

**USING THE MULTILITERACIES APPROACH TO PROMOTE LEARNER
ENGAGEMENT IN AN ESL CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY IN A SELECTED
SCHOOL IN PENANG**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
ABSTRAK	xv
ABSTRACT	xvii

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	5
1.1.1 The Education System: Pre-Colonial Era	5
1.1.2 The Education System: Post-Colonial Era	6
1.1.3 The Evolution of ESL since Post-Colonial Era	7
1.1.4 The New Primary School Curriculum (1983) and The Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (1989)	8
1.2 The Present Education System in Malaysia	9

1.3	ICT and Language Learning	11
1.3.1	The Changing Role of the Teacher	13
1.3.2	The Development of Multiliteracies in the Teaching and Learning of ESL	17
1.4	Statement of the Problem	22
1.5	Objectives of the Study	26
1.6	Research Questions	27
1.7	Significance of the Study	28
1.8	Limitations of the Study	30
1.9	Definition of Terms	31
1.10	Conclusion	33

CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0	Introduction	35
2.1	The Changing Nature of Literacy Practices	35
2.1.1	Defining Literacy	38
2.1.2	The Relationship between ICT and Literacy Practices	40
2.2.	Theoretical Approaches to Student Learning	42
2.2.1	Behaviouristic Approach	42
2.2.2	Cognitive Approach	43
2.2.3	Constructivist Approach	45
2.3	ESL Teaching and Learning Strategies	46
2.3.1	The Designs of Meaning	50

2.4	A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies	54
2.4.1	Conceptual Framework	56
2.4.2	The LBDF	59
2.4.3	The LBD Pedagogy	62
2.5	Related Research on the MLA	66
2.6	Conclusion	77

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.0	Introduction	79
3.1	Research Methods	80
3.1.1	Research Process	81
3.1.1.1	The Multiliteracies Workshop	83
3.2	The Sample	86
3.2.1	The Students	87
3.2.2	The ESL Teachers	89
3.3	Research Instruments	90
3.3.1	The Multiliteracies Questionnaire	92
3.3.2	Assessment	95
3.3.2.1	Peer Review Form	96
3.3.2.2	Classroom Observation	98
3.3.2.3	Teacher Rating Sheet	99

3.3.3	Interviews	100
3.3.3.1	The Semi-Structured Interview	102
3.3.3.2	The Objectives of the Interview	103
3.3.3.3	The Construction of the Interview	103
	Schedule	
3.3.3.4	The Interview Procedures and Ethical	104
	Consideration	
3.3.4	Student Journals	106
3.4	Pilot Study	107
3.5	Data Analysis	109
3.5.1	Analysis of Quantitative Data	110
3.5.2	Analysis of Interviews	110
3.5.3	Analysis of Student Journals	111
3.6	Conclusion	112
 CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS		
4.0	Introduction	114
4.1	The Results of Student Journals	114
4.1.1	Results of the Students' Perceptions in using the MLA	115
4.1.2	Overview of Collaboration during the lessons	121
4.1.3	Level of Engagement	122
4.2	The Results of the MQ B for Students	124

4.2.1 Results of the Students' Perceptions in using the MLA	125
4.2.2 Results of the Students' Open-Ended Responses	134
4.3 The Results of the PRF	143
4.3.1 Results of the MLA in Promoting Learner Engagement	144
4.4 The Results of the Teachers' Interview	150
4.4.1 Results of the Teachers' Perceptions in using the MLA	150
4.5 The Results of the Teachers' MQ A	160
4.5.1 Results of the Teachers' Perceptions in using the MLA	160
4.6 The Results of the TRS	170
4.6.1 Results of Students' ability to Demonstrate the Knowledge Processes	171
4.7 Conclusion	175

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction	177
5.1 Discussion of Findings	178
5.1.1 Students' Perceptions of their Learning Experience using the MLA	179
5.1.2 Teachers' Perceptions of the LBDF using the MLA	183
5.1.3 The MLA in Promoting Learner Engagement and Demonstrations of Knowledge Processes by Students	187
5.1.4 A set of Guidelines for Teachers using the MLA	190
5.2 Educational Implications and Recommendations	195

5.3	Directions for Further Research	201
5.4	Conclusion	202
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	205

LIST OF TABLES	PAGE
Table 3.1: Types of Data and Research Instruments Used in Research Study	91
Table 4.1: Students' Responses to Question 1	125
Table 4.2: Students' Responses to Question 2	125
Table 4.3: Students' Responses to Question 3	126
Table 4.4: Students' Responses to Question 4	127
Table 4.5: Students' Responses to Question 5	127
Table 4.6: Students' Responses to Question 6	128
Table 4.7: Students' Responses to Question 7	128
Table 4.8: Students' Responses to Question 8	129
Table 4.9: Students' Responses to Question 9	130
Table 4.10: Students' Responses on Question 10	130
Table 4.11: Students' Responses on Question 11	131
Table 4.12: Students' Responses on Question 12	131
Table 4.13: Students' Responses on Question 13	132
Table 4.14: Students' Responses on Question 14	132
Table 4.15: Students' Responses on Question 15	133
Table 4.16: Students' Responses to Question 1 (a)	134
Table 4.17: Students' Responses to Question 1 (b)	135
Table 4.18: Students' Responses to Question 5	138
Table 4.19: Students' Responses to Question 6	139
Table 4.20: Students' Responses to Question 7	140

Table 4.21: Students' Responses to Question 8	141
Table 4.22: Students' Responses to Question 10	142
Table 4.23: Students' Responses to Question 10	143
Table 4.24: Peer Review Evaluation	144
Table 4.25: Evaluation on the 'Looking' element	146
Table 4.26: Evaluation on the 'Connecting' element	147
Table 4.27: Evaluation on the 'Thinking' element	147
Table 4.28: Evaluation on the 'Doing Things' element	148
Table 4.29: Evaluation on the 'Expression' element	149
Table 4.30: Teachers' Responses to Question 1	160
Table 4.31: Teachers' Responses to Question 2	161
Table 4.32: Teachers' Responses to Question 3	161
Table 4.33: Teachers' Responses to Question 4	162
Table 4.34: Teachers' Responses to Question 5	163
Table 4.35: Teachers' Responses to Question 6	163
Table 4.36: Teachers' Responses to Question 7	164
Table 4.37: Teachers' Responses to Question 8	165
Table 4.38: Teachers' Responses to Question 9	165
Table 4.39: Teachers' Responses to Question 10	166
Table 4.40: Teachers' Responses to Question 11	167
Table 4.41: Teachers' Responses to Question 12	167
Table 4.42: Teachers' Responses to Question 13	168
Table 4.43: Teachers' Responses to Question 14	169

Table 4.44: Teachers' Responses to Question 15	170
Table 4.45: Assessment Criterion: Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge	171
Table 4.46: Assessment Criterion: Demonstrate Conceptual Knowledge	172
Table 4.47: Assessment Criterion: Demonstrate Analytical Knowledge	172
Table 4.48: Assessment Criterion: Demonstrate Applied Knowledge	173
Table 4.49: Assessment Criterion: Multiliteracies	174
Table 4.50: Assessment Criterion (Overall Scale): Experiential knowledge, Conceptual knowledge, Analytical knowledge and Applied knowledge	174

LIST OF FIGURES

	PAGE
Figure 1: Key Teacher Role Changes in a Learner-Centered Environment	48
Figure 2: The Process of Meaning Making	51
Figure 3: The Conceptual Framework	57
Figure 4: Multiliteracies Pedagogy	63
Figure 5: Choices of Pedagogy in the Multiliteracies Approach	65
Figure 6: Research Design and Process: Stage Flow-Charting	85

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPRD	Education Planning and Research Division
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
KDU	Kolej Damansara Utama
LBD	Learning by Design
LBDF	Learning by Design Framework
LE	Learning Element
LEs	Learning Elements
MF	Multiliteracies Framework
MLA	Multiliteracies approach
MQ	Multiliteracies Questionnaire
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
NLG	New London Group
PRF	Peer Review Forms
TRS	Teacher Rating Sheets

**PENGUNAAN PENDEKATAN MULTILITERASI UNTUK MENGGALAKKAN
PENGLIBATAN PELAJAR DI DALAM KELAS BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI
BAHASA KEDUA: SATU KAJIAN KES DI SEKOLAH TERPILIH DI
PULAU PINANG**

ABSTRAK

Pada asasnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti penglibatan para pelajar di dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris (BI) sebagai bahasa kedua dengan menggunakan elemen pembelajaran iaitu kerangka 'Learning by Design' (LBD) dalam pendekatan Multiliterasi. Kajian ini juga menganalisis persepsi pelajar tentang pengalaman pembelajaran dalam pendekatan Multiliterasi untuk memperoleh kemahiran-kemahiran BI sebagai bahasa kedua di dalam kelas. Selain itu, menentukan jika pendekatan Multiliterasi dapat membolehkan para pelajar mendemonstrasikan proses-proses pengetahuan dalam kerangka 'LBD'. Kajian ini seterusnya meneliti persepsi guru-guru tentang penggunaan pendekatan Multiliterasi sebagai pedagogi literasi dalam kelas BI sebagai bahasa kedua untuk menentukan sama ada para pelajar dapat mendemonstrasikan proses pengetahuan berlandaskan pembelajaran Multiliterasi. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menghasilkan satu set garis panduan yang akan membantu guru-guru untuk merancang dan mengimplementasikan pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang sesuai berdasarkan persepsi guru-guru dalam pendekatan Multiliterasi. Rangka kerja konsepsi kajian ini berlandaskan kajian-kajian teori dan empiris dalam penguasaan bahasa kedua. Satu sampel

kajian ini merangkumi 33 pelajar sekolah menengah dan lima orang guru BI dari Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Convent Lebu Light di Pulau Pinang. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif dalam pengumpulan datanya seperti soal selidik, temu bual dan jurnal pelajar. Persepsi dan pendapat para responden mengenai pengajaran-pembelajaran menggunakan kerangka 'LBD' dalam pendekatan Multiliterasi diketarakan dalam hasil kajian dan dapat dilihat dalam petikan-petikan penulisan dari respons pelajar daripada soal selidik dan penulisan jurnal pelajar. Kajian ini memperlihatkan bahawa apabila guru memenuhi minat para pelajar di dalam kelas dengan mengintegrasikan teknologi sebagai alat pembelajaran, tahap pencapaian pelajar yang positif berjaya dilahirkan dalam pendekatan Multiliterasi. Selain itu, cara pengajaran dan pembelajaran menggunakan kaedah Multiliterasi melalui proses pengetahuan dalam kerangka 'LBD' memastikan bahawa para pelajar dapat memahami pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang diperoleh melalui aktiviti-aktiviti kolaboratif dalam pembelajaran yang efektif, mereka berasa lebih bermotivasi serta mempunyai minat untuk eksplorasi, menilai dan mengkritik bahan pembelajaran.

USING THE MULTILITERACIES APPROACH TO PROMOTE LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN AN ESL CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY IN A SELECTED SCHOOL IN PENANG

ABSTRACT

This study is primarily an investigation of using the Learning by Design Framework (LBDF) underlying the Multiliteracies Approach (MLA) to promote learner engagement in an ESL classroom. The study also analyses students' perceptions of their learning experiences using the MLA to acquire their language skills in the ESL classroom. The study further examines teachers' perceptions of the LBD using the MLA for literacy pedagogy in the ESL classroom to determine the extent of its effect on students' ability in demonstrating the knowledge processes based on the MLA of lessons. The study also aims to produce a set of guidelines that will help teachers design and implement learning experiences based on the teachers' perceptions of the MLA. The conceptual framework that underpins the study includes theoretical studies in second language acquisition and approaches to teaching and learning contexts in ESL classrooms. The sample comprises 33 secondary school students and five ESL teachers in Convent Light Street Secondary School in Penang. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and student journals. The sample of 33 Form Four students kept student journals to record their learning experiences based on the

MLA lessons (16 weeks). The qualitative data from interviews and student journals were analysed, categorised and sorted into the domains that reflect the perceptions of teachers and students. Respondents' perceptions and opinions of the LBDF underlying the MLA are presented in the findings, which are illustrated through the use of excerpts from interview responses and journal entries. The findings of the study indicate that the LBDF underlying the MLA has crucial implications for improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This study shows that students' academic achievement is positively correlated to integration of ICT when the teacher addresses their real world needs in the classroom setting by integrating technology as an educational tool which enables the achievement of learning outcomes successfully. This case study reveals that the MLA to teaching and learning through the knowledge processes in the LBDF ensures that students would be able to understand the knowledge and skills that they acquire through collaborative activities where students felt that they were self-motivated and possessed the desire to explore, discover and critically assess relevant materials.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The dawn of the second millennium has resulted in significant changes in every professional environment that includes the field of education. In this respect, technology has become a tool for enriching classroom experiences. As a result, Malaysia's Ministry of Education announced on 1 April 2004 that 35 000 teachers are now equipped with notebook PCs to help improve teaching techniques (The Star, April 2004). Tan Sri Musa, the former Minister of Education had commented that by providing teachers with notebooks, the Ministry of Education hopes to inspire a whole new generation of teachers who will integrate technology in their lesson plans, making the learning experience more effective for their students. In discussing educational developments in Malaysia, Pandian (1999: ix) highlights:

In the contemporary complex and sophisticated information era, the debate on literacy research and practice and the directions in which it could develop to bring about social and intellectual advancement is an imperative one.

Advances in information and communication technology (ICT hereafter) have hastened the pace of globalisation and the trend is irreversible. Malaysians realise that they can no longer carry out our development behind walls, isolated from the world's technological development. Increasingly, we encounter knowledge in multiple forms that entail print, images, video, and combination of forms in digital contexts and consequently, are required to reproduce knowledge in a sophisticated manner. Hence, in line with

globalisation, our education system must respond to these new technological developments, economic progress and social aspirations by realigning its focus. This is perceptively pointed out by Pandian (2002) when he states that there is a need to re-examine and re-orient the paradigms of the education system in order to cater for a globalised economy that emphasises on knowledge workers. In efforts to enable Malaysia make the quantum leap towards a knowledge economy, the country seeks to build a world class education system dedicated to producing a world class workforce. This national aspiration is reflected in the mission statement by the Ministry of Education:

“To develop a world class quality education system this will realise the full potential of the individual and fulfill the aspirations of the Malaysian nation “(Education, Planning and Research Division, 1996).

The vision takes into account the sixth challenge of the vision 2020 which states that:

“To build a progressive and scientific society, a society which has a high capacity for change and forward looking, not only as the user of technology but also as a contributor to the future of science and technology “(National Development Policy, 1991).

The education sector faces numerous challenges in its journey towards becoming a hub of educational excellence. To face these challenges, the Ministry of Education has formulated a ten-year blueprint known as “Education Development Programme 2001 – 2010” (Economic Planning Unit, 2001). The Education blueprint aims at ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to twelve years of education in terms of access, equity, and quality. In addition, the

blueprint plans to nurture creativity and innovativeness among students; develop a science and technology culture; encourage lifelong learning; enhance learning culture; provide for an efficient, effective, and world-class quality education system and promote Malaysia as a centre of education excellence.

In this respect, efforts must be taken to address issues and challenges confronted by educators at the grass roots in order to achieve the above plans strategically laid out by the blueprint. Malaysia as a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural country continues to struggle with multifaceted problems in the field of education. While having to cope in the local and global development, the rapid information era that evolves around the Malaysian education system gives rise to the need of "reassessing the tools and processes involved in addressing and interrogating the idea of literacy" (Pandian, 2001:12). In the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL hereafter), teachers are beset by insistent demands to teach students the basics while having to improve their literacy and keeping abreast with rapid technological advancements in the field of education (Kaur and Ganapathy, 2006).

In the era of globalisation and revolution of ICT, the education scenario is expected to prepare learners for "personal fulfillment, civic participation and access to work" in order to cope with the evolving nature of society and economy (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005: v). The emergence of a knowledge society results in a necessity to adopt new approaches to learning in relation to preparing learners to engage meaningfully in the world with new ways that force schools "to change and reconceptualise what learning is" (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005:3). With this in mind, the multifaceted issues related to the educational context in Malaysia that is influenced by the hallmark of evolving ICT, has

prompted the researcher to use the Multiliteracies approach (MLA hereafter) to promote the teaching and learning of ESL. The MLA to learning forms the basis of the Learning by Design Framework (LBDF hereafter). Hence, the LBDF draws on the Multiliteracies theory where it seeks to make

“pedagogy explicit and to create teachers who are expert in a wide-variety of pedagogical repertoires and it aims to make teachers more mindful and conscious of what pedagogical processes they are employing, both to ensure it fits the learning goal and be inclusive of diverse learners who come to know things in different ways” (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005:69).

According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), the dynamics of the teaching and learning process is confronted with pedagogical challenges which are due to the changing social, cultural, economic and technological evolution that surfaces in today's contemporary society. Hence, there is a need to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions as to what aspects of teaching contribute to effective and high quality learning in the acquisition of ESL. The purpose of the study is to explore the MLA of the LBDF which draws on the theory of Multiliteracies which can be integrated through the teaching of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills within the ESL classroom. It also aims to analyse the students' perceptions of their learning experiences using the MLA based on the LBDF to acquire their language skills in the ESL classroom and examine the teachers' perceptions of using the MLA as literacy pedagogy by implementing the LBDF in the ESL classroom. In addition, this study also aims to produce a set of guidelines that will help teachers design and implement learning experiences based on the teachers' perceptions of the Multiliteracies theory underlying the LBDF in the MLA. In this vein, Burrows (2005) points out that a marriage of theory (Multiliteracies theory) and practice (Learning by Design

Approach) by theorists and practitioners were innovated in the aim of creating new ways of teaching.

1.1 Background to the Study

As a background to this study, it is first necessary to discuss developments of ESL in the Malaysian Education System. It is hoped that a brief look into Malaysia's education system involving ESL can assist one in understanding the teaching-learning process and help to contextualise relevant issues pertaining to ESL education in the country.

1.1.1 The Education System: Pre- Colonial Era

When the British came to colonise the country, they brought with them their culture, their language and their believes. They introduced the English Language as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools. Since Malaysia gained independence, there was a major revamp of the education system as prior to 1957, it was segregated in accordance to racial polarisation where the Malay community received Islamic religious education, Chinese community funded their own schools and Mandarin was their main language, the Indian community in estates depended on the funding of their estate management where they were working to build Tamil schools. The English Language did not exist in any of these three schools at that point of time.

While Christian missionaries built and managed their own schools, they ensured that English was the medium of instruction. The English Language was promoted by Christian missionaries as a tool for administration and transmission of knowledge. Students who completed their education in these schools were at

an advantageous edge as they experienced working opportunities with the British or were able to pursue their education in United Kingdom. These students were responsible in establishing the English Language as prestigious and significant for economic development.

1.1.2 The Education System: Post-Colonial Era

When Malaysia gained independence from British in 1957, this phenomenon spelt freedom for Malaysians to develop in wholesome. This was especially evident in the field of education where the new education system was aligned to form a new national identity which will reflect uniformity in terms of its unique diversity in terms of a multicultural society. The government made Bahasa Melayu the official language as it was viewed upon as achieving national coherence. The Razak Report 1956 was the milestone in Malaysia's education system where it functioned as a basis for national coherence in terms of amalgamating the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Christian schools to form a national system. This report was also vital in contributing to the idea of a national identity. In establishing a post-independence education system that emphasised on ethnic unity, the Razak Report 1956 was responsible in accepting English Language in the education system, while maintaining to upgrade the standard of Bahasa Melayu as the main national language. These two languages were compulsory subjects in primary and secondary schools.

In 1970, all English medium primary schools were changed to the Malay medium with exception to vernacular schools. Consequently, changes were experienced at secondary schools in phases. The learning subjects in English were also converted to Bahasa Melayu Language in stages. Consequently, lead

to the implementation in universities, teacher's training colleges and higher education institutions where Bahasa Melayu was the medium of instruction. Due to the shortage of Bahasa Melayu reference books at the higher education arena, the decision was made to maintain the English medium of instruction for fields of medicine, law and engineering.

1.1.3 The Evolution of ESL since Post-Colonial Era

In 1971, the situational structural syllabus was introduced in all national primary schools and encompassed a standard form of resource, practice and syllabus for assessment. In primary vernacular schools, the standard form of structural syllabus was adopted. However, teaching and learning of ESL was from the third year of schooling onwards. When the first batch of primary school students who completed year six and went into the secondary school, they followed-up with the situational structural syllabus for the next three years until form 3. In 1980, a task-oriented situational approach was introduced for the upper secondary schools that were for the Form 4 and Form 5 students but slanted more towards a communicative style.

Until 1983, the syllabus for teaching of ESL in primary and secondary schools were divided into three distinct phases that was segregated into three separate components. This characteristic was found to be an imbalance as primary school students were exposed to situational structural syllabus, lower secondary students to contextual structural learning and upper secondary students experienced a quantum leap in the approach of ESL learning as they were faced with a communicative syllabus. With too much emphasis on acquisition of skills, communicative aspects were neglected. As a result, the

syllabus produced students who passed exams well and were able to gain entry into the higher education arena without obstacles but encountered problems with communication skills that entailed real world needs.

1.1.4 The New Primary School Curriculum (1983) and The Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (1989)

The Cabinet Report in 1979 stressed the importance of English Language as a tool for revolution of Science and Technology and a dominant factor in reflecting a progressive Malaysian community. The New Primary School Curriculum was introduced in 1983 and The Integrated Secondary School Curriculum in 1989 as a measure to implement an education system that was tailored to overcome problems encountered with the previous system. In this new curriculum for primary schools, the teaching of ESL was mainly centred in acquiring three basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy. At secondary level, the new curriculum concentrated on fulfilling attributes of the National Education Policy that was to nurture students in a wholesome approach that paid close attention to the aspects of emotional, spiritual, physical and intellect (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1982).

In this light, ESL teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing was to integrate moral and spiritual elements that connect to real-life experiences. Essentially, the New Primary School Curriculum and the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum was aimed at encouraging active participation in a classroom besides developing intellectual capacity. Therefore, the teacher played an important role in stimulating students' thinking capacity with higher-order

questions that involved answering in an analytical, evaluating manner which encouraged students to give their opinions relevantly.

1.2 The Present Education System in Malaysia

The 1997 Smart School project which was conceptualised by the Ministry of Education in the document entitled "Smart Schools in Malaysia: A Quantum Leap" was devised in relevance to global development and recognition of a paradigm shift from an industrial economical status to a knowledge-based society resulting from the inevitable influence of ICT. This project signified a milestone for the use of computer technology in schools. In the year 1999, a pilot programme was launched where 99 schools of urban, rural and residential areas were equipped with computer labs, LCD projectors, scanners, digital cameras, audio-video equipment, internet connections and a networking community. Consequently, in 2001 software packages and activity books were catered to most of the schools. The Education Ministry's target was to furnish all 10, 000 schools in the country with Smart School programmes. This had an implication in the teaching and learning of ESL in schools and higher education sectors, where English Language functioned as a primary tool for acquiring knowledge in the area of ICT at the local and global context. In this vein, the English Language gained limelight in terms of reflecting its significance and urgency to acquire the language as a pedestal for Malaysians to cope with waves of globalisation.

After gaining independence from British 50 years ago, numerous changes and developments have provided Malaysians with successful developments and directions in the global scenario. One of the developments is an

encouraging success in the education sector that has enabled Malaysia to improve its development of human capital. "Statistics have also provided basic input to policy makers thus enabling them to plan as well as determine development and direction of the national education system" (NST, August 2005).

The importance of education is further reiterated when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi recently forwarded his idea of the Education Ministry to revolutionise the education system in a move to produce a young generation that is competitive in the international arena. The Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006 – 2010) focuses on the development of national human capital to produce sufficient knowledge workers who are needed by the nation to achieve the status of an economy that is knowledge-based while realising the objectives of Vision 2020. Malaysia's intent to transform its educational system is in line with and in support of the nation's drive to fulfill Vision 2020. This vision calls for sustained, productivity-driven growth, which will be achievable only with a technologically literate, critical thinking workforce prepared to participate fully in the global economy of the 21st century (Ministry of Education, 1997). Knowledge is increasingly influencing growth and transforming nations and the way of life. Recognising the critical need for knowledge as input, Malaysia has embarked on the transformation from an input – driven growth strategy that had served well in the past to one that is increasingly driven by knowledge in order to achieve sustainable high growth and development. The Ninth Malaysia Plan signals the shift from a production-based economy to a knowledge-based economy.

1.3 ICT and Language Learning

Pandian (2006) in his keynote address at the 15th Malaysian English Language Teaching (MELTA) Conference highlighted the evident fact that literacy must be broadly conceptualised, resulting from the challenges posed in the current period of dramatic global economic change.

We are in the midst of an era that brings dramatic changes in the ways we make sense of literacy. Cultural theorists and educators have asserted that this 'New Times' era emphasises three features; the emergence of English as a global language, the proliferation of new technologies and multi-channelled learning environments; and the diversities in communities, languages, cultures and ways of life which call for the diversities in communities which call for shifts in reading, thinking, writing and speaking practices (Pandian, 2006).

He stressed that in line with globalisation and the influence of ICT, changes in the domains of working lives, public lives and community life encourages the shift in the way literacy is taught in schools. Skills relating to ICT must inescapably be incorporated into the teaching and learning process to promote literacy practices for producing successful learning outcomes to form knowledge producing communities. In light of this, Ghani and Gill (2006) from the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education Malaysia, stressed that reading and writing through the integration of ICT has resulted in profound changes among learners and teachers. They stress that pedagogical strategies are enhanced in producing effective learning outcomes and understanding across the curriculum with the integration of ICT.

Teaching is also enhanced in new ways and forms that makes a difference to students' learning environment, and promotes creativity in the teaching and learning activities in the classroom to be more relevant and valid with present times. Cope and Kalantzis (2004) encapsulate the change in

literacy to be Multiliteracies. This approach is relevant in the pedagogical repertoire of teachers and can fulfill learners' literacy practices as it can connect the real world to the classroom experiences that is pivotal in achieving intended learning outcomes. This study explores the classroom experience that students encounter when they use the MLA to engage in activities that motivate them to effectively and strategically achieve the teacher's intended learning outcomes planned in the Learning Element (LE hereafter).

The education system in Malaysia has to respond appropriately in relation to rapidly changing social, cultural, economic and technological environment that exist in contemporary society but tread a careful path that must comply to other domains of our lifeworlds that is in line with the National Philosophy of Education documented in 1988. The National Philosophy of Education (1988) highlights that education must produce citizens who are holistically well-rounded, knowledgeable, competent, possess high moral standards, responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as able to contribute to the betterment of society and nation at large (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 1988). After independence, nationalistic sentiments arose and in 1970, Bahasa Malaysia was introduced as the medium of instruction in schools. With the advancement in Science and Technology and the advent of globalisation, English regained part of its lost status. It is now taught in schools both at the primary and secondary school level and it is also used to teach Science and Mathematics. "The learning settings in Malaysia are set to undergo major alterations – changing the culture and practices of Malaysia's school programmes, moving away from memory-based learning designed for the average learner to an education that stimulates thinking, creativity and caring in

all learners” (Pandian and Balraj, 2005:289). In order for these new learning settings to materialise, evidence that was cited by Kalantzis and Cope (2005) from current research has advanced the role of a teacher where the professional capacity of the teacher is critical in determining the learning experience of students in comparison to the socio-economic background or the curriculum of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Hatie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Kalantzis and Cope (2005) further stress that the LBDF promoted by the MLA serves as a platform to focus on crucial dimensions of teachers’ professionalism.

1.3.1 The Changing Role of the Teacher

Teachers are now challenged to address the diverse learning needs of students who encompass a variety of dispositions, sensibilities and learning needs (Burrows, 2005). With the dawning of the information age, where the globe is technologically and culturally networked, Pandian (2006) stressed this crucial importance of teacher professionalism in his professorial talk relating to the relevance of current literacy practices in Malaysia that should be encouraged to acknowledge waves of globalisation where it is vital to re-examine literacy practices in order to cope with the tides of ICT. Similarly, Donoghue (2000:72) holds the view that:

With the Web, we are **moving away from traditional notions** of ‘the Written word’ to an understanding of the written word as part of a wider matrix of communication, where writing is not necessarily more authoritative than other forms of communication, and when it is more easily accessed and challenged. Appropriate use of ICT can help us to put students at the **forefront of producing texts**. This is both **motivating** and will help to redress the imbalance caused by years in which texts, especially literary texts, have been regarded as privileged and the product of emotions.

Kaur and Ganapathy (2006:2) point out that “the advent of technology compels teachers in the 21st century to acknowledge students who are struggling with literacy and experience difficulties engaging with cultures and texts of schooling”. Therefore, teaching English Language literacy skills in contemporary ESL classrooms is evolving dynamically in cohesion with the multiplicity of communication channels, media, cultural and linguistic diversity. In today’s rapid era of digital information, technological advancements and sophistication that result in globalisation, inevitably influence literacy practices and as a result are

moving away from literature book-based culture, it’s a shift in youth. It’s a general move, towards television, video, computer games in their own life out of school you’re fighting a society that is moving away from literature towards a leisure-based, easier culture and the reading and literature themes look too hard – we are between the generations, sort of juggling reading and writing alongside IT (an English teacher cited in Goodwyn, 2000:1).

In the Malaysian landscape, former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad (1998) stressed on the need to transform from an industrial-based economy to a knowledge-based one, and this calls for a technologically literate workforce equipped to competently perform in a global environment and able to use “Information-Aged tools and technology” to increase productivity. Similarly, Dimmock (2005:10) is of the notion that “in an information-based society, knowledge work, work that entails expanding mental effort, is the primary mode of work since information constitutes the main means for its accomplishments”. Singh et al. (2002:157) reiterate that “as a nation with a strong economic and political commitment to new technologies, Malaysia requires curriculum,

teaching methodologies and practices with the dynamic qualities needed to embrace the flexibilities of the cyber age”.

Dimmock (2005) stresses that “a voluminous literature has grown on teaching styles over the past two decades” and the important factor is to match learning with teaching styles. He points out that ‘best practices’ which is a common term used for describing effective teaching and schools’ effectiveness should be converted to ‘informed practices’ as the term best practices is conceptualised as a restrictive and prescriptive term. It is said that best practices approach creates avenues for teachers to “maximize the effectiveness of whatever approach they wish to adopt” (2005:22). According to Dimmock (2005), some practices are more suitable in accordance to the desired outcomes compared to others and this is evident in substantial research evidence. Thus, he stresses the notion that teachers are exposed to diverse environments where there arises a need on the teachers’ part to reflect if a particular practice is feasible. With this in mind, teachers should match their “own views and experiences with the research evidence on successful practice” (2005:23). So Dimmock (2005:23) advocates the term ‘informed practice’ with the view that “teachers need to be informed in order to make judgments about appropriate strategies to adopt in given situations and contexts”.

Dimmock’s (2005) notion of informed practice is important in terms of teacher’s critical role in today’s digital era to prepare students to engage meaningfully in the world which relates to Kalantzis and Cope’s (2005) opinion for a new approach to learning. Hence, there exists a need to embrace “new pedagogical approaches assisted by digital technologies, to transform today’s learning environments and create learning for the future which could be more

relevant to a changing world, more effective in meeting community expectations and which manage educational resources more efficiently” (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005: i). They further reiterate by stressing that learning environments must encourage learners to engage their sensibilities which connect to their real world practices of being immersed in “digital and global lifestyles” (2005: i). This means that the concept of a traditional teacher, teacher-directed pedagogy and a generic content approach to learning are less effective to address students’ motivation to acquire new skills and knowledge related to their technological experiences. Students are increasingly exposed to multimodal literacy practices, and thus there exists a growing recognition for a broader repertoire of literacy practices which encompasses print and digital technologies. This change in the nature of literacy practices requires a paradigm shift from traditional notions to a knowledge-based society that should accommodate new perceptions of literacy practices that involve new teaching methods to align with effective learning of literacies in the information age.

Besides that, diversity among students in a classroom plays an important determiner in the “challenge of different learning styles, greater differences in background experiences, varied home life settings and so on” (Newby et al; 2000:6). Concern about the ‘performance chasm’ among ESL students’ linguistic diversity is a topic for discussion by educators, policy makers and concerned citizens in many communities in the developing world (Kaur and Ganapathy, 2006). These concerns make it necessary that teachers use pedagogical strategies that not only effectively promote the learning of ESL skills but also recognise the element of student diversity in their classrooms. Changes such as these fundamentally explain the emergence of The New

London Group's (NLG hereafter) Multiliteracies framework (MF hereafter) that acts as a corridor to literacy empowerment in the 21st century which stems from the proliferation of ICT and hence, Cope and Kalantzis, (2000:9), argue that:

... the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy...account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies. Literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies.

1.3.2 The Development of Multiliteracies in the Teaching and Learning of ESL

In addressing the challenges of teaching and learning ESL, students require new approaches to understand literacies used in making meanings from multimodal communication elements and teachers are confronted with the need to be exposed to various pedagogical approaches to cater for students' relevant needs. To describe changes in the current global and national context the NLG (2000) coined the term 'Multiliteracies'. They propose a Multiliteracies "pedagogy that opens possibilities for greater access" (The NLG, 2000:18). Responding to the changing dynamics of new times, teachers can adopt a pedagogy of Multiliteracies which focuses on enhancing students' abilities of conceptualising, experiencing, applying and analysing multimodal texts involving the elements of linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural and spatial designs (Cope and Kalantzis, 2001).

As a pedagogical framework, the Learning by Design (LBD hereafter) that practices the Multiliteracies theory advocated in the MLA seeks to negotiate the changes in work and public lives associated with increased influence of market sensibilities and the realities of a diverse, globally networked workplace (Anstey

and Bull, 2004). The argument of the framework can be construed as very appropriate to match our Malaysian Educational system which comprises students from culturally diverse backgrounds as a result of our multi-ethnic population. This multiplicity of ethnic values, traditions and cultures result in the globalisation and localisation of English as stressed by Singh et al. (2002). In addition, Cope and Kalantzis (2003:47) are of the opinion that literacy can be interpreted in two different ways:

The first is the many kinds of English literacy at work in many different cultural, social or professional contexts. As much as English is becoming a global language, these differences are becoming ever more significant to our communications environment. The second is the nature of new communications technologies. Meaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal...The starting point for the Multiliteracies framework is the notion that knowledge and meaning a historically and socially located and produced...

Cope and Kalantzis, (2000:12) highlight the evident fact that the inevitable changes that are rapidly occurring in our daily lives, working lives and public lives will influence the pedagogy for literacy in schools. They stress that the way literacy is perceived, can result in new pedagogies for teaching ESL which is significantly different compared to the old, rigid and standard syllabus which is teacher-oriented. The LBDF in the MLA which integrates the theory of Multiliteracies, takes into account a person's identity, subjectivity or sense of themselves to be engaged and looks at whether the engagement can broaden their horizons of knowledge and capability. Teachers in Malaysia can use the LBDF to address diversity in the Malaysian classrooms as they are expected to teach ESL to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. When students are engaged in their classroom learning process, they are "connected with interest,

enthuse, even influence" (Kalantzis and Cope, 2005:43). Teachers in Malaysia should play the role of facilitators to promote the use of multifaceted technology in their pedagogical practices in order to motivate and engage learners in the ESL classroom. They can do this through interactive learning as they are expected to teach ESL to culturally and linguistically diverse populations of students who must have an understanding that ICT constitutes a part of the very fabric of how we communicate.

The aim of the LBDF is to integrate ICT into the learning practices of students as an innovative tool for learning. Kalantzis and Cope (2005:108) stress that the LBDF "envision[s] technology as an enabler of more dynamic and engaging pedagogical models, where students are instead involved directly with the creation and sharing of knowledge, and teachers in the creation of curriculum more closely engaged with the local community". Teachers can certainly make a significant difference in reconnecting young people to school life and educational opportunities. When new technologies are supplemented into their classroom activities, there will be a tremendous potential to span the Digital Divide, prepare youths for the jobs of tomorrow, and allow youths to engage critically with social forces behind the new economy and emerging social diversity (Warschauer, 2005). It is vital in addressing students' lack of motivation and interest in the present day classroom where there emerges a need on the teacher's part to integrate a new pedagogical framework as an effective measure in order to create a fusion between the classroom and the real world. This is as aptly noted by Pandian (2006:220), when he argues that "there is a need to change the role of teachers and the need to situate the

learning process within the needs and interests of the society so that learning becomes meaningfully connected to the needs of the information era”.

Students of this era are motivated and interested to learn when there is an extensive use of technology incorporated in the classrooms as they use a lot of their time outside school hours to engage in various forms of ICT like hand phones, e-mails, chatting, computer games, digital televisions, DVDs, videodiscs, video- conferencing, iPods, MP4 players, CD-ROMs and other wireless and fibre optic technologies which help to determine learners’ values and lifestyles (Pandian, 2003). In Pandian’s paper entitled ‘Literacy Behaviour in the New Malaysian Literacy Environment (2003), two studies were carried out and that included data from 674 students of Universiti Sains Malaysia and 975 Form Four students of government secondary schools to report on the reading habits in the New Media Environment involving new types of media that include computers, television, newspapers, magazines, radio, books and others. The findings revealed that the most popular media preferred by young people were computers (43.8%) and television (21.9%). This finding gives rise to the notion of multimodal meaning construction in reference to the LBD underlying the MF.

Technology, especially ICT, has become one of the main forces in today’s digital age. The idea of technology interfacing with the importance of literacy and a pathway to achieving literacy has a remarkable influence in teaching ESL related to the Malaysian classroom scenario. The Ministry of Education revealed that by year 2010, all schools will be equipped with Internet connection and that Information Technology (IT hereafter) would play a significant role in the education system (The Star, 30 July 1997). This idea has materialised as 80% of schools are equipped with these facilities (The Star, 30 March 2005). In view

of this, teachers will have the facilities to incorporate ICT into their pedagogical practices. A body of research conducted during the 1990's (Luke, 1995; Cradler & Bridgforth, 1996; Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, 1996; Pandian 1999) suggests that to be most effective, the use of ICT should be suited to well-planned curricular goals and should involve carefully designed activities that provide students with meaningful educational experiences and extensive opportunities to acquire and expand knowledge. It is worth emphasising that with the advent of ICT, teachers as educators have to rethink notions of literacy in a changing, technological and social world and are responsible for integrating technology as a supplement when designing their pedagogical strategies for effective learning outcomes.

Hence this study explores the LBDF that underlies the MLA which acts as a bridge to gap the differences of cultural, social or professional contexts and the multimodality of meaning communicated through the proliferation of new technologies. The proposed LBD which is based on the MF allows the birth of new kinds of pedagogy, in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representations, constantly being used to achieve various cultural purposes. The Multiliteracies pedagogy extends the concept of traditional text and literacy to include multimodal meanings. This pedagogy is ideal to the Malaysian ESL classroom in the dimension that this method can better prepare students to be effective workers in the millennium era where productive work demands a good usage of various communication patterns of English that cross different cultural, social or professional contexts. To provide ESL students with a full range of literacies necessary for success in academic and workforce environments, ICT needs to become a critical component in the ESL classroom.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Pandian (2006) critically analyses current issues that face the domain of teaching ESL in Malaysian classrooms. He stresses on problems experienced by ESL teachers. Firstly, teachers are faced with a minimum number of hours per week to teach ESL. Excess emphasis on tests and public exams are stumbling blocks to effective pedagogical practices in the ESL classroom. Besides that, only a few teachers are involved in curriculum development of teaching ESL. Other challenges encountered were teaching techniques, developing listening and speaking skills, using appropriate vocabulary and aspects of writing. According to Pandian (2006), dimensions that need to be improved will entail areas of teaching communicative English, computer aided teaching, appropriate materials and classroom organisation. Majority of teachers are also incompetent in using technology and lack the skills needed to address individual needs of each student. Furthermore, there are insufficient ESL teaching aids to enhance the creativity of teachers' literacy practices in the classroom.

The study by Pandian (2006) entitled "Literacy Outlook: Realities and Critical Encounters with English Language in Malaysia" is a well-analysed paper that gives insight about the dilemmas faced by teachers of ESL in the country as illustrated above and that has serious implications on the education system. Hence, proper measures ought to be taken in order to achieve success in improving and upgrading the standards of English Language in the country.

Schools in Malaysia, as in many other countries, are characterised by conventional approaches to grammar drills, classroom confined settings, text-

book centred methods, teacher as the primary source of information, students as passive learners, excessive pressure to pass exams and an emphasis on uniformity. Students today will enter a labour market that is fast becoming globalised, in which they will have to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences and a profusion of networked and multimedia communication channels across a broadening range of meaning-making systems (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). Similarly, Ganapathy & Kaur (2006:3) express their view that, "educators experience a continuous stream of dilemmas in a struggle to engage in the issue of what to do in literacy pedagogy on the basis of our different national and cultural discrepancies and the emerging proliferation of multi-channelled communication technologies."

Since new ICT is fast invading our daily lives in various important and challenging ways, the field of literacy pedagogy needs a paradigm shift from the old school of thought, in order to constitute effective methods and guidelines for educators of the present generation. It is important that teachers think of ways to integrate ICT into literacy practices in the classroom to engage students and better prepare them to face the challenges they will meet in their future world of work, social citizenship and family life. Hence, it is vital that the question of engagement comes to the forefront in a classroom through integrating multimodal literacy practices with the usage of ICT where teachers create avenues for teaching and learning process to shape students to cope with their future challenges.

Ishak and Salleh (2006) add that current classroom scenario places importance in utilising whiteboards, blackboards and textbooks. Today's current and emerging information age charts the direction of teaching practices in line

with new and modern technological implications. Besides that, to consolidate fundamental aspects of traditional literacy pedagogy and encompass the Multiliteracies competencies that students will need to negotiate meaning in the digital age. In this perspective, Razak (1999) also noted that teachers play a significant role in creating avenues to promote their teaching of ESL in an environment that focuses on learner-centredness, high motivation, positive attitude and good class activities, proper instructional materials and effective methods of teaching. Furthermore, stresses that these factors are vital in enhancing students' motivation and perception towards the learning of ESL.

Pandian (2007) stressed in his featured country presentation at the 5th Asia TEFL International Conference that "unless we as service providers are ready to convert ideas to reality, things will not change. A whole generation of teachers needs to learn new tools, new approaches and new skills". Therefore, he emphasises that the current pedagogical practices employed by teachers in a secondary school system do not address the interest of present generation which is focused in engaging themselves outside school hours in digital communication environments. Currently, Malaysian students are pressured to solely memorise and regurgitate academic contents during exams. Furthermore, they are expected to excel in their school subjects while teachers are under stress to complete the required syllabus of The New Primary School Curriculum and The Integrated Secondary Curriculum. As a result, teachers as educators experience time constraints and often tend not to vary their lessons by using ICT in class and ignore the interests of the present generation which is highlighted by Razi et al., (1999:54) where they critically point out that

Most of the teaching objectives in Malaysian schools are centred on preparing students to face their respective examinations when the time comes. Teachers are in a jubilant mood if students show remarkable achievement in these examinations. Their notion of success in teaching is when students under their charge score high marks in the subjects they teach.

In the process, vital communication skills are not emphasised in the ESL classroom through creative literacy practices integrating technology (Kaur et al; 2007). Teachers as designers of classroom pedagogy and activities should not be curbed by the restricting exam-oriented curriculum. Teachers should strive to seek innovative and creative pedagogical strategies which can be modified to fit the design of the curriculum as teachers and students are active participants in promoting social change. Similarly, Pandian and Moorthi (2003:197) stress that:

the teacher's literacy behaviour that is being informed of the use of multiple forms of communications including computer programmes and networks will determine their ability to produce educated and informed students.

Alternatively, teachers need to change their mindsets and have to explore various styles of pedagogies or teaching practices that are relevant and cater to the needs of the students in culturally and diverse educational contexts.

In view of this situation, there is a need for the researcher to explore the new pedagogical framework of LBD which underlies the MLA to describe the nature of teaching and learning process through technologically-supported environment in an ESL classroom which encompasses and supports learner-centredness in The Integrated Secondary School Curriculum. It was reported that all schools nationwide will be equipped with digital library facilities under the Ninth Malaysian Plan through a project by the Education Ministry to further promote the use of online teaching and learning materials among teachers and students (NST, 11 September, 2006). This will be a good step towards