DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMME (DLP): TEACHERS’ VOICE

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Abstract— English is a second language in Malaysia and it has influenced most of the language policies made by the government. Recently, the implementation of Dual Language Programme was introduced in line with the new policy; Uphold the Bahasa Malaysia, Strengthening the English Language (MBMMBI) DLP requires English as a medium of instructions for Mathematics and Science subjects. Thus, this qualitative case study was conducted in a secondary school to explore the challenges that the teachers faced in the implementation of the Dual Language Programme. The data were collected through semi-structured interview with 2 Science and Mathematics teachers and for the purpose of triangulation; other interviews with the head of the panel and class observation were carried out. The results indicated that teachers were facing a number of problems and challenges that they encountered during the implementation. The findings from the study could help the policymakers and school management to understand their roles to make this programme a success and to provide the needs of teachers involved in the programme. One major implication is the role of the government to provide courses for teachers and funding research related to language programme.

Index Terms— Challenges, implementation, Mathematics, Science, Dual Language Programme

I. INTRODUCTION

Ministry of Education to empower the implementation of MBMMBI, was the introduction of the Dual Language Programme (DLP) and High Immersive Programme (HIP). In Malaysia, the implementation of DLP is intended to support students’ mastery of English language skills through increased exposure to English time indirectly [7]. With the strengthening of bilingual students, DLP can hopefully provide an opportunity for students to broaden access and exploration of diverse knowledge so that they would be able to compete globally and enhance the employability of the students. The students involved are Year One and Year Four in primary schools and Form 1 students in secondary schools. DLP requires teachers to use English as medium of instruction for Dunia Sains dan Teknologi (DST) and Mathematics Year One, Science and Mathematics Year Four as well as Science and Mathematics for Form 1 starting January 2016 [7]. This action of the Ministry of Education was seen as restoring English for Teaching Mathematics and Science (ETeMS) which have already recognised its failure through a series of studies and reports. Gerakan Mansuhkan PPSMI (GMP) expressed their dissatisfaction over the new programme which is claimed to be alike with ETeMS and questioned the rationale of its implementation. This movement had organised a rally to protest the policy on March, 26 and April 9 (The Star, 2016). In respond to the critics, Dato’ P. Kamalanathan,, the Deputy Minister of Education pointed out that, unlike ETeMS, it is optional for schools to implement DLP [17]. As it is still in a piloting stage, 300 primary and secondary schools were selected nationwide to join the programme [7]. However, selected schools that are not willing or do not fulfil the criteria outlined may write letters to their respective District Education Officers (PPD) to ask for exemption. Similarly, the schools that are willing or interested to implement DLP may also write formal application to the PPD provided they meet the following requirements set by the ministry.

i) The school must have adequate resources in terms of textbook, teaching aids and other materials for teaching and learning support.

ii) The principal / headmaster and teachers are willing to implement the DLP.

iii) Parents demand for the implementation and give written consent to the schools provided there are more than 15 students in a classroom.

iv) The school achievement for Malay Language must be equal or greater than the national average.

The Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Najib Bin Abdul Razak announced the implementation of DLP at the presentation of Budget 2016 in October 2015. It was said to be carried out in January 2016 and surprised teachers with the sudden implementation where there are only two months to prepare themselves before the start of the session 2016. What’s alarming is the level of understanding of teachers and even school administrators about the essence of DLP programme itself. Two months is a very short period of time to examine and reveal themselves on such an imperative programme. Often, the so called reformation and educational innovations are always sudden; resulted undesired outcome due to the lack of teachers’ readiness in certain areas of teaching [12] [8]. This in turn causes the teacher to meet few challenges when implementing the programme.

The context of the study was focusing on teachers who are teaching Form 1 students in a secondary school. This article discusses the challenges faced by teachers when implementing the DLP as part of the
past research related to teachers’ readiness and challenges faced by the teacher were also discussed to support the relevancy of writing this article. For that reason, the methods used, followed by the findings of study were briefly presented before the discussion and implications conclude the paper.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The History of Dual Language Programme (DLP)

Dual Language Programme (DLP) also known as Two-Way Immersion (TWI) programme has been initiated in Miami, Florida in 1962 to fulfill the need of non-English speakers as well as to preserve the culture of the non-English who attend public schools at that time [6]. Meanwhile, in Canada, the programme derives from a Canadian experiment on the use of French and English as mediums of instructions involving 26 kindergarten children in St. Lambert, Montreal. Baker in 1995 intended to enable pupils to become competent speakers, readers and writers in French, to achieve good results in all subjects including the English language and also to appreciate traditions and culture of French-speaking Canadians as well as English-speaking Canadians. The main idea of this programme is using two languages as medium of instructions. There are two types of DLP: One-Way Dual Language Programme and Two-Way Dual Language Programme which serve different demographic context of implementation.

B. Past Research

Thomas & Collier (2004) concluded and summarised vast scope of dual language programme in various longitudinal researches conducted in various schools in the United States. The outcomes of the programme showed that the implementation of the DLP benefits learners and managed to gain support from parents, teachers and administrators. This study also elaborated on students’ achievement before and after the implementation of the programme. Good results of the implementation can be seen because the stakeholders have ample time to monitor, and do the betterment. Teachers are getting better as they learn throughout the years of the implementation. The success of DLP in a longitudinal research United State was recognized by [16] despite anti-bilingual education movement at the time of the study.

In Malaysian context, Dual Language Programme is a continuation of the abolition of the PPSMI which was to ensure both Bahasa Malaysia and English reserved without downgrading one of the languages. The concept of DLP is equal to PPSMI whereby the teaching of Mathematics and Science using English as medium of instructions. The difference is just in terms of resources and selection of the students. Earlier studies involving bilingual teaching in Malaysia less involves the readiness of teachers from the perspective of teachers itself but from the perception of the students involved. [9] [10] conclude the results of teachers or lecturers’ readiness from the perspective of students are unsatisfactory because researchers do not get information from the premier targeted respondents. Most studies on the use of two languages in Mathematics and Science lessons are focusing on students’ achievement and perception. Among the studies are [15] [14] [3] [11]. Hence, this article highlights the challenges of implementing the DLP which requires the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English after the gradual abolishment of ETeMS in 2012.

In a higher level of education, the challenges that lecturers had to deal with are students’ perception towards English and their level of proficiency. [1] found that students prefer Malay and believe that they learn Mathematics better using Malay. Moreover, students’ academic performances were also deteriorating after the implementation of ETeMS. This showed that students’ level of proficiency is not a satisfactory level. Students’ negative perceptions towards the use of English for Mathematics and Science created challenges to teachers as teachers had to deal with the subject matter and work on students’ motivation and perceptions.

Apart from students’ low proficiency in English, most teachers were not fluent in the English Language. [3] stated that many teachers who were not fluent in English use much more Malay in weaker classes in order to be able to cover the copious syllabuses and ended up teaching in Malay. The respondents in this study admitted that they were struggling with the language as to why they could not use fully English in their lessons. However, this study addresses that the challenges related to the level of proficiency of English faced by teachers were varied depend on the teachers’ background.

A study conducted by [4] on the implementation of new English Language Curriculum (NELC) in Turkey show that teachers need comprehensive guidance and support as well as proper guidelines of the new curriculum. A study conducted by [4] revealed that new programme received mixed responses from the teachers; either positively or negatively towards the curriculum introduced. It is believed that the more they are ready, the more positive attitudes shown by the teachers.
Another study that highlighted the challenges in implementing the Dual Language Programme was conducted by [5]. The finding mostly addressed the outcomes of the DLP towards the learners but the challenges faced by the instructors were also discussed briefly. It was revealed that the design of the DLP that could affect its implementation from which the challenges emerged thereafter. Often, teachers’ knowledge on the relationship between biliteracy and the success of dual language programme was neglected. This study also found out that there are insufficient research to guide the policymakers and also educators to implement the programme. It was revealed that the students who were already weak in their L1 will not master the L2 as well. In addition to that, the study suggested that the state of students’ L1 should be taken into account when implementing bilingual curriculum.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is a case study which focused on two cases (2 teachers) who involved in the Dual Language Programme (DLP). The programme is carried out in selected school and classes for pilot purpose. Therefore, not many teachers are involved. This study sought to explore the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the DLP. The participants were purposively identified. Moreover, they were willing to participate in the study. These two participants have more than 15 years experience of teaching Mathematics and Science and were involved in the PPSMI programme. The research site was a school that could easily be accessed so that the teachers involved would be easily contacted for any arising matters especially the interpretation of the data collected from the samples.

A. Instruments

This study utilised two sets of semi-structured questions for interview purpose. The first set of questions is to obtain teachers’ insight about the implementation of DLP whereas the second set was to get information from the head of department’s perspective on Mathematics and Science teachers’ readiness, mainly for the triangulation purpose. The questions were adopted and adapted from [4] [2]. All the questions developed to answer the research questions on teachers’ readiness in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. For observation purpose, teachers’ practices and activities in classroom were recorded into a field notes as a non-participant observer.

B. Data Collection

The data were collected through face-to-face interview with the respondents. To verify the responses from the respondents, the Head of Science & Mathematics Department was also interviewed. Observation was also carried out as another source of triangulation. The researcher did not participate in any activities conducted during the observations in the classroom and also the laboratory. However, the presence of the researcher was noticed by students in the class.

C. Data Analysis

All the responses from two in-depth interviews were all transcribed to be analysed later. These transcriptions comprised the data source of this study. The data were analysed through content analysis and the responses were classified into significant themes and patterns based on the codes determined by the researcher when adapting the questions to the interviewees. The recurring statements from the interviewees were also considered as codes for the data analysis. This process needed the researcher to do constant check to ensure the consistency of the coding.

The coding was then used to identify themes on the challenges faced by the teachers towards the use of English as medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science subjects. The final theme was teachers’ suggestions for the effective implementation of the DLP.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

D. The Challenges

1) Students’ English Proficiency Level

Both participants expressed the same problems that they faced regarding the students’ level of English proficiency. They are caught between the need to fulfil the requirement of the programme and also the need to convey the concepts of their subjects more implicitly. Students with low proficiency of English are the real predicament that teachers had to deal with during lessons.

Certain topics are very time-consuming because teachers had to explain the same concept several times in order to deliver the content to the students and at the same time trying to maximise the use of English in the instructions. T2 mentioned that:

“...after I repeat a few times, some of them still cannot catch up because the basic of the language is not good. Not good.”

This appeared to be the never-ending issue when it comes to the use of English among students. The implementation of the DLP is supposed to help students with their English through the longer hours of exposure to the language. Problems regarding students’ level of English proficiency are not new. This issue was also one of the most prominent findings in studies on the implementation of ETeMS. This indicates that the implementation of DLP did not consider the findings of those previous studies on the use of English as medium of instructions for Mathematics and Science. [5] suggested that the stakeholder should carry out more research before implementing educational programme does make...
sense if the government is serious about handling the issue. This is similar to [13] which reported that teachers were concerned about ‘covering the syllabus’ within specific timelines so that students will be ready for school exams. Therefore, teachers may have either skipped some details of the subject matters or resorted to translating the lesson to the first language.

2) Lack of Support and Guidance

In terms of guidance, both teachers said that they were never called to attend any particular courses or seminars prior to the DLP implementation until the day of this study was conducted: “specially for DLP, no we don’t attend any seminar or course or something like that but before that we already attend the eTems okay during the PPSMI that is the only seminar that we attend lah...So, we use what we learnt during the ETeMS to do this programme.” T2 alleged that the methods and approaches used in her DLP classroom was based on what she had learned from the courses she attended for ETeMS: “So, what we use now, still follow the ETeMS methods...”

There was nothing provided to facilitate teachers’ lessons other than a letter and a circular about the implementation that required the selected schools to use English as medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science. It is disappointing to know that there was not even a course given to teachers prior to the implementation of the DLP. Teachers are the implementers and play important role in making a programme a success. Thus, teachers should be equipped with ample information and knowledge on the introduced programme. Gunal & Demir (2012) stated that teachers need comprehensive guidance and support as well as proper guidelines of the new curriculum. Teachers were left with nothing but previous knowledge struggled to start a new beginning. Even though these teachers had involved in the ETeMS, they need to refresh their knowledge. In addition to that, the last course that they had ever attended was more than a decade ago.

Teachers had to use the remaining teaching aids and textbooks from the era of ETeMS. The materials and teaching aids from the era of ETeMS were still in good condition but the appropriateness of these materials concerned the teachers as the aids were prepared based on the state of education more than a decade ago. The head of department for Mathematics and Science (HD) subjects did monitor the progress of the implementation by periodically observing the teachers in classroom and giving feedback.

V. IMPLICATIONS

The findings prove that the government should consider the findings in previous research on ETeMS regarding students’ level of English proficiency before implementing this programme. There is a need to provide fund for researcher to conduct research on certain issues before introducing a curriculum and implementing a bilingual programme. This could minimise the lost of time and cost. Every programme should be scrutinised and planned systematically within a realistic timeline so that the objectives could be achieved. The teachers should be given courses and training as well as ample time to study and fully understand the programme. As for the policymakers, the findings of this study could help them to make amendment and improvement on the implementation of the Dual Language Programme in Malaysia. As for other future plan, the policymakers should design a language programme that could cater different level of students’ English proficiency or design different language programme for different level of English proficiency among students.

It is time to revise the way of English is taught to students. Generally, English curriculum is designed according to age in Malaysia which also determines the type of public examination they are sitting for. For examples, 17 years old students should be sitting for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) which requires them to write 350 words English essays. Hence, weak students had to follow the requirement of this curriculum even though they are not in par with peers of the same age. Language should be learned, taught and tested according to the level of their skills instead of their age. On the other hand, teachers had to work hard to fulfill this requirement. This is a serious matter that really that must be viewed in-depth and in dire need for change.

CONCLUSION

This programme needs some amendments in order to make it a success and teachers’ voice should be addressed for that purpose. However, the implementation of the DLP at the time of this study conducted was still in a pilot stage. Thus, this is just a starting point for the related study on the DLP.

It is recommended for researchers to carry out more research on the implementation of the DLP in different areas of study. Moreover, nationwide study comprising bigger population and sample size is very much recommended.

REFERENCES


