

**The evolution of newly qualified English teachers' cognition
in Malaysian primary schools**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the evolution of knowledge and beliefs of four newly qualified English teachers in their first year of teaching in Malaysian primary classrooms. Although there has been an increased interest in the study of teachers' cognition in general education research over the years, studies on the cognitions of language teachers in their first year in the classroom remain limited, particularly research into the use of a longitudinal approach to case studies on newly qualified teachers' beliefs.

The aims of this qualitative multiple-case study were to explore the evolution of newly qualified teachers' (NQTs) beliefs about teaching and learning during their first year of teaching, and to examine the factors that might influence their thinking and classroom practices. The four research participants were from the first cohort of a new Bachelor of Teaching (Hons) course in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (Primary Education) at an Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) in Malaysia. The data was gathered from Skype interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews and journal entries throughout the participants' first year of teaching. They were then analysed both manually and using nVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. The outcome provides interesting insights into the evolving thoughts of the four NQTs. As well as shared areas of concern, they each display relatively distinctive reactions to their first-year teaching experiences.

The findings support the current movement towards viewing teachers' cognition constructions as an individual process, and classroom experience in a given moment seems to be the strongest element in NQTs' belief formation. This study hopes to add to the understanding of the complexity of teachers' cognition and the appropriacy of the existing pre-service training courses for teachers teaching in public schools. The potential impacts of the study include understanding the importance of providing real support systems for NQTs and adjusting the curriculum structure, content and pedagogy in pre-service English language teacher education to better prepare NQTs for the reality of the classroom.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Prelude.....	1
1.2 Notes on the researcher’s cognitive evolution.....	2
1.2.1 Constructing beliefs through personal experience of schooling 2	
1.2.2 Constructing and adjusting beliefs: linking prior beliefs to training.....	4
1.2.3 Adjusting and strengthening beliefs: from training to the real classroom	6
1.2.4 Developing personal beliefs	7
1.3 Aims	8
1.4 Structure of the thesis.....	10
Chapter 2 English language education in Malaysia	12
2.1 Introduction to research	12
2.2 Background of the country	12
2.3 Linguistic context in Malaysia	13
2.4 English language in the Malaysian education system	14
2.4.1 Status of English in education during the post-independence period: 1957 to 1970	15
2.4.2 Status of English in education from 1970 to 1999	16
2.4.3 Status of English in education during the millennium and beyond.....	16
2.5 Teacher education institute in Malaysia	19
2.5.1 The English language teacher education programme	20
2.5.2 English curricula and the PISMP curriculum.....	22
2.6 English language proficiency	23
2.6.1 Low proficiency among English teachers	23
2.6.2 Low proficiency among English trainee teachers	24
2.7 Teaching and learning approaches.....	26

2.7.1 Mismatch in teaching and learning approaches	26
2.8 Summary	26
Chapter 3 Changing trends in SLTE towards teachers' cognition: guiding literature.....	28
3.1 Introduction.....	28
3.2 Defining second language teacher education	29
3.3 Changing trends in SLTE.....	30
3.3.1 The knowledge base of language teaching	31
3.3.2 The landmarks in SLTE development	32
3.4 Teacher Education Models in SLTE.....	35
3.4.1 The craft model.....	35
3.4.2 The applied science model	36
3.4.3 The reflective model.....	38
3.5 Teacher cognition research	40
3.5.1 Beliefs.....	41
3.5.2 Beliefs or knowledge?	43
3.5.3 The development of research in teacher cognition.....	46
3.5.4 Why are beliefs important in teacher education?.....	51
3.5.5 The construction of teacher beliefs	52
3.6 Newly qualified teachers: concerns and challenges.....	54
3.7 Challenges in SLTE in Malaysia	57
3.8 Summary	58
Chapter 4 Methodology	60
4.1 Introduction.....	60
4.2 Research aims and questions.....	60
4.3 Research paradigm	61
4.4 Methodological framework.....	62
4.4.1 Qualitative case study.....	62
4.4.2 Multiple instrumental case study	63
4.4.3 Longitudinal approach to case study.....	65
4.4.4 A note on narrative accounts in case studies	65
4.5 The research sites and participants	66
4.5.1 The research sites	66
4.5.2 Sampling strategy	66
4.5.3 Participant recruitment.....	66
4.5.4 The participants: four newly qualified English teachers.....	67

4.5.5 My relationship with the participants	68
4.6 Research methods	70
4.6.1 Interviews	71
4.6.1.1 Skype/telephone interviews	71
4.6.2 Classroom observations.....	73
4.6.3 Stimulated recall interviews.....	76
4.6.4 Documents: journal entries, field notes, and lesson plans	79
4.7 Phases of data collection.....	79
4.8 Pilot study.....	81
4.8.1 Skype/telephone interviews	82
4.8.2 Classroom observation schedule	83
4.9 Data collection: challenges and opportunities	85
4.9.1 The first challenge: changes in the research plan	85
4.9.2 The second challenge: planning, and conducting the observations	87
4.9.3 The third challenge: the language of data collection.....	89
4.10 Data analysis.....	89
4.10.1 Step 1: prepare and organise data for analysis	90
4.10.1.1 Transcription.....	90
4.10.1.2 A note on translation.....	90
4.10.2 Step 2: explore and code the data.....	91
4.10.3 Step 3: coding to build description and themes	91
4.10.4 Step 4: represent and report qualitative findings.....	92
4.10.5 Step 5: interpret the findings.....	92
4.10.6 Step 6: validating findings/trustworthiness.....	93
4.11 Ethical considerations.....	94
Chapter 5 Alice's story	96
5.1 Introduction.....	96
5.2 Before first year of teaching.....	98
5.2.1 Evoking the past: English language learning experience of a Chinese student in a national-type Chinese school	98
5.2.2 Embarking on teacher training	99
5.3 Starting the first year of teaching	100
5.3.1 School context	101
5.3.2 Alice's workload in school	102
5.4 Welcome to the real world of teaching! Surviving the first year	103

5.5	Summary	120
Chapter 6	It is my passion: Salina's story	122
6.1	Introduction.....	122
6.2	Before first year of teaching	122
6.2.1	Reminiscing about her English language learning experience ..	122
6.2.2	Teacher training: Salina's attitude to English and views on her training.....	124
6.2.3	Starting the first year of teaching.....	125
6.2.4	School context	126
6.2.5	Salina's roles and responsibilities in school.....	128
6.3	Managing the first year	131
6.4	Summary	142
Chapter 7	Slowly but surely: Emi's story	143
7.1	Introduction.....	143
7.2	Before first year of teaching	143
7.2.1	English language learning experience.....	143
7.2.2	Reflecting on teacher training experiences	145
7.3	Starting the first year of teaching	147
7.3.1	School context	147
7.3.2	Emi's workload in the school.....	147
7.4	First year mission: slowly but surely.....	149
7.5	Summary	161
Chapter 8	Joanna's story	162
8.1	Introduction.....	162
8.2	Before first year of teaching	162
8.2.1	Reminiscing the past: English language learning experience of a Chinese student in a national school.....	162
8.2.2	Joanna's teacher training experiences	164
8.3	Starting the first year of teaching	166
8.3.1	School context	167
8.3.2	Joanna's workload and school environment.....	167
8.4	Surviving the first year	171
8.5	Summary	188
Chapter 9	Summary of key issues: similarities and differences among four newly qualified English teachers' evolution of beliefs	189
9.1	Introduction.....	189

9.2	Beliefs at the start of the first year of teaching and what affected these	189
9.3	The changes of beliefs throughout the first year of teaching and the affecting factors	191
9.3.1	Attitudes towards the use of L1 in English classroom.....	191
9.3.2	Classroom management.....	192
9.3.3	The role of assessment- exam and LINUS: from focusing on achieving lesson objectives to exam-oriented teaching.....	194
9.3.4	Teaching-learning activities and teaching resources	197
9.4	The change of view about language learning.....	204
9.5	Conclusion.....	205
Chapter 10 Unpacking newly qualified teachers' beliefs: a discussion.....		206
10.1	Introduction.....	206
10.2	The construction of beliefs in the language classrooms	207
10.2.1	Elements in the construction of beliefs	207
10.2.2	Belief development as individual phenomenon.....	211
10.2.3	Discussion of data on the construction of beliefs and individuality phenomenon.....	214
10.3	The inconsistencies in belief-behavioural relationships.....	218
10.3.1	Relationship between beliefs and practice.....	219
10.3.2	The reasons behind the tensions between beliefs and behaviour	221
10.4	The constraints affecting beliefs-behavioural relationships	223
10.4.1	Internal constraints.....	224
10.4.1.1	The NQTs' experiences, personalities and teacher attributes	224
10.4.1.2	NQTs' knowledge	225
10.4.2	External constraints.....	225
10.4.2.1	The contextual reality of the classroom and school... ..	226
10.4.2.2	The role of assessment	229
10.4.2.3	Pressure from the administration (school, district, state and national level) and parents.....	230
10.5	Summary	231
Chapter 11 Conclusion.....		234
11.1	Introduction.....	234
11.2	Contributions of the study	234
11.3	Implications for Teacher Education and the Institute of Teacher Education	235

11.4 Limitations of the study	241
11.5 Suggestions for further research.....	242
11.6 Research reflections and final words	243
List of References.....	245
Appendix A PISMP (TESL) English Language Teaching Courses.....	255
Appendix B The objectives of PISMP programme.....	256
Appendix C Interview schedule- Skype Interview	257
Appendix D (i) Participant information sheet and consent forms	259
Appendix D (ii) Participant consent form.....	262
Appendix D (iii) Parental consent form	263
Appendix E Classroom observation schedule	264
Appendix F (i) An example of Nvivo10 coding (Salina).....	265
Appendix F (ii) An example of initial themes and sub-themes derived from NVivo10 (Salina).....	266
Appendix F (iii) An example of a thematic category in NVivo10 from SRI transcript (Alice).....	267
Appendix G An example of printouts of the transcripts of the interview with Salina and Joanna, and manual (hand-written) colour-coded themes and sub-themes	268
Appendix H (i) An example of emerging themes and sub themes coding from preliminary analysis (Alice)	269
Appendix H (i) An example of emerging themes and sub themes coding from preliminary analysis (Alice)(cont.)	270
Appendix H (ii) An example of diagram from ‘Nodes’ and ‘Sources’ coded in Nvivo10	271
Appendix I Letter of approval from ethics committee.....	272
Appendix J Letter of approval from EPU	274
Appendix K Letter of approval from State Education Department.....	276
Appendix L Conferences and seminars	277

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Landmarks in SLTE development: From a view of SLTE as an Applied Linguistics and Psychology to the new agenda in SLTE, theory about language teachers learning-to-teach, and its practices	33
Table 4.1: Classroom observation schedule.....	75
Table 4.2: Classroom observations conducted	76
Table 4.3: Summary of Skype interviews and classroom observations conducted.....	78
Table 4.4: The changes in research methods and plan.....	85
Table 9.1: Changes in beliefs and practices	200

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 The craft model of professional education (Wallace, 1991, p.6)	35
Figure 3.2 Applied Science model (Wallace, 1991, p.9).....	36
Figure 3.3 Reflective practice model of professional education / development.....	39
Figure 3.4 Tracing the migration of ideas about teacher thinking.....	46
Figure 3.5 The TOTE Unit and description of a sequence of decisions using TOTE (Shavelson, 1973, p.146).....	47
Figure 3.6 A model of teacher thought and action (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p.13)	47
Figure 3.7 An ethno-cognitive model of teachers' decision-making.....	48
Figure 3.8 Elements and processes in language teacher cognition (Borg, 2006, p.283).....	49
Figure 3.9 Teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching	58
Figure 4.1 Basic types of designs for case studies (COSMO Corporation cited in Yin, 2014, p.50).....	63
Figure 4.2 Multiple Instrumental Case Studies (Adapted from Creswell, 2012).....	65
Figure 4.3 The content of the initial Skype interviews.	72
Figure 4.4 Research Phases.	80
Figure 5.1 Framework of the story.....	96
Figure 10.1 Elements and processes in belief development as individual phenomenon	232

List of Abbreviations

BM	Bahasa Malaysia
B.Tchg	Bachelor of Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ESL	English as a Second Language
ITE	Institute of Teacher Education
KSSR	Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools
LINUS	Literacy and numeracy screening
MoE	Ministry of Education
NS	National School
NTCS	National-type Chinese School
NTTS	National-type Tamil School
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
PCK	Pedagogic content knowledge
PISMP	<i>Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan</i>
PLLE	Prior language learning experience
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education
SRI	Stimulated Recall Interview
TE	Teacher Education
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Prelude

The time has come for us to realise that new teachers do not all learn or teach the same way. Talk to several new teachers about why they are teachers, what teaching means to them, how they know when they are successful, and what gives them the most satisfaction, and you'll discover that some teachers place great emphasis on imparting knowledge to students, while others stress the importance of helping students discover knowledge for themselves...These different perspectives of teaching reflect various experiences or styles of teaching – inventing, knowing, caring, and inspiring – that highlight differences in how individuals perceive and process information.

(Pajak et al., 2009, pp.110-111)

Pre-service teachers enter teacher education programmes with already-well-grounded beliefs about teaching and learning which are not easily changed. According to Fives (2015), “*Pre-service teachers come to teacher education experiences with deeply held beliefs*” (p.257). Their experiences and perceptions as learners are definitely different from their current role as teachers. The newly qualified teachers (NQTs) often start teaching with preconceived beliefs about teaching and learning based on their prior language-learning experiences from their schooling years and training. Exploring what NQTs think, believe and know about language teaching is indeed an extremely complicated matter in their first year of teaching. One might feel challenged by the messy construct of what actually constitutes teachers’ beliefs. One of the most influential constructs is the role of prior beliefs from their own language learning. The prior beliefs constructed during schooling, the challenge of accommodating new beliefs during teacher training; and adjusting beliefs once being a teacher make the evolution of one’s beliefs quite complicated.

This study is about the evolution of NQTs’ cognition – specifically, their beliefs – in Malaysian primary schools. My experiences as a language teacher and later as a language teacher educator have motivated me to embark on this domain of language teacher cognition. As I reflected on my own cognitive evolution, on how my beliefs

about language teaching and learning developed, adjusted and changed, I am always amazed and at times puzzled by the enormous differences in NQTs' classroom practices. Although the NQTs receive similar training input from the same institution, the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE), from my own experience, it seems that they projected different teaching practices. Thus, I am interested in exploring how the NQTs' beliefs develop and change, particularly in their first year of teaching, and the factors affecting the changes. Since the ITE introduced its own independent Bachelor of Teaching course about two years before I conducted my study, I felt that this was a great opportunity for me to conduct such research on the first cohort of the 'Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)' programme for primary levels.

1.2 Notes on the researcher's cognitive evolution

1.2.1 Constructing beliefs through personal experience of schooling

From a historical point of view, Penang Free School, established in 1816, was the first school based on the system of education in England, using English as the medium of instruction (Omar, 2012). There were also other English-medium schools established, not only by the colonial government but also by Christian missionaries. However, these schools were only located within the major towns, attracting students mostly from the children of the Malay ruling class and the affluent Chinese.

Having been raised in the capital city of Malaysia, I had the opportunity in the early 1980s to experience schooling in a primary school which was once an English school managed by the Christian missionaries. During that era, there were five types of schools in Malaysian education system: i) English/mission schools; ii) Malay schools; iii) Chinese schools; iv) Tamil schools; and v) religious schools. English schools are also known as mission schools since they were founded and managed by Christian missionaries like the Anglicans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics. They were given the autonomy to accept pupils of different races and religious backgrounds. My earlier experiences as a student in the English classroom were likely to have had an effect on my own beliefs about English language teaching and learning. In the first six years of primary schooling, I remember well that the method used to deliver the English lesson was 'chalk and talk'. I did not enjoy learning English until I met an English teacher who was different from the others. She was warm, enthusiastic, and provided a fun and exciting environment in the classroom. She would use an English book with cartoon characters that were popular back then and this approach motivated me and

other students to learn the language. However, that excitement did not last long. When I had a different English teacher the following year who favoured drilling, I again found English language lessons boring, especially when it involved a spelling test, which was held once a week. Being in a mission school environment also meant that the majority of my friends were English-speaking. To me, English was a foreign language, as I came from a Bahasa Malaysia (national language) background while many of my classmates came from an English-speaking home and spoke good English. Many of them were Chinese and Indian and came from the affluent area near the city. I believed that my English language proficiency was not as good, and as such, I felt uncomfortable and afraid of being mocked for my poor English; I avoided using English and would use Bahasa Malaysia instead during school recess to communicate with my group of close friends who came from the same area where I lived.

During the early days of secondary school, being in a similar environment, there was an additional pressure to use the target language. Although Bahasa Malaysia was already the medium of instruction, the school had selected one day a week during which students were required to speak English. Those who refused to use the language would be fined, 10 cents per word. I also began to take an interest in the English language, especially during literature lessons, during which there was a choral recitation of poems. During my lower secondary school career, I also had English teachers who loved to read literature aloud with accompanying actions, stress, and intonations that I always admired. This approach cultivated my passion for learning the language. During upper secondary school, I gained more confidence in using the language, especially when my class won the choral speaking competition. In addition, there were opportunities to practise the language during the lessons through communicative activity since oral proficiency was also part of the assessment for the public examination. However, I did not feel the pressure of being forced to use the language. I had fun learning English during my secondary school years, especially when the teachers encouraged the students to use the language without any form of punishment, even if the sentences were grammatically incorrect. I also admired the way the teacher taught during English lessons. She would always include her personal stories to motivate us, reflecting her passion for the profession.

Based on my personal experiences as described above, at present there are three main beliefs about a 'good teacher': a) provides varied and interesting activities appropriate for his/her learners; b) provides those activities in a supportive and unthreatening classroom atmosphere in which to learn and practice – both of which

imply an interest in students – and c) a genuine interest in/passion for teaching and as such, a willingness to make the effort to enable (a) and (b). Apart from the personality traits of good teachers, I also believe that the learning environment plays an important role in providing the students with the opportunity to use the language for authentic purposes. For instance, I believe that being in a mission school with the majority of my friends speaking English had helped me to acquire the language by listening to their conversations during the early years of schooling and being able to use it confidently when I was in upper secondary. This scenario implies that language is more than just a subject in which students need to ‘learn’ (more memorising the content) and pass the examination.

1.2.2 Constructing and adjusting beliefs: linking prior beliefs to training

Having been trained as a teacher via a twinning programme of Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) (Hons) TESOL, I realised that my prior beliefs in the importance of having the right environment for developing and enhancing one’s language proficiency had been strengthened. MoE (2005) states that, in the context of the objectives of the twinning programme training and capacity-building, the relevance of a twinning arrangement, with part of the degree taught in the ITE and part in the other institutions, is that the trainees would develop a higher level of language proficiency and cultural awareness given their immersion in the language and society in the countries abroad. The trainees would also benefit professionally from the variety of teaching-learning styles and cultures they would experience in two different institutions. I believe that the opportunity given in the first year of living in the UK with an English host family and in the second year of living in the university accommodation with the local students helped me improve my language proficiency in addition to the classes attended. Hence, having the opportunity to spend two years living in the UK, where English is the language of everyday life, as part of this teacher education programme reinforced my belief in the importance of having the right language-learning environment.

Additionally, my prior and current beliefs indicate that while it is important to acquire subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge through formal training, teachers could acquire tacit knowledge through experience and learning by doing. Throughout my training in the mid-1990s, the teacher education curriculum was heavily influenced by "*the study of pedagogical grammar, discourse analysis, second language acquisition, classroom-based research, interlanguage syntax and phonology, curriculum and syllabus design, and language testing*" (Nunan, 1990,

p.3). The challenge of linking the theory learnt from training to practice arose during the school visits in the UK and teaching practice sessions. While applying theory to practice was challenging, it was supported by careful guidance from my teaching practice supervisor. I had some misconceptions: i) students learned the language when they were provided with the environment to use the language, which meant that there would be only the English language without any code-switching during English lessons; ii) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was vital in the English language classroom to encourage students to practise the target language; and iii) writing learning objectives (LO) 'correctly' was important to ensure that the LO were achieved successfully. Therefore, I began to believe that while input of knowledge was important, learning through doing was equally important. In my case, the learning through doing was structured according to the three features mentioned above.

Since teaching practice or practicum sessions offer trainee teachers the opportunities to put into practice the theories learnt and to take risks in trying out new things in real classrooms, I tried to accommodate the new information received. In the process, I adjusted my prior beliefs, based on experience. During the two 12-week teaching practice sessions in Malaysia, which I experienced in the final year of my teacher education programme, I encountered two different sets of students in terms of their language proficiency. Based on my prior experience as a student and later as a trainee teacher, I learned that using the communicative approach and communicating solely in English would help my students to interact in English. In the first school I taught, a majority of the students were either of average or low proficiency in the English language. Since the topic of my dissertation was CLT, I managed to try out several communicative approaches during the lessons, despite experiencing initial difficulties in helping them to cope with the language. After several attempts, I observed that the students were engaged with the activities and were able to communicate using the target language. I tried to avoid code-switching and adapted the CLT activities to match them to the students' abilities and to cater to their needs. Conversely, the second school which I was assigned to for teaching practice comprised of students with good academic performance. I experienced almost no challenges or problems in delivering the lessons as a majority of the students were fluent in English. Both situations had further strengthened my beliefs on the importance of providing an environment to practise the language without the need to code-switch and on the use of CLT which could enhance students' language abilities. These two teaching practices had reinforced my beliefs in the three features above.

1.2.3 Adjusting and strengthening beliefs: from training to the real classroom

I felt that I might have strongly developed my beliefs in the influence of the environment towards one's learning when I realised that my English proficiency had deteriorated. This began on my first posting to a secondary school in an urban area where more than half of the student population had difficulty understanding the target language. Consequently, I had to either code-switch or use Bahasa Malaysia 80 percent of the time to teach English. During the first few months of teaching, I was confident that my students would benefit from my English lessons through CLT. However, I noticed that the students were passive and they did not seem interested in the lessons. I finally realised that this was because many of them could not understand the language; English was foreign to them. I tried to vary and adapt the activities to suit their level of learning. In order to ensure that they used English during the lessons, I had to introduce a classroom rule of using only English during lessons since I believed that they would learn the language if the teacher provided them with the environment to practise the target language. I would only allow English language in the classroom, and if there were any students who did not understand the lesson and needed clarification in Bahasa Malaysia, I would explain using Bahasa Malaysia outside the classroom since no other language was allowed in the classroom. I later realised that I started to 'punish' the students if they broke the classroom rule. I would also ask the students to pay a fine based on the number of words they used in other languages or memorise a number of English vocabularies. I started to adjust my beliefs about punishment in the classroom, even though at first I had rejected the idea of punishment in language learning.

I also found out that I needed to have control over the class and I felt that having a rule helped me in managing the classroom. I found that it was easier to manage in a class which was good academically compared with a class which was weak and in which almost every student had very low English proficiency. Over time, I actually taught English using Bahasa Malaysia since the students could not comprehend the lessons. My belief in the importance of using solely English during English lessons was challenged, and I thought I had lost the battle, especially when I felt that I was burdened with administrative tasks and using the mother tongue to teach was the easy way out. A range of these contextual factors meant that my beliefs were challenged once I started 'real teaching', when I began to let some of my prior beliefs slip, just to survive. There was one particular incident which encouraged me to go back to my own set of beliefs in using the target language and at the same time motivated the students to learn English. I was given the task to teach English to the

lowest performing and lowest proficiency level students in the year. To make things worse, a majority of the students could not read, though there were in their secondary years. For the first few lessons, I tried simple words and later I introduced the word 'congratulations'. To my surprise, one of the students used the word the following day, and he was excited that he could pronounce the word. I began to try out other activities, including choral speaking, that had motivated me once. Although it was more drilling and reading the poems aloud, I could see the improvement in the students in terms of using the target language orally. I did not impose any rule of using English only in that class, and I started to recall my own experiences of language learning. I believe that it is important for a teacher to value and appreciate students and at the same time be passionate about teaching and try to make the class as interesting as possible to ensure that the students enjoy learning the language. Students will feel safe using the language and express themselves better, especially when the implementation of classroom rules is done through negotiation between the teacher and the students. I became more flexible and remembered my earlier beliefs about the importance of the atmosphere and that I needed to start from where the students were.

1.2.4 Developing personal beliefs

In summary, throughout the process of developing beliefs about language learning and teaching, I realised that there were different constructs that constitute one's beliefs and these constructs might differ for each individual since each individual is unique. This means that different people's beliefs are the result of the different experiences they have had and the different influences on them, together with the different significances that such influences/experiences have for them. Such beliefs seem to reflect findings similar to those I encountered in this study. My prior experience during my schooling, the training received, and my experiences in teaching had certainly influenced my beliefs regarding language learning and teaching. My learning experiences at the mission school and going abroad suggest that being in an appropriate environment for students to learn the target language was essential to some extent. Teachers need to ensure that they provide the right environment for students to practise the language. In addition, I realised that certain theories learnt during teacher education training might not be applicable to certain groups of students, and it is important for the teacher to adapt to the students' needs. I also discovered, through trial-and-error during teaching practice and even during real teaching, that every lesson is unique in that it is an ongoing learning process for a teacher on how teachers learn to teach. The learning process of becoming a teacher starts from their own beliefs, stemming from their live experiences from their

schooling years. Pajares (1992) highlights that although teacher education researchers are aware of the power of this early enculturation in developing educational beliefs, they have failed to explore it. Hence, Lortie's (1975) notion of "*apprenticeship of observation*" is indeed an important construct in developing one's beliefs. Although trainee teachers might receive the same input during their training years, individual teachers give different meaning to teaching through their own constructs which evolve over the years.

It is indeed a challenging task for the NQTs to adjust their beliefs as they make their transition from teacher education to being the practitioner. The 'turbulence' in the language policy which has affected English language teaching and the numerous changes in curriculum make the challenge even greater.

As a result of this personal voyage, I realised that since constructing beliefs is an evolving process that takes place over a period of time, I am interested in exploring the evolution of newly qualified English teachers' cognition in terms of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning. In the following section, I share my initial aims for embarking on this study.

1.3 Aims

Over the years, I realised that from my experience as an English language teacher and teacher educator, my beliefs about teaching and learning have gradually developed and changed. As I had the opportunity to teach the first cohort of a new Bachelor of Teaching (Hons) course in TESL, I felt that it would be interesting to find out how they constructed their beliefs from their prior learning experiences and training, and how they adjusted their prior sets of beliefs in a new teaching environment in their first year of teaching. My intention in exploring what NQTs think, believe and know about language teaching over the first year of teaching is indeed an extremely complicated matter. The challenge for the NQTs would be the changing conceptions, which are potentially taxing and even threatening, especially when they have to adjust their existing beliefs in order to accommodate new information.

Embarking on this study allows me to reflect on my personal evolution in my beliefs about teaching and learning. There are several elements that influenced the formation of my beliefs throughout my teaching years. I was aware that the NQTs in

my study experienced similar evolutions in their beliefs; their personal beliefs about teaching and learning developed and adjusted to their current context. Although the elements in the construction of beliefs, such as prior language learning experiences, training and teaching experiences, play a significant role in influencing beliefs and classroom practice, based on the study and reflecting on my own first-year teaching experience, I believed that one's teaching experience in dealing with teaching and learning issues in a particular moment or in the current moment has a greater impact in affecting one's beliefs. Thus, the aims of this study were therefore to explore the evolution of NQTs' cognition over their first year of teaching in terms of beliefs about teaching and learning, and to investigate the factors that might influence their thinking and classroom practice. This study involved a year-long longitudinal approach to data collection since the formation of beliefs is a behaviour that happens over a period of time. In addition, the study hopes to examine what any evolution or changes in beliefs and knowledge implies for the content and process of the ITE curriculum (including practicum) specifically for the Bachelor of Teaching programme which was introduced in 2011.

I was interested in investigating the first cohort of this programme since this was the first time the ITE had introduced their own independent Bachelor of Teaching programme. I decided to adopt a case study approach and initially I chose five NQTs from this cohort who were posted in a particular state in Malaysia as the participants of this study. Since the data collected was thick, I decided to focus on presenting only four cases.

The study started upon the completion of their B.Tchg programme, so as to examine the participants' initial beliefs before they started their first year of teaching. This allows the reader to gain insights into the formation of their preconceived beliefs (before they started their training, during training, and once they completed their training) and track the changes in their beliefs until the end of their first year of teaching. The evolution of their beliefs continued into the first year of teaching, and the insights from their experiences as NQTs illustrate the concerns and challenges that NQTs need to deal with in order to find an appropriate classroom practice for their learners.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The structure in this thesis reflects the fundamental areas that are involved in exploring NQTs' cognition during their first year of teaching. The thesis comprises of 11 chapters.

The present **introductory chapter** presents the background and aims of the study. An attempt has been made here also to underline the evolution of the researcher's personal beliefs in learning English and teaching in the Malaysian context. Furthermore, the researcher will share how the status of English has impacted one's schooling experiences and influenced one's beliefs about English language learning.

Chapter 2 provides the background of the educational context of English language education in Malaysia. It describes the background of the country, the linguistic context, and the role and status of English in the Malaysian education system. The background of teacher education institutes in Malaysia, and the background issues of the study, are also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 3 deals with the concepts applied in the field of Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE), the challenges of SLTE in Malaysia, and the aims of this study. The changing trends in SLTE, the teacher education models, teacher cognition research, and the concerns and challenges of NQTs are also discussed. The review of the literature with reference to the field of SLTE underpins the discussion of the implementation of the new Bachelor of Teaching in the TESL (Primary Education) programme in ITEs in Malaysia.

Chapter 4 presents the research design and methodology. This methodology chapter introduces the research aims and the main research questions. It also articulates the research paradigm, the methodological framework, and the methodological approach adopted. The challenges and opportunities during data collection are also presented in this chapter. The stages and procedures for collecting and analysing the data are provided, and clarification of the ethical issues is shared.

Chapters 5 to 8 provides in-depth data gathered through classroom observations and interviews of four newly qualified teachers, which revealed notable findings from their evolving thoughts. Their thoughts and reactions towards the teaching practices are narrated case by case. As well as sharing areas of concern, the data gathered reveals relatively distinctive responses to their first-year teaching experiences. The stories from individual cases are presented based on a story's framework, from the participants' past experiences of schooling and teacher training, the context and ethos of the school in which the participant is situated, and their experiences during the first year in the school are shared.

Chapter 9 summarizes the key issues of the study. This chapter addresses Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 as introduced in Chapter 3 and draws on different cases to answer these questions. The findings reveal that the beliefs are unique to every individual and that they evolve in the light of individual specific experiences in a particular context.

Chapter 10 discusses the summary of findings presented in Chapter 9, and how these findings relate to previous research in this domain. The findings suggest three fundamental points: i) all the NQTs' beliefs changed over a period of time, but in different ways with differing extents; ii) the change in beliefs and behaviours were not interdependent, whereby a change in beliefs did not necessarily result in a change of behaviours, and there were gaps in the relationship between beliefs and behaviours; and iii) the factors that seemed to have the strongest influence on the beliefs and behaviour changes were their own personalities, their teacher attributes, their status as NQTs, and the contextual reality of the school (the ethos and the set of students).

Chapter 11 is the conclusive chapter that provides the contribution of the study, and challenges and states preliminary suggestions for a fuller and more efficient implementation of ITE programmes in Malaysia. The chapter also proposes prospective areas for further research.

Chapter 2

English language education in Malaysia

2.1 Introduction to research

This chapter provides an overview of the educational context for this study, particularly the educational context of English language education in Malaysia. This chapter is divided into six main sections. I begin with describing the background of the country, the linguistic context, and the role and status of the English language in the Malaysian education system. Next, I will provide the context of teacher education institutes in Malaysia. Finally, I will discuss the background issues of the study, which include English language proficiency and teaching and learning approaches.

2.2 Background of the country

Malaysia had a population of 32 million people in 2017 (Malaysia, 2017). The country consists of a multi-ethnic population which is represented by Malays and other ¹*Bumiputera* groups – which make up 68.6 percent of the country's population – Chinese (23.4 percent), Indians (7 percent) and other unlisted ethnic groups (1 percent) (Malaysia, 2016). Malaysia, a middle-income country, has transformed itself since the 1970s from a producer of raw materials into an emerging multi-sector economy and is moving towards becoming a developed country by the year 2020. Various types of schools have been instituted in Malaysia, and to date there are 14 types of school including secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2014). The two prominent types of school are the national school (NS) and national-type school. NS refers to government primary and secondary schools that are established and maintained by the Ministry of Education (MoE). These schools utilise a national curriculum and the Malay language is used as the medium of instruction. Mother tongues are also offered at these schools with a minimum enrolment of 15 students per class. With regard to the other type of school, national-type schools were set-up to cater for the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia. There are two types of national-type schools: national-type Chinese school (NTCS), and national-type Tamil school (NTTS). Initially, these schools were funded by the Chinese, the Indians, and the British administration. While these schools utilise the national curriculum, particularly

¹ A Malaysian of indigenous Malay origin

at the primary school level, the medium of instruction is different. NTCSs use Mandarin as their medium of instruction while NTTSSs utilise the Tamil language. My study took place at primary level in these three main types of schools: NS, NTCS, and NTTSS.

The role of English in these schools has not been consistent due to changes in government policy over time (to be explained further below). At different points in time different types of school did/did not teach in English, did/did not teach English as a subject, and/or started English at different ages/levels. English is considered second in importance to the Malay language or Bahasa Malaysia (the official language of Malaysia) for political and historical reasons that will be explained below. However, in reality there are parts of the country even in urban areas where English is regarded as a less than necessary foreign language. Hence the history of English language teaching (ELT) in Malaysia can be considered rather complex, which inadvertently affects the history of Malaysian language teacher education. In the next section, I shall provide the linguistic context followed by the historical review of the changing role of English language in the Malaysian education system.

The context of this study is Malaysian primary school classroom settings in different types of school. The NQTs in this study are in schools that represent the whole range of Malaysian schools which mean that I am able to talk more certainly about the 'Malaysian Primary Schools' context' than if I had just conducted the study in National schools. Zheng (2015) suggests that as the social settings in which the teachers' work has a significant impact on their beliefs and practices, it is important to explore interaction of teachers' beliefs and practices in a specific educational context. Other scholars have also put the significance of context whereby the teachers working context can impose various constraints on teachers' beliefs and their abilities to provide pedagogical instruction that aligns with their beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Holliday, 1994; Fang, 1996; Kubanyiova and Feryok, 2015; Borg, 2003; Basturkmen, 2012).

2.3 Linguistic context in Malaysia

The English language has been part of Malaysia for many decades. Historically, during colonial times, English was the sole medium of instruction in the education system. The Federation of Malaya (Malaysia before independence) achieved its independence in 1957 and after independence there was awareness of the need for a national identity. Malay was proclaimed as the national language. Nevertheless,

Darmi and Albion (2013) state that English was declared the second most important language in Malaysia after Malay. Gill (2005) highlights that since then the role and status of English have been radically reduced: *“English was relegated to being taught in schools as a second language although in reality there are parts of the country in which there is no exposure to the language. English was virtually a foreign language”* (p.244). In addition, Darus (2010) states that major changes that took place after independence were the implementation of policies related to the educational syllabus and the medium of instruction. Malaysian language policies have been greatly affected by the historical and political context. In particular, as it was previously colonised and expanded to include East Malaysia in 1963, it is a multi-ethnic nation. There has been an ongoing tension especially from the strong political need for a ‘national language’ and the promotion of Bahasa Malaysia as the official language. Simultaneously, there is also a desire to retain some sense of ‘ownership’ of English, particularly with the aspiration of Malaysia becoming a developed country by 2020 (MOE, 2013). This tension is reflected in the role and status of English in education. Today, Bahasa Malaysia is Malaysia’s national and official language and the language of instruction in the Malaysian education system. Consequently, English is used as the official language in administration (Darmi and Albion, 2013) and it is taught as a compulsory subject in schools. Over the years, the status of English in Malaysia public education has been affected by the historical, social, economic, and political developments in the country.

2.4 English language in the Malaysian education system

The Federation of Malaya (Malaysia, before independence) was granted its independence from the British in 1957 and in 1963 the British territories in North Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak were also granted their independence and together formed Malaysia. From a historical point of view, English at that time was regarded as the language of the elite. Omar (2012) observed that education in English was most favoured by the British colonial government and it was the language of the upper stratum of society, the colonial rulers. After independence, English became the second language of the government (Puteh, 2010) and English schools that were set up by the British became national schools, using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction. English is now a compulsory language (subject), even in the Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools.

2.4.1 Status of English in education during the post-independence period: 1957 to 1970

After independence in 1957, there was a demand from the Chinese and Indians not to have a monolingual national language policy. Although Malay language was undoubtedly the language of the Malaya Peninsula being the indigenous language of the region, there was a great deal of controversy over the choice of Malay as a national language. Even so, the Malay language was then declared the national language and English was allowed to continue as the official language. Stephen (2013) points out that the Malay nationalists viewed English-medium education as part of the British agenda to maintain control of the country after independence. As such, it was important to replace English with Malay as the medium of instruction. This move to replace English with the Malay language was also an important aspect of the national agenda as it would 'Malaysianise' national education to forge a national identity. Consequently, all primary schools in the country were converted to national and national-type schools as a symbolic gesture of the new education policy (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012). While the national schools use Malay language as the medium of instruction, the national-type schools use their respective mother tongue (Mandarin or Tamil) as the medium of instruction.

According to Omar (2012), English was given the role as an official language for a period of ten years after independence. This meant that between 1957 and 1967, there were two official languages in independent Malaya: the Malay language and English. However, in September 1967, after the establishment of the Malaysian Federation, English was no longer an official language. Although the Malay language had become the main medium of education, English was now regarded as the second language of Malaysia, i.e. a language that had to be taught to every Malaysian from the primary to tertiary level of education. In other words, the position of English as an official language still lived on, even if the official status was not overtly referred to. English was (and remains) termed the second language in Malaysia, meaning that it is the most important language after the Malay language or Bahasa Malaysia, the national language.

In the 1960s, school curricula were standardised and all different types of schools were expected to adopt the common curriculum. However, schools could deliver the curriculum in their respective medium of instruction. A committee was established to review the implementation of the National Education Policy and the Rahman Talib report (1960) was produced. Puteh (2010) mentions that the Razak and Rahman

Talib reports formed the basis of the Education Act 1961, which affirms the role of the national language as the medium of instruction and provides a common curriculum and common public examinations for schools. The Act was amended in 1995 to reinforce the position of the Malay language. By 1970, English had a minor role in the education system and Malay became the medium of instruction in all schools with the exception of vernacular schools.

2.4.2 Status of English in education from 1970 to 1999

The implementation of the National Education Policy led to the conversion of the national-type English schools to national schools. It was the government policy to phase out the English language as the medium of instruction. According to Richards (1979) an ad-hoc committee was set up to design a common content syllabus for English language teaching (ELT) in primary and secondary schools. It was stated that *The English Syllabus for Use in Standard One to Standard Six of the Post 1970 National Primary Schools (1971)*, was the first common ELT syllabus for use in the school system. The syllabus advocated the use of a structural situational approach/oral method. In the Chinese and Tamil medium schools, English was introduced only at Standard 3.

In 1996, a new education act, the 'Education Act 1996', was established in response to emerging industrialisation and globalisation as Malaysia attracted numerous direct foreign investments through multinational companies. This scenario has led to a need for a supply of skilled workers, and these companies relied heavily on English as the medium of communication (Le Ha et al., 2013; Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012; Puteh, 2010). The newly introduced Education Act 1996 allowed for the use of English as the medium of instruction for technical areas at post-secondary level. In addition, the Private Higher Education Institute Act allows the use of English in twinning programme courses with foreign universities (Le Ha et al., 2013).

2.4.3 Status of English in education during the millennium and beyond

By 2000, the new syllabus for the primary and secondary schools was fully implemented and recognised the status of English as a language second only to Bahasa Malaysia. According to MoE (2013), the aim of teaching English is to help the society function appropriately in the business and commercial sectors and to support this aim, there was a need to reintroduce English as a medium of instruction.

In January 2003, the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English (ETeMS), better known by its Malay abbreviation *Program Pengajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris (PPSMI)*, was introduced with the aim of improving the command of the English language amongst Malaysian students, both in primary and secondary schools. The implementation of content and language integrated learning (CLIL), which concerns the teaching of subjects through a foreign language to students, has led to the introduction of the English for Science and Technology (EST) syllabus for secondary schools, Forms 4 and 5 students. EST aims to use English as a tool for acquiring content knowledge to prepare students to embark on tertiary-level studies and enable them to communicate in the business world both locally and internationally.

Omar (2012) states that the introduction of ETeMS could help ensure a smooth transition from school to university, for students pursuing science-based degree programmes which have been delivered in English at Malaysian universities since December 1993. Until the end of 1993, mainstream education in Malaysia was said to have belonged to a monolingual mode, with a second language appended to it. Malakolunthu and Nagappan (2012) believed that opening the door once more to English in the mainstream education system in Malaysia has been motivated by two objectives which are intertwined. The first was to increase the proficiency in English of Malaysian students by having them learn the language in the context of language use. Often, Malaysian students resort to their community languages or Malaysian English, outside the school compound. Secondly, learning science and mathematics through English will assist the students to gain familiarity with the terminologies of these disciplines that will take them through to their university education. Omar (2012) points out that English is once again given prominence in 2003, whereby English is seen as the language of science and technology, and due to the advent of globalisation, English became the medium for teaching science and mathematics.

ETeMS has been the subject of debate among the public, academics, and politicians. The implementation of ETeMS upset many Malaysian nationalists who rejected the idea when it was first announced. It seems that the changing status of English in Malaysia has also affected English language teaching. ETeMS required the preparation of new teaching materials in English as well as training teachers to teach science and mathematics in English. In some cases English language teachers were appointed as a 'buddy' to science and mathematics teachers to assist them in using the language to teach these subjects. They were also asked to teach English for Science and Technology (EST), which led to pressures both in terms of increasing

their workload and in terms of learning the technical language used in both subjects. In 2010, only eight years after its implementation, ETeMS was abandoned and the switch back to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction for all subjects took place. Stephen (2013) remarked that observers of ELT in Malaysia pointed out that *“the policy reversal is yet another example of the fact that English cannot seem to move away from its stereotyped portrayal as a threat to the national language”* (p.4).

As illustrated above, the language (in education) policy in Malaysia has been affected by the historical-social and political contexts. Today, Bahasa Malaysia is the medium of instruction in all national schools and a compulsory subject in the vernacular Mandarin and Indian schools. English is taught as a second language in all schools. It is a challenging task for teachers, and particularly NQTs, to fully understand the scenario of the Malaysian education system as far as the teaching of English is concerned. Darus (2010) highlights that English teaching in Malaysia still faces a number of challenges such as providing sufficient competent teachers to teach English in both EFL and ESL settings, and identifying the most appropriate approach to teaching English to multilingual students. Since the English syllabus is standardised across the country, it does not take into account the varying proficiency levels of EFL learners. The shifts in national education policies have meant that there has been no consistent approach to English language teaching. One consequence has been that the content and process of teacher education has also changed frequently, and continues to do so today, so that the approach to teacher education is continuously shifting.

The shifts in language education policy resulted in changes in the curriculum, MoE initiatives and programmes, and other elements in English language teaching and learning. Students and teachers will have had many different ‘messages’ about the role of English during their own schooling and training, how it should be taught, and the lack of a clear purpose of teaching-learning in English. In this study I am interested in exploring the evolution of NQTs’ cognition in order to examine the factors that have impacted on the construction of their beliefs and how these factors helped to shape their beliefs in teaching. This scenario, i.e. the shifts in language education policy, might be one of the important factors in shaping their beliefs.

2.5 Teacher education institute in Malaysia

The education ministers in the Declaration & Recommendations of the 45th Session of the International Conference in Education in Geneva, 1996 (MOE, 2004) stated that teachers' contributions are important in education as they are the medium to bring the renewal of education through ideas, methods and practices. Hence, the higher level of teacher education training – in particular, the teacher education institutions (TEIs) – plays an important role in producing future teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills that this particular education system considers to be necessary.

Since the aim of the teacher education programme is to equip trainee teachers with a set of competencies to teach in the real school environment, well-planned curricula in teacher education programmes are vital in preparing prospective teachers for developing their professional competencies. Wright (2010) further stresses that the intent of teacher education, specifically second language teacher education (SLTE), should be to provide opportunities for trainee teachers to acquire the skills and competencies of effective teachers and to discover the working rules that effective teachers use. This notion is supported by the belief that the effective teacher differs from the ineffective one primarily in having the command of a larger repertoire of competencies-skills, abilities, knowledge and so forth that contribute to effective teaching (Medley 1979, cited in Richards & Nunan, 1990).

Generally, the teacher education curriculum for the programme offered by TEI in Malaysia is planned, evaluated and developed by the curriculum officers in the Teacher Education Division (TED) together with the expertise from several TEIs that existed before the Teacher Education Institute Malaysia was transformed into its own division (Tsui, 2008). In TEI, the pre-service teacher training equips the trainee teachers with a curriculum for a specific level of education, together with a specialized area with elective subjects (BPG, 2007). Since the future teacher would act as the agent for the implementation of the educational programme in Malaysia, the teacher education curriculum aspires to prepare the teachers with knowledge and skills as well as developing the teacher's potential to implement effective teaching-learning process. This aspiration has become the major foundation, and it is stipulated in *Kurikulum Kursus Perguruan Asas* (Teacher Education Curriculum), which is now being implemented in TEIs and other higher education institutions that offer education programmes. These institutions are responsible for preparing the future teacher with

adequate knowledge and skills consistent with current ideas about appropriate teaching practices in Malaysia.

Research into teachers' cognition, particularly on NQTs in Malaysia, is still scarce especially at the Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) level. One reason is that the Bachelor of Teaching (B.Tchg) programme fully managed by the ITEs is still relatively new. Previously, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programmes were offered by the universities, and teacher training colleges were only able to conduct the programme in collaboration with both local and foreign institutions. Before 2008, the ITE had 27 campuses that were managed independently and offered a three-year diploma programme and a post-graduate certificate programme. In 2008, all 27 teacher training colleges were upgraded to the ITEs and were brought together under one central management structure to standardise quality. The curriculum and qualifications were upgraded to offer a five-and-a-half-year foundation and degree programme and a post-graduate diploma programme. Since then, the ITEs have been responsible for running their own programmes preparing graduate teachers for primary schools. One of the programmes offered is the newly introduced Bachelor of Teaching (B.Tchg), also known as *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PISMP), which enables all primary school teachers to be qualified to degree level. Over the next five to ten years, the ITEs aspire to transform themselves into world-class teacher training universities (Ministry of Education, 2013). According to Jamil et al. (2011), the first intake of the four-year degree-level course was in 2007, when 3,725 students enrolled for the PISMP programme in different specialized areas. In ITEs, the curriculum of this pre-service teacher training aims to prepare the trainee teachers for a specific level of education and also through elective subjects for teaching in a specialised area (BPG, 2007).

2.5.1 The English language teacher education programme

The trainee teachers are trained according to the planned curriculum with the aim of achieving learning outcomes in each teacher education course in the teacher education programmes. The professional knowledge gained will help them to impart the subject-content effectively and to help their learners to acquire the utmost knowledge in the future. In 2011, several ITEs enrolled the first cohort of trainee teachers for the PISMP programme with a major in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The degree awarded is Bachelor of Teaching (Hons) in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (Primary Education). The core courses of this newly implemented PISMP (TESL) programme run solely by the ITEs generally pertain to the knowledge base of language teaching. Graves (2009) informs

us that the knowledge base of language teaching consists of what language teaching involves and what language teachers need to know and be able to do to apply such knowledge effectively in a English as a Second Language (ESL), or English as a Foreign Language (EFL), classroom. Based on the PISMP (TESL) English language teaching courses (see Appendix A), there seems to be a heavy emphasis on the knowledge base for language teacher education. In addition, there is a great deal of emphasis on the use of songs, plays, drama and poetry in the elective subjects of the primary ESL curriculum. In other words, the courses that the trainees are expected to study are dictated by a tradition in which teaching is seen as routine. This scenario reflects the SLTE development four decades ago, which emphasised a process-product paradigm, and traditional beliefs of what teachers need to know and ignored and devalued individual prior experiences of teachers (Freeman and Johnson, 1998).

In terms of teacher education models in SLTE which will be presented in Section 3.4, from the three models presented, ITEs in Malaysia seem to adopt the applied science model (Section 3.4.2) to a certain extent, focussing on transmitting their knowledge about teaching and learning to their trainees. Trainees are expected to apply what they have learnt in their classroom, especially the pedagogical theories learnt during training. In terms of the input of modules in the ITE, the trainees are exposed to ITE modules which emphasised understanding the ELT knowledge base. For instance, the trainees are taught about the use the pedagogical practices, theoretical positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to a pedagogical setting in the 'TSL3103 ELT Methodology' module (Semester 2). The use of L1 and its effect on the language classroom is also exposed in this module. The teacher educators would normally encourage the trainees to avoid using L1 in an English classroom, and this stand/advice is emphasised again during practicum supervision. In addition, the trainees are exposed to two modules about ways of disciplining the students and also on classroom management in 'EDU3104 Behaviour and Classroom Management' (Semester 3) and 'TSL3109 Managing the Primary ESL Classroom' (Semester 5).

The PISMP (TESL) English Language teaching courses in Appendix A also seem to suggest that the curriculum is theoretically based. The delivery modes include lectures, discussions and micro-teaching. The trainees are given the opportunity to observe teachers during school based experience (SBE) in the earlier part of the training and they are involved in practicum in the later part of the training (semesters 5, 6 and 7 consecutively, which normally will take one to three months). However,

trainees go out to school after they have completed their bachelor programme with a great many theories but having had little opportunity to test them in the real world, although they were given the opportunity to teach during a six-month practicum. While the practicum is a significant element of the teacher education programme and in principle ought to enable the trainee teachers to apply the theories in practice as well as developing their attributes and professionalism as teachers, from my supervision experience in most cases the trainee teachers only show-case their teaching practice ability for their practicum supervisors when they were being evaluated. At times, the co-operating teachers appointed would also observe and evaluate them; otherwise, the trainees were left on their own if there is no observation from both supervisors and co-operating teachers. This is because it is always assumed that the trainee teachers will demonstrate their teaching based on the supervisors' expectations of what they have been taught in college. Kabilan and Izzaham (2009) point out an alarming result of such a tendency, shown in Ong et al.'s study in 2004 on trainee teachers in Malaysia, in which the trainee teachers reveal that their practicum failed to give them opportunities to engage positively in trying to put theory into practice because they were overwhelmed by the classroom realities. Despite the above, the practicum is not entirely unhelpful. However, this does not mean that the training had not prepared the trainee teachers for classroom realities since the practicum functions as a bridge that would help them to develop their professional competence and identity. Trainee teachers emerging from this programme also have other issues to deal with, as outlined in Sections 2.6 and 2.7.

2.5.2 English curricula and the PISMP curriculum

In Malaysia, the English language is considered a key school subject and it is part of the school curriculum from the primary level for all learners. In 2011, a new curriculum for the primary school, Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR), was launched in an effort to restructure the components in the previous curriculum, the Integrated Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR). KBSR was based on a linear approach of integrating the four language skills in each English lesson, while KSSR is based on a modular approach whereby the pupils need to master listening and speaking first before moving to learn other language skills of reading and writing, and reasoning skill (thinking skill), which is included. In terms of the PISMP (TESL) curriculum, the course contents were designed with reference to the primary school curriculum at the time the programme started (KBSR), and so for the first cohort of PISMP (TESL) trainees enrolled in the programme, whom I intend to study, this was the English curriculum that they followed in their first year of training. They began working with the KSSR in their second year. Although the KBSR syllabus will no

longer be in use by the time the trainee teachers graduate, they are expected to be familiar with both primary school curricula.

The trainee teachers have the opportunity to apply their knowledge of both curricula during classroom presentations of ideal lesson plans or through micro-teaching sessions. They are asked to do this since they will be expected to teach upon graduation following the KSSR. Additional problems arise when they have to cope with two curricula, especially during the teaching practicum sessions at school and when they are confronted with the real situation of implementing the curriculum. At the point at which they did their practicum, both curricula were still being used, so they needed to be prepared for both.

During the practicum, the trainees are able to seek further assistance from either their practicum supervisors or co-operating teachers in the school. However, sometimes either supervisors or co-operating teachers or both are still vague about KSSR. Some practicum supervisors themselves are not familiar with the latest information on KSSR since some only received secondary information through in-house training. Similarly, the teachers in schools are still in the process of adapting to the new curriculum and, as practitioners, they are still experimenting to determine the best practice for their pupils. Trainees, therefore, receive conflicting messages from the 'experts' during the practicum. They might develop their personal practice based on a mix of their reflection on the theories learnt, the practices used or recommended by practicum supervisors and their co-operating teachers, and their experience of the reality in the classroom.

2.6 English language proficiency

2.6.1 Low proficiency among English teachers

Apart from the issues mentioned in the previous section, there is a national problem of low proficiency among English teachers. The government has attempted to address the issue of low proficiency among English teachers through various means, such as the introduction of the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) and transforming teaching into a profession of choice by raising the entry bar for those interested in enrolling on teacher training programmes (MoE, 2013). Surprisingly, The Star Online (2013) revealed that 70 percent of the 60,000 English language teachers (both primary and secondary) have been classified as 'incapable' of teaching the subject in

schools because they performed poorly in CPT. Consequently, as directed by the Education Minister II, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, these teachers were required to enrol onto courses to improve their English language proficiency.

This issue however is not a recent one. Nunan (2003) points out that in Malaysia, English language skills are in decline and “...a significant proportion of teachers especially in the rural areas, do not have sufficient command of the English language to conduct their classes with confidence” (p.602). Hence, this scenario has caused increasing concern at the national level as English has emerged as a global language and the decline in the standards of English is seen as a main hurdle to the aspiration of Malaysia to achieve developed nation status by 2020.

2.6.2 Low proficiency among English trainee teachers

The report above shows that there is a high percentage of English teachers with low proficiency and suggests that the ITE does not provide adequate language support for the trainees. While there is a special course on English Language Proficiency offered in ITEs, it is only for the non-TESL trainee teachers. TESL trainees are expected to be proficient in the language and those with low English language proficiency are required to enrol in proficiency courses on their own initiative. This policy could be one of the contributing factors to the TESL trainees’ low proficiency in the target language.

While it is claimed that TESL trainees are expected to be proficient, the English language proficiency of ITE trainee teachers is generally poor. This language proficiency issue raises two potential problems:

1. Can the trainee teachers understand their training in English?
2. Can they teach the expectations of the curriculum once they are in school or do they revert to more ‘traditional’ teaching approaches since these approaches are less demanding of language proficiency?

The minimum requirement for entering ITEs is only a strong pass in the Malaysian Certificate of Education – also known as *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) - equivalent to 'O' levels with a minimum of six credits. According to the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010) there are currently over 175,000 applicants for ITEs in Malaysia every year with up to 20,000 new teachers placed in schools annually. In terms of applications

to ITEs in 2010, only 7 percent of applicants had more than ²7As in their SPM. The trainee teachers who joined ITEs are rarely the top academic achievers as a majority of those who excelled in SPM often opt to enrol in other programmes. Clearly, becoming a teacher is not the profession of choice for high achievers. Teaching is not widely considered a preferred career option, especially for students who excel academically at school. Although the teaching profession should attract the most capable, this is often not the case. One reason is because teachers are underpaid compared to other professions. Apart from the low pay and incentives that teachers receive, Pihie and Elias (2004) point out that working conditions and lack of support from the administration, community, and parents pose challenges that make it difficult to attract people to consider teaching as a profession. Furthermore, as observed in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010), many applicants do not have the aptitude and attitude required and expected to become teachers.

Also, Phern and Abidin (2013) point out that the English language proficiency level of undergraduate trainee teachers on the newly introduced degree programme in ITEs nationwide is below expectation. Their study reveals that the majority of the undergraduate trainee teachers in a particular ITE fail to excel in English. Only 13 out of 116 undergraduate trainee teachers had passed their English language proficiency test. The issue of low proficiency among English language trainee teachers might result in trainees having difficulty in understanding the programme content and pedagogical knowledge as well as the content of the two curricula outlined above. As a result, trainees often code-switch or resort to their mother tongue during the practicum. They would adopt the audio lingual method or grammar translation method to ease the delivery during teaching and learning in the classroom. Consequently, the methods used meant that pupils might learn English in their mother tongue, which makes it rather difficult to achieve the learning goals stated in the curriculum. Hence, Darus (2010) points out that one of the challenges in the teaching of English in Malaysia is producing sufficient linguistically competent teachers to teach English lessons. She stresses that this issue is pivotal since the success of any policy the government implements for the teaching of English in Malaysia will be determined by teachers in the classrooms. English teachers in

² 7 refers to the minimum number of compulsory subjects in SPM and A refers to the highest grade.

Malaysia should thus be linguistically equipped to teach English lessons in Malaysian classroom settings.

2.7 Teaching and learning approaches

2.7.1 Mismatch in teaching and learning approaches

The next issue is that the teaching and learning approaches in the ITEs do not reflect the requirements for the new primary curriculum. In ITEs, the teacher educators still transmit the knowledge of what and how to teach their trainee teachers via different modes of delivery such as lectures, discussion, tutorials, and micro teaching sessions. The knowledge transmitted is adopted from the current practice in SLTE as decided by the MoE and adapted to the Malaysian context. This process of knowledge transmission is evident in the PISMP (TESL) programme and resembles the applied science model, one of the models or approaches of second language teacher education programme proposed by Wallace (1991). The idea of transferring the theories learnt into practice is further supported by the objectives of this programme (see Appendix B), which emphasise understanding the knowledge base in teacher education and the ability to apply the received knowledge and skills in classroom practice. This scenario seems to suggest that the trainers are not practising what they preach, because there were mixed messages, and while 'transmitting' they are saying that the trainees should be well versed in the theories learnt and should be able to link the theories to practice.

2.8 Summary

This chapter helps to situate the study by providing the background of the educational context of English language education in Malaysia, the background of the country, the linguistic context, the role and status of English language in the Malaysian education system and the background of teacher education institutes in Malaysia. It also underlines the background issues of the study. The readings on the educational context of English language education in Malaysia and the issues addressed in the literature in this chapter, as well as my own experience as a teacher educator, have helped me develop and identify my research aims. Based on these readings and my experience as teacher educator, I have encountered numerous challenges and issues with regards to the implementation of ELT in Malaysia, and the implementation of the newly introduced B.Tchg programme. The background issues of the study include the drastic change in the primary school curriculum after the first intake of

Bachelor of Teaching trainee teachers and the lack of clarity among teacher educators regarding what the new curriculum means and the generally poor language abilities of primary trainee teachers. Thus, I am interested in exploring how these issues and other factors influence the process of how the trainees learn to be teachers and to further explore how these factors contribute to their belief formation, particularly over the first year of teaching.

Since cognition as a teacher evolves over time, I realised that my own beliefs have changed considerably throughout the process of my experience as a learner to becoming a trainee, a teacher, and a teacher educator. I also believe that other teachers would experience a similar evolution of beliefs but to differing extents. Thus, readings in the contextual background in this chapter, as well as my own experience, have prompted me to explore the process that occurs when trainee teachers enter the 'real' teaching environment upon completion of their teacher training programme. Teachers' beliefs, practices and attitudes are pivotal in understanding and improving the educational processes. These three elements are linked to teachers' strategies for dealing with challenges in their daily professional life and to their general well-being (Teaching and Environments, 2009).

In the next chapter, I will look at the factors that the literature suggests are important in terms of SLTE and the experiences of NQTs. It also offers the theoretical underpinnings of the study which helped me to identify the research questions appropriate for the research aims in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3

Changing trends in SLTE towards teachers' cognition: guiding literature

If there is one cardinal rule of change in human condition, it is that you cannot make people change. You cannot force them to think differently or compel them to develop new skills.

(Fullan, 1993, p.23)

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided the contextual background of the study, i.e. the educational context of English language education in Malaysia, and the issues related to English language education, particularly English language teaching (ELT), which assisted me in developing and identifying my research aims. In this chapter, I draw on the existing literature which has guided and helped me to identify research questions appropriate for my research aims mentioned previously in Chapter 1. This chapter is organised into six sections which move from a general overview of the concepts in the field of second language teacher education (SLTE) and literature on teacher cognition research to discussing the challenges in SLTE in Malaysia. The final section ends with the study's research questions relevant to the research aims.

The first section, **Section 3.2** provides a brief definition of SLTE and discusses the term 'second language', which is controversial in the context of my study. Next, **Section 3.3** illustrates the trends in SLTE from promoting the theoretical aspect of the categorisation of knowledge, i.e. a transmissive model (knowledge is transmitted to be applied in the classroom by the teacher), to a more practical aspect of knowledge, i.e. the recent view of the importance of teacher cognition (teachers' prior knowledge and how teachers learn, through experiential learning and reflective practice) in SLTE research.

The following section, **Section 3.4** looks at several teacher education (TE) models in SLTE which have emerged from the trends in SLTE. This section also discusses the underlying educational principles of the TE models. The discussion touches upon several features in the TE models which distinguish the oldest model, which supports

the idea of teaching being prescriptive to a more integrative model with the inclusion of reflective practice. This section also briefly remarks on the TE model adopted by the ITEs in Malaysia in order to provide the background on the type of TE model which might affect teachers' classroom practices.

Section 3.5 then focuses on current trends in SLTE research which highlight the importance of the teachers and their practices, particularly on teachers' cognitive processes. This section deals with the understandings of a debatable term, 'beliefs', both in general education research and SLTE research. The difficulty of choosing the 'right' definition of beliefs arises because there is confusion in the distinction between 'knowledge' and 'beliefs' in literature.

Section 3.6 discusses the concerns and challenges of NQTs that underpin this study. A tremendous amount of literature in general education has been devoted to this issue in recent years and there is a growing need to explore the issue in SLTE field to guide practitioners, especially NQTs and those who support them.

This review of the literature from the field of SLTE from Section 3.6 will be used as a basis for discussion in **Section 3.7**, a discussion of the challenges in SLTE in Malaysia, particularly in the implementation of the new *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PISMP) or Bachelor of Teaching (B.Tchg) (Hons) in the TESL (Primary Education) curriculum of the teacher education programme in the ITEs in Malaysia.

In the final section, **Section 3.8**, I summarise the main ideas in the existing literature in general education research and in SLTE research presented in this chapter as well as identifying the research gaps which emerged from the literature. This review of the literature helps me to understand, develop, and identify the main issues arising from my research context, and guides me to identify research questions appropriate for my research aims.

3.2 Defining second language teacher education

The term SLTE as proposed by Richards (1990) is a teacher education programme in second language teaching which typically includes both theory and practice, linguistics and language learning theory, and a practical component, based on

language teaching methodology and the opportunity for practice teaching. Apart from English as a second language (ESL) teacher education, Vélez-Rendón (2002) has included two other different subfields which are English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education and bilingual teacher education in reference to SLTE. Although each subfield has its own orientations and sets of practices, the aim of all subfields is to achieve effective second language teaching and learning. Since there has been a rapid growth in the use of the English language in non-English speaking countries in recent decades, there has been a need for a growing number of English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners and thus SLTE in these countries has expanded. As Graddol (2006) highlights, the quick spread of the English language itself has influenced SLTE thinking and practice.

While the term 'second language' can be a controversial term and Nunan (2003) states that sometimes it is heavily promoted for political reasons, Wright (2010) claims that SLTE has become the umbrella term for language teacher education in ELT. He specifically uses the term 'Anglo-Saxon SLTE' to define teacher preparation for TESOL/EFL teachers in Britain, Australia and North America (BANA countries) (Holliday, 1994) and in the contexts such as former British colonies and transitional countries on the Pacific Rim like China and Korea, SLTE ideas (like ELT methodology ideas) have been strongly affected by ideas developed from BANA countries.

In this study, I will adopt the term SLTE. The term 'second language' is used to refer to English as a second language in the Malaysian context in which their study will be conducted and in which English is considered the second most important language after Bahasa Malaysia in official affairs. Although English language is a compulsory subject for all pupils in Malaysian schools, it can in fact be the first, second and even foreign language they speak, depending on their local context, and so the English language may not necessarily be the second language of all Malaysian students.

3.3 Changing trends in SLTE

In the last four decades, there has been a considerable shift in the area of SLTE from its emergence in the 1960s. The shift is from what teachers needed to know to how teachers learn. Graves (2009) points out that the knowledge of language in terms of proficiency and about its structure, phonology and other aspects of language together with the knowledge of teaching, study of language teaching methods and/or teaching skills were considered sufficient for teacher education until the 1970s. The knowledge

base of language teaching in SLTE was once viewed as a highly compartmentalized area, whereby knowledge of language and the knowledge base of teaching were two different sets of entities. The knowledge of subject matter of both grammar and phonetics, which was once considered the core area of SLTE, has been expanded to "*the study of pedagogical grammar, discourse analysis, second language acquisition, classroom-based research, interlanguage syntax and phonology, curriculum and syllabus design, and language testing*" (Richards, 1990, p.3). The scope in SLTE later expanded and shifted to recognising the teachers and their mental dimension. Borg (2006) points out that the study of teachers' mental lives became established as a key research area in the study of teaching in the 1980s.

Consequently, the shift has affected the trend in SLTE programmes from promoting a transmissive model, in which a teacher's role is to transmit knowledge to be applied in the classroom (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), to a reflective practice model which explores the idea of experiential knowledge based on practical experience (Wallace, 1991). In addition, Schon's work on teachers understanding their own thinking through reflective practice has made a significant contribution to teacher education (Richards, 2008). To a large extent, the shifts reflect the education philosophies which direct the education development. Traditionally, in general education, the role of school has been to transmit the subjects and knowledge; in the contemporary philosophy, education is formulated in social, moral and cognitive terms, focussing on the whole child. In terms of knowledge and learning, the previous emphasis was on knowledge and information; and on subjects (content). However, based on the current education philosophy, the focus is on resolving problems and functioning in one's social environment and learners are the primary focus (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). The extensive changes in ideas about (language) learning and the purpose of (language) education influence SLTE.

3.3.1 The knowledge base of language teaching

Discussions about the knowledge base of language teaching have been directed by a substantial amount of teaching and learning domains. Although Vélez-Rendón (2002) highlights that there is no consensus about the core knowledge base of language teacher education, there have been some efforts to explore what the language teacher should know. Day and Conklin (1992, cited in Day, 1991) suggest that there are four types of knowledge base: SLTE: i) content knowledge: knowledge of the subject matter (what ESL/EFL teachers teach); ii) pedagogic knowledge: knowledge of generic teaching strategies, beliefs and practices (how we teach); iii)

pedagogic content knowledge (PCK): the specialized knowledge of how to represent content knowledge in diverse ways that students can understand; the knowledge of how students come to understand the subject matter; and iv) support knowledge: the knowledge of various disciplines that inform our approach to the teaching and learning of English (p.40). Shulman (1987) has popularised the term PCK, which is a renewed concept aiming to emphasise the importance of the integration of subject-matter knowledge and pedagogy in teaching. PCK offers a way of representing and formulating subject matter that makes it comprehensible for others and so emphasises how the subject matter of a particular discipline is transformed for communication with learners.

Interestingly, Díaz-Maggioli (2012) has proposed three components in EFL teacher education programmes which are rather similar to Johnson's three broad areas in SLTE. Johnson (2009) suggests that the areas in SLTE consist of, first, the content of L2 teacher education programmes (what L2 teachers need to know); second, the pedagogies that are taught in L2 teacher education programme (how L2 teachers should teach); and third, the institutional forms of delivery through which both the content and pedagogies are learned (how L2 teachers learn to teach). At the same time, the areas suggested by Díaz-Maggioli are language and culture, language acquisition, and language teaching methodology and classroom practicum. The areas in teacher education programmes suggested by Díaz-Maggioli (2012) and Johnson (2009) seems to suggest that, when developing a teaching education programme, it is not only important to teach future teachers what they need to know and be able to do but SLTE nowadays also needs to include opportunities for trainees to articulate their own ideas about teaching, reflect on these in the light of the training input /practice opportunities and also develop their personal practical knowledge or their personal theories of teaching. This topic of the teacher's mental construct will be elaborated further in the teacher's cognition section in this chapter.

3.3.2 The landmarks in SLTE development

In terms of teaching methods in English language teaching, the field has expanded its major teaching methods of the 1960s and 1970s, which equipped trainee teacher (TT) with classroom techniques and skills, towards the current approach of TT experiential learning. Richards and Nunan (1990) point out that in recent SLTE contexts, TTs are encouraged to develop their own theories and become responsive to their own learning-to-teach process. Wright (2010) further informs that the recent forms of SLTE pedagogy "*share the primacy of experience as a precursor to*

conceptualising in formal training sessions" (p.274). This statement suggests the importance of educators being aware of teachers' prior knowledge and conceptions before they enter a training programme. Wright suggests that learning experiences might occur from either the principles derived from practice or in an unconscious 'natural' learning that a learner experiences, which concurs with Lortie's (1975) "*apprenticeship of observation*", suggesting that teachers have preconceived ideas about teaching from their observation as learners in the classroom. In addition, Graves (2009) emphasises that teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Table 3.1: Landmarks in SLTE development: from a view of SLTE as applied linguistics and psychology to the new agenda in SLTE, theory about language teachers learning-to-teach, and its practices

Year	Key Features	Source
1960s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine teaching (what the teacher does) rather than the teacher (what/who the teacher is) Teaching is seen as a set of discrete behaviours, routines Process-product paradigm Ignores and devalues individual experiences of teachers 	<p>Richards (1987)</p> <p>Freeman & Johnson (1998)</p>
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprenticeship of observation Highlights effective teaching strategies- questioning techniques, instructional process Maintain process-product approach Why teacher did what they did (mid 1970s) Explore actual thought processes-teaching is not just behaviour since it is related to thinking done before and during (late 1970s) 	<p>Lortie (1975)</p> <p>Richards (1987)</p> <p>Freeman & Johnson (1998)</p>
1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching is shaped by prior experience as student, personal practical knowledge, values & beliefs. Expansion of the theoretical concepts, subject matter content (study of the teaching process-form the basis for the principles and content of TESOL TE) Teaching and its various methods 	<p>Freeman & Johnson (1998)</p>
1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Constructivist view of how people learn to teach' (p.402) Recognize language teachers as who they are, what language teaching is and how language teachers learn to teach Teachers' previous learning experiences are pivotal Learning to teach- affected by a person's experience and it is socially negotiated. Learning emerges through social interaction within a community of practice. 	<p>Freeman & Johnson (1998)</p> <p>Richards (2006)</p> <p>Vélez-Rendón (2002)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to teach-It is a long-term, complex & developmental process • Core research on SLTE-inquiry about teacher development • Impact of reflective practices on LTE 	(Borg, 2006) (1996)
2000-recent years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence from socio-cultural theory perspectives • Socio-cultural tradition of equating learning with participation in the activities of the community • Repositioning of language-based discipline as the core for SLTE (e.g. SLA, linguistics & phonetics) • Product-process approach • Teacher-learning as the theorization of practice rather than conforming to the traditional views of application of theory to practice • Current conceptualizations - focus on the field of teacher cognition, teaching is not simply the application of knowledge and of learned skills • Collaborative approaches-Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) • Knowledge acquired through experience • Experiential pedagogy 	Lantolf (2000) Díaz-Maggioli (2012) Freeman (2002) Borg (2006) Richards (2006) Malderez and Wedell (2007) Wright (2010)

Table 3.1 above summarises the key features of the development in SLTE from 1960s to the recent years. The key features in Table 1 suggest that the ideas of the changing trend come from the Anglo-Saxon model and there are hardly any ideas derived from research exploring public school classrooms with non-native teachers in other continents apart from English-speaking countries (United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia and Ireland). Since many of the non-English speaking countries were once colonised by the English-speaking countries, to a certain extent these ideas from the Anglo-Saxon model are very influential as the education system in these non-English speaking countries adopts a similar curriculum with adaptation to the cultural context.

It is noted from the table above, the trend in SLTE research in recent decades has been to address the teachers and their practices. The current research has been highlighting teachers' cognitive process, the role of teachers' previous learning experiences, and the knowledge gained through experiential learning and reflective practice. According to Vélez-Rendón (2002), the future of SLTE research looks promising and it lays the foundation for a more theoretical and research-driven approach to prepare second language teachers. However, the changes in trend do not seem to reflect in changes to the content and process of SLTE programmes for NQTs. Díaz-Maggioli (2012) points out that the components in teacher education

programmes are the product of traditions in teacher education by referring to the teacher education models - the craft model, applied-science model and reflective model, which will be discussed further in the next section. He has proposed a socio-cultural tradition or model of 'participate and learn' which provides the opportunity for learning to take place through participation in community activities. He believes that through engagement in, the practice of teaching and learning, this would help trainees to become teachers. However, the latest trends in SLTE only provide ideas from academia with little practical implication.

3.4 Teacher Education Models in SLTE

Based on the trends in SLTE, several models providing SLTE programmes have emerged, to exemplify the ways trainee develops his/her professional education and training. Wallace (1991) proposed three major models of teacher education programmes: the craft model, the applied science model, and the reflective model. Each of these models will be described briefly along with its underlying principles in education.

3.4.1 The craft model

This model, which is also known as the 'Apprentice-Expert' model by Day (1991), is the oldest model in SLTE and its usage is still evident in the current SLTE, albeit limitedly. The key factors that promote teachers to become professionally competent in this model are imitating, master and apprentice. The model suggests that the trainee or beginner learns about what he/she needs to know about the profession from the expert in the field and it is definitely a good learning model provided that the learners are exposed to the good practices of the expert.

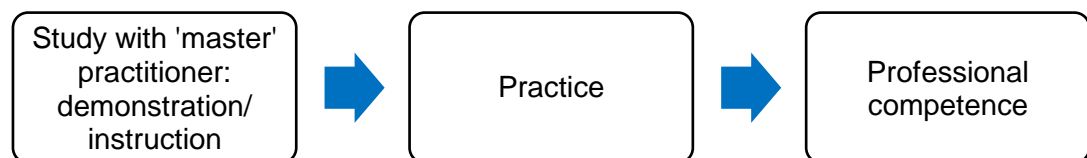


Figure 3.1 The craft model of professional education (Wallace, 1991, p.6)

From the figure above, this model seems to be prescriptive in nature, whereby the trainee would rely heavily on the 'master' for the knowledge and skills of teaching. Ornstein (2011) rejected the idea of teaching being prescriptive or predictable and stresses that the act of teaching should be intuitive, interactive to some extent, and feature the ability to improvise within the classroom. This is one of the drawbacks of

the model that no teacher can be exactly like another since they never work in identical contexts.

3.4.2 The applied science model

This model is a theoretically based model and it is experimental in approach. Wallace (1991) states that this is a traditional model and it might still be the most common model underlying most training or education programmes for diverse professions such as teaching, medicine, architecture and so on. The model is similar to the craft model in a sense that it is a top-down approach model and trainees are expected to apply the theories that they have learnt in their classroom practice in order to become professionally competent. Day (1991) states that there is overemphasis on this model in SLTE and Johnson (2009) concurs with Day's statement and points out that this model has influenced the curriculum of L2 education programmes in terms of the L2 pedagogical content (how L2 teachers should teach). Wallace (1991) illustrates this model as essentially one-way.

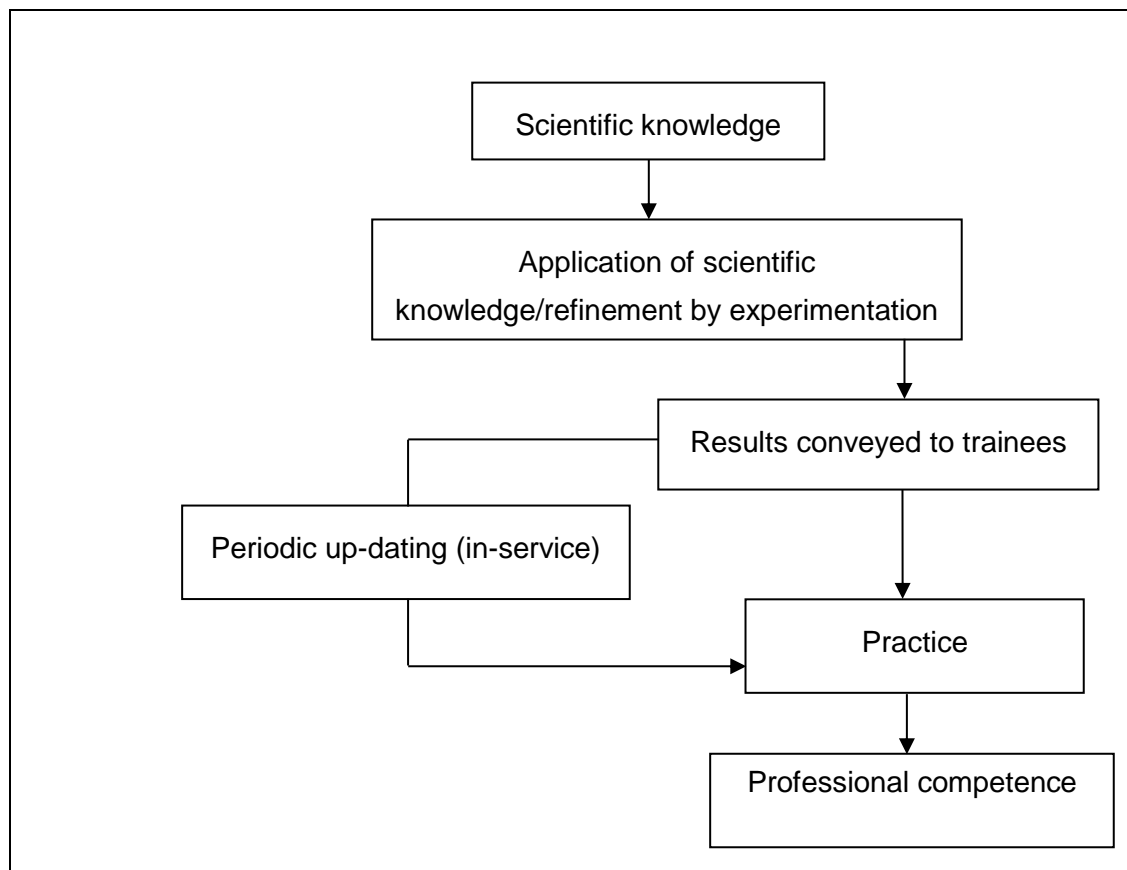


Figure 3.2 Applied Science model (Wallace, 1991, p.9)

One of the drawbacks of this model is the fact that it is a one-way approach in that the role of teacher educator is one that merely transmits the knowledge base of SLTE rather than assist the trainees to make connections between the knowledge learnt (theories) and teaching practice. Ur (1992) states the idea of this approach as the "*rationalist learn-the-theory-and-then-apply-it model*" (p.56) and the trainees who have undergone courses with this model feel that the theoretical studies are not helpful. Day (1991) also points out that the opportunities for the trainees to integrate theory and practice are limited, since the trainees receive knowledge in the form of lectures, readings, discussions and so on but do not necessarily have chances to link it to classroom experience.

The process of knowledge transmission as reflected in this model is evident in the subject of this study, the B.Tchg. TESL programme, and although the programme makes no claim to the applied science model, the B.Tchg. TESL programme seems to resemble this model to a certain extent. The idea of transferring the theories learnt into practice is further supported by the objectives of this programme, which emphasise understanding the knowledge base in teacher education and the ability to be able to apply the received knowledge and skills in classroom practice. The aim of the B.Tchg. TESL programme is to produce primary school ESL teachers with quality in terms of knowledge, skills and professional attributes in line with the National Education Philosophy for Malaysia:

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.

(MoE, 2013, p.25)

Although this model is said to be an excellent source of content and support knowledge, Grandell (2000 cited in Graves, 2009) highlights that traditional transmission-based instructional practices have little impact on what teachers learn.

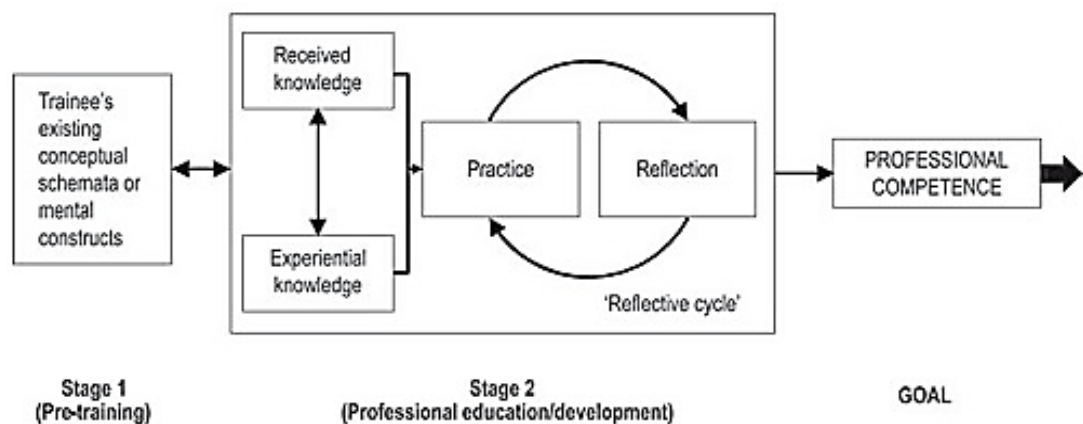
It is deemed necessary for the teachers to recognise their existing knowledge and beliefs about teaching in order to transfer them into practice in the classroom. It is believed that learners already have a set of beliefs before they enter training, which is their experience as learners in observing their teachers, and this set of beliefs evolves during their training through learned knowledge. As teachers begin to explore the real world of teaching in their first year, this accumulation of knowledge and beliefs about teaching may lead to a discovery of new knowledge or it may just be the expansion of the existing knowledge. Another possibility is the knowledge and beliefs remain static depending on the innumerable experiences that teachers are exposed to. Since teaching itself is a dynamic process, an alternative model which allow teachers to be reflexive and reflective is introduced in the following section.

3.4.3 The reflective model

Based on the two models described earlier, it is evident that the existing models do not treat the knowledge base of SLTE properly. Day (1991) proposed the idea of incorporating the strengths of all models and exposing the four types of knowledge, i.e. content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge and support knowledge, to the learner by introducing the integrative model with the inclusion of a reflective practice. Wallace (1991) addresses this issue by suggesting the reflective model, which deals with 'received knowledge' and 'experiential knowledge'. Both the authors highlight the importance of reflection on the trainees' classroom experiences as an instrument for change in classroom practices. 'Received knowledge' concerns the content knowledge essential for carrying out a particular profession and in this case, the knowledge needed in teaching the second language, which includes the theories and skills of teaching. On the other hand, the 'experiential knowledge' relates to the professional's ongoing experience. It deals with reflective practice of trainees, which involves Schon's 'theory of action'. This theory is based on the concept of 'tacit knowledge', whereby professional knowledge could not be acquired or learned only through written or verbal instructions but through critical reflection on one's actual beliefs and behaviour in practice (Ur, 1992). This critical reflection allows the teachers to develop a hypothesis on what works well with their learners and so develop new ways in teaching which suit both teachers and learners.

Figure 3.3 of the reflective practice model below illustrates the process of professional education/development, which is intended to apply to both pre-service and in-service education/development. The goal is what the professional aims to

achieve: that is, to be professionally competent. The process starts from Stage 1, and it is the first stage taken by a person who has decided to venture into the profession (pre-service) or those who may already be in the profession (in-service). In an SLTE setting, it is often believed that trainees have a set of beliefs about teaching before they enter the training (Wright, 2010; Lortie, 1975). Consequently, this set of beliefs would evolve during training due to the input gained (knowledge received) and through experiential knowledge which is reflected in Stage 2. In Stage 2, trainees are involved in reflective practice to achieve the goal of professional competence.



**Figure 3.3 Reflective practice model of professional education/development
(Wallace, 1991, p.49)**

In comparison with the other two education models, the reflective model encourages learners to be active in their own learning. In the craft model, learners imitate the 'master' practitioner and in the applied science model, the learner acts as the receiver of the knowledge. Wallace (1991) states that in reflective practice model, the learners are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. However, he notes that the reflection needs to be carefully structured, so that the learners can best benefit from the period of observation. Thus, teacher educators should encourage and provide opportunities for the trainees to reflect on the theories of teaching and learning learnt and on their teaching practices so that the trainees can improve their practice during their teaching years. In the case of the teacher education programme in Malaysia, the reflective practice is evident to some extent, especially during the practicum, whereby the trainees are required to provide oral and written feedback from their classroom practices. Trainees are also obliged to provide a written reflection section in most of their written assignments; however, this is merely for the sake of assessment.

Crandall (2000) highlights that there is a growing sense that language teaching education programmes have failed to prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom. One of the examples from an ITE in Malaysia is on the 'TSL3113 Action Research I' and 'TSL3115 Action Research II' modules, which identify and address an aspect/issue pertaining to their teaching and learning practice that requires improvement in the ESL primary classroom context. The modules act as the medium with which the trainees can extract the issues in their classroom practices for their classroom reflection. In addition, the trainees are also given opportunities to reflect (both orally and in written form) on their classroom practices during their practicum. However, when they are posted in a school, as teachers they are obliged to meet the requirements from the inspectorate. They are asked to write a numerical report in their reflection, in the lesson plan. For example, '27 out of 30 students were able to practice and use 'conjunctions' in the information-gap activity' or '90 percent of the students were able to...'. This kind of reflection does not align with what is exposed during time at the ITE and what is required in the teaching field. Hence, there is a need to address the issue of the nature of reflection, between what is taught during training and the actual practice in the real classroom.

It is important to provide the background of these different types of models in order to have deeper understanding of how the models and the kind of training received later influence the beliefs of the trainees/NQTs/teachers in their classroom practice. Hence, in the next section, I shall introduce the main aspect of the study, i.e. the NQTs' cognition, and introduce the elements and issues in teachers' cognition research from general education and language teacher education literature.

3.5 Teacher cognition research

Teachers' cognition is a fundamental concept in understanding teachers' mental lives in terms of how they learn to teach. However, it was not until four decades ago that research on teaching in general educational research highlighted the significance of teachers' cognition. Borg (2006) highlights that only in the past 15 years has there been a surge of interest in the study of language teacher cognition, which he refers to as, "*the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching - what teachers know, believe, and think*" (p.81), and of its relationship to teachers' classroom practices. There are a variety of terms used in language teacher education research to describe these mental dimensions of thinking, ranging from the development of personal theories (Burns, 1992), teacher's beliefs, attitude and knowledge (BAK) by Woods

(1996), and personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998) to teachers' pedagogical knowledge (Gatbonton, 1999), and these definitions will be explained further in the next section.

3.5.1 Beliefs

As to date, there is no commonly accepted definition for the concept of teachers' beliefs from the scholars in the area of teacher cognition. In this section, I shall share various definitions in order to describe these dimensions of thinking. Li (2017) points out that there is no consensus on the 'right' definition for beliefs since the biggest confusion lies in the distinction between knowledge and beliefs. A few scholars in the field of teacher cognition would use the two terms interchangeably and a few debated the differences. Pajares (1992) stresses that one of the factors that account for this messiness was the desire of the scholars to distinguish beliefs from knowledge, and research into teachers' beliefs had been hampered by the lack of a clear definition for the concept. The blurred distinction between 'knowledge' and 'beliefs', as Grossman et al. (1989) highlight, exists because teachers often treat their beliefs as knowledge. They highlight that, "*While we are trying to separate teachers' knowledge and belief about subject matter for the purposes of clarity, we recognise that the distinction is blurry at best*" (p.31). Furthermore, Richardson (1996) points out that knowledge can be a source of beliefs since it shapes the way teachers think and process new information.

There is a plethora of terms that have been used by different scholars, as presented in this introductory section of teacher cognition research. In general educational research, Shavelson (1973) succinctly defines the role of thinking in teaching as "*Any teaching act is the result of a decision, consciousness and unconscious*" (p.144), and Clarks and Peterson (1986) suggest a broader framing of thinking as teachers' "*thought processes*". After a decade, in SLTE research, Woods (1996) details the individual propositions posited in their networks of 'beliefs', 'assumptions' and 'knowledge' (BAK), and he highlights that these different terms and the distinction between knowledge and beliefs becoming increasingly blurred. However, he highlights that 'beliefs' 'assumptions' and 'knowledge' do not refer to distinct concepts, rather to points on the spectrum of meaning, and he suggests that the term 'knowledge' refers to things we 'know', conventionally accepted facts. Borg has later redefined the construct of teacher's thought processes as "*cognition*", i.e. "*...a proposition...as a guide to thought and behaviour*" (Borg, 2001, p.186) which are

“dynamic”, “contextualised” and “systematic” (,p.272). Crookes (2015) refers to cognition as “*aspects of (language) teacher thinking*” (p.486).

The relationships between beliefs, practices and knowledge have been the major concern in teachers’ cognition research over the last 20 years. The scholars in the field have identified several key theoretical constructs. Clark and Peterson (1986), for instance, have highlighted the study of teachers’ implicit theories and beliefs as a key category of research on teacher mental processes. Pajares (1992) has later made a significant contribution to the literature on teachers’ beliefs. However, he points out that the construct of educational beliefs is itself broad and encompassing:

*For purposes of research, it is diffuse and ungainly, too difficult to operationalize, too context free. Therefore, as with more general beliefs, **educational beliefs about** are required – beliefs about confidence to affect student’s performance (teacher efficacy), about the nature of knowledge (epistemological beliefs), about causes of teachers’ or students’ performance (attributions, locus of control, motivation, writing apprehension, math anxiety), about perceptions of self and feelings of self-worth (self-concept, self-esteem), about confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy). There are also educational beliefs about specific subjects or disciplines (reading instruction, the nature of reading, whole language).*

(Pajares, 1992, p.316)

His notion of teachers’ beliefs has opened up a wide range of issues in the teacher cognition field. He also proposes that teachers’ classroom practices can be influenced by a hierarchy of beliefs, which consist of core and peripheral beliefs. Core beliefs are more dominant and tend to be more stable, are difficult to change, and are said to have a more powerful impact on behaviour compared with peripheral beliefs. Borg (2006) also emphasises that core beliefs are more likely to be implemented in the classroom practice and he suggests that further research is required to understand “...*how the different elements in teachers’ cognitive systems interact and which of these elements, for example, are core and which are peripheral*” (p.272).

Another reason for the absence of a clear definition for beliefs may also be due to the conflicts between beliefs and practice, which will be discussed further in Section 3.5.4. The conflicts involved in the construction of teacher beliefs include the elements involved in belief formation such as the relationship between teacher beliefs

and prior experience of language learning, the teacher education programme and classroom practices. Basturkmen et al. (2004) find some inconsistencies in the teachers' stated beliefs in their study and the result suggests a weak relationship between what teachers think and what they actually decide to focus on when teaching. Basturkmen (2012) also concludes that the beliefs of experienced teachers become more firmly embedded in their practices over time, which as a result hardens their resistance towards new policies. Basturkmen (2012) further emphasises that teachers select options that best reflect their principles, and it is not surprising that teachers' beliefs reflect their planned practices. The findings of this study therefore strengthen the view of the literature which suggests that beliefs affect teacher's behaviour.

Borg (2001) suggests that teachers' beliefs usually refer to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and she concludes that, "*a belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour*" (p.186).

Several definitions shared above seem to suggest that teachers' cognition or beliefs are multifaceted conceptual processes that are interconnected; as Woods (1996) stresses, "*a single decision cannot be talked in isolation*" (p.280). Pajares (1992) highlights that it is a messy construct that serves as a personal guide by helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves. In addition, Green (1971, p.47 cited in Zheng, 2015) mentioned that teachers' belief systems are complex and the complex feature of the teachers' beliefs involves "*not with what is believed but how it is believed*". Hence, in this study, I adopt the label teacher 'beliefs' as a comprehensive term to embrace the messiness of teachers' thought processes underlying their practices.

3.5.2 Beliefs or knowledge?

As stated in the previous section, the biggest confusion and messiness in teacher cognition research is found in the distinction between the key terms, especially between knowledge and beliefs. Pajares (1992), in his reviews on research done in distinguishing belief from knowledge, states that most studies used the term 'beliefs' to describe teachers' own interpretations of what could be asserted as truth and he uses the term 'knowledge' for more objective fact. Li (2017) mentions that different terms are used to refer to similar ideas since the research into teacher knowledge has expanded from content subject knowledge and pedagogical concerns to

teachers' personal, practical knowledge, which derives from their personal experience.

Scholars in this field, such as Connelly and Clandinin (1985), Shulman (1986) and Fenstermacher (2004), have further explored the idea of knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (1985) have introduced "*teachers' practical knowledge*" as "*experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a user's life*" (p.183), which focuses on the knowledge construction of individual teachers based on their personal classroom experiences. Their view seems to be in accordance with Tsui (2012), who emphasises the importance of the professional images teachers develop through their personal experiences in the classroom. In addition, Shulman (1986) has suggested three forms of teacher knowledge: propositional knowledge, case knowledge, and strategic knowledge. These different forms of knowledge are based on/concerned with content, pedagogy and curriculum. In 1987, Gudmundsdottir and Shulman offer a renewed concept to emphasise the importance of the integration of subject-matter knowledge and pedagogy in teaching, "*pedagogical content knowledge*" (PCK), particularly in science education. PCK offers a way of representing and formulating subject matter that makes it comprehensible for others, and it illustrates how the subject matter of a particular discipline is transformed for communication with learners. Gudmundsdottir and Shulman (1987) state that:

PCK that is influenced by content knowledge includes knowledge of the central topics, concepts, and areas of the subject matter that can be and are taught to students... Content knowledge is required for knowledge and understanding of the order in which concepts, topics or areas within a subject can be, and are being, taught... Pedagogical content knowledge that is influenced by the knowledge of students includes knowledge of students preconceptions or misconceptions about the topics they learn... Knowledge of the topics students find interesting, difficult or easy to learn is pedagogical content knowledge that is influenced by the knowledge of students.

(pp.60-61)

They also suggest that the implication for teacher education is that the focus should be on PCK since there has been less emphasis on getting the trainees to think about the subject matter they have to teach in terms of their pedagogical content and ensuring that their content knowledge is available for students.

Seventeen years after PCK was introduced, Fenstermacher (2004) proposes that 'knowledge' should be demonstrably and objectively true, with an evidence base, and as such he has distinguished between formal teacher knowledge – “*the concept of knowledge as it appears in standard or conventional behavioural science research*” (p.5) – and practical teacher knowledge – what teachers know as a result of experience – through different types of research. He states that process-product research focuses on formal knowledge and the goal of this research was to discover effective teaching and to use this as the basis of prescriptions for practice. The second type of research is of practical knowledge and reflective practice, and focused on practical knowledge. The third type focuses on subject-matter knowledge and the orientation seems to be inclined towards formal knowledge. His interpretation of knowledge includes not only the different types or background of the research but the assumptions about knowledge underlying them. Fenstermacher (1994) provides a distinction between beliefs and knowledge, and he stresses the importance of providing evidence in distinguish between these terms:

The main point of this discussion of knowledge and belief is that there are important differences between the two if one intends to make claims about epistemic import. When, for example, a researcher argues that teachers produce knowledge in the course of acting on experience, he or she could be saying merely that teachers generate ideas, conceptions, images, or perspectives when performing as teachers (the grouping sense of knowledge) or that teachers are justified in performing as they do for reasons or evidence they are able to provide (the epistemic status sense of knowledge).

(p.31)

However, Fenstermacher's interpretation of both knowledge and beliefs does not seem applicable to research on education, as Borg (2006) points out, whether the evidence can be cited to support the claim that it is knowledge while referring to the status of practical knowledge in Fenstermacher's statement, or it is rather an umbrella term used to group together a range of related psychological constructs without making any claim about their epistemological status.

3.5.3 The development of research in teacher cognition

The development of research in teacher cognition started in general education research, then migrated into language education since the 1970s. The focus of the study in teacher cognition has been to fundamentally reshape the conceptions of teacher's thinking in recognition of the teacher's role as an agent of change who plays the central role in shaping classroom events (Borg, 2006; Freeman, 2016; Li, 2017). Li (2017) states that previously the emphasis was on teachers' classroom behaviour, students' classroom behaviour and student achievement, and the emphasis has shifted to teachers' mental lives which also corresponds to a general change in many disciplines from behaviour (product) to thinking (process). Although the area of teacher cognition has become an increasingly international phenomenon, Borg (2006) points out that the field is a greatly fragmented one. Gradually, more attention was given to the study of teachers' beliefs that have emerged as a fundamental and distinct domain. Freeman (2016) summarizes the development of research in teacher cognition into four representations of teacher thinking, as shown in Figure 3.4 below:

In general educational research	Decision as 'the basic teaching skill' (Shavelson, 1973) (Figure 3.5)	Teachers' thought processes (Clark & Peterson, 1984) (Figure 3.6)
In SLTE research	Decision-making based on BAK (Woods, 1996) (Figure 3.7)	Language teacher cognition(s) (Borg, 2006) (Figure 3.8)

Figure 3.4 Tracing the migration of ideas about teacher thinking

(Adapted from Freeman, 2016, p.147)

Representation 1: Decisions and decision-making

In articulating the cognitive side of teaching, Shavelson (1973) proposes a model of TOTE, which stands for a Test-Operate-Test-Exit. His ideas on thinking as decision-making shifted from seeing teaching as a set of procedural moves and behaviours to seeing it as an activity involving thinking in and about context.

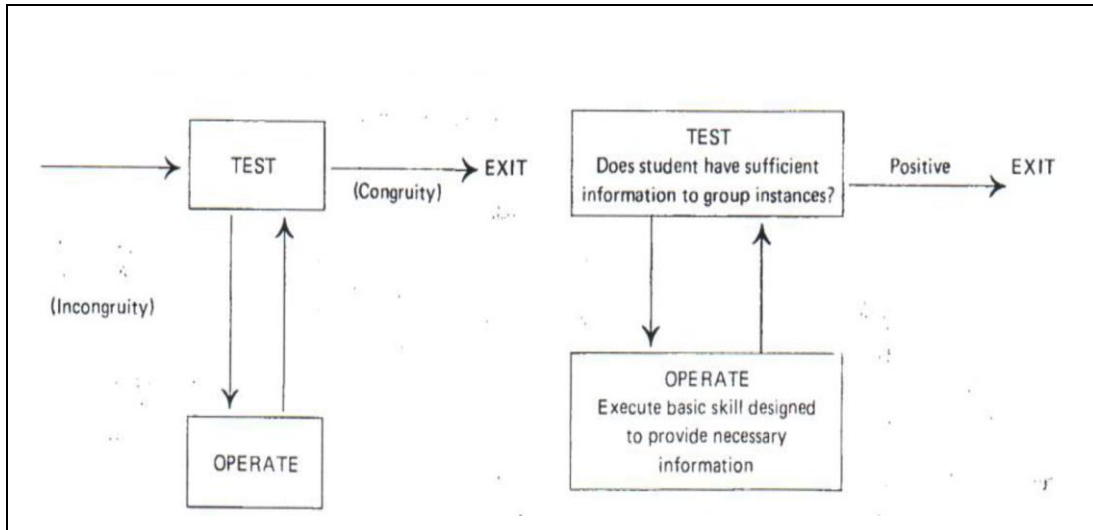


Figure 3.5 The TOTE Unit and description of a sequence of decisions using TOTE (Shavelson, 1973, p.146)

Figure 3.5 above illustrates the sequence of decisions made by the teacher, characterized by the TOTE unit, and the arrows in the TOTE unit represent the transfer of control from one component of the TOTE unit to the next (Shavelson, 1973). Shavelson's model linked teachers' thought processes with actions through series of decisions based on the teacher's judgments of the 'congruity' between the context in the teacher's mind and the context in the classroom.

Representation 2: Teachers' thought processes

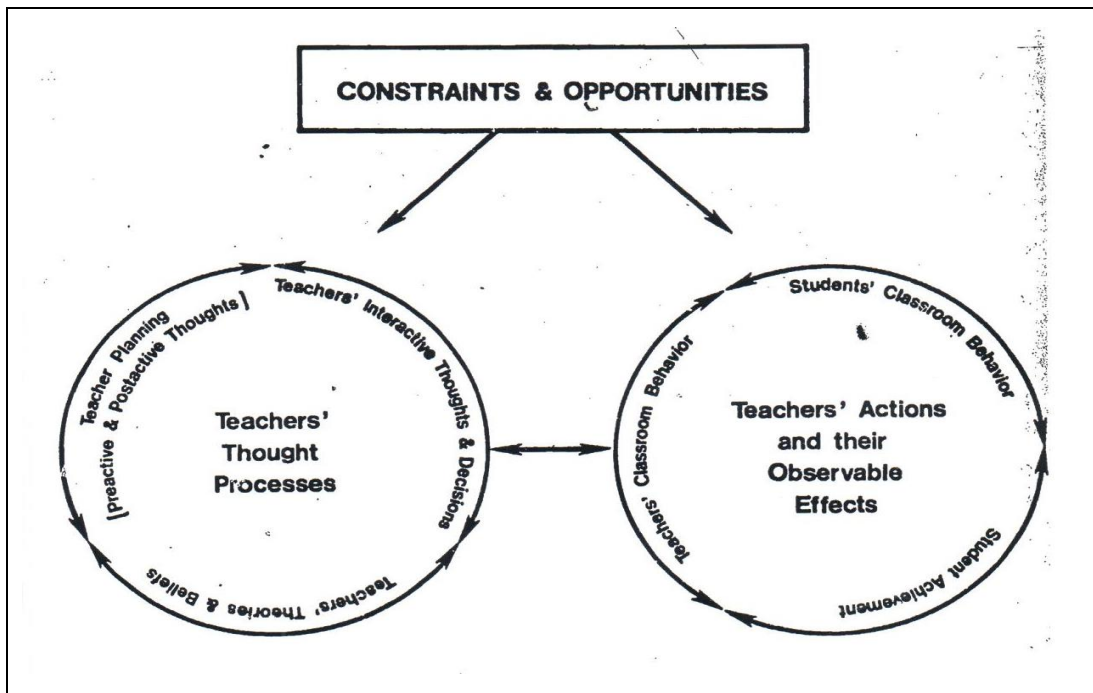


Figure 3.6 A model of teacher thought and action (Clark & Peterson, 1984, p.13)

After a decade of TOTE's model, Clark and Peterson (1984) propose a broader framing of thinking as thought processes which was the second major construct from general educational research to shape conceptualizations of teacher thinking in language teaching. The circle on the left represents teachers' thought processes during the day: "*pre-active & post-active thoughts*" and teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, together with their theories and beliefs. The circle on the right illustrates elements of the social world in the "*actions and observable effects*" of the teacher and students. Both constraints and opportunities in the diagram are aspect of social factors that have potential influence on the two circles above, teachers' thought processes and teachers' actions, and their observable effects. Freeman (2016) comments that the model underlines the interplay of the inner cognitive world and the outer world of actions and effects.

Representation 3: Beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK)

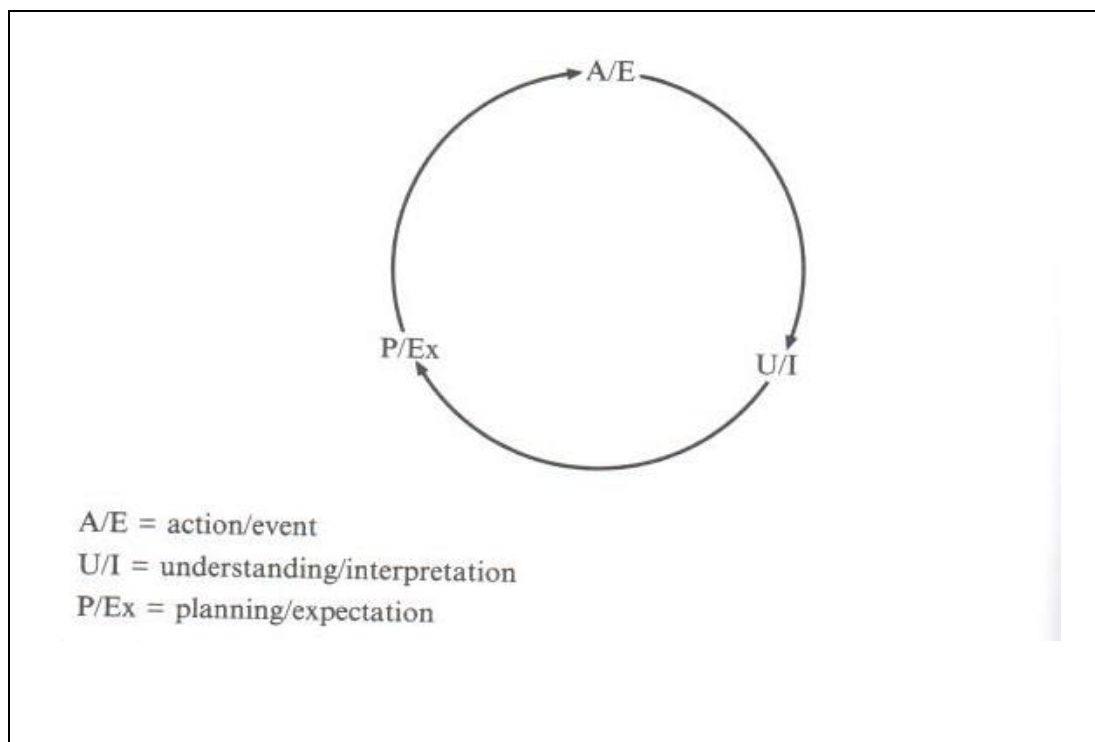


Figure 3.7 An ethno-cognitive model of teachers' decision-making (Woods, 1996, p.82)

Woods (1996) has included another element of decision-making, "*interpretative processes*", to Clark & Peterson's "*pre- and interactive decision-making*" and termed his study of language teachers' decision-making as "*ethno-cognitive*" (p.22) to indicate the evolving system of BAK. Based on Figure 3.7 above, there are three main components of the model: A/E (action/event), U/I (understanding/interpretation)

and P/Ex (planning/expectation). These components are organised in sequence in a circular representation. The first component, A/E, is followed by U/I, and finally, P/Ex. Time was a major feature in this ethno-cognitive model, time before the lesson (planning processes), time during the lesson (interactive decision), and time after the lesson (interpretative processes). Freeman (2016) considers this action as the “*same things done differently*”, referring to a similar visual from Clark and Peterson (1986) with two circles and arrow. He suggests that such presentation of time actually becomes part of the thinking processes, and suggests how decisions might build into experience through time. These “*interpretative processes*” require the teacher to use BAK, which is guided by the context of teaching. It seems that he was expanding Shavelson’s (1973) “*judgments of congruity*” and their impact in this interpretative process. Wood’s initialised ‘BAK’ has become popular in the area of language teacher thinking, particularly in the literature of teacher decision-making. According to Freeman (2016), Woods’ study of BAK marked the starting point of the research trajectory of thinking in language teaching.

Representation 4: Language teacher cognition(s)

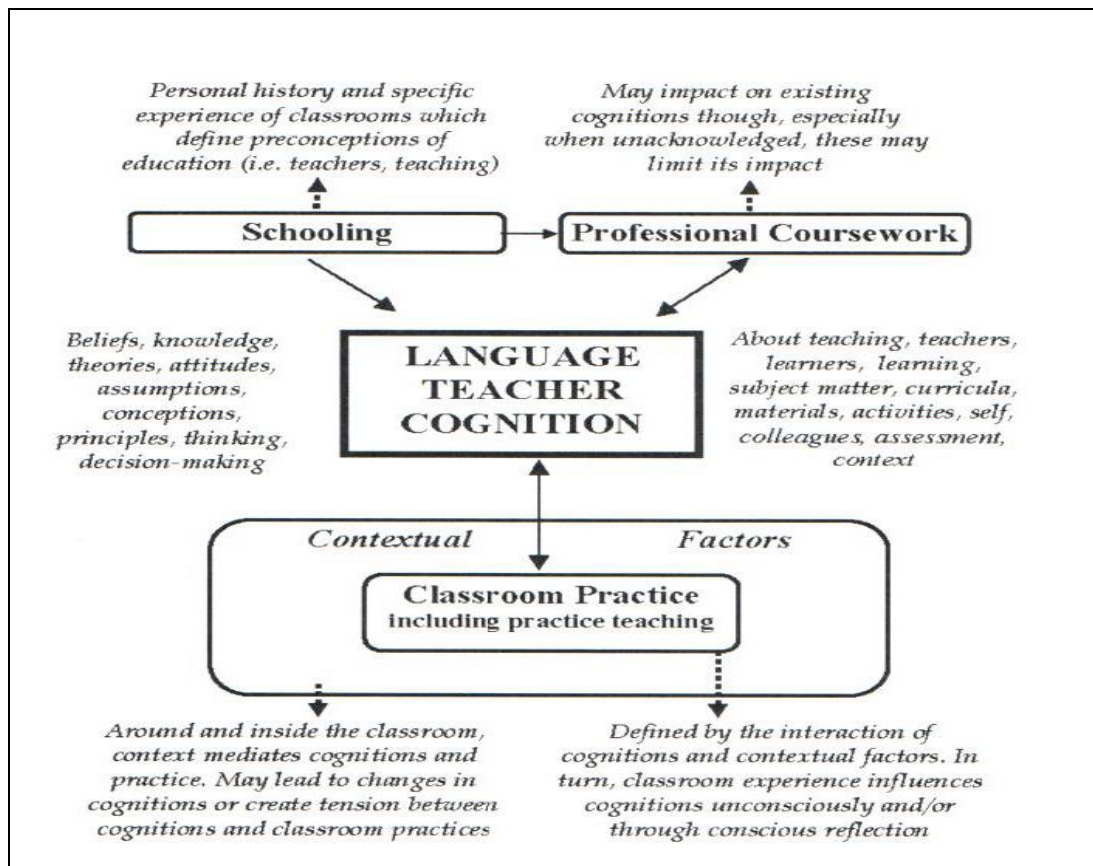


Figure 3.8 Elements and processes in language teacher cognition (Borg, 2006, p.283)

In 2003, Borg followed a similar process of redefining the construct of thought processes as "*cognition*". Figure 3.8 above illustrates Borg's framework which highlights the relationships between contextual factors, schooling and professional coursework, and the classroom practices that contribute to teacher cognition. The categories of teacher learning (schooling and professional coursework) are historical in the sense that they contribute to teachers' backgrounds and the construction of teacher thought processes, whereas classroom practice and contextual factors are categories of the present environment for thinking. More fundamentally, it is interesting to see that Borg differentiates 'cognition' as a mass noun and defines it as, "*the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching*" (Borg, 2003, p.81) and he termed "*cognitions*" as a count noun which refers to the parts of the whole. Freeman (2016), however, highlights that in language teaching cognitions are cognitions, and Borg's framework on teachers' cognition is considered as 'the same things done differently' by looking at the development in teacher cognition research.

The four representations of a teacher's thought processes reflect the evolution in teachers' mental lives. Freeman (2016) suggests that Shavelson's and Clark and Peterson's (1984) representations of thought processes as socially situated reflects the movement in general educational research. In language teaching, their ideas were refined and dealt with differently. Wood's (1986) BAK model proposed the idea of decision-making as cyclical, and, although decisions continued to be the unit of thinking, they were elaborated as BAK. Borg's (2006) framework suggests thinking was a process (cognition), of combining individual parts (or cognitions), which made the term ambiguously useful (Freeman, 2016). Interestingly, Freeman (2016) concludes that, cognition could refer to, "*the unit of thinking happening at a particular time in particular circumstances, classrooms, and lessons*". His statement concurs with my own conclusion about this study, i.e. classroom experience in a given moment seems to be the stronger element in the construction of beliefs than the other elements that the NQTs brought with them. Freeman further suggests that cognition also refers to the process that integrated sources of decisions, from the teacher's own schooling, from professional preparation, and from past and present teaching. It can be concluded that the development of teacher cognition research has been guided by the shifts from what teachers need to learn in order to teach to how teachers learn: as Borg (2006) states, from an initial concern with information-processing, decision-making and teaching effectiveness to understanding teacher knowledge, its growth and use. Teacher cognition research today is aligned particularly closely with work in teacher education: a key role for such research is to support teacher learning at both pre-service and in-service levels (p.35). In the next

section, I shall therefore describe the significance of conducting the research into teachers' beliefs in the context of language teacher cognition.

3.5.4 Why are beliefs important in teacher education?

Over the last decade, the research into the domain of language teacher cognition has explored several areas. Borg (2003) categorises the language teacher cognition educational research into three main themes: i) cognition and prior language learning experience; ii) cognition and teacher education; and iii) cognition in classroom practice; these all indicate that the development of teachers' cognition occurs before the training, during the training and during the actual teaching. Hence, what is important in discovering how teachers learn to teach is not just to see where the knowledge about teaching comes from; Ur (1992) suggests that what is important is what is done with the knowledge (research, theory, personal experience) after it is perceived, in terms of testing, reflection and development.

Since the study of language teacher cognition has become increasingly developed since the 1990s and is now a well-established area in language teacher education, it is an important aspect to be taken into consideration in planning and designing teacher education programmes to help pre-service and in-service teachers and to help develop and enhance their beliefs about teaching and learning, linking it with their classroom practices. The growth of research in this area has initiated new ideas about teaching and learning in general education as well as language education. Thus, apart from investigating the evolution of NQTs and the factors affecting the changes in their beliefs, this study hopes also to examine the implications for the content and process of the TE curriculum, especially SLTE. Zheng (2009) states that despite a significant amount of research done in this field into various teachers' roles in promoting learning to teach, little has been written on the qualitative differences in the types of teacher beliefs and relating this role to teacher education. Calderhead (1996) suggests a specific treatment of different types of beliefs: i) beliefs about learners and learning; ii) beliefs about teaching; iii) beliefs about subject; iv) beliefs about learning to teach; and iv) beliefs about the self and teaching role. As recommended by Pajares (1992), this treatment of teachers' beliefs suggests that teacher cognition research had shifted from the study of beliefs generically to more focussed analysis of beliefs about specific issues. Borg (2006) therefore highlights that Calderhead's valuable contribution to teacher cognition research formed the basis of research on teacher cognition throughout the 1990s, and continues to influence the path of teacher cognition research today.

3.5.5 The construction of teacher beliefs

The literature in general education and the language teaching field has identified prior language learning experiences (PLLEs), prior training and personal teaching experience as central elements in the construction of language teachers' beliefs. Zheng (2009) adds that there is general consensus that their beliefs have a close relationship with teachers' PLLEs and their classroom practice. Further discussion about the elements and their relationship with teachers' beliefs will be further unpacked in Chapter 10, Section 10.2. Below is a brief description from the literature on the fundamental elements in the constructions of teacher beliefs.

i. Relationship between teacher beliefs and their prior language learning experiences

Prior language learning experiences (PLLEs) play an important role for each individual in influencing their process of learning in second language teaching. Lortie (1975) emphasizes that being a student is like "*servicing an apprenticeship for teaching and students are impressed by some teachers' actions, and what they learn about teaching is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles*" (p.62). He states that there are limitations in learning about teaching through apprenticeship of observation; first, learning is gained from a limited vantage point, and second, the learner's participation is usually imaginary rather than real, thus it does not represent acquisition of the technical knowledge in teaching. Lortie's (1975) "*apprenticeship of observation*" highlights the important contribution of trainee teacher's prior learning experiences to their professional learning about teaching. For example, trainees who had encountered negative experiences during their years as learners, might avoid imposing similar experiences on to his/her students. In Golombek's (1998) study, due to the negative experiences of being hyper corrected, a teacher avoided focusing on accuracy, although she is expected to, and for fear of making her students experience the same process. Some studies also reveal how teachers' beliefs are based on prior experience and how such experience relate to classroom practice (Pajares, 1992; Farrell, 1999; Sanchez, 2013; Li, 2017) and this literature suggests that PLLEs is one of the important elements in the construction of teacher beliefs.

ii. Relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher education programme

Apart from learning to teach through apprenticeship of observation, learners gathered knowledge about second language teaching during their training years. It is essential that learners should know not just about what to teach and how to teach, but to be

able to test and reflect on the knowledge gathered from various sources. Ur (1992) points out that the aim of teacher training should be to encourage teachers to develop a theory of action through reflection on what has been done in the classroom and its consequences, thereby developing hypotheses that are tested in future action. Johnson (2006) agrees that teacher education programmes should promote changes in teachers' knowledge through reflective practice, especially in terms of situating theory within their own socio-cultural context. This idea leads to the notion of cognitive influences on language teachers' classroom practices. Zheng (2009) states that the idea of whether a teacher education programme has any impact on teacher beliefs remains unsettled. He states that mainstream educational research has shown that at the beginning stage of their teacher education programme, trainees may hold 'inappropriate, unrealistic or naïve' understandings of teaching and learning. NQTs find their initial stage of teaching challenging as they try to match the idealisations during training to the classroom realities. Akcan (2016), Farrell (2012) and Johnson (1996) agree with such challenges, and point out that there is a gap in the transition from training to teaching in real classroom. Thus, Hargreaves (1994) highlights that teachers must not only be competent in their content area but also the capability to think, judge, and perform in changing situations. Richardson (1996) suggests pedagogical knowledge is the least powerful factor affecting beliefs of teaching in teacher education programme.

iii. Relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practice

Teacher education research has reported a significant findings in examining the complex relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices over the past 25 years (Zheng, 2009). The findings in this domain suggest that teacher's cognition involves a complex mental constructs and teachers develop their knowledge about teaching in individual and variable ways (Pajares, 1992; Fang, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Borg, 2003). As discussed previously in Section 3.5.2, Shavelson (1973) has focused on seeing teaching as an activity involving thinking in and about context; later, Woods (1996) expands Shavelson's idea to more interpretative processes and put forward the idea of beliefs, attitude and knowledge (BAK) to reflect planning and decision-making in the ESL classroom. After a decade, in addition to Wood's BAK system in decision-making, Senior (2006) emphasizes again that teachers draw on a complex system of individualized knowledge to make their classroom decisions. Golombek (1998) further highlights this individualised knowledge as personal practical knowledge (PPK) and its role in practice, which shows that there are a numbers of factors that inform teacher's practice in the classroom which include filtering experiences for the teacher to reconstruct his/her

teaching framework and respond to a particular context whereby each context would reshape that knowledge.

To conclude, teachers developed and adjusted their own teaching beliefs based on his/her prior experiences, knowledge learned during training and through classroom practice as discussed earlier. However, since teaching in itself is a dynamic and complex activity, teachers need to be able to be flexible in adapting their practices in the classroom at any given moment. Thus, since this study concerns the NQTs, I will describe their concerns and challenges, based on various literature.

3.6 Newly qualified teachers: concerns and challenges

Studies have shown that NQTs and experienced teachers have a different set of focus during the teaching-learning process in the classroom and the first year of teaching is the most difficult time in a teacher's career since new teachers have to deal with many challenges (Farrell, 2012, Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Farrell, 2003). There is increasing evidence of issues and challenges in teacher training and retention as NQTs deal with excessive workload and insufficient support from the administrators or experienced teachers. For instance, Crookes (1998) and Peacock (2009) highlight that NQTs are left to survive on their own in less than ideal conditions, and as a result early career teachers are leaving the profession. However, there has not been many in-depth studies in SLTE concerning teachers' experiences in managing the complexities in the real classroom during their first year of teaching. Richards and Pennington (1998) reveal that there are some common themes in studies of NQTs in both mainstream and second language classrooms. Often, NQTs have to make their own decision to 'sink or swim' in dealing with the difficult situation in a teacher's career (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). The phrase 'sink or swim' is used to refer to a slower realisation made by NQTs of whether they choose to fail or succeed in this career. Lortie (1966, cited in Fantilli & McDougall, 2009) used the term to reflect the phenomenon of the beginning teacher thrown into the deep end to sink or swim as the Robinson Crusoe approach (p.814).

The core concerns of the NQTs, particularly ESL teachers, in studies conducted by Senom et al. (2013), Fantilli and McDougall (2009), and Farrell (2003), are managing the students' needs, dealing with the complex nature of teaching and conflict with school administrations, colleagues and society's expectations. During the teachers initial entry into teaching, almost immediately a NQT has to take the same

responsibility as a teacher with many years of service. Although all teachers are expected to manage the behaviours and the diverse needs of students, the top concern in Fantilli and McDougall's (2009) study is for the NQTs that have to deal with the special needs students, as extra care and attention are required of them. Senom et al. (2013) mentions that in Malaysia, that NQTs have to handle students with low English proficiency is the most frequent problem encountered because there is an increasing demand of the use of the mother tongue during English lessons in Malaysia. Although English is the second official language and it is a compulsory subject for all pupils in Malaysian schools, it may not necessarily be the second language of the students. Fuller (1969) and Bullough (1989) (cited in Richards & Pennington, 1998) point out that although new teachers have to respond to various demands from their students, they would first deal with their own survival needs and focus on disciplining the students. It is a necessary stage before they can consider students' needs. Once they are able to control the class, they would later be able to concentrate on teaching situation concerns and respond to the students' needs.

The second concern is matching 'idealisations and realities'. Often, there is a mismatch between the teacher's ideal vision of teaching and the realities in the classroom. Ideal visions of teaching or a set of beliefs of what effective teaching should be like are normally constructed from theories of teaching and learning gathered from training and/or their earlier experiences as learners. NQTs should be made aware that the point of teaching theory is to make informed decisions in the classroom. Thus, in SLTE, NQTs should be able to link the theory into practice; in other words, they should be able to deal with idealisations and at the same time acknowledge realities. Farrell (2012) states that novice teachers carry the assumption that their task is to apply all the knowledge they gathered during training and hope all is well when they first enter a real classroom. In one of his studies, the participant has to reconcile the differences between his beliefs in an effective teaching approach to what existed in school. The participant found it challenging to carry out a student-centred approach in his classroom, which he believes to be a more effective way of learning, since the school regulations would not tolerate pupil movement, the noise level and the lack of control of the class (Farrell, 2006). The same concern with the difficulty in engaging theory to practice, especially adopting an appropriate teaching methodology or strategy, was found in two other studies of pre-service teachers during their practicum, conducted in Malaysia (Md. Yunus et al.; 2010 & Ong et.al, 2004, cited in Senom et al. 2013). Johnson (1996) suggests that this scenario emerged due to inadequate levels of practical knowledge for the NQTs to deal with realities in the classroom. As Richards (1998) claims, NQTs do not

translate the knowledge they obtain from their SLTE preparation courses into practice automatically because they need to construct and reconstruct the theory and new knowledge acquired by participating in "*specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes*" (p.164).

On top of the above concerns, NQTs have also to deal with conflicts and demanding expectations from the school administration for them to be as good as experienced teachers, their own colleagues and even from parents. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) point out that the encountering the expectation, often results in the teachers finding their work frustrating, unrewarding and intolerably difficult. This would be particularly true when NQTs do not get the support to cope with the teaching challenges in the first year of teaching, either from the subject mentor, from colleagues or from the school administration, support they need in the initial stage of teaching in the real classroom. Such support is particularly needed by NQTs, especially when there is an alarming statistic of teachers exiting the profession within their first three to five years of teaching.

Peacock (2001) suggests that trainee beliefs differ from experienced ESL teachers' beliefs to some extent and these beliefs would change in due course during their study. Since learning to teach is an ongoing and developmental process whereby teachers change their roles and responsibilities in different stages of their teaching careers, as highlighted by Graves (2009), NQTs are more concerned about classroom management, maintaining the flow of instructional activities and worrying about the appropriateness of the instructional strategies in the earlier stages of teaching (Gatbonton, 2008); thus, there might be less focus on students learning. On the other hand, experienced teachers are concerned with keeping the language learners on task (Roberts, 1998). Interestingly, Graves (2009) points out that the knowledge base of teaching is not a fixed set of knowledge, but it is developing gradually, and consequently, it requires the content to be tailored to the students' needs as well as the SLTE curriculum aims of helping teacher-learners develop the tools to continue their learning once the teacher education programme ends. Therefore, the concerns and challenges faced by NQTs, which are often described as a reality shock, should be taken into consideration for the teacher educators to find solutions for how to prepare the trainees for the transition upon completion of training to the initial stage in teaching in the real classroom. Such transitions, especially in bridging the gap that exists between pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development, are highlighted by Farrell (2012) and he expresses his concerns about NQTs dealing with the issues and challenges:

Over the years I have often wondered how many other novice teachers have had negative experiences but without the guides and guardians who came to my rescue. How many of these novices travelling alone decided to abandon the teaching path before ever discovering the joys of teaching.

(p.436)

The following section presents the concerns and challenges of the NQTs in the context of the study, and briefly provides the background of the teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching, which is a fundamental element in understanding the concept in belief formation as acknowledged in both general education and the language teaching area.

3.7 Challenges in SLTE in Malaysia

In the previous chapter, Chapter 2, it is stated that in Malaysia the provision of SLTE has previously been solely through universities or through collaboration between local institutions or local institutions and institutions abroad. In 2011, ITEs have been given the responsibility to run their own independent B.Tchg. TESL programmes to produce English teachers for primary levels. However, this process has been complicated by a number of challenges which include the drastic changes to the primary school curriculum shortly after the first intake of B.Tchg. trainee teachers was admitted, the generally poor abilities of primary trainees, and the lack of clarity among teacher educators regarding what the new curriculum means. These challenges might have an impact on the product of the first cohort of B.Tchg. TESL produced by the ITEs. Thus, the primary focus in this study will be on a group of NQTs that graduated from the ITEs' B.Tchg. TESL programme and I am interested in exploring the changes in teachers' cognition, i.e. teachers' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning over their first year of teaching. Figure 3.9 below will further illustrate my study.

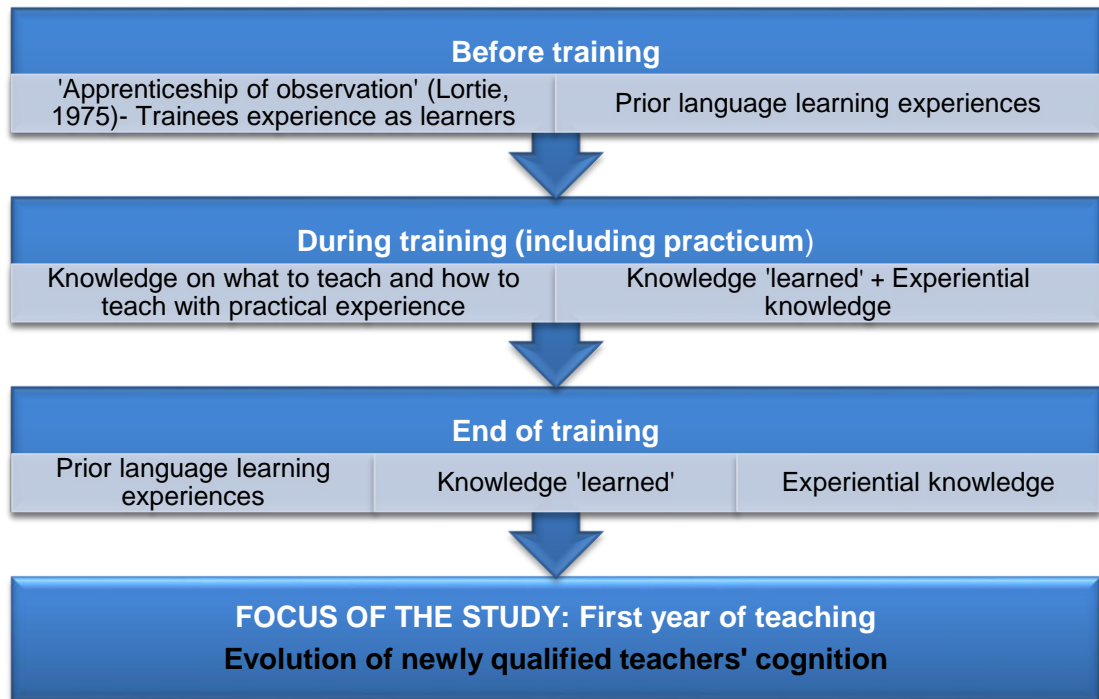


Figure 3.9 Teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching

Based on Figure 3.9 above, it is believed that trainee teachers already possess a set of beliefs about teaching, even before they enter training through “*apprenticeship of observation*” (Lortie, 1975). It means that teachers have preconceived ideas about teaching from their observation as learners in the classroom. This set of prior beliefs about prior language learning experiences (PLLEs) is one of the fundamental elements in the construction of beliefs, which has already been identified in both general education, and the language teaching domain (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Farrell, 1999; Borg, 2006; Zheng, 2009; Sanchez, 2013). The trainees later might adjust their sets of beliefs during their training years, and at the end of their training, they may carry with them a new set of beliefs or an expansion of the beliefs they had earlier, as a result of the knowledge learnt and experiential knowledge (in this context, the knowledge gained through practicum experience).

3.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the background literature that informs this study. The literature outlines the recent trends in SLTE research, moving from a view of SLTE as two separate components of knowledge, i.e. knowledge about language, and knowledge about teaching, to the recent view of the importance of teachers' thought processes. The section on TE models has addressed several types of models which try to capture the complex process of how teachers learn to teach. The

section on teacher cognition research suggests that there is no consensus on the 'right' definition for the concept of teachers' beliefs and different labels are used to refer to teachers' thought processes. In addition, there is a gap between interpretations of knowledge and beliefs, which Woods (1996) argues are not distinct concepts but instead represent a spectrum of meaning. The following section in this chapter has highlighted the NQTs' concerns and the challenges which inform part of the rationale for this study. Finally, the last section briefly looks at the challenges in SLTE in Malaysia, and provides an overview of teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching which illustrates the important elements in the construction of beliefs.

As stated in the literature in this chapter, recently, the research focus in SLTE has become centred on the teachers themselves, especially on how they learn to teach. Thus, in the well-established domain of enquiry of language teacher cognition, Borg (2003) has suggested that there is a need for research in the SLTE field exploring state school classrooms with non-native teachers and where syllabuses are prescribed, to varying degrees. Since there is limited prior research on such settings, this study will pursue Borg's suggestion. In addition, although the literature review in this chapter is relevant to the research aims, from my readings, I found limited research focusing on the evolution of NQTs' cognition. There is also limited literature on investigating NQTs' cognition, which adopt longitudinal approach in the data collection.

Hence, in addition to the contextual background of the study in Chapter 2 which has helped me in identifying my research aims, careful consideration of ideas, findings, and methods from a plethora of literature relevant to the research aims has enabled me to develop the research questions in the subsequent chapter. Chapter 4 presents an account of the research design and methodology, research procedures, and the rationale for choosing the methodology.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to focus on the research design and methodology. This methodology chapter is organised into ten sections. The research aims and questions will be presented in Section 4.2. They will be followed by an explanation of the research paradigm in Section 4.3, the methodological framework in Section 4.4, the research site and participants in Section 4.5, the research methods in Section 4.6, the research phases in Section 4.7, and the pilot study in Section 4.8. In Section 4.9, I share the challenges and opportunities I have observed during data collection. The following section, Section 4.10, describes the stages involved in data analysis. Finally, the ethical issues that were taken into consideration in this study will be put forward in Section 4.11.

4.2 Research aims and questions

This qualitative study set out to explore the evolution of knowledge and beliefs of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in the first year of teaching, and to investigate their opinions of the extent to which knowledge and experiences gathered from their prior training were helpful to them. The primary focus was a group of teachers from the first cohort of a new Bachelor of Teaching (Hons) course in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (Primary Education) at an Institute of Teacher Education (ITE). The aims of this study are as follows:

- To explore the evolution of the NQTs' cognition over their first year of teaching in terms of their knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning
- To examine the factors that might influence their thinking and classroom practices
- To consider the implications of the content and process of the ITE curriculum (including practicum)

It was my intention to investigate how NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning evolved in the first year of teaching, and how NQTs in a second language classroom in a mainstream school setting adopted and adapted the teaching methodology they had learnt in their training years. This study could offer some insights into how NQTs think and behave, and also the impact of the existing teacher education curriculum, structure, content, and pedagogy. It might also shed some light on the kind of support NQTs need from different stakeholders.

The study was driven by the following research questions:

1. What were the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning at the start of their teaching careers?
2. How did the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning change in their first year of teaching?
3. What factors influenced the changes in NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning?

4.3 Research paradigm

The term *research paradigm*, according to Hammersley (2007), is a set of philosophical assumptions about the phenomena to be studied, how they can be understood, and the proper purpose and product of the research. Researchers tend to be influenced by their underlying ontological (reality) and epistemological (knowledge) stance when they make decisions on their research methods (Wellington, 2000).

For this study, an interpretive research stance was adopted as the underlying research paradigm and I conducted a phenomenological study to investigate the meaning that several individual teachers made of their lived experience during the first year of their professional lives. Cohen et al. (2011) point out that the interpretive paradigm is governed by a concern for the individual and regards human experience as a valuable source of data. The emphasis in this paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience, and the role of the interpretive researcher is to understand the individuals' interpretations of the world around them. In addition, Pring (2000) highlights that the phenomenological study examines individuals' unique life experiences, and in this study the focus is on each individual beginning the teacher's classroom experience. Since I intended to investigate how NQTs' personal knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning evolved in their first year of teaching and how contextual factors might influence classroom practice, a quantitative approach would not be suitable for the study. Instead, the nature of this study involving several NQTs in different schools, which would not represent a uniform reality, necessitated the use of qualitative data collection methods.

4.4 Methodological framework

4.4.1 Qualitative case study

This study focused on the teachers' knowledge and beliefs, which included what they knew, how they thought, how they developed professionally, and how they made decisions in the classroom in their first year of teaching. As suggested by Pajares (1992), qualitative research is perhaps ideally suited to the purpose of investigating the 'messy' construct of teachers' beliefs, as the development of a complex, detailed understanding of teachers' beliefs can be developed by engaging directly with the teachers, observing their teaching, and allowing them to tell their stories (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative case study approach was adopted and relevant for this study because it could enable rich personal accounts of NQTs' classroom experiences to be obtained. According to Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) case studies are qualitative in nature, and they belong to an interpretive paradigm. Li (2017) suggests that the case study has presented itself as an appropriate strategy to address the complexity of teacher cognition and the influential factors of the context. As Stake (1988) mentions, a case study is "*a study of a bounded system, emphasising the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time*" (p 258), and it means that any elements which do not fall within the boundary of the case shall not become part of the case. Creswell (2012) also states that a case study is "*an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (for example, activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection*" (p.465). In addition, I found that using a case study approach is more relevant since it can also offer a rich and vivid description of events, which is relevant to the case. The advantages of using this approach are reinforced by its other distinguishing features, as highlighted by Hitchcock and Hughes (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011):

- It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them
- It focuses on individual actors/groups of actors, seeks to understand their perceptions of events which highlight specific events that are relevant to the case (p.182)

Yin (2014), a well-known pioneer of the rigorous use of case studies suggests four types of design that case study researchers can make use of, as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

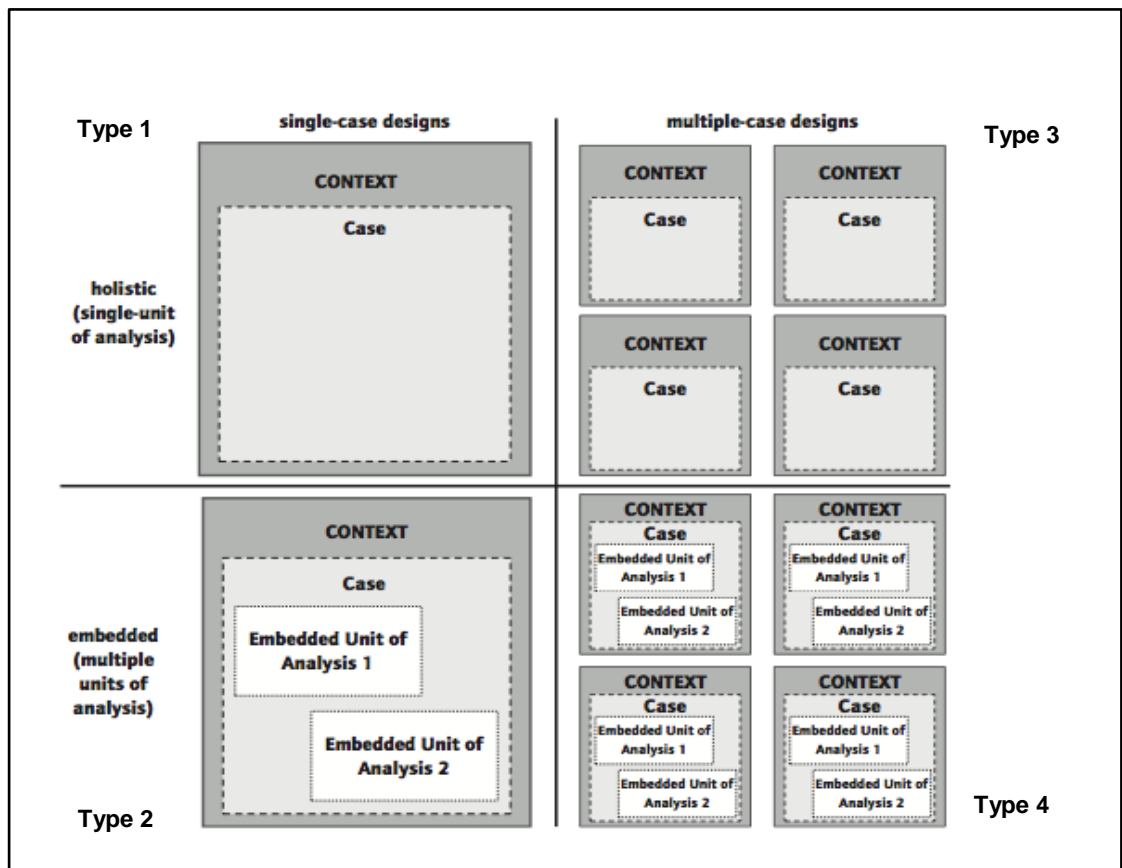


Figure 4.1 Basic types of designs for case studies (COSMO Corporation cited in Yin, 2014, p.50)

The four types of designs for case studies are single-case (holistic) designs (Type 1), single-case (embedded) designs (Type 2), multiple-case (holistic) designs (Type 3), and multiple-case (embedded) designs (Type 4). Every type of design will include the desire to analyse contextual conditions in relation to the 'case', with the dotted lines between the two signalling that the boundaries between the case and the context are not likely to be sharp. Yin (2014) explains, one would adopt a case study approach to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in greater depth within its real-world context. This enables the researcher to use a variety of evidence: for example, using interviews, classroom observations and relevant documents, as suggested in this study for exploring and capturing the participants' stories.

4.4.2 Multiple instrumental case study

There are different types of case studies as highlighted by Creswell (2012) and Yin (2014). The reason for adopting the multiple-case study instead of a single-case study was to increase robustness of the study with a number of studied 'objects' (Yin,

2014). Schirmer (2014) added that “*similar findings arising from several case studies can provide stronger analytical conclusions*”, and “*contrasting findings can results in deeper investigations and can potentially lead to discovering underlying reasons*” (p.103). Therefore, based on these discussions, the multiple-case study approach is considered to be the most appropriate and relevant method to be used to investigate the phenomenon under study.

I adopted a multiple instrumental case study approach that provides insight into an issue (or theme), and for this study it involved multiple cases. Creswell (2012) and Punch (2009) use the term *multiple instrumental case study* (also called collective case study), and Stake (2005) uses the terms ‘collective’ and ‘multi’ interchangeably to describe this particular type of study in which a number of cases are studied jointly. Stake argues for a flexible design which allows researchers to make major changes even after they proceed from design to research, which is in contrast with Yin’s point of view, which suggests a really tight and structured design for case study method. Stake offers an important advice about the two types of case studies: “*for intrinsic case study, case is dominant; the case is of highest importance. For instrumental case study, issue is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant*” (Stake, 1995, p.16).

The purpose of selecting this type of case study is to learn more about the phenomenon, population, or general condition as suggested by Punch (2009). As illustrated in Figure 4.2, multiple instrumental case studies are studies of several cases that provide insights into a single issue or theme. In addition, Hoffman (2003) gives an example of his multi-case studies, which “*were constructed of four elementary multiage teachers by examining each teacher and classroom carefully, comparing each, and providing examples of beliefs and practices in these multiage classrooms*” (p.6). His view is reflected in this study, the issue is the evolution of teachers’ cognition over their first year of teaching, and the cases are different individuals, each of them working in a unique setting. In my study, I would initially analyse the individual cases, and later I would carry out a cross-case analysis to identify emerging common themes and summarize the findings in Chapter 9.

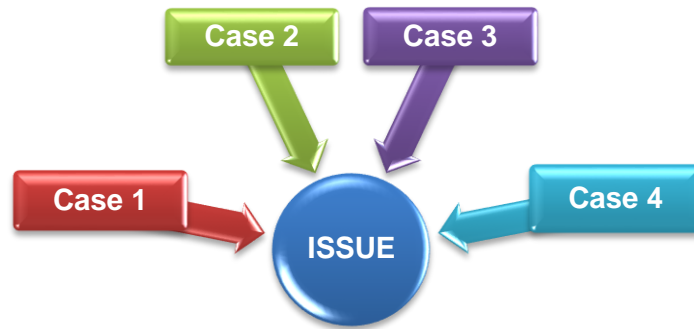


Figure 4.2 Multiple instrumental case studies (Adapted from Creswell, 2012)

4.4.3 Longitudinal approach to case study

The longitudinal nature of this study seems suitable for studying NQTs' evolving beliefs over the first year of teaching. The research questions (Questions 1-3) for this study relate to the evolution of NQTs' cognition over a period of one year. The first research question seeks to identify the NQTs' beliefs at the start of their teaching careers, followed by the second question which intends to explore the changes in their beliefs in the first year of teaching, and the third question seeks to investigate the factors that might have influenced the changes in their beliefs. Cohen et al. (2011) highlight that longitudinal studies allow researchers to use the same sample over time and enable them to highlight similarities, differences, and changes over time within and between participants.

4.4.4 A note on narrative accounts in case studies

I decided to adopt narrative accounts to present the data in the following findings chapters since I felt that teachers' beliefs can be captured through their stories. Johnson and Golombek (2002) suggest that teachers would welcome the opportunity to reveal factors contributing to classroom beliefs and the consequences of their teaching practice. In addition, Creswell (2012) and Murray (2009) highlight that narrative accounts make personal experiences in actual school settings easily accessible and allow participants' voices to be heard. Pavlenko (2002) stresses that personal narratives are extremely important for the field of TESOL as they allow teachers' voices to be heard. She further suggests that narratives are also interesting, and because of the reflection involved they are empowering to the participants involved. To obtain personal narratives, the participants in my study were required to reflect on their teaching practices during stimulated recall interviews, and so narratives represent part of the data I collected.

4.5 The research sites and participants

4.5.1 The research sites

The study took place in five public primary schools in one particular state in Malaysia where the NQTs graduated from the ITE. The reasons for choosing the participants and the state were practicality and familiarity with the context. The state chosen is where the participants' schools/workplace is situated, and it was convenient for me to conduct the interviews with them.

4.5.2 Sampling strategy

In this study, I used purposeful sampling, and Creswell (2012) states that using such sampling strategy means that certain sites or people are selected because they possess a similar trait or characteristic. I selected participants who belonged to a common subgroup in the community: teachers who graduated from the same education programme. My participants were five NQTs, who were in the first cohort of a B.Tchg. TESL programme provided by the institution introduced in the background chapter. However, I had to select and present only four NQTs because of the need to report in detail on each NQT.

According to Creswell (2012), the quality of a sample is more important than the number because my intention is not to generalize the findings to a sample population but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. He also warns that a larger number of cases will result in more data and may result in superficial perspectives. Although all the participants have undergone the same teaching programme, each of them was treated as a unique case before their cases were examined collectively to search for insights into the issues raised by the research questions.

4.5.3 Participant recruitment

My working experience as a lecturer in the ITE had assisted me in gaining access to the participants, who were my ex-students. In August 2014, I mentioned to a few of the students in the cohort about my study, and I expressed my intention to search for volunteers. A few of them seemed interested in participating in the study. Due to practicality, the sample was chosen from those who had opted for my home state in their posting application forms. The results of their posting were not known until the end of December 2014. I contacted the programme co-ordinator and appointed her

as my gatekeeper. It is important to have a gatekeeper, as mentioned by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), because a gatekeeper helps researchers locate people and assists in the identification of places to study. She provided me with the list of where the trainees were posted. I contacted them through email and/or WhatsApp (a smartphone application) and asked for volunteers. Those who were interested, contacted me, and I provided them with further details, which consisted of a brief outline of the information of the study. Once they confirmed their interest, I sent them a copy of the participant information sheet and consent forms (Appendix D) via email before I embarked on my initial data collection sessions, which were Skype interviews. I also informed the participants that their identity would not be revealed and it would remain anonymous in any part of the research. In addition, I assured them that any data gathered in the study will be kept confidential. The study was carried out over a maximum period of 12 months (March, 2015 - February, 2016).

4.5.4 The participants: four newly qualified English teachers

This section includes a brief description of the four participants in this study.

Alice: She is a Chinese teacher teaching in a national-type Chinese school (NTCS). She received her education in an NTCS at both primary and secondary school levels. She did not enjoy learning the English language as a subject during her schooling years and only developed a love for the target language during her foundation years at the ITE.

Joanna: She is also a Chinese teacher teaching in an NTCS. However, during her primary and secondary school years, she attended national schools. She perceived learning the English language as fun.

Salina: Salina is an Indian teacher teaching in national-type Tamil school, and she received her education in a convent school where English was widely spoken. She enjoyed learning the English language during her school years especially when she was selected to take part in choral speaking competitions.

Erni: She is a Malay teacher teaching in a national school where the majority of the students are Malay. Erni attended national primary and secondary schools. She did not share much about her schooling experience since everything seemed fine to her.

All together I have five participants but I decided to report on only four of them (Alice, Salina, Erni and Joanna) for the following reasons:

First, since Nur, the fifth participant, belongs to the mission school, I thought initially that it would be good to choose participants who do not have similar backgrounds with regards to the schools they were posted to. This would give the study insight into different aspects of the school culture, activities that they do and their routines as well as the participants' beliefs about teaching-learning and about their actual classroom practices. However, I felt that there were a lot of similarities in her beliefs and classroom practices that were shared by the other four participants. Second, the four participants were from different school types in Malaysia which allows a fair range of different data presentation on the education in Malaysia. Although two of the participants, Alice and Joanna, were from national-type Chinese schools (NTCS), each with a similar school ethos, both of the participant offer unique and interesting data. They have slightly different beliefs about teaching-learning in NCTS classroom. Salina was chosen because she worked in a national-type Tamil school and her data was distinct from the others, although there were also similarities in beliefs and classroom practices to a certain extent. Third, initially, I thought of excluding Erni when reporting the data since I encountered little progression in her classroom practices. However, her data might provide different insights on NQTs' beliefs and classroom practices.

4.5.5 My relationship with the participants

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) point out that the researcher and participant relationship determines the quality and the quantity of the information gathered. My role in this research was that of a “*non-participant observer*” (Cohen et al., 2007) which will be discussed further in Section 4.6.2. Copland et al. (2016) mention that,

Although classroom observation is undoubtedly the best method for finding out what happens in classrooms, it must be remembered that the presence of a non-participant observer, or even only of a tape recorder, will inevitably lead, to some extent, to an alteration of normal behaviour, to what Labov (1972) calls ‘the observer’s paradox’, and allowances must be made for this in the analysis and reporting of the data.”

(p. 13)

Creswell (2009) also suggests that being an insider helps in the familiarity of the context and might help to create a rapport to a certain extent; however, it is important to note that although I had taught the cohort for a semester, my relationship with my participants was not so close, because I only taught them for a particular module and it was a mass lecture. One possible conflict that might arise from being their former

lecturer was that during the initial stage they associated my classroom observation with authority, someone who observed and evaluated (inspectorate role). However, after the initial data collection of classroom observations, the participants began to be more relaxed in terms of sharing their own thoughts and experiences on classroom practices, when I had assured them again that the interviews and classroom observations were only for the purposes of my PhD research.

In addition, Cohen et al. (2011) note that it is important for the researcher to treat research participants as subjects rather than as objects to be used instrumentally. In this study, I tried my best to create and maintain a good rapport with the participants, and instil them with respect and self-esteem. During the initial stage of the study, I felt that there may have been a degree of social desirability response bias leading them to put on a show and provide me with the responses that they thought I wanted to hear. However, during most of the data collection, their responses were quite blunt about educational issues and they were willing to share the issues that their administrators would not disclose.

Compared to the other three participants, my relationship with Erni was quite close since I supervised her for her two-month practicum in Semester 5. I took this opportunity to make Erni my gatekeeper for the research in addition to my colleague, who was Erni's programme co-ordinator. Once I received the list of 13 potential participants, I contacted each of them personally. At first, six members from the cohort gave their commitment to the study, but later one had to withdraw due to health issues and five agreed to participate. According to Park (2006), it is very important for the participants to establish trust with the researcher, and the participants will share their life stories only once they feel safe and had built trust with the researcher. Once they had agreed to participate, apart from sending them a copy of the consent form via email, I took the initiative to create a WhatsApp (WA) group, 'University of Leeds Research'. One of the rationales for creating the group was to disseminate research information. At first, I allowed them to choose the time that was convenient to them for my first Skype interview. Before I embarked on my fieldwork in Malaysia, I had an informal meeting with all of them so that I could learn more about them and for me to share my own experiences as well as the stories of my current and future journeys. After the informal meeting, I informed them that they can use the WA group as a means of communication: for instance, in sharing information about the school activities, classroom practices, issues and concerns related to the study. I took this opportunity to build their trust and gradually, they started opening up to me. At times they would share their personal stories relating to their 'mint' teaching

experiences, both positive and negative – for instance, how this research helps them in reflecting on their current practices – and there would also be issues that they shared which might be sensitive to the school management or to the MoE in general. They informed me that they were grateful to be part of my study since my presence was also considered as teaching-learning support like they used to have during the practicum, particularly during SRI, whereby they had the opportunity to watch the video and reflect on their lesson.

4.6 Research methods

My sponsor only permitted three months as the maximum period for data collection purposes at the research site. Due to this time constraint, different research methods were adopted to fulfil the aims of the study. My initial plan was to collect the data from April till June 2015. This constraint has affected the research design, and the decision about what data collection methods are both valid and feasible. However, due to unavoidable personal circumstances, the plan for data collection at the research site was changed to include two phases of fieldwork in Malaysia. The first phase of fieldwork in Malaysia was from April to May 2015, and the second phase of data collection was conducted from August to September 2015. Overall, there were four phases of data collection, which include the first phase of the initial Skype interviews in early March 2015, and the final phase of the Skype interviews in early 2016.

The data in this study were gathered primarily from Skype interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews. Other sources of evidence such as journal entries, field notes, and the NQTs' lesson plans were also used. I chose different research methods to ensure that the data were triangulated and to enhance research trustworthiness. The research methods I chose were directed by a set of general themes derived from the goals of the pre-service programme. These themes seem to coincide with Richards and Farrell's (2005) ideas on teacher learning, which include the following:

- Teacher learning as skill learning
- Teacher learning as cognitive process
- Teacher learning as personal construction
- Teacher learning as reflective practice

These themes also link directly to the elements in the 'evolution of cognition' of the study. The evolution of cognition involves teachers' cognitive processes (e.g. making

adjustments, and changes in beliefs), which corresponds to skill learning, personal construction, and reflective practice in shaping the teachers' learning.

I added other themes or subthemes or at times decided to emphasise some themes over others in the light of my findings during my study. Thus, each phase of the study was influenced by what preceded it. For instance, I analysed the set of data from my first Skype interview before proceeding onto the next phase of the data collection, i.e. field work. The initial themes from the first data analysis were used as a guide during the first phase of the field work. Next, once I had the themes emerged from the preliminary data analysis for the first phase of the field work, the emerging themes were used as a guide for the next phase of data collection, i.e. the second phase of field work.

4.6.1 Interviews

The qualitative interview is a widely used strategy in the study of language teacher cognition. Borg (2006) suggests that interviewing is a useful strategy to get teachers to talk about their beliefs and thoughts. This seems to reflect the view that beliefs can be articulated orally and that NQTs are able to provide a verbal account of the kind of beliefs that underpin their work to a certain extent. There are various types of interviews. In this study, I conducted two different types of interviews: Skype/telephone interviews, and stimulated recall interviews (SRI). The interviews were semi-structured and directed by a set of general themes derived from the goals of the ITE programme. The questions explored the beliefs or practices that the programme aimed to emphasise, and I also included other relevant themes or sub-themes based on the literature.

4.6.1.1 Skype/telephone interviews

The first type of data gathered through distance data collection were Skype/telephone interview conversations. Initially, I intended to conduct Skype interviews only; however, whenever technical problems occurred, I had to resort to telephone interviewing using a smartphone application, Viber. There were two phases of Skype/telephone interviews: one at the initial stage of the study, and the other one at the final stage of the study. I conducted the first Skype interviews in March 2015 after the participants had graduated from their degree programme and after I had received the list of where they were posted. This first phase interview is the initial Skype

interview. The interviews served as background interviews which covered the following themes, as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

Themes	Descriptions
• Teacher learning as cognitive process	The participants' concerns, beliefs, knowledge, theories on English teaching and learning through personal experiences of schooling and pre-service teacher education
• Teacher learning as skill learning	The participants' feedback on their degree programme, especially on the extent to which the knowledge and skills 'learnt' and learning experiences gathered are helpful in preparing them to become future primary teachers based on their teaching practice experiences
• Teacher learning as personal construction	The internal and external situational factors underlying the participants' instructional practices, which mediate and shape their teaching and learning beliefs. The participants' educational backgrounds including English exam results in Malaysian Certificate of Education and Cambridge Placement Test results (English Language proficiency test). This information can enable the researcher to see whether or not their exam/test results reflect their English proficiency and whether or not being proficient in the language would have an effect on their classroom practices.
• Teacher learning as reflective practice	The participants examine and reflect on their teaching practice performance (relationship of the participants' cognitions to their instructional practices)

Figure 4.3 The content of the initial Skype interviews

Some of the descriptions were adapted from Borg (2006). I conducted a pilot Skype interview using the Skype interview schedule in Appendix C. The primary purpose of conducting the initial Skype interviews was to answer the first research question:

- What were the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning at the start of their teaching careers?

In addition, part of the purpose of this study was to investigate whether the degree programme has helped mould NQTs' beliefs about teaching and learning. The interviews were to find out the types of beliefs about teaching, being a teacher, language, and language learning in the pre-service programme including teaching

practice/practicum aimed to develop the trainees. The final stage of the Skype interviews was conducted upon the completion of the NQTs' last journal entries. The interviews focused on the themes that emerged from the study, and key findings for the purpose of verifying the data collected.

4.6.2 Classroom observations

The purpose of conducting classroom observations was to address the research questions below:

- What were the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning at the start of their teaching careers?
- How did the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning change in their first year of teaching?
- What factors influenced the changes in NQTs' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning?

The lessons were observed and video recorded. The purpose of the observations and video recordings was to examine the NQTs' classroom practices and later to identify if there was any evidence of teachers' cognitive evolution during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. Allwright and Bailey (1991) also agree that one of the main tools for classroom research is using classroom observations and recordings.

I had preliminary classroom observations for a week in the beginning of May 2015 about three or four months after the NQTs had been posted. This was to give them ample time to get used to the school environments. The aim of the consecutive observations and reflection cycles outlined below in Table 4.1 was to identify participants' common/typical practices and to profile their beliefs about teaching and learning that guided their classroom practices at the early stage of their teaching careers. My plan was to observe the participants on consecutive days for one week of instruction. For example, on Day 1, I would observe participants A and B; on Day 2, participants C and D; on Day 3, participants E and A; on Day 4, participants B and C; and on Day 5, participants D and E. The participants were interviewed at the end of each classroom observation session.

Each observation for a participant lasted approximately an hour, which was the standard time length of two English language lesson periods in the Malaysian primary school. The data collected would be beneficial for me to have an overview of their

classroom practices, before I moved on to the next phase of classroom observations. Creswell (2012) recommends the strategy of conducting multiple observations over time to obtain the best understanding of the site and individuals. The next phase of classroom observations took place over three months between May and July 2015. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the plan for classroom observations was altered (see Section 4.9 below, Data collection: challenges and opportunities).

The classroom observations were focused on specific themes. For the first two classroom observations, I used a semi-structured classroom observation schedule that was based on the training programme aims and dimensions, and elements listed in the 'Pedagogy Standards for English Language Teaching' (PSELT) developed by the British Council and the Ministry of Education Malaysia including a few elements taken from the ITE's formal practicum observation checklist, which had been piloted (refer to Appendix E: Classroom observation schedule). However, later on, I was open to unexpected situations and could include them in my data.

I adopted the participant observation approach, and my role was an observer-as-participant. According to Cohen et al. (2011), when the researcher's role as an observer-as-participant is clear and overt, he/she is not a member of the group but may participate peripherally in the group's activity. Bailey (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) highlights several inherent advantages in this participant observation approach, which include "*the ability to discern ongoing behaviour as it occurs and make appropriate notes about its prominent features; and researchers can develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing in more natural environments since case study observations take place over an extended period of time*" (p.298).

In this study, I video-recorded the teachers' lessons and took field notes during the observations to cross-check the data as a means of data triangulation. The data were also used as prompts for the post-observation interviews. During the initial stage of classroom observations, the students were very curious and at times excited when they saw 'strangers' in their classroom, which was interesting to observe. Although my participants had informed them earlier about me and my role in their classroom, some of them were still curious and eager to know what I was doing at the back of the classroom.

Table 4.1 below shows the initial schedule for classroom observations. Each NQT or each case is represented by a letter. For example, A refers to NQT A. In total, there would be 20 classroom observations at the end of three months, excluding the preliminary classroom observations, and four classroom observations for each NQT within these three months. The plan would allow me adequate time to observe, interview, and prepare between observations. The NQTs would not be observed too frequently to avoid interfering with their challenging role as new teachers and creating an unnecessary burden for them.

Table 4.1: Classroom observation schedule

TEACHER	MONTHS			
	May (Week 1)	May	June	July
A	Preliminary classroom observations (PCO), Days 1 & 3	Week 2	Weeks 2, 4	Week 2
B	PCO, Days 1 & 4	Week 2	Weeks 2, 4	Week 3
C	PCO, Days 2 & 4	Week 3	Week 2	Weeks 1, 3
D	PCO, Days 2 & 5	Week 3	Week 3	Weeks 1, 4
E	PCO, Days 3 & 5	Week 3	Week 3	Weeks 2, 4

*School holidays- May (Week 4) & June (Week 1)

However, as mentioned earlier, due to unforeseen circumstances, the initial schedule was revised to include two phases of classroom observations: (i) April-May 2015, and (ii) August-September 2015. **Table 4.2** below shows the actual number of classroom observations and the number of observations conducted. The advantage of having to change from my initial planning was that I was able to see and identify how the participants' beliefs changed. This might have not been possible to see (the change of beliefs) if I were to observe them continuously as suggested initially in the study (i.e. to observe continuously for three consecutive months).

Table 4.2: Classroom observations conducted

	April	May	August	Sept	Total
Joanna	3	1	2	-	6
Alice	2	1	2	1	6
Salina	1	1	2	2	6
Erni	2	1	3	1	7
*Nur	2	3	2	-	7
	10	7	11	4	32

*Nur- Findings not reported in this thesis (see Section 4.5.4)

4.6.3 Stimulated recall interviews

In this study, I conducted a stimulated recall interview (SRI) after each classroom observation. SRI is a form of research procedure that has been employed extensively in educational research and has gained increasing prominence within the field of second language education. Lyle (2003) states that SRI is “a family of introspective research procedures through which cognitive processes can be investigated by inviting subjects to recall, when prompted by a video sequence, their concurrent thinking during that event” (p.1). In addition, SRI has also been employed effectively in studies on teachers’ decision-making. For instance, Woods (1989) investigated the decision-making of eight ESL teachers. He used three data collection methods including stimulated recall. He highlights,

[Stimulated recall] elicited teachers’ comments about the options considered, decisions made and actions taken in the classroom...A lesson was videotaped and subsequently viewed and commented upon by the teacher. By pressing a remote pause button to freeze the video and then making a comment (captured on a composite videotape as a voice-over), the teacher provided commentary about the lesson, the students or about what s/he was trying to do as the lesson transpired. The composite videotape containing the lesson and the superimposed comments was analysed to determine the processes and bases of decisions made during the lesson.

(Woods, 1989, p.110).

I conducted SRI immediately after each classroom observation. At times when I was not able to conduct the interview immediately after the observation, I would wait until

the school session ended on that day since the official teaching hours are from 7:30 am until 1:30 pm. It is essential to conduct the SRI as soon as the teacher finishes the lesson while the teacher's memory of the lesson is still fresh. Using this method, I would be able to gather important accounts of the classroom events from the teachers and then corroborate those accounts with what I had observed earlier.

In terms of the implementation, during the initial SRI I informed the participants of the process and procedures of SRI. They were informed that they could choose when to pause the video, and what they chose to focus on. The interviews were conducted in English; however, in certain instances, the participants would code-switch. I managed to perform member checking with them several times on themes they discussed during the SRI so that I did not misinterpret the meanings when they code-switched. The fact that some parts of the interviews were multilingual added a further layer of complexity. Mann (2016), for instance, suggests that as researcher, we need to be aware of how different contexts affect the qualitative interview and how the language being used in each interview creates its own interactional context, thus creating a further layer of complexity. The project conducted by Copland et al. (2016) experienced similar layers of complexity during the data collection, whereby interviews and classroom observations were conducted in six different countries (Brunei, Cameroon, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) with 'native English speaker teachers' (NEST) and local English teachers (LETs).

Borg (2006) states that SRI is another technique for eliciting verbal commentaries on teachers' cognition. Andrews and McNeil (as cited in Borg, 2006) also suggest that stimulated interviews should be carried out "as soon as *practicable*" following observations. The purpose of the SRIs was to elicit talk about teaching in general and give an opportunity for the teachers to express their thoughts about specific events in the lessons they had just conducted. I would view the recorded lesson with the teacher, and the teacher would be asked to stop the recording every time he/she wanted to share his/her thoughts on a specific event. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent.

Table 4.3 is the summary of the Skype interview and classroom observation schedule for all the participants.

Table 4.3: Summary of Skype interviews and classroom observations conducted

Teacher/ No. of students	Data collection	Date	Class	Skills & Topic
Alice (45 students)	SI1	10/3/2015	-	-
	SRI1	22/4/2015	Year 2	Teaching Vocabulary Topic: Hobbies
	SRI2	07/05/2015 (10:50am)	Year 2	Teaching Vocabulary Topic: In my town
	SRI3	07/05/2015 (11:50am)	Year 2	Teaching Vocabulary Topic: In my town
	SRI4	20/08/2015	Year 2	Reading phonics (Segmenting and blending skills) & Writing
	SRI5	27/08/2015	Year 2	Listening and speaking-Topic: Food
	SRI6	03/09/2015		Reading Topic: Food
	SI2	28/02/2016	-	-
Salina (20 students)	SI1	12/03/2015	-	-
	SRI1	10/04/2015	Year 2	Writing/A farm experience
	SRI2	08/05/2015	Year 2	Grammar-Verb
	SRI3	12/08/2015	Year 5	Writing/Safety Issues
	SRI4	20/08/2015	Year 5	Grammar- Prepositions/Safety Issues
	SRI5	01/09/2015	Year 5	Reading – ‘Precious Creatures’
	SRI6	01/09/2015	Year 2	Reading -‘To the Zoo’
	SI2	13/01/2016	-	-
Erni (26 Students)	SI1	08/03/2015	-	-
	SRI1	09/04/2015	Year 3	From the sea
	SRI2	15/04/2015	Year 3	Sea creatures
	SRI3	13/05/2015	Year 3	Vocabulary/It’s story time
	SRI4	12/08/2015	Year 3	The Holidays
	SRI5	26/08/2015	Year 3	Writing/Fresh fruits
	SRI6	02/09/2015	Year 3	Grammar/Fresh fruits
	SI2	09/01/2016	-	-
Joanna (46 students)	SI1	08/03/2015	-	-
	SRI1	07/04/2015	Year 4	Listening & Speaking/Unit 6 People around me
	SRI2	07/04/2015	Year 3	Unit 5 Uniquely you
	SRI3	14/04/2015	Year 2	Language Arts/Friends
	SRI4	05/05/2015	Year 2	Language Arts/Farm in the city
	SRI5	06/08/2015	Year 2	Writing/Beautiful Flowers

Teacher/ No. of students	Data collection	Date	Class	Skills & Topic
	SRI6	24/08/2015	Year 2	Reading & writing/'How Melaka got its name'
	SI2	18/01/2016	-	-

***Codes for summary:**

SI – Skype Interview

SRI – Stimulated Recall interview

4.6.4 Documents: journal entries, field notes, and lesson plans

The study also involved other sources of data, including journal entries, field notes, and lesson plans. These documents were used to triangulate the data from the classroom observations and interviews. The teachers were expected to produce a lesson plan for each lesson, and the lesson plan was used as a guide during the classroom observation along with the classroom observation schedule. Initially, I also requested every participant to write a journal entry at the end of each week and send the entries to me at the end of each month to ensure that the journal entries were completed. I did not intend to set the number of words for the journal entry since this was completed on voluntary basis. However, due to teaching workload, each of them managed to produce only two journal entries: one entry during the first phase of field work, and another one during the second phase of field work. The participants wrote approximately 250 to 300 words for each journal entry. The content of the journal entries concerned the strengths or/and weaknesses of the lesson, and the lessons learned from the classroom experience. Borg (2006) highlights that journal writing can provide insights into teachers' cognitive processes, and in this study such insights were used to complement the findings from other data sources. However, in terms of reporting the data in this thesis, these documents were used as secondary data because the data from both Skype interviews and SRIs were massive.

4.7 Phases of data collection

The study was conducted in four phases in order to track the changes in the NQTs' knowledge and beliefs. The phases were established after taking into consideration the date the NQTs completed the degree programme and the dates they assumed duties as new teachers in their respective schools. The four phases of this study are illustrated in Figure 4.4.

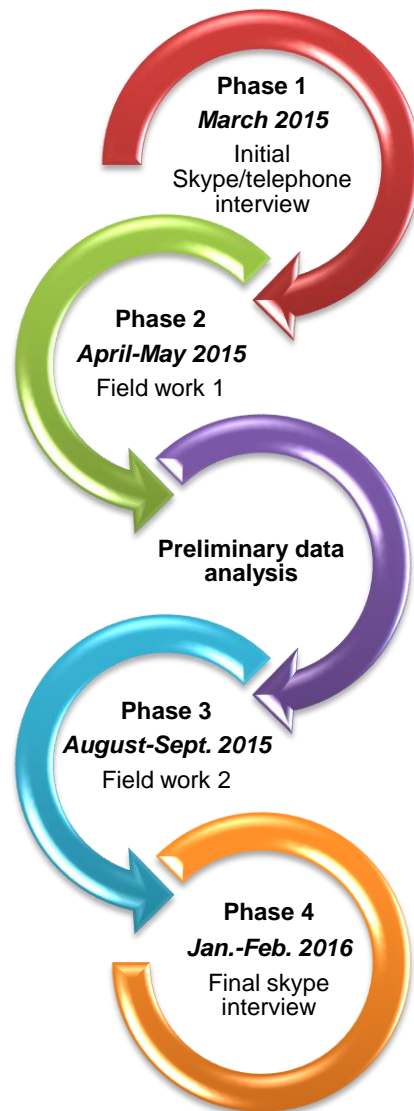


Figure 4.4 Research Phases.

Phase 1 consisted of Skype/telephone interviews. I conducted one-to-one Skype/telephone interviews in March 2015 after the participants graduated from their degree programmes and at the start of their teaching careers. The interviews served as background interviews which covered the four main themes of teacher learning, as illustrated in Figure 4.3 earlier. The main aim of conducting these interviews was to explore the participants' beliefs about teaching and learning at the beginning of their teaching careers.

Phase 2 started in April and ended in May 2015. This was the first field work in the study. Although the school academic year started in January, the participants were

posted to their respective schools in March 2015. I did not start collecting data immediately after they were posted, considering that the NQTs would need time to adjust and adapt to the new working environments. I then had the first face-to-face meetings with the participants to plan the classroom observations and journal writing. I also took the opportunity to build relationships with the participants and to gain overall views of the participants' knowledge and beliefs about teaching. The preliminary classroom observations took place in the first week of April 2015, and these observations were followed up with post-lesson interviews, i.e. SRIs. The primary purpose of the first meeting and preliminary classroom observations was to establish what their beliefs about teaching and learning were at the early stage of their teaching careers, and to compile a list of the participants' common practices. Apart from that, I also used the preliminary classroom observations and interviews in this phase to help me make necessary adjustments to the classroom observation guide and to improve on the interview questions.

Phase 3, the second field work, started in August and ended in September 2015. This was a continuation of the previous field work with more focused themes added to the classroom observations and post-lesson interviews since I started the preliminary data analysis after Phase 2. The participants were asked to write their second journal entries.

Phase 4 was conducted from January until February 2016. It was the final stage of the study, and the final Skype interviews were conducted. In this stage, the discussions in the interviews were based on the themes that had emerged throughout the study for the purpose of verification. The aim of these final interviews was to summarise and identify the ways in which participants' knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning had evolved during their first year of teaching.

4.8 Pilot study

I piloted the Skype interview schedule on 20 August, 12 September, and 14 September in 2014, while the classroom observation instrument was piloted on 10 September 2014. The aim was to trial the interview schedule and the research instrument to be used in classroom observations prior to the major study. The pilot studies carried out were very useful for developing my research skills, especially in dealing with the research instruments and for adapting the initial interview and

classroom observation schedules. The participants were three teacher trainees from the second cohort of the pre-service programme who were in their third year of study.

4.8.1 Skype/telephone interviews

The pilot studies helped me anticipate the technical and content-related issues that I might encounter in the main study. There were some technical issues which arose during the interview, but I still managed to complete the interview, and I received feedback on the questions. There were a few questions that the participants found difficult to answer, and their feedback enabled me to make necessary adaptations. Since I had the chance to pilot the interview schedule with three participants, the results from the first interview helped me to improve on my first set of interview questions. I was able to make some amendments to the questions before using them in the second and third pilot interviews on 12 and 14 September 2014. The second and third participants were able to answer all the interview questions except for one: i.e., "*Were there any other kinds of reflective practice during your teaching practice apart from the prescribed one?*" I had to explain that question since the participants felt that it was not clear to them. As a result, I decided to omit the question from the main study. The following points illustrate some issues concerning the technical and content-related aspects of Skype/telephone interviews.

(i) Technical aspects: The advantage of using technology such as Skype is that the participants can be contacted easily regardless of their locations. However, during the Skype interviews, I encountered problems because the participants had slow internet connections. This situation occurred during the second and third Skype interviews, and I had to resort to using the telephone and Viber (a smartphone application). Raento et al. (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) point out that the smartphone offers a potentially powerful tool for researchers. As for the final interview, even though Viber was used as an alternative, there were times when the speed of the internet connection hindered the communication, and I had to repeat the questions several times. I learned that, for the main study, I needed to ensure that the internet connection was stable enough for me to conduct the interviews.

(ii) Content-related aspects: Firstly, I discovered that some of the interview questions needed amendments. In the first pilot interview, the participant found some of the questions were vague and difficult to answer. The first pilot interview enabled me to amend my first interview schedule. I adapted the questions before using them in the second and third pilot interviews on 12 and 14 September 2014. As for the

second and final pilot interviews, the participants felt that the question related to reflective practice was not clear to them, and I had to clarify that question. Secondly, I also encountered a situation where the participant code-switched to her first language, the Malay language, when giving responses. Although it occurred on a few occasions only, this incident showed that I needed to foresee that the same situation might also occur in the main study. It seems that the participant code-switched due to her lack of proficiency in the target language. Apart from that, she also mentioned that she was able to express herself better in the Malay language. Hence, during the data collection, I allowed my participants to use the language that they felt most comfortable using but it should also be the language that I was able to understand. I then translated the interviews into the English language.

4.8.2 Classroom observation schedule

On 10 September 2014, I viewed the videos of 40-minute English lessons in three Malaysian primary classrooms, which were recorded during the practicum in August 2014. I used the observation schedule that I had adapted and developed (see Appendix E). At first, I included a set of questions taken from the English Language Teaching Development Project (ELTDP) observation feedback form. However, during the pilot study I realised that the list of questions restricted me from observing other aspects, thus I decided to omit the questions and replace them with 'Comments' (Refer to Appendix E). Below are the issues that arose from the piloting of the classroom observation schedule.

Technical aspects: In terms of the quality of video recording, the pictures and sounds of the three videos viewed were clear and good. There was not much interruption while the lessons were being recorded. Only in one of the lessons did the students occasionally wave at the video recorder, but most of the pupils in the classroom were engaged in the lesson. I could foresee that there would be some issues concerning the use of video recording in observations. I would need to be prepared by testing the gadget before the main study. I would test the equipment in the classroom during the first week of initial observation to familiarise the students with the mode of observation.

I could not trial the first part of the classroom observation schedule, which was 'Methodology & English Language Curriculum: lesson planning', since I did not have access to the lesson plan of the observed lesson. Although I could not pilot this section, I felt that it is an important aspect to be included since it could explore teacher

learning and the skills and knowledge learnt during the training programme. In the main study, I would need to obtain the lesson plan to have an overview of the lesson and examine it against the aspects observed especially the part on 'achievement of objectives'.

Content-related aspects: At first, I included a section on the difficulty level of the lesson, and a set of questions taken from the English Language Teaching Development Project (ELTDP) observation feedback form in the initial classroom observation schedule. However, during the pilot study I realised that the level of challenge was not relevant to the study as this information seemed to be more relevant to the pupils than the teachers being observed. In addition, I realised that some of the content in the schedule tended to assess the teacher trainees' performance. I also felt that aspects such as 'teacher presence/style/appearance' might lead me to become judgemental towards the teachers, so they needed to be avoided in the main study. In addition, the list of questions prepared to prompt me on the aspects in the initial schedule restricted me from observing other aspects that were not included in the schedule. Therefore, I decided to omit the questions and replace them with 'Comments' (see Appendix E).

There was an intention to omit 'Seek external advice and support for self-improvement' (Part C: Learner and reflective practice) since I thought that I could not observe the aspects and the teachers would be able to seek advice and support only after the lesson ended. However, I noticed that one of the trainees participating in the pilot study consulted the other trainees who were in the classroom about correct vocabulary use. In another incident, the trainee had to ask his co-operating teacher to help him control the class. Based on these observations, I decided to retain this aspect in the schedule to account for similar situations in the main study.

Overall, the pilot studies provided an insightful experience that helped me anticipate some of the issues which might occur in the main study. After viewing the videos, I found that the section on 'Aspects' was a useful guide that could provide me with a scope of observation. I also learned that the focus in every observation would be different since each lesson is unique. Based on my analysis, I identified four similarities from the three lessons and related them to the relevant literature.

- i. Classroom management issues
- ii. The use of mother tongue to deliver the content and to control the class

- iii. A lot of teacher talk, although the trainees had been trained in student-centred teaching methods
- iv. Trainees' ability to evaluate their own performance during the lessons



4.9 Data collection: challenges and opportunities



As stated earlier in Section 4.6, the initial plan was to have three full months of field work since that was the maximum period granted by my sponsor. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the plan to conduct single-phase data collection at the research site between April and June 2015 was revised to include two phases. The first phase was from April till May 2015, and the second phase was conducted from August till September 2015. It is important to note that other initial plans were also affected besides the field work schedule. Despite having to make changes to the research plan, I was able to gather useful data from the research site.

4.9.1 The first challenge: changes in the research plan

The 'Participant Consent Form' (Appendix D (ii)) stipulated four research activities (see Table 4.4) as the initial plan of action. Due to the reasons stated in the table, I had to make adjustments to the initial plan.

Table 4.4: The changes in research methods and plan

	Initial Plan & Research Activities	Changes	Reason(s)
1.	Two Skype/telephone interviews	-	No changes
2.	Four classroom observations and post-lesson observation interviews		Six to seven observations since the second phase of field work offered more time
3.	Two focus group interviews		Not implemented due to time constraints and the possibility that participants influence one another's views in a focus group

	Initial Plan & Research Activities	Changes	Reason(s)
4.	Up to twelve journal entries	 	Only two journal entries due to the NQTs' workload

I conducted the initial Skype interviews in early 2015, once the participants had received their posting letters, and I conducted the final Skype interviews in January and February 2016, a year after they had begun teaching in schools. The initial and final interviews enabled me to investigate how the NQTs' beliefs at the beginning of their teaching careers had changed at the end of the first year of teaching. As for classroom observations and post-lesson observation interviews (SRIs), since the initial plan was to spend only three months in Malaysia, I intended to conduct four classroom observations. Nevertheless, with the changes made to the research plan, I was able to conduct six to seven observations and SRIs for each participant. The summary of the number of classroom observations conducted was shared previously in **Table 4.2**.

I had to cancel the two focus group (FG) interviews due to time limitations since the classroom observations were time-consuming and it was difficult to make meeting arrangements with the participants. In addition, I realised that due to the nature of my study, it was not advisable to have a FG interview because the NQTs might influence one another's opinions in the group discussion. Freitas et al. (1998) mention that in some situations it is not advisable to use FG as a research method. The potential risk of adopting FG might affect the originality of the data when their opinions are affected by others during FG interview. As for journal entries, initially I planned that each participant would write at least one weekly journal entry, which would mean that each of them had to produce 12 journal entries (4 weeks X 3 months) throughout the study. However, due to time constraints and the NQTs' workloads, they managed to write only two journal entries. Although I had to deal with the challenges of having to revise my initial research plan to include two phases, the data that I gathered during the second phase of field work allowed me to see the changes in the NQTs' beliefs and practices in the classroom, which I would not have been able to do if I were to proceed with the initial plan.

4.9.2 The second challenge: planning, and conducting the observations

Before I embarked on the classroom observations, I was required to go to the Economic Planning Unit at the Prime Minister's Department to obtain the original letter of approval and a research pass to gain entry to the schools for my field work. Once I received the letter on 31 March 2015, I arranged the first meeting with the participants, but only three of them were able to attend the meeting. One of them was absent with dengue fever, and she was on two weeks' sick leave. I briefed them on the overall plan of my data collection and discussed the journal entries they would have to write. The participants said that they would prefer to be given topics on which they could reflect. I informed them that the topics would be provided on a monthly basis based on the theme(s) that emerged during classroom observations. I then set the dates for the preliminary observations, and I collected their teaching timetables to make arrangements for the preliminary observations. The overall planning and implementation of the observations were far more complicated than expected. Below were some of the challenges:

1. Teachers' timetables were used to determine the suitable time to observe the participants. However, it was not an easy task since the teachers were occupied with teaching seven out of ten periods in a day at times. I ended up observing the same class and set of students in most cases. In addition, since I had to cater to their availability, there were times that I conducted two to three observations in a day, which was physically exhausting due to the distance involved in travelling. There was also an instance where I reached the school and was informed that the participant was on sick leave but she had forgotten to notify me.
2. Teachers' workloads and other school activities affected my observation plan. I had to cancel and postpone some of the observations. Sometimes, even after we had agreed on a particular time for an observation, there would always be ad-hoc school programmes or other activities which required me to cancel the observation. For instance, I had to cut short one of my observations because half of the class was detained by the discipline teacher. At times, the participants were called to attend training at the education department a day before or on the actual day of my observation. There were also instances where the scheduled observations were affected due to school tests, Sports Day, or the participants carrying out their duties such as taking students to various competitions. Below are a few excerpts of my participants' responses on such matters:

- a) Alice: *I couldn't make it this week ma'am cause I'm away for the coming three days. It's a very sudden decision from GPK (Assistant Head teacher) for me to attend LINUS course.*
- b) Erni: *I won't be around Tuesday until Thursday. 'Ada kursus 3 hari' (I have a three-day course). (Sad emoticons).*
- c) Alice: *Sorry to tell you that I need to cancel off tomorrow observation as I got to attend a course at JPN (Education State Department) tomorrow. Can we postpone to next week?*
- d) Salina: *Can the observation be postponed to end of this month? It's a revision week and I was given few sets of worksheets to do with the students throughout this whole week.*
- e) Alice: *I have native speaker guy observing me this week. And all afternoons are taken up for workshops with him*

From the examples given above, I sympathised with the participants with their workloads and other ad-hoc activities, which did not just affect my observation but most importantly, the lesson preparation and teaching-learning activities were interrupted.

3. A school administrator had queries about my research although she had been informed earlier. In most cases, the school administrators were very accommodating during my data collection. However, on one occasion I had to deal with a deputy head teacher, who wanted a letter of permission for documentation purposes, and she instructed my participant to write a report on the observations and my research with all the permission letters attached to it.
4. Obtaining the 'right' data was not always a straightforward process. The SRI was suitable for encouraging the participants to share their thoughts on a particular event or events. However, most of the time, they would also share other information which was not relevant to my research. We spent about one to one-and-a-half hours on the SRIs after the observations, and at times they would share their own personal stories or other issues such as their dissatisfaction with the school management. It was indeed challenging since they needed someone to listen to them but at the same time I was pressed for time in my attempt to obtain the 'right' data. Nevertheless, I appreciate their time, commitment, and participation in my research.

4.9.3 The third challenge: the language of data collection

Although I intended to conduct my interviews in the English language, I did not make it compulsory for the participants to converse in English since their levels of proficiency might vary. Before I started the data collection, I could foresee that the participants might code-switch during the interviews. In addition, the participants might also switch to the Malay language during classroom observations based on my previous experience observing trainee teachers from this cohort. As a researcher, I allowed them to use the language that they were comfortable with especially if it enabled them to express themselves effectively. Since my participants are multi-racial and three of them taught in national-type schools, there were times they had to speak Mandarin or Tamil when giving examples about a particular situation, especially when they wanted to talk about the use of other languages in the classroom and how they responded to it. Once a participant explained in Mandarin that it was easier to use Mandarin to teach a particular topic. It was a challenge to comprehend the content of the interviews at times.

These are some of the challenges that I faced in my study, and I have learnt important lessons from them. As a researcher, I felt that I always need to expect the unexpected, and I ought to be able to adapt to different situations in order to obtain relevant data. Definitely, data collection, especially field work, was a very challenging part of this study. As Creswell (2012) points out, difficulty scheduling an interview, and handling emotional outbursts, are a few of the field issues during interviews. In the end, however, I felt the satisfaction of having the opportunity to work in various educational environments and a sense of fulfilment after exploring in depth the real-life challenges faced by the participants in the process of seeking answers to my research questions.

4.10 Data analysis

There is a diverse range of qualitative data analysis methods, and one of the researcher's concerns is choosing the right ones. Creswell (2012) states that qualitative research is interpretive research, whereby the researcher makes his/her own personal interpretation to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information. In addition, Cohen et al. (2011) state that there is no single correct way to analyse and present qualitative data: "how one does it should abide by the issue of *fitness for purpose*" (p.537), meaning that the researcher needs to be clear about what he/she wants the data analysis to do, as

this will determine which approach to data analysis is appropriate. Since I conducted qualitative data collection and the data were obtained from various sources, I used Creswell's six steps of data analysis as a guide. The six steps are commonly used in analysing qualitative data, and they are explained below. I realised that the process of data collection and analysis would not be as neat as Creswell suggests since I had encountered some issues in the data collection process during my pilot study and later during the actual data collection.

4.10.1 Step 1: prepare and organise data for analysis

The data gathered were extensive, and initially I organised the data based on the phases of the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and typed the field notes.

4.10.1.1 Transcription

I used 'Otranscribe', a free transcription tool, and NVivo10 software, a qualitative data analysis tool, to transcribe the audio recordings of the interviews. I selected two transcription tools based on the availability of the tools. According to Mackey and Gass (2015), the process of transcription varies depending on the research goals. I adopted a verbatim transcription approach, which means that I typed out everything that I heard in the audio files. I adhered to the transcription conventions such as giving each speaker a pseudonym, recording hesitations, indicating short and long pauses, and recording inflections, as suggested by Cohen et al. (2011). However, only the features of interest for the study are transcribed; in other words, only the conventions that are relevant to the research aims, and the information required by the researcher were recorded (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Mackey & Gass, 2015). The transcripts include pauses which were indicated by three continuous dots, with or without brackets – for example, (...) – fillers such as 'mmm', and laughter. I included laughter since one of the participants would laugh at almost every sentence uttered. However, I did not include facial expressions and gestures. I also transcribed every word spoken by the participants without correcting any grammatical errors, repetitions, or false starts. The transcription was punctuated following the standard conventions for written English.

4.10.1.2 A note on translation

As stated earlier, although I conducted my interviews in English, I did not make it compulsory for the participants to converse in English since their levels of proficiency might vary. Three of my participants spoke English during the interviews, but they would code-switch if they could not find the suitable words to describe their thoughts,

when they shared examples from their classroom practices, or when they expressed their views towards L1. However, Erni spoke the Malay language most of the time and code-switched during the interviews. I transcribed all the interviews as recorded, and later I translated only the data which I reported. I tried to ensure that the translation did not deviate from the original utterances. I referred to '*Kamus Dewan Bahasa*', a trusted dictionary for the Malay language, which is endorsed by the official government bodies. I also verified the translation by consulting an expert in the field.

4.10.2 Step 2: explore and code the data

Once the interviews were transcribed, I read through the transcripts to obtain a general sense of the data in the preliminary analysis. I tried to generate the initial code labels after examining the text database and reflecting on what the participants said. Cohen et al. (2011) explain that a code is a simple label the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or a piece of information and it enables the researcher to identify similar information. In addition, it enables the researcher to search and retrieve data that bear the same code. Codes can be regarded as a categorising system.

4.10.3 Step 3: coding to build description and themes

As for the main analysis, I used both manual method and computer software. I uploaded the interview data transcribed using 'Otranscribe' onto NVivo10, and the data transcribed using NVivo10 remained in the software. NVivo10 helped me to organise and structure my data systematically. I highlighted the data and developed the themes by using Nodes in NVivo, the function of which is similar to coding. I coded the data from case to case, creating the primary nodes first, and later I created sub-nodes where sub-themes emerged from the data. The nodes and sub-nodes helped me to identify shared/common information. Examples of NVivo10 are presented in Appendix F (i. An example of NVivo10 coding, ii. An example of initial themes and sub-themes from NVivo10, and iii. An example of a thematic category in NVivo10 from an SRI transcript). Some of the themes were interrelated to portray the complexity of the phenomenon. I also printed the transcriptions and manually colour-coded the data to cross-check the codes or nodes. An example of the printouts of the transcripts, colour-code used on the transcripts, and an example of the written themes and sub-themes is presented in Appendix G. Different colours were used to represent different themes: for instance, orange was for 'teaching resources', red for 'classroom management', and blue for sub-themes of classroom management – for example, 'attitudes towards L1' and 'moral values'.

It is important to note that I had pre-defined themes from the literature reviews as well as from my pilot study. Examples of the themes included 'classroom management issues', 'attitudes towards the use of L1 in English classroom', 'teacher-centred vs. student-centred approach', and 'reflective practice'. These themes guided me during my first phase of data collection. During the initial stage of my analysis, I used NVivo10 to perform my preliminary analysis. An example of emerging themes and sub-themes of the preliminary analysis of Alice, one of the participants is included in Appendix H (i), and an example of the diagram from 'Nodes' and 'sources' (data from SRI, phase one fieldwork notes, and the first journal entry) coded in NVivo10 is included in Appendix H (ii).

In the second phase of data collection, I used several emerging themes from the preliminary analysis as a focus, and I managed to construct other themes afterwards. However, I later opted to analyse the data manually using the manual colour-coding approach since I discovered that the set-back of using such data analysis software is that it requires further training and the process is time-consuming. In addition, Holliday (2015) stresses that he would not personally recommend using software as "*it cannot replace the intuition of the researcher who was there when the data was collected*" (p.54). Analysing the data using the colour-coding system from various sources (Skype interviews, SRI, journal entries) seemed to be a tedious task, but the advantage is that I was able to analyse the data in greater depth and gain deeper insights into the issues under investigation.

4.10.4 Step 4: represent and report qualitative findings

In the introduction of Chapter 5, a diagram is provided to show the framework of how I would report the findings from cases. I divided the findings reports into three sections: i) before first year of teaching; ii) starting the first year; and iii) during the first year of teaching. I included excerpts from the data when necessary.

4.10.5 Step 5: interpret the findings

From the codes and themes, one should be able to construct an understanding about what can be learnt from the data through interpreting the findings. The interpretation includes advancing personal views, making comparisons between findings and the literature, and suggesting limitations and future research (Creswell, 2012). Apart from the challenge of choosing the right approach to manage the data, it is also challenging when it comes to presenting the data, especially when the word limit is

the biggest constraint. One of the lessons learnt is that there are no hard and fast rules about analysing and managing your data.

4.10.6 Step 6: validating findings/trustworthiness

Creswell (2012) suggests several strategies, such as member checking or triangulation, as means to enhance the accuracy or credibility of the findings. Both Stake (1994) and Lu (2005) also encourage the use of member checking, whereby the researcher asks the participant(s) of the study to check the accuracy of the account. I employed member checking after the first phase of data collection (Skype interviews and several SRIs) to ensure the accuracy of the data, asking them to double check the content. During the second phase of data collection, I managed to complete the preliminary data analysis. After the first classroom observation in the second phase of classroom observations, I shared with the participants the emerging themes I had identified. In addition, I used the final Skype interview for a kind of member checking of the data at the end of the study. All of them agreed with what I reported. This process is indeed important, as Maxwell (2012) points out that there is a possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and their own perspectives on what is going on, as well as the possibility of researchers having their own biases and misunderstandings of what they have observed.

Apart from member checking, I adopted data triangulation to enhance the accuracy of the research data. It is a process of corroborating evidence either from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection. In my study, I triangulated the data from Skype interviews, stimulated recall interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and two journal entries. Creswell (2012) argues that this strategy will ensure the accuracy and credibility of the study because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes. After the initial stage of Skype interviews, I gathered the emerging themes for follow-ups in the ensuing classroom observations. I then cross-checked them with the themes that emerged from the classroom observation data to see whether there were any similarities. During the final Skype interviews, I revisited the data from the first Skype interviews as well as the first and the second phases of classroom observations to check their accuracy.

4.11 Ethical considerations

I received ethical approval from the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee, on 13 October 2014 (Appendix I). The main ethical issues in my study concern access and acceptance (permission), data protection, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and language. Since the study took place in Malaysian public primary schools and involved newly qualified Malaysian teachers, I obtained permission to conduct research in Malaysia through the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) at the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia. The application was reviewed by referral agencies identified by the EPU, and the process took about a month before a final decision was reached. I obtained approval from the Research Promotion and Co-ordination Committee at the EPU to conduct research in Malaysia on the 6 November 2014 (Appendix J). The approval letter from the EPU was essential for me to request permission from the state education department and later the district education department to gain access to schools to conduct my research. I managed to get the approval letter via email to conduct my research in the selected schools a week after I submitted my application. The approval letter from the state education department (JPWP) was dated 8 January 2015 (Appendix K). The aims of the research were made clear to the school administrators.

It is important for a researcher to be aware of the ethical guidelines in research to make sure that the responsibilities to participants are adhered to. BERA's 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2011), for instance, provides guidelines on responsibilities, such as responsibilities to participants and responsibilities to sponsors of research. In this study, my participants were given the 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix D), which includes the elements underlined in the 'Voluntary Informed Consent', 'Right to withdraw' and 'Privacy' section as, as suggested by BERA's ethical guidelines. Prior to research, I checked that the participants understood the purpose of the study, and that they did not feel pressured to participate. I had a session with them and I went through the details in the 'Participant Information Sheet' to ensure that my research participants understood the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported. They were also informed in the 'Participant Information Sheet' that they have the right to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they need only inform me via email. Cohen et al. (2011) also note that the researcher needs to identify and address the main areas of ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of participating in a particular study, before the interviews or any type of data collections commence.

Aside from the classroom observations and interviews, I video-recorded the teachers' lessons. The video recording focused on the teachers' classroom practices, not the pupils, but inevitably some of the students were filmed in the video recordings. The video recordings would only be used by me to collect data for my study, and I would not refer to any individual pupils in my thesis. In Malaysia, it is not a common practice for the researcher to get consent from parents for video recording their children. However, I still sought parents' consent via the school authority and I prepared a copy of the consent form for the parents (Appendix D: iii. Parental consent form).

The following four chapters, Chapters 5-8, present the data collected through the methodological framework and process elaborated in this chapter. The next chapter, Chapter 5, contains the data gathered from the first NQT, Alice.

Chapter 5 Alice's story

5.1 Introduction

An in-depth study of the data gathered from various phases of data collection revealed significant findings about the evolving thoughts of four newly qualified teachers. The data gathered revealed distinctive reactions towards their first-year teaching experiences as well as shared areas of concern. The thoughts and reactions towards the teaching practices of the four participants were narrated separately, case by case. In this findings section, the stories from individual cases are presented in a way which allows the reader to see the evolution of knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning in the first year of teaching. First, for all the stories, I am going to present the participants' past experiences of schooling and teacher training, then briefly, I am going to set the scene, i.e. situate the context of the school in which the participant is teaching, before sharing their experiences during their first year in the school. Figure 5.1 below illustrates the story's framework for all the participants.

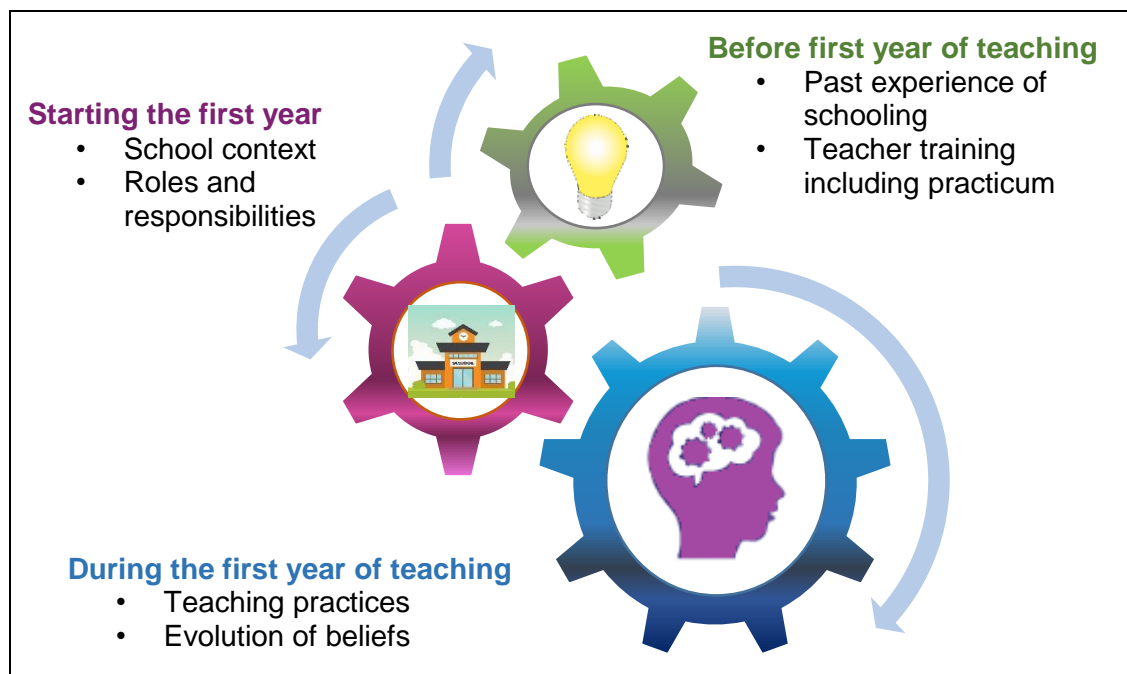


Figure 5.1 Framework of the story

As for the stories of the four case studies (Chapters 5 to 8), each case is given the following pseudonym:

NQT 1 - Alice

NQT 2 - Salina

NQT 3 - Erni

NQT 4 - Joanna

Codes for data presentation are as follows, SRI for stimulated recall interview, SI for Skype interview, and L is for line in the transcription. An example of the transcription can be found in Appendix G. SRI1, for instance, stands for the first stimulated recall interview conducted after the first classroom observation, SI1 stands for the first Skype interview, and SI2 stands for the second or final Skype interview.

In 'narrating' the stories in Chapters 5 to 8, I used the ideas emerging from the participants' data as sub-headings, where relevant.

Introduction to Alice's story. In this first findings chapter, I present the story of Alice, the first NQT in my case studies. At the initial stage, it can be seen that Alice holds to her beliefs firmly, which are influenced by her personal experience as a language learner and based on the knowledge 'learnt' during teacher training. During the first year of teaching, it seems that Alice tried to accommodate and adjust her previous set of beliefs with her new experiential knowledge. However, towards the end of the year it was rather a sad ending, when she ended up being what she thinks she needs to be in order to keep all the 'others' happy rather than what she believes to be best. There are a lot of interdependent factors that have influenced her beliefs and thus affected her classroom practices. These factors are from both inside and outside the classroom, and even the factors inside the classroom are influenced by the culture outside it.

5.2 Before first year of teaching

5.2.1 Evoking the past: English language learning experience of a Chinese student in a national-type Chinese school

My personal experience as a language learner. “Can I talk about the dislike part first ma’am?” – that was the first request from Alice when we had our very first Skype interview in March 2015. During this interview, Alice shared her difficulty of learning the target language, because she felt that English was very difficult and she did not like the language at all. English seemed like an alien language for her and during English lessons she felt that the ‘alien’ words ‘go in one ear and out the other’. Alice shared that very often her English class was boring and most of the time she went blank. During her secondary schooling, she said that her English teacher had made her lose interest in learning English. Alice vividly remembered that her Form 4 English teacher could not use Mandarin at all because he was not Chinese. Thus, he would only use English during English lessons. Alice disliked his class because of his strong emphasis on the English language. She felt that she did not get anything from the lessons because she could not understand a single word.

In another instance, Alice experienced learning English from a Chinese teacher who spoke Hokkien but could not speak Mandarin. Mandarin is the medium of instruction in a national-type Chinese school and other Chinese dialects are prohibited. These two occurrences were among a few other unpleasant experiences learning English. Alice, being completely immersed in her Chinese community and surrounded by Chinese friends in a national-type Chinese school, could not find a purpose for her to learn English since she knew that she would not be using the language in her daily life. She shared,

For primary most of the teacher they used code switching...that's why I could understand...but come to secondary, the teachers emphasised on English. They wanted us to use English all the time...even she's Chinese she didn't use Chinese with us. So I find it very hard for us to understand and actually I lost interest in the class.

(S11, L27-28)

5.2.2 Embarking on teacher training

'It is my luck!' Tracing Alice's footsteps in becoming an English teacher.

Reflecting on Alice's struggle in learning English, it made me wonder about her decision to apply for the Bachelor of Teaching specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programme. Despite her second language learning experience, Alice said she managed to score B for English in *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM), a national exam equivalent to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). She was laughing hard when she said that she was just trying her luck when she applied for this programme, following the advice of her school counsellor, who introduced her to the TESL programme (SI1, L68). Apart from that, Alice's brother-in-law motivated her to pick up a language and from that she decided to apply for the programme. She did not expect that she would be accepted into this programme, and she repeatedly said, *"I choose this course based on my luck (giggling)...ya...based on my luck"* (SI1, L74). She was unprepared for the interview for the teaching programme because she was away for the ³National Service Training Programme and she had to take a few days leave in order to attend the interview.

Adjusting oneself from 'Alien land' to 'Wonderland'. It was indeed an adventurous journey for Alice to travel from an 'unknown land', a place where English seems 'alien' to her, and it was only luck that brought her to 'Wonderland', which is yet to be explored. Alice was indeed surprised when she received the result of the interview. It was a turning point in her life when she said that she started to realise that she needed to use English fully to communicate, and she felt that it was a bit troublesome for her – *"I struggle so long ma'am"* (SI1, L82). However, it started becoming an interesting language learning journey. She recalled,

I think... my... my... classmate was Viknes... she was my housemate... she was sitting next to me... me... Viknes... and the other one was Maisarah... so I actually told Viknes that I came for this English course but I can't really speak good English. So, initially we were... because she couldn't speak Mandarin and I couldn't speak Tamil and so we ended up using Malay (laughing)... ya... very interesting part...

(SI1, L84)

³The National Service Training Programme is a three-month national service programme for selected 18-year-old Malaysian youth trainees.

When asked about the most useful modules that helped to prepare her to teach English to primary school students, Alice acknowledged that the four main modules – English Studies, Language Development, Language Descriptions and Social Studies – actually helped her to gain a lot of English content. In fact, she admitted that she knew more about English language as a result of the ITE programme and these modules had helped her to form a better foundation as compared to her previous English language learning experiences during her school years. Her love for the language began to grow during the one-and-a-half years of her foundation. She recollected,

It helps me a lot. I learn a lot in one and a half year. Now I've started to like lovee... English a little bit (giggle). I didn't say a lot... (giggling) only a little bit. One of the good example would be like I started to watch English movies...(giggle). In my previous experience, I didn't really like English movies... ya...

(SI1b, L29-31)

Her experience seems to suggest that one could develop an interest towards learning an 'alien' language even if there was a struggle in the initial stage of learning. One of the interesting language features that I encountered during the interviews with Alice was that, as in the excerpt above, she giggles a lot, even when the issues discussed were on a serious matter. One of the reasons might be her lack of confidence and nervousness in talking to me, one who might seem to be 'inspector-like' since I was observing her lessons. It is important to note that I was once the lecturer for her cohort but I did not know her personally or have a close relationship with her. When I realised this might be the case, I tried to ensure that she was comfortable and did not feel threatened by my presence. I would offer her my stories on teaching practices or experiences related to her current situation.

5.3 Starting the first year of teaching

Setting foot in school. Alice's experience of the transition from trainee teacher to being a NQT was quite a challenging one. One of the first challenges was the unexpected posting to the national-type Chinese school. It was not just her, the first cohort of her TESL programme had a shock due to the unexpected action by the MoE. Generally, the trainees were trained to be primary English teachers in a national

school and to their surprise, some were sent to the national-type Chinese or Tamil schools, where they had to make adjustments to adapt to the new environment of a majority of Chinese or Tamil students. The trainees had to make adjustments to some things, including the difference in the time allocated for English, i.e. 300 minutes in SJK schools compared with 150 minutes in SJK (C) or SJK (T) schools. The difference in time allocated for English language had a great effect on them, especially in terms of planning and implementing English lessons.

5.3.1 School context

During the first visit to Alice's school, I managed to meet the school deputy head teacher and interviewed her about the school ethos, environment and general information about the school. Box 5.1 below is the background of the school.

Box 5.1: Background School A

The school is a *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)* (SJKC) which stands for national-type Chinese school and it is co-educational. SJKC is an institution with a majority of Chinese students. The syllabus is based on the national curriculum but it is designed, approved and revised by Chinese education bodies. School A was formerly a school with a low enrolment of a mere 108-117 students and 16 teachers with a class size of 25 at the most. The student population has seen a tenfold increase since it was relocated to a new area in 2012. The new building is situated approximately 12 km from the city centre and the predominantly Chinese community is benefitting from the move and the demand for a Chinese vernacular school here is high. Currently, the students' enrolment has reached more than 1000 students with a smallest class size of 46. In 2014 the total number of teachers was 42 including three NQTs. Generally, it is a common belief that Chinese schools have a different ethos compared with other types of school; it is very academically driven and the discipline enforcement in a Chinese school is stricter.

I managed to conduct six classroom observations with Alice and the number of students during the lessons I observed ranged from 34 to 46. Students in Alice's class were all Chinese and they were seated according to traditional classroom setting, each students with their own desk facing the white board.

5.3.2 Alice's workload in school

Right from the start, Alice had a range of roles to which little preparation was given during her training years. She was given the responsibility of teaching three different subjects: English Language, Physical Education, and Art. She had five classes of 26 periods to teach English Language and eight periods for Physical Education and Art. The total number of her teaching hours at first was 30 periods early in the year and it had since increased to 34 periods per week. One period equals 30 minutes, which is the minimum time for a lesson. Besides teaching, Alice was also given the responsibility of acting as an advisor for the school library and English society. In addition, she held an administrative post at the *Tabung kumpulan wang amanah pelajar miskin* (KWAPM) or Trust Fund for Poor Students. The main objective of KWAMP is to help the parents with low incomes and to reduce the dropout rate and eradication of school due to poverty (MoE, 2016).

A few weeks after Alice was posted to this school in early 2014, she was down with chicken pox and was given medical leave for three weeks. My preliminary classroom observation with her took place a week after she was back at school. She mentioned that she had to readapt with the students who were 'good' before she left for her sick leave. Frustrated, she complained that the relief teacher that took over her place taught the students but "*they didn't follow the system, didn't write the record book*" and she had to rewrite the lesson plans for the whole three weeks. The week before my observation the students had just taken their exam and they had to complete the LINUS screening test. According to her, it had been a stressful week. She informed me that she had prepared the lesson plan for this very first observation on 22 April 2015. She had seven periods that day and she had to stay back until 3.30 pm. Since Alice had a tight schedule, I had taken the opportunity to conduct the stimulated recall interview (SRI) straight away after the lesson. This had been the case for all the SRIs I conducted. Since it was done immediately after the observation, it did not give me the opportunity to watch the video carefully before the interview and reflect or prepare the questions for her. Although I felt that I should have tried watching the video before conducting the SRI, it was actually quite difficult to find time to do that since the participants had to rush to their next class. I was then satisfied when I felt that Alice managed to share and reflect on her lessons and at times I followed up on her reflections with my own interview questions. The next section is Alice's sharing about her classroom practices.

5.4 Welcome to the real world of teaching! Surviving the first year

Throughout the first year, Alice endured a never-ending trial-and-error teaching approach in order to meet the lesson's aim and to cater to her student's needs. Nevertheless, her story also seems to reflect the exhausting life of a first-year teacher having to cater to and please 'other people' apart from her students. Below are some examples of Alice's teaching practices, which reflect the changes in her beliefs about teaching and learning.

Attitudes towards the use of L1 in English classroom. During the initial stage of her teaching, she tried to relate her own language learning experience and emphasised the use of the target language in order to master the language. Alice would ensure that she used only English during her English lesson, although she knew that, from her own experience, it would put off the students.

As I told you ma'am... as a ... I was a third, second language learner... I feel like... I actually understand what the... what my student have it now... the feeling of learning English... so right now I tried to use fully English... but I can see most of the students really lost their interest... because they couldn't understand...

(S11b, L59)

Because from my experience I believe that... when you use fully English... when you immerse them in this environment... they actually could pick up a little bit... but there will be very slow progress... because when I first came to IPG (ITE)... I had to pick up the language... a lot...

(S11b, L80)

However, upon realising that her students had difficulty in understanding her lesson, sometimes she would simplify it in Mandarin, depending on the situation.

So, I'm trying to make them feel more comfortable in my class... I try to use English but when it comes to simple simple things I will still talk to them in Mandarin.

(SI1b, L85)

Since Alice tried her best to encourage the use of English in the classroom, she would avoid using other languages there. She had chosen to talk in Mandarin outside the classroom to ensure that her students understood the lesson. She had also made that decision because her students would think that she was an 'alien' if she kept on using English. She shared,

But outside the classroom I talk to them in Mandarin... is part... is kinda like... building rapport, good rapport with them... because when I speak English they will think that I'm alien... they asked me where you come from they thought I'm from oversea.

(SI1b, L86)

Towards greater tolerance of L1. A few months into teaching, when I had my second phase of classroom observation, Alice showed greater tolerance of the use of L1. She also used a lot more Mandarin than before. Towards the end, she was also quite flexible with the use of other languages (Malay). This is because even in a good class there would still be a few students who could not understand. They felt a bit strange because it is not their mother tongue, and felt like there was a barrier. Alice shared, *"It's just what I felt last time"* (SRI5, L571). This scenario seems to suggest that Alice used her own prior experience to try and understand her students. Thus, at times, Alice would opt to code-switch:

Somehow you have to look at the students.

When teacher code-switch, it actually helps the students to learn and they can co-operate with you more.

(SRI5, L557 & L561)

The most important thing for her is that as long as Alice's students get the meaning, she would code-switch. She appears to believe that if she uses only English in the

classroom, it would be very difficult to get the students' attention, especially when they are very weak in the language. It is fair to state that Alice's stance about language learning and the use of L1 depends on her students' needs and abilities.

I think... it's important to instil them with the right attitude... ya... if they are interested in the language they will learn, if they are not, they wouldn't bother at all in the class... they don't even participate... if you have the activity for them... they don't do it.

(S12, L308)

Despite her students' low English proficiency, she chose to code switch only during certain parts of the lesson because she believes that it would be meaningless if the teacher conducts an English lesson using Mandarin. It means that the students would master Mandarin rather than learning English. However, for weaker students, she had no choice but to use Mandarin. For instance, for a very weak class in Year 3, she said, *"I actually teach them from the basic, I didn't speak English with them, beginning of the year I tried, but I feel like it's not that effective... they are not listening at all... so I actually conducted the lesson in Mandarin"* (S12, L310).

Alice would use English most of the time if she was teaching students with good proficiency: *"The good one was basically all in English, I speak English to them... all the time so they understand"* (S12, L316). Again, this depends on the needs and the level of the students: *"If they are good already, we can bring them one step beyond but if they are zero at all you have to use translation or else at the end of the day, you speak in English... it's like alien language to them"* (S12, L320). It does not mean that the 'poor' are bound to remain 'poor' as she mentioned earlier that she would code switch to ensure that her students get the meaning.

Apart from dealing with the use of L1 in her English classroom, Alice had to find ways to deal with classroom management and keep on searching for 'good' survival skills for her to keep on 'floating' and not 'drowning' on her initial quest to find a 'good' classroom practice which suited her and her students best.

'To cane or not to cane?' Towards a better classroom management. During the first Skype interview, Alice emphasises that it is important to build a good rapport with the students in order to improve classroom management. She states that, *"When you're good with the students, they'll listen to you and you actually save time in classroom management"* (S11b, L171). However, in the first phase of classroom observation, her focus was primarily on managing the classroom and not on developing rapport. During my first classroom observation, there was a range of classroom management strategies she adopted to cope with mixed abilities students. Based on my field notes, I have recorded 19 examples of utterances on classroom management strategies. Some of the examples are, *'Raise your hand and keep quiet'* and *'What must you do when you saw me raising hand?'* There were times that she threatened the students, *'If you talk to your friend again, I'll deduct one mark from your exam'*, *'If you don't like your chair, I'll take away your chair'* (upon seeing a boy who could not sit still), and *'Talk, talk, talk, tomorrow can't pass up to me, you're not getting your exam paper'*.

The most obvious strategy, which came as a surprise, was her strong opinion about caning. It is important to note that caning is part of a 'culture' in national-type Chinese schools. Since Alice experienced attending Chinese school herself, she seems to be quite comfortable with caning as an approach to discipline the students. Alice felt that caning is the fastest and the most effective approach. She said that she had started using the cane since Day One and shared that other factors had influenced her beliefs apart from her Chinese education background, including the big class size of about 40 students. It was indeed difficult for her to control such a big number of students and she appears to believe that since the class size is difficultly big for her to control, punishment like this will be the fastest, the most effective approach (SRI1, L42-54).

In terms of managing the classroom and caning the students, Alice has her own way in implementing them. First, she warned the students about caning and then she would cane them on their palm if her students did not bring their book or complete their homework. Alice would cane them once, if the student did not bring their book on the first day, and it would be twice/double caning on the second day. Her students became scared because she would cane them if they did not hand in their work (SRI1, L88-90). Although caning might seem a very harsh approach in disciplining the students to some people, it depends on how the teacher approaches it. Although I have stated earlier that Alice has a strong stand regarding caning, on one occasion, one of her students did not bring their homework book but, since the students were

punished the day before, instead of caning them for not bringing their books, Alice decided to get them a new book. She recalled: *"The solution is to get them the book, so that the students can pass up the book to the teacher"* (SRI1, L60).

Time is precious and the cane is essential. TIME. Time can be one of the important factors that influence teacher's decisions in selecting the best classroom practices, and for Alice, it is the most important factor that influences her decision to use the cane. Alice has repeatedly mentioned the word 'TIME' to express her views regarding her choice of adopting caning. She had tried other ways to discipline the students, but it takes time and she said that *"Teachers don't have time"* (SRI4, L204), and *"...in reality we don't have time"* (SRI4, L207). Alice emphasises that the most effective way for her to curb the issue of behaviour or personality challenges is by using the cane. This is not to say that she had not considered other approaches of classroom management. Being a NQT, she had tried different ways to discipline her students including using the token system (reward system as positive reinforcement), which she picked up in her 'Classroom Management' module. However, according to her, it takes a long time to implement the token system and she stresses that *"we don't have time"* (SRI4, L204). Thus, at the end she scrapped the idea of the token system. She has chosen caning as the most effective way in managing her classroom because she strongly believes that caning is easier since, *"you can settle it on the spot"*, *"you don't have so much time to waste"* (SRI1, L56) and *"caning can save a lot of time"* (SRI1, L94-95).

In the second phase of classroom observation, she shared similar views on caning as she had earlier in the first phase of classroom observation: *"...caning is the best, the most effective way"* (SRI4, L202). Generally, after caning, Alice would ask her students to do the work on the spot since that is the way to get them to do their homework (SRI4, 209). Not just in her English lesson but in her Art class. Alice said that students mentioned that English is boring and they do not like English but then even for Art, they did not do their work (SRI4, L213). Hence, in order to ensure that her students completed the task, she opted for the cane. She pointed out, *"After cane you can't do anything, you don't have time, the more you dragged, the more time you wasted"* (SRI5, L471). This means that the cane is the final decision that she would take since she did not have time to prolong any discipline issues.

MoE Malaysia have demonstrated different views on caning. Previously, MoE had clamped down any type of caning, except by the discipline teacher appointed by the

school. Since strict discipline is closely associated with their academic performance in Chinese schools, the administrators allow caning as an effective deterrent against misbehaviour. Although the decision made seems to contradict the MoE's ruling, parents did not complain because they are aware of their children's misbehaviour. However, recently, the Deputy Minister of Education has announced that by 2017, all teachers will be allowed to cane students. While some parents believe that a sharp taste of the cane is sometimes necessary, Alice mentioned that teachers are in difficult situation when certain parents have qualms about having their children caned by the teachers (SRI4, L200). Alice argued that during her time at school as a pupil, the scenario was better in terms of caning but maybe "people in KL" (Kuala Lumpur - referring to the people living in the capital city) are like '*sikit-sikit tak boleh*' (parents could not compromise the disciplinary actions towards their children) (SRI4, L196). From my own experience, sometimes it is not so much about being in a capital city, it is also based on the school culture and how parents react to physical punishment. I had once experienced a teacher hitting me on my palm with a ruler just because I did badly in my spelling quiz. There was also an experience when parents would come to the school and gave permission to the teachers to carry out physical punishment to their own children for any unacceptable behaviour. One of the famous quotes from the parents would be, "*You can hit my child but not to the extent that he/she'll die*". In terms of students' misbehaviour, sometimes the teachers would call the parents and discuss their child's behaviour, but there was not any change. Teachers in school tried to help the students but when their parents were not co-operative, Alice said *that* "*we actually say, we can't do much*" (SRI5, L489). Alice views on parents:

They will think that forever their children is their apple in their eyes, so they are good, they don't see anything wrong in their own children... they will only blame the teachers... come to school complaint this and that.

(SI2, L286)

In 2015, she had an experience when parents came and complained, but so far, by early 2016, there had not been another complaint yet. Since the timetable kept on changing, the teachers have been teaching different sets of students and this scenario did not leave any room for complaints from the parents. Alice would try to talk to her students first to ask about their problems (SI2, L288-290). However, with support from the administrator – "*HM said we can cane on the palm*" (SRI4, L192) – teachers in Alice's school are given permission to use canes in the classroom and with that, Alice's opinion about caning is further developed. Alice felt that caning is

the most effective punishment because *“it saves a lot of time, it’s not that it really works to the students”* (SRI5, L507). This was particularly true when Alice shared her concerns on the effectiveness of using a cane in the classroom. At times she said that it is not really effective; even after she caned the students, they still did not hand in their work and *“you just have to give up on some of the students”* (SRI5, L475). Alice realised that the cane only works for some of the students. When Alice caned the students, they would do the work, but for some, there was no effect at all even after so many times. Again, Alice was a bit frustrated, especially when there was no improvement in students’ behaviour (SRI5, L476-483).

Towards the end of her first year of teaching, Alice was more flexible on the use of the cane, depending on the situation or on the types of disciplinary problem. For instance, in a good class, she did not even need to bring the cane since she could talk to them, which is more about giving advice, and her students know what is expected from them. The situation was quite different for weaker students. As she mentioned earlier, it is not that caning really works for the students, but because it saves a lot of time in terms of focussing on lesson delivery rather than classroom management. In the end, Alice managed to find a solution and not use the cane straight away. Alice has established three main steps for her classroom management: step 1: advise the students; step 2: warn them and after a few warnings, the teacher uses the cane; step 3: the teacher will send them to the administrator. This seems to show that Alice has adjusted her beliefs about caning and that she decided to advise her students first before taking them further to a more serious punishment. In addition, this seems to show her growth in self-confidence, from focussing too much on disciplining the students during the initial stage of teaching to adapting to her students’ needs, giving advice first rather than punishing them straight away.

Pitfalls in the quest for knowledge and beliefs of good teaching. Initially when Alice embarked on her journey as an NQT, she was full of enthusiasm to practice what she considered good teaching from what she had gained from teacher training. She recalled,

One of it will be like... you need to build good rapport with the students in order to make your lesson effective, so when you're good with them whatever you say they'll listen to you... so you actually save the time in classroom management.

The second one will be like materials and activity selections, so when you select the activity that is interesting and you have that materials to do other than the textbook and the activity book, they'll find it really rare... and it's very... mmm... something very... very different from the normal class and they appreciate it more...

(S11b, L171-173)

Alice planned and implemented her lessons accordingly with these ideas in mind, having a good rapport with the students and selecting interesting activities. One way of developing good rapport was to be able to understand her students' needs. She believed that if the teacher only knows English, it will be very difficult to get the students' attention especially when some of the students are very weak in the language. I shared similar ideas when I was an NQT and I felt that if we try to create and maintain good rapport with our students, they would pay more attention to the lesson. From my initial teaching experience, my students were actively engaged during my lesson when I started to be close to them and maintained good rapport with them. She also felt that if the teacher speaks to them in Mandarin, the students will feel closer to the teacher:

You're more friendly, more approachable to them... It'll be helpful for the students to learn in teaching.

(S12, L155 & 156)

During the initial stage of teaching, Alice would ensure that she adhered to the MoE syllabus and school English panels programme. For instance, the English teacher in her school would receive a list of vocabularies for spelling from the English panel and students would have to achieve a certain number of vocabularies in a week. At first, she conducted the spelling activity differently from what the teachers in her school did. Instead of dictating the vocabulary, for spelling, Alice chose to use 'Hang-man'. However, it did not last long since the school admin had instructed the teachers to have standardized activities and she had to follow the practice of other teachers in her school, i.e. the traditional way of conducting spelling, the teacher dictates and the students write. Alice said if she were to conduct different activities, parents would start comparing to other teachers and insist on having similar activities for their children, although Alice shared that students would appreciate the teaching-learning more if they find it different from normal class (S11b, 173).

I think activities would be like old... if ... as for spelling you don't give them like normal spelling like... you tell the words they write on the board... on the book... you can use like... instead of that you can use the hang man game.

(SI1b, L179)

Based on Alice's experience above, it seems that 'other people' have the power over making decisions about what the teacher should do in his/her classroom, which only seems to allow teaching methods 'prescribed' by them. Although the teachers already have prepared something different to be used in the classroom, the parents would start comparing with other teachers and ensure that whatever activities given to their children are standardised. The school administrator would normally listen to parents' voices rather than their own teachers.

Alice's beliefs about one of the features of good teaching, i.e. activity and materials selections, have changed along the way. This is particularly true during the second phase of classroom observation. Although during the initial stage she emphasised that the teacher needs to select an interesting activity and have other materials besides the textbook and activity book, in the middle of her journey of being a NQT, she seemed to 'surrender'. She used the textbook most of the time and she said one of the factors was because she did not really have time to prepare resources or materials since there was too much of a workload (SRI4, L158). Since she did not have time to create new material for her students, at times, Alice would try and use PowerPoints that she had prepared on her own from the previous year's materials (SI2, L42).

Another downside that had made Alice adjust her stand about the use of textbooks is that she was 'forced' to follow the normal classroom practice of other teachers, i.e. to maximise the use of textbook. The forcing factors came from the parents, school administrator, and colleagues as well as examinations; for instance, she expressed the view that teachers are expected to use the textbook and could not go beyond it, or else parents will come and complain (SRI4, L171). Seriously, Alice was in dilemma because in the syllabus, teachers need to encourage creative and critical thinking and develop 'higher order thinking skills' (HoTs) in the classroom. Even though Alice realised that in reality teachers just need to follow whatever is in the textbook and cannot go beyond that (SRI4, L170-177), she still give her very best, especially the extra knowledge that she thought was necessary for her students. But first, Alice said

that she needed to ensure that she had covered the syllabus in the textbook. This is vital for her since some students are quite advanced; normally if there is time she would give extra work to them (SRI4, L267). Alice's actions seem to show that she did not feel pressured by what the teachers told her, though they said, do not go beyond, but as long as Alice finished whatever in the textbook, that would be fine. There were times during SRIs, Alice would ask my opinion on the use of the materials in the classroom, particularly with regards to the textbook. Since I experienced working in the MoE, dealing with the Textbook Department, I told her that we (the officers) would emphasise that the textbook is used as a guide. A teacher could adopt and adapt the textbook content and activities based on the students' proficiency level. I would also share my teaching experiences in school which might help her to maximise and utilise the textbook and other teaching materials. Thus, I felt that my presence as a researcher in this study benefitted my participants as I could share my experiences and teaching practices with them.

As for conducting activities, Alice had to ensure that her students did not make so much noise because it might disturb other classes. Alice said that it depends on the other teacher in the next class because sometimes other teachers would need a silent environment. She '*kena*' (experienced) a similar situation a few times. While her students were enjoying the activity and they were making noise, another class teacher came and checked. They thought that there was no teacher inside the classroom to control the class (SRI6, L101-109): "*But I feel badlah because I disturbed their class*", "*so I try to control*". Although the noise is a different type of noise, since the students are learning (SRI6, L109-113), these several incidents had limited her classroom practices, from conducting more activities that she believed were interesting and beneficial for her students' learning.

Alice also shared a third view on what good teaching meant to her. She said that time management is very important to reflect good teaching (SI, L185). She emphasised,

ya... teacher need to manage the time well... right know I'm still adapting ma'am... (laughing) because in SJK there's only... for lower primary there are only 5 periods a week.

(SI1b, L187)

...so if you wasted 5 times to manage them... their behaviour in the class, you actually have 25 minutes to teach a week.

(SI1b, L189)

Based on the excerpt above, Alice expressed her concern about the allocation of time for English lesson, it means that she would have limited time in the classroom to teach. Five times refers to five minutes, and if she were to spend five minutes managing the classroom every day, she would have lost 25 minutes per week. This was because she shared that she could plan better if more time is allotted to each class. During her training, she was normally prepared for an hour's lesson since the practicum schools she was sent to were all national-type schools. In a national-type Chinese school, the minimum time for a lesson is about 30 minutes and what worries her most is sometimes she spent a lot of time in managing the classroom, and after that she realised that she had limited time to deliver the actual lesson.

During the final Skype interview, I was rather shocked with her statement about what good teaching entails: *"In reality good teaching is when you managed to cover the textbook (syllabus) and students get good result"* (SI2, L51). *"Teaching is not fun anymore"*, and Alice felt bad for her students not having the time to prepare new teaching-learning materials for them (SI2, L44-48). She felt that she would try to strike a balance between examinations and have fun at the same time. In reality, Alice said that she did not have any choice (SI2, L60). So far no one had approached the head teacher and spoken with them about this issue and she felt that the head teacher will not change anything even if they voiced their concerns (SI2, L66): *'saya yang menurut perintah'* (I abide by the rule) (SI2, L68).

Dealing with LINUS assessment and exams within the ⁴'Kiasu' community. The Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) programme is aimed at ensuring that all Malaysian children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills after three years of mainstream primary education. Basically, there are three screenings a year in March, June and September, during which students need to take oral and written tests. For literacy, the students have to pass 12 constructs. Students will then be placed into the LINUS programme or into a special education programme if they have learning

⁴ *Kiasu* is a Hokkien word which refers to a selfish attitude or being afraid of 'losing out' to other people

difficulties. Teachers are expected to conduct 'differentiated activities' and prepare a different lesson plan (LP), for the mainstream and LINUS students. The percentage of LINUS students in Alice's classes varies from 10 percent to 30 percent of between 34 and 46 students.

Teachers are supposed to show both lesson plans (LPs) in their teaching record book but Alice admitted that she did not do that. Alice added that since there are two LPs, teachers have to set two different activities, different reflections and so on. Alice defended her action for not following the order by saying, "... *we didn't learn this in college*" (SRI2, L32-33). Although the programme began in 2010 for students in Year 1, there was no inclusion of LINUS in the teacher education modules. During the practicum, LINUS was already implemented, but Alice said that her co-operating teacher did not tell her to differentiate.

One of the challenges in implementing LINUS is that it is a type of assessment in which students need to pass the screening to progress and if the students failed, they would be regarded as those who are not able to achieve basic literacy. Generally, the target for LINUS is 100 percent and the target is set by the MoE and passed down to the State Education Department and then to the District Education Department. Hence, every level of the Education Department needs to ensure that the schools reach the target set. Alice shared that, "*Teachers have to pass them although some of the students could not perform well in the assessment, some teachers, 'cheated'*" and the problem worsened when she received those students: "*I didn't do like that, I didn't cheat*" (SRI2B, L60). Alice shared her dissatisfaction and disagreement with the other teacher's actions – passing the students in LINUS. She said that if the teachers were to fail them, they will have more LINUS students and there would be more problem and extra work for them. Definitely, other teachers did not want to do that so they passed all the students. Alice said that the teachers did not have to worry because even the officer who came and checked them would just look at the black and white figures; they did not check the students (SRI2B, L50-66) and teachers got away with it.

In relation to Alice's standpoints about LINUS, she agreed that, "*It's good attention to help weak students, however teachers lack of time to carry the programme since English lesson is normally 30 minutes per period and if it's all use up with LINUS, teacher actually don't have extra time for the average students*" (SI2, L238). Previously, Alice had different worksheets for them and LINUS students would have

their own books. Normally, her students would simply do the work from their own LINUS books (SI2, L240-242). Consequently, Alice brought up the issue about TIME. Despite the MoE's good intentions to help the students with LINUS, and Alice as a teacher wanting the best for her students too, she and other English teachers have to deal with the setback of conducting LINUS screening, i.e. carrying out oral or written assessments of the 12 constructs during English lessons, which would take up a lot of their lesson time. Alice decided that she would conduct the screening with the whole class to save time (SI2, L247-249).

In terms of LINUS implementation and the observation conducted by the MoE, Alice seemed dissatisfied with the way the MoE officers or inspectorate regularly came to the school and checked the teachers' work. With regards to the new programme, LINUS, Alice said, "*They simply change the policy and then we have to suffer*" (SRI5, L641). She said that, normally, the inspectorate would come and check their LINUS file and observe teaching: "*There's always limitation in our teaching*", "*forever will have, no matter how good we try, they still have something to write about us*", Alice muttered. Sometimes she felt the pressure, although she realised that she knew her own limitations and also improved on them. She continued, "*... we don't have time to go and entertain them*" (referring to MoE officers/inspectors) (SI2, L293-304).

Alice also shared her concerns about teaching becoming too exam-oriented. During the initial stage of the first year, the focus was on the content, but this has changed toward achieving exam goals. Examinations have become the central agenda in the teaching-learning process, whereby exams are based on textbooks; thus, teachers have to teach using the textbook to ensure that the students can pass their exams and if anyone tried to teach beyond the textbook, especially if something from outside the textbook is in the exam, other teachers would not be happy about it. At the earlier stage of Alice's career, she thought that it would be enough if she could adhere and complete the syllabus. Little did she know that in reality, and specifically in her school environment, exams 'outrank' teaching and learning. I felt that the idea of focusing on exams has been indoctrinated within the system and it is actually difficult to change an education system that is exam-oriented. One of the effects is the teacher focuses on ensuring that his or her students pass the exam. A clear example of such indoctrination was shown in the way Alice's school stream the students, which also happened in the schools that I have taught in. Her school starts to stream students based on their academic ability in Year 3. As mentioned in the previous section, Alice believes that one of the features of good teaching is selecting interesting activities and using other materials apart from the textbook. However, along the way, she had

to adjust her beliefs and use the textbook instead. She said that she hardly had time to prepare teaching-learning materials and, moreover, her colleagues said that she could not go beyond the textbook. The teachers need to use the textbook because it would be tested in the exam (the content) and parents will usually raise out (the importance of using the textbook) (SRI5, L133). She shared her experience,

Me: *So, even for words you actually refer to the textbook right?*

Alice: *Yes... because they say we cannot go beyond... (laughing) the teacher say cannot go beyond... because it actually came out in the exam paper, the latest exam and one of the teachers actually complain... it was occupation but then because I taught my class 'astronaut' and they all didn't teach... it came out in the exam... then they were complaining... ahh... how come it's not in the textbook... but you're coming up with this? we actually got the... what do you call... they are some body will who go through the exam papers.*

Me: *Vetting... somebody to vet.*

Alice: *But he didn't say anything, so I say ok fine... because I was... first time... that was the first time... (laughing) they actually didn't get to see.*

(SRI4, L159-163)

It was the norm in her school that other teachers expected that everything comes from the textbook (SRI4, L165). In addition, Alice shared that the easiest way to teach besides using the textbook is to use an activity book, especially when teachers have to rush for exams and cover the syllabus and there is no extra worksheet for them (SRI4, L326-335). During the fourth classroom observation, Alice decided to focus on writing which was based on the textbook and the activity which is the crossword puzzle was taken from the activity book (SRI4, L306-322). When asked about her decision in materials and activity selection, she said that she had to rush for the exam and there is a lot to cover (syllabus).

Kiasu! Alice repeatedly mentioned the word to describe the parents in Chinese schools, and her school in particular. The Chinese community, especially parents in her school, nurture the '*kiasu*' attitude. She said that in reality parents will look at the marks:

because we have to rush for the exam... this and that... a lot to cover...

ok... so so again... it's like exam... mmm... since it is for the exam so the pressure of you know... using and ... using the textbook and cover all the topics... so that's why..

*because at the end of the day... in reality ma'am... the parents..
.everybody will just look at the marks... (giggling) ...that's it...(giggling)*

(SRI4, L333-335)

In the above excerpt, Alice was giggling when she mentioned that parents and the others were concerned with the marks, and this seems to suggest that teachers were forced to accept the reality of the exam-oriented culture, although their training suggested differently. Alice mentioned that sometimes parents would come or they would ring the school. *"It's all about marks, exams"* (SRI5, L150), Alice stressed. In Chinese culture, *"They are really 'kiasu'"* (SRI5, L152). She said that the moment the students sit for the exam and later received the results, people would start asking about the results especially relatives, *"How many 'As' you got?"* (SRI5, L156). Towards the end, teachers had to follow to the parents' needs, i.e. to focus more on the 'As' and getting good results for their children. So, what does 'kiasu' tell us about Chinese parents? They are anxiously finding ways to bring up their children the best way they can (academically), especially ways to boost the exam scores. One of the ways to achieve that is to pressure the teachers with their needs. Thus, by the end of the study, Alice had decided that 'education' equals covering the book/syllabus so that the students can pass the exam and that this idea of education is reinforced by the 'culture' outside the school.

Alice also highlighted that for good students, an examination is like motivation for them to score higher, but not for the weak students. They would not feel anything; it would be just another exam (SI2, L252). She felt that because the students did not achieve anything in their exams, the weaker students that struggled with the exams are actually labelled. If there is no exam, they would not be labelled as weak (SI2, L254). In her school, starting from Year 3, students are streamed based on their academic abilities and sometimes the weaker stream's exam seems to be a kind of demotivation to them (SI2, L255-258). This is because they were labelled and streamed based on their academic achievement. Nevertheless, since part of the Malaysian education system stresses the importance of the exam and parents are pressuring teachers for 'As', like it or not, Alice mentioned that she had to go with the flow and was unable to act on her beliefs because of external pressures. This seems

to suggest that the messages that the ITE promote are not really ones that 'society' is interested in.

Reflecting on reflection. These next sections seem to suggest that despite all the pressure that Alice is under, she is still reflecting on her teaching. Alice pointed out that it is important to have daily reflection for further improvement and as for weekly reflection, the teacher reflects generally and so not in great detail (SI1b, L148). She said that reflections help her to notice weak and good students. However, it was quite a struggle for her since there is a mismatch between how ITE and schools see 'reflection'. In reality, the type of reflections implemented during training years could not be implemented since the inspectorate instructed teachers to do it differently. Teachers are supposed to write their reflection at the end of each lesson plan in their teaching record book indicating only the number of students or percentages of students who achieved the lesson objectives. At the end of each week, normally, on Friday, the teachers would submit their record books to the head teacher to be checked. At times, the inspectorate would come and observe the teachers and look at the lesson plans as well as their written reflections.

However, during the first classroom observation phase, Alice pointed out that it was a required by the administrator and she admitted that she might not even want to write if it was not required from her (SRI1, L156-162). Alice disagreed with the way she was asked to write and felt that the written reflection was just for the sake of writing it: "95% is just a number" (SRI2, L45) and "36 out of 38 students achieved the objectives and it must be a number" (SRI2, L57). She felt that instead of reflecting on her own teaching, the teacher is only concerned with the students' results (SRI2, L50-57) and she appeared frustrated when she said that currently it is just reflecting on how many students had achieved targets (SRI2, L60). Compared with what they have learnt during college, the teachers were told to adopt lesson planning using 'SMART' objectives. The acronym stands for 'S-Specific, M-Measurable, A-Achievable, R-Relevant and T-Time-based'. It seems to show that there is a gap between lofty aspirations on paper and the reality of reflection as nothing but an administrative ritual.

Alice pointed out that written reflection has not been helpful since the school does little to support teachers' reflective tendencies:

No ma'am, to be honest...

Because our headmistress already said, we need to write down how many students achieved... after class, ya... for we surely write down the numbers only, the numbers

but the thing is only that one... ya, because we got quite a lot of classes like 5 classes per day at least... so, if you really go, there's no time for us to reflect... each of the class... because in and out, in and out you totally forgot what happened.

(SI2, L327-329)

She added, *"It is merely black and white but we know what is going on in the classroom, it's just that we don't have time to write it down"* (SI2, L333). Again, time is clearly one of the major issues that is affecting teacher classroom practices. From her interviews (both SRI and SI), I realised that the issue of the differences between what has being taught in ITE and the practice of writing the reflection in school has not changed. Perhaps, the findings of this study would help the teacher trainers and the inspectorate to be aware and make necessary changes, so as to help the teachers to reflect and improve their teaching practice.

Supporting collaborative reflection: Recently, starting from 2015, MoE has endorsed the Professional Learning Community (PLC) programme, a professional collaboration as a means of improving teaching quality and maintaining the highest standards. The purpose is for a teacher to discuss their classroom experiences and what happened in the class with other teachers,, and they would share and suggest ideas for what they can do in the future (SI2, L337). However, the PLC programme was difficult to carry out because of other conflicting issues, according to Alice:

So far only the Mandarin group is doing it but not the English team.

(SI2, L341)

By right we need to do that, it's just that the part our English panitia (panel) didn't ask us to stay so... it's just depends... it's free and easy when you are free you go and talk to your colleague what they can do and all.

(SI2, L343)

But we don't really set a time to sit down and discuss... it's just that if got problem, we go and see because unless we really need... they (other English teachers) are willing to stay back after school... ya... and even stay back they don't have time for us.

(SI2, L347)

Haven't managed to do anything even last year.

(SI2, L348-349)

One of the reasons the programme was not conducted formally was that the English team is a very small group, five or six English teachers, and since they are sitting near to each other, they said that they did not really need to set a time – “*actually any problem, we just discuss on the spot... when you see the teacher you can talk straight away*” (SI2, L355). Alice said that PLC is a good platform in that teachers have the opportunity to reflect and discuss their classroom practices and experiences. This seems to be one of the approaches that a teacher can adopt to reflect on their daily or weekly teaching; as Alice mentioned, at the earlier stage of her teaching career, it is important to have daily reflection for further improvement and it helps with noticing weak and good students. However, in reality there is a directive from the authorities on how the teacher should reflect on their lessons and they had to adhere to it. The concept and purpose of ‘reflection’ have been completely changed from reflection as a means of helping oneself to understand one’s teaching more fully to reflection mostly as a means of admin supervision. Hence, teachers have to be really determined and conscientious if they are to continue to reflect in positive ways as Alice still seems (just about) to be doing.

5.5 Summary

To study a teacher’s beliefs is quite a messy construct and to follow the evolution of the beliefs in Alice’s early career in teaching is rather challenging. In Alice’s story and in other stories to come, it is important to bear in mind that their past experience plays a role in influencing the starting point and part of what affects their experiences during the first year in the school, apart from the past, is also the context of the school. In the case of Alice, since she had attended a similar kind of school herself, she could easily relate her own experience to her students’ language learning and at times, she would make her classroom decisions based on her schooling experience. As an NQT,

Alice definitely had to make adjustment to her classroom practices to accommodate her prior beliefs about teaching-learning with the new experiences she encountered in her real classroom. Although during teacher education training trainees are exposed to a 'Linking theory to practice' module to prepare them for the real world of teaching, the module was only helpful to certain extent. As an NQT, Alice would try her own initiatives to remain 'floating' and survive her first year of teaching. It might be because certain theories and teaching practices are not applicable to her current context. Although there are several supports for NQTs surrounding Alice, most of them exist only 'on paper'; for example, Alice's head of English panel was not willing to spend time for them to reflect on their lessons through the PLC programme. Another issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the co-operation or collaboration among the stakeholders to ease the 'first year journey' of the NQT. It was indeed quite a challenging task for NQT to implement something they considered good classroom practice, it seemed that the policy-makers, ITE providers, parents, school administrators and teachers were not 'singing the same song'. As a result, teachers end up doing what they think they need to do in order to keep all the 'others' happy rather than what they believe to be the best, which seems to be a sad reality. This might be because others are 'higher in the hierarchy'.

Chapter 6

It is my passion: Salina's story

6.1 Introduction

In this second findings chapter, I present Salina's story using a similar framework to the other chapters. Salina, the second participant of this study, is an Indian teacher working in a national-type Tamil school. She showed a very positive attitude towards learning the English language and towards becoming an English teacher from the start of the study. Although I taught her cohort for a semester, I hardly knew her personally. She had a very positive primary English language learning experience with a great primary school teacher – she really enjoyed choral speaking – and a more ordinary secondary experience, although there was a bit of pressure in terms of having to use English. Consequently, she still felt pretty good about English, which made her keen to apply for a teacher education course. She was pretty impressed and positive about the whole TE course and by the time she finished it, she felt reasonably ready for action. Given a Tamil national-type school for her first posting with a majority of Indians and a smaller class size, she appears to be contented and dedicated to her work, especially since her school was selected to run ⁵21st century classroom programme by the Ministry of Education. She started positively and that impacted her positively which helped her to manage her first year.

6.2 Before first year of teaching

6.2.1 Reminiscing about her English language learning experience

Choral speaking, English and Me. Salina's language learning experience differs greatly from Alice's. During the first Skype interview, Salina mentioned that she enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching programme because of her passion for the English language. She went to convent schools for her primary and secondary education, and her educational background seems to influence her interest towards the language. Since there were quite a number of activities which centred on encouraging the use of English, those who attended convent schools shared a belief

⁵ A pilot project based on the guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education under the District Transformation Programme (DTP) aimed at encouraging students to work collaboratively and enhance their skills with the necessary setting, facilities and tools for teaching and learning

that English was a prominent language, although the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, was the medium of instruction. One of the activities that Salina enjoyed and loved most was choral speaking. She explained that when she was in Primary 5, she entered choral speaking competitions which she found to be

The most memorable part of learning English because... it's not in the classroom itself, it's like we go out and kind of experience new environment through competitions... it was very enjoyable because we learn language in a different way, in a more fun way I think, instead of like learning it in the classroom, we also learn through this kind of competitions.

(S11, L20-22)

Salina also revealed that it was through the choral speaking competition that she developed confidence in the language, and the behaviour of her English language teacher had inspired her to love the language. She recollected,

... because through her I got the chance to enter the choral speaking competition... ya... so it's like she gave me this solo parts and everything... it's like she had the confidence in me... to actually do the solo part... she was very strict but then very approachable... if there's anything to ask she will be there... she's very committed... approachable, very hardworking in terms that whenever we had extra classes or anything she prepared... she will always be prepared with teaching materials like worksheets and everything... instead of just using the textbook.

(S11, L54-58)

Hence, from those memorable experiences in her primary years, Salina decided she wanted to master the language, and became motivated to become an English teacher. I reflected on Salina's experience on choral speaking and I found that I experienced similar passion towards choral speaking during my schooling years. Choral speaking had also helped me to develop my passion for the English language and gave me more confidence in using it.

6.2.2 Teacher training: Salina's attitude to English and views on her training

It is my passion! Throughout the study, Salina showed a positive attitude towards learning English, as well as to her training and teaching. In comparison to all the other participants in this study, Salina was the one who felt most passionate towards the language and that was her first reason for enrolling on this training programme:

... because of my passion on the language, I want to know more and learn about the language... passion... ya... and then I want to know more about it... it's not just about English. I want to know in-depth, what are the things that's like... needed to actually master the language, and how to deliver whatever skills I'm learning... to the schools... I mean within... among the students and all.

(SI1, L64-66)

Hence, being a passionate language learner, Salina wanted to master the language and at the same time, she wanted to learn how to deliver the learnt skills to the pupils in school. Salina said that she was inspired to enrol at ITE and not at the university because of her views that the ITE programme is more specialized in education:

...because what I heard before enrolling teacher education was... IPG (ITE) is more focus to the skills and everything... it's like only teaching courses... back in university they have many faculties and courses... the attention is like, very less compared to IPG. So... basically I think teachers from IPG are like well trained and occupied with many ideas and methodologies compared to... it's not that I'm comparing but then I think that's the fact... because we did learn a lot... because it's like more like a school back in IPG... the lecturers really trained us like to be a good teacher... in the university... they have their freedom, they can come and go when they like... here it's not like that... it's like... we were really occupied with lots of things and activities and programmes... every semester... every semester... we like... went out... to schools and to observe and a lot of... how to say... like... mmm... out for visit... we went to ⁶klpac and everything... I think we really learn a lot.

(SI1, L68-70)

⁶ Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) – centre for the performing arts

so back in IPG we actually learn, ok... reading skill you should do this... how should you teach... what are the activities... how do you develop teaching resources and everything... so, I think the four semesters... not four... I think five was very useful... because we actually learn about each skill.

(S11, L77)

From the excerpts above, it seems that Salina was satisfied with her decision to study in ITE and she was indeed happy with the four-year training she went through. She was also satisfied with most of the modules taught in ITE and she found them to be very useful. She recalled,

... towards the end... I think the course developing teaching resources and materials. I think that's very useful because we actually learn how to come out with teaching aids and materials... because it's not just about having like 'mahjong paper' or any colourful materials... to be display in the classroom... it's more how to utilised it... how to use it... ya... so in this course I actually learn how to utilise the teaching materials... even one colour paper or just a simple one... teacher can utilised in many ways.

(S11, L81-82)

She appeared to believe that the skills 'learnt' during training years would help her in developing her teaching skills whilst managing her students' learning in her first year of teaching.

6.2.3 Starting the first year of teaching

Finally, I am a primary school English teacher! Salina's experience of the transition from trainee teacher to being an NQT was rather smooth sailing. Being a passionate language learner and highly motivated teacher trainee, she did not seem to have much difficulty in adjusting herself to the new environment. After teaching for almost a month, Salina shared that she had made full use of her training in terms of developing teaching aids. She valued her training and said that, "*I think without sufficient training I don't think so I can, come and teach...*" (S11, L112). Salina seemed to really enjoy teaching, especially when she had the opportunity to enhance her teaching skills by attending in-service training. Since her interest towards English had been consistent since her primary school, especially with the memorable experience

of joining choral speaking, she decided that she would use that as an example of fun learning. She explained,

I still think that the fun way of learning English... when it comes to English is like... about choral speaking. Recently I attended a course about choral speaking, story telling, action songs and public speaking... it was very useful... it was very useful where they actually guide the teachers, how to train their students... for action songs... especially ma'am for action song, I got to know, it is not necessary to use nursery rhymes, they don't allow us to use nursery rhymes... they want us to use the contemporary songs... like what we did in our songs and poetry back in semester 3 or 4... we actually use the song, the modern songs...we came out with our own lyrics... that's what they want for action songs... so when they told... ya...when they told us this like... oh my god I did this in my IPG.

(S11, L98)

She was very pleased to enhance her knowledge of choral speaking, action songs, and others since she planned to use them in her English lessons. In addition, from the excerpt above, she seemed excited to share that she had prior knowledge of what was taught due to her training.

6.2.4 School context

During the first visit to her school, I managed to meet the head teacher as part of the formality and procedure. The head teacher gave full responsibility to Salina to handle any questions regarding the school. Box 6.1 below is the information about her school.

Box 6.1: Background School B

The school is a *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)* (SJKT) which stands for National-type Tamil school with majority of Indian students. It is rather a small school with 22 teachers including 4 administrators. In terms of English performance in Year 6 public exam, the school did well and in 2011, the school managed to get 100 percent pass in English Language public exam results. On the whole, Tamil schools are not as pressurised academically as Chinese schools. Similar to any other national-type school, the minimum time for English lesson is 30 minutes. In April 2014, School B was selected as one of the pilot schools for *Sekolah Rintis Abad ke-21* (21st century classroom), a MoE programme. In 2016 the school continues to be part of the 21st century classroom along with other Tamil vernacular schools around Malaysia. The school is also involved with other MoE projects which are Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Frog and LINUS. For the first time, every child in Malaysia will have access to 'world standard' learning tools based on the ⁷1BestariNet⁷ programme. All these projects have implications for what teachers need to do and spend time on.

In terms of academic performance across all subjects, Salina's students range from very good to good, and as for English language proficiency, there is a mixture of good and weak students in the same class. This represents a typical class in her school. According to her, those who come from English-speaking families speak good English. Generally, she said that the students wanted to learn but low language proficiency was a problem to some of them. In 2015, Salina taught Year 1, Year 2 and Year 5 classes and she said that she only had 1 to 2 'LINUS *tegar*' (illiterate) students in Year 5 and the rest of her students were active, and sometimes they daydreamed, were playful and a bit hyperactive, especially those in Year 1.

During the first phase data collection, I only managed to conduct two classroom observations. This was due to Salina's tight schedule, especially in accompanying her students in other activities like colouring contests, an eye examination or yoga training. It was therefore quite a challenging task to slot in the observation time even in the second phase of data collection. The number of students during the lessons I observed ranged from 20 to 22 students. Students in Salina's class are all Indians and were seated according to group work setting, with 4-6 students sharing a group

⁷ 1BestariNet is a programme which MoE is partnering with YTL Corporations to equip schools with next-generations technology

of desks. Since the school is selected for the 21st century classroom, all the classrooms in this school are equipped with a smart board, white board and other facilities to prepare the students to become active participants in a global community by developing their ⁸21st century literacy.

Salina said that parents have mixed reactions to the use of English language in the school. Once there was an issue of parents not wanting anything but Tamil to be used. Salina explained,

...the main thing ma'am... last year the bendahari (treasurer) she doesn't know Tamil, basic Tamil... just like me... so she bentang (presented) the accounts in English and Tamil, she used the word expenses... one parent... the parent, the guy that came to my class who ask me for year 3, he actually stood up and say... this is Tamil school, how can the teacher speak in English? ahhhhh... I was like... oh my goddd... oh my godd... silly things you know ma'am... she just used the word expenses.

(SRI2, L152)

The excerpt above seemed to suggest that with such a perception of English, the children did not get any support for learning English at home from their parents.

6.2.5 Salina's roles and responsibilities in school

Generally, in Malaysian public schools, the roles and responsibilities of each teacher are under the control of the administrators and bear no relation to the number of years served in the profession. Even new teachers may be expected to take on a minimum of five roles or posts in a school. She therefore had a long school day and a range of responsibilities apart from her English teaching, which were quite trifling in some ways. However, she was fortunate compared with Alice, as she taught 20 hours a week to classes of 20 to 22, and compared with other teachers, her academic and administrative roles is lesser, not as much as what other teacher actually have. So

⁸ 21st century literacy consists of five main areas i.e. i) strong academic skills: 3Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic) and 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration); ii) teamwork; iii) reasoning; iv) thinking; and v) proficiency in using the technology.

as a novice teacher relatively speaking, she has a lighter load even though most novice teacher do not.

In 2015, Salina was given the responsibility to teach English language and Art. She had three English classes (Years 1, 2 and 5) and a total of 22 teaching periods including Art. In 2016, she was given a total of 26 periods to teach three subjects: English language (16 periods - Year 1, 10 periods, and Year 4, 6 periods), Art and Music (10 periods). Most days, her school day lasted from 7:00 am to 3.30 pm. She was instructed by the administrator to conduct the '*Sinar pagi*' (morning) programme (7:00 am every day), whereby students are expected to read a story book with their teacher's assistance. In terms of conducting the LINUS programme, Salina explained that she would teach her English lesson first and then conduct LINUS. Apart from that, she had to participate in DBKL (City Council) tuition classes from 1:20 to 3:30 pm for Year 6. The tuition class is preparation for the UPSR, which is the public exam for Malaysian primary schools. Salina added that since she could not read and write in Tamil, she was not given a post as a class teacher, but instead she was an advisor for the English Language society, *Tunas Puteri* (Girl Guides) and an 'Innovative teacher' for an 'Innovation competition'. For her English Language society, she trained students for the public-speaking and story-telling competitions that took place in May 2015. She shared that she also needed to prepare worksheets for the students if she had to go for training. She was involved in VLE frog training especially for '*Guru Muda*' (young teachers) outside the school. After attending the training, she was required to conduct in-house training for other teachers in her school.

Although Salina has managed to adapt herself well in school, she seemed to be a bit frustrated that she could not focus on her main 'professional area' of ELT because she was in a national-type school, where she felt that opportunity for her to develop her teaching skills was limited compared with teaching at a national school. One of the main issues discussed was the 'unrelated tasks' given to her. The excerpt below is an example:

Actually I don't want to go out... if you asked me... because I'll miss classes... and spend the whole day out... sometimes it's not my option... that day I brought them for 'Pemulihan' (remedial)... I'm not the 'pemulihan teacher'.

(SRI6, L350)

I think I have to do because I'm new, so, it's like... I can't really say no... I think every teacher went through that when they first..

(SRI6, L356)

Just that I have less contact hours with them... in terms of like finishing up the syllabus, that's the challenge... because I always go out... so when I come back, it's left out a bit... so I have to really rush to finish... because I have to finish before... September or mid-October because they'll be having their exam.

(SRI6, L360)

The excerpts above seem to suggest that Salina was quite reluctant to accept the tasks of accompanying her students and attending training which was not related to her role as an English language teacher. However, she believed that as a novice teacher she had to accept the responsibility and she also believes that every teacher went through a similar situation. Her decision to adhere to the school administrator order impacted her teaching-learning process in the classroom, meaning she had fewer contact hours and she needed to rush through the syllabus. The positive outcome from this situation is that by the end of the final Skype interview in January 2016, she seemed to understand that her role:

It's not about English only, I have to get myself prepared for other things as well... that's what I learnt.

(SI2, L487)

She also shared that,

Because they gave me 'pemulihan' (remedial) last year. I cannot be 'pemulihan' because 'pemulihan' is only for Maths and BM. Only LINUS is for English... whenever I attended the 'pemulihan' courses, it's like I'll be doing the teaching aids for BM. I always ask myself this, 'what's the point?' Because I'm not going to teach BM...because the school we have like not enough teachers...so have to... like go for this pemulihan courses and all. So, that's what I learn, it's not about limiting myself to English only but some more I learn also about pemulihan. So, it's a good thing also.

(SI2, L489)

The excerpt above seems to suggest that in Malaysia, teachers need to be able to take responsibility for a range of roles, not just the teaching of the subject for which they have been trained. I experienced a similar situation during my first year of teaching: not only that I was given other subjects to teach that I was not trained to teach such as Art and 'Amalan Bahasa Melayu' (a subject specially designed for students from national-type school in transition to a national school), but I was also given various roles which at times I felt were not related to English language at all. However, after a year in this profession, Salina learnt that she needs to prepare herself well, be willing to accept other tasks, and not limit herself to English language only or to what she has been trained to teach.

6.3 Managing the first year

Managing transition: valuable practicum experience. Salina was content with her practicum experience and she seemed to manage her transition from practicum to real classroom quite well since she shared that she learnt valuable lessons during the practicum which she could then adopt for her classroom. For instance, during the first Skype interview, she shared her practicum experience of observing an NQT and one experienced teacher. She was able to reflect, compare and contrast the teaching practices of both teachers. She was greatly affected by how the experienced teacher conducted her class:

... so this newly posted teacher... she used this terms like superlatives, adjectives, comparatives adjectives... so the students didn't understand whatever the teacher was teaching and the teaching aids were not really sufficient because it was too small... so, ok... she brought in realia maybe she can asked a few students to explain, to come to the front to have a touch... to touch the book, or ball... she didn't do that... she just show ...this is a ball... another teacher, the experienced teacher... she had a big book with her, and she asked her students to sit around her.

(SI1, L133)

She added,

It was like more constructive way to have the class because... when after reading one sentence she tend to ask the kids... "What do you think? What happened to Little Red Riding Hood?" She had questions... like... shared reading... after she is reading one line, she had question to the students... after she's reading the second line she post questions... I think that was like the best observation.

(SI1, L135)

Apart from this, in the last phase of the teaching practicum, Salina explained that she was interested in what seems to be good practice to her; she said that the teacher wrote the lesson objectives on the board and informed the students about them before starting the lesson (S11, L147).

Another aspect of the practicum that she said was very beneficial was the practice of completing a written reflection after each lesson. Salina preferred to write her own reflections for every lesson; however, since she had many classes, this could become very time consuming (S11, L254). Hence, at times she would only have time to reflect verbally. Sometimes, she just thought about matters without writing them down. For example,

Sometimes after teaching also... when I checked their workbook... why can't they get the correct answer... sometimes I reflect back, where did I go wrong... or something wrong with the students or what this kind of thing.

(SRI5, L578)

Embracing 'good teaching' and managing students' needs. As someone who is passionate about language learning and teaching, Salina tried her best to manage language learning effectively. I felt that Salina had a very 'developed' understanding of the need to adapt to the context. For her, the essence of good teaching was getting to know her learners' strengths and weaknesses and therefore, being able to appropriately match the work she gave them to what she knew about them. She highlights,

Good teaching is about having this... good relationship with the students first and also get to know them because when it comes to English it's like... I think the teacher should know what's the level of English of their students... whether it's like poor, average or high... that is when the teacher can actually come up with this kind of worksheet and everything... without knowing that... without having good relationship with the students... I don't think so... having this good relationship and rapport with the students first... then think about coming out with the worksheet and how to teach... how to... what matters to you and all.

(S11, L94)

At times, she had to cater to individual needs. She shared, “so... ya... *they are in the same class... so, it's hard for me because... certain students they understand what I'm trying to say... but certain they don't... so I have to like personally go to them and like cater to their needs*” (SRI5, L516). At the end of her first year of teaching, she realised that ‘good teaching’ entails enabling more students’ involvement:

... actually it changed slightly... because like when the first time I came in I thought like teacher should take control like 80% of classroom teaching but eventually I think my session, it's more on students, not only teachers like 80% should go to the students not the teacher because when I have this pencerapan (observation), like the observation with my HM, she told me this... she said make sure the students involve more than the teacher... let them do the talking... we just teach the important point for that day... for a lesson... make sure they do all the talking and the activity... everything... organising, this and that... but at first I found it very hard but eventually when I trained them... like after a few lessons, they can take charge of the lesson and actually conduct the activity and can answer and everything... so I think like good teaching it like... it lies on students' involvement about 80%.

(SI2, L6)

Although during the initial stage she believed that “*good teaching*” is mostly related to having a good relationship with the students, the excerpt above shows that over time she adjusted her beliefs, while still focusing on the students, moving towards implementing a more student-centred approach.

Tech-savvy classroom: Smart board fever! Salina had the opinion that if the teacher focuses on the student’s needs, it would be easier to support their learning. In the first Skype interview, Salina told me some students are weak and she tried using different approaches to help her students to learn. During the first observation in a writing lesson, she conducted a drilling-method strategy: “*How do I handle that is like... I use this drilling method like... keep telling them the correct pronunciation*” (SRI1, L14). Apart from that, Salina used the textbook to guide her teaching and sometimes she would make copies of the worksheets inside the textbook and give them to the students (SRI3, L254). However, during the second phase of classroom observation, since the school installed a smart board, she seemed to fully utilize the facilities installed for the 21st century classroom programme and used the textbook

less. She mentioned that the inspectorate had complimented her teaching, especially in terms of her use of smart board. She recalled,

Then the sir he came in and then he asked... 'How long have you been teaching?'... after the observation... I said... I'm newly posted... really ah... you don't look like one... I said why... he said you can use the smart board very well... I said ya... because we learn back in uni (ITE).

(SRI3, L3)

After that session she said that she was more confident about using the smart board as her teaching resource. A lot of discussion in the second phase of data collection was on the usage of the smart board compared to other learning resources. From my observation, it seemed that the students were addicted to the smart board and there was a smart board fever in Salina's classroom. She shared that at times she would use the smart board if the students requested it (SRI3, L97). They were also excited if she used PowerPoint and the smart board instead of the textbook:

I think no teacher has really use PowerPoint or what because they only have one LCD... so when I started to use they like... oh... I think using PowerPoint or pictures or songs... it's more lively... maybe they can feel it or something because it's moving... very interactive... but sometimes when I use textbook... they don't show any... that they are not interested or what but they they're fine just that when I use something different, they tend to be like... very excited... I actually can get the attention also... if I use textbook... they'll be like... they tend to talk.

(SRI5, L495-499)

In addition, Salina would modify the vocabulary used in the textbook. She would select appropriate content and ensure that it suited the students' level of proficiency (SRI3, L347). She also explained that she would try her best to find an activity that encouraged her students to communicate and something that suits their level and interests, and that is attractive, especially for visual learners (SRI5, L57). Multiple intelligence is still a live topic in Malaysia, and Salina came across the concept which was introduced in her ITE. She would also use a lot of songs projected onto the smart board, especially nurse y rhymes, and ensure that the videos/songs used contained moral values (SR6, L241-246) for her Year 1 students. She added that, in a way, she is providing something extra for the students, by using the smart board in her lesson

(SRI5, L116-168), and she believed that preparing PowerPoints and videos were helpful for students' learning (SRI5, L175-179). Salina told me that since her students were engrossed with the smart board, she allowed them to experience it and would invite them to use it too (SRI6, L185-187). She took the initiative to adapt the materials from the textbook and used the materials that she produced on the PowerPoint (SRI5, L35). She would also use activity books provided by the MoE and worksheets, but only in terms of giving extra support (SRI6, L157).

Tech-savvy again? 'Welcome VLE Frog'! As stated earlier, during the initial stage of teaching Salina used the textbook and the use of technology in the classroom increased only after the school was selected to be part of a 21st century classroom programme. Besides having fully utilized the smart board, the school was also given the responsibility to run 'VLE Frog', a virtual learning programme which aims to encourage virtual learning and assist students to become autonomous learners (SRI3, L306) (SRI4, L161-185). In VLE, students have to send their work online and not all the students have internet access at home (SRI5, L216). Salina was sometimes frustrated by having to deal with VLE problems (SRI5, L218-238). Although it is quite interactive and students were eager to participate, the use of VLE was very troublesome. She highlighted,

They need to log in, need to activate the ID... I think it'll take up to like 30 minutes for them to activate their ID... and then they have to go one by one... if I connect my laptop to the computer lab, I cannot get the internet access... because the government block it seems... the internet access is only for the chrome books... not for the... even for the teacher... so no internet access... so I can't really show them what's happening on my VLE frog to them, because no internet.

(SRI4, L161)

... even the internet connection is so slow... some of them didn't get to log in, it's hard for me to check their work.

(SRI4, L262-264)

She said that she had to use VLE, "*Because all the teachers have to*" (SRI3, L306). The headmaster checks whether the teachers are using it since the use of VLE is a directive from the MoE and the students expect the teachers to fully utilise it.

However, although the idea was that use of the VLE would encourage students to work independently with the teacher there to facilitate, she was not in favour of using it, because the technology available in the school was not robust enough. Salina tried other ways to encourage student's participation, which did not involve the use of technology. At the end of the lesson during the fifth and sixth classroom observations she tried to get the students to participate by presenting the work (poster presentation) they had prepared earlier. She said that at times she preferred the whole class approach so that the students do not feel shy or scared (SRI5, L305-308). Later on, she reflected and shared that she needs to do more group activities to encourage her students to read, speak and have confidence:

Overall... I think I need to do more group activities... like because I think... through group activities, only I can see the ability... read, speak and having the guts to come to the front... because this class like... actually they wanted to do so many things... it's just that it's like... maybe the language barrier or what I don't know... but they want to... maybe by doing this... because when I asked them to do they were very excited... actually all the groups they have brought the things.

(SRI5, L419)

Salina also highlighted the importance of encouraging students' involvement during the final Skype interview. As mentioned above, while she initially thought that the teacher should control 80 percent of the classroom teaching time, towards the end of the study she realised that 'good teaching' means that students are participating for about 80 percent of the time (SI2, L6).

Dealing with the use of L1. The issue regarding the use of the L1 seemed to be one highlight of Alice's story, since she was still personally struggling to learn the language, she felt that students shared the same experience. However, this was not the case with Salina. As mentioned earlier, she was passionate about learning English and had much better language skills than Alice; thus, she seemed to manage the issue quite well. Since this is a national-type Tamil school, the medium of instruction is Tamil and generally, students are used to learning English using Tamil. Salina mentioned that the head teacher reminded her not to tell the students that she knows Tamil and avoid using Tamil with them. She was told to use English and even if the students do not understand, the head teacher reminded her just use English and she felt comfortable with that instruction (SRI1, L123-125).

Although the issue regarding the use of L1 was not as serious for Salina as for Alice the status of Tamil and English did seem to affect Salina's attitude towards the use of L1 in her English lesson. She said that her students tend to use Tamil instead of English most of the time and since she knew that her students speak Tamil at home, she had to keep on reminding them to use English:

... they tend to like... use like Tamil instead of English most of the times... so I have to keep reminding them... speak in English because you're speaking in Tamil back at home and even in school... so why don't you use this one hour to speak in English... most of them... they tend to speak more English most of the time... only some of them tend to speak in Tamil... so I don't really encourage them... ya... it's like a habit I think... the culture.

(SRI1, L29-34)

Since the background of her students did not seem to encourage the use of English in their daily life, Salina said that her students tend to rely on code switching (into L2) and they expect her to provide them with Malay words (SI1, L196). Salina was very strict with the use of Tamil in classroom, and since at first her students did not know that she knows Tamil, Salina encouraged her students to bring dictionaries and she would use pictures to help her students to learn rather than using Tamil. Although she tried to avoid using Tamil, she empathised with a few students, and said that “*sometimes I have to*” (SRI1, L76) but she did not use it for the whole class; she would call them personally (SRI1, L126) and she had to code switch (SI1, L197, 198-204). She gave an example of one exceptional case, one of her students was too weak in English and the boy did not understand anything in the language and she had to code switch and decided to use Tamil, but it was done outside the classroom (SI1, L204-210) so that the others would not know she spoke it.

In addition, she explained that sometimes her students seemed to understand English but they use Tamil due to a lack of vocabulary to respond in English. At the start of the second phase of classroom observations in August 2015, Salina still encouraged her students to speak in English and some students made the effort to speak (SRI3, L105). For those who were still weak in the language and not confident with it, Salina had become more flexible by allowing her students to use Tamil but she would still use English. She confided that her students were very scared to talk to her in Tamil, but if they did try, she would respond in English:

... actually during the beginning they were actually very scared... only a few of them answered... I asked... why are you all like this? then they like... ok ...already flexible with me... and then I saw one boy... I think they don't know that I know how to speak Tamil. So they usually very scared to talk to me in Tamil but whenever they speak, I'll reply back in English.

(SRI3, L223-227)

From what I observed, Salina encouraged students' participation even if it was in broken English, as long as her students tried to speak in English (SRI3, L87). Salina also had a strong view on the use of L1 in her English lesson; she stressed that she did not want to use Tamil but would allow only one or two words since she believed that students would not learn the target language if they speak long sentences in Tamil (SRI5, L78). While she allowed her students to use Tamil, she would not use it herself in class but would use BM instead to help the students with the words (SRI5, L84, 86). She argued that she had chosen BM over Tamil so that students can learn two languages, and they also need to improve their BM (SRI5, L92-100). She also stressed that

I don't want to use translation... that's another problem also... if I'm willing to use translation, I think it'll ease my flow of teaching but then, I don't think so it'll be helpful for me to use Tamil.. Yes... if one two words come from them, it's fine but I don't want to be very like... I don't want them to be very dependent on me...other than that it's fine...I think the only challenge is the language.

(SRI5, L525-527)

It is indeed interesting to see the consistency of her attitude towards the use of L1. From the start she was reminded only to use English by the head teacher and she did so to a certain extent with her students throughout the year. Only in a few instances towards the end of the study she said that she "had to" use other languages outside the classroom, or code switch to BM, not Tamil, with some of the weaker students.

It is not about getting an A? As a NQT, Salina's main focus during the initial stage of the study seemed to be to deliver the subject matter successfully by focusing on content and achieving lesson objectives. During the first Skype interview she shared

the wonderful idea of helping the students to develop and master their language skills, rather than focusing on exam results; her standpoint about teaching is

... not about getting them to get A all the time... I don't think so that's the way... maybe last time A was a big thing so you must get A... but now... when it comes to KSSR it's more about throughout formative test assesment is like actually guiding them throughout the year... to come out or achieve certain band... and I think that's important... instead of getting A... I think A doesn't show that the student is very good in language... she or he might have memorized the whole paragraph or essay... ya... so I think it's like formative is throughout the year.

(S11, L96)

However, after the first phase of data collection, her beliefs about achieving academic excellence had drastically changed and become more exam-oriented. I observed that she started giving written exercises to prepare her students for public examination. It was indeed a heart-wrenching scenario to witness the change in her classroom practices from adopting fun learning activities to focusing on the exam and 'worshipping' good grades. This scenario was apparent in her Year 5 classroom during the second phase of classroom observations. There were fewer student-centred activities and Salina started giving exercises to prepare the students for Year 6 public examination which was a year ahead:

...exam... it's going to be at the end of the year and final exam and next year, UPSR... so I want them to be in the exam mood... Don't be too... take things for granted... because I can see this year... standard 6, too many problems... because they didn't prepare earlier... this students is weak in BM, Maths... so why don't we do this is like earlier... when they are in Year 5... why want to do in Year 6? Because I'm teaching them... Year 6... I mean Year 5... I'm responsible if anything... that's why I want them to be serious... don't want them to be like... take things for granted... this class is different... from Year 1.

(SRI6, L149-155)

The excerpt above highlights the changes in her beliefs that there is the need to help them to prepare for the exam, especially when she said that her students requested extra classes.

They [referring to her students] came, 'can you like teach us extra'? We are scared of UPSR... I think they can feel already... every week after 3 or 5 days... then they'll come and I give... I just photocopy and give... construct sentences.

(SRI5, L445-447)

Apart from the exam, Salina also talked about the implementation of LINUS and discussed how complicated the construct was. There are 12 constructs, starting from Construct 1: 'Able to identify and distinguish letters of the alphabet' to Construct 12: 'Able to construct sentences with guidance'. As a teacher, Salina needed to ensure that her students are able to achieve all 12 constructs by the end of the year and there are three phases of screenings conducted within a year to distinguish LINUS students from the other students who are able to read and write. She also shared that before she could focus on the LINUS students, she needed to make sure that she had accomplished the lesson objectives for that day. It was also difficult for her to have a special activity for LINUS students since she had to prepare two different activities for LINUS and non-LINUS students. However, the preparation for such flexible teaching was limited during her time at the ITE. Thus, towards the end, due to the focus on the exam and then LINUS, her beliefs changed from guiding the students to master the language to guiding them throughout the year to achieve academic excellence.

Reflecting on observation and feedback. Similarly to Alice, Salina was told to do the written reflection in the form of writing the percentages or number of students who had achieved the lesson objectives. The kind of 'reflection' expected from Salina was as superficial as that expected of Alice. As I shared earlier in the previous chapter, I experienced similar issues during my initial teaching years. Salina, apart from having to adjust to the 'real' reflective practice, highlighted that there should be someone to provide feedback on her lesson similar to what she experienced during the practicum. When asked whether or not she was allocated a mentor to do that, she said,

My PK (assistant head teacher) is my mentor... but she didn't really observe... she only took my lesson plan... someone must be there... to see the way I teach it must be there... so there's something that I can reflect... I can reflect alone but then, I think it's better when someone is there... because when I'm teaching, that someone is like... on full focus

on me... someone will know... this is wrong with her, this is what she should do...

(SRI5, L572-574)

She did not therefore have any real mentoring support. There were quite a number of observations from MoE officers who came, especially to ensure that the smart board was fully utilized in the new 21st Century classroom. Salina said that she did have the opportunity to share a post-observation discussion with one of these inspectors. She appreciated having the opportunity for someone to observe and provide constructive feedback. She recalled,

... the JPN (State Education Department) came... actually I did a lot of reflective practice... because you told me a lot of things... they said... I'm not commenting... I'm just sharing... you're new... and he said you're berkebolehan (talented) and he said I want you to improve... He mentioned my classroom management and the way I make it more student-centered... so that's why now, I'm bringing it a little in the class... I let them talk... but other than that... the HM, my KP (head of English panel) they never say anything... so, I think there must be someone there to actually tell me what is wrong with my lesson...

(SRI5, L568-570)

In addition, the MoE has recently started a School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) programme, which aims at improving low-performing schools with the help of instructional coaches. She was told that she needs to be prepared for observation from a SISC+ coach. Although previously she was hoping that someone could observe and guide her teaching, she did not seem to be looking forward to this, instead seeing herself as the 'victim' of this programme:

... so they were under him for one year... so this year, there's no other English teacher... so I'll be the victim for sure... today, he came to school and... he told another teacher that he'll come next week to talk to me... I mean obviously no one likes to be observed but there's someone to guide you but we don't have this native speaker programme but this SISC programme where 'guru cemerlang' BI (English language excellent teacher) will come to school... and just observe your lesson.

(SI2, L337)

6.4 Summary

Salina's beliefs about teaching were strongly shaped by her passion towards the language, resulting from her memorable language learning experiences during her school years, and by her training and particularly her practicum, which involved a lot of learning from other teachers. During the initial stage, the transition from ITE to the real classroom was rather smooth, with a few instances about which she expressed her dissatisfaction. However, she managed to handle these issues and adjusted well to the new environment. These include the positive impact of the practicum on her current teaching-learning context; the use of technology, particularly the smart board, to encourage students' participation in the classroom; and more flexibility in allowing her students to use L1 while she still used English. However, she could not avoid the way the wider culture and the role of exams affected her school culture and therefore her teaching, especially in the upper years. Her beliefs changed dramatically from guiding the students in developing and mastering the language to become more exam-oriented. Although at first she was a bit frustrated with the range of unrelated tasks given, by the end of the year, she learnt that she should be prepared for any roles and responsibilities and not limiting herself to English language teaching only. Thus, she felt that "*real monitoring support*" is needed apart from the 21st Century classroom and SISC+ support, which are seen as MoE national support programmes rather than support for the NQT.

Chapter 7

Slowly but surely: Emi's story

7.1 Introduction

Erni, the third participant in this study, is a Malay teacher teaching in a primary national school which is primarily populated by Malay students. This chapter depicts her story, 'Slowly but surely', in which the teaching-learning process in her classroom was changing to bring out the best in the children. Her own educational experiences did not seem to have impacted on her current teaching practice, except for adopting the drilling technique. During her degree studies, although she initially shared the sense that teaching was not her cup of tea, her passion for teaching developed gradually during the three phases of the practicum. As her practicum supervisor in Semester 5 (a two-month practicum), she seemed to me to be dedicated and enthusiastic about teaching, able to reflect on her teaching and identify her strengths, and prepared to improve on what she felt could be better. Surprisingly, I 'encountered' a different 'Erni' when I started my data collection as she characterised her teaching as, "*This is what 'typical' teachers do*", meaning her classroom practices were based on what other teachers in her school did and her aim was just to get through the day.

7.2 Before first year of teaching

7.2.1 English language learning experience

A drill and kill teacher? Salina's opinion about teaching before she started training seemed to be that one might want to try out other teaching approaches which suit the students' needs and although drilling might seem boring, the technique was indeed useful, especially in assisting students with low English proficiency.

Her primary and secondary educational experiences seemed to have had little impact on her later beliefs about teaching and learning. She shared that her English language learning experience was rather mundane in the sense of 'commonplace'. Her English teacher used drilling quite frequently, which seemed to "kill their learning motivation"; she added, "*So, when it's drilling, it feels like we couldn't stand it anymore, we couldn't stay attentive in the classroom*" (S1, L6). She highlighted a few times that drilling is boring, she said, "*...it's not like I really dislike it but because of it... like boring... nothing, nothing much about it... because it's boring*" (S1, L38-44).

Drilling might have seemed boring and 'killed' the excitement in teaching-learning at the time but from Erni's current perspective, she stated that her English teachers were helpful in terms of aiding student's learning through drilling:

... because we were not that clever but then, they helped us to learn English... through drilling... and we could remember everything... since we drill drill drill... repetitions does help right ma'am.

(S1, L48-56)

Despite the fact that she hated drilling, in general she liked the teachers that drill (S1, L59-60). Erni also shared that her drilling experiences influenced her to adopt the technique later in her own teaching. Although there is less room for creativity and independent learning since the activity is very controlled, Erni mentioned that drilling is a useful technique in the classroom if it is used appropriately. Considering the kind of students she had, academically weak with low English proficiency, Erni adopted drilling during grammar activities and writing (S1, L127-129) and since she said that she learnt drilling techniques during training, she had to adopt and also adapt the technique to suit the students' levels of proficiency. Most of the time she had to lower the level (S1, 146).

During the final Skype interview, Erni shared that apart from drilling, sometimes, her English lesson was fun and meaningful and by meaningful, she said, "*I mean using role play, and using contextual learning... like we learn something from our own experience*" (S1, L14). Erni said that role play encouraged her to talk and "*...we didn't have to write anything, nothing much because we are free to do whatever we want ... and then because it involved movement*" (S1, L32). Hence, in her current classroom practices she conducted other kinaesthetic activities apart from role play, she followed 'Listening and Speaking' activities from the KSSR syllabus, which helped her not to use drilling all the time (S1, L131). This scenario suggests that her classroom practices were influenced by the multiple intelligences theories introduced in ITE.

After trying out different approaches, during the final classroom observation, SRI6, Erni felt that, drilling was very useful for grammar practice and so far it had been helpful (L386-388). She adopted drilling techniques together with other activities. She

explained, "... also infused experiential learning and asking them to relate it to their own life and... as well as... the one, role play, which cater to students' multiple intelligence" (S12, L14).

7.2.2 Reflecting on teacher training experiences

It's my parents' wish. Erni said that her reason for enrolling on the teacher education programme was basically her parents' wishes, "*Because my parents asked me to do it...to apply for it and then as I learn about...when I were in IPG, the part of being a teacher developed gradually*" (S1, L71). Her passion towards teaching began to develop towards the end of her teacher training programme, during Semesters 7 and 8 (fourth year undergraduate) and later she said, it started after the practicum (from Semester 5, third year, until Semester 8) (S1, L73-77).

Although it started off with her following her parents' wishes and she did not fancy teaching children, Erni managed to complete the teacher education programme successfully. She expressed that the programme was helpful in preparing her to teach English to primary school children. Erni emphasized that in the 'Education' (EDU) subject, trainees were taught how to teach the children and to ensure the class dynamic and about how the learners learn. Later she restated that all the courses were useful (S1, L85-86), the "*Teaching of [courses, referring to Teaching of Grammar, Teaching of Reading etc.] EDU part, classroom management and 'Learning and Learners' ... because it build foundation for us to teach later, to apply what we learn in the classroom*" (S1, L88-90). In addition, she said that her teacher education training, "... helped me on how to be a good teacher, how to make a lesson effective and then how to teach students in a good way ⁹*kot ma'am*" (S1, L114). She seemed uncertain about this statement based on the particle 'kot' used, perhaps this might be due to the need to please me as her previous practicum supervisor. Since this was her first interview with me, I felt that my role as a researcher also had an effect to a certain extent. Apart from being her former practicum supervisor, she might feel that I was 'evaluating' her teaching practices as the inspectorate does.

⁹ 'kot' is used to express uncertainty of a Bahasa Malaysia speaker in a particular subject in a conversation

She pointed out that several theories learnt during training had made an impact on classroom practices such as Skinner's Behavioural Theory and Piaget's cognitive development. She explained that the theories were helpful because "*Piaget actually has set up the level of students, how we should teach them and how they perceived everything and then for Skinner, the repetition itself has proven that it could help students to learn*" (S1, L152-158). It seemed to show that the theories provided a framework for understanding her students and also for adapting practice.

When discussing her practicum experience in three different schools, she mentioned that each school was different in terms of the students' levels and the extent to which English was used as medium of instruction. During the practicum, her need to code-switch reflected these contextual differences. So, during the practicum she was already aware that classrooms would be different and she would have to adapt. She told me, she code-switched a lot during her first practicum, and in her third practicum, she used less code-switching because English is widely spoken in the school (S1, L234). If the students could not comprehend the instructions, she had to speak in Malay all the time (S1, L168), and she emphasized that if she were to use English all the time, for example to the lower level students, only two or three students would be able to understand her lesson (S1, L220-224). I also shared similar experiences during my initial teaching experience when I was given the tenth class out of 12 classes in that year group. The students were very weak in English, which I had tried to use in many ways to encourage them to speak in English. I tried to code-switch; however, later, I had to actually use Malay to ensure that they understood the content of the lesson.

Commenting on Erni's training experience, although teaching was following her parents' wishes, she managed to go through her training successfully and was able to relate several theories to her current practice. Her beliefs before she started her first year of teaching seemed to be that a teacher needs to adapt to her/his student's needs to ensure learning takes place, which she took from the training. However, the training did not explicitly acknowledge the need to adapt and provide ideas about how to do so. Her beliefs seemed to be quite practical and realistic, especially when she felt that the practicum prepared her to deal with the real conditions of the classroom environment: "*...because sometimes, we could not apply the theory in the classroom, at all, so we have to change something, make adaptation, so that the students can learn effectively*" (S1, L116). Although Erni seemed to grow in

enthusiasm during training, she went into a school where apparently the ethos was to survive and not to make too much effort to prepare daily lesson plans.

7.3 Starting the first year of teaching

7.3.1 School context

My first visit to Erni's school was on the 9 April 2015, and I managed to meet the head teacher as part of the formalities and procedures necessary to carry out my data collection. The head teacher briefly shared information about the school, with Erni providing more detail.

Box 7.1: Background School C

The school is a primary national school, established and maintained by the MoE. The school utilised the national curriculum and the Malay language is the medium of instruction. It is located approximately 9 km from the heart of the city. The enrolment is 916 students and 65 teachers and it is surrounded by the Malay community and a minority group of Chinese. The majority of students in this school come from low socioeconomic homes and the majority of them do not use English in their daily life. In terms of discipline, some of the students show disruptive behaviour with some attitude problems such as daydreaming, being talkative, and overly playful, especially the boys. Since the majority of the students are Malay Muslim, the school conducts daily morning prayers during the morning assembly and most of the Muslim teachers would also ask their students to recite prayers before class starts. Students are also encouraged to read story books before the morning assembly in order to inculcate a reading habit, which is part of the MoE's ¹⁰NILAM reading programme. Students are streamed academically based on their end-of-year exam results.

7.3.2 Erni's workload in the school

One of the biggest challenges for NQTs in Malaysia is that they are treated as if they were fully qualified and experienced from the very beginning of their teaching lives. Erni and the other participants were given 'massive' responsibilities at the start of

¹⁰ NILAM is an intensive reading program planned for all students in the school and it is carried out in collaboration with the school library.

their teaching. Apart from teaching three different subjects, i.e. English Language, Science and Physical Education, Erni was given the roles of class teacher and assistant secretary for LINUS, and was given responsibility for the media room, netball club, 'Sports House' club, the school book shop and the book loan scheme committee. In 2016, she held the posts of assistant secretary for LINUS, co-ordinator for Year 1 transition, media room teacher and prefectural board committee. She said that she was no longer a class teacher since she already held several administrative posts. Apart from the huge range of roles and responsibilities, Erni seemed frustrated with the training that she had to go to. She reported that within six months she had to attend three different training sessions. It was a challenge for her since she had to leave her students, replace missing lessons and catch up with the syllabus afterwards since otherwise the students would be left behind compared to other classes (SRI5, L180-184).

She shared that throughout her first few weeks of teaching, she was able to prepare teaching materials for her lesson. However, during my first meeting with her, she said that she spent less time for lesson preparation due to the workload. She mentioned that she was busy accompanying students for netball training and tournaments after school. Hence, she did not have time to prepare for the lessons that I was going to observe. Erni was busy planning and preparing the lesson on the spot when I came. She was busy finding sentences and vocabulary on 'Sea creatures', the topic for that day, and we discussed the topic and materials that she planned to use. She said, "*Not enough time*", "*Too busy*" and at times, she jokingly used "*lazy*" to describe her inability to prepare teaching materials for her class. Erni also mentioned that she was still adapting to the school environment and followed the syllabus strictly during the first classroom observation. In addition, she kept on repeating "*typical teacher*" during the interview. She stated that being a 'typical' teacher was what she experienced, being too busy with other unrelated teaching practices, and the ethos was to survive and not make too much effort. She seemed to see this 'typical teacher' as just a survivor. She said that there is a 'good' English teacher in her school who was able to prepare her lessons well. When asked, "*Why aren't you the same?*" She replied "*Entah*" (I don't know). In addition, I asked, "*Do you have LCD projector in the classroom?*" "*Entah. Tak perasan*" (I don't know. I didn't realise). Her response seemed to imply that she was not bothered or did not have the motivation to prepare well for her lesson. Since she was teaching a class with students that performed poorly academically, she said that she needed to make extra effort, especially in implementing the LINUS programme to ensure that the students could read and write.

Erni said that she could not use English at all because the students could not understand or she would use English but have to code-switch to Bahasa Malaysia. This scenario happened most of the time because her students could not understand even one full sentence (S11, L97-99). Erni suggested that this was because they did not see the purpose of using English language in their daily life.

She told me that, as an NQT, she was given a mentor. The head of the English panel was her mentor at that time and she would have a mentor for three years until '*Sah jawatan*' (Confirmation status as a teacher). Erni said that one of the roles of mentoring an NQT is to discuss the lesson plans and, only if she had time, she would discuss her lesson plan with her mentor. For the first observation, she managed to seek advice from her head of panel only a few minutes before the lesson started.

All in all, although she seemed frustrated with the training sessions that she had to attend, she shared that she was happy with her current condition and the challenge was not really a big deal for her. Erni complimented the school as she felt that all teachers were given a fair distribution of work. Generally, the basic practice in school was that it did not matter if one is an experienced or inexperienced teacher; everyone was allocated with their own roles and responsibilities fairly. She continued by saying, she was 'okay' with the school environment and with the students.

7.4 First year mission: slowly but surely

This first section of the first year mission reflects Erni's 'passage' in classroom practice from the optimistic early stages, i.e. from coping with classroom reality and adapting what she asked the students to do, to what she felt it was realistically possible to do. Erni remembered that in her initial stage of teaching, she was quite ambitious with her students. She set tasks and expected her students to complete the tasks on their own. However, she had to deal with reality and adapted her classroom practice to suit her student's needs. She recalled, "...so at the end of the day, I did not get anything. So, I changed to this... it's easier... simple" (SRI4, L388) and later, she emphasized again, "*Slowly but surely*" (SRI4, L390).

Beliefs about good teaching: teach and reach. At the beginning of Erni's teaching life, she shared the idea that as teachers, one should reach the students first, i.e. understand their student's needs before he/she started teaching. She expressed that the first factor of good teaching was the classroom environment. At first, her students had difficulty in understanding English and later she shared that they started to understand slowly. She felt that it was because she was stern and they did not dare to play during lessons, thus focusing their attention on her lesson. Erni stressed that to a certain extent it was important for her to be stern in the classroom; however, it should not be all the time (SI1, L295).

The second factor is the pupils, which is also part of the classroom environment. She said that as teacher, "... we teach depending on their level, so we know their level... It's easier for us to prepare our lesson, give them some kind of enrichment or remedial activity, it gives us prerequisite knowledge on how to teach them" (SI1, L301). As for the final Skype interview, it seemed that Erni still held similar views on what good teaching entails. For instance, she highlighted the third point from the first Skype interview, i.e. to conduct activities that could cater for all the students' needs. In addition, she suggested that as teachers we have to be flexible to cater to students' needs (SI2, L1-4). It is important to highlight that for Erni, having the kind of students who were very weak in English and needed extra support and guidance, her main concern was to ensure that she could cater to their learning needs. She recalled,

I think the subject of teaching of, the one that we studied before... help a lot to cater to students' needs... like 'Teaching of listening and speaking'. Actually, the students seemed to refuse to talk. They're like... they're not confident to speak in English. So, it's like I have to motivate them. I have to tell them I'm not going to ridicule or to scold them or not. So, it's like slowly. I have to lower down their anxiety level first and then they can.

(SI2, L110)

Erni had a mission to be an effective teacher, she felt that she ought to have a grasp on teaching methodology, content knowledge and classroom management and she felt that these three things were important for anyone to be an effective teacher (L177). These three things mattered to her towards the end of her first year of teaching:

... because I think these are the major things that involve us everyday right? We want to teach... methodology if we just have the content... but our methodology is not very effective, the students will be bored... since the students... at the end of the day, they'll learn something but would it be in memorable ways... meaningful.

(SI2, L183)

She also realised that it was important to have sense of humour because when she saw that her students were the type who like to play, at times it was no use for her to be stern all the time. She suggested, *"We can't scold them, we have to soothe them. We have to use 'a soft' way and that's the thing, I still developing myself"* (SI2, L191). She felt that they are human too and it was not their fault they are poor academically, hence she tried to find ways to make her students happy (SI2, L192-199).

It is all for them, my students. Compared with the other participants of the study, Erni's classroom practices were the most affected by the students' attitude, their readiness, and their level of proficiency (SRI5, L225 & L229). She made more effort to adapt her teaching to the students and these efforts actually affected how she delivered her lessons. She explained,

If we're being too ambitious, they can't do it, we don't achieve anything right? Because I think as long as they can understand (the content of the lesson) they have adapt, they can learn something, they can understand, that's enough... we don't need... perhaps, we don't have to use too much of 'bombastic' activity.

(SRI5, L332)

From the excerpt, she was suggesting that teachers did not have to use extraordinary classroom activities. At the end of the final Skype interview, she reflected that she learnt a lot during her 'real' first year of teaching (SI2, L471). For instance, drilling had been helpful, especially in teaching grammar (SRI6, L386-388). Erni highlighted again the importance of drilling in helping her deal with students who faced the greatest academic challenges (L424-425). She told me again that most of her activities were very guided: for instance, in grammar teaching, *"...it will be pages and the words and guided sentences... for writing, it's guided... for instance, they will write"* (SRI6, L394-396, L402) and during SI2, she agreed that she had to describe

and explain each and every single thing (L31-32) to show that until the end of her first year, there was nothing much that she could do to help her students but to guide them. Erni had reported that as teachers one should consider student's readiness for learning and try to conduct suitable activities for them. She kept on pointing out that she did not have to be ambitious in planning and delivering the lesson, she expressed that, 'slowly but surely', the students would progress gradually if the teacher is willing to guide their students and be able to adapt and adopt good classroom practices.

Teaching English in Bahasa Malaysia? Turning the impossible into the possible. While the previous participants reported that they tried to use only English in delivering the lesson during the initial stage of teaching, Erni took a different approach. Although she began using only English at the start of her teaching career, she gave up very quickly because her students could not understand. One of the main challenges was to deal with the students' language proficiency. Since the medium of instruction was Bahasa Malaysia (BM) and the majority of the students were Malay, the students could not see the purpose of using English, let alone learning English. Erni moved to BM to ease the teaching-learning process. During the first classroom observation, Erni shared that she would give instructions in English and translate them in BM (SRI1, L17). Furthermore, Erni highlighted that she had to use BM when disciplining the students since she said that there was no point telling the students if they did not understand (SRI1, L41-46). She also said that "*I have the choice, I can speak English first, I can use English and translate but there's no impact, the impact isn't strong, the students will use BM straight away*" (SRI1, L38). Erni suggested that one of the factors was the students' backgrounds: they did not use English in daily life and the majority of them came from the nearby flats (SRI1, L64-66), which was a poor neighbourhood. Their academic performance was less favourably compared with those students from rich neighbourhoods and English was nowhere to be 'seen' in this kind of environment.

Erni used combinations of BM and English, considering the majority of her students were weak in English. Thus, later she tried to use other teaching aids to assist her students in learning. She would use pictures in the textbook and translated them. Her plan was to use English, then BM and later she would gradually use more English. Her aim was to ensure that at least her students could pass the exam and that would be good enough for her (SRI1, L122-124). Towards the end of the interview in SRI1, Erni pointed out her standpoint on her approach of having to translate:

If I were to say it is difficult, I think every school is difficult. Every classroom is difficult. So, I think we have to deal with it. So like this class I have to direct translate. I have to translate everything. Maybe certain words I don't have to. For instance, they know what fish is. But when it comes to complicated words, I have to...

(SRI1, L132)

During the second visit, Erni conducted group work so as to invite her students' participation. She explained, "...at least 1% will understand and she or he will explain to the friends...in the group" (SRI2, L35), and the good thing was, Erni said that there would be a student who became a "*translator*" (SRI2, L63). It was interesting to see the changes in the students when Erni shared that students started picking up the language. During this observation, I saw them using more English. A group of students were talking in English, basic English and when the teacher said 'stop talking', one of the boys said 'keep quiet', and it was good to know that they know another word for 'stop talking' is 'quiet'. Erni said one of the reasons was because she used the word quite frequently in the classroom (SRI2, L65-67).

Over time, her students seemed to understand more English and that was when she decided to try to move from more BM to more English over time. During the third observation, things started to improve whereby the students used more English vocabulary compared to my first visit. She said that she would only use BM if the students could not understand and the students requested her to use it (SRI3, L279-282).

However, I was quite saddened when I went for the next phase of data collection after a three-month gap, as BM was used widely in the classroom. In my fourth observation Erni pointed out that "...the students could not understand ma'am, that's the thing, they forget easily, I don't know the problem but maybe because I use Bahasa quite frequent" (SRI4, L2). On the other hand, she said that students were able to understand basic instructions like 'meaning', 'repeat after me'. (SRI4, L6). In the fifth visit after another two-week gap, she was still using Malay and her reason was that she felt that the benefit of using Malay was to help the students to understand the content. She said, "...but then looking at my students, how they perceived after I use English, they don't understand... I felt like... It can't be like this" (SRI5, L244). It is important to note that she realised that "...to use English all the time is important but the children... it is better to use code switching" (SRI5, L254).

Ultimately, by the end of the year the situation was, she explained, that she still opted to use both languages (SI2, L384). She said,

Yes, after I seen they've improved, I slowly withdraw the... translations and then used English, I opted for that... It's like I still choose the one that I've done last year [referring to using English and then translating to BM]."

(SI2, L386)

Moreover, Erni said, *"I think using pictures, actions, could help the students to understand English, so it's like we don't have to opt to or depend too much on Bahasa"* (L413). She seemed satisfied with her approach and said a few times, *"Slowly but surely"* (L414-423). By the time the study ended, I observed that there was still a lot of BM use needed. Since, in reality, the real role of English in their lives was almost zero, the students did not seem to see the purpose in learning the target language.

Managing the classroom: to win the hearts and minds of students

I felt that if we can't manage a class, we couldn't afford to complete what we wanted to teach. Most of the time, we need to manage the class. It's quite tough though.

(SRI5, L366)

Erni repeatedly mentioned, *"classroom management"* was her main challenge (SRI5, L197-200, L302-304, L364-369). It was a major concern for her right from the start of her teaching career until towards the end of her first year of teaching.

Discipline. The biggest concern for Erni was classroom management, particularly discipline. Discipline is a real problem to her as she had to work out how to deal with discipline on her own, since other teachers were not able to provide help; physical punishment was not usually an option according to the MoE, although minor physical punishment was fine with parents' consent. Over time, Erni developed other strategies; however, the strategies were more along the lines of 'psychological torture', based on shaming the students. Generally, most teachers would ask the children to recite short prayers before class started and she pointed out that the

function of short prayers was to arouse her students' readiness (SRI6, L3-8) and it became part of the school culture since the students are Muslim (SRI6, L10-14). However, it did not solve the matter.

During the initial stage, Erni chose to implement quite a strict discipline in her classroom. Most of the time, she said the ruler was used just to threaten them as an equivalent of 'the cane'. She stressed that "...*that's the way it is*" (SI1, L50-53), in that there had to be threat of physical punishment. She experienced different types of students' behaviour, from lazy, stubborn, low achievers, day dreamers, to only a few 'good' students (SRI2). Using vulgar words and calling their friends "*stupid*" were common among them too (SRI3, L322-323).

Erni had also consulted her colleague on that matter but she received similar reaction i.e. they did not know how to handle this particular class. Towards the end of the first year, during the final Skype, Erni continued to express her opinion with regards to classroom management. She explained,

...it's still the same, same because we have to avoid... wasting my time and to increase... learning times... ya... because it's only one hour period. So, it's like you have to know how to manage your time. They shouldn't expect me to tell them about this discipline and the things that matter everyday... all about the discipline matter... it takes time... almost 15/30 minutes... even if they're playing at the back, we have to cater all that too... So, it's like we have to establish ground rules so far.

(SI2, L203)

From the excerpt above, she had to figure out how to make sure that there was time for learning during the lesson.

She was left alone to work out what to do and she tried out a different range of possibilities:

1. Regular changes to seating arrangements, especially when she encountered a discipline problem in a particular group. There were changes in the student's behaviour when she moved the students to a different group (SRI2, L115-118).

2. 'Attention getter' strategies - 'Eyes on me', 'Look at me' or calling out students' name (SRI2, L71).
3. During SRI3, she tried to encourage them to learn but failed, so she decided to punish them (L210-212).
4. During SRI4 and SRI5, the naughty students were asked to stand at the back of the class and normally she would ask them to do written work while they stand. Since MoE does not allow teachers to punish the students physically, 'standing' was the only solution that she could think of (SRI5, 152-156).

Later, she decided to take a different approach because she felt that whatever classroom approaches she used before were not effective (SRI5, L170). In the end, she developed a "*psychological approach*" in which the monitor and his assistant were punished for other's behaviour to elicit sympathy from their classmates (SRI5, L47-53). She reflected on this latest approach and shared, "*so far, so good...I mean we can see the responsibility among them... maybe they would sympathised their friend, the class monitor*" (SRI5, L71). Towards the end, in SRI6 Erni stated that the approach adopted seemed to work and the students did not dare to make any noise (L443-447). She highlighted, "*...so far, I would say that it is successful in a way because the class monitor is their friend... they would feel guilty if they make noise*" (SI2, L122) and "*...it helps so far*" (L129).

Apart from the several classroom management strategies described above, Erni would also advise the whole class when the need arose, and only when she felt that a certain matter had become worse, would she advise her students individually (SI2, L282-291). This section on discipline seemed to reflect how the real context of the classroom made it hard for her to live up to the ideas about teaching and learning that she shared earlier. This scenario is another sad reality that she needed to cope as an NQT.

"Exam results and LINUS do matter – I want them to pass." For Erni, she admitted, "*... at least I want them to pass ma'am... that's enough*" and this was one of the reasons she used Bahasa Malaysia in the classroom, to ensure that the students understood the lesson content so that they could pass the exam (SR1, L122-124). It is interesting to note that even with low achievers, the role of examination and ensuring that the students pass the exam is the most important

aspect of education. During the second phase of data collection in SRI4, Erni highlighted that she was delighted to see that her students had improved academically. She said that only two students failed the exam. Their grades during the mid-year school-based exam were mostly 'B' and 'C' (SRI4, L402-414). She continued to explain that she still adopted a similar teaching style and her belief in teaching was still "*Slowly but surely*". During SRI5, Erni highlighted the importance of exams:

... passing an exam is important and their ability to apply what they have learned is also important for me... make it balance.

(SRI5, L344)

... exam is a bench mark. So, I mean if many students failed, the blame is on us and not others.

(SRI5, L352)

Hence, her statements seem to strongly support the role and the importance of exams in the Malaysian classroom as well as in the Malaysian education system, and the other two participants in the previous chapters reported a similar focus on the role of exams. It was indeed quite disheartening to discover the bittersweet reality of having to pass the exam, even though the Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR) had been developed to increase students' interest in the English subject and was not about passing the subject. In fact, the students, teachers, administrators and parents were all focused on passing the exam and the exam content and format was not consistent with what the curriculum was trying to achieve. This scenario seems to be a problem for all teachers, and it is true for all the participants.

LINUS. The extent of LINUS varied from one school to another and the school contexts in the sense of the percentage of LINUS students are very influential in enabling/not enabling teaching of English as the curriculum proposes. In this case, there was a high percentage of LINUS students in this school. Erni described that in her class, only some students passed LINUS screening. Previously, she tried a one-to-one approach, and later she tried to use another group-work approach in order to help those who failed. She conducted more group work, but even then, she still had

to “*go to them and help one by one*”, especially those under the ¹¹*LINUS Tegar* (hard core) category and she said that she gave extra attention to them (SRI3, L345-351).

During the fourth classroom observation, Erni emphasized that her aim was to “...*tell them to pass, understand, pass LINUS and understand only*” (SRI4, L66). As a teacher she wanted the best for her students and she would want to see her students score an ‘A’, but at times considering her students’ level and ability, she explained that it would be good enough if her students could at least pass LINUS. She pointed out that the percentage of LINUS students in this class was very high, 18 students out of 26 failed the recent LINUS screening (SRI4, L396). Since the majority of her students were LINUS, she needed to focus on them while providing more challenging work for the relatively few non-LINUS students. However, she stated that she always found it difficult to come up with ways to help students pass LINUS, and the time that she had to spend on LINUS students was another factor making it hard to focus on classroom teaching.

It was indeed noteworthy when, after a few months, she was sent for LINUS training. She then became more positive towards LINUS implementation (SRI4, L70). During the final Skype interview, she stated that “... *I went to LINUS for Year 1 and Year 2 last year. So I have a bigger picture. I have a ground knowledge on how to execute LINUS, how to treat those LINUS students and like... I can do it... based on their teaching. I can execute in my school*” (SI2, L90). She was more confident and mentioned, “*from LINUS exam, LINUS test we can distinguish, I mean like we could see who could do it... who couldn’t... we... how to teach them*” (SI2, L302). She continued by saying that different strategies were used in the same class. Based on the screening, for every class, she had to deal with non-LINUS and LINUS students for whom she had to set two different tasks: one for those who have mastered basic literacy skills and another for those who could not, *LINUS Tegar* (SI2, L304-312). Although she was slightly positive about the implementation of LINUS, she felt it was difficult at times in terms of the time allotted to conduct the screening since it should be done individually. Furthermore, since she was still new, she felt that she was still unsure on how to ‘handle’ LINUS and she needed to learn more about it. For her, this issue was more her personal problem (SI2, L352-356). Hence, in order for the

¹¹ LINUS Tegar - pupils who do not pass Constructs 1 and 2 are classified as LINUS Tegar and required to attend remedial class.

teachers to be effective in providing LINUS support, they need proper training and experience over time.

Teacher-centred vs. student-centred. This section reflects another example of “*slowly but surely*”, although it was very challenging, Erni moved from the whole class approach to a more individual one over time. In SRI1, she adopted the whole class approach and during the second phase of classroom observation, she began to approach her students individually since she said that not all of them could understand and complete the task set. Those who were able to proceed with the task, she would monitor. After a while, her students understood her purpose of going around the class and monitoring their work. In addition, Erni was indeed excited to see that there were students who took the initiative to ask her if they did not understand. For her, that was good enough to show that some of her students were willing to learn. Erni shared that she would try her best to approach them one by one; however, that would depend on her time since sometimes she would not have enough time to do that (SRI4, L434-435). Towards the end, she tried to conduct a student-centred approach and her role was to facilitate (SRI4, L233). In SRI5, she said again that she was conducting the student-centred approach but would adopt a teacher-centred approach if she felt that she could not ask them to think on their own (L6-12).

Textbook...because it has everything. During the practicum, trainees were encouraged to use a range of materials. However, in the case of Erni, she focused very much on the textbook from the very first observation. As someone who had supervised her during her practicum, I was not sure whether or not to feel frustrated seeing Erni was still using the textbook as her main teaching resource. Trainees were also encouraged to adapt the textbook to ensure that the activities conducted suit the students’ needs. She was indeed very good in adapting materials and carried out a variety of activities during her practicum. I had to remind myself that my presence as a researcher in this study is to focus on the aims of the study and to avoid my role as her former practicum supervisor who advises her on her current practices. Perhaps, I should not have put such high expectation on her classroom practices in her first year of teaching. Indeed during the practicum, she did not have such a wide range of responsibilities as she had once she started teaching. The minimum number of teaching hours during the practicum was 10-12 periods (5-6 hours weekly) and other responsibilities were to help out with the school activities such as the mural or the

English language society. Thus, expecting adaptation was more reasonable than it was when I went to see her in school. In that second phase of classroom observation, there was not much change that I could observe. When asked about her choice of using the textbook for the observed lesson, she happily explained, *“So, the use of textbook... because it has context, everything... sentences... so, they can make sense of it”* (SRI2, L84).

During the fourth observation, Erni conducted an information-gap activity which she adapted from the textbook. She prepared a simple task sheet, a written task adapted from the textbook content due to time constraints. Since her students were not proficient in English, she used that task sheet to aid their understanding (SRI4, L155-173). Occasionally, she introduced some other activities in order to help the students, especially the LINUS students, to learn. She explained that she used the task sheet again because it was simple to fill in the blanks and featured pictures with other signage (SRI5, L77-79). Later, Erni resorted to the textbook because she said, *“... I have to follow the syllabus and then there is examination will come... exam questions will be based on what we learn from the textbook... sometimes I'll use other task sheet from other sources”* (SRI5, L86-87). During the last classroom observation, SRI6, Erni expressed that she could not be too ambitious with her low achiever students. So far, she used simple and guided activities (L291-295) and she said she had tried before to use semi-guided activities, but she stressed that *“they could not get the answer and they would not get the answer”* (L304-307). Erni adapted activities from the activity book as supplementary learning resources apart from the textbook. She set homework from the activity book and students were instructed to write and add additional points of what they know (L360-364).

Reflecting on her classroom approach and the methodology used, Erni explained that she still wanted training, *“...so that every and each of the students are motivated to learn. I think that the thing I'm lacking”* (SI2, L154) and, *“... methodology I think, sometimes, the children at the end towards the lesson, they seem to lose their focus. It happens to most of the teachers, if I'm not mistaken but we have that kind of feeling like, ‘Why aren't they listening? Are they bored with our teaching?’* (L156). Hence, to avoid such feelings and to ensure that there were a variety of activities, once in a while, Erni would bring her students to the library and chose books for them. Then, she instructed them to read and summarise the story for them to fill in their library record book under *‘Nilam Programme’* (SRI5, L125-127). Apart from reading

individually, at times, she would ask them to sequence the story again with their friends in groups of 4-5 students (SRI5, L134-139). Erni explained that the range of responsibilities in school along with the exam-oriented environment had made it difficult for her to find time to prepare for her lesson about which she felt very guilty towards her students at times. Thus, she would try her best to offer other classroom activities apart from using the textbook, only if she had time to prepare.

7.5 Summary

Erni's own language learning experiences were centred on having mostly learned through her teachers' use of "*a boring yet useful*" drilling technique, which she successfully adopted in her current classroom. She started off her teacher training only to fulfil her parents' dreams but began to enjoy the idea of becoming a teacher during her first practicum. Erni's classroom practices revealed quite a strong attempt to cater to students' needs first, especially in managing their discipline before any teaching-learning activities took place. She adopted a significant amount of teacher-centred approach but tried to conduct a student-centred approach towards the end of the study, albeit with strict guidance. In terms of using teaching-learning resources, she relied reasonably heavily on the textbook with a few adaptations. By the end of the first year, Erni's slogan of "*Slowly but surely*" was reflected in the language side, as her students gradually started using English words. However, I actually saw little progression in most other areas such as managing the classroom, lesson planning and implementation; and in adopting and adapting classroom materials. It was not much evidence of "*Slowly but surely*", since that implies some kind of progression.

Chapter 8 Joanna's story

8.1 Introduction

In this final findings chapter, I present the story of Joanna, the fourth newly qualified teacher in my case studies. Joanna, a Chinese teacher who attended a national school in primary and secondary years, is currently teaching in a national-type Chinese school. Even at the initial stage of the study, Joanna's stories already reflected her strong personality, a very confident, capable and thoughtful 'novice'. She had strongly held beliefs on what is best for her students. She disagreed with the use of cane as a form of punishment, although it was the norm in her school. She exclaimed that support for NQTs during the first year is vital and she was thankful for the support she had received. One of the supports was the MoE 'English Native Speaker Programme' (ENSP), which impacted positively on her classroom practices. She also explained that the ENSP along with the mentor for NQTs as well as my research project were the kind of support which helped her throughout her first year of teaching.

8.2 Before first year of teaching

8.2.1 Reminiscing the past: English language learning experience of a Chinese student in a national school

"It was really fun." Unlike Alice, the first participant of the study, Joanna despite being a Chinese, attended a national school for both her primary and secondary, and had no experience of national-type Chinese school. She mentioned that her school was a bit different; she was from ¹²SK but they had Mandarin as a sub-subject. A national school must provide teaching in the Chinese or Tamil languages as well as the indigenous language if the parents of at least 15 students in the school request that particular language to be taught. The majority of the students were Chinese and so it was a bit different from other predominantly Malay national schools (SI1, L50). Joanna shared the contrasting teaching approaches she experienced, in primary (trust, autonomy, personal choice, flexibility, variety and individuality) and secondary, (predictability and lack of autonomy). She remembered,

¹² SK refers to 'Sekolah Kebangsaan' or national school.

So, I think like for primary, in my school specifically we're encourage to read or to go to the library and borrow books. So, I think that was one thing that I like, I think it was helpful whereas... for secondary, we didn't use songs. It was mainly just from the textbook, activity books, that's all. It was very structured and I think that one I didn't like.

(SI1, L1)

Furthermore, she recalled that during her primary years there was a variety of teaching approaches which were full of enjoyment, fun and freedom:

... during English period it wasn't just you sit down in the classroom and then you listen to what the teacher had to say ... but during English period you were given the opportunity to go to the library, pick any book that you want or at the same time talk to your friends... So it was like you get to read and have that freedom.

(SI1, L3-5)

Joanna shared with me that she liked the 'Peter and Jane' reading collection and it was some kind of motivation for her when she was able to see her own progress in reading. She seemed excited to be able to read and moved to another level in reading. She explained,

It's 15 maximum [referring to the class size] and we did like Peter and Jane... like when we were younger. So, that one also, the part where I enjoyed... every week, I actually look forward to it because I wanted to see if I improve and I could go to the next level or like for the week I still have to read 2A and I could bring 3A home.

(SI1, L18)

On top of her formal education in the national school, she went for extra-classes or tuition outside school hours. Her tuition teachers exemplified egalitarian teaching styles which provide space for students and teachers to discuss the teaching-learning process:

... In primary and secondary I went for English tuition outside. So, another thing that I like from that tuition... we had songs because it was Singapore-based syllabus, so we had songs, we had different kinds of

activities and the way the teacher taught us was very different because you pay money but it was really fun, and there this teacher in secondary teacher in sec4... No sec3 which is ... when I was about 15. One thing I like about her was that she's really humble in a sense in language learning is like... Even though I think she's an expert in English but still she brought her 'bible'. She said it was her bible. It was her dictionary, she brought it... she brought her dictionary... I remember clearly during the first day of class. I may be your English teacher but that there are a lot of words that I do not know so we are here to learn together.

(SI1, L10)

She explained that another good thing was that her teacher would reward her students with 'Ferrero Rocher' chocolates, if they could answer her questions (SRI1, L14), and Joanna realised that she wanted to improve herself, she continued saying that, "...so, having that reward it was like a secondary like it added on...it make you even want to learn more" (L24).

8.2.2 Joanna's teacher training experiences

Passion for teaching. Although she did not know what to expect from the course, Joanna started off her teacher training with a positive mind-set. She admitted that she had the passion for teaching and she expressed, "...which is why I went on any way... like I thought it's English, it shouldn't be too difficult and I enjoy teaching... it should be alright" (SI1, L290). When asked about her decision-making about enrolling to ITE, she was barely aware yet positive about it. She recalled,

...I initially thought that English is going to be easy and fun. So, I didn't give much thought to it and I considered IPG (ITE)... but having gone through five and a half years of it, I think it has prepared me for teaching in a way... you can't be fully prepared but I think, IPG has done what need to be done to prepare us to be a teacher.

(SI1, L30)

When she first started, she wondered what she could possibly learn in five and a half years of English. She expected 'grammar' but in fact throughout the training she was exposed to language skills development. She predicted that one would probably learn "... grammar, present tense, past tense, continuous, future and am I going to learn that for 5 years? It was just a thought... it was just a thought" (L40). She realised

what she had learnt was not what she expected and for the first one-and-a-half years of learning English in ITE, she thought that it was fun. It was a good thing for her since the trainees were not exposed to the 'Teaching of' modules' yet during that foundation years (L32). She pointed out that foundation years were indeed helpful: "... help us improve our English first and that was when we were exposed to Literature, other poems, stories" (L34).

Useful courses/modules. Reflecting on the aspect of programme that she found most useful, Joanna appreciated the courses that introduced activities that were 'culturally different' and those dealing with practical classroom management. She felt that the practicum offered the opportunity to 'try out', as in her description of her first practicum which lasted for a month:

...that one month I've truly started teaching...I think it was story telling for children. One of the subjects because that's expose...me personally for the possibility for using that activity in the classroom because I feel it's not really our culture to use that sort of things or maybe I wasn't expose to it when I was in primary school so that was something new and I feel that something it's really interesting that I can use in my classroom. Another one is, behaviour and classroom management because that one really taught me how to what I should expect because we all know kids can be rowdy in classrooms.

(S11, L44)

During the practicum she also had the chance of sharing teaching ideas with other trainees, who came from different institutions to do their practicum at the same school. She was exposed to the others' ideas of collaboration or sharing of limited expertise, which was indeed helpful. She recalled,

...during practicum we were exposed to a different kind of experience like advice from the teachers, or the people you meet and I had the privileged of meeting two Australians, they were pre-service teachers as well... in my practicum school and... they were here for 2 months so within the two months, we exchange like ideas, we exchange on ways on how we can control the classroom, one of which I'm still using until today in my classroom.

(S11, L56-58)

In addition, Erni felt that courses such as 'Teaching of Grammar' and 'Teaching of Writing' helped her in designing activities: for example, guided writing and parallel writing. However, she mentioned that there was not so much exposure for 'Listening and Speaking' skills (SI1, L52) and again during the final Skype interview, she highlighted that similar modules helped her in designing activities that could engage the students: "*students are actually interested or they are engaged like when it comes to cooperative learning like whether it is shared writing... or shared reading... so that helps me overcome challenges like kids not participating or some people being left out* (SI2, L341).

She said that the things that she had learnt in ITE helped her in her classroom practice and to adjust her beliefs on teaching and learning (SI2, L320).

I think overall, it sort of prepared us... I mean those are important courses that I wouldn't discard because if it is not for those certain courses, it wouldn't help me in whatever I am doing now... each subject, each courses had given me like a small take away from it.

(SI2, L395)

8.3 Starting the first year of teaching

Adjusting oneself from national school (NS) to national-type school (NTS).

Joanna's first posting to a NTS was not an expected one. As mentioned earlier, in Alice's story, the first cohort of her TESL programme had a shock due to the unexpected action by the MoE because they were sent to the NTS despite being trained to be primary English teachers in a NS. Alice's learning experience in an NTS was an advantage but for Joanna, who had attended and carried out her practicum in an NS, it was quite a struggle to adjust herself to an NTS environment. During the first visit to her school, the administrators were not available and Joanna shared the information about her school in Box 8.1 below.

8.3.1 School context

Box 8.1: Background School D

It is a national-type Chinese school with a high enrolment of about 1270 students and 91 teachers. The class size ranges from 35 to 45 and more. The school is situated approximately 4.5 km from the city centre. Since the area is highly populated and with different communities, the school is surrounded with 1 international school, 2 other primary NS and 3 secondary schools. School classrooms are equipped with LCD projectors and visualizers to assist the teachers. School D shared a similar ethos to school A, with a lot of emphasis on academic excellence and so pressure on teachers including dealing with excessive amounts of learner written homework. Although it is a Chinese school, other races are permitted to enrol and there were two Malay students in one of Joanna's classes.

8.3.2 Joanna's workload and school environment

Joanna's workload was like all the others; she was given a full teacher's workload immediately. In 2016, Joanna was given 30 periods of English and she was in charge as the advisor for the choir, assistant for school cleanliness, and English Language co-ordinator for Year 2 (SI2, L43, L52, L64-66). Previously, in 2015, she had the responsibility of teaching 32 periods of English Language for five classes. On top of that, she had to conduct an extra class for Years 4-6, and she was expected to attend the English Panel meeting every Friday. Joanna was not given a class teacher post since she did not know Chinese characters (for writing) and her Mandarin speaking skills were limited, but she saw that as an advantage. This was because of the huge responsibility of being a class teacher. She was also involved with the LINUS programme and there were ten LINUS students in all three classes of Year 2 that she taught. She said that she had to plan and design differentiated activities in a class with LINUS students.

During the second phase of data collection in August 2015, Joanna started to feel disappointed with the workload, especially when there was too much administrative work. She explained,

... but I don't know being in this school, I feel like everything is so messy now... I'm starting to realise... admin... in terms of admin and like teacher's meeting or exam papers... like paper work... the non-teaching stuff is all very messy.

(SRI4, L228)

In addition to her workload, she was also unsatisfied with the double-standard treatment by the administrator or the senior teachers. She explained that her schedule was packed because she had to replace her classes after she was away for a few days. However, she said that other teachers did not have to replace their class if they were away. She complained about it and shared another example of double standards,

...other teachers don't have to do it...but because we are new, they want like teach us the proper way like replacing your classes beforehand whereas other teachers, they get other people to relief... So, I'm thinking like... why do I have to... Other people?... I guess some teachers they rebel... so they just let them go.

(SRI4, L240-241)

Apart from the double standard, she disagreed with the kind of stereotyping that the teachers had. In SI2, she said that if they were given 'good' classes to teach, then the other teachers would automatically know that "you are a really good teacher that is why you are given that class... or just that how they have the collaborations that if you teach upper primary, your English must be really good compared to lower primary which I disagree" (SI2, L808-810). She continued by saying that some would mention a 'good' and 'excellent teacher' if one is given one of those particular two 'good' classes (L817). However she said that, "...not to say that they are lousy, but they are not as passionate" and students could be more independent even when the teacher is inadequate. Hence, she did not accept such stereotyping. She means that teaching a good class does not mean being a good teacher, and also teaching a good class means that it is easier because students are more independent.

During the final observation, she informed me she was exhausted with the workload although it was still bearable.

... how I feel at the end of the class... I think generally if you have a smaller class you'll be a bit more refresh... it's just at the end... I'm just drained... that's all... I'll like... I'll like marking books... but so far I still can managed without having to bring books home.

(SRI5, L740)

Joanna decided that, *"I tell myself that I'm not going to look too far... if I can make it through this five years and do it well, I'll decide again"* (SRI5, L786). She mentioned that she would make a decision in the future, about whether she should stay in the teaching profession, depending on whether or not she would survive in this profession after five years of teaching.

Joanna was indeed lucky compared to the others to have the privilege of getting support in her first year of teaching. One of the teaching supports that helped throughout her first year was the 'English Native Speaker Programme' discussed in the next section.

'English Native Speaker Programme'. During my first meeting with Joanna, the first thing she highlighted was the 'English Native Speaker Programme' (ENSP), devised by the MoE, which all seven English teachers in her school were involved in. The 'native speaker' mentor involved, Mr Trevor (pseudonym) is an English expert who came to observe classroom teaching and sometimes co-teach with the teachers. He would share anything about classroom ideas, teaching-learning approaches and classroom management. For instance, he suggested that the English teachers should create shared a teaching materials file: *"...we have like this file where we put ¹³ABM from Mr Trevor because he's the one who told us about all this... and then we take turn to use it"* (SRI3, L95), and Joanna remembered that it was like something they did in college (L96). There were times that Joanna had different opinions on teaching practices in the classroom. She explained, *"I think it's a good practice for them but Mr Trevor thinks like... it's annoying. Why did you keep emphasising on day and date? I want them to learn... because he said why are you so strict about it? It's day and date anyway"* (SRI3, L149-155). Hence, at times she would make her own classroom decisions, which she thought best for her students. Although at times she felt pressured by his presence in lesson observations, she would be prepared to deal with his feedback because she said that the most he would say is to give suggestions (SI2, L730).

After a few months under ENSP and during the second phase of data collection in August, Joanna complaint about Mr Trevor's presence: *"He's very very negative that's why it's so draining when he comes..."* (SRI4, L2014). At times, they 'argued'

¹³ ABM – *Alat Bantu Mengajar* (Teaching materials)

about the content of the textbook or sometimes his suggestion was good but it was difficult to implement.

...he gives us ideas on how to teach and all that... he has a lot of ideas... but sometimes it's really like short of time that you can't do it... for example like writing he suggested that we create a post box... I get them to write each other's letter... it's a really good idea and I would want to do it but... I don't know when I can do it.

(SRI4, L273)

However, she admitted that Mr Trevor and the ENSP supported her in her classroom planning and management. She added,

...but all in all...in terms of talking to him, it does help...it's just side track and he does his personal stuff... it's a bit weird... other than that it's good... he really put in the effort... sometimes he asked us to stay in the afternoon... so that's when... it's a bit messy... because we have to arrange all tuition classes and it's not easy looking for replacement... but if we do get that done our time spend with him for workshop is all very helpful.

(SRI4, L276-281)

There was a sense that overall Mr Trevor's support was helpful, but he did not fully understand the context. She said later,

"... it's quite positive... I mean... besides ... putting aside like his attitude and like the things that he says sometimes... but overall I think he has a rather positive impact because whenever his here... arghhh... you want him to leave..."

(SRI5, L533)

The excerpt above seems contradictory as Joanna said that she was indeed grateful to have him around, especially in terms of supporting her throughout her first year of teaching; however, she wanted him to leave because at times she felt that his presence increased her workload, in terms of having to prepare a proper lesson plan, and staying back after school for discussions and workshops.

She also highlighted that Mr Trevor not just gave support in terms of teaching materials and resources but he motivated her (SRI5, L536-541).

I think in the last seven months, there have been ups and downs when you're so excited to teach and (then feel) I'm not going to do it anymore... everyone else is like that... but then... with him coming... it's like... whenever we're down, he constantly pushes us... you know.. .do it, do it, do it... it's like... I know like all the other teachers before they get like... indoctrinated to the whole system you know... don't fall into it... mmm... other people may not be doing it but as new teacher show what you can... because in a way it keeps you going.

(SRI5, L531)

His presence stopped her from just 'giving up' and doing what everyone else did, i.e. she was indoctrinated into the whole system, which was going to class and teaching towards the exam.

In the final Skype interview, Joanna highlighted again the positive support that ENSP offered and that Mr Trevor was indeed helpful in giving feedback on classroom practices. Normally, he would leave the classroom decision-making to the teachers without enforcing his rules on them (SI2, L329-331).

8.4 Surviving the first year

How do I decide how to teach? Joanna shared that her previous learning experiences during her schooling and training years helped to inform her current teaching practices. She mentioned that she tried to do things that her English teacher during her school years did but certain things did not work for her and she tried to avoid those things. For instance, she adopted a reward system for her students (SI1, L108-110). Although she did not have any experience in learning or teaching in a NTS, she seemed to have a sense of an independent and quite confident person in this new environment. During her transition period from ITE to the 'real' teaching, she shared one of the theories that stands out among the rest, which she used as a guide in planning her lessons:

I think it's Piaget cognitive... constructivist theory... I believe in that students in language learning or even for their cognitive processes... we

should always help them a little bit but let them find the answers themselves (based on their developmental stages). So, in a way the teacher inspires them without telling them the answers. So, it always acts as a reminder for me. So when I plan a lesson I try to... is this activity helping them construct their own knowledge?

(SI1, L163)

She shared that she used the theory to develop the lesson on vocabulary learning and she taught them vocabulary in a contextual way; she said within the context, they were able to come out with their own conclusions of what the vocabulary means (SI1, L168-174). She also expressed the idea that younger new teachers were exposed to more technology in the classroom during training days and they could use songs in the classroom and they could go on 'YouTube' and get the materials and use it in the classroom partly because they had those courses/modules during training days (SR11, L22). However, she realised that certain skills or activities learnt such as the 'information-gap' activity or an activity that requires students to move around the class, were not feasible in Malaysian classroom with the class size (SI1, L153).

Good teaching? When asked what good teaching entails, Joanna stated that "... I think for good teaching you need to have variety. It's always trial and error, like you know this will work and... variety" (SI1, L280), and she connected her statement with her reading lesson the previous week where she tested students' knowledge of 'sounds' and gave them a variety of activities. She also pointed out that the attitude of the teacher is another aspect of good teaching. She highlighted that it would be very difficult if a teacher does not enjoy teaching but even if one enjoys teaching, we need to reflect our attitude towards teaching. For instance, if we really want our students to learn, we would always try to find ways even if it really tests our patience sometimes, and she said that she was exhausted, especially after every Friday: "*I'm just like low, I'm running low on my tank*" (SI1, L282).

During the second classroom observation, Joanna had reported strong positive views about the teaching-learning process; she said that the most important thing is that her students understand what they are learning. She felt that she needed to focus the students' attention on the content: for instance, in SR12 for the 'Giving directions' activity, she said that, "...*they need to know the spelling and what's in those rooms... for the one before, turn left, go straight... the museum is on your left... to use words*

and they should know which is left and which is right... which is now until today I still ask them to practise..." (SRI2, L110-115).

One of her efforts to help her students to understand what they are learning was to bring them out of the class. She tried it once with Mr Trevor to bring the children to the school hall and conduct activities there (SRI5, L744-746). However, it was difficult for her at times to bring the students to do an activity outside the classroom due to certain factors. In SRI4, for the topic 'Beautiful flowers', she recalled,

... we had a lot of visitors coming in... so, the GB (head teacher) and all and everybody... it was like... oh... try to keep your students in the class, make sure they behave... I was thinking if I bring them out, it's a risk... in case they bumped into them... I don't know what will happen... and I didn't dare to do that... so, I just brought them to 'Taman Orkid' (Orchids Garden) which is just outside their classroom... if not I think around the school there would be a lot (of flowers).

(SRI4, L47)

Thus, Joanna felt that sometimes her school context makes it difficult to do things differently. She wanted to do something outside the children's routine; however, there were other factors, such as the permission from the head teacher, that she needs to consider in order to implement something different which she felt benefitted her students.

In SI2, Joanna tried to ask her students to perform a role play scenario about 'Good manners', but the children refused since the task was to challenge 'the teacher'. It seemed that she had not accounted for cultural norms; it was hard for students to do in terms of challenging the teacher. So she had to change the whole situation and told her students that the task set previously was just a role play and it was supposed to be fun. Only after that her students understood what role play is and Joanna mentioned that she felt that a lot of teachers did not do such activities (role play) thus her students did not dare to try something new and she stated, "*I am not saying what I am doing is right but I still just trying it out*" (SI2, L279). She continued, "*so its managing those differences then adding you know like what you think is good or what is actually good not from the books, not from your schooling experiences but your current students, like current situation now... and like seeing what the best that will fit them*" (L283). She appeared to believe that understanding students is vital and to

be effective teacher is to be able to "...to put lesson down to their level, to understand what they are going through, what they are interested in... number 1 is to be effective... number 2 is to know my stuff well..." (SI2, L497). In terms of understanding the students she highlighted that, "...what we believe about learners, for instance, whether they should be active or enthusiastic about learning, affects her classroom practices" (SI2, L967).

Creating an 'English only' classroom? Joanna said that her students had always relied on Mandarin even during their English lesson. They are used to English being translated into Mandarin whenever they did not understand. Their previous teachers in Year 1 and halfway through Year 2, taught them in Mandarin and they actually encouraged code-switching. She stated that when she came in for the first time, the students were shocked since they were not used to the way she was teaching. Her students came to her with Mandarin vocabulary and since she is not proficient in Mandarin, she tried different ways to explain the vocabulary in English (SI1, L194-200). Upon realising that the students had difficulty in understanding her, she was a bit lenient for the first few weeks, so she said that she let the students off the hook. In her second month of teaching, however, she warned the students, "*If you speak Mandarin, you get out of my classroom*" (SI1, L208). Joanna really is confident and capable, especially when she always rationalises her action. She explained and helped her students to understand:

They're very very scared, ya they are very scared but I helped them why I wanted them to speak English because I said you don't speak English at home, you don't speak English when you play with your friends, during recess. So, if I'm asking one hour per day, three hours per week, is that too much and they all said no. So, I'm like...ok! I was speaking English.

(SI1, 210)

She expressed that she did not want to impose on her students since they are young and they would not understand. She had her own viewpoint that a teacher needs to explain why they are doing things to their learners. She was drawing on her own experience and shared that it did not work for her when she was growing up as a kid, when someone told her something and she did not understand; thus, when she tried to rationalise her actions, so far her way of rationalising her actions has been working well (SI1, L212). She mentioned that she would try her best not to code-switch but

she actually used two or three Mandarin and BM words during the observation since she felt that she could not find any suitable words. She knew that initially it was weird for her students since they were not used to using English during their English lesson but she encouraged them to speak more English and she knew that her students were getting used to it. Her students told her that their previous teachers spoke to them in Mandarin during English lessons and it was only vocabulary items that they speak to them in English (SRI1, L37-42).

In SRI2, she reflected on her attitudes towards the use of L1 in her English classroom and she realised that she should not have used L1 in the first place, even to aid student's understanding. She gave an account of a Malay student who could not really understand English, so she decided to use BM, especially when the boy did not bring his book. She reminded him in BM to bring the book for the next English lesson and the boy did. Thus, at the moment, she said that he would speak to her in BM when he saw Joanna. Later, she tried to change the situation, so she used English back to him; she still sometimes switched to BM, but she understood that at least the boy tried to mix and use English. She was happy with this small change because she felt that although English was a foreign language to him, at least he took the initiative to use it (SRI2, L53-58).

In SRI4, she pointed out that she used Mandarin to explain the names of the flowers because the topic was very content-based and they were used to direct translation. For instance, she translated 'bougainvillea' as /tse hua la/, 'paper flower', and her students understand the flower she was referring to. She also said that they know the flowers' names in Mandarin but they could not connect it to the English name (SRI4, L1-7). She mentioned that for that topic she needed to deal with vocabulary and it was actually easier to translate rather than to explain. She gave another example, "*chrysanthemum they wouldn't know...but if I say 'teh bunga' or like Mandarin /'júhuā chá'...then they will know*" (SRI4, L70-72). She also said that when she started it was a bit difficult because her students did not know what orchid was and she had to ask other teachers what the Mandarin term was. She said that it was easy to translate the vocabulary on the spot, and she expressed that for this topic "doing translation definitely saves a lot of time" (SRI4, L99).

During this second phase of data collection, Joanna admitted that she "*has gone partly a bit loose*" (SRI4, L87) in terms of her attitude towards the use of L1 in her English classroom, although actually every time she went into the class, she would

have to remind them. For her Year 3 classes, since the students were reluctant to learn, she decided that she had to do something new to encourage her students to use English in the classroom. She introduced 'Chocolate Fund'. She explained,

So I did a chocolate fund. So whenever you speak Mandarin, one word is 10 cents, and I told them beforehand... it's not that I want your money... so don't go by telling your parents I keep your money... I'm putting it in a box and we're going to buy chocolates for everyone... when we have enough money... so when you want to talk and contribute and be nice to your friend by all means speak Mandarin... so far I've collected... quite a fair bit.

(SRI4, L89)

Joanna said that her Year 3 classes were quite serious about the 'Chocolate Fund' and her students could actually understand when she spoke in English. However, she said that for her Year 2 class, it was still very difficult (SRI5, L351).

Joanna continued to use Mandarin when it comes to certain vocabulary in the following observation in SRI5. She used Mandarin to help the students understand the word 'wisdom', 'knowledge', and other words like '*shui nu*' water buffalo because she felt that it helps in explaining the story for that lesson (SRI5, L343-347). However, later she realised that she should have not use Mandarin and realised the reason why she started switching to Mandarin:

...and then I realised... actually no... they can understand... so sometimes it's always like a battle between I don't know if they understand or not and then I lower my standard... so I start using Mandarin... and then when I start doing that... then I started to realise... no... if I'm going to do that they'll never learn.

(SRI5, L349)

Joanna got the sense that her students were slightly confused with her 'English only' rules and sometimes she got so frustrated and blurted, "*ahhh... just speak Mandarin*" (SRI5, L353). It seemed that there was changes in her attitude towards L1 which sometimes depended on the topic, available time and students' levels of proficiency. She also highlighted that she was still struggling with her rules and kept on reminding herself to be consistent (L365).

Towards the end, Joanna still held a strong view of using English only in her language classroom; however, she would allow a bit of Mandarin, especially for weaker students (SI2, L189-190). I also felt that I shared a similar view with Joanna during my first year of teaching. I remembered that I also had the rule of 'English language only' in the classroom and I would carry out different types of punishment, which included paying fines and memorising words from the English dictionary. However, I would use code-switching or use Bahasa in the lesson when I realised that my students had difficulty in attempting the tasks instructed, especially those who have low proficiency in the language. Joanna shared that when she received a new set of students in early 2016, she insisted on only English in the classroom; she said that it pushes them to try to use the language (L196) and she would not enforce the rules so strictly with the weaker ones. Joanna also tried what she coined "*peer accountability*", whereby those who are proficient in the language would explain or teach the weaker ones in a group of six (SI2, L867-873) but there would be those who just explain in Mandarin (873). At the end, she highlighted that,

I still believe now that if they are really that weak that you need... translation.

(SI2, L846)

...that would work for really weak students so that they don't straight away feel discourage... you know I can't understand this at all I am not gonna try... so giving them a bit of code switching would help them about a bit.

(SI2, L852-854)

In addition, she stated that,

I think correcting them on the spot sometimes help ... and I think it doesn't have to a bad thing to correct them on the spot. it is how you put it.

(SI2, L856 &862)

Classroom management: creating rigorous and engaging classroom.

Classroom management is a problem for Joanna, as for all the others. The ways she tried to deal with it needed to vary according to the ages of the students. Her attempts included making her classes engaging and interesting, rewards, punishments, and clear rules. She realised that, "...as a teacher you always hold on to one major thing that you see as important... for me is to start off with classroom management... if I

can't manage my classroom then I don't see learning taking place, not as effective... not that there is no learning but it is not as effective" (SI2, L969). She stressed that if we could not control our class well, it would be difficult to deliver whatever we planned to deliver (SI2, L970) and towards the end of the study, managing student's behaviour was still very important to her (SI2, L120).

During the initial stage, Joanna felt that behaviour and classroom management were something that she had to know, considering the large class size of 45 she had (SI1, L48) and she felt that she was being too ambitious in wanting a perfect classroom (SI2, L204). Joanna realised that "*no classroom is the same*" (SI1, L124). She said that even after two months' teaching, she was not sure of the right approach to manage her students. She mentioned that initially since it was a transition period for her, she tried a different classroom management approach and she did not realise that she was actually shouting in getting them to keep quiet and she had lost her voice twice in just a month (SRI1, L24). She explained,

I realised that I don't want to be shouting and I can't do it for the next like whole year and then like I thought about you know, everyone hands on your head, hands on your shoulder but that one works mostly for Year 2, the younger, year one and year two that would work but Year 3, I think they find it a bit boring, like they give you that kind of response, so that one works for year one and year two ... and so far I think that has been one of the most successful one and like counting down numbers yes but after a while like, what do you do after number five, if you don't sit down? Oh, there's no punishment, who cares?

(SRI1, L26)

She continued by pointing out that her Year 3 students were mature enough to understand the rationale of the classroom rules she set. She explained the reasons why she set certain rules to her students:

I told them when I set rules, I told them English you speak English, English class you speak English, follow those rules and I also said that if you don't want to be in the class, I give you a choice, you go out, you don't make me angry coz I don't like being angry and the whole class is going to get mad. Everyone is not going to enjoy the lesson, so, you can just go out, you can stand outside where I can see you, I want to teach those who

wants to learn, that's what I told them. **So I made them understand, I wasn't angry or anything. I just like... give very clear and... I believe that in every method that you choose or whatever you say to the students, they should know the reason behind it, if not, there's no point in just telling them... and I think that works because at least in a way treating them like adult, not just you do this, you do that.**

(SRI1, L26)

Joanna made it very clear to her students that, *"I think when it comes to... when I'm talking, you don't talk or even like... for the first one period I just need them to sit still but after that you want to talk, you want to stand it's fine during activity... or writing..."*, and she pointed out that towards the end of the lesson, usually she is a *"bit loose"* but for the first part of the lesson (usually the presentation stage), her students have to listen to her first (SRI4, L115). She also shared that she had a class of students who were generally quite rude and when she tried to use attention getters such as counting 1, 2, and 3, it did not work for them, although they worked in other classes (SI2, L197). Thus, the way she managed the class varies according to the set of students. Towards the end of the study, Joanna highlighted that her priority in the classroom would be *"discipline, how they behave in class and then whether they learn or not"* (SRI5, L679) because for her *"...people who want to learn can actually learn"* (L680).

Joanna tried out different approaches in managing her language classroom:

1. Promoting rewards. Joanna emphasized the role of reward in her classroom so as to encourage positive learning behaviour despite any learning difficulties they have. She would offer rewards for her students, including for LINUS students. She believed that, *"...rewarding kids will help them in their learning positively but at the same time not too much of it because they will rely on it eventually"*, and this belief stemmed from experiences as a learner and as a teacher (SI1, L86). She tried this reward system during the practicum and it worked, and she continued the practice. She adapted the criteria for rewards to match the learners' capacity. She was excited to share an example of a reward she tried: at one point of the lesson, she realised that her students had already lost interest so suddenly she took out her RM10 notes and they were all excited. She asked them to find some words in English and since they did not have much time to complete her task, she told them that if they went

back and found the words, the RM10 is still the reward for the following week (SI1, L276). She continued by saying,

So, I bet they are all excited to start and I'm excited to go to class that Monday which is why I think for good teaching you need to have variety. It's always trial and error, like you know this will work...

(SI1, L280)

It is not the norm in Malaysian schools to reward students outside the classroom and it was indeed quite surprising to know that her school adopted the reward system. This scenario could lead other teachers to adopt it in their classrooms. She explained,

Even the school they have a system if you help the teacher, the teacher can give you stickers, so all the teachers have that same sticker and we can give it to students if they behave well, mainly for moral... like they help someone... they're considerate.

(SRI1, L36)

She shared that she was exposed to a similar reward system during her training years. One of the modules learnt was 'Behaviour and Management', which informed trainees on how teachers could carry out some positive reinforcement to certain age groups. Joanna, however, stated that not everything theoretical works effectively, because from her own experience, in one of the Year 3 classes, the positive reinforcement only worked for some of them and it did not work for a few of the more 'naughty' children. This seemed to be an important realisation, the need to 'adapt' theory to reality, and again this is something that was true for all teachers. Basically, she admitted that she just remembers what she learnt during training and tried to apply it in her classroom (SRI1, L45-47).

In SI2, she explained that she still implemented the reward system (L211), especially reward stickers for spelling, and she was excited when she tried it with upper primary classes as the children were surprised with the reward (L211-223). She noted, "...*that actually worked because I didn't know like it will work on them because they are much older and they probably would appreciate other things. So with the sticker system is, every ten stickers that they collect they get to exchange something from me*" (something like biscuits or pencils) (SI2, L225).

2. Punishment. After about six months into teaching, during the second phase data collection, Joanna pointed out that she introduced a new rule to manage her classroom (SRI4, L108-109) i.e. standing inside the classroom. She rationalised her action of implementing such a rule:

...it shouldn't stop them from paying attention... I think in fact standing will help them... pay attention more because they know that they are standing... the other thing is... I can't ask them to just go out... instead all the time you go out, you don't learn ...so I figure ...standing outside is the best option because they will get tired.

(SRI4, L111)

In the following observation, she continued to share: “*...but not completing your work or not bringing your workbooks... if you don't bring your book, I make you stand... but not on the first time, like if I see you disturbing your friend, that's when you stand*” (SRI5, L462). Another reason for her to punish her students with standing and sometimes standing outside was if they disrupted the class while she was teaching. She said that she would simply get them to stand outside with a book for them to do something, and not just stand and do nothing (SRI5, L164).

Joanna was quite lenient if her students did not bring their books to class, either their textbook or their exercise book. She said that if they forgot to bring their textbook, she would ask them to stand and share with their friend. She expressed that, “*I was thinking like if I make them stand, they don't learn anything, like better... I can do my work right, then stand and ... look at their friends but when Mr Trevor came last week, they didn't bring their workbook so he made them copied phrases*” (SRI3, L12) and for spelling exercise, she would just ask her student to stand and take out a piece of paper and write (SRI3, L127-131) since she believed that there is no point of asking her students to complete other types of punishment and they would not be able to learn.

3. Caning? She admitted that in her school, “*they allow caning... the teachers bring cane everywhere... the students are very afraid of the cane, like as a new teacher I don't cane them but still the class is too big, too noisy I have to use the cane. So, what I usually do is to point to them to the table like, 'Hey, like... you pay attention'. I just point...*” (SI1, L129-140). Even with her family background experience of punishment by using the cane, and the cane was almost seen everywhere in her

school, she did not believe in using it to solve her students' discipline problems. She used it just to scare the students and did not use it to cane them physically. During SRI1, she said that initially she took the cane because that was the norm in the school. She explained,

...everyone was doing it, they're very scared of the cane... it was spelling because I gave them spelling every week and if they didn't learn I will hit them once on their palm and then I figure there's no point, they just gonna get immune.

(SRI1, L49)

She continued to share that at the beginning of the year, teachers were seen selling rattan in the staff room (SI2, L588-589). They were selling them not just to the new teachers but to other teachers as well. In terms of using it she was told about the guide of caning the students, i.e. be careful so that it would not hit the vein (when she canes the student on the palm) and for the boys, they hit the bottom. She recalled that her colleague advised her,

...try not to use the cane because it gets very addictive and like you rely on the cane, to be fierce, where as you yourself should scare the kids already when you need them to be scared and when you need them to pay attention.

(SRI1, L57)

Towards the end of the study, it was quite a surprise knowing that Joanna had used the cane to discipline her students. In SRI5, she said that usually she would cane them on the palm (SRI5, L147). However, normally she would warn the students first and cane would be her last resort. Later, she rationalised her action:

Usually the well-behaved one, if they tell me they forgot to bring, I understand... bring it the next time... for now just share and they can share... the problem only comes... when you don't bring and you disturb other people... so I told them, if you don't bring just sit down and copy but some of them don't want to do it... So, that's when I punished you.

(SRI5, L168)

In SI2, Joanna shared that after she attended a 'teaching camp' during the school holidays at the end of 2015, she felt that after the camp she wanted to create a safe

and fun environment, and caning should be the last option (L571) and she highlighted that in early 2016, at the end of the study, she was one of those who did not carry any cane around the school since in a Chinese school environment it is the norm (L577-579).

4. Toilet rules. Joanna had laid down rules regarding going to the toilet during class time from the very first time she entered the class. She would not allow her students to go to the toilet during 'presentation time': normally for the first half an hour because she would not want them to miss the first part of the lesson. She had been very strict with the rules. She said only if it is a genuine case and she knew that he/she could not stand, would she let him/her go (SRI2, L45-49).

During the second classroom observation, she felt that she could still improve on her classroom management. She expected her students to really behave but she thought that it was only her expectations, realising that "*they are kids, they cannot be robot*" (SRI2, L106). She was still strict in her toilet rules and she made sure that she made it clear to her students from the start because there was an incident where a student peed in her pinafore (SRI4, L210-214). She seems generally to be very keen on explaining to her learners and sees understanding of the rules as important.

5. Other approaches. During SRI2, Joanna said that she tried using other approaches to manage her class. She seldom sits in class and when she does, the students would actually get scared. In one situation, the class was too noisy and she was very angry and she decided to sit. The moment she sat down, she heard a few of her students shouting "teacher angry" three times and because after that there was a few minutes left, she asked her students to open their books and later she left for the next class. Joanna was surprised when the next time she went in, the class was super-duper good (SRI2, L31). She commented that that was her first encounter of sitting and she quite liked the moment where she did not have to scream and shout.

In SRI5, she used a lot of 'counting the numbers' to get their attention and ask them to keep quiet. She shared:

"Nowadays, I use a lot of 1 to 3 or 1 to 5 or 1 to 10... aahh... because it's faster and it takes less effort... Honestly, compared to putting your hands up (as a signal to ask the students to keep quiet)... because you have to wait for everyone to do it... and then I have to wait for everyone to do it

and they just... (sigh)... a bit tiring... coz when I come... when I do count down... there's more urgency... I make it clear... when I count to 5, I want this to happen... but at that time... I count to 5 for some reason they just do it... or I have to wait for a bit... whereas for the hands... I need to speak... and not everyone will be doing this... because they were busy talking right? and then... at the end of it... when they are like this, I need to still give instructions.

(SRI5, L597-603)

During our final Skype session, Joanna tried clapping twice to five times to get the students' attention. The whole class would clap together with her and she said that this method actually worked. Everyone would slowly drop or stop doing other things since their friends were doing it (L474). I was amazed with her classroom management and the way she handled her students' misbehaviour. At first I thought my presence in the classroom would create a different teaching environment, i.e. the students would behave and pay attention to their teacher since there was a stranger sitting at the back of the classroom. However, there were times that the students did not listen to her and that was when I observed that she was strict in managing her students' behaviour.

Mr Trevor as a life saviour. Joanna admitted that at times, Mr Trevor helped her in managing the classroom and she also said that her students were afraid of him (SRI5, L70). He shared with her some of the classroom management ideas:

..because he comes out with ideas... in terms of classroom management he came in and he brought a whistle... did I tell you? He blow the whistle and all the kids were scared. So, I brought mine so I figured like I'll learn from him and I don't have to scream? and lose my voice so I brought my whistle... until now I don't know where's the whistle ... I never used it.

(SRI5, L635)

'Teaching course camp'. During the end-of-year school holidays in 2015, as mentioned earlier, Joanna had the opportunity to join a 'teaching course camp' for seven to eight days conducted by a private school where they had facilitators from abroad (United States). She shared that she learnt a lot in terms of approaches to teaching and it was like a refresher course for her. She concluded that the camp, "...beyond that I learned how to manage kids without scolding them... without having

to scold them all the time" (SI2, L243). However, she did not have the chance to see whether it works in practice.

Conclusion: trial and error in managing the classroom. In SRI5, Joanna mentioned that the classroom rules depend on the class and the set of students (L193-194) and for the past year of teaching, Joanna tried trial and error in managing the classroom. She said that she was still indecisive about what was good or bad classroom management and she still had those questions lingering in her mind (SRI5, L717). However, nearing the end of the study, she concluded that she finally came up with three important things for the ground rules (SI2, L149). First rule - raise your hand when you want to talk; second -toilet break (students were only allowed to go to the toilet at the start of the second period); and third, speak English (L151-180). She honestly said she would just give her best and realised that if she could not change much, then it is fine because she would be happy knowing that she made a bit of difference (L537-539). She pointed out that it was better to have three basic rules which are easier to follow.

Exam grades and LINUS 'outrank' teaching and learning.

If the purpose for learning is to score well on a test, we've lost sight of the real reason for learning.

Jeannie Fulbright

The quote above reflected the sad reality in which the four participants had to deal with, including Joanna. At the initial stage of teaching, Joanna already had this idea that the exam grades would reflect her teaching and act as a bench mark for whether or not her students understood what she taught (SRI2, L121). She said, "*I'm scared, they (the administrators and the parents) will blame me*" (L125).

In SRI4, she discussed the marks as well as her students' scores, and felt that she should do something to help them boost their scores. She said,

I'm telling because they all feel very happy that they score very well... Year 3 they are so happy... they think like they are very good but... this is zero [referring to the marks, '0']... they get zero... maybe like I should start working on this.

(SRI4, L164)

She informed me the exam result was the benchmark for her to gauge and to reflect “*where... what I’m doing is right, what I’m doing is wrong, what should we include...*” (L690). She also encouraged her students to score well and she was a bit frustrated by the careless mistakes made by the weaker ones, which resulted in them getting lower marks:

I told the pupil if you're getting like A and above, it's very good for you... but I know you can do better so this is not the only paper... this one is very easy... the weaker ones... careless mistakes... that's why you didn't do very well... if they copy wrongly I'll just like give a zero [referring to the marks, '0'] and even that sometimes they copy wrongly... the words are already given.

(SRI5, L696)

During the final interview she said that she was still trying with whatever she could, in terms of helping her students with learning. Frustratingly, she pointed out, “*sometimes it is like a lot of things you cannot change especially when it comes to completing workbooks and their exam based situation... those are the big things that I can't change*” (SI2, L277). Her views on exams were that exams gave the students a goal to work towards but the setback was when they felt that their learning is only judged by their exam results (SI2, L678-L680). She shared that some of her students would feel that if they failed it means they are really ‘lousy’ and they are not going to try because “*... they set very high pressure on themselves especially parents in Chinese school*” (L684). Even in SRI5 previously, she explained that some of her students were afraid to show their exam results to their parents even though the exam ended three weeks before (L145). She continued by saying that they (the parents) set a lot of expectations and it was very obvious such as how many ‘A’s that one get or even one or two marks they would come and look for you (additional marks) (SI2, L686-688). She agreed that it is indeed heart-wrenching that this is what the education system has to come to. Basically, from Joanna’s stories, the administrators and the parents perceived ‘learning’ as learning to pass the exam rather than preparing the students for knowledge and skills that will be useful in the future.

Dealing with LINUS. As for LINUS, Joanna took extra effort to conduct differentiated activities for LINUS and non-LINUS students. In one of the observed classes, she had three LINUS students, all seated in front of the class. Joanna mentioned that initially she had to call them up to give them the different tasks. Later, since she had

grouped them together to sit in front, it was easier for her to allocate the tasks. Another challenge for new teachers was dealing with 'differentiated classes' and this is true for the other participants. When it comes to a spelling activity, for instance, she would read out all the words to the whole class while the LINUS students started writing the date and day, and by the time she finished the whole spelling with the others, these LINUS students were just about to copy the task set for them; Joanna stressed that they were slow. At the same time, she would set another task for the rest of the class (SRI3, L19-35). She highlighted that in all the three classes of Year 2 that she taught, there were ten LINUS students (L37).

In the second phase of data collection, Joanna did not seem satisfied with the second screening of LINUS because she said that that would definitely affect her teaching time. She suggested,

...when we teach in the classroom like a lot of things will be rushed... I think ya... it's just rush that bit... a lot of time it'll be... ok you'll do this page, this page without... a teacher teaching them.

(SRI5, L736)

Joanna remembered that she went to a half-day workshop for LINUS and another training session for LINUS Year 4 over the holidays in November 2015, and that was the only LINUS training/workshop that she attended (L349). She strongly said 'No' when asked whether or not the LINUS training helps in terms of dealing with challenges in the classroom (L355). She highlighted that for LINUS, the teacher would need to prepare two objectives and two reflections, for mainstream and LINUS students (L361). She said that, "*...for those really weak students what is the most basic they should achieve at the end of it... my objective, I won't expect a LINUS student to like make a full on sentence*" (L616). Hence, she set her own target and what kept her going was, "*...I know I actually enjoy teaching... seeing kids learn and the results that you get... which are not exam result*" (L981-983). She seemed to show her maturity in reflecting her students learning process when she said, "*...the characters that you get to build and to see how they respond cause they all like being... human beings... they all have characters, personality*" (L985).

She realised that having different sets of students in 2016, she needed to approach them differently (L991) and in the end, she felt that, "*it is a lot about what you want to do for the kids and what you do for them affect what you do for yourself*" (L997).

Although teaching seemed exhausting, she admitted that she was enjoying it (SI2, L1105).

8.5 Summary

In summary, Joanna's past experiences as a learner and her positive attitude towards teaching helped her to start her first year of teaching positively. She had strong opinions on what was best for her students. These included creating an 'English only' classroom and she was able to manage use of the L1 with greater tolerance towards the end of the study. In terms of classroom management, she did not agree with the use of caning, although it is the culture and norm at a Chinese school. In addition, although there was tendency towards exam-oriented classrooms, she tried to help her students in learning. However, at the end, she highlighted that there were things that she could not change and one of them was their exam-based situation. It was indeed difficult for her, especially when the general education system focuses on the exam. On the other hand, she was indeed lucky to have the privilege to receive support from the 'English Native Speaker Programme', which she admitted helped her by supporting her first year along with the support from her colleague, and my research observations were said to be very helpful for her to have the opportunity to reflect on her own teaching.

Chapter 9

Summary of key issues: similarities and differences among four newly qualified English teachers' evolution of beliefs

9.1 Introduction

The four stories in this research focus on each newly qualified English teachers' cognition or the evolution of their beliefs about teaching and learning during their first year of teaching and how these affected their teaching practices. Through their accounts, readers can track the thoughts of these teachers as they evolve from the beliefs established before they started teaching through their past experience of schooling and teacher training during their first year of real teaching. Since the stories in this research focus on an individual participant's evolution of beliefs, the findings revealed that beliefs are unique to the individual and that they evolve in the light of individual experiences in particular contexts. Participants make adjustments to their beliefs differently from each other to certain extents and, therefore, the change in beliefs is influenced by their own personalities, their status as newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the school context, the ethos, and the nature of the students they teach. Teachers have a set of different prior beliefs as a result of different prior experiences, even though on the surface they all seem to have been through a similar Malaysian education system and are members of the multi-racial Malaysian culture. Thus, beliefs are shaped by interdependent factors.

In this chapter, I summarise the key issues highlighted in the four participants' stories (Chapters 5-8). I will present the similarities and differences with regards to their evolution of beliefs about teaching and learning during their first year of teaching and how these influence their teaching practices. The research questions in Chapter 4 will be used to present and demonstrate the key issues of this study and organised in that way.

9.2 Beliefs at the start of the first year of teaching and what affected these

It was interesting to observe how the different experiences of schooling and interest in the language essentially affected the way these four teachers responded to their teaching-learning practices when they began teaching, and the learning on 'how to teach' that evolved. Evidence from each of the stories presented shows that their initial cognitions was quite strongly influenced by their prior language learning

experiences (PLLEs) and their teacher training experience. Each participant had to make adjustments to their beliefs and accommodate to the realities of teaching. To recapitulate, each of them had different schooling experiences, two in national schools (Erni and Joanna), one in a mission school where English was used widely (Salina) and one in a national-type Chinese school (Alice).

The differences in schooling background and exposure to different approaches of learning the English language affected their beliefs about language learning and teaching to a certain extent. Those who experienced positive PLLEs seemed to have a more positive experience in their first year of teaching, compared with those who had negative experiences. This is particularly true in the case of Salina and Joanna since they had experienced enjoyable English language learning lessons. Both of them started out teaching positively and their prior experience of learning is one of the factors which helped them in managing their first year. In contrast, Alice did not enjoy her schooling years. Her prior schooling experiences influenced the changes in her beliefs, and she explained that she joined teaching just because her family members and her teachers supported her. She claimed that it was luck that brought her into this field as she was unprepared for the ITE entrance interview. In addition, she had experienced difficulty in learning English and had to struggle during ITE. Her description suggested a difficult teaching and learning journey, from difficulty in learning English during schooling years and training to difficulty in teaching English language during her first year of teaching. Her story seemed to reflect the exhausting life of a NQT, having fear of authority and pressured by the administrators and parents in terms of ensuring that the students achieved academic excellence. At times, she had to 'ignore' best practices learnt during ITE. This scenario suggested that PLLEs and one's interests in learning seemed to relate.

Apart from PLLEs and interest, the school contexts play a role in influencing the NQTs' belief changes. Alice, who disliked English in school as a student and did not want to be an English teacher, was attached to a school that emphasised grades. Salina, however, who enjoyed English language as a student, was attached to a small school, but she could not practice many of her ideas about ELT, although it is a school with a conducive environment and good ICT facilities, because some of her workload was not related to ELT. Erni seemed to be different from the rest of the participants. Her educational experiences did not seem to have impacted on her current teaching, and from the observations conducted, she seemed rather 'relaxed' with her 'slowly but surely' slogan since she was very comfortable with her school environment. She

uttered this slogan frequently but there was a lack of evidence of any kind of progression. Thus, the above descriptions suggests that teachers' beliefs are influenced by a number of factors which include PLLEs, one's interest in the language (teaching and learning) and the school context.

9.3 The changes of beliefs throughout the first year of teaching and the affecting factors

From the four stories, I can see cognition change in the following ways:

- i) Attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English classroom
- ii) Classroom management
- iii) The role of assessment-exam and LINUS
- iv) Teaching-learning activities and teaching resources

9.3.1 Attitudes towards the use of L1 in English classroom

All participants shared the issue of having to deal with the use of L1 in their English language classroom. During the initial stage of teaching, all participants implemented the 'English only' rule in their English language classrooms. They believed the use of the target language would help the students to master the language as was emphasised during ITE. One of the four participants, Erni, managed to ensure the survival of the 'English only' rule for only a few days and she gave it up very quickly since her students could not understand the content of her lesson. In contrast, Alice, although she knew from her own experience that such a rule would put the students off, still tried to emphasise it in her classroom. Salina and Joanna were both strict with the rules, and although Alice was not as strict, the three of them tried their best to keep reminding the students to use English throughout.

During the second phase of classroom observation, three months later, they all showed greater tolerance towards the use of L1, especially Alice, who increased her use of Mandarin. She would code-switch and at times translate, which suggested that she could easily relate her own prior experience of attending a similar kind of school for her to try and understand her students, and this was what had happened in her school, code-switching and understanding her students. Her use of the language varied according to which students she was addressing. As for Joanna she tried her best not to code-switch and still encouraged her students to use English, but there were times she had to code-switch to either Mandarin or Bahasa Malaysia (BM).

Nevertheless, Joanna was frustrated by her own actions and upon reflection, believed that she should not have used L1. Her students now knew that she could communicate in 'their language', and as such would start to use L1 in the classroom. Joanna nonetheless still believed in using English in her classroom although she would allow some L1 especially for weaker students.

In Salina's case, she encouraged her students to use English even if was flawed. Although she would allow a little bit of Tamil as observed during the second phase of data collection, she would use only English, and she allowed the students to use Tamil. She held strong beliefs on the use of L1, stating that the students would not be learning the target language if they spoke long sentences in Tamil during her lesson. As such, she avoided speaking in Tamil and would rather use BM by pointing out that at least they can learn another language and improve their BM. It was interesting to observe how these teachers' beliefs on the use of L1 in the classroom evolved from being strict on the use of English at the outset and then becoming more flexible in order to aid the students' understanding during learning.

The three teachers excluding Erni 'had to' use another language sometimes outside the classroom or at times code-switch to L1 or BM but with the same objective in mind, i.e. to help the weaker students to comprehend the content of the lesson. Hence, the changes in their beliefs about their attitude towards the use L1 from 'English only' towards greater tolerance of L1 was to ensure that 'learning' takes place. The participants viewed 'learning' as memorizing the lesson content for the students to pass to their exam, and it is also a change from how they first conceived of learning. It is indeed an important change from their initial beliefs in guiding the students in learning to helping them memorise the lesson content to pass the examination.

9.3.2 Classroom management

Classroom management also evolved through 'trial and error' (the participant's term). The importance of the issue of classroom management, however, seemed to vary according to the type of school or age and level of the learners. The ways they handled it varied and evolved over time, and the NQTs initial beliefs about discipline were that they were concerned with managing the students' behaviour, and focusing on disciplining them. However, their beliefs changed from strict to more flexible over time as a result of several factors, such as the students' language proficiency, and their attitudes towards L1.

The norms in different types of school also vary and so different options were open to NQTs to deal with discipline. The NQTs response to the norms was based on trial and error. Thus, there was an evolution of the ways they dealt with discipline in managing the class. The factors that seemed to influence these changes included individual confidence, school norms, and levels of learners or learners' ages. Discipline was the biggest concern for Alice, Erni, and Joanna. Erni developed strategies based on shaming the students on her own over time, which suggested 'psychological torture' in which the monitor and his assistant were punished for other's behaviour to elicit sympathy from their classmates (Chapter 7, Section 7.4). Her final strategy for classroom management was to punish the class monitor and his assistant for the discipline problems of the other students in the classroom. Alice and Joanna shared similar experiences of being in a national-type Chinese school where enforcement of discipline was stricter than national schools. Although caning is part of the 'culture' in such schools, both Alice and Joanna had slightly different approaches in managing their classroom. Initially, Alice strongly believed in the use of the cane to discipline the students. She pointed out that caning is the fastest and the most effective approach. Eventually, Alice became more lenient and managed to find other solutions and avoided the use of the cane at the first instance. She managed to establish three simple steps for her classroom management. She would, advise the students first and then warn them before punishing them. Her approach and consequent action suggests that she gained more confidence in managing her classroom as she focused less on disciplining the students and rather adapted to their needs and advised them instead of immediately punishing. On the other hand, Joanna did not believe in caning as a solution discipline problems. Although she tried to use the cane only because it was the norm in the school, she set her own classroom rules from the onset. Joanna would always rationalise every rule imposed in disciplining them, making the rules clear to students from the start to ensure they understood the rationale for the punishment. Ultimately, she listed only three important ground rules, which were mentioned in the previous chapter. This scenario suggests that norms in Malaysia are very varied and that the teachers therefore had different options open to them. Hence, this shows the importance of context in influencing NQTs' beliefs in classroom decision-making.

Among the four teachers, classroom management was not an issue for Salina, especially as she had a smaller class size of 20-22 students. Surprisingly, she did not set any special classroom rules since there were almost no discipline problems. She adopted several attention-grabbing strategies from the start to manage her

classroom, similar to the ones used by the other teachers and depending on the students' levels, which seemed to be successful from my observation. She preferred to give practical advice, especially to the upper primary students: for instance, Year 5. She mentioned that the ways she tried to deal with problems varied according to the age of the students, an approach similar to Joanna's. Therefore, throughout the first year, except for Salina, all three participants had set specific classroom rules through 'trial and error'. The rules were constantly evolving in the light of their actual effectiveness. By the end of the study, they managed to establish a set of classroom rules that best suited their students at that particular moment and their beliefs about appropriate classroom rules are likely to continue to evolve depending on the situation or context they find themselves in.

9.3.3 The role of assessment- exam and LINUS: from focusing on achieving lesson objectives to exam-oriented teaching

Generally, the Malaysian education system is an exam-oriented system which concentrates more on academic achievement and on passing exams than valuing the learning process of understanding the subject content. There are different types of assessment, such as school-based assessment (SBA), which involves a comprehensive assessment of student achievement based on academic, physical and psychometric aspects; academic exam (public exam prepared by the MoE, and school exam prepared by the State Education Department, or school); and The Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS). The Ministry of Education (2014) states that SBA is a result of the realisation that students can no longer be judged based solely on academic exams. The LINUS programme aimed at ensuring that all Malaysian children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills after three years of mainstream primary education.

The four stories described in the previous chapters highlighted the role and the importance of exams in the Malaysian classroom throughout different types of schools. Although KSSR was developed to increase student's interest in English and did not emphasise passing the subject, the four participants all commented that the need to ensure good exam results affected their teaching and influenced them professionally in the eyes of others and in their own eyes. The exam appears to be a bench mark to measure one's ability to teach and if students failed, the blame would be on the teachers. This scenario suggests that the MoE has failed to communicate what it hopes KSSR would achieve for the schools and for the society.

Initially, the main concern of the NQTs was focusing on the learning process of the students, and guiding them during the lesson to ensure that they understood the lesson content. Given that they had been through the exam-oriented 'system' themselves, they all believed that exam performance was not the most important when they began. However, their beliefs changed gradually over the year. All participants shared the belief that exam performance 'outranks' teaching and learning. This is another important issue since their change of beliefs on the role of assessment impacted their teaching-learning practices. This issue is prominent, for instance, in Joanna's stories. During her initial stage of teaching she already had the idea from her school culture, that exam results would reflect her teaching and were also a benchmark to measure whether or not her students understood what she taught.

Similarly, since the Malaysian education system is exam-oriented and the main concern is more with the outcome than the learning process, Erni's mission was to ensure that her students passed the exams at the initial stage of her teaching year. Although her classroom consisted of students who were low achievers, she expected them to at least pass the exam by memorising content. The view of the purpose of learning has shifted from what ITE suggested – that is, understanding the lesson as part of the learning process – to learning in serving examination purposes. Erni emphasised exam results and it began to become her goal. Her view on the purpose of learning had changed to learning by memorising content to pass the exam. For her, having her students pass the exam was sufficient since she knew that her students could not achieve better grades.

In comparison with the other stories, Alice's and Salina's initial attention in teaching was to help and guide their students in learning, and to achieve lesson objectives. However, during the second phase of data collection after three months from the first one, both Alice and Salina commented that many of their classroom practices were influenced by the expectations of administrators and parents, who wanted good grades. Their focus thus changed from guiding the students in their learning to passing the exams and being in step with other teachers', parents' and administrators' expectations. Alice commented that she could hardly implement any language classroom activities which were different from other teachers in her school as they were written exercises and drilling expected by parents and geared towards the exam, which was the shared practice among other teachers. Hence, she had to adhere to these demands. Although Joanna's school is also a national-type Chinese

school, which is academically driven, she managed to strike a balance between guiding the students in learning and helping them to prepare for the exam, although the emphasis was to ensure that students scored well in their exams. In addition, she did not receive as much pressure from parents as Alice had or from the administrator. Similarly, although Salina was not pressured by students' parents and therefore did not care much about getting her students to score 'A' grades, she later changed. Her administrator was concerned with the exam grades and she started to prepare her students as early as Year 5, even though the public exam is only sat when they are in Year 6.

In terms of LINUS, there are three screenings a year in March, June and September where students need to take oral and written tests. For literacy, the students have to pass 12 constructs (from the first construct, phonics, to the twelfth construct, read and understand sentences with conjunctions). However, since LINUS is still new, the participants had less exposure to its content and implementation during ITE. Hence, before they began their first year, they did not seem to know much about the screening. When they started teaching, there was in-service training on LINUS for two to three days so as to equip the NQTs and other teachers with information on the content and its implementation. Since the LINUS programme was newly implemented when they first started teaching, the participants shared the same views about ensuring that their students passed the LINUS screening test because that was what expected of them from the administration. If the students passed the screening, they joined the mainstream classes. From the four participants, Erni had the most challenging class with the most LINUS students. Her aim was to ensure that her students understand her lesson and pass LINUS. The other three participants did not have many problems in dealing with LINUS and they normally conducted differentiated activity for LINUS and non-LINUS students. It was only Alice who had the dilemma of having non-LINUS students who were actually LINUS. This was due to action taken by the senior teachers who willingly 'passed' LINUS students in previous years to ensure that the school achieved a 100 percent pass rate in the screening test. They tried to avoid the MoE officers from visiting the school and checking on them, since if they could not achieve a 100 percent pass rate in LINUS it would mean extra work: for instance, preparing reports for those who failed. LINUS is another MoE programme that the teachers felt had drastically increased their workload along with a plethora of other MoE programmes. However, Alice was confident and managed to take a stand to ensure that non-LINUS and LINUS students were given appropriate tasks according to their needs and LINUS results

would be transparent. By the end of the study, the participants held a similar beliefs about dealing with LINUS, which was to ensure that the students achieved 100 percent pass rate in the screening test due to the pressure from the administrators and the State Education Department.

9.3.4 Teaching-learning activities and teaching resources

The participants explained that at the beginning of real teaching, their previous learning experiences during schooling and training helped inform their current teaching practices, especially in making decisions about the teaching-learning activities and selecting teaching resources. They had all developed and tried out a range of skills/activities based both on what their English teachers did during schooling years and on what had been recommended during ITE and tried out in one or more practicum contexts. There were activities which did not work and they tried to avoid those. They were able to adjust knowledge and skills learnt during training to fit the context of their teaching.

However, there were instances, for example, in both Alice's and Joanna's cases, when they had to change the way they approached the lesson due to external factors, such as demands from parents and the administrators. Alice, for example, was criticised when she conducted the spelling activity by introducing 'Hang-man', differently from other teachers. It was quite surprising to know that the school administration instructed the teachers to have standardised activities which she was expected to follow. She shared that the parents would also compare teachers and then insist that their child has similar activities. It was difficult for Alice to make decisions on what is best for the students since the school administrator would rather listen to the parents' voices rather than their own teachers. In another instance, Alice and Joanna wanted to try out language games or take their students out of class, to do something different from their normal routine. However, they had to restrict themselves from doing something extraordinary and to make sure that their students did not make much noise during the activity to avoid complaints from other teachers. The idea of taking students out of the classroom was not viewed favourably by the school administration who believed that students should be in the classroom, since the children wondering around outside the classroom was an 'unpleasant' sight, especially when the school received visitors, mainly from the MoE. The teachers considered the idea of taking the children outside the classroom was challenging particularly because as NQTs they had to follow orders and felt that their voices were ignored.

Erni detested drilling at first, but upon reflection of her past experience as a learner, later admitted, rather to her own surprise, that drilling had worked well in her more recent teaching, especially when she had to deal with weak students. In addition, she tried using guided role-play, group work, and had designed simple task sheets adapted from the text book to aid her students' learning. Most of the time she would use the textbook because she had to follow the syllabus and students needed to refer to the textbook for the exam. Erni was the only participant who was loyal to the textbook and utilised it fully from the beginning of her teaching. She felt that it could be too ambitious to try out other activities beyond the scope of the textbook with her low-achieving students. Another limitation for Erni in conducting other activities beyond the textbook was the inadequate facilities in her school. Compared to the teachers in the other three schools, there was only one common media room in the school to share to enable the use of the LCD projectors, present PowerPoint presentations or play songs or videos, and any other interactive media. As the schools were not uniformly resourced, what teachers did in their classrooms varied.

On the other hand, Alice, Salina, and Joanna were extremely fortunate in terms of access to technology in the classroom. Their classrooms were equipped with ICT facilities including different types of projector technologies such as 'visualisers', OHP and LCD projectors. They would sometimes play video, songs or stories from YouTube' and any other resources which appealed to students' interests. The use of technology in the classroom is prominent in Salina's case. As is evident in her stories, Salina was privileged to have additional equipment, a smart board, to facilitate her teaching with the 21st century classroom programme. The use of technology in the classroom seemed to attract and encourage students to learn as evident from the demands of their students to use VLE or any other activities using the technology. However in Salina's case she was not in favour of using VLE because the technology available in her school was not sufficiently robust. Also, the use of VLE was rather troublesome. Eventually, she realised that she preferred more group work and took the initiative to adapt the materials from the textbook and used them on the PowerPoint.

Hence, in terms of teaching-learning activities and resources, Alice, Salina and Joanna moved away over time from implementing more language games and songs, and what they considered as 'fun learning', especially with the advantage of having good ICT facilities. Towards the end of the study, all of them either adapted activities from the textbook or maximised the use of the textbook. It was obvious that there was

a common trend among them. Their initial ambitions of trying out a variety of activities particularly with the use of technology had become less apparent as the year progressed. The need for all students to reach the same point of progress based on the textbook to prepare for the exams had become more important. This development clearly showed that in the eyes of the schools and the parents at least the aim for learning is to memorize content in order to pass the exam. The textbook thus became an ever more important resource for the participants. Alice was reminded to ensure that her teaching did not go beyond the textbook as the students would be tested in the exam based on the textbook content only. This finding indicates that the teachers were restricted in attempting to be creative and to critically think about their instructional approaches. Such restrictions were in conflict with one KSSR learning objective which is to promote higher-order thinking skills. This scenario seems to limit potential for cognitions to evolve.

To sum up, the NQTs' cognition changed/was adjusted in all four themes around which the data was organised. The data in my study showed that the NQTs' beliefs and behaviours changed at different speeds and in different ways, which suggested the differences in belief-behaviour relations. I classified the possible relationships between belief change and behaviour/practice change into six categories in order to show that the change in beliefs and change in behaviour were inconsistent, as follows:

- A. Beliefs change, behaviour change
- B. Beliefs unchanged, behaviour change
- C. Beliefs change, behaviour unchanged (without any obvious change in what they do)
- D. Beliefs uncertain, behaviour changes accordingly depending on the current context (practice not fully developed)
- E. Beliefs unchanged, behaviour changed accordingly depending on the current context
- F. Beliefs unchanged, behaviour unchanged

The examples of the above categories are presented in Table 9.1 below. I have highlighted the categories in different colours for clear presentation.

Table 9.1: Changes in beliefs and practices

Themes of change	Alice	Salina	Erni *uncertain about own beliefs. Beliefs changed accordingly (fickle-minded)	Joanna
Attitudes towards the use of L1	<p>(B) Beliefs ‘English only’ – didn’t change. However, behaviour/practice changed. To meet the Ss’ needs. (Towards greater tolerance – *T uses a lot more Mandarin than before. Language use varies according to which Ss she is dealing with. Relate to prior experience - use Mandarin to help her Ss to understand)</p>	<p>(B) Beliefs unchanged, behaviour changed accordingly – to meet Ss’ needs. T used English only until the end. Consistency on her attitude. Flexible with L1. Endorsement from the HT to use ‘English only’ in class.</p>	<p>(C) Beliefs changed - quickly. Behaviour unchanged. ‘Resign’ to deal with the reality. Start with English only – just for a few days. Direct translation method from the start. Gave up quickly. Use combination of BM & English since only at least 1% understand. Use L1 quite frequent – see the benefit of using BM.</p>	<p>(B) Beliefs ‘English only’ – didn’t change. However, behaviour/practice change to certain extent only. To meet the Ss’ needs. Only use Mandarin when the need arises. Reason – to help **Ss to learn. E.g. Translate vocab- saves time. Allow Mandarin especially for weaker Ss. Depending on the learners. School culture – translate.</p>

Themes of change	Alice	Salina	Erni *uncertain about own beliefs. Beliefs changed accordingly (fickle-minded)	Joanna
Classroom management	(B) Beliefs unchanged, behaviour changed. Strong beliefs about caning from the start. Develop a range of classroom management strategies to cope with the very mixed levels/abilities etc. (Tried several approaches - cane saves time). So, cane towards less cane + advice.	Not so much – didn't have any problem. No specific classroom rules since there's not so much of discipline problem.	(D) Beliefs uncertain, behaviour changes accordingly depending on the current context. No specific beliefs. Discipline - Biggest concern. Develop own way to deal. Behaviour keep on changing (trial and error). TIME – is a concern. Can't spend too much time in disciplining them.	(E) Beliefs unchanged, behaviour changed accordingly, depending on the current context. Believes that no classroom is the same. Learning would not take place if there were no classroom management – always rationalised her action. Not sure the right approach to manage her Ss, even after two months of teaching, still try out different approaches. For caning – Changes in beliefs (didn't believe – change and cane the Ss – change again – didn't cane). (A) Beliefs uncertain, behaviour changes accordingly depending on the current context.

Themes of change	Alice	Salina	Erni *uncertain about own beliefs. Beliefs changed accordingly (fickle-minded)	Joanna
Materials and activity selection	<p>(A) Beliefs of fun learning – change to ‘cover the syllabus in textbook’ and Ss get good result. Behaviour changed.</p> <p>Variety of activities – take into consideration of noise level.</p> <p>Language games, songs, digital resources to textbook but towards the end, standard ***T&L, followed other Ts as instructed by the Head teacher. E.g. Hang man for spelling but later on standard spelling routine (order from school)</p>	<p>(A) Beliefs changed. Behaviour changed.</p> <p>Good teaching – good relationship with the Ss and beliefs that T should take charge to it should be more of Ss’ involvement.</p>	<p>Drastic change- from practicum to reality. (D) Beliefs uncertain, behaviour changed accordingly. First day of observation – textbook & unprepared. Textbook from day 1 till the end with some adaptations of activities (at times). Group work at times, simple task sheets. Drilling since her Ss are very weak.</p>	<p>(B) Beliefs unchanged, behaviour/practice changed.</p> <p>Behaviour didn’t reflect beliefs. Good teaching – variety, always trial and error. Tried to bring Ss outside the classroom but at times she couldn’t. Adapt to the situation NOT because of schooling experience but current situation. Admin disagreed.</p>

Themes of change	Alice	Salina	Erni *uncertain about own beliefs. Beliefs changed accordingly (fickle-minded)	Joanna
Exam	<p>(A) Beliefs changed. Behaviour changed. Regards good learning as understanding Ss' needs towards Ss get good results. Exams 'outrank' T & L. Content to achieving exam goals. School streams Ss – Year 3. Good teaching = covering the syllabus.</p>	<p>(A) Beliefs changed. Behaviour changed. From guiding Ss to master the language to 'worshipping' good grades. Exams 'outrank' T & L. Didn't care much about A or exam grades but later changed totally. Couldn't avoid the way the wider culture and role of exams affected her school culture.</p>	<p>(A) Beliefs changed. Behaviour changed. Passing the exam is important although she wanted the best for her Ss. As long as her Ss understand the lesson and it'd be good enough if her Ss pass the exam. Understand learner's ability- as long as her Ss are learning something that's fine</p>	<p>(F) Beliefs unchanged, behaviour unchanged. Initial beliefs- exam reflects her teaching & exam provide goals in learning. Different approach used for different set of Ss. Balance although there's tendency towards exam. EXAM – things that she can't change.</p>

*T- teacher

**Ss- students

***T&L- teaching and learning

The categories above suggested the complexities in the relationship between beliefs and actual behaviour which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

9.4 The change of view about language learning

The themes identified in this finding show an important cognitive change on the view of language learning over time. The NQTs had different ideas about language learning based on their own PLLEs. They had positive and negative PLLEs: for instance, both Salina and Joanna had positive PLLEs which later impacted positively on their first year of teaching. However, Alice had a quite negative PLLE which later her view towards English language learning changed during training. They came out of the ITE programme with different notions about language learning and various ideas about learning and skill development through interactional opportunities and the utilization of what has been learnt for practical purposes. However, by the end of the year when they were expected to maximise use of the textbook, their view of language learning experienced changes, "Can the students memorise the lesson content for the exam?" However, their view of what language learning means has now been challenged and changed by the end of the year. The main goal of education appears to indicate the importance of excelling in the exam.

Previously, most of the participants enjoyed learning language in school because it involved doing interesting activities which resulted in real change to their learning. However, currently the aim of a system of assessment seems to be to test the students' memory instead of testing their language skills which influenced these teachers' classroom practices. During practicum, many Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based activities were conducted as at that time evidence of carrying out such activities was part of how these student teachers were assessed. Hence, the curriculum and the teaching approaches during training are too idealistic for the practitioners to put into their practices. This scenario is one of the examples that reflect the importance of examination in the education system. It is quite a complex issue to discuss since what ITE is doing does not feed into the curriculum. This issue will be further discussed in the next chapter in order to show the extent to which ITE actually reflects or tries to reflect reality.

9.5 Conclusion

From the key findings or issues described earlier, it can be concluded that during the first phase of the first year of teaching, the participants tried to apply the theories they had learned during training into practice. However, over time contextual influences and norms 'limited' the extent to which what had been promoted during the ITE could actually be 'applied'.

The participants started to show a change in their beliefs in the middle of the year, during the second data collection, as they adapted their classroom practices to students' needs, the school environment, and demands from the parents, and other factors which at times 'forced' them to adjust their beliefs. During the final stage, they were still adjusting, influenced by the support received such as the 'English Native Speaker Programme', '21st century classroom programme' and 'mentor programme' (which worked very differently in different schools). Eventually, the participants seemed to believe that what was most important was that their students should understand (memorising content to pass the exam) what was delivered, especially when dealing with weaker students or those following the LINUS programme. Although the NQT were treated as 'real teachers' in terms of taking a full teaching load, they had no 'voice' in the school, and so did not attempt to suggest changes to existing norms or personally implement new practises which might benefit the students' language learning.

Although the four themes were discussed separately, they are not totally discrete but affect one another. While the individuals in the study reacted differently to their first year's teaching experience, they all began teaching quite strongly influenced by their prior learning experience and/or their training, entering the classroom, holding their own notions of what needs to be done with regards to classroom practices. By the end of the year, each person's beliefs and behaviours changed to differing extents, influenced by a number of contextual factors. One of the most influential factors was the school environment, and the current classroom situation that they each found themselves in. The following chapter discusses some issues emerging from these key findings in relation to the relevant literature.

Chapter 10

Unpacking newly qualified teachers' beliefs: a discussion

10.1 Introduction

This chapter takes into account the findings presented in the previous chapter and how these findings relate to previous research in this domain. To recapitulate, the aims of this research were to explore newly qualified teacher's (NQTs) evolution of beliefs about teaching and learning at the start of their teaching career and the extent to which their beliefs change in the first year of teaching; and to investigate factors influencing these changes.

A total of 25 classroom observations and 25 stimulated recall interviews were carried out with four participants over one year. The findings of the data were presented in the form of stories in Chapters 5-8. In Chapter 9, I summarised the key issues highlighted in the four participants' stories and presented their similarities and differences with regards to their evolution of beliefs about teaching and learning during their first year of teaching and how these affected their teaching practice. The findings suggested that the NQTs entered their schools with cognitions that were based mostly on their own schooling experiences and initial teacher education, and that these were greatly influenced by their experiences during the first year they began to teach. The highlights of the findings include three fundamental points: i) Finding A: all the NQTs' beliefs changed but in different ways and to differing extents; ii) Finding B: the changes in beliefs and changes in behaviour were inconsistent, whereby the change in beliefs did not necessarily mean there was a change in behaviour, and there were tensions in the relationship between beliefs and behaviours; and iii) Finding C: the factors that seemed to have the strongest influence on the belief and behaviour changes were their own personalities, their teacher attributes, their status as NQTs, and the contextual reality of the school (the ethos and the set of students).

By the end of the first year, they had been more or less explicitly forced to adapt the cognitions they arrived with to the current situation in their classroom, often at the level of a particular moment in that context. Freeman (2016) points out similar notions in teacher's thinking, i.e. "Cognition could refer to the unit of thinking happening at a particular time in particular circumstances, classrooms and lessons" (p.161). Based on the three fundamental findings above, in this chapter I shall therefore discuss the construction of beliefs in the language classrooms (Finding A) (Section 10.2); the

inconsistencies in beliefs-behavioural relationships (Finding B) (Section 10.3); and the factors accountable for the individuality trajectories (Finding C) (Section 10.4).

10.2 The construction of beliefs in the language classrooms

This section discusses the construction of beliefs in the language classroom. I organise this discussion under three sub-sections to

1. Discuss elements that the literature commonly says contribute to construction of beliefs in the first sub-section (10.2.1)
2. Reflect upon recent research that suggests that belief development is an individual phenomenon in the second sub-section (10.2.2)
3. Discuss the main findings of my study in the light of the literature described in the first and second sub-sections (10.2.3)

*Teacher educators have come to recognize that teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are **individuals** who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms.*

(Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p. 401)

As the above quote notes, people are individuals who enter teacher training with a set of prior beliefs and experiences which later are likely to be more or less strongly adjusted/changed during formal training, upon completion of training, at the start of their teacher career, and during their teaching years. The main body of literature about language teachers' belief development, until quite recently, suggests that teachers' prior language learning experiences (PLLEs), prior training and personal teaching experiences are fundamental in the constructions of beliefs. I shall therefore summarise these three main aspects involved in the constructions of beliefs in the section below.

10.2.1 Elements in the construction of beliefs

As mentioned in the previous section, PLLEs, prior training and personal teaching experience are important in the construction of language teachers' beliefs. These

elements are regarded as the main elements in the belief development as elaborated under the followings headings:

i. Role of prior experience of language learning in belief formation/change

A number of empirical studies have affirmed that trainees' beliefs originate from their PLLEs before they enter teacher training. Sanchez (2013) points out that PLLEs shape pre-training beliefs and knowledge about teacher education, and also the impact of the TED on the development of their pre-training beliefs. Most of these influences have already been identified in the general education field (Lortie, 1975; Woods, 1985; Knowles, 1992; Farrell, 1999; Borg, 2006). Other scholars have also pointed out that trainees arrive in their ITE with PLLEs already established (Johnson, 1994; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). In addition, Li (2017) shares that Horwitz (1985), Johnson (1994) and Mok (1994) find that teachers' beliefs are greatly influenced by their previous learning experiences leading to many preconceived ideas about how languages are learnt and should be taught. Thus, it is indeed important to recognise PLLEs impact on the trainees/teachers' beliefs about becoming an L2 teacher and L2 teaching.

ii. Role of prior training/ teacher education in belief formation/change

A second influence on language teachers' belief development widely discussed in the literature is prior training. Hollingsworth (1989) indicated that trainees filter course content through the beliefs already held, i.e. PLLE-supported beliefs, and this can lead to differential learning. Learning to teach is a long term process since teaching in itself is a complex and multifaceted activity.

Often ITE introduces idealised ideas of teaching-learning process based on theories. Akcan (2016) points out a similar issue: that the NQTs in her study reported more emphasis was given to theory than practice. Although ITE tried to provide more opportunities of practice through the practicum, the practicum experience is often not really 'real'. For instance, Kabilan and Izzaham (2009)'s study on trainee's educational beliefs in Malaysia show that, even though during training trainees are instructed to carry out student-centred activities, they become more teacher-oriented in their educational belief once they entered school. This scenario seems to show a tendency to move away from the theories introduced in training towards what they see as the norms of the practicum classroom. This scenario often creates an issue of dealing with unexpected reality because when pre-service teachers become NQTs

in real classrooms, their beliefs which developed during TE often suffer shock. This situation is evident in Farrell's (2003) study of NQTs' cognitions in Singapore, which identifies that the participants went through a reality shock during the first semester when faced with classroom reality.

Since prior training is another influence on belief development, there are several recommendations from literature for what TE ought to try to do (to further enhance the role of training). ITE needs to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to link theories to real-life practice because one of the concerns of NQTs in classrooms is to be able to link the learned theories to classroom practices. This concurs well with what Goh and Blake (2015) suggest, that TE should provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to apply the practical and theoretical knowledge of teaching learned on the training programme to real-life classrooms. Their suggestion links well with Wallace's (1991) proposal of a 'reflective model' to link the theory and practice. The fact that the trainees are involved in the practicum potentially gives them the opportunity to evaluate, reflect and take actions upon their teaching practices, and therefore generate understandings of it. Another important aspect to take into consideration in pre-service training is the reality of facing real teaching environments, and the NQTs in Akcan's study (2016), for instance, proposed the need for more practice in the first year of the TE programme, and that since learning to teach is a long term process, initial training ought to prepare pre-service teachers for learning to teach as a life-long learning process. Hence, the stake holders in TE, especially teacher educators and TE policy-makers, need to note what Borg (2006) highlighted, that the impact of pre-service teacher education on what new teachers learn cannot be taken for granted, since individual teachers make sense of and are affected by training programmes in different and unique ways.

iii. Role of personal teaching experience in belief formation/change

The third aspect involved in the construction of beliefs is a person's teaching experiences, which includes their experience during any practicum and once they have started teaching full time. Parsons et al. (2017) mention that teachers connect personal experiences both in school and out of school, along with their passions, beliefs, and knowledge about teaching with their image of their idealized classroom (p.14). Borg (2006) further suggests that contextual factors, such as classroom practice including teaching practice and the learners, are important influences on teachers' beliefs. They may interact with teachers' beliefs in two ways: they may lead to changes in these beliefs, or else they may alter practices directly without changing

the cognitions underlying them. Woods (1996) shares quite a similar view with Borg and reports that under particular conditions, including both the teaching situations the teachers were involved in and the interview situations from his data collection, belief change among his participants seemed to result from the interaction of their beliefs with assumptions and knowledge (known as BAK), and their experience of trying to put knowledge into practice. Hence, he claims that belief is unlikely to be changed by itself, as beliefs are part of a network of interwoven elements.

Apart from the interaction of beliefs with the contextual factors mentioned above, reflecting on one's own teaching has increasingly been viewed as an important aspect of teacher learning for all practising teachers (Farrell, 2014). Li (2017) and Sanchez (2013) point out that teachers' knowledge and beliefs derive from both their educational and professional experiences, and they are increasingly shaped by the interaction between various features of the socio-cultural and educational context in which they find themselves, and as they participate in a professional community and reflect with peers who share similar concerns. Sanchez (2013) further recommended that teachers should examine their existing beliefs regularly and reflect upon their validity in the light of their current teaching objectives and career goals. Other writers such as Schon (1983) and Kolb (1984) have stressed the importance of reflection as a means of improving teaching practices. Kolb's experiential learning, for instance, suggested that teachers reflect on their own actions and thinking, and experiment with new ideas; Schon's notions of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' suggest that teachers can provide themselves with learning opportunities through conscious reflection on the decisions that they make during and after the action. The mental processing as teachers reflect on and evaluate their teaching, and later make adjustments to improve their teaching practices, contributes to the ongoing formation of teachers' beliefs.

Recently, Farrell (2014) proposes a comprehensive framework of reflection, which is grounded in the established literature on reflection including Dewey (1933), Schon (1987), and more current literature on adaptive expertise (Lin, Shein, & Yang, 2012). He acknowledges that everyone appears to agree that reflection is a pivotal and meaningful practice for teachers at all levels of teaching experience; however, the teachers, particularly NQTs, are unsure of how to begin. Farrell's five stages of the framework are as follows: (1) philosophy, or the roots of a teacher as a person; (2) principles, or the assumptions, beliefs, and concepts of teaching and learning held by a teacher; (3) theories, which are the choices about what is taught; (4) practice,

meaning the observable actions in a classroom; and (5) beyond practice, including the sociocultural and critical aspects of education in society. He argues that his framework of reflection is a guiding hand to support teachers as they embark on a journey of growth (Wight, 2015).

To conclude this section, Goodman (1988) suggests that the elements (i-iii) described above provide insights into why teachers have different perceptions, why teachers in general might have different perceptions about teaching, even though pre-service teachers go through similar training. Teachers might have different perceptions about teaching since they have different PLLEs and different personal teaching experience. Cortés (2016) takes a similar position and further highlights that teaching relates to transforming content itself, according to what is needed, and the elements above are factors that take place in the formation of teachers. These differences in beliefs are reflected in the classroom practices which are formed early in teachers' minds and reinforced over a long period of time (Pajares, 1992). Pajares' statement suggests that because teachers are individual people, beliefs are different, and practices will be too.

10.2.2 Belief development as individual phenomenon

While the three aspects above influencing belief formation are generally agreed on, a few writers (Lortie, 1975; Woods, 1996; Golombek, 1998) have previously noted the individual nature of teacher cognition, and the idea now seems to be growing that belief formation needs to be understood as an individual process. Some scholars such as Clark and Peterson (1986), Johnson (1992), Numrich, (1996) and Breen et al. (2001) have emphasized the vital place of social, cultural, and historical context in language teacher education, language pedagogy and language learning, and shifted the focus towards individuality. It is only fairly recently that researchers have begun to explore the individual nature of teachers' cognition more fully (Borg, 2011; Burns et al., 2015). This recent shift in the teachers' cognition field suggests that 'truth' about teacher beliefs can only ever be individually explored. Thus, teacher belief formation needs to be understood as an individual process. The purpose of this section is to highlight that apart from the three fundamental elements in belief development, there is a need to examine and discuss the domain of teachers' cognition in terms of individual phenomenon based on the findings from my study.

Recent research has suggested that we need to base studies of belief formation on an ontology that more explicitly recognises the individualist and cognitivist nature of

the process. For example, in Burns et al. (2015), the individualist and cognitivist ontological focus is to examine “...*the beliefs the language teacher held, how and why these beliefs were constructed, and how they related to practice*” (p.589) with the unit of study being the particular thoughts, beliefs and decisions of individual teachers. In addition, Freeman (2016) lends support to this idea and mentioned that there were various antecedents that would shape the idea of thinking in language teaching. Since there has been a shift of focus in this field, Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) emphasise the importance of redrawing the boundaries of language teacher cognition which could help the domain of teacher cognition to expand further.

Another study from a similar ontological perspective is Johnson's (1992a) study which focuses on the cognitive dimensions of language learning and the practice of pre-service language teachers during their practicums. She provided an example of the individuality of idiosyncrasy with the trainee's decision-making related to ensuring students' understanding and their engagement in the lesson and also based on classroom management. According to Burns et al. (2015), Johnson's study paved the way for future empirical work from an individualist perspective, which include Farrell (1999), Borg (1998, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2011), Phipps and Borg (2009), and Baker (2014). Borg, in his writing over the last 15 years, has increasingly recognised this individuality, and Burns et al. (2015) in particular have been interested in how individuality relates to TE and what it implies for TE. It is stated that this individualist domain has continued to investigate “*teachers' beliefs, thinking, knowledge, decision making, and the impact of various types of teacher education on those internal cognitive processes*” (p.590). While Borg's conceptual work has been significant in defining the current state and future directions for language teacher cognition research situated within this ontology, Burns et al. (2015) focus on the relationship between the individual and TE.

Freeman (2016) suggests that we can no longer try to use our understanding of the knowledge/beliefs of one teacher to assume that such knowledge/beliefs are shared by all teachers with broadly similar experiences. He argued that to position teachers as knowers of their own teaching, whose guidelines for classroom practices are formed by working with their students in specific classrooms (i.e. their own classroom experiences regarding what works and what does not work), has become complicated. There are two views of individuality that emerge from this situation: the individuality of idiosyncrasy and the individuality of exemplification. The first is the mixture of beliefs and practices that come from individual idiosyncratic cognition (the

experiences of individual language teachers working in vastly different classroom contexts with students of diverse cultures, personalities, needs and expectations), and the individuality of exemplification which refers to the knowledge and beliefs shared across individuals in the sense of how shared knowledge/beliefs are interpreted in practice.

The original notion of individuality in the research of teachers' mental lives, as mentioned earlier, has been adjusted and expanded, and it is beginning to be dealt with from different perspectives. Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) point out that the conceptualizations of the language-teaching mind have evolved since 1996, thanks to Woods's (1996) ontology of the individualist, cognitive terms of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK) situated within and strongly influenced by the social context of the classroom. Woods (1996) thus suggested that while there is a strong evidence that the decisions made in lesson planning and implementing are internally consistent for any given teacher, the decisions and beliefs may differ dramatically between teachers in the same context. However, Woods (2003) later dealt with individuality from a slightly different perspective. He argues that BAK and the practices emerging from it may be shared or may be totally individual. He does not wish to claim that his BAK systems exist only in the minds of teachers as individual entities; rather, he claims that, "*Changes in individual's beliefs follow a kind of path of development (which may be idiosyncratic or shared with other learners)*" (p.226).

While several writers suggest that belief development is an individual construct of mental lives, from the educational psychology perspective, Hargreaves (1994) proposes a concept of individualism as part of the culture of teaching, with beliefs as one aspect of that culture. He states that the content of teacher cultures can be seen in what teachers think, say and do. His concept of individualism, however, seems to show that teachers' beliefs and behaviour are derived from a shared standard/norm in the teaching community, which differs slightly from the previous literature which proposed individualism as a single, individual construct of mental lives. His view is somewhat similar to Woods (2003), who claims that changes in an individual's beliefs may be idiosyncratic or shared (with other learners), whilst Hargreaves recommended rather a homogenous concept of sharing (with colleagues), i.e. shared beliefs and shared attitudes, when he pointed out that, "*Changes in beliefs, values and attitudes in teaching maybe contingent upon prior/parallel changes in the ways teachers relate to their colleagues*" (p.166). Although his view is not specifically for

language education, it is indeed relevant because to understand how teacher beliefs change, we need to understand why the teacher does what she/he does in the classroom. He emphasises that we need to also recognise the shared norm of the teaching community, i.e. the working culture of which that teacher is a part.

In terms of the approach to researching teachers' beliefs, Burns et al. (2015) highlighted that individualist studies have begun to move toward integrating less-established tools, such as stimulated recall and verbal protocols, in order to capture the influences of the immediate classroom context and other factors. Therefore, it requires the use of different research tools, some of which have been used in my study. These different approaches to researching teacher cognition also recognise the complexity or dynamism of the interplay between teachers' beliefs and practices, as will be discussed further in section 10.3.

The purpose of the discussion and reflection in the above sub-sections (10.2.1 and 10.2.2) is to provide an overview of factors believed to influence the construction of beliefs and to highlight the recent shift towards exploring teachers' cognition from an individual perspective. The upcoming section discusses the main findings of my study in the light of this literature.

10.2.3 Discussion of data on the construction of beliefs and individuality phenomenon

In this section, I start with a discussion of my data in relation to the literature described in the above sub-sections. Although the three elements introduced above are important in belief formation, the data show that my participants are different individuals with various language-learning experiences, diverse personalities, cultures, teaching experiences and expectations. Hence, they would react differently to different classroom practices and teaching-learning process issues. The three fundamental elements discussed previously did affect all the participants in this study; however, they did so in different ways, and so the manner in which their beliefs were adapted/changed in the light of their first year of teaching differed greatly. Thus, my data suggests that the 'truth' about teacher beliefs can only ever be individually explored.

The role of PLLEs was highlighted in the findings chapters (see Chapters 5-8); for instance, both Salina and Joanna had positive learning experiences themselves with a variety of teaching approaches, such as choral speaking and reading library books

motivating their learning of English. Alice, in contrast, experienced language learning rather negatively and found learning English difficult because her secondary teacher emphasised an 'English only' classroom, in which Alice could hardly understand the content, thus switching off her mind from the lesson. Prior language learning experiences seemed to have little impact on Erni's belief formation/changes. She mentioned only experiencing drilling, "*a boring but useful*" technique which she adopted in her current practice. Participants created stereotypes of good and bad classroom instruction based on their own language learning experiences. In most instances, they said that they would try to avoid or reject what they remembered as negative learning experiences and would try to replicate teaching methods and strategies they had found to be personally effective as L2 learners. My findings thus resonate strongly with the literature that suggests that PLLEs affect the way teachers construct their classroom practices.

In most cases reported in the literature (Lortie, 1975; Day, 1991; Borg, 2006), NQTs acted out some past images of the L2 instruction they had experienced themselves and this is also evident in my data. There are different responses to PLLEs: for example, Erni adopted drilling in her current teaching although she detested the approach during her schooling years because she felt that drilling suited her students who were weak in the language. Alice, on the other hand, responded differently and did something different. She was able to relate her own schooling experience in national-type Chinese school to the context of her later school, which shared a similar ethos. She had had difficulty in learning the English language, especially during her secondary school years when her English teacher forced the use of L2, used 'English only', and upon reflecting on this experience, she became lenient towards the use of L1 in her English classroom. Both participants experienced language learning rather negatively and yet responded differently to their current classroom situation. Another example of different response to PLLEs is from the other two participants. Since Joanna and Salina enjoyed their language classroom during schooling years, they approached their English lesson in a rather similar way to how they had before as a student. They adopted language games, used songs, PowerPoint presentations and other 'fun learning' activities, as they felt their students would also enjoy such strategies. Such instances correlate well with the literature that suggested that concepts of appropriate classroom practices formed early in teachers' minds and were reinforced over a long period of time. NQTs arrived with beliefs about what made good teachers and bad teachers and PLLEs have a vital role in informing decisions in the classroom.

Apart from the role of PLLEs above, another aspect that it is agreed influences the construction of beliefs is prior training. My data revealed that all the participants were in complete agreement that some of their training prepared them for teaching and they reported that some modules during training were useful and helpful. Joanna shared that ITE had done what needed to be done to prepare them for being a teacher and Alice also shared that her training had helped her to form a better foundation in terms of language development as compared to her previous language learning experiences during her school years. During their initial months of teaching, their beliefs were strongly influenced by the TE course content; however, as they started to immerse themselves into the real teaching environment, they started to adopt and adapt the content they 'learnt' whilst adjusting their beliefs to accommodate the current situation.

Having dealt with PLLEs, now I am going to deal with the influence of training and finally below I will deal with their teaching experience. One of the initial challenges that the participants had was the sudden change in their posting; they were posted in quite a different kind of school than expected. In their training, they were trained to teach in a national school and they were later sent to national-type schools (Chinese and Tamil). This situation had created several issues: i) the mismatches in the curriculum content and structure and how they adopted them; ii) the changes in teaching approaches, from student-centred to teacher-centred; and iii) the sudden change in roles and responsibilities. It was not an easy task for the NQTs to meet the demands of the different types of school with different school ethos for different ethnic groups since during training (practicum) they were only exposed to national school classrooms. However, when they got to their actual classroom, as we will see, the practicum was not as always a good preparation. Another difficult task is to be able to deal with the changes in teaching approaches and to be able to link the theory into practice. Although they tried at the beginning to use the approaches learnt during training, by the end of the study, they had given up and (or) changed accordingly. For instance, during training they were instructed to implement student-centred activities; towards the end of my study, NQTs started becoming more teacher-centred. The next concern was the massive change during their transition from pre-service teachers (teaching during their practicum) to in-service teachers in terms of roles and responsibilities. When they entered school as NQTs, the study showed that despite having similar prior experiences during training, their actual teaching experience led them to develop and/or change their beliefs in different ways. During the practicum they had 10-12 periods a week as teachers; however, once they got into schools the

roles and responsibilities were completely different. They had not been prepared for increased roles and responsibilities. They had to cope with more than 30 periods a week of teaching and a minimum of five posts, such as class teacher, advisor for the school library, societies, English language co-ordinator, and Trust Fund for Poor Students (see sections 5.2.2, 6.2.2, 7.2.2 and 8.2.2).

Among the participants, there was a variety of beliefs based on the individual interplay between PLLEs and training. They brought a variety of thoughts, ideas, experiences, beliefs and goals to the process of learning to teach. Although they shared the same training with the same emphasis, they are different individuals with different PLLEs and each might react differently to their training. Based on the data from the first Skype interviews, they arrived on the first day of the first year of teaching with a variety of beliefs about teaching and learning. This scenario clearly support Goodman's (1988) view in section 10.2.1, which indicates that even though pre-service teachers go through similar training, their PLLEs, and how these interact with training and their teaching experiences including the practicum, may all provide insights into why the novice teachers might have different perceptions about teaching.

The discussion suggests that the main ideas about belief formation highlighted above are indeed true for the participants in my study. All the NQTs' beliefs changed to a certain extent over the period of the study. Their beliefs were constructed and reconstructed, in a continuous process in the light of their daily experiences in their classrooms over time. These experiences and the evolution of their beliefs were influenced and shaped by contextual factors in their teaching environment. All the NQTs' beliefs changed over the years, but in different ways and to differing extents. Thus, there were instances when they reacted similarly as regards to certain themes/issues discussed in Chapter 9. For instance, with regards to the exam, Salina's beliefs and behaviour changed, from her initial beliefs of guiding students to master the language to 'worshipping' good grades, and exams which 'outranked' teaching and learning. She did not care much about exam grades in the initial stage of teaching; however, towards the end of the study, her beliefs and behaviour changed to prioritising exam goals. She shared that she could not avoid the way the wider culture and role of exams affected her school culture. As for Joanna, her initial beliefs towards exams were that exams reflected her teaching and exams provided goals in learning. Although she had the tendency of focusing on exam grades only,

she mentioned that she tried to create balance by using different approaches for different sets of students.

While the roles of PLLEs, training and teaching experiences were influential in the construction of my participants' beliefs, the individuality phenomenon seems to more accurately reflect the changing nature of what I saw in the classroom. My data strongly supports ideas about the individuality of the relationship between teachers' cognitions and their practices and the dynamism of that relationship.

In the light of the findings discussed above, I conclude that each individual teacher in my study is different in their construction of beliefs, and different participants might interpret a particular classroom practice differently in different classroom contexts. Despite all being Malaysian, all having passed through language learning in the Malaysian education system (albeit in different schools) and all having attended the same teacher education programme, the four participants' beliefs changed at different speeds and in different ways, suggesting that the change of beliefs is not homogenous. For instance, Alice and Joanna reacted differently in terms of using the cane, despite having attended the same training and teaching in a similar school ethos, i.e. national-type Chinese schools. They justify their behaviour in different ways. My data suggests that, despite apparently having similar prior training and teaching practicum, the NQTs developed ever more highly individualized belief systems during the year of the study. They questioned and restructured their pre-existing beliefs to make informed decisions about their classroom practice in response to their understanding of the demands of their current working context.

10.3 The inconsistencies in belief-behavioural relationships

As mentioned earlier in Section 10.1, one of the fundamental points that emerged from the study is the inconsistencies in belief-behavioural relationships, and the tensions between beliefs and behaviour. In this section, I will first discuss the relationship between beliefs and practice or behaviour (I will use these two terms interchangeably) (10.3.1). Next, I will discuss one of the possible reasons behind tensions between the two (10.3.2).

10.3.1 Relationship between beliefs and practice

The relationship between beliefs and practice in teaching has been well recognised (Li, 2017; Basturkmen, 2012; Borg, 2006; Ng & Farrell, 2003) and Peacock (2001) believes that there is always a strong relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices. However, the question that still lingers is whether beliefs influence behaviour or vice-versa.

i. Beliefs influence practice

The findings of this study concur well with the literature that supports the idea that teachers' thought processes or beliefs provide a basis for behaviour, and beliefs affects behaviour (Borg, 2011; Clark & Peterson, 1984). From the data, there was a change in the teachers' beliefs from guiding the students to develop language proficiency to master the language to passing the exam. The NQTs in the study had changed their teaching approaches and resources. They gradually moved from using digital resources, for example, smart boards and songs from 'YouTube', for students to enjoy learning and mastering the language, to maximising the use of textbooks for the students to 'learn' (memorising content) to pass the exam. This scenario reveals how the change in teachers' beliefs in the light of their experiences in different contexts influenced their behaviour in the classroom. Tillema (2000), who examined the relationship between beliefs and classroom performance, reported that one cannot oppose the idea that beliefs guide action and he envisages beliefs as "*being concomitant to behaviour or intermingled with it*" (p.587).

ii. Practice influence beliefs

Shavelson and Stern (1981) take a different stand and propose that classroom events will in turn influence the subsequent decisions a teacher may make. This was also evident in my study, whereby at times Salina would plan and conduct classroom activities based on her students' feedback. For instance, she would take into consideration her students' interest in songs, especially nursery rhymes that her students requested, or to the computer lab, as they enjoyed learning using computers. In addition, Erni most of the time would only conduct drilling since she stated that she could hardly conduct other activities apart from drilling since her students were very weak in the target language. Although there is evidence from my data that corresponds well with Shavelson and Sterns' (1981) standpoint, my data also suggests that apart from the classroom events, other factors such as the MoE initiatives, examinations, parents and school administrators play a role in determining teacher practices. From the data, in the two national-type Chinese schools in the

study, parents had the power to decide the kind of classroom practices that a teacher should adopt to ensure that their children experienced similar teaching-learning process. For instance, they would question a teacher if he/she adopted language games and observed that other teachers just rely on the textbook. They would later insist that no language games are needed and the teacher should only use the textbook, as other teachers do. It is therefore difficult for NQTs to apply what they had learnt during training, especially in implementing what they think is best for students' learning, when parents have the influence to make the decision on how they should teach.

iii. The tensions between beliefs and practice

The discussion based on the literature in sub-sections (i) and (ii) above seems to suggest that the majority of studies agree that beliefs influence practice. However, Borg (2006) points out that it is important to provide a clear distinction between cognitive change and behavioural change because one does not necessarily imply the other. He stated that, "*Teachers may adopt and display particular behaviours without any accompanying change in their cognitions*" (p.277). Thus, Borg's suggestion that there is no perfect correspondence between beliefs and practices is also in line with my study, and the findings substantiate previous work (Li, 2017; Basturkmen, 2012; Basturkmen et al., 2004; Johnson, 1992b) on the tensions between teachers' beliefs and their practices.

In Chapter 9, I classified the relationship between beliefs and behaviour/practice change arising from my data into six categories in order to show that the change in beliefs and change in behaviour were inconsistent. The data showed that the NQTs' beliefs and behaviour in my study changed at different speeds and in at different ways.

These inconsistencies in belief-behavioural relationships from the data corresponded with the views from other scholars in the field of teacher cognition (Li, 2017; Basturkmen, 2012; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Johnson (1992b) takes a similar position in claiming that it was not automatically possible to claim direct relationships since the interrelationships between cognition and practice were not necessarily consistent or convergent. Under many circumstances, the NQTs in my study had to change certain aspects of their classroom practices and at times, their practices did not at all reflect their beliefs. Xu (2012) suggests that teachers see themselves as teachers even when they may simultaneously hold beliefs that are inconsistent, in conflict with

and even contradictory to their practices. Li (2017) further indicates that there are different perspectives with regards to these inconsistencies, disagreements or gaps, since teachers' beliefs are a complex interactive system, with beliefs covering a range of dimensions, such as teaching and learning, learners, professional development and self. Therefore, I argue that whether beliefs influence behavioural change or vice-versa, it depends to a certain extent on how both beliefs and behaviour are in harmony with the contextual factors of the schools and classrooms in which teachers work. This will be discussed in Section 10.4.

10.3.2 The reasons behind the tensions between beliefs and behaviour

One of the reasons for the tensions in belief-behavioural relationships discussed earlier might be due to the considerable disagreement in literature as to the exact relationship between 'stated' and 'enacted' beliefs. Pajares (1992) argues that the tension between core beliefs and peripheral beliefs have contributed to the gap between the stated beliefs and actual practices. Phipps and Borg (2009) state that core belief is the belief that guides teachers' behaviour inside the classroom, and these beliefs are stable and thus they exert a more powerful influence on behaviour and are more obviously reflected in practice, while peripheral beliefs which reflect teachers' theoretical or idealistic beliefs (beliefs about what should be) exert less power on behaviour. Kumaravadivelu (2012) also emphasises that core beliefs are more influential than peripheral beliefs. Hence, this hierarchy of beliefs seems to contribute to tensions in the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their behaviours, i.e. between what teachers believe and claim they do.

Another factor that might have contributed to apparent inconsistencies in teachers' beliefs and behaviours relates to methodological issues. In this study, because of my split data collection, I saw the NQTs across a longer period of time than is the case in much previous research, as well as the decision of using SRIs rather than 'structured' interviews. These methodological matters may have affected the data I obtained, and so may have highlighted discrepancies between beliefs and behaviours. Speer (2005, as cited in Li, 2017) emphasizes that, "*it is certainly plausible that teachers might state beliefs and behave in a manner inconsistent with those beliefs. There are, however, other potential explanations for these findings tied to methods and research designs that warrant consideration*" (p.28).

The NQTs' beliefs in their initial months of teaching were restricted and seemed to be governed by the ideal theories and practices from their training. Over time, their beliefs were adjusted and (or) changed once they started to be immersed in the reality of the classroom. This development is supported by the early years studies (studies of other NQTs in a different context and in Malaysia) in the field (Bullough et al., 1991; Warfood & Reeves, 2003; Farrell, 2009; Senom et al., 2013) that show similar concerns and challenges for NQTs and the way they reacted to the issues in the early stages of teaching. They are characterised by a higher degree of compartmentalization in their knowledge, inflexibility in responding to unplanned learning opportunities, a less varied instructional repertoire and difficulties in thinking about learning from the learners' perspective. Although Borg (2006) and Speer (2005) suggested earlier that different research instruments have different levels of sensitivity in detecting different types of change, Basturkmen (2012) opposes the idea that methodological choices in the research would have any impact on the research findings in the degree of correspondence between beliefs and practices. She argues that although Ng and Farrell (2003) and Farrell and Lim (2005) use very similar qualitative methods and data, their findings offer differing results and therefore, she underlines that her review did not find any patterns related to the choice of methodology used in the studies. I would like to oppose Basturkmen's argument that every research is unique and that using similar methods does not necessarily lead to similar findings, considering other contextual factors that might have affected the findings. Furthermore, her report is only based on her review on other people's research and not based on her own study, thus her claim is rather weak. Apparently, my study confirms both Borg and Speer's views which suggest that different research instruments would affect the findings and in my study, the use of stimulated recall interview (SRI) provided different findings to a certain extent. If, for instance, I had adopted face-to-face interviews with a set of interview schedules which were set based on the literature instead of SRIs based on their current teaching practices, I would have obtained different views of changes in beliefs.

To conclude, this section discusses different perspectives on the relationship between beliefs and behavioural change from literature and from my study. I conclude that the changes in beliefs and changes in behaviour were inconsistent and this finding is supported by several scholars in the field of teacher cognition. The discussion above also suggests that the changes in beliefs and behaviour show that individuals react and respond in different ways, due to the various contextual factors. I discuss the relationship between beliefs, behaviour and contextual factors which act as mediating factors in the next section.

10.4 The constraints affecting beliefs-behavioural relationships

As underlined in the previous section, there were inconsistencies in belief-behavioural relationships and these inconsistencies are affected by a number of contextual constraints. One of the examples of contextual factors provided by Phipps and Borg (2009) is that they emphasise that teachers consciously reject classroom practices that contradict their deeply felt beliefs following teacher training and this is one of the reasons why teachers' cognition sometimes does not align with their practices. As Richards (1998) states, NQTs do not translate the knowledge they obtain from their SLTE preparation courses into practice automatically because they need to construct and reconstruct the theory and new knowledge acquired by participating in "*specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes*" (p.164). Hence, I would like to argue that this scenario seems to suggest that there is dynamic relationship between beliefs and behaviour, and they interact to contextual factors concurrently in the teaching-learning process (lesson planning-implementation-evaluation/reflection of a particular lesson).

The findings from this study revealed that these constraints were noticeable during observation and discussion of their observed lessons. The NQTs in this study considered these constraints had controlled their practices to a certain extent and restrained their attempts to enact their beliefs into practice. Mansour (2006) suggests that there is common contextual constraints which act as barriers for NQTs to put their beliefs into practice, and the teachers' behaviour is somehow affected by these constraints. Borg (2006) provides a number of the common constraints which include the impact of large classes, unmotivated students, examination pressures and a set syllabus, pressure to conform from more experienced teachers, students' limited proficiency in English, and students' resistance to new ways of learning and heavy workloads.

Based on this study, these constraints can be divided into two categories: internal and external constraints. Internal constraints refer to the factors related to the NQTs themselves: for instance, their experiences, personalities and teacher attributes, and knowledge. On the other hand, external constraints refer to the factors over which teachers do not have much control. This includes the contextual reality of the school (the school ethos, the learners, and the school administrators), the role of assessment, and the pressure from the administrators and parents. Both internal and external constraints are interrelated and these constraints affect the way teachers put

their beliefs into practice. These constraints will be discussed further in the following sub-sections.

10.4.1 Internal constraints

10.4.1.1 The NQTs' experiences, personalities and teacher attributes

The NQTs' inexperience is one of the constraints that affects the belief-behavioural relationships. Most of the time, Alice, for instance, said that because she was new, she could not do anything and she could not make changes (as in decision-making). She had to adhere to the administrator's order because she had less experience in teaching. Her experience portrays what Kilgore et al. (1990) suggest, that the administrator and collegial attitudes can support or diminish the effectiveness of NQTs by influencing beliefs about themselves, and in Alice's case, it seems to have negative influence on her beliefs.

A few of the participants reported that they experienced double-standard treatment in their working environment because they are NQTs. They remarked that as NQTs, they had little voice. Three participants, Alice, Joanna and Salina, reported that they felt the difference between how senior teachers and NQTs were being treated.

Apart from the NQTs' experience, it is important to take into account individual differences, as Webster (2012) points out that individual characteristics inevitably affect how teachers feel about their work and how they shape their practice. These include teachers' personal attributes and attitudes to change. In Farrell's (2003) study, the teacher eventually managed to cope with the demands of being a first-year teacher of English, largely on his own. This suggests that NQTs often have to make their own decisions and take their own initiative to put what they believe into practice with less support or without any support from others. Erni, in this study, initially had difficulty with the lesson delivery and managing the lesson because she found that her students could not understand English. Although she tried to seek help from other colleagues, tried different teaching-learning strategies, and tried out different classroom management approaches, finally, she had to develop her own classroom rules and practices, and she found her own ways to ensure that her students learn. Thus, often NQTs need to be independent.

10.4.1.2 NQTs' knowledge

The NQTs' pedagogical knowledge and knowledge on subject matter are also important. They need to be aware of and prepared for recent changes in the curriculum if they are to deliver their lessons as expected. Since a new curriculum for the primary school in Malaysia, the Standard Based Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR), was launched in 2011, when the trainees (the participants) were just enrolled in the programme, they did not get enough information about the latest changes. For instance, regarding the implementation of LINUS, which according to Alice had been dealt with in a one-day workshop during training, they had to use their own initiative to find out more about LINUS from the school administration and their colleagues. In addition, Alice reported that her cohort had little exposure on the 'phonics approach' during training, and when she had to carry out her reading lesson using the phonics approach, she said that her colleagues were giving different information on how to conduct it. It was a problem for her since she did not have enough knowledge to use phonics approach in her reading lesson. It is indeed a difficult task for the NQTs to actually bridge the gap between the pedagogical and content knowledge learnt/gathered from ITE and the knowledge they needed to teach appropriately for the new curriculum context in their classrooms. Johnson (1996) is also concerned with such issues and found a mismatch between the practical knowledge obtained during the programme and what was needed to deal with the realities of the classroom. Akcan (2016) also points out that NQTs must reconcile the pedagogy and knowledge adopted in their trainings with the reality of teaching. They are likely to encounter a set of norms and behaviours that clash with their previous experiences (Sabar, 2004; Scherff, 2008 in Akcan, 2016). As Zheng (2015) points out, the development of teachers' beliefs and practices is a dynamic process; the NQTs need to draw upon multiple teaching approaches to meet different teaching objectives and expectations in different teaching contexts, and they cannot rigidly follow a single paradigm of teaching. Zheng's view suggests that although NQTs should be flexible in their teaching approaches and be able to apply their pedagogical knowledge or subject-matter knowledge in the classroom, they also need to be able to cope with the limitations of their knowledge in order to shape classroom practice based on what they believe is 'right' and what is best for their students.

10.4.2 External constraints

As stated earlier, external constraints refer to the factors which teachers do not have much control of and in this study, the external constraints include the contextual

reality of the classroom and school (the school ethos, the students, workload, lack of provision of support, and the role of assessment), MoE initiatives and policy, parents, and the role of assessment.

10.4.2.1 The contextual reality of the classroom and school

The contextual reality of the classroom and school is one of the important factors that affect the belief-behavioural relationship in this study. As Fang (1996) points out, the complexities of classroom life can restrain teachers' abilities to attend to their beliefs and he suggests that contextual factors can have powerful influences on teachers' beliefs and, in effect, affect their classroom practice. Fang's stand is somewhat similar to Wedell and Malderez's (2013) statement about how contextual factors have an impact on teachers' beliefs: for instance, they say that what happens in a classroom is determined by beliefs about what is, and what is not, considered suitable behaviour for language teachers and learners by colleagues, leaders and parents. Teachers' beliefs and their behaviour in the classroom are thus influenced greatly by more widespread societal beliefs, within and outside the school context.

i. The ethos of the school

The NQTs' belief-behavioural relationships are strongly influenced by prevailing norms and values in the schools in which they work, which are in turn reflecting the norms/expectations of the wider society in which they are situated. Previous research (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2003; Basturkmen, 2012); Wedell & Malderez, 2013) supports the findings in this study which highlight that the teachers' working context has an effect on teachers' beliefs and behaviour. It further highlights that the norms and behaviours in the working context affect the behaviour and attitudes of teachers when they are confronted by change. The Malaysian education context is particularly complex because the wider society is multi-cultural, and schools to some extent are mono-cultural (schools are divided into different types based on race) and so, different schools have different norms. Thus, the types of school/cultural influences on NQTs vary according to the type of school. From the data, Alice shared that she was 'forced' to follow the traditional way of teaching spelling, i.e. the teacher would dictate and the students would write, since that was what the administrator and the parents (the society) believed is appropriate for the students. This scenario seems to concur with Holliday (1994), who suggests that the influence of the workplace context is the 'deep action' of local cultures. Another obvious piece of evidence in the data for the deep action of the local cultures is the issue of the two different Chinese schools. The school culture is very exam-oriented, and Alice had to deal with the

'*kiasu*' (selfish) beliefs and behaviour of the parents/community who only focus on their own children's exam success. Another outstanding feature of a Chinese-type school ethos is the cane, which is a norm and is used to discipline the students (in the case of Alice). However, Joanna felt that using the cane is not the solution to disruptive behaviour although it was the norm in her Chinese-type school. In this case, Mann (2017) highlights the importance of connecting training to the teachers' context. He states that teachers may fail to connect with the training, if it seems to be far removed from their teaching realities. In Alice's case, although, during training in ITE there was a 'Classroom Management' module and trainees were reminded to avoid physical punishment, the ethos of the school seems to have a greater impact on her behaviour in adopting the cane to manage her classroom.

ii. The students

The NQTs in this study reported that the students themselves are seen as an obstacle for them to teach according to their beliefs. The obstacles from the students, including their disruptive behaviour such as shouting, swearing and walking out, have both a detrimental impact on their ability to teach and affect teachers emotionally. This substantiates the previous findings of Owen, Broadhurst and Keats' study, which show that poor pupil behaviour regularly affects NQTs (Owen, 2009). This scenario is evident in Alice's, Erni's, and Joanna's classrooms. For instance, dealing with discipline is a real problem for Erni and she had to work out on her own on how to deal with the disruptive behaviour such as being stubborn, using vulgar words, and daydreaming. Over time, she developed other classroom management strategies of her own, which she found helpful. Although she managed to develop strategies which she believed work for her, the strategies were "*psychological torture*", based on shaming the students. The class monitor was instructed to stand if the others made noise during the lesson. Alice and Joanna also had a great deal of managing student's behaviour in their classrooms. The literature (Johnson, 1992a; Richards & Pennington, 1998) has confirmed that NQTs paid great attention to students' misbehaviour and their primary concern is with maintaining discipline and authority.

Since students were seen as barriers to implement teaching based on teachers' own beliefs, understanding students' needs is vital in ensuring teaching-learning takes place. The NQTs need to adapt or adjust their practices to their current situation. Fang (1996) suggests that teacher behaviour and students' learning is cyclical. Teacher behaviour affects students' behaviour, which in turn affects teacher behaviour and, ultimately, students' academic performance. From the data, in most

instances the participants adapted their practices to meet the students' needs. For example, in LINUS, Alice did not follow the senior teacher's practice in automatically passing the students. Salina, Joanna and Alice believed in the use of L1 in classrooms to help students 'understand' or help them to 'learn', towards the end. Salina still allowed her students to use Tamil, and Joanna and Alice at times used Mandarin depending on the level/type of learners. They were being flexible as long as the students 'learn'. As for Erni, she used the direct translation method from the start since only 1 percent of her students understood what she taught. She considered students' readiness in learning and tried to conduct suitable activities. In terms of classroom management, all the participants tried different approaches to suit the student's needs. Towards the end, all participants agreed that use of L2 is good for their students to master the language. However, their behaviour changed according to their understanding of student's needs. They adjusted their beliefs while still focusing on the students. Mann (2017) highlights in his study how trainees may become initially very enthusiastic about a new approach. In this case the NQTs tried to emphasise 'English only' classrooms at the initial stage of teaching; however, most found it difficult to adopt in the reality of the classroom.

iii. Workload

The NQTs in this study were overloaded with various roles, not only with teaching roles but with administration as well. They struggled with a demanding teaching load, classes which presented instructional and management challenges, and unsupportive administrators (and sometimes colleagues). Mansour (2006) shares similar results in his study on Egyptian science teachers, who were overburdened by having to perform many roles too. This resulted in resorting to the simplest teaching methods, such as verbal explanations, and sometimes they used demonstrations. However, such methods did not allow students to practice their manual skills. There is ample evidence from the study (reflecting Farrell 2003) on how workload affects the NQTs' belief-behavioural relationships and their understanding of what it means to be a teacher (Chapters 5-8, sections 5.2.2., 6.2.2., 7.2.2 and 8.2.2).

iv. Lack of support

In Malaysia, a range of government initiatives have been introduced to support NQTs: these include Professional Learning Community (PLC) and School Management System (SMS) (Goh & Wong, 2014). PLC requires NQTs and other teachers to collaborate, and Sandholtz (2002, cited in Mann, 2017) shows that teachers usually

value collaboration; it has been claimed that teachers have a higher regard for their peers' views than the views of university professors or researchers. In addition, Webster (2012) suggests collaborative initiatives such as PLC give benefits to teachers to share practices across the schools. Apart from PLC and SMS, other provisions of support include 'School Improvement Specialist Coaches', 'Mentoring', and the 'English Native Speaker Mentoring Programme', and a few of these programmes were evident in my study to a certain extent. The English Native Speaker Mentoring Programme, for instance, was said to be a success story in supporting NQTs. Joanna was involved in the programme and she was satisfied with the kind of support she received throughout the programme. Ong and Lin (2015) report that there was a strong mentoring relationship in this programme, which was based on the Empowering Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening English (MBMMBI) policy in an effort to raise the level of English proficiency among Year One to Year Three English teachers. English teacher mentors were from several English-speaking countries – the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand – and 6,500 English teachers in 1,800 schools were getting guidance from 360 native speakers. Joanna, who was involved with the programme, gave positive feedback on it. She also added that my study helped her in developing professionally, as she was able to reflect on her teaching and we discussed it. This was similar to the support that she used to have during her practicum and training year, but such support was difficult to get once she began teaching. Mentoring is potentially a powerful support especially for NQTs in terms of improving practice (notably, behaviour management) and career development, and in most school contexts some mentoring provision exists in principle. However, sometimes other teachers were not supportive to NQTs, perhaps because those supposed to provide mentoring had very high workloads (Jala, 2012; Chapman, 2012). This scenario suggests that, again similar to what Farrell (2003) reports, the actual impact of the various initiatives developed to support NQTs in school only work to a certain extent. At the end of the day, it seems that the NQTs had to make their own decisions on classroom practices and make the best of it.

10.4.2.2 The role of assessment

Based on the data, the NQTs were pressured by the community to fulfil the standard target of 'learning', which seemed to be memorising the content in order to pass the exams. The findings from the study of NQTs in Hong Kong by Urmston (2008) also reveals a similar issue in that the NQTs were pressured by the parents, school administrators and well government to ensure that the students perform in the examination. They had to adhere to a syllabus heavily geared towards standardizing

instruction and preparing students for assessment. Education is seen as a utilitarian unit whereby, generally, society's mind set is to get good exam marks in order to enter university and later get a good job to improve one's socio-economic status. Parents, especially from the national-type Chinese school, are concerned with their children's academic performance, thus they put the pressure on school and administrators, who in return put pressure on teachers. Abdullah and Peters (2015) found that the Malaysian government envisions Malaysians students as becoming of international quality, as judged by their performance in international assessments, such as 'Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study' (TIMSS) and the 'Programme for International Student Assessment' (PISA), and the MoE thus directs state educational assessment towards such apparent markers of achievement. The view of 'language learning' that has evolved over time is thus one of having to pass the exam as an indication that 'learning' took place. The participants come out from the ITE with a different notion of what language learning is. Their initial belief was to guide the students to master the language and their beliefs changed to memorising content to pass the exam. This seems to suggest that the NQTs' behaviour changed to meet the needs of the community although that was not what they wanted. Thus, in this study, the NQTs rejected certain behaviours/classroom practices that they believed in due to contextual pressure. For instance, towards the end of the study, there was a lot of teacher-centred approach with the use of textbooks due to exam pressure. This raises the questions of "*Does this show that over time beliefs and practices diverge ever more widely?*" or "*Is it that beliefs actually change to 'fit' possible practices?*".

10.4.2.3 Pressure from the administration (school, district, state and national level) and parents

There is a growing body of literature on parental engagement with schools and this includes parental engagement in managing the behaviour in students' learning (Webster, 2012). The majority of studies in Basturkmen's (2012) review stress that the teachers across the case studies reported that external factors, i.e. the pressure from parents and the administrators (see Chapter 9, section 9.3.4), make it difficult for them to put their beliefs into practice. The same was true in this study, also situated in a context where the education system has a top-down hierarchy. It is difficult when teachers, as in this study, have to take the burden of implementing MoE policies, programmes and initiatives introduced without any consultation or consideration of their voices.

Many of the contextual constraints which affect belief-behavioural relationships are not unique to Malaysia. Looking at literature from inside the classroom elsewhere, for example Egypt, Hong Kong, and Singapore (Mansour, 2006; Urmston, 2008; Farrell, 2012; Basturkmen, 2012), similar factors influence teachers in similar ways to the teachers in this study; they change their behaviour but not all change their beliefs. The issues in this study and teachers' individual responses to them appear to be widely shared. My study seems to reflect Urmston (2008), who reports that the NQTs in his study, instead of focusing on introducing new ideas and practises into the educational system were largely absorbed into its traditions (p.10).

10.5 Summary

The above discussion suggests that there are three fundamental elements involved in the constructions of NQTs' beliefs, i.e. PLLEs, prior training and personal teaching experience. The findings confirmed the initial literature on *Teachers' knowledge base at the start of teaching*, which included these three elements as presented earlier in Chapter 3, Figure 3.9. To summarize the NQTs' belief development as an individual phenomenon, Figure 10.1 below illustrates how these three fundamental elements contributed in belief development/change, and the figure also illustrates how the constraints affect the belief-behavioural relationship. The arrow between the individual phenomenon ('individual choices of classroom behaviour' in context) and classroom practice indicates the relationship between individual beliefs and behaviour.

The figure may be seen as a combination of ideas from Clark and Peterson's (1984) model of teacher thought and action (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.6), and Borg's (2006) diagram of elements and processes in language teacher cognition (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.8). The diagram divides Borg's schooling or personal history and specific classroom experiences into three main elements, based on the findings of this study. Professional coursework is excluded since it did not emerge as one of the main elements in belief development, and this figure has similarities with Clark and Peterson's model in terms of the relationship between teachers' thought processes, and teachers' actions and their observable effects. However, in their model, the two elements are projected as two separate circles which are influenced by both constraints and opportunities of the inner cognitive world and the outer world of actions and effects. In the figure below, I separated both internal and external constraints; however, the relationship between the two is interrelated and both play a role in influencing classroom practice or behaviour.

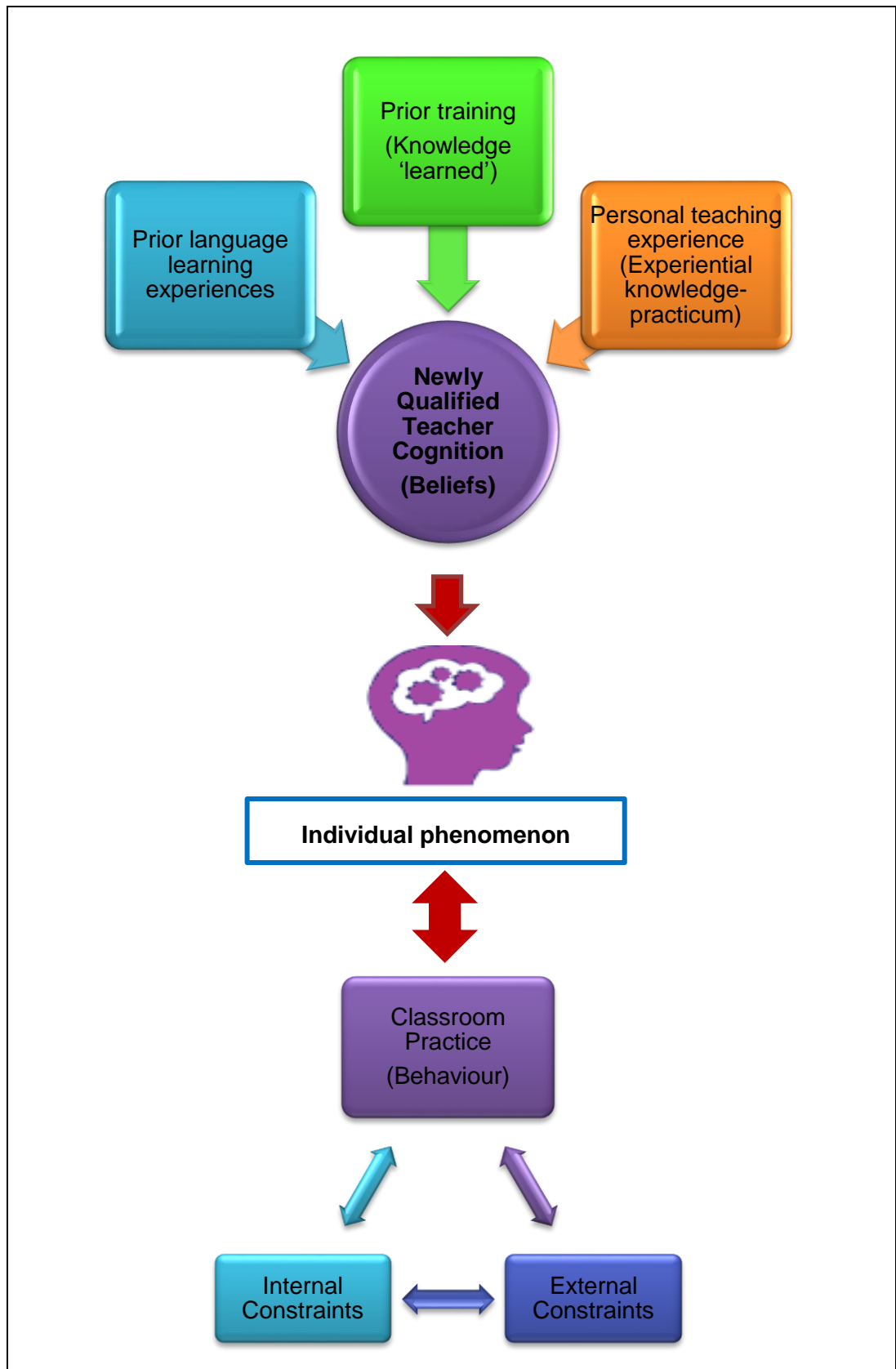


Figure 10.1 Elements and processes in belief development as individual phenomenon

Despite the fact that teacher beliefs is a well-established research area, deeper understanding about how teacher beliefs dynamically interact with classroom practice and contexts and mutually inform each other should be further explored.

In the next chapter, I will present the contribution of the study, discuss its challenges and suggestions for the future, and draw its limitations. I will also provide some suggestions for future research and conclude the chapter with some personal reflections on the research process.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

This study has presented the evolution of the NQTs' cognition over their first year of teaching in terms of their knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning; the factors that had influenced their thinking and classroom practices; and in terms of the changes in their beliefs and knowledge with regards to the content and process of the ITE curriculum. I conclude this study by addressing the contributions of the study, discussing its implications for Teacher Education and the Institute of Teacher Education, as well as outlining its limitations. This chapter proceeds with some suggestions for future research and concludes with some personal reflections on the research process.

11.2 Contributions of the study

I believe that this study adds to the body of knowledge on teachers' cognition in terms of reframing the existing findings, specifically in the field of literature with regards to language education. The following points discuss this further:

- **Theoretical contribution 1:** The findings from this study illustrate the challenges in the relationships between beliefs and behaviour that the NQTs had to deal during their first year of teaching. This study hopes to better prepare Teacher Education to understand how NQTs learn to teach, thus creating a better 'fit' between Teacher Education and classrooms. Since learning to teach demands a great deal of preparation from an individual for the complexity and reality of classroom practices, the current movement towards viewing teachers' cognition constructions as an **individual process** is justifiable and important.
- **Theoretical contribution 2:** A view of teachers' belief formation that behave as if it is just a matter of adding PLLEs, training, and previous teaching experiences together is too simplistic. These prior experiences may have some influence at the very beginning stage of a teacher's working life. However, once they have been in the classroom after a while, it is actually the

lived **classroom experience** in context that is going to influence the extent to which those prior experiences are supported or diminished.

- **Theoretical contribution 3:** The key to this evolution of NQTs' beliefs is how the important elements in the construction of beliefs (PLLEs, training, and teaching experiences) are developed and adjusted through time, interact with the classroom experience at a given moment, and consequently, how this interaction affects the NQTs' behaviour. Although the above elements contribute to the initial formulation of beliefs about teaching and learning, it could be argued that it is the way these elements relate and interact with an individual NQT's **classroom experience in a given moment** that is the key factor influencing their teaching practices. Thus, experience in a classroom at a given moment seems to be the strongest element in influencing the interaction between beliefs and practices, stronger than the other elements that the NQTs brought with them.
- **Methodological contribution 1:** The year-long longitudinal approach to data collection in this study seems to be an appropriate approach for research which explores and investigates the evolution of a complex phenomenon such as cognition. Relatively few previous studies, however – there are none in Malaysia – have explicitly noted the use of a longitudinal approach to explore NQTs' beliefs over such an extended timescale. The few that have include Farrell's, (2003), a study of a single secondary school teacher in Singapore; Pennington and Richards' (1997) study of the experience of five Cantonese-dominant secondary English teachers in Hong Kong; and Rust's (1994) report on two first-year teachers in Michigan, United States. Hence, if we really want to understand the complexity of teacher cognition then more such longitudinal studies seem desirable.

11.3 Implications for Teacher Education and the Institute of Teacher Education

In Chapter 3, section 3.7, I shared the concerns and challenges or issues of NQTs as reported in the literature: for example, the issues in managing the students' needs, the conflict of matching the idealisation and realities and the expectation to be as good as experienced teachers. To a certain extent, the findings of this study reveal

similar issues to those reported in the literature. However, the issues which emerged from the findings of this study are slightly different from what was discovered and reported in the existing literature. These issues have implications for the NQTs, other stake holders in teacher education in general, and on the ITE curriculum. I highlight these issues and implications in the following points:

Issue 1: *The transition from teacher training to the first year of teaching was a challenging journey of trying to match the 'idealisations and realities'*. The transition from being a trainee to being an NQT is not easy and adjustments are to be expected. NQTs in this study entered their first year of teaching and the 'real' classroom with idealisations of subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. During training, most of the time, the content presented is seen as the 'right way'. During the time at the ITE, in order to confirm the trainees' understanding of their classroom practices based on the knowledge 'learnt', they received support from supervisors, co-operating teachers during the practicum and their friends. In addition, they were introduced to a set of classroom management strategies during training. During their first year of teaching, the NQTs tried to seek support from their colleagues, especially those who have had more years of teaching experience, in adopting and adapting the teaching approaches they had learnt to their current classroom contexts. However, from the data, the NQTs in this study, had to also explore and discover their own ways in making classroom decisions. Akbulut (2007) criticises this arrangement, saying that trainees are equipped with the highest values of university-based courses without seriously considering the resistances and difficulties involved in implementing them.

It seems that from the data, apart from the practicum, the trainees had inadequate preparation in terms of preparing them for the actual reality of the teaching world; they were not exposed to experiencing the actual number of teaching hours and carrying out different challenging roles in school. Interestingly, I agree with Lortie (1975), who stresses that trainees may fail to realise that the aspects of teaching which they perceived as students represented only a partial view of the teacher's job. What students learn about teaching is "*intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical*"(p.62). This is particularly true when traditional teacher training models are adopted (Akbulut, 2007).

Implication: It may be suggested that particular attention should be given to ensure a better link from theory to practice, and that due attention be paid to identifying support from different stakeholders, and understanding the importance of providing real support systems for NQTs. Hoban (2002) reports that the most influential element of professional learning is the sharing of teachers' own experiences in groups that can operate as a learning community. Although the NQTs in this study reported that there were several types of support for NQTs, such as mentoring, the native-speaker programme, and Professional Learning Community (PLC), they expressed that they still needed real support and guidance from their experienced colleagues and also the administrators, especially when the latter are more in favour of parents' voices rather than their own teachers'.

It may also be suggested that collaboration between the stakeholders is indeed necessary to reduce or overcome these challenges. Farrell (2012) suggests that the main stakeholders, i.e. NQTs, second language educators, and school administrators, should collaborate to ensure a smooth transition from training to the first year of teaching, so that the NQTs can be better prepared for the complexity of real classrooms. He proposes a novice-service teacher education which begins in second language teacher preparation programmes and continues into the first years of teaching in a real classroom. Although at the moment, the ITE and schools collaborate during the three stages of the practicum, they should also consider the necessary support during the transition or bridging period (from the last semester during training to the first year of teaching) as Farrell has suggested.

In the interest of ensuring NQTs' 'preparedness' for the real classroom teaching, a dynamic approach to language TE seems to be ideal for helping trainees adjust to reality. Akbulut (2007) suggests if teacher educators have an understanding of their trainees' knowledge, they become more successful in relating the reality and the theory to their pre-existing knowledge in a more appropriate way.

It is also important to note that, the transition from training to real classroom requires more than applying the subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge gathered or learnt during training. Trainees should be prepared mentally on what to expect in their first few months of teaching to avoid the 'reality shock'. Thus, apart from focusing on subject-matter or pedagogical knowledge support, Hayes (2003) remarks that the emotional welfare of trainees should not be overlooked as it could have an impact on their success and failure as future teachers. The ITE may have

overlooked certain aspects as this is the first time the ITE have run the programme independently. One of the suggestions is to gradually set the task (teaching role and administrative role) from their final semester.

Issue 2: *PLLEs is one of the elements in the construction of beliefs which was hardly acknowledged during the time at the ITE and the first year of teaching.*

The NQTs created a stereotype of good and bad instructions from their PLLEs during schooling years. During the practicum and training years, they tended to replicate teaching methods and strategies they found effective as L2 learners and reject negative experiences. This scenario is evident in many instances during the data collection, the use of 'English only' in the classroom (Salina's and Joanna's PLLEs), 'drilling technique' (Erni), and the use of the cane in classroom management (Alice).

Implication: Since PLLEs is one of the important elements in belief formation, the role of prior experience of L2 learning should be considered in the design and the implementation of the teaching education programme. Some literature suggests that prior experience of L2 learning is influential in the formation of NQTs' beliefs (Lortie, 1975; Woods, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Johnson, 1992b; Richardson, 1996; Farrell, 1999; Phipps & Borg, 2009). Sanchez (2017) also mentioned that PLLEs play a pivotal role in teachers' lives, since they influence their subsequent cognitive development and their engagement with professional education. Thus, teaching programmes need to develop strategies to enable the trainees identify their PLLEs and existing beliefs about teaching and learning, and relate their beliefs to the current teaching-learning practices. Since it was stated earlier that TE policy-makers need to develop strategies for the trainees to adopt and adapt their PLLEs to the current teaching practices, teacher educators should provide a platform for them to share their PLLEs with others and guide them in the process of making classroom decisions. Thus, they can further implement the practice in their first year of teaching and the following teaching years. In addition, one of the goals in TE should be oriented towards the formation of beliefs, as suggested by Zheng (2009), and therefore policy-makers need to also take into consideration other elements that influence beliefs formation.

Issue 3: *The mismatch in the practice of 'reflective practice' between training and the first year of teaching.*

In the ITE, trainees are taught about 'reflective practice' in the 'Curriculum Studies' module, and during the practicum, trainees were encouraged to reflect on their lessons after classroom observations by the practicum

supervisors or co-operating teachers and make suggestions to further improve their lessons. This reflection was done verbally and in written form. However, they experienced a complete change in the practice once they were into real teaching. It became merely following the directive from the inspectorate on how written reflections 'should be' done in their teaching record books. Although while at the ITE, this was a 'written exercise' that was assessed, to a certain extent, there was still room for the trainees to think, discuss, and question. Their written reflection now is very structured and it should, according to MoE guidelines, report the percentage of students who managed to achieve the lesson objectives for the day. My data showed that the participants had to adhere to the 'order', since they had to write the 'reflections' in their lesson plans.

Implication: It may be suggested that the MoE should consider adopting Wallace's (1991) 'reflective practice model' TE models in SLTE, as presented in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.3) and co-ordinate the 'reflective practice' guideline at the level of the ITE and link it to the implementation in school. Wright (2010) suggests that SLTE preparation should place "*an emphasis on the student teacher's learning to teach, and becoming a thinking teacher*", which "*in turn means a great deal of reflective activity programmed into learning experiences*" (p.273). Some literature has also highlighted the importance of reflecting the classroom experiences as a tool for changes in the classroom practice (Sanchez, 2013; Díaz-Maggioli, 2012; Goh, 2012; Day, 1991; Wallace, 1991). For this to take place, Schon (1983) promotes his idea of self- reflection, an awareness of oneself as a learner and encourages them towards the path of becoming a thoughtful and conscientious practitioner, which encourages 'reflective practice'. However, as discussed earlier, reflective practice was just on paper when teachers are told to write reflections according to what MoE thinks is right (for them and not the teachers). The data seems to suggest that teachers needed to reflect a lot in order to adjust themselves to the complex context in which they are working. Thus, teachers should be encouraged to examine their existing beliefs regularly and reflect upon their validity in the light of their current teaching objectives and career goals, especially when Sanchez (2013) highlights that teacher-held beliefs are derived from both educational and professional experiences which exert powerful impact on their teaching practices. In addition, Goh (2012) recommends that teacher educators need to prepare the trainees to reflect on their practices in the broader context, which they can later use in their teaching years. It is reasonable to expect this if it is not modelled in the ITE. However, the kind of reflective practices the participants experienced were only written reflections after each lesson, which is

very structured and based on MoE guidelines. It would be up to the teachers to go beyond, i.e. to reflect on their own teaching and act accordingly for future lessons.

Consequently, a proper guideline should be prepared to clearly identify the kind of written-reflections that are required of the teachers and that necessary measures are undertaken to ensure that both the TE and school agree on how 'reflective practices' should be carried out or done, and not following the standard format or content on how teachers should reflect. It may also be necessary to consider reviewing the present requirement of the written-reflection in the ITE and match it with the requirement from the MoE to allow some degree of autonomy to the teachers to express themselves and reflect on their classroom teaching.

Issue 4: *The ITE programme is still new, and its structure, curriculum and content are still in mint condition.* It can be argued that certain modules are overlapping in terms of content, based on the first Skype interview data. For example, some of the content in 'Linking theory to practice' overlapped with the 'Teaching of (skills)' modules. In this case, perhaps TE should consider reviewing and adjusting some of the modules to better prepare trainees to face the reality. In terms of TE preparation, for instance, although the trainees had quite a restricted school context for the practicum (for example, they were trained and exposed to teach only in a primary national school, and then they were allocated to the surrounding schools near their ITE), the practicum was seen by the trainees as an idealisation of classroom practice. During the practicum, trainees had to undergo 10 hours of lesson, whereas in reality it is more than 30 hours, excluding numerous administrative tasks. This scenario seemed to suggest that during the practicum, trainees are demonstrating what they have learnt in their ITE, which is more of an assessment. From the data, for example, initially Salina was concerned with the English language subject and only towards the end, she realised, teaching is not just about teaching the English Language. She had to be prepared and ready to adapt to the situation. Apart from that, the planning of the NQTs' postings had caused a shock to the NQTs since they were posted to different types of school, which were different from what they were trained for. This scenario had created challenges for the NQTs to adapt to their current teaching schools.

Implication: To better prepare NQTs for classroom reality, curriculum structure, content and pedagogy in pre-service English language teacher education need to be reviewed and adjusted from time to time. It can be suggested that TE should involve

not only teacher educators and subject-matter experts in designing and reviewing the overall structure, curriculum and content, they might also want to consider involving the trainees and more importantly, the practitioners in schools. Since the ITE focuses on training for pre-service primary education, and in order to improve the quality of education, particularly the primary education, it will be necessary to provide adequate professional training to the NQTs and later provide in-service training. This also means that the duration and frequency of training should be benchmarked and fixed, and the training should be made compulsory considering that there are different types of schools in Malaysia with different challenges. This suggestion is also necessary to curb the issue of unexpected postings to different types of schools, as discussed above.

11.4 Limitations of the study

The study has been concerned with exploring the development of English NQTs' beliefs and how this affected classroom practices during their first year of teaching. It should be borne in mind that this study has several limitations. Firstly, this study employed the in-depth approach of a collective case study. While this was an advantage in enabling me to explore and investigate the NQTs' beliefs in depth, it means that the study lacks generalisability. Thus, leaving the reader to consider its transferability to their own context. It is also important to bear in mind that the study on belief is a complicated matter as it involves the complexity of accessing beliefs. Secondly, this study did not involve other stakeholders such as other English language teachers, head teachers, English language education officers (district, state and national level), or ITE lecturers who might have been helpful in providing further insights into the implementation of the primary school English language curriculum, and so the data provides only the teachers' perspective. Thirdly, the interviews were conducted in English and this might have had an influence on the NQTs' responses to a certain extent. They might have felt obliged to use the target language to create an impression that they are competent in the English language since they are English language teachers, although at times they code-switched. The participants used the language of their choice since at the initial stage of the interview I reminded them that they have a choice to use English or Bahasa, a language that they are comfortable with. Finally, the possibility of bias existed since I interviewed my ex-students. Although I had only taught them for a semester, and mainly during mass lectures, I was rather close to Erni since I was her practicum supervisor. Nevertheless, I tried my best to be very honest and transparent on reporting the participants' responses.

Despite these limitations, I feel that this study has generated massive and rich data, which I had to carefully select and present. The data gathered contribute to understanding of NQTs' beliefs about teaching and learning and how these inform classroom practices, and provide a basis for suggesting further improvements to teacher education in general, and second language teacher education specifically.

11.5 Suggestions for further research

There is significant literature on the teachers' cognition field which investigates an array of diverse issues from different perspectives and different geographical contexts. Borg (2006) points out that the study of language teacher cognition is increasingly an international phenomenon, and he classifies the language teachers' cognition research into studies, which have examined: pre-service teachers' cognition, in-service teachers and those who have examined specific curricular domains in language teaching (p.46). However, there is still limited research into ESL/EFL NQTs' beliefs that uses longitudinal approaches in data collection, including a few studies mentioned previously in section 11.2, 'Methodological Contribution 2'.

Further research may be carried out within the Malaysia context, and perhaps it would also be interesting to replicate this study and apply it to other contexts. Since this study focuses on the NQTs from the first cohort of the Bachelor of Teaching (TESL) course from a particular ITE in Malaysia, it would be interesting to conduct similar research using the case study approach from another cohort from the same ITE to explore whether there are changes in the delivery of training which might have impacted the NQTs' beliefs. It might also be interesting to try and replicate this study to other cohorts from a different ITE. One of the reasons is to examine whether different ITEs have different approaches in training using the standardised TE curriculum because they might establish different impact to NQTs beliefs.

This study shows evidence of different fundamental elements in the constructions of teachers' beliefs, specifically those of NQTs. Since the classroom observations only involved students indirectly, and it was conducted in primary education, further research may consider looking at the secondary education students' perceptions of how the NQTs' beliefs and behaviour affected their learning process in the classroom, and from their perceptions, it might be useful to examine how these perceptions impacted the NQTs' beliefs and behaviour in the future lessons. It is a cyclical

process which might be interesting to venture into providing an in-depth account of teachers' thought processes from the students' perceptions.

11.6 Research reflections and final words

This study has taught me a great deal about what teachers do and why they do it in terms of their teaching-learning processes in their classroom. The existing literature and this study suggest that teachers' beliefs are formed or constructed through the teachers' past schooling experiences, training and classroom experiences. However, this study reveals the three elements as stated above (past schooling experiences, training and classroom experiences) interact with the teachers' teaching in the classroom at a given moment as the key aspect which influences the teachers' classroom practices.

This study has also taught me a valuable lesson in terms of developing my research skills. Specifically in terms of choosing and designing the 'right' methodology to achieve the aims of the research as well as deciding and making adjustments to the initial research plan. It was indeed a challenging experience for me in making an important decision to change my research plan due to unexpected personal circumstances. At the same time, I had to ensure the study progresses and that this change was a blessing in disguise. Overall, I am satisfied with the decision I made which helped me to gather an interesting and valuable set of data even after the adjustment.

In presenting each of the participant's stories, this study had made me reflect on my own experiences. Some of the issues which the four teachers experienced in this study (e.g. numerous challenging teaching roles, attitude towards the use of L1 in the classroom, the influence of exams towards learning) are also the issues which I had encountered as an L2 learner, as a trainee and as an English language teacher. As a teacher educator and a researcher, I hope this study could provide and act as a platform in giving voices to my participants. Thus, they will gain actual support from respective and relevant stakeholders.

Finally, throughout my four-year doctoral study, I had the opportunity to present in a number of conferences and seminars (Appendix L) at different stages of my research project. During these presentations, I received valuable and thoughtful feedback from the audiences, which helped in the development of my research planning, field work

experiences, in analysing the data, and in developing and illustrating my ideas with regards to the findings. The knowledge and experiences I gathered from these presentations had helped me develop my self-confidence as a researcher, expanding my network in the language education and teacher education fields, and most importantly, it had contributed significantly to the development of my research project.

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Appendix A PISMP (TESL) English Language Teaching Courses

CODE	COURSE	CREDIT	SEM.
TSL3101	Introduction to Linguistics	3(3+0)	1
TSL3102	Literature in English	3(3+0)	1
TSL3103	ELT Methodology	3(3+0)	2
TSL3104	English Phonetics and Phonology	3(3+0)	2
TSL3105	Teaching Listening & Speaking Skills in the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	3
TSL3106	Teaching Reading Skills and Vocabulary in the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	3
TSL3107	Teaching Writing Skills in the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	4
TSL3108	Teaching Grammar in the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	4
TSL3109	Managing the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	5
TSL3110	Linking Theory to Practice	3(2+1)	5
TSL3111	Developing & Using Resources for the Primary ESL Classroom	3(3+0)	6
TSL3112	Language Assessment	3(3+0)	6
TSL3113	Action Research I - Methodology	3(3+0)	7
TSL3114	Curriculum Studies	3(3+0)	7
TSL3115	Action Research II – Implementation and Reporting	3(0+3)	8

Elective Package 1

No.	Elective 1	Course	Credit	Sem.
1.	Language Arts Offered from January 2011 intake, only for TESL Major	LGA3101: Children's Literature	3(3+0)	2
		LGA3102: Songs and Poetry for Young Learners	3(3+0)	3
		LGA3103: Stories for Young Learners	3(3+0)	4
		LGA3104: Plays and Drama for Young Learners	3(3+0)	5

Appendix B

The objectives of PISMP programme

The aim of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) (Primary Education) Teaching English as Second Language programme also known as *Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan* (PISMP) is to produce primary school ESL teachers with quality in terms of knowledge, skills and professional attributes in line with the National Education Philosophy. Meanwhile, the programme aims to produce trainees who are able to

- i. show an understanding of the knowledge content, curriculum materials, assessment, management of learning resources
- ii. use inquiry process and problem solving in learning through critical and high order thinking skills
- iii. use knowledge and skills to implement teaching and learning taking physical, social, culture, psychology and professional teaching ethics into consideration
- iv. transfer and apply acquired skills in different situations
- v. have and project values, ethics, as well as the right practices in line with the Public Service Principles of Ethics and Malaysian Teaching Code of Ethics
- vi. appreciate and practice values as individuals who are loyal to the religion beliefs as well as living in harmonious society
- vii. portray the willingness for lifelong learning
- viii. practice entrepreneurship in everyday life

Bahagian Pendidikan Guru (2007)

Appendix C

Interview schedule- Skype Interview

Themes and sample questions

A. Teacher learning as cognitive process: The participants' beliefs and experience on English teaching and learning through personal experience of schooling

1. Could you share any past learning experiences on English language learning (in school) that you remember?
 - What were the learning experiences you like/dislike?
 - Why did you like/dislike them?
2. Could you share about any teacher you liked/admired and disliked?
 - Why did you like/dislike them?
3. From your learning experiences as English language learner that you have mentioned, what beliefs about teaching and learning have developed in you?
 - What do you think makes good teaching/good teacher?

B. Teacher learning as cognitive process & as skill learning: The participants' beliefs and experience on English teaching and learning through teacher education training

1. Since you have just completed your pre-service teacher education programme (PRESET), could you share your main reason for doing this teacher education programme?
 - Why does this programme important to you?
 - Is there any particular course in the programme you find the most useful in preparing you to teach English to primary school children?
 - Which course do you find the most useful in helping you to develop good teaching? Why?
 - Which course do you find the least useful? Why?
2. Up to this point, to what extent do you think PRESET has an impact on your beliefs about teaching and learning?
 - At the end of PRESET do you think that you still hold the same beliefs you did at the start of the programme?

C. Teacher learning as personal construction

Part I

1. Based on your previous teaching practice/practicum experience, what are the factors that influence your classroom practices?
- Do you think that your experience as learner has an influence your classroom practice?
2. Were you able to transfer and apply the learnt skills from the trainings to your classroom practices?
3. Do you think the theories learnt have been useful in your classroom practices? If yes, in what way is it useful **OR** If not, can you explain in what way is not useful?

Part II

1. How did you do in your English language exam (public exam, entrance to higher education) and in Cambridge Placement Test result (English Language proficiency test)?
- Did you find your exam/test results reflect your actual English proficiency?
- How would you rate your English proficiency on the scale of 5? 5 being most proficient.
2. Did you encounter any experience where being proficient in the language helps a lot in delivering the lesson successfully?
3. Did you experience a situation where being less proficient in the language hinders the lesson delivery?
4. Do you think code switching or using Malay in your English classroom will affect learners' learning?

D. Teacher learning as reflective practice

1. Do you think that your past educational and teaching practice experiences influence your current beliefs of good teaching?
2. Based on your teaching practice experience/practicum experience, do you think that the post-lesson reflective session with your co-operating teacher or supervisor has been helpful in developing your understanding on good teaching?
3. What do you think about daily and weekly written reflections that are required of you? Were the written reflections helpful in developing your beliefs on good teaching?

Appendix D

(i) Participant information sheet and consent forms

Participant Information Sheet



“The evolution of beginning teachers’ cognition in Malaysian primary schools”.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to participate or not it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If anything is not clear or you would like further information, please contact me, Zuraidah Ismail (edzi@leeds.ac.uk).

Who is the researcher?

Zuraidah Ismail, a PhD candidate from the School of Education, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the evolution of beginning teachers’ knowledge and beliefs of about teaching and learning in their first year of teaching. The primary focus will be on a group of teachers who have just graduated from Institute of Teachers Education, Bachelor of Education specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language (B.Ed. TESL) programme.

The main aims of the study are to explore:

- the evolution of beginning teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning over their first year of teaching;
- the contextual factors that might influence their thinking and classroom practice; and
- what any evolution or changes in beliefs and knowledge implies for the content and process of the ITE curriculum (including practicum).

Why have you been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are one of the first cohort of trainee teachers from Institute of Teachers Education, B.Ed. TESL programme who will be teaching English in a primary school in this state.

Do I have to take part?

You have the right to choose whether to take part or not. If you do decide to take part please contact me via email (edzi@leeds.ac.uk) and you will be given this information sheet and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you agree to take part, you remain free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

When does the research start and end?

The study will be conducted in three phases:

PHASE	TIME	ACTIVITIES
1	December 2014	First skype/telephone interview
2	April-May 2015	Planning meeting and preliminary classroom observation
3 (Part I)	May-July 2015	Classroom observations, post lesson observation interviews and journal entry
3 (Part II)	June-July 2015	First and second focus group interview
4	August-October 2015	Journal entry and final skype/telephone interview

What will it involve?

- **Interviews.** You will be asked to take part in two skype/telephone interviews of up to one hour for each interview which will take place in December 2014 and October 2015. These interviews will be audio-recorded.
- **Classroom observations.** You will be asked to allow the researcher to observe four of your English lesson and there will be a follow-up post-lesson observation interviews. The classroom observations and follow-up post-lesson observation interviews will take place from May till July 2015. The classroom observations will be video-recorded and the interviews will be audio-recorded.

- **Focus group interviews.** You will be asked to participate in two focus group interviews, one in June and one at the end of July 2015. The focus group will be carried out at a time and place that suits you and the rest of the participants. These interviews will be audio-recorded.
- **Journal entries.** You will be asked to write a journal entry at the end of each week during the research period - approximately twenty journal entries from May till October 2015. The suggested content about what your journal entries might include will be given prior to the beginning of the research.

What are the possible risks and benefits of taking part?

There are no known risks involved in the process of this study. In terms of benefits, participation will mean that you will have an opportunity to share your experiences with other participants during the focus group interviews and/or I will provide opportunities for exchange ideas after the focus group is completed. These meetings provide a forum for exchanging ideas on current classroom practices and for offering each other support/suggestions on how to cope with challenges that you face during the first year of teaching.

Will the information I provide be kept confidential?

All information collected during the research process will be kept strictly confidential. All the data in interviews, classroom observations and journal entries will be made anonymous. Only the researcher will have access to the data before it is anonymised. Your name and your institution will not appear in any reports or publications. The data will be stored on an encrypted hard drive.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings of the research study will be part of my PhD thesis for the University of Leeds. The research will also be used for presentations at local and international education conferences and publications in international journals.

Contact details

If you would like to take part in the research study and/or you have any questions about the study, please contact: Zuraidah Ismail at edzi@leeds.ac.uk.

Appendix D (ii) Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form



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Consent to take part in the research project: "The evolution of beginning teachers' cognition in Malaysian primary schools".

	<i>Please put your initials next to the statements you agree with</i>
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated (date) explaining the above research study and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.	
I understand that my participation is voluntarily and I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without there being any problem. I also understand that I can decline if I do not wish to answer any particular question(s).	
I agree to take part in the following research activities: i. Two skype/telephone interviews ii. Four classroom observations and post-lesson observation interviews iii. Two focus group interviews iv. Up to twenty journal entries	
I give permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded and for the classroom observations to be video-recorded.	
I understand that my name and my contributions to the research study will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report(s) that result from the research.	
I agree for the anonymised data collected from me to be used in PhD thesis, presentations, future reports or publications.	
I agree to take part in the above research activities and will inform Zuraidah Ismail (edzi@leeds.ac.uk) should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Researcher	Zuraidah Ismail
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Appendix D (iii) Parental consent form

Parental Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This year, your child's class is working with _____ (Name of research participant), a beginning teacher who recently graduated from the Institute of Teachers Education, Bachelor of Education specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language (B.Ed. TESL) programme. The teacher has agreed to take part in my PhD research study entitled, "The evolution of beginning teachers' cognition in Malaysian primary schools". I will be observing and video-recording some of the teacher's lessons. Each video-recording will be approximately an hour. The focus of the video will be on the teacher's classroom practices, not on the pupils, but inevitably some of them will also be filmed. The video recording will only be used by me to collect data for my study and my thesis will not refer to any individual pupils.

Please complete and return the Permission Form to document your permission for these activities.

Yours Sincerely,
Zuraidah Ismail
PhD Candidate
University of Leeds,
United Kingdom.



PERMISSION FORM

Pupil Name _____

Class _____

I am the parent/legal guardian of the child named above. I have received and read your letter regarding the beginning teacher in my child's classroom and agree to the following:

(Please tick ✓ to the appropriate box below)

I DO give permission for my child to appear on a video recording and understand my child's name will not appear in any material written accompanying the recording.

I DO NOT give permission for my child to appear on the video recording, and understand that he/she will be seated outside of the recorded activities.

Appendix E

Classroom observation schedule

Participant: _____ School : _____
 Date : _____ Topic : _____
 Time & Length of observation: _____ Observation : 1 / 2 / 3 / 4

Component	Aspects	*(✓)	Comments
(A) Methodology & English Language Curriculum (i) Lesson planning	a. Aims & objectives b. Lesson content c. T-L strategies d. T-L resources e. Moral values f. Creative & critical thinking skills / HoTs		
(ii) Lesson Implementation	a. Set induction b. Questioning & feedback techniques c. Accuracy/ appropriateness of oral/written language d. Ability to adapt to learners need e. Pupils involvement f. Closure g. Achievement of objectives		
(B) Classroom management	a. Class control b. Clarity of instruction c. Types of grouping & interaction		
(C) Learner and reflective practice	a. Evaluate on performance & react to self b. Seek external advice & support for self-improvement		
(D) Personal qualities	a. Professional attitude & commitment b. Rapport with students		

*Put a tick (✓) to the aspects observed

This classroom observation schedule serves as a framework for semi-structured classroom observations guidelines with reference to the programme aims, dimensions and elements listed in 'Pedagogy Standards for English Language Teaching' (PSELT) developed by British Council and Ministry of Education Malaysia (component part), a few elements taken from the formal ITE's practicum observation checklist (aspects). During observation, the researcher will anticipate other unexpected situations apart from the dimensions listed and include them in the observation notes.

Appendix F

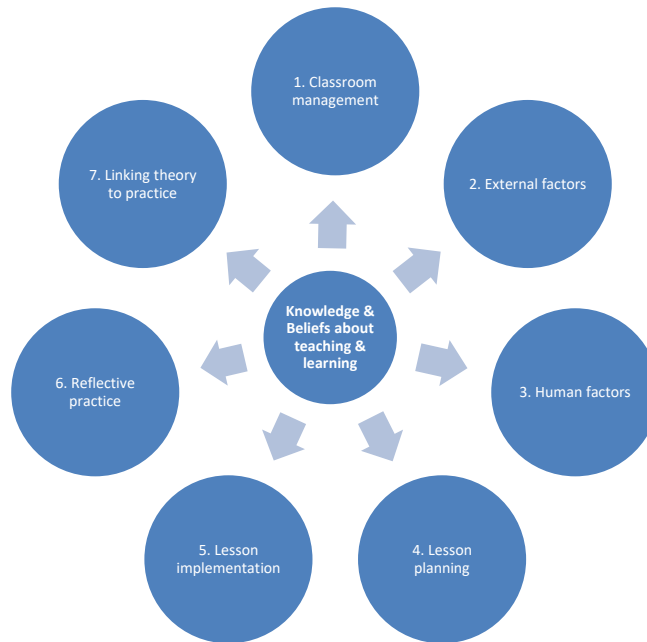
(i) An example of Nvivo10 coding (Salina)

The screenshot displays the Nvivo10 software interface for a project named 'Case1 Salina.nvp'. The main window shows a list of nodes with columns for Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The nodes are organized into a hierarchical structure, with 'Internal Factors' and 'External factors' being the primary categories. The 'Internal Factors' category includes sub-nodes like 'Teacher education training including', 'Professional development', 'Students', 'Researcher', and 'Teacher personality'. The 'External factors' category includes sub-nodes like 'School facilities and resources', 'School admin', 'Parents', 'Colleague', 'MOE officers including inspectorate', 'MOE and school Programmes & Initi', 'Work load and time', 'School ethos & environment', 'Schooling experiences', and 'Status of English'. The status bar at the bottom indicates 'ZU 51 Items'.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Learner and learning	7	33	29/03/2016 15:46	ZU	29/03/2016 15:46	ZU
Teaching, Learning and Assessment	9	124	29/03/2016 15:47	ZU	29/03/2016 15:47	ZU
Language Ability	3	3	29/03/2016 15:47	ZU	29/03/2016 15:47	ZU
Professional development and values	7	25	29/03/2016 15:48	ZU	03/04/2016 11:11	ZU
Factors	8	157	29/03/2016 17:24	ZU	03/04/2016 11:11	ZU
Internal Factors	7	55	29/03/2016 17:25	ZU	29/03/2016 17:25	ZU
Teacher education training including	5	15	29/03/2016 17:58	ZU	03/04/2016 09:31	ZU
Professional development	3	10	29/03/2016 18:05	ZU	03/04/2016 09:25	ZU
Students	5	21	30/03/2016 09:34	ZU	03/04/2016 09:49	ZU
Researcher	0	0	01/04/2016 12:46	ZU	01/04/2016 12:46	ZU
Teacher personality	3	9	01/04/2016 16:41	ZU	03/04/2016 09:37	ZU
External factors	8	102	29/03/2016 17:25	ZU	29/03/2016 17:25	ZU
School facilities and resources	6	13	29/03/2016 17:41	ZU	03/04/2016 09:21	ZU
School admin	5	17	29/03/2016 17:47	ZU	01/04/2016 18:40	ZU
Parents	4	9	29/03/2016 17:47	ZU	03/04/2016 09:53	ZU
Colleague	5	14	29/03/2016 17:55	ZU	03/04/2016 09:36	ZU
MOE officers including inspectorate	5	16	29/03/2016 18:10	ZU	03/04/2016 09:54	ZU
MOE and school Programmes & Initi	6	20	29/03/2016 18:14	ZU	03/04/2016 10:01	ZU
Work load and time	4	9	30/03/2016 09:29	ZU	03/04/2016 10:03	ZU
School ethos & environment	1	1	01/04/2016 15:52	ZU	01/04/2016 15:56	ZU
Schooling experiences	1	2	03/04/2016 09:10	ZU	03/04/2016 09:11	ZU
Status of English	1	1	03/04/2016 09:12	ZU	03/04/2016 09:12	ZU

Appendix F

(ii) An example of initial themes and sub-themes derived from NVivo10 (Salina)



1. **Classroom management:** classroom rules on how the participant is disciplining the students i.e. by giving advice, warnings or threatening, using cane or other physical punishment; creating conducive environment for learning; implementing classroom routines; giving clear instructions and lesson input; and managing student's needs.
2. **External factors:** assessment such as exams and LINUS; lesson duration and class size; government initiatives, programmes and trainings; and prior experience.
3. **Human factors:** participant herself, school administrative, Higher authorities from MOE, national, state or district level, English teachers (colleague), other subject teachers and class teacher.
4. **Lesson planning:** related to aspects of planning lessons such as formulating aims and objectives of the lesson, teaching and learning resources, teaching-learning strategies and types of grouping and interaction.
5. **Lesson implementation:** teaching method or style, adaptation of materials or activity to suit student's level and inculcating moral values.
6. **Reflective practice:** ability to evaluate own performance or seek external advice and support from the admin or other teachers.
7. **Linking theory to practice:** adjusting/accomodating the theories learnt in college to the real classroom.

Appendix F

(iii) An example of a thematic category in NVivo10 from SRI transcript (Alice)

Classroom management > Classroom rules

Name: Classroom rules

<Internals\0705a> - § 3 references coded [9.89% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.39% Coverage

5	so it works so i think that will be the rules, i told them already..if they make noise i want to save my energy, i will switch off the fan and there'll be stuffy in the classroom
---	--

Reference 2 - 1.90% Coverage

9	other rules..last time..usually if they talk, i will ask them to stand and then they still make noise, they have to raise one hand (laughing)
---	---

Reference 3 - 5.60% Coverage

11	ya..the first time is stand only, stand also cannot, keep quiet and i ask them to raise their hand, third time will be raising both hands..and some of them they like to like lying on the table, even get punishment also..they lie down on the table, so i asked them, raise both hands and one shot raise both hands..they have to stand straight already because they don't want to..they are so reluctant to..restless..restless
----	---

<Internals\0705b> - § 5 references coded [4.68% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.04% Coverage

20	ya..i asked them to raise their hand because they were too noisy..i don't want to shout anymore (laughing)..so everybody will keep quiet
----	--

Reference 2 - 0.56% Coverage

22	they know that when they see the hands they have to raise their hands
----	---

Appendix G

An example of printouts of the transcripts of the interview with Salina and Joanna, and manual (hand-written) colour-coded themes and sub-themes

33		about stickers. the spelling one, the one i give for spelling. after that i figure, no. for spelling. i'll give them something else
34		they were eager to you know just now when you mentioned biscuits. they actually wants stickers rather than the biscuits?
35		they don't know. they can't see the biscuit. that's why. they've only seen stickers. (i don't usually give out rewards.)
36	<p><i>School - Reward System to encourage moral promoting / promote moral conduct</i></p>	even the school they have a system if you help the teacher, the teacher can give you stickers, so all the teachers have that same sticker and we can give it. to students if they behave well. mainly for moral. like they help someone. they're considerate.
37		school culture as well? is there anything that you would like to share because i see there's not so much of code switching. only a few instances. give one word. that's it. the rest you did not.
38		what was it? pegawas? perfect. i don't know how to explain. a school leader? don't understand. i don't know how to explain anymore. 'cinca!
39		usually i won't like. i will be able to find something. ya usually i'll be able to find something. but today i just went like. ya.]
40		but i encourage them to speak more English and i think they're getting use to it. cause initially it was weird. they were not use to it but then now it's alright
41		but because you said all this while they have been doing translation.
42		ya. and i ask them like does your English teachers speak English to you? No. They speak in mandarin. so it's only vocabulary items that they speak in English
43		so that what you said. even the students are facing this transition. everything translated and then suddenly all English in your class. have you ask them how does it affect.
44		i think i should..
45		in terms of you like having as you said you have carried out things especially in managing the classroom. what are the factors that influence your choice. in mean in terms of changing. because i can see you said. for year 2 this is suitable for them but year 3 they're more matured. what are the factors that influence your decision?
45	<p><i>c/room</i> <i>more personal</i> <i>-ive reinforcement</i></p> <p><i>Attitude towards L1</i></p> <p><i>Initially it was weird - as were not use to it → now they're getting use to it.</i></p>	mmm. part of it was also our exposure when we were doing 'Behaviour & Management' ..one of the courses. i can't remember a lot of things but like they were telling us. how certain age kids. in certain age group, you can have some reinforcement. positive reinforcement. but some it's just won't work. like even in class. in one class year three, it will work for some of them but there'll be

5	<p><i>class year</i> <i>Year 3 + 5 more matured - f activity</i> <i>Level 1 → active</i></p>	very easy to control and some more. they are in year 5. so they don't really like. walk here and there. because you're coming on friday right? That time. year 2 then you'll see. how chaotic it'll be. 21 of them. 2B first class very smart the students and very active but then noisy
6		oh ok. so in terms of academic performance for your year 2?
7		very good. most of them very good
8		ok
9	<p><i>improv/ extract?</i></p> <p><i>focus to learner</i></p>	they can speak. they can speak and they can read. they can write on their own
10		oh the one. this class just now?
11		the last class for year 5
12		but still. i mean the way they sit down. as if they actually understand
13	<p><i>7. resources facilities & computer lab!</i></p> <p><i>SS require to use of smart board</i></p> <p><i>worksheet</i></p>	they always want me to use the smart board. sometimes i use sometimes i bring them to computer lab. this book they are supposed to buy. but most of them don't have money to buy so it's like everytime i photocopy the worksheets and give them. actually they are supposed to get one. when i asked just now. no response. ok. i know already what to buy
14		have they actually told their parents?
15		ya. because it's like one set ma'am. English tamil BM in one set so they don't want to buy. RM50 something i think
16		for the whole set?
17		for the whole set
18		oh ok
19		they don't want to buy. ok. so i was like. ok nevermind. i'll photocopy
20		so basically what skill are you actually..?
21		writing
22		oh it's writing skill

Appendix H

(i) An example of emerging themes and sub themes coding from preliminary analysis (Alice)

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface for a project named 'Preliminary Analysis See Ai Li (Recovered).nvp'. The main window shows a hierarchical tree of nodes on the left and a table of node statistics on the right. The table columns are Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The nodes are organized into a tree structure, with 'Classroom management' being the top-level node. Other nodes include 'Classroom routine', 'Classroom rules', 'Calling out names', 'Disciplining the students', 'Giving advice', 'Using cane or other physical punis', 'Warn or threaten', 'Conducive environment', 'Managing students' needs', 'External factors', 'Assesments', 'Exams', 'LINUS', 'Initiatives, Programmes & Trainings', 'After class activities', 'Trainings, workshop, and competitions', 'Lesson duration and class size', 'Class size', 'Time', 'Prior experience', 'Human factors', 'Higher Authorities', 'District level', 'National level of MOE', 'School admin', 'Other teachers', 'Parents', 'Participant', 'Student', 'Disruptive students', 'Good academic achievement and beha', and 'Lesson Implementation'.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Classroom management	5	26	26/06/2015 11:15	ZU	26/06/2015 11:15	ZU
Clarity of instructions and input	1	2	26/06/2015 11:28	ZU	26/06/2015 13:08	ZU
Classroom routine	2	6	26/06/2015 13:07	ZU	26/06/2015 14:30	ZU
Classroom rules	3	9	26/06/2015 11:27	ZU	26/06/2015 13:17	ZU
Calling out names	2	4	26/06/2015 13:18	ZU	26/06/2015 14:26	ZU
Disciplining the students	0	0	26/06/2015 13:11	ZU	26/06/2015 13:23	ZU
Giving advice	3	15	26/06/2015 13:24	ZU	26/06/2015 14:30	ZU
Using cane or other physical punis	3	11	26/06/2015 13:23	ZU	26/06/2015 14:29	ZU
Warn or threaten	1	8	26/06/2015 14:23	ZU	26/06/2015 14:28	ZU
Conducive environment	1	2	26/06/2015 12:45	ZU	26/06/2015 12:46	ZU
Managing students' needs	2	7	26/06/2015 12:42	ZU	26/06/2015 13:06	ZU
External factors	4	14	26/06/2015 11:24	ZU	26/06/2015 11:25	ZU
Assesments	0	0	26/06/2015 13:37	ZU	26/06/2015 13:38	ZU
Exams	2	10	26/06/2015 13:39	ZU	26/06/2015 14:21	ZU
LINUS	3	11	26/06/2015 12:57	ZU	26/06/2015 14:20	ZU
Initiatives, Programmes & Trainings	0	0	27/06/2015 09:53	ZU	27/06/2015 09:53	ZU
After class activities	0	0	27/06/2015 10:01	ZU	27/06/2015 10:01	ZU
Trainings, workshop, and competitions	1	4	26/06/2015 11:24	ZU	27/06/2015 09:55	ZU
Lesson duration and class size	4	9	26/06/2015 11:24	ZU	27/06/2015 09:52	ZU
Class size	2	9	26/06/2015 13:22	ZU	26/06/2015 14:20	ZU
Time	1	1	26/06/2015 14:12	ZU	26/06/2015 14:12	ZU
Prior experience	1	5	26/06/2015 14:18	ZU	26/06/2015 14:19	ZU
Human factors	0	0	26/06/2015 11:20	ZU	26/06/2015 11:25	ZU
Higher Authorities	0	0	26/06/2015 12:59	ZU	26/06/2015 13:00	ZU
District level	2	6	26/06/2015 11:22	ZU	26/06/2015 14:16	ZU
National level of MOE	1	2	26/06/2015 13:58	ZU	26/06/2015 14:20	ZU
School admin	1	6	26/06/2015 13:59	ZU	26/06/2015 14:10	ZU
Other teachers	0	0	26/06/2015 12:16	ZU	26/06/2015 12:16	ZU
Parents	2	14	26/06/2015 11:22	ZU	27/06/2015 09:48	ZU
Participant	4	16	26/06/2015 12:38	ZU	27/06/2015 09:48	ZU
Student	2	16	26/06/2015 11:20	ZU	26/06/2015 13:26	ZU
Disruptive students	3	11	26/06/2015 13:30	ZU	26/06/2015 14:31	ZU
Good academic achievement and beha	2	4	26/06/2015 13:31	ZU	26/06/2015 14:01	ZU
Lesson Implementation	4	8	26/06/2015 11:12	ZU	26/06/2015 11:12	ZU

Appendix H

(i) An example of emerging themes and sub themes coding from preliminary analysis (Alice)(cont.)

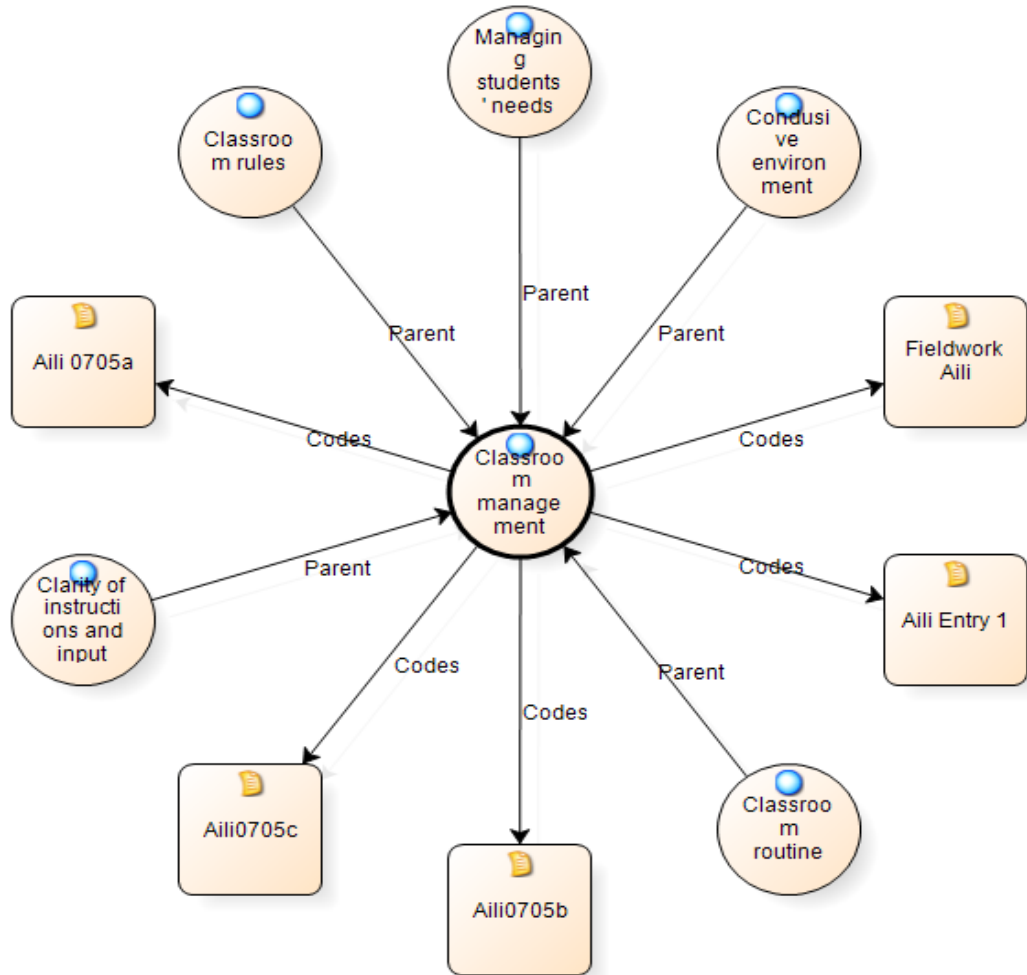
The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface with a list of nodes and their associated sources and references. The nodes are organized into a hierarchical structure, with 'Lesson Implementation' and 'Lesson planning' being the primary categories. The table below represents the data shown in the 'Nodes' pane.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Lesson Implementation	4	8	26/06/2015 11:12	ZU	26/06/2015 11:12	ZU
Adaptation of materials or activity	2	3	26/06/2015 12:53	ZU	26/06/2015 13:22	ZU
Inculcate moral values	1	3	26/06/2015 13:12	ZU	26/06/2015 13:13	ZU
Teaching method or style	2	2	26/06/2015 12:10	ZU	26/06/2015 12:44	ZU
Lesson planning	3	6	26/06/2015 11:09	ZU	26/06/2015 11:25	ZU
Teaching learning resources	1	1	26/06/2015 12:52	ZU	26/06/2015 12:52	ZU
Teaching learning strategies	3	4	26/06/2015 12:21	ZU	26/06/2015 12:51	ZU
Types of grouping and interaction	1	1	26/06/2015 12:46	ZU	26/06/2015 12:46	ZU
Linking theory to practice	1	1	26/06/2015 12:31	ZU	26/06/2015 12:32	ZU
Reflective practice	4	16	26/06/2015 11:16	ZU	26/06/2015 13:43	ZU
Evaluate own performance	3	7	26/06/2015 13:43	ZU	26/06/2015 14:20	ZU
Seek external advice and support for self i	0	0	26/06/2015 13:44	ZU	26/06/2015 13:44	ZU

Appendix H

(ii) An example of diagram from 'Nodes' and 'Sources' coded in Nvivo10

Alice - Theme 1: Classroom Management



Appendix I

Letter of approval from ethics committee

Performance, Governance and Operations
Research & Innovation Service
Charles Thackrah Building
101 Clarendon Road
Leeds LS2 9LJ Tel: 0113 343 4873

Email: ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Zuraidah Ismail
School of Education
University of Leeds
Leeds, LS2 9JT

ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee
University of Leeds

1 October 2017

Dear Zuraidah

Title of study: The evolution of beginning teachers' cognition in Malaysian primary schools
Ethics reference: AREA 14-27

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the ESSL, Environment and LUBS (AREA) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
AREA 14-027 10.3.2014 Research Ethics committee form (signed).docx	1	03/10/14
AREA 14-027 10.3.2014 Research Participant Information Sheet.docx	1	03/10/14
AREA 14-027 10.6.2014 Participant_consent_formlowrisk.doc	1	06/10/14
AREA 14-027 10.3.2014 Parent_consent_form.doc	1	03/10/14
AREA 14-027 10.7.2014 FIELDWORK ASSESSMENT Zuraidah.docx	1	07/10/14
AREA 14-027 Epu.pdf	1	03/10/14
AREA 14-027 further info.txt	1	06/10/14

Committee members made the following comments about your application:

Comments to the applicant		
This was a really thorough, carefully considered application. We have just a few matters for consideration and we are sure that you will give them your full attention before, during and after data collection.		
Application section	Comment	Response required/ amended application required/ for consideration

A10	It would be good practice to also prepare an explanation (and informed consent forms) for the children who will appear in the videoed classes.	For consideration
C3	What will you do if participants are critical of their school/ training centre or individuals – how will you protect them from power brokers and/ or potential consequences of their comments? Similarly, it is important to consider what you will do if you observe inappropriate, dangerous, criminal actions/ activities in the classes you observe (ie what is your duty of care?).	For consideration
C7	It will be important to keep careful records of permissions granted as well as initial recruitment emails to schools, participants etc	For consideration
C9	What will you do if you get more than 5 volunteers? What will your selection criteria be?	For consideration
C22	You have ticked the box no plans to report or disseminate data. Are you sure you are not going to disseminate this research I would discuss this with your supervisors.	For consideration
C24	Worth giving a longer time period for data retention (just in case you experience some delays beyond 3 years)	For consideration

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie
Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service
On behalf of Dr Andrew Evans, Chair, [AREA Faculty Research Ethics Committee](#)

CC: Student's supervisor(s)

Appendix J Letter of approval from EPU



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Prime Minister's Department
Block B5 & B6
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA


EPU
Economic Planning Unit
Telefon : 603-8000 8000

Ruj. Tuan: 
Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE 40/200/19/3176[5]
Our Ref.:

Tarikh: 06 November 2014
Date:

ZURAI DAH BINTI ISMAIL
4, St. Johns' Close
LS6 1SE
Leeds, West Yorkshire
United Kingdom
Email: edzi@leeds.ac.uk

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	:	ZURAI DAH BINTI ISMAIL
Passport No./ I.C No	:	731120-14-5394
Nationality	:	MALAYSIA
Title of Research	:	"THE EVOLUTION OF THE BEGINNING TEACHERS' COGNITION IN MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL"
Period of Research Approved	:	4 YEARS

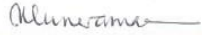
2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia and **bring along two (2) colour passport size photographs**.

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
- b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



(MUNIRAH BT. ABD MANAN)

For Director General,
Economic Planning Unit,
E-mail: munirah@epu.gov.my
Tel: 88882809
Fax: 88883961

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and **cannot be used as a research pass.**

Appendix K

Letter of approval from State Education Department



JABATAN PENDIDIKAN
WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR
PERSIARAN DUTA, OFF JALAN DUTA
50604 KUALA LUMPUR
MALAYSIA



Telefon: 03-6203 7777
Fax : 03-6203 6210
~~Telefon: 03-6203 7777~~
~~Fax: 03-6203 6210~~
Portal: <http://jpwpl.moe.gov.my>

Ruj.Kami : JPNWP. 900-6/17 Jld. // (3P)
Tarikh : 08 Januari 2015

Pn. Zuraidah binti Ismail,
School of Education,
University of Leeds,
Leeds, LS2 9JT,
United Kingdom, London.

Tuan,

KEBENARAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH, PEJABAT PENDIDIKAN WILAYAH DAN JABATAN PENDIDIKAN WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR TAHUN 2015

Dengan segala hormatnya saya merujuk kepada perkara di atas. Surat tuan 07 Januari 2015 dan surat kebenaran dari Unit Perancangan Ekonomi, Jabatan Perdana Menteri bil. (5) dalam UPE 40/200/19/3176 bertarikh 06 Disember 2014 adalah berkaitan.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk "The Evolution of The Beginning Teachers' Cognition in Malaysian Primary School" diluluskan dan tuan adalah tertakluk di bawah syarat-syarat berikut:-

- 2.1 Kelulusan ini adalah tertakluk kepada kandungan dalam cadangan penyelidikan yang telah diluluskan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- 2.2 Sila kemukakan surat kebenaran ini ketika berurusan dengan pihak pengurusan/Pengtuea/Guru Besar di Sektor/Pejabat Pendidikan Wilayah/sekolah berkenaan.
- 2.3 Kelulusan ini untuk sekolah-sekolah di bawah pentadbiran Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur sahaja.
- 2.4 Tuan hendaklah mengemukakan senaskhah hasil kajian kepada Jabatan ini setelah ia siap.

3. Kebenaran ini adalah untuk tujuan dipohon sahaja dan luput selepas **31 Disember 2015**.

Sekian, terima kasih.

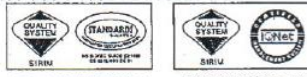
" BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA "

Saya yang menunt perintah,

(H.J.H. AZAH BINTI H.J. HUSIN, KMW)
Ketua Sektor Pengurusan Sekolah,
b.p. Pengarah Pendidikan,
Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.

- s.k.
- Pengarah Pendidikan, Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.
 - Timbalan Pengarah Pendidikan, Pejabat Pendidikan Wilayah Bangsar dan Pudu, Kuala Lumpur.
 - Timbalan Pengarah Pendidikan, Pejabat Pendidikan Wilayah Keramat, Kuala Lumpur.
 - Timbalan Pengarah Pendidikan, Pejabat Pendidikan Wilayah Sentul, Kuala Lumpur.

"GEMILANG DALAM KALANGAN YANG CEMERLANG"



Appendix L Conferences and seminars

CONFERENCE/SEMINAR PRESENTATION		
No.	Conferences/Seminars	Date
1.	Malaysian Students Conference & Research Showcase 2017 Venue: University of Manchester Title: Shaping mind: Exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Poster presentation)	12 May 2017
2.	Centre for Education Studies (CES) Fifth Annual Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference Venue: University of Warwick Title: Untangling the Mind: A Story of Alice and her comrades in their first year of teaching (Oral presentation)	06 May 2017
3.	Education, Social Sciences and Law (ESSL) Graduate School Conference Venue: Liberty Building, University of Leeds Title: Shaping mind: Exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)	22 March 2017
4.	Education Policy Discussion Group Seminar Venue: The Coach House, University of Leeds Title: 'Education in Malaysia: A Journey to Excellence' (Joint presentation)	14 March 2017
5.	SHOWCASE 2016: The 7th annual University of Leeds Venue: Parkinson Building, University of Leeds Title: From 'Alien' land to 'Wonder' land: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Poster presentation)	05 December 2016

6. **TESOL France's 35th Annual Colloquium** 18-20
November
2016
Venue: Télécom ParisTech, Paris, France
Title: Untangling the mind (Oral presentation)
[http://www.tesol-france.org/uploaded_files/files/Full%20TF%20Colloquium%20Programme.pdf]
7. **White Rose Doctoral Training Centre Welcome Event** 06
October
2016
Venue: Ron Cooke Hub, University of York
Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Poster presentation)
8. **WISE21 Conference 2016** 24 June
2016
Venue: King's Manor, University of York
Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)
[<http://wise21york.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/conference-programme.html>]
9. **International Education: Classroom Interactions** 20 June
2016
Venue: Berrick Saul Building, University of York
Title: Interaction of mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)
10. **Kaleidoscope Conference 2016** 26-27 May
2016
Venue: Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)
11. **Fourth Research Student Conference 2016** 09-10 May
2016
Venue: Octagon Centre, University of Sheffield
Title: Shaping the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)

12. **Postgraduate (PGR) Seminar 2016** 18
February
2016

Venue: The Coach House, University of Leeds

Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)

(Audience – PGR Students & Norwegian colleagues from Bergen University College)
13. **Postgraduate (PGR) Seminar 2015** 30
November
2015

Venue: The Coach House, University of Leeds

Title: The evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition in Malaysian primary schools (Oral presentation)
14. **Education, Social Sciences and Law (ESSL) Postgraduate Research Conference 2015** 25 March
2015

Venue: Liberty Building, University of Leeds

Title: Transforming the Teacher Education Curriculum: Exploring knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning (Joint presentation)

Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Poster presentation)

[<http://plsoe1qn6nn3w0o2p3q60bf1.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/files/2011/06/Abstracts-Booklet-ESSL-Conference-2015.pdf>]
15. **Oxford STORIES Conference 2015** 17-18
March
2015

Venue: Department of Education, University of Oxford

Title: Journey of the mind: exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Oral presentation)

[<http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/STORIES-2015-Programme.pdf>]
16. **PGR Showcase 2014, The 5th annual University of Leeds Postgraduate Research Conference** 04
December
2014

Venue: Parkinson Building, University of Leeds

Title: Shaping the mind: Exploring the evolution of newly qualified teachers' cognition (Poster presentation)

17. **White Rose Induction Event, 9 October 2014, at Leeds Town Hall.** 09
October
2014

Venue: Leeds Town Hall, Leeds

Title: Education Impact of Curriculum Change in Two National Contexts

(Joint presentation) (Poster presentation)

[<http://wrdtc.ac.uk/wrdtc-induction-event-2014-poster-exhibition/>]

18. **10th Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC), School of Education, University of Leeds** 30 May
2014

Venue: University House, University of Leeds

Title: The impact of teacher curriculum change in two national contexts

(Joint presentation) (Poster presentation)

[<http://wrdtc.ac.uk/pathway/education-pathway/>]

19. **Third Annual White Rose Social Science DTC (WRDTC) Spring Conference, 'Impact through Engagement'** 22 May
2014

Venue: University of Sheffield

Title: Evolution of Beginning Teachers' Cognition in Malaysia English Language Teacher Education (Poster presentation)