

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MENTORS' AND
MENTEES' REACTION IN THE NATIVE SPEAKER
PROGRAMME OF A RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL
IN PERAK**

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALT	Assistant Language Teacher
CDD	Curriculum Development Division
CIR	Coordinator of International Relations
CLAIR	Council of Local Authorities for International Relations
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EPIK	English Program in Korea
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IPG	Teacher Training Institutes
JET	Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme
JTL	Japanese Teacher of Language
KBSR	New Primary School Curriculum / Integrated Curriculum for Primary School
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KSSR	Standard Curriculum for Primary School
MBMMBI	Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language
MELTA	Malaysian English Language Teaching Association
MOE	Ministry of Education
NEST	Native English Speaking Teacher
NNEST	Non-native English Speaking Teacher
PKG	Teachers' Activity Center

PPD	District Education Office
PPSMI	Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English
SEA	Sports Exchange Advisor
SKPM	Malaysian Education Quality Standard
TPR	Total Physical Response
UPSR	Primary School Assessment Examination

**SATU KAJIAN FENOMENOLOGI TENTANG REAKSI MENTOR DAN MENTEE
DALAM PROGRAM PENUTUR JATI DI SEBUAH
SEKOLAH RENDAH LUAR BANDAR DI NEGERI PERAK**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji reaksi mentor dan mentee di sebuah sekolah luar bandar di negeri Perak. Program Penutur Jati telah dijalankan di sekolah-sekolah rendah yang terpilih di Malaysia dari tahun 2011 sehingga 2013. Mentor yang berasal dari luar negara telah diletakkan di sekolah rendah tempatan untuk membantu meningkatkan kapasiti para guru Bahasa Inggeris sekolah rendah (mentee). Objektif utama kajian fenomenologi ini adalah untuk mengkaji reaksi mentor dan mentee yang terlibat dalam Program Penutur Jati di sebuah sekolah rendah di negeri Perak dari segi objektif program, jangka masa, motivasi mentor dan mentee serta kerjasama yang diberikan sepanjang program ini dijalankan. Tiga orang mentor dan dua orang mentee telah ditemubual untuk mendapatkan pandangan mereka mengenai empat bidang di atas. Mereka juga dipantau pada waktu pengajaran dan pembelajaran serta bengkel, dan ditemubual untuk mendapatkan respons mereka. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan kepentingan komunikasi dalam menyampaikan maklumat untuk mencapai objektif program. Dari segi jangka masa, hasil kajian telah menunjukkan bahawa mentor bersetuju akan kadar bilangan jam boleh dicapai, akan tetapi kerja sampingan yang dipikul oleh mentee telah menyukarkan mereka untuk mencapai bilangan jam tersebut. Hasil kajian juga telah menunjukkan bahawa hubungan mentor-mentee yang baik sangat penting supaya mereka boleh bekerjasama serta saling memberi dorongan untuk mendapat manfaat daripada pelaksanaan program ini, di samping berkongsi pengalaman sesama sendiri.

**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF MENTORS' AND MENTEES' REACTION
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the reaction of the mentors and mentees in a rural primary school in Perak. The Native Speaker Programme was implemented in selected primary schools in Malaysia from 2011 to 2013. The mentors are the foreign English language teachers who are placed in the local primary schools to assist in building the capacity of the local Malaysian English teachers (mentees). The principal objective of this phenomenological study is to investigate the reaction of the mentors and mentees in the Native Speaker Programme implemented in a rural primary school in Perak in terms of the programme objectives, time frame, motivation of the mentors and mentees and the cooperation given throughout the programme. Three mentors and two mentees were interviewed to obtain their responses regarding the four areas stated above. They were also observed as they engaged in classroom teachings and workshops, and then interviewed for their feedback. The findings indicate that effective communication is important to convey the essential information in order to achieve the programme objectives. In terms of time frame, the findings show that the mentors agreed that the number of mentoring hours is achievable; however the amount of workload shouldered by the mentees hindered them from achieving the targeted hours. The findings also reveal that a well-established mentoring relationship is vital in ensuring that the mentors and mentees can work together and to be able to share their experiences with others.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces readers to the important and fundamental issues in the study. It focuses on the problem of the study which is the reaction of the mentors and mentees of the Native Speaker programme. Therefore, this chapter provides an account of the background of the study, statement of problem, rationale of conducting the study, aims and objectives of the study, significance of study, limitations of the study, as well the definition of terms used in the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In many countries where English is taught and learnt as a second language, like Malaysia, it is no easy feat as students and teachers are more focused in achieving a passing grade before moving on to the next level of studies and education. English language is a universal language which is more than learning the structures and to merely pass an examination. Excellent universities, better job prospects, and career progress await those who are proficient in English. However, there are many shortcomings for learners to acquire a new language.

Teaching English language is a challenging task in this country. A presentation by Ho and Hasreena (2012) on English Teacher Professionalism Enhancement Programme (Program Peningkatan Profesionalisme Guru Bahasa Inggeris) under the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) 2.0 was given, which highlighted the aims of enhancing the English Language teachers. Sourced from the analysis by the English Language Lab done in 2012,

students in Malaysia encounter difficulties in mastering the English language. It is one of the core subjects in the national examinations and yet, it scored the lowest percentage of achievement. Malaysia recorded a 25% failure in UPSR, 23% in PMR and 22% in SPM. In the English international examination known as 1119, 50% of the students failed in this particular subject. In the same analysis, many students do not have the required skills to be in the working profession. 52% of students attained merely Band 1 and 2 in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET).

The English language is made compulsory in the curriculum of primary and secondary levels of schooling in Malaysia, due to its importance both nationally and internationally. Malaysian students are introduced to and required to learn the English language in preschool at the age of four or five years old, then they would continue learning it until they are in secondary five (17 years old).

The Malaysian government has announced on 27th July 2009, the six National Key Results Area (NKRA) in the effort to drive and inspire the nation to greater heights. The six NKRA's are:

- i. Reducing crime,
- ii. Fighting corruption,
- iii. Improving students' outcomes,
- iv. Raising living standard for low-income households,
- v. Improving rural basic infrastructure,
- vi. Improving urban public transport.

There have been many investigations and researches done regarding the low attainment in English language of Malaysian students. (Normazidah, Koo & Hazita, 2012). There are questions and queries as to why Malaysian students are unable to achieve results although they have gone through eleven years of English language learning in schools. (Nor Hashimah, Norsimah & Kesumawati, 2008). It is undeniable that the Malaysian government has given utmost importance to this concern and pledged to address this problem. In the report of Budget 2011 tabled by Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, a sum of RM213 million was allocated to enhance the proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and to strengthen the English Language as well as streamline the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR). In this respect, the Government recruited 375 native-speaking teachers from various countries such as the United Kingdom, United States and Australia to further improve the teaching of English.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education decided to employ native speakers as mentors to assist in building the capacity of primary school English teachers and lecturers at teacher training institutions in this country under the Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language (MBMMBI) programme. This programme would be implemented from years 2011 to 2013. The Native Speaker Programme's Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is to "increase the capacity of English language teachers" in as many as 1800 primary schools and the lecturers at five Teacher Training Institutes.

In 2009, the Minister of Education, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced that the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI) policy would be replaced with the implementation of the MBMMBI policy. The government's move to introduce MBMMBI policy was necessary to improve English proficiency among students. In The Star Online (13th September 2011), Minister in the Chief Minister's Department Datin Fatimah Abdullah said

research had shown that the level of English among students was still unsatisfactory after the introduction of PPSMI in the past years. In an interview, she stated that the MBMMBI policy would be an advantage to students so that they can learn the Malay and English language equally.

A curriculum transformation took place where the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) was introduced to replace the Primary School Integrated Curriculum (KBSR), beginning with Year One students in 2011. The Ministry of Education's transformation of the school curriculum is aimed to kindle creativity and innovative ideas among students. According to Bernama (23rd February 2010), Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin stated that the education system would be less exam oriented and lessons should be learner centered, rather than teacher centered. Fun would be integrated for knowledge and language acquisition in the classrooms.

In a report by Bernama (25th September 2012), there were positive feedbacks on the implementation of KSSR by parents and teachers, and it increased students' interest to learn English. Education Deputy Director-General (Policy) Prof Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof in the interview that it was because the KSSR approach was no longer the 'chalk and talk' method, but has turned its focus to a more enjoyable way of learning English. There are more hands-on activities for students to be engaged in learning, besides incorporating music and games in the lesson. In KSSR, a major difference that can be seen as compared to the KBSR is that more emphasis is given on phonics, where students need to have the capability to recognize letters of the alphabet and sound them, a term coined as "Phonemic Awareness." Through phonics, students will be able to blend and segment phonemes to read a word.

Since 2011, the native speakers from United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia who act as mentors or consultants to the English language teachers in have been deployed to various schools throughout Malaysia. The relationship built and knowledge exchanged between the teachers and the mentors would help to improve the English language level of that particular school. Their presence here has hoped to make an impact and to assist the teachers and students. For this reason, we need to have a clear understanding of objectives of the implementation of the Native Speaker programme and its contribution to the schools and stakeholders at the end of three years.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The MBMMBI (Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language) policy was implemented in stages from the year 2010. This policy replaced the PPSMI (Teaching Mathematics and Science in English) policy which made English as the medium of teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics, because it was found that the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy was not implemented accordingly as what the Ministry of Education hoped for. With the implementation of MBMMBI, the Ministry of Education wants to ensure that each child can master both Malay and English languages fluently (Ministry of Education, 2012). In order to support this new policy, the Ministry of Education has then carried out various programmes.

Since the implementation of this programme, there were concerns and issues expressed by certain groups as to why English native speakers are brought into the country in which the researcher would like to highlight. In the report on a forum held at the 19th MELTA (Malaysian

English Language Teaching Association) International Conference in 2010, some pertinent points or issues were raised and debated. One of the objectives of the Native Speaker programme stated by the Ministry of Education is to increase the capacity of the English teachers. A rebuttal in the conference was that the local Malaysian English language teachers are knowledgeable in the English language and pedagogical skills besides possessing recognized qualifications from the government. One other issue raised in the conference was the reliance on the foreign teachers and the inability to recognize and draw on the Malaysian expertise. When the local English teachers are failed to be recognized for their abilities, it could result in negative reaction in accepting the Native Speaker programme, and thus will affect the learning process. Interviewed by Ng (2011) in the Star Online, an interviewee stated that she had the qualifications to be part of the Native Speaker Programme, and thought she stood a chance to get a job, but her application was rejected because she holds the Malaysian citizenship.

One of the issues worth highlighting is about the time frame of the programme. There were concerns about how sustainable and viable the programme was going to be after being implemented in selected schools; and after the mentors' contract expired and they left the country. MELTA (2010) asserted that the initiative to form a compelling group of ESL teachers does not rely on the temporary measure of hiring the native speakers from other countries. In the column by Chan (2010) in the Borneo Post Online, he mentioned that the Sarawak Teachers' Union president expressed his opinion that employing the native speakers is costly and is a short term investment. The large pool of money could instead be used to train local teachers or be sent overseas to master the English language.

The other issue highlighted was the effects to the Malaysian English language teachers involved in the Native Speaker programme in terms of their motivation, morale and self-esteem

(MELTA, 2010). Hallam, Chou, Hite and Hite (2012) pointed out that a person would feel more empowered in terms of confidence and job satisfaction when they are given positive feedback and support in their field of work. The local English teacher could view themselves as not being at the same level as the native speaker and may feel that they would be regarded as second best during the running of the Native Speaker programme. There would be also dissatisfaction among the local teachers and comparison made between them and the foreign mentors. In an opinion voiced by Tasneem (2010), she mentioned that the native speakers were better paid and enjoyed benefits such as travel allowances and bonuses than the local teachers who have more experience in the local teaching field.

Gilles, Carrillo, Wang, Stegall and Bumgarner (2013) reminded that working together and supporting the mentees is important. This can be done by giving advice and planning lessons collaboratively with the mentees. One other issue highlighted was the mentors' lack of knowledge and awareness of local cultures, beliefs and ideologies about learning and teaching process (MELTA, 2010). It is important for the mentors to understand the cultural differences in order for them to cooperate and work closely with the local English teachers. In accordance to Hansmann (2003), in order to build a mentoring relationship, the mentors and mentees need to overcome socio-cultural differences that may defy cross-race mentoring. Aside from that, there was a call for the mentors to be bilingual due to the English language status as the second language in Malaysia (MELTA, 2010). This is deemed important because monolingual mentors may find it difficult to relate with the ESL teachers and students in rural areas who usually speak their first language or mother tongue, and to enable the mentors to empathize with the challenges that they face. Hansmann (2003) stated that mentors will not be helpful and effective to the mentees, and school if they lack understanding of the cultural characteristics in the area. If the

mentors are unaware of the social background of the school, teachers and students, it may be a challenge to create and build a good relationship with the mentees and to work together to ensure that a programme is carried out successfully (Hansmann, 2003).

Based on the issues highlighted, the researcher intended to find out comprehensively about the mentors' and mentees' reaction towards the programme in a rural primary school. The researcher hopes that the findings would highlight the reaction of the mentors and mentees who participated in the Native Speaker programme. This formed the problem of this study.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

To remain competitive and relevant in the globalised world, it is undeniable that the mastery of English will give students or working adults an edge. This is because the English language is widely used for communication, for referential reasons or in the written form. The English language is officially recognized as the second language in Malaysia; however, it is good to keep in mind that it may be a foreign language especially to the students who live in the rural and under-privileged area and away from the bustle of the city causing the lack of exposure to the language. There are still many primary schools particularly the rural schools, which are not producing outstanding results in the public examination known as UPSR. The passing rate for the rural students is still unable to surpass those in the urban areas. Due to this reason, English is one of the main subjects that contributes to the low passing rate and is often dubbed as the “killer” subject.

This is a phenomenological study on the Native Speaker programme in a rural school in Perak. With this study, the reaction of the mentors and mentees of the programme would be

sought after and brought to light with the information, comments and feedbacks gathered. According to the MELTA report (2010), when the Native Speaker programme was formally introduced, local experts felt that they are overlooked and their abilities were not given due credit. With the mentor's presence in the local primary schools, the reactions of the mentees differ in terms of willingness and readiness to accept the mentor. In Korea, the government announced to increase more than ten times of native English-speaking teachers to enhance the students' communicative competence in 2005 (Kim, 2008). The issue of unqualified English teachers was raised during the hurry to hire them. In a report, it was found out that 32.7% or 326 out of the total 997 foreigners employed to teach English in the country do not own certificates in teaching (Korea Times, as cited in Kim, 2008). Kim (2008) stated that the foreign teachers who came to teach in Korea may not be passionate and committed in the teaching profession, but they were there to gain experiences rather than pursuing a professional career.

Therefore, the researcher attempts to study the different reactions of the mentors and mentees besides focusing on the programme implementation in achieving the aims and objectives set by the Ministry of Education in the rural school.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to study the Native Speaker Programme in a rural school in the state of Perak. This phenomenological study is specifically interested in the reaction of the mentors and mentees. As such, the specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the reaction of the native speaker (mentor) and Malaysian English language teachers (mentees) towards the implementation of the Native Speaker programme in regards to the:
 - a. programme objectives and content.
 - b. time frame of the programme.
 - c. motivation of the mentor and mentees throughout the programme.
 - d. cooperation given by the mentor and mentees throughout the programme.

1.5 Research Questions

The following formed the research question of the study:

1. What is the reaction of the native speaker (mentors) and Malaysian English language teachers (mentees) towards the implementation of the Native Speaker programme in regards to the:
 - a. programme objectives and content?
 - b. time frame of the programme?
 - c. motivation of the mentor and mentees throughout the programme?
 - d. cooperation given by the mentor and mentees throughout the programme?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it would reveal significant findings about the reactions of the mentors and mentees of the Native Speaker programme in a rural school in Perak. According to Kirkpatrick (1998), obtaining feedbacks and suggestions is to allow room for improvement. The information obtained through this research may assist respective groups particularly the policy makers and the English language teachers themselves to further improve themselves in the education field. Teachers have to constantly learn to improve themselves to teach and produce high quality students that are at par to what the Ministry of Education hopes for (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Teachers in Malaysia have to undergo trainings and programmes organized by the policy makers, under a significant sum of expenditure invested for the smooth running of those programmes planned. Professional development for teachers is a key method to improve classroom instructions and student achievement. Policy makers often need methodical data on how the English language teachers view the ongoing programme in benefitting and encouraging them to attain professional growth. According to Kwang, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss and Shapley (2007), professional development affects student achievement through three stages. Professional development would first increase teacher knowledge and skills which will provide better knowledge and skills to improve classroom teaching and later improves students' achievement.

It is safe to say that there is a never-ending space for improvement and development in any field, what more the educational field where it needs to provide quality education to the students. As stated by Metz (2007), the purposes of a programme evaluation are to gauge the effectiveness of a programme, to improve the teachers' practice and quality, and to assess a programme. By examining the mentors and mentees' reaction towards this programme will allow

us to understand how to plan, develop, organize and implement and evaluate any other similar programmes.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study done is a phenomenological study. Due to the characteristics of its phenomenological design, it sets boundaries on the application of the results of the study. The researcher focused on a rural primary school in the state of Perak. The findings in this study may not be generalized and applicable to other rural or urban primary schools who are involved directly in the Native Speaker programme in the other states in Malaysia. This is because the phenomenon is experienced in only one school and may not be the experience of other mentors and mentees in another setting. Besides that, each school has a different mentor and has different environments and infrastructure to support the running of the programme. Furthermore, each school differs in the way of teaching and delivering the English language lessons to the students due to different social and cultural backgrounds.

Another limitation that the researcher stumbled upon was the change and replacement of mentor in this school. Ideally, the mentor assigned to his or her school should remain throughout the three year programme. However, due to circumstances where they are reassigned to another school, district or school, this school had been under the tutelage of three mentors during this study. There may be discrepancies and differing opinions and inputs given by the mentors, which might affect this study.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Mentor: A mentor is the native speaker who is placed in the school with the aim to assist the English teachers. According to Lee (2005) in his article, a native speaker has to satisfy one prominent criterion which is acquiring the language in early childhood and maintain the use of the language. In the same article, Lee (2005) has also highlighted that the qualities that native speakers have which are “internalized knowledge of language form, natural pronunciation, appropriate use of idiomatic expressions, above average sized vocabulary, collocations and other phraseological items, and metaphors”. In this case, the mentor who was assigned to the school hailed from the western country. This school has had three mentors, of which one was transferred to another district and the other left due to personal reasons.

Mentee: The mentee refers to the local English teachers in the school of this study. This school has three qualified English teachers who major in the subject. Two of the teachers have been following this programme since the start in 2011, whereas the other participated in 2012 whereby he replaced an English teacher who transferred to another school. The English teachers have undergone workshops conducted by the mentor and have conducted workshops for non-participating schools.

Reaction: The term “reaction” is derived from Kirkpatrick’s model of evaluation. It measures how the participants of a programme react to it (Kirkpatrick, 1998). Obtaining feedback by the participants is a way to know how they reacted to a programme. The first level is important to be addressed where it will affect the other three levels which are learning, behaviour and result in the model. An affirmative reaction will usually lead to receptive learning, which will then

encourage a transfer of learnt knowledge into the workplace, and finally generate better results for the organization (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005).

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter established the basics of this study. The aim of this chapter was to put lay the important fundamentals that shaped this study in the later chapters. The next chapter focused on the literature that the researcher reviewed in relation to this study to form the conceptual framework of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to review the literature related to the aims and objectives of the study. In order to come up with a conceptual framework that formed the basis of the research design and research methodology, related literature was reviewed and thus helped me, the researcher, in this area.

It is good to be reminded of the focus of this study that is to investigate the reaction of the mentors and mentees in the Native Speaker programme in a rural primary school in Perak. The following will briefly explain about the English language teaching and learning in Malaysian primary schools.

2.1 English Language Teaching and Learning in Malaysian Primary Schools

English is taught as a second language in Malaysia to all national primary and secondary school students, where by Bahasa Melayu is the national language. There has been much concern about Malaysian graduates who do not have the sufficient language ability and communication skills to make them more favoured to be hired by companies. Upon the country's independence in 1957, the medium of instructions in schools was in English. In 1963, the National Language Act was introduced and ruled that the medium of instruction in education for all levels would

gradually switch from English to Malay. Kirkpatrick (2006) termed the change as the period of “Malaysianization”.

In 2002, a policy change took place that is the PPSMI programme that revived English as the medium of instruction for the Mathematics and Science subjects in primary and secondary schools, under the then Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. He believes that English is vital for Malaysians to remain competitive at the global level (Gill 2007, as cited in Kirkpatrick, 2006). In other words, English is important to enable the community to be competent and well-equipped to compete at international levels. In 2009, the PPSMI policy was abandoned and the medium of instruction was switched back to Bahasa Melayu, amidst much controversy. The researcher will further discuss in Section 2.2 about the new policy, coined as MBMMBI.

The new KSSR English syllabus is aimed to equip and furnish students with basic language skills to enable them to communicate successfully in a variety of contexts that is appropriate to the students’ level of achievement. In addition to the five objectives mentioned, the curriculum is designed in modules and organized in as content and learning standards (Curriculum Development Division, 2011). In Year 1 and 2, the curriculum emphasis is on the development of basic language skills and to build on their proficiency in the language so that the students will have a strong foundation. The curriculum standards in the form of modules will help the students to develop language skills and sub skills. Those skills are integrated in the later stages of the curriculum. The approach taken in KSSR stresses on the development of the four skills that are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Another important component is language arts, which aims to help pupils develop their oral skills, analytical skills and enhance their creativity. This provides pupils with plentiful opportunities to speak in English in a more relaxed atmosphere and to increase and boost their confidence.

Emphasis is also given to the workplace although English language is taught in the classroom context. Therefore, educational emphases are included to reflect the current developments in education (Curriculum Development Division, 2011), to prepare pupils for the challenges of the real world. The following educational emphases are infused into classrooms: critical thinking, information and communication technology literacy (ICT), learning how to learn, values and citizenship, creativity and innovation, and entrepreneurship (Curriculum Development Division, 2011).

2.1.1 Peace Corps Malaysia

Peace Corps was established by President John F. Kennedy in February 1961, which saw volunteers working in human and economic development, in their home country and in post colonial countries, for geopolitical purposes (U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, 2012). Sergeant Shriver, who was the first Peace Corps Director, travelled to various countries in order to gain support for the programme. He met Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was the first Prime Minister of Malaya, during his visit. Being a new country after Malaya gained independence in 1957; the late Prime Minister conveyed his interest to have volunteers serving in development projects. Therefore, on 4 September 1961, the Peace Corps programme in Malaya was agreed upon; and on 12 January 1962, a total of 36 volunteers arrived in Kuala Lumpur to commence their service for two years as nurses, architects, secondary Science teachers, medical laboratory instructors and industrial arts instructors (U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, 2012).

The federation of Malaysia was constituted on 16 September 1963, and the main focus of Peace Corps was in the field of health – primarily in training nurses and establishing medical

laboratories in different hospitals (U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, 2012). There was a change of emphasis to education when the Malaysian government announced that every child has the right to have basic education through Form 3. Due to this change, there was an influx of students that required additional 3600 teachers, and the Ministry of Education called for the Peace Corps to overcome the shortage of teachers. The volunteer teachers served in schools teaching the subjects of Mathematics, Science, English and Industrial Arts. The Peace Corps programme in Malaysia was one of the largest in the world by 1967 (U.S. Embassy Kuala Lumpur, 2012), with 558 volunteers serving in three major areas which are education, health and rural development throughout the country.

The Peace Corps programme underwent change a decade later when the Second Malaya Plan came into place and the requirement of having experienced volunteers were stressed. The number of volunteers dwindled from almost 600 in 1968, to less than 290 volunteers in 1975, whereby most of them were in the education field such as the university, vocational educational institutes, and in Specialist In-Service Training courses for Malaysian teachers. In 1982, the Director General of the Economic Planning Unit received a written letter from Country Director Gary Brenneman that confirmed the Peace Corps programme would be phased out, citing reasons that it would be difficult to recruit specialized personnel to accommodate the fast development rate in Malaysia. As the programme winded down, there were 49 volunteers remaining in the field until it officially closed in November 1983. The Peace Corps served Malaysia for 21 years from 1962 to 1983 in these notable fields – agriculture, education and health related programmes – teaching the Malaysians skills of specific disciplines.

In the English language education field, Peace Corps contributed significantly to the local teachers and students. An example of the contribution given is through the Peace Corps

volunteers known as New English Primary School Advisor (NEPSA) and Primary English Medium Syllabus (PEMS) in Sarawak. Most of the PEMS workers were Peace Corps volunteers, whose responsibility was to advise the primary school teachers on the new English medium syllabus (Baer, 2012). The PEMS programme, headquartered in Kuching, was taught from Primary One to Primary Six. The headquarters provided materials for the NEPSAs to be used in leading short courses for the local teachers. Each NEPSA had four to five schools to assist, supervise, teach occasionally, hold discussions with teachers; and provide materials and resources. By 1974, PEMS was introduced to almost all of the primary schools in Sarawak by the Peace Corps volunteers, and was a positive step for Sarawak in spreading the English-medium primary education.

2.1.2 Primary School Curriculum – From KBSR to KSSR

The Curriculum Development Division (CDD) is responsible to formulate and develop the national education curriculum (Policy and Educational Development Sector, 2011). As such, in 1983, the New Primary School Curriculum (KBSR – Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah) was introduced. A decade later in 1993, the initial KBSR was revised and thus the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR – Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah) was implemented. The curriculum was under constant revision and review to ensure the quality and relevance of education to benefit the students. Recently in 2011, the new curriculum known as the Standard Curriculum for Primary School (KSSR – Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah) was implemented for all Year One students in this country. The approaches in KSSR are more

interactive and the principle of KBSR is adopted. Instead of 3M, it shifts its focus to 4M (reading, writing, arithmetic and reasoning).

For the English Language Curriculum, the aim is to equip pupils with the basic language skills to enable them to converse in a variety of contexts that is suitable to their level of development (Curriculum Development Division, 2011). The main objectives of the English Language curriculum stated by the Curriculum Development Division (2011) are pupils should be able to communicate assuredly and appropriately in formal and informal situations, read and understand a variety of English texts for information and enjoyment, write an array of texts using proper language, style and form in various media, apply the correct grammar in speech, and writing and appreciate English language literary and creative works.

As such, the primary education is divided into two stages. The first stage involves the Level One pupils in Year 1, 2 and 3, and the second stage involves the Level Two pupils who are in Year 4, 5 and 6. It is designed in two strands where Strand 1 is the language focus and Strand 2 is language arts. Language focus deals with the language skills which are listening and speaking, reading, writing and grammar, whereby grammar is only taught formally in Year 3. Language arts revolve around music, poetry, drama, and children's literature. The CDD agreed that English language learning is developmental. Therefore, the focus placed in Year 1 and 2 is on basic literacy by building a strong basis in reading through phonics, penmanship, and basic listening and speaking. Lessons need to integrate language skills in class through fun-filled and interactive activities.

The more interactive activities as emphasized by CDD (2011) would replace the traditional 'chalk and talk' method in helping students to learn in a fun environment and be more

hands-on. As mentioned in Section 1.1, there have been positive feedbacks on the implementation of KSSR by parents and teachers, and it has boosted interest in students to learn English.

2.2 Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language (MBMMBI) Policy

On 8th July 2009, the Cabinet decided to replace the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI) policy with “Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening the English Language” (MBMMBI). In the Cabinet meeting, it was decided that the MBMMBI policy will be implemented in stages, commencing in 2010. During this transitional period, schools have the option to use English language or the mother tongue to teach Science and Mathematics. The term ‘soft-landing’ is used, whereby it helps to facilitate and help teachers and students to adapt to the change of policy. In the Professional Circular No. 12/2011 (*Appendix 3C*) distributed by the Office of Director-General of Education Malaysia, it explained the implementation of the policy and principally supported the decision made on 8th July 2009; and its aim was to uphold the national language.

MBMMBI is the policy of the MOE to ensure all national primary and secondary schools use the Malay language as the medium of communication and instruction, and students would become proficient in the Malay and English languages (Ministry of Education, 2012). The policy is carried out by restoring the Malay language as the means of learning and teaching Science and Mathematics. Studies have revealed that the students found it tough and demanding to learn Science and Mathematics in the English language. This problem was dominant in the rural areas.

To support this policy, the MOE planned and carried out various programmes and courses to enhance the teachers' professional development and be well-equipped with pedagogical skills. The groups involved in the programmes and courses are the Teacher Training College Lecturers, English Language teachers, non-option English Language teachers and contract teachers. Under the MBMMBI policy, the Native Speaker Programme was implemented and carried out from 2011 to 2013.

2.2.1 The Native Speaker Programme in Malaysia

There were mixed reactions by the public about this programme, prominently the views and opinions expressed by the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA), of which the researcher highlighted in the first chapter. This brings us to the question what and who is qualified to be a trainer in this programme. The definition of a native speaker is still a debatable topic in the world of ELT. According to Davies (1991, as cited in Lee, 2005), the definition of a native speaker is a person who learns to speak the first language in his or her mother tongue. Lee (2005) stated that the main factor in defining a native speaker is that an individual acquired the first language since young and maintains the use of the language. The question raised by MELTA about native speaker status has brought to a proposal to the MOE that the definition of a native English speaker should be widened and not be restricted to the term "Caucasians" or according to skin colour.

The Ministry of Education employed native speakers from other countries as trainers or mentors to assist in building the capability of primary school English teachers and lecturers at teacher training institutions in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2012). When Prime Minister Datuk

Seri Najib Tun Razak tabled the Budget 2011, a significant amount of money was allotted to hire teachers who are native speakers of the English language from other countries to improve the local standards of the language and to streamline KSSR. This was in line with the government's aspirations of the education National Key Results Area (NKRA) to improve students' outcomes.

The Ministry of Education (2012) stated that Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the Native Speaker Programme is to increase the capacity of English language teachers in 1800 primary schools and the lecturers in five Teacher Training Institutes (IPG) nationwide. The five Teacher Training Institutes involved are the International Language Campus in Kuala Lumpur, Dato' Razali Ismail Campus in Terengganu, Gaya Campus in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Batu Lintang Campus in Kuching, Sarawak and English Language Teaching Centre in Kuala Lumpur. The hired mentors placed in Teacher Training Institutes were known as Training Fellows and they were to coach English Language lecturers to enhance their professional development. Besides, they work hand in hand to develop training programmes.

The expatriates who were placed in primary schools are known as mentors where they were required to assist the English language teachers in the following areas as specified by the Ministry of Education (2012): "to plan and carry out professional development programmes for English language teachers, to organize and carry out programmes/workshops/trainings within clusters and in zones, to cooperate and organize activities with mentors from other clusters and zones, to plan and organize co-curriculum activities, to assist in support activities during teaching and learning, to conduct suitable action research, to work with ministry officials for assessment of the programme; and to create a team of potential master trainers amongst teachers".

One of the companies that succeeded in obtaining the contract to supply trainers in the states of Perak, Selangor, Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perlis was SMR HR Group. When this programme commenced in 10th January 2011, an orientation with the mentors was held in the country's capital, Kuala Lumpur. The mentors then set out to the various schools in the states mentioned, where each mentor had five schools under his or her mentorship. In the cluster of the rural school of this study, four mentors arrived to work with 20 schools, of which each of the mentors had to oversee five schools. Throughout the three-year programme, the school of this study had been under the tutelage of three mentors, where one was transferred to another district and another left the programme citing personal reasons. In each contract year of the programme, there were four KPIs stated by SMR HR Group (*Appendix 3C*) that has to be fulfilled by the mentor which are:

- i. Each teacher will receive 75 hours of professional input through individual mentoring at least once a fortnight, *in situ* mentoring and training, cluster training and zone level training.
- ii. Improvement in classroom teaching and learning based on two classroom observations in a year, using an observation schedule developed together by the MOE and the vendors,
- iii. Participating teachers show improvement in the English language proficiency based on an assessment instrument jointly developed and agreed upon by all the vendors, and,
- iv. A reasonable amount of quality and fitting resources are developed in print or electronic form that can be used appropriately inside or outside the classroom.