

Incorporating Teaching-Learning Materials in the English Language Classroom: A Narrative Inquiry on Edufluencers' Textual Cycles

Myzatul Sarah Yusof¹* and Nur Ainil Sulaiman¹

¹Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Abstract. In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the attention given to language learning materials, particularly those designed for English language learning. However, previous literature has concentrated on various aspects like materials design and development, materials evaluation and adaptation, all while leaving out a crucial aspect: the actual use of English Language Teaching (ELT) materials by teachers and learners. Thus, this study aims to explore how *Edufluencers*, a group of influential teachers entrusted as the voice of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, incorporate teaching-learning materials in their English language classrooms and the factors that influence their textual cycles. Narrative inquiry through oral history text will be employed in adopting a qualitative research approach. Purposive sampling will be used to select the respondents of this study. Online semi-structured interviews, together with document analysis on social media posts and lesson plans, will then be conducted. Subsequently, the collected data will be analysed to gain invaluable insights and enlighten educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders on how to improve the language learning experience.

1 Introduction

Due to Malaysia's historical experience of colonisation, the imperative inclusion of English language instruction spans all levels of the Malaysian educational system, officially designating it as the second language [1]. The significance attributed to English is mirrored in the various educational policies instituted throughout the nation's history, extending from pre-independence to contemporary times [2]. The role of English has evolved throughout the Malaysian education system [3]. The implementation of the Standards Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC) since 2013, as outlined by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013), aims to enhance students' proficiency in English while facilitating its practical application in daily life, knowledge acquisition, and meeting future demands [4].

In response to the dynamic changes occurring globally, education necessitates constant adaptation and evolution, a phenomenon evident in the implementation of new national education policies shaping a country's educational landscape [5]. One noteworthy initiative

* Corresponding Author: p121306@siswa.ukm.edu.my

reflecting this need for change was the introduction of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 in 2013 [4], aiming for enhancements in the education system to align with global standards [6]. The English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) crafted a comprehensive plan for progressive reforms across all educational levels in Malaysia, ranging from pre-school to university [7]. Advocating for reform, Pillai (2021) highlighted the roadmap's recommendation to adopt the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to align English language education with international standards and serve as a framework for curriculum development [2]. Consequently, the curriculum in Malaysia has been realigned to adhere to the CEFR.

The need for adjustments in English language teaching with the introduction of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in Malaysia is recently discussed [8]. Nine new internationally distributed English textbooks were introduced to Malaysian schools, but teachers can choose to use, modify, or create their own materials. This flexibility is essential due to two lesson types: textbook-based and non-textbook-based. Textbook-based lessons draw from selected textbooks, while non-textbook-based lessons may require teachers to find materials elsewhere, sometimes related to the textbook content [9]. Since implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum, the Ministry has taken initiatives to ensure teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills. This includes a Learning Materials Evaluation, Adaptation and Design course, detailed lesson outlines and recommended materials in yearly Schemes of Work (SoW) for each teacher, and two editions of a teacher guide providing comprehensive guidance for lesson planning and management [10].

The practices of teachers in selecting texts for the classroom and planning activities around them offer valuable insights into the successful implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, particularly concerning the integration of teaching-learning materials. The decisions on which texts to use, how they are incorporated into educational practices, and the individual approaches of teachers in implementing these texts constitute the textual cycle [11]. Bhattacharya et al. (2007) emphasise the inevitable connection of textual cycle elements with political decisions tied to broader public debates on linguistic and textual inclusion and exclusion [12]. Therefore, examining teachers' textual cycles can illuminate how policy is put into action at the grassroots level. The study will focus on Ministry appointed Edufluencers, influential teachers not only in education but also in their social media presence (Education Performance and Delivery Unit (PADU), 2019) [13]. Given the exemplary nature of these educators, exploring how Edufluencers incorporate teaching-learning materials into lessons becomes crucial. Hence, this study will conduct a detailed investigation into the textual cycles of Edufluencers to elucidate their practices in successfully conveying language lessons.

2 Statement of the Problem

Educators commonly turn to prescribed textbooks for second language instruction, a practice affirmed by Li (2021), who underscores textbooks' longstanding role as pedagogical models [14]. Consequently, adapting materials becomes imperative for effective application across diverse learning environments. Prior to deciding on adoption or contextual adaptation, English language instructors must consider various factors, as outlined by Jusuf (2018), including the roles of teachers, students, the course curriculum, and the instructional material itself [15]. Recognising the significance of English teachers acquiring knowledge in selecting, adapting, or developing appropriate instructional materials, efforts have been made to equip them with such expertise. Despite endeavours to address this challenge, teachers still encounter difficulties in evaluating, adapting, or designing materials to meet their students' demands.

Concerning the provision of essential support and training for teachers in the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, Nair and Harun (2018) assert the necessity of identifying and addressing existing gaps [5]. This acknowledgement stresses the critical need for strategic measures to rectify these gaps, thus optimising the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. The identified gap in the existing literature not only underlines the importance of addressing these issues but also serves as a prime opportunity for the administration of targeted research initiatives. This research endeavours to contribute novel insights into the lived experiences of Edufluencers, particularly focusing on their processes of evaluating, adapting, and designing instructional materials within the framework of the CEFR-aligned curriculum.

In line with this, PADU (2019) reports that Edufluencers are actively encouraged to participate in specific annual programs, fostering the establishment of an online community [13]. Within this virtual community, teachers collaboratively engage to continually enhance the quality of the nation's education. By exploring the participation and contributions of Edufluencers, this study aims to enrich the limited body of research dedicated to understanding their role. Moreover, beyond its academic significance, this research project holds the potential to serve as a valuable resource for policymakers seeking a comprehensive understanding of the impactful role played by Edufluencers in shaping the educational landscape.

3 Objectives of the Study

This research is dedicated to a comprehensive examination of the teaching-learning material incorporation practices employed by Edufluencers. The study is intricately designed to achieve two primary objectives: (1) Exploration of teaching-learning material integration and (2) Identification of influencing factors. The first objective involves a thorough investigation into how Edufluencers incorporate teaching-learning materials within the English language classroom, employing a focus on their textual cycles. This entails a detailed exploration of the methods, strategies, and patterns employed by Edufluencers in integrating instructional materials to enhance language instruction. The second objective is centred on identifying the multifaceted factors that significantly influence the textual cycles of Edufluencers in their incorporation of teaching-learning materials within the English language classroom. This involves a nuanced examination of the contextual, pedagogical, and individual determinants that shape Edufluencers' decisions and approaches in material integration. Through the pursuit of these objectives, the research aspires not only to provide valuable discernments into the specific practices of Edufluencers but also to contribute to the broader understanding of effective teaching-learning material incorporation strategies in the field of English language education.

This research aims to attain its outlined objectives through the rigorous implementation of a meticulously designed methodology tailored for this conceptual study. Employing a qualitative research design, the study primarily centre on the application of biographical narrative inquiry, specifically utilising into oral history texts. To ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the chosen participants, namely Edufluencers instructing English within government-aided primary schools, a purposive sampling technique will be employed. This intentional selection process aligns with the targeted criteria for the study population. The data collection process will be multifaceted, encompassing semi-structured interviews that afford participants the opportunity to articulate their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, document analyses will be conducted, scrutinising Edufluencers' social media posts and meticulously crafted lesson plans, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of the complex dimensions of teaching-learning material incorporation within the English language classroom. The detailed execution of this research methodology aims to ensure the

robustness and validity of the findings, contributing meaningfully to the scholarship in English language education and instructional material development.

4 Literature Review

4.1 Training and Support in Learning Materials Evaluation, Adaptation and Design

Since its inception, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has been dedicated to enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills for the effective implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum [16]. Nationally, the MOE has been conducting Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for in-service teachers through its various divisions, including the Teacher Education Division (TED), the Curriculum Development Division (CDD), and the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). These divisions not only offer courses but also develop resources, programs, and strategies to support teachers. Attending such courses, seminars, and conferences is identified as a means to improve the quality of teachers, aligning with the MOE's commitment to upgrading their knowledge and skills.

In addressing the selection, adaptation, and development of learning materials, the MOE has organised the Learning Materials Evaluation, Adaptation, and Design course, the second among four principal courses during the early stages of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation. Additionally, the MOE published a comprehensive guidebook titled 'Teacher Guide for Implementing the CEFR-aligned Curriculum: Planning and Managing Learning' (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020) [16]. Several studies, including those by [17-19], have explored the effectiveness of these training initiatives. The first two studies examined cascade training sessions holistically, whereas the third specifically focused on the Learning Materials Evaluation, Adaptation, and Design course, analysing its impact on application [19]. Notably, a decline in training quality further down the cascade was reported, which potentially impacted teachers' ability to grasp and apply the training content in their daily practices.

Despite these investigations into teacher support, limited work has explored the effectiveness of applying acquired knowledge in the actual language classroom. English primary school teachers in rural areas perceived and adapted prescribed textbooks in their language classrooms. One respondent, reflecting the fear of reprimand, exclusively employed the textbook [19]. This finding aligns with Aziz et al.'s (2018) results, emphasising the need for clarity on materials' classroom use and the processes of selection, adoption, adaptation, or development [17]. Ahamat and Kabilan's (2022) paper further illuminates respondents' perceptions toward internationally distributed textbooks and how these perceptions drive content adaptation before implementation in language classrooms [19].

4.2 Perceptions of Imported Textbooks

Numerous investigations have thoroughly investigated the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum in the Malaysian English language [20-24]. The majority of these studies reference the introduction of newly imposed international textbooks in implementing the curriculum. Despite assertions by Yasin and Yamat (2021) regarding public approval, several reports present contrasting perspectives [23]. Numerous studies express strong stakeholder disapproval, citing concerns such as textbook costs, cultural aspects, and teacher challenges [21,24,25].

Furthermore, there are in-depth analyses focusing on the utilisation of foreign textbooks in Malaysian English language classrooms [8,26,27]. Shak et al. (2021) solely focus on issues

related to the use of imported CEFR-aligned textbooks [8], while Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh (2019) assess the cultural content of international textbooks in comparison to local counterparts [26]. Johar and Aziz (2019) [27], on the contrary, explore teachers' perceptions of a specifically prescribed textbook, revealing mixed opinions among participants. Abdul Rahim and Jalalian Daghigh (2019) note a lack of coverage of students' own culture in some international course books [26], suggesting the need for teachers to adapt prescribed textbooks to suit students [19].

4.3 Materials Adaptation and Design in the Malaysian English Language Classroom

Ahmed (2016) posits that while textbooks serve as a structured syllabus, they may not fully cater to the specific needs of students and may contain language lacking authenticity [28]. This perspective is corroborated by Richards and Renandaya (2002), who contend that available materials often fail to align with students' needs and may lack genuine language representation [29]. Alih et al. (2021) highlighted the challenges faced by teachers in materials development, particularly reliance on the prescribed textbook provided by the Ministry to align with the CEFR language curriculum in Malaysia [24]. The prescribed materials limit teachers' flexibility, yet they can adapt materials to address students' needs and interests, even supplementing inadequate prescribed content [30]. Despite serving as a foundational resource, teacher-led adaptation enhances the appropriateness and effectiveness of language learning materials.

Teachers, pivotal in material adaptation, ensure alignment with students' backgrounds, interests, and learning conditions. Scholars propose various adaptation strategies, including adding, omitting, modifying, simplifying, and reordering content [19,31-33]. In accordance with ministry recommendations and McGrath's (2002) evaluative processes, teachers may adopt, reject, extend, or replace coursebook materials [31]. Diverse adaptation strategies empower teachers to customise materials, addressing deficiencies in prescribed resources.

Decisions regarding language learning materials hinge on factors such as students' age, interests, language level, available resources, and relevance to the learning context [34]. Developing authentic materials enhances reading skills and cultural awareness in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms [35]. While challenges may arise, authentic materials bridge language learning with real-life situations. Ahamat and Kabilan's (2022) findings reveal challenges with prescribed teaching materials, prompting some teachers to adapt, yet others refrained despite students' difficulties [19]. Furthermore, some teachers reported resistance to material adaptation from education officers and school inspectors. Future research employing larger samples and deliberate methodologies is recommended for a comprehensive understanding of teachers' material adaptation practices.

5 Discussion

This study will attempt to enhance our understanding of the outcomes stemming from the implementation of the CEFR-aligned curriculum, focusing on the role of Edufluencers, thereby offering substantial contributions to policy evaluation and ongoing enhancements within the Malaysian education system. The investigation into the translation of policies into classroom practices will provide nuanced insights into policy effectiveness and potential areas for refinement. This research will hold particular significance within the domain of education, notably within the Malaysian English Language education system. A comprehensive examination of how Edufluencers will strategically select and implement learning materials promises to illuminate the efficacy of the CEFR-aligned curriculum and the prescribed imported textbooks. The resulting findings are poised to furnish policymakers

and educational authorities with invaluable insights into both the anticipated successes and challenges associated with the incorporation of teaching-learning materials in language classrooms, enabling informed decision-making to elevate the quality of education in the country.

As the study will explore the relatively budding field of Edufluencers in education, it will contribute substantively to the expanding body of research in this area. Offering detailed insights into the anticipated practices and experiences of Edufluencers within a specific context, this study will cater to the education community and researchers keen on exploring the projected influence of social media and online platforms on educational practices. Moreover, understanding how Edufluencers will adeptly adapt learning materials can serve as a valuable resource for educators and teachers in English language classrooms. By delineating best practices in material evaluation, adaptation, and development, this research will become a source of inspiration for educators, motivating them to craft more effective and contextually relevant teaching materials.

The examination of factors influencing learning material evaluation, adaptation, and development practices will not only contribute to identifying gaps in teacher training but will also inform targeted support initiatives. The study will align with the observations made by Lee et al. (2022) [36], accentuating the prevalence of insufficient teacher training and professional development in countries that will adopt the CEFR as a curriculum framework. By comprehending the anticipated challenges faced by Edufluencers and other educators, educational authorities can design tailored training programs and support mechanisms to facilitate effective teaching-learning material incorporation in English language classrooms.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this conceptual paper posits significant implications for the trajectory of educational policy, teacher practices, training, and support, culminating in the overall enhancement of the English language education system in Malaysia. By scrutinising the outcomes of the CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation and the pivotal role played by Edufluencers, the study holds the potential to offer dynamic insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. These insights will not only guide future efforts to enrich the language learning experience but will also inform strategic decision-making at the intersection of curriculum design, material adaptation and design, and professional development. As we anticipate the unfolding of this study, its findings are positioned to be a cornerstone for shaping the educational landscape, fostering an environment that promotes inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and an efficacious English language learning journey for Malaysian students.

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