Quality Teaching and Learning Experiences in Mother Tongue (Tamil Language) in Singapore Kindergartens: Teachers’ Perspectives.

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This thesis is presented in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Education of The University of Western Australia Graduate School of Education

2016
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is my composition and was substantially completed during enrollment at UWA. It has not previously been submitted for a degree in any institution of higher education.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis does not:

i. contain any sources without acknowledgment.

ii. incorporate any material that has been previously published or written by another person other than which has been appropriately referenced in the text.

Signature: 

Date 23 June 2016
ABSTRACT

This research, into bilingual education in Singapore preschools focused on kindergarten teachers’ perspectives on quality teaching and learning in Mother Tongue (Tamil Language). Mother Tongues (ethnic languages) have declined amongst children with the continuing growth of English Language in Singapore, and in none more than the Tamil Language. Research on bilingual children in Singapore evidences code-switching, code-mixing and language shifting, leading to the loss of ethnic languages. Ethnic language maintenance and death have become serious concerns, especially for the Tamil language.

The Ministry of Education’s recent initiative to promote mother tongue teaching at preschools has brought kindergarten teachers of Tamil language to the forefront in providing quality teaching and learning experiences. According to literature, teachers’ perspectives on Mother Tongue language that are positively influenced by their formalized teacher training play an important role in the teachers’ facilitation of quality teaching and learning experiences. However, teachers of Tamil Language in Singapore kindergartens do not attend formalized Tamil language teacher training courses. Research studies in Singapore on the Tamil Language at kindergarten level are often limited.

The aim of the study was to generate explanatory theory on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on quality teaching and learning experience in the Tamil Language. Data were gathered from 12 Tamil language teachers. For maximum variation, they were selected from nine MOE registered kindergartens managed by three different types of organizations. Data from observer notes, semi-structured interviews and participants' journals were collected and analyzed according to Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory strategies in the attempt to describe and understand the phenomena. A series of propositions led to the development of explanatory theory related to perspectives of Tamil Language teachers’ perspectives on provision of quality teaching and learning of Tamil language in early childhood programs in Singapore.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>GCE O-Level Grade B4 (60 – 64 marks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPH</td>
<td>Critical Period Hypothesis</td>
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<td>DAP</td>
<td>Developmentally Appropriate Practices</td>
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<td>ECDA</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development Agency</td>
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<td>EL</td>
<td>English Language</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as Second Language</td>
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<td>FLT</td>
<td>Foreign Language Teaching</td>
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<td>GTM</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Method</td>
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<td>L1</td>
<td>First Language</td>
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<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCYS</td>
<td>Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports</td>
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<td>MLAT</td>
<td>Modern Language Aptitude Test</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MSF</td>
<td>Ministry of Social and Family Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Mother Tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTL</td>
<td>Mother-Tongue Language</td>
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<td>NABE</td>
<td>National Association for Bilingual Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBPTS</td>
<td>National Board for Professional Teaching Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEL</td>
<td>Nurturing Early Learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-level</td>
<td>Singapore –Cambridge General Certificate of Education ‘Ordinary Level.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSLE</td>
<td>Primary School Leaving Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>PQAC</td>
<td>Preschool Qualification Accreditation Committee</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
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<td>SLL</td>
<td>Second Language Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Tamil Language</td>
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My deepest gratitude is to my supervisor Professor Marnie O’Neill for inspiring me along this challenging yet satisfying learning journey. Her constructive comments and criticisms at different points of the research were stimulating and helped me in maintaining my focus. Professor O’Neill’s patience, and belief in me has been invaluable to my academic development, and in particular the completion of this research. Professor Marnie, you have been a wonderful mentor, and I am deeply honored to share this accomplishment with you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A widespread phenomenon in the last few years has been concern about the erosion and disappearance of minority or native languages. This concern has increased the focus on formal education instruction, in the hope that by reviving and developing the home languages of young speakers the language shift could be retarded or reversed (Fishman, 2001). Language loss or language shift involves a situation when there is the gradual displacement of one language by another in the community (Dorian, 1982). The factors that contribute to language shift or language endangerment are varied and complex, rendering an accurate prediction of the nature of the shift unachievable.

Singapore, too, has developed deep concern about Mother Tongue\(^1\) (MT) loss against the overpowering influence of English (Ramiah, 1991; Zhao, Wang & Huang, 2008; Vaish, 2007; Tan 2014). Singapore, a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual nation in South East Asia and hailed as an educational success story embraces an official bilingual education policy (Gopinathan, Ho & Saravanan, 2004). The policy, introduced by the Ministry of Education (MOE), was intended to reduce inter-ethnic divisions and promote national identity and economic growth (Gopinathan et al., 2004). English served as the lingua franca for children of different races to bond and appreciate each other; MT was to enable them to keep rooted in their heritage, identity and cultural values (Kirkpatrick, 2010). MT was vital to preserve ethnic identity, culture, and traditional values while English viewed as crucial to Singapore’s economic survival and national interest. However, research on bilingual children in Singapore evidence code-switching, code-mixing and language shift leading to the loss of ethnic languages which has become a serious concern especially for Tamil Language (TL) (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a; Schiffman, 2002).

MOE recently announced its plan to enhance MT languages teaching in schools and to promote bilingualism in preschools to start the foundation earlier (Lee, 2014).\(^1\)

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\(^1\) The term “Mother Tongue (MT)” means a student’s ethnic / native language. ‘Mother Tongue’ or ‘Mother Tongue language’ (MT) is also referred as the ‘Second Language’ (L2). Mother Tongue is any ethnic language learned in addition to English Language (EL) in the formal education system. Learning in Mother Tongue is deemed necessary to preserve ethnic culture and retain the roots (Vaish, 2007). The three official Mother Tongue or Second languages are Mandarin for Chinese, Malay (ML) for Malays and Tamil (TL) for Indians of Tamil origin.
Preschools, also known as kindergartens, are for children aged below seven years, before them joining the formal primary one schooling in Singapore. MOE’s emphasis includes nurturing students’ liking for MT and using the languages in a variety of real-life settings to communicate and to understand the ethnic culture. The Late Minister Mentor, Lee Kuan Yew observed that “the bottom line is that our education system must evolve and adjust as the situation changes. No policy is cast in stone” (Lee, 2011). He cautioned that “in Singapore, our bilingualism policy makes learning difficult unless you start learning languages, English, and the MT, from an early age - the earlier, the better.” The Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism was launched in November 2011 to focus on initiatives for the pre-schoois, homes, and community to build a more supportive language environment in preschool years. The focus is to develop a good foundation in MT in preschool education.

These initiatives have brought the teachers of TL as MT in kindergartens to the forefront in providing quality teaching and learning experiences. Moreover, literature regarding quality teaching and learning experiences stated that teachers’ perspectives on MT language play an important role in their facilitation of quality experiences (Shin & Krashen, 1996; Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford & Arias, 2005). Findings from various countries revealed that teachers’ attitudes for teaching and learning in MT were likely to be positive for those who had acquired ethnic language or second language teacher training (Byrnes et al., 1997; McInerney, McInerney, Cincotta, Totaro & Williams, 2001; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; OECD, 2009). However, TL teachers at Singapore kindergartens are accredited to teach TL if they possess the professional diploma in early childhood education in teaching (English), and a personal grade of ‘B4’ (credit) in the Tamil Language obtained at the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (O-level) exam. These teachers do not receive formal training in the teaching of TL at the kindergarten level.

Research indicates that explicit and implicit educational values and beliefs are embedded in teaching since it involves curriculum decision-making and instructional choices, judgments and interpretations. (Eisner, 1990; Gudmundsdottir, 1990; Richards, 2010). Klein pointed out that teachers “…are not reactive about the expectations and decisions of others; they are also proactive in that some teachers develop their curricula and work to implement their personal beliefs and values about how best to educate their students.” (1991, p. 29). Richards explained that teachers’ daily activities are based on the explicit ‘values and beliefs’ stated in the planned curriculum, but their actions will convey other unstated (implicit) values (2010).
These findings suggested the probability that the perspectives held by individual preschool teachers are influenced by their understandings, beliefs, and values about quality teaching and learning experiences in TL (Good, 1996; Harris 1998). However, relatively little is known about preschool teachers’ perspectives on quality teaching and learning experiences in TL, as research studies in Singapore have largely focused on MT education at and beyond the primary level. Furthermore, TL study is often limited or excluded. The study reported in this thesis is an attempt to address this knowledge deficit. This study reports the perspectives of twelve preschool teachers selected from nine MOE registered English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens, managed by three different types of organizations. The data were collected and analyzed with grounded theory strategies based on the Strauss & Corbin model to describe and understand the phenomena to generate theory from the teachers’ perspectives.

The following section in this chapter outlines the background and relevant literature. Next will be the problem statement, central and guiding research questions including the significance of the study. The conclusion describes the structure of the thesis. The list of definitions on terms, keywords, and concepts as they apply to this study is included in chapter 2.

The Background: An Overview

Bilingualism in Singapore

Bilingualism might intuitively be regarded as knowledge of more than one language, but scientifically it appears to be hard to peg down (Cook & Bassetti, 2011). Though a variety of definitions have been proposed, most have been clustered into two groups (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). The first denotes an equal ability to communicate in two languages or the ability to communicate in two languages, but with greater skills in one language (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011). The second group is based on the assumption that bilingualism refers to any real-life use of more than one language at whatever level (De Groot, 2011). Defining bilingualism in just a few words is not easy, as definition each would have different bilingual characteristics (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). There is a fundamental difference between the ability to use a language and proficiency in a language. Nevertheless, the commonly recognized fact is that any person who speaks more than one language is bilingual. Bilingual ability refers to a person’s proficiency in two or more languages across four basic dimensions: listening, speaking, reading and writing – and naturally, also thinking (De Groot, 2011). Psycholinguistics recognizes three

Simultaneous bilingualism is the learning of two languages as ‘first languages’-to develop the ability, from total ignorance, to understand and speak two languages, typically developed from infancy in the home environment. Receptive bilingualism, also called as passive bilingualism, is common in families where the minority language does not enjoy high status in the majority culture. These bilinguals have the ability to understand two languages, but to express in only one and language: mixing or code switching is common. This characteristic is common with Singaporean preschoolers in general as English develops at this stage. Sequential bilingualism is the learning of another language after one has already established a first language in an individual (John & Horner, 1971; De Groot, 2011).

At the surface, simultaneous and sequential bilingualism appear to be the common trends in Singapore (Kuo, 1985). The terms bilingualism and MT as used in Singapore can cause some confusion. Singapore's version of bilingualism refers to being competent in the English language (EL) and a Mother Tongue language (MTL) which is supposed to be child’s ethnic language (Tan, 2014). The government-assigned official MTs are Mandarin, Malay and Tamil though there are eleven MTs spoken as dialects by the Chinese, seven MTs spoken by the Malays and nine by the Indians (Doraisamy, 1969). Nonetheless, children are assigned official MT languages, namely Mandarin for the Chinese, Malay for the Malays and Tamil for Indians, as their official second languages.

Singapore identifies bilingualism as the ability to communicate in English and Mandarin or English and Malay or English and Tamil, with the three ethnic languages declared as official languages. Pakir (1993) defined bilingualism in Singapore as “English-knowing” bilingualism; that is, English as the common language or first language (L1) for all, with some knowledge of MT or second language (L2) (Pakir, 1993; Tupas, 2011). MTs became languages of identity, of culture and values while English was for knowledge, nation progression and national cohesion (Doraisamy, 1969).

Since 2000, the use of MT in homes has declined. English has increasingly grown to be amongst the preferred languages and is fast becoming a default MT for many families, substantially amongst TL speakers (Ramiah, 1991; Saravanam, 1994; Tupas, 2011; Rajan, 2014). Bilingual children in Singapore evidenced code-switching, code-mixing and language shift resulting in erosion of ethnic culture and heritage
identity (Vaish, 2007; Zhao et al., 2008; Ramiah, 2008). Translanguaging, though highlighted as an effective pedagogical practice by Canagarajah and Ashraf (2013), was recognized as a contributory factor in the loss of ethnic languages which has become a serious concern, especially for Tamil Language (TL) (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a; Schiffman, 2002; Rajan, 2014). Findings also indicated that mixing languages had resulted in hybrid languages like 'Tanglish' (Tamil-English) in India, Malaysia, and Canada (Kanthimathi, 2009; Chowdhury & Marlina, 2014). The hybrid language had caused Tamil Language and culture to become obsolete (Kanthimathi, 2009; Chowdhury & Marlina, 2014). The erosion of any official MT is problematic for Singapore’s commitment to multiracialism; like Mandarin, Malay and Tamil are of equal importance. The MT languages are emblematic of different ethnic identities; different kinds of cultural heritage and the languages are associated with the identity and values of different ethnic communities (De Silva, 1997; Wee, 2003; Zhao et al., 2008; Ramiah, 2008). Singapore’s definition of bilingualism is the basis for its Bilingual Education policy and is discussed in chapter two.

**Importance of Mother Tongue Languages in Singapore**

Singapore’s bilingual policy is partly credited for the nation’s success as a thriving metropolitan state with a Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity) per capita that ranks amongst the richest countries in the world (Low & Hashim, 2012). Language is significantly important, given Singapore’s multi-ethnic and plurilingual society comprising three major ethnic groups: 74.2% of ethnic Chinese, 13.3% of Malays and 9.1% of Indians constitutes the estimated 5.3 million population (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2013). The government’s position in promoting English to sustain rapid economic progress has been successful. The English language promoted a common national identity amongst the ethnic groups as they have equal opportunities to contribute to the nation-building process (Afendras & Kuo, 1980).

Although Singapore’s population is dominated numerically by Chinese, all ethnic groups enjoy equal status under the bilingual policy. However, the economic value of the different MTs varied. Mandarin has facilitated commerce and networking with China, since its open door policy in 1978, and Malay promoted regional cooperation and harmonious coexistence with the neighboring countries. TL, in comparison, is marginalized despite its official and institutionalized status.

The use of the TL has been in decline since 1990 (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a). A survey on children’s language choices indicated English as their preferred language (Saravanan, 2001a). According to Saravanan, the factors could be due to the small Tamil population and the perception that TL has low economic status. TL is also not
perceived as ‘the language of the government’ and hence not recognized as the same in status as English, Mandarin or Malay. Wei, Dewale and Housen explained that although from a linguistic standpoint “all languages are equal” each may differ from a “social, economic and political point, with some languages more valuable than others” (2002, p. 4). The finding is that English and Malay have replaced TL amongst the Indian community (Saravanan, 1994). There is a strong possibility that TL as MT will be displaced by the dominance of English and may amount to “deculturalization,” as language is associated with culture.

**Code-switching, Code-mixing and Language Shift in the Tamil Language**

Since English became the instructional medium in Singapore schools in 1979, there has been a massive language shift away from the diversity of languages (Gopinathan et al., 2004). TL maintenance has become a serious concern (Saravanan, 1994; Zhao et al., 2008).

Before the 1981 directive that dictated MT in Singapore schools to be based solely on the father’s ethnic background, many Indian children took Mandarin as their MT because of the widespread perception then that it offered better employment opportunities (Saravanan, 2001a). However, after 1981, English-Tamil bilinguals increasingly were more English-speaking (Ramiah, 1991; Saravanan, 1994, 2001a) and displayed ‘bilingualism without diglossia’ (Vaish, 2007). Vaish rationalized the deterioration as a result of the “rapid modernization and development” that Singapore has achieved in the last 50 years (2007, p. 178).

Other studies also revealed a general lack of interest in TL, and that students studied it merely to pass their examinations in schools (Shegar & Rahman, 2005). It is mandatory in the mainstream education system for children to pass both English (L1) and their respective MTs (L2). Kuo cautioned that TL maintenance and survival is a grave problem (1985). Vaish concluded that “the task that lies ahead is to use this information to reform pedagogy and curriculum in TL MT teaching so that these emergent trends of maintenance can be harnessed for a sustainable linguistic ecology” (2007, p. 184).

**Teaching and Learning of Tamil Language in Kindergartens**

MOE mandated the bilingual policy in 1966, to create a level playing field in the formal education system, across primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education. The policy was intended to reduce inter-ethnic divisions and promote national identity and economic growth (Gopinathan et al., 2004). The policy emphasis on the English language as the first language (L1) was associated with academic
success and the knowledge-economy. Children study English as the first language (L1) in the formal education system (Dixon, 2005; Baker, 2011; Su, 2011).

Every child must learn English as the first language (L1) and his/her “mother tongue” or ethnic language as the second language (L2). English (EL) became the medium for all content-area instruction while MT remained as a single subject. EL and MT are examinable subjects; thus achievement levels in both languages contribute to academic attainment in the Singapore education system.

Nevertheless, bilingualism is not mandatory for kindergartens. In 2003, MOE launched a curriculum framework for kindergartens entitled ‘A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore’, designed to explain MOE’s view on what constitutes quality teaching and learning experiences. As stated in its aim, the framework was meant to guide teachers in designing curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2003), and not to serve as a prescription. The ‘MT Framework book’ for the teaching of Mandarin, Malay and Tamil was a translation of the EL framework. The curriculum framework adopted the backward design approach, starting “with a careful statement of the desired results or outcomes” (Richards, 2013, p. 20). The framework suggested developmentally appropriate activities and teaching strategies for preschoolers’ learning to attain the stipulated learning outcomes for the transition to primary school. It advocated learning experiences across subject disciplines and developmental domains.

Though there are parallels in the acquisition and learning of both the first language (L1) and second language (L2), ‘the learning of L2 was viewed as any language learned later than in earliest childhood’ and the learning process differs (Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013). There are also arguments that L1 acquisition is an essential, biologically-driven process, but that L2 is not as essential a life-skill as L1. L2 is considered simply as another subject in the school curriculum (O’Neill, 1998), which is the situation in Singapore. The English Language has become the dominant home language in Singapore, hence the de facto first language (L1) (Wee, 2002; Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010; Tan, 2014). Wee (2002) and Tan (2014) argued that the English language should be termed the ‘Mother Tongue’ as it is the first language (L1) acquired by children, while the designated MT language that is not frequently used and is not seen as an essential life-skill should be learned as L2. English has become the home language and had replaced TL in many homes and the community in Singapore (Saravanan, 2001a; Zhao et al., 2008; Tan, 2014). In Singapore, the English language has become the L1 (mother tongue status though not officially accorded). In contexts such as US, Australia, and England, English, although the dominant language of the surrounding society, is regarded as L2 for immigrant children. The task of this
discussion is not to challenge existing literature but to unpack the different constructions and present a working definition that is applied to this study in the Singapore context. MT is learned as L2 in Singapore.

There is no unified or comprehensive view on how an L2 that is MT in context is learned. Explanations draw upon a collation of theories which can broadly be reviewed from linguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. The teaching strategies are guided by learning outcomes based on the range of perspectives (Mitchell et al., 2013).

The MOE MT framework is not compulsory but strongly recommended. Therefore, it seems that curriculum for TL is deep-seated in the teachers’ beliefs on what and how the content is to be taught and is influenced by their attitudes toward the MT language (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu & Peske, 2002). This resulted in non-standard MT curricula that were subjective and diverse. It was observed that TL is not used in authentic informal oral communication and that language activities in classrooms were designed with a little emphasis on spoken functionality, but rather on reading and writing (Shegar & Rahman, 2005). This is a far call in comparison to what the Netherlands emphasized as a quality trend for teaching and learning experiences which are described in chapter three (Snoek & Wielenga, 2001).

Only 7.5% of the 488 centers licensed by MOE offer English-Mandarin/Malay/Tamil languages in their bilingual program (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, in centers where TL is not offered, the Indian children learn Mandarin/Malay as their MT language until they progress to primary level in the formal education system. Preschoolers who do not receive any exposure in their MT lose the learning opportunity in their critical period of language acquisition and development (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). It appears that TL is not valued and not viewed as a ‘useful language’ in the kindergarten environment. This could be one result of the code-switching, code-mixing, and language shift, occurring substantially in the Tamil Language community (Saravanan, 1994; Shegar & Rahman, 2005; Tan, 2014).

Furthermore, children learning Tamil attend once to thrice weekly TL sessions in a different classroom. The 45 to 60 minutes subjects are conducted in Tamil focusing on the language and literacy skills in TL. The TL teacher is a bilingual teacher. A TL bilingual teacher in the Singaporean context is an EL diploma trained kindergarten teacher who had attained the required academic qualification in Tamil. These teachers’ tend to set self-determined goals to teach TL, which is typically guided by the MOE learning outcomes for the English curriculum (Shegar & Rahman, 2005). It is common to observe children code-switching and code-mixing and at times shifting away to English in classrooms (Vaish, 2007). The practice of the ‘convenient-
‘curriculum’ is in contrast with the two-way bilingual education, ESL or immersion schools of thought. Long-standing predictions cautioned that it was a matter of time before the cost ‘curriculum of convenience’ was a loss of the heritage language in Singapore (Martin-Jones, 1989; Gupta, 1997; Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014). Congruent with the prediction, research by Dixon, Wu and Daraghmeh (2012) on kindergarteners’ language proficiency and the influencing factors revealed that Tamil children showed low proficiency in their ethnic language.

**TL Teachers and Teacher Education for Teaching TL in Kindergartens**

The TL teachers do not attend any formalized L2 or native language teacher training. Kindergarten teachers, teaching both EL and TL, must attain a minimum qualification of a Diploma in Early Childhood Teacher Training in English and five credits in the General Certificate of Education “Ordinary” Examinations that includes a B4 for EL and a B4 in the Tamil Language, to be accredited to teach. It appears that only language proficiency is needed to teach the Tamil Language in Singapore kindergartens. In contrast, Richards asserted that in language teaching, teachers must be competent in ten core dimensions of skill and expertise: “language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused teaching, specialized cognitive skills, theorizing from practice, joining a community of practice and professionalism” (2010, p. 101). Teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning of TL in Singapore kindergartens is contextualized based on the teachers' personal understanding and experiences.

Teachers' perspectives on quality teaching and learning, whether positive or negative, steer teaching practices in Singapore kindergartens. This viewpoint is a cause for concern as study findings showed that MT teachers' negative attitudes, as well as their inappropriate practices to support children’s MT learning have resulted in the poor performance of the students (Au, 1998). It is indisputable that children’s language development is subject to the quality of teachers and their beliefs about the ways the language is learned (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Barcelos and Kalaja (2011) implied that teacher education not only develops MT teachers' knowledge and skills to deliver good quality teaching, but that the reflective practices have evolved towards cognitive process on teachers’ thoughts, judgments, decisions and plans. Research findings (Lee & Oxelson, 2006) on quality teaching and learning indicated that teachers who had acquired formal MT training (proficiency and competencies in the MT teaching) demonstrated positive attitudes and beliefs towards heritage language maintenance.
Teachers and their perspectives in preschool education play a vital role in facilitating children’s learning and growth of any native language, and certainly for Tamil Language and TL learners in Singapore.

**Teachers Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values in Bilingual Education**

The perspectives individual teachers hold are influenced by their experiences, formal education and by knowledge handed down through commonly held wisdom (Good, 1996; Harris, 1998). Research suggests that beliefs are a salient part of teachers’ competence (Calderhead, 1996; Richardson, 2001). Teachers’ beliefs and values guide their perceptions and actions and form attitudes towards teaching that are crucial for application of knowledge in classroom situations. In fact, they can be conceptualized as a bridge between knowledge and teaching. The studies further revealed that teachers’ attitudes (beliefs and values inclusive) direct the learning outcomes. Curdt-Christianesen and Silver (2012) suggest that beliefs and values are socially and culturally shaped mental constructs that are typically acquired in the respective educational settings.

In summary, research on teachers’ attitudes and MT / Native language learning or maintenance showed that teachers who had attained formal L2 teacher training and who were familiar with MT heritage and culture demonstrated higher positive attitudes and perspectives for teaching practices.

**Problem Statement**

Studies show that perspectives of teachers are crucial influences on quality teaching and learning experiences and that teachers who had acquired L2 teacher training had demonstrated positive attitudes and perspectives for teaching practices. Findings also substantiate that teachers’ beliefs and values are socially and culturally shaped mental constructs that are typically acquired in the respective educational settings and that attitude (beliefs and values inclusive) direct the learning outcomes.

In Singapore, the recent focus on quality teaching and learning of MT in preschools called attention to preschool teachers teaching TL in Singapore kindergartens. The teachers involved in this research, came from three of four different types of educational organizations, as one did not participate. The organizations offered differing curricula as the MOE curriculum framework is only recommended rather than mandatory. The teacher participants had not received any formal training for L2 teaching. Nonetheless, their perspectives on quality teaching and learning, whether positive or negative, steer teaching practices in Singapore kindergartens. This phenomenon was a cause for concern as previous studies showed that MT teachers’
negative attitudes, as well as their inappropriate practices for children’s MT learning, resulted in poor performance of students and loss of interest in the target language (Au, 1998).

It is indisputable that preschoolers’ TL language development is subject to the quality of teachers and their beliefs about the ways the language is learned (Willis, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Relatively little is known about preschool teachers’ perspectives as research studies in Singapore have largely focused on MT education at and beyond the primary level.

The study reported in this thesis is an attempt to address this inadequacy. This study reports the perspectives of preschool teachers on quality teaching and learning experiences in TL. The study looked closely at teachers’ interactions, behaviors, lesson delivery and learning outcomes that were deemed significant. It also attempted to build a broader understanding of the strategies used by the teachers in realizing their aims and intentions.

This grounded theory study aimed to generate theory on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL) across three different types of organizations registered with the MOE. Given the aim, one general guiding question and four specific data collection questions were developed. The general question was, “What are the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL)?” The study sought to understand teachers’ aims and intentions, strategies, significance and expected outcomes for Tamil Language (TL) teaching and learning in Kindergartens.

**Significance of Study**

The importance of this study is in its contributions to the knowledge base in Singapore’s early childhood field and non-formalized Tamil Language teacher training in other countries. The potential outcomes of this study include opportunities for:

- All operating organizations to better understand, identify and rectify the gaps in TL teacher competencies and;
- Training agencies and program accreditation committees to identify appropriate competencies and develop skill based training; and
- Laying the theoretical foundations for future research on how to help TL teachers to share quality teaching and learning experiences.
Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study reported in this thesis. It introduced the context and explained the problem, listed the research questions, and stated the significance of the study. The remaining six chapters are structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** examines contextual literature mainly from Singapore. It describes the Bilingual Education Policy from its early days and the historical development of Tamil language in Singapore education including training. It also describes the current status of Tamil Language as an L2 taught only as a subject and in a limited number of kindergartens. The chapter defines terms, keywords, and concepts as they apply to this study, including the list of definitions.

**Chapter 3** reviews a range of studies relevant to the research. However due to the limited studies of perspectives of preschool teachers in teaching MT (TL), the chapter reviewed the literature on general studies conducted on perspectives of teachers of native/L2 from kindergarten to elementary (or primary) schools. The literature review surveyed Bilingual Education Worldwide, Quality Teaching and Learning in MT, Teacher Education and Bilingual Education and empirical literature on teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and values on bilingual education.

**Chapter 4** concentrates on the methodology and research design for the qualitative study of perspectives of the twelve TL kindergarten teachers. The chapter describes the grounded theory study conducted within the Interpretivist paradigm, drawing on symbolic interactionism based on grounded theory. It also provides the profile of the research setting and participants, as well as explains the data gathering tools that included observational field notes, interviews and journal logs. The chapter elaborates the analysis process of Strauss & Corbin Grounded Theory Method (GTM), whereby data were analyzed by open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to generate theory on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers teaching MT (TL).

**Chapter 5** presents the overarching theoretical frameworks of the thesis and discuss them. The chapter displays the teachers’ three clusters of perspectives and their learning outcomes intended for the preschoolers. Three propositions were generated from the data findings. The first proposition states that the Tamil Language teachers in Singapore develop their ideational theory from English language literacy instruction and possibly from foreign language teaching. The second proposition declares that the teachers interpret their ideational theory base in ways that bore their distinction between language acquisition and language learning. While the third
proposition testifies teacher identity: congruence between personal and professional identity.

Chapter 6 discusses the details of each of the three propositions. Also described in this chapter is how the three propositions are linked to developing the explanatory theory - the efficacy of TL teachers in Singapore kindergartens is constrained by complex interactions in three areas, namely cognitive knowledge base, practices and professional identity.

Chapter 7, the concluding chapter presents the argument of the theory; the implications; and recommends a direction for future research. It briefly outlines the critical areas of the study, including research actions undertaken. The three propositions and the explanatory theory presented earlier contribute to the expansion of the limited knowledge of TL provision in Singapore’s kindergartens.
CHAPTER 2: TAMIL LANGUAGE IN SINGAPORE KINDERGARTENS

Introduction

This chapter examines contextual literature mainly from Singapore. It describes the Bilingual Education Policy from its early days and the historical development of Tamil language in Singapore’s education system, including preschool teacher training. As pointed out in Chapter 1 English is accorded the status of the first language in Singapore; thus the official ethnic MTLs are regarded as L2s. Tamil Language, today, is, therefore, an L2 taught only as a subject in schools and a limited number of kindergartens.

The chapter is organized into three main sections. The first provides an account of the history of the Singapore Bilingual Policy (Bilingual education and preschools); the second section explores bilingual education in Singapore kindergartens and Tamil Language, and finally the third discusses the importance of this study in today’s context. The chapter defines terms, keywords, and concepts as they apply to this study. The List of Definitions and the supporting literature are summarized at the end of this chapter.

Bilingual Education Policy and Tamil Language – Before 1959

Singapore, before 1959, was one of the states of Malaysia which later emerged with Sarawak, Borneo, and Malaysia to form the Straits Settlement. It separated from the Straits Settlements with its governor and director of education after World War II. Schools were re-opened in whatever premises were available to cater to the ‘backlog’ of school-age children. Singapore’s education policy deviated from the Federation of Malaya and has since evolved further (Doraisamy, 1969).

The objective of the education policy was to support Singapore’s economic development and the management of racial diversity (Wee, 2003). English proficiency was deemed necessary for economic survival and interethnic communications (Wee, 2003: Dixon, 2005). However, in a linguistically and racially diverse country, the government’s decision for respect and equal treatment for the major ethnic groups resulted in the bilingual education policy that embraced the mother tongues (Wee, 2003). The English language was made the main medium of instruction, and Mandarin for the Chinese community, Malay for the Malays and Tamil for the Indians were the official mother tongues in schools. Having the three ethnic official mother tongues and
English as lingua franca was to make explicit the ‘equality of treatment’ of ethnicity and also to impel the harmonization in curriculum outcomes (Dixon, 2005). Singapore’s bilingual education is one of the key systems for promoting racial integration, and economic and political stability which has steered the course of present-day education (Vaish, 2007).

**Bilingual Education Policy and Tamil Language - After 1959**

With the effect of the bilingual education policy Malay, Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools were opened (Dixon, 2005; Koh, Auger, Yap & Ng, 2006). These schools used their respective MTs as the formal language of instruction, but it was expected that the vernacular schools teach English as an L2 (Dixon, 2005). It was noted that Tamil vernacular schools were only government-aided schools while English, Chinese and Malay schools were categorized as government or government-aided. Government schools were fully funded while the “aided” schools were only partially funded by the government (Dixon, 2005).

The early Tamil-medium schools, whether religious or race affiliated institutions, were operated by individual Tamil immigrants, Tamil immigrants' labor unions or missionaries (Koh et al., 2006). About 20 Tamil Schools were opened and were distributed throughout the island where there were pockets of Tamil immigrant workers. The institutions were constrained by poor finances, which led to the limited building, equipment facilities, unsatisfactory teaching essentials and poor quality of education (Gopinathan, 1974). Furthermore, the teachers in these institutions, recruited from India and Sri Lanka, had no formal training to teach TL. The untrained TL teachers did not have a proper curriculum nor teaching resources. There was the limited provision of English as a second language in these Tamil vernacular schools (Gopinathan, 1974).

It was only after 1957 that the MOE had registered 17 Tamil-medium schools, by which time enrolment of Indian students in English-medium schools was ten times that of the students enrolled in Tamil-medium (Doraisamy, 1969). Tamil ethnics felt disadvantaged as English was not their home language and saw EL as a world language, providing access to economic development and social mobility while MT was considered mainly as repositories of ancient knowledge and cultural heritage (Wee, 2003; Vaish & Tan, 2008)

The Tamil-medium schools in Singapore closed down due to low enrollment and stiff competition from English-medium schools (Gopinathan, 2013). The last Tamil-medium school, Umar Pulavar Tamil School, closed in 1983 (Koh et al., 2006). Other
attempts to start Tamil institutions largely failed, either due to a lack of suitable teachers or TL teachers’ preference for English-medium schools or interest from the Tamil community (Doraisamy, 1969; Saravanan; 1994; Koh et al., 2006). Since the 1950s, English-medium education was valued highly and regarded as the language of elitism in comparison to TL by the Tamils in Singapore (Doraisamy, 1969; Wee, 2003). Fishman stated that “regardless of location, the spread of English is closely linked to social class, age, gender, and profession” (2001, p. 28) This helps to understand the continued emphasis of EL over TL, until today even though Bilingual Education was made compulsory from 1966 in Singapore.

Bilingual education was made compulsory in 1966 at primary and in 1969 at secondary standards within the formal education sector. It became mandatory for students in the formal education sector to learn English as the L1 and acquire a level of proficiency in their MT. MT language was and continues to be taught as a separate subject. Singapore’s Bilingual Education Policy is EL dominant, but students have to study and offer their respective MT languages at the national examinations. Both English and MT languages are examinable which equates language learning to academic attainment in the Singapore education system. However, it must be noted that bilingual education was not a requirement of preschool education and was left to the discretion of kindergarten operators.

This bilingual education policy enabled TL to gain the recognition and full government support awarded to Mandarin and Malay languages. It had paved the way for the longevity of TL in the formal education system from primary school to tertiary education. However, the bilingual policy was not mandated in the pre-school system. The post-war period witnessed the development of early childhood programs along with two main dimensions: Kindergartens and child care centers. Political parties, church groups, and private schools that operated kindergartens as an aspect of community service teaching conducted the programs in English with Mandarin or Malay as MTL options.

In 1990’s TL was offered as an MTL option, albeit in a limited number of kindergartens. While parents still had the option of choosing their preferred MTL, most Indian parents opted for Mandarin believing that TL provided limited functional and economic opportunities (Saravananan, 1994). Another reason for this outcome was that preschoolers were ‘subsumed’ into the MTL taught at the kindergartens. They were ‘forced’ to learn an MT that may not be their ethnic language in the critical period of language acquisition (Bialystok, 1997; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Such arbitrary choices, which still continue, disadvantage Tamil children in learning TL at Primary level.
Bilingual Education Policy and Tamil Language - Today

More recently, the education policy’s overwhelming shift has been to stress the economic value of the MT as well as their role in preserving traditional values for maintaining Singaporeans’ cultural identity (Wee, 2003; Gopinathan et al., 2004). “Bilingualism” in Singapore experienced a major transformation, as increasing numbers of English-knowing children were coming from households where English had become the dominant home language (Wee, 2002; Singapore Department of Statistics, 2006, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2011). As highlighted in the earlier chapter, bilingual children in Singapore evidenced code-switching, code-mixing and language shift resulting in a concern for the loss of ethnic languages (De Silva, 1997; Zhao et al., 2008; Ramiah, 2008). The use of MT has been declining; specifically, the shift away from TL to EL was considerable (Saravanan, 1994; Lee, 2011). However, Canagarajah and Ashraf (2013) suggested that translanguaging is an effective way to learn MT. Their notion was disputed, as translanguaging was found to be a contributory factor in the development of hybrid languages which are the main cause of MT to become extinct (Shegar & Rahman, 2005; Rajan, 2014). ‘Tanglish’ (Tamil-English), one such hybrid language, in countries like India, Malaysia, and Canada had caused the Tamil language and culture to become obsolete (Lee, 2011; Rajan, 2014). Ethnic language maintenance, in the face of language shift, and potential language death, has become a concern as many children do not identify with their designated MT language especially for TL in Singapore (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a; Schiffman, 2002; Shegar & Rahman, 2005; Lee 2011; Rajan, 2014).

Ethnic and cultural identities have become blurred by a set of paradoxes. On the one hand, it is significant to maintain ethnic language to transmit the cultures and values. On the other hand, the significance placed on EL as the language of education, administration, business and intercultural communication, as well as its perceived value as a global language has given it a place in Singapore’s linguistic ecology that threatens the original intentions (and outcomes) of the bilingual policy (Wee, 2002).

There has also been an intergenerational shift from ethnic language use to English (Beardsmore, 1994; Fishman, 1965, 2001; Rajan, 2014). Linguistic change in postwar Singapore is usually related to three so-called generational shifts. The ‘grandparent generation’ typically spoke their ethnic language, but rarely English; The second-generation spoke ethnic languages and English, although few people were equally proficient in both languages. The decline of ethnic language occurred between the second and the third generations because the second generation rarely used the ethnic language enough to impart it to their children (Beardsmore, 1994). A similar study relating to TL in Singapore revealed that there was a shift from TL
monolingualism amongst the ‘grandparent-generation’; to a bridging combination of MT and EL by the ‘parent-generation’ and finally to an EL monolingual ‘child-generation’ (Raman, 2002). The process of language loss had taken place over two generations (Fishman, 2001; Porters & Rumbaut, 2005).

The Educational Minister, Dr. Ng Eng Hen, in 2009 quantified the scope of the problem:

Since the 1980s, more of our Primary one students are coming from households where English is the dominant home language. Only 1 in 10 of Primary 1 Chinese students in 1982 (quarter-century, age 33 today) came from homes that used English — the figure today is nearly 6 in 10. For Indians it has moved from 3 in 10 to 6 in 10; Malays — 0.5 in 10 to 3.5 in 10. A seismic shift in language environment has occurred within one generation. Those above 40 years of age today would have grown up in homes that spoke their MTL, either predominantly or partly, either with parents, grandparents or siblings (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The perceptions of ethnic identity that contributed to language shift also differed between the generations (Raman, 2002). Unlike the ‘grandparent-generation’ who had communal and sentimental attachments to the cultural heritage of TL, the younger generations perceived themselves as Singapore-Indians and subscribed their ethnic identity only by the value of the common ancestry. They acknowledged having very little knowledge of the cultural heritage of the language and viewed EL as is the language of upward social and economic mobility. The loss of the language, coupled with the government’s introduction of a policy objective of encouraging people to identify primarily as “Singaporeans” and give only secondary allegiance to their ethnic identities had redefined perceptions of ethnicity and self-identity in the younger generations.

Furthermore, less than 40% of the student population of Indian ethnicity had the minimum competency in two languages. The 1990 Census Report and surveys demonstrated that only 72% of respondents of Tamil origins used TL and that TL was being replaced by EL (Ramiah, 1991). The Goh Report (Goh et al., 1979) critiqued the bilingual education policy as the major contributory cause of students’ low bilingual competency. Dixon, Wu, and Daraghmeh (2012) study on the ethnic language proficiency level of preschoolers in kindergartens in Singapore revealed that Tamil children tended to show the lowest proficiency in TL. MOE acknowledged that the bilingual policy had not been effective in delivering equal proficiency in both EL and MT languages. Nevertheless, TL is an examinable subject in the formal education system. The weighting assigned to MT in major examinations such as PSLE and GCE ‘O’ Level
contribute to parents’ perceptions of inequity for children who lacked the exposure or were not given a foundation in TL during the early years. In Singapore’s meritocratic system emphasis is on academic credentials and children’s performance in TL has great implications for their future opportunities.

Noting that Singaporeans were gravitating towards becoming more English-speaking, the late Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew lamented that successive generations had paid a heavy price as they had lost interest in their native language (Hoe, 2009). Concerned with the withering of Singaporeans’ Asian heritage, he acknowledged that the bilingual policy had started the ‘wrong way’ but insisted that bilingualism is achievable. He challenged educators of bilingualism to get children interested in the language and to engage them early. MOE commenced investigations of the ways in which languages are taught in schools (Hoe, 2009).

The Late Minister Mentor Lee stressed again,

If we arrange our education system first in kindergarten and preschools in such a way that our children are exposed to languages straight away, it will make bilingual a reality and easily achievable by all (Lee, 2011).

On that note, the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism was launched in November 2011. It is a supplementary body to MOE, for initiatives to ‘nurture the love for bilingual learning’ focusing in the preschool years. The emphasis is on developing listening and speaking capabilities to build a stronger foundation for language learning in children’s later years. MT teaching and learning in Singapore Kindergartens and the kindergarten teachers teaching MT have come to the forefront, notably TL, in the recent years.

**Current Context of Bilingual Education in Singapore kindergartens and TL**

The following section presents the current and ongoing context of bilingual education in Singapore in which the study is located. Although the bilingual policy was not mandatory for kindergartens or childcare centers, many adopted it due to the ‘top-down’ culture that is prevalent in the preschool education system (Ministry of Education, 2011). The three noticeable gaps in Singapore are that TL is not available to all TL learners in kindergartens; the curriculum is based on the perspectives of teachers, and there is no formalized TL teacher training.

**Kindergartens and Tamil Language - Limitation**

As at 2013, there were 502 kindergartens registered with MOE. Though kindergartens are under the supervision of MOE, four core organizations or sectors
managed the kindergartens in Singapore. They are community foundation, social associations, religious bodies and business enterprises.

**Community foundations.**

The only Community Foundation is a national charitable foundation. The foundation, managed by community leaders and volunteers, focuses on the social and charitable causes of Singapore, specifically in preschool education to provide pre-school children a head-start and to prepare them for primary school. The organization is a major provider of preschool services in Singapore, operating 360 of 502 kindergartens in 2014 (Tan, 2015). Fifty-three of its kindergartens offered the Tamil Language, comprising 80% of the total of 66 kindergartens that offered TL as MT Language in Singapore (refer Table 1).

The organization has a mandated curriculum customized for the teaching of Tamil Language. The teaching curriculum, adapted from the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework for Mother Tongue Language (2006) is developed by the MOE. The organization's headquarters stipulates the syllabus and lesson plan. The organization conducts an annual briefing and in-house training in the form of ‘Central Tamil Curriculum Meeting’ which commenced in mid-2014. The teachers had learned “the basic knowledge” of how to integrate the six subjects: Aesthetic and Creative expression; Discovery of the world; Language and Literacy; Motor skills development; Numeracy and Social and Emotional development in their teaching of TL for the holistic development of a child.

**Social associations.**

The social associations are ‘non-profit' organizations that provide broad-based community services for the general community through a charitable Hindu missionary, a social, ethnic group, and an endowment board which offers free and subsidized pre-school education to children in need through its kindergartens. The social associations operate four kindergartens in total, which all offer TL as MT. The missionary and the ethnic-social groups operate one kindergarten each, and the Endowment Board manages the other two kindergartens.

The Endowment Board is a statutory body set up in 1968 under the Hindu Endowments Act in 1968. The Board's role is to administer those endowments placed under its administration for the support of Hindu’s purposes. The Kindergartens were set up to meet the need of the Indian community for pre-primary education offering English and Tamil. However, children
of various ethnicity are enrolled in the kindergartens. In addition to appreciating of one’s culture (rootedness) and traditions, the children are taught to respect other traditions and cultures. Respective kindergartens develop the teaching curriculum at the discretion of the teachers.

**Religious bodies.**

The religious bodies are usually privately operated entities. The organizations comprise of churches, mosques, and gurdwaras (Sikh temples), providing kindergarten services grounded in religious-based principles, philosophies, and values. The selected two churches, for the study, operated three of the five kindergartens that offer TL.

The curriculum, infused in religious-based teaching, in these kindergartens is decided and planned by the teachers in isolation. Each kindergarten has its TL curriculum though it comes under the purview of the same religious body.

**Business enterprise.**

The business enterprises are kindergartens managed by private proprietors. In general, the enterprise is an endeavor where the primary objective is profit making. Only four proprietors offer TL as MT Language in the kindergartens across Singapore. The curriculum in the four kindergartens is individualized and aligned with the philosophies of the respective centers.

As at 2013, of the 502 kindergartens, only 66 offered TL in their bilingual programs (Ministry of Education, 2013a). Table 1 shows the organization and the number of kindergartens under their purview.

Table 1

*Kindergartens offering TL in Singapore (2013)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>No of Establishments</th>
<th>Kindergartens Offering TL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Bodies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Associations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Enterprise</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kindergartens that do not offer TL direct the TL learning preschoolers to learn Mandarin or Malay. These preschoolers study the ‘given’ language, usually for two years until they progress into the formal education system (Shegar & Rahman, 2005). Opportunity for young children to learn TL during their critical period of language acquisition and development is thus lost, for many centers feel it is not financially viable to conduct TL classes (Ramiah, 1991). The children, placed in an environment where their ethnic language is not included, hence may adopt the view that their MT is not a ‘useful language’ in the environment. This viewpoint is cited as a reason for code-switching, code-mixing, and language shift in TL (Ramiah, 1991).

**TL Curriculum in Kindergartens**

Before 2007, teachers worked in silos within their centers to design a TL curriculum and taught based on what they understood to be quality teaching and learning of TL in kindergartens. The teachers’ understandings were commonly grounded in their diploma education to teach EL, guided by the NEL framework and the learning outcomes for the English curriculum and teachers’ personal experiences in learning and teaching TL (Shegar & Rahman, 2005). In some centers, there was only one TL teacher thus the curriculum was developed in isolation. The TL curriculum in use had diverse learning outcomes and varied teaching strategies.

In 2006, MOE recognizing the importance of nurturing children from early years launched MTL framework entitled ‘Nurturing Early Learners Framework for Mother Tongue Languages.’ The MTL framework also adopted the American Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) and the philosophy of “play” stipulated in the English version (2003), to shift MTL teaching from ‘academic rote learning’ to more experiential learning (Ng, 2014).

The package included one curriculum book each for Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil within the curriculum framework. The TL book is a guide for kindergartens to customize their TL curriculum based on the prescriptive learning outcomes for kindergarten years (Ministry of Education, 2003. p. 3). The framework listed activities and strategies for teaching and learning of concepts. Notwithstanding, the TL framework was a translation of the English version of the NEL Framework for kindergarten launched in 2003. Both of the frameworks have been reviewed since, English in 2013 and TL in 2014.

The curriculum listed six principles and the desired outcomes for kindergarten education. The principles are a holistic approach to development and learning; integrated learning; children as active learners; adults as interested supporters in learning; interactive learning and play as a medium for learning. It advocated for a
holistic approach focused on the child. The learning experiences were to be based on knowledge, skills, dispositions and feelings within the six subject areas. The curriculum supports integrated learning experiences in the areas of Aesthetic and creative expressions; Discovery of the world; Language and Literacy; Motor skills development; Numeracy and Social and emotional development. The teaching principle was encapsulated in the acronym ‘iTeach’, which is the dogma for best practices in the Singapore context (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Overview of the iTeach’ principle in NEL Framework for Kindergarten

According to ‘iTeach’, teachers are seen as facilitators and supporters of children’s learning. The focus is on children, viewed as ‘active learners’ who explore, discover, and make sense through meaningful experiences. The play is acknowledged to provide them with meaningful exploration and interaction with materials, peers, and teachers to construct knowledge and to stimulate their learning. The approach was designed to give ample opportunities for children to indulge in purposeful play, for their engagement with materials, peers, and teachers. It involves children as ‘active learners’ who explore, discover, and construct knowledge through significant tasks.

The learning objectives stipulated for TL, within the framework (2006), is for the preschoolers to use the language to communicate (listening and speaking); to recognize letter forms and their sounds; to read using letter-sound and blending skills;
to distinguish between spoken TL and written TL for use in respective settings. The framework also specifies the learning components and suggests strategies and approaches in teaching TL, as well as the desired learning outcomes for each level. It must be mentioned that iTeach’ has the child as the focus for quality teaching and learning at kindergartens.

Paradoxically, the TL framework seems to insinuate that the content of the six subjects is taught in TL. The TL teachers’ interpretation of the curriculum informs their classroom application. As content can be understood to be ‘subject content knowledge’ that is facts and concepts rather than the skills (such as speaking, listening, reading and writing) related to the learning. The meaning of content can also be understood as grammar-translation, Audio-lingual methodology (a system of reinforcement) and vocabulary learning (Met, 1994). Content has been interpreted as the use of subject matter as a vehicle for second or foreign language teaching and learning fused in culture (Genesee, 1987; Met, 1994). If the teaching of TL is not perceived as the integration of language, culture and content then it is likely to lead to a misalignment. This misalignment to the bilingual policy, which is intended to maintain children’s MT heritage, may lead to confusion and misinterpretation for practice and thus contribute to the gradual loss of the MT.

As the NEL TL framework is only a guide, although strongly recommended, kindergartens have the option to decide on a TL curriculum that meets their needs and values. However, the specific content of the teaching and learning program appears to be determined by the teachers’ beliefs and influenced by their attitudes to MT (Kauffman et al., 2002). Such beliefs and attitudes have resulted in non-standard subjective curricula across different kindergartens. The curricula varied regarding teachers’ perspectives on quality teaching and learning experiences. Some kindergartens prefer to refer to the primary school TL education curriculum which is academically inclined, stressing academic written and spoken language (Ministry of Education, 2005).  

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2 The term “Perspective” is used as the aims and intentions, strategies and expected outcomes from the participants’ point of view. Perspective is defined as the belief, value and practice system of an individual and the actual action taken (Barros & Ella, 1998). O’Donoghue’s definition of perspective, that is to observe what are the aims and intentions, strategies of participants and what they see as being significant and their expected outcomes will be utilized in the study (2007, p.39).
Teachers currently teaching TL in kindergartens are likely to be from the ‘second-generation.’ They could be equally proficient in both TL and EL but may bridge between the two languages in their teaching practices due to their values (Beardsmore, 1994). Equally, their ethnic identity with the language and their knowledge of the cultural heritage of TL cannot be assumed, although they have great influence on what and how they teach (Baker, 2011). Likewise, their interpretation of the curriculum influences their teaching practices. Teachers’ values, beliefs, and attitude are conceptual structures that may shape and influence their curriculum choice and teaching strategies to be effective.

**TL Teachers’ Competencies and Teacher Training**

The Preschool Qualification and Accreditation Committee (PQAC) governed by MOE-Early Childhood Development Agency (MOE-ECDA) accredits TL teachers in kindergartens through the professional English teacher training and TL academic performance. The committee was formed to oversee the standards, and quality of preschool teacher training for both kindergarten and child care sectors. The competencies and skills teachers needed as stipulated in the certified diploma are transferring theories into practice; child observation skills; application of teaching approaches to facilitate creative and development appropriate practices; and design, implementation and evaluation of the teaching and environment based on the curriculum framework and learning outcomes (refer to Appendix D). These abilities to transfer theory into practice, formulate realistic curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are viewed as basic competencies required for MTL teaching (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1974). Besides the basic competencies, it is essential for bilingual education teachers to have cognitive, linguistic and affective competencies (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 1974; Carlisle-Zepeda & Saldate, 1977). It is stressed that competency in the area of cultural awareness is mandatory for affective competency.

As aforementioned, other than the diploma in EL teaching, it is apparent that only language proficiency is required to teach TL in kindergartens in Singapore. Unlike

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3 In 2001, the Pre-school Qualification Accreditation Committee (PQAC) was set up to oversee the standards and quality of pre-school teacher training for both kindergarten and child care sectors in Singapore. This is jointly steered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). From 1 Jan 2013 all new teachers must have 5 ‘O’ level credits including a credit in EL and a DECCE-T; those with a C5 or C6 in EL will require either a B4 or a 6.5 in IELTS to teach K1 & K2. MTL teachers must have at least a B4 in GCE ‘O’ Level MTL.
the Mandarin Language teachers who are diploma trained in teaching the language, the Malay and Tamil bilingual teachers attend neither formal language training nor training on the use of the NEL MT framework. However, the ML and TL teachers are appointed to teach their respective MTs based on their academic attainment in the language. Despite lacking the resources, curriculum structure, and training, kindergarten teachers of TL in Singapore kindergartens are expected to decide on and to facilitate quality teaching and learning experiences in TL. TL teachers’ competencies are one of the key concerns in meeting this expectation.

It was only in 2014, after the launch of the Supporting MTL Early Childhood Educators, that ECDA announced its plan to organize one-and-half day workshops, from the end of 2014, to help MTL teachers apply the Framework. The workshops were to cascade from principals, supervisors, and senior teachers, then subsequently to MTL teachers, who are the lowest-ranked. The passing of knowledge through the various ranks means teachers have been interpreting the framework for their instruction of TL in their respective kindergartens. Even then the workshop is for the transmission of knowledge on the utilization of the framework to the TL teachers and not the development of their competencies and skills to teach TL.

Summary

Studies relating to TL revealed the shift from TL monolingualism amongst the ‘grandparent-generation’; to a bridging combination of MT and EL by the ‘parent-generation’ and finally to EL monolingual ‘child-generation’ (Raman, 2002). Evidence of code-switching, code-mixing and language shift leading to the loss of ethnic languages amongst the bilingual children indicated a serious problem, especially for Tamil Language (TL) (Saravanan, 1994; Tan, 2014). The policy has been named for the younger generation’s loss of interest in using TL or not identifying with the TL ethnic, cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the bilingual education policy has been hailed as an educational success story and is viewed as crucial for Singapore’s economic survival and national interest. The current notion is that Bilingual education has not gone wrong but had made “learning difficult” unless both EL and MTL are learned from an early age (Lee, 2011). Kindergarten teachers teaching MTL are challenged to make MTL language learning engaging and interesting.

These initiatives have brought the teachers of TL as MT in kindergartens to the forefront in providing quality teaching and learning experiences. Moreover, literature regarding quality teaching and learning experiences showed that teachers’
perspectives on MT language play an important role in their facilitation of quality experiences (Shin & Krashen, 1996; Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford & Arias, 2005; Vaish, 2012). Additionally, findings revealed that teachers’ attitudes to teaching and learning in MT were likely to be more positive for those who had acquired ethnic language or L2 teacher training (Byrnes et al., 1997; McInerney et al., 2001; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; OECD, 2009).

Teachers of TL in Singapore kindergartens, despite lacking resources, specific curriculum structure and training for TL teaching are making decisions on what forms quality teaching and learning experiences. It is probable that teachers’ perspectives influence their quality teaching and learning experiences. Studies showed that perspectives of teachers are crucial influences on quality teaching and learning experiences and that teachers' beliefs and values are socially and culturally shaped mental constructs that are commonly acquired from their respective pre-school environment and the stipulated learning outcomes. It was reiterated that trained teachers demonstrated positive perspectives to teaching the language. The contextual issues outlined in the latter part of this chapter, underline the need to understand the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL). The next chapter presents conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on linguistic and applied linguistics pertinent to this study.

List of Definitions

Bilingual Education Policy

“Bilingual Education Policy” in Singapore is where EL is taught as the L1 and the MT as an L2. Singapore's Bilingual Education Policy adopted in 1996 was more than just a policy, a program, a population, or a progression (Pakir, 2004; Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). The Education policy is based on the All Party Report on Chinese Education of 1956 (Kam & Gopinathan, 1999), which recommended equal treatment for English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil, the four official languages in the formal education system. Schools were converted to English medium, where the EL is taught as the L1 and the MT as an L2. It is mandated for students in the formal education sector to study all subject-matter curricula through the English medium while acquiring a level of proficiency in their official MT (Mandarin for Chinese, Malay for Malays and Tamil for Tamil-speaking Indians). Students are assigned a ‘Mother Tongue’ based on ethnicity, and both these languages are examinable which equates language learning to academic attainment. Bilingual Education Policy is not regulated at preschool levels though strongly recommended.
Curriculum

The curriculum is a set of guiding principles or a roadmap established to help the teachers decide on the content to be taught and ideas on ‘how’ to teach. It also helps in defining methods to be used to measure each student’s learning outcomes. It is considered as prescriptive and is more general than a syllabus. The curriculum is usually designed at the National or institute level. In this study, reference is made to the NEL Framework for Kindergartens designed by the MOE and the curriculum designed by the respective kindergartens.

Early Childhood and Development Agency

The Early Childhood and Development Agency (ECDA) is an autonomous agency jointly overseen by the MOE and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). ECDA is hosted under MSF. The agency serves as the regulatory and developmental authority for the early childhood sector in Singapore. It also oversees and approves early childhood teacher training courses.

English Language (L1)

The term “English Language (EL)” is utilized as a non-native language. EL is the core language of instruction in the formal and preschool education systems. EL is commonly referred to as the L1. The EL was chosen as the official language due to Singapore’s economic concerns and interethnic communication (Lee, 2000; Pakir, 2008; Tupas, 2011). The English Language is the de facto L1; this convention is used in this study.

Kindergarten

The term “Kindergarten” is used interchangeably with pre-school. Kindergarten is a preschool regulated by the Education Act and licensed by MOE (Khoo, 2010). The pre-school caters to children between the ages four and six at three levels called Nursery, Kindergarten 1 (K1) and Kindergarten 2 (K2) respectively (Khoo, 2010). Kindergartens prepare K2 children for formal education at primary school and normally offer two languages that are English and MT in their programs. However, for centers where Malay or Tamil is not offered the non-Chinese children learn Chinese as their L2 until they move to primary level. This study will focus on MOE licensed kindergartens that offer English-Tamil languages.
Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports, abbreviated as MCYS is a government ministry. MCYS regulates policies, community infrastructure, programs and services for cohesion and resilience building in the nation. The ministry oversees childcare centers and abides by the Child Care Act, the act governing the control, licensing and inspection of childcare centers. MCYS, since 1st November 2012, has been restructured to be renamed Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), however in this essay the term ‘MCYS’ will be retained.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education, abbreviated as MOE is a government ministry. MOE regulates the formulation and implementation of all policies about education in Singapore. The ministry oversees the licensing of kindergartens and abides by the Education Act governing education and registration of schools.

Mother Tongue (L2)

World-wide nomenclature refers to Mother Tongue (MT) as the first language (L1); it is also known as native language. The term “first language” refers to the order of acquisition, and any languages acquired later are numbered accordingly (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). Native language is described as the language of the original community and has historical roots but not necessarily the language commonly used. Mother tongue is also regarded as a heritage language, to the language of a person’s family, which the person does not necessarily speak or understand but with which they culturally identify (Valdes, 2005; Kelleher, 2010).

In Singapore, the term ‘Mother Tongue (MT)’ is the de facto ethnic language or the second language (L2), designated in accordance to the ethnicity of a child’s father (Dixon, 2005). It is not necessarily the home language or the first language acquired by a child. MT is defined solely by a student's official registered race. Students are assigned official MTs, namely Mandarin for Chinese, Malay for Malays, and Tamil for Indians as their official L2 in the formal education system. English Language (EL) is the first language (L1) in the system. Learning in Mother Tongue is deemed necessary to preserve the ethnic culture and retain the roots (Vaish, 2012). Though there are some MTLs amongst Singapore Indians, such as Bengali / Gujarati / Hindi / Panjabi / Urdu, only Tamil is recognized as one of the official languages. For the purpose of a working definition, ‘Mother Tongue (MT)’ will be used to refer to the learning of a second language (L2) or target language in this study.
**Perspectives**

In qualitative research, “perspective” is regarded as the belief, value and practice system of an individual and the actual action taken (Barros & Ella, 1998). O’Donoghue’s (2007) definition of a perspectival study is that it observes the aims or intentions of the participants, the strategies that they use to achieve their aims and intentions, the significance that they attribute to them and the outcomes that they expect. Blackledge & Hunt (1985) offer a similar definition.

**Pre-School Qualification Accreditation Committee**

The Pre-School Qualification Accreditation Committee (PQAC) is a body established in 2001 by MOE and MCYS to ascertain and maintain high educational standards in quality of preschool teacher training for both kindergartens and childcare centers. PQAC jointly steered by MOE and MCYS, accredits and assess teachers, teacher qualification and teacher training in Singapore (Khoo, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2003).

**Singapore Education System**

The term “Singapore Education System” means the formal education system mandated by the MOE. The Singapore education system is divided into the formal education system and pre-school education system. The formal system includes primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education. MOE oversees the operation, administration, and regulation of the formal education system. The “Pre-school Education System” is made up mainly of organizations in the child care and kindergarten sectors (Khoo, 2010). While child care and pre-school education are regulated and licensed by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the kindergartens come under the purview and regulation of the MOE.

**Syllabus**

The term ‘Syllabus’ for this study is used as a descriptive outline of topics, concepts, objectives, delivery instructions and assessment methods to a particular level. Syllabus is more detailed in comparison to the curriculum. It is either created by a governing organization/ kindergartens or teachers.

**Tamil Language**

The term “Tamil Language (TL)” is utilized as a native language of Singapore Indians for the teaching of MT. Tamil is a Dravidian language predominantly spoken by the Tamil Indians in Singapore. It is one of the four official languages in Singapore.
Tamil is one of the longest surviving languages with a rich culture. It is divided into Early Tamil in the sixth century, Medieval Tamil between the sixth and twelfth centuries and Modern Tamil from the twelfth century to present day. The language of Early and Medieval Tamil demonstrated many linguistic forms that were unique to poetry, devotional literature and moral literature. They emphasized literary Tamil, and in comparison with present Tamil, the use of grammar (phonology, morphology, and syntax) then differed. Literary Tamil is the variety of written Tamil that embraces norms as old as the 13th century and does not involve spoken varieties or vernaculars (Asher & Annamalai, 2002; Schiffman, 2002). Modern Tamil, an influence of English and European nations, led to the changes in the colloquialisms and pronunciation differences in the Tamil Language (Karunakaran, 2011). The language of writing (literary) differed considerably from the spoken language (Schiffman, 2002). In Singapore, the Tamil linguistic culture regards the literary Tamil as higher in status and therefore supports the notion that it should be used as the official language. The spoken Tamil language that is used in homes is not valued. The Tamil language is a language characterized by extreme diglossia.

As one of the three ethnic languages accorded the status of an official language in Singapore’s formal education system, Tamil is recognized as an important heritage language (Rajan, 2014). Education is viewed as the mainstay of Tamil language, culture and heritage maintenance in Singapore (Schiffman, 2002). The Tamil language is an examinable subject at the national level. Of the 495 kindergartens in Singapore, 15 % offer the Tamil Language as Mother Tongue (Ministry of Education, 2011).
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of literature relevant to the research. The literature on the three areas, Bilingual Education; Quality Teaching and Learning in MT; Teachers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values of bilingual education, as illustrated in Figure 2; and the intersection of these elements formed the conceptual framework that locates this thesis. However, due to the limited studies in the perspectives (attitudes, beliefs, and values) of preschool teachers in teaching MT (TL) the reviewed literature focused on general studies conducted on perspectives of teachers in teaching ethnic /L2 from kindergarten to elementary (or primary) schools.

Figure 2. Cognate fields of literature informing the Conceptual Framework

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the key terms and provides the definitions as used in the study. An account of conceptual alternatives and theoretical concepts are also provided in the same section. The second part is an overview of empirical studies on the teaching and learning of MT/ ethnic / L2 and the perspectives of the teachers. The final part discusses the theoretical framework for this study.
Bilingual Education - An Overview

The terms bilingualism and bilingual education frequently appear in literature and at times are used interchangeably. However, there is a great deal of variation in the meanings attributed to these two terms (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). The two terms, bilingualism and bilingual education, necessitates clarification because of the variations of meanings in different circles.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism as a concept has fluid semantics. Definitions are numerous and are continually being proffered without any real sense of progress as the list extends. Baker (2011) explained that ‘perfect foreign-language’ that does not result in the loss of the native language is Bilingualism, but then added that one could not define the degree of perfection. Mackey (1972, 2000) agreed that the use of not only one but two or more languages by the same individual is bilingualism and that the individual could be described as a bilingual. In the partial agreement, Grosjean (2010) proposed that bilingualism not be about fluency, but the regular use of languages. Mackey (2000) and Baker (2011) reiterated that language is not an abstract entity, but a tool for the purpose of communication. They emphasized the functional definition of bilingualism that shifted the focus from linguistic competence to language performance (language use in everyday context and events). An alternative approach focused on bilingualism as an attribute of a country in that bilingualism is the condition in which two living languages exist side-by-side in a country, each spoken by one national group, representing a fairly a large proportion of the people (Austin, Blume & Sanchez, 2015). The emphasis is on the existence of neighboring unilingual communities rather than the bilingual speakers (Austin, Blume & Sanchez, 2015).

The concept of bilingualism as discussed showed a lack of consensus even among experts, and there is also no universally accepted definition of what it means to be bilingual. Nonetheless, most authors use the term bilingualism to refer both to the bilingual individual and the bilingual society. Hamers and Blanc (2000) distinguished clarified that the concepts of bilingualism and bilinguality distinguish. Bilingualism refers to the state of a linguistic community whereby two languages are in contact and that some individuals are bilinguals (societal bilingualism). On the other hand, bilinguality (individual bilingualism) is the psychological state of an individual who is exposed to more than one language as a means of social interactions and are subjected to dimensions of psychological, social, sociological, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and linguistic experience (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). They also distinguished between minimalist bilingualism and maximalist bilingualism. To achieve maximalist bilinguality,
an individual needs to be native-like in the four basic skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening). An individual is regarded as a minimalist bilingual if that individual is even able to sing or have a simple conversation in a different language. Bilingualism is viewed as a continuum from minimalist to maximalist competency (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011; Austin, Blume & Sanchez, 2015).

Psycholinguistics had sub-categorized early childhood bilingualism as Simultaneous bilingualism, Receptive bilingualism and Sequential bilingualism (Baker, 2011; De Groot 2011). Simultaneous bilingualism is the learning of two languages as ‘first languages’ - to develop, from total ignorance, the ability to understand and speak two languages, typically developed from infancy in the home environment. Children from such settings are proficient in both languages and are classified as ‘balanced bilinguals.’ Receptive bilingualism also known as passive bilingualism is the ability to understand the L2, but not necessarily be able to speak it or write it. On the other hand, Sequential bilingualism is the learning of another language after a child had already established a first language (L1). These children are classified as ‘dominant bilinguals’ or ‘unbalanced bilinguals’ (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011). ‘Unbalanced bilinguals’ are those with a higher level of proficiency in one language than in the other.

In Singapore, bilingualism is “English-knowing” bilingualism, which is to be competent in EL (L1) and the assigned official MT(L2) language as elaborated in chapter two (Pakir, 2008; Tupas, 2011; Tan, 2014). At the surface, the simultaneous and sequential bilingualism appeared to be the common trends in Singapore (Kuo, 1985; Dixon, 2005). However, the surge in EL, as the first language in Singapore homes, had steered learning EL (L1) and MT (L2) from simultaneous to sequential (Tan, 2014). Pre-schoolers in this context are generally ‘unbalanced bilinguals’ who are proficient in EL but not in their MT (Tan, 2014). As outlined in the preceding chapter, MT is recognized as a language of identity, of culture and values to keep Singaporeans ethnically-anchored while EL (L1) offers political and economic benefits. Owing to the political and economic status of EL, it took dominance over MT in practice; in Singapore, it is ‘first-language-knowing bilingualism’ (Doraisamy, 1969; Pakir 2008; Tupas, 2011; Gopinathan, 2013; Tan 2014).

**Bilingual Education**

The term “Bilingual education” is defined as a form of education in which students have information presented to them in two (or more) languages (Baker, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen, 2014). Theoretically, an educational system that uses more than
one language is bilingual education (De-Meija, 2002). On the contrary, Baker (2011) pointed out that bilingual education is a ‘simple term for a complex phenomenon.’ He explained that bilingual education could refer to the education of students who were already speakers of two languages or education of students who were learning an additional language. Learners of the additional language could be immigrants, refugees, members of minority groups or who wanted to learn the dominant language though able to speak in two languages such as Spanish and their home language in Canada, which is the situation in US and England (Baker, 2011; Wei, 2011; Chowdhury & Marlina, 2014). Other definitions focus on the medium of instruction, defining bilingual education as the use of two or more languages to teach subject content, to develop an understanding of languages and culture awareness, a sense of cultural identity and cultivates an appreciation for human diversity (Ovando & Collier, 1985; Dixon, 2005; Baker, 2011). Consequently, the term bilingual education includes the concept of bicultural education as it is impossible to separate language and culture (Garcia, 2005; Dixon, 2005). It underpinned the very ‘characteristics of human societies, social change, cultural and ethnocentric developments’ (Wee, 2003; Gopinathan et al., 2004; Baker, 2011; Tan, 2014).

Bilingual education is rooted in the historical context of the country. In the US, Canada, England, and Sweden, bilingual education was linked to the context of immigration, political movements like civil rights, equality of education opportunity; affirmative action and melting pot (integrationist, assimilationist) policies (Garcia, 2005; Baker, 2011). The United States 1968 Bilingual Education Act defined bilingual education as the use of two languages, one of which is English and the other the native or ethnic language of the child as mediums of instruction. Unlike Singapore, in the United States the native or ethnic language is regarded as the child’s first language (L1) and EL as the second language (L2). It was the first comprehensive and most influential federal intervention in the schooling of language minority students. It has since evolved from “providing meaningful and equitable access for only English-language learners to the curriculum” into the all-encompassing Bilingual Education Act 1994, in “serving as an instrument of language policy for the nation through the development of learners’ native languages” (August & Hakuta, 1997, p. 16).

**Aspects of Bilingual Education and aims and outcomes.**

Bilingual education methods varied according to the political and socio-cultural differences and the aim and outcomes, as well as the views of overall value and purpose of the education (Ferguson, Houghton & Wills, 1977; Fishman, 2001; Wee, 2003; Edwards, 2010; Baker, 2011, Tan, 2014). The methods were often classified as transitional or maintenance, depending on the program’s
aims and outcomes that are steered by Sociolinguistic, Political or Educationist perspectives (Fishman, 2001; Gopinathan, 2001; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Baker, 2011).

Fishman (2001) critiqued bilingual education from the sociolinguistic perspective. He stressed that bilingual methods must have societal implications, make societal assumptions and required societal data for their implementation and evaluation. One avowed purpose of bilingual education was maintenance and development of linguistic and cultural diversity. Fishman added that 'much bilingual education was attempting language shift or language maintenance with little or no conscious awareness of the complexity of such an effort when viewed from a societal perspective' (Fishman, 1965, p. 20). He proposed four typologies of bilingual education: transitional, monoliterate, partial and full bilingualism and debated their societal implications. Sociolinguistics asserted that effectiveness of bilingual programs was very much dependent on the social, cultural and political environment in which a school works (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011). As an illustration, in many schools in the United States, 'Two-way Immersion' has proven to be highly successful. The program has integrated the aims of Two Way Bilingualism to produce bilingual, biliterate and multicultural children with high levels of proficiency in both languages and the two-way immersion programs worked towards academic, language and affective (positive cross-cultural attitude and behaviors) goals (Howard, Sugarman & Christian, 2007; Baker, 2011).

Nonetheless, proponents of political perspectives argued that wherever bilingual programs exist, politics are involved (Kaplan, 2010), because the ideology of pragmatism or survival would override all other concerns (Gopinathan et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2008; Tupas, 2011). Gopinathan, Ho, and Saravanan, (2004) and Kaplan (2010) pointed out that behind language planning is language politics, as what might pose as conservation of threatened languages would underpin political debates about national identity, dominance, and questions about social order and social cohesiveness and the perceived potential submission of language minorities. Any form of social control (like language management for ethnic relations) would qualify as pragmatism as long as it supported the improvement of the economy (Tupas, 2011). Such ideological positions commonly result in a unique kind of education. In the case of Singapore, English as the L1 and the three MTLs as L2 Bilingual education in the curriculum was an inevitable outcome of economic-politics (Saravanan,
Wee (2003) characterized bilingual education as linguistic instrumentalism engineered by political ideology. Contrastingly, the educationists reasoned that bilingual education is a pedagogy and that language learning is continued from preschool following through formal schooling to adult education (Kaplan, 2010). The pedagogical perspective emphasizes cognitive definition and cognitive functioning pedagogy. Using the bilingual program to transmit curriculum content is valorized as standard raising, child-centered, and responsive to parents and children as clients (Kaplan, 2010). Educationists argued that a bilingual program (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011):

- allows for full development of both L1 and an L2.
- develops broader enculturation.
- generates biliteracy, facilitating opportunities for different perspectives and viewpoints and leading to a deeper understanding of heritage and traditions.
- develops cognition and creativity, supporting interpersonal awareness as well as metalinguistic awareness.
- raises children’s self-esteem by recognizing the home (heritage) language in school, thus contributing positively to confidence in ability and potential, interacting with achievement and curriculum success.
- facilitates economic advantage for child's future personal and professional life.

As the focus of this study is on teachers’ perspectives on quality teaching and learning of MT (TL), it was necessary to examine the Educationist perspectives in achieving the aims or intentions. The reviews and research grounded in Educationist perspectives debated the comparable effectiveness of Two-way Bilingual (or Dual language), Heritage Language and Immersion Bilingual education programs (Cummins 1984; de Courcy, 2002; Johnston, 2002; Krashen, 2003; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Baker, 2011). These methods were to promote L1 and L2s for academic achievements, cultivate home language and to meet the social and economic challenges of the nation (Baker, 2011).

In Two-way Bilingual Education or Dual language programs, for some children, English is L1, and they learn the second language as L2. For the remaining children, the situation is reversed, with their native language as L1 and English as L2. Lessons are taught in both languages alternately within the same classroom in the belief that both groups will become fluent in the other
language. This program is sometimes coupled with ESL teaching practices. Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2010, p. 430), located ample research findings to establish the positive impact of Two-way Bilingual programs in promoting bilingual, biliterate, content area and multilingual competencies (Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993; Oller & Eilers, 2002; Krashen, 2003; Genesee, 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Baker, 2011). The research concluded that Two-way Bilingual education at the elementary level was the optimal program for the long-term academic success of language minority students (Baker, 2011).

Heritage language broadly refers to non-societal and non-majority languages spoken by groups often regarded as linguistic minorities. Education programs focus on the study, maintenance, and revitalization of the minority languages, with the goal of full bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy (Baker, 2011; Tan, 2014). Baker elaborated that Heritage language instruction was usually the medium of instruction between 50 and 90 percent of the curriculum time. Reviews of Heritage Language Education for indigenous American schooling imply that the program was effective in the maintenance of children’s home language, their performance in other curriculum areas, including EL, and development of positive attitudes (Cummins, 1984; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010). When home language is used in school, children tend to believe that the home language, home, culture, and parents are accepted by the school. This viewpoint was likely to contribute to the development of children’s sense of identity, self-esteeem, and self-concept (Johnstone, 2002; Duff, 2008).

Immersion programs are designed to teach “majority language speakers” a foreign language (Baker, 2011). It is a method of using L2 as the medium of classroom instruction to develop students’ communicative competence in their L2 in addition to their L1 (their native language). In an immersion program, students are fully or partially immersed in the target language (L2) for as much as fifty percent of the day both in and outside the class (Baker, 2011; Hickey & Mejia, 2014). The learning environment is designed to accommodate and to respect the native language (L1) and facilitate its growth with L2. It is considered that attaining competency in the L2 will enrich children’s learning of the L1; thus, it integrates cultural horizons and sensitizes students to their language culture and values. Immersion education draws upon political, social and cultural ideology and is viewed as an optimal program for the early years (Hickey & Mejia, 2014). Although various studies of the Immersion model confirmed that students mostly succeed in gaining competence in both
languages, proficiency was uneven; they had native-like performance in receptive skills (listening and reading) but not for productive skills (speaking and writing) in their target language (Johnston 2002; De Courcy, 2002; Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011). One of the limitations highlighted was that for some students, “immersion” was a school-only phenomenon confined within that system (Baker, 2011).

Though research supports sociolinguistic, political and educationist perspectives in bilingual education, generalizing the research results from one country to another was problematic: the varying results were related to ‘particular political and educational contexts’ (Baker, 2011, p. 254). Conversely, there appears to be an agreement in the literature that the intended aims and outcomes of bilingual education not only navigate and determine the choice of a bilingual education method but also define the programs’ effectiveness (Kaplan, 2010; Baker 2011). Bilingual education is contextualized to achieve the aims and outcomes, as well as beliefs in the overall value and purpose of the education, which was the situation in Singapore (Lee et al., 2008; Gopinathan, 2013).

In Singapore, there has been a recent shift towards emphasizing the economic value of MT and the Government’s attempt to accommodate English alongside MT. However, preschoolers in Singapore are ‘immersed’ in EL (L1), the dominant language before they acquire age-appropriate mastery in their MT(L2), as not all preschools offer MT of the child’s ethnicity, especially for TL (Tan, 2014). Although immersion is regarded as an optimal program that aims to achieve additive bilingualism, it can actually lead to “submergence” in EL and bring about subtractive bilingualism. Subtractive bilingualism results from a situation in which the child’s ethnic language, is devalued in his or her environment and there is social pressure not to use it, which is the situation for TL in preschools in Singapore. Subtractive bilingualism can have serious negative consequences for TL maintenance let alone learning (Lambert, 1980; Cummins, 1984; De Groot, 2011, Tan, 2014). Researchers contended that children who work in an additive bilingual environment succeed to a greater extent than those whose ethnic language and culture was devalued by their schools and by the wider society (Au, 1998; Takanishi, 2004; Tan, 2014). Studies related the learning of the second sequential language (target language) to critical period hypothesis and Second Language Acquisition and Learning theories (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). Singapore Bilingual Education policy is mandatory only in the formal education system; that is, at primary level. It is binding for primary school children to pass both L1 and their respective L2s. Preschool Education institutions had options on which, if any, MT to include in the preschool curriculum. Therefore, not all children, particularly Tamil children, had an equal opportunity to learn their designated L2 at the preschool level.
Preschool language immersion programs are essentially voluntary, and children cannot be compelled to learn Tamil Language (Schiffman, 2002).

**Mother Tongue (L2) and Preschool Years – Critical Period Hypothesis**

Lenneberg’s Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) about L2 (1967 cited in Mitchell et al., 2013) establishes that there is a biologically determined period of life when language is acquired more easily. Lenneberg asserted that the primary language acquisition needed to take place between age two and teenage, a period that coincides with the lateralization process of the brain. CPH, also known as “the sensitive period,” is defined as “the period during which a child can acquire language easily, rapidly, perfectly, and without instruction” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.145). Underlying the CPH is a biological view of L2 development, that young children are born with a special intuitive capacity for language that enables them to acquire their L1 - or first languages (in the case of bi- and plurilingual children).

Age of acquisition is the period of acquisition and linguistic proficiency (skills) or processing (knowledge). Although there is dissent about the CPH hypothesis, some research confirms the importance of age in L2 acquisition (Johnstone, 2002; Singleton & Ryan, 2004). Most researchers support “the younger, the better” hypothesis and imply L2 acquisition is only possible if begun in the early childhood years (Yamada et al., 1980; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999; Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Abrahamsson 2012; DeKeyser, 2013). Even the researchers who do not subscribe to CPH tend to agree that learning languages could become more difficult with age (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Richards and Schmidt reiterated that a gradual and continual decline of L2 acquisition did take effect from childhood when the critical period in the preschool years was not maximized.

Based on their study with children in Croatia, Djigunovich and Vilke (2000) suggested that six years was a good age to start L2 education if all key conditions were fulfilled. The conditions include intensive interaction in class, amounting to 45 minutes per day for five days per week, class size of 10-15 for languages and teachers who possess a fluent command of the language and good pronunciation and intonation. These conditions are contextualized to the study. Nikolov cautioned that 'if any of the requirements is missing, L2 (EL) instruction should not begin at an early age, as a negative experience may harm children's attitude to the target language and language learning in general.' (2000, p. 43).
The implications of the above study are salient to this research as it is only recently that preschoolers in kindergartens in Singapore have come under the radar for MT education. MOE has given limited emphasis to the initiative with the launch of the ‘MT Framework book’ for the teaching of Mandarin, Malay and Tamil in 2006, only as a recommendation and the observation “that the bottom line of the education system must evolve and start the bilingualism policy from preschool years” (Lee, 2011).

**Second Language Learning Theories: Mother Tongue (TL) Acquisition and Learning in children.**

Children’s L2 learning is immensely complex; it is not considered to be a defective version of the adult system, but an independent system (Cook, 1979, 2013). In addition to the CPH, some researchers have made a principled terminological distinction between unconscious acquisition and conscious learning in children (Bialystok, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2013). Bialystok (1997) who first drew the distinction, described the unconscious acquisition as implicit knowledge and conscious learning as explicit knowledge. Second Language Acquisition theory in principle is unconscious learning acquired through informal and implicit learning, while Language Learning theory in which conscious learning occurs through explicit teaching of formal linguistic knowledge of the language (Krashen, 1982; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Baker, 2011). Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Second Language Learning (SLL) are described as a dichotomy (Bialystok, 1997; Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013).

Developments in neurosciences, together with technical innovations for measuring brain activity shed new light on the neural basis of L2 processing, and on its relationship to native language processing (L1). Neural differences in L1 and L2 representations related only to the specific computational demands (Mitchell et al. 2013). These vary according to the age of acquisition, the degree of mastery and the level of exposure to each language (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). L2 learners acquired things in a sequence resembling L1 acquisition, and it was just ‘natural’ (Mitchell et al., 2013). Language is learned in a certain, predictable order, that is, parts of language appear before others (Krashen, 2003; Baker 2011).

The term SLA refers to the process of learning another language after the L1 has been learned (Gass, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). SLA theorists’ concerns are about the ways in which interactions between L1 and L2 affected the learning of both languages. Selinker (1972), hypothesized that children had a ‘separate linguistic system’ or mental device for coping with the
acquisition of two or more languages, which he labeled ‘interlanguage.’ The contrastive hypothesis regarded instances of interference between L1 and L2 as a result of (linguistic) habits transferred from L1 to L2 learning (Ellis, 1986; 1997). The interlanguage hypothesis challenged the contrastive hypothesis notion and stressed that children exposed, in the childhood years, to an L2 after acquiring their L1 were able to “acquire” as opposed to “learn,” both the languages (Ellis, 1997). The Interlanguage Hypothesis counterview is that the interference is a way that learners access a particular linguistic system in their attempt to acquire another language. It is noteworthy that the Interlanguage development is the root of Translanguaging (Wei, 2011; Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging describes the practice in which bilinguals treat the diverse languages of their repertoire as an integrated system, rather than as autonomous language systems as they shuttle between languages (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013; Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging, while regarded as an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and education of bilinguals, was identified as the cause leading to the loss of ethnic languages which has become a serious concern, especially for Tamil Language (TL) (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a; Schiffman, 2002; Tan, 2014). Findings also indicated that mixing languages resulted in a hybrid of languages like ‘Tanglish’ (Tamil-English) in India, Malaysia, and Canada (Kanthimathi, 2009; Chowdhury & Marlina, 2014). The hybrid language contributed to Tamil Language and Culture becoming obsolete (Kanthimathi, 2009; Chowdhury & Marlina, 2014). Though ‘Translanguaging’ (code-mixing, code-switching, and language shift) is described as a pedagogical practice in SLA and may have a range of potential advantages (Canagarah & Ashraff, 2013), it is acknowledged as a threat to heritage language maintenance (Saravanan, 1994, 2001a; Schiffman, 2002; Kanthimathi, 2009; Kenzhetayev, Keniskhanova & Duysekenov, 2016).

The contention was that SLA differs from the L1 acquisition, albeit both the first and SLA develop in sequence (Krashen, 1982a; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Baker, 2011), progress in order of sequence (Krashen, 1982a; Baker, 2011) and subjected to the universal grammar (Ellis, 1997; Baker 2011). Unlike the first language acquisition (LA) whereby children had manifested and habituated to the speech sound, speech perception and with the messages they are conveying and understanding, in SLA, the children’s knowledge of their first language also serves as a basis for acquiring the second language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010; De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The SLA primarily centers on the language input that children receive, the duration they are immersed in the language, and the more time
they spend doing intentional activities like reading, singing, and communicating. The experiences are communicative strategies focusing on affective factors. The affective factors that influence acquisition are children’s anxiety, personality, social attitudes and motivation (Mitchell et al., 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In contrast is Second Language Learning (SLL) was defined as implicit learning, fixed on emergentizm and processing perspectives (Ellis, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2013; Richards & Schmidt, 2014). SLL using grammar translation instruction is the result of direct instruction in the rules of the language. Error correction is maintained to help children come to the correct mental representation of the linguistic generalization. In language learning, children develop conscious knowledge (awareness) of the new language and skills in production (writing and speaking) as well as reception (reading and listening) (Baker, 2011). Therefore, children’s knowledge of the language and the proficiency in reception and production are mutually supported in language learning.

Incidentally, while the implicit (SLA) / explicit (SLL) debate does not provide definite answers, Krashen (2003) reasoned that acquisition and learning are indeed two ways of developing language ability. He posited two independent systems for developing ability in the second language, subconscious language acquisition, and conscious language learning; the acquisition system initiates an utterance and the learning system ‘monitors’ the utterance to inspect and correct errors. However, he stressed that acquisition of language is more important than learning as the ‘monitor’ can sometimes become a barrier as the child is forced to slow down and focus on accuracy as opposed to fluency. Krashen contended that positive and negative transfer between languages might occur in the acquisition of the L2 and therefore acquiring an L2 requires a conscious effort often on the part of the learner (2003). That is, after the acquisition of an L1, the L2 has to be learned explicitly before it becomes an acquired language. L2 learning may turn into an acquisition with focused input and directed practice (Krashen, 2003). Krashen’s Contrastive hypothesis and Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis has had a very great influence on language teaching practices (Krashen, 1982b; Baker, 2011; Gas, 2013).

Behaviorists, constructivists, and social, cultural theorists, after Krashen, considered that children’s L2 was learned, therefore, and adopted either the cognitive perspective or interactionist perspective (input hypothesis) or functional, sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspective (Baker, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013). Behaviorists insisted that learning of L2 occur primarily through imitating the adults, and essentially resulted from shaping children’s ‘habits’ through repeated trial, error and rewards.
Contrastingly, constructivists insist on the development of cognition in stages and the process of connection to children’s existing knowledge through active and meaningful involvement in a holistic sense (Baker, 2011; Gass, 2013). Social-cultural theorists, adopting the interactionist position, claimed that the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the child’s innate capacities determined language development (Mitchell et al., 2013: Gass, 2013).

Essentially, theorists seem to agree on the innate and environmental factors, within the natural and instructional settings, but there is a lack of agreement among researchers and theorists in the ways that they conceptualize language learning. (See Appendix A for the evolution of theories and their implications for teaching practice.) Researchers and teachers who were locating SLL theories, for an insight into MTL teaching practices were often frustrated due to the disagreement amongst ‘experts’ (Hannak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003).

Even if there were such agreements, the subsequent challenge would be interpretation and application of the theory to MTL teaching. Hence, it is noteworthy to understand how the TL teachers teaching in Singapore kindergartens, constructed their personal theories about learning and planning, and their practices in teaching and assessing the children’s performances based on their interpretation of the theory of L2 learning.

The preceding discussion indicates that bilingual education aims and outcomes, as well as views of the overall value and purpose of the education, is contextualized within political and socio-cultural factors (Fishman, 2001; Edwards, 2010; Baker, 2011). The literature also reveals that the differing methods in educationist perspectives and L2 learning theories resulted in teachers not only interpreting the aims and intentions of bilingual education but also forming their personal beliefs about the theories of quality teaching and learning. It is probable that teachers of TL in Singapore draw on their perspectives on education as well as their interpretations of L2 learning theories to construct their aims and intentions and thus define quality teaching and learning experiences for TL curricula. Consequently, an overview of literature regarding the quality teaching and learning in MT is presented in the next section and then followed by teachers’ perspectives on bilingual education and quality teaching and learning. The term ‘learning,’ from this section onwards, is used in its general sense and does not differentiate between SLA and SLL unless otherwise stated.
Overview Quality Teaching and Learning – Mother Tongue

The proliferation of definitions of quality teaching and learning has produced several varying and sometimes conflicting concepts. However, the conceptualizations of quality in teaching and learning of L2 fall into two main groups: outcome measures and input measures.

In outcome measures, quality is described as “effective” and other times “successful” bilingual education based on learners’ academic performance or competence, or on achieving an institute’s learning outcomes or the MT education aims and intentions that are politically influenced by a government agenda (Hanak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003).

Input measures judge the effectiveness of bilingual education by evaluating the language of instruction and models adopted in the teaching practices (Richards, 2013). Input measures focus on the quality of the educational program, activity and service benefits for all stakeholders. Amongst the key stakeholders are students, parents, teachers, and institutes. Richards (2010) asserted that as much as the learner experience is a key indicator of the quality of education provision, the perspective of the teacher on teaching and learning was equally imperative.

According to Renandya (2013) quality teaching and learning in language must ‘balance’ both output measures and input measures as an emphasis on either one is likely to result in an unbalanced system with unintended and negative consequences (Renandya, 2013). He explained that to be considered a competent user of a language, one need to know the underlying system of the language and to be able to use this system, implying that both measures are interrelated and linked to assure quality teaching and learning experiences. The following segment reviews literature in this regard though emphasizing on indicators of quality teaching and learning in MT.

Teaching and Learning Mother Tongue: Definition

Despite the wide acceptance by the teaching community as a generic feature of education, the terms ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ have different meanings for different people. It is relevant to describe these terms for the purpose of this discussion.

Teaching has been defined in various ways: to impart or transmit knowledge (Whitehead, 2009); further the education (Morrison, 2008); as a cluster of activities such as explaining, questioning, engaging, motivating and stimulating (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009); development of a child (Baker, 2011); and, facilitation of learning (Farrant, 1980). Teaching is also conceptualized as a process through which teachers assist and encourage children’s learning. MacNaughton and Williams (2009) described
the process to be highly complex and dynamic, in which teachers made decisions about how to best respond to children to support their learning.

To comprehend the efficacy of teaching in L2 to preschoolers, it is necessary, to begin with, some fundamental thinking about the teachers’ goals which the teaching seeks to attain (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). Setting objectives was a necessary first step in raising the quality of MT teaching (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Cook, 2013). Cook stressed that only once what is to be achieved is clear, can teachers make informed decisions about teaching methods relevant to what is to be learned by the preschoolers and how they can be stimulated (2013). She stated that the first step was to study learning itself, and the second step was to see how teaching relates to learning. Teaching and learning are causally tightly bound activities, so questioning “what is learning?” might lead to an understanding of efficient teaching.

The term ‘learning,’ by psychologists’ definition, is a process that depended on experience and led to long-term changes in behavior potential (De Groot, 2011). This was, of course, arguable; as some authors acknowledged changes in "capability" or even simple "knowledge" or "understanding" in learners, even if they did not manifest in behavior (Mitchell et al., 2013; Cook 2013). On the other hand, teachers who embraced cognitive theory believed in the complexities of child memory and academic achievements; those who advocated constructivism viewed learning as a learner’s ability to extend their prior knowledge; and sociocultural adherents viewed learning as a social process that started from human intelligence in society or culture and was fundamental for cognitive development (Hanak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003: Baker, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013).

Teachers’ concepts of learning and the related experiences they provide for children are induced by the teachers’ learning objectives. Research into pedagogic practices of teachers revealed that teachers’ aims and objectives are likely to be predisposed by the L2 learning theories or their perceived aims and intentions guided by the curriculum outcomes (mandated by national or institutional levels) or based on their personal experiences and social interactions (Karaata, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Learning objectives are the foundation for discussing the didactic shaping of MT education and starting-point for evaluation of teaching (what should children learn) and learning (what children had learned) efficiency. Only with clear objectives laid down, can the stakeholders like schools, parents and educational policy representatives make objective judgments about the quality of teaching and learning – how to teach for learning to take place in children (Cook, 2013).
However, the differences in aims and intentions at national, institutional and personal levels, inevitably drew on diverse perspectives on appropriate quality indicators on teaching and learning of MT (Cook, 2013). Currently, there are no common indicators on quality teaching and learning but wide-ranging frameworks of quality indicators of L2 teaching and learning (Ramos & Mabanglo, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2013b).

Frameworks described clear expectations for effective teaching and learning, identifying exemplary practices that will enable teachers to meet the stipulated goals within the context (Ramos & Mabanglo, 2012; Ministry of Education, 2013b). Frameworks are designed to help districts promote a common definition and understanding of excellence in teaching, amongst the stakeholders and to determine the key indicators for quality teaching and learning (Verhelst, Branden, Nulft & Verhallen, 2009; LAUSD, 2013; TELL, 2014).

**Quality Indicators for Second Language Teaching and Learning**

A common trend in the limited but varied L2 learning and teaching frameworks was that the quality standards were across four domains (Education Bureau, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2004; CEFR, 2007; DEEWR, 2009; Verhelst, Branden, Nulft & Verhallen, 2009; Ramos & Mabanglo, 2012; LAUSD, 2013: TELL, 2014). The quality standards, drawn from diverse L2 frameworks were synthesized across four domains, summarizing the key indicators and their associated components (Table 2).

Table 2

**Key Indicators and Related Components for Quality Teaching and Learning in L2 (MT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator Standards</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Child as Learner</td>
<td>• Characteristics</td>
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<td>• Aptitude</td>
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<td>• Attitude</td>
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<td>The Classroom Environment</td>
<td>• Environment of respect and rapport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establish culture for learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working with families and community</td>
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<td>Delivery of Instruction and Assessment</td>
<td>• Communicating with learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Questioning and discussion techniques</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Engage learners through inquiry</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Real-life context through exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Professionalism</td>
<td>• Professional Knowledge, skills, and competencies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Professional Growth</td>
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**Child as a learner.**

Reportedly, it was common to find in the same classroom, some children progressing rapidly in L2 learning in comparison to their peers, who may be
struggling (Dornyei, 2005). Dornyei, (2005, 2006) attributed differences in learners’ achievements in L2 learning to differences in learner characteristics. Research on individual differences among L2 learners (Genesee & Hamayan, 1980; Skehan, 1989; Dornyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008) identified child characteristics as a factor affecting their learning. The main traits that correlate with L2 learning were the child’s aptitude for and attitude to the language (Dornyei, 2006; Ellis, 2008).

**Learner Attitude – Attitude and motivation.** Child attitude, shaped by social factors, was one of the crucial variables that influenced the learning experiences of L2 (Ellis, 2008). According to Ellis, learners with positive attitudes who experienced success would have these attitudes reinforced; similarly negative attitudes in learners who experienced a lack of success were also likely to be reinforced.

Attitude is a ‘set of beliefs that the learners held toward the members of the target language group, the target language culture and in the case of classroom learning, towards their teachers and the learning they were given’ (Atchade, 2002, p.45). In a similar trend, findings revealed that learners’ attitude was an effective factor that influenced the learning experiences of their L2 (Burstell, 1975; Schumann, 1978; Gass, 2013), and that integration of attitude and motivation influenced effectiveness of learning (Dornyei et al., 2006; Garrett, 2010).

Motivation involves both the reasons (motives) that learners had for learning a language as well as the intensity of their feelings (Gass, 2013). It is defined as two factors: one was the communicative learner needs, and the other was their attitude towards the L2 community. Learning success very much depends on how much the learner wants to learn the language and whether the motivation is more practical (instrumental motivation), or social and emotional (integrative motivation). Though both motivations impacted L2 learning, learners who are integratively motivated are more successful than those, who are instrumentally motivated (Dornyei et al., 2006; Garrett, 2010). Integratively motivated learners want to learn the language because they want to speak the language and are interested in the culture associated with that language.

**Learner Aptitude.** ‘Aptitude,’ drawn from psychology, was defined as a natural ability for language that referred to the potential for achievement and quick learning, which was identified as the distinguishing feature of L2 success (Ellis, 2008). Unlike attitude, it was a measurement of performance on standard tests
Aptitude refers to a specific ability for language learning, that is, a combination of linguistic memory and auditory ability and had no link to attitude (Ellis, 2008). Some learners had a higher aptitude for language learning than others (Ellis, 2008, p. 659) and were, therefore, likely to enjoy more successful adaption to instructions and attainment in proficiency. Language aptitude is related to general intelligence.

Robinson (2013) highlighted the theory about a cluster of four abilities that resulted in language learning aptitude: phonetic coding ability (to store new language sounds); grammatical sensitivity (awareness of syntactical patterning in a language as meta-awareness rather than specific grammatical terminology); rote learning ability (memory based on repetition); and inductive learning ability (making meaning, understanding and using the language material). The notion was that simply hearing a language with understanding was insufficient; the input must make meaning to enable the learner’s utilization, whether for utilitarian or value-expressive functions (Robinson, 2013).

Research indicated that the most widely used aptitude tests were Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB). These tools developed during the Grammar Translation and Audiolinguistic period, did not measure the different abilities and stages of development that contributed to the L2 learning (Ellis, 2008; Robinson, 2013). Robinson laments that ‘no current test of aptitude operationalizes this developmental perspective’ and nothing in specific to L2 aptitude testing (2013). Unfortunately, this means measures of aptitude are limited to drills and metalinguistic explanations without consideration for the learner’s cognitive abilities. The abilities such as processing input for meaning, organizing what had been heard and relating it to what is known from explicit instructions, incidental learning from the oral input and corrective output related to L2 learning are omitted in the tests (Robinson, 2013).

Arguably, learners might not be strong in all of the components of aptitude and may have different abilities (strength, weakness) and needs (learning styles) for L2 learning (Ellis, 2008; Robinson, 2013). Therefore, an aptitude profile of learners would help teachers in selecting appropriate classroom activities and strategies for teaching that were sufficiently wide-ranging to accommodate the learning abilities and needs (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009; Robinson, 2013).
The classroom environment.

The classroom environment typically incorporates the physical setting, the psychological environment established in social contexts, and the instructions linked to teacher characteristics and behaviors (Driscoll, 2009). The concept of classroom environment refers to the mental and social conditions in which teachers and learners operate. The mental condition signified the teachers’ approach (for example, the focus on attention, nature of interaction and practice opportunities); the social condition referred to student and teacher roles in the setting (Irma, 1996). Behavior is a function of one’s characteristics and associated with the environment that structures learning, engagement, motivation, social relationships, and group dynamics (Irma, 1996; Fraser, 2002).

The classroom environment depended on the quality of relationships among teachers and learners (TELL, 2014). When teachers strive to engage children in a discussion or activity, their interactions with them speak volumes about the extent to which they value and respect the children as people from a multicultural background, with diverse needs and abilities. Respect and Rapport indicated a safe and supportive milieu in which risk-taking was encouraged; children were motivated to contribute ideas spontaneously, and their mistakes were treated as teaching opportunities (Alison, 1993). Building trust and rapport by talking to children at personal level, developed children’s enthusiasm was the key ‘motivational tool’ for learning (Alison, 1993; Dornyei, 2005).

Establishing a culture of learning and working with families are the other two key elements in an environment for positive learning. “Culture,” in this context, recognizes that the way things were done in a setting was not always expressed verbally, but also through actions like body language, the tone of voice, gesture, inflection and invasion of child’s personal space (Cummins, 1997; Gregory, 2010). According to Gregory (2010, p. 23), “what teachers said, did and alluded to, had an effect on learners and their perceptions of success.”

Similarly, to succeed, children needed to believe that they could learn and that what they were learning was useful, relevant, and meaningful for them (Cummins, 1997; Baker, 2011). They needed to have a sense of belonging in the classroom and that they were responsible for their learning and behavior. Cummins (1997) suggest that an environment for empowerment developed a self-directed learner who was confident in making the information his or her own. His rationale was that a child’s self-concept, constructed through a myriad
of interactions and teaching strategies that occurred in the environment, was central to the child’s sense of his or her role in learning and the value of the language in the society.

**Delivery of instruction and assessment.**

Focusing on different aspects of L2 instruction created different kinds of the learning environment (Irma, 1996; Garcia, 2009). Irma differentiated between ‘form-focused’ and ‘meaning-focused’ learning environments. According to Irma, ‘form-focused’ favored transmission of linguistic competence resulting in whole-class instruction, lockstep conditions restricting communication and practice opportunities that were often mechanistic and concentrated on different skills. In contrast, ‘meaning-focused’ classrooms paid attention to all aspects of communicative competence thus adopting a flexible syllabus, built to some extent on learner needs and characterized by culture-bound, content-based target language work in groups, skills integration, flexible materials, and rich opportunity for input and practice (1996, p 6-8).

The Structural, Audiolinguistic, GT and Communicative approaches were widespread methods of instruction in L2 classrooms (Shegar & Rahman, 2005, Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The structural approach is based on teachers’ belief that L2 can be best learned through the mastery of structures which is more important than acquisition of vocabulary. Therefore, the focus was on patterns and formation of words and sentences by way of drill and repetition and correlation of teaching of grammar and vocabulary with reading lessons (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Audiolinguistic teaching was based on behaviorist theory emphasizing formation of habits through the practice, memorization and repetition of grammatical structures in isolation from each other and meaningful contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The emphasis was on the language itself, and the aim was to learn the vocabulary and grammatical rules, including phonological knowledge, for an examination and not for the use of the language for daily communications. It is critiqued as a mechanical practice of language patterns. On the other hand, GT is a direct teaching method which is characterized by the explicit instruction of grammatical rules and language analysis by way of translation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Teachers’ emphasis is on written language as it is considered superior to oral language. Therefore, translation activities are the nucleus and are based on rules and lists of vocabulary translation from L1 to MT. The learning experiences focus on comprehension, vocabulary, fill-in-the-blanks exercises, and drill practice and memorization. Conversely, communicative
approach is viewed as "communicative" classes, in the widest sense of the word. Teachers facilitate activities for children's social conversation, and tasks are completed using communicative interaction with other peers. The emphasis is on functional uses of the language, which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, rather than on talking about it (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The environment is set for pair, group, and mingling activities, focusing on completing the task successfully through communications rather than on the correct use of the form for communicative competencies. In addition to facilitating and being independent participants in children’s conversations, the teachers monitored and provided feedback on the success or otherwise of children’s interactions (Macintyre, 2007). Such formative assessment that infused teachers' monitoring of children’s learning progress and anticipated their potential development was validated for L2 learning (Cheng & Fox, 2013).

Broadly, studies to test the hypothesis of the above-mentioned methods of instruction, showed that learners receiving structural, audiolingual and Grammar-Translation instructions lacked the ability to communicate their needs and intentions effectively in L2 (Montgomery & Einstein, 1985; Long & Porter, 1985; VanPatten & Sanz 1995; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Long and Porter, in support of the communicative approach, argued that although learners may not have produced grammatically accurate utterances, they were able to produce genuinely meaningful communications (1985). Such negotiations of meaning and comprehensible inputs were essential and were motivation for language learning (Krashen, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Whatever the chosen approach of instruction, using their knowledge and understanding of the child as a learner, teachers must align their delivery to meet the learners' needs, interests, their readiness levels and skill sets, their language proficiency, and the family dynamics and culture for developmentally appropriate learning (Goldstein, 2003; Baker, 2011). Child-centered and play-based principles are indicators for quality language learning experiences in preschool years (Johnston, 2002; Blumberg, 2009; Edwards, 2010).

**Child-centered Learning.** By definition child-centered or learner-centered approaches, focus predominantly on the needs of the children rather than stakeholders like teachers, institutes or the education system (Blumberg, 2009).
The core in child-centered learning is the curriculum and teachers’ role in this approach. Teachers facilitate active learning, centered on the interests, needs, abilities, learning styles, the processes of learning and the cultural backgrounds of individuals or groups of children, to enable most of the learners’ access to learning (Gordon, 2007). Experiences are authentic to children, rather than rigidly conforming to a standard curriculum, therefore shifting the focus of activity from the teacher to the children.

Richards described the term curriculum as an overall plan and how the content is ‘transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcome’ (2013, p. 6). Curriculum development involves deciding on linguistic content to teach, learnable and authentic sequencing of the syllabus, teaching methods, the design of activities, materials and the procedures to teach. Procedures and principles translate teachers’ beliefs and theories on language pedagogy and teachers’ roles (Richards, 2013) into learning activities and procedures. The child-centered curriculum is a key feature in child-centered learning.

Gordon (2007) described child-centered learning as a type of instruction that provided opportunities for children to lead the learning activities, engage in discussions, ask questions, answer questions, debate, explain, problem solve, originate their learning projects, explore topics that interest them and promote their learning. The classroom arrangement is clustered in circles or small groups for children’s self-paced learning instead of assigned rows facing the teachers (Gordon, 2007).

**Play-based Learning.** Bodrova and Leong (2005) stated that Play-based learning is learning based in play, during which children actively explore their environment and the world around them. Play and language share similar characteristics, such as the use of symbols to represent ideas, feelings, and experiences as well as reflections (Whitehead, 2009). Play-based language learning is a means to extend children’s language abilities as it positions them to be involved enthusiastically in their learning. The experience motivates, stimulates and develops children’s skills, concepts, language learning/communication competencies as well as provides opportunities for them to express their point of view and to promote positive attitudes (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Whitehead, 2009; Dietze & Kashin, 2015).

Dietze and Kashin (2015) explained that ‘play’ was mostly a self-chosen pleasurable activity by children, instead of teacher prescribed and that it was a process rather than a predicted outcome or product. The teachers’ role is to
support and extend learning opportunities through a scaffolding process by helping children to learn, play and solve the challenges facing them with a simple hint, question, or prompt, and to provide appropriate feedback for language learning. Studies concerned with the educational transition between the preschool context and formal education, which impacts on the children's development and socialization recommended practical-play-based learning (Ghaye & Pascal, 1988; Yeboah, 2002). That is, to integrate into children’s play, formal teaching practices, like language and literacy experiences, that were pleasurable and meaningful (Whitehead, 2009).

Correspondingly, the four essential strategies suggested for L2 instructions were: (i) talk, play (including role play) and representation; (ii) rhymes, rhythm, language patterns and word games; (iii) stories and narratives; and (iv) environmental print and messages (Whitehead, 2009). Nonetheless, the learning experiences must be spontaneous and should not constrict or coerce children (Whitehead, 2009).

**Teachers’ professionalism.**

The domain of teachers' professionalism, one of the quality indicators, encompasses the characteristics and behaviors exhibited by the teachers. In the educational context, the definition of teacher professionalism focused on teachers’ professional qualifications and the extent to which they can use their skills, knowledge, competencies and related experiences to implement best practices or highest standards for effective learning and teaching (Baggini, 2005; Richards, 2010).

**Professional Knowledge, skills, and competencies.** Richards (2010) stated that in language teaching, teachers must be competent in ten core dimensions of skill and expertise. He identified these as: “language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused teaching, specialized cognitive skills, theorizing from practice, joining a community of practice and professionalism” (p 101). The Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers’ Associations (AFMLTA, 2005), the major professional body for the Australian language teaching profession, emphasized the value of the skills and expertise, in addition to the professional and ethical responsibilities of language teachers. AFMLTA position is that teachers need to analyze their personal, professional teaching attitudes: understand the professional ‘overall-view’ and perceptions teachers bring to classrooms that unreservedly shape the programs and pedagogies.
Other studies proffered teachers' proficiency in knowledge, skills, and competencies as indicators of teacher professionalism. The indicators, drawn from the various studies, were merged to form four areas of competency: Basic, Cognitive, Linguistic and Affective (Carlisle-Zepeda & Saldate, 1977; Tellez & Waxman, 2006; TELL, 2014). Refer to Appendix D for the overview of the four competency areas and the related knowledge, skills, and dispositions for L2 teaching proficiency. The proffered teachers’ proficiency requirement demonstrates a huge contrast to the generic teacher proficiency training in Singapore, as described in chapter two (compare Appendix C to Appendix D).

**Professional Growth.** MT teacher training and continuous professional development are essential attributes in the facilitation of teachers' professional growth. Researchers acknowledged that trained teachers were far more effective than teachers who were not prepared for teaching in bilingual education (Menken & Antunez, 2001; Alanis & Rodriguez; 2008; Garcia, 2009; Wylie & Bonne, 2014; Freeman & Freeman, 2014). Teachers’ training in bilingual education is imperative.

**Teacher Education in Bilingual Education.** In the Netherlands academic and professional training for teachers of MT at the preschool level is mandated and emphasized as quality in teaching and learning (Snoek & Wielenga, 2001). All teachers of MT attend a 640-hours Pedagogical Academy Basic Education (PABO) training program focusing on pedagogical subjects to teach at ‘kleuterscholen’ (kindergarten or nursery school). The teachers attend PABO certification at specialist training colleges established for pre-school and primary school training. Table 3 summarizes specific key trends for teaching MT at ‘kleuterscholen.’

Table 3

**Netherlands’ Teacher Education for MT: Key Quality Trends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends in Teaching and Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum must be competence based and not knowledge only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working with knowledge and not absorbing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Active learners and not passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher as a learner and not expert coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Product and processes knowledge and not assessment knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborative learning environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consistently, Mata (2014, p. 342) explained that professional standards have to 'represent a set of expectations and demands related to the knowledge, skills, and attitude' that teachers are supposed to show at a level that is qualitatively accepted by all stakeholders. As there are several approaches concerning the types of professional standards involved in training language teachers, Mata compiled the focal categories (see Appendix E). The standards are by 'specialist' authors in the issue of classifying the professional standards for language teachers’ training. According to Shulman (cited in Mata, 2014), professional competencies are divided into five categories based on knowledge, while Cummins (cited in Mata, 2014) differentiated it from five broad areas of competence: pedagogical knowledge, linguistic knowledge, tasks in practice, interpersonal skills, and attitudes, whereas Day and Conklin identified four types of knowledge. The analysis implied that the professional standards in the training of language teachers played an important role in building pedagogic competencies (cited in Mata, 2014).

Despite the universal acknowledgment of appropriate teacher education, for effective teaching and learning of bilingual education, the evaluation of bilingual education conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR), revealed that almost one-half of the teachers studied had received less than three days of bilingual education training over a five-year span. In the late 1960s, it was a general practice for teachers to be assigned to teach bilingual education programs with little preparation in the use of bilingual materials and methodologies. Although there had been an improvement in the pre-service and in-service training of the teachers, needs assessment like being unprepared for conditions working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners still pointed to teacher training as a critical requirement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Tellez & Waxman, 2006). It is rather worrying that teachers who expect learners to acquire sufficient proficiency in the L2 had themselves insufficient proficiency and competency to teach the language.

To counter this problem, the US had mandated ‘state-level requirements for teaching licensure’ that also guided the practices and set the standards for the preparation of teachers for bilingual education (Menken & Antunez, 2001). The state licensure requirements served as a gatekeeper to ensure the quality of teachers and their training as it meant that teachers were prepared in a state-approved teacher education program (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Expertise organisations, such as National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), Centre for
Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE), and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) argued that standards for L2 teacher training must be specialised specifically to address the needs of L2 learners and to build on the general education program standards (Menken & Antunez, 2001). That is to say, bilingual education for teachers requires preparation above and beyond training required of teachers in an English-only setting.

Notwithstanding the disputes, bilingual teacher training was valued and became a worldwide routine to provide professional education for both pre-service and in-service teachers (Menken & Antunez, 2001; Tellez & Waman, 2006; Freeman & Freeman, 2014).

**Pre-Service and In-Service Training.** Johnson, Askins, Huiling-Austin, and Robinson study (1988) of bilingual teachers’ needs showed that the teachers had distinctive needs based on their pre-service or in-service status. The study suggested for pre-service teachers’ education should focus on learning how to be a bilingual teacher and for in-service teachers’ education to address how to self-sustain in bilingual teaching and improve oneself. Angelle and Teague (2014) suggested theory-to-practice relations at pre-service and practice-to-theory-to-practice relations at in-service levels. Correspondingly, research on competencies needed by bilingual teachers detailed four principal areas: basic competency; cognitive competency; linguistic competency; and affective competency, as aforementioned in the earlier segment, ‘Professional Knowledge, skills and competencies’ (Refer also to Appendix D and Appendix E).

Conclusively, Baker cautioned that with untrained or poor quality bilingual teachers, the best bilingual education was sure to fail, whatever the model (2011). The foundation of sustainability and success of any bilingual education was found to rely on highly skilled teachers, outstanding teacher training and continuous teacher effectiveness development (Brisk, 2008).

The topic of teacher education in teaching bilingual education was not new but a worldwide interest (UNICEF, 2011; Su, 2011). However, the interest is yet to yield research or policy studies examining the quality of teacher preparation or training for L2 learners specifically, more so in Singapore. Despite the mandated bilingual education policy, whereby preschoolers are expected to achieve MT academic standards when they transit to primary level, teachers of TL in kindergartens are not trained in L2 but rely on their knowledge and skills training for teaching an integrated curriculum in English for preschool years.
Furthermore, the literature and research on pedagogic practices of the teachers made obvious that teachers develop their personal objectives and aims from their experiences, beliefs, values, motivations and commitment that influences the effectiveness of any bilingual education curriculum. In brief, teacher’s perspectives are determinant indicators of quality teaching and learning experiences in MT.

**Teachers’ Perspectives: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Values in Bilingual Education**

**Teachers’ Perspectives**

In the field of Bilingual Education, besides teacher education, teachers’ perspectives were viewed as a significant influence in facilitating quality teaching and learning (Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005). Teachers’ perspectives are their attitudes, beliefs, values and teaching practices (Barros & Elia, 1998; Garcia-Nevrez et al., 2005). The term attitude, within the framework of social psychology, was defined as a subjective or mental preparation for action that impacts the outward and visible behavior of individual’s beliefs (Barros & Elia, 1998). It determines what people will see, hear, think and do, based on their experiences. Therefore, attitude is an individual teacher’s prevailing tendency to respond favorably or unfavorably to a concept or an idea. Attitude is formed by teachers’ beliefs and values that steer their actions. Studies show that children's language development is not a result of their limited language competence, but rather, an outcome of the quality of teacher and teachers’ perspectives on the ways the language is learned and taught (Au, 1998; Wills, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006).

**Importance of Teachers’ Perspectives, Attitudes Beliefs, and Values**

MT teachers’ negative attitudes, as well as their ignorance of the language's culture and insensitivity towards the needs of the learners, had resulted in poor performance of students. Findings in bilingual education showed that children’s limited language proficiency is not the result of their poor language achievement, but due to the inadequate use of the child’s MT (Au, 1998; Willis, 2004; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Indications were that teachers who understood the MT language and culture were likely to be sensitive to the needs of their students (Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005). Research into the value of teachers’ roles in children’s MT language learning and maintenance highlights that the teachers’ perspective as the core indicator.

According to Barros and Elia (1998), teachers’ attitudes were based on three components: cognitive (the knowledge and belief of MT language regardless of
accuracy); affective (the feeling for and personal value of language); and behavioral (the actual practice or action taken). Beliefs are taken to be teachers’ personal aims and intentions for teaching from their cognitive point of view and values as ideas that are important based on one’s standards.

Studies have also acknowledged that teachers’ attitudes towards teaching or maintenance of children’s native language varied considerably depending on the following sets of values: teacher’s personal belief and personality; educational background; cultural background; type of certification held; and years of teaching experiences (Shin & Krashen, 1996; Byrnes et al., 1997; McInerney et al., 2001; Walker, Shafer & Iiams, 2004; Gracia-Naverez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Gourneau (2005, p. 34) asserted that “effective attitudes and actions employed by teachers could ultimately make a positive difference in the lives of their students.” Inevitably teachers’ behavior and approaches towards culturally diverse learners are inclined to be shaped by the norms and values of both the education setting and the larger society (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). Fundamentally, teachers’ attitudes could facilitate or be an impediment to MT learning for children (Byrnes et al., 1997).

**Research on Teachers’ Perspectives: Attitudes and Values Bilingual Education**

Despite the value of bilingual education as established in earlier sections of literature review, it also presents some drawbacks such as inappropriate or inadequate instructional materials; untrained teachers in MTL teaching who may not have an understanding of L2 learning theories; perspectives that MT is not important or economically viable (Saravanan, 2001b; Malone & Paraide, 2011). The drawbacks are major issues that are likely to impact teachers’ attitudes towards bilingual education.

Interestingly, Shin and Krashen (1996) revealed that there was a strong acceptance of the underlying philosophy of bilingual education; however, actual participation in the education practice was less positive. They surveyed K-12 public school teachers from six school districts in California. It was noted that teachers who had some ESL and bilingual training were fluent in the L2 supported bilingual education but were less enthusiastic about teaching. The analysis suggested that there could be practical considerations, such as concerns about job security, need for additional qualifications, or misapplication of the principles and their perceptions. Shin and Krashen concluded that education and training, including background knowledge of an L2, could affect teachers’ beliefs and actual practices.
Another study also revealed that professionally trained teachers undertook a wider array of positive teaching practices. Research conducted in Arizona indicated that MT teachers who had formal training demonstrated more positive language attitudes and were enthusiastic about teaching the language. MT teachers’ competencies are the key factor for practices. Also, to the basic competencies to formulate realistic curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, teachers need to be cognitively, linguistically and affectively competent (CAL, 1974; Wylie & Bonne, 2014).

Research on Teachers’ Perspectives: Beliefs on Quality Teaching and Learning of Mother Tongue

Teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and values have been pinpointed to underpin teachers’ teaching practices. Their perspectives shape students’ learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement in learning. Several studies equated teaching practices to effective classroom learning and student outcomes (Baker, 2011; Mata, 2014).

Children’s learning and teaching.

Flores’ (2001) study of 176 bilingual teachers from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade, from several San Antonio area school districts, demonstrated that the bilingual teachers had specific beliefs about how bilingual children learn. The results identified four aspects of teachers’ beliefs about how children learn:

- Exposure to the target language, especially through reading and listening;
- Children’s conceptual knowledge is transferred from the L1 to L2; that is, once content is taught in children’s L1 there is no requirement to “reteach” it in L2;
- Learning is primarily constructed through interactive experiences that connect to the child’s culture, prior experiences, and language. The teachers who valued culture maintenance practiced interactive experiences within the social context of their classrooms.
- Language, culture, and thought are viewed as separate learning processes. These teachers’ standpoint is that native language simply means to learn an L2 and favored the transmission approach.

The two-tailed correlational analysis of the study revealed that the bilingual teachers’ beliefs about learning were influenced mainly by their professional teaching experiences. Results indicated that the prior experiences
do influence bilingual teachers' beliefs, especially professional teaching, and there was also congruity between their beliefs and practices.

In 2009, OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) findings from 23 countries showed that a variety of beliefs, practices, and attitudes shaped teachers' teaching and learning. OECD TALIS used a domain-general version of two teaching and learning-related indices (constructivist and direct transmission) to cover teachers' beliefs and basic understandings of the nature of teaching and learning. The participants from Europe, Scandinavia, Australia and Korea were found to regard students as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge, rather than to see the teacher's main role as the transmission of information and demonstration of “correct solutions.”

However, teachers from Europe, Brazil, and Malaysia fell between the two views. Nonetheless, all teachers seemed to place emphasis on ensuring that learning was well structured around student-oriented (child-focused) activities that gave learners more autonomy. In general, 25% of the teachers expressed belief in the constructivist view; 50% supported direct transmission, and the remaining were between the two views. The OECD attributed the findings to the influence of the national school systems, culture and pedagogical traditions.

The attitude on linguistic diversity.

Byrnes, Kiger, and Manning (1997) surveyed 191 teachers from Arizona, Utah and Virginia using the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) for a comparative study. The 13-item LATS was used to investigate teachers' attitudes about linguistic diversity among their students within the factors of language politics, language tolerance, and language support. The study also included five independent variables, namely experience with language minority students, region, education, formal training in second-language learning, and grade level at which the respondent taught. The results showed that the most positive teachers in L2 learning were those who had participated in well-organized formal second-language training and had completed a graduate degree, in addition to coming from regions that had educational mandates for the second-language learning. The finding also highlighted that formal training provided the teachers with the required skills and knowledge for effective teaching.
Language Heritage, Maintenance and Cultural Identity.

Correlated studies (Byrnes et al., 1997; McInerney et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2004; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006) declared that the most positive teachers in L2 learning were those who had participated in well-organised, formalized second-language training; were familiar with the MT heritage and culture and valued it; and were in the region that gave "strong and supportive messages" in the form of educational mandates.

Garcia-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias (2005) conducted their study on native language teaching and maintenance, from a population of 152 elementary teachers from five school districts in Arizona. Their study showed that the bilingual teachers believed that skills learned in the L1 could be transferred to the L2 and using the native language in the classroom would increase students’ self-esteem. However, the traditional teachers had the most negative attitude toward using the L2 in classrooms and believed that English should be the instructional language. The type of certification teachers held, their teaching experiences and their ethnicity were linked to their attitudes to native language teaching and maintenance. The bilingually certificated teachers and their familiarity with students’ native language showed more positive attitudes toward the native language than the non-trained teachers.

Lee and Oxelson (2006) conducted a similar study on 69 kindergartens – 12 teachers’ attitudes towards their students’ heritage and their engagement in classroom practices in California. It is significant to note that the survey participants comprised groups of mainly Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic development (BCLAD) and non- Bilingual Cross-cultural Language and Academic development (non-BCLAD). The findings showed that the non-BCLAD teachers believed that English must be placed as the leading priority for the school, parents, and society and they did not see a role for themselves in heritage language maintenance. Once again, findings revealed that teachers’ training and personal experience with languages other than English had extensively affected teachers’ attitudes toward language heritage and maintenance.

However an earlier, longitudinal study of Australian teachers’ revealed that although teachers agreed that students should maintain their native languages, they did not think that it was the school’s responsibility (McInerney et al., 2001). The longitudinal study sought to compare attitudes toward fostering native language maintenance, cultural identity, and benefits within multiculturalism from the year 1979 to 2000 (McInerney et.al, 2001). The
participants were trained and experienced in teaching bilingual education. The findings appear to conform to Mata’s claim that teachers’ perceived needs of bilingual education could diverge from that of the policy or institute aims and intentions (2014).

Teachers’ perspectives emerged as a major factor in bilingual educational settings. As Borg suggests, “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (2003, p. 81). Studies have indicated that teachers’ attitude – their beliefs, attitude, and values about theories and assumptions about teaching and learning – have a great impact on their instructional practices. In fact, it has been revealed that teachers have inconsistent beliefs about learners and classroom activities that form their personal set of rules for pedagogic practices (Curdt-Christiansen & Silver 2012).

**Summary and Theoretical Base**

In summary, children’s MT language development and success are strongly linked to the quality of teachers and their beliefs about the ways the language is learned and should be taught. On the other hand, it was also highlighted that teachers’ attitudes varied considerably. The variables for the teachers’ attitudes were their personal beliefs and values, formalized training, cultural background and years of teaching experience. The literature indicated that the most positive teachers were those located in the regions that advocated mandated L2 teacher education. These teachers had participated in well-structured, formal L2 training and were familiar with the MT heritage and culture which they valued.

Despite the emphasis in the literature supporting the value of teacher training in the target language, the teachers of TL in Singapore kindergartens are trained only to teach only EL as L1; thus, their knowledge, competencies, and skills are EL (L1) specific. These teachers, located in a context where MT is not viewed as compulsory in preschool years and a ‘top-down educational culture’ (from the formal education system), are assuming the aims and intentions of the bilingual education and determining the value of teaching and learning of MT in kindergartens. Furthermore, they are also deciding on pedagogical needs and strategies that they believe will provide for quality teaching and learning experiences for the preschoolers. It is, therefore, salient to know “What are the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL).” Much can be learned about the phenomena by studying the perspectives of the teachers.
The central aim of the study was to generate theory on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experiences in MT (TL). The research was a grounded theory study within the interpretivist paradigm, drawing on symbolic interactionism and based on Strauss and Corbin GTM (1990). The hermeneutic approach in the interpretivist paradigm provided for opportunities to understand how individual teachers imposed meaning, language and thoughts based on their experiences, definition and their actions within the given meanings. Furthermore, the symbolic interactionism having only one variable, that is, teacher’s set of meanings, facilitated not only naturalistic data collection for analysis but also the window to view and think about the phenomena in the study. The succeeding chapter details and describes the methodology for the grounded theory study.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH PLAN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Designed within the interpretivist paradigm that underpins the key principles of symbolic interactionism, this study aimed to generate theory from the perspectives of 12 kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experiences in MT (TL). This chapter describes the rationale for the paradigm selected to address the research questions; explains the sampling strategy; identifies the settings and participants for the study; the procedures and techniques for data collection, data analysis; and the steps taken to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Research Questions

Given the aim of this perspectival study, one general research question and four specific guiding questions were developed. The general question was, "What are the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL)?" The concept of perspectives, according to Wallen and Fraenkel (2001, p.467), is that "ideas, behaviors, and contexts of particular teaching acts (are) set in the concrete world of the actual situation and refer to particular actions." Teachers' perspectives take into consideration how teachers understand their experiences, beliefs and assumptions and how these interpretations are demonstrated in their behaviors. Therefore, for this study, ‘perspectives’ are taken as the ‘meanings’ attributed by teachers to their experiences, beliefs, and assumptions. Perspectives include notions such as aims and intentions; strategies used to achieve those aims and the reasons for the notions, including what the teachers see as significant and as the expected outcomes of their actions (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985). Thus, the following were the four guiding questions for the study:

1. What are the aims and intentions of pre-school teachers in bilingual kindergartens in providing quality teaching and learning of Tamil Language? What is their rationale for these intentions?
2. What strategies do these pre-school teachers employ to realize their aims and intentions? What are their reasons for these strategies?
3. What significance do these pre-school teachers attribute to their aims and intentions and strategies? What are their reasons?
4. What outcomes do these pre-school teachers expect from pursuing their aims and intentions? What reasons do they give?

**Research Strategy and Design**

The qualitative study was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm underpinning symbolic interactionism as the theoretical perspective, with grounded theory, specifically the Strauss and Corbin model, as the research strategy. This section provides an overview of interpretivist paradigm, symbolic interactionism and the description and background of the grounded theory strategy.

**Interpretivism and Symbolic Interactionism**

Taylor & Bogdan (1998) described a paradigm as a worldview or a “set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived.” Interpretivist paradigms emphasize the social meanings people attach to the world around them, and how they respond to them (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The individual and society are indivisible. Individuals are figments of the society and understanding one is dependent on understanding the other.

The interpretivist paradigm is one of the three underlying philosophical assumptions associated with qualitative research (Punch, 2009). Interpretivism is founded on the observation that there are basic differences between the natural world and the social world (Webber, 1970, cited in Crotty, 2003) and that the study of human science is concerned with understanding. Interpretivists assume that phenomena happen in a natural setting and believe that there is ‘truth’ to be uncovered within the multiple positions and opinions that have a good degree of merit (O’Donoghue, 2007; Jackson, 2009). The interpretivist paradigm views social interaction as the basis for socially constructed knowledge through mutual communication specific to the situation being investigated (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Denscombe, 1998; O’Donoghue, 2007). Researchers located in the interpretive paradigm are interested in understanding the purposes, goals, and intentions people give to something and how these understandings, in turn, define the settings (O’Donoghue, 2007). Ernest (1994, p.25) contended that researchers should “consider human beings’ subjective interpretation based on their personal perceptions of their life-worlds” as the ‘starting point in understanding the social phenomena’ since multiple people interpret events differently leaving multiple perspectives of an incident. Further, as purposive actors, active and involved with life experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), they are best-placed informants about phenomena under investigation.
Symbolic interactionism holds a significant position within the interpretivist paradigm (O'Donoghue, 2007). It is the process of individual meaning formation through the development of a complex set of symbols to give meaning to the world (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Mead (1962) theorized interactionism as the essential definition of self through social roles, expectations, and perspectives set on individuals by society; that is, human's understanding of collective definition is through a socializing process (cited in Annells, 1996). Symbolic interaction is grounded in how humans develop a complex set of symbols to give meaning to the society and their place in it (Crotty, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008); the principle of meaning is central to human behaviour and social interaction as a process that contributes to the development of individuals’ meanings.

Symbolic Interactionism has only one variable in it, the individual who has their set of meanings for things and people (Glaser, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz, 2009). Symbolic interactionism provides the window through which the researcher can view and think about the phenomena in the study, providing a philosophical underpinning to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Milliken & Schreiber, 2012).

**Theoretical Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism**

The aim of the study was to investigate the meanings, language and thought the kindergarten teachers accord to quality teaching and learning experiences in MT (TL). O'Donoghue (2007) stated that meaning relates to an individual's actions influenced by the implications they attach to people or things. Thus, symbolic interactionism and the three central principles as proposed by Blumer (1969) were a good fit for this study. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism and grounded theory have a strong compatibility (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008).

**Research Method: Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory as a research strategy is an inductive process of theory generation grounded in systematic data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The main attribute of grounded theory is the theoretical sampling, based on the constant comparative method, coding and categorizing, memo writing and theory generation that occurs concurrently throughout the study (Glaser, 1978; 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 2008).

The Strauss and Corbin model of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) offered a clear structure, with step-by-step descriptions of the process for a researcher who had limited experience in the use of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The well-defined coding paradigm offered comprehensive, user-friendly techniques for
analysis of data collected from one-to-one conversational interviews, observer notes and participants journal logs. In the data analysis stage, the process provided detailed direction in the construction of a theoretical framework for the development of empirically grounded categories.

Data Collection

This section addresses the sampling strategy, participants and details the data collection and data analysis method undertaken in this study.

Purposeful Sampling

According to Punch (2009), the basis for excellence in grounded theory is in the selection of sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling of participants, involved in the phenomenon of interest, was identified as the most appropriate strategy for this study (Bryant & Charmaz, 2008; Punch, 2009). Patton defines purposeful sampling as a selection of participants for information-rich data to promote in-depth learning about the topic of the research (2002). The researcher used purposeful sampling strategy to ensure that the selected informants adequately represented the range of settings, ensuring maximum variation of contexts and participants to enhance the robustness of theory development (O'Donoghue, 2007; Punch 2009).

Research Setting and Participants

The research setting in Singapore was MOE registered kindergartens offering TL. “Kindergarten” refers to the level of education offered to pre-schoolers below the age of seven, before entry to formal schooling. At the time of this study (2013), 66 of 502 kindergartens in Singapore offered TL in their programs. Community foundations, religious bodies, social associations and business enterprises operated the kindergartens (refer to Figure 1 in Chapter 2).

In the original plan, 16 kindergarten TL teachers, two from each of the eight kindergartens, from the four organizations, were to be invited using a purposeful sampling strategy. All the participants were bilingual pre-school teachers of TL as MT in English-Tamil kindergartens in MOE licensed kindergartens. These two criteria provided homogeneity in teacher training and kindergarten standards. Diversity in age, gender, ethnic language, experience, and academic qualifications as well as the kindergartens’ cultural diverse setting, offered heterogeneity.

However, between proposal development and data collection, the number of centers offering TL as MT language had dwindled from 70 to 66 kindergartens. Of these, a total of eight, two each from community foundations, religious bodies, social
associations and business enterprises were selected to provide a variation. Each of these eight kindergartens was treated as an individual setting. Refer to Table 4 for the limited available sites and number of participants, based on telephone verifications from the organizations/ principals.

Table 4

Sites and TL Teacher Population as at April 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisations</th>
<th>Kindergarten centres</th>
<th>No of teachers (approx.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Foundation</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Estimation of total population 66

However, only 12 teachers from three organizations involving nine sites responded (see Figure 3). The business organization did not participate: one kindergarten had ceased offering, due to the resignation of the TL teacher at the point of data collection; another kindergarten replaced TL with Hindi for business viability, and two others did not reply.
The participants were approached by way of their organization or principals' consent (Appendix F). A gathering was arranged to meet the respondents in their kindergartens. They were briefed on the details of the research, confidentiality, and anonymity procedures and given an invitation letter with an informed consent form (Appendix G). They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. The researcher adhered to UWA guidelines for confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. Upon consent of the participants, the researcher emailed the teacher questionnaire (Appendix H), to gather information about teacher's profile and make known the interview questions as requested by the teachers during the briefing session. The access allowed the participants to consider their responses and explanations. Table 5 shows the profiles of the twelve participants, whose identities were number coded for pseudo-identity (Kizza, 2013). The coded number system facilitated easier identification, tracking and connecting (Kizza, 2013).
Table 5

Research Participants' Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Ref-Code: Teacher</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>ECE Qualifications</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Origin/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Centre / Setting</th>
<th>Teacher Training in Tamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1401AS</td>
<td>1AS</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1402AW</td>
<td>2AW</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1403AC</td>
<td>3AC</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1404AC</td>
<td>4AC</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1405BK</td>
<td>5BK</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Ind/Tamil</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>No (BA TL Lit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1406BK</td>
<td>6BK</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1407BY</td>
<td>7BY</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>No (BA TL Lit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1408BY</td>
<td>8BY</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>Ind/Tamil</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>No (MSc TL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1409CB</td>
<td>9CB</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Ind/Telugu</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No (BA TL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1410CD</td>
<td>10CD</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Sg/Tamil</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1411CU</td>
<td>11CU</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Ind/Tamil</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1412CU</td>
<td>12CU</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Ind/Tamil</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No (BA TL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher followed up with telephone calls to schedule observations followed by interview appointments, at the participants’ convenience. Interviews were conducted in three phases over a 12-month period from commencement of the initial data collection.

Data Collection Tools

The general research question, as previously stated, determined the data collection tools and procedure. Observations (field notes), Interviews (semi-structured) and Reflective Journals (journal logs) were the means of data collection. A pilot study with the same tools was conducted with a volunteer who was not one of the participants.
Pilot study.

The pilot study served as a practice for the researcher as well as pre-testing of the data collection tools and the procedure. The purpose was to gather feedback on the effectiveness of data collection instruments and to identify potential problems of the strategy. The data collected during the trial met the purposes of the study, identifying only one concern. The issue was the participant’s limited ability to reflect critically on her teaching practice. Her first log journals were descriptive rather than reflective analysis. On that basis, the researcher adapted and attached a guide for the teachers’ reflective analysis (Tripp, 2012. Refer to Appendix M). As no other changes were needed, the researcher applied the tools and procedure to collect data in the main study. The following segment describes each of the strategies.

Observer field notes.

Observer notes were made during lesson observations. Observation has a long tradition in educational research and was indispensable in this interpretivist study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Punch, 2009). It is not unusual for “participants to say they were doing one thing but, in reality, they were doing something else” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 29). Observation provides for first-hand information and yields high face validity (Garson, 2002). Though time-consuming and intrusive, naturalistic observation, where the researcher neither manipulates nor stimulates the behavior of the participants, allows the researcher to see what was going on. The researcher experienced and understood what was happening and acquired insights into the setting under study (Patton, 2002).

Besides the above, the decision to gather data through observing the teachers teaching TL in their classrooms was determined by the symbolic interactionist principle. Blumer elaborated that people acted towards things by the meanings they held for them (1969). The method provided the opportunity for the researcher to seek explanations and elaborations of their actions from the teachers. Although Punch (2009, p. 154) suggested that qualitative approaches to observation are relatively unstructured, he also emphasized the function of observation, “typically sharpening in focus” the research question.

In this study, direct observation enabled the researcher to modify the interview schedule to seek participants’ explanations for their classroom processes. Silverman (1993) suggested beginning the observation with a set of general questions and writing observer’s notes beginning with broad descriptive categories, followed by developing focus codes and categories about the
guiding questions. The pre-determined categories provided consistency in the approach that was taken from individual observations, see Observer Note (Appendix I). The Observer Note was used to keep the researcher’s observation focused on collecting data that was built on the guiding questions.

A one-time observation, of the teachers’ teaching of a TL session, was conducted before the scheduled interview session. The researcher confirmed the session with the teachers through email and telephone two days before the visit. On the day of observation, the researcher reiterated her role in the observation as a non-participant observer and that observer notes were to be used to provide clarification and substance to the interview and to supplement the recordings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The notes helped inform the researcher’s probe questions in interviews that helped in understanding some of the teachers’ behaviors and practices and provided ‘thick data’ (Punch, 2009).

**Interviews.**

Semi-structured, face-to-face individual conversational interviews were the main data collection mode. Interviews are an excellent way of “accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality,” (Punch, 2009, p.144). Moreover, Bernard (1998) recommended that semi-structured interviews were best when the researcher had only one opportunity to interview the participants, which was the situation for this study. The semi-structured interview facilitated the researcher’s access to the teachers’ perspectives, meanings, the definition of situation and constructions that were not directly observable during the classroom observations (Punch, 2009). The mode also offered consistency as a set of pre-planned core questions were asked of each participant, though in fluid conversation. The interviews were guided by the interview schedule (Table 6) and symbolic interactionism, as explained on page 66.

The researcher established rapport with the teachers at the beginning of the interview to build trust to generate natural unfolding dialogue with them. The briefing sessions conducted to seek consent and the observation sessions had eased the settling as teachers were familiar with the researcher. The interviews were kept interactive to enable opportunities to observe and gather the ‘true’ meaning, which was to understand the purposes, goals, and intentions these teachers had about quality in teaching and learning experience in TL in their kindergartens. The interviews took no longer than one hour each. All the interviews were conducted at the individual teacher’s workplace where they
were comfortable in answering the interview questions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Participants had the opportunity to view the four guiding questions and the list of definitions of terms to allow them to consider their responses and explanations. The list of definitions was intended to reduce pre-interview anxiety and therefore, the amount of time spent on clarifying terms during the interview. It was also to develop a shared frame of reference. The researcher believed that it had eased the teachers’ anxiety and assisted in more meaningful replies that contributed to the collection of richer data. The set of guiding questions (Table 6) served as a template for stimulating conversations between the participant and researcher. The interviews (conversations) were audio-recorded with the participants’ consent.

Table 6

**Guiding Questions and Interview Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What are the aims and intentions of preschool teachers in bilingual kindergartens providing quality teaching and learning of Tamil Language? What is their rationale for these intentions? | 1.1 How do you define quality teaching and learning?  
1.2 Why is quality teaching and learning in TL important in the kindergarten years?  
1.3 What do you, as a preschool teacher in bilingual kindergarten, aim or intent to achieve through quality teaching and learning in TL?  
1.4 What are your reasons for the aims and intentions? |
| 2. What strategies do these preschool teachers employ to realize their aims and intentions? What are their reasons for these strategies? | 2.1 What are you doing (strategies) to achieve your aims and intentions?  
2.2 How do you use these strategies?  
2.3 Why do you use these particular strategies?  
2.4 Why do you think these strategies will be successful? |
| 3. What significance do these preschool teachers attribute to their aims and intentions and strategies? What are their reasons? | 3.1 What are the factors (issues and challenges) that influence quality teaching and learning TL in the kindergartens?  
3.2 What are your reasons for naming these factors?  
3.3 How do these factors affect your selection of strategies?  
3.4 How do these factors affect you in achieving your aims and intentions? |
| 4. What outcomes do these pre-schools teachers | 4.1 What outcomes do you expect from your |
The teachers were informed that the audio-recorded data would be transcribed verbatim to provide the best database and checked with them for accuracy before analysis (member check). At the end of the session, the participants were informed of the tentative date to expect the transcribed data (see Appendix J). Electronic communication was maintained with the participants until the transcribed data were verified and confirmed by the teachers.

**Reflective Journals (Journal Logs).**

In keeping with Punch’s advice (2009) that journal entries were particularly useful for capturing participants’ authentic perspectives over a period, participants initially were asked to maintain reflective journals after each TL class for three weeks following the interviews. In practice, taking into consideration participants’ workload, the researcher provided journal logs as templates with explicit guides, and reduced the frequency to weekly recordings (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). The journal logs were simple records of events with the participants’ reflective thoughts written in bullet-points. Tripp’s (2012) guiding principles from *Critical Incidents in Teaching* were adapted (see Appendix L). A guide on how to use the reflective journal log was also appended (see Appendix M).

The journals aided in verifying data collected from observations and interviews for data triangulation. Participants, at the point of invitation, were informed about journals and the processes involved. They had the option to submit their three journal logs by e-mail or hard copy. The observer had scheduled to collect the journal logs from the teachers three weeks after their respective interviews. However, two teachers submitted theirs six weeks later while another two teachers submitted theirs only after eight weeks. The first two teachers stated that they had challenges to meet the timeline due to work commitments and time constraints. The second two teachers who were on maternity leave, yet submitted their journal logs voluntarily, after their request for the additional time was respected.

**Data Collection Process**

Data collection was conducted in three phases, commencing with six teachers, followed by three teachers each in the succeeding two phases. The three phases of
data collection were interspersed with open coding analysis, taking into account the information collected in each phase, to ensure that saturation point was reached. It was a cyclic process of data collection (refer to Figure 4).

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher concurrently developed analytic interpretations. The interpretations helped with the focus on data collection that was useful in informing and refining in the development of the theory (O'Donoghue, 2007). The observer field notes, interviews, and participants’ journals were triangulated for data validity.

**Data Analysis Process**

Data collected from the observations, interviews and journals were analyzed based on GTM as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). The GTM entailed using the ‘three coding’ analysis system of open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Much as, each of the modes is a distinct analytical procedure, the researcher alternated between them (O'Donoghue, 2007). The analysis process began soon after the first interview as the data served as the foundation for progressive analysis and theory formation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

**Data coding process: Ground Theory Method.**

The GTM process involved reduction of raw data into concepts and grouped into categories, and these categories were then interconnected to abstract the theoretical idea. Constant comparison, discussed later in this section, was a
prime feature of the analysis process. The inductive approach, by way of the ‘three coding’ system, facilitated the generation of theories that were grounded in data. It is a ‘bottom-up” approach to knowing, whereby the researcher moved from specific to the general, so to build an abstraction or to describe the phenomenon that is being studied (Punch, 2009). As data collection and analysis are interrelated processes, the analysis began soon after the first interview was transcribed and member check conducted (see Figure 4).

**Open coding.** Open-coding is the first level in coding where raw data is ‘fractured’ into discrete ideas or events and labeled by their properties or dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The process entailed breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These concepts were then regrouped into categories and given a label each based on their properties and dimensions.

**Opening data: Generate Initial labels, Concepts, and Categories.** In this study, open coding commenced with the observation field notes followed by interview transcript of the first participant, and it continued throughout the entire data collection. The content was coded line-by-line, and on occasions, it was carried out on a word-by-word basis. The sentences and words were highlighted and the corresponding labels and concepts annotated in the right-end margin (see Appendix I). As the observation was focused and based on the guiding questions, the emerged labels and concepts were categorized into alike or related phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The process of categorizing began with examining the ‘fractured data,’ comparing and conceptualizing. The researcher’s basic analytic procedure for the categorization was by the asking of questions about data and comparing for similarities and difference between the data of the observed phenomena.

The interview questions were open-ended and therefore, there was a considerable variation in the data collected from different participants that produced multifaceted codes. To probe ‘deep into data’ to ‘see’ the ideas, meanings, actions and behavior of the participants, the researcher used the Strauss and Corbin ‘tried and tested’ analytical tool that involved asking questions like, ‘who?; when?; where?; what?; how?; and why?’, and making comparisons (Corbin & Strauss, 2008); and Alan Bryman’s four stages of qualitative analysis (see Figure 5 for an overview) to open the data inductively (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The two analytical tools for the coding process were used to ensure the richness, consistency, reliability, and validity.
After re-reading the transcript fully, the researcher highlighted the sentences (line-by-line), words (word-by-word basis) and in some situations a section of data (Appendix J). The highlighted data were then indicated with labels and concepts as representative of the phenomenon. When familiar properties or characteristics emerged from the data, she used the common properties or characteristics to group concepts based on the context and classified them. Throughout the coding process, the researcher constantly asked questions of the emerging concepts in the data and made comparisons. Moving back-and-forth in the data became habitual. When there was an overwhelming number of codes, researcher compared the codes, using the ‘flip-flop technique’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to find the similarities and grouped them into higher-level concepts (concept categories) based on their common properties. This resulted in interconnections of initial labels and concepts. At this point, the name of the category changed from the initial codes, so as to express the scope better. For example, developmentally appropriate practices, child level, child interest ‘hands-on activities’ were categorized as ‘Child-Centred.’ Code notes were developed and maintained in this regard (Appendix K). The researcher also annotated her initial analysis in memos for every participant (Appendix N). Initially, it was a challenge for the researcher to suppress her interpretations on the data. However, Strauss and Corbin’s ‘3-step-practice’ became a routine after the third analysis (1990, p. 44). The practice avoided the effects of researcher subjectivity (bias and prejudices). It also fostered the verification and authenticity of emerged concepts and categories. This is crucial as axial codes, and selective codes are based on open codes.

**Axial Coding.** Axial coding, the next level after open coding, offered a set of procedures to put data back together in new ways by making connections between categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Punch (2009) stated that categories derived from open coding were the first level concepts and axial coding or second order concepts were more abstract than open coding. The purpose of the axial coding was to be more precise and complete the explanation of a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The
researcher compared and combined the categories to create a “big view” during axial coding. This process involved explaining and understanding the relationship between the categories to understand the phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1997; Punch, 2009).

**Comparison and Relating – Connection between Categories and Sub-categories.** As the researcher compared one category against another, she asked questions denoting the type of relationship and mapped them. There was a constant interplay between proposing and checking until the proposed relationships were repeatedly supported in the data. Data were triangulated to see similar codes occurring in different data sets, thus verifying researcher’s interpretation of the phenomenon. The task involved a mass of the related concepts and categories. The FreeMind mapping software was used for the recording. The mind map provided the ‘micro and macro’ picture of the links and relationships of categories and sub-categories and allowed easy editing as and when needed (see Appendix P). Four maps based on the guiding questions were created. The researcher then adopted the paradigm model to analyze and link the categories and sub-categories from all the gathered and analyzed data. An enlarged section of one of the maps is included in Appendix Q to show some of the connections.

**Selective coding.** The final coding process involves selecting and defining the central phenomena and systematically integrating the categories (Strauss & Corbin 1998) to “abduct theory” by logical inference to make new discoveries grounded in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, Punch 2009).

For this concluding stage, after saturation point, the researcher reread the FreeMind map and the analyzed related data. The rereading was to verify and identify the core variables and selectively coded data that related to the core category or theoretical idea. The researcher again sifted, sorted and classified the categories. The meticulous analysis procedure, especially the mind map and memos, made obvious the theory abstraction (refer Appendix S). The data analysis process culminated with the abduction of the theoretical idea that developed into the theory.

**Memoing.** Apart from the raw data gathered the researcher also kept memos of her thoughts, feelings, insights, reflections and ideas of the study, as the data were being collected. Memos are defined as a written record of analysis that is functional in grounded theory and aligns with symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Bryant and Charmaz (2008) described memos as ‘theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories’ by the researcher. The recorded memos also included information such as the
researcher’s assumptions about the observation, interviews, probable issues and setbacks (Birks & Mills, 2012). Though the memos were the researcher’s thoughts while undertaking the research process that varied in subject, intensity, coherence and theoretical content, it was a significant record that supported the mapping of the audit trail for the study and facilitated the grounded theory findings (see Appendix O). Corbin and Strauss stated that ‘memos may begin as rather rudimentary representations of thought and grow in complexity, density, clarity and accuracy as the research progress’ (2008, p.118). Data collection, analysis and memoing were an ongoing and overlapping processes that continued until the completion of the study. The researcher maintained three levels of the memo: first at data collection and analysis (see Appendix N); second at triangulation of data; and third at focus coding for theoretical analysis as the study progressed. Memos were critical to the analysis processes of the study.

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity was one of the researcher’s key attribute in the development of the grounded theory. Theoretical sensitivity is the trait of “having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p 42). The researcher was familiar with the literature on theory and research, as well as had the experience of having worked in the field and undertaken research using field notes and interviews. In addition to this theoretical sensitivity background, the researcher’s 3-step-practice throughout the data collection and data analysis also provided the additional source for theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The researcher periodically stepped back and asked herself, “what is going on here?” and whether her thinking fitted the reality of data. Next, the researcher regarded concepts and categories as provisional until verified with data. Then, she strictly adhered to alternating between further data collection and analysis that aided in the verification of emergent concepts of categories. The practice also ensured that the researcher avoided subjectivity (bias and prejudices).

**Criteria for Trustworthiness**

While the interpretive study is acknowledged for its value in contextual depth, findings were often criticized for lack of trustworthiness (O’Donoghue, 2007). The
concerns were with the honesty of the data collected from and about the participants and the extent to which confidence could be placed in the outcomes of the studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, over the last two decades, advocates of interpretivism demonstrated the rigor and trustworthiness of their research method (Shenton, 2004).

Given that this was an interpretivist study in the symbolic interactionist tradition, it was appropriate to use the interpretivist criteria to evaluate its trustworthiness. The criteria were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which were constructed parallel to the similar quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality (Guba, 1981; O'Donoghue, 2007). Shenton (2004) proposed a range of strategies that might be adopted by investigators in response to the issue. Triangulation, member checks, and audit trails were three of the major strategies that were used in the study to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; O'Donoghue, 2007).

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of data. Credible findings are achieved when rapport and trust exist between researcher and participants. The rapport and trust promote understanding and co-construction of meaning between the researcher and members of a setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Building trust contributes towards credibility. Member checking was a process of taking the data or interpretations back to the teachers from whom the researcher collected the data and asking them to verify the accuracy of the information (Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Patton, 2002). The interview transcriptions were emailed to the twelve teachers who were invited to clarify, elaborate or suggest changes. All twelve participants agreed that the transcriptions were accurate and did not suggest any changes. It was after the teachers’ confirmation by email that the researcher analyzed the data; this process ensured the credibility of the data.

Data saturation is another often used criterion to evidence the credibility and quality of qualitative research. Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated that data saturation occurs when the researcher is no longer receiving information that has not been previously noted. The concept of data saturation is important because it addresses whether a study is based on an adequate sample to demonstrate content validity. However, studies (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Francis et al., 2010) revealed that data saturation occurs more or less after ten interviews, highlighting that depth of the data, rather than mere quantity of samples, may achieve saturation. The researcher made a concerted effort to attain data saturation by adopting the constant comparative
analysis, as elaborated in the data analysis section (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). She analyzed all twelve participants’ data. Therefore, when a category offered considerable depth and breadth of understanding about the phenomenon, and relationships to other categories were clear, it was deemed to have reached a saturation point for the purpose of this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which the findings of a study are confirmed by, or applicable to, the different groups of people, or in a different setting from the source of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Many naturalistic inquirers believed that conventional generalisability was not possible in the interpretivist studies as all observations were defined by the specific contexts in which they occurred (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Stake (1994) disputed this view, insisting that, though each case may be unique, it was also an example of a broader group. Therefore, the possibility of generalisability should not be rejected entirely.

The comprehensive (‘thick’) description was a way of achieving transferability; if a phenomenon was described in sufficient detail, the reader could evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn were transferable to other situations and people (O’Donoghue, 2007). Accordingly, use of more than one method of data collection was advocated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The combination of the observations, interviews and teachers’ reflective journal provided ‘thick description’ and resulted in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon in this study. Such triangulation also provided different dimensions on the same phenomenon. Triangulation was used to compare data to decide whether they were corroborative (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2008), and verified the research findings. It was one of the important techniques in enhancing the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. Also, the detailed contextual information about the field work was also provided to enable the reader to compare the instances of the phenomenon to their situations and make such a transfer.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree of thoroughness related to the consistency of the study’s findings (Guba, 1981). Compiling an audit trail was the normal approach adopted to achieve this (Merriam, 2009). The researcher kept an audit trail, a diary with descriptions of the research steps taken from the beginning of the project to the reporting of findings (see Appendix R). The audit trail allowed the researcher and readers to trace the course of the study step-by-step through the decisions made and procedures described throughout the study. It contains comprehensive notes of
interviews, written records of telephone conversations and e-mails with the teachers as evidence in the confirmation of data during external audits. The purpose of the audit trail was to evaluate the accuracy and to assess whether or not the data appropriately and adequately supported the findings, interpretations, and conclusions.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is the point to which the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by others. It is concerned with objectivity and the awareness of the researcher on individual subjectivity or biases. The audit trail used in the study, as described earlier in this section, established confirmability. This was the argument that auditing could also be used to ‘establish confirmability in which the researcher made the provision of a self-critical methodological account of how the research was done’ (Seale, 1999 p. 45).

**Summary**

This chapter described and explained the rationale for adopting the Interpretivist paradigm to understand the kindergarten teachers’ perspectives on quality teaching and learning in the Tamil Language in Singapore. More specifically Strauss and Corbin’s GTM was detailed to justify its pragmatism and relevance in collecting and analyzing data. It also explained the process of selecting the 12 participants from three organizations and the steps taken to address ethical considerations. Data collection by way of observation, interviews, and journals were discussed and validated as ‘meaning-oriented’ sources that are aligned with the interpretivist forms of data collection. The process for data collection and administration, as well as the analysis process and procedure, were elaborated. The final section ended with the strategies to fulfill the trustworthiness criteria for the interpretive study. The analysis and findings are discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings related to the perspectives of the 12 participants in this study. Findings were based on analysis of all data sources as mentioned in chapter four. The structure of this chapter was determined by the outcomes of the grounded theory coding process which identified the overarching theoretical frameworks shared by all participants, and the Context-based curriculum orientations held by sub-groups of participants. The participants’ Conceptual Framework and their differing curriculum orientation are displayed in Table 7. The differing curriculum orientations were driven by differing desired outcomes or results, which in turn, informed decisions about the election of content and related teaching activities.

Table 7
Conceptual Framework for Participant Preschool TL Teachers in Singapore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Overarching Theoretical Framework</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child-centered pedagogy</td>
<td>Language acquisition theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context-based curriculum orientation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standards-based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for primary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural conservation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two common core concepts that surfaced from the teacher interviews were ‘Child-centered’ as a component in a quality experience, and Language Acquisition in TL as critical in the kindergarten years. It is likely that these key concepts could have been knowledge acquired by the teachers from their professional teacher training and the NEL curriculum framework where the core ‘i-Teach’ principle is based on child-centered curriculum design. The framework was elaborated in Chapter 2. It is also likely that they could be based on theories of professional practice. McCutcheon (1992) suggested that teachers’ theories consisted of beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes—that play a significant role in shaping their instructional decisions. McInerney, McInerney, Cincotta, Totaro and Williams (2001) concluded that the integration of such theory and practice occurs seamlessly in the context of teachers’ instructional practices.

The teachers explained that the core theories were linked to their conceptual frameworks and that these theories steered their classroom teaching and learning.
practices for TL quality experiences. Child-centered learning and Language Acquisition Theory are the two overarching Ideational or theoretical frameworks of the 12 teachers. Coded responses to the general research question, “What are the perspectives of kindergarten teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens in Singapore on quality teaching and learning experience in MT (TL)?” produced three clusters of collective views which formed the Context-based curriculum orientations of the teachers’ conceptual framework (refer Table 7). Despite the shared overarching theoretical framework, there were marked differences in the other values that informed the perspectives of participants. These formed three clusters of four, three and five teachers respectively as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Three Collective Clusters of the Participants’ Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Framework of the 12 Teachers</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>National origin</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1 Standards perspective.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1AS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2AW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3AC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4AC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 2 Preparation for primary level perspective.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6BK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9CB</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10CD</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 3 Cultural custodial perspective.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5BK</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7BY</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8BY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11CU</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12CU</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An explanatory framework (Figure 6), based on the idea that providing general descriptions applicable to the different participants in a study would enable one to understand, explain and relate to the reality of the settings in which the teachers worked was derived from Popkewitz’s theoretical approach (1980). The explanatory framework provided a structure in which the ways that teachers deployed the overarching theories of child-centered learning and language acquisition in their specific Context-based curriculum orientations (Table 5.1) could be compared and contrasted.
The term ‘ideational’ signifies the teachers’ articulation about theories that informed the rationale, aims and intentions of their curriculum. ‘Interpretation’ describes the operation of rationale, aims and intentions for practice, while application refers to the ways in which the teachers were observed to put their theories into practice (that is, the enactment of the teachers' thoughts and meanings in classroom teachings).

The hierarchical explanatory framework became the means through which the research guiding questions could be connected to the findings of the study (Table 9).

Table 9

**Relationship of the Guiding Research Questions to the Explanatory Framework.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Framework</th>
<th>Research Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational or theorized curriculum</td>
<td>What are the aims and intentions of pre-school teachers in bilingual kindergartens in providing quality teaching and learning of Tamil Language? What is their rationale for these intentions? What outcomes do these pre-school teachers expect from pursuing their aims and intentions? What reasons do they give?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive or operational curriculum</td>
<td>What significance do these pre-school teachers attribute to their aims and intentions and strategies? What are their reasons?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied or enacted curriculum</td>
<td>What strategies do these pre-school teachers employ to realize their aims and intentions? What are their reasons for these strategies?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remainder of this chapter presents the analysis and findings from the data following the structure outlined above.
Teachers’ Overarching Theoretical Framework

Although all teachers subscribed to the child-centered learning theories and the language acquisition theories, their discussion of these theories was located in the demands of their professional contexts.

Child-centered Pedagogy

According to the 12 teachers quality teaching and learning TL in the kindergartens must be located in child-centered experiences. The teachers related “child focus”; “learning and playing”; “children’s level”; “child’s interest, needs and abilities”; “joyful teaching”; “engaging children”; “hands-on activities”; “fun to learn”; “learning and playing”; “development appropriate practices”; “child-directed”; “child showing interest”; “play that interests preschooler”; and “play-based” to child-centered learning, which was their key principle. “Child-focus” and “Play-based” were two popular categories among the 12 participants.

Child-focus.

The teachers declared that “child-focus” is to provide experiences to the preschoolers, pitched to their ability or needs that are interesting and engaging. Teacher 7BY (Cluster 3) explained that child-focus is to “make sense to the children in an interesting way. Teaching like in a fun way at the children’s level, so to make them interested in the language”. Likewise, Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1) reasoned that “when we provide games which children like… I think they are, they are keen, and they will be keener in learning the language….engage the children so that the participation will be more when they do their work…” With the same outlook Teacher, 9CB (Cluster 2) elaborated that it is using “Very simple and easy to understand as using flash boards, posters, storybooks and interactive games that children like to teach them Tamil.” Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1) asserted that “… we have to give them an environment of love and a place that is fun and interesting. Then it is very important socially; emotionally we need to attract the children first, then go into the actual learning of the lesson.”

Play-based.

The 12 teachers said that they employed play as a way to engage children. They regarded play to be fun, enjoyable and captivating activity. Teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) said that her teaching “approach would be more play-based to make it fun for children, let them enjoy the language before they go into more written
work, reading and that kind of stuff.” As for Teacher 8BY (Cluster 3), it is “Teaching the language in a fun way so that children will be involved in this. The fun way means that I will read the stories with expression - the sounds up and down (intonations), the different sounds; if it is the animals I will say ‘waahrrw’ (roaring sound), it comes ‘ehnn’ (movement sound with body language and gesture), so they will be involved.” Likewise, Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) mentioned that she used “singing, role play, and play-based experiences to engage children in talking ‘properly’ in the Tamil Language.”

**Language Acquisition Theory**

All 12 teachers stressed that kindergarten years provide the foundation for language acquisition, and children are in the absorbent stage. Their belief that kindergarten is the best year for teaching and learning TL is based on brain research about ‘Critical Period Hypothesis’ (CPH), Language Acquisition. Teacher 3AC (Cluster 1) declared that “Kindergarten is the foundation, the basic thing. Brain study says that this is the stage children acquire language, I think it is very very important for the kindergarteners to learn Tamil; this is the best years for them in learning the language.” In addition, Teacher 9CB (Cluster 2) reasoned, “I think children learn by sensorial, because they actually now had good concept because they feel, they touch, and there is sensorial learning; and that’s what this kindergarten learning is about” Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1) justified, “…engaging activities that are appropriate for their age, through the lessons where they had hands-on activities.” Similarly, Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1) believed that “As the child at this age they can learn more than one language; they are in the absorbent stage, and as a teacher, we are a role model emphasizing the importance of teaching TL at the kindergarten level.” With all the teachers agreeing unanimously, Teacher 6BK (Cluster 2) summed up:

This is the learning age, to absorb language. It will help children to have a better early understanding of Tamil. At this level, we can get children just to listen, learn, write and be familiar with the sounds. It helps them to have a strong foundation when the children enter the primary level. The foundation of learning is at the kindergarten level.

The teachers were united in their thoughts on the importance of teaching and learning TL in the kindergarten years. They referred to language acquisition and the critical period in brain development to rationalize their views. However, it was noted that all of them had made reference to language acquisition as ‘subconscious’ learning and kindergarten as the effective stage to acquire language. In their reasoning, the
teachers subsumed language learning into language acquisition and used the two terminologies interchangeably (refer Teacher 3AC and Teacher 6BK in vivo, above).

Language acquisition and language learning had been understood to be the same by these teachers, and the terms used synonymously. Furthermore, there was no mention of SLA but only language acquisition; these two differing language acquisition processes had been assumed to be the same by the teachers. Besides the teachers, referred to concepts: ‘developmental appropriate practices’; ‘sensorial learning’; ‘hands-on experiences’; ‘imitating teachers (teachers as role models)’ and ‘child-teacher interactions’ in the preschoolers learning of the Tamil language. These indicators are oriented towards constructivist, behaviorist and interactionist theories on language learning. The teachers had collectively referenced prominent theory-based practices as salient for the language learning at kindergarten years.

As indicated in the discussion above, these overarching theories were filtered through the specific contexts in which the teachers worked, and the curriculum orientations supported by the employing organizations. The next section of this chapter presents with the ways in which the three sub-groups of teachers dealt with the ideational, interpretive (operational) and applied (enacted) curriculum.

**Teachers’ Ideational or Theorized Curriculum**

The aims and intentions of the 12 teachers focused on developing the preschoolers’ confidence in TL. The teachers stressed three varied types of confidence that they intended to develop to achieve their expected outcomes for the preschoolers. The emphases were shaped by the teachers’ conceptual framework (refer Table 8) and the curriculum within their respective settings. This segment presents the findings within these frameworks.

**Standard Perspective: Confidence in Tamil Language speaking and writing skills**

The aims and intentions of teachers in Cluster 1 (see Table 8) were to develop the preschoolers’ confidence in TL speaking and writing skills. The kindergarten’s prescriptive TL curriculum, which is thematic-based, stipulates speaking and writing skills as one of the learning outcomes to be achieved by the end of the kindergarten level. As indicated in Chapter 2, the TL curriculum was adapted from the NEL Framework and using the ‘i-Teach’ principle. A correlated syllabus was designed by the organization’s headquarters. The teachers understood the learning outcomes as indicators of progression towards the standards set by the kindergarten.
In this regard, confidence development in the spoken Tamil language and literacy skills was valued by the four teachers. They believe that it is an important quality that would help the preschoolers' transition to the next level of learning. Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1) expressed:

I want my children to excel; this is not only at the kindergarten level … kindergarten is the foundation for building the basic skills to prepare them for the primary. They must be able to speak and write by the end of kindergarten a standard I want the preschoolers to achieve. It is done with activities that interest children.

Moreover, teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) reasoned:

If the children can recognize all the letters as in the lesson plan, it will help them to become more confident in speaking and writing the Tamil language. I also give them many practices on copy writing (from whiteboard) and reading so that by the end of kindergarten they have learned the letters and words. I teach the words through singing, games and hands-on activities. These words are vocabulary fixed in the kindergarten curriculum.

The four teachers’ answers to the interview questions and their reflections on the efficacy of strategies were in achieving the learning outcomes specified in the lesson plan within the given curriculum time. They seem to regard the standards as guides to developmentally appropriate learning. In speaking and writing, the teachers focused on vocabulary building. Their instructional decisions were directed by the curriculum content while their aim to achieve the stipulated standards was the organization’s expected outcome.

**Preparation for Primary Level Perspective: Confidence in Succeeding at Primary Level**

Unlike the teachers from the cluster 1, teachers 6BK, 9CB, and 10CD, from cluster 2 had designed their TL curriculum and planned the syllabus for their respective kindergarten instructions. The teachers decided on the curriculum approach and content in isolation. They did not make reference to the MOE NEL framework, as justified by Teacher 9CB:

Both the English and Tamil frameworks are similar, for English, it is ok but not for Tamil teaching. Tamil classes of one hour each is conducted twice in a week only, so we have to teach what is essential within the given time.
The teachers’ in Cluster 2, integrated TL in other subject disciplines. The linked concepts and skills for teaching in subjects like science; numeracy; music and movement; and arts, a prominent trait of foreign language teaching.

Teachers 6BK, 9CB and 10CD’s aims and intentions were to develop the preschoolers’ confidence in managing and succeeding in TL at Primary school. They believed that familiarity with the primary level TL content would enhance the preschoolers’ confidence and thus enable them to perform well academically in TL at the primary level. TL is an examinable subject in primary schools. Therefore, the teachers were concerned with the ‘passing of the subject’ and its implications for the children’s overall academic performance at primary level. Their belief was that children need academic knowledge and skills to succeed in the meritocratic education system in Singapore.

Teacher 9CB declared that her aim was “to build the kindergarteners’ confidence in the Tamil language, as it is the base for other development to take place and help them succeed in primary school.” She added:

I insist the ‘sound’ and keep repeating; this is ‘AI’ sound; this is ‘OH’ sound; this is ‘AW’ sound, which the children will be learning in primary one and primary two. After hearing me state the importance of learning, the children pay more attention. I will also give them worksheet on the letters and homework every week. Most of the times I use memory games and rote learning in my teaching.

Similarly, Teacher 6BK’s aim was to “boost the child’s confidence and knowledge in the… language to help them pass in their primary one.” She rationalized:

Though it is important for the child to know and understand the MT language, so the child will keep the culture, tradition, and religion alive. However, it is more important for the children to be well prepared in the syllabus of primary level as they will be assessed. It is important that they pass the exams and achieve the success in their MT. Their confidence can be developed by practices from primary syllabus which will help when they are in primary school.

Teacher 10CD asserted:

I feel that my preparation for children to pass their Tamil in primary level is OK because children are learning and enjoying my teaching; they are doing well in primary school. So for me to see parents happy, I am happy.

The cluster of teachers’ reflective journals correspondingly revealed their aims to develop the preschoolers’ confidence through primary level syllabus familiarization at kindergarten level so that the preschoolers can succeed in primary TL assessments.
They appear to stress on grammar and habit-forming practices. The teachers slanted towards audiolingual and GT method.

**Cultural Custodial Perspective: Confidence in Self-identity**

Similarly to Cluster 2, Teachers 5BK, 7BY, 8BY, 11CU, and 12CU, from Cluster 3 developed the kindergarten’s curriculum, planned the syllabus and decided on the teaching directions. These teachers similarly worked in isolation in the development of the curriculum and syllabus. They made reference to the MOE NEL framework, but with the limited application as their focus was in the maintenance of cultural values of the TL.

The teachers from this cluster synonymously linked TL learning to the maintenance of cultural heritage and traditions in Singapore’s multi-cultural society. TL learning was seen as the emblem of a preschoolers’ cultural identity. The teachers believed that it was important to develop the preschoolers’ awareness of cultural heritage, provide opportunities for the appreciation of TL and the sense of belonging to the roots. The teachers’ mutual aim was to develop the preschooler’s cultural self-confidence for a sense of self-identity. Teacher 8BY aimed, “to create interest in the MT language, for the children to learn and love the language, so the language won’t disappear,” She added “because I love the Tamil language; for the future of the children, they also have to learn the language. …. if not, they will not be able to identify with their rich cultural heritage.” Teacher 11CU concurred that “For me, I want the child to gain confidence level of oneself. Knowing the child’s culture and values the child develops self-concept and motivated to learn the language.”

Teacher 12CU typified the cluster of teachers’ beliefs and values:

Tamil is a very old language. We can say from the ancient times onwards they had the language. It has the literature, many Tamil literature like even the Thirukkural. It is not only for the Tamil people. All over the world, I think it is translated in many languages also that is not only for Indian people or Tamilians, but it is also for the whole world. So, such a great literature of good values is beneficial to the society, so we want the children to know the importance of Tamil from the basic level itself. It also relates to culture and enhances our heritage. Children have to know the letters also, the alphabets which are unique to the Tamil Language. We interact in a motivating way and fun oral activities to bring their interest in their MT. That is to keep to children's interest and make them interested in learning Tamil.
With the same notion, Teacher 5BK fittingly summarized the cluster’s belief:

Language is the only way we can incorporate the culture and the values to children. If we can instill the correct value and our culture identity the children will become confident about themselves. They will value Tamil and behave appropriately, and will also not be shy to speak the language. It is important to talk and use Tamil. They will also not feel foreign to it and will not ‘mentally close up’ to the learning in primary school. At this stage we start our culture through this language, they understand, and they want to follow it.

The five teachers believed it was their responsibility to develop the passion for learning TL through culture-based experiences. They felt that there was a need to ‘safe keep’ and maintain TL, as it was the vehicle through which culture and traditions are transmitted so that future generations do not become ‘rootless.’ The teachers regarded TL as functional and valued meaningful interactions. The teaching curriculum was at the discretion of these teachers’ perspectives. In brief, the aims and intentions of the 12 kindergarten teachers in bilingual kindergartens about quality and teaching and learning were steered by the three different conceptual frameworks (perspectives). Although the three clusters of teachers shared the desire to develop “confidence” of preschoolers through the child-centered curriculum, their differing rationales, and practices, informed by their institutional contexts, framed “confidence” very differently. The participants’ perspectives indicated traditional teaching methods (teacher-oriented direct instructions); rote learning (drill and practice); examination oriented (academic achievement) and cultural custodial oriented (communicative interaction) pedagogies. In addition to child-centered experiences, the teachers commented on the necessity for teaching practices that focused on listening, speaking, reading and writing (literacy instruction); grammar structure; vocabulary instructions; integration of concepts from subject disciplines; repetitive drills; and dispositions for TL learning in alignment to the specific outcomes for the preschoolers. The discussed child-centered experiences indicated concepts of foreign language teaching practices. The curricula theorized by the three cluster of teachers were congruent with beliefs and values for teaching within the ethos of their institutions. The next segment discusses the teachers’ interpretive curriculum for practice and the challenging factors.

**Teachers’ Interpretive or Operational Curriculum**

Child-centered curriculum and teaching strategies were identified as significant factors to achieving the teachers’ aims and intentions. Equally important were resources (teaching materials, teaching aids and time), human support (institute and
parents namely) and professional training in teaching TL, which was regarded as challenging factors by the 12 teachers. Although the curriculum constitutes an overall plan transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning, it is the teachers’ interpretive curriculum that instructs the teaching practices (Richards, 2013). The teachers’ interpretations of their theorized curriculum for practice in achieving their aims and outcomes for the preschoolers are described in this segment.

**Child-centered Curriculum**

The three clusters of teachers commonly interpreted thematic approaches and eclectic methods in teaching as attributes of the child-centered curriculum. The eclectic strategy is the teachers’ use of techniques and activities from a range of language learning theories and methods that are believed to be most appropriate for language teaching at preschool years. According to the teachers, the eclectic method is a strategy that connects many areas of the curriculum together and integrates within a theme. It is understood by the teachers that thematic curriculum and eclectic methods for teaching allows the teaching of TL to be natural and less fragmented, as well as engaging the preschoolers holistically. Nonetheless, the teachers’ decision on what method or approach to use depending on the aims of the lesson, varied

Teacher 3AC, from standards perspective of Cluster 1, explained that thematic curriculum as “a plan, based on the theme and content to be covered, as well as the activities that I want to use for teaching. I can also provide activities that integrate intellectual, physical and social learning”. Teacher 2AW, from the same cluster, rationalized that, “Thematic approach, make it easier to teach as I can plan to include like Festivals in our curriculum. Then I can integrate teaching opportunity for listening, speaking, reading and writing” and then subtly concluded, “At any rate, our center curriculum is based on Thematic Method, so it is mandatory!” Teacher 9CB, from preparation for the primary level perspective of Cluster 2, added, “In primary school, they are also using themes, so the thematic curriculum brings familiarity. It is also good to include the teaching practices in primary level; like give spelling and all in relation to the themes.” In a similar manner, Teacher 7BY, from the cultural custodial perspective of Cluster 3, justified that “To teach Tamil, we have made it useful and something the preschoolers can relate to, then only they will be motivated to learn. I will choose the themes that include culture and tradition at their level.” She further commented, “There are many mythological and Tamil epics that can be linked to themes and at children level. So I can use these to teach about culture.”

The three clusters of teachers asserted that the incorporation of age and language appropriate thematic experiences in the kindergarten teaching would stimulate learning
and engage children in the philosophy of the kindergartens and their theorized curriculum. Their methodology was considered to be child-centered and particularly useful and easy for the integration of opportunities to hear, speak, and interact in TL. The teachers who had designed the TL curriculum for their kindergartens collectively backed the thematic and integrated curriculum. They claimed it was a practical and valid strategy which they could adapt and align to achieve their aims and intentions. However, within the collective interpretation of child-centered curriculum the teachers were divided in their intention for practice by their aims and outcomes.

**Child-centered Learning**

All 12 teachers viewed child-centered pedagogy as most effective practice in the preschoolers’ acquisition of TL. Inevitably, the concepts of child-focus and play-based were inseparably interwoven in the teachers’ discussions of child-centered activities, which were informed by their institutional perspective.

Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1) had described child-centered activities as engaging activities that are hands-on, age appropriate and ‘based on the lessons.’ Her examples of child-centered activities were coloring, pasting and writing of letters, teaching children the forming words, using plasticine to form the letters. The teacher’s standards perspective manifested her interpretation of child-centered theory for practice, as her focus was on patterns and formation of words; and sentences by way of drill and repetition as well as completion of worksheet activities that were regarded as indicators of progressive achievement of the stipulated standards. In her reflective journal, she had penned her concern on ‘getting the children engaged to complete the given worksheets quietly and on time’ for adherence to the standards.

As for Teacher 6BK (Cluster 2) ‘child-centered learning’ is for:

Children to have a good understanding of the language, and be familiar with letters and words by way of fun activities. Like the same songs, on the rote-learning basis, to use the learned words and repeating them for reinforcement. For example, I use some words that the children will learn in primary one to instill interest and challenge them by way of fill-in-the-blank games. I use memory games too to teach the letters and words to be learned in primary level, for awareness. I will also bring in like props, puppets, do some coloring activities or follow-up homework activities after that.

Her interpretation was distinctively inclined to the perspective of preparing the preschoolers for primary level success. She justified the need to incorporate primary level TL syllabus through play and commented in her reflective journal on providing
take home worksheets for children who are unable to grasp some of the ‘challenging’ letters and words.

On the other hand, Teacher 11CU’s, from Cluster 3, explanation differed from that of Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 teachers. Teacher 11CU clarified:

To teach the preschoolers to speak the simple language; I expose them to simple letters slowly with the help of pictures, picture talks and play way like traditional games. I also provide them some cartoon characters from Indian origin, like 'Tenali Raman,' this gets the children to relate to the culture and talk, as they enjoy watching and learn the moral values. I will choose stories from our Tamil literature; my intention is for them to be aware of the cultural practices and instill the joy of learning TL. In addition, I use action and gesture in reading stories so that children will be engaged, participate and be interested TL.

Teacher 11CU’s interpretation of child-centered experiences was ingrained in her cultural custodial perspective. Her ‘child-centered learning’ experiences were interpreted for the preschoolers to learn the TL heritage, cultural values and to maintain their cultural identities. The three clusters of 12 teachers, though different in their perspectives, voiced that child-centered activities must be facilitated from the perspectives of children and how they learn. They emphasized that the adopted strategies for child-centered learning must view preschoolers as active learners who need engaging and stimulating experiences to be motivated to learn TL.

**Engagement of the Preschoolers**

The three clusters of teachers affirmed that only when children are engaged will they participate in child-centered activities. Their notion was that engaging children in the learning process would increase the preschoolers’ attention and focus that motivates meaningful experiences in the learning of TL. The teachers agreed that the preschoolers have varied strengths and different learning styles and that they must provide for experiences that addressed listening, reading, speaking and writing encompassing the preschoolers’ physical, social and emotional needs. All the three clusters of teachers concurred that the engaging experiences must be child focused and involve the children by relating to personal experiences and interests.

Teacher 9CB (Cluster 2) opined that home culture and practices are linked with TL and getting children to share or talk about their family and home events set a risk-free environment. In her viewpoint, drawing from the child’s background is an efficient trajectory. She said that teacher-directed conversation pitched to child’s level but structured appropriately will facilitate “children’s fearlessness, for the transition to
primary school." She also used props and puppets that urged participation and boost children’s confidence to speak in TL.

Teacher 11CU (Cluster 3) shared:

Some children do not come from Tamil speaking homes. To teach them to speak I engage them in daily conversations. I also think that picture talks and picture books allow for the preschoolers’ free expression without shyness, on the condition that the teacher appreciates the children’s effort and ideas. Another way to engage children is to use interactive games, where they have to listen and speak. Acknowledging children’s attempts motivate and encourage them to learn better, I always noticed.

Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1), who also had children from the non-Tamil speaking home, divulged:

For this kind of children I use English and Tamil in my Tamil teaching and translate word-to-word to English, so too they can understand the concept that I am teaching. Furthermore, the translation method includes the children and sustains their attention. This help in my achieving my objectives as indicated in the lesson plan.

In Cluster 1, teachers’ engagement of the preschoolers was steered towards the organization's stipulated standards. Despite their different perspectives, teachers in each cluster experienced common challenges in engaging preschoolers. They attempted to address these challenges using child-centered strategies as approaches that they thought were congruent with their institutional perspectives.

For strategies to teach TL in the kindergarten, the teachers had considered the philosophy of the kindergartens and the key concepts of child-centered experiences and engagement of the preschoolers. Aside from the philosophy and child-centered strategies, the three clusters of teachers pointed out that teaching materials; institute and parent support; and professional training influenced the effective implementation of the curriculum.

**Teachers’ attitude and actions in managing the challenges**

The teachers stressed that for actual implementation, they needed resources in the form of teaching materials; time to plan, prepare, implement and review their teaching practices; institute support; parents’ participation and professional training in the teaching of TL to preschoolers. This segment presents the challenges and the
teachers’ dispositions (attitudes and beliefs about their roles and responsibilities) and behaviors (action) in managing the challenges to achieving their aims and intentions.

**Teaching materials: Curriculum, syllabus and teaching aids.**

Teachers from the cluster 2 and cluster 3, who developed their kindergarten curriculum and syllabus in isolation, reasoned that an endorsed national framework in the teaching of TL and related syllabus would facilitate a level learning field and quality teaching across all kindergartens. Teacher 9CB viewed the biggest challenge as non-standard curriculum and syllabus, complaining:

*We don’t have a curriculum for Tamil, like for English, and we have to use the English curriculum and translate. So I use the primary one Tamil syllabus as my guide as those who learn extra knowledge from the kindergarten will benefit. When they go to primary one, the curriculum will become a reinforcement therefore for me there is no issue. Implementation depends very much on the individual teacher’s interest and commitment. There is no one to check on our teaching. It all depends on the teacher’s attitudes and how they want to teach.*

Although Teacher 9CB reflected the perspectives of Cluster 2 on the value of the primary syllabus as a guide that was not shared by teachers in Cluster 3. Teacher 5BK (Cluster 3) was concerned with the inconsistency in curriculum and the syllabus in the kindergartens. She expressed that,

*Though our organization has another center, we tend to have different content coverage and syllabus though both the centers use thematic approach. There is no time for professional networking for the teaching practices, no validation. Some centers I know, translate the MOE curriculum, but this does not work for teaching the Tamil language.*

Teacher 5BK explained that it was not feasible to replicate the thematic based English curriculum into Tamil as teaching TL teaching “involves culture and values, for example when we talk to elders we have to use a respectful language.” Translating the English curriculum according to her “at times changes the meaning totally!” and reassured herself that her experience as a primary school teacher “has enriched me in creating my plan and syllabus.” The absence of correlating NEL syllabus guide to an appropriate TL curriculum framework was another mentioned issue. Although the lack of a standard curriculum might be viewed as an opportunity for variation in teaching.
approaches and activities, the participants expressed the view that the lack of a standard curriculum affected their ability to deliver quality education. The concern was common not only across but within clusters. All 12 teachers indicated that the current operational syllabus is very much decided by the teachers’ aims and learning outcomes and varies in content and teaching practices. The teachers in Cluster 1, just like their colleague Teacher 1AS, admitted that at times even if they are in conflict with the specified content (translated from the English Literacy instruction), “we just follow and teach.” They confided that their purpose was to adhere to the objectives and achieve the stipulated standards as stated in the organization’s curriculum framework. The teachers expressed a sense of personal conflict.

Teaching-aids which are the materials used by the teachers to supplement classroom instruction and to stimulate the interest of the preschoolers were deemed to be deficient. Teachers across all clusters struggled to find appropriate teaching aids and resources. Teachers in clusters 1 and 2 used the EL teaching aids, although some (Teachers 4AC and 9CB) supplemented them with those they created in “off-work hours.” Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) used grouping strategies to overcome deficiencies:

Instead of providing for individual exploration, I group the children and teach them what to do so that all children will learn as they may not have the hands-on experience with the materials. I use what is there and do my best.”

Teachers in cluster 3 expressed most frustrations, typified by Teacher 7BY laments:

We don’t have relevant resource material and then some more we also don’t know where to source. Very lacking. We end up doing our material …. teaching aids. It is sad in comparison with English and Chinese available teaching resources and aids which are attractive and relevant. Well for us, we have to adapt, 'copy' and do our material to make the children attracted in the learning for the Tamil language.

All the teachers in Cluster 3 created their teaching aids and artifacts during “off-work hours.” There was a feeling of annoyance and despondency amongst the teachers at not being supported in achieving their intentions in the teaching of TL.
Time, Institute Support and Parents’ Participation

The asserting statements, “Lack of time" and “Shortage of time" were prevalent in the 12 teachers’ interviews. The teachers alleged that time was not given for the planning of lesson, for the preparation of teaching aids and in reviewing the teaching practices as well as meeting-parents-sessions for child’s progressive update in TL. Teachers in Cluster 1 seemed to be particularly depressed by the pressure of time.

Teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) implied that TL is not awarded the same significance as English and Mandarin languages in her kindergarten:

The Tamil language curriculum plan was like a framework, a guide, and a lot falls on us teachers in specific to planning for implementation, identifying and making the teaching aids, and evaluation of the lesson. While for The English Language, we discuss in a group at center level and decide on the lessons, teaching aids and the evaluation process. Then we distribute the workload, which is also the case for Mandarin but Tamil, I have to do everything. I am expected to do it during my free periods in the kindergarten, which is once a week for forty-five minutes.

Likewise, Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1) said in a disgruntled tone:

There are many things that you can prepare for the children’s learning, but being a single teacher I got to make sure that I prepare all these activities in time for them, which is a bit difficult at the moment. Furthermore, I am not only doing my second language, I’m also taking over my language classes, my other English language classes, so I am a full day teacher and with two language classes plus two 2nd language classes, so it is a bit tiring. With such shortage of time, it is a big challenge to created teaching aid especially if you have different types of learners. Even though I want to give my best, but due to the lack of time, sometimes I just give up in preparing the activities for them.

Teacher 2AW and Teacher 1AS mentioned dispiritedly that they were not motivated and may request to be relinquished from teaching TL. They preferred to concentrate on their role as English language teachers.

Contrastingly, teachers in Cluster 3, took it upon themselves and used after work hours to plan their lessons and create the needed teaching aids. This latter group of teachers absorbed the responsibility for the benefit of the
preschoolers learning experiences. The difference is in the Cluster 3 teachers’ commitment to TL as a cultural matter.

Teachers in Cluster 1 also complained that time was not allocated for ‘parent-teacher communication’ to engage parents, sharing their observations on children’s development in TL with parents. They pointed out that the Mandarin teachers were allocated time for parent-teacher meetings. Teachers 1AS and 2AW felt that TL parent-communications were viewed as not ‘time-worthy’ by their institutes and left it as an option. As for the Teacher 4AC, she communicated with the parent through electronic mails and shared her observations of the children’s progress. Similarly, Teacher 3AC, from the same cluster, made arrangements to extend the ‘parent-teacher meetings for EL’ to accommodate parents whose children are learning Tamil in the center. Teachers 3AC and 4AC initiatives typically spill over into their personal time, yet were willing as they viewed the parent engagement time as crucial in their teaching.

Opportunities for professional networking; principal’s feedback and sharing; and professional recognition were the three areas that were deemed as a lack of support at all institutions.

All the teachers, at one point or another, had mentioned that there was almost no opportunity for TL teachers’ professional networking in the kindergartens. The Cluster 1 teachers said the only time all the teachers teaching TL in their organization gathered, was for the announcement of the implementation of the TL curriculum framework. The teachers felt that mixing, communicating, getting information, sharing teaching practices (as well as managing challenges) and establishing a professional partnership with teachers from other kindergartens within their organizations or other organizations would develop them personally and professionally.

Teacher 10CD remarks typified the teachers in Cluster 2:

I do think about how the other kindergarten teachers are teaching; how they are preparing the worksheets and how they are doing the lesson. I would just like to see or hear from other teachers, how are they doing. I feel that what I am doing is OK, but it will help me know that for sure. That will give me the reassurance.

The Cluster 2 teachers stated that they felt isolated and overwhelmed at times.
Similarly, Teachers from Cluster 3 in addition to the feeling of working in isolation and having no opportunity for professional exchanges, were also concerned about not receiving feedbacks on their teaching strategy or lesson delivery from their principals.

As regard to center principal’s support, Cluster 1 teachers were the most discouraged. Teacher 2AW commented:

The principals do not provide feedback or reciprocate to TL teachers’ teaching practices and contributions. The lack of CP’s (center principals) interest makes you feel that your hard work is not recognized or acknowledged. The acknowledgment is important; especially from your principals and executive principals as it shows their recognition of the mother tongue, it can be Tamil, it can be Malay or Chinese. The principal’s emphasis is more on Chinese rather Malay and Tamil. As Tamil teachers we also have to teach Tamil as well as we have to teach English, numeracy, music and movement as well as prepare for the MPS (meet-parent-session) for EL, so we are very drained out, yet feel unappreciated. Whereas the Chinese teachers only have to focus only on Chinese, so that makes the work easier and more time to prepare their resources.

Teachers 3AC and 4AC, also from Cluster 1, are of the opinion that if they as TL teachers are not proactive, then it is likely that the kindergartens may withdraw from offering Tamil as an MT in the kindergartens. This viewpoint was shared by the others though they did experience disheartening moments when their additional role as TL teacher is overlooked for professional incentive and growth.

The teachers unanimously highlighted that building partnership with parents was a salient step in supporting the preschoolers’ learning and development in TL. Nonetheless, Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 teachers said that engaging parents’ was a demanding task. The reasons mentioned were that parents were not keen or ‘free’ to participate in the TL curriculum; they do not or are too shy to speak in Tamil, and they neither value the language nor culture.

Teachers in Cluster 1 pointed out that due to the teachers’ time constraints it was unworkable to accommodate to parents’ availability. The teachers related that even if they worked around parents’ time, the parents who do not speak or
not interested or do not see TL as a valuable subject for their children were not keen in the meetings. Teachers, 1AS, and 2AW were in agreement with Teacher 3AC’s judgment:

Singaporean parents use mostly English at home. Hence, they feel it is ‘OK, if my child is not interested in Tamil, after all, there is limited use for it in the multicultural society.’ The parents also see very little benefit in learning or maintaining the culture as Tamil is needed only to pass exams in the primary school. The children coming from such background look at you as if this is the first time they hear the language.

Teacher 2AW added that the parents who were not interested or shy to speak in Tamil avoided speaking to her. She reasoned that it is probably that the parents could be thinking that she is solely an L2 teacher who might not know English. She said that to such parents, Tamil Language teachers are of a lower status in comparison to English teachers. She concluded, “Out of my 20 kindergarten children, about four parents had spoken to me about their child’s Tamil language development.” She declared that the parents’ biased thinking and actions, made her feel insignificant.

In the same predicament were Teachers 6BK, 9CB, and 10CD (Cluster 2). However, for the other teachers in Cluster 3 parent-partnership is a criterion in their kindergartens and they voluntarily make time to meet parents after work hours. Unlike the Cluster 3 teachers, the Cluster 1 and 2 teachers who were not keen, asserted that such meetings should be scheduled and not imposed on teachers after their work hours.

**Professional training.**

The teachers stressed on the necessity and urgency for certificated teacher training in the teaching of TL. They all agreed that the teaching of Tamil language required a specific competency that differed from the teaching of EL. Four teachers from Cluster 1 and two teachers from Cluster 2 disclosed that when they were asked to teach TL, they did not expect it but took on the role thinking that their knowledge and skills in teaching EL could be transferred. However, the six teachers indicated that they had experienced moments of self-doubt in the teaching of TL to the preschoolers. Self-doubt refers to how certain a person feels about important abilities and it can make one feel inadequate, overwhelmed and insecure therefore affecting their self-esteem (Beijaard,
Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1) linked the cause of self-doubt to lack of training:

For Tamil, we don't have a kind of a Certificate or Diploma training. What we are doing is all based on what we learned in English. We are translating or transforming all the English into Tamil; we put those practices in Tamil. At times, it does not work and can get frustrating, so if we have the proper training, I think we will be more confident. Many teachers assigned to teach TL had resigned after a while, as they felt incompetent and not supported.

On the other hand, teacher 8BY (Cluster 3) said emotionally:

I do feel incompetent as I know that Tamil teaching involves culture and literature, but I am not trained. For now, I am doing with whatever personal knowledge and my practices but to be a professional in my Tamil teaching, teacher training is compulsory.

Six teachers (two from Cluster 2 and four from Cluster 3), who had a minimum of ten years of experience each in teaching TL, were keener for continued professional development to keep them current on the teaching practices and strategies. They suggested for Tamil Language seminars, conferences and other development workshops for preschool teachers, as it can serve as an opportunity for them to learn from and interact with other fellow TL teachers on the ‘real world teaching practices.’

The analysis of this segment showed that the theories and three conceptual frameworks of the teachers’ interpretive curriculum for practice were aligned to the teachers’ theorized curriculum. However, the interpretation made noticeable the teachers’ lack of distinction between language acquisition and language learning theories for their teaching. The discussion also revealed the different teachers’ attitude and behaviors towards their teaching practices and managing the associated challenges. Nonetheless, managing their perceived lack of resources (teaching material and time); insufficient institutional support; parents’ limited participation and zero professional training in teaching TL were an important challenge that had affected the personal worth and image of the teachers. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) stressed that teachers’ personal image (identity) affects their professional practices. The following segment of this section presents the observed application, to the ways the three clusters of teachers put their thoughts and meanings into classroom teachings.
Teachers’ Applied or Enacted Curriculum

The findings disclosed inconsistency between the teachers’ cognition (what they thought, knew and believed) and their application (what they practiced) in the teaching of TL in the classrooms. The enacted curriculum showed child-centered pedagogy as understood by teachers, and methods that integrated Language Acquisition and Language Learning theories, in their classroom teaching. In addition to the common strategies, the three distinguished methods implemented by the 12 teachers were contained within the philosophy of their respective kindergartens and aligned to achieve the teachers’ aims and outcomes for the preschoolers in the learning of TL. This segment discusses the observations of the teachers’ application and clarifications (gathered during the interview) of the theories and methods in their teaching practices.

Child-centered pedagogy and teachers’ conceptual framework

It was observed that the teachers’ application of key concepts (child-centered; play-based experiences; and engagement of the preschoolers) as presented in their ideation and interpretive curriculum, though conforming to the teachers’ conceptual frameworks (as shown in Table 8), deviated from the articulated meaning.

Teaching practices within Standard Perspectives.

Teacher 1AS, from Cluster 1, implemented a numeracy activity to teach the concept of number ‘irahndu’ (two) and size, ‘periya’ (big) and ‘sirîya,’ (small) in TL. The lesson commenced with a concept word (vocabulary) introduction, followed-up with a fishing activity and ended with the worksheet. She introduced the three concept words with two pictures of the fish cut-out. The pictures were identical except that one cut-out was smaller in size than the other. Teacher 1AS labeled the cut-outs as big fish and small fish in Tamil. She then demonstrated ‘one-to-one correspondence’ principle and counted ‘ondru, irahndu’ (one, two). The implemented numeracy activity showed that TL was used as a medium to teach subject discipline.

The children were instructed to repeat after her thrice, as she pointed. Then as a whole-class activity, she sorted and classified six similar cut outs into big and small on the white board. The children had to repeat after her as she labeled “periya meen” (big fish) and “sirîya meen” (small fish) and counted “ondru, irahndu.” One of the children asked if the “sirîya meen” is a “baby fish” as the pictures were similar. Teacher 1AS replied that “sirîya means small” and informed that some fish are big while some are small in TL. She then told the
children to repeat after her. The class echoed whenever Teacher 1AS uttered the three words. Each time the word was repeated thrice. When two children mispronounced the word “siriya meen,” she recapped and got the two children as well as the class to pronounce after her. Upon getting it right, she praised “mega nandru” (very good) and moved on. Her teaching practice displayed rote learning and ‘drill-and-practice’ for memorization, teacher-oriented, children’s compliance with the teacher and the “right” answer outcome. Even so, Teacher 1AS explained that the ‘cut-outs’ provided the hands-on experience, the visual one-to-correspondence demonstration is sensorial learning, and the repetition is a practice exercise for children to learn the words.

Teacher 1AS’ follow-up was a fishing activity, in groups of four children. Each child was given a fishing net to catch two live fish each from a basin. It was noted that the teacher’s conversation with children was directed towards the introduced vocabulary, the lesson’s objective. It was a ‘closed-ended question’ session rather than an engaging interaction. She asked a child “nee etthanai meen piditthaai? (how many fish did you catch?)” When a child replied, ‘naahn rhendu fishes pidittheyn,’ teacher corrected, ‘naahn irahndu meengal pidittheyn.” (rhendu is two in spoken Tamil; irahndu is written Tamil, and meengal is plural for fish). TL is used in two forms; one is ‘spoken Tamil’ (paychu Tamil) and the other ‘written Tamil’ (ezhutthu Tamil). Though written Tamil is also accepted as spoken, in everyday interaction it is differentiated. The differences between spoken and written Tamil are expressed in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary (Schiffman, 2002). Many ‘written Tamil’ words are not used in everyday speech. The child with a puzzled look imitated the teacher. Teacher 1AS made the child repeat the ‘correct answer’ thrice before she clapped and said, “miga nandru” (very good). She then moved on to the next child and repeated her ‘conversational-question exercise,’ to every child, which was consistent with ‘drill and practice’ approach rather than a two-way interaction.

The session ended with worksheet exercise on matching the numeral 2 to the number of fish and tracing the word “meen” (fish). It was noted that the teacher used ‘spoken Tamil’ and code-mixed between Tamil and English, in her chats with children but was deliberate in the use of ‘written Tamil’ in her teaching. On clarification, she mentioned that she had to adhere to the given lesson plan. The teacher took deliberate effort to ensure that the development of formal or academic TL was key in her teaching of TL.
Teacher 1AS then validated that the real life “hands-on” fishing as a sensorial-learning experience that captivated the children, sustained their interest in catching the fish and deemed it as developmentally appropriate. She elaborated that the activity instills joy and fun, and was thus viewed as play-based. The aim of her conversation was to engage every child in using the learned vocabulary for meaningful interaction. She declared that the interaction provided an opportunity for the children to speak and listen, as they have to answer her questions, while the worksheet completion facilitated writing skills which she considered as a significant skill in language learning. She reiterated that,

As English is taught thematically, I teach Tamil Language using the same themes and concepts...I just translate the content from The English language to Tamil, which keeps the children engaged and interested as they are familiar with the concepts. It is a repetition of concepts but in Tamil. This way I can achieve the teaching objectives by the lesson plan within the specified time.

Teacher 1AS’s interpretation of play-based and developmentally appropriate teaching practices was not congruent with the concepts from the literature (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Gordon, 2007; Blumberg, 2009; Whitehead, 2009; Dietze & Kashin, 2015). Consequently, there was a dysfunction between her ideational theory and her interpretation of theory and observed practice.

Similarly, Teacher 2AW provided stick flashcards and used ‘written Tamil’ in her interaction with the preschoolers during the TL literacy activity on transportation. The aim of the teacher was to deliver the lesson as planned within the subject period (time). She consistently used words that were prescribed in the syllabus, ‘written Tamil’ or words translated from the English syllabus. An example, ‘zebra crossing' was taught as “varee kutherai kadappu” which meant ‘striped horse crossing.' Zebra is 'striped horse' and crossing is ‘kadappu.' Teacher 2AW’s discussion was structured and not fluid as she appeared to be uncomfortable with the use of the ‘written Tamil’ in her interactions. In the follow-up role-play activity, she used the stick flashcard on road signs for children to dramatize. In the activity, Teacher 2AW unconsciously switched between the written Tamil and ‘colloquial spoken Tamil.’ Colloquial Tamil is an informal language that not commonly spoken in formal settings. The activity came to an abrupt end as it was time to do the worksheet. Worksheet exercises were routine for the Kindergarten 2 classes in the organization. In one of the reflection journals as well as at the interview, Teacher 2AW
mentioned that the “...vocabulary words for learning were too bombastic for children; even I was not familiar with the names.”

The intention of Teacher 2AW’s interaction with children was also to focus on achieving the learning objectives for the lesson, to learn the vocabulary words and identify the four road signs. Further observations of Teachers 3AC and 4AC revealed that all the cluster 1 teachers’ child-centered teaching practices exhibited similar activities and were influenced by their belief in a ‘standards perspective’ for quality teaching and learning of TL.

**Teaching practices within Primary Level perspectives.**

Teacher 9CB from Cluster 2 conducted a science activity on the theme, Nature. She also used hands-on teaching aids like pictures, drawing and realia (banana tree sculpture) in her teaching. Teacher 9CB introduced the lesson from recapitulating the previous day’s lesson on the theme. She asked what nature was but replied instantaneously, "nammai suttiree ullavaigal" (things surrounding us). As she named earth, sun, moon, ocean, sea, garden (in Tamil), the children repeated after her unreservedly. She informed the children that the day’s lesson was ‘vaazhai maram’ (banana tree) as she pointed to the picture. Some children spontaneously shared their home experiences with banana leaves, fruits and flowers. Teacher 9CB redirected the children’s focus to naming the different parts of the tree that they echoed. She used ‘letter-sound-blend’ and included synonyms like ‘poo’ is also ‘malar’ (flower) in her teaching. Teacher 9CB then questioned the children on the functions of the parts of the plant and drew on the white board to illustrate the functions. She also corrected children’s grammatical tense usage in their speech. At one point she mentioned that it was important for the children to listen and learn as she was teaching them primary 1 ‘paadam’ (lesson), so it will be easy for them when they go to primary school. The follow-up activity was a picture fill-in-the-blanks worksheet on the parts of a plant. The preschoolers were to write the name of the part of the plant within the given blanks. The teacher wrote the words on the whiteboard randomly and instructed the preschoolers to choose the correct word and copy it to their worksheets. Teacher 9CB concluded the session by stating that whoever finished the worksheet will get to ‘play’ with the realia. There was a burst of excitement in the children’s voices. Teacher distributed the children’s workbook and walked around to check if the children had written the correct answers. Only those completed the workbook, explored with the sculpture. Only those who completed the worksheet correctly got to explore
with the realia. It was teacher-directed teaching inclined towards achieving the primary one subject content.

At the interview, Teacher 9CB, like the teachers in Cluster 1, mentioned that the teaching aids provided the concrete experience and sensorial learning which are important in child-centered learning. She stated that banana tree parts are commonly used in children homes, and they can relate, so the topic was developmentally appropriate. She elaborated that the picture, drawing facilitated the visual guide on parts of the plant and the banana sculpture (realia) enabled the children to feel and see. She added while the realia intrigued the children, the worksheet exercise and becoming familiar with the vocabulary would instill the confidence in the preschoolers to manage the primary one syllabus. Teacher 9CB’s teaching practices were focused on achieving her aim and intentions.

Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) practices were similar to that of Teacher 9CB. She too stated that the teaching aids, the songs at tune-in activity and book talk that she had used were at children’s level, ability and related to their experiences. The book was on ‘Aarokkiyamaana unavu’ (Healthy food). During the book-talk Teacher 10CD, used “written Tamil” and code-mixed English-Tamil to explain. She mentioned that the primary one content and workbooks in her teaching motivated the children to learn new words and keeps them occupied. The children have to complete one workbook every quarter. Teacher 6BK, who is also in the same Cluster 2, used repetitive songs and alliteration word-games in her teaching to involve the preschoolers. She implemented ‘write the words in the air with finger’ activity before ending the lesson with the worksheet. Teacher 6BK classified the ‘writing the words in the air with finger’ activity as pretend play. The children uttered the words four times as they wrote in the air with their fingers. The follow-up was repetitive writing of the words on lined worksheets (a penmanship activity). Teacher 6BK regarded the resources as hands-on, engaging as children love repetitive songs and “writing on air” as “fun activity.” She explained that the activity was to bring awareness in the form of the letter and comprehend the ‘writing-direction.’ She too valued worksheets in her teaching for the same reasons as the others in the cluster.

All the three teachers had similar concepts for their child-centered teaching strategies, to hone the required skills for primary school success. Nonetheless, play experiences in the respective sessions were trivial. The three teachers' practices were teacher-directed and primary level content-focused. The concepts these teachers had on child-centered were alike amongst themselves.
and that of the teachers in cluster 1, and the play-based experience was implemented as activities rather than a mode of learning. Nonetheless, the cluster 2 teachers were resolute in their preparation for primary level perspective too.

**Teaching practices within Cultural Custodial perspective.**

On the other hand, Teacher 11CU (Cluster 3) who also valued child-centered learning provided additional teacher-made resources customized for children’s cultural experiences. In addition to traditional resources, as used by teachers in cluster 1 and 2, Teacher 11CU engaged the preschoolers in dramatic play with animal masks and related animal props. For the theme “Miruganggal” (animals), she had selected a story for dramatization on the moral value of respect and harmony. She commenced the lesson with a shared reading of an enlarged story chart (adapted for dramatization). Shared reading is an interactive reading experience whereby the children join the reading with the teacher. The teacher simultaneously modeled the convention of reading. Teacher 11 CU also used realistic reactions to the text, gestures, and appropriate voice intonations. She paused from time to time and asked for the preschoolers’ predictions, and then confirmed their predictions. When a child said “puli” (tiger) and pointed to a picture of ‘poonai’(cat), Teacher 11CU teased the child. “Oh uhn puli meow meow sollumaah?” (Oh, so your tiger says meow meow?). The whole class laughed. The child giggled and self-corrected. The teacher ended on the note that “‘naam vehru pattaalum, naanggal otrumaiyaga vaazhvohm” (though we are different from each other we live in harmony) as children shared their understood meaning of the statement.

Following the reading experience was the dramatization activity with implanted riddles Though Teacher 11CU had given each child a scripted dialogue for the dramatic play, she accepted the impromptu interactions and actions that led to the preschoolers’ instinctive discussion of the moral values. The lesson ended with the song “Kaattukkula vaalgerom, ondraai koodi vaalgerom” (we live in the forest, we live in harmony). The experience included audio of the song and preschoolers’ singing of the song with related hand and body movements.

Teacher 11CU explained, “I choose stories from our Tamil literature and ‘neethi kathaigal’ (Tamil moral story), my intention is for children to be aware of such fun stories in TL and at the same time appreciate the values.” She added:

> The choice of the story must be easy for children to understand and interesting. The props also stimulated the children to participate, learn
and tell about the features of the animal as they are wearing the props like the elephant trunk and big ears; monkey's long tail. They also act the movement of the animals. Children read, see and do - to learn the acting, er pretend play of the story engaged the children and motivated them to talk. The more they talk, the more confident they become. Never mind if they make mistakes, the talking is more important.

Teacher 11CU applied an informal language instruction to engage all the children in a risk-free setting. The lesson aim was to teach the names of specific wild animals and their prominent features through communication. It was interesting to note the teacher’s creativity in merging the lesson’s theme and cultural value from Tamil couplets. The play was a rich, meaningful experience to entice children to talk and respect each other’s ideas in the dramatization. Similarly, the other teachers from cluster 3 had role play, props, percussion instruments, teacher-created songs, rhymes and dramatic play as modes of instructions for the child-focused experiences. Teachers 5BK and 12CU used couplets and proverbs in their teachings while Teachers 7BY and 8BY sourced and linked values to fables (Panchatantra) and epics (Ramayana). The cultural custodian nature and disposition of the five teachers, as summarized by Teacher 8BY “Create interest in the MT language, to learn and love the language so that the language won’t disappear,” were evident in all their teaching practices.

In short, the applied curriculum revealed that though the 12 teachers’ theorized curriculum presented the concept of child-centered learning as child-focus and play based, there was dissonance and perspectival biases in the teaching practices. Cluster 1 teachers application was standard-focused that was aligned to meet the objectives of the stipulated curriculum, for Cluster 2 teachers it was preparation for primary level while Teachers in cluster 3 undertook cultural custodian practices for the maintenance of TL.

**Theories and Strategies: Teachers’ Aims and Outcomes**

There were also differentiated teaching strategies in the implemented curriculum. Content gravitated; top-down content; and interactive approach were the three core strategized methods that were distinctive between the three clusters. The strategies were enacted to achieve the teachers’ intended aims and outcomes. Similarly, the enacted curriculum made apparent the teachers’ practices of hybridization between language acquisition and language learning theories. Krashen (1982) explained that SLA is the way “children 'get' their language, subconsciously
(feels natural), through informal, implicit learning” while SLL is ‘conscious learning’ (p17). Learning is knowing about language, “explicit, formal linguistic knowledge of the language” (Krashen, 1982, p.17). The theories were implemented in the classrooms in ways that the teachers interpreted them for teaching practices.

Confidence in TL speaking and writing skills: Content gravitated.

Teachers in cluster 1 (1AS, 2AW, 3AC, and 4AC), were concerned that the preschoolers instinctively spoke in English in their TL lessons. They believed that acquiring the speaking and writing skills (in specific to the outcome-focused skills) would boost the preschooler’s self-esteem to speak and write some words in TL by the end of the kindergarten year.

Teacher 3AC rationalized, “Very easy for them to converse in English, but when I ask them to converse in Tamil then suddenly they will all keep quiet; then I have to start the conversation, and then they will join in one by one. I also get them to write the vocabulary words which they had used in the conversation. Once the children acquire the words they speak to me in TL confidently”. One of the activities, in her observed lesson, was class shared reading with a big book on ‘Vaanilai’ (weather), the theme for the lesson. Teacher 3AC led a picture talk on the cover page and emphasized on the vocabulary words in English like ‘vaanilai’ (weather) and ‘vaanavil’ (rainbow). During her reading, she paused and emphasized on ‘mazhai naal’ (rainy day), ‘Mekamoottaanaa naal’ (cloudy day), ‘wayil naal’ (sunny day) and ‘kaattru naal’ (windy day). Concurrently she wrote each word on the whiteboard and narrated on the direction of writing the respective letters in the word. During the shared reading Teacher 3AC integrated numeracy and science concepts like counting, matching, categorizing and color spectrum. She explained that integrated curriculum is a teaching principle in the organization curriculum (refer to Figure 1 in Chapter 2). The subject disciplines integration, as taught by the teacher, was similar to the grammar-translation and direct method traits of the Foreign Language Teaching (FLT).

Teacher 3AC then told the children to talk about what they liked to do during any of the learned weather. When a child said, “naan and brother beach pohnohm. Appuram naan and brother sand-castle seithom” (he and his brother went to the beach and built a sand castle). The teacher paraphrased child’s speech to include the words “oru wayil naalil” (On a sunny day). However, the child did not incorporate the word but continued his narration on how he and his brother played a ball at the beach. Teacher 3AC interjected the words “oru
"wayil naalil" (on a sunny day) unsuccessfully. Eventually, she interrupted and instructed the child to repeat after her “oru wayil naalil naanum en annanum kadarkaraikku sendrohm” (on a sunny day, my brother and I went to the beach). The child repeated after Teacher 3AC twice and then gradually quietened down. The teacher’s practice in enticing children to use the learned words was common of the class. Her view was that the accustomization would enable children to learn to use the words in their dialogue. Teacher 3AC’s expectation of the pre-schoolers to use the vocabulary words and learn the grammatical structure, by way of her modeling; repetitions; drill and echoing aloud also indicated pedagogical features of FLT. Foreign Language pedagogy commonly taught through the medium of content-based learning (Baker, 2011; De Groot, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The session ended with worksheet activity whereby the children were directed to write their favorite weather word and draw a related picture. The teacher monitored children’s writing as she walked around the classroom. Teacher 3AC stopped frequently and told children to follow the writing directions. For closure, she held a picture-talk on some of the completed worksheets and praised the penmanship.

Although Teacher 4AC’s teaching practices were similar to Teacher 3AC, she was watchful on how children pronounced the words when they were talking. The theme was “en veedu” (my house), Teacher 4AC used picture flash cards to introduce the types of house. The list included ‘thodar veedu’ (terrace); ‘adukku maadi veedu; (flats); ‘irattai maadi veedu’ (two story house); ‘maaligai’ (bungalow) and ‘aranmanai’ (palace). She conducted “name-and-talk” activity. Teacher 4AC called out each child to the front to name the house type they live in and talk about it. When the children pronounced incorrectly, she emphasized on the correct utterance before they talked about their houses. Teacher 4AC repeatedly interjected and corrected the children’s dialogue. When she realized that terrace, bungalow, and palace were unused, she made every child repeat the names of the three house types after her. In the process, she stopped to correct every child’s pronunciation. Her focus was to “to teach the words in the lesson plan” she declared. Similarly, Teachers 1AS and 2AW, as presented earlier in this segment, also emphasized on the vocabulary learning and writing by way of drill and practice by way of transmission approach.

Relatedly, all the teachers in the cluster particularly used the lessons’ vocabulary words in their speech and enforced them in the children’s writing. At one point or another, they implemented pedagogical traits of FLT in their
classrooms. At the interviews, the four teachers, repeatedly validated that “I teach according to lesson plan”; “we have to impart the vocabulary”; “We have to teach so that children can understand and use the words meaningfully” and “educate to achieve the objective so that the children will be able to speak and write, and develop the confidence by the year end”. The teachers’ reasoning substantiated their content-gravitated classroom practices, by way of transmission approach. Though the four teachers had signified that speaking and writing are acquired naturally, their practices were mainly immersed in formal language instruction. Their teaching practices exhibited the teachers’ lack of distinction between SLA and SLL theories.

Confidence in Succeeding at Primary level: Top-down approach.

Unlike the teachers in Cluster 1, Teachers 6BK, 9CB and 10CD (Cluster 2) aims and outcomes were to go beyond the preschool performance, to build the pre-schoolers’ confidence in managing and succeeding in primary level. The teachers’ applied strategy was the use of the primary one curriculum pedagogy; they embraced the ‘Top-down’ academic teaching approach. The three teachers used the primary one level content to set the pre-schoolers up to succeed. Their teaching practices were teacher-directed, and content focused on reading, writing, and comprehension. They argued that familiarization of primary one TL content at kindergarten level would breed confidence for Primary one TL success.

Teacher 9CB explicitly declared:

Implementation depends very much on the individual teacher’s interest and commitment. There is no one to check on our teaching. It all depends on the teacher’s attitudes and how they want to teach so I use the content from primary one so that my children are better prepared. I tell children that the Tamil Language has 247 letters which they will learn by primary 2. I will also tell them that I will teach them all the important letters for primary one by now, so it will be easy when they go to primary school.
Teacher 9CB's classroom teaching instructions also included a variety of formal language skills for oral and written, such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and syntax. Her teaching of vocabulary in the form of separate word lists, explanations of grammar (like singular and plural) and the frequent use of 'drill and practice' exercise for reading were distinctive features of FLT too.

In a similar manner were Teachers 6BK and 10CD classroom practices. Teacher 10CD concurred:

I use the primary one Tamil syllabus as my guide as those who learn extra knowledge from the kindergarten will benefit. When they go to primary one, the curriculum will become a reinforcement. Therefore, I teach them words from Primary 1 textbook. They also learn to write some of the words.

She told the pre-schoolers in her classroom to copy the words she had scribed in isolation on the whiteboard. Teacher 6BK emphasized that the children write within the lined worksheet, as she explained that it is “a skill needed in primary one and after many practices, they will acquire it.” The writing task was for familiarization to worksheet skills and the ‘drill and practice’ habit formation experiences were for the acquisition of the skills.

Though the teachers in this cluster had adopted some FLT pedagogies, similarly to the teachers in cluster 1, they focused on enhancing the skills needed for primary school, justifying their ‘top-down’ pedagogical application in
their classrooms. Teachers 6BK, 9CB, and 10CD had also stated that their teaching and learning experiences facilitated the preschoolers' language acquisition and learning. However, their structure and formal teaching practices demonstrated anomalies in the application of the language acquisition and language learning theories.

**Confidence in self-identify: Communicative method (Interaction).**

Teachers in Cluster 3 (5BK, 7BY, 8BY, 11CU, and 12CU) saw a need to sustain and maintain TL amongst the pre-schoolers, as they viewed them as the vehicle through which culture and traditions are transmitted. The teachers reasoned that by raising the pre-schoolers cultural self-identify (confidence in oneself) about TL, the pre-schoolers will value their cultural selves and will be motivated to use TL. The teachers exercised interactions to engage the pre-schoolers in meaningful dialogues and focused on utterances, centered in the audio linguistic practices. The five teachers’ implemented curriculums were rooted in culture and values.

Teacher 7BY explained,

Mahabaratham or Ramayanam (Ancient Indian Epics devoted to philosophical and ethical teachings). It can be told in the easy and fun way for children to love the story. At the same time, we can teach our culture also by talking and sharing the moral values so the children can learn. I want our Indian community children to learn Tamil and appreciate their traditions. Once they appreciate and enjoy the language, they will talk in Tamil with happiness. That’s why I spend much of my own time in preparing for their needs. Otherwise, in the future, nobody will speak Tamil.

Teacher 7BY, commenced the lesson with chorus ‘mantra’ recitation, with the pre-schoolers. The mantra (a Vedic hymn) was repeated to aid concentration in a meditation form. The pre-schoolers greeted the teacher and peers, “Kaalai vanakkam” (Good morning) with both palms clasped in front of their chests (a gesture to show respect).
In the main activity, Teacher 7BY recapped the previous day lesson “🤔, 🤔 ezhuthum, osaum” (letter and sound). She wrote “🤔” on the white board; instantaneously the children phonated the letter with a short “ah.” She then wrote “🤔.” Most of the pre-schoolers uttered as “aah” albeit a few children repeated the same short “ah.” Before the teacher’s response, the peers stretched their hands and said it was the long sound “aah.” She acknowledged and added that they are going to learn letter “으,” as she wrote and uttered “으.” Teacher 7BY informed that they are going to use “ezhuthum osaum” to play a game. She wrote “ Leer” below “🤔” the class read as “dah”. Following that, she wrote “ Leer” under “🤔” the pre-schoolers automatically read as “daah”. Teacher 7BY laughed and teased them, “appadi oru ezhuthukku irandu osai varum?” (How can one letter have two sounds?). The class laughed. She highlighted to children the link between ‘pattern and sound’ and showed an example with ‘으’. She named the image as ‘kaar’ (leg), and said if they see a ‘kaar’ beside a letter then the letter becomes a long sound “으”. She gestured with outstretched arms and emphasized the length. She termed ‘kombu’ (horn) for letter “으”. The teacher built on the pre-schoolers’ prior knowledge on the consonants and facilitated their observation for patterns and sounds. The activity became a game of looking for patterns and reading the letters correctly. Teacher 7BY implicitly created two-letter words for the children to sound and blend, to read. She then by way of flash cards, arranged the two-letter words into simple sentences which the children read unconsciously. An example was “으LEE 누LEE” (Ravi come read). The preschoolers were intrigued and requested Teacher 7BY to substitute the name with their classmate’s “LeeLEE” (Siva). It was a round-robin game with the preschoolers’ suggestions for substitution. One child uttered “으LEE 누LEE 루LEE” (uncle come read), the teacher implicitly explained that for an elder it is said “LeeLEE 누LEE 루LEE 루LEE”. The activity continued with children experimenting and substituting as teacher transcribed the preschoolers’ utterance of sentences into a big chart. The chart was used for the class group reading, similar to shared book approach. At the interview, Teacher 7BY expressed “once the children have the control over the activity, they feel competent, good about themselves and see value in their contribution. The confidence makes them participate actively.”

Teacher 7BY implemented implicit-explicit strategies for the preschoolers' learning experiences. She utilized segmenting and classifying utterances into
their phonological and grammatical constituents to make meaning for the preschoolers. It was an informal language instruction strategy to engage all the children in a risk-free setting. A strategy that was common amongst the teachers in cluster 3 sees Teacher 11CU practices as discussed earlier in this segment.

Teacher 5BK also added, "...stories, songs, and rhymes, role play are some activities that the children enjoy... I also get children to talk about it so without the knowledge they are learning the language. Talking becomes natural and will boost children confidence which is fundamental to learning." In her classroom, the pre-schoolers dressed up as a doctor, chef, police and teacher and dramatized their roles in mini skits. The pre-schoolers' communication showed their instinctive association of real life experiences to the role. A few of the pre-schoolers spoke about how their grandparents were unwell and were taken to the hospital, though in code-mixed conversations. Role play and dramatization with language scaffolding were key strategies of Teacher 5BK.

Teacher 12CU, who also implemented role play and dramatization in her classroom aptly summarized:

Some children have gained the confidence to take part in storytelling competitions in the community centers. Our kindergarten children have also participated in such events and won trophies. The children bring and show us the prizes. This confidence boosts their self-esteem in the use of TL.

She created props and teacher-child collaborated skits for the dramatization, namely adapted from a story on proverbs and Thirukkural. The Thirukkural is one of the Indian ancient classics, consisting of 1330 couplets on guide to living virtuously; it is immersed in the rich culture.

Equally, Teacher 8BY’s communicative strategy in her picture book storytelling was apparent. She used wordless, big picture book (teacher-created) to narrate a story from the Panchatantra tales. The Panchatantra is a compilation of mostly animal fables, interwoven tales in prose and poetry on moral values. Teacher 8BY animated and used her voice, facial expression, sound effects and exaggerated keywords to engage the pre-schoolers in the storytelling activity. She enticed the pre-schoolers to predict the next scene by looking at the illustrations. She welcomed their ideas, sharing and scaffold towards the moral of the story. Teacher 8BY emphasized:
The picture book allows for creative expression, so the children can say whatever they think about the picture freely, and it allows me to tell the story according to the children’s varied level. Moreover, at the same time, I integrate the moral values within the storytelling. I also use props to emphasize on the keywords.

The communicative approach was explicit in the classrooms of the teachers in this cluster. The teachers facilitated interactions and enticed children into authentic conversations. Role play and dramatizations were common widespread traits across the five teaching practices. The implicit-explicit experiences provided by these teachers differed from teachers in cluster 1 and 2, and displayed their deviation in the operation of the language acquisition and learning theories in their respective classrooms.

In brief, the 12 teachers’ enactment of their curriculum were perspectival based and impacted by the teachers’ aims and outcomes for the preschoolers. The outcomes-focused teaching aimed to achieve the priorities the teachers had identified as important rather than the needs of the preschoolers. The observation also revealed an irregularity between the bilingual kindergarten teachers’ interpretations and application of the language acquisition and language learning theories in their teaching practices. The teachers’ methods and strategies indicated the meanings and ideas the teachers had assigned to the theories of the preschooler’s learning.

**Summary of Findings**

The field observations and interviews that were conducted and cross-compared to the teachers’ reflective journals, as discussed in chapter 4, gave deeper insights into how the teachers teaching TL in kindergartens in Singapore understood (theorized), interpreted (interpretive) and implemented (applied) their theoretical framework to achieve their aims and intentions for the preschoolers.

The findings showed how theory, interpretation, and practice interfaced in TL instructions in the kindergartens. There was a juxtaposition of the 12 teachers’ perspectives on TL teaching theories and their interpretations for application in their teaching practices. It also revealed that the teachers’ perceived self-image (personal identity) affected and effected their professional identity and their teaching practices.

The theorized or ideational curriculum of all 12 kindergarten teachers was informed by their overarching theoretical framework (refer to Table 7). Child-centered
pedagogy and language acquisition were the two overarching theories within which the three collective clusters of the teachers’ conceptual frameworks were located. Standards-based, preparation for primary level and culturally custodial orientations to the curriculum were the three perspectives of the teachers.

Despite their location in the three differing perspectives, these teachers believed that the kindergarten years formed the critical period for the TL acquisition and learning. They advocated for child-centered learning experiences for the preschoolers’ learning. In the ideational curriculum, the teachers subsumed language learning into language acquisition and related to the two theories interchangeably. Though SLA theory explained that the nature of acquisition of the L2 differed from an L1, the 12 teachers’ descriptions of the acquisition and learning of TL were similar. Their reasoning and the concepts that were shared inclined towards English literacy instruction and Foreign Language teaching concepts. The definitions and meanings that the teachers had assigned to the child-centered pedagogy and learning theories were based on their conceptual knowledge and understandings. The ideational curriculum made explicit the teachers’ adherence to beliefs and values for teaching within the ethos of the kindergartens, as well to achieve their aims and intentions. The three clusters of teachers focused on developing the confidence of the preschoolers, albeit emphasizing on three varied types of confidence. The first cluster of four teachers in the standard perspectives outcome was to develop the preschoolers’ confidence in TL speaking and writing skills. The second cluster of three teachers from the primary level perspectives outcome was to develop the confidence in succeeding at primary level. Finally, the third cluster of five teachers from the cultural custodial perspective outcome was to develop confidence in self-identity. The confidence range was determined by the teachers’ contextual perspectives.

The overarching theories and the three conceptual perspectives were interpreted as significant factors in the teachers’ operational curriculum. The teachers’ interpretation of the language acquisition theory for practice made noticeable their peculiar distinction between language acquisition and language learning theories. In their rationalization of methods and strategies for implementation the terms ‘will acquire’ and ‘will learn’ were used interchangeably. Also, to the theories, the teachers mentioned the use of resources (like teaching materials, teaching aids and time), human support (institutional and parents) and their knowledge gained from their professional training in the teaching of English as their strategies for effective teaching of TL to the preschoolers. In the discussion of strategies for practices, the teachers mentioned their challenges and limitations. The limitations for effective teaching practices were the perceived lack of support from the institutes and parents. The
interviews findings revealed that the teachers operationalized their varied dispositions as strategies to manage the challenges. The teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about their roles and responsibilities and related behaviors were imperative for managing and implementing the teaching practices. The 12 teachers’ dispositions were closely linked to how they viewed their personal worth and image (identity). Their personal identities translated and affected their professional identities and teaching practices. The teachers’ personal identities were gauged by the recognition and support they received as a teacher teaching TL to preschoolers, from the institutional and parents; and professional training opportunities.

The applied curriculum disclosed inconsistency between the teachers’ cognition based knowledge (what they thought, knew and believed) and application (what they practiced). That is the enacted curriculum was not in total accordance with the ideational and interpretive curriculum. The teachers’ identified conceptual frameworks were child-centered pedagogy and Language Acquisition theory. However, their implementation was drawn on perspectives grounded in their institutional contexts. The teachers in Cluster 1 implemented content gravitated methods within formal teaching and GT approaches to developing the preschoolers’ confidence in speaking and writing in TL; the Cluster 2 teachers practiced the structured approach, and they implemented top-down content delivery for familiarity with primary school content by way of ‘drill and practice’, teacher-directed approaches and formal teaching to instill confidence in the preschoolers to succeed at primary level; and the Cluster 3 teachers engaged in communicative methods to engage children in meaningful and authentic experiences to imbue culture and values by way of informal teaching to instill in the preschoolers confidence in self-identity. The teachers in Clusters 1 and 2 explicitly taught the content while teachers in cluster 3 used both implicit and explicit teaching practices. All teachers at one point or another enacted traits of FLT teaching in their classroom practices. The outcomes-focused teaching practices were the teachers’ priorities in the applied curriculum.

The observations also revealed an anomaly between the bilingual kindergarten teachers’ ideation and implementation of the language acquisition and language learning theories in the classrooms. Language acquisition is a subconscious learning while language learning involves conscious and explicit learning experiences. The informal and formal instructions and the implicit and explicit learning experiences provided by the teachers indicated the meanings and ideas that the teachers had assigned to the theories specific to the preschooler’s learning of TL.

In summary, the ideation of theories and the perspectives were formed as a result of teachers’ understanding of the theories, prior knowledge from their diploma
training, accumulated experiences, present situation as in the ethos of the kindergartens, values, and culture. The teachers' interpretation (explanation) of the theories was the central idea for their action (application) in the classroom. However, the triangulation of observations, interviews, and reflective journals revealed the disjunction between the teachers' interpretation of the ideational theories and their application in their teaching practice. The theories of learning as explained by the teachers for their teaching practice during the interview were not congruent with the actual implementation in their classroom. This evidence surfaced in the observations and the teachers' reflective journals.

The findings correlated with the underlying assumptions of the literature reviewed that teachers' pedagogical practices in the classrooms for learning outcomes are influenced by the teachers' mental acts that have been shaped by their knowledge, professional identity, beliefs and values about teaching and learning MT. The key three propositions that emerged from the findings are:

**Proposition 1**
Tamil Language teachers in Singapore develop their ideational theory from English language literacy instruction and possibly from foreign language teaching.

**Proposition 2**
The Tamil Language teachers interpret their ideational theory base in ways that revealed their lack of distinction between Language Acquisition and Language Learning.

**Proposition 3**
Stability of teacher identity is enhanced by the congruence between their personal and professional identities.

The next chapter discusses the three propositions and presents the explanatory theory based on the three propositions.
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the three propositions derived from the findings presented in Chapter 5. Firstly, Tamil language teachers in Singapore develop their ideational theory from English language literacy instruction and probably from foreign language teaching. Secondly, the Tamil Language teachers interpret their ideational theory base in ways that revealed their lack of distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Thirdly, ‘stability of teacher identity’ is enhanced by congruence between personal and professional identity. Finally, a statement of explanatory theory is developed from the three propositions.

Proposition 1: Tamil Language Teachers in Singapore Develop Their Ideational Theory from English Language Literacy Instruction and Possibly from Foreign Language Teaching.

This proposition states that the teachers’ theorized curriculum to achieve their aims and intentions in developing the preschoolers’ confidence in TL were informed by theories learned in the diploma in EL teaching in the early years, and the interpretation of the ‘iTeach’ principle in the MOE Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework for kindergarten (Shegar & Rahman, 2005).

English Language Literacy as a Principle in Teaching the Tamil Language

The ideational theories for quality teaching and learning expressed in interviews and journals logs by the three clusters of 12 teachers, derived from Child-centered pedagogy and Language Acquisition Theory drawn from English language literacy training. The teachers concurrently referenced knowledge and skills gained from their early childhood teacher training courses and the MOE NEL curriculum framework (see Figure 1). As inferred by Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1):

In my diploma training, I had learned that child-centered teaching, that is providing for experiences that are developmentally appropriate based on children’s interest and engaging them using play is the best practice for children’s learning. Kindergarten year is the absorbent stage for language acquisition. Furthermore, in our organization’s briefing on the NEL curriculum framework, we have been instructed to adopt child-centered and learning through play practices in our teachings (interview).
Consistently Teacher 6BK (Cluster 2) also related to learning and experiences from her teacher training for her teaching practices:

The emphasis of the Language and Literacy module, in my ECE teacher training, was on child-focused and play-based experiences. That is to plan for games and activities for English language learning. I learned about the critical period hypothesis and its implication for language acquisition. Therefore, if Tamil is taught underpinning the similar theories, the preschoolers will acquire the Tamil language and develop the confidence in succeeding in primary school Tami (interview).

The 12 teachers automatically, because of their EL teacher training, identified child-centered pedagogy and Language Acquisition Theory as theories likely to be effective for teaching TL in the kindergartens and specific to achieving the teachers’ aims and intentions within their contextualized curriculum (refer to Table 5.1). The teachers from the three clusters expressed cohesive thoughts on the two overarching theoretical frameworks, in the achievement of their common aim to develop preschoolers’ confidence in TL, though they focused on three varied types of confidence. Research studies made it explicit that conceptualization of quality teaching and learning aligned strongly with the purpose, aim, and intention of MT education and the teachers’ values (Richards & Burns, 2012; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Singapore kindergarten teachers teaching TL are English language-trained teachers whom themselves decide on and implement what constitutes quality teaching and learning experiences in the Tamil language. All 12 teachers, explicitly declared that their informed decisions for teaching TL were based on their knowledge, abilities, and skills acquired at diploma in early childhood teacher training and other continued professional development programs for English literacy teaching. Teachers in Cluster 1 translated the principles and strategies in the NEL English curriculum framework while the teachers in Cluster 3 adapted the NEL framework selectively in their teaching of Tamil. The teachers in clusters 1 and 3 recognized the framework to achieve the national learning outcomes for preschoolers. Contrastingly cluster 2 teachers, referred to other curriculum sources to attain their aims and intentions. Teacher 9CB, from cluster 2 noted:

The challenges are, there is neither professional training for teaching TL nor a standard TL curriculum framework for kindergarten. Unlike the English curriculum, the Tamil language does not have a curriculum, so we teachers use the English curriculum and translate it to teach TL. In my case, I use the primary
school TL curriculum to bring primary one content familiarity to the preschoolers. There is no one to check on our teaching. It all depends on the teacher's abilities, attitudes and how we want to teach (interview).

All participants were certified to teach TL at kindergartens primarily on their attainment of a professional qualification and their academic proficiency in the Tamil Language. The PQAC governed by ECDA accredited kindergarten teachers, teach TL based on their EL professional certification. That is, the Diploma in Early Childhood Teacher Training and academic achievement in English and five credits in the General Certification of Education ‘Ordinary’ Examinations that includes a B4 for English Language and a B4 in the Tamil Language to teach both languages at kindergarten levels. Teachers do not attend any formalized L2 teacher training to teach TL.

Furthermore, the professional teaching diploma in English delivered by approved training agencies was also accredited by PQAC (Ministry of Education, 2008). PQAC prescribed standards for the diploma course content and outcome for Teacher Proficiency Training to teach in pre-schools (see Appendix C); it has no indicators specific to the teaching of TL. The learning outcomes of the teacher training are aligned to the NEL framework desired learning outcomes of pre-school education. The stipulated professional competencies and skills were basic and cognitive, omitting salient linguistic and affective competencies for L2 teaching. This varied radically from findings (AFMLTA, 2005; Tellez & Waxman, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; TELL, 2014) that reasoned that language teachers must be competent in language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focus teaching, specialized cognitive skills, theorizing from practice, joining a community of practice and professionalism, and recognize their professional ethical responsibilities to analyze their personal and professional teaching attitudes (compare Appendix C to Appendix D). The teachers, albeit certified to teach TL in kindergartens in Singapore, were not aptly trained in the competencies and skills required for teaching of the Tamil language (Richards, 2010). There is no formal teacher training to teach TL as an L2 in Singapore kindergartens.

The Singapore TL teacher-training situation is minimalist or non-existent in contrast to the training of MT in the Netherlands, Washington, Hawaii, New Zealand and Peru. In the Netherlands, it is mandatory for all teachers teaching MT to attend a minimum of 640-hours Pedagogical Academy Basic Education (PABO) training program focusing on pedagogy to teach at ‘kleuterscholen’ (kindergarten or nursery school). The teachers attended specialist training colleges established for preschool and primary school training for their PABO certification. Likewise, in Washington, Hawaii, New Zealand and Peru, MT teacher training and continuous professional
development were indispensable in the facilitation of quality teaching and learning experiences in MT in their preschools. Teacher expertise was identified as the ‘single most important factor’ in predicting learner’s achievement in bilingual education; fully trained teachers were far more effective than teachers who were not prepared (National Commission, 1996, p.12). Teachers’ training in bilingual education is imperative in worldview, but in Singapore, formalized teacher education in the teaching of TL at kindergartens is yet to be established.

Given the Singapore context and the teachers’ capacity-limitation due to lack of training, the teachers of Tamil Language in Singapore kindergartens naturally developed their ideational theory from English Language Literacy instruction. They interpreted the theories to develop teaching practices to achieve their aims consistent with their respective context-based curriculum. The viewpoints individual teachers held in regards to the theories predisposed their teaching practices.

Studies theorized that teachers’ beliefs and values are socially, and culturally shaped mental constructs commonly acquired from teachers’ personal and professional environments and are crucial influences on quality teaching and learning experiences (Shin & Krashen, 1996; Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Garcia-Nevarez et al., 2005, Lee & Oxelson, 2006; OECD, 2009; Richards; 2010). Borg (2003) established a correlation between what teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom. He used the term ‘teacher cognition’ to describe the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching and further explained that ‘teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs (2003, p. 81). Teacher cognition is interrelated to teacher education (both through schooling and professional training) and their classroom teaching practices; it exerts an influence on teachers throughout their professional careers (Borg, 2003; Richards, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

**Teachers’ Ideational Theory: Child-centered and Language Acquisition in Tamil Language Teaching**

Child-focused and play-based orientations in Child-centered teaching and the Language Acquisition Theory were core principles in the three collective clusters of context-based curriculums. The three conceptual framework clusters are Standards perspective. Preparation for primary level perspective and Cultural custodial perspective. The teachers believed that child-centered and language acquisition teaching informed their perspectives.
Child-centered teaching.

The teachers asserted that child-focused teaching enabled them to provide experiences pitched to children's ability and needs that are interesting and engaging; play-based experiences, described as “fun,” “enjoyable,” and “captivating” motivated and involved the preschoolers in their teachers' pedagogical practices.

Their narration of child-centered and play-based concepts was aligned to that of literature. As mentioned in chapter 3, child-centered teaching centers predominantly on the needs of children, rather than the teachers’ aims or curriculum objectives (Blumberg, 2009). Goldstein (2003), Gordon (2007), Baker (2011) and De Groot (2011) explained that the teaching experiences must provide for active learning, centered on the interests, children’s readiness levels and skills sets, their language proficiency and family dynamics and culture for developmentally appropriate learning. Gordon further emphasized that the teaching practices must be authentic to children and not rigidly conformed to a standard curriculum, shifting the focus of experiences from teacher to children.

However, observations revealed that although the participants’ ideational theories (theorized curriculum) referenced the concepts of child-centered teaching as child-focused and play-based, dissonance and perspectival biases emerged in the classroom teaching practices. Cluster 1 teachers’ application was standards-focused, aligned to meet the objectives of the stipulated curriculum; for Cluster 2 teachers it was preparation for primary level; teachers in cluster 3 embarked on cultural custodian practices for the maintenance of Tamil Language. The teachers implied that they conformed to the expectations of the curriculum, institution, and parents. Teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) disclosed that she taught as prescribed in the lesson plan despite being in doubt:

Sometimes when I teach the children vocabulary, I do not know the meaning of some of the listed words, as they are not commonly used in oral communications. I have to use deliberately the words in the way it is written in my interactions with the children. It made my teaching unauthentic and doubtful. Nevertheless, I teach as per the prescribed curriculum for institute accountability, and I do not have anyone to seek clarification (interview).
Similarly, Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2), commented that her practices derived from her predecessor, yet uncertainty emerged in her reflective journals:

> Workbook and basal readers are a feature of the kindergarten. I had embraced and continued the curriculum and teaching practices of my predecessors as parents are happy with the learning outcomes. The children are well versed in copying and writing words as well in the echo reading, needed skills for primary one. However, at times, I do wonder if I am doing it right and how the teachers are teaching TL in other kindergartens. I have to be self-taught and self-reliant as I am the only TL teacher in the kindergarten.

Correspondingly, Cluster 3 teachers teaching practices were elicited by the social organization’s philosophy of inculcating moral and spiritual values to live a life of righteousness and integrity. The 12 teachers’ cognitions and practices were mutually informing, but contextual factors played a critical role in determining the extent to which the teachers could implement instruction congruent with their cognitions (Richards, 1994; Borg, 2003).

**Language acquisition theory.**

Language Acquisition as described by the teachers is a natural absorption of language in the preschool years. They linked this theory to the critical period hypothesis (CPH) concerning brain research on language growth and acquisition. The teachers rationalized that TL teaching experiences in kindergartens were natural, spontaneous and informal. Richards and Schmidt (2002), Ipek (2009) and De Groot (2011) clarified that CPH, also known as “the sensitive period,” is when a child can acquire language easily, rapidly, perfectly and with or without instruction. Underlying the CPH is the biological view that young children are born with a unique intuitive capacity for language acquisition (Johnstone, 2002; Singleton & Ryan, 2004; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). The 12 teachers were like minded with Teacher 5BK (Cluster 3) on their notion on Language Acquisition Theory:

> Kindergarten year is very important time for children to grow or absorb the Tamil language. Research in brain development and learning say that this is the stage when children acquire language like a sponge. So I provide a lot of exposure in TL like singing, rhymes, ‘show and tell,’ storytelling and role play in my informal teaching. This for the children to grasp Tamil more easily and faster. Tamil Language acquisition is the foundation for the learning of TL (interview).
Language Acquisition and Language Learning are two general theoretical viewpoints in English language literacy instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Richards, 2010; Baker, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013). Bialystok (1997) is the first to draw a distinction between the implicit (unconscious) and the explicit (conscious) knowledge. She described the two theories as a dichotomy. Richards (2010), Baker (2011) and De Groot (2011) elaborated that Language Acquisition theory in principle is unconscious learning acquired through informal and implicit learning. That is, children learning the language naturally. Quite distinct from acquisition theory is language learning theory in which conscious learning occurs through explicit teaching of formal linguistic knowledge of the language (Krashen, 1982; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Baker, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The teaching differences not only existed between the language acquisition and language learning theories but within teachers’ practices, particularly in clusters 1 and 2.

Various theories argued that SLA differs from L1 acquisition, albeit with some similarities in the teaching and learning process (Krashen, 1982; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; Baker, 2011). The similarities in both the first and L2 acquisition are in the developmental sequence (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1997; Baker, 2011); the acquisition order (Krashen, 1982; McLaughlin, 1987, 1991; Lightbown & Spada, 2006); and the universal grammar (previously termed as linguistics universal) (Ellis, 1997; Baker, 2011).

The differences as debated by Krashen (1982) and Ellis (1997), were grounded in Contrastive Hypothesis and Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis. The contrastive hypothesis considered instances of interference between the acquisition of the first and second languages but concluded that knowledge of the L1 acquisition also serves as the basis for the SLA. Thus both positive and negative transfer between languages may occur in the acquisition of the L2. Krashen (1982) and Ellis (1997) contended that everyone acquires an L1, but not everyone acquires an L2. Acquiring an L1 happens naturally while acquiring an L2 requires a conscious effort often on the part of the learner (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Based on Acquisition / Learning Hypothesis, through focused input and focused practice, SLL may turn into the acquisition (De Groot, 2011; Cook & Bassetti, 2011). That is, after the acquisition of an L1, the L2 has to be learned explicitly before it becomes an acquired language.
Therefore, in the context of Singapore kindergartens, teaching practices for TL must consider theoretical perspectives, not of standard language acquisition theory, but SLA and SLL as TL are learned as a second language (L2). However, participants’ theoretical perspectives were restricted to Language Acquisition theory, drawn from their teaching of English language literacy. These teachers who were not trained in specialized competencies as detailed by Richards (2010), for the teaching of TL as an L2, rationally translated theories from English teacher training, to inform their TL teaching practices. Teacher 4AC articulated her use of translated theories:

There is no training or appropriate teaching resources for us teachers in the teaching of TL to preschoolers. So I just transfer the theory and strategies that I use for teaching English like child-centered, learning through play and planning routine activities for the children to acquire TL. This includes translating my English resources into the Tamil Language. Like the vocabulary words in my flash cards are both in English and Tamil (interview).

The teachers’ ideational theories derived from their diploma teacher training. The teacher training was designed to give the preschool teachers the basic academic knowledge and practical skills and disposition for English Language teaching (Ministry of Education, 2009; Richards, 2010). The teachers of TL in Singapore kindergartens have to rely on self-initiated independent professionalism, which refers to ‘teachers’ views of teaching and the process by which the teachers engage in reflection on their values, beliefs, and practices’ in the teaching of TL (Richards, 2008, p. 161).

**Manifestation of English Language Literacy and Foreign Language Teaching Principles in the Teaching of Tamil Language**

Elements of English Language Literacy and attributes of Foreign Language Teaching manifested in the participants' pedagogical reasoning applied to the teaching of the TL in the kindergartens. Central to teacher cognition is the role of teachers' pedagogical reasoning. Shulman (1987) and Richards (2008) described pedagogical reasoning, as teachers' ideas, values and thinking processes that shape their understanding of teaching and their classroom practices. It was acknowledged that most teaching practices are initiated by some form of ‘text-like’ guided textbook which becomes the vehicle for the accomplishment of educational purposes (Richards, 2008; 2010).
English language literacy principles from NEL framework.

In the discussion of the significant factors of the ideational curriculum influencing the teachers’ aims and intentions, the three clusters of teachers referred to the MOE NEL English curriculum framework. The ‘text,’ NEL framework is a national initiative by the Ministry of Education in Singapore. It particularly focuses on the skills and competencies a preschooler needs on entering the primary level, in the main education system. It serves as a national guide on principles and strategies for teaching English Language literacy in kindergartens. The English framework was officially launched in 2003 and disseminated to all kindergartens registered with the Ministry. The Ministry also reviewed the teacher training program to align with the NEL curriculum framework learning outcomes for preschoolers (MOE-MCYS, 2008). Shegar and Rahman (2005) noted that teachers’ understandings of quality teaching and learning were grounded by the NEL framework principles and strategies as well as teachers’ roles in the curriculum delivery. MOE initiatives tend to be heavily top-down in Singapore, though the implementation is not necessarily standardized (Silver, Curdt-Christiansen, Stinson, & Wright, 2013). All the kindergartens, in this study, adopted the NEL framework in the teaching of English Language Literacy and adapted their curriculum to meet the prescribed learning outcomes of NEL framework. Silver, Curdt-Christiansen, Stinson and Wright (2013) imputed that it was common for institution policies in Singapore to follow national initiatives and to act as the mediating layer between the initiatives and classroom practices.

The research participants were trained English Language teachers assigned by their organizations to teach TL in the kindergartens. The three clusters emerged from the participants’ responses in interviews, describing how their practices for quality teaching and learning in TL were attuned to English language literacy and emphasized their respective context-based curriculum:

Quality teaching and learning experiences for the kindergarten must provide for explicit and systematic instructions for developing confidence in the speaking and writing skills. In my teaching, I expose the children to words that are thematic based, aligned with the English lessons, to develop their vocabulary. I will teach them by way of flashcards or concrete materials, rhymes, then get them to repeat after me and use the learned words to answer my questions. The questions I ask are skewed to entice the children’s use of the vocabulary words in their answers. The vocabulary words are prescribed in the given
syllabus, by the organization. By the end of the kindergarten, the preschoolers would have been taught all the stipulated words and able to read and write some; this is by the organization's prescribed learning outcomes in the TL curriculum. (Teacher 4AC, from Cluster 1).

For me, quality teaching and learning are to build the children's confidence in managing primary school TL content and succeeding when they are in primary one. Therefore, I teach the children the Tamil letters and ensure that they can recognize the letters and the letter sounds. The letters are taught in systematically in three groups ‘mei ezhuthu’ (consonant) ‘uyir ezhuthu’ (vowels) and ‘uyir-mei ezhuthu’ (consonant-vowel blended). The Tamil alphabet knowledge and phonics are the foundations for the children's reading and writing skills. For the letter sound teaching, I write rhyming words on the whiteboard so that children can see how the words are written (print awareness). I sound the letters as I write to make the letter-sound link. The children will recite the rhymes by echoing me, then on their own, subsequently they copy the rhymes into their workbooks for writing skills development. (Teacher 9CB, from cluster 2)

Oral language skills are the foundation for reading and writing. Children will talk in TL only if they value and relate to it. Therefore, quality teaching and learning experiences in TL must focus on, inculcating and raising the preschoolers cultural self-identify and the value of TL in their culture and traditions. By way of meaningful and informal dialogues, the children will be enticed into speaking and developing their confidence in the language. In the process, the children acquire the language. I provide for Read-aloud, with Tamil culture and moral value enriched literature that integrates the explanation of targeted vocabulary. The children participate in Role and Dramatic play organized around a carefully chosen theme to promote social interactions amongst children and also between child and teacher. The teaching of letters and letter sounds are integrated into ‘show and talk’ to involve children in structured interaction to achieve the learning objectives for the lesson. I also use open-ended questions or questions that can have multiple answers, to help the children to expand their utterances. (Teacher 7BY, from cluster 3).
In the discussions, participants referred to the NEL framework for English Language literacy to justify their teaching methods, approaches, and techniques for practice. Teachers in cluster 1 commented that their given TL lesson plans are an interpretation of content, activities, and objectives of the English lessons.

The unexpected observation was that none of the teachers mentioned ‘The NEL Framework for Mother Tongue Languages’ for teaching in preschools (Ministry of Education, 2009). The framework was recommended as a core reference when reviewing, planning and implementing teachers’ MTL curriculum. However, the TL framework was a translation of the English version that was launched in 2003. On probing, all participants claimed that they had not seen the framework. However, Teachers in cluster 1 mentioned that their curriculum was developed by their organization and that they were briefed of the revised version of the framework in 2014. Teacher 7BY, who had seen the revised framework remarked that it was a replica of the NEL English framework and did not find it useful. The principles and strategies of the English NEL framework were obvious in the participants’ rationalization for their teaching of TL (interview). For all participants, the ‘text’ reference for their TL teaching practices was explicitly the NEL framework for English Language Literacy (Richards, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

**Foreign Language Approach Probably from Subject Content-led Teaching from NEL Framework**

Apart from English language literacy approach, participants had also implemented subject content-led TL teaching which is distinctive to foreign language teaching (Richards, 1994; Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The three clusters of teachers, taught subjects like Tamil literacy; Numeracy; Social sciences; and Music and Movement and Creative expression (Art and Craft) in TL. Tamil lessons in the kindergartens were typically taught as subjects, and the concepts are specific to the subject.

Practices noted during lesson observation were supported by interview data. For example, Teacher 3AC (Cluster 1) impressed that for the week’s theme on weather, she taught the preschoolers about the ‘water cycle.’ She narrated that she used picture cards and conducted a ‘show and tell.’ She surmised that the lesson was taught in English the day before and assumed that the preschoolers had learned the concept and vocabulary. Likewise, Teacher 10CD of cluster 2 said she taught social health using basal readers. The reading was on ‘Aahrokiyamana Oonavu’ (Healthy...
food). She conducted echo reading, paused and stressed on the vocabulary related to healthy lifestyle. The children were engaged in ‘drill and practice’ for correct pronunciation. The concluding activity was copying the words into the workbooks. She claimed the lesson integrated speaking, listening, reading and writing for TL learning. It was the same with Teacher 12CU, who reflected on her conduct of dramatic play on the theme ‘Kaattu vilangugal’ (wild animals). The children wore face masks of animals to dramatize a skit on the animal features and their movements. The follow-up activity was for children to describe and sort the animals by their size and features. The vocabulary was the names of the animals and their unique features.

In the lessons observed, teachers based their teaching on environment science, social health, and mathematics concepts respectively. They linked and rationalized their subject teaching practice to their interpretation of the ‘iTeach’ principle in the NEL Framework (see figure 1). The teaching practices were identical to content-based teaching a medium for foreign language instructions (Richards, 1994; Stryker & Leaver, 1997; Baker, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Richards and Rodgers affirmed that content-based instruction is a core in teaching a foreign language that motivates children to learn the language by actually using it, empowering children for continued learning beyond the classroom.

The NEL framework for English language instruction utilizes the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology (Ministry of Education, 2003). The ‘iTEach’ principle advocates for young children’s learning experiences to be integrative and to encourage greater participation of children in the process of constructing knowledge and acquiring skills in the six subjects (Ministry of Education, 2013b).

The TL curriculum in the kindergartens, although based on English Language instruction, was subject content-led. The subject content meaning was constituted and communicated through language, which dictated the vocabulary and language for teaching. Fundamentally, there is the difference in the use of EL in the English literacy instruction and teaching subject content. In the EL sessions, English was taught as a set of structures for the teaching of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), but for the content-teaching sessions, the four skills were a means of learning new information and displaying an understanding of the subject being taught (Deller & Price, 2007; Richards, 2010; Baker, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The teaching must include oral TL proficiency, literacy ability in both TL and the cultural backgrounds (Beardsmore, 1986; Brisk, 2008; Baker, 2011). However, the teachers had interpreted the use of subject matter as a vehicle for TL teaching, a distinctive feature of foreign language teaching and learning (Genesee, 1987; Met, 1994; Baker, 2011). The teachers’ foreign language teaching practice probably results
from their interpretation and translation of the principle curriculum framework for the teaching of TL in the kindergartens. There was cognitive dissonance between the teachers' ideational and interpretive curriculum and Language Acquisition theory for the teaching of TL.

**Summary of Proposition 1**

The participants in this research had developed their ideational theory from English language literacy instruction and foreign language practices supported by iTeach principles. The teachers' theorized curriculum for teaching TL in kindergartens was guided by their cognition knowledge acquired from the teacher training for teaching English Language Literacy and the NEL curriculum framework for teaching English language (Krashen, 1982; Richards, 2010; Karaata, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2013a). Notwithstanding, the teachers' translation of the ideational theory into practice was based on their understanding (meaning) and belief system. Richards (1994, p.7) ascertained that “the primary source for teachers' classroom practices is teachers' belief systems--the information, attitudes, values, theories, and assumptions about teaching and learning which teachers build up over time and bring with them to the classroom.” Teacher beliefs form a structured set of principles derived from educational theory, experience, school practice and reading (Karaata, 2011).

The participants trained only in English Language literacy teaching at kindergarten level logically applied the acquired knowledge in theorizing for teaching TL. Their generalization of language acquisition theory was based on their assumption that the acquisition of the L2 would be identical to the acquisition of the L1. Similarly, their theorized ideas were underpinned by the NEL curriculum framework principles and strategies for English Language literacy teaching and learning.

However, their interpretational assumptions of the ideational theory for teaching practices had traits of foreign language teaching and second language learning principles. Richards (2008; 2010) suggested that teachers' pedagogical reasoning results from teachers' ideas, values and thinking processes that shape their understanding of teaching and their classroom practices.

Participants rationalized their teaching practices through references to their EL training and the MOE Curriculum Framework. Calderhead (1996) established that teachers' thinking constitutes the psychological context of teaching in which the curriculum is interpreted and executed. Fundamentally, the teachers teaching TL in kindergartens in Singapore function from their basic cognitive knowledge, abilities, and skills to teach English Language Literacy. They acquired the basic theoretical knowledge and related pedagogical principles for teaching English Language but
lacked the specialized theoretical knowledge about SLA and SLL as well as an understanding of pedagogy in teaching TL as an L2. Their professional context is far removed from the identified knowledge, skills and competencies needed for teachers to teach an L2 in kindergartens (AFMLTA, 2005; Tellez & Waxman, 2008; Richards, 2008; Richards & Schmidt, 2010; TELL, 2014). The teachers teaching TL in Singapore kindergartens attempt to develop informed ideational theory, interpret for practice and implement the curriculum within the limited resources at their disposal.

**Proposition 2: The Tamil Language Teachers Interpret Their Ideational Theory Base in Ways that Revealed Their Lack of Distinction Between Language Acquisition and Language Learning**

This proposition posits that the participants’ interpretation and application of language acquisition and language learning theory interchangeably reveal their lack of distinction between the theories. The teachers’ pedagogical thinking, pedagogical reasoning, and pedagogical practices regarding language acquisition theory revealed the interface between their ideational theory and their teaching practices.

**Teachers’ Pedagogical Thinking: Language Acquisition and Language Learning**

The objective of the participants was to provide learning experiences that enabled children to acquire TL. They conceptualized language acquisition theory as an unconscious process of learning that enables preschoolers to absorb the language. The three clusters of teachers’ overviews were similar in themes to that of Teacher 8BY (Cluster 3):

For the preschoolers to understand TL language, it has to be natural. Tamil must be used in everyday talking, singing and telling stories. When children hear the language, they will spontaneously respond, interact and imitate the teacher automatically. Without the preschoolers’ realization, they speak in TL instinctively. TL is learned without the children’s thinking (interview).

The inclination of the teachers of all the three clusters was towards the natural approach that TL is learned by acquiring the language. However, TL is learned as an L2 in kindergartens in Singapore and literature affirms that acquisition of an L2 often requires conscious learning (Krashen, 1982; Schmidt, 2010). To avoid the ambiguity of
the umbrella term “consciousness,” Schmidt (2010) defined conscious learning in four categories: intentionality; attention; awareness (explicit and implicit based on child’s prior knowledge); and control. Richards and Schmidt (2002) emphasized that there are differences in the L1 and SLA. In contrast, participants conceptualized the ‘Language Acquisition theory’ in the context of L1 acquisition; throughout the discussion no participant mentioned SLA or SLL.

Besides the explicit mention of the term ‘Language Acquisition’ in their ideational theory, the teachers from Clusters 1 and 2 had implied the idea of ‘language learning’ in their discussions on achieving the aims and intentions. As narrated (interview) by Teachers 3AC and 6BK:

Brain study says that this is the stage children acquire language, I think it is very important for the kindergarteners to learn Tamil; this is the best years for them in Tamil language learning. (Teacher 3AC, from Cluster 1)

This is the learning age, to absorb language, get children just to listen, learn, write and be familiar with the Tamil letters and the sounds. The exposure will let the preschoolers learn quickly. (Teacher 6BK, from Cluster 2)

Furthermore, the teachers referred to concepts: ‘developmentally appropriate practices’; ‘sensorial learning for concept learning’; ‘hands-on experiences’; ‘imitating teachers’ and ‘child-teacher interactions’ in the teaching of TL to the preschoolers. These are indicators oriented towards constructivist, behaviorist and interactionist theories of language learning. Intuitively the teachers had collectively named prominent theory-based practices as salient for the teaching of TL in kindergarten years. The concepts of Language acquisition and language learning were used interchangeably in the teachers' dialogue.

Literature affirmed the dichotomy between language acquisition and language learning theories and drew clear distinctions between them (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1997; Richards, 2009; Baker, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Other than the implicit (unconscious) learning for Language Acquisition and explicit (conscious) Language Learning, there are distinct differences in the pedagogical principles and practices related to the theories.

Language learning theory, as opposed to acquisition, is standardly held to involve both explicit and implicit psychological processes (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1997; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). For explicit learning, the learner will be consciously aware of the modification of his or her knowledge. The learning and teaching experiences are intentional; bringing attention and awareness to the learning, and learners are in control of the learning. Intentional teaching is premeditated, thoughtful, and purposeful,
where the teachers use their knowledge, judgment, and proficiency to organize children's learning experiences with defined outcomes for the development of language fluency. Teaching strategies for the instructional approach underpin cognitive processing in learning rules and structures. Consciousness and language learning are inextricably interconnected (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

In implicit learning, the change in the learner’s knowledge is based on unconscious learning outside his or her conscious introspection. The pedagogical principles and practices of teachers are based on the assumption that learners are born with a certain system of language that he or she can call on later (Hanak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003; Baker 2011). Krashen claims that acquisition is the intuitive process of constructing the system of a language (1982). Therefore, implicit instruction occurs in instructional tasks that do not provide specific guidance on what is to be learned from the task (Ellis, 1994). Ellis elaborated that the teaching may provide examples, uses, illustrations, or visualizations of a concept without direct comments or rules that plainly direct the learner on what is to be learned.

Albeit, it must be noted that generative theorists favor using the term language acquisition since some influence of universal grammar is involved in both language acquisition and language learning (Baker, 2011). Ipek, (2009) strongly rebutted generative theory, more so in the teaching of L2. He argued that though there are similarities between the two theories, some level of awareness (explicit and implicit) is necessary for L2 teaching. Many contemporary learning theories also suggest that language regarding learning has to be related to the existing knowledge of the child (Krashen, 1982; Hanak-Hammer & Newby; 2003; Gordon, 2007; Schmidt, 2010). Bialystok (1997) theorized the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge and suggested moving from metalinguistic knowledge (highly analyzed and controlled) towards linguistic knowledge (not analyzed and not controlled) in the teaching of L2. She proposed progressing from explicit to implicit knowledge, reinforcing the view that the learning of L1 and L2 are complex processes (Ipek, 2009; Richards 2010).

On the same note, Richards (2010) and Borg (2003) affirmed that in language teaching, the conceptualizations teachers have of the nature of teaching L2, have a significant impact on their teaching practices. Richards (2010) emphasized the metaphor of ‘teacher-as-thinker’ and affirmed that teachers’ conceptualizations of theories and their thinking process and decision-making ground their teaching practices. The base for teachers’ classroom practices are their attitudes, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning (Richards, 1994; Hanak-Hammerl & Newby, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The teachers’ belief systems form a structured set of principles arising from experience, school practice, personality,
educational theory and reading. The belief systems and teachers' knowledge systems are often interrelated (Borg, 2003: Fives & Gill, 2015). In this situation, the conceptualization of language acquisition is a cognitive construct of the teachers, based on their ideation (beliefs). Knowledge is related to truth and certainty while belief is more associated doubts and disputes (Borg, 2003: Fives & Gill, 2015). Richards (2010) advocated viewing teaching expertise as a process whereby the teachers actively construct a personal and workable theory for the teaching of L2.

The clusters of English language-trained teachers' pedagogical thinking about SLA are based on their theoretical belief systems and knowledge systems, which bridges their interpretations and practices. It is likely that participants who can differentiate between Language Acquisition and Language learning in the teaching of L2 and have the cognition of the implications of the theories, may be better equipped with the competencies and skills to make professional decisions for their teaching of TL in the kindergartens in Singapore.

Teachers' Pedagogical Reasoning: Language Acquisition for Practice

Pedagogical reasoning is discussed from the perspectives of the three clusters of teachers' pedagogical thinking and interpretations associated with the teachers' beliefs, knowledge, theories and assumptions (Borg, 2003). Borg emphasized that such reasoning plays a significant role in shaping teachers' instructional decisions. The findings of this study revealed that although the three clusters of teachers believed that TL is acquired, their interpretation for practice correlated with their context-based curriculum, that is standards-based; preparation for primary school or cultural conservation (refer to Table 5.2). The three clusters of teachers reasoned at the interviews that:

Children learn best at a young age. Brain study says that kindergarten is the foundation year whereby children acquire language. Therefore, if the preschoolers are taught Tamil in a fun and engaging way, they will pick-up the language. If teachers recite rhymes, tell stories and conduct ‘picture talks’ or ‘show and tell’ with hands-on materials regularly, the preschoolers will naturally attain the Tamil language. The children will imitate the teacher as they listen and repeat. To enable the preschoolers to speak confidently in the Tamil language, the teacher must build their vocabulary. It will help the children to acquire the vocabulary if the teacher repeatedly uses the word in the classroom. Like in asking purposeful questions to entice the use of the learned word. (Teacher 1AS from Cluster 1).
I think children in the kindergarten year learn by sensorial experiences. The sensory input will enable concept acquisition. For example, if the teacher is to teach about fruit, then she can show the actual or picture of the fruit. The children will be able to label the fruit in Tamil from practicing what to say when the teacher point to the fruit. Similarly, for reading and writing the teacher can use visual cues for the children to see the words and copy them. The continued and repeated practice will ingrain the letter-sound recognition, the ability to recognize written words correctly and effortlessly, and writing awareness. The kindergarteners will be able to recollect the words and the meaning automatically due to their familiarity. (Teacher 9CB, from Cluster 2).

Theories state that children exposed to the language in the kindergarten years will grasp the language instinctively. Most importantly for language acquisition is to engage children in meaningful conversations. I think, we can incorporate the culture and the values indirectly to children only through language. Teachers must instill and provide the preschoolers to be immersed in a natural setting filled in the Tamil Language enriched literature, poems, mantras, proverbs, and conversations. Dramatic play, role play, and picture talks are a good way to teach about culture and values. Once the children begin to enjoy the immersion, they are motivated and become confident in using Tamil. Tamil language acquisition has to be the culture acquisition. (Teacher 5BK, from Cluster 3).

Noticeably the teachers from cluster 1, focused on vocabulary teaching while teachers from cluster 2 emphasized teaching phonological, reading and writing skills and teachers from cluster 3 concentrated on the teaching of culture and values. The teachers’ descriptions of the ideational theory for practice amalgamated language acquisition and language teaching strategies, despite their shared assumptions that TL is acquired in the kindergarten years.

In theory, the clusters of teachers opined that the preschoolers must be taught implicitly for TL acquisition, albeit, in their rationale for application, the teachers mentioned explicit teaching experiences. The teachers’ notions of implicit teaching are principled in ‘automaticity’ whereby the children learn without awareness and acquire the learning without intending to do so (Baker, 2011). However, in SLA theory is based on the idea that extended practice under particular conditions and circumstances in naturalistic settings will enable language attainment (Ellis, 1994; Richards, 2010). As children’s motivation and interest are impetus factors in language acquisition, it is suggested that teachers teaching L2 incorporate activities and materials that relate to students’ interests that promote automaticity in a way that provides an opportunity for
transfer to new situations and real-life communication (Lukmani, 1972; Richards, 2010).

However, for application, the teachers’ teaching strategies were aligned with the principles of explicit teaching. The basic principles of explicit teaching are the development of rule-based competency; focus on meaning, form, and structure; extensive L2 input in both naturalistic and an instructed context; opportunities for L2 literacy outputs; and to interact in L2 to develop L2 proficiency (Ellis; 1994). The participants in this study diverged from implicit teaching ideas to explicit teaching principles in practice.

Analysis of participants’ pedagogical thinking and reasoning revealed their lack of distinction between language acquisition and language learning for teaching practices. The teachers’ over-reliance on the term ‘language acquisition’ may have derived from teaching and learning of L1. It seems that L1 and L2 acquisitions follow similar routes. However, evidence of research informed that the learner’s L1 has an effect on acquisition of an L2 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Baker, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2013). Arguably, acquiring an L1 happens naturally while acquiring an L2 requires a conscious effort on the part of the learner. Specific knowledge of language acquisition and language learning with regards to L2 learning, as well their implications for teaching practice could help reform the teachers’ teaching of TL in kindergartens in Singapore. At present, the teachers’ pedagogical teaching practices (application) are grounded on their limited cognitive constructs and belief systems.

**Pedagogy in Application: Ideational Theory in Practice**

The three broad pedagogical approaches that emerged from observations of the three clusters of teachers’ application were an amalgamation of Structural Approach and Grammar Translation Method; Audiolinguistic Method and Communicative Method (Shegar & Rahman, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Despite the commonalities in the ideational theories and interpretation for teaching, the classroom observations showed the three obvious pedagogical approaches amongst the three clusters of teachers. Each approach was predominant with the teachers within the clusters. These methods were the filter for the teachers’ decision-making in their teaching practices to achieve their aims and intentions. The teachers’ application of their ideation showed the interface between theory and practice.

**Structural approach within Cluster 1 teachers.**

The teachers’ conception for teaching in cluster 1 was content gravitated as all the four teachers valued the standards perspective curriculum prescribed by their organization. As expressed by Teacher 4AC, her aim was for children to
achieve the ability to speak and write by the end of the kindergarten level as per the prescribed standards in the given curriculum. The four teachers also mentioned that as teachers, they should impart knowledge and teach according to the specified lesson plan.

Teacher 1AS’s conduct of a numeracy lesson (as elaborated in Chapter 5) which focused on vocabulary teaching in formal TL, is an example of the curriculum in practice for the cluster of teachers. The teacher used a transmission approach, that is teacher-instructed in her introduction of the vocabulary, ‘periya meen’ (big fish); siriya meen (small fish), ‘oru periya meen’ (one big fish) and ‘eerahndu siriya meengal’ (two small fishes). Children were made to echo and repeat the vocabulary for the words to be acquired, followed by children’s interaction. The word ‘eerandhu’ (formal language) is ‘rayndu’ in casual spoken Tamil. However, in the supposed conversation between the peers, the teacher was insistent that the preschoolers used the formal language. The interaction was contrived rather than spontaneous, as teacher’s questions were deliberately phrased to elicit children’s use of the formal language in their speech. Paradoxically, the teacher herself constantly switched from spoken (informal language) to written language (formal language). Ending the lesson with a worksheet is a routine to practice writing skills. All the children had to write their names in Tamil before the assigned paper-pencil task. Teacher 1AS habitually translated the words and her instructions in English language and then repeated in Tamil.

Like Teacher 1AS, the other teachers in cluster 1 used ‘drill and practice’ strategies and rote teaching techniques in teaching vocabulary. Activities provided for listening, speaking and writing experiences were targeted to achieve the objectives of the lesson. The instructions also included a variety of formal language skills for oral and written expression, such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, syntax and subject-specific terminology to acquire the stipulated knowledge and competency skills. The teachers also operated consistently in transmission mode, as they felt that only by imparting their knowledge and teaching would the children learn and understand. Similarly, in their reflective journals, the teachers from this cluster defined efficacy as keeping learners busy or engaged to complete the teaching tasks within the prescribed time, focusing on “correct” completion of worksheets.

This cluster of teachers applied principles drawn from the Structural Approach and Grammar-Translation Method. Both approaches emphasize
learning L2 through structures and vocabulary. The Grammar-Translation Method is based on the assumptions that language is primarily graphophonic and that the main purpose of the L2 study is to use the translation for the development of the learner's logical powers, in addition to building the knowledge of structures. The focus of the classroom experiences was on patterns and formation of words by way of drill and repetition and teaching grammar and vocabulary (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Essentially the Cluster 1 teachers’ applied approaches were explicit in the teaching of TL.

These teachers, who may have overgeneralized between L1 and L2 instruction, blurring conflicts between EL and TL, unanimously believed that quality teaching and learning experiences must be implicit and ‘child-centered, and standard perspective.’ Their interviews and journal entries did not indicate any awareness of an actual or potential conflict of the beliefs and values they espoused or between their language acquisition theory and their structural approaches to pedagogical practices.

**Audiolingual method within Cluster 2.**

For teachers in Cluster 2, teaching practices were entrenched in developing preschoolers’ familiarity with the primary level TL content (syllabus). They believed that acquaintance with primary TL syllabus would enhance the preschoolers’ confidence and thus enable them to perform well academically in TL in primary school. Their viewpoint was that children need TL academic knowledge and skills to succeed in the meritocratic education system in Singapore. Therefore, their teaching practices were based on teacher-developed syllabuses adapted from the MOE primary one TL curriculum, basically a top-down curriculum approach.

Teacher 9CB’s (Cluster 2) conduct of a science activity, as detailed in chapter 5, displayed her emphasis on the preschoolers’ Primary TL content knowledge. Similarly to teachers in cluster 1, she used hands-on teaching aids like pictures, drawing and realia (banana tree sculpture) in her teaching, although in her topic on "nammal suttrees ullavaigaal" (things surrounding us) she included abstract concepts. She had established a habitual drill-practice so that whenever she named a label, the preschoolers repeated after her, unprompted. She used ‘letter-sound-blend’ and included synonyms like ‘poo’ is also ‘malar’ (flower) in her teaching. She also highlighted the singular and plural terms in her teaching. Integration of numeracy into the science subject and related concepts were also taught by way of Grammar-Translation method, whereby some concepts were translated from Tamil to English then back to Tamil.
Teacher 9CB demonstrated print awareness and the writing direction as she scribed the words on the white board while she narrated the conventions of writing the Tamil letters. Correcting grammatical tenses usage in preschoolers’ speech was another focal point in the teaching practice. The teacher ended her lesson with ‘fill-in-the-blank’ worksheet to assess the preschoolers’ learning.

The teachers in this cluster were alike in their classroom teaching practices. The teaching experiences were fundamentally teacher-directed teaching, inclined towards habit forming through practice, memorization, and grammatical structures. The applied pedagogy amongst the teachers in this cluster was directed by their teachers’ aims and intentions of teaching primary 1 TL content.

Though there appear to be some similarities between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2, practices of teachers in cluster 2 were more inclined to Audiolinguistic teaching combined with Grammar-Translation Method. Rote memorization, role play and structure drilling were the other predominant activities demonstrated by Teacher 10CD and 6BK in the cluster. The audiolingual approach stresses the language itself and aims for the learning of vocabulary and grammatical rules including phonological knowledge and was critiqued as a mechanical practice of language patterns (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

The teachers in Cluster 2 expressed the view that quality teaching and learning in TL must be child-centered; however, it must be within a curriculum that prepared the preschoolers for primary level. They were of the opinion that preschoolers’ need specific knowledge and skills to manage and succeed in their primary school TL. The Cluster 2 teachers’ reflective journals on critical incidents, efficacy strategies, and expected outcomes were congruent with their beliefs in preparation for primary level. These included appropriate learning behaviors. Similar to Cluster 1, this cluster of teachers did not show any awareness of the contrast between their ideation of language acquisition theory and their explicit teaching based on audiolingual approach.

**Communicative approach within Cluster 3.**

On the other hand, the teachers in Cluster 3 synonymously linked TL learning to the maintenance of cultural heritage and traditions in Singapore’s multicultural society. TL learning was seen as the emblem of a preschooler’s cultural identity. The teachers’ mutual aim was to develop the preschooler’s cultural self-confidence for a sense of self-identity. Teacher 11CU expressed a
desire for the preschoolers to gain their self-confidence by teaching them the
cultures and values of Tamil. She was of the opinion that the awareness would
develop the preschoolers’ self-identify and would motivate them to learn the
language. The five teachers believed it was their responsibility to develop the
passion for learning TL through culture-based experiences. Their analysis was
that there was a need to ‘safe keep’ and maintain TL as the vehicle through
which culture and traditions are transmitted so that future generations did not
become ‘rootless.’

Teacher 11CU’s lesson was a shared book reading in which she
conducted a ‘read-aloud’ with a big book on the theme Miruganggal (Animals).
The session commenced with a spontaneous talk on the animals that the
children had learned in a ‘non-threatening’ setting. When a child said “puli”
tiger and pointed to a picture of ‘poonai’ (cat), Teacher 11CU teased the child.
“Oh, oohn puli meow sollumaah?” (Oh, so your tiger says meow meow?). The
whole class laughed. The child giggled and self-corrected.

Teacher 11CU then brought the children’s attention to her book with
props, animal face masks. The story was a riddle game with repetitive lines.
Teacher 11CU combined tone variation, animated sounds, gestures and body
language to share the story. For example, she read in an animated tone of an
elephant “Nahn oru periya mirugam. Enahku periya thumbikai irukerathu. Nan
yaar theriyumaa?” (I am a big animal. I have a big trunk. Do you know who am
I?). She then trumpeted like an elephant. Spontaneously all the children
called out Ḷaanai’ (Elephant).

The children were very enthusiastic and predicted the names of the
animals even before the teacher completed her question. Gradually the
motivated children read with the teacher. The ‘read-aloud’ by a teacher turned
into ‘choral reading’ whereby the children and teacher ‘read’ in unison. The
follow-up activity was the story dramatization by children with props. The
teacher encouraged children to come up with their riddles for their peers to
guess, the props served as an effective scaffold. The emphasis of the story
and dramatization was ‘naam vehru pattaalum, naanggal ottrumaiyaaga
vaazhvohm” (though we are different from each other we leave in
harmony!). The closure was a song about animals living together in harmony.
The teacher ended the session with linking a couplet from Thirukkural on ‘Living
in harmony with the world’.

The teachers in Cluster 3, adopted the Communicative approach, as an
‘Informal Language Instruction strategy’ to engage all the children in a risk-free
setting. A communicative approach to teaching assumes that languages are learned through communication and advocates facilitation of activities for children’s social communications. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The emphasis is on using the language as a function, which includes listening, speaking, reading and writing rather than talking about it. It also focuses on encouraging learners to engage in speaking activities which simulate 'real life' communication. In addition to the meaningful conservations in which children are independent conversationalists, the teacher monitors and provide feedback on the preschooler’s success or otherwise (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). However, the approach de-emphasizes the role of a metalinguistic knowledge of the L2 linguistic system (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Nonetheless, the teachers incorporated the metalinguistic awareness within the conversations. Metalinguistic skills involve the awareness and control of linguistic components of language. Simply put, it implies the awareness of others as listeners and ability to recognize significant details that indicate changes in speech. Metalinguistic indicators were noted in their role-plays. For example, the preschoolers used the word “Ger” (a term of respect for an elder) when addressing their teachers, unlike when communicating with a peer.

The teachers in this cluster saw a need to sustain and maintain TL as they considered it to be the vehicle through which culture and traditions were transmitted. Though the teachers’ ideational theory was Language Acquisition in practice the material culture, social culture, cognitive culture and heuristic culture were included in their teaching.

**Summary of Proposition 2**

The teachers identified the theoretical perspectives that they understood to be most effective for quality teaching and learning experiences in TL. The observations showed an anomaly between the kindergarten teachers’ interpretations of language acquisition theory and language learning theory; and the application of the theories in their teaching practices.

Their interpretation and application of the language acquisition and language learning theory interchangeably revealed the teachers' lack of distinction between the two theories. Literature had affirmed the dichotomy between language acquisition and language learning theories and drawn clear distinction between them (Krashen, 1982; Ellis, 1997; Richards, 2009; Baker 2011). Other than the implicit (unconscious)
Learning for Language Acquisition and explicit (conscious) Language Learning, there are distinct differences in the pedagogical principles and practices of the theories.

To reiterate, literature informs that for Language acquisition, the pedagogical principles and practices are innately determined and based on the assumption that learners are born with a certain system of language (Krashen, 1982a; 1982b). The acquisition is the intuitive process of constructing the system of a language. Therefore, the implicit instruction does not provide specific guidance. In contrast, the language learning pedagogical experiences are intentional; bringing attention and awareness to the learning, and learners are in control of the learning. Learning Experiences are planful, thoughtful, and purposeful, whereby the teachers use their knowledge, judgment, and proficiency to organize learning experiences for specific outcomes. Explicit instructional approaches and strategies underpin cognitive processing regarding learning rules and structures. Consciousness and language learning are inextricably interconnected (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Also, research had highlighted the difference in the L1 acquisition and SLA (Krashen, 1982: Richards, 2010).

In contrast, the kindergarten teachers had conceptualized the ‘Language Acquisition Theory’ as in the context of L1 acquisition. Throughout the discussion, there was no mention of SLA but only of Language Acquisition. Even then, Language Acquisition was explicitly mentioned in the kindergarten teachers’ ideational theory and described by the teachers as a natural approach or automaticity in the acquisition of TL. However in the classroom pedagogical practices, the teachers applied explicit teaching practices. The teachers’ pedagogical thinking, pedagogical reasoning, and pedagogical practices regarding language acquisition theory revealed the interface between theory and practice.

The kindergarten teachers’ cognitive constructs on the theories of teaching TL and the meanings they had assigned based on their knowledge systems and belief systems have a significant impact on their decision-making for teachings practices (Borg, 2003; Richards, 2010). The bases for pedagogical applications were the teachers’ attitude, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning (Richards, 1994). Teachers’ belief systems are organized from the experiences, school practice, personality, and educational theory, therefore, the belief systems relate to the teachers’ knowledge systems (Fives & Gill, 2015).

In Singapore, the kindergarten teachers teaching TL are performing with the basic competencies gained in their Diploma course that trains them to be preschool EL teachers. The teachers lack the specific competencies, skills, and dispositions to teach TL (Richards; 1994; 2010) and yet are teaching the preschoolers in the kindergartens. The teachers’ belief system was an interface of their professed beliefs and beliefs in
practice. The aims and intentions of the teachers, except for those in cluster 3, are not congruent or consistent with the aims of Bilingual Education policy. The policy and the current concerns are for TL maintenance and preservation of the ethnic identity, culture and traditional values. Nonetheless, the teachers’ pedagogical applications are their knowledge systems and belief systems which are likely to be based on their training. Teachers better equipped with the specialized competencies and skills for teaching TL are likely to make personal and professional decisions for their teaching of TL in the kindergartens.

**Proposition 3: Stability of Teacher Identity is Enhanced by the Congruence between Their Personal and Professional Identities**

This proposition notion assumes the core of quality teaching and learning of TL in kindergartens in Singapore is the teacher’s identity. Teacher identity entails the cognition of teachers, their self-conceptions and beliefs in their roles and responsibilities in teaching TL in context. The teachers’ emotions about the personal and professional identity influence their identity as TL teacher. Fundamentally, the stability of teacher identity is enhanced by the congruence between their personal and professional identity.

**Teacher Identity: Personal and Professional Roles and Responsibilities**

The three clusters of teachers were of the opinion that their role as TL teacher is important but lamented the challenges they had to confront the realities of teaching TL in kindergartens in Singapore. As teachers, they added that they had to manage the everyday challenges while sustaining a sense of moral purpose and care to ensure that the preschoolers’ progress and achieve in the learning of TL. The teachers had similar expressions (interviews) to that of Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1), Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) and Teacher 7BY (Cluster 3) in their determination to facilitate quality teaching:

The factors and challenges are a shortage of resources and no training for the teachers. For Tamil, we don’t have a kind of a Certificate or Diploma training in teaching the preschoolers. What the teachers now in preschool, in Singapore, are doing is all based on what we learn in English. We are translating all these, or transforming all the English into Tamil; we put those practices in Tamil. Furthermore, we have limited resources to teaching materials and also not given ample time to plan and review our teaching practices unlike for English teaching. We have to ‘double up’ as English language and Tamil language teachers. Sometimes I do feel frustrated and think of giving up the TL teaching
role, but the thoughts of the preschoolers’ need to quality teaching and learning hold me back. I do my best by modifying my English lessons resources at my home-time. (Teacher 4AC, from Cluster 1).

In addition to the limited resources and lack of time, I do not get ample support from the center and parents. For example, my center does not see the priority of teacher-parent-meet session for Tamil parents as it strife the kindergarten’s already constrained resources. I am the only TL teacher in the kindergarten who is also a form teacher of an English class. On the other hand, even if I make time for parents at their convenience, they do not turn up. Though I get upset and feel unappreciated, the reason I am sustaining is that I have the responsibility as a teacher to the preschoolers. If I do not teach them, they are likely not to get any foundation in TL before they go to primary school. (Teacher 10CD from Cluster 2).

Tamil is very sweet, and if taught in the interactive way it is easy to learn. I like to use Tamil literature to teach children about the culture and values but with the limited teaching materials, it is difficult and burdensome. For me, it is a necessity to create teaching materials like adapting the Tamil Literature to the preschoolers’ level and making the necessary props. Though sometimes it is stressful and time-consuming, I take comfort to see the children enjoying my lessons. (Teacher 7BY from Cluster 3).

The teachers’ dispositions, the attitudes, and beliefs about their roles and responsibilities, as well as the behaviors in managing the mentioned challenges is an identification of the teachers’ concepts of self as TL teachers (Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005; Burn, 2007). The teachers believed that their core role as TL teacher in Singapore context is to help the preschoolers to develop oral and written skills; to develop confidence in using Tamil for both oral and written expression by the end of the kindergarten year; and to develop confidence in their cultural identity. To achieve their goals, the teachers took the responsibility to present curriculum resources and instructional materials in a way that they had assumed would allow the preschoolers TL language acquisition. However, despite feeling frustrated (Teacher 4AC); upset and unappreciated (Teacher 10CD); and stressed (Teacher 7BY) the teachers managed their daily challenges within their possibility and time. The teachers genuinely want the preschoolers to learn TL and believe the onus is theirs. Teacher 7BY (Cluster 3) expressed vividly:

I will try my best not to let any factors affect as I want our Indian community children to learn Tamil and appreciate their traditions. I spend much of my own time in preparing the needs. Otherwise, in the future, nobody will speak Tamil.
Children will become ignorant of Tamil. I mean the Tamil is diminishing, it is coming down already, and that is why I try my best to teach them in Tamil to instill the interest and enjoy the language and keep Tamil alive (interview).

With the same opinion but differing intention, Teacher 10CD and Teacher 4AC posited respectively:

My aim is to make them learn with understanding and to communicate well with others; by singing rhymes and reading will develop their ability to listen and speak, also the reading skills. It is important to prepare them for primary level (Teacher 10CD from Cluster 2) (interview).

So far I am doing my best, as the Tamil teacher. I want these children to speak in Tamil, speak confidently and become fluent by the end of the kindergarten. So in my class, I create an opportunity for children to talk, whatever in their thoughts they want to put in Tamil. I build their vocabulary subtly as they speak. I want Tamil to become the language the children want to use. (Teacher 4AC from Cluster 1) (interview).

The teachers’ self-concept, as defined, is their organized representation of their theories, attitude and beliefs of themselves (Day et al., 2005; Burn, 2007). Symbolic interactionist Mead (1934) related the concept of self with the concept of identity. He asserted that self-concept is mediated through interactions with the environment and social communications and that one learns to assume the roles of others and monitor his or her actions accordingly. Therefore, how these three clusters of teachers make sense of their teacher identity evolves out of the developmental capacities of the self (Kegan, 1998). The teachers’ attempt to manage the challenges to achieving their aims and intentions, as aforementioned, indicated the teachers are at Kegan’s ‘Self-authoring Mind’ stage in capacity development. In the Self-Authoring Mind stage, teachers can take a step back from their environment and hold it as an object and distinguish the opinions of others from their opinions to formulate one’s seat of judgment. The teachers’ minds are drawn towards problem-solving around meeting their personal agendas (Kegan, 1998).

The teachers’ conception of identity is based on the contexts, relationships, and emotions and is the basis for their meaning making and decision making (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Studies (Zembylas, 2003a; Rodgers & Scott, 2008) emphasized that while contexts (schools, teacher education programs, family, religious groups and so forth) and relationships are the external aspects of identity formation, emotions are the internal (meaning-making) aspects. Both the aspects inevitably shape teacher identity. This signifies that the TL teachers’ interactions with their stakeholders, including
parents and society, are paramount in shaping 'who they are and do they matter.' Studies determined that teachers' identity, the virtues of being, is central and critically impacts on professional identity, practice and commitment to the profession (Gee, 2000-2001; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Day et al., 2005; Alsup; 2006; Burn, 2007).

Professional identity in the context of teachers is defined as how the TL teachers identified themselves in the field of teaching and fulfilled their intentions (Lasky, 2000; Beijaard et al. 2004; van Veen & Sleegers, 2006; Burn, 2007). Teacher action is a construct of their professional self, that evolves and defines "social and policy expectations of what a good teacher is and the educational ideals of the teacher" (Day et al., 2005, p. 11). Teachers' professional identity contains a set of identity elements such as their self-images, job motivation, core responsibilities, self-esteem, and perceptions of teaching, subject and subject pedagogy, and teaching as work (van Veen & Sleegers, 2006). Some studies argued that professional identity refers not only to the influence of the conceptions and expectations of other people, including broadly accepted images in society about what a teacher should know and do, but also to what teachers themselves find important in their professional work and lives based on both their experiences in practice and their personal backgrounds (Tickle, 2000; Zembylas, 2003a; 2003b). The arguments reiterate that teachers' identity and their basis for meaning and decision making depend on the contexts, relationships, and emotions (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

**Emotions and Teacher Identity**

The teachers demonstrated a sense of dispirited emotions that were evoked from their feelings, when they discussed: 1) Lack of teaching materials - TL-specific curriculum, syllabus, and teaching aids; 2) Insufficient time - for the planning of lesson, preparation of teaching aids and reviewing their teaching practices to engage parents; 3) Limited institute support - in opportunities for professional networking, principal’s feedback, and sharing, professional recognition; 4) Lack of parents’ collaboration; and 5) Minimal professional training in the teaching of TL as an L2. The three clusters of teachers voiced that the insufficient or scarce resources and support are a determinant of their teaching of TL as professional teachers. The teachers' feelings of frustration, anger, annoyance, doubt, uncertainty, inequality, stress and tiredness were based on the meanings that they attribute to their experiences (Zembylas, 2003b). Emotions of professional uncertainty; lack of value or respect; low self-esteem; inadequacy and anxiety were evoked from the teachers' feelings (Zembylas, 2003b). Zembylas (2003b) explained that emotions are subject to change and are reactions to life’s events.
Affective connections between the cluster of teachers’ emotions and their personal and professional identity, emerged in the findings.

**Concern: TL is not a ‘level learning field’ in the kindergartens.**

The three clusters of teachers, though determined to manage the situational challenges, exhibited mixed feelings. Feelings of doubt, uncertainty and frustration surfaced in teachers’ lament about not having or not having an appropriate curriculum and syllabus in specific to the teaching of TL in the kindergartens. The teachers from cluster 2 and cluster 3 developed their respective kindergarten curriculum and syllabus in isolation as their reason was that the NEL framework booklet for the Tamil Language (2006) was not TL teaching and learning-centric. On the other hand, the teachers from cluster 1 who had been subjected to the mandated curriculum from 2015, were stressed with their prescribed curriculum and related syllabus; the curriculum was not only a translation of the English language content, it was skewed towards formal language instructions. There was a conflict between teachers’ belief and prescribed teaching practices. Teacher 1AS (Cluster 1), who alternated between informal spoken TL to formal language in her interactions with her children conceded:

> I have to ensure they speak properly as only then when they go to the primary level they will not feel new to the language used. They would have the standard in Tamil as the children would be familiar and confident. The vocabulary listed in our syllabus are a formal language, so I use the words in my conversation so that the children can hear both speaking and written language. However, sometimes my interaction does not flow as I do not use some of the words naturally, these are not used in daily interactions (interview).

On the other hand, Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) who had taken the initiative to develop the TL curriculum and syllabus felt inadequate, uncertain and expressed self-doubt:

> There is no curriculum framework or syllabus guide. I plan my content; It is my own. There is nobody to discuss and do as I am the only Tamil teacher teaching all levels from N1 to K2. As a result, there was no discussion about the lesson plan or curriculum. Furthermore, I had not attended any training on teaching Tamil. I have to make my decision on what I feel the children should learn; I make sure they learn. That is the issues and challenges I experience. I do think about how the other
kindergarten teachers are teaching; how they are preparing the worksheets and how they are doing the lesson. I would just like to see or hear from other teachers (interview).

The teachers mentioned that locating TL teaching resources and aids was another trying experience, firstly because of the limited availability and secondly, because of budget constraints. The teachers created their teaching aids or used the English Language teaching aids. Teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) compared on the inequity of the resource support given to her colleague teaching Mandarin as L2 and complained that the support for TL was partial.

It is only recently I learned how to type in Tamil font, so I find it easier to create the resources and teaching materials like flash cards and labels in Tamil, which are limited in the market. Furthermore, there is a limited budget to purchase commercial resources. I borrowed the teaching aids used in the teaching of Mandarin as an MT. The Chinese teachers have more resources, while they focused only on Mandarin teaching, so that makes the work easier and frees more time for them to prepare additional resources to meet the differentiated needs of the preschoolers. Creating resource material is a challenge especially if you have different types of students; and limited time and budget (interview).

The teachers expressed their concern about not being able to provide for similar learning experiences in the learning of MT in comparison to preschoolers who are learning Mandarin in their kindergartens. Though the three clusters of teachers want to provide similar learning experiences and to create a ‘level playing field’ in the foundation years, they feel discriminated against (Gee, 2000-2001; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Day et al., 2005; Alsup; 2006; Burn, 2007). The generalized TL curriculum, lack of teaching materials and aids does not provide the equal opportunity for the preschoolers. It is the teachers’ opinion that children should not be discriminated in their learning TL. The perceived inequities in teaching and learning of TL has a fundamental impact on the teachers’ identity.

**TL teaching and TL teachers are not valued.**

The other two factors that underpinned the feeling of not being appreciated, recognized and respected are, the teachers’ assumed, lack of Institute support and parents’ participation. The teachers expressed emotions of dejection and belittlement.

All the teachers had mentioned at one time or another that there was no opportunity for any TL teachers’ professional networking in the kindergartens.
They believed that the professional exchanges would enable sharing of teaching practices, managing challenges and establishing a professional partnership amongst kindergartens within their organization or other organizations. The teachers were enthusiastic to develop their personal skills in the teaching of TL to help them perform more efficiently. Nonetheless, the teachers shared (interview) dejectedly:

I am lonely and drained, as I am the only Tamil teacher in the kindergarten. Whenever I request for an opportunity to seek new or creative ideas amongst other teachers, it is always kept on hold. The reasons cited were a lack of time or not cost effective. My teaching activities are repeated every year. I feel outdated and not supported at all! (Teacher 3AC from Cluster 1).

I know I have to do changes to my teaching style, the way I teach is not reaching out to the children. I have to make some adjustments so that the children will have a better understanding of what I am teaching. In situations like these, I feel incompetent. I need the guidance of an expert or others who had managed similar challenges. However, I have never heard of any professional sharing groups for TL teachers teaching in kindergartens or workshops for teaching Tamil in kindergartens. (Teacher 6BK from cluster 2).

My networking source is social media, but regrettably, it is only one way! When I become clueless about stories or ideas for activities or to manage any challenges I look into YouTube. There are some uploads of teachers’ sharing, namely from India. Though there are copyright issues, I use it as I have no other choice. The networking for personal and professional growth in the kindergarten is for only English language teaching and learning. The Mandarin teachers in my kindergarten have scheduled bi-monthly networking sessions but nothing for Tamil. (Teacher 12CU from Cluster 3).

All the participants remarked that the kindergarten principals did not provide feedback or recognize and reward the teachers’ teaching practices and contributions. The teachers also complained that their undertaking and management of the additional teaching load was neither acknowledged nor recognized. The reason as deduced by the teachers was that they are not valued as ‘effective contributors’ to the organization’s core needs, as only a minority group is learning Tamil. Therefore, they inferred that the investment of time and cost in the teaching of TL was not economic-worthy for the organizations.
Teacher 10CD (Cluster 2) said unenthusiastically:

Sometimes I just need feedback or even a nod of recognition from the principal. However, the principal has a differing view for observing the teaching of TL in comparing to my teaching of English class. Though the principal plays the major role from curriculum coordination to the implementation, her priority towards Tamil language instruction is the bottom most. Sometimes as a teacher teaching Tamil I feel non-existent. I had thoughts of opting out of teaching Tamil for now as it was not a gratifying experience (interview).

Teacher 7BY (Cluster 3) reasoned that many center principals are non-Tamils so expecting them to provide feedback was groundless. Regardless, she agreed that not acknowledging the teacher’s effort in teaching TL within the constrained organization support is disheartening. Nonetheless, Teacher 7BY described herself as a strong-willed person/professional who enjoyed the intrinsic challenge/experience of teaching Tamil to the preschoolers.

Teacher 2AW (Cluster 1) vented that her initiatives and time devoted to the implementation of TL despite all the shortcomings and her dual-teaching role, she is not ‘recognized or acknowledged.’ She sensed that the center principal’s (kindergarten principal) prime commitment was to English language and Mandarin teaching, but obliviousness to Tamil language instructions. Though Teacher 2AW acknowledged that the percentage of children learning the Tamil Language is insignificant, teachers like her still need the institute support for personal and professional effectiveness in the teaching of Tamil for which they are not trained. She questioned the value of TL teaching and her contribution to the organization as a TL teacher.

The teachers also expressed their emotions of dejection and belittlement with regards to parents’ collaboration in the teaching of TL. The teachers were united in their belief that building teacher-parent partnerships are crucial for the teaching of TL in the kindergarten. However, the teachers declared that engaging parents was a demanding task and a demeaning experience.

The teachers from cluster 1 expressed that even when they worked around their time-constrained teaching schedule to meet on parents’ availability, the parents do not attend the parent-teacher-meetings for TL. The teachers supposed that the Singapore parents are either not comfortable or are shy about talking in Tamil or are not interested in their children learning Tamil. The parents had indicated that Tamil has limited use in the multicultural society. Teacher 2AW shared her upsetting encounter with parents who did not and were not keen in speaking to a TL teacher. The notion the
parents had was “Tamil Language teachers are of a lower status in comparison to English teachers” said Teacher 2AW dejectedly and then retorted:

However, those who are not interested don’t bother to attend the meetings yet expect their children to perform at primary level. In my class of 20 children, only four attend the Parent-Teacher meeting. Sometimes, I compare myself to the ‘TL teacher image’ and feel lowered and indistinct (interview).

In the same predicament were Teachers 9CB and 10CD from cluster 2. However, for Cluster 3 teachers and Teacher 6BK, it is a criterion in their kindergartens to meet parents after teachers’ work hours. Teacher 6BK and 8BY were disgruntled about meeting parents in the evening and commented that some parents do not even inform them if they are not attending. They felt undervalued at such times.

The emotions of the three cluster of teachers, related to Tamil language teaching and the lack of support for the teachers’ effective teaching of TL in the kindergartens, were notably pessimistic. The pessimistic emotions made the teachers doubt not only the value of TL teaching in kindergartens but also of themselves as TL teachers and their professional status (Zembylas, 2003a; 2003b).

**Professional self-doubt: Tamil Language teachers not recognized as professionals.**

The three clusters of teachers who were trained in English Language literacy teaching at the kindergarten, in their interviews and reflective journals, repeatedly expressed their feeling of self-doubt and inadequacy in the teaching of TL. The teachers of all the clusters agreed that teaching TL required specialist knowledge and skills that differed from teaching the English Language.

Teachers from cluster 1, Teacher 6BK (Cluster 2) and 8BY (Cluster 3) stated that when they were approached by their respective kindergartens to teach TL, they took the assignment with confidence. The six teachers believed that they could manage the teaching of TL by transferring their learned EL pedagogical principle in their teaching. However, after embarking into the teaching of TL they begin to doubt their teaching practices. As admitted by Teacher 4AC (Cluster 1):

So, as preschool teachers what we do is we think about teaching English and plan the activities identically. For example for music and movement, I get the children to sing the English song. Then use the same music but translate the lyrics to Tamil words. However, when the meaning of words was translated from EL to Tamil, the TL words does
not rhyme because of that I have to use ‘drill and practice.’ The children eventually lose their interest and reverted to singing in English. I have to stop the activity frequently and remind the children to sing in Tamil (interview).

Teacher 4AC declared that she felt frustrated, incompetent and overwhelmed despite having a prescribed lesson plan. The other five teachers also shared similar experiences. Similar to Teacher 4AC, the cluster of teachers linked their inadequacy to lack of training to teach TL in the kindergarten. Teacher 4AC rationalized that they have been accredited to teach TL based on their training to teach EL. Inevitably the teachers applied the language acquisition theory, and the teaching approaches in the implementation of TL, as well as the stipulated curriculum and content (translated from English to Tamil). The six teachers believed that appropriate training in their acquisition of knowledge, skill, and aptitude would enable them to be effective teachers in the teaching of TL. They complained that despite their highlighting of their needs, the organizations did not include TL training requirements in the Teachers’ Continued Professional Development Plan. Teacher 2AW repeatedly complained:

The principal kept saying that she has only limited budget and that she has to do the best for kindergarten as a whole. She also added that she is yet to come across a suitable training in TL for kindergarten. I guess sometimes I need to remember that TL is only catered to the minority, and it may not be viewed as cost-worthy to meet my professional needs (interview).

Teacher 10CD and Teacher 9CB (Cluster 3), as well as Teachers 5BK, 7BY, 11CU and 12CU (Cluster 2), applied their particularized curriculum to achieve their respective aims and intentions. Though the teachers confidently discussed their curriculum, their reflective journals indicated their uncertainty in their teaching. They too doubted whether they were effective in their teaching of TL to the preschoolers and felt saddened that they have to be self-supported. They too complained that there were no training opportunities or resources accommodated for TL professional development by the kindergartens or in Singapore. The three clusters of teachers in the ‘Teachers’ Questionnaire’ shared the viewpoint of Teacher 10CD:

Limited facilities for Tamil training in Singapore. There is also no possibility for networking amongst the TL teachers in the kindergartens.
Yes, we have to face this problem only in the teaching of Tamil. I do wonder if we are recognized as professionals then. Why this bias?

The common complaint amongst the three clusters of teachers was that they were not accorded equal or at least some opportunity for professional training. They expressed their preconceived opinion that the partiality in the training opportunities is an indication that TL teachers are not recognized as professionals by their centers or by the community.

Teacher professionalism is teachers' professional qualification and the extent they use their skills, knowledge, competencies and related experiences to implement best or highest standards for effective learning and teaching (Baggini, 2005; Richards, 2010). Literature affirmed that the incapacity to forming and relating ideas, in regards to teaching and learning achievement is noted among teachers without training which is likely to induce professional educators to doubt their ability to teach. (Freeman & Freeman, 2014). Coupled with not being trained and the feelings of not being valued as a TL teachers and not being recognized as professionals has evoked self-doubt on professional identity amongst the three clusters of teachers (Nias, 1996; Acker, 1999; Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Little, 1996, 2000; Boler, 1997, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Lasky, 2000; Schmidt, 2000; Zembylas, 2003).

Summary of Proposition 3

In summary, the teachers revealed complex emotional responses that manifested in their perspectives on teachers' personal and professional identities. Considering the cluster of teachers' identities, it is important to keep in mind that, although there is a certain amount of stability in how the teachers saw their roles and responsibilities in the teaching of TL in the kindergartens, there is also a continuous change as the teachers manage challenges and issues among their social contexts (Zembylas, 2003b). The teachers' construction and reconstructions of their identity are based not only on the continually changing of self-cognizance but also on their perspective of their professional self, as a TL teacher.

Teacher identity sets a framework from which teachers identify with others (Schutz, Aultman & William-Johnson, 2009). The framework also guides teachers’ behavior and the ways they deal with emotions during classroom interactions. Therefore, how the TL teachers view themselves in their professional role influences their beliefs about pedagogy, how they portray themselves and enact.
Summary of Discussion

In this study, the salient features of the professional experiences of TL teachers in Singapore kindergartens emerged as:

- Lack of specific professional preparation for the teaching of Tamil Language, especially in pre-school programs.
- Default recognized qualifications being qualifications in early childhood EL teaching.
- Relative professional isolation of teachers of TL in Singapore preschools.
- Perceived relatively low status of TL professionally and in the wider community.

The complex interactions of these factors on the teachers-participants' lived / personal experiences were elicited through multiple data sources and using the Grounded Theory analytical processes three key propositions were developed. They were:

**Proposition 1**
Tamil Language teachers in Singapore develop their ideational theory from English language literacy instruction and possibly from foreign language teaching.

**Proposition 2**
The Tamil Language teachers interpret their ideational theory base in ways that revealed their lack of distinction between Language Acquisition and Language Learning.

**Proposition 3**
Stability of teacher identity is enhanced by the congruence between their personal and professional identities.

These propositions form the basis for the Explanatory Theory, that is, ‘The efficacy of TL teachers in Singapore kindergartens is constrained by complex interactions in three areas – cognitive knowledge base, practices, and professional identity. The next chapter discusses the contribution of the theory to the limited knowledge of this topic and particularly in the field of TL in Singapore. The chapter also presents the implications and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 7: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The study set out to generate theory on the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on quality teaching and learning experiences in the Tamil Language. The contextual literature focused on Bilingual education policy to present the historical development of Tamil Language and its current status in the Singapore Education System. This sensitivity to context is crucial as it helps in understanding what is going on by appreciating where and when it is happening. Additionally, the international theoretical literature presented the cognate fields of literature informing the conceptual framework for the study. However, due to limited studies on the perspectives of preschool teachers in teaching TL, the literature reviewed consisted mainly of general studies on perspectives of teaching in native/L2 from kindergarten to elementary (primary) schools.

This study focused on the experiences and perspectives of kindergarten teachers of Tamil language, which is designated as an MTL in Singapore. The data from the observer's notes, semi-structured interviews and participants' journals collected from the 12 participants were analyzed in accordance with grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The three propositions and the explanatory theory presented in the previous chapter contribute to the expansion of the limited knowledge of this topic and particularly in the field of TL in Singapore. The implications of these contributions are discussed in the following sections, followed by suggestions for further research.

Contribution to Knowledge

The significance of this study is in its contributions to the knowledge base in Singapore’s early childhood field, notably Tamil Language, highlighting the need for formalized TL teacher education. Formal preschool TL teacher training in Singapore is non-existent, compared with the substantial and formal teacher education requirements for L2 teachers in other countries.

The study contributes substantially to the knowledge base of research about the provision of MTL instruction in Singapore’s preschool centers. Evidence of declining numbers of preschool institutions offering TL and the declining numbers of teachers willing to teach TL indicates fragility in that provision and raises questions about equity of opportunity for TL learners. Grounded theory analysis of data which informed this knowledge base contributed to the development of three propositions focused on the teachers’ cognitive knowledge base, practices, and professional identity.
which underpinned explanatory theory for the efficacy of TL teachers in Singapore kindergartens. The following section provides the synthesis of the three propositions and the implications for policy and practice.

From Proposition 1, the TL teachers in Singapore develop their ideational theory from the English language literacy instruction and probably from foreign language teaching. The kindergarten teachers of TL in Singapore, formally trained in English language literacy instruction, transfer the competencies, knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach EL in kindergartens to TL instruction based on their knowledge, understanding, and interpretation. Furthermore, coupled with the pedagogical justification of the NEL kindergarten framework and its ‘iTeach’ principle as a quality gauge, the teachers also transferred those teaching methods, approaches, and techniques into the teaching of TL, infusing features of foreign language teaching methods. The NEL framework is one of the key sources applied in the diploma teacher training program. Fundamentally the basis of the English language literacy instruction and the probable foreign language teaching in the TL teachers’ ideational theory for the teaching of TL, is their training and cognizance of teaching English in the kindergartens. Research studies distinctively differentiated training for MT from EL and declared that MT trained teachers were far more effective than teachers who were not prepared for bilingual education (Menken & Antunez, 2001; Snoek & Wielenga, 2001; Alanis & Rodriguez; 2008; Garcia, 2009; Richards, 2010; Freeman & Freeman, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Despite their lack of training to teach preschool TL, Singapore kindergarten teachers, are summoned to teach the subject. Thus, the teachers’ cognitive stability in teaching TL is questionable. If interesting children in TL and engaging them in the preschool years are genuine concerns of the MOE, then training kindergarten teachers for teaching TL should have been a priority.

Proposition 2 states that the Tamil language teachers interpret their ideational theory base in ways that revealed their lack of distinction between Language Acquisition and Language Learning is a natural cascade of the first proposition. Similar to the ideational theory base, the teachers interpreted and transferred the Language Acquisition and Language Learning theories for practice from their learning in the English Language teacher training diploma. Nonetheless, there was an anomaly with their description of language acquisition theory and interpretation of the theory in their teaching practices. All participants described Language Acquisition as implicit learning. However, unlike cluster 3 teachers who embraced the communicative method for implicit experiences, Clusters 1 and 2 teachers’ Structural Approach with GTM teaching strategies evidenced explicit learning. The participants’ personal cognition of the theories and the meaning they had assigned for their respective practices resulted
in the disparity. On the other hand, the teachers' aims and intentions could have been the likely cause of the teachers' adoption of explicit teaching practices. Essentially the teachers' knowledge systems and belief systems constructed within the English Language training about language acquisition and learning strategies and their aims and intentions had significantly impacted their ideation and practices in the teaching of TL (Borg, 2003; Richards, 2010; Fives & Gill, 2015). Furthermore, at no point during the study did the teachers indicate awareness of SLA or SLL Theories which are imperative in the teaching of TL as an L2 (Richards, 2010). The kindergarten teachers were functioning from the basic competency to teach The English language in preschools, which is the learning outcome of their diploma training. If the aim of Singapore’s bilingual education policy is to enable children to keep rooted in their MT heritage, identity, and cultural values to preserve ethnic identity and culture, then it must be clearly conveyed to all teachers involved. The aims and intentions of the TL teachers must be congruent with the aims of the bilingual education policy. To achieve this congruence, the TL teacher training program must align its learning outcomes with the policy and facilitate the specialized knowledge, skills, and disposition for the teaching of TL as an L2 in the preschools (Richards, 1994; 2010; Curdt-Christiansen & Silver, 2012; Mata, 2014). The TL teacher training program, as suggested in the earlier proposition must consider the learning outcomes and contents specific to TL teaching and learning. Teachers with the specialized competencies and skills are better equipped to make personal and professional decisions for their effective teaching of TL in the kindergartens.

While the first and second propositions involve teachers’ cognitive knowledge and practices, the third proposition stresses the stability of teacher identity for professional efficacy. The teachers regarded their role as TL teacher as important but lamented on the challenges they confronted in the realities of teaching TL in kindergartens in Singapore. Though the teachers were determined, they expressed apprehension on their ability to fulfill the requirements of their role and responsibility. The apprehension largely stems from not being trained to teach TL in kindergartens. They shared dispirited emotions that they were not given training opportunities as their organizations did not value TL as important; thus, it was not considered sufficiently worthy to warrant investment in professional training for the teachers. The negative emotions resulted from the teachers’ feelings that TL teachers’ status was not recognized as professional; they regretted that ‘TL teachers and the related work’ were disregarded or overlooked by the institutes, parents, and community. Their unhappiness was exacerbated by the lack of resources, parental-center-support and training opportunities. There is general acknowledgment that teachers’ conceptions of their identity are based on contexts, relationships, and emotions. Teacher identity is a
key factor that influences a teacher’s sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, and effectiveness (Nias, 1996; Acker, 1999; Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Little, 1996, 2000; Boler, 1997, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Lasky, 2000; Zembylas, 2003; Schmidt, 2010) and critically impacts on teacher professional identity (Gee, 2001; Beijaard et al., 2004; Day et al., 2005; Alsup; 2006; Burn, 2007; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). It was salutary to note that two disillusioned teachers from the participants had expressed their intention to opt out of teaching TL, despite the dwindling TL teacher population. If the growing negative perspectives of the TL teacher identity are not stabilized, the teacher shortages already experienced by Singapore kindergartens will be exacerbated. If TL teaching and learning in the kindergartens is viewed as insignificant and the resultant teacher shortage considered trivial, then the equity of opportunity and robustness of the MT policy in Singapore is questioned.

Implications for Teacher Education and Stability

The outcomes of this study have significant implications for TL professional training policy and professional development practices, as well as further research.

Second Language Teacher Training Policy and Certification

The first and a major implication of the study is that it provides the much-needed data to justify the necessary inclusion of TL teacher training for the kindergarten level in the country’s general teacher training policy which covers pre-service and in-service teacher education. This study identified specific concerns related to the provision of quality teaching and learning of TL in Singapore:

- Development of an appropriately prepared and qualified body of teachers of TL;
- Recognition of the professional status of TL teachers and support of their professional identity through in-service professional development and association.

In addition to MOE, the governmental agency accrediting preschool teacher training, ECDA, should include TL teacher training as a professional development program in its Professional Development Program (PDP) framework. The accredited training should provide specialized professional training in the teaching of TL, and upon successful completion of that training, the kindergarten teachers must be certified as professional L2 (TL) teachers. This certification is beyond the current teachers' registration as kindergarten teachers. Approved colleges, training institutes, and
associated agencies can aid in the delivery of the preschool teacher training at pre-service and in-service courses.

Preschool teacher-trainees who are appointed to teach TL as well as those who are interested in teaching TL and undergoing the standard ‘pre-service training’ full-time diploma conducted in the English Language, to undergo a compulsory TL teaching program at the certificate level. For in-service teachers attending ‘part-time training,’ the TL teaching program could be delivered on a modular basis, but of the same duration as the preservice course. Continued Education Training (CET) opportunities aimed at upgrading their specific skills for effective teaching must be made available for both the pre-service and in-service TL teachers. The framework for the continued CET could be designed to meet these varied needs of different groups of TL teachers in the preschool field.

Relevant resources for the implementation of the recommended programs could be jointly provided by MOE, ECDA, and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA). The funds for TL teachers training could be included in the national preschool teacher training budget to emphasize the importance of such training in producing skilled and competent TL teachers for Singapore kindergartens.

**Tamil Language Teacher Training Curriculum**

The second implication relates to the TL teacher education curriculum, namely in the design and content development emphasizing on specialized competencies for teaching TL in kindergartens.

- The rationale for the TL program in kindergartens is derived from the bilingual education policy. Hence, the training curriculum’s objectives are to be aligned with the aim and intentions of the bilingual education policy; that is, for the preservation of the TL ethnic identity and culture in Singapore. Although identity and culture may be “carried” by language, they are also embedded in cultural practices such as literature or embodied in dance and drama. Arguably, TL teachers need a knowledge base in literature and cultural practices to support the aim of preservation of Tamil identity and culture through the kindergarten program.

- For many TL pupils in Singapore, TL is an L2, rather than a “home” or MTL. Therefore, in addition to the basic competencies such as planning and implementing developmentally appropriate activities, using diverse teaching strategies and technologies, assessment and evaluation skills, the TL training
curriculum design should emphasize theories specific to L2 teaching and learning, and linguistic and affective competencies in the language.

- TL teacher training should invariably include the aims and intentions of TL learning in context and the specific competencies to be developed in the teachers. The approved colleges, training institutes and agencies must be committed to the delivery of instruction for effective preparation of the TL teachers.

Tamil Language Teachers’ Identity Stability for Professional Efficacy

The final implication is that the instability of their professional identity influences the effectiveness and efficiency of the TL teachers. Amongst the 12 participants, three were predominantly non-TL (vernacular dialect) speaking and use TL solely for teaching, while only two teachers had studied Tamil literature and culture. These deficits would have likely contributed to their unstable identity as TL teachers. Proposition 3 revealed that the TL teachers are of the opinion that their contribution and perseverance in managing the daily challenges of teaching TL with minimal support is not valued. Furthermore, disregard of their basic needs for teaching resources, poor parent-center support and lack of professional development and career growth had raised the TL teachers’ self-doubt and professional uncertainty as TL teachers in kindergartens. Teacher identity is key to the teachers’ sense of purpose, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and professional effectiveness. If not stabilized, the repercussion is teacher attrition, as evident by the emerging symptoms amongst the participants. Though the teachers agreed on the need for teaching resources, incentives, career progression, social status, peer-staff-management support, and the involvement of the stakeholders, it is unclear as to what extent, from whom and the type of support needed for the stability of the TL teachers’ identity. The research literature established complex interplay between context, relationships, and emotions in supporting teacher identity. If the context is influenced by perceived value of teachers (indicated by investment in appropriate training and certification), recognition of the importance of their work by their institutions and the associated parents may follow. In part, teachers confidence imparted by appropriate training may in itself contribute to more robust professional identity and lead to more positive emotional investment in and return from TL teachers’ work.
Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in the following areas are worth pursuing:

- This study revealed that the TL kindergarten teachers lack professional development opportunities to upgrade their teaching skills. Considering their varied competency levels and needs, perhaps further research could focus on what the teachers think their professional needs are. The research and consultation in the processes of curriculum development may enhance the teachers’ sense of value and contribute to better ‘fit-for-purpose’ courses.

- Evidence from this study shows that the TL teachers’ personal and professional identities were adversely affected by the lack of support and recognition from their principals, institutions, and parents. The disillusioned teachers had mentioned ‘the need for teaching resources, incentives, career progression, social status and peer-staff-management support.’ Further research could focus on the specifics of what the teachers see these to be and how they might be achieved.

- Of the participants contributing to this research, 85% did not study Tamil literature and culture, and amongst them, 25% did not even speak Tamil, except during TL teaching. Could this inadequacy amongst the participants contribute to the uncertain identity as TL teachers? Perhaps further research could be done to ascertain this and whether the TL teachers’ professional education and development should include a TL language, literature and culture component.

Conclusion

Based on the research study carried out with preschool teachers of TL in Singapore, this thesis has developed and presented an explanatory theory of the constraints on the efficacy of provision of TL instruction for preschool children. In the process, the underpinning propositions identified weaknesses in the professional preparation of teachers of TL which resulted in the inappropriate transfer of EL teacher education to TL curricular ideation and practice in the pre-schools. These findings constitute an original contribution to knowledge both specific to the Singaporean context and the wider field of research. The third proposition, with its focus on the participants’ personal and professional sense of identity, indicates that provision of quality teaching and learning of TL at preschool levels is more fragile than might be expected in the Singapore context of an apparently strong multicultural society and policy support for MTL at all levels of education.
Discussion of the implications of the propositions and explanatory theory suggested shortcomings of the equity of and access to quality TL instruction for preschoolers located in two areas: program provision by kindergartens and preschool institutions; and quality teacher education and professional development opportunities for TL teachers. The suggestions made in this thesis to address both of these areas should be implemented if the decline of TL instruction is to be arrested, and the policy of equitable and efficacious support for maintenance of all MTL’s in Singapore is to be realized.
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Chavez (Eds.), *Ethnolinguistic issues in education*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press.


McInerney, V., McInerney, D. M., Cincotta, M., Totaro, P., & Williams, D. (April, 2001). Teacher attitudes to, and beliefs about multicultural education: Have there been changes over the last twenty years? In paper presented at the 82nd annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Seattle, WA.


Ramos, V. T., & Mabanglo, R. (2012). The language learning framework for teachers of Filipino. *Journal of Southeast Asian Language (Special Issue).*


## Appendix A

### Second Language Learning Theories Evolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Chomsky, N. (1959). Review of B.F. Skinner Verbal behavior. <em>Language</em>35, 26-58</td>
<td>Chomsky argued that children have innate language faculty guiding them to acquire language. They do not merely imitate the language around them, but generate novel sentences and rule. The innate faculty is Universal (Universal Grammar). Even though Chomsky did not attend to second language acquisition, his ideas had a major impact in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Selinker, L (1972). <em>Interlanguage</em>. <em>International Review of Applied Linguistics</em>. 10, 209-31</td>
<td>Selinker coined the term 'Interlanguage'. It is, metaphorically a halfway house between the first language (L1) and the target language (TL), hence 'inter.' The L1 is purportedly the source language that provides the initial building materials to be gradually blended with materials taken from the TL, resulting in new forms that are neither in the L1, nor in the TL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Bialystok, E. (1978). <em>A theoretical model of second language learning</em>. Language</td>
<td>Bialystok is the first to draw a distinction between implicit (conscious) and explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Long, M</td>
<td>Input, interaction and second language acquisition. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Pienemann, M</td>
<td>Psychological constraints on the teachability of languages. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 6, 186-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>McLaughlin, B.</td>
<td>Theories of second language learning. London. Arnold.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Methods and Strategies for Teaching and Learning MT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Beliefs and Attitudes</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Grammar Translation Method  | • Direct method of teaching, which is characterized by explicit instruction of grammatical rules and language analysis by way of translation (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)  
  • Emphasis in on written language as it is considered superior to oral language  
  • Successful learners must translate each language to other though they cannot communicate orally.  
  • Reading and writing are the focus skills  
  • Teachers play an authoritarian role and interaction is between teacher-student.  
  • Children must learn grammatical rules overtly and know the grammatical paradigms  
  • Basic unit of teaching is sentence  | • Presentations of rules and lists of vocabulary translated into MT.  
  • Translation is important class activity  
  • The main procedure-presentation of grammatical of rules, followed by list of vocabulary and finally translation exercise.  
  • Example of activities:  
    • Reading comprehension  
    • Vocabulary is selected, memorized and sentences are formed with new words  
    • Fill-in-the-blanks exercises  
    • Drill, practice and memorize |
| Structuralist               | • A process of acquiring the structures of patterns of MT through habit formation.  
  • Language as a ‘system of structurally related elements for encoding of meaning, the element being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures, and sentence types’(Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.49)  
  • Grammar is not a collection of rules but a list of structures  
  • To learn the language is to master all these building blocks and the rules to combine them.  | • Focus on oral aspects of language.  
  • Breaking Oral language relevance with written language  
  • Teach the language not about the language  
  • Behaviorist habit-forming experiences  
  • Provide stimulus  
  • Elicit behavior and a consequent response  
  • Finally reinforce |
| Audiolinguistic             | • Imitation, memorization and repetition – Army Method of teaching based on behaviorist theorists.  
  • MT learning is the same as any other kind of learning and can use the same laws and principles.  
  • Learning is a result of experience and shows in behavior. It is a  | • Emphasis on oral language.  
  • Focus on an accurate speech, but not on grammatical explanation. Grammar is learnt by memorization and in isolation from each other and from contexts of meaningful use.  
  • Teaching is organized in three methodological points: |
The process of habit formation.
- Learning proceeds by means of analogy (habit-formation involving discrimination and generalisation) rather than (deductive learning of rule, unlike GT method).
- Errors are caused by L1 interference

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Typical experience:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners first hear a dialogue with key structures of the lesson, repeat and memorize them. Teacher concentrate on pronunciation and fluency and corrects immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue is adapted to the learners' interest or situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key structures from the dialogue are selected and used as the basis for repetition and drills. First practices in chorus and then individually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners refer to textbook and follow-up reading, writing or vocabulary based on the dialogue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The central feature of the experience is language structures, grading and sequences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on premise that successful language learning involves not only knowledge of structures and forms but also the functions and purpose of the language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Teaching. Language is a system for the expression of meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners in addition to being structurally competent they must be communicatively competent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners must be able to transfer the classroom work in their social life, outside classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative ‘capacity as the starting point, then to organize language teaching in terms of content rather than on form of the language’ (Wilkins, 1976, p.18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values notional syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process does not adopt any single model but with different central elements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Types of Elements**
1. Structures (Wilkins, 1976)

| Communicative use of language for functional meaning. |
| Dialogue focus on Functional meaning that underpins: |
| Notional categories (concepts such as time, quantity, location, frequency etc.) |
| Communicative functions (approval, prediction etc.). |
| Common experiences |
| Meaning is paramount. |
| Dialogue centers around communicative function and not on memorization. |
| Communication is teased but at times some form of drilling may occur but peripherally. |
| Comprehensible pronunciation is sought. |
| Judicious use of L1. |
| Translation may be used and language is created through trial and error. |
| Reading and writing though incorporated the desired goal is communicative competencies. |
| Interaction in pairs / groups with peers and others is a feature |
| Techniques and activities |
| **Information transfer principle:** write purposeful notes from a
2. Functional spiral around, a structural core (Brumfit, 1980)
3. Functional (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990)
4. Notional (Wilkins, 1976)
5. Interactional (Widdowson, 1979)
6. Task-Based (Prabhu, 1987)
7. Learner generated (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-Based Learning (TBL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Project Based Teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication tasks and related enabling tasks for participation for language learning in authentic way (Prabhu, 1987).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The process model for classroom work provides:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- major collaborative decision making between learners and teachers in an on-going negotiated way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a bank of classroom activities and tasks as Task-based plan but not sequenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- a natural progression from holistic to specific whereby the environment provides for exposure, use and be motivation in the use of the language (essential conditions for language learning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Process model involves communicating, learning and classroom social activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The teaching techniques involves three phases: pre-task, task cycle and language focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pre-task: Introduce learners to topic and the task, activating topic related words and phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Task cycle: Offer learners opportunity to use whatever they know in the language to express. Then teacher improve the language by guiding while planning the reports for the task. The experience provides the exposure at different points (before or during task) – like by way of listening to recordings of others doing the task or read text related to task/topic; learners then relate to the exposure to use in their own experience and motivated in doing so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The final, Language phase is an analysis phase whereby learners focus on the language that they had worked with and engaged meaningfully. The study of the form of the language used is contextualized through the task itself.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Content-Based Learning (CBLT)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 98 percent of Foreign language teaching is taught through the medium of CBLT; for this reason this type of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A L2 program in which lessons are organized around topics, themes, and / or subject-matter rather than langue or linguistic points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Designed to provide L2 learners instructions in content through their L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experiences are built on the principles of communicative method and builds of prior knowledge of learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The objective relates to the subject matter, not to the language. Experiences emphasis is on interaction, conversation and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Information gap principle: Learners have different pieces of information and have to exchange them through questions and answers, learners can choose different answers, which means negotiation when talking.
- Correction for content principle: Joint scrambled sentences (or a conversation, a picture story) into their original order, to deal with cohesion and coherence as well other aspects of discourse. Activities may include language games, role-plays, and problem-solving.
is often called ‘content-based foreign-language teaching’ (Lightbown & Spada, 2006)

communicated through learners’ L2 / MT (Baker, 2011)

- Language acquisition is more successful when that language is used as a means of acquiring information. Acquiring is perceived as interesting, useful and leads to desire goal, therefore learners are motivated (Grabe & Stoller, 1997)

- It better reflects the need for learning a second language. It is most effective way to prepare learners for academic achievements.

- Language learning is more motivating when the focus is on ideas, issues and opinion of topics rather than language itself.

- Children need to be engaged in real and meaningful communication to exchange information.

language use in variety contexts.

- It is common for a topical syllabus that is theme-based.

- Success is measured in terms of learners’ ability to ‘get things done’ in L2 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

- Teaching techniques for children’s effective learning (Grabe & Stoller, 1997):
  Themes are chosen and organized to meet learners’ needs and interests, institutional expectations, program resources, and teacher abilities and interests
  Content resources (written and aural) are of learners’ interest, relevance, and development appropriate.
  Topics organized to generate maximum coherence for the theme unit and to provide chances to explore both content and language.
  Links and transitions across, topics, subject-content and themes for children’s holistic learning.
  Tasks to engage children across developmental domains to teach the content.

| Note: The listed six methods and related strategies are acknowledged as effective in teaching and learning MT. The table was adapted from the following sources: |


Appendix C

PQAC Indicators of Teachers Proficiency for Second Language Teaching in a Bilingual Education Program

PQAC prescribed general course outcome for Teacher Proficiency Training to teach in pre-schools.

The content of all courses should focus on the following:

| I. | A common core of knowledge and understanding of the holistic development of children. This includes the cognitive, language, social, emotional, moral and physical development of the young child in the years before formal schooling begins |
| II. | The core values and skills required in the early childhood curriculum which are based on the desired outcomes of education and the attainment targets for early childhood education |
| III. | An awareness of and the ability to facilitate learning through play, creative learning, social and communicative skills in children's learning and development |

Guiding principles for effective early childhood teachers (must possess in the basic competency):

- a) a sound knowledge of child development – theories and practices
- b) the ability to translate theories into practice
- c) the ability to plan and implement developmentally appropriate activities
- d) the ability to facilitate effective learning among children
- e) the ability to work effectively with stakeholders towards the holistic development of children
- f) a commitment to personal growth and professional development

Teacher Competencies development in Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education – Teaching:

- a) Transfer educational/child developmental theories into practice which provide wide-ranging, multi-media and developmentally appropriate learning experiences to young children
- b) Skilful in observation and to apply their knowledge of child development to designing a learning environment that meets the needs of each individual child
- c) Apply variety of early childhood approaches which facilitate a creative and developmentally appropriate curriculum
- d) Collaborate with fellow colleagues, parents and other professionals in supporting children's cognitive and affective development
- e) Design, implement and evaluate learning environment and activities based on the curriculum framework and desired outcomes of preschool education.

The Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education-Teaching (DECCE-T) is the minimum professional qualification for an early childhood educator teaching K1 and K2 levels with effect from 1 January 2013.

## Appendix D

### Indicators of Teachers Proficiency for Second Language Teaching in a Bilingual Education Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Basic Competency      | - Plan, formulate realistic performance objectives and implement engaging activities that is developmentally appropriate  
                        - Incorporate children's culture in practice  
                        - Use diverse teaching strategies  
                        - Include technology like media and audio visuals  
                        - Language assessment skills  
                        - Evaluation strategies                                                                                                                                 |
| Cognitive Competencies| - Knowledge and understanding of the content (fundamental ideas, principles and structure) and how to teach the L2 (pedagogy).  
                        - Knowledge of the characteristics of children and how they learn  
                        - Working knowledge of child’s preferred learning styles.  
                        - Provide environment to facilitate communication between teacher-child and child-child.  
                        - Provide for all the arrangement of the culturally democratic learning environment, that facilitates adult-child contact in order to promote learning in the field-sensitive and / or field-independent modes  
                        - Review / modify materials to meet child’s learning needs (styles) and interest  
                        - Develop collaborative activities suitable to the experience and background of the child                                                                                                                                 |
| Linguistic Competencies| - Language skills – both in L1 and L2  
                        - L2 teaching skills- an ability to teach in the target language, in content area where specialized vocabulary and nuances  
                        - Contrastive linguistic and applied linguistics – knowledge of the nature of language and language learning  
                        - Linguistic subsystems, communication skills, and sociolinguistic variables.  
                        - Reading development techniques – in both L1 and L2                                                                                                                                 |
| Affective Competencies | - Relates to the human and positive self-concept  
                        - Cultural competencies in specific to (#)  
                        - understanding of another culture, and the factual information of the 2nd culture  
                        - empathy for the 2nd culture  
                        - positive attitude of acceptance, respect and appreciation for the other culture  
                        - A conviction as to the legitimacy of the 2nd culture  
                        - Skill to be cross-cultural interpreter, to minimise the inevitable conflicts between a dominant and sub-dominant culture  
                        - interpersonal relations, function effectively in varied settings                                                                                                                                 |

(#) Being an accomplished teacher of languages and cultures entails:

- knowing, using and teaching language and culture in an ethical and reflective way.
- involving a continuous engagement with and commitment to learning, both as a teacher and as a lifelong learner.
- teaching knowledge of languages and cultures
- teaching learners to value, respect and engage with languages and cultures in their own lives and to interact with others across linguistic and cultural borders.
- creating a culture of learning which approaches language, culture and learning with respect, empathy, commitment, enthusiasm and personal responsibility. (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, 2005).
Appendix E

Professional Standards for Preparing Language Teachers

Classification of Professional Standards for Preparing Language Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Categories of professional competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shulman (1987)</td>
<td>- knowledge of the target language and culture;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- pedagogical knowledge: learning theories, approaches and strategies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- disciplinary knowledge: applied linguistics (theories of language learning);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- professional and contextual knowledge;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ethical knowledge (engaging with otherness, responsibility and evolving self)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cummins (1995)</td>
<td>- using and developing professional knowledge and values;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- communicating, interacting and working with students and others;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- planning and managing the teaching and learning process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- monitoring and assessing student progress and learning outcomes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- reflecting, evaluating, and planning for continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day and Conklin</td>
<td>- content knowledge of the subject matter as represented by courses in syntax, semantics, phonology, and pragmatics as well as literary and cultural aspects;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1992)</td>
<td>- pedagogic knowledge, focusing on knowledge of generic teaching strategies, beliefs, and practices, regardless of the focus of the subject matter (how we teach), e.g. classroom management, motivation, decision making;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- pedagogic content knowledge (the specialized knowledge of how to represent content knowledge in diverse ways so that students may understand; knowledge of how students come to understand the subject matter, what difficulties they are likely to encounter when learning it, what misconceptions interfere with learning, and how to overcome these problems);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- support knowledge, referring to the knowledge of the various disciplines that inform our approach to the teaching and learning of mother tongue language (psycholinguistics, linguistics, first language acquisition, sociolinguistics, research methods)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 April 2014,

Ms. ................
Xxxxxx Church Kindergarten
123, ABA Avenue, Singapore 512345

Dear Ms. ................

I am a staff member of the University of Western Australia. Komala Angappan-Panniselvam, is conducting her doctoral research under my supervision. The title of the project is “Quality teaching and learning experience in mother tongue (Tamil language) in Singapore kindergartens: Kindergarten teachers’ perspective”. As your organization / kindergarten offers Tamil language for mother tongue, we are seeking permission to meet with potential teacher participants at your kindergarten.

The purpose of this study is to understand the aims and intentions of preschool teachers in English-Tamil bilingual kindergartens with regard to quality teaching and learning Tamil language and the teachers' strategies, significance and their expected outcomes for Tamil Language teaching and learning. In doing so, we seek to understand the perspectives of kindergarten teachers on quality teaching and learning experience in the mother tongue.

Data will be gathered by non-participant observation and individual interview by Komala Angappan-Panniselvam, and three journal logs. The non-participant observation is conducted once to observe the participants’ teaching and learning practices in Tamil language in their respective classrooms, followed by one scheduled interview with participants. The interview will take at least 60 minutes and will be recorded for our transcription. The transcript will be emailed to participants for their comments, confirmation or changes. Participants will be requested to make journal logs on three of their Tamil Language sessions after the interview. The logs will be collected by the researcher. All data is confidential between the participants and the researchers at this point.

The data will then be analysed and prepared for publication. Quotes may be used from the interview but no identifying information about the organization / kindergarten or individuals will be included in any publications that emerge from this research.

Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from participation, without reason or prejudice, at any time prior to the appearance of the work in published form. Participation in this study will neither benefit the participant nor impact his or her work or study.

There is minimal risk and minor inconvenience associated with participation in this study. All data will be collected confidentially and coded to prevent identification of individual participants. All data will be stored in encrypted format.

The investigators (Komala Angappan-Panniselvam and Professor Marie O’Neill) are available to answer any further questions that you may have in relation to this research project.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any persons considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time. In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of any researcher may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Western Australia on +61 (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing hreo-research@uwa.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted/Blurred]

Marie O’Neill
Senior Honorary Research Fellow
Dear Ms. . .

Thank you for considering participation in the doctoral research conducted by Komala Angappan-Pandiswamy under my supervision. This letter outlines the information about the research and your possible role in it.

The title of the research is “Quality teaching and learning experience in mother tongue (Tamil language) in Singapore kindergarten: Kindergarten teachers’ perspectives”.

The purpose of this study is to understand your aims and intentions as a teacher in an English-Tamil bilingual kindergarten with regard to quality teaching and learning of Tamil language and your strategies, significance and expected outcomes for teaching and learning the language. In doing so, we seek to understand your perspectives as a kindergarten teacher on quality teaching and learning experience in the mother tongue.

Data will be gathered by non-participant observation and individual interview by Komala Angappan-Pandiswamy, and three journal logs. The non-participant observation occurs once to observe your teaching and learning practices in a Tamil language session, followed by one scheduled interview. The researcher will seek a time at your convenience and fix the schedule for the observation and interview. The interview will take at least 60 minutes at a place of your comfort and will be recorded for our transcription. The transcript will be emailed to you for your comments, confirmation or changes. You will be also requested to maintain journal dot logs on three of your Tamil Language sessions. The researcher will provide a template and the detailed guideline for the log, after the interview. The logs will be collected by the researcher four weeks from the interview.

The data will then be analysed and prepared for publication. Quotes may be used from the interview but no identifying information about you, your kindergarten or other individuals at your kindergarten will be included in any publications that emerge from this research.

Participation is voluntary (see attached consent forms) and you may withdraw from participation, without reason or prejudice, at any time prior to the appearance of the work in published form. Participation in this study may provide a positive professional development experience, but should have no adverse impact on your work or study. There is minimal risk and minor inconvenience associated with participation in this study. All data will be collected confidentially and coded to prevent identification of individual participants. All data will be stored in encrypted format. All interviews will require at least 60 minutes of participant time.

The investigators (Komala Angappan-Pandiswamy and Professor Marlie O’Neill) are available to answer any further questions that you may have in relation to this research project.

Approval to conduct this research has been provided by the University of Western Australia, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. Any persons considering participation in this research project, or agreeing to participate, may raise any questions or issues with the researchers at any time. In addition, any person not satisfied with the response of any researcher may raise ethics issues or concerns, and may make any complaints about this research project by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Western Australia on (08) 6488 3703 or by emailing irgeo-research@uwa.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

Marlie O’Neill

Senior Honorary Research Fellow
Graduate School of Education
617, The University of Western Australia
395 St George Highway, Crawley WA 6009
Tel: +61 8 6488 0000
Fax: +61 8 6488 0000
Email: marlie.ohara@uwa.edu.au

Appendix G
Participants Information Form – Teachers
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this doctoral research to study to understand your aims and intentions as a teacher in an English-Tamil bilingual kindergarten with regard to quality teaching and learning of Tamil language and your strategies, significance and expected outcomes for teaching and learning the language. In doing so, we seek to understand your perspectives as a kindergarten teacher on quality teaching and learning experience in the mother tongue.

This questionnaire is addressed to gather information about your academic and professional backgrounds, classroom resources, and the instructional materials and activities used in the teaching and learning of Tamil language.

It is estimated that it will require approximately 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. We appreciate the time and effort that this takes and thank you for your cooperation and your contribution. When you have completed the questionnaire, please place it in the accompanying envelope or email to:

KomalaPannirselvam@aic.edu.sg

Thank You.
### About You

**Your age as at January 2014?**

- [ ] Under 21
- [ ] 21-25
- [ ] 25-29
- [ ] 30-39
- [x] 40-49
- [ ] 50-60
- [ ] 61+

**Gender**

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Ethnicity**

- [x] Tamil
- [ ] Malayalam
- [ ] Telegu
- [ ] Kanada
- [ ] Hindi
- [ ] Other __________________________

**What was your Mother Tongue Language in school?**

- [x] Tamil
- [ ] Malay
- [ ] Chinese

**What was your quality of school Mother Tongue experience?**

- [ ] Excellent
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Poor

**What is your highest level of academic qualification?**

- [ ] Postgraduate Degree
- [ ] Bachelor Degree
- [x] ‘A’ Level/Diploma
- [ ] ‘O’ Level
- [ ] ‘N’ Level
- [ ] Other __________________________

**Have you attended any accredited training to teach Tamil language in kindergarten?**

- [ ] Yes
- [x] No
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tamil language speaking competency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tamil language reading skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tamil language listening comprehension skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Competency in teaching the Tamil language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Knowledge in teaching the language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Knowledge of Tamil culture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Knowledge of Tamil literature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Knowledge of Tamil music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Competency to play Tamil music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Competency to teach Tamil music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Competency to integrate Tamil culture with language instruction activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Competency to use ‘realia’ with your language instruction activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open Response Questions

Please state any challenges or issues which you face or have encountered within the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formalized Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Not really formalized. But training was given to teach Tamil language. It gave us the basic knowledge how to integrate the six domains in the lesson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Curriculum National Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We adopt Nurturing Early Learners, A Curriculum for Kindergarten in Singapore – Framework for Mother Tongue Languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Central Tamil Curriculum Meeting held once a year. We just meet and discuss and plan what to teach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Yes, Courses are in English; however they are used for my Tamil teaching and learning practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of knowledge on the value &amp; culture related to Tamil language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Yes, there is lack of knowledge on the value &amp; culture related to Tamil Language as we do not impart the importance of festivals; furthermore time is also crucial matters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In Tamil curriculum, there is a little parent involvement, as we tap parents only during show &amp; tell of main festival that is celebrated in Singapore.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• We have our own teaching resources. Most of the teaching resources are made by teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Occasionally, we do use certain education website only for rhymes and songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating Tamil Nursery Rhymes – we create our own lyrics based on the theme and substitute with the English rhyme tune.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please stop here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 How do you define quality teaching and learning?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Why is quality teaching and learning in TL important in the kindergarten years?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 What do you, as a preschool teacher in bilingual kindergarten, aim or intent to achieve through quality teaching and learning in Tamil Language?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 What are your reasons for the aims and intentions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments**

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

207
## Interview Questions

To be completed by interviewer/researcher only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>What are you doing (strategies) to achieve your aims and intentions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.2</th>
<th>How do you use these strategies?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.3</th>
<th>Why do you use these particular strategies?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.4</th>
<th>Why do you think these strategies will be successful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Comments

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3.1 What are the factors (issues and challenges) that influence quality teaching and learning TL in the kindergartens?

- 
- 
- 

3.2 What are your reasons for naming these factors?

- 
- 
- 

3.3 How do these factors affect your selection of strategies?

- 
- 
- 

3.4 How do these factors affect you in achieving your aims and intentions?

- 
- 
- 

Additional Comments

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>To be completed by interviewer/researcher only.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4.1  What outcomes do you expect from your strategies for the TL learners?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4.2  How the expected outcome will benefit the TL Learners?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional Comments**

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### Field Note: Lesson Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Road Safety (if any)</th>
<th>Subject / Concept: Stop, Look and Go</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of children</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Number of children: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of lesson</td>
<td>26 Feb 14</td>
<td>Time/Duration of lesson: 45 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setting:** Classroom circle-time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children seated in rows of three (3 in each row)</td>
<td>Routine; Big grp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Greeted in Tamil with folded palms in front of chest</td>
<td>Model behavior, culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children did likewise</td>
<td>Rote learning, drill, scribe spoken word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children sang seven-days in a week in Tamil. Name the day, teacher repeated and wrote Friday on white board</td>
<td>Picture talk,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dual Language use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tuned in via flash card of pictures on pedestrian crossing light, overhead bridge, zebra crossing and underpass with words in Tamil. She named in Tamil and told children the English word. When children labeled in English, she acknowledged and told children the Tamil word for ...zebra (vahree kootherai) crossing (kahdapu).</td>
<td>Word-to-word translation (It should be vahree kohdoo);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• She asked if children had seen the signage. She explained one by one as children mentioned where they had seen each one in the neighborhood. When one child said that he had seen a car not stopping at a traffic light, she said ok but asked him what traffic sign was there as regards to safety for him. However, when other children added on to the child’s conversation she reasoned with the children on why they have to be safe in brief and linked them to the signage.</td>
<td>Engage children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher mixed colloquial Tamil and literary Tamil when discussing with children.</td>
<td>Divert to focus on content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use Colloquial and literary Tamil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- She highlighted to children on the high accident levels that involved children. She asked questions, like what can we do? In that dialogue she used words like ‘especially’ and ‘that is one point’.
- She used many close-ended questions to get children to talk. When children replied on the importance of observing traffic rules to be safe. She praised by saying ‘very good’. She joked and laughed with the children when a child said “car and car also can knock” because they do not have safe traffic crossing.
- She recalled the words ‘stop, look and go’ before closing the activity with a song recitation. Children sang with rhythm sticks.
- Follow-up activity was music & movement. Teacher used stick props of the words ‘stop’, ‘look’ and ‘go’ and sounded each letter for children to blend and read.
- The activity was an adapted version of musical chair. She played the audio record for children to move and stopped at random. Each child stopped and picked a word.
- She asked each child to say the word they are holding. The children laughed and prompted each other in the reading.
- The session ended with a worksheet. She explained that the children have to match the word to the illustration. She reminded the children to write their names in Tamil. Children went to their work tables.

**Class Environment / Setting**

- Established routine and made learning environment familiar and secure for children
- Organized and structured environment. Limited amount of individual attention during the directed main activity.
- Children tables arranged for students to face each other. Teacher maintained eye contact only with student who looked at her. Some children had their back to the teacher.
- From the follow-up the class environment appeared relaxed, friendly and comfortable
- Generally a warm and caring atmosphere that was risk-free.

**Human Interactions**

- Teacher and child interaction were questioning and answering episodes. The questions appeared more like comprehension to get children to reply using the vocabulary learnt in the lesson. Most questions were closed ended and some were asked in EL during the main activity. Some children diverted in their reply and teacher told them to use the learnt words. She instructed them to repeat after her. Limited scope for language use less to meet the learning objective.
- The follow-up activity was lively. There was spontaneous teasing amongst child-child and teacher-children.

**Activities (planned / curriculum structure)**

- Main activity was planned and teacher directed

**Questions to engage, Code-switching**
- Questions to engage children
- Feedback - praises
- Use humor

**Structured environment**
- Layout classroom arrangement. – Physical environment
- Limited teacher-child interaction – Social environment
- Engaging and motivating setting – Emotional environment

**Content-focused**
- Based on theory of learners’ prior knowledge in English language.

**Expectation**

**Class Environment / Setting**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to engage, Code-switching</th>
<th>Structured environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback - praises</td>
<td>Layout classroom arrangement. – Physical environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use humor</td>
<td>Limited teacher-child interaction – Social environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap before closure.</td>
<td>Engaging and motivating setting – Emotional environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforce vocabulary – Play-based; word recognition with prop.</td>
<td>Paper-pencil activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitated peer scaffolding</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Human Interactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content-focused</th>
<th>Expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on theory of learners’ prior knowledge in English language.</td>
<td>Child Engaging but Content-directed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
unplanned)
Child-guided / Teacher guided / Teacher directed

- Follow-up M&M activity was teacher guided, to reinforce the words learnt. Though the activity was child-centered that was developmentally appropriate the focus appeared to be on word recognition and vocabulary.

Pronunciation, word repetition, word recognition and vocabulary
Drill and practice strategy

Resources

- Teacher made flash cards, props of traffic signage was contextualized. Use of percussion and translation of English song for the Music & movement activity

Child focus
Curriculum prescribed

Teacher’s Expectations

- To achieve the planned curriculum to realize the goals regarding the language that is to be learned. The words ‘stop’, ‘look’ and ‘go’ and complete the worksheet correctly.
- Children are to be able to write their names in Tamil

Aligned to curriculum objectives

Additional Comments

Centre uses workbook and it is mandatory to complete the worksheets as planned.

Syllabus is developed at cluster level and teacher is not involved in the planning.
She appeared unsure of some of the words used - as many, were translation from English extracted from the Nurturing Early Learners—A Curriculum Framework for Kindergartens in Singapore (Revised 2012), I noted this from her lesson plan.

The TAMIL framework is a translated version of the said document. There is no standardized syllabus or specific standards for teaching of Tamil Language in kindergarten.

MEMO: Teaching and Learning Practices

The session had 2 obvious delivery approaches. Main activity was teacher-directed and interactions were teacher-child oriented. The follow-up activity, role play turned the session into an active and interactive one. However the experience seem to be content-gravitated.

Teacher used routine and structure like in greeting, day song and sitting arrangement to create an ambience of familiarity and comfort amongst the children. She used EL and TL (dual language) for explanation as it appeared she wanted to engage all the children as some children did not respond to her instructions in Tamil. Could that be her reason for using and permitting code-switching and code-mixing in her class?

Teacher’s interaction during the main activity appeared ‘unnatural’ as the language used was written Tamil language (I was stumbled too) instead of conversational. The intent of the conversation appear to focus on achieving the learning objectives for the lesson - to learn the three words and identify the four road signs. At certain point, the teacher unconsciously switched from the literary language to colloquial (not a common
conversational language). In that process many sentences were code-mixed (Tamil and English language).

The role play was an active session and filled with children voices, engaging all the children. The children teased each other when their peers read the word using letter-sound and letter-sound blending (phonemic awareness). With the teacher’s praises (motivation), the children volunteered to read the word.

It appeared that the aim of the teacher was to deliver the lesson as planned within the period (time). She consistently used words that were ‘prescribed in the syllabus’ literary Tamil or word translated from the English curriculum. An example ‘zebra crossing’ was taught as “vahree kootherai kahdapu” meaning ‘stripe horse crossing’. Zebra is known as ‘stripped horse’ the correct word is ‘stripped-line crossing’ (vahree kohdu kahdapu). The structured discussion was not fluid as the teacher herself appeared to be conscious about the literary Tamil it seemed like a deliberate attempt on her part as the words were key in the lesson’s vocabulary. The role-play came to an abrupt end as it was time to do the worksheet, a routine for the class as they are in K2.

Thought:
- Teaching is communicative content-based instructions. The focus on the lesson is on subject matter - leaning the subject content through the medium of Tamil.
- Could have the teacher acquired the colloquial language as it came up spontaneously though she attempted to switch to literary Tamil. Must a conversation with the children be structured (use literary Tamil)? If so why?
### Interview Transcript

**Interview**

QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN MOTHER TONGUE (TAMIL LANGUAGE) IN SINGAPORE KINDERGARTENS: KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES

**INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

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<tr>
<th>Interviewer: Komala Pannirselvam (Researcher)</th>
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<td><strong>Interviewee:</strong> 1402AW</td>
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<td><strong>Date / Time:</strong> 25 Mar 2014 / 11.15 am</td>
<td>Higher level concept</td>
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1. **How do you define quality teaching and learning?**

   *I will define quality teaching and learning as joyful learning and teaching process whereby the children will interact confidently and I would like to see the children showing interest in learning and the teacher should impart it very proactively with lots of love and joy in sharing the knowledge. A structured curriculum and good lesson plan will help in quality teaching.*

2. **Why is quality teaching and learning in Tamil language important in kindergarten years?**

   *Well, I would say children who are proficient in mother tongue will also be proficient in English, because when they are confident in their mother tongue I find that they do better in English as well. And moreover when you set the foundation for the children at the younger age they would be able to absorb the language much faster and more easily.*

3. **So what do you as a preschool teacher in a bilingual kindergarten aim or intend to achieve through quality teaching and learning in TL?**

   *I would like to impart as much as I can in sharing my knowledge of teaching Tamil to the kindergarten and my aim is for them to become confident in the end of kindergarten learning. I also like to share some of the cultures and values of Tamil people and the festivals and the behaviours, especially the value of respect. I find this is lacking as they grow up... is lacking or some parents do not emphasise certain values so*
maybe being a little older for my age I feel that there are certain things that we should impart to the children, and children should know about it when they are younger, so those kind of memories stay put in children. I feel this is the time to put in the kind of information, so at least if they can't follow there will be something in their mind that strikes to them that these are our values and we should try to closely follow it.

4. What are your reasons for the aims and intentions?

As I told you, my aim is to set a good foundation in Tamil and help the children to be more confident in speaking and writing Tamil language so that they find it easier to talk because when they go to primary school the group is bigger so it is basically about reading or writing or focus mainly on the curriculum itself. But at Kindergarten level I’d prefer children to be more open about whatever feelings they have, what they wish to express, be open about it and we can share it, even like we can share like what they know and how much we want to let them know about the real world. Because it’s more than just letters or curriculum, it includes culture.

- You mentioned about culture, so what are your reasons for that?

Because I find that some of the Tamil parents do not emphasise on respect, like mostly they don’t use words like, ‘avanga, ivanga, neenga, waanga’. Instead they use ‘nee, poh, waah’, which I don’t like. I was brought up with these kind of values at home and in my primary school. Those days, teachers value was respected a lot which I find that Indian parents do not emphasise that so much. When speaking to another person they address the other by name; and also casually use terms such as ‘waah, poh, nee’. So I emphasise the use of appropriate words related to humans, such as ‘neenga and waanga’, instead of 'athu and ithu' which are used specifically when referring to animals; not for human beings. When I was little, we speak Tamil freely not constrained by high standard language so I enjoyed the language. But now we cannot do that as children need to hear the proper standard. The syllabus is written that way too.

5. What strategies are you doing in your classroom to achieve your aims and intentions?

We have incorporated the theme, Festivals in our

| 1. Foundation for primary level |
| 2. Curriculum-based |
| 3. Child focus (Child Centred) |
| 4. Child focus (Child Centred) |
| 5. Culture value |
| 6. Culture value – respect |
| 7. Culture value - Teacher's experience |
| 8. Culture value - language use causal - language use with inhibition |

| 1. Thematic curriculum – festivals |
| 2. Tradition integration – |
| 1. | Content / syllabus based. |
| 2. | Foreign Language lens. |
| 3. | Formal language learning |
| 4. | Syllabus prescribed |
| 5. | Content / syllabus based. |

**6. How do you use these strategies?**

I am using it daily in the class; those pictures, song sheets I enlarge it into A3 sizes, so children can view the words; thus when they are able read and sing the lyrics, the words resembles like echo to them. These words are vocabulary stipulated in the curriculum.

*Tamil is like a foreign language.* It does help, not only in terms of speaking but also in the recognition of letters. Because of our focus on letters. We use one letter for a week, that is, one particular letter in a designated day of the week. As for songs and rhymes, they will see and use the said letter more frequently, hence will serve as reinforcement for them. Normally it is just done for one lesson, that’s about it. Yeah, one lesson one letter. I mean, one week only one letter, or sometimes two letters, and that would end with that lesson. But with singing, they have the opportunity to see and use the letters again.

**7. Why do you use these particular strategies?**

I want to teach them vocabulary. The words when they revisit stays in their minds; and secondly it gives them the opportunity to keep more words in their memory banks.

**8. Why do you think these strategies will be successful?**

*It shows results; and because they are singing it does not become like a lesson, it becomes more of an enjoyable thing for them to do. And when you actually tell them that you sing well; Ms Komala is very happy that you are performing very well, they feel very proud and get excited about singing the*
9. What are the factors (issues and challenges) that influence quality teaching and learning TL in the kindergartens?

| No specific syllabus. We only started formalising planning for Tamil curriculum last year, which was good because we had brainstormed and then we divided the work among different staff from all over the centres. The curriculum plan was like a framework, a guide and a lot falls on us teachers in specific planning for implementation. Before I was using only the text book and workbook; and twice yearly we will do curriculum planning where we identify themes, though it’s not done in-depth. However since the second half of last year we have been doing it more in-depth. Preparation was done as a small group of between 3 and 4 members; however at the HQ level we had more than 15 centres and the main themes were identified for the development of lesson plans. We came up with something similar to English, with six domains and all that. So it was far more, I would say it was a very good curriculum. To me it was very good, but then CPs (centre principals) wouldn’t know how much we are teaching because they don’t monitor Tamil so much.

The lack of CPs interest makes you feel that your hard work is not recognised or acknowledged. The acknowledgement is important; whether at your centre level, especially your principals and executive principals how much of recognition they want to give for mother tongue, it can be Tamil, it can be Malay or Chinese but the emphasis is more on Chinese rather Malay and Tamil. So, the most important factor that I would say is, second language teachers, as Tamil teachers we also have to teach Tamil as well as we have to teach English, numeracy, music and movement as well as prepare for the MPS (meet-parent-session), so we are very drained out. Whereas the Chinese teachers only have to focus only on Chinese, so that makes the work easier and more time to prepare their resources.

Right now I know how to type in Tamil already, so I find it easier to create the resources and teaching materials like flash cards and labels which are limited in the market. I have to create developmental appropriate materials to teach the planned curriculum. It’s a matter whether you want to do it or not. Furthermore there are limited resources in the market for Tamil language

| 1. Non-standardised syllabus - guide across the level is lacking.
| 2. Non-standardised syllabus - inconsistency in teaching.
| 4. Institute support - Accountability is subjective.
| 5. Teacher Profile - Motivation to facilitate quality experiences.
| 6. Resource - workforce management (dual role)
| 7. Resource - create, teaching aids and materials (Teacher profile - competency)
| 9. Learners’ profile - varied needs.
| 10. Learner Profile - New to language - not motivated
| 11. Learners needs - learning style (Teacher's profile - catering for varied needs)
| 12. Teacher profile - personal attribute.
| 13. Teacher profile - varied experiences.
| 14. Tamil in family domain – (Singapore families English speaking.)
| 15. Tamil in family domain - (Immigrant families Tamil
teaching.

I also make my teaching aids to motivate my class children by getting them to participate. I know them and their needs so I will make puppets and props to engage the children. Some of these children do not come from Tamil speaking homes and are afraid to speak in Tamil. However, some children even if they do not come from Tamil speaking homes are not afraid to use the props and try to sing the songs that I teach. My materials are used to engage these children for a meaningful experience. For quality learning experiences parents also matter.

- You had mentioned parents as factors, can you elaborate?

I think, the Singaporean parents use mostly English at home, hence the children have limited knowledge in both written and spoken Tamil. I also encourage these parents to converse more in Tamil with their children at home. As for the expat Indian children, they have more exposure. They are able to express and share their India experiences, such as having seen cultivated fields, farm animals, and even riding on bullock carts. So I will motivate the India children to talk. As for the Singapore children, they usually listen to the India children’s sharing with curiosity. They like it. So it is good to integrate India children as well as Singapore children. In terms of knowledge and learning abilities, the India children are ahead of Singapore children.

This year when I notice the parents are doing better, because they feel the pressure; because when I make the worksheet, even though like for this year we actually started doing the Tamil curriculum with worksheet. I will always change the K2’s worksheet, because the K2 children’s their Tamil standard is much higher. All of them are able to write very well, words not just the letters, so I change the worksheet make it tougher for them otherwise it becomes too simple and not challenging enough for them. And then the Singapore girl, whose mother is a Tamil teacher, she basically speaks only in English to me. Even in Tamil class she spoke mostly English; but as the others spoken language were of much higher standard what she did was, she has caught up and is now at the same level as the others. Currently she speaks to me in TL at Tamil classes as much as possible. The other day, Deepak Kumar- the boy you saw earlier, is a bit ‘special’. He speaks only English, however he is able to write Tamil speaking).

| 17. Language Learning competency - equated to knowledge and abilities (worksheet). |
| 19. Language Learning competency - focus on structural approach. |
| 21. Teacher expectations - to perform. |
| 22. Child centred - varied needs and interest. |
| 23. Content gravitated - diversion to focus on teaching. |
| 25. Family attitude. - value of Tamil language - use of Tamil language |
| 26. Requirement in primary level. |
well. While he likes to sing and talk, he has a short attention span; and occasionally expresses his opinion before being ‘diverted’. This way I am able to keep him on board also. I tell stories, sing songs that are short and sweet; it works on them. Instead of us merely talking, children in my class participate in writing and drawing activities too. These keep them engaged.

One of my real challenges that I manage in my class, managing the different needs. Most of the parents are OK; they now recognise the importance of Tamil. I also inform them on the emphasis of spoken Tamil (oral) in primary school, and encourage parents to converse with their children in Tamil at home. This would ensure that their children receive more practice for improvement.

10. What are your reasons for naming these factors?

All the above factors are my stumbling blocks in my teaching. Time, time is the real factor that affects, and even though I am teaching Tamil I also have two form classes for Nursery. So when come to doing children’s portfolio, I have to do 30 portfolios for 30 children for English, and on top of that I cannot be just doing worksheet. When it comes to portfolios Tamil parents, especially those from India, they do come to me and they want to have a meeting with me for Tamil. So I need to prepare a checklist to show like, what is the progress for Tamil as well. Secondly, when they come to the Parent-Teacher conference the time is allocated for English parents; there is no time allocated for Indian parents to meet Tamil teachers. So sometimes, in between I just have to tell my co-teacher, ‘can you just take over’, then I talk to the Indian parents and then wrap it up. So from this you can understand how much importance is given by the leaders. Sometimes when I raise the matter, it is not accorded the seriousness it deserves, nor any solutions given; they simply adopt silence on the matter. It’s OK, even if I am no longer here, future Tamil teachers would benefit from the changes if implemented from my feedback.

11. How does these factors affect your selection of strategies?

With regard to time, the availability of YouTube has been helpful. So in the selection of songs, it’s a very good tool for me to explore and then impart the song to the children. So with YouTube I don’t have to remember the lyrics and create charts, there is also music the children are able to
12. How do these factors affect you in achieving your aims and intentions?

*I am 1 the kind of person, if I, this is the way I want to do it I will find my own time to do it. So sometimes if I don’t have time in the school I’ll just prepare after school hours certain things. So, if you want to do it you will do it no matter what. 2 This is my belief and practice. If we are positive, that will reflect in the children. How much they absorb; so I think that the 3 children’s interest in the language depends on our positive conduct of lessons despite the constraints in resources and time, and our motivation and enthusiasm in teaching them.*

| 1. Teacher profile - positive attitude.  
| 2. Role model positive behaviour.  
| 3. Teacher’s characteristics. - positive  
| - make time  
| - self-motivation  
| - enthusiasm |

13. What outcomes do you expect from your strategies for the TL learners?

*I hope since they are enjoying the TL in the kindergartens, I hope that it will inspire them to be interested in TL as they move on to primary and secondary, because my kindergarten children when they enter our kindergarten they don’t like Tamil. So I hope that at least as a Tamil teacher now I can make them very much interested in the language. Tamil is not just a language, it is more than a language. It is a culture and value as well. So by learning Tamil it will really bring up the moral value. Sometimes I incorporate certain things about god as well. So, they will share what they do at home, and to what extent do they know about god. So it’s like, make them feel the language is very important I believe that knowledge of the language contributes to the growth of one’s spiritual, cultural and moral values. The Tamils have this as the foundation of their practices, and problems often arises when one strays away from this.*

| 1. Child focused - enjoy and be interested (Emotional perspective)  
| 2. Teacher’s belief – Tamil language teaches culture, spiritual and moral values |

14. How the expected outcomes will benefit the TL learners?

*Once children enjoy the language they will be interested in the culture and values. The values will help them to know what is good and bad. They will also know the importance of learning and how respect to their teachers who teach them in primary school. It will benefit them further if parents can provide opportunities for their children to use the language as well appreciate the cultural experiences.*

| 1. Cultural value  
| 2. Preparation for primary school  
| 3. Parent’s collaboration |

This is the end of the interview. Thank you.
## Appendix K

### Codes Notes

Thursday, November 6, 2014
6:59 PM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No</th>
<th>Code / label</th>
<th>Brief Definition / in vivo</th>
<th>Guiding notes /in vivo</th>
<th>Category / Theme / Concept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID Code/color</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1401AS; 1402AW; 1405BK; 1407BY;</td>
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<td>1409CB; 1410CD</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Transmission Approach</td>
<td>Make sure that children are learning and understanding. Impart knowledge. Teach children.</td>
<td>&quot;teach according to lesson plan&quot;</td>
<td>Teacher directed</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>&quot;teacher should impart&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I want to teach them to...&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;teach them to recognise and write letters; learn the meaning of words; learn to ask questions and answer.&quot;</td>
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<td>1401AS; 1402AW; 1409CB; 1410CD</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Structured lesson plan</td>
<td>Instruction as per prescribed lesson plan. Adhere to learning objectives and complete all tasks within time</td>
<td>&quot;whatever the teacher has been expressing to them according to the lesson plan&quot;</td>
<td>Curriculum / content driven</td>
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<td>Structured curriculum and good lesson plan will help in quality teaching.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Child-centered</td>
<td>Children’s level. Child centered, child directed DAP, child’s interest, needs, ability Joyful learning, child showing interest</td>
<td>&quot;give chance for children to express what they feel....want to learn and ...activities they would like&quot;</td>
<td>Language Learning Theory / method - Child centric experiences</td>
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<td>&quot;Quality teaching and</td>
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learning as joyful learning and teaching process whereby the children will interact confidently and I would like to see the children showing interest".

"Quality teaching to me is, it must interest the child. It must arouse the child’s interest, so that the child can remember".

"Quality teaching and learning to me is, make sense to the children interesting way. We are teaching like in a fun way, we are teaching, so we make them to interest in the language."

"Very simple and easy to understand using flash boards, posters, story books and interactive games that children like."

1401AS; 1402AW; 1405BK; 1407BY; 1409CB; 1410CD
Appendix L
Teacher Reflective Journal

Reflective Journal: Log 1

Identification Label
Participant ID:
1402AW

Teacher Reflective Journal (Dot-log)

Background

Theme: My family (if any) Subject / Concept: Tamil

Age of children: 5 years old Number of children: 10
Date of lesson: 1st April 2014 Time/Duration of lesson: 4.00pm
45 minutes
Setting: Large group in classroom

Reflective Journal
To be completed by teacher.

Critical Incidents (unusual / unexpected)

• It was 3.10pm and I was telling a story about family members. A boy was nodding off. This is normal with the child but today he was very sleepy.

• I had to let him lie down and take a five minute shut-eyes, (though I wondered if he was tired or bored as he is a Sri Lankan boy with no knowledge or background of Tamil).

Reflect on efficacy strategies

• I decided on the nap to address his immediate needs and felt he will not participate if I insisted he listen to me.

• During that period I quickly adapted a ‘Sri Lankan’ song that I knew into Tamil and sang about the members of the family.

• The child smiled and hummed the tune. I acknowledged his interest in wanting to join the class. He then joined the singing using the Tamil lyrics. I praised his attempts. To my surprise he got motivated and sang so loudly that made his peers laugh. He laughed with them.

• Letting him rest to meet his basic needs then integrating home-culture to instill a sense of belonging helped. Showing respect for the child’s need and promoting a sense of belonging helped.
**Resources**
(Effective? Modify? etc.)

- Maybe if I teach in Bilingual, both in Tamil and English, the child will understand the story.
- Use his name for one of the character to involve him so that he feels part of the story and engages himself.
- Explain to him alone so that he can understand the story as he does not understand Tamil.

**Outcomes**
(Expected? Hoped for?)

- By involving him in the story, like if is the brother in the family how will you feel? I hope that he will be engaged and participate.
- I hope the child will feel motivated and learn the words.

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**Additional Comments**

Its 6th May 2014 now he is able to sing the song “There are seven days” fluently in Tamil.

Great job! I had used both bilingual that use English to explain the Tamil as I read in Tamil.

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**Memo:**

Guided by her believe that basic needs (Maslow’s hierarchy theory) has to be met, she provided for the child. Shows care and compassion.

Her self-reasoning for the child being sleepy made her to reflect on how to foster child’s participation and involvement.

Including child’s culture (music) into curriculum indicates teacher’s respect for diversity - child identity.

However, her learning outcome is guided by the curriculum-content.
Appendix M
Teacher Reflective Journal Guide

Teacher Reflective Journal (Dot-Log) Descriptor and Guide

You are requested to fill the three dot journals for three critical incidents. The incidents are your reflections based on any three of your Tamil language teaching sessions.

A critical incident is something which you can interpret as a problem or a challenge that you had noted, rather than a routine occurrence. It simply means that when something goes wrong, we need to ask what happened and what caused it to happen.

The guiding principle is to frame incidents as questions. For example, you noted that you have the tendency to dominate your storytelling sessions and the children adopting the role of passive ‘listeners’. This is despite your intention to promote listening and speaking in Tamil for conversation skills in the children. For the critical incident in teaching, you may ask ‘Why did I ask the children so many questions and then answer them myself?’ followed by ‘Why did I dominate the conversation?’ These questions can become the turning points and lead to changes in your understanding of your values in practice (Tripp, 1993).

Filling the Reflective Journal (Dot-Log)

The following questions are a guide for you to complete the form:

| Critical Incidents (unusual / unexpected) | • Choose a critical episode: for example, students continually arriving late; students talking during class discussions.  
• Describe the incident:  
  a. When and where it happened (time of day, location and social context)?  
  b. What actually happened (who said or did what)?  
  c. What you were thinking and feeling at the time and just after the incident? |
| Reflect on efficacy strategies | • What did you do? OR What can you do? Why?  
• What was your strategy to manage / handle the situation?  
• Why do you think it was / will be effective strategy? |
| Resources | • What are the resources that you had used OR modified? Why?  
• What resources you would consider using or modifying? Why? |
| Outcomes | • What happened OR what do you think will happen?  
• What is your expectation OR what did you hope for? |
**Definition List**

**Critical Incident:** A critical incident is something which you can interpret as a problem or a challenge that you had noted.

**Strategies:** Approaches that you believe could be effective in achieving your outcomes. An example, for conversational skills it requires at least two participants. Conversation is the verbal exchange of information, observations, thoughts and feelings. Conversation skill involves listening (active and engaged), talking and responding appropriately to the talk. There are many teaching strategies to encourage pre-schoolers to express themselves, like to play games that use verbal directions; to create natural opportunities for conversations; and to use questions (open-ended) appropriately or to make comments to invite further talk.

**Resources:** Not limited to teaching aids and material, however may include environment, setting, time, teaching style, approach, parent engagement, peer collaboration, professional engagement, professional development etc.

**Outcomes:** Your expectation or anticipated results.
Memo

Tuesday, 13 January, 2015
9:57 AM

Interviewer: Komala Pannirlselvam (Researcher)
Interviewee: 1402AW
Date: 10 Apr 2014

Teacher had defined quality teaching and learning as "quality teaching and learning as joyful learning and teaching process whereby the children will interact confidently" and "children showing interest in learning" but included that the "teacher should impart...the knowledge" guided by a structured curriculum and good lesson plan will help in quality teaching. She believed in Transmission approach "I would like to impart as much as I can in sharing my knowledge of teaching"

There is a conflict as teacher mentioned for practice and in practice. Quality of teaching and learning is perceived as child centred and structured to meet prescribed curriculum standards.

The questions are similar to that of Teacher 1AS.

Is the prescribed lesson plan then not Developmentally Appropriate?

Though child-focus is spoken but the teaching and learning experience depends very much on the teacher's believe and value. She believed in child centric experiences but value the prescribed lesson plan.

Could the teacher's value have been fostered by the organisation's mandated curriculum which specify standards to be achieved by pre-schoolers on completion of kindergarten level?

Teacher defined and explained theories for language learning, "joyful learning" and "enjoying thing for children". However, the field observation demonstrated teacher's interaction was restrictive and structured to use the planned vocabulary (literary words).

She conducted "role-play" to motivate 'interaction' but the Teacher's interaction during the activity appeared 'unnatural' as the language used was written Tamil language instead of conversational. The intent of the conversation appear to focus on achieving the learning objectives for the lesson, to learn the three words and identify the four road signs. At certain point, the teacher spontaneously switched from the literary language to colloquial (not a common conversational language). In that process many sentences were code-mixed (Tamil and English language).

As the teacher has diploma in teaching (English), could the theories uttered by her be 'declarative knowledge' that is facts of concepts while the practice is based on her interpretation of theories for practice- 'procedural interpretation knowledge'?
The intent of the interaction focused on teaching the vocabulary and for children to ‘use’ the words in conversation.

Teacher’s Aim and intention is for “children to be more confident in speaking and writing Tamil language.”

However the observation denotes that aim focused on ‘learning the vocabulary and use them in interaction’ and complete the worksheet. That is to complete the prescribed lesson plan within the given time.

She consistently used words that were ‘prescribed in the syllabus’ literary Tamil or word translated from the English curriculum. An example ‘zebra crossing’ was taught as “vahree kootherai kahdapu” meaning ‘stripe horse crossing’. Zebra is known as ‘stripped horse’ the correct word is ‘stripped-line crossing’ (vahree kohdu kahdapu). The structured discussion was not fluid as the teacher herself appeared to be conscious about the literary Tamil it seemed like a deliberate attempt on her part as the words were key in the lesson’s vocabulary. The role-play came to an abrupt end as it was time to do the worksheet, a routine for the class as they are in K2.

Her journal logs also suggested strategies for achieving the objectives of the vocabulary and completing worksheets.

However, teacher believes that culture values must be “imparted” in the teaching. “I also like to share some of the cultures and values of Tamil people and the festivals and the behaviours, especially the value of respect.” Her belief is a result of the teacher’s experience. “I find this is lacking”. “Tamil parents do not emphasize on respect” she lamented that the spoken language is disrespectful. “I was brought up with these kind of values at home and in my primary school. Those days, teachers’ values were respected.”

**Thoughts:**
Teacher’s aims and intentions to build the pre-schoolers confidence in TL communication is contained within the centre’s restricted lesson plan and prescribed standards (learning outcomes is to acquire oral and written language).

There appears to be a lack of interface between what is uttered (interview) and what is practiced (observation & reflection) in class.

Her elaboration on the lack of support from parents and not being ‘recognized and acknowledged’ center (organization) indicates her ‘emotional challenge’ in meeting her aims and intentions.
Opening Data: Generate initial labels, concepts and categories

I commenced my interview (data collection) with Teacher 1AB, who is from a community organisation setting. The data collection and analysis was a tightly interwoven one and was done simultaneously. In order to probe “deep into data” to ‘see’ the ideas, meanings, actions / behaviour of the participants, I used Strauss & Corbin ‘triad and tested’ analytical tool that involved asking questions and making comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2008); and Alan Bryman’s 4 stages of Qualitative Analysis to open the data inductively (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The two analytical tools for the coding process were used to ensure the richness, consistency, reliability and validity.

I labelled words and section of data; then moved into classifying one or more familiar properties or characteristics. I then used the common properties to group concepts based within the context. When it came to a point of overwhelming of codes I analysed the codes to find the similarities and grouped them into higher-level concepts (categories) based on their common properties. When I interconnected categories the name of the category changed from the initial codes, this is to express the scope better. For example, Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), children level, child interest, ‘hands-on activities’ were categorised as “Child-Centered”. Labels, concepts and categories were named to present the view of participants, their meanings and ‘feels’ that were contained in the data.

It was initially a challenge to suppress my interpretations (based on my knowledge and experiences) against the data. However, after consciously being aware and analysing with an ‘open-mind’ and taking the role of the participant by immersing in the data, it became uncomplicated.

For theoretical sensitivity, I adopted the 3-step-practise (Strauss & Corbin, 1990. P44)
Firstly, to periodically step back and ask myself on what is going on here and if my thinking fits the reality of data. Next, to regard concepts / categories as provisional until they are verified with data. Then to strictly adhere to alternating between data collection and analysis procedure which not only guided my sampling choice but also aided in verification of emerged concepts / categories. The practise also helped me to avoid subjectivity (bias and prejudices). I progressively worked with concepts in terms of properties and dimensions; picked upon relevant issues, events and happenings in the data.

Initial Data Findings

Teacher 1AB, in her definition for quality teaching and learning as well for her strategies, repetitively named “child focused”, “children’s level”, “learning and playing”, “play-based”, “enjoy the language”; “Tamil Language has to engage children”; “hands-on activities”; “keen to learn”; and mentioned that it is for a teacher to accommodate and provide “chance” for “children to express what they feel, what they want to learn and what kind of activities they like”. She also explained that adopting language learning theories and teaching strategies are salient for quality teaching and learning experiences. Though there was emphasis on relevant theories and approaches for language teaching and learning, she had mentioned the need to “make sure that the children are learning and understanding what teacher is teaching”, focus on teaching letters, and “basically will keep the children engaged so that I can teach according to my plan”. This inconsistency rendered triangulation of data with the field notes and teacher’s reflective journal logs for verification.
In axial coding, the categories that were most relevant to the research question were chosen from developed codes and the related code notes. From the massive categories that were originated, those most promising for further elaboration were selected and analysed with coding paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
Appendix Q

FreeMind Mapping – An enlarged section of Map

**Phenomenon:** Children lack interest in Tamil Language and do not use it: Child-centred experiences in enhancing their interest in the language.
(Note: All 12 teachers had stated child-centric as part of their conceptual framework.

**Causal Condition:** Children not using TL and either code-mix or code-switch. De-emphasis in use of TL in the home and school settings; Teachers’ aims and intentions guided by their perceived conceptual framework for teaching and learning.

**Context & Intervening Conditions:** Limited use of TL in environment; Lack family collaboration due to little or no emphasis on TL use at homes; Limited institute support and resources (time, material and physical classroom setting); Curriculum translated from NEL English Framework; Subjective curriculum practices; Teachers code-switching in TL teaching; Teachers’ professional training was for English Teaching; teachers’ interpretation and application of theories.

**Consequence of child-centric practices:** (Interview data): Children are more confident; and less hesitant in speaking in TL; Use the TL during greetings and routines; Lesser code-switching and code-mixing in class though very little improvement; Use vocabulary that are literacy related; able to complete

**Strategies:** (1) Social – use of language (oral interaction and comprehension); (2) Intellectual – hands-on activities, shared book approach, worksheets (primary preparation); (3) Emotional - children’s expressions and ideas included. Play intrigued

Propositions were developed from the axial coding.
Appendix R

Audit Trails

AUDIT TRAIL: QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN MOTHER TONGUE (TAMIL LANGUAGE) IN SINGAPORE KINDERGARTENS: KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES

Note: I had a casual chat with a head/ principles, at MOE 2nd Mother Tongue Languages Symposium on 14 September 2013. I wanted to identify the diversity amongst the preschool bilingual teachers teaching Tamil language at kindergarten levels in Singapore.

One head of an organisation stated that it is mandatory for the teachers to have a Diploma in preschool teaching in English and a credit pass in Mother Tongue (Tamil Language) at the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (O-level) - General Cambridge Examination, to be able to teach at kindergarten level. These teachers must be accredited by Ministry of Education (MOE). She added that 53 kindergartens in her organisation offers Tamil Language and that each centre has one such teacher.

Six principals (across the 4 core organisations) mentioned that the teachers at their kindergartens have about 3 to 15 years teaching experiences each, at kindergarten level. There are no male teachers and there was diversity in age, ethnic language, country of birth, experience and academic qualifications.

The above information was used to formulate the teacher’s profile collection form – Teacher Questionnaire (Appendix 2). The questionnaire was discussed with my supervisor and edited after her feedback. I also consulted with my supervisor on the design of my field note and reflective journal for participants. After the consultation, I edited the field note for focus observation and reflection journal to focus on critical incident analysis.

2. Edited Field Note and Journal Log – October 2013

Field Note
As my observation is to collect data on teachers’ lessons and record the behaviors, activities, events, and other features related to their teaching practices, I had edited the template to focus on strategies; environment / setting; human interactions; activities; resources and teacher’s expectations (Appendix 3). The focus data collection will produce meaning and an understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Note: A column was catered for my reflective note (analysis) of the field data. I will record my preliminary analysis which is likely to occur as I conduct the observations. The main reasons for the preliminary analysis is to:

1. Foster self-reflection, and self-reflection is crucial for understanding and meaning-making in any research study.
2. Reveal emergent concepts / themes. Identifying emergent concepts / themes while observing will allow me to move my attention in ways that can foster a more developed investigation. It will also help inform my interview probing questions as necessary.

Reflective Journals (Dot- Logs)
Appendix S
Theoretical Coding – Theory Abstraction

Theory Abstraction: Theory and practice interface of early childhood Tamil Language instructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Code</th>
<th>Open Coding</th>
<th>Abstracts (from Data) / In vivo</th>
<th>Memo</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>1. Child-centred</td>
<td>“give chance for children to express what they feel...want to learn and ...activities they would like” 1401AS</td>
<td>All the 12 teachers stated the quality teaching and learning experiences in TL must be Child-centred. Nonetheless their description for child-centred experiences varied as follows: Children’s level; Child focused; Child directed; Development Appropriate Practices; child’s interest, needs &amp; ability; Joyful learning; child showing interest. The 12 teachers were in sync when they explained that the experiences must have the child in mind and appropriately facilitated. However in practice (field observation) the teachers were found to be in the middle child-centred and curriculum-centred continuum. The teachers interviews also evident their transmission approach / direct teaching styles. Child-centred</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>“Quality teaching and learning as joyful learning and teaching process whereby the children will interact confidently and I would like to see the children showing interest” 1402AW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Quality teaching to me is, it must interest the child. It must arouse the child’s interest, so that the child can remember” 1405BK</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Quality teaching and learning to me is, make sense to the children interesting way. We are teaching like in a fun way, we are teaching, so we make them to interest in the language.” 1407BY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Very simple and easy to understand using flash boards, posters, story books and interactive games that children like.” 1409CB</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The children interacting with them and make them comfortable that the language that they are going to learn is they must love it. Then also they must enjoy, then only can they enjoy, be at my level children.” 1411CU</td>
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</table>
practices were limited to play based activities and engaging children through that experiences.

Child-centred concept could be a result of the participants’ professional training and the NEL framework ‘Teach’ principle which places child in the centre of a quality curriculum. A strongly recommended framework that is based on an integrated curriculum approach. Teaching and learning is integrated across six subject disciplines and children development domains.

The transmission approach and direct teaching style could have been the teachers’ strategy to achieve their aim or intention for the lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2. Theories for Language Learning</th>
<th>Language Acquisition and Learning - Innatism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theories on Language acquisition</td>
<td>“Kindergarten is the foundation, the basic thing. Brain study say that this is the stage children acquire language, So I think it is very very important for the kindergarteners to learn Tamil, especially in the MT. So I think it is very important for us, especially in the kindergarten years, because it’s the foundation years for them.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(acquisition and Learning)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language acquisition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+ Innatism, the ability to learn language (Chomskyan theory of Universal Grammar) (Cunningham, 2011)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Critical period hypothesis ( biological maturity)</td>
<td>“I feel it is very important because the child will have the understanding capacity as their brain is</td>
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</table>
+ Connectionism, can ‘learn’ certain things if it is exposed to often enough (Lightbown & Spada, 1999)
- Language learning
  + Interactionist, interplay child and the environment (child-directed speech) (Vygotsky)
  + Constructivism
    + make meaning - construct knowledge rather than to reproduce facts.
    + build from previous concept
  + Behaviourism (Second language learning)
    + imitation
    + practice
    + reinforcement (feedback, habit formation)
  + Conditions for Learning
    - Exposure
    - Use
    - motivation
  + Strategies for Language Learning
    - Talk, play & representation
    - Rhyme, rhythm & language patterns
    - Stories & narratives
    - Environmental print & messages

developing during the kindergarten years, and it will be also keen to learn the language; it will also have a good exposure at an young age, and I think it is good to start as early as two. This foundation will help them at primary level.” 1406BK

Critical Period Hypothesis – Biological Maturity
“...when you set the foundation for the children at the younger age they would be able to absorb the language much faster and more easily.” 1402AW

“Now normally we say the 0 to 5 years, or 4 years, is the very important time for the children to grow or absorb anything. So if he missed that period, we cannot expect the same quality in that thinking and absorb knowledge.”

“So it’s through the research in early childhood that we can see, so that’s the best time to start anything, any language.”1405BK

“Giving good foundation for children to improve the language in kindergarten to help them in primary level. Children learn fast at this age, the brain can absorb.” 1411CD

TL learning

Interactionists
"...stories, the songs and rhymes, they relate the children really enjoy. I also get children to talk about it so without the knowledge they are learning the language."

Result of Language acquisition is subconscious - innatism (UG)
In order to acquire language, the learner needs a source of natural communication. The emphasis should be on the text of the communication and not on the form.
Language Learning on the other hand is conscious. It is being aware of form and structure. Language learning, is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language, whereby learners have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. Like they can fill in the blanks on a grammar page.

Second Language Learning (SLL)Theories and Second Language Acquisitions (SLA) ?

The learning of the ‘second language’ takes place sometime later than the acquisition of the first language(Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013)

The theories cited were namely for language learning and not
"Talking becomes natural and will boost children confidence which is the fundamental to learning..." 1405BK

**Constructivism**

"...they will have engaging activities that are appropriate for their age..." 1402AW

"I use it with my conversation so that the children can hear both speaking and learning language and know the meaning" 1404AC

**Behaviourism**

"I keep them engaged so that they will have fun. And my aim is actually for them to look forward to coming to my class. Looking forward to come to learn the language. (Motivation)" 1401AS

"I insist the ‘sound’ and keep repeating. This is ‘AI’ sound; this is ‘OH’ sound; this is ‘AW’ sound....I will also give them worksheet on the letters and homework every week....This is to help the children to transit to primary level and manage their Tamil work (practice & Habit formation) 1409CB

**Conditions for Language Learning**

"I start the lesson with greetings and prayers to be blessed with education. The young age we are teaching the prayers in the ‘manthram’." 1407BY

specific to second language learning. Even when citing CPH it was mentioned in isolation, and referenced was made to brain research. This is likely that the teachers are transferring their learnt knowledge on teaching Language and Literacy in English to teaching of TL. Theories for practice are generic and not specific to second language learning. How about Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)? The connectionism for learning?

Conditions for TL were generally Exposure to TL by way of songs, storytelling and rhymes and use of varied materials. Hands-on activities were mentioned time and again by all teachers. However, there was limited use of language from relational and social perspective (meaningful experiences and authentic interaction). Interactions were ‘comprehension like’ or routine greetings. The conditions of language learning was slanted toward the diverse perspectives of the teachers.

When discussing strategies for Language Learning all the
“My teaching and children learning I use a lot of flash card to teach the letters and Tamil alphabets. These children are very fluent in writing and talking. When I place the flash board or something letters or alphabets on Tamil phonics.” 1409CB

Strategies for Language Learning

“Songs from YouTube...they will have engaging activities that are appropriate for their age, they have hands-on activities; they can do colouring, pasting and writing of letters” 1402AW

“being a teacher you can facilitate their learning so that you can see who is actually having difficulties and you know you can go around helping them and make sure that they also learn. You can find out whether they are learning at a faster pace or a slower pace and then you can actually divide them into different groups to finish their work” 1401AS

“I am teaching the language in a fun way, so they will be involved in this. The fun way means that I will read the stories with expression - the sounds up and down, the different sounds; if it is the animals I will say ‘waahrrw’ (roaring sound), it comes “ehnn’ (movement sound), so they will be involved. They will sit and watch and listen what the teacher is saying. At times wondering “What is the word that means for?” To help children understand words I dramatise.” 1408BY

“Teaching the stories also like the fun way. It’s not like use the book, just go, read. No, we must, the

teachers kept referring to Language Learning theories in relation to ‘child-focus’ and ‘playbased’ experiences. However, it was noted that the experiences provided were influenced by the teachers’ perspectives
character, we must teach them the character to focus, so the children, like, wow got something. We can make that way, even Mahabharatham or Ramayana. These legends are thought as difficult right? Very difficult, but the story can be told in easy and fun way for children to love the story. At the same time we can teach our culture also, so the children can learn.” 1407BY

“I teach them to recognise and write letters; learn the meaning of words; learn to ask questions and answer. I follow strictly to the syllabus as the main thing is for them to have the skills required for primary level.” 1410CD

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<th>3. Content Gravitated</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Teacher Directed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Curriculum driven (content)</td>
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"Teacher should impart" structured curriculum and good lesson plan will help in quality teaching.” 1402AW

"teach according to lesson plan"

"whatever the teacher has been expressing to them according to the lesson plan"

"as a teacher at the end of the day..you have achieved your objective or goal as per the lesson, I think you will be the most happiest.” 1401AS

In the reflective journals teachers 1403AC and 1404AC efficacy were also on product – how to keep learner busy or engaged to complete the given task with the prescribed time.

Teachers’ views are to make sure that children are learning and understanding, impart knowledge, to teach children. Namely to transmit knowledge.

Teachers, 1AS, 2AW, 3AC and 4AC are working in Community foundation organisation but in different kindergarten centres across Singapore.

The organisation has a mandated curriculum customised for teaching of Tamil Language. The teaching curriculum is adapted from the Nurturing Early Learners (NEL) Framework for Mother Tongue Language (2006) developed by Ministry of Education. The organisation’s
240

<p>| 4. Culture Custodial | “I want our Indian community children to learn Tamil and appreciate their traditions I spend much of my own time in preparing the needs. Otherwise, in the future nobody speak Tamil.” 1407BY “Actually Tamil is a very old language, you know. We can say from the ancient times onwards they have the language. It has the literature, many Tamil literatures like even the, you know, Thirukkural, ‘do you know thirukkural’? such a great literature of | Teachers, 5BK, 7BY, 8BY, are working in the Social organisation based kindergartens and Teachers11CU and 12CU are working in the Religious organisation based kindergartens respectively. All the teachers are Singaporeans though the place of origin for teachers 5BK, 8BY, 11CU and |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>5. Preparation for Primary level</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Therefore my intention and aim is to build their confidence in Tamil language, as it is the base for other development to take place and help them in primary school.&quot; 1409CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I teach them to recognise and write letters; learn the meaning of words; learn to ask questions and answer. I follow strictly to the syllabus as the main thing is for them to have the skills required for</td>
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</table>

12CU is India. The five teachers are of Tamil ethnicity and can speak and write Tamil fluently. Teachers 5BK, 7BY, 8BY and 12CU have an undergraduate education in Tamil or Tamil literature. The teachers see a need to sustain and maintain TL as it is the vehicle through which one’s culture and traditions are transmitted so all the five teachers believe that the curriculum must be entrenched self-culture identity of children for self-esteem. They included experiences in Material culture, social culture, cognitive culture and Heuristic culture. Could have their knowledge and passion of TL as verbalised at the interviews, inspired their perspective?

Teachers 9CB and 10CD are working in a religious organisation based kindergartens. The teachers plan their curriculum independently and in isolation. Both the teachers are do not refer to the NEL framework. While, Teacher 6BK is working in a social organisation based kindergarten. TL curriculum is
All the teachers’ practices were teacher-directed and content- focusing of reading, writing and comprehension.

Teacher 9CB had ‘inherited the TL curriculum from the predecessors’ and had only upgraded the workbooks. She is of the opinion that the curriculum’s primary school content prepares children to perform well at primary level. On the other hand Teacher 10CD experiences with her daughter had guided her perspective and for teacher 6BK is her own struggle in her transition from kindergarten to primary 1. Sociological study by Dan Lortie insists that many teachers’ beliefs about teaching originate from personal experiences as students or some may from other personal experiences such as family traditions and values, social encounters, community participation, culture, teacher training (preparation), observing teachers, professional development, and scholarly literature (1975). Likewise these teachers experience could have impacted their beliefs.

As the teachers’ conceptual framework differed, I was curious to know the meanings

**Theories for Teachers practice (Ideational theories)**

| 1. Child-centred | “So although we have to teach so that children can understand and give it back, something like that. It must also interest the child and fun.” 1403AS | planned at centre level by a couple of teachers. Teacher 9CB had ‘inherited the TL curriculum from the predecessors’ and had only upgraded the workbooks. She is of the opinion that the curriculum’s primary school content prepares children to perform well at primary level. On the other hand Teacher 10CD experiences with her daughter had guided her perspective and for teacher 6BK is her own struggle in her transition from kindergarten to primary 1. Sociological study by Dan Lortie insists that many teachers’ beliefs about teaching originate from personal experiences as students or some may from other personal experiences such as family traditions and values, social encounters, community participation, culture, teacher training (preparation), observing teachers, professional development, and scholarly literature (1975). Likewise these teachers experience could have impacted their beliefs. |

"It will have a good foundation in the MT language, and it also can focus on other subjects....This foundation will help them at primary level.... I am worried as they will not be well prepared for their school and will get poor marks.” 1406BK
“...cater the lesson according to the child’s interest where innovative teaching comes in, and also, of course, to create wonder and curiosity in the child so that the children will be prepared well for primary school.” 1406BK

“We are doing, we are encouraging them ... interested to bring their interest in their MT. That is to keep to children’s interest and make them interested in learning Tamil.” 1412CU

The teachers hold for the theories that they had verbalised. What are the differences in values and beliefs with regards to the child-centred philosophy, what theories are being used and how (strategies in specific to the verbalised theories).

To understand the teacher assigned meanings to the theories a cross reference was made to the earlier classroom observation field notes. For Child-centred, all the teachers stressed on child-focus and play base experiences but slanted towards their conceptual framework. Within the premise of “child interest and fun based experiences”, Teacher 3AS wants to ‘teach’ the content, teacher 6BK wants to prepare them for primary level and Teacher 12CU wants to develop the interest in Tamil language. Even the theories in practice exhibited the effect of the teachers’ three diverse perspectives.

Interpretation of Theories

<table>
<thead>
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<th>2. Theories for Learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>o Constructivism</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Behaviourisms</td>
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<td>o Interactionism</td>
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Constructivism (build on previous concept), Behaviourism (imitation; habit formation; practice) and Interactionism (socio-cultural)

“I think because they actually now have good concept because they feel, they touch and there is sensorial learning; and that’s what this kindergarten learning is about.” 1410CDt

“Every time we start a new lesson then we will recall what did we learn before, so that the children whether they can remember they learn the previous class. The greeting is the reason for, even if they see an elder, elderly person or, in the morning also, we train them in such way like wishing ‘good morning’, ‘good afternoon’ something like that, in Tamil also, we encourage them...” 1412U

“. I want my child to be very comfortable with me and it’s best for me don’t have a formal kind of a conversation, so which I did is informal, like how I just speak to you, ‘OK where do you live?’; more on

Theories and pedagogy articulated by teachers at interviews and meaning assigned
open-ended question less than close, then I want to get the children to say. So some of the children were even talking for others things, other houses, because I give this chance for them. Then I will divert to my lesson.” 1404AC

“...use simplified form, so that the child will have a good understanding of the language, and repetitive, the same songs on a repetitive basis. We will also bring in like props, puppets, do some colouring activities or follow-up activities thereafter, so the child’s understanding will be there. They will be able to absorb; they will be able to understand.” 1406BK

| 3. Strategies in teaching | To teach them to speak simple language; expose simple letters slowly with the help of pictures, picture talks, and also we provide them some cartoon characters and TV, so they enjoy watching the alphabets by pictures and through comics, and stories, animation fonts. I will choose stories from our Tamil literature. so these are the my intention that they must learn this way.”1411CU |
| Data from the interview and observation indicated that the commons strategies amongst the teachers are to provide experiences to use... |
| - Talk, play & representation |
| - Rhyme rhythm & language |
| - patterns |
| - Stories & narratives |
| - Environmental print & messages. |

| Theories Observed in application | 4. Environment for learning | Exposure |
| Field Observations: |
| 1402AW |
| Teacher showed picture of zebra crossing’. She named in Tamil and told children the English word. When children labeled in English, she nodded and told children the Tamil word for zebra crossing is vahree kootherai (zebra) kahdapu (crossing). |
| Wills (1996. P11) stated that “language learners take full advantage of their exposure to the target language in use. This may involve listening or reading or both..” He emphasised that the exposure has to be rich but comprehensible input of real |
The translation was in literal meaning as a place for ‘zebras to cross’.

In my clarification the teacher mentioned the word was a vocabulary in the content. *It should have been (vahree kohdu kadhapu – striped line crossing).*

1401AS
In a follow-up activity children, fished live fishes with net from a tub. Teacher told them to catch 2 fish each, one big and one small. "rayndu meen peedingah' (catch two fish). When a child told her 'nahn rayndu fishes peediythayn', teacher corrected child '…eerahndu meengalai....." (ryandu is 2 in casual spoken language, eerahndu is written language, meengal is plural for fish). Child with a puzzled look echoed teacher.

Teacher interactions were in casual spoken however when it came to instructions she switched to written Tamil.

The teachers provided many opportunities like reading, talking, sharing, singing, role play etc to expose children to the language. Though the teachers provided exposure to language but it seems to be contained within the literary (written) language rather than real spoken language. Could this practice have been an effect of their perspectives?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Use Field Observations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1410CD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher used the basal readers for choral reading on ‘Healthy Food’ with class. She showed the cover page and asked children what do they saw? When a child described the illustration, teacher nodded her head but said I that she wanted to know what the ‘boy in the cover page is doing”. She prompted by saying “pal thulaikugeeran” (brushing teeth). Teacher flipped the next page and read a sentence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The input and output are recognised as essential for language development especially for learners of target language *(Wills, 1999)*. Learners need to know the real use of the language. Wills stressed that the use of the language for real purposes (for example get things done, share experiences and socialise) provides learners...
and asked what a question in relation to the sentence. When a child’s reply is not in coherence to the ‘key words’ that the teacher want to teach, the teacher ‘nudged’ with closed-ended questions for the correct answer. When the correct answer was given, she go the class to clap. The interaction throughout was a like ‘question and answer’ session for the correct answer.

Motivation

“The children, if they know with the lyrics and also with the tune, then they won’t forget it. So when they want to learn a song, the lyrics and the tune, they are enjoying…..some children have gained confidence to take part competitions in the community centres. Our kindergarten children have also participated in such events and won trophies. The children bring and show us the prize.” 1412CUs

I try to make music… to substitute and it really works and they enjoy. After that I found out that even they come out with their own music. Once they have the music and we have the song and we will just do it in repetition; so when they sing and sing you can see how they are pronouncing, the pronunciation of the word is so beautiful. That’s how I get them to speak, another way of speaking.” 1404AC.

opportunities to recall and are motivated “use the language they already know” (1999, p13). Teachers created many opportunities in the use of the Tamil Langue in the classroom. Nonetheless, in some practices the language was used like a ‘question and answer ‘sessions to retrieve or steer towards the anticipated answer (correct answer). The use of the language was limited and did not amply maximise the given exposure.

Wills (1999) emphasised that motivation as the third essential condition for learners’ success and satisfaction in learning language. Motivation for these learners can be integrative (for learners to admire and identify with the target language and culture) or purely instrumental (further their study, pass exams or a good job). He added that learners must be motivated sufficiently to seek out opportunities for exposure to and use the target language.

Notably all the teachers agreed motivation is essential in the learning of TL. All the teachers agreed that motivations inspires
| Theories Observed in application | Play-based learning | the TL learning but the teachers goals for motivations is to achieve their aims and intentions. |