

## Material Adaptation Among Rural Primary School English Language Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

*This study is meant to investigate rural primary school teachers' views on the use of imported textbooks and their adaptation strategies in dealing with foreign content in the prescribed materials. A qualitative approach was employed using semi-structured interviews, involving seven rural primary school English language teachers. The responses were orthographically transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The teachers disclosed that they did not have problems with the grammatical elements in the textbooks, but the cultural context needed to be locally presented to make the materials meaningful to their students. Teachers with fewer years of teaching experience, as opposed to experienced teachers, were found to be more innovative in their classrooms. Prospective research might better consider larger samples and employ a deliberate method of study for a better generalisation.*

*Keywords: CEFR; English language learning; imported textbooks; material adaptation; rural primary school teachers*

### INTRODUCTION

Since the English language has been extensively used in the field of education, the issues in relation to the English language teaching (ELT) materials have recently caught the attention of many researchers. It is undeniable that the use of ideal materials is significant and that it would, in return, give positive outcomes to learners, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) context (Mukundan & Kalajahi, 2013). In fact, learning processes generally exist with the help of good materials, even with bad or non-existing teaching (Ahmed, 2017). In another study, it is discovered that most teachers are still dependent on materials in language learning although the prescribed materials are irrelevant and uninteresting (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). These studies imply that learning materials are mandatory in language teaching and learning; therefore, it has to go through detailed procedures in the process of selection. Materials for language learning, according to Tomlinson (2012), could appear in forms that can facilitate language learning. As such, materials for language learning should be informative, instructional, experiential, eliciting, and exploratory.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MoE) aims to nurture students who meet Malay and English language proficiency requirements by 2025. The Common European Framework of References (CEFR), therefore, was adopted in the local English language syllabus as an initiative to achieve the desired national aspiration. The MoE in the 2015 publication was quoted as saying

that CEFR would favour teachers and students in improving their English language proficiency involving curriculum, assessment, and teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2015). With the adoption, the existing local English language textbooks have been replaced in stages since 2017 with the imported textbooks from the Cambridge University Press and Macmillan Publishers. According to the MoE (2015), the country needs the imported teaching materials because local experts may have lacked experience dealing with the CEFR and the adoption of international textbooks is assumed to have supported the current curriculum and pedagogy reforms.

Even though the implementation of the CEFR is now in the fifth year of its implementation, the debates over the textbooks are inconclusive. Daghigh and Rahim (2020), for instance, claim that the internationally published textbooks could promote neoliberal values through its foreign elements that are not in-line with the local learners' schemata. Neoliberalism in this sense is a form of foreign elements in the textbook that may influence students to believe those elements as 'standard,' and that they are acceptable in their own cultures. On the one hand, it inspires the students "to adjust their attitudes and behaviours to fit market demands" (ibid, p. 3). Siti Bahijah Bakhtiar, the senior assistant director of the Research Development and Innovation Centre at the Teacher Training Institute of Malaysia, however, argued that the imported textbooks open students' minds, provide wider exposure to other cultures, and give advantages to students to use the language in foreign and local contexts (Zali, 2018). The statement, on the other hand, contradicts the finding of Rahim and Daghigh (2020) in a textbook evaluation study, in which they found that the previously used local textbooks in fact, capture wider intercultural content compared to internationally published textbooks that are currently in use in Malaysia. The main concern of the study is that rural primary school students could not adapt themselves with the foreign contents in the textbook. As Subramaniam argued (cited in Monihuldin, 2018), "you can't bring to the students books they can't connect with and expect them to connect with it" (p.1).

Despite differing views and findings on the use of imported textbooks, it is also crucial to examine teachers' perception on the issue, especially those teaching in rural areas whose students are generally at a disadvantage. Wood (1996) emphasises the importance of understanding "teachers' interpretation of the process" (p. 21) concerning methods, curriculum, and behaviours of learners because these affect classroom activities and the way they are conducted. In order to understand teachers, exploring their perspectives is important as opposed to merely focusing on their observable behaviours (Borg, 2006). Teachers' views and beliefs on this issue may also provide viewpoints especially to the higher authorities regarding the current practices related to the newly adopted CEFR-aligned curriculum. Teachers' views are genuinely important because they are involved in the implementation of the policy; teachers typically play the roles of main witnesses of school-level problems. The present study, therefore, examines rural school teachers' views towards the use of the imported textbooks at primary school level and their adaptation strategies, particularly in classrooms. The following research questions are discussed throughout the study:

1. What are rural primary school teachers' views towards the use of imported textbooks in the English language classroom?
2. How do teachers adapt foreign content of the textbooks in the English language classroom?

This study provides insights comprising rural school teachers at primary school level which complement previous studies that emphasise on other subject matters related to the CEFR. Besides,

the second research question would benefit the rural school practitioners by providing possible adaptation strategies that can be used in dealing with the internationally published materials in classrooms. The study would also contribute to the body of literature as it 1) reveals teachers' perception towards the use of ESL/EFL foreign textbooks and 2) describes the adaptation strategies by taking into consideration rural school teachers' perspectives.

#### ISSUES IN ELT MATERIAL SELECTION

Choosing the right teaching materials could be a challenge for ESL teachers. With the adoption of the CEFR in the new English language syllabus, teachers are left with no choice other than using the newly prescribed imported textbook by the Ministry of Education in their classrooms as a main reference in their respective classrooms. The currently in-use imported textbooks are perceived negatively due to its "imbalanced cultural content, high lexical density, lack of supplementary materials, steep price, ambiguous selection procedure, and fitness with the goals, and objective of Malaysia's language program English curriculum" (Shak et al., 2021, p. 957). However, Şimşek (2017) made an analogy that a textbook should only act as a vehicle, while teachers are the 'driver' of the vehicle who eventually would determine the experience of the learning journey. Textbooks or coursebooks can be viewed from various teachers' perspectives, "as a Bible, a guide, a crutch, a necessary evil or a burden" (Gabrielatos, 2004, p. 1). Consequently, teachers generally possess the discretion on prescribed textbook use, whether to fully adopt or adapt the books with flexibility, accommodating students' needs and interests.

As the English language has been in use globally for many years, it should no longer be considered as the exclusive property of the native-speaking countries, primarily because it now serves people from different cultures for different purposes (Shin et al., 2011). In fact, studies related to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) have emerged over the last few years and provided the spotlights on ELF for international communication (see Baker, 2015; Hashim, 2019; Jenkins, 2012). As such, Alptekin (2002) claims that the strict adherence to native speakers' norms in the culture of the target language is no longer valid, especially in dealing with English language teaching pedagogy. Therefore, the presence of ESL textbooks imported from a native-speaking country may not be an advantage to ESL or EFL learners.

Research also demonstrated that language learners can only improve their language skills when they are given the opportunity to express their own experiences and cultures in the target language (Shin et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to provide them with such opportunity, ESL textbooks should present local culture and context that can further inspire learners to use the language not only within the classroom context, but also in their daily usage. There are counterarguments concerning intercultural space that might better be considered by textbook writers and teachers to help learners cultivate intercultural competencies which could help learners have better communication with people from different background (Byrnes, 2004), and that learners should be provided with authentic models so that they are familiar with authentic performance (Don, 2020). Such claims, however, are not in line with Shin et al. (2011)'s standpoint; a single target culture textbook will not meet the needs of learners, whose English language instruction is taught as an international language.

As in the case of using prescribed foreign textbooks, teachers should opt for adaptation instead of completely adopting the content to students because the content may not fit the local students. According to Nehal (2016), these two terms, 'adoption' and 'adaptation,' differ in a way that the first refers to a process of choosing and accepting someone else's set of materials based on particular criteria, while the latter signifies "modifying particular parts or place of the

coursebook to suit a particular class or level” (p. 241). As far as material selection and development, Tomlinson (2011) outlined fifteen principles for materials development, and six of them are closely related to ELT. According to him, the materials should, (i) expose the learners to language in authentic use, (ii) help learners pay attention to features of authentic input, (iii) provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes, (iv) provide opportunities for outcome feedback, (v) achieve impact in the sense that they arouse and sustain the learners’ curiosity and attention, and (vi) stimulate intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional involvement. The issues of “authenticity” have brought previous researchers’ attention to the extent that the definitions and categories vary from one to the other. According to McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara (2018), authenticity refers to the outside world, including classroom material and activity selections. However, Nunan’s (1997) notion on learner authenticity also deserves attention in which it emphasises learners’ acceptance towards a particular material, through recognition and identification, that are based on their interests, prior knowledge, and experiences that could stimulate genuine communication.

#### ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

There have been numerous adaptation strategies proposed by previous scholars (see McGrath, 2002; Islam & Mares, 2003; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; McDonough et al. 2018). McGrath (2002), for instance, recommends “four evaluative processes” (p. 59) in material selection in a coursebook that includes adopting the material as is, partially or completely rejecting the material, adding extensions to the existing materials, and replacing the materials. Islam and Mares (2003) formulated adaptive strategies; *adding*, *deleting*, *simplifying*, *reordering*, and *replacing* with little extension on *adding* (sub-categorised into *extending* and *expanding*, while *subtracting* and *abridging* are classified under *deleting*).

Meanwhile, McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara (2018) provided a more comprehensive strategy in adapting materials which include five techniques: (i) *adding*, (ii) *omitting*, (iii) *modifying*, (iv) *simplifying*, and (v) *reordering*. *Adding* refers to including more similar material to the existing material to increase its effectiveness. *Omitting* or *deleting* on the other hand, involves deletion on a small or large scale of the material. *Modifying* is related to the internal change that can further be divided into two categories, namely, *rewriting* and *restructuring*. *Rewriting* takes place when instructors take learners’ background and interests into consideration by introducing an authentic language model while *restructuring* normally involves changes in the structure of the material to accommodate learners and the learning condition. *Simplifying* on the hand, mostly applies to reading passages which could be done on sentence structure, lexical content, and grammatical structures. Lastly, *reordering* signifies “adjusting the sequence of presentation within a unit or taking units in a different sequence from that originally intended” (ibid, p. 75). In addition to the adaptation strategies, they also recommend that the foreign contents in language teaching materials be measured against a teaching environment beforehand. The environment determines the necessity of adaptation which requires appropriate changes in the content.

These complex categories of adaptation strategies from different scholarships suggest that teachers have a wide range of choices in adapting materials that are insufficient or inappropriate to their students. Jolly and Bolitho (2011) emphasise the importance of material modification by teachers, who might better act as material writers, modifying materials depending on students’ feedback in classrooms. In the case of the Malaysian context, teachers are not given such an advantage because the materials are prescribed to them by the Ministry of Education. Hence, the

least they could do is adapt the materials according to the suitability of the students. As Rao (2019) recommends, teachers might better provide additional materials if the prescribed materials do not meet students' needs and interests.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out qualitatively, following phenomenological tradition in order to comprehend “experience in the context of a particular situation” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14). Therefore, a semi-structured interview was employed with a total number of seven rural primary school English teachers. Three male and four female teachers were chosen based on purposive sampling, a type of sampling that concentrates on “specific purpose of the research” (Fraenkel, et. al., 2019, p.100). The type of sampling was chosen because it matches the objectives of the research that highlighted rural primary school English language teachers in Malaysia. The samples must be English language teachers who teach at rural primary schools with the experiences of teaching the CEFR-aligned syllabus, using *Super Minds* and *Get Smart* textbooks. Since there are cases in which teachers with other majors have to teach English due to the insufficiency of English language teachers, respondents must possess at least three-year teaching experiences with the newly adopted syllabus to ensure that the respondents have adequate knowledge on the subject matter. The number of samples in a qualitative study is relatively small because the aim of the study is to obtain a thorough understanding of the responses from the selected sample as proposed by Palinkas and colleagues (2015). All seven respondents were interviewed via Google Meet at their convenient time.

TABLE 1. Demographic profile of qualitative data

Respondents	Gender	Years of experience	State
Respondent 1	Male	15 years	Pahang
Respondent 2	Female	7 years	Sabah
Respondent 3	Female	11 years	Johor
Respondent 4	Male	5 years	Sarawak
Respondent 5	Female	14 years	Sabah
Respondent 6	Female	13 years	Sarawak
Respondent 7	Male	3 years	Sarawak

The semi-structured interview comprised four questions that were related to the teachers' views on the current English language textbooks (*Super Minds* and *Get Smart*) and their adaptation strategies towards the foreign contents in their respective classrooms. The interview questions were validated by two experts in the field of ELT with at least 10 years of experience. Prior to the interview, respondents were briefed regarding 1) the purpose of the study and 2) personal details. They were informed that their personal details will be kept confidential as the information given was released for academic purposes. The duration of the interview depended on the responses given by the respondents, but the interviews mostly ended within 40 to 45 minutes. After the

interviews, the audio responses were orthographically transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis according to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) is “a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis” (p. 82). With the thematic analysis, the researchers could label similar responses and finally classify them into major themes. The following are the examples of interview questions and data obtained from the respondents:

- i) What is your personal view towards the use of the imported textbooks in the CEFR-aligned English language curriculum?
- ii) How do your respective students react upon the foreign elements in the textbook?
- iii) When your students face difficulties in understanding the content of the textbook, how do you cope with them?
- iv) What would you like to suggest to the MoE to further strengthen the implementation of the CEFR at primary school level?

## FINDINGS

### TEACHERS’ VIEWS ON THE USE OF THE IMPORTED TEXTBOOKS

The following are teachers’ responses in relation to the use of internationally published textbooks in their classrooms:

TABLE 2. Teachers’ responses on the use of imported textbook

Respondents	Responses
Respondent 1	<i>For me, the content is very simple. Students learn new things, new words. They may not know all those words, so it requires a lot of explanations. I do agree they are not culturally in line with our culture and practices, but I think it’s good because students could learn new words from it.</i>
Respondent 2	<i>To be honest, it’s not too bad. It’s just that the culture is very not Malaysian. It gives advantage to students to explore other cultures from other countries but not their own.</i>
Respondent 3	<i>The textbooks are boring because the contents are not relatable to students’ own practices. A chapter in Year 4 for example, includes games like chess and ice-skating, which they couldn’t find in their daily life. Before I could even start the lesson, they would ask me “where can we go ice-skating?”, “why should we wear something like this?”, “why don’t we wear something like that?”. They could not imagine all those things because they’ve never seen them before. They are also not exposed to Astro (satellite television) because most of them are from low-income families.</i>
Respondent 4	<i>Actually, I’m on the fence. Of course, when we introduce something foreign to our kids, it is something bizarre to them. But on the positive side, it’s not a problem to introduce something new to them in terms of the content, the culture. In fact, when I first introduced the new syllabus and the new books, they really liked it. They were very excited because they wanted to see the world. They have not been coming out from their comfort zone. Positively, it’s something good for them even though they are not locally adapted. I don’t find it a problem.</i>
Respondent 5	<i>To be frank, I find the book less applicable to our students. Even though the contents are simple, the context is not related to our kids. So, I find it very challenging for teachers in which it requires extra effort in preparing and explaining the context.</i>
Respondent 6	<i>I think some elements in the textbook are not suitable for local kids. There’s a topic in Super Minds 1 (textbook for Standard 1) about four seasons. Imagine how difficult it was to explain about winter to Standard 1 pupils who have never experienced and seen snow in their lives. They do not even know the name of the capital city of Sarawak, so how could I introduce them to countries like Canada, the United Kingdom? It is challenging, indeed.</i>

Respondent 7	<i>Some of the contents are not really localised, so we need to adapt them to the local context. It takes teachers extra effort to change the content to fit the students. My students find it difficult as some of the elements are foreign to them, so they could not make sense of it.</i>
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From the responses given, teachers with negative feedback concerning the use of the imported textbooks outnumbered those with positive feedback. Respondents 1, 2, and 4 provided positive remarks on the imported textbooks as they provide simple content (Respondent 1) and give advantage to students to discover other cultures (Respondents 2 and 4). The rest of the respondents, however, highlighted that the imported textbooks are less applicable to their students, considering they are in rural primary schools in which English could be a foreign language to them. Thus, the textbooks are described as “boring” to rural school pupils (Respondent 3) and “very challenging” for the teachers as they have to explain foreign elements that are not familiar to pupils (Respondents 5, 6 and 7).

Most of the respondents reported that some of the elements in the new textbooks were not suitable for use in Malaysian context, especially in the rural areas. Respondent 5 responded “*The textbooks even use foreign names which the students are not familiar with, like Greig and Anna. They should have changed it to local names instead*”. In another response, she addressed some topics that are foreign to her students: “*Even though the language is simple, the context is not applicable in Malaysia. For example, weather and season. In Malaysia, we only have two types of weather, but in the textbook, it discusses all four types of seasons. My pupils have difficulty understanding even with explanations because they never experienced all those things*”. Likewise, Respondent 6 also said: “*I’m teaching Year 2. They don’t know the concept of country or state. They don’t have any idea what I’m talking about. We talk about weather, countries like Canada, the United Kingdom... They don’t even know where Miri and Kuching (cities in Sarawak) are. They are from middle to low-income families, and some are living in slums*”.

#### TEACHERS’ ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

The responses from the second research question were categorised according to McDonough, Shaw and Masuhara (2018)’s adaptation strategies, which comprise *adding*, *omitting*, *modifying*, *simplifying*, and *reordering*. Table 3 lists the responses and strategies used by rural primary school English teachers in their respective classrooms:

TABLE 3. Teachers’ adaptation strategies in the English language classrooms

Respondents	Responses	Strategies
Respondent 1	<i>I solely use the textbook in my classroom. I do not want to change anything because I’m afraid I’d be observed. They (school inspectors) are stern enough that they want us to make full use of the material. For now, they (students) may not understand the content. So, what I do is I keep on repeating. We’re not asked to catch up on the syllabus, but we need to put them in their memory. So, I do drilling.</i>	No adaptation
Respondent 2	<i>Luckily my school has one television in the library. For most of my lessons, I have to bring all my students to the library and connect the television to YouTube. From there, I could show them places, seasons which could not be found here in Malaysia. Sometimes, I show them my travel pictures from Korea and Japan that would make them even more excited. In order to teach foreign content, technology is something crucial. We have to show them to make them understand.</i>	Adding
Respondent 3	<i>At school, I couldn’t do much as we have limited connectivity and devices. What I can do is that I give homework or so-called assignment to my pupils to use their parents’ devices at home to find information about a particular topic, for instance, a story about “Tuntankhamun’s Mummy” for Year 4. So, whenever they come back to my class, we exchange stories about it.</i>	Adding

Respondent 4	<i>Normally, I will use videos to introduce the topic to them, so they will comprehend better. For example, teaching them four seasons which they have never experienced. By singing songs from the textbook or showing them pictures or flash cards might not be enough to help them understand places with 4 seasons. I also make the reading text simpler. Instead of using the reading text in the textbook, I pick up important phrases or words and transfer them into a mind map.</i>	<i>Adding Simplifying</i>
Respondent 5	<i>I have to show them pictures or YouTube videos just to show them what the situation looks like. However, here we have slow internet connections, so that's the major problem here in rural areas. However, I also use traditional methods like singing activities just to increase my pupils' attention level. They really like it. Here we couldn't use much technology.</i>	<i>Adding</i>
Respondent 6	<i>I normally bring Malaysian context so that the pupils could relate to their daily practices. For example, Topic 4 in Super Minds; Lunchtime, I replace the food in the book with local food. Instead of having steak, sausage and pizza in the chant (musical passage), I replace them with local food, based on what my pupils would normally have for lunch.</i>	<i>Modifying</i>
Respondent 7	<i>I would involve language arts and fun learning. Language arts such as crafty works, singing, performances, games, and handmade work really work with them.</i>	<i>Adding</i>

From the interview sessions, there was one respondent who did not adapt anything in his classroom, strictly following the prescribed textbook in his classroom. The reason given is that he has a perception that the Ministry of Education would expect teachers to have “maximum use of the materials” and he is also afraid to be observed by the school inspectors if he does not fully use the textbook. The issues of school inspector observation have been raised by Respondents 3 and 7 concerning the rare flexibility in classroom textbook implementation due to the strict rules imposed on them by the Ministry. For example, Respondent 3 said, “*my students are from low-proficiency level, and I couldn't simply explain the content in our first language because it is against the rules and the school inspector can observe my classroom at any time*”.

Other than Respondent 1 who did not apply any adaptation strategies, the rest of the respondents reported at least one strategy that was applied in their respective classrooms. The following list demonstrates the adaptation strategies together with the frequency obtained from the thematic analysis:

TABLE 4. Frequency of adaptation strategies

Adaptation strategies	Frequency
<i>Adding</i>	5
<i>Simplifying</i>	1
<i>Modifying</i>	1

Despite having low internet connectivity in their areas, the majority of the respondents insisted on adding computer-assisted learning materials in order to support the prescribed foreign textbook. Four out of five respondents used videos from YouTube while one respondent used fun learning activities, like crafty works and games as supportive learning materials. One of the respondents even employed *simplifying* by condensing complex sentences in reading passages into a mind map (Respondent 4). Another respondent highlighted *modifying* because the respondents, on occasions, amended or substituted foreign with local contents in the textbook that was familiar to her students (Respondent 6).



## DISCUSSION

### IMPORTED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

The findings revealed that most of the respondents had difficulties with the prescribed teaching materials provided by the Ministry of Education. This can be implied from viewpoints expressed by respondents 3, 5, 6, and 7 (refer Table 2). Respondent 3, for instance, provides a specific response from her student who dealt with the textbook in the classroom, where her student labelled one of the topics as found in *Super Minds* as “nonsense” because the student could not relate the content to his or her real life. In this case, scholars in the field of language learning materials, like Byrd (2001) and Sheldon (1988) suggested that materials should be based on the context of learning-teaching practices and that teachers and learners’ needs must be considered. It is also supported by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018) who pointed out that language learning materials should follow local criteria that are specific to a particular learning context by specifying learners’ profile and everyone involved in the context. Zohoorian (2015) in an experimental study likewise discovered that language learners possessed higher motivation levels with the use of authentic contexts because learners were able to connect learning materials to real life situations.

The MoE previously addressed the need of learning materials that should be “useful and relevant” (p. 25) to the learners and listed “providing appropriate learning materials” (p. 34) as one of the seven steps in transforming English language programmes in The Roadmap of English Language Education Reform 2015-2025 (Ministry of Education, 2015). Nonetheless, the current practice presents a contradiction to the aspiration in The Roadmap. As noticed by Aziz, Rashid and Zainudin (2018), a normal way of textbook development is by following a designated curriculum, yet the currently in-use textbooks did not comply with these mandates, possibly because the textbooks were already in the market even before the CEFR-aligned curriculum was completed. This suggests that the selection of the material did not consider a proper needs analysis on local students. Thus, problems with the existing prescribed textbooks as found in the present study are consistent with other previous studies (see Aziz et al., 2018; Alih et al., 2021; Shak et al., 2021).

In the findings, some respondents agreed that the prescribed textbooks were not supplemented with workbooks, a practice emphasised in the previous curriculum. Respondent 5, for example, highlighted that “*The KSSR textbooks (the previous textbooks) were complemented with workbooks, but not for the current ones. I find it difficult to conduct the activities as recommended in the textbooks*”. The same problem was described by Respondent 2 as she said, “*In my school, not only are the textbooks insufficient, but the workbooks are not provided at all. The workbook should complement the textbook because the activities in the textbook tally with the ones in the workbook. Students could have at least seen some pictures and figures in the workbook while doing listening practices*”. The issue of the “lack of supplementary materials” bears a resemblance to issues at secondary schools (Shak et al., 2021, p. 958). Leaving the responsibility of buying the workbook to all parents without considering their income and other concerns could be taxing since the exorbitant textbook prices are “five times more expensive” (ibid, p. 958) than the locally produced books.

### ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

In terms of adaptation strategies, one respondent with the longest years of teaching (15 years) declared not to adapt the prescribed textbook in his classroom. Instead, he chose to adhere to the

original content even though he admitted that his students did not understand the lesson. The finding, however, contradicts Burkhauser and Lesaux's (2017) earlier findings in which experienced teachers, as opposed to novice teachers, were found to have better ability to adapt curriculum materials by extending curriculum activities and integrating different materials and activities. The current findings, however, revealed that teachers with five-year teaching experiences or less tend to be more creative in their material adaptations. Respondent 4, for instance, does not only use *adding* strategy (the integration of technology-based materials), but also incorporates *simplifying* (the shortening of complex sentences or phrases into a mind map). With the least number of years of teaching experiences, Respondent 7, likewise, could be categorised as an innovative teacher as he mostly included language arts activities such as crafts and performances in his classrooms. However, the findings do not bear a resemblance to what Grossman and Thomson (2008) found; they found that novice teachers were reported to have closely followed the prescribed materials with limited adaptations. The issue of school inspectors as in the case of Respondent 1 should also be further examined. Similar case was also reported by Aziz, Rashid, and Zainudin (2018) through a national master trainer's reflection, in which English language teachers were continuously reminded to be flexible with the use of supplemented materials during the training. However, in reality, material adaptation generally was not accepted by education officers and school inspectors.

The findings also revealed that most of the respondents employed additional technology-based materials such as YouTube videos and internet pictures to ensure students' better understanding of the foreign content of the textbook. However, most of them raised their concerns on the lack of internet connectivity and facilities that hinder them from making more effective lessons. This kind of problem might better be considered especially in this era where everyone is dependent on technology. Teachers require the internet accessibility "to download materials, update their knowledge, get immediate solutions for their doubts and queries, and show the required pictures, videos, and audios to the learners" (Rao, 2019, p. 1). The situation is now even more challenging when online lessons are conducted during the pandemic. This issue could indicate the centrality of further explorations with more respondents by specifically emphasising primary school teachers in rural areas conducting their online lessons.

## CONCLUSION

The study attempted to examine rural primary school English teachers' views on the use of prescribed foreign textbooks and their adaptation strategies because English is considered a foreign language to some of their students. Firstly, it was discovered that the small number of respondents felt uncomfortable with the internationally published textbooks due to unfamiliar cultural contexts. Secondly, the teachers were primarily found to adapt the content of the textbooks in their classrooms by implementing the strategy of *adding* more frequently compared to other strategies (*adding* incorporates computer-assisted materials such as YouTube videos and internet pictures). One of the teachers used the *simplifying* strategy by shortening a long text to a simplified version that could be understood by students. This mostly works on reading passages (McDonough et al., 2018), allowing teachers to change complex sentences to accommodate learners' levels of proficiency. Another unique adaptation strategy such as *modifying* (simplifying texts into simpler forms for better understanding and changing some contents to accommodate local contexts) allowed students to make sense of the topics discussed.

From the study, locally developed materials might better be considered for the sake of its authenticity. Foreign elements can also be included in order to provide intercultural awareness to them, but local context should be made more dominant so that students can make use of the lexical items learnt in the classroom into the real world. Prescribing foreign textbooks to rural school students, especially at primary level, could further demotivate the students to learn the target language. Therefore, authentic materials that are close to their culture and daily practices should be imposed to ensure that the students could benefit from the contents presented in textbooks. Importing ready-made textbooks may not be a good option as previous studies have proposed that most ELT textbooks do not comply with principles of language acquisition and development suggested by scholars, and they are merely developed for commercial purposes (Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 2010).

As in the current Malaysian case in which the foreign textbooks were prescribed to all students, teachers might better take extra strategies by complementing it with adaptation strategies such as *adding*, *omitting*, *modifying*, *simplifying*, and *reordering* to make the content more meaningful to students. Teachers should also be given autonomy to plan their own lesson without restricting them to the prescribed materials. It was also found in the study that some of the respondents were reserved in voicing out their views towards the use of the current textbook in their classroom. The first respondent who reported that he completely used the textbook without any adaptation because he was afraid of being observed by the school inspectors may indicate that teachers generally do not have the full autonomy to select materials that accommodate students' level and classroom learning preference.

With a limited number of respondents, this study generally provides an overview of teachers' perception on the use of foreign textbooks and adaptation strategies in their classrooms. Future research with larger samples and deliberate methods of study is highly recommended for a better generalisation. A comparative study between novice and experienced teachers dealing with materials would also be insightful for future research.

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