Challenges Faced by Teachers in Using Supermind Textbook

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Abstract

Textbook is one of the important sources and guidance in learning the second language. Starting from 2017, Supermind textbook had been used in Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms to improve the current English Language education in Malaysia to international standards using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). As it is new in Malaysia, the past studies done were focused more on the CEFR programme. There is no further study related to the challenges of using the textbook. Hence, this paper present and discuss a part of the study that focuses on identifying the challenges faced by teachers in using the Supermind textbook. 63 Primary school English teachers in Tanjung Zone were involved. A questionnaire with 5 Likert's scale had been designed using Google Form and mode was used to determine the highest frequency based on the scale for each item. There are 20 items used which consists two subsets which are physical make-up and practical concerns of the textbook. The data collected found out that there are challenges faced by teachers in using Supermind textbook especially on the cultural aspects. The data gathered give teachers and policymakers the insights about the textbook. In conclusion, it is strongly recommended that future planning need to be done in selecting new textbook.

Keywords: Textbook, Supermind Textbook, Challenges, Second Language Acquisition, Low Primary School Teachers

Introduction

In 2017, the Malaysia Ministry of Education had announced that they had done a collaboration with Cambridge English. The main purpose of the collaboration is to improve the current English Language education in Malaysia to international standards using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

After the implementation, there is a lot of research done on the CEFR program. However, there were none on Supermind textbook which is something new in Malaysia. There are no other findings which indicate the types of challenges faced by the teachers in using it, leaving no chance for preparation and intervention.

On the other hand, based on research done by Sànchez (2018) in Barcelona, stated that one of the weaknesses of Supermind textbook is that the activities in the textbook are not appropriate with the pupils' age and proficiency level. The textbook has a lack of authenticity to engage the pupils. Besides, the researcher also stated that because of the

complexity of the vocabulary, it is frustrated for the pupils as they need extra support from the teacher. Therefore, this research was conducted in Tanjung zone, Melaka, Malaysia as to identify the challenges encountered by the teachers in using the Supermind Textbook.

A textbook is one of the important sources and guidance in implementing language programs in education. It is key to how the pupils receive and practice the language. It is a medium where they can have contact with the language. It also acts as a source and guidance for teachers to transfer the knowledge and teach the pupils about the language.

Hence, the results of this study will be able to help the teachers to get insights about the Supermind textbook. They can try to find and implement different strategies to cover the weak points of the textbooks. This is because of the textbook act as teaching materials where it is a platform for the teacher to deliver his or her lesson. If teachers are unable to deliver the knowledge properly, it might affect the pupils' ability to receive information from the teacher.

In addition, the findings may help people who are involved during the implementation of new language policy. For instance, it can give insights for policymakers during designing a new syllabus, planning curriculum and developing materials. Not only that but it also can inform the policymakers about how the teachers implement, and challenges faced by them in using the textbook in the classroom. Therefore, policymakers can do future planning when they want to select a new textbook to be used in schools and training for teachers. Based on research done by Uri & Aziz (2018) showed that 38.4% of the teachers with the agreed that it is necessary for them to be given training and workshop on CEFR so that it will help them to fully understand and familiar with the concept and usage of CEFR framework.

Literature Review
Second Language Acquisition and Classroom Teaching Practices

Stefánsson & Jóhannsdóttir (2013) stated that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a process where a person learnt any language as the second, third or fourth language after the first language. SLA can be learnt in a formal or informal way. For instance, the pupils can learn English formally in school or informally during the interaction with society by being a culturally active participant. There are a few SLA theories.

The first one is on Communicative Language Teaching. This is when the person has the language competence with the application of the knowledge and the ability to use the target language. Hence, it is important for the teachers to integrate interesting activities to influence the pupils to be engaged and communicate with the target language.

Secondly, it is stated that the Cognitive Approach emphasized that the pupils need to learn the language unconsciously in a social context which will enable pupils to remember and use it automatically.

Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to understand the stages in second language acquisition. This is because it can help the pupils on how they acquire the language in terms of cultural and linguistic. Hong (2008) mentioned that there are a few strategies that can be used by teachers in helping the pupils to acquire the second language.

The first strategy is the pre-production stage. This stage is widely known as "silent period" where the pupils are at the stage in receiving and understand the language. Thus, the teacher can help the pupils to respond to the language by using varieties of teaching materials and techniques in the classroom.

The next stage is the early production stage. During this phase, pupils already able to understand and use the word where they can speak in using one-word or two-word phrases. Thus, short comprehension questions are the most suitable to be used as an activity.

According to Hong (2008), the third stage is on the speech emergence stage. At this stage, pupils already able to communicate by using the short phrase and simple sentences. Hence, the teacher can emphasize more to activities that focus on dialogue and ask simple questions. In addition, the intermediate language proficiency stage will take place where pupils are ready to use more complex sentences, give and share opinions, able to do clarifications and speak at more lengthy sentences.

Finally, is advanced language proficiency. The teacher will be able to design activities which pupils can fully participate in the classroom with extra support. From all the stages, we can conclude that it is important for the teacher to understand those stages in order to help him or her to predict and accept the level of the pupils and able to modify their instructions.

Relationship Between Textbook and Second Language Acquisition
In this 21st century era, it is important for the teachers and policymakers to know the role of textbook and language acquisition (Trisha, 2016). Besides, according to Richard (2005), English textbooks able to provide varies activities that can help pupils to learn English in the classroom. Hence, it is aligned with second language theories which are Communicative Language Teaching and Cognitive Approach where the pupils will learn the language unconsciously in the actual situation.

Textbook
Lappalainen (2011) stated that textbook can be defined as any types of books that made and published for education or any books can act as a teaching tool in the classroom. Cuuingsworth (1995) claims that textbook able to help the pupils to do self-directed learning, help teachers to present materials effectively, a source of ideas and activities, act as a reference for pupils, contain syllabus that will help teachers to achieve learning objectives and help the novice teachers to gain confidence to teach the pupils.

There is two main importance of textbook. The first one is that textbook act as a supplement for teacher's instructions in teaching and learning process especially in ESL classroom (Cheng, Hung & Chieh, 2010). Teacher will use a textbook as their guide on how to teach the syllabus and to achieve their goals. Unconsciously, it can help teachers to gain self-esteem. Mbuva (2016) cited that Rogers (1969) claimed teachers who showed high self-esteem in their daily teaching, can give positive effects in building the pupils' self-confidence. On the other hand, Richards (2005) mentioned that textbooks are psychologically essential for pupils as they will think their learning is taken seriously.

In addition, the textbook can be a major source of cultural elements besides providing the language and current contents related to the language itself. Thus, the textbook needs to be authentic enough for the pupils to feel engaged with the language. Based on Kilickaya (2004) authentic materials are the materials that give exposure to real language and use in its own community.

Supermind Textbook
In September 2013, the Malaysian government had revised the education system and introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2015. Although the education system was reformed, the focus was still on the English language as it is also considered as a second

language in Malaysia. The reason is that, based on a study that had been done ranging from preschool to form 6, the results show that many of the pupils are not proficient enough. 78% of the pre-schoolers are occupied towards the lowest scale of A1 while 32% of the primary school pupils are at A1 level (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Those results proofed that our student's proficiency level is as far from the international standard.

Therefore, the government had established English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) who responsible to prepare for The Roadmap for English Language Education 2015-2025. In order to implement the roadmap, instead of coming out and spending years to develop own framework, the government had decided to adopt CEFR with a hope to overcome the problems immediately in a short time. This is necessary as CEFR has received international recognition for language learning.

In Malaysia, aligned with CEFR, Supermind textbook from Cambridge University Press and MacMillan had been used throughout the whole of Malaysia in Year 1 and Year 2 classroom. There is a total of 9 units which need to be divided into half for Year 1 and Year 2. Year 1 will learn from Unit 0 to Unit 4 while Year 2 will focus on Unit 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Besides, units in Supermind also is under three main themes which are World of Knowledge, World of Stories and World of Self, family and friends.

The content of the textbook consists of 5 skills which are speaking, listening, reading, writing and language arts. Besides, there is also the introduction of new vocabulary for each unit with the assist of pictures. On the other hand, there are also many illustrations and interesting pictures to help the pupils to use the language in their daily life. From this, we can conclude that textbook can affect the pupils teaching and learning process in many ways (Behnke, 2018) and it is vital in helping pupils to learn the language. Any challenges might cause the pupils to have difficulties in acquiring the language.

Challenges in Using the New Textbook

According to Nguyen (2015), a new textbook needs to be professionally designed, suitable to the curriculum and strictly parallel with the goals of the teaching program and the needs of the pupils. Therefore, for countries that are using a new textbook, evaluation needs to be done to find if there are any challenges in the process of implementation of the textbook.

Additionally, Ellis (1997) suggested that material evaluation could be conducted at three stages. The stages are 'predictive' or 'pre-use', 'in-use' and 'retrospective' or 'post-use' (reflective) evaluation. However, this research will only focus on an "in-use" evaluation where it is suitable to examine material that is currently being used.

On the other hand, Gretchen (2003) also had mentioned that good instructional material needs to follow a few guidelines. The guidelines that had been suggested are:
1) The materials need to be up to date which is not more than 10 years
2) The content should be relevant
3) The linguistic and culture in the textbook is suitable with the pupils
4) The layout and format such as the font size are suitable with the pupils
5) The materials can be used by a variety of learning styles
6) The materials are suitable to be used in varieties of grouping strategies
7) The materials have exercises which the learners can use it to evaluate their previous knowledge of the content

Sheldon (1988) also recommends that the selection of an English language teaching textbook often established based on an administrative and educational decision which had been decided by people who are related to finance and investment. Thus, teachers and

learners that is using the new textbooks might experience significant difficulty in achieving the aims of their teaching and learning program. Which is to improve the pupils' English proficiency.

Methodology

For this research, to identify the challenges encountered by teachers in using the Supermind Textbook, a quantitative research design had been utilised.

This study used a questionnaire which had been designed using Google Forms. It was distributed to each school through the District Education office and via schools' email. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions. Some items in the questionnaire were adapted from two published articles by Rahimpour & Hashemi (2011) and Karamifar, Barati & Youhanaee (2014). It can be divided into two categories. There were 9 questions for the first category which will assess the physical make-up of the textbook while the next 11 questions will focus on the practical concerns. Therefore, there were 20 survey questions in total. A pilot study was also conducted to make sure the reliability of the instrument in a different zone in Melaka Tengah, Melaka.

Likert scale items which cooperated five-point scale response had been used. The responses were ranging from 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree. After the teachers had answered the survey, all the items had been counted using percentage based on frequency.

Participants / Samples

The respondents in this study involved 20 Primary school English teachers. All the schools involved were from Tanjung Zone, Melaka Tengah, Melaka. The respondents were identified using criterion sampling where the teachers who involved were teaching Year 1 and Year 2. The teachers were chosen because they were the individuals who are directly involved and affected by CEFR and Supermind textbook. They were responsible for introducing CEFR to pupils as well as implementing the Supermind textbook into their teaching and learning processes in the classroom. In addition, the total number of respondents was determined using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) statistical formula where for 63 samples size was needed for 80 population size.

Findings

Table 1:

The challenges faced by teachers in using Supermind Textbook based on the physical make-up

ITEMS / SCALES	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. Textbook covers are attractive.	12.7	57.1	30.2	0	0
2. Type of font and size appropriate for the students.	27.0	66.7	6.3	0	0
3. Textbook is durable, and not too expensive.	3.2	31.7	42.9	22.2	0
4. Illustrations colorful and attractive.	28.6	61.9	9.5	0	0
5. Illustrations informative and functional.	19.0	65.1	15.9	0	0
6. Illustrations provide appropriate representations of local.	9.5	3.2	3.73	12.7	42.9
7. Illustrations provide appropriate representations of national standards.	9.5	9.5	3.2	39.7	38.1
8. Size and weight of the textbooks are convenient for the students.	9.5	68.3	22.2	0	0
9. There are enough illustrations accompanying texts in the textbooks.	9.5	71.4	19	0	0

Table 1 explained the challenges faced by teachers in using the Supermind Textbook based on physical make-up. According to the first item, most of the respondents (57.1%) agreed that the textbook covers are attractive, while 12.7% of the respondents strongly agreed with the item and another 30.2% were neutral. Secondly. the survey showed that 66.7% of the respondents felt that the type of font and size appropriate for the students. It is followed with 27% strongly agreed and 6.3% have neutral connotation for the item.

Next, the study tells us that 3.2% of the respondents have strongly agreed and 31.7% agreed with the third item. Whereas 42.9% have chosen neutral while 22.2% disagreed that the textbook is durable, and not too expensive. From the study, we can see that many respondents (61.9%) agreed that the textbook has illustrations that are colourful and attractive, followed by 28.6% strongly agreed with the item. However, 9.5% of the respondents have a neutral stand for it.

On the other hand, as for the fifth item, 'Illustrations informative and functional', 19% of the respondents strongly agreed with the items meanwhile 65.1% agreed with it and 15.9% choose neutral connotation. Referring to Table 1, we can also see that only 9.5% of the respondents strongly agreed with the sixth item, followed by 3.2% agreed and 3.73% choose to be neutral. However, 12.7% of the respondents have disagreed stand and 42.9% strongly disagreed that the illustrations provide appropriate representations of local.

In addition, from the survey, it was found that the number of respondents who strongly agreed and agreed with the seventh item is 9.5%. In the meantime, 3.2% choose to be neutral. Yet, 39.7% of them disagreed besides 38.1% strongly disagreed that the illustrations provide appropriate representations of national standards.

Furthermore, 9.5% of respondents strongly agreed that the size and weight of the textbooks are convenient for the students. The result also showed that majority of the respondents with 68.3% agreed with the item followed by 22.2% choose to be neutral. Besides, the study tells us that 9.5% respondents strongly agreed that there were enough illustrations accompanying texts in the textbooks while the other 71.4% agreed with the item and 19% respondents have neutral stands. In conclusion, based on the result collected, it can be concluded that the respondents disagreed that physical make-up is the challenges faced by teachers in using the Supermind Textbook.

Table 2:
The challenges faced by teachers in using Supermind Textbook based on the practical concerns

ITEMS / SCALES	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
10. Caters for individual differences in home language background.	0	0	6.3	49.2	44.4
11. Support the goals and objectives of the lessons.	0	63.5	28.6	7.9	0
12. Support the goals and objectives of the program and the curriculum.	4.8	25.7	3.2	66.7	0
13. Units in the textbook are appropriate and familiar for the students.	9.5	0	11.1	34.9	44.4
14. The themes in the syllabus are related to the pupils' culture and environment.	3.2	25.4	25.4	46.0	0
15. Content relates to the students' culture and environment.	3.2	28.6	42.9	22.2	3.2
16. Integrates different learning styles.	0	0	25.4	3.2	71.4
17. Incorporates higher level thinking skills and problem solving.	0	0	19.0	9.5	71.4
18. The textbook is student centered to a large extent.	0	3.2	19.0	15.9	61.9
19. Flexible and can be taught using different teaching methodologies.	0	0	25.4	12.7	61.9
20. Have sufficient amount of time to finish all units.	61.9	3.2	25.4	9.5	0

Table 2 described the challenges faced by teachers in using Supermind Textbook based on practical concern. First and foremost, for the tenth item, 6.3% choose to be neutral and 49.2% of the respondents disagreed that the textbook caters for individual differences in home language background and 44.4% strongly disagreed with the item.

Moreover, according to the result for the eleventh item, 63.5% agreed that the textbook supports the goals and objectives of the lesson, while 7.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the item and another 28.6% are neutral. The following item showed that 66.7% of the respondents disagreed that Supermind textbook supports the goals and objectives of the program and the curriculum. In the meantime, 4.8% strongly agreed, 25.7% agreed and 3.2% have neutral connotation for the item.

The study also told us that 9.5% of the respondents have strongly agreed and 11.1% have chosen neutral for the next item. Whereas 34.9% disagreed besides the rest of the respondents, 44.4% strongly disagreed that the units in the textbook are appropriate and familiar for the students. From the result, we can see that most of the respondents, 46% disagreed that the themes in the syllabus are related to the pupils' culture and environment. As well as 3.2% strongly agreed with the item. However, 25.4% of the respondents respectively agreed and have a neutral stand for it.

On the other hand, as for 'Content relates to the students' culture and environment', 3.2% of the respondents strongly agreed with the items meanwhile 28.6% agreed with it and 42.9% choose neutral stand while 22.2% and 3.2% disagreed and strongly disagreed with it. Additionally, referring to Table 2, we can also see that only 71.4% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the sixteenth item, followed by 3.2% disagreed and 25.4% choose to be neutral. Next, the following item which focuses on whether the textbook incorporates higher-level thinking skills and problem-solving has 71.4% strongly disagreed, 9.5% disagreed and 19% of the respondents have a neutral connotation.

Furthermore, 61.9% of respondents strongly disagreed that the textbook is student-centred to a large extent. The result also showed that 15.9% disagreed with the item and 19% choose to be neutral while 3.2% agreed with it. Besides, the study also informed us that 12.7% disagreed that the textbook is flexible and can be taught using different teaching methodologies. Besides, majority of the respondents, 61.9% strongly disagreed with the item and 25.4% respondents have neutral stands.

Lastly, as for the item 'Have sufficient amount of time to finish all units', it can be seen that 61.9% strongly agreed and 9.5% disagreed with it. Meanwhile, 25.4% choose to be neutral and 3.2% agreed. In conclusion, based on the result, it can be concluded that the respondents agreed that practical concerns are the challenges faced by teachers in using Supermind Textbook.

Discussions
Physical Make-up
Based on the results, it is indicated that the respondents disagreed that the physical make-up of Supermind textbook had contributed to the challenges in using the textbook. In line with this, the data collected showed the respondents believed that the illustrations used did not provide appropriate representation of local and national standards. This is parallel to the research done by Sànchez (2018) on Supermind textbook, the lack of authenticity of the physical make-up lends to the disengagement of the students.

As the illustration plays an important role in attracting the students' attention and help them to remember, it is necessary that the pictures or drawings used for the textbook is

familiar to the students. This is because a textbook is the main source where students can engage with the cultural elements while it provides them with the language and the content of the language itself. Kilickaya (2004) stated that authentic materials are materials that can give exposure to the real language and able to be used in their own community. Therefore, as an improvement, it is better for the textbook designer to use illustrations that represent and show local background.

Practical Concerns

Based on the data obtained in the survey, 49.2% disagreed that the textbook caters for individual differences in home language background. This should be taken seriously as not all students use English in their home setting. There are students who will use the language as their second or third language. This will cause them to have a low proficiency level and limited vocabulary. Therefore, the language used in the textbook should be simpler yet meaningful in order to help the students to be able to understand and use it without having any difficulties.

Next, the data also showed that Supermind textbook did not support the goals and objectives of the program and the curriculum. The reason is that the main idea of CEFR is to improve the pupil's English language to the international level and it should be implemented through assessment and not the textbook. Alderson (2016) mentioned that those products such as the examination, textbook, and curricula that claimed related to CEFR only acts as a reassurance for teachers. Thus, more in-depth research needs to be done so that the main objective of the program can be achieved and at the same time, able to increase students' proficiency level in the future.

On the other hand, the challenges that teachers need to face during the process of using Supermind textbook is that the units are not appropriate and familiar for the students. Units in the textbook should be familiar so that it can help them to feel engaged with the lesson. Later, they can accept the language easily as they can relate it to their real-life situations. This is aligned with SLA theory which is Communicate Theory. The theory emphasized that when the students able to engage with the language, they will be able to apply the knowledge and use the target language in their daily life.

Besides, 46% also disagreed that the themes in the syllabus are related to the students' culture and environment. As Malaysia is a multiracial country, it is important as it will help students to appreciate their own cultures and others around them. Nguyen (2007) also stated that when the leaners unable to relate to the culture, it will demotivate them if they are required to express themselves within a culture that they do not have any experience with. Hence, adaptation needs to be done so that the textbook will be more relatable and based on the Malaysian context. Gretchen (2003) also mentioned that one of the guidelines to have good instructional material is that the content should be relevant and the culture in the textbook is suitable with the students.

In addition, as the level of the vocabulary used for the textbook is high, it is not suitable for students-centered. The same problem also occurred in the previous research done in Barcelona, where the researcher stated that because of the complexity of the vocabulary, it is frustrated for the students as they need extra support. Cuuingsworth (1995) claimed that a textbook should be able to help the students to do depth-learning. It is an advantage for the students if they can use the textbook for their own self-learning and learn more about the language. Not only that, but the teacher will also gain advantages as they will act as a

facilitator and able to reduce the amount of guidance that they need to give to the students when the students face any difficulties.

Lastly, 61.9% strongly disagreed that the textbook is flexible and can be taught using different teaching methodologies. In a classroom, there are mixed abilities students who are weak, intermediate and advanced learners. Thus, it is compulsory for the teachers to use the textbook as a medium to fulfil each of the students' needs. Besides, Gretchan (2003) also suggest that good instructional material should be able to be used by a variety of learning styles and suitable for variety grouping strategies. As an improvement, the activities in the textbook need to be adjusted and simplified so that it can be used in varies way which will help teachers to cater to the needs of all students.

Conclusion

To sum up, based on the data gathered from the survey, there are some characteristics of Supermind textbook that contributes to the challenges that teachers need to face during implementation, especially on the practical concerns. This is important because in a classroom it will consists different types of learners with different needs and background. It will be a plus point if a textbook able to cater the needs of all types of learner.

As an improvement, it is suggested that there are some adjustment and modification that need to be done by Malaysian syllabus designers and the policymakers in order to overcome the shortcomings and weaknesses. During the process of revising the textbooks, the good qualities of the textbooks can be maintained meanwhile the weaknesses of the textbook should be eliminated or adjusted. It is suggested that the textbook authors to take count the latest trends in education but at the same time still maintain the culture and background of the learners so that the same problem will not occur for the revised textbook.

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