

Teacher-level and context-level barriers to using English as a medium of instruction: A systematic review

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Abstract

A systematic review of literature regarding the factors that hinders or challenges preschool teachers' use of the English language in formal preschool classrooms was undertaken initially in order to summarize the findings of research between 1991 and 2016. Research suggested that various important teacher and context level barriers were barriers. Large number of literature reported preschools teachers' lack of confidence in using the language as the prevalent barrier, followed by lower than expected proficiency level. The literature alluded to an association between these two teacher barriers. Other teacher context included inability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners when English was solely used, deficient attitudes and beliefs about the importance of the language thus creating an inherent resistance to use the language in the classroom, and stress related workplace due to overzealous administrators. Context level barriers included time constraints, classroom environment (example, lack of access to resources, large classroom sizes, and lack of parental encouragement towards the use of English), and lack of administrative support.

Keywords: English language as the medium of instruction, EMI, Malaysia, preschool teachers, teacher education, systematic review

Background and issue

The Malaysian government places a strong emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and has formulated the National Policy for Early Childhood Care and Education for children till the age of six. Under this policy, programs initiated serve to meet the following aims (Radziah, 2013):

- Provide a foundation for healthy growth and development which expose them to activities in nation building.
- Enhance their readiness for primary school education.

- Numerous initiatives to make early childhood programs more accessible especially for urban disadvantaged children through allocation of funds.

ECCE in Malaysia is divided into two main groups (“Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) in Malaysia”, n.d., para 9):

- 0-4 years-olds (TASKA and PERMATA Centers) - mainly uses the PERMATA curriculum;
- 4-6 years-olds (TADIKA, including Ministry of Education preschools, KEMAS preschools, PERPADUAN preschools, preschools operated by private sectors and NGOs) - uses the ECCE National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 (Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah 2010) (modified from the ECCE National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2003).

In the National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 (Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan), four aspects of learning are emphasized, learning should be: enriching, engaging, safe and fun. It is aimed to foster the developments of psychomotor, social-emotional and language required in the 21st century. Objectives defined in this curriculum include the entire skills such as cognitive skills, problem solving, communication, reasoning, decision making, taking responsibilities and technology skills. However, fun and play are also highlighted and specified as the way of children’s learning. In addition, as children like to use their senses and try to learn the limits of their abilities, significance of providing a wide variety of materials to children are emphasized. It is the role of the teachers to provide an environment for the children. Teachers are responsible to encourage engagement and motivation among children. Within this curriculum, parental involvement and school-family collaboration are also emphasized (Ministry of Education, n.d; Radziah, 2013).

TADIKA in Malaysia follow a similar National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 starting in 2010. While the curriculum content is standardised, the language to teach, content focus and instructional approaches may vary among the preschools (Ministry of Education, n.d). However, with the move to increase the number of hours for the teaching of English in national and vernacular schools which started in Year One in 2011, teachers are encouraged to instill the use of English at the preschool as a strategy to get children ready to master the English language before Year One. In fact, existing research have indicated the importance of English language development and impact of early language use on later proficiency of the language among preschool children (Neuman, 2010; Vellutino, Tunmer, Jaccard, & Chen, 2007). However, preschool teachers in Malaysia do not often use the English language to teach or engage in activities that support English language use and development in the early years (Pandian, 2006). In addition, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh had said that about two-thirds of English Language teachers in the country lack competency to teach in the English language (Wong, 2014). This has resulted in: i) the low proficiency of English among Malaysian pupils (Selvaraj, 2013; Wong, 2014); ii) students and teachers are struggling with English in schools, especially those in the rural areas (Wong, 2014); iii) many Malay pupils still fail to be able to converse in the English language despite learning the language from preschool (Fauzy, 2015).

Despite curriculum reform efforts at the preschool level, the problem remains that preschool teachers’ competency to use English to teach and knowledge of strategies for developing the language in the preschool classroom are not known, including issues faced by these teachers (for not using the English language to teach in the first place) (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009). It seems Malaysian preschool teachers are not

spared this criticisms either. Although there may be many issues that are responsible for the low proficiency of the English language among Malaysian's pupils, the competency of the teachers who teaches and uses the language remains the main contention to this issue (Pandian, 2006, Khairie, 2013, Wong, 2014, Fauzy, 2015).

There has yet little knowledge about whether or not the issue pertains to preschool teachers' competency to use English to teach through factors as yet undiscovered or it is a matter of the teacher education preparation they received. Cunningham, Zibulsky, and Callahan (2009) have argued that there is a need to better understand the problems encountered by preschool teachers to hinder the use of English language to teach and that there is a need "to recognize their skill deficits" too, in implementing the school curriculum. Determining what hinders the competencies and challenges of preschool teachers to use the English language in implementing the KSPK curriculum is critical to providing effective intervention, professional development, future preparation and understanding the instructional decisions that preschool teachers make.

Examining pre-school teachers' competency in teaching English appears to be particularly pertinent and useful in the Malaysian context, where English use is encouraged since the formulation of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 (Kurikulum Standard Pra-Sekolah Kebangsaan). Since 2010, the teacher factor, particularly their lack of English proficiency, has been pointed out as one of the biggest obstacles for successful teaching and learning of English (e.g., Achariam, 2015; Selvaraj, 2013; Wong, 2014). In literature on the subject, it is largely assumed that teachers' lack of English proficiency has a causal relationship with their low competency in teaching English. However, it is interesting to note that such an association is assumed without empirical data. Despite its intuitive appeal, assuming such an association is questionable until we can establish the relationship by an empirical study. This is the aim of the research. The researchers maintain that any new intervention or best practices must come from the rigorous research. Researchers in education have documented that pre-school teachers' competency in the English language have strong impacts on various aspects of teaching and learning. Yet, the inquiry into Malaysian pre-school teachers' competency is extremely scarce. Given its documented powerful impact on teaching practices and children learning, it is critical to pursue this line of inquiry into the field.

This research through rigorous literature review (using systematic mapping), focuses on factors which hinders, challenges and supports pre-school teachers' English Language use in the classroom. It aims to review existing evidence to inform future program development and policy-making in using English to teach and other factors that may influence their tasks when English language is used. On the basis of the aim, the overarching question is specified as follows:

"What are the factors that hinders or challenges preschool teachers' use of the English language in formal preschool classrooms?"

Systematic review protocol

The protocol aims to explain the review's conceptual framework as well as to ensure openness and transparency in relation to the methodological choices made (EPPI-Centre, Internet). The protocol describes the basic issues and the conceptual arrangements applied in the systematic review. The protocol describes and explains the key decisions relating to the search strategy, criteria for exclusion and inclusion of studies (e.g year, the country, type of studies, specific research design, and specific topics) and criteria for synthesizing. The protocol acts as a document control process in the review and is thus a tool for those

involved in the project. The protocol is central to the systematic review due to the requirement for transparency and repeatability. As the review process progresses, it may become necessary to revise the protocol, and some decisions may be affected by the result of the prior processes. This can be done based on the type of studies identified. If the protocol is revised, then the outlines changes and reasons are given (EPPI-Centre, Internet).

Different organizations have established guidelines for how the protocol should be followed and points to be included. Cochrane's model for protocol and review includes for example the title, authors, contact dates, abstract, the summary, background, condition (medical) intervention, hypotheses about the intervention, objectives, methodology, criteria, search methods, data collection, analysis and synthesis (Higgins & Green, 2010). This research uses the steps as listed by Petticrew & Roberts (2006). The steps are the basis for the methodological choices made in this research as it also resembles the systematic reviews that Cochrane's model for protocol and review recommended. The core points from both Petticrew and Roberts (2006) and the Cochrane's model for review can be summarized as:

1) formulation of the review question, 2) definition of core concepts and explanation of the theoretical and scientific context in which the questions ask, 3) statement of applied search strategy and synthesis methods, 4) a description and definition of specific research methods, and 5) criteria for the composition of the review group.

Review question

The formulation of the review question sets the framework for all other phases of the review process. There are various models for how a review question can be defined and the elements to be included in the question. The most famous model is PICO (population, intervention, comparison, outcomes), which is used by Cochrane's systematic reviews (O'Connor, Green & Higgins, 2010). However, in this research, the question is more complex for several reasons. The question is not whether a particular intervention in teaching methodology is effective or not, but the factors that hinders or are barriers preschool teachers' competencies to use the English language in their teaching. The question design influences the types of studies that are best suited to answer the research question. In this research, a pluralistic approach method in which all types of research design principle can be included. In practice, this means that the included studies are likely to be very heterogeneous. The overarching research question reads:

“What are the factors that hinders or challenges preschool teachers' use of the English language in formal preschool classrooms?”

With this review question is thus proposed several different types of answers, which will affect the entire review process, which thus becomes more complex. The systematic review is intended both to examine the factors or barriers that hinder preschool teachers' competency in use of the English language in their classroom, therefore this review includes research designs of both qualitative and quantitative.

According to Petticrew & Roberts (2006) there are three issues to consider in relation to the relevance and meaningfulness of the review question. The first question is whether the reviewers have knowledge of the subject of the review. It is necessary to have knowledge of the field in order to ask the right questions and not a question that is already answered right. This is one of the reasons that a review group is formed, where researchers with different backgrounds are brought together to discuss the systematic review, including preparation of review questions. The second question to be considered, deals with who will

benefit from the systematic review and how the results can be applied, while the third and final question is whether there is an interest to get the question answered. This can be ensured by discussing it with potential users of the review and by studying the literature on the field to determine whether the review contributes to existing research with new knowledge. The fact that the team received the grant from the Pusat Penyelidikan Perkembangan Kanak-Kanak Negara (National Child Development Research Center, NCDRC) and from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia show the need to get the question answered. However, this research seeks to answer more than just a pure 'why' issue.

Conceptual delimitations

A review question contains implicit assumptions about the subject, therefore it is important to define the concepts involved in the review question. The conceptual clarification of the review question is important in terms of making informed choices regarding search strategies for identifying primary studies as well as the establishment of criteria for screening and assessment of primary studies.

Preschool

- Malaysian context: 4-6 years-olds (TADIKa, including Ministry of Education preschools, KEMAS preschools, PERPADUAN preschools, preschools operated by private sectors and NGOs) - uses the ECCE National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2010 (Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah 2010) (modified from the ECCE National Preschool Standard Curriculum 2003).
- International context: 4-6 years-olds and in certain circumstances 7 – 8 year olds

“Factors that hinders or are barriers to”

- Obstacles to competencies to the use of the English language in the classroom.

Pedagogical approaches (or strategy)

- The concept of pedagogical approaches is the 'strategy' used in pedagogic tasks where strategy is defined as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. The term 'strategy' is used in practice at the preschool level. In reference to 'strategy', it must therefore be an approach or a way to be used by preschool teachers which intends or allows them to improve their use of the English language to teach.

Systematic literature searches

Due to technological developments, it is now easy to access large amounts of information. Recent research is usually available electronically, and one can ask what the purpose of a systematic literature search is when access to research and information is so easy for everyone. For each person, the problem is not, however, to find information, but finding the relevant and reliable information on a given topic. There is a large amount of educational research, which the contents of the bibliographic databases can testify. In the largest educational database ERIC, there are approximately 1.6 million texts and each month new ones are added. For any individual, this amount of information can be daunting and impossible to keep up. With a systematic review of the literature, the search is identified based on the available literature on a given topic specified from substantive, conceptual and methodological criteria.

Literature search and evaluation of sources is an important part of all research and may be considered as a research methodology in itself and uses scientific literature search as a reflective and systematic part of the scientific method. According to Davies (2004), the purpose of the systematic literature search is to avoid selectivity and opportunistic reading, as can be seen by narrative reviews. A key difference between a systematic review and a general overview of the literature is that in the systematic review, researchers strive to avoid bias by identifying all available research on the defined review question(s). All relevant primary studies in the databases, journals and previous reviews using systematic methodology is the starting point in the conceptual determination of the area of the review. This method is central in the preparation of systematic reviews, as it fundamentally determines the empirical studies that is finds and includes in the systematic review, and thus the results and conclusions of the review findings. As in all other parts of the review process, transparency is important. The search process should be explicitly explained and documented in such detail that it is possible for others to repeat the searches (Lefebvre, Manheimer & Glanville, 2010). Below are explicit explanation as to the choices made in connection with the literature search.

'Gray literature'

The systematic literature search is conducted mainly in electronic databases. There may be, however, literature not published in journals and indexed electronically, but which are nevertheless relevant and reliable. This literature is called 'gray literature'. There are several definitions of 'gray literature', but it is generally understood that these are literature which have no formally published sources unlike books or journal articles (Lefebvre et al., 2010). 'Gray literature' may include working papers, reports, web pages, conference papers, dissertations and other publications that are not widely distributed (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). In Cochrane's review, it has been found that about 10% of the included studies are made up of 'gray literature', and the inclusion of gray literature affects the results of the systematic review (Lefebvre et al., 2010). This is called publication bias (Aveyard, 2014; Lefebvre et al., 2010). To find gray literature and to minimize publication bias, different methods, ERIC, which is the largest educational database which also contains texts that are not journal articles, and searches here will therefore with great probability identify a large proportion of the gray literature. Databases such as PsycINFO and sociology index also contain texts that are not books or journal articles. Some gray literature will be available through these database searches. Other options to find gray literature is through 'references', and Internet Searches.

Hand search

One way to ensure that all relevant studies are located is through a hand search. Hand search involves a manual search of relevant core journals in the field and can be a useful addition to searches in the electronic databases, as not all studies can be found in the databases, or they can be difficult to identify in the databases due to flawed indexing. Cochrane has set up its own hand searches and searches of over 3000 journals are indexed in Cochrane's own database (Lefebvre et al., 2010). For this research, hand search of the journals will take place later in the process and be described later.

Sensitivity and specificity

The purpose of the systematic literature search is to locate all relevant literature on a given topic defined by specific criteria, but also to reduce the amount of irrelevant literature. This means that there must be a balance between sensitivity and specificity (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). A sensitive search will locate a very high proportion of the relevant studies that exist, while a very specific search will only find a low proportion of irrelevant studies. If the search is too specific, there is a risk that the search overlooks relevant literature but if the search is not specific, then a very extensive amount of material need to be sorted through. A high level of sensitivity can be obtained by using the broad search terms, and by searching widely in various databases. This way to search means that relevant 'hidden' studies are found among a large number of irrelevant studies. A high level of sensitivity will be at the expense of specificity. In this research, it is necessary to do a systematic review with a high level of sensitivity due to the breadth of the review question(s). The consequence of a highly sensitive search is a high number of references which subsequently need to be screened to locate the relevant studies to be included in the review - a time-consuming but necessary process.

Search strategy

A thesaurus contains standardized terms that are helpful to use in the searching since these terms allows us to find articles that use different words to describe the same concept, as well as to locate studies on the basis of information that are beyond the terms used in the titles of articles and abstracts. The search strings are made up of standardized terms, related terms and synonyms for each concept. The terms combined use the Boolean operators "OR" and "AND". When "OR" is put in-between all the terms that cover the respective terms of interest, this will result in searches with all references indexed with just one of the terms. When "AND" is put in-between the two sets of terms, this means that only studies that are indexed by at least one term from each term are listed.

The most comprehensive source of information on education is the Educational Resources Information Center, better known as ERIC. ERIC includes education-related journal articles and documents from the books, research reports, doctoral theses and conference papers. Other databases searched are Science Direct, Sage Journal, DOAJ, Scopus, Emerald, Proquest, Cochrane, PsycINFO and AEI. Sociological Abstracts is a database containing international literature in sociology and social sciences. PsycINFO is an international database, if the subject matter is mainly psychology, but also cover areas in anthropology, medicine, pedagogy, sociology and nursing. Malaysia database are such as MyJurnal. An internet search in Google Scholar is also used to investigate for relevant publications.

An explanation of the assessment and quality of the research

In this research, the systematic review will be based on studies of both quantitative and qualitative and mixed-methods studies. It raises questions about how to evaluate and compare the research, which is based on various theoretical premises. For example, goals and standards relating to representativeness in a quantitative study could not be used to assess the quality of a qualitative study. In quality assessment, attention is directed to all parts of the research: design, methods, participants, context, variables, execution and reporting. To ensure that quality assessment it is necessary to define clear criteria for quality of research. When the criteria are clearly defined, ensuring the transparency of the review

process, giving others the opportunity to consider and critically evaluate the results of the systematic review. However, it is often not so straightforward. Quantitative studies are based on measurements and calculations, which are relatively straightforward to establish and evaluate in terms of representativeness, validity, reliability and generalization, whereas in qualitative research, it is about narrative arguments and they are difficult to put onto a formula. Qualitative research does not cover more than one method, but many different methods such as ethnography and discourse analysis as well as different methods of data collection such as interviews, participant observation and document analysis. This research uses Section M and Section N of “The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Center” (EPPI Center, 2017) data extraction and coding tool for educational studies version 2.0 which has established a number of questions and checklists, with the intention to evaluate the quality of different types of studies.

Section M deals with "quality of reporting". The reporting of the study forms the basis for quality assessment, whether the study is well-executed study, manageable and well reported. Section N deals with "Quality of study" and the questions in this section address concerns related to the selected studies. The first dimension to Section N address ethical issues, choice of method, reliability, validity and generalizability. Another dimension to this section is the question of the extent to which the study focus and context are relevant to the review question (Gough, 2007). Generally, it sets out to ask whether the study methodology and design is well suited to answer the review question.

Findings

A research mapping can stand alone or can be used as a step in a systematic review, where the results are synthesized (Oliver & Sutcliffe, 2012). Research mapping is based on the data extraction of the primary studies and has primarily a descriptive character. The research survey is partly to show the landscape of empirical studies on the investigated area and also to form the basis of an analysis of the results. The mapping provide information about the type of research design and type of data the studies are based on. This has implications for the choice of synthesis method. Generally, it starts off with an introduction of the general characteristics of this research such as language of publication, country where the study took place and research design. It then shows the issues that are relevant in this systematic review. Finally, it provides an account is given of overall assessment of quality of the 65 studies included in the analysis.

The classification of this review is themed as teacher-level barriers and context-level barriers. In this review, teacher-level barrier relates to individual teacher factor as barriers such as confidence issues, proficiency in the language, teacher competence, attitudes and beliefs (or rather the lack of), and teacher under pressure to perform. School-level barrier relates to the institution from which the teachers work in. School-level barriers are such as policies being implemented, the environment, and access to resources.

General characteristics of this research

Geography and languages

Table 1 indicates that a large number of studies are conducted in the Middle East countries (26.6%) while about 15.6% are in Europe. While studies conducted in Malaysia accounts for approximately 21.9% (14 studies) of the total research, 7.7% (5) studies are carried out in the African continent and another 7.7% (5) are in North America.

Table 1. Geographic location.

Country	Number of Studies	Percent (%)
Malaysia	14	21.5%
Middle East: Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan & Kuwait	17	26.2%
Indonesia	1	1.5%
Taiwan	3	4.6%
South Korea	3	4.6%
Japan	1	1.5%
Russia	1	1.5%
Hong Kong	3	4.6%
Thailand	1	1.5%
Europe countries: <i>Germany, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Norway, Slovenia, Serbia, & Spain</i>	11	16.9%
African Countries: <i>South Africa, Kenya, Mauritius & Ghana</i>	5	7.7%
Others: <i>North Texas, North Carolina, South Florida, Mexico & Canada</i>	5	7.7%
	65	100.0%

Table 2 shows that 96.9% of the research are published in English. The remaining 3.1% is published in *Bahasa Melayu*.

Table 2. Characteristics in the context of language.

Language	Number of Studies	Percent (%)
English	63	96.9%
Bahasa Malaysia	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

Qualitative and quantitative methods

Research methods can be characterized as qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of qualitative and quantitative design, also called mixed methods. The distribution of the studies in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods together with the research design characteristics is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Methods ($n = 65$).

Methods	Number of studies
Qualitative methods	27
Quantitative methods	21
Mixed-methods	17

As can be seen from Table 3, there is a higher proportion of qualitative studies in the field. There are 27 studies which uses a quantitative method, while 21 uses a qualitative methods, and 17 using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This means that the qualitative methods used in the studies of 44, corresponding to 68% while quantitative methods used in the studies of 38, corresponding to 58%.

Research design

In principle, all research designs are included in the systematic review. This is reflected in the studies included, which uses a large number of different designs, which is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Design characteristics of the research (n = 65; Multiple encodings are possible).

Method	Number of studies
<i>Design</i>	
Case study	12
Survey	30
Observation	13
Interview	16
Test	2
Document analysis	3
Systematic review	5
Comparative study	1
Phenomenological study	1
Ethnographic study	1
Non-experimental causal method	1
Phenomenological study	1

Although many different designs are represented, it appears however, that case study, survey, observation and interview are the dominant designs on the field. Survey stands out in 30 of the studies corresponding to 46%. The distribution shows (indirectly) that in the period 1991 to 2016 no randomized controlled experiments have been carried out. This is because the category "What works" studies are used only on studies that measure a statistically significant effect. Studies, which aims to determine the effect of a particular intervention compared to a control group or another intervention if there is a statistical calculation of power. There are studies which are designed as randomized experiments, but where "power" is analyzed qualitatively, e.g., by comparing the groups and discuss reflection level. This in itself is noteworthy since the subject — factors and barriers towards competency to use the English language to teach — could from the point of view of research method be said to lay itself open to the use of this design — among others.

Review specific characteristic of research

Teacher-level barriers

a) Lack of teacher confidence

Lack of teacher confidence takes up 20.0% of teacher-level barriers (see Table 5). Teacher confidence comes in the form of lack of experience in teaching using English, the "fear of failure" and being anxious also caused the lack of confidence and the lack of motivation to prepare the lesson in the language. The difficulty in using both the mother tongue and English is also deemed to diminish a teacher's confidence in using the language to teach.

Table 5. Teacher confidence ($n = 65$; Multiple encodings are possible).

Teacher level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Teacher confidence</i>		
a)	Less/no teaching experience in English / some adaptation problems in teaching English	4
b)	Fear of using the language	2
c)	Feeling anxious about English lesson	1
d)	Passive / Lack of preparation / Lack of motivation	5
e)	Tensions between code switching (English to mother tongue and vice versa)	1

Table 6 shows that teacher's own lack of competency in using the language takes up 9.2% of teacher-level barrier. This barrier, which is also directly related to teacher confidence, is teachers' competence in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of preschool learners and their knowledge and understanding of the conceptual teaching in the preschool curriculum.

Table 6. Teacher competence ($n = 65$; Multiple encodings are possible).

Teacher level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Teacher competence</i>		
a)	Teacher's inability to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners	3
b)	Teachers like actors following a script – based on the teacher's manual provided by the MOE	1
c)	Lack of knowledge and understanding of the conceptual teaching in the preschool curriculum	1

Table 7 shows that teacher's English language proficiency takes up 15.3% of teacher-level barrier. It would be an error to over-generalize preschool teachers' lack of involvement in the classroom in an effort to introduce possible solutions without first considering the uniqueness of this particular teaching and learning environment (where mother tongue is not used with preschool children).

Table 7. Teacher English language proficiency ($n = 65$; Multiple encodings are possible).

Teacher level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Teacher English Language proficiency</i>		
		9
a)	Not proficient in the language	
b)	Lack of proficiency thus limited involvement in the lesson to avoid exposing limited proficiency	1

Research into the barriers to the use of the English language in the classroom stems from teacher own attitudes and an inherent resistance to use the language in the classroom. Resistance to use may not be a barrier itself; instead, it could be an indication that something is wrong. In other words, there are reasons why resistance occurs. Approximately 13.8% of the studies deal with teacher attitudes and beliefs as can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. Teacher attitudes and beliefs (n = 65; Multiple encodings are possible).

Teacher level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Teacher attitudes and beliefs</i>		
a)	Self-belief (could not determine the role that they play in the job field)	1
b)	Belief that there is lack of support, guidance or rewarded in integrating English in their practice	1
c)	Teachers' beliefs about teaching English at early ages 7 adults can learn English faster	1
d)	Uncertain future in their job	1
e)	Lack of awareness of school structures and environments	1
f)	Not interested to use English in their teaching practice / did not implement the teaching and learning of English	2
g)	Teaching in English was irrelevant to the students	1
h)	Simultaneous teaching of English and mother tongue has no effect on learning English	1

Table 9 (20%) indicates that preschool teachers are under a lot of pressure to perform using the English language in their classroom. Other barriers include a possibly overzealous administrators who may have felt it necessary to constantly monitor these preschool teachers.

Table 9. Teacher Pressure (n = 65; Multiple encodings are possible).

Teacher level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Teacher pressure</i>		
a)	Frequent intervention of the principal into the classroom teaching - teachers felt that the principals do not trust / Teachers' limited roles	2
b)	Had to bear loads of work / too many task (e.g: documentations) – become overburdened	7
c)	Frequent supervision / Pressure from curriculum demands to meet targets inhibits creative and innovative language teaching	3
d)	The teachers felt that they had insufficient opportunities in which they could make mistakes without being judged	1

Context-level barriers

The problem of lack of time exists for teachers in many aspects of their work as it affects their ability to complete tasks. There is a lack of the time necessary to accomplish plans. This takes up 7.7% of the school-level barrier (Table 10).

Table 10. Lack of Time (n = 65; Multiple encodings are possible).

School level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Lack of time</i>		
Time constraints / Limited topics to cover curriculum / maintaining the focus on content		5

Barriers within the classroom environment itself show 55.4% of the context-level barriers (Table 11). That lack of access to resources, large classroom sizes, and lack of parental encouragement towards the use of English are possible complex barriers that discourages preschool teachers from using the language.

Table 11. Classroom Environment ($n = 65$; Multiple encodings are possible).

School level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Classroom environment</i>		
a)	Lack of teaching and learning materials / limited resources / Lack of instruments to assess practices of preschool teacher / lack of technological equipment	14
b)	Size class is too large / crowded / unorganized classroom	8
c)	Lack of parental involvement / parent attitude towards preschool systems (as childcare not learning centre) / parents' negative preconception of preschool	7
d)	Children / colleagues want to speak in mother tongue – children were not interested in English	7

Without both good administrative support and whole-school resources, teachers cannot be expected to overcome the barriers preventing them from using the language. This barrier takes up 26% of the overall school-level barrier (Table 12).

Table 12. Administrative Support ($n = 65$; Multiple encodings are possible).

School level barriers		Number of studies
<i>Administrative support</i>		
a)	The administration of the school don't support in the implementation / School language policy is not fully reinforced	6
b)	Schools' policies: limited these teachers to teach in English language periods only	3
c)	Teacher and school traditionalism / the environment outside the classroom did not encourage the use of English	3
d)	Lack of getting answers from principals regarding the new curriculum reform	1
e)	Role expectations and coordination between schools and Department of Education / Bureaucratic obstacles / examination-oriented educational system leads to instructional pressure	4

Methods for synthesis

In a systematic review, the challenge is how studies with different methodological approaches can be synthesized. One method is combined synthesis - where quantitative and qualitative studies are synthesized separately and then combined. This will often be done by performing statistical meta-analysis of the quantitative study and a separate analysis of the qualitative studies. Meta-analysis is a statistical analysis of data from various comparable studies that provide answers to whether efforts (or interventions) are working or does not work. As can be seen from the characteristic of the 65 studies in this review, there is no RCT types of studies. At the other end of the scale are thematic analysis that is used for the synthesis of both quantitative and qualitative research in a systematic review (Harden & Gough, 2012).

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a frequently used method used in several different approaches to synthesis. The use of qualitative studies in systematic reviews has often been described as problematic as qualitative studies have not been considered as generalizable but rather related to a specific context. The thematic analysis considered in this research is a method that respects the context and the qualitative research complexity. Thematic analysis can be used to systematically identify the key (based on the review question) and the most frequent themes and concepts across studies. Thematic analysis reflects the ideas and conclusions of the primary studies. Although thematic analysis can be characterized as a qualitative approach to the analysis of data, the themes are counted and manufactured in tables and matrices. The advantage of thematic analysis is that it organizes and summarizes the results of a larger body of research. Thematic analysis as described by Popay et al. (2006) provides for translation of data in the same manner as meta-ethnography. Meta-ethnography is an interpretive synthesis approach that re-conceptualizes key themes and synthesizes and extends the findings of individual studies. This present synthesis is not a meta-ethnographic synthesis, but using methods which are inspired by it. In thematic analysis, the analysis process involves a ‘translation’ where concepts extracted from a study and are compiled with the same concepts from other studies, though not necessarily expressed in the same words.

Thematic approach - developing descriptive themes

Tabulation is a way to present both quantitative and qualitative data visually. Findings from all studies were collated under the three revised questions used in data extraction. Figure 1 diagrammatically depicts the themes.

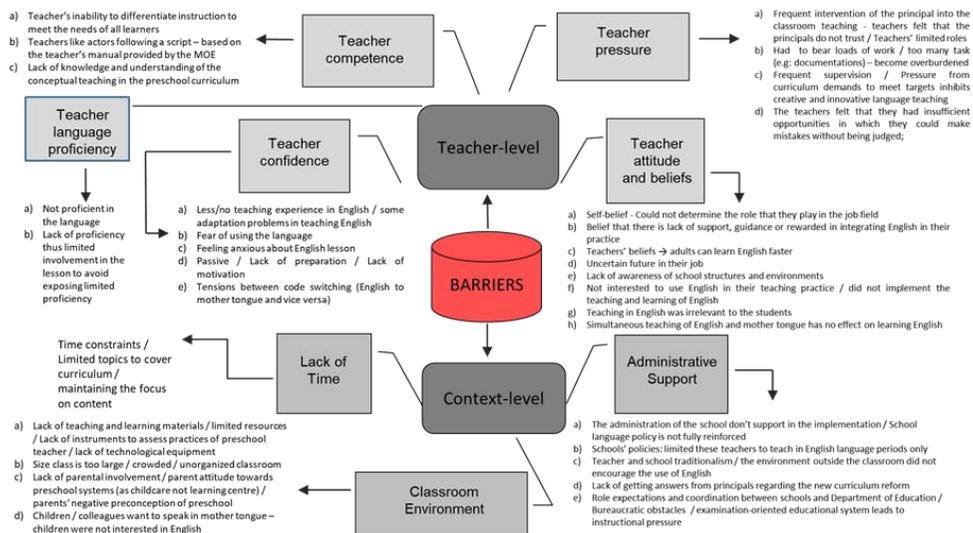


Figure 1. Descriptive themes.

Discussion of findings

The evidence from the data addressing the question falls into two main categories: Teacher level barriers and Context-level barriers (refer to Figure 1).

Teacher-level barriers

a) Lack of teacher confidence

Studies that have investigated the reasons for teachers' lack of confidence, assert that teachers' 'fear of failure' and 'feeling anxious' cause a lack of confidence (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014; Machida, 2016). On the other hand, Ng (2015), Sandra du P. & Brenda, L. (2008) find that the lack of experience in using the language also make them feel anxious about using the language in the classroom and thus not confident to use it in their teaching. Coupled with the tension between code switching (English to mother tongue and vice versa) could further cause them to avoid using the language (Kocaman & Cansız, 2012; Vivian et al., 2015; Palviainen et al., 2016). Some studies report that there are preschool teachers who do not go into the classroom prepared for the day. 'Fear of failure', 'feeling anxious', 'feeling tensed about code switching' together with the lack of preparation could have created a vicious cycle, indirectly influencing preschool teachers' motivation (or lack of) to use the language in the classroom. However, there have been no correlation study found on this conjecture.

b) Lack of teacher competence and language proficiency

This barrier, which is directly related to teacher confidence, is teachers' competence in using the English language in pedagogical practices (Hsu et al., 2013; Tuula, et al., 2014; Čotar Konrad & Kukanja Gabrijelčič, 2015). Some of the literature found that preschool teachers lack the proficiency to use the language competently and they lack the ability to differentiate instruction while using the language (for example, Walker, 2015; Vivian et al., 2015; Al Darwish, 2012). Due to this lack of proficiency, preschool teachers might not feel enthusiastic about the need to integrate changes and integration of supplementary learning into their teaching practices (Jawaid, 2014).

Findings from the data have reported that teachers' lack of proficiency is a main barrier to their acceptance and subsequent adoption of the language (Sandra du P. & Brenda, 2008; Tunku Mohani et.al.,2015; Lee, 2012). The findings showed that teachers who did not use the language in the classrooms tended to claim that low level of proficiency was a constraining factor preventing them. Other studies indicated many preschool teachers still chose not to use the language in teaching situations because of their proficiency issues rather than for pedagogical/didactics reasons (Tuula, et al., 2014; Tunku Mohani, et al.,2015; Machida, 2016). Due to the lack of proficiency in using the language, materials have been developed to assist preschool teachers through modules and manuals. However, several studies have raised questions whether using scripted modules and manual can act as a constraining factor instead thus preventing preschool teachers from being creative and innovative in their teaching (Puteh & Ali, 2013; Fern & Jiar, 2014; Mileidis & Sabrina, 2015).

c) Teachers' attitudes and beliefs

Although the lack of teacher competence may be one of the strong barriers to the use of English in the classroom, but it may also be one of the factors involved in preschool teachers beliefs and attitudes towards the language (Čotar Konrad & Kukanja Gabrijelčič, 2015; Maskit & Firstater, 2016; Jantan et. al & Ong, 2015; Rethza & Jamaluddin, 2010). Research into the barriers to the use of the English language in the classroom stems from teacher own attitudes and an inherent resistance to use the language in the classroom.

Studies have shown that implementing something new or different change and different preschool teachers will handle this change differently. Nevertheless, considering different teachers' attitudes to change is important because teachers' beliefs influence what they do in classrooms. Some studies claim that one aspect of preschool teachers' attitudes towards the use of English to teach is their understanding of how the use of English will benefit their teaching and their children's learning. Some preschool teachers may feel that the use of English has no benefits or unclear benefits to their children in the classroom. They believe they were are not being supported, guided, or rewarded when asked to use the language in teaching (Erden, 2010; Sak, Erden & Morrison, 2016). However, negative attitudes or beliefs seem not to be a barrier in itself; instead, it could be an indication that something is wrong (Ambotang & Hashim, 2010; Fu, 2015). In other words, there must be reasons why negative attitudes and beliefs persisted.

The change from a present level to a desired level of performance could be facilitated by encouraging greater awareness of the language's importance as a global language. Most times, preschool teachers are unlikely to use the language in their teaching if they see no need to change their professional practice. Teachers who have low perception towards the importance are not rejecting outright the need for its use but lack the necessary education in accepting the changes and are given insufficient long-term opportunities to make sense of the new policies for themselves (Rethza & Jamaluddin, 2010; Vivian et.al & Nana, 2015; Maskit, D. & Firstater, 2016).

d) Teacher pressure

A school's administration plays a crucial role in determining the school's culture and, by extension, the way in which preschool teachers experience their work (Ambotang & Hashim, 2010; Puteh & Ali, 2013). However, the quality of the relationship that preschool teachers have with their administrator can vary (Al-Thani, & Nasser, 2012). The 'best administrators' are those who establish and maintain a positive school atmosphere and who are open, consistent and predictable in relating to teachers. Inversely, preschool teachers feel that they are not trusted with the role if there is over interference from the administrators and bureaucrats (Erden, 2010). Overzealous administrators may have felt it necessary to constantly monitor these preschool teachers. Teachers want to feel that they are being encouraged to contribute their ideas and that their views are taken into consideration in planning.

Context-level barriers

a) Time constraints

Several studies indicate that many teachers have competence and confidence in using English in the classroom, but they still make little use of the language because they do not

have enough time. A significant number of researchers identified time limitations as a barrier to teachers' use of the language in their teaching (Puteh & Ali, 2013; Bakshsh, 2016; Sak, Erden & Morrison, 2016; Fern & Jiar 2014; Ambotang & Hashim, 2010). Probably, one of the more common challenge was the lack of time they had to plan lessons, explore the different strategies to use, or look at various aspects of optimising learning when using the language (Masnan & Hashim, 2014). The problem of lack of time exists for teachers in many aspects of their work as it affects their ability to complete tasks, specifically towards which aspects of the lesson should be taught in English (Ambotang & Hashim, 2010; Masnan & Hashim, 2014) or require more time (Bakshsh, 2016;). These include the time needed to prepare lessons, explore and practice using the language to teach, deal with arising problems - especially in control of the classroom if the teacher's proficiency is not sufficient, or to receive adequate training (Fern & Jiar, 2014).

b) Classroom environment

Barriers within the classroom environment itself show 55.4% of the context-level barriers (Table P1.21). That lack of access to resources, large classroom sizes, and lack of parental encouragement towards the use of English are possible complex barriers that discourages preschool teachers from using the language.

The lack of teaching and learning materials / limited resources, lack of instruments to assess practices of preschool teacher or lack of technological equipment could stem from challenges of acquisition of teaching and learning resources due to lack of finance, rigid procurement procedures or the unavailability of material needed by the preschool to function optimally (Ambotang & Hashim, 2010). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the lack of resources does not only impede preschool teachers' optimum performance in using English to teacher, but also cut across to other teaching and learning functions in a preschool classroom. However, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources can possibly affect the implementation of the use of English in teaching in preschool classes.

One of the biggest issues facing schools and teachers today is overcrowding (Erden, 2010; Sak, Erden & Morrison, 2016). A combination of an increasing population and a decrease in funding has caused class sizes to soar. Other factors include lack of parental involvement or parents' negative preconception of preschool (Leung, Lim & Li, 2013). There is a probability that these parents believe that parents are the first teachers and can best prepare their children with foundational skills at home.

The problem of children not being interested in the English language could be alleviated with proficient bilingual teachers who are highly suitable for classrooms with pupils who mainly speak or feel more comfortable with the mother tongue (Kocaman & Cansız, 2012; Vivian et.al, 2015; Bakshsh, 2016). Moreover, suitable instructional textbooks and materials that utilize the familiar culture of Malaysia should be developed to further the goal of more effective English language teaching and English language use in the classroom (Gultekin, 2006; Ntumi, 2016). Suitable programs at appropriate levels, times, durations and intensities should be set for preschool children to meet realistic needs and to stimulate, maintain and promote motivation (Aulear, 2015).

c) Administrative support

Without both good administrative support and whole-school resources, teachers cannot be expected to overcome the barriers preventing them from using the language. Support from school administration encourages preschool teachers' use of the language but also the integration of the language in other activities in the preschool (Cisneros-Chernour et.al.,

2000; Erden,2010; Leung et.al & Li, 2013; Dhillon, & Wanjiru, 2013; Vivian et.al & Nana, 2015; Machida, 2016). Although preschool teachers are ready to address the use of English in teaching (Shaari, & Ahmad, 2016; Machida, 2016) but they do not seem to be able to, probably due to ineffective administration or bureaucratic interferences (Cisneros-Chernour et.al & Moreno, 2000; Erden, 2010; Machida, 2016).

Conclusion

Sixty-five studies were systematically reviewed in terms of their ability to answer review's questions and their data regarding factors that hindered and challenged preschool teachers' competencies in carrying out teaching in the English language. Of the forty studies systematically mapped so far, thirty-six themes identified were teacher factors. Several of the studies alluded to the relationships and importance of confidences, general competences, language proficiency and the beliefs/attitudes these teachers have and in making decision to use the EL in their teaching task.

Preschool teachers' confidence has strong impressions on various aspects of them using English in their teaching and learning. Through the literature, it is largely assumed that preschool teachers' lack of English proficiency has a causal relationship with their low confidence in using English to teach. The widespread acknowledgement of English as a "global language" has led Malaysia, like other countries in the Asian region, to the radical changes in its policies and practices concerning English use and education (Butler, 2004). This decision was made based on the belief that longer exposure to English would improve children's communicative ability. Since 2010, when it was implemented (through the KSPK curriculum) that preschool teachers must use the English language as the language of instruction (for at least 50% of their instructional time) the teacher factor, particularly their lack of English proficiency, has been pointed out as one of the biggest obstacles for successful use of English among preschool teachers in teaching and learning. To be fair, in order to address this problem, the Malaysian government has provided in-service training programs on the use of English in teaching. However, it seems that concerns surrounding the 'teacher factor' is still very strong, particularly those related to teachers' lack of English language proficiency.

The lack teaching and learning resources as a barrier is closely related to several other key issues which can themselves be considered barriers to preschool teachers' use of English in the classroom. Although the resources are available in preschools, the lack of time does not allow preschool teachers to access these resources. This may be because the number of lessons in one day is too many or because the time available during the class lesson is insufficient.

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