings of this study indicated that Malaysian English language teachers’ experience with CRP practices in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms is shaped by the use of teaching resources, navigating rules, and expectations from various stakeholders in education.

The study identified three conclusions based on the findings. First, the study identified Malaysian English language teachers’ need for relevant support and autonomy
in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Second, the study found challenges Malaysian English language teachers faced in providing quality education to diverse students while adhering to evolving policies and community expectations. Third, the study concluded that CRP practices in Malaysian English language classrooms are multifaceted and require a better understanding of the components and implementation of the pedagogy. Following the conclusions, implications for theory and practice were offered to impart the study’s contributions to the literature. Future research was encouraged to fully expand the complex understanding of CRP practices in multifaceted education settings.
The concept of cultural diversity is highly significant in a multicultural society like Malaysia. This concept is prevalent in Malaysian schools, and teachers play an important role in promoting multiculturalism in the classroom (Phang et al., 2019; Saadiyah Darus, 2009; Saravanamuttu, 2020; Singh & Fatin Najwa Amelia, 2018). Malaysian English language classrooms are made up of students from numerous ethnic groups, where each one represents its own distinctive culture, language, identities and values (Lee, 2003; Najeemah, 2008). Like many English as a second or foreign language students, Malaysian students view the English language as only one among other languages present for communication (Jenkins, 2015). Therefore, in the Malaysian English language classroom, it is crucial that pedagogy supports the learning, development, and engagement of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Kim, 2020).

Research in the English language teaching and learning phenomenon in Malaysia has paid limited attention to how learners’ diverse cultures influence English language teaching practices (Albury, 2017; Lee, 2003; Lee et al., 2010). The complexity of English language acquisition in Malaysia as a former colonial language, as well as the cultural beliefs and differences among Malaysian students, makes it valuable to examine English language practices in the Malaysian classroom (Asmah Haji Omar, 2000; Saadiyah Darus, 2009). According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has received feedback from the “rakyat” (“the people”) regarding the need to ensure that schools offer a more conducive learning environment, a more
relevant curriculum, as well as better language proficiency and communication skills as the foundations for Malaysian students’ success in the 21st century (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). These requests sparked motivation for this study, which sought to investigate aspects of teaching pedagogies for the culturally and linguistically diverse Malaysian classroom while also contributing to new insights to aid in the development of English language education in Malaysia.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how Malaysian English language teachers negotiate the complexity of cultural, social, and historical issues in the field of English language education in Malaysia to teach their culturally and linguistically diverse students. This phenomenon was examined using the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) proposed by Engeström (1987/2015) and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Ladson-Billings (1995; 2006) as frameworks to provide in-depth insights into Malaysian English language teachers’ nature of work, the types of environments they are in, the way they manage responsibilities inside and outside of the classroom, their interactions with the community around them, the rules or systems they must adhere to, and the types of resources available to them to teach their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students?

2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students?
3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction?

**Significance of the Study**

In Malaysia, research in the field of English education has focused on investigating language development, teaching and learning processes, the ways language learners learn, as well as language instructional strategies and methodology (Normazidah et al., 2012). The scholarship has increased researchers’ understanding of English language teaching and learning, promoting discussions on potential pedagogies that address teacher beliefs and the influence of social, cultural, political, and historical structures on classroom dynamics (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Concurrent with this shift in English language teaching methods, research shows that Malaysian English language teachers are seeking more effective ways to teach in their culturally and linguistically diverse classes (Mohd Ikhwan & Azlina, 2019; Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005; Noor Azli et al., 2002; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana and Mohd Najib, 2010).

Malaysian teachers have reported a lack of understanding of how to implement multicultural education practices in their classrooms and being uncomfortable implementing the practices (Faizah Idrus and Mahfuzah Sohid 2023; Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005; Qismullah Yusuf et al., 2018; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana and Mohd Najib, 2010). Also, the current status of multiculturalism and multicultural education does not necessarily reflect the complexity of what happens in the field (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Following a “new” (p. 44) approach that teaches students in the way that they learn best, Rychly and Graves (2012) made a distinction between multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002). They expressed:
Education that is multicultural can be delivered to a classroom containing students from the same culture; the content presented is representative of various cultural perspectives. Culturally responsive pedagogy, on the other hand, must respond to the cultures actually present in the classroom. It connects new information to students’ background knowledge and presents the information in ways that respond to students’ natural ways of learning. Multicultural education may be a heading under which culturally responsive pedagogy exists. Culturally responsive pedagogy is one means to the ultimate objective of multicultural education for all. (p. 45)

In this context, it is evident that culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) bears a close resemblance to culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002) in the aspect of enhancing students’ learning experiences and outcomes by recognizing and valuing their cultural backgrounds and experiences in curriculum and instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This paradigm shift from a focus on multicultural education to an emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy holds significant implications for the Malaysian English language classroom setting. Given the diversity of cultures and languages present in Malaysian English language classrooms, a research focus on culturally relevant pedagogy is not only timely but also highly pertinent. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms to teach their linguistically and culturally diverse students as a significant step towards contributing knowledge to the field of English education.
Organization of the Dissertation

Following the introductory Chapter 1, the aim of Chapter 2 is to first provide contextual background of this study in relation to the Malaysian education system and the development of English language education in the country. The second aim is to present Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and Engeström, (1987/2015) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as the theoretical frameworks in this study.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology and methods employed in this study. The chapter discusses the phenomenology research approach used in this study. It also provides details on participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and how trustworthiness was ensured in this study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings. Key findings were derived primarily from interviews with individual research participants in this study. Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the main findings of this study. Issues arising from the results and limitations of this study are also discussed. Finally, the conclusions and implications of the study, as well as some recommendations for future studies, are presented in this chapter.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first aim of this literature review is to establish the contextual background of this study in relation to the Malaysian education system and the development of English language education in the country. The second aim of this literature review is to provide an overview of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and Engeström’s (1987/2015) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) literature, which are employed as theoretical frameworks for this study. Additionally, related research on CRP and CHAT in the English education context is also reviewed. Lastly, this chapter illustrates of gaps in the literature in which this study sought to address.

Education Development in Malaysia

Education in Malaysia was developed through the country’s pre-independence (1824-1957), post-independence (1957-1970) and different eras that the country experienced. Prior to attaining independence from the British in 1957, there was an absence of uniformity in the Malaysian education system. Each ethnic group (e.g., Malay, English, Chinese and Indian) established its own school using their respective approach to instruction, curriculum, books and teachers. Malays were recruited to teach in Malay schools, and teachers for the Chinese and Tamil schools were brought in from China and India respectively. Only in English schools would children from different ethnic background study together. This resulted in segregation among the ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Prior to independence, the leaders and locals in Malaysia were aware that they needed to replace the education system left behind by the British. They formed an
education committee and established the Razak Report 1956. The report suggested an education system that incorporated national unity and guaranteed a place in schools for all children regardless of their ethnicity or religion. A review committee established the Rahman Talib Report in 1960 to confirm the public acceptance of the policies stated in the Razak Report (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). With that, the education policies outlined in the Razak and Rahman Talib Report became the foundation of a national education system in Malaysia that placed high emphasis on national unity.

After gaining independence, the two biggest issues facing the country were democratization of education and unity. During this time, the effort of merging diverse school systems into a cohesive national education system with the national language, Bahasa Melayu, as the primary medium of teaching was initiated. In 1957, all existing primary schools were converted to national and national-type schools. National primary schools used the national language, while national-type primary schools used English, Chinese, and Tamil. The national language was made a compulsory subject in these schools. Beginning in 1968, English national-type schools were converted into national schools. Prior to the conversion, English national-type schools used English language as the medium of instruction.

The aim of achieving unity through the use of the national language as the medium of instruction in schools continued in the New Economic Policy period (1971-1990) in Malaysia. In Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, English language ceased as the medium of instruction at the primary school level in 1975, the secondary school level in 1982, and at tertiary level in 1983. In Sarawak, the change in medium of instruction was implemented in 1977 beginning at primary school level. Today, Bahasa Melayu is the
medium of instruction in all national schools and a compulsory subject in national-type Chinese and Tamil schools. English language is taught as a second language in all schools. In 1980, the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination (for fifth level secondary students) was conducted in Bahasa Melayu. In 1970, English language ceased as the medium of instruction for teacher training at the primary school level. This era saw the completion of converting teaching and learning instruction from the English language to Bahasa Melayu in academic settings. The education development in the next few eras aligned with the globalization and the information and technology plans for the development of Malaysia.

Increased access to education, equity in education, quality of education, and competency and efficiency level of the educational management were the driving forces of the education development during the National Development Policy (1991-2000) and the National Vision Policy (2001-2010) eras. During the National Development Policy era, preschool policies were added to the education system to conceptualize equal access and opportunities for Malaysian students to obtain at least 12 years of education. Additional institutes of higher learning were set up to accommodate the increase of student enrollment. During the National Vision Policy era, two education plans, the Education Development Plan and Education Development Master Plan, were developed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. The Education Development Plan focused on the development of preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education. The plan was used as a framework to expand and strengthen existing programs to meet current and future educational needs in Malaysia. The aim of the Education Development Master Plan is to oversee the completion of tasks under previous education plans, to further develop the
potential of schools and to promote the national education system to an international level.

In 2010, the Malaysian government launched the National Key Result Areas (2010-2012). The focus of this program was to widen the access to quality education. To achieve that, the program established four initiatives: increase preschool enrollment, ensure proficiency in Bahasa Melayu and numeracy, develop high performing schools and introduce a performance incentive program called the New Deal for school principals, which rewarded schools that made significant progress in a short time frame and schools that sustained a high level of performance. Since independence, education development in Malaysia has undergone changes from a diverse education system to a system that strives to build national unity. This transformation started with the change in the medium of instruction from English language to Bahasa Melayu in the primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary level education. It then moved on to the development of education policies to create access, equality, and quality education in Malaysia.

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is the current comprehensive plan to elevate Malaysia’s educational system to a global standard that is equitable and focused on students’ needs. The blueprint aims to address the 21st-century challenges of the Malaysian education system by focusing on improving access to education, raising standards, closing achievement gaps, promoting unity among students, and maximizing system efficiency. The Blueprint was developed through a comprehensive evaluation process involving expert and international perspectives to assess Malaysia’s education system performance.
Medium of Instruction in Malaysian Schools

As previously stated, there are two types of primary schools in Malaysia. National primary schools employ Bahasa Melayu as their medium of instruction, whereas national-type primary schools use Chinese or Tamil as their medium of instruction. After primary education, students from all three types of national primary schools converge into national secondary schools. In all national secondary schools, Bahasa Melayu is the main language of instruction. English language is a required subject. Therefore, students from national-type Chinese and Tamil primary schools will experience change in language of instruction from their vernacular language to Bahasa Melayu. They will also experience more diversity as teachers and students in national secondary schools are more culturally and linguistically diverse than in national-type primary schools. During secondary education, students attend three years of lower secondary (age 13-15), two years of upper secondary (age 16-17) and can choose to continue another two years of pre-university education, where they will sit for the Malaysian Higher School Certificate. This certificate is one of the prerequisites for admission into Malaysian public universities, or they can continue their pre-university education in private institutions of higher learning.

Tertiary education in Malaysia is provided by community colleges, polytechnic, and public and private universities (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Students undergo a major transition in the language of instruction from Bahasa Melayu to English language as they move from education in secondary school to college or university (Hall, 2015). The emphasis of the English language in the tertiary level at the point of tertiary level is because the English language is the primary language for science as well as key language global communication, cooperation and collaboration in any area of human
endeavor (Omar Abdul Rahman, 2019). Despite the advantages of knowing and using the English language, there exist perceptions among the Malaysian society that English language threatens the status and erodes the culture of the national language (Lee et al., 2010).

The biggest challenge for English language medium of instruction in Malaysia was when the Ministry of Education Malaysia wanted to implement the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, which would result in students’ exposure to the English language in schools. Students would thus use English language not just in English classes, which are typically only about 40-80 minutes a week. The program was implemented in 2003 and lasted for a period of only six years because of arguments and challenges from a group of advocates fighting for the national language (Lee et al., 2010).

**English Language Education in Malaysia**

English language medium schools were established in 1900 by the British colonial government in Malaysia, following the establishment of missionary schools (Gaudart, 1987). However, these government English language medium schools had difficulty maintaining quality education for students as compared to missionary schools, because the schools were confined to urban areas, the syllabus and teaching materials that come from England were outdated and the teachers and school administrators were not trained (Gaudart, 1987). The introduction of the English language medium schools in Malaysia has also created divisions among the ethnic groups in Malaysia, benefiting students in urban areas and the upper-class, thus social differences appeared between the English-educated and vernacular-educated among the people (Asmah Haji Omar, 2000; Foo & Richards, 2004; Selvaraj, 2010). A common phenomenon to colonized countries is
they inherited the educational model of the colonial power (Alis Puteh, 2011). In the aspect of education planning in Malaysia, policies and implementation were modeled after the then aristocratically-oriented British system which did not fit nor was practical in the Malaysian context (Alis Puteh, 2011).

After the Second World War, the British colonial government in Malaysia was “faced with problems of a communist insurrection, Malay nationalism, and communal politics” (Gaudart, 1987, p. 21). The British used “education as a tool for political integration and nation building” (p. 21) by suggesting a single-type primary school open to all races and phasing out Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools (Gaudart, 1987). This recommendation was protested among the Chinese community, which led the British to invite educators from abroad to look into the matter (Gaudart, 1987). Based on the discussion with Chinese leaders, the Chinese community was concerned that phasing out Chinese vernacular schools would lead to possible elimination of their culture (Gaudart, 1987). Therefore, the Chinese leaders put forth a new recommendation, which is a system where students in Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools would learn Bahasa Melayu and the English language besides their mother language. The vernacular schools would then be integrated into the national education system and not phased out (Gaudart, 1987).

With the establishment of Malay, Chinese and Tamil language medium schools, English language medium schools could not be sustained because the schools are seen as disseminating foreign western values and weakening the traditional cultural loyalties among the students who attended the schools (Gaudart, 1987).

Ultimately, the status of the English language in Malaysia was not maintained after the country gained its independence in 1957 (Iber, 2014). Unlike many former
British colonized countries that chose the English language as their national language, Malaysia chose Bahasa Melayu as its national language (Coluzzi, 2017). Malaysia embarked on a nation building journey, having and promoting its national language as a symbol of sovereignty (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993). Hence, Malaysia began to use Bahasa Melayu in official ceremonies, administration in government departments, in government schools and universities, as well as in the judiciary system (Asmah Haji Omar, 2000; Coluzzi, 2017). English language medium of instruction schools were phased out in the 1970s and converted into Bahasa Melayu language medium schools (Cheong et al., 2016). The medium of instruction at the university level was also changed from the English language to Bahasa Melayu in 1983 (Alis Puteh, 2011; Foo & Richards, 2004).

Nonetheless, efforts in English language teaching and learning continued and the English language was taught in schools using the grammar translation method, direct method and situational approach (Asmah Haji Omar, cited in Selvaraj 2010). These methods later made way for the implementation of communicative approach in language teaching and learning in the 1970s, which focuses on students’ effective communication skills (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993; Selvaraj, 2010). In the 1990s until the present, English language policies in Malaysia place a strong emphasis on the use of two different instructional approaches, which are the aesthetic approach for instilling reading habits and critical and creative thinking among students, and content-based instruction (CBI) for preparing students to deal with advances in science and technology (Selvaraj, 2010). At the same time, universities in Malaysia were focused also helping students read academic texts in the English language (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993). With the advancement of science and technology in relation to globalization, the English language in Malaysia
regained status once again (Cheong et al., 2016; Foo & Richards, 2004) when the Ministry of Education Malaysia introduced the teaching of mathematics and science subjects in the English language in 2003 (Cheong et al., 2016). However, due to continuous backlash from Malay nationalist and Chinese educators, who feared that English as a medium of instruction in mathematics and science will abolish the importance of their respective languages (Cheong et al., 2016), the initiative was abandoned in 2009 (Iber, 2014).

In 2012, under the MBMMA policy, which is the abbreviation for “Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia Mengukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris”, (“Upholding the Malay language and strengthening the English language”), the Ministry of Education Malaysian continued to aim for the use of Bahasa Melayu as a medium of communication in all schools as well as to ensure that each student can master both Bahasa Melayu and the English language well (Radzuwan AB Rashid et al. 2017). Though the policy reverted the Malaysian education system back to where Bahasa Melayu is used as language of instruction for all subjects except the English language subject, it was proposed that 2016 onwards the English language paper will be a compulsory pass paper for high school graduates to be awarded the “Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia” (“Malaysian Certificate of Education”) (Radzuwan AB Rashid et al. 2017). Before this, high school students need only to have a pass in the Bahasa Melayu paper to obtain the Malaysian Certificate of Education.

The proposal to make the English language subject a compulsory pass has not been implemented because based on Iber’s (2014) observation as a senior English language fellow with the English Language Teaching Centre of the Ministry of Education
Malaysia, it is predicted that if the 2016 required English language paper was implemented in 2014, one third of the students will not pass the compulsory paper thus preventing them from obtaining the Malaysian Certificate of Education. Iber (2014) also observed that in some parts of Malaysia, the English language is more a foreign than second language to its people. English language experts have also placed Malaysia in the English as a foreign language category and this is contrary to what Malaysia has perceived the status of the English language in the country to be (Asmah Haji Omar, 1993).

Malaysia is a pluralistic society where racial divisions tend to coincide with and be reinforced by linguistic, cultural, religious, and economic divisions (Alis Puteh, 2011). All political issues are interwoven with communal considerations, including education policies (Alis Puteh, 2011). Political reasons as well, the emergence of the English language as a global language has been played out as a potential threat to Bahasa Melayu (Nunan, 2003), the national language of Malaysia, which honors the Malaysian identity and freedom from colonization after gaining independence from the British (Hall, 2015; Lee et al., 2010). Studies have shown that the perception of English language as a form of colonization among Malaysian English language learners (ELLs) has caused prejudice and resistance toward the language and its culture (Choy & Troudi, 2006; Lee, 2003). The English language’s influence on Malaysian students has historically divided people of different cultural and social economic statuses, particularly in urban areas where established schools have traditionally benefited from an English curriculum (Asmah Haji Omar, 2000; Foo & Richards, 2004; Gaudart, 1987; Iber, 2014; Selvaraj, 2010).
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

The movement of education for and about cultural diversity during the 1970s, out of concerns for the racial and ethnic inequalities that were apparent in learning opportunities, called for schools to reform teaching pedagogies to make them more culturally relevant and effective to students of different cultural, racial, ethnic, and language groups (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2012). For this matter, education proponents began deliberating and conceptualizing pedagogies, teaching styles and learning environments that will be more receptive to cultural differences of students in the classroom as well as maximize students’ educational achievement in schools.


Gloria Ladson-Billings is a renowned educational researcher and scholar best
known for her work on how to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of
students of color, particularly African Americans, by implementing CRP in the
curriculum and teaching practices, which recognizes and values students’ cultural
background and experiences (Belgarde, Mitchell & Arquero, 2002; Gay, 2002; Ladson-
Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2016;
Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). Ladson-Billings asserts in her work that traditional
education approaches frequently fail to meet the needs of students of color and perpetuate
cultural and academic misalignments between students and schools. Geneva Gay is a
leader and expert in multicultural education, especially multicultural curriculum
(Atwater, 2010; Gay, 2002). Her work on CRT emphasizes the use of “cultural
knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically
diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them”
(Gay, 2010, p. 31). Gay advocates for teachers to use culturally responsive teaching
strategies in the classroom that engage students and encourage them to share their
experiences and perspectives.

While the works of Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay emphasize similar
ideas, they come from different philosophical outlooks (Aronson & Laughter, 2016;
Mensah, 2021). CRP, as Ladson-Billings describes it, “seeks to influence attitudes and
dispositions” (p. 166-167), which describes the position a teacher takes in curriculum and
instruction planning as well as assessment implementation in the classrooms for the needs
of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Whereas
CRT, as Gay describes it, “seeks to influence competency and methods” (p. 166), which
describes what a teacher should be doing in the classroom to be culturally responsive
The objective of this study was to explore the social, cultural and historical context of Malaysian English language teachers’ experience of teaching the English language to their culturally diverse students. This study aimed to make sense of Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences beyond just teaching by also looking into their consciousness to assess critically cultural norms, values and institutions that were involved in the process of their understanding of teaching practices for their diverse classroom. Therefore, this study employed the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings’ *culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP)*, which is described as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). Terms other than *culturally relevant (CR)* will be used only when the scholars quoted use a different terminology.

Ladson-Billings’ landmark ethnographic study on eight teachers from 1989 to 1991 discovered three central components in the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). These components are academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2016). To meet the purpose of this study, the discussion of these components will center on their application in the field of English language teaching.

**Academic Success**

Ladson-Billings (2014) defined academic success as “the intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences” (p. 75).
When addressing students’ academic progress, it is impossible to avoid the topic of assessment. For CRP, the challenge lies in producing outcome-based data from non-traditional assessments to demonstrate students’ academic progress (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Lee, 2010; Sleeter, 2012). Many educators, even when employing CRP in their curriculum and instruction, are still constrained by the notion that traditional assessment is the most reliable way to measure students’ academic progress (Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Olsen and Buchanan, 2019). It is also difficult to persuade politically driven, well-funded, and traditional education stakeholders to accept CRP practices in the classroom if there is no compelling outcome-based data (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

According to research and discussion on the implementation of CRP in educational settings (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Miller, 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Walker, 2019), if we are willing to look beyond traditional methods of assessment, the relationship between CRP and student outcomes “extend far beyond what might be measured on a standardized exam” (Miller, 2011, p.69). According to Miller (2011) students who participated in CRP curriculum and instruction felt “empowerment”, “see their culture in the curriculum and instruction”, and “are challenged by new learning opportunities” that allow them to meaningfully “understand the sociopolitical nature of society and how society works” (Miller, 2011, p. 69-70). These are types of affective domains that students exhibit as a result of CRP curriculum and instruction in their classrooms. Other affective domains include increased motivation, increased academic engagement, a sense of belonging, improved self-perception, and increased confidence in taking standardized exam (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Byrd, 2016). Teachers can use these domains to develop culturally relevant assessments,
recognizing them as notions of success outside of traditional assessment contexts (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Tierney, 2020).

Beyond-traditional notions of success are crucial in re-engaging students who have been marginalized or failed in traditional learning to develop confidence in new learning experiences (Tierney, 2020). Furthermore, the concept of basic skills, as defined within the educational system, can create disparities among students, particularly for minority students. This is because these skills often reflect the knowledge that mainstream students bring to school, making them seem “basic” to them but potentially overwhelming for minority students who lack these prior experiences (Chu, 2011; Delpit, 2006). To address this issue, teachers must help students transform what Delpit (2006) termed “inferiority myths” into powerful motivation by recognizing and celebrating their unique strengths within the educational context to foster a positive environment for their academic success.

Cultural Competence

Ladson-Billings (2014) mentioned that cultural competence refers to teachers’ “ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture” (p. 75). Culturally competent teachers “view students’ culture as an asset” (Miller, 2011, p. 69) and use students’ culture in curriculum planning and implementation to make lessons more engaging and relatable (Byrd, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller, 2011). Teachers can collaborate with their students and negotiate cultural aspects that are relevant and interesting to students, which can then inform teachers’ practices in the classroom (Brown and Flaumenhaft, 2019; Cummins, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2016). By
tailoring curriculum and instruction to meet the unique needs of diverse student populations, culturally competent teachers work to bridge the achievement gap, ultimately leading to students’ better academic outcomes (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018).

Karatas (2020) mentioned that culturally relevant teachers should possess a range of personal and professional competencies, extending beyond pedagogical skills. These competencies include the ability to avoid discrimination, respect cultural differences, serve as role models, demonstrate empathy, display strong interpersonal skills toward their diverse students (Banks & Obiakor, 2015; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Chu, 2011; de Royston et al., 2020; Krasnoff, 2016). Unfortunately, Ladson-Billings (2016) mentioned that many educators lack these competencies due to their “mono-cultural experiences” (p. 36) and a lack of interest in understanding different cultural perspectives. Meeting the needs of diverse students requires teachers who think differently about the way they teach. Teachers need to see cultural and linguistic differences in the classroom as part of the solution and not deficit to positively impact the lives of their students (Banks & Obiakor, 2015).

**Sociopolitical Consciousness**

Ladson-Billings (2014) stated that sociopolitical consciousness is teachers’ ability to assist students “to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems” (p. 75). Culturally relevant teachers can help students raise their critical consciousness by having critical conversations that impact students’ lives and their community (Ladson-Billings, 2014) to validate and seek ways to address the realities in students’ lives (Byrd, 2016;
Based on Ladson-Billings’ (2014) observation, these kinds of critical conversations are seldom pushed by teachers in the classrooms. This could be because, as Vetter et al. (2018) discovered in their research on teachers’ discursive strategies, critical conversations are complex and require a deep understanding of power, privilege, and oppression, as well as understanding how identities intersect and are enacted differently within specific social contexts. They added that “critical conversations are messy and complicated” and “there is no prescribed way to have them” (Vetter et al., 2018, p. 27).

While observing her research participants work on making a lesson on measuring temperature more culturally relevant for students, Young (2010) suggested that teachers should discuss on the U.S. insistence on the use of Fahrenheit as a system of measurement when no other country is using it. However, this suggestion was met with criticism from her research participants, who questioned “whether the imposition of one’s values in the name of culturally relevant pedagogy rendered one sociopolitically conscious” (Young, 2010, p. 254). Ladson-Billings (2016) mentioned that culturally relevant teachers’ role is not to replace one dominant ideology with another but to invite students to question, challenge, and critique systemic inequalities that exist in society, nationwide and globally, that affect their lives. Nurturing and encouraging critical conversations go hand in hand to create a supportive learning environment for students. Smith and Yeh (2019) argued that while nurturing is important, it does not eliminate systemic inequalities in education. Therefore, teachers need to engage in critical dialogues and take initiatives to create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for their students.
Culturally relevant teachers should engage in reflective teaching to manage critical conversations and develop effective teaching strategies (Hollins, 1993; Howard, 2003). Hollins (1993) mentioned that teachers should maintain a written record of successful approaches and challenges, as well as their experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This record can guide future decision-making and the development of effective teaching strategies in challenging situations. Howard (2003) mentioned that culturally relevant teachers need to engage in honest, rigorous, and painful self-reflection as well as critique of their own thoughts and behaviors on what it means to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)**

The evolution of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) was built upon three generations of activity theory (Engeström, 2008; Engeström, 1987/2015). Vygotsky’s idea of mediated action served as the foundation for the first generation of activity theory (Engeström, 2008). Figure 2.1 represents Vygotsky’s basic mediated action triangle (Cole and Engeström 1993). The person or persons performing the activity are represented by the subject in the figure (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The mediating artifact or tool is anything that influences how the subject behaves toward the activity, such as “instruments, signs, procedures, machines, methods, law, forms of work organization” (Kuutti, 1996, p. 23) or “artifacts, social others, [and] prior knowledge” (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010, p. 16). The activity’s goal is represented by the object in the figure (Yamagata-Lynch, 2010).
The limitation of the first generation of activity theory was that the unit of analysis remained individually focused (Engeström, 1987/2015). Vygotsky’s student, Leontiev, helped overcome this limitation in the second generation of activity theory by showing how historical evolving division of labor has brought about difference between an individual action and a collective activity (Engeström, 1987/2015). In other words, the activity of an individual is perceived to be made up of a system of consecutive activities (Leontiev, 1977/2014). These activities are individual and cooperative conscious actions toward the same goal (Kuutti, 1996). Therefore, activities have their own history, and historical analysis is needed to understand the evolution of the activity (Kuutti, 1996;
Engeström, 2000). Leontiev only presented these ideas and never graphically expanded Vygotsky’s original basic mediated action triangle (Engeström, 1987/2015).

The third generation of activity theory, CHAT, came about when Engeström expanded Leontiev’s idea of a collective activity system between the individual and the community through history, context, and interaction of the situation and activity (Nussbaumer, 2012). Figure 2.2 represents Engeström’s effort to model the human activity system in CHAT. Engeström (1987/2015) argues that human activity requires individual mediators to become determining factors, so the bottom triangle is added to reflect a more collective activity system consisting of rules, community, and division of labor components.

Figure 2.2

The Engeström Triangle

![The Engeström Triangle](image)

Mwanza (2001) developed the Eight-Step-Model to implement Engeström’s human activity structure (Table 2.1). When interpreting Engeström’s structure of human activity (Fig. 2.2), the model integrates relevant questions based on the various components to aid researchers in determining which areas to focus on during the study.

**Table 2.1**

Mwanza Eight-Step-Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Questions to ask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Activity of interest</em></td>
<td>What sort of activity is this study interested in?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Object or objective of activity</em></td>
<td>Why is this activity taking place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Subjects in this activity</em></td>
<td>Who is involved in carrying out this activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tools mediating the activity</em></td>
<td>By what means are the subjects carrying out this activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rules mediating the activity</em></td>
<td>Are there any cultural norms, rules and regulations governing the performance of this activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Division of labor mediating the activity</em></td>
<td>Who is responsible for what, when carrying out this activity and how are the roles organized?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Community in which the activity is conducted</em></td>
<td>What is the environment in which this activity is carried out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Outcome of the activity</em></td>
<td>What is the desired outcome from this activity?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: This table shows the various components of the Engeström triangle in terms of the situation being examined. Adapted from “Where theory meets practice: A case for an activity theory based methodology to guide computer system design”, by D. Mwanza, 2001, Proceedings of INTERACT’ 2001: Eighth IFIP TC 13 Conference on Human-Computer Interaction, 9-13 July 2001, Tokyo, Japan. IOS Press.

The Use of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory in Education Research

In education research, CHAT is often employed to analyze the workplace’s system, focusing on the factors that influence human activity towards a goal or purpose. (Cole & Engeström, 1993; Edwards, 2011; Foot, 2014; Nor Hazlina & Jones, 2007; Nussbaumer, 2012). The CHAT model, an activity system that evolves through collective learning actions in response to systemic contradictions (Engeström, 1987/2015), offers a comprehensive analysis of professional work practices (Foot, 2014). It encompasses not only interpersonal and communicative aspects but also cultural, historical, political, and economic dimensions of interactions between relationships (Foot, 2014). Some education research that used CHAT as a descriptive tool for qualitative data analysis have looked at: (1) Evolutions of educational practices shaped by contradictions and tensions (Ivey & Johnston, 2015; Roth et al., 2004; Thompson, 2015); (2) Curriculum development and learning environment (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999; Olson, 2007)

Research on Evolutions of Educational Practices. Roth et al.’s (2004) longitudinal study employed CHAT to analyze identity formation in critical circumstances, identify cultural and historical resources as empowering and restricting tools, and use of mediated action as the basic unit in evaluating identity. Their study argued that identity should not be a fixed characteristic of individuals but a contingent
achievement of situated activity. In the context of education, they suggest that teachers and students engage in dialogues to identify and implement positive changes in classroom teaching and learning practices. Roth et al. (2004) mentioned that dialogues can provide contexts for mutual understanding of the identities of these individuals in different social settings.

According to Thompson (2015), CHAT provides researchers in the field of English education with an effective tool for exploring the complexity and contradictions within the teaching and learning of the subject. One of his studies investigated the impact of introducing a secondary stimulus to literature circles in low level English classes. The class involved both eager and reluctant lower secondary school readers aged 11-12. The teacher’s goal was to promote collaborative meaning-making through interpersonal discourse. The study aimed to determine if confident older readers, aged 15-16, from other classes could facilitate students’ discussions. Data was collected through classroom observation, recording, questionnaires, and interviews. The results of the study showed that younger students made use of confident readers as a secondary stimulus to support active reading processes like making inference and criticality.

Using cultural historical activity theory, Ivey and Johnston’s (2015) study analyzed the co-evolution of activity systems in a public school and the development of individuals within the systems. Their study investigated the voluntary change in teaching focus by four eighth-grade teachers who switched to student-selected, self-paced reading from high-interest materials, especially young adult fiction. Over a four-year period, this change led to students’ increased reading volume, reduced state test failures, and changes in peer relationships, self-regulation, and self-concepts. The study also revealed a similar
evolutionary shift in teaching activity among the four teachers. The teachers reflected in
their relationships with peers and students, types of resources use in their classroom, and
teaching goals.

**Research on Curriculum Development and Learning Environment.** Jonassen
& Rohrer-Murphy (1999) suggested that activity theory is an effective framework for
designing constructivist learning environments (CLEs). Activity theory is a socio-cultural
and socio-historical lens that analyzes human activity systems and consciousness within
the environment. Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy (1999) discussed that conscious learning
emerges from activity, therefore CLEs should aim to replicate the activity structures,
tools, sign systems, socio-cultural rules, and community expectations that performers
must accommodate while acting on an object of learning. They outlined a six-step guide
of how activity theory is used to determine the components of an activity system that will
be modeled in any CLE: (1) clarify purpose of activity system; (2) analyze the activity
stem; (3) analyze the activity structure; (4) analyze tools and mediator; (5) analyzing the
context; and (6) analyzing activity system dynamics.

Olson’s (2007) study investigated the impact of state educational policies, such as
high-stakes English testing and Proposition 227, on primary language instruction for
English learners in California. The high-stakes English testing is the SAT-9 test and the
Proposition 227 policy mandates that for a child to receive primary language instruction:
(1) a school needs to choose to offer the bilingual program along with the ME
(mainstream English) and SEI (structured English immersion) programs so that all
students have a choice of language of instruction; and (2) parents who decide to place
their child in the bilingual program need to sign a waiver that relinquishes their child’s
right out of English instruction. Using cultural-historical activity theory, this qualitative case study uses participant observations, interviews, and classroom interaction to analyze the impact of these reforms on bilingual teachers, students, and the teaching of Spanish. The findings show that the pressure to pass the SAT-9 test led bilingual teachers to focus on skill and drill teaching in Spanish, limiting students’ opportunities for student-centered literacy practices in their native language.

**Research on Malaysian Teachers’ Practices in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom**

Research on Malaysian Teacher’s Practices in diverse classroom have looked into the areas of: (1) Malaysian teachers’ awareness and their perception of teaching practices in multicultural classrooms; (2) Impact of teaching resources on student learning in multicultural classrooms; and (3) Teaching strategies in the culturally and linguistically diverse Malaysian English language classroom.

**Malaysian Teachers’ Awareness of Education Practices in the Multicultural Classroom**

Investigations in the area of Malaysian teachers’ practices in their culturally diverse classroom looked into the awareness of Malaysian teachers and their perception on education practices in the multicultural classroom (Abdul Razaq Ahmad et al., 2011; Faizah Idrus & Mahfuzah Sohid, 2023; Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005; Qismullah Yusuf et al., 2018; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana & Mohd Najib, 2010; Tengku Nor Rizan et al., 2015). Both quantitative descriptive studies (Abdul Razaq Ahmad et al., 2011; Qismullah Yusuf et al., 2018; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana & Mohd Najib, 2010) and qualitative studies (Faizah Idrus & Mahfuzah Sohid, 2023; Najeemah Mohd Yusof,
Malaysian teachers are aware of the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students, and that they value the importance of multicultural education practices in the classroom.

However, when it came to adopting multicultural education practices in their classroom, Malaysian teachers reported that they are uncomfortable discussing aspects of other people’s culture besides their own since they do not fully understand these other cultures’ perspectives (Qismullah Yusuf et al., 2018; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana and Mohd Najib, 2010). Teachers viewed multicultural education practices as controversial because they believe the practices involved discussing about race and inequality, which the teachers would prefer to avoid in their classroom to maintain a harmonious teacher-student relationship (Faizah Idrus and Mahfuzah Sohid 2023; Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005). Malaysian teachers also reported a lack of opportunities to implement multicultural education practices due to the syllabus (Rajendran, 2005), textbooks, and other teaching materials (Sharifah Norsana and Mohd Najib, 2010) they were required to utilize. Teachers agreed that they will be able to provide better curriculum and instruction for their culturally and linguistically diverse students if they obtain more training in multicultural education pedagogies (Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana and Mohd Najib, 2010).

Najeemah Mohd Yusof (2005) and Tengku Nor Rizan et al. (2015) conducted workshops with Malaysian teachers to offer them more exposure to the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. Teachers believed that the workshops had made them more aware of the importance of being culturally relevant
and responsive when dealing with students from various backgrounds. The teachers also stated that the knowledge they gained from the workshops provided them with more ideas on how to incorporate the concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching into their classrooms. Despite this, Malaysian teachers do not think that multicultural education practices in their classroom would be sustainable because they feel it is time-consuming and demanding to prepare new teaching materials as well as assessments to meet this concept (Najeemah, 2005). They would rather have all the resources needed to implement multicultural teaching practices in their classrooms provided by the school district administration (Najeemah, 2005). This idealization, however, is unrealistic given that one of the reasons Malaysian teachers do not consider engaging in multicultural educational practices is because it is not the school district administrators’ primary goal for their school (Najeemah, 2005).

**Impact of Teaching Resources on Student Learning in Multicultural Classrooms**

Another area of investigation into Malaysian teachers’ practices in culturally diverse classroom is on the impact of teaching resources and strategies toward students’ learning. Research in the Malaysian English language classroom has focused on how Malaysian literature in English texts can be used to foster cultural competence in students (Faizah Idrus, 2014; Singh & Fatin Najwa, 2018).

Firstly, research on the use of non-prescribed Malaysian literature in English texts in the classroom by Singh and Fatin Najwa (2018) and Faizah Idrus (2014) looked at how teachers use these texts to discuss and address multicultural issues with their students. The researchers chose to work with non-prescribed texts because of the lack of Malaysian literature in English texts in the national syllabus, which is more familiar in terms of
setting and culture for Malaysian students. Singh and Fatin Najwa (2018) analyzed and compared prescribed and non-prescribed Malaysian literature in English texts for secondary school students using the content analysis approach. The Harper and Brand's (2010) checklist for selecting and evaluating multicultural literature texts was used as a guide to assess the texts. They found that the texts offer different amounts of information about the history and culture of Malaysia. When teachers are working under time constraints, it is crucial that the text selection utilized in the classroom contribute as much knowledge and conversation for students as possible. Singh and Fatin Najwa’s (2018) study served as a guide for curriculum developers, literary text selection committees, and education policymakers in identifying and selecting appropriate multicultural texts for fostering intercultural competency among Malaysian students.

Faizah Idrus (2014) introduced a non-prescribed Malaysian literature in English text to Malaysian English language teachers to be used in their classroom. Classroom observations and interviews were conducted to sought teachers’ and students’ responses toward the text. According to the findings of this study, teachers and students find using the non-prescribed text provided them with more opportunities to discuss about Malaysian identity and other cultures than prescribed texts. This is due to the preconceived expectation that prescribed texts should be utilized for the examinations, which limits teachers’ and students’ ability to study the material in new ways. Although introducing applicable, non-prescribed literature to the classroom seemed to be a good idea, teachers mentioned it was difficult to integrate the additional text into their lessons. Teachers encountered time constraints since introducing new texts in class took time away from covering required materials, which are more important for the exams.
Students were more excited than teachers to discuss stereotyping issues in the text due to their awareness of its impact on relationships with peers from different backgrounds. The new text was provoking many differences over religious beliefs and cultural issues, leading in debates between teachers and their students. It took time for teachers to clarify arguments and maintaining a harmonious classroom environment. Although it was unclear whether students spoke more English during these sessions, Faizah Idrus’s (2014) qualitative study showed students’ readiness to discuss societal issues when given the opportunity.

**Teaching Strategies in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Malaysian English Language Classroom**

Research on teaching methods that cater to the needs of diverse students in Malaysian English language classrooms has looked into differentiated instruction (Mohd Ikhwan & Azlina, 2019; Noor Azli et al., 2002) and translanguaging pedagogy practices (Nur Mazliyana & Nik Nuryasarah, 2023; Nur Sakina et al., 2022; Ooi & Azlina, 2022; Rajendram, 2021; Sylvester and Azlina, 2021). According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, one way to improve English language teaching and learning is to increase differentiation in classroom teaching approaches, where teachers tailor their pedagogical styles to their students’ language proficiency levels and learning needs (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Mohd Ikhwan and Azlina’s (2019) quantitative investigation through the survey method discovered that teachers are aware that differentiation teaching methods take into account their students’ various learning styles. Teachers also believed that differentiated instruction create a more engaging learning environment for students. Noor Azli et al.’s (2002) qualitative study using a case study
approach found that teachers’ decisions on how to differentiate instruction in their classroom were influenced by students’ learning abilities. Also, teachers with more years of teaching experience can better implement differentiated instruction and assessment in their classroom. However, due to time constraints in keeping up with the curriculum, teachers find it difficult to maintain the use of this instruction in the classroom (Mohd Ikhwan & Azlina, 2019; Noor Azli et al., 2002), especially when it requires them to prepare different teaching and learning materials for a lesson (Noor Azli et al., 2002). In order to use this teaching approach more efficiently, teachers stated they needed more understanding and training in differentiation instruction strategies (Mohd Ikhwan & Azlina, 2019; Noor Azli et al., 2002).

Considering English language classrooms in Malaysian schools are made up of bilingual and multilingual students, translanguaging is a common occurrence in the classroom. Malaysian students employ translanguaging in cooperative learning activities to facilitate their comprehension of concepts and content, assign roles and responsibilities within the group, establish rapport and communicate with peers, and ultimately utilize English language structures and discourse to finish the task (Rajendram, 2021). According to studies on Malaysian teachers’ perceptions of the use of translanguaging practices in their English language classrooms, teachers believe that translanguaging practices are necessary, particularly to support the learning of students with lower language level proficiency (Nur Mazliyana & Nik Nuryasarah, 2023; Nur Sakina et al., 2022; Ooi & Azlina, 2022). Teachers use translanguaging in their English language classroom to translate English to students’ first language, explain and elaborate lesson content, provide feedback to students, give instructions, check students’ understanding,
for classroom management, interpret, build rapport with students, and increase students’ motivation to learn the target language (Nur Mazliyana & Nik Nuryasarah, 2023).

Nur Mazliyana and Nik Nuryasarah’s (2023) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study, employing Romanowski’s (2019) classification of translanguaging methods to better understand the roles of translanguaging in the Malaysian English language classroom. According to the findings, instructors at both the secondary school and tertiary levels engage in translanguaging practices for explanatory, managerial, and interpersonal purposes. However, it is noted that at the tertiary level, students are given less freedom to use translanguaging practices in classroom activities and assignments. Ooi and Azlina’s (2022) qualitative case study also looked at the use of translanguaging practices in the Malaysian English language classroom. Similar to the findings of Nur Mazliyana and Nik Nuryasarah’s (2023) study, teachers in Ooi and Azlina’s (2022) study also use translanguaging strategies to manage classroom instruction and activities, to relate to their students’ needs, and to explain new vocabulary, concepts, or themes to students during English language lessons. In addition, the researchers discovered that teachers use students’ first language while thinking aloud for students to observe their thought processes throughout classroom activities.

While the previous studies discussed how translanguaging practices are used in Malaysian English language classrooms, Nur Sakina et al. (2022) and Rajendram’s (2021) investigations looked at how translanguaging practices impact students’ learning. Nur Sakina et al.’s (2022) qualitative thematic analysis research highlighted the necessity of using translanguaging to boost student engagement in the English language classroom. Rajendram’s (2021) qualitative naturalistic case study research, guided by
translanguaging and sociocultural theory, looked at the advantages as well as constraints of students using translanguaging in the English language classroom. According to these studies, translanguaging supports students in learning a new language by fostering a learning environment that upholds students’ cultural identities (Rajendram, 2021). This lowers students’ anxiety levels (Nur Sakina et al., 2022), enabling them to actively participate in learning the new language. Despite the potential benefits of translanguaging practices for English language learners, teachers are afraid that their pupils would rely too heavily on their mother tongue in the English language classroom, diverting their attention away from learning a new language (Nur Sakina et al., 2022). Apart from that, teachers are pressured to use an English-only policy due to expectations from administrators, peers, parents, students, and society (Nur Mazliyana & Nik Nuryasarah, 2023; Rajendram, 2021), even though there is no official policy against the use of translanguaging in English language classrooms in Malaysia (Rajendram, 2021). As a result of the same external influences and policies, students are also pressured to refrain from translanguaging practices in the classroom (Ooi & Azlina, 2022; Rajendram, 2021).

**Conclusion**

This study on the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students built upon the above existing literature in several significant ways. First, by examining the Malaysian education system, this research explored how English is taught, the curriculum’s structure, and the challenges faced by teachers dealing with diverse students. The literature uncovered how the system either accommodated or fell short in addressing cultural and linguistic diversity within Malaysian English language classrooms.
Second, the integration of CRP and CHAT as theoretical frameworks was crucial. Literature on CHAT offered a lens on how this study can analyze tools used for teaching and learning, rules or regulations, and the division of labor in the Malaysian English language classroom. Literature on CRP emphasizes the inclusion of students' cultural backgrounds, identities, and experiences in teaching practices. This literature shed light on strategies Malaysian English language teachers can implement to engage diverse learners.

By incorporating these theoretical underpinnings in the exploration of Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, this study achieved a deeper understanding of how Malaysian English language teachers navigate the complexities of teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms to better serve the needs of diverse student populations within the Malaysian context.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a literature review on significant areas that informed the study. The first area offered contextual background of this study in relation to the Malaysian education system and the development of English language education in the country. The next area focused on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) practices and its components. It reviewed crucial concepts related to teachers’ beliefs and practices based on related research. Then, the chapter provided a comprehensive overview of CHAT and its components, as well as related research on the use of CHAT in education research. Lastly, discussions on practices in the Malaysian English language classroom were
presented. The next chapter discusses details related to the research methodology of this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and Engeström’s (1987/2015) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as theoretical frameworks. As highlighted in chapter 2, CHAT has potential for analyzing and describing the complex dynamics of a specific activity system (Engeström, 1987/2015).

In this study, the primary focus is to explore the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. This exploration aims to shed light on how Malaysian English language teachers’ teaching practices were influenced by the cultural, social, and historical factors within the Malaysian education system.

Research on CRP practices in the classroom mostly consist of case studies that explain problems and barriers that teachers experience and how those problems can be addressed (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Lee, 2010; Malo-Juvera et al., 2018; Sleeter, 2012). Also, there are case studies that explore specific kinds of professional development programs on teachers and how the programs impact the implementation of culturally relevant teaching practices in the classroom (Brown & Flaumenhaft, 2019; Olsen and Buchanan, 2019). Despite the fact that these studies have contributed to the body of knowledge and shaped current understanding of CRP practices, there is need for more clarity in describing what CRP is, what it looks like, and how when faced with limitations in their respective education systems, teachers adapt their lessons to meet the needs of various student groups across nations and international boundaries (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017; Sleeter, 2012; Young, 2010). Thus, the
The aim of this qualitative research study was to offer an exploratory lens to understand the CRP approaches of Malaysian English language teachers in their culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. In guiding this research, this study considers the following research questions:

1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students?
2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students?
3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction?

This chapter provides an overview of research design for this qualitative study, including plans for recruiting participants and data collection, approaches to data analysis, methods to support the study’s trustworthiness, as well as a discussion of the researcher’s positionality and assumptions.

**Research Methodology and Design**

Planning a research design requires consideration of how the research methods, the purpose of the study, and research question(s) relate to one another (Creswell, 2013). Research topics for a qualitative study are those in the social sciences that focus "on discovery, insight, and knowledge from the viewpoints of people being examined" (p.1) (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) stressed the fact that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). Qualitative approaches that are most frequently seen in the field of social sciences are narrative
research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study (Creswell, 2013).

This study employed a phenomenological approach as its research design and methodology. While all qualitative research approaches have a common interest in explaining how people make sense of their experiences in a given phenomenon, “the difference between phenomenology and most other forms of research is that phenomenology studies the world as we ordinarily experience it or become conscious of it—before we think, conceptualize, abstract, or theorize it” (van Manen, 2016, p.65). At the most basic level, several key characteristics define and shape a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; Potter, 1996; Vagle, 2016; van Manen, 2016; Wertz et al., 2011). This study began with the question of what culturally relevant practices looked like in Malaysian English language classrooms. Research revealed that the Malaysian English education system adopts multicultural education practices (Abdul Razaq Ahmad et al., 2011; Faizah Idrus & Mahfuzah Sohid, 2023; Najeemah Mohd Yusof, 2005; Qismullah Yusuf et al., 2018; Rajendran, 2005; Sharifah Norsana & Mohd Najib, 2010; Tengku Nor Rizan et al., 2015), which do not fully represent CRP practices (Rychly and Graves, 2012). Therefore, it was uncertain whether there were one or multiple cases of Malaysian English language teachers implementing CRP in their classrooms. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the activity system and experiences of English language teachers teaching students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Malaysian national secondary schools. Then, the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers in relation to CRP practices in their classrooms were described.
Researchers and scholars distinguish between different types of phenomenology, which share certain commonalities but also have distinctive features (Creswell, 2013; Dowling, 2007; Finlay, 2012). Hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology are two significant approaches to phenomenology research (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2012; Vagle, 2016). According to scholars of hermeneutic phenomenology, when we experience anything, it has already been interpreted (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2012). Therefore, it is impossible to set aside one’s assumptions and beliefs (Eddles-Hirsh, 2015). In contrast, transcendental phenomenology focuses less on the researcher’s interpretations and more on the description of research participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2013; Eddles-Hirsh, 2015). This approach uses the *epoche* or bracketing technique to set aside assumptions and beliefs to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Eddles-Hirsh, 2015; Finlay, 2012; van Manen, 2016).

This study was driven by the transcendental phenomenology approach because the study aimed to gain Malaysian English language teachers’ point of view on “what the experience is like” to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students and to describe “how does these teachers experience” teaching their students. Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes the significance of lived experiences as the ultimate source of meaning, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the world (van Manen, 2016). It attempts to “grasp the exclusively singular aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 27) being studied (van Manen, 2016) or the essence or basic structure that underlies the meaning of an experience (Merriam, 2009). In the context of this study, the aim was to grasp the essence that underlies the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students in relation to CRP practices in their
classrooms. Also, the phenomenological researcher, at least initially, adopts an attitude to suspend judgments about the phenomenon being investigated (Finlay, 2012). The researcher of this study grew up in Malaysia, attended Malaysian national primary and secondary schools, and obtained a bachelor’s and master’s degree in teaching English as a second language at a Malaysian public university. The researcher had also taught the English language subject in a Malaysian national secondary school. Therefore, it was important that the researcher identify these personal experiences in the field of teaching and learning the English language in the Malaysian education system and set them aside so that the researcher could focus on the experiences of the Malaysian English language teachers in this study.

Transcendental phenomenology is closely related to the concept of intentionality (Moustakas, 1994). In the phenomenological stance, intentionality is the essential quality of consciousness (Giorgi, 1997; Wertz et al., 2011). Intentionality implies two essential aspects to every consciousness: noesis and noema (Moustakas, 1994). Noesis and noema are not two independent entities (Giorgi, 1997). Noesis is the conscious experience as experienced from the subjective point of view (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). It is based on opinions rather than facts “toward something (real or imaginary, actual or nonexistent)” (Moustakas, 1994, p.68). Noema is the conscious experience as experienced from the objective point of view (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). It “contributes to the very meaning of [consciousness] by its varying modes, styles, forms, and so forth” (Giorgi, 1997, p.236). In other words, it is the reality of the experience as it is understood within the context of the individual’s actual experience. (Creswell, 2013).
The second key characteristic of phenomenological research is positioned in how a study from a phenomenological perspective is launched. To launch a phenomenological study as far as possible from subjective knowing, to allow for a circulation of meanings of the phenomenon that is being investigated (Vagle, 2016), “[p]rior beliefs about a phenomenon of interest are temporarily put aside, or bracketed...” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). This is known as the *epoche* (suspension of judgement) process which requires researchers to eliminate “suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). This is followed by the phenomenological reduction process. The reduction process leads us back to the essence of the phenomenon and enables the researcher “to closely examine how situations present themselves through experience” (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 125). The subsequent process that makes possible an understanding of meanings and essences of experience is imaginative variation. The task of imaginative variation “involves viewing data from various perspectives” (Merriam, 2009, p. 26) to arrive at a description of underlying factors that account for how the phenomena investigated is experienced (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

The third key characteristic of phenomenology is in the methods of obtaining and analysis of data. This study employed Moustakas’s (1994) approach to phenomenological data analysis procedures and guidelines because it has systematic steps especially on constructing textual and structural descriptions (Creswell, 2013). Data for phenomenological studies are generally obtained from “research participant [who] has experienced the phenomenon, is intensely interested in understanding its nature and meanings, is willing to participate in a lengthy interview and (perhaps a follow-up interview)” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 107). This study utilized a model of in-depth,
phenomenological interviewing, which involved conducting three separate interviews with each research participant (Siedman, 2006). The three separate interviews were designed to allow the researcher and research participants to align the lived experiences of the phenomenon that is being investigated and place it in context (Seidman, 2006).

Once the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the researcher studied the data using phenomenal analysis procedures (Moustakas, 1994). The first procedure involved *horizontalizing* the data, which is to treat all data as being of equal importance (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Next, the horizontalized data were reduced to significant statements or *meaning units* and clustered into *themes* (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The clustered themes and meanings were used to develop individual *textural descriptions of the experience* for each research participant (Moustakas, 1994). These textural descriptions included “thoughts, feelings, examples, ideas, situations that portray what comprises an experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). From individual textural descriptions, *individual structural descriptions*, which included “conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structural meanings” of an experience for each research participant were developed (Moustakas, 1994, p. 79).

Another distinctive characteristic of a phenomenological study is positioned in the product of the study. Individual textural and structural descriptions were combined to develop *composite textural and structural descriptions* of the meanings and essences of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Composite descriptions “is a way of understanding how the co-researchers as a group experience what they experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 142). Writing a phenomenological text “is a reflective process of attempting to recover
and express the ways we experience our life as we live it—and ultimately to be able to act practically in our lives with greater thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 2016, p. 20). Based on research findings and participant narratives that illustrated the phenomenon under investigation, this study has provided rich description of CRP beliefs and practices in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms as described by Malaysian English language teachers.

**Participant Selection**

For this study, the research participants consist of Malaysian English language teachers who have experience in teaching the English language to students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In locating and recruiting the participants for the study, this qualitative study performed purposeful sampling “that will intentionally sample a group of people” (Creswell, 2013, p.147), which provided the researcher “access to relevant evidence” (Potter, 1996, p.104) about the phenomenon being investigated. There are numerous purposeful sampling designs (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015). It is essential that the type of purposeful sampling designs for phenomenological studies serve the purpose of recruiting samples who can articulate their lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the purposeful sampling design that was employed by this study was the criterion sampling design. To begin criterion sampling, the researcher first identified the important criteria for selecting the participants or locations to be studied (Merriam, 2009).

Key criteria for this study’s sampling selection were Malaysian English language teacher who are: (1) Teaching in Malaysian national secondary schools; (2) Represent
different age groups, academic levels, cultural backgrounds, as well as number of years teaching; (3) Is interested in understanding the nature and meanings of the study; (4) Is willing to participate in a lengthy interview and perhaps a follow-up interview; and (5) Permits the investigator the right to tape-record and publish the data in a dissertation and other publications.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the population and enrollment in different types of primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. In Malaysia, students can choose to attend national primary schools or government-funded religious primary schools, where the medium of instruction is in Bahasa Melayu, or national-type primary schools, also known as "vernacular schools", where medium of instruction are either in Mandarin or Tamil. Hence, as shown in Figure 3.1, more than 80% of the students in each of these schools are from the same ethnic group. The students attending these schools are less ethnically diverse.

When students move up to secondary schools, they will enroll into national secondary schools or government-funded religious secondary schools, where Bahasa Melayu is the medium of instruction. More than 80% of the students in government-funded religious secondary schools are still from one ethnic group. However, the population of students in national secondary schools represent an ethnically diverse population that resembles the ethnic population in Malaysia. Due to this study’s interest, the researcher decided to work with teachers who are teaching in Malaysian national secondary schools since they are teaching a more culturally and linguistically diverse group of students as compared to teachers in other public schools.
Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1 show the percentage and number of Malaysian secondary school teachers by gender and age. As of April 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2022, there are about 72\% female teachers as compared to 28\% male teachers teaching in Malaysian secondary schools. The research participants in this study were intended to represent the gender and age range of the data. Nonetheless, more male than female teachers responded to the study's call for research participants, and their ages range from 26 to 54. Besides that, the research participants in this study have teaching experience ranging from 2 to 26 years. It was important to recruit teachers with different levels of teaching experience for this study because it provided diverse perspectives on how teachers make meaning of CRP practices in the classroom. When choosing participants for this study, the researchers also considered the different cultural backgrounds of the teachers to ensure that all Malaysian ethnic groups were represented. According to the most recent statistics gathered by the Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2022, ethnic groups among Malaysian residents are made up of 69.9\% Bumiputera, or Malaysian natives, including Orang Asli, Dayak, and Anak Negeri, 22.8\% Chinese, 6.6\% Indian, and 0.7\% Other. Participants who teach in urban and rural schools across Malaysia and represent these ethnic groups were successfully recruited for this study.
Figure 3.1

Population and Enrollment in Different Schools in Malaysia

Note: This figure shows the year 2010-2011 population and enrollment by ethnic groups in primary and secondary Malaysian schools.

Adapted from *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025* (p. 3-23) by Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013.
Figure 3.2

Percentage of Secondary School Teachers by Gender and Age Group (2022)

![Figure 3.2](image_url)

Table 3.1

Number of Teachers at Secondary School Level by Gender and Age Group (2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>&lt;25</th>
<th>25-29</th>
<th>30-34</th>
<th>35-39</th>
<th>40-44</th>
<th>45-49</th>
<th>50-54</th>
<th>55-59</th>
<th>≥60</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3,546</td>
<td>6,159</td>
<td>8,303</td>
<td>7,594</td>
<td>7,313</td>
<td>9,255</td>
<td>8,225</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>51,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>10,661</td>
<td>15,850</td>
<td>28,168</td>
<td>24,288</td>
<td>19,979</td>
<td>20,339</td>
<td>11,096</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>131,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>14,207</td>
<td>22,009</td>
<td>36,471</td>
<td>31,882</td>
<td>27,292</td>
<td>29,594</td>
<td>19,321</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>182,179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These figure and table show the gender and age of teachers at Malaysia secondary school as of April 30th, 2022. Adapted from *Quick Facts 2022: Malaysia Educational Statistics* (p. 28) by Educational Planning and Research Division, 2022.
Invitations to participate in this research were distributed to Malaysia national secondary schools as well as to the researcher's network and professional community groups. First, the researcher prepared a statement outlining the nature and purpose of this study, stating that this study aimed to describe the lived experiences of Malaysian English language teachers teaching the English language to their culturally and linguistically diverse students and the meaning constructed from the phenomenon. Once the statement was prepared, the researcher contacted the gatekeepers of the Malaysian national secondary schools, and also relied on the researcher’s own network to provide assistance in inviting English language teachers to participate in this study. Discussions regarding how many sites or participants to sample in qualitative research often raised the question of whether the number decided is able to provide extensive data about the phenomena being investigated (Creswell, 2013; Dworkin, 2012; Merriam, 2009). A large number of literature suggest a minimum of 5 to 50 participants as adequate for qualitative research (Dworkin, 2012). For phenomenology studies, qualitative research methodologists presented guidelines for sample size of interviews ranging from 6 to 10 participants (Creswell, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013). This study received responses from 8 teachers in total, but due to time constraints, two teachers had to withdraw from the study, leaving a total of 6 research participants.

**Data Collection**

Data collection involved a number of interconnected activities such as obtaining permissions, implementing a good qualitative sampling technique, devising methods for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical difficulties that may occur (Creswell, 2013). These activities were designed to
collect high-quality data that accurately captures and conveys experience, perceptions, and descriptions of the phenomenon the researcher is researching in order to address the research question(s) in a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Merriam 2009). This study gathered data primarily from individual interviews with research participants and reflexive journaling. This section described the specific methods of data collection and procedures that were conducted in this study.

**Interviews**

Since this study employed the phenomenology research method, individual interviews with Malaysian English language teachers served as the primary source of data collection. When conducting a qualitative interviewing, it is important to ask good questions (Merriam, 2009) to generate “purposeful conversations” (p. 103) which enables the researcher “to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). “Qualitative interviewing design is *flexible, iterative and continuous*” (p. 43), rather than predetermined and fixed (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). If the interviewer structured the interview too rigidly, research participants will not be able to share their experience in their own terms (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Instead, semi-structured interviews that are more openly worded, guided by a list of questions or topics to be covered, will give research participants the chance to fully express themselves and give the interviewer the chance to be more receptive to participants’ responses throughout the interview process. (Merriam, 2009).

This study employed an in-depth, phenomenological interviewing model which involved conducting three separate semi-structured interviews with each research participant (Siedman, 2006). A number of six participants was interviewed for this study.
The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. An interview protocol with a list of possible questions was used to ensure that key issues were consistently covered in every interview (note Appendix F). The interview questions were mainly guided by this study’s research questions, theoretical frameworks and the researcher’s formal literature review on the topic.

This study relied upon three interview series to gather information on Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching the English language to students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The interviewer’s aim in the first series of interview for this study was to contextualize the participants’ experience by asking them to share as much about their journey toward becoming an English language teacher in Malaysia. Siedman (2006) mentioned that instead of asking participants “Why did you become an English language teacher?” and ask “how?”, participants will reconstruct and recount a range of significant incidents from their personal, educational, and professional experiences to situate their professional development as English language teachers in the context of their lives.

The second interview series focused on obtaining “concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience” (Seidman, 2006, p.18). In this second interview, the interviewer asked the participants to discuss their work in connection to their students, other faculty members at their school, the administrators, and the community in order to place their experience within the framework of their social environment. In the third interview series, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The meaning of the participants’ experiences here addressed “the intellectual and emotional connection between the participants’ work and life” (Seidman, 2006, p.
This interview required participants to go back in time to describe the specifics of their former experiences which led participants to where they are now, in order to adequately describe their current experiences.

According to Seidman (2006), interviews with each research participant should last no less than 90 minutes because the goal of the in-depth, phenomenological interviewing approach is to have participants respond by reconstructing their experiences, placing them in context, and reflecting on the meaning of their experiences. To give research participants time to reflect on the preceding interview while maintaining the connection between the interviews, Seidman (2006) recommended spacing the three interviews three days to a week apart. However, if necessary, the spacing of the interviews can be changed to accommodate participants' schedules. Seidman’s (2006) research team had conducted interview one and two, as well as all three interviews with research participants on the same day with reasonable results. Three research participants in this study scheduled each interview apart, and three research participants requested to have interview one and two on the same day and the third interview apart.

*Reflexive Journal*

Fieldnotes were also used in this study to record the researcher's direct experience and observation while conducting this research (Emerson et al., 2011). These direct experience and observation were what the researcher heard, saw, understood and thought about throughout the course of the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As data collection progresses, these fieldnotes were explored and analyzed to generate additional data to supplement other data collection methods (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Burgess, 1981; Emerson et al., 2011).
During the data collection process, the researcher recorded two types of fieldnotes, known as descriptive fieldnotes and reflective fieldnotes. These fieldnotes have specific content that includes descriptive and interpretative data based on the researcher’s observation (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). In descriptive fieldnotes, the researcher recorded the objective aspects of the research participants, physical setting, conversation reconstruction, narratives of particular events, depictions of activities, and the researcher’s actions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In reflective fieldnotes, the researcher recorded the subjective aspects of her experiences and observations of this research (Merriam, 2009), which reflected the researcher's thoughts on analysis, methodology, ethical conflicts and difficulties, assumptions, biases, and clarifications (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Additionally, the researcher created memos to further engage in the research process (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). Memos served as a record of the researcher's initial analysis (Merriam, 2009), ongoing reflection (Emerson et al., 2011), theoretical insights and connections formed through deconstructing and reconstructing data from a variety of data sources (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007). To maintain records of fieldnotes and memos for this study, the researcher used a reflexive journal. The contents in the journal were organized chronologically but when analysis began the fieldnotes and memos was reorganized into themes (Potter, 1996).

**Data Collection Plan**

The University of Missouri-Columbia Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research on May 6, 2022 (IRB review number 374164). The initial strategy to recruit research participants for this study involved sending letters of invitation to gatekeepers
and the researcher's network of teachers who work in Malaysian national secondary schools, inviting them to take part in either in-person or virtual one-on-one interviews (note Appendices C and D). As this initial recruitment progressed slowly, a snowball recruitment strategy was employed with participants who responded to the study. The invitation request sent out to potential research participants included the following information: (1) Research purpose; (2) Eligibility criteria for participation; (3) Expected hours of commitment when participating, and (4) The researcher’s contact details (note Appendix C). Interested participants were asked to contact the researcher directly and provide their names and contact details and best time to be reached.

Interview appointments were made based on the participants' preference for the most convenient time, location, and method to be interviewed. All research participants for this study opted to participate in virtual interviews. Prior to the interviews, all participants were sent a consent form to participate in this study (note Appendix D) and asked to fill in an introductory questionnaire (note Appendix F). The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather basic background information about the participants that were relevant to the purpose of the study. After the participants filled in the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher, the interviews were conducted.

The final step was to conduct member checks with the participants. This procedure was to ensure the credibility of the research. Following each interview session, the researcher provided a brief summary of the main points of the discussion, allowing participants to quickly correct any errors or misinterpretations that may have occurred. Participants were also asked to review their transcriptions, which were delivered to them via email or postal mail depending on their preference. For confidentiality reasons, the
researcher made sure that no identifying information was included in the transcription sent to participants. All corrections identified by participants were corrected and delivered again to participants for verification. When the participants were satisfied with their interview transcriptions, the researcher sent them a letter of appreciation (note Appendix E) for their time and voluntary participation in the study.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis refers to a systematic process of organizing data gathered for the research to enable the researcher to make sense of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Data analysis began with the research planning stage, continued in the field during data collection, and concluded with the research writing process (Potter, 1996). This ongoing process assisted the researcher in thinking about and making decisions about the direction of their data collection, ensuring that the data collected is sufficient to complete analysis for their research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study employed the phenomenological research approach, therefore the particular method of data analysis for this study was based on Moustakas (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Ken phenomenological method of data analysis.

Data analysis for this study began with the *epoche* process, which required the researcher to eliminate assumptions and raise knowledge above every possible doubt of the phenomenon that was being studied. This personal account was documented at the end of this chapter in the researcher's positionality section. The researcher then proceeded with the phenomenological reduction process, in which the researcher bracketed prior assumptions and prejudices about the phenomenon being studied and then horizontalized significant statements that were relevant to the experience. Next, the researcher worked to
create a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements. These significant statements were then reduced to meaning units of the experience and clustered into themes.

Then, the researcher synthesized the themes from the researcher’s personal experience to create a textural description of the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994), which in this study is the phenomenon of Malaysian English language teachers teaching the English language to students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This description was supported by verbatim examples and described “what” the researcher experienced, including thoughts, feelings, and struggles with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher reflected on her own textural description, and constructed a structural description of her experience (Moustakes, 1994). This description conveyed “how” feelings and thoughts connected to the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Then the researcher construct “a textural-structural description” (Moustakes, 1994, p. 122), generating new meanings and essences of her experience of the phenomenon. These steps were repeated for each verbatim transcript of the research participants. While the constant comparison technique, which involves taking a piece of data and comparing it to others, aids in conceptualizing the relationships between data sources, cross comparison is avoided in phenomenology studies (Thorne, 2000). This is because phenomenology research aims to discover the underlying structure or essence of a phenomenon through an in-depth, systematic, and reflective examination of individual cases (Thorne, 2000).

Finally, the textural-structural descriptions of all research participants’ experiences were combined to “construct a composite textural-structural description” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122), describing how the research participants as a group experience
**what** they experience (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, this final description conveyed the essence of the Malaysian English language teachers’ experience teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research**

Trustworthiness of a qualitative study refers to the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the researcher’s data to persuade herself and others that the research’s findings are significant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative study introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been accepted in many qualitative research (Connelly, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Nowell et al., 2017). The criteria of trustworthiness in qualitative research that Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This study focused on these criteria to ensure trustworthiness in the study.

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend these strategies to promote credibility in a qualitative study: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy, and member checking. Qualitative researchers engage in one or more than these strategies when conducting their study to increase the credibility of their findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This first strategy that this study engaged in to increase the study’s credibility was to use the triangulation process. Triangulation is a process of combining data from numerous sources to research a certain phenomenon (Hales, 2010) in order to obtain richer data to support the research’s findings (Wilson, 2014). Experts in triangulation in the social
sciences continue to agree on the use of four types of triangulation identified by Denzin in the 1970s: (1) Data triangulation; (2) Investigator triangulation; (3) Theory triangulation; and (4) Methodological or method triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hales, 2010; Merriam, 2009).

This study, in particular, engaged in a data triangulation strategy. Data triangulation is when a researcher uses multiple data sources in a research study (Johnson, 1997). Using different methods does not imply using different data sources, for example, multiple interviews would provide multiple data sources while using the interview method (Johnson, 1997). Another important aspect of data triangulation is gathering data at various times, locations, and with various people (Johnson, 1997). During data collection for this study, each research participant went through three separate interviews at different times. The interviews were conducted with teachers from various parts of Malaysia, with varying cultural backgrounds and different years of experience teaching in urban and rural schools. The researcher’s fieldnotes, which documented what was heard, seen, experienced, and thought about during the data collection as well as data analysis processes, were also used as a data source for this study.

The second strategy that this study engaged in to increase the study’s credibility was to perform member checks with the research participants after the interviews were conducted. Member check is where interview transcriptions were sent back to the research participants for them to confirm if the themes or categories of the data makes sense, is developed with sufficient evidence and whether it represents their narratives.
(Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this way, researcher bias can be avoided when analyzing and interpreting the study’s findings (Anney, 2014).

**Transferability**

Researchers support their study’s transferability by providing a detailed description of their study so that others who are interested in the context of the study can determine how applicable the findings are in other settings or similar contexts (Anney, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004). A detailed description of a study includes a rich, thorough description of how the study was conducted, who were the research participants, and all the information that a reader may need to know to comprehend the findings in the context in which they were presented (Conelly, 2016; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Dependability**

Since dependability and credibility go hand in hand, the use of strategies to increase credibility in a research study can also help establish the research's dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Besides that, dependability in a qualitative study can also be addressed through creating a clear audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail records the researcher’s thorough procedures, and decision points during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

**Confirmability**

The major strategy to establish confirmability in a qualitative research is also through an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity is central to the audit trail (Nowell et al., 2017). Reflexivity happens when a researcher recognizes her responsibility and tells the story of the people she is researching by expressing in writing
the significance of events as experienced by those who were involved in them. (Emerson, et al., 2011). A reflexive journal is used to document and articulate the researcher's internal and external awareness or reflections, including biases, dispositions, and assumptions that they brought to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). The reflexive journal also documents the course of the research through decisions made and procedures carried out (Shenton, 2004). In addition, this reflects the researcher’s positionality when conducting their research. The following section outlined the researcher’s positionality throughout the course of this study.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

This statement of my positionality as a researcher will inform myself and the reader on how the data in this research study was selected, filtered, and analyzed (Creswell, 2013; Foote & Bartell, 2011; Merriam, 2009). This statement also informed my opinions and assumptions throughout the research process, allowing me to be more aware of my biases and to bracket them as the study progressed.

My firsthand experience watching Mizzou students express their needs and concerns during the fall 2015 homecoming parade sparked my interest in this field of research. A group of students marched in support of black students, bringing the parade to a halt as they criticized the administration’s inadequate attempts to eradicate racism at Mizzou. This led to the resignation of the Missouri University System President at that time (Pearson, 2015). It was not until this time in my academic life that I experienced such high levels of anxiety in the classrooms. Many instructors were aware of the events taking place on campus, and some made an effort to start a conversation about the events. However, most efforts at dialogue ended with silence from the floor, at least in the
classes I was attending as a student or interning in as part of my Ph.D. degree. There were students who attempted to talk about the incidents, but it was more of a concern, stating that they do not feel safe with the events happening on campus. I felt concerned as an international student witnessing these events, trying to understand the tension while remaining safe. The majority of international students at the time tended to observe the event from a distance and avoided engaging in conversation about it, at least not within my own group of international student acquaintances. As I was doing my teaching internship, it gave me some relief that the primary instructor was in charge of leading any discussions regarding the events on campus because I lacked information or rhetorical skills to do so.

At the time, I wondered how I might learn to manage challenging dialogues with students who have diverse life experiences and come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This inquiry introduced me to the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), and I recognized its relevance in English language classrooms in Malaysia, where the English education system has battled with racial, political, and national identity issues. Ladson-Billings (2014) mentioned, “those who do this [culturally relevant pedagogy] work understand that not knowing is one of the most powerful tools and motivators for doing more and doing it better” (p. 82). My interest in this topic of study stemmed from “not knowing” and being intrigued with a novel pedagogy and my attempt to make sense of it in the context of Malaysian English language education system.

My initial understanding of cultural diversity in the classroom came from my time as a student in the Malaysian school system. Later, as an undergraduate in the TESL program at Universiti Putra Malaysia, I gained an understanding of cultural diversity in
the classroom from the perspective of an educator through two mandatory courses called “Sociology of Education” and “Introduction to Multicultural Education.” These courses provided me with foundational knowledge of how culturally diverse our classrooms are, but the knowledge was not tied to curriculum and instruction and did not give me a teaching pedagogy to work with such students. My experience here is similar to that of many Malaysian graduates in the education field. My previous teaching experience in a Malaysian national secondary school has given me firsthand knowledge of the school’s system, as well as difficulties and opportunities that English language teachers face when teaching students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I am able to relate to and comprehend the experiences of the teachers because I am familiar with the distinctive cultural and linguistic dynamics that define the Malaysian English language classroom. This knowledge guided my research strategy, data gathering, and analysis, enabling me to approach the subject from an informed standpoint.

My shared experience with Malaysian English language teachers positioned me in the role of an insider. According to Berger (2015) researcher as an insider will impact a study in three major ways: (1) Research participants may be more willing to share their experiences with a considerate researcher; (2) Researcher and research participants relationships can be shaped by the researcher’s status, such as education or experience, and can bring power to the relationship; and (3) Prior knowledge and experiences of the researcher impact the data collecting and analysis process, influencing how the phenomenon being examined is constructed. Having shared experiences with Malaysian English language teachers in this study allowed me to establish a level of relatability with these teachers, which is essential for building trust and rapport. However, these shared
experiences could also present the challenge of bringing my bias and assumptions into the study. Because of my insider position, I reflected rigorously on how my presence would shape the conversation. While the research participants and I may share experiences, I maintained the separation between my understandings and theirs to allow the research participants to share their unique experiences rather than projecting my own experiences onto the participants.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the phenomenological research methodology used in this study. This research methodology was utilized to investigate the beliefs and practices of Malaysian English language teachers who teach English to students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Data was collected from six English language teachers teaching in Malaysian national secondary schools. The study relied on the criterion sampling design to identify research participants that could provide rich data on the phenomenon being studied. The primary source of data for this study was interviews, with additional data from a reflexive journal. This study engaged in several trustworthiness strategies, including data triangulation, member checks, the maintenance of an audit trail, and a reflexive diary, to ensure the findings of the study were significant. A description of the researcher’s positionality was included to enhance transparency on the researcher’s biases and assumptions. The results obtained using this methodology will be presented and examined in the next chapter, providing insight into the issues addressed in this study.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The findings of this research study are based on interviews with six Malaysian teachers teaching the English language in Malaysian secondary schools. Triangulation and member checking procedures are employed to ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students?

2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students?

3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction?

Data analysis and findings in this chapter begin with the profiles of six Malaysian English language teachers who participated in this study. These profiles were crafted in the participants’ own words, using the first-person voice to capture their experience (Seidman, 2013) in teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Next, the findings in this study are framed within CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and cultural-historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987/2015) frameworks to analyze the impact of mediators (tools, rules, and division of labor) on teaching practices of Malaysian English language teachers in diverse classrooms within the Malaysian English education system. For this study, the data reveals three sets of findings. The first set of findings presents Malaysian English language teachers’ addressing government prescribed teaching resources to teach their culturally and linguistically diverse students.
The second set of findings focuses on the influence of cultural norms, rules, and regulations at the national, school, and classroom level on Malaysian English language teachers’ teaching practices. Meanwhile, the third set of key findings highlights Malaysian English language teachers’ understanding and interpretation of various experiences that they went through teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Research Participant Profiles**

Six teachers teaching the English language subject in Malaysian secondary schools participated in this study. These teachers include four male and two female teachers whose number of teaching experience range from 2 to 26 years. Some teachers in this study teach in schools situated in urban areas, and some teachers teach in rural areas located in parts of Eastern and Western Malaysia.

Among the six teachers, two teachers hold a master’s degree in teaching English as a second language (TESL) and English respectively, one teacher is currently enrolled in a master in TESL program and the others have a bachelor’s degree in TESL, music education and economics.

The teachers who participated in this study come from culturally diverse background. They represent the three main races in Malaysia, which are the Malays, Chinese and Indians, as well as the indigenous group in one of the states in East Malaysia. Each teacher speaks at least three languages, generally their mother tongue, official Bahasa Melayu and the English language. Table 4.1 summarized the demographic and information of the six teachers that participated in this study. In an effort to have a fuller sense of the research participants, a brief profile of each participant
is crafted and presented in first-person voice, based on the participants’ own words from their interview sessions. To protect the privacy of the participants’ true identity, all identifying information, including their names, has been changed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cultural and Linguistic Background</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Number of years in teaching</th>
<th>School location</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Peng</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese</td>
<td>Master’s degree in English</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Urban area in southern region of West Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Speaks Mandarin, Cantonese, official Bahasa Melayu and English language</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Denise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Philippines</td>
<td>Bachelor of education in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urban area in East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks Hakka, Cantonese, Mandarin, Official Bahasa Melayu, local Malay dialect, and English language</td>
<td>Currently enrolled in Master in TESL program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakim</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Bachelor of education in TESL</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Urban area in eastern region of West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks official Bahasa Melayu, local Malay dialect, and English language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Cultural and Linguistic Background</td>
<td>Educational Background</td>
<td>Number of years in teaching</td>
<td>School location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megat</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Master’s degree in TESL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rural area in East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks official Bahasa Melayu, indigenous group language, local Malay dialect, and English language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajeshwari</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Malaysia Indian</td>
<td>Bachelor of Economics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rural area in eastern region of West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks Tamil, official Bahasa Melayu, and English language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Diploma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian</td>
<td>Bachelor of education in Music, minoring in English</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban area in central region of West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks Malayalam, official Bahasa Melayu, and English language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table shows the demographic and background information of the Malaysian English language teachers who participated in this research study.
**Teacher Peng**

After my form six\(^1\), I got into [name of local university] but I took English for professionals [bachelor’s degree program]. It’s something like business English, [or] English for communication. So, it’s a linguistics course technically, no education [component]. Then, after I finished my bachelor’s [degree], I continued my master’s [degree]. While I was finishing my master’s [degree], I applied for the teachers’ intake. So, recently, Malaysia did a one-off intake\(^2\), in which they want to fill in the vacancies for [teaching] job positions in government schools, whether it’s SMK [public national schools], even the vernacular schools. So, I applied, I don’t know how I got through, I got the interview, then I was given the job. I applied last July, I think, then the interview was in November, or was in October, then the result came out in December, then my posting was in March.

I have two years of experience teaching as a substitute teacher in a primary school. I also volunteered to teach foreign language in [name of state] while I was in [name of university]. I also taught the intensive English program at [name of university] for one year plus. When I applied [to teach in national secondary schools], I chose the English option. So, they gave me the English option.

My official role is ‘guru penolong’ or assistant teacher. So, that title is given for new teachers. For my other roles, I’m also in charge of asset checking. And I’m in charge of the building and physical department. I not really sure what that role is, but it’s in the

\(^1\) National pre-university program offered by government schools, equivalent to ICGSE or O level.

\(^2\) In order to address the shortage of teachers in some subjects taught in Malaysian primary and secondary schools, the Ministry of Education Malaysia introduced the one-off intake in 2021 for graduates not in the education field but with specialization in certain subjects, with the English language subject being one of them (Education Service Commission Malaysia, 2021).

list [of responsibilities]. I’m the ‘AJK’ or member of the committee for natural disasters. I’m a ‘Nilam’ teacher, the reading program teacher. I’m the assistant head teacher for form three students. So, that means that if one of the form three teachers, the form teachers are not in school, I would have to take over their responsibilities including taking attendance and doing what a form teacher normally does. I’m also a prefect teacher. I’m also part of the dengue prevention team. And for curriculum, I’m in the blue house, as in the blue sports team. I’m an English language club teacher. I’m part of the boys’ brigade, which is the uniform body. I’m also in charge of basketball. What else? I’m also in charge of the afternoon assembly. I’m an afternoon session teacher. I’m also part of the parent teachers association, the PIBG. And I’m also part of ‘bina insan’, which is [name of state] program of trying to encourage non-Muslim students to ‘memupuk nilai murni’ (‘cultivate good values’), that kind of stuff.

My school is not an urban school\(^3\). It’s a suburban school. It’s outside town area. But actually, it’s within town area. I think the community doesn’t speak English that well. It’s a school in a residential area. But the demographic of the residents there, I’m not sure. But a lot of the students they walk home, so maybe that suggests that they live around the school. A lot of them [students’ parents] are working at [name of country]. Some of my students’ parents are working in [name of country]. My school has 60% Chinese students. For an SMK [national public school] that’s a weird number\(^4\). Yes, because my school is a feeder school for a few Chinese primary schools nearby. And

\(^3\) Upon checking the information on the list of Malaysian secondary schools, compiled by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2022), the school Teacher Peng is teaching in is categorized as an urban school.

\(^4\) Refer to Figure 3.1 for demographic of students in Malaysian national secondary schools. When compared to other secondary schools in Malaysia, Teacher Peng’s school still exhibits a more diversified student population, although having a different student ethnic majority.
usually, the students according to my colleagues, not me, students with good English
[language proficiency] generally got into better schools, like cluster schools, high
performing schools in the same area. So, my school is like plan B, feeder school, if you
cannot be admitted to other schools, then come to feeder school. Oh, speaking of
diversity, I’m actually teaching two to three Iban students, their parents relocated from
Sabah, Sarawak. I’m not so sure. I think Sarawak. Maybe they’re working in [name of
country]. Maybe they’re working in [name of state] I didn’t ask. But I was surprised
because I didn’t expect East Malaysians to be in my school.

Teacher Denise

Right after my bachelor’s degree, at that time was already provided to us the form
whether or not we wanted to be posted to the national schools of which I did. So, from
there, we went through some interviews, but it was a guaranteed place already for us, for
national schools. So, my first posting was in my own hometown, I served there for eight
years before I transferred to another school in [name of district] and taught in this school
for six years. When I was offered whether to pursue my degree in [university in East
Malaysia] or in [university in West Malaysia], I fought for a place in [university in West
Malaysia]. I do not know why I go for [university in West Malaysia] because I’ve never
been out of [East Malaysia] all this while. So, I got that experience. So being out of [East
Malaysia] during that time was really significant to me, because I am in an environment
where especially in the English course, people like dare to speak up, people are daring to
ask questions. And I see the difference of those who came from [East Malaysia] or from
[Eastern region of West Malaysia], and those from Kuala Lumpur.
[The schools that I taught in] both urban schools, both can be considered academically good schools. Yeah, so the demographic doesn’t make much difference. My experience was, I would say limited with this setting of students, to these setting of schools. When other teachers say that even in form five, their students do not even know the basic present tense, or the basic is or are [verb to be], I couldn’t imagine that. And even when we go for courses, and we do some sharing, most of the teacher would say, “Oh, for my students, because their English proficiency is very low, it’s very hard to do this, we have to resort to first language.” But this is a form five, so I couldn't really grasp. Because my setting is really limited within these two [schools].

In school it’s not just teaching, there’s a lot of many other responsibilities, the class teacher, co-curricular and all that sort. Apart from making sure attendance record, and then contacting parents, why they [students] cannot come, and issuing letters. Issuing letters from schools, teachers are doing it. This is another thing that I realized now, being the middle person carrying out NGOs [non-government organizations] collaboration with the school. This is one thing for example, Interact Club, we are under the Rotary Club here, that’s good. It depends on what the Rotary Club wants for example, in [name of district] they focus more on students’ performance, exhibition. So that’s a lot of work on the teacher’s side and making sure that students are carrying this out and all, so it’s quite a stretch, and when there’s money involved at the same time, so there’s a lot of thing. So, when I was in [name of district] that’s a different story, the Rotary Club is more on community base. That means we do activities for the community. In [name of district], it’s more on performance, more on setting up booths, more like a carnival. Not only that, if they want to make donations for the students and all, which is a good thing, then it is
the teacher who look for who are the ones eligible, to check on their parents’ salary, and then their academic and then getting them together. So this sort of thing, not minor, but the work behind it is quite tedious. And to make sure we are fair to all students. So, these are some of the things, even writing speeches for the VIP.

**Teacher Hakim**

Okay, firstly my choice to become a teacher is because my parents were teachers. But I didn’t see what I would be teaching, what subject. Since childhood, my English language is better than my friends, even my own family [members]. When I was young, I watched English language programs on TV especially *Sesame Street*. I watched English language sitcoms and I laughed on my own. And when I entered [primary] school, I excelled [in the English language subject] more than my friends. I see that I could teach my friends, show them what I understand [about the English language subject]. And then, when I entered [national secondary] Islamic school, I thought that my interest to be an English language teacher is no more because I am in an Islamic school, so I don’t see myself teaching the English language. But I still wanted to be a teacher. After I am done with the [national secondary] Islamic school, I entered college, an Islamic college. But when I have completed my diploma, and tried to proceed with a degree, the college admission told me that I do not meet the required pointer [grades] to enroll in the degree program [that I wanted]. With the diploma that I have, I was eligible to apply into a bachelor TESL program. So, my mother did not stop me from pursuing a TESL degree, although I have background in Islamic studies but had to move onto language, so I went ahead and enrolled into a bachelor in TESL program.

Okay, work of a teacher is 24 hours non-stop. There’s so much to do. As a
secondary school teacher, you will be asked to teach any subject. Except like for those who does not have musical knowledge background, then they [administrators] will not force you to teach it. Then sports, although I am not a sports person, but these last weeks we had a lot of sports events. I was appointed as the ‘sepak takraw’ coach. And just being teacher [of student] helpers. Teacher helpers are when there is a tournament, there will be helpers to pick up the rubbish, carry things. So, the helpers are a group of students. There will be a teacher in charge of these group of students.

This is the only school [I taught in], from posting till now, 14 years. I feel happy, I feel sad too. Although this posting I did not get near my home, but it is still in the same district. My second choice was to be posted to [name of state]. I heard the reason why I am posted here is because there are not enough English teachers in [name of state]. I am not sure why we still lack English language teachers here but for my school, to meet the needs of teaching and learning of the English language, my school actually need three English language teachers. But I am an [English] option [teacher], the second teacher is non-option but he has taught the English language subject for more than 10 years, so they said that automatically it becomes his option. The third teacher is a new teacher. Also, non-option and will be slowly given less English language classes to teach because that teacher is an educational technology teacher.

The students in this school are majority ‘anak peneroka’ (‘children of settlers’). Perhaps about 40-50% are government servants’ children. [Name of place] is actually located within three districts actually. So, students used to be from these districts. But now, students in my school, they are all from [name of district], so none from other districts. The Ministry restructured the enrollment of students in this school. To make it
convenient for students to come to school. They don’t have to travel on the main road [highway] to come to school.

**Teacher Megat**

I come from a family of teachers. My dad was an English teacher. My mom worked with the kindergarten, KEMAS\(^5\). So naturally, I think that’s how I became a teacher. Basically, at school, I think the only subject that I was good at was English. My father was a headmaster at that time, so he used to bring back like boxes of books. So, I would just like you know, develop this interest in reading. Then my mother, I remember, I think, the point that really sparked interest in me, I think when I was in year six [12 years old]. So apart from already reading English storybooks and things like that, my mother bought this, I remember it’s like a system, like a learning system, I think with all the cassettes and books. So, “Oh, this is fun!” So, I started to like, you know, practice speaking and things like that. Yeah. So, it really started from home and then school and then [as an] English teacher, tadaa!

So, I did my degree [in TESL] in the Peninsula [West Malaysia] for my first degree. And then after working for 14 years I did a master [in TESL] degree here in [name of state]. This school is my first posting up until now. So, if you are asking for like, you know, different experiences, like in different districts, I do not have that kind of experiences. But, I did two times of practical teaching. And the two schools [I did my teaching practice] were so different. The first school I went to, it’s a religious school. So basically, all the students were Malays, and the cultures is like, I was so comfortable with

\(^5\) KEMAS is an early childhood education program established by The Ministry of Rural Development Malaysia. Priority is given to students aged 4-6 years old from lower SES family (Ministry of Rural Development, n.d.).
that, because I attended a religious school myself, for secondary school. So, I knew their routine, I knew like things they talk about, like how to talk to these students. So, I was so comfortable within that environment, like I knew how to navigate through and things like that. In my second practical teaching, that was like an eye opening. It was an SMK school [national secondary school], and I met with these three big races in one class, the Indians, the Chinese, and the Malays. And I was not prepared for that one. And then looking at the dynamics of their like, how they mingle with one another. So, I thought it was quite a challenge in the beginning, because I need to know how they behave with one another, what are the things they are used to do, things they are comfortable of doing and things like that. It was the only unique experience I ever had, actually.

So, I’m teaching at, I think the second school that was built here in this district, so it is quite old. It’s located inside of this little town. Maybe not so remote, because this district is located like 70 kilometers away from the capital city. So, I think not an urban school, but not so remote either⁶. I was the head of panels, I was the president of the staff club, and I was also the class teacher, and there were so many things going on. And then I got sick, like I went to the hospital and all that. And I went to see all the admin and say, I couldn’t do this anymore. And then there was quite a scene actually that happened in school when I tried to like push my voice, saying that I couldn’t do all of these things anymore. I used to be very busy, like the busiest person on the planet. But not this year. So, I have less responsibilities as compared to two years ago, actually. Yeah, I still have one thing that I do apart from teaching, but that is it. So, I’m in charge of ‘kebajikan’

⁶ Upon checking the information on the list of Malaysian secondary schools, compiled by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2022), the school Teacher Megat is teaching in is categorized as a rural school.
(‘welfare’). So, I will like organize programs like for example, now I’m doing this food pantry program, prepare free food for the students. Other than that, the normal things that you have to do like you are teacher advisor of this club or in that club, but not so like, not the big ones as compared to before.

Currently, there are 7 of us [English language teachers]. We have seven classes for each form. Each of us has four classes. It’s just like nice. The school is a one session school. We have like 1000, I don’t remember a specific number, but like 1000 students. And so with major three [indigenous] ethnic groups, and smaller other ethnic groups. These [indigenous] ethnic groups that I’ve mentioned to you, which I’m so very familiar with, and, like I somehow know, the backgrounds and a little bit of the culture and traditions, and how their daily routine would be like. 60% of them [students] are coming from the lower economic status, they [students’ families] work as farmers, or maybe they’re into a little business and things like that. And then I think, sort of small, a handful of students whose parents are government servants, like teachers, or [work in] hospitals.

*Teacher Rajeshwari*

Well, you know, actually, I obtained an economics degree. You know, at the time, it was recession, and I couldn’t find any suitable jobs with the degree I have. I could have looked for a job in where I was studying. But you know, at the time, my parents, they were like, they were sick and all that and I thought that I should stay put in [name of state]. So, I decided to do whatever job that came around. So, then I registered myself with the employment agency, and soon there was a vacancy as a lecturer in one of the colleges in [name of state]. So, I ended up working at that college for four years. I taught
things like computer assisted English, meaning using computer to teach young children. Also, I taught advanced business calculation for ACCA [the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants] students, and that went on for four years until the closure of the college and that is actually when I realized that I had a knack for teaching. So that’s when I decided to enter into this field. So, I applied for teaching, teachers training, at the time it’s called KPLI [Malaysian teacher training program] where people who have a degree can pursue teaching by obtaining diploma, and the course was only for a year, less than a year. So, I tried [applying for the course] for two years and eventually I got into one of the college in [name of district]. I was offered, majoring in English. After a year of completing the diploma. I was posted to a rural school in [name of place]. I taught there about two years at that time, then I got married. So, I had to I mean, I asked for transfer, transfer to [name of place] and after two years [of applying for transfer], I was transferred back to [name of place], but to teach in another rural school, somewhere outskirt of [name of place]. And I’ve been there [teaching] ever since, about 18 years.

I’m the head of the language panel, overseeing four subjects namely, Bahasa Melayu, English, Chinese and Tamil. Okay, my job description among others, including raising standards of the students’ achievement, and monitor people’s work and the classroom practice of teachers who are under me. Moreover, I need to develop and enhance the teaching practices of other teachers. I need to manage effectively, the financial and physical resources of the school, so that it is used effectively in teaching and learning. I mean, I have about maybe approximately, like 20 teachers under me who are language teachers. So, it is tough. I have to monitor their movement, I mean, what are they doing? How are they doing it, and I will list the, the keyword is monitoring. How
they go about teaching and how they, if they have any problem, I must be there to solve the problem. If they encounter any problem, while teaching and they do encounter many problems, which I don’t think, rarely encountered by perhaps the teachers in urban schools. Something may look like not very important, may look small to others, but it is a big thing for us. Even as like as mundane as asking students to come to school [because of] transportation. Okay, I don’t think they have these kinds of problems in the urban school. So, we need to diversify the ways to solve this problem, which I don’t think actually taught in the textbook. So, over the years, the 20 [years of] experience actually have taught me to think outside the box to come up with solutions for even the slightest problem.

Okay, there are about 450 students, about 47 teachers including the principal and senior administrators [in this school]. The majority of students, about 70 or 80 percent of students are Malays, followed by the second largest [group of students], the indigenous people, or ‘orang asli’. And there are quite a number, about 100 of them [indigenous students] mainly from [name of place] and [name of place]. These areas are located near our school, and then followed by about 28 Chinese and about 20 Indians. Majority of them are from B40 groups and some live in below poverty line.

*Teacher Michael*

I always wanted to be a teacher. But I wanted to be a geography teacher. Yeah, I like geography very much. So, I thought it would be nice to be a geography teacher. And my first major when I went to teacher training college was actually music. Yeah, so I

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7 According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2021), Malaysian household income is categorized into Bottom 40% (B40), Middle 40% (M40), and Top 20% (T20), with B40 indicating income below RM 4,850, M40 indicating income between RM 4,850-10,959, and T20 indicating income above RM 10,959.
majored in music but my minor was in English. Yeah, so when I went to school, of course, my main subject was music, teaching music at primary school that time. And then I was asked to teach English as well. Because they were short of English teachers, you know? And then, okay, so I was given [the English language subject], it’s okay, I enjoy teaching. So, they gave me the remove class\(^8\), because at that time, there were still many English teachers in the school. So, I started with remove class, and I started teaching them. And then slowly it went up to form 1 and then I went on to specialize a bit more in English. See, I was teaching English, but I was not an [English] option [teacher] because my major was still music and moral education. So, because of that, I had to go for this one-year course, for and I got a certificate after that, and then my major change to English. Yeah.

So, the challenge with this school was, it’s near an area called [name of the place]. So, in this area, even though the name of the school is a fantastic name, but the students who come to this school are mostly foreign workers’ children who live by there. So, if you look at the socio-economy, most of these students, the parents may be having two or three jobs, and they have no time to monitor their children. And these children, some of them are working too. So, school for them is like a chore, not coming to school. So, it is from there that I learned you know how they need to be engaged to come to school, but if they know something exciting is happening then they will come to school. They come to school, they may sleep in the school, and you have to use, you have to be very patient

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\(^8\) Remove class is a one-year transition program for students transitioning from national-type Chinese or Tamil primary schools to ensure basic Bahasa Melayu proficiency for these students as they enter national secondary schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).
with them. So, in this school there’s a lot of discipline problems in the school, social problems, fights and family problems. So, the attendance was not very good.

So, when I was posted to my second school, the head of panels said the district is looking for teachers who are interested to be JU. JU means ‘jurulatih utama’ (‘master trainer’). ‘Jurulatih utama’ means you’re supposed to be like, go and be a trainer for the district, you know. So, I just gave my name. Yes, I’m quite interested to be this trainer. So, after that, I was called, and they actually called me to go, and at the same time, they started a new English syllabus, the new syllabus, KSSM for form one. So, I went for the course at the state level. And then we came back and I was supposed to train the teachers in the district, a small group of us. And it was during that time that I learned a lot actually. And of course, putting in my own ideas, how to make English come alive in the classroom? Yeah. So, up to now, even today, I had a training session for the teachers, a sharing session. Such as such meaning I shared on our program, which I do in school, you know. And this was a cluster school. So, cluster school, so can you imagine from that I’m jumping up to a different level up there. So, it was another learning experience for me where I had to up myself because the other school was a low level and you’re trying to push them up, but over here they are already at that particular level and you’re trying to push them even higher.

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9 According to the master trainer program guide by Institut Aminuddin Baki (2016), a master trainer is an accredited professional trainer who has understanding in aspects of learning and development in their respective fields. These master trainers have also fulfilled the necessary competencies and requirements set by the Institut Aminuddin Baki.

10 Cluster Schools in Malaysia were introduced in year 2007. These are innovative, excellence-focused schools in fields such as art, music, science, and technology. These schools are offered operational flexibility on how they manage their financial resources to develop its specialty are. Cluster schools’ administrators can also choose up to 10% of its student population. (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).
So, after this school, I was there for about a few years then I moved on to, actually I was invited to go to the [name of high performing school]. They wanted me to help English teachers there with the new syllabus. The teachers were not used to the new syllabus. So, they wanted someone to guide them. So, I was there for two years, but totally different experience teaching there. So, after two years because of the distance and the late classes at night, I asked to come back to [name of place] and that’s why I posted to [name of school] and I was very happy there until I got a promotion and moved on to my current school now.

So currently, I’m the head of languages in school. So, I’m in charge of Malay, English and Chinese. My school doesn’t have Tamil, so this three. So, I have to oversee all the activities for these [language department] and all these teachers come under me so I’m the head of this. This is one aspect of it. I have to do observations I have to go observe teachers. I’ve 10 teachers to observe in the school. I have co-curricular activity. So, every Wednesday is co-curriculum day, so, meaning from 1 to 4 [p.m.], we have three, each hour we have different clubs, we have sports, we have uniform bodies. So, I have to go and observe them to see if I can make a report based on what the state wants. So, on Fridays I have to check the teachers’ lesson plans. They submit the lesson plans for the week and Mondays as well, they [the teachers] come and stop by to get [their books] checked and stamped. So, these are some of the things, and I have four classes of English as well. I teach four classes. So, at times, honestly, my main focus in my school,

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11 High performing schools (HPS) were introduced in 2010 to recognize the best schools in Malaysia. HPS consistently produce excellent academic and non-academic student outcomes, have a distinctive character, and can compete internationally. Each HPS receives allocation to invest in improvement programs. HPS are also offered operational flexibility in student intake, financial management, and human resourcing (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).
I put to my four classes. That’s my priority number one. So, my classes come first and then all these extra things.
The Activity System: The Malaysian English Language Classroom

CHAT (Engeström, 1987/2015) is utilized in this study to understand how the Malaysian English language classroom operates as an activity system. Complementing CHAT (Engeström, 1987/2015), CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) adds an essential lens to investigate Malaysian English language experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Together, they offer thorough understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning that occur in Malaysian English language classrooms by considering various factors that affect the learning environment. This integration provides a more comprehensive knowledge of the complexity of educational situations. Further context for the Malaysian English language classroom activity system is provided in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1

The Malaysian English Language Classroom Activity System

Note: This figure shows the Malaysian English language classroom activity system.
**Subjects**

The subjects, those involved in this activity system (Mwanza, 2001) are Malaysian English language teachers. These teachers and their students speak multiple languages, such as Malay, the national language, their mother tongue, like Mandarin, Tamil, or others, and English. English language teachers in Malaysian national secondary schools are typically qualified and trained in the field of English language teaching. They have extensive knowledge of the Malaysian educational system as well as the English language curriculum. The teachers have a critical role in promoting and encouraging students’ English language proficiency.

**Tools**

The tools, by what means the subjects are carrying out the activity (Mwanza, 2001), include the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) aligned documents Malaysian English teachers use to refer to when planning and writing lessons. These documents include: (1) Curriculum framework; (2) Standard-based curriculum; and (3) Scheme of Work (Mardziah Hayati & Zuraida, n.d.). These documents are to supplement the required CEFR-aligned textbooks, imported from the United Kingdom (Muhammad Ariff & Abdul Khalid, 2022) as the primary teaching material in Malaysian English language classrooms (Mohamad Syafiq et al., 2021). Teachers also attend professional development training to gain pedagogical tools and strategies to teach in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
**The Object or Objective**

The object or objective, why is this activity taking place (Mwanza, 2001), is to analyze the Malaysian English language classroom as an activity system, focusing on factors that influence teachers’ CRP practices in their diverse classrooms.

**Rules**

The rules, regulations, and cultural norm that govern the performance of this activity (Mwanza, 2001) include Malaysian English education policies, school standards, classroom norms, cultural norms and community expectations.

**Community**

The environment in which this activity is carried out? (Mwanza, 2001) is the Malaysian English language classroom which reflects the country’s diverse population. Teachers and students come from the Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous groups, each with their own languages and cultures. Students bring a wealth of language resources, cultural perspectives, and communicative styles to the classroom.

**Division of Labor**

Who is responsible for what when carrying out this activity (Mwanza, 2001)? This study looks at the roles of stakeholders in education and how they impact Malaysian English language teachers’ teaching practices in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

**Outcome**

The desired outcome from this study (Mwanza, 2001) is to identify and understand how tools, rules, and division of labor influence Malaysian English language teachers’ CRP practices in their diverse classrooms.
Discussion of Findings Based on Research Questions

The following sections present this study’s research findings in accordance with the research questions: (1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students? (2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students? (3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction? Themes based on teacher interviews were organized per research question.

What are Malaysian English Language Teachers’ Experiences Using Resources to Teach the English Language to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students?

As described in the Malaysian English language classroom activity system earlier, resources such as the curriculum, scheme of work, and prescribed are available to support Malaysian English language teaching of the English language to diverse students. Teachers also attend training for professional develop and to gain pedagogical knowledge to help them teach their diverse students better. When Malaysian English language teachers describe their experiences utilizing these resources, they identified: (1) Challenges in getting relevant training; and (2) Adapting prescribed teaching materials to meet the needs of students.

Challenges in Obtaining Training and Support to Enhance Knowledge and Skills to Teach Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

Teachers in this study addressed the professional development opportunities available to them, focusing on the skills and knowledge needed to effectively select,
adapt, and apply teaching resources to teach their diverse students in the classroom. The teachers pointed out the lack of relevant professional development opportunities that take into account the various needs and contexts of Malaysian teachers teaching the English language to diverse students.

**Ineffective Teacher Training for Curriculum Introduction.** Teacher Megat mentioned that when the Ministry of Education Malaysia developed a new English language curriculum by aligning its prior curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), they conducted nationwide workshops to train master trainers on using CEFR-aligned teaching resources to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse Malaysian students. According to Teacher Megat, these workshops are meant “to prepare teachers for what’s coming, because they know they have to do a lot of adaptation when they use the textbook for the first time... [and will have] some ideas on how to go about it.” Teacher Michael mentioned that “from the very beginning” of training, teachers were told to connect foreign cultural content to references in Malaysia or Asia. Teacher Michael mentioned that, for example in the textbooks where students read about “Big Ben”, the famous clock tower in the United Kingdom, teachers were asked to relate the concept of a clock tower with the one we have in Kuala Lumpur, at Dataran Merdeka.

Teacher Megat explained that these workshops were “cascaded to teachers” at various stages. He shared that certified master trainers were “encouraged” to conduct workshops and “share knowledge” with teachers at the state level. Then, appointed state level trainers will train teachers at the district level. Teacher representatives from each school in the district will return as resource persons to conduct in-house training for other
English language teachers in their respective schools. Teacher Megat highlighted his experience with the cascade training model and the challenges in convincing teachers about the use of CEFR-aligned teaching resources. He said:

> It took a few days for us [master trainers] to be convinced actually. It was only like toward the end of the training that we realized, “Oh, so this is the idea that they want us to do”. So, this is something that we have to bring back, convincing them [other teachers] that this is going to work. It’s not always a success story. There are feedback from the teachers, when they express their opinion, “This is very new, this is very you know, too difficult” or things like that.

Teacher Megat added that he is concerned about the cascading training model, including losing “important principles of the curriculum” from level to level, and post-training efforts to monitor teachers’ practices, particularly new teachers’ preparedness for the CEFR-aligned curriculum. He stated:

> So, I’m quite worried actually, like now the implementation has come to full cycle. And then I’m not sure like the new teachers that have just came into the system, I don’t know, like if they know what is going on, and the kind of things that have changed in the last five, six years...

Based on the interviews with the teachers in this study, it is noted that Teacher Denise, Teacher Rajeshwari, and Teacher Michael are also master trainers. Teacher Hakim and Teacher Peng, who have 14 and 2 years of teaching experience respectively, said that they had not attended any workshops on using CEFR-aligned teaching resources. Teacher Peng presumed that teachers need to have prior knowledge and skill proficiency in the curriculum before entering school. He expressed, “I don’t think these
teachers were trained to use this syllabus. Because when we entered a school, we are expected to know how to use the syllabus already.”

**Lack of Relevant and Necessary Courses in The Ministry of Education**

**Malaysia Training Management System.** Teachers in this study pointed out the prospects of developing knowledge to teach the English language to their culturally and linguistically diverse students through professional development courses. The teachers mentioned that they primarily find courses to attend through the Ministry of Education Malaysia training management system known as ‘Sistem Pengurusan Latihan Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia (SPLKPM)’ (‘Ministry of Education Malaysia Training Management System’). This system offers a list of webinars that teachers can attend, as well as videos on various issues in teaching and learning for teachers to view. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has established credit point guidelines for the ongoing professional development of education service officers, and teachers must complete a minimum of 42 credit hours of training annually (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018).

Teacher Peng highlighted that teachers have access to resources from the training management system to fulfill their professional development credit points. The training management system offers national-level seminars or workshops, which provide credits points for teachers to attend. Due to this, Teacher Peng and Teacher Megat pointed out that teachers prioritize attending seminars and workshops from the training management system, rather than attending courses outside of the system. When talking about whether the SPLKPM offers talks on teaching strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse students, teachers in this study stated that they have not encountered any. Teacher Denise
mentioned that there are courses on teaching strategies but often times they interpreted teachers’ need for support to teach their diverse students simply as teachers needing teaching modules, instead of attending to what teachers really need. Teacher Rajeshwari’s shared the same sentiments as Teacher Denise about teaching strategies courses offered by the SPLKPM. She mentioned:

I’m afraid maybe perhaps they [professional development courses facilitator], I won’t say they’re not aware. Maybe they do.... They have to teach the teachers the basic knowledge how to teach these [diverse] students but somehow, I think they haven’t actually come up with any solution or strategies to overcome, or to help these students. Normally they will teach, they will give training for I mean, like, cater more to the urban school problems like... how to incorporate technology or 21 century skills. I mean, there’s no use talking about computers and gadgets and all that if you [students] don’t even own one. So, it’s like, back to basic for us. I mean, we go back [after the courses], and it’s not applicable actually, because it is not what is needed [teaching in rural schools].

Teacher Rajeshwari pointed out that courses on teaching strategies in the SPLKPM often cater to urban school issues and do not meet her needs or students’ needs in rural schools.

**Adapting Prescribed Teaching Resources to Meet the Needs of Students**

Adding to the complexity of receiving training on how to implement the CEFR-aligned curriculum, teaching resources and relevant teaching pedagogies, teachers in this study talked about the organization of structure of the prescribed CEFR-aligned teaching materials, as well as issues in adjusting foreign cultural contents in teaching resources to meet Malaysian students’ cultural understanding.
**Flexibility of the Structure of Prescribed CEFR-Aligned Teaching Resources.**

The teachers in this study noted that the CEFR-aligned English language textbooks in Malaysian national secondary schools are selected by the Ministry of Education Malaysia and provide structured content, language learning activities and exercises that are aligned with the Malaysian English language curriculum. For example, Teacher Megat shared:

“So, I don’t really prepare a lot of things in terms of the materials. Because I think the textbooks is enough. Okay, because everything is in the textbook. And then if you want to do like extra, yes of course, but usually you should have the textbooks, that’s the most important documents that you should have... because when you look at the textbook, actually, these CEFR textbook, it has the pre-lesson, it has the main activities, and it has a process. So, everything is included there.

Teacher Michael shared the same views with Teacher Megat about the organization of the CEFR-aligned textbooks used in schools. He referred to the Full Blast Plus 4 textbook¹² (Mitchell & Malkogianni, 2019) “detailed” step-by-step approach in the form four textbook, where the reading, listening, speaking, and writing components are consistently incorporated into each unit. The same “detailed” nature of the textbooks, however, created a sense of rigidity for Teacher Denise to prepare lessons that cater to the needs of her students. She mentioned that she appreciated “that the [Malaysian Ministry of Education] curriculum department really tries as much as they can to support teachers.” She did, however, wonder “to what extent teachers are given the autonomy to

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¹² The Full Blast! Plus 4: Student’s textbook is use to teach Malaysian students age 16-17. This textbook is published by MM Publications.
work within their own contexts” with the specified teaching materials provided for teachers.

The teachers in this study mentioned besides the prescribed textbooks, the Malaysian Ministry of Education also provided teachers with the English Language Scheme of Work, which Teacher Megat explained is a document which suggests steps for lesson preparation, as well as gives an overview of how lessons will look like based on the textbooks. Teacher Denise mentioned that rather than using the Scheme of Work and textbooks, she planned her lessons based on her students’ progress and level of English language proficiency. Like Teacher Denise, Teacher Rajeshwari stated that she had “to go through other [teaching] resources” and “cannot rely on the textbook” because the contents of the textbooks are too hard for her lower English language proficiency students to understand. She said it is more crucial for her students to fully grasp a lesson than to speed through the curriculum. She adapted lessons based on her students’ ability and made sure to assess their progress before going on to the next lesson.

Teaching Foreign Culture Content in CEFR-Aligned Teaching Materials to Meet Student Needs. The teachers in this study spoke about teaching foreign culture content in the textbooks and what it meant for their students. Teacher Peng mentioned that the foreign CEFR-aligned teaching and learning materials “is not relevant” for Malaysian students’ cultural understanding. He highlighted unit 7 in the Pulse 213 textbook (Bowen, 2017), which introduced the topic “Journeys” to students. The unit included a feature article for the reading component titled “Journey Into the Modern World”. The article discussed who the Amish people are in the United States of America.

13 The Pulse 2: Student’s textbook is used to teach Malaysia students age 14-15. This textbook is published by Kumpulan Desa Fikir Sdn. Bhd.
and how they “prefer the old-fashioned way of life” (Bowen, 2017, p. 75). Teacher Peng mentioned that in addition to being unfamiliar with the Amish people, his students also do not know much about the United States of America.

Teacher Hakim mentioned that it is challenging to pique students’ interest when teaching foreign cultural content in the textbooks because his students are unable to relate to the culture. He stated:

If use CEFR, I think it is a bit hard. Even the name is Common European Framework, so they use the Europe culture to teach the English language. So, in the form 1 textbook, the questions are “What is the date for Easter? What is the date for Halloween?” Students don’t celebrate so the students also don’t know. So, it is quite hard to get students’ interest to learn. There’s one that ask about the population of countries in Europe. What main languages do these Europe countries use? My students they don’t care about these things.

Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that initially she was “skeptical” about teaching foreign culture content to her students, but she felt that “nowadays, students are quite open” and she is “glad that they are not introducing these [topics] 30 years ago, then there’ll be some opposing ideas and opinions and all that.” She quoted a sentence from a textbook where it is written, “Siti attended the Easter party, and she was glad.” Teacher Rajeshwari said that she did not have to change the sentence to avoid sensitivity because parents understood and accepted that it is part of students’ learning.

Section Summary

Overall, Malaysian English language teachers in this study highlighted several challenges they faced in obtaining training and support to enhance their knowledge and
skills in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. One challenge identified was the training approach to introduce the new CEFR-aligned English language curriculum to teachers. Concerns were raised about the loss of quality information from level to level.

Another significant challenge reported by the teachers in this study was the lack of relevant and necessary courses within the Ministry of Education Malaysia Training Management System, which teachers primarily rely on for their professional development. Teachers reported a lack of courses addressing strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This mismatch between course offerings and teachers’ actual needs hindered their ability to effectively teach diverse student populations.

Additionally, teachers discussed challenges related to adapting prescribed teaching resources to meet the needs of their students. While CEFR-aligned textbooks provided structured content, some teachers found the detailed nature of the materials to be rigid, limiting their autonomy in lesson planning. Some teachers preferred to adapt their lessons based on their students’ progress and language proficiency levels rather than strictly following prescribed materials. Teaching foreign cultural content in the textbooks also posed difficulties, as it often did not resonate with Malaysian students’ cultural understanding, making it challenging to engage students and maintain their interest in the curriculum.
What are Malaysian English Language Teachers’ Experiences with Cultural Norms, Rules, or Regulations that Influence the Ways They Teach Their Diverse Students?

The teachers in this study discussed their experiences with cultural norms, rules, and regulations established by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, their schools, and in their classrooms. They talked about the impact of these norms, rules, and regulations on the way they teach in their classroom. Teachers in this study highlighted: (1) The impact of frequent national educational policy changes on their teaching approaches; (2) Tensions in curriculum implementation and student progress monitoring in schools; (3) Balancing diverse needs of students and maintaining curriculum standards in the classroom; and (4) Navigating expectations from local communities.

Impacts of National Education Policy Changes on Teaching Approaches

National education systems often establish curriculum standards that outline the subjects, content, and skills to be taught at each grade level, ensuring a comprehensive education for students. The teachers in the study addressed that the Malaysian English education system has been the subject of continuous national reforms. As research participants described their experiences navigating and supporting these reforms, their narratives were intertwined with evaluative thoughts about being on the forefront of change in the Malaysian English education scene.

Frequent Policy Changes Disrupt Teachers’ Teaching Approaches. Teacher Megat pointed out that frequent changes in education policies often require teachers’ time and energy to adapt to the policies, which lead to burnout. Teacher Megat mentioned,

So, it takes so much time and energy for the teachers to adjust themselves to these new policies that are coming.... So, teaching has been very dramatic... because
you have to keep up with so much new things, learn new things. But if you have too many changes, and if it causes you to feel like a little burnout in the process, I think something is wrong somewhere.

The latest reform in the Malaysian English language curriculum was motivated by the role of the English language in the global context. Teacher Denise mentioned, “CEFR is the global standard of [English] language learning and teaching”. While teachers in this study agreed that the curriculum’s balanced assessment of students’ English language proficiency, which placed equal emphasis on each language skill (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), some teachers expressed their concerns over the loss of key components from the previous Malaysian English education curriculum. They believed that these components played a role in improving students’ levels of English language proficiency. These components were the removal of the literature in English component and the replacement of the PBSMI policy. PBSMI is the Malay acronym for “Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris”, which is translated as the teaching of science and mathematics in English.

Teacher Hakim expressed that he was disappointed with the removal of the literature in English component because he believed that “it is from literature that we can improve students’ speaking by reciting the poem, or storytelling”. He added that by removing literature students cannot “have fun and enjoy”, “act out” and “express themselves” anymore. Teacher Hakim noted that the CEFR-aligned curriculum has evolved to emphasize a different type of student language development and communication. He stated that the literature in English component was helping students acquire stronger descriptive and narrative language skills. Language practice in the
CEFR-aligned curriculum is more technical, with students learning to create, understand, and explain “flowcharts” as a means of presenting information.

Teacher Peng said that the literature component is still available in the Malaysian English language curriculum and syllabus for secondary schools, however it is optional. He also stated, that unlike the previous curriculum, the literature in English component is not tested in the examinations, and there are no prescribed texts required for teachers to teach this component. Teacher Peng believed that “literature is a very crucial part in building students’ critical thinking”, however, “most of the teachers don’t teach literature anymore, because there’s not enough time.” Teacher Denise shared her personal experience of what learning literature when she was a student and what it meant for her. She said:

[i]t was the literature class that I had really make a difference on for me. It stayed with me, I think, because I appreciate that interaction, the Q&A, and there’s a negotiation of what one text could mean for another, and you can be open about it.

Teacher Michael mentioned that the shift from the PPSMI to MBMMBI policy, changed the language of instruction for Mathematics and Science subjects from the English language back to Bahasa Melayu. MBMMBI is the Malay acronym for “Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia, Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris”, which is translated as upholding Bahasa Malaysia, strengthening the English language. Teacher Peng believed this shift downplayed the importance of the English language, impacting students’ perceptions of the English language’s status. He expressed,
...it’s like [policy says], yeah, English is good but Malay is more important. So, I think more emphasis on Malay, but at the same time, a lot of students, they find that learning Malay is very lame. They don’t want to do that. They don’t want to learn English as well. Yes, they’re very reluctant to learn another language because they feel that their own mother tongue is just enough for them to survive.

Teacher Rajeshwari recalled that during PPSMI implementation, students showed better proficiency in the English language because they were using the language in their science and mathematics classes. She added that students were reading mathematics story problems in English, and as a result, they had “slightly better [understanding] in grammar, a better grasp of the sentence structure, better comprehension of any [English] texts,” and “better [English] vocab.” However, after the policy changed, students struggled with basic English terms, and Teacher Rajeshwari found herself having to teach basic English terms to students again. According to Teacher Rajeshwari, throughout these changes in policies, “[teachers] don’t really have the platform to voice our opinions.” She added that, if given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion, she would share her thoughts on how education policy changes impact her work at school.

**Tensions in Curriculum Implementation and Student Progress Monitoring in Schools**

Teachers are often required to adhere to curriculum guidelines and regulations issued by the school, district, or the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Research participants in this study addressed the gaps between teachers and school administrators regarding the implementation and assessment practices in the context of the curriculum. The teachers discussed various aspects of this issue and provided insights on: (1)
Navigating administrative demands on curriculum implementation; and (2) Emphasis on school’s performance instead of students’ achievement.

**Navigating Administrative Demands on Curriculum Implementation.**

Teacher Denise noted differences in perceptions between teachers and school administrators regarding the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Despite being a CEFR master trainer and having attended continual training to become acquainted with the curriculum, she mentioned that school administrators imposed different standards on what the curriculum should be. She mentioned,

“I’ve been to one of the CEFR master trainers [talk]. So, when I listen to the Cambridge officers themselves who came, the way how she presents is really [about] helping the students, how to go about [using CEFR curriculum] and that is what really English [learning] is. But, when go to back to school, this is the challenge most of the teachers, all the master trainers have in common, the administrators they have a different understanding of it [CEFR curriculum], and they have different requirements based on the administrator above them. So, there’s a different understanding.

Teachers in this study mentioned that, one of the discrepancies on curriculum implementation between teachers and administrators is conducting assessment for students. According to Teacher Denise the current curriculum is “student-based within the whole year” focusing on skills students need to achieve by the end of the year. However, the school required “a report within the first semester” on students’ progress. If no progress was made, teachers were required to justify the reason why. As a result, “for the sake of reporting” teachers were urged to “give students the average mark”, which
indicated that students have mastered the skill. Teacher Denise added that this does not align with the objectives of the curriculum.

Teacher Megat mentioned a reason why there was confusion regarding how to assess students in the English language subject as compared to other subjects in school. He talked about PBD [pentaksiran bilik darjah], which translates to classroom assessment. He said:

So that’s the thing with this PBD, it’s like a whole another issues, because apparently different subjects do it differently.... For the English subject, when we were being trained, is something that is very easy to do, because this assessment is a part of the classroom activities. And it’s not something that you have to record or it’s not something that you have to like document and it’s not like complicated and difficult to do. But this is not the case for other subjects. For example, the Bahasa Melayu subject, it turns out to be like, like a task in itself, and it has to be like at a specific time. For example, teacher will say, “Okay, so today we’re going to do [classroom assessment], if you can do this activity, you’ll get three [score]. I never hear that when we were being trained for English [subject].... So, this is just like, you know, ongoing.

Teacher Megat highlighted that there are varying classroom assessment approaches for different subjects in school. In the context of the English language subject, assessment is part of classroom activities, straightforward and does not require extensive documentation.

**Emphasis on School’s Performance Instead of Students’ Learning.** School administrators frequently focus on students’ academic achievement, however teachers in
this study said that the emphasis on students’ academic progress in their schools is to address the school’s or district’s performance rather than on addressing students’ achievement gaps.

Teacher Megat noted how discussions regarding students’ academic success among school administrators and teachers in his school frequently link students’ progress to their attendance. He shared:

[We] are so busy talking about the students’ academic performance and maybe talking about the factors that cause it to happen, like, for example, the attendance, because of the situation in their family, but I don’t think I’ve heard anybody talk about like the community. Like in terms of their culture, and in terms of like, their language, and how that maybe have some impacts on their survival, at school, you know, as students.

Teacher Megat highlighted that views such as students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds are often disregarded when addressing students’ academic progress, and that these factors may contribute to a better understanding of students’ academic progress in schools.

Teacher Denise pointed out the contradiction between her school’s departmental goals and higher-level goals set by school administrators. Her school’s English language department aimed to focus on formative assessment and individual student achievement, where else school administrators focused more on standardized metrics or other key performance indicators. Teacher Denise felt confused being caught between the two sets of expectations. She expressed,
“So, for our school, [in department meeting they say] we try to do this at least, for students to achieve this one [objective], okay? Make sure that you hand in report before when, when, when. If the students don’t do well, you prepare intervention for them, you know, do this, do that? Often by the end of the day that is what they said during the meeting. But then when it comes to meeting among administrators, they have another KPI [key performance indicator] to achieve. Then coming back to us, “Okay, you must do this, the students must achieve this.” But how can? This is a formative assessment it goes by their [students’] own level.”

As a result of this, Teacher Denise questioned what is important when it came to her teaching practices in the classroom. She said, “it makes me question as well... [w]hether what I’m doing matters or not where else what really matters in the end for the school is the students’ result.”

Teacher Denise shared that teachers were informed that there would be no more academic performance-based school comparisons, reflecting a shift away from the competitive aspect of ranking schools. However, when her school district had the lowest academic performance within the state, she was surprised that teachers were asked to attend meetings about improving their school’s performance to raise the district’s performance to the “top ten” spot. Teacher Hakim shared the same sentiments as Teacher Denise regarding the aspect of ranking schools. He mentioned that when his school scored second lowest in the district in terms of the Malaysian Certificate of Education academic achievement, teachers were made accountable to develop an “intervention” to enhance students’ academic performance. This intervention would be reported to
education officers from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and there was paperwork and requirements for how to go about producing the report. Teacher Hakim shared,

“Based on the SPM results last year, our school is second lowest, so actually it’s not this group of students who are second lowest. But to make sure the teachers in this school are more hardworking and that this batch of students do not continue to be the second lowest, so teachers need to do an intervention. Meaning what the teacher has taught before this is not correct. So, the teachers need to do something.”

Teacher Hakim mentioned that the report involved a data-driven approach, starting with historical performance data from four to five years ago, setting targets for the next Malaysian Certificate of Education examinations, analyzing current results, identifying weaknesses, and proposing interventions to improve student performance. He expressed that the process of intervention placed a burden on both teachers and current students.

**Balancing Diverse Needs of Students and Maintaining Curriculum Standards in the Classroom**

The teachers in this study felt a need to strike a balance between incorporating students’ diverse needs into lessons and ensuring that the core curriculum objectives are met. The teachers addressed the delicate balance that they must achieve when balancing effective classroom instruction and curriculum standards. The teachers highlighted: (1) Managing the use of native languages in the classroom while promoting English language learning; and (2) Employing differentiation strategies while adhering to curriculum standards.
Managing the Use of Native Languages in the Classroom While Promoting English Language Education. Teachers in this study understand that having low English language proficiency makes it difficult for students to communicate, complete learning activities, and participate in class discussions in the targeted language. Teacher Peng stated that around 60% of his students are Chinese, with the remainder being Malay and Indian. In addition, his school has Iban [an indigenous group from East Malaysia] students. According to Teacher Peng, these students have a variety of native languages with which to communicate. As a result, students do not place a high priority on learning the English language because it is “a second or even third language” for them.

Additionally, he expressed that his students are reluctant to learn the English language because they believe that their native language is sufficient for their daily needs and survival.

Teacher Michael noticed that some of his students are reluctant to speak in the English language because they fear making mistakes and being laughed at. He mentioned that he would encourage his students to “just speak”, “give them confidence to move on” and to not worry because “making mistakes is fine”. Teacher Peng also said that his students were scared of making mistakes in English and would rather leave exam questions unanswered. However, he noted that through encouraging students to make mistakes and helping them learn from their mistakes, his students took initiative in responding to exam questions, moving from leaving questions unanswered to attempting to complete all of them.

Teachers in this study noted that students take advantage of the fact that teachers can communicate in Bahasa Melayu or students’ native languages. As a result, they keep
silent in class and rely on teachers to explain everything to them. Most teachers in this study refrain from using other languages in their English language classes, although they are frequently forced to do so when students are too silent and do not participate in class. Teacher Denise noted that there are times that her students seemed to understand what she is saying, yet they chose to remain quiet and not respond. She expressed these sentiments about her students:

[W]hen I was being given one of the academically weak classes to teach English, what I see these students is that they understand me, just the matter that they can’t express it. And they are very quiet and seem to be waiting for my answer and there’s not much enthusiasm of what the lesson is all about.

Teacher Denise faced the challenge of students who may understand the subject matter but lack the confidence to articulate their understanding of the lesson.

Teacher Peng mentioned that passive learning attitude among students in his school was noticeable “three years” before the COVID-19 pandemic hit until now. Teachers at his school are finding it more difficult than ever to motivate students to learn. Therefore, Teacher Peng said he tried to meet students halfway when it came to using both students’ native languages and the English language in his classroom. He noted that although he allowed students to speak to their friends in Bahasa Melayu or their native languages during class discussion, the written or oral output from the discussion had to be in the English language. Despite this flexibility, his students nevertheless opt to “be very quiet... wait for the teacher to give answer, [and are] very passive” when asked to use the English language. Teacher Peng added about the complexity of language acquisition among his students. He said that when students were given the opportunity to respond in
Bahasa Melayu, “they can answer eloquently” but when asked to speak in the English language, students do not want to.

Teachers in this study mentioned that they noticed students utilize translanguaging strategies in their classroom “as a resource for learning” such as “to ask question” when they are unable to articulate what they want to say in the English language. However, there is a dilemma as to how much translanguaging these teachers want to allow in their English language classroom. Some teachers are comfortable using Bahasa Melayu or the native language that they share with students to explain ideas, concepts and classroom instructions. For instance, using his students’ interest in motorcycles, Teacher Hakim informed his students that many motorcycle parts are directly translated into Bahasa Melayu from the English language. He shared that he wanted his students to understand that they unconsciously use many English words in their everyday lives.

Some teachers practice using Bahasa Melayu and students’ native languages in their English language classroom cautiously. Teacher Rajeswari mentioned that students prefer teachers to use their native language to explain English vocabularies that they do not understand. However, she would constantly find a way to convey ideas or terms to her students by using images that she draws on the board or from her phone. If that does not work, she will ask students who are familiar with the word to explain it to their peers in their native language. Only if all these strategies fail would she resort to using Bahasa Melayu, or the students’ native language in the classroom.

Teacher Michael mentioned that his students frequently require a “nudge” to use the English language in class. This “nudge” might come from their friends or by making
mistakes and learning from them. Therefore, rather than encouraging students to use their native languages, he requires his students to utilize the English language in class. He added the use of native languages among students in the English language classroom has not become a particularly great “trend”. He stated that when students are too comfortable using their mother tongue, it hinders them to “speak fluently [in] English”.

Employing Differentiation Instruction While Adhering to Assessment Standards. According to teachers in this study, they use differentiation strategies to meet their students’ English language proficiency as well as adapt lessons to meet their students’ cultural understanding. Teacher Denise mentioned that, “differentiation is one of the buzzwords now” in the field of English language teaching and learning practices in Malaysian schools. Teachers in this study mainly differentiate learning materials and learning goals based on their students’ English language abilities. Teacher Michael provided an example of what differentiation instruction looked like in his lesson planning. He said:

> When you go to a classroom, you have your lesson plan with you, and you look at your class. If there are 30 students in the class, are they of same level?...Can I teach the same thing to them? For example, reading comprehension, I have this group of students who are finding it so difficult to answer the comprehension questions. So, for example, group A you answer all the 10 comprehension questions, but I want this group, if you can answer at least two [questions] you have achieved the objective for the day. So, that is differentiation. And the questions... Maybe for the first group, for example, we can put a lot of higher
order thinking skill questions for them to really think to answer. But come to this [other group], you can simplify the questions.

Teacher Michael’s approach to differentiation instruction demonstrates how to adapt the complexity of classroom activities to meet the learning abilities of diverse students in a single classroom.

Teacher Peng also shared differentiation strategies to meet the needs of different students in his classroom. He mentioned that he used differentiation strategies to also help students achieve the objective of the lesson. For example, “it could be an improvisation of a reading activity” where instead of having students read and answer comprehension questions, he would ask lower English language proficiency students “to just read and try to understand the passage” then “[i]dentify any words that they don’t know”. Teachers reported that while they differentiate learning materials during lessons, this is not the case when it comes to examinations.

In terms of examination, all students in their respective forms take the same English language exam. Teacher Peng mentioned that his upper secondary students approached learning of the English language is “not... because it’s an interesting language but learning English because they [students] want to score A.” Teacher Peng felt pressured by the exam-oriented system as well, feeling that “the only way to properly assess them [students] is by looking at the exam results, unfortunately.” As a result, the approach to teaching has been “drilling” students with examinations questions. Teacher Michael pointed out how standardized national examinations further reinforced the exam-oriented system. He expressed:
... ultimately, at the end of the year, all the students are sitting for the same exam paper. There’s no different paper for the weak students, meaning the summative exam would be SPM. Everyone sits for the same SPM paper, whether it’s from the good class or weak class.

Teacher Megat mentioned that although the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum is changing teaching practices, this progress is slow because “it’s very difficult for us [teachers and students] to let go of this idea of an exam-oriented thing.”

Navigating Expectations from Local Communities and Parent Outreach

Most of the teachers in this study do not directly collaborate with the communities around their school. For example, Teacher Megat mentioned that activities involving communities are organized by his school’s “counseling unit”. He added that when contacting parents about students’ discipline or attendance, “the senior assistant” in his school’s “student unit” conducts visits to students’ homes to “try to find out why they [students] are missing school”. He shared:

I don't really have experience of organizing activities [with the community]. But when it happens at school, usually it’s done under the counseling unit. So, this unit will usually reach out to NGOs, or to some freelance and motivator, and they will organize certain activities like that. When it comes to like contacting parents or dealing with parents, usually, it will be done by the senior assistant in the student unit. Yeah, so they will arrange visits [to students’ home]...to try to find out why they are missing from school and try to improve the attendance and things like that.
Teacher Megat also stated that, in addition to the senior assistant, “the discipline teacher” and “class teachers” are also more involved that other teachers in reaching out to parents about students’ behavior and attendance in school.

Teacher Peng also shared the same experience with Teacher Megat about reaching out to parents regarding students’ disciplinary problems. Teacher Peng clarified that he is not a class teacher and does not need to contact parents. Also, the “disciplinary teacher will be in charge” of students’ disciplinary cases, and parents may occasionally visit the school to meet with the vice principal to discuss student-related issues. Teacher Michael did not share any particular experience working with the community around his school. Teacher Hakim shared that “in terms of mixing around”, there is no issue, but he does not have experience working with the community around his school.

Two teachers in this study, Teacher Denise and Teacher Rajeshwari, have experience collaborating with the local communities around their schools. They experienced the expectations placed by the communities on their roles as teachers. Their experiences navigating community expectations are highlighted below.

**Teacher Denise: Balancing Student Involvement and Teacher Responsibilities in Rotary Club Collaboration.** Teacher Denise had the opportunity to work with two Rotary Clubs in different districts. She mentioned that these Rotary Clubs worked closely with the school’s Interact club. Therefore, when the Rotary Club organizes events, they will get students in her school to participate in them. The Rotary Club in her current school district that she is teaching emphasizes students’ involvement in “performances” and “exhibitions”. The Rotary Club at her previous school district involved students in activities such as “setting up booth.. like a carnival”. Therefore,
teachers need to make sure students carry out these activities. Teacher Denise felt that these additional responsibilities burdened her because “the work behind it is quite tedious” and it creates pressure “when there’s money involved at the same time”. Her school is receiving funding from the Rotary Club. These funds go to students who need financial aid to support their learning. The Rotary Club has requirements on the eligibility of students receiving financial aid. The criteria include “to check on their [students] parents’ salary and then their academic [performance].” It is the teacher’s job to make sure that the selection process for financial aid is “fair to all [eligible] students”.

Teacher Rajeshwari: Addressing School Dropout Rates Through Collaboration with Head Village and Indigenous Community. Dropping out of school is a prevalent issue, particularly among the indigenous communities at Teacher Rajeshwari’s school. She mentioned that this is a complex issue where cultural norms, traditional values, and the perception of education as a priority are the heart of the problem. Teacher Rajeshwari expressed,

Dropping out, it’s a norm here, especially among the indigenous people, it is a culture for them to marry off early... they don’t see the importance in education. They don’t see the future in studying, higher than what it’s necessary. They don’t see the need to finish complete their studies. They just drop out. And we find them working as a laborer, or even working around the villages, just doing odd jobs, and all that.

Teacher Rajeshwari stated that efforts were being made to address the issue by involving the “Tok Batin”, or traditional village head. The school also formed a collaborative effort between parents and teachers. Teacher Rajeshwari expressed,
“...we tried to communicate with the “Tok Batin”, the head of the village of the indigenous people. We include the “Tok Batin” in our parents, teachers association to come to a solution, how to overcome the problem. But it is up to them to change it. And hopefully the system itself, I mean, the culture, they will have some changes within their own culture, to see the importance of education.

Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that their engagement with the head of the village and students’ parents is “only to give suggestion” rather than to push for change.

Section Summary

Malaysian English language teachers in this study highlighted the frequent changes in education policies, which demand significant time and energy for teachers to adapt. Teachers mentioned that constant shifts can lead to teacher burnout, making it difficult to maintain a consistent teaching approach. While teachers in this study support the most recent reform, the CEFR-aligned curriculum, they are concerned about the elimination of key components like literature in English and the teaching of science and mathematics in English. Teachers noticed improvements in their students’ English language proficiency when literature in English and teaching of science and mathematics in English components were implemented.

Teachers in this study also discussed the tensions in curriculum implementation and student progress monitoring. They highlighted the disparities in understanding the CEFR-aligned curriculum between teachers and school administrators. The discussion revealed that school administrators frequently prioritize school performance over closing achievement gaps among students. Teachers felt caught between the department’s and school’s differing standards and aims.
Next, teachers in this study talked about efforts to balance the diverse needs of students with maintaining curriculum standards in the classroom. Teachers faced challenges in managing the use of native languages in English language classes. Some students, for whom English is a second or third language, felt reluctant to learn the language and relied on their native language for communication. Teachers were confronted with the challenge of deciding how much freedom to allow students to use their native languages in the classroom because students needed greater exposure to the English language instead. Teachers adopted differentiation strategies to meet students’ varying language proficiency levels and cultural understanding. However, teachers are aware that there will be no separate examination for students with lower English language proficiency. Students will eventually sit for the same national examinations, and teachers faced challenges in deciding how much differentiation to implement in their classroom.

Finally, teachers discussed their roles as liaisons between schools and local communities. They highlighted the additional responsibilities and pressures that arise from these community expectations, including involvement in extracurricular activities and addressing school dropout rates among students.

**How do Malaysian English Language Teachers Make Meaning of These Experiences While Trying to Provide Culturally Relevant Instruction?**

Malaysian English language teachers in this study talked about how they understand, interpret, and process the various experiences that they went through teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. The
teachers highlighted: (1) The importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment; and (2) Reflection on educational practices in the Malaysian English language classroom.

**The Importance of Fostering an Inclusive Learning Environment**

Teachers in this study emphasized the significance of inclusivity in their English language classrooms. They recognized that fostering an inclusive learning environment includes understanding of students’ cultural backgrounds and embracing differences in the classroom.

**The Significance of Understanding Students’ Cultural Backgrounds.** Teacher Megat mentioned that he recognized that his “students’ have different backgrounds” and that it is important to be aware of how to teach students the English language by “tapping into students’ backgrounds”. He expressed,

“I think the only way for English to make sense with them, is when it is so close to them with their daily life. So, you can start with their culture and their language, like their native language. So, I think that is one of the ways on how it can help with teaching and learning English.”

Teacher Megat noted that his students find mastering the English language hard, and they are not exposed to the language back home. Therefore, to overcome this gap, he mentioned that it is important to make his lessons accessible and relevant to students.

Teacher Peng said that teachers need to be aware of their students’ cultural backgrounds when teaching in the classroom. He also emphasized the role of the teacher in bridging the cultural gap and facilitating understanding, even if students cannot fully relate to the foreign culture contents in the textbooks. He expressed,
“...the [textbook] content does not, I confidently say it is not relevant to the Malaysian situation. So, it is the teacher’s job to explain what is in the textbook and try to help the students understand the content by using their [students’] culture. Since we are aware of our students’ culture, or even our own [Malaysian culture], so when we talk about the contents, we can actually put it in a way that we know that Malaysian students generally understand.”

Teacher Rajeshwari and Teacher Hakim included students’ interests in their lessons to improve students’ learning experiences in their English language classrooms. For example, Teacher Hakim leveraged his students’ interests, such as their love of motorcycles, to boost their attention during English language lessons. Teacher Rajeshwari emphasized the significance of embracing and valuing students’ cultural backgrounds as a means to foster approachability, cooperation, and motivation in the classroom. Teacher Rajeshwari expressed,

I learned about the students’ cultural background, and I really demonstrate my appreciation of their culture. When they feel appreciated, they feel not alienated. Because I think for my students, they always feel that others don’t understand them. So, when they have a teacher who understand them, and I show that I do understand them, their diverse culture, they are more approachable, they are more cooperative and they are more motivated to learn.

Teacher Rajeshwari added that she actively inquires about her students’ daily lives and cultures as well as creates an open space for students to discuss and learn from each other’s backgrounds.
Embracing Differences and Promoting Collaborative Learning. Teacher Rajeshwari and Teacher Michael talked about how inclusivity in their English language classrooms encouraged students to recognize and respect one another’s differences as well as similarities. Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that she utilized group work activities for example for students to work on a presentation together, to foster unity and understanding among her diverse students. She mentioned that previously, her students were hesitant to work with other students from different cultural backgrounds. However, her efforts to understand and appreciate her students influenced them to adopt this attitude towards working with other classmates from different cultural groups. Teacher Rajeshwari stated,

Those days they are a bit reluctant to go together with other races, they would prefer to confine to their own races. So nowadays, when they understand, especially my class, I’m not sure about other classes, they understand their cultural differences and they understand about why they are like that. They are not ignorant anymore. They embrace them, and they are willing to cooperate and work together in the classroom. So, it becomes easier. So, group work, collaborations, teaching and learning, it becomes easier because they understand each other like a family.

Teacher Michael stated that he encouraged his students to be open to new experiences and to not be afraid to ask questions if they are unsure. He shared,

Well, for me, I think every day is a learning experience. I got to learn from somebody, even listening to you, learn something new, I can bring it back to my students. I learn from my students too. So, I always tell my students I learned
from you too. You learn from me, yes, but I learned a lot from you. I learned technology, I learned words, you know. So, don’t be shy, don’t be scared to learn something new. Don’t be scared if you’re not sure, ask somebody.

Teacher Michael added that by emphasizing the importance of learning from each other, he was able to establish a collaborative learning atmosphere in his classrooms.

Reflecting on Educational Practices in the Malaysian English Language Classroom

Teachers in this study reflected on educational practices in the Malaysian English language classroom. They regarded this reflective process as a chance to assess instructional practices while taking into account the unique challenges and complexities of the Malaysian education setting.

Teacher Megat’s Vision: Promoting Cultural Awareness and Relevance for English Language Instruction. Teacher Megat expressed concerns about the lack of cultural awareness in the school community. He noted that it is possible for teachers and students to overlook their own cultural identities and the importance of these identities in the context of education. Teacher Megat perceived significant potential in utilizing culturally relevant practices in English language instruction. However, he believed that the lack of cultural awareness among the school community might hinder opportunities to incorporate culturally relevant aspects into teaching and learning approaches. Teacher Megat contemplated taking a personal initiative to address this issue. He believed that by starting a conversation about cultural awareness among teachers, they could begin to raise awareness and generate ideas at the district level. Teacher Megat shared,

I think the greatest challenge is if you don’t have the awareness of it [culturally relevant practices in the classroom], if you don’t think about it, you will not pay
attention to it, you know. Then you will miss the opportunity to use it like a platform for you to teach language to the students. There’s a great potential to find out more about this [cultural awareness in classroom] and I think it will start a very interesting conversation. I think, if I start talking about this more people will know about this, and then maybe we’ll share some new interesting ideas on how to do this. I think I have a good feeling that they will receive this, like with an open mind, something that is interesting to talk about... I think the best way to do this, I will start with teachers [because] they also coming from different backgrounds, and you know, like, they are coming from different communities.

**Teacher Peng, Teacher Hakim, and Teacher Michael’s Perspective: Tailored Solutions in English Language Instruction.** Teacher Peng reflected on the development or adaptation of Malaysian English language curriculum or teaching resources that are specifically tailored for the Malaysian setting. He expressed concerns over the existing curriculum’s relevance to Malaysian students. According to Teacher Peng, the contents or examples are not relevant to the students’ culture and needs. Teacher Peng proposed using workbooks written by Malaysians for Malaysian students. He believed that these books offered students more content that reflected the Malaysian experience. Teacher Peng stated that this allows student to connect with the learning content on a personal level while meeting specific learning objectives. He shared,

> The contents of the syllabus is not relevant. But we were able to diminish that challenge, because we have workbooks that are written by Malaysian authors for Malaysian children. We still achieve the objective of [the lesson] which ask students to describe the price of things and learn how to use the word “buy”, or
“want”, or, “would like,” we still achieve those things. But instead of asking students to read a grocery list from an American or European market, then we will use the Malaysian market as an example. At least next time when they go to the shopping mall, they can still relate like, “Yes, I’ve learned this in school.”

Teacher Hakim proposed that instead of solely relying on the textbook and teaching content, which focused on European culture and events, they should encourage students to bring their own experiences and local context into their learning. He suggested that this could involve having students include their daily experiences and observations from their communities in their writing assignments. The goal is to make the learning experience more relevant to the students’ lives. Teacher Hakim expressed,

I mean what we have been doing so far is what we have from the textbook, we present it to the students, make them do the activities. Maybe what we need to do is ask them to bring what they experience every day or what is happening around their communities, include that in their writing book, make an assignment out of it, do a power point, do a presentation in a group work, to be discussed in the group... So, maybe what I think, it’s not we who should bring the world to them [students], let them bring their world to us... For me, they [students] need knowledge to explain what is happening around them, not knowledge about the Europe for example.

Teacher Hakim also talked about flexibility in using the syllabus. He believed that the syllabus and themes in the lesson were just a guide. Teacher Hakim mentioned that he tailored lessons to the students’ needs and local context. He shared,
For me, for the English language [subject], syllabus, don’t have to chase the syllabus too much. For other subjects, maybe. For me, the theme is just a guide...

So, I can ask them [the students], “What is the date for our Independence Day?” We just want them to learn to say, “On the 31st of August”. That’s all. That’s why, in the form 1 textbook they asked, what is the Halloween date? I changed it, because all they want is how to say the date, how to say the numbers.

Teacher Michael expressed his thoughts on top-down decision-making in the education system. He shared,

“Yeah, you know, sometimes we teachers, we always tell one another, the people up there they have nothing better to do. They just implement things and say this must be done.... But I feel that sometimes they need to come down and be in the school to see actually what is happening in the school. And then you cater your program. Not one blanket program for every single school.”

Teacher Michael felt that policymakers and administrators implement policies without understanding the realities that are happening in schools. Teacher Michael noted that there is a need to tailor programs because a one-size-fits-all approach is not ideal for every school.

**Teacher Denise’s Dilemma: Balancing Tradition and Change.** Teacher Denise reflected on the concept of cultural relevance in education. She acknowledged the importance of empowering students within their cultural context to elevate students’ capacity and potential. However, she expressed realization that students cannot thrive solely on that because the larger education system also plays a crucial role. Teacher Denise mentioned that there are two realms in education. She noted that the first is
distinguished by the traditional, exam-oriented learning. The second reflects the real world, which acknowledges practical skills for individuals to strive in their daily lives.

Teacher Denise expressed,

There are two worlds now, one that is the organization, the typical exam-oriented one... And then there’s this one part where we know that the real world needs skills and yet the real world also need qualification... So, what am I relevant to [for students] at this point?

Teacher Denise highlighted the challenges of being culturally relevant in preparing students for both academic qualifications and practical competencies. She stated that as much as she wants to “elevate the students to their capacity and potential” by providing students with real-life skills, she knows from her students that their need is to earn “good grades in exams,” and she “would not want to deny” students their needs at the time.

Teacher Denise made reference to Samuel Isaiah\(^\text{14}\), a Malaysian educator, nominated as one of the top 10 finalists for the Global Teacher Price (Global Teacher Prize Varkey Foundation, n.d.), who sought to use culturally relevant instruction for indigenous students by using technology and other innovations, but discovered that in order to have a meaningful influence, he needed to move beyond the educational system. Samuel Isaiah now acts as the program director of the non-profit organization, Pemimpin Global School Leaders (GSL), and works to improve school leadership in Malaysia (Olanday, 2023). She said,

\(^\text{14}\) Samuel Isaiah is a Malaysian English teacher, who tackled the perception of indigenous students as unworthy by establishing a crowdfunding project to create a 21st century English classroom (Hall-Waters, 2022). This led to improved English language pass rates from 30% in 2008-2012 to 80% in 2013-2017, transforming the perception of indigenous children's academic capabilities (Hall-Waters, 2022).
This reminds me of Samuel Isaiah. He wanted to make his students, the Orang Asli (indigenous group), culturally relevant to what is happening outside. He wants them to be culturally relevant that’s why he introduced all this technology and all. But now he has to go out of school to do more for them. So, when I see his work right now, his connection to the royalty and different organizations you know, when he is not a teacher anymore, like not in the government anymore, then he can do a lot of these things. And it shows that a lot of people actually concern and have power to do something about it but has to be outside of it. So, what about us teacher who are inside?

Teacher Denise raised the question of teachers who are still within the system and how they foster cultural relevance and holistic development within the confines of the traditional education system.

**Teacher Rajeshwari’s Perspective: Addressing Bias and Supporting Marginalized Students.** Teacher Rajeshwari expressed concern about the impact of teacher bias and cultural insensitivity on the quality of education and student well-being. She pointed out that, although “very rare”, there are teachers who may bring their preconceived notions and biases to schools. These biases can negatively influence “the quality of teaching” and learning. For example, she described a situation where a pregnant teacher made an insensitive remark about an Indian student’s religious practice of “wearing ashes on their forehead”, and that “the smell is so strong”, asking the student “to move away further”. Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that the student approached her to tell her about the incident since she was “the only Indian teacher in the school.”

Teacher Rajeshwari pointed out that when situations like these happen, it is difficult to
address them directly. She feared that confronting a colleague may “escalate to
something else or may cause some misunderstanding.” Instead, she calmed the student
down and “give rationale” for the colleague, explaining to the students that “the teacher
didn’t know better, she didn’t realize, maybe she’s pregnant.”

Even as a teacher herself, Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that she was subjected
to cultural insensitivity. She said that despite having been a teacher for 20 years, she still
finds herself having to explain her dietary restrictions as a Hindu to school staff. She was
surprised that the school staff were “not aware that Hindus they don’t eat beef” and that
using the same ladle to scoop chicken and beef dishes at the school’s canteen is still not
okay for Hindus. Teacher Rajeshwari mentioned that these incidents at school made her
wonder whether current initiatives to support cultural diversity are successful and
comprehensive enough to address these problems. She expressed,

People should learn of other people’s culture, they should take the time and
energy. It is worth it and it will foster more understanding and would reduce
many social problems, I think, which is due to mostly because of
misunderstanding. And I think the national agenda itself is to foster understanding
and cultural diversity or to learn cultural diversity but I think most of them are
quite superficial. They do say “keharmoonian” (‘harmony’) and “pelbagai bangsa”
(“different races”), learn and foster relationship, but how far, how deep, how
effective the programs are? I am not really sure. But obviously it looks much
more needs to be done because it’s not there yet.

Teacher Rajeshwari expressed concern that students “fall between the loopholes of
education” if “teachers are unable [or inexperienced] to address these kinds of cultural
and linguistic issues”. She felt that students who do not receive the guidance and support they need to succeed might “stop schooling or they don’t complete their school”. She expressed,

I think when they fall, when they stop schooling or they don’t complete their school, they will go back to their village or go back to the home place and the vicious cycle starts again. They’re not educated, they work odd jobs, and same thing again and again. So maybe the government, maybe somebody can establish a training or technical college or whatever, so that maybe they can join and learn skills, maybe. So, they can improve their themselves financially and become better in socially. And so, when they have children, and then they can at least make sure their children complete education, and after that the whole community improves that way.

Teacher Rajeshwari highlighted the challenges faced by linguistic and cultural minority students in the educational system, resulting in a continuous cycle of limited opportunities for both students and their communities.

**Section Summary**

Teachers in this study made meaning of their experiences based on different aspects of teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students and reflected on the importance of fostering an inclusive learning environment and educational practices in the Malaysian English language classroom. In terms of creating an inclusive learning environment, the teachers highlighted the significance of understanding their students’ cultural backgrounds. They emphasized the need to connect English language teaching to students’ daily lives to make the language more accessible
and relevant. Teachers recognized that embracing differences and promoting collaborative learning were key to fostering unity and understanding among diverse student groups. Teachers also integrated students’ interests into their lessons to improve their overall learning experience. Teachers see this approach as a way to make English language learning more engaging and effective for the students.

Regarding reflection on educational practices, one teacher expressed concerns about the lack of cultural awareness in the school community and believed that incorporating culturally relevant practices into English language instruction could be highly beneficial. The teacher discussed the challenges of implementing such practices and expressed that there is a need to initiate conversations and raise awareness among teachers about culturally relevant practices in the classroom. Some teachers reflected on the need for tailored solutions in English language instruction. They mentioned that the existing curriculum might not be entirely relevant to Malaysian students. The teachers proposed using locally authored materials to better reflect the Malaysian experience and make the content more relatable.

Additionally, one teacher reflected on the concept of cultural relevance in education and recognized the importance of empowering students within their cultural context to maximize their potential. The teacher acknowledged the existence of two realms in education. The first is the traditional, exam-oriented system, while the second is focused on equipping students with practical skills for real-world success. The teacher grappled with the dilemma of balancing cultural relevance with the need to prepare students for the educational system. Another teacher expressed serious concerns about the impact of teacher bias and cultural insensitivity on the quality of education and student
well-being. The teachers highlighted the presence of some teachers who bring their preconceived notions and biases to schools, negatively affecting both teaching and learning. The teacher also expressed concerns that when teachers are unable or inexperienced in addressing cultural and linguistic issues, students may suffer and fall through the loopholes of education.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented qualitative research findings that addressed the three research questions. The first set of findings discussed the experiences of Malaysian English language teachers using resources to teach the English language in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. The research participants highlighted the complexity of the Ministry of Education Malaysia’s choice of CEFR-aligned teaching resources, with some teachers appreciating the structured nature of these resources but others concerned about limited autonomy in adapting the materials. The inclusion of foreign cultural content in the textbooks sparked differing viewpoints among the teachers. Nonetheless, the teachers in this study recognized the importance of tailoring content for student comprehension and incorporating Malaysian contexts to explain unfamiliar concepts.

The second set of findings focused on cultural norms, rules, and regulations on the national, school, and classroom level, which influenced the ways Malaysian national secondary school English language teachers teach their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Research participants emphasized the significant impact of Malaysia English education reform on students’ English language acquisition, critical thinking, and holistic educational journey. The teachers in this study revealed a discrepancy between
the emphasis on students’ academic achievements and the underlying motivations behind this focus. The teachers in this study also highlighted the complex use of students’ native languages, especially in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.

Meanwhile, the third set of key findings revealed Malaysian English language teachers’ understanding, interpretation and various experiences teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Research participants emphasized the importance of creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment where students’ diverse cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and celebrated. The teachers also reflected on educational practices in the Malaysian English language classrooms and addressed issues in the Malaysian education setting.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents key findings based on data collected on Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. This chapter first provides an overview of the research design of the study. This will be followed by a summary of the study’s findings. Next, it presents three key conclusions that were inductively drawn from the findings. The chapter ends with implications for theory and practice and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the intricate dynamics that Malaysian English language teachers encounter while navigating the cultural, social, and historical context within the realm of English language education in Malaysia. The study aimed to explore how these teachers interpret their experiences as relates to teaching goals, and available resources to them in their efforts to teach students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This research drew upon the cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) proposed by Engeström (1987/2015) and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) by Ladson-Billings (1995) as theoretical frameworks. CHAT (Engeström, 1987/2015) is utilized in this study to understand how the Malaysian English language classroom operates as an activity system. This study explored the activity systems in English language classrooms in
Malaysian national secondary schools, as well as the development of individuals within them. This study found that Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students were reflected in their relationships with peers, students, and the community, as well as classroom resources, and educational practices in their classrooms. Complementing CHAT (Engeström, 1987/2015), CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995) adds an essential lens to investigate Malaysian English language experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Together, they offer thorough understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning that occur in Malaysian English language classrooms by considering various factors that affect the learning environment.

This study adapted a phenomenological research approach. The research participants of this study included six English language teachers in Malaysian national secondary schools, selected using criterion sampling to ensure data richness. Data was primarily collected using the model of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing (Siedman, 2006), which involved conducting three separate interviews with each research participant. The research employed various trustworthiness strategies, such as data triangulation, member checks, maintaining an audit trail, and a reflexive diary, to ensure the credibility and significance of the study’s findings.

**Limitations of Study**

It was important to note that the research participants’ experiences in this study were limited to Malaysian English language teachers working in national secondary schools. As a result, the findings of the study may not be generalizable across all contexts, which was never the goal of a qualitative study in the first place. However, the
experiences of the teachers in this study can still serve as a guide for English educators, policymakers, and stakeholders who may identify with the issues addressed. Time constraints when conducting this study could limit the understanding of how Malaysian English language teachers’ teaching experiences and challenges might evolve over a longer timeframe. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted traditional methods of scholarly engagement and data collection. Lockdowns, social distancing measures, travel restrictions, and closures of libraries and research institutions had limited access to physical resources, leading to a shift towards digital resources. Challenges such as remote collaboration, and uncertainty had hampered the pace and scope of this study.

**Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study were based on three research questions: (1) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students? (2) What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students? (3) How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction? A summary of findings and discussion for each research question is discussed below.
What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences using resources to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students?

Malaysian English Language Teachers Need Relevant Support and Autonomy in Using Resources to Teach Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

**Professional Development Resources.** According to the teachers in this study, the Ministry of Education Malaysia’s Training Management System is a primary source for teacher development opportunities. However, teachers stated that the system falls short in providing courses that specifically address strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teachers in this study mentioned that the mismatch between available courses and the needs of teachers prevents their ability to effectively cater to diverse student populations. Research participants also addressed the need to bridge the gap between rural and urban school contexts. In a culturally relevant pedagogy framework, this situation calls for the consideration of unique challenges and limitations faced by rural school teachers and students, and to tailor educational approaches to their strengths and resources, rather than simply applying strategies designed for urban school settings.

**Teaching and Learning Resources.** Teachers in this study also talked about the teaching resources they employed in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Teachers in this study believed it was important to adapt textbook content not only due to their students’ language proficiency, but also due to the textbook’s foreign Western culture. The incorporation of foreign cultural content in the CEFR-aligned teaching materials posed a challenge, as it may not resonate with Malaysian students’ cultural understanding. As pointed out in Sosa and Bhathena’s (2019) study, when
students reflect on their unique experiences and identities during lessons, this will lead to better engagement in the classroom. However, in the context of this study, teachers can have a critical stance toward the foreign culture content in teaching resources, but they cannot ignore the fact that the Malaysian education plan mandate is to level Malaysian students’ English language proficiency to the international level (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013) and that learning a language comes with its culture. Here, we revisit Ladson-Billings’ (2014) definition of teacher cultural competence, which is the “ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture” (p. 75). As Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) researched the understanding of CRP over time, they discovered that teachers still had misunderstanding of what CRP practices are.

*What are Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences with cultural norms, rules, or regulations that influence the ways they teach their diverse students?*

**Malaysian English Language Teachers Faced Challenges in Providing Quality Education to Diverse Students While Adhering to Evolving Policies and Community Expectations**

**Changes in Curriculum.** As a result of constant adaptation to new policies, curriculum, resources, and teaching approaches, the Malaysian English language teachers in this study are experiencing burnout. The teachers’ experiences with changes in curriculum and policies are also similar to the dilemma of teachers in Achinstein and Ogawa’s (2011) study on being caught between contradictory demands from government policy and the teaching profession, which ultimately takes a toll on them.
Despite supporting the CEFR-aligned curriculum, teachers in this study discussed the removal of the literature in English component prior to this new curriculum, which they thought was beneficial to students. Teachers in this study have observed improvement in students’ English language proficiency when the literature in English component was implemented. As supported by Faizah Idrus’s (2014) study, when culturally relevant texts are used for reading, this gives students and teachers opportunity to engage more in class. In her study she used a non-prescribed text, which is not used in the exams. Faizah Idrus (2014) noticed that teachers and students talk more freely about the text and were not held to any expectations on how to think about the text for examination purposes.

**School Administrators’ Expectations.** The teachers also discussed tensions in curriculum implementation and student progress monitoring, with school administrators often prioritizing school performance over closing students’ achievement gaps. The goal of CRP is to close the gap between student and school cultures (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Sleeter, 2012). However, in the context of this study, the differences in perceptions of the CEFR-aligned curriculum reflects a misalignment between school administrators and teachers, which impacts the needs and expectations of the students. This study’s conclusion is important for understanding what Engeström (1987/2015) calls the “double bind” that teachers experience, a tangle of complex and often contracting expectations in their professional roles.

**Using Native Languages in the English Language Classrooms.** Teachers in this study also described challenges in managing the use of native languages in their English language classes. They mentioned that for some students, whom English language is their
second or third language, do not perceive the significance of learning English but instead rely on their native languages for communication. Culturally relevant teachers acknowledge the complexity of our diverse and globally connected world, recognizing that sociocultural contexts and layers of human interaction shape different expectations of behavior and language use (Lee, 2003). In the context of English language teaching, for instance, English language learners (ELLs) come from various backgrounds with different home languages, cultures, socioeconomic statuses, and schooling experiences. This diversity means that while one culture may view learning the English language as prestigious, another might perceive it as adopting a different culture (Lee et al., 2010). This is where culturally relevant teachers need to raise students’ critical consciousness and engage them in critical conversations (Byrd, 2016; Lee 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Smith & Yeh, 2019; Vetter et al.; 2018; Walker, 2019) about how their perception of the English language could be rooted from their ancestor’s perception. For example in Malaysia the English language has been seen as a form of colonization, thus causing prejudice and resistance toward the language and its culture in Malaysia (Choy & Troudi, 2006; Lee, 2003). However, the English language has become a global language for communication, cooperation, and collaboration in a wide range of human endeavors (Omar Abdul Rahman, 2019). Therefore, learning the English language without bias can break down barriers and open up opportunities for students’ personal growth and success.

**Meeting Students’ Needs.** Teachers in this study found it challenging to balance the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students while maintaining curriculum standards. This is similar to the experiences of the teachers in Malo-Juvera et al.’s (2018) study, who found it challenging to correspond with the objectives of the
common core standards when deciding on curriculum and instruction for their diverse students. Research participants in this study mentioned that they employed differentiation strategies during lesson planning to accommodate students’ varying English language proficiency levels. This result is consistent with a study conducted in 2019 by Mohd Ikhwan and Azlina, which showed that teachers use differentiation strategies and take into account the diverse learning styles of their students to create more engaging learning environments. However, this research also found that the teachers’ approach of differentiating teaching materials aimed to make the materials easier for lower proficiency students to achieve lesson objectives. This may imply that teachers were lowering standards for students with lower English language proficiency, which could result in delaying students’ academic performance to match mainstream level.

Smith and Yeh (2019) claimed that while nurturing is crucial for promoting the achievement of marginalized students, however, it is insufficient to overcome systemic inequalities in education that affect these students. According to CRP practices, culturally relevant teachers need to identify or create authentic materials and resources that reflect students’ diverse cultures, identities, and experiences (Kibler & Chapman, 2019; Lee, 2010). CRP curriculum and instruction should also build on students’ strengths to encourage learning (Byrd, 2016), rather than lowering expectations for students.

**Meeting Communities’ Expectations.** The teachers in this study discussed about community expectations of teachers. Two teachers mentioned that they served as liaisons between their schools and local communities. These teachers talked about how they manage these additional responsibilities and expectations. Both teachers felt challenged in terms of their ability to effectively support and educate their students while navigating
complex cultural dynamics within their respective communities. One of the teachers managed requests from organizations to ensure that they continued to offer financial aid to students at the school. Another teacher, who saw the value of education for her students and how it may help them escape poverty and improve their community’s quality of life.

These two teachers in this study showed social consciousness when considering the lives of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but this awareness did not translate into having a conversation with students about the systematic inequalities that are present. One of the teachers in this study mentioned about not wanting to impose ideas on the indigenous community about the importance of education. This finding is similar to Young’s (2010) study on a group administrators and teachers which found that CRP practitioners regard raising critical consciousness with ideological imposition. In the context of Young’s (2010) study, a teacher interpreted a conversation regarding the United States’ insistence on a measurement system that is exclusive to the country as anti-American and an imposition on personal values. These findings indicates that there is a challenge in assisting teachers in recognizing what constitutes as critical thinking and what constitutes as imposing ideologies.
How do Malaysian English language teachers make meaning of these experiences while trying to provide culturally relevant instruction?

**CRP Practices in the Malaysian English Language Classroom are Multifaceted and Require a Better Understanding of the Components and Implementation of the Pedagogy**

When the Malaysian English language teachers in this study talked about how they made sense of all the experiences that had shaped their teaching methods in their diverse classrooms, they all mentioned how being aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students inspired them to create an inclusive environment where every student felt accepted. This finding contributes to the definition of culturally competent teachers, who see the diversity of their students as a strength and draw on it to prepare lessons that will motivate students’ participation in the classroom (Byrd, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller, 2011).

When teachers in this study displayed sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995), it was as a result of their participation in this study as well as their experiences in the Malaysian English education system. One of the teachers talked about how the Malaysian English education system does not adequately promote CRP. The teacher was inspired to start discussions with his peers about his reflections on CRP based on the conversations he had from this study. Another teacher spoke on her commitments to the school’s, students’, or her own needs. Based on her conversations in this study, she realized that while she was preparing students for the real world, students were thinking about their needs at the time, which was to perform well in their exams.
And so, this made her wonder, who should she be relevant to? Another teacher talked about overcoming prejudices and encouraging cultural sensitivity among teachers.

These reflections are a result of what Engeström (1987/2015) referred to as expansive learning, where new forms of activities are “learned as they are created” (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). In contrast to Ivey and Johnston's (2015) study, which used CHAT (Engeström, 1987/2015) to analyze the development of teachers within a system over a four-year period, revealing a shift in teaching activities among the teachers in the study, this study was unable to observe whether teachers implemented their new understandings due to time constraints. However, Hollins (1993) and Howard (2003) mentioned that when culturally relevant teachers have the opportunity to engage in reflective teaching, this helps them develop better teaching strategies. Thus, through the use of CHAT in this study, it was able to bring out the contradictions and tensions that arose from various factors impacting Malaysian English language teachers’ practices to provide quality education for their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Through this realization and understanding of the dynamics in the Malaysian English education system, teachers and policymakers have insights into the implementation of CRP in the Malaysian English language classrooms.

**Implications and Recommendations**

This study’s findings contributed to a broader and deeper understanding of Malaysian English language teachers’ experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. The implications and recommendations in areas of CHAT in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, with a focus on CRP practices are highlighted in this section.
**Implication for Theory**

This study supports Engeström’s (1987/2015) CHAT and Ladson-Billings’ (1995) CRP model. Engeström’s (1987/2015) CHAT suggests that an activity system evolves through collective learning actions in response to systemic contradictions. Ladson-Billings’ (1995) CRP suggests three components to the theory, which are academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. The findings of this study showed how Malaysian English language teachers’ experience with CRP components in their culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms are shaped by contradictions and tensions in the activity system. While this study described the activity system in the Malaysian English language classroom through the development of teachers’ practices, the use of teaching resources, navigating rules, and expectations from various stakeholders in education, this study was not able to investigate Engeström’s (1987/2015) idea of expansive learning due to time constraint when conducting this study.

Engeström mentioned that, “[i]n important transformations of our personal lives and organizational practices, we must learn new forms of activity that are not yet there” (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). These new forms of activities are “learned as they are created” (Engeström, 2001, p. 138). Foot (2014) mentioned that the CHAT-based theory of expansive learning “in which activity systems are transformed is an integral, but underutilized part of the CHAT framework” (p. 338). While this study did not fully explore expansive learning among teachers, but it did show evidence of it through teachers’ reflections. One teacher suggested extending discussions on CRP practices among Malaysian English language teachers and another wanted a platform to voice opinions. These findings are pertinent to Hollins’ (1993) and Howard’s (2003) discussion
of culturally relevant teachers’ participation in reflective teaching to manage critical conversations and establish effective teaching practices to guide future pedagogical decision-making. However, validating these actions would call for more research.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study offer practical implications for supporting English language teachers teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. A supportive activity system for English language teachers to support the needs of diverse students should be based on the following:

1. Encourage teachers to use the prescribed materials in a way that best accommodates them and their diverse students’ needs. It is important to maintain the prescribed teaching resources that teachers find useful for teaching students. For example, this study noted that Malaysian English language teachers found using literature in English texts from the prior curriculum was beneficial in encouraging students to utilize the English language more in the classroom.

2. A comprehensive approach is required to support English language teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Cultural competency, language acquisition theories, and practical classroom approaches should be emphasized in pre-service teacher education programs. Real-world scenarios and teaching practicums can help teachers better prepare to work in multicultural contexts. Professional development programs for in-service teachers should include culturally sensitive workplaces, tailored instructional for rural schools as well as sociopolitical awareness and how to conduct challenging dialogues in the
classroom. Case studies, best practices, and access to experts can help bridge the gap between theory and classroom implementation.

3. Administrators should establish clear standards about the use of native languages by teachers and students in the English language classroom. Translanguaging strategies have been found to assist both teachers and students by improving the success of teaching and learning the targeted language (Rajendram, 2021). However, due to education stakeholders’ beliefs of how language should be taught, teacher and students are being pressured to use an English-only policy in the English language classroom.

4. Provide a secure and encouraging working environment either virtually or in person, for teachers to share their concerns and challenges with teaching the English language to students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. A work environment based on mutual respect, trust, and a democratic space allows teachers to reflect on their teaching practices collaboratively in order to develop better teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse students.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study and discussions suggested several areas for future research. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) discussions should extend beyond students’ well-being to teachers’ experiences. Research should explore the impact of CRP on teachers, including support mechanisms and relationships among colleagues. A culturally responsive educational environment is not solely the responsibility of individual teachers, but a collective effort. Researchers should explore how to foster and improve collaborative relationships among teachers to enhance the overall implementation of
CRP. Researchers could explore the effectiveness of teacher training programs aimed at reducing bias and increasing cultural sensitivity would be valuable. These findings can inform evidence-based practices and contribute to a more equitable education system in Malaysia.

Chapter Summary

This study explored Malaysian English language teachers’ experience teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. In analyzing their experiences, three conclusions were presented and discussed in this chapter.

First, the study identified Malaysian English language teachers’ need for relevant support and autonomy in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Second, the study found challenges Malaysian English language teachers faced in providing quality education to diverse students while adhering to evolving policies and community expectations. Third, the study concluded that CRP practices in the Malaysian English language classrooms are multifaceted and there is need to better understand the components and implementation of the pedagogy.

Following the conclusions, implications for policy, practice, and research were offered to impart the study’s contributions to the literature. Future research is encouraged to fully expand the complex understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy in multifaceted education settings.
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: IRB Consent Form

Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia
FWA Number: 00002876
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

May 06, 2022

Principal Investigator: Irene Yoke Quin Wan (MU-Student)
Department: Learn, Teach and Curric - PHD

Your IRB Application to project entitled Teaching English to Culturally Diverse Students: A Phenomenological Investigation of Malaysian English Language Teachers’ Experience was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

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<tr>
<td>Risk Level</td>
<td>Minimal Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPAA Category</td>
<td>No HIPAA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approved Documents

- Informed Consent & Assent - Consent (Exempt Studies Only): #593661
- Other Study Documents - Eligibility Questionnaire: #590414
- Other Study Documents - Follow-Up Letter/Communication to Participant: #593498
- Other Study Documents - Interview Questions: #590416
- Recruitment Materials - Recruitment Letter: #593495
- Recruitment Materials - Recruitment Materials: #593494

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
3. Major noncompliance deviations must be reported to the MU IRB on the Event Report within 5 business days of the research team becoming aware of the deviation. Major deviations result when research activities may affected the research subject’s rights, safety, and/or
welfare, or may have had the potential to impact even if no actual harm occurred. Please refer to the MU IRB Noncompliance policy for additional details.

4. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.

5. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the MU Business Policy and Procedure: [http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2.250.html](http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2.250.html)

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MU IRB Office at 573-882-3181 or email to muresearchirb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,
MU Institutional Review Board
Appendix B: Letter to Gatekeepers

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am Irene Wan, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum at University of Missouri, looking for volunteers to participate in my research study. My research focus is on Malaysian English language teachers’ experience teaching the English language to culturally diverse students. I am writing to ask if it would be possible to recruit participants for this study from your school. The reason why I am approaching your school is because I am interested to work with English language teachers working in Malaysian national secondary schools. Research has shown that teachers in national secondary schools work with students from a more diverse cultural background compared to other types of schools in Malaysia. Therefore, I am hoping to learn from the teachers in your schools and their experience teaching English to culturally diverse students.

I have prepared a description of the study and what is involved in it for potential participants, and I have attached a copy for you to read. I would anticipate that participants would contact me directly to complete the study in their own time and therefore there should be no disruption to your organization. I would anticipate that the project would take no more than five hours (whole project hours) for each teacher that is interested to participate in this study. Completion of paperwork and interviews will be done online (Zoom) or in-person at a public location depending on the participants’ preferences. I will endeavor to keep the disruption to the teachers’ working day to an absolute minimum.
I hope that you find the attached project of interest and will help me pass on this information to teachers who teaches the English language subject in your school. Please let anyone interested to participate in this study know to contact me directly if they have any queries. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor, Dr. Amy A. Lannin at lannina@missouri.edu or +15738821798 if you would like a reference or other information.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Irene Wan

iwrk6@umsystem.edu

0132098823 (call, text or WhatsApp)
Appendix C: Invitation Letter to Participate in Research

Hello,

I am Irene Wan, a doctoral candidate from the Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum at University of Missouri, looking for volunteers to participate in my research study. My research focus is on Malaysian English language teachers’ experience teaching the English language to culturally diverse students. I am looking to learn about your daily experience as an English language teacher and how you make sense of teaching culturally diverse students.

This study is important in providing insights on how to develop and design effective and supportive English as a second language curriculum. Your contribution will indirectly help future English as a second language educators understand what goes beyond teaching English to culturally diverse students and improve their teaching pedagogy.

You have been identified as a research participant for my study because you met the following criteria:

1) teaching the English language in Malaysian national secondary schools

Therefore, I would like to speak to you and learn from you. If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to:
1) complete consent paperwork and an introductory questionnaire, whether online (on Google Survey) or in-person at a public location (non-residential) and is ideally quiet and conducive for the conversation to take place (for example: meeting room, library's discussion room), depending on your preferences. This may take about 15 to 30 minutes.

2) participate in three in-depth recorded interviews (60 to 90 minutes) for each interview. Time and place of the interview will be decided mutually between the researcher and participants. The interview will be conducted online (on Zoom) or in a public location (non-residential) and is ideally quiet and conducive for the conversation to take place (for example: meeting room, library's discussion room), once again depending on your preferences.

3) if you agree, you will be asked to review your interview transcripts, which will be sent to you via email or mail. Then you and I, the researcher, will have a brief follow up on transcription accuracy via telephone or email if needed. Both follow up and review of transcription should take less than 45 minutes.

If you are interested to participate in this research, please contact me, Irene Wan, at 0132098823 (call, text or WhatsApp) and provide me with your name and contact. Thank you for your interest. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Irene Wan
iwrk6@umsystem.edu
0132098823 (call, text or WhatsApp)
Appendix D: Consent Form to Participants

Project Title: *Teaching English to Culturally Diverse Students: A Phenomenological Study of Malaysian English Language Teachers’ Experience.*

Principal Investigator/Researcher: Irene Yoke Quin Wan  Advisor: Dr. Amy A. Lannin

IRB Reference Number: *IRB #2090255 MU*

You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop being in this study at any time. The purpose of this research project is to seek comprehensive descriptions of your experience as an English language teacher in Malaysian schools. Through your participation in this study, I, the researcher (named above), hope to understand the essence of teaching English language to culturally diverse students in Malaysian national secondary schools as it reveals itself in your experience. You are being asked to recall specific episodes, situations, or events that you experienced from your teacher training program to work experience and through professional development in teaching English in Malaysian schools. I am seeking vivid, accurate, and comprehensive portrayals of what these experiences were like for you: your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, as well as situations, events, places, and people connected with your experience.

The timeframe of your participation in this research will be as follow:

1) discuss consent and complete an introductory questionnaire, whether online (on Google Survey) or in-person at a public location (non-residential) and is ideally quiet and
conducive for the conversation to take place (for example: meeting room, library’s
discussion room), depending on your preferences. This may take about 15 to 30 minutes.

2) participate in three in-depth recorded interviews (60 to 90 minutes for each interview).
Time and place of the interview will be decided mutually between the researcher and
participants. The interview will be conducted online (on Zoom) or in a public location
(non-residential) and is ideally quiet and conducive for the conversation to take place (for
example: meeting room, library’s discussion room), once again depending on your
preferences.

3) if you agree, you will be asked to review your interview transcripts, which will be sent
to you via email or mail. Then you and the researcher will have a brief follow up on
transcription accuracy via telephone or email if needed. Both follow up and review of
transcription should take less than 45 minutes.

The information you provide will be kept confidential and only the researcher will
have access to it. The researcher may share what is collected from you as part of this
research, after removing your identifiers, for future research without additional informed
consent from you. You can ask the researcher to provide you with a copy of this consent
for your records, or you can save a copy of this consent if it has already been provided to
you. I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. If you have any further
questions about this study or if there is a problem with the date and time of our meeting, I
can be reached at 0132098823 or iwrk6@umsystem.edu. If you have questions about
your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri
Institutional Review Board (IRB) at +1573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu.
The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at +1888-280-5002 or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu.

Sincerely,

Irene Wan
Appendix E: Letter of Appreciation to Participants

Thank you for meeting with me in an extended interview and sharing your English language teaching experience. I appreciate your willingness to share your unique and personal thoughts, feelings, events, and situations. I have enclosed a transcript of your interview. Would you please review the entire document? Be sure to ask yourself if this interview has fully captured your experience teaching English language to culturally diverse students in Malaysia.

After reviewing the transcript of the interview, you may realize that an important experience(s) was neglected. Please feel free to add comments, that would further elaborate your experience(s), or if you prefer we can arrange to meet again and tape record your additions or corrections. Please do not edit for grammatical corrections. The way you told your story is what is critical. When you have reviewed the verbatim transcript and have had an opportunity to make changes and additions, please return the transcript to me. I have greatly valued your participation in this research study and your willingness to share your experience. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Irene Wan
Appendix F: Interview Protocol

Introductory Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather basic background information about you that is relevant to the purpose of the study.

Before you proceed, please take note of the following:

1. Please do not write your name anywhere in this document. It is important that this document does not link you in any way that is identifiable to others.

2. Please know that all the information that you will be providing will be kept confidential.

A: Personal Demographic Information

1. Please share your gender (optional) __________________________

2. Please share the year you were born ________________________

3. Which of the following best describe your current employment status?

   [ ] Employed full time
   [ ] Employed part-time
   [ ] Other (please specify) __________________________
4. Please share your education level(s) and program major. If you are currently enrolled in a program of study, please specify in (others) as well.

- [ ] Ph.D/Ed.D
- [ ] Master Degree
- [ ] Bachelor Degree
- [ ] Diploma Degree
- [ ] Certificate
- [ ] Other (please specify)

B: Teaching Experience

1. Please share the number of years you have taught in Malaysian national secondary schools.

2. Please share the secondary level(s) that you have taught English language subject to.

- [ ] Remove class
- [ ] Form 1
- [ ] Form 2
- [ ] Form 3

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C: Contact Preferences

1. What is the best method to contact you?

   - Call
   - Text
   - Email
   - Other (please specify) ______________________________

2. What is the best time and day(s) to contact you?

   ______________________________________________________

3. If you voluntarily agree to review your interview transcription for accuracy, please state how would you like to receive the transcription.

   - By mail
   - By email

   Thank you for completing the introductory questionnaire.

Sincerely,
Irene Wan
Interview Questions

Thank you for your interest and participation in my dissertation research on the experience of Malaysian English language teachers teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students. During this interview, you will be asked to respond to several open-ended questions. With your permission, the procedure will include audio-recording of the interview and it will be transcribed verbatim. Please know that the results and your identity will be kept confidential.

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

First series of the interview: Putting participants’ experience in context.

1. To begin, tell me about your journey to become an English language teacher?
   - Could you describe what has the process been like?
   - Tell me about your experience training to be an English teacher and now practicing as an English teacher. Tell me anything about your experience, how you feel, what you did, the interactions you had.
2. How do you describe the work of a teacher in Malaysia?
   - How do you describe teaching in a Malaysian national secondary school?
   - What is your teaching philosophy?
3. Other than being an English language teacher, tell me about your other responsibilities in school?
4. What teaching pedagogies were you introduced to during teaching training or during your in-service years that demonstrate the ways to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students in the classroom?
   - As a teacher teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students, what is it like to be in your shoes?
   - As a Malaysian teaching the English language to Malaysian students, is there any unique perspective that you bring with you when teaching in the classroom? If so, what does that include?

Second interview series: Obtaining concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience.
1. Tell me about your typical day/week in terms of lesson preparation, teaching and after school hours activities (related to job).

2. What can you tell me about the student population in the school you are teaching?
   Also, tell me about other educators in the school, the administrators, the parents and the community around the school.
   - What are the rules, etiquette and guidelines that influence your participation in these communities?

3. Tell me about the students in the English language classroom(s) you are teaching.
   How culturally and linguistically diverse are your students?
   - How do your culturally and linguistically diverse students view learning the English language?
   - What are the unique strategies or ways that they use to learn the English language?
   - How do you use students’ understanding and ways of learning to help them learn in the classroom?
   - What shared tool(s) that you and your students use to sustain the learning and progress in your English language classroom?

4. Can you talk about the development of English language teaching in Malaysia?
   - What are the changes in terms of teaching practices that you experienced throughout the years?
   - How has the change in teaching practices work for culturally and linguistically diverse students?

5. Try to remember a time you were teaching English in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom and tell me anything you can about the situation, about what you felt, did or said.
   - How do you decide on the teaching pedagogy that you use to teach your culturally and linguistically diverse students?
   - What kind of activities were useful for you to make sense of how to teach in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom?
   - How are you connecting classroom materials to students’ lived experiences?
   - How did it influence your students’ learning and academic performance? In your opinion, what role should cultural relevance in teaching play in this process?
6. How are social issues addressed in your school and community?
   - How are social issues addressed in your English language classroom?
   - What are the rules, etiquette and guidelines that influence your thoughts on discussing social issues in school?
7. Did you notice any opportunities to discuss social issues in the English language textbooks or teaching materials that you are using in the classroom?
   - If yes, how did you go about the lesson? If no, which unit or theme do you think is closest or most relevant to students’ lives? How did you go about teaching that lesson? How did your student relate to that? What are the challenges teaching that lesson or a lesson like that?
8. What kind of support do you feel yourself needing to teach your culturally and linguistically diverse students?
   - How do you find information and resources on how to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students?
   - What would you like to learn and know about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students?

Third interview series: Reflecting on the meaning of participants’ experience.
1. Given what you have said about your experience training to be an English language teacher to being a beginning teacher, and with your teaching experience now, how do you understand teaching practices to teach the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students in Malaysia?
2. Given what you have said about teaching the English language to culturally and linguistically diverse students, what does it mean for a teacher to be culturally relevant in the Malaysian English language classroom?
3. What do you see in the future with regard to English language teaching and learning practices for you and for your culturally and linguistically diverse students in the Malaysian English language classroom?

End of interview
1. Are there any other questions that you think I should have asked?
2. Are there anything else that you would like to share?
3. Do you mind if I contact you again if I have further questions or need clarifications?

Additional questions will be asked in a timely way during the interview for clarification and fuller descriptions of participants’ responses.
1. What was the outcome of that experience?
2. Would you explain that in detail?
3. How did the experience affect you?
4. Why is it important to you?
5. Why did you decide to do that?
6. What feelings/thoughts were generated by the experience?
7. Can you give me an example?
8. What else can you share that is significant to the experience?
9. Are there any other questions that you feel that I should be asking?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I appreciate you taking the time to respond to questions related to the experience of Malaysian English language teachers teaching the English language to culturally diverse students. If you voluntarily agree, I will contact you in the future to review your transcript for accuracy. Once again, I assure you of the confidentiality of your identity and responses. If you have any question, please feel free to call or text me at 0132098823 or email me at iwrk6@umsystem.edu

Sincerely,
Irene Wan
VITA

Irene Yoke Quin Wan grew up in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. She completed her M.S. in teaching English as a second language in 2011 at Universiti Putra Malaysia. She enrolled in the Department of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum at the University of Missouri to pursue a Ph.D. in English education. She hopes that obtaining the highest degree in the field will provide her with insights to develop and expand English education research and classroom practices. Her research interests include culturally relevant pedagogy and English language teaching.