## SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

# Cooperative Learning (CL) as 21st Century's Teaching Method in Improving English Proficiency among Primary School Student: Teachers' Perception

**Mahbib, U. K.[1], Esa, A.[2]\*, Mohamad, N. H.[2] and Mohd Salleh, B.[3]**

[1]Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Machap, 86200 Simpang, Renggam, Johor, Malaysia
[2]Faculty of Technical and Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia.
[3]Center for Language Studies, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning (CL) as a 21st-century classroom teaching method has begun to be viewed as a form of active learning in Malaysia. Although CL has been applied and successfully implemented abroad, it is still considered difficult to put into practice among primary school teachers in Malaysia for improving English among primary school students. Primary school teachers are more comfortable with conventional teaching methods including using the national language, Bahasa Malaysia. In order to implement CL successfully, teachers require knowledge of CL, its features and terms and how it functions in classrooms. This qualitative study examined 10 primary school teachers' from the southern zone of Peninsular Malaysia on their understanding of CL and factors perceived to affect its implementation. Using Johnson and Johnson's (1994) features of CL and Bain, Lancaster and Zundans' (2009) list of CL terms as a framework for analysis, we found that the teachers' level of CL knowledge shaped their perception of the factors affecting its implementation in the classroom. However, more research is needed to explain how teachers' knowledge of CL can shape what teachers perceive as barriers to effective implementation that affect the success of CL in practice.

*Keywords:* Cooperative learning (CL), English proficiency, teachers' perception

## INTRODUCTION

Today's classrooms are diverse. Students have varying academic abilities, ethnic and cultural differences and special needs. These differences are compounded by the expectations of all students to participate in general classroom activities and perform well on state assessments. As teachers feel pressured to help students improve their performance on standardised tests, the need to implement alternative teaching methods has become more urgent. Teachers are currently faced with implementing effective strategies that can address the needs of their students. According to McLaren (2015), effective teachers spend their career learning better techniques that will help students succeed in school and in life. Mitchell (2014) noted that effective teachers have a variety of instructional strategies at their disposal and he recommended that teachers use research-based instructional strategies. One research-based method is cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning (CL) has been identified in the literature as a successful research- based teaching strategy in which small teams of diverse students use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject (Epstein, 2016; Slavin, 2015; Davidson, Major & Michaelsen, 2014). According to Pedersen and Digby (2014), CL involves a team in which students work in small groups to accomplish a common learning goal under the guidance of a teacher. Hertz-Lazarowitz, Kagan, Sharan, Slavin and Webb (2013) described teams as a set of interdependent individuals with unique skills and perspectives who interact directly to achieve their mutual goal.

Poor command of English among students should be given attention by all teachers especially for students who are poor in English communication. Moreover, teachers cannot let students be left behind without adequate English communication skills in a world that is becoming rapidly globalised as that would leave them unable to face the challenges of life (Spawa & Hassan, 2013). A study done by Ahmad, Abdullah and Ghani (2014) showed that the English teacher, especially in Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia, faced difficulties in teaching because 61% of the students were not proficient in and were hesitant to use the English language.

Numerous studies done by researchers have encouraged the use of CL in order to increase student achievement and social skills development especially in English (Kuo & Huang, 2015; Hill & Miller, 2013). Thus, this study will focus on primary school teachers' perception of CL especially in improving English proficiency among students. CL is an effective teaching strategy that allows students of various ability levels to work together in small teams to accomplish a specific goal (Johnson et al., 1998, p. 26).

## BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Many scholars have proven that CL is one of the best learning methods of the 21st century. Cooperation in the process of learning can give students a sense

of tranquillity that can help them learn better. CL relies on students' learning style (Johnson, Johnson, & Tjosvold, 2012, p. 15). Learning cooperative skills will enable students to take an active approach in their own learning. CL provides the opportunity for students to express ideas and discuss and interact with peers while learning through their own experience (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). Research conducted by Cheung, Slavin, Lake and Kim (2016) found that CL helped other researchers to practise this method in today's classes and also helped teachers to help students improve their grades.

According to Cohen (1993), Hintz (1990) and Rich (1990), the employment of a new methodology and the improvement of classroom instruction can only come about through the teacher's efforts. The success or failure of a new educational idea depends greatly on the role of the classroom teacher; therefore it is important to recognise the existence of salient concerns of teachers regarding innovation. Whether or not change actually becomes practice depends on the individual teacher. Hintz's analysis of lessons taught using CL did not show enhancement in student achievement largely due to the teacher's deviation from the ideas of CL offered by the research.

In this paper, researchers argue that teachers require knowledge of CL features and terms and how these features function to implement CL successfully in their practice with the aim of helping students improve their English proficiency. To discover the teachers' existing knowledge of CL and factors perceived to affect its implementation, this study examined the perception of Malaysian primary school teachers. This study examined teachers' knowledge of CL terms and functions (i.e. CL pattern language) and compared it with CL features and terms described by Johnson and Johnson (1989) and Bain, Lancaster and Zundans. (2009). It also examined how teachers' level of CL knowledge shaped how they perceived and managed various factors affecting the practice of CL. Determining and understanding teachers' knowledge of CL pattern language and how this affects their CL implementation (or lack thereof) is important because the findings will provide information for teacher training and professional development programmes (Ministry of Education).

## THE UNDERLYING FEATURES OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING (CL)

Seminal researchers in CL, such as Slavin (1989), have slightly different approaches to CL; however, they share common elements for its structure. For the purpose of this study, Johnson and Johnson's (1994) titles of the key characteristics of this approach used in the 'Learning Together Model' have been summarised below to provide an understanding of CL principles or features:

1. Positive interdependence exists when group members perceive that they are linked with each other in a way that one cannot succeed unless everyone succeeds.

2. Individual and group accountability refers to the group being accountable

for achieving its goals, but also to each member being accountable for his or her contribution and for learning the material.

3. Face-to-face promotive interaction occurs when members share resources, such as learning material, as well as help, support, encourage and praise each other's efforts. Promotive interaction aims to enhance group cohesion.

4. Teaching students the required interpersonal and small group skills, such as communication, positive reinforcement, constructive feedback and problem solving skills, is necessary in addition to teaching them academic subject matter.

5. Group processing exists when group members reflect on how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships and then make adjustments accordingly.

Johnson and Johnson (1994), among other researchers, argued that these five underlying principles must be implemented simultaneously in order for CL to be effective in the classroom (Dyson & Grineski, 2001; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1989). In their study on pattern language development, Bain et al. (2009) listed the following terms under CL within their "Pattern Language Lexicon": Face-to-face interaction; positive interdependence; interpersonal skills; focus on group processes; individual accountability; social cohesion; cognitive elaboration; metacognition; procedural; declarative;

all levels of learning; differentiation; and motivation. The researchers were interested in the teachers' use of these terms and their knowledge of the CL features outlined above when they were asked to describe their understanding and experience of CL in order to improve English proficiency among primary school students. In this study, researchers focussed on the perception of teachers in the use of these terms and their knowledge of the CL features outlined above when they were asked to describe their understanding and experience of CL in improving English proficiency among primary school students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Cooperative learning (CL) in improving English proficiency

In recent years, several researchers and instructors uncovered many benefits of CL. During CL activities, students work with their peers to achieve and complete shared goals. Instead of working alone, the goals are reached through interdependence between cooperative group members. All group members are responsible for achieving the common goals. CL is today one of the most popular methods in teaching and learning, and has been shown to have positive effects on various outcomes (Pedersen & Digby, 2014). Based on Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1993), CL is an instructional method whereby students in small groups collaborate to maximise one another's learning and to achieve mutual goals. This methodology has been widely used to teach various educational subjects such

as Mathematics and English (Bolukbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011; Meng, 2010; Law, 2011). Most studies on the effectiveness of CL have consistently indicated that this methodology promotes higher achievement, more positive interpersonal relationships and higher self-esteem than do competitive or individualistic efforts (Ning, 2013). Partridge and Eamoraphan (2015) and Mohamad (2013) indicated that English reading materials could be learnt through social interaction by undergoing re-definition and reconceptualisation of the materials to become internalised. English reading skills are enhanced in a learning environment in which learners interact and use language for socially constructing meaning (Zoghi, Mustapha, & Massum, 2010). Furthermore, research findings by Selamat, Esa, Salleh and Baba (2012) showed that additional classes could improve performance in learning and extend students' excellence. Practically employed CL helps learners participate in reading lessons effectively, creates an abundant and healthy English-learning environment, makes language learning more meaningful and increases acquisition (Bolukbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011). Teacher roles should also shift from being knowledge transmitters to thought mediators. Teacher mediation involves facilitating, modelling and coaching. Based on Hennessey and Dionigi (2013), to become as effective facilitator, teachers must intervene and assist in the problem-solving process, assess group interactions and monitor how students are developing their language skills, all of which allows

them to make changes where needed to enhance student learning. Creating a safe, non-threatening and learner-centred environment is also important for teachers to ensure that all students have the opportunity to contribute to achieving group goals (Ning, 2011).

## METHOD

### Participant sample

Ten participants were recruited using Snowball sampling (Creswell & Plano, 2011). The teachers were initially contacted and identified by colleagues who might be interested in participating in the study. Approval was gained from the Ministry of Education prior to data collection, and each participant gave informed consent. Teachers ranged in years of teaching experience, from one to 10 years in teaching the English language. The participants were selected from five primary schools in the southern zone of Peninsular Malaysia. Five participants were from Teacher Education Colleges (CTE), four had completed their educational degree from the same university and the remaining one participant had graduated from an overseas tertiary institution.

## DATA COLLECTION

The semi-structured interview was used to examine teachers' understanding of the term 'cooperative learning' (CL) (Research Question 1) and the factors they perceived to affect its implementation (Research Question 2). Each participant

was informed of the topic before their interview. The interviews were about 20-45 minutes long depending on the participant. Each interview began with a screening question: What do you understand by the term 'cooperative learning' (CL)? Depending upon this initial response, the interviewer classified the participants into one of three categories (limited, general or detailed understanding of CL) and posed different questions accordingly. Table 1 shows the interview schedule based on the initial classification.

Table 1
*Fuzzy Delphi technique*

| Limited | General | Detailed |
|---|---|---|
| Cooperative learning:<br>- Small groups work<br>- Group goals<br>- Group characteristics<br>  * mixed abilities<br>  * mixed genders<br>  * two to six members<br>- Individual accountability<br>- Equal opportunity<br>- Team competition<br><br>• What opportunities do you feel exist for using cooperative learning in the classroom?<br>• How do you think you could use this strategy?<br>• What barriers might inhibit your use of cooperative learning? | • Do you use cooperative learning in your classroom?<br>• How do you use cooperative learning in your classroom?<br>• What opportunities do you feel exist for using cooperative learning in the classroom?<br>• What barriers might inhibit your use of cooperative learning?<br>• What do you need to know to make the implementation of cooperative learning successful?<br>• How did you learn about cooperative learning? | • How do you use this strategy in the classroom?<br>• What opportunities do you feel exist for using cooperative learning in the classroom?<br>• What barriers might inhibit your use of cooperative learning?<br>• What do you believe teachers need to know and understand about cooperative learning to ensure they can successfully implement cooperative learning?<br>• How did you learn about this strategy? |

As the dialogue progressed, the interviewer moved flexibly between categories in order to ask a range of questions to accurately represent the full extent of the participant's CL knowledge. For instance, if the participant demonstrated deeper understanding of CL than the interviewer had initially thought, then the interviewer asked a question from a higher categorisation to probe for further knowledge. Essentially, the three categories acted as a loose guide for selecting questions to probe participants' depth of CL knowledge and use. Each participant's categorisation (i.e. limited, general or detailed) was only finalised during the analysis stage, as explained below.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were audio-taped, then transcribed and read several times. Initially, each transcript was coded

using three codes: i) understanding, ii) opportunities, and iii) barriers. The codes, 'opportunities' and 'barriers', focussed on those factors that affected each English teacher's implementation of CL. This intra-textual analysis approach (Wiedemann, 2013) resulted in the identification of raw data themes within each English teacher's transcript that represented the factors affecting CL.

The code 'understanding' was further divided into 'limited', 'general' and 'detailed' by comparing English teacher knowledge of CL terms and functions against CL features and terms described by Johnson and Johnson (1994) and Bain et al. (2009). A word search of each transcript found that none of the English teachers used the specific terms outlined by Bain et al. (2009); however, a couple of English teachers made reference to them. Therefore, 'limited' referred to participants having minimal or no understanding of the underlying principles of CL as defined by Johnson and Johnson (1994) and others (e.g. Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1989), as well as no use of the CL pattern language terms identified by Bain et al. (2009). 'General' referred to those participants who displayed an understanding of some CL features, functions and terms, but did not use Bain et al.'s (2009) CL pattern language terms. 'Detailed' referred to the participants who articulated all or most of the principles of CL and who frequently showed an understanding of CL pattern language in their responses (Table 2).

The next phase of analysis involved the researchers examining the common themes across the whole data set, with particular attention being given to how the teachers' level of CL knowledge shaped their perception of the factors affecting its implementation. This approach is called inter-textual analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and it allowed the researchers to link similar raw data themes that were represented across individual participants together, drop irrelevant themes and develop higher order themes (more refined concepts) to ensure that themes specifically addressed the two research questions. For example, the raw themes 'working together', 'student training' and 'teacher control' were merged to develop the higher order theme of 'teacher planning and control'. To facilitate consensus and verification of the representativeness and interpretation of the codes derived from the interviews, on-going discussion among the researchers occurred, enabling critical reflection on the emergent themes. The researchers only focussed on teachers' level of understanding and teacher planning and control as the key themes regarding CL knowledge and factors perceived to affect the implementation of CL in primary schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' level of understanding

Teachers' CL knowledge affected the way they perceived and managed the factors of

teachers' level of understanding and teacher control and planning. Table 2 shows that of the 10 participants in this study, half were categorised as having limited understanding of CL (three female and two male teachers).

Of the remaining participants, three were seen as having general understanding (three females, one male) and two showed detailed understanding (two females and one male).

Table 2
*Participant demographic details*

| Pseudonym | Gender | Teaching status | Teaching experience | CL knowledge categorisation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mr Ali | Male | Permanent | 3-5 Years | Limited |
| Mr Syafiq | Male | Permanent | 3-5 Years | Limited |
| Miss Elizabeth | Female | Temporary | 0-2 Years | Limited |
| Miss Nadia | Female | Permanent | 0-2 Years | Limited |
| Miss Khaltom | Female | Permanent | 3-5 Years | Limited |
| Mr Salvan | Male | Temporary | 3-5 Years | General |
| Mr Lim | Female | Temporary | 3-5 Years | General |
| Mrs Suri | Female | Permanent | 10 + Years | General |
| Mr Kamal | Male | Temporary | 0-2 Years | Detailed |
| Mr Ng | Male | Permanent | 10 + Years | Detailed |

Table 2 shows that half of the participants demonstrated 'limited' CL knowledge (Mr Ali, Mr Syafiq, Miss Elizabeth, Miss Nadia). This suggested that there were still teachers who lacked knowledge of CL. Not all teachers have deep knowledge of CL and are not serious and regular about applying this method in their classes. Miss Elizabeth equated group work with CL and did not appear to realise that CL extends beyond traditional group work (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1993). Miss Elizabeth's response illustrates a number of misconceptions about students' ability to perform particular roles. Johnson and Johnson (1994) argued that

every student should be provided with the opportunity to develop the skills needed to fulfil different roles. Bain et al. (2009) used the phrases "all levels of learning" and "focus on group processes" to describe CL language pattern but Miss Elizabeth assumed that the role of the leader had to be filled by a student who was perceived to be of higher ability. She appeared to assume that the lower achiever was the one who benefitted from the group process, a situation which can lead to a breakdown of positive interdependence and individual and group accountability, as articulated by Johnson and Johnson (1994).

Statements by Mr Salvan, Mr Lim and Mrs Suri articulate more clearly their 'general' level articulate CL knowledge. This response highlights the characteristic of positive interdependence as a way of structuring CL (Bain et al., 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Although Mr Salvan admitted, "I've mostly had experience with Year One and I haven't used it very much because it's very hard to do especially in English subject and not suitable for the young students...." Mr Salvan implied that the age of students (Year One students are 6 or 7 years old) and the difficult teacher planning and control that are required for effective CL implementation restricted his usage of this approach.

Table 3 shows further that Mr Kamal and Mr Ng provided a more 'detailed' understanding of CL. Mr Ng's response demonstrated a recognition of three principles of CL (Johnson & Johnson, 1994): positive interdependence, by "... children working together ..."; promotive interaction, by "... getting the children to teach each other ..." and students promoting the success of others through encouragement and support; and, students being taught social and team building skills and then using them to work collaboratively. It also demonstrated recognition of the teacher's role as a facilitator. Although Mr Kamal did not use the exact CL pattern language terms outlined by Bain et al. (2009), he did describe 'face-to-face interaction', 'positive interdependence', 'interpersonal skills', 'social cohesion' and 'all levels of learning' in his explanation above. Besides that, Mr Kamal provided more detailed understanding of CL, showing that he was thinking out of the box i.e. that he could interpreted the effect of the implementation of CL, especially in improving communication and social skills that are suitable and appropriate for 21st century student teaching and learning.

## Teacher planning and control

Teachers with a general and limited understanding of CL expressed difficulty in planning and control, whereas the teachers with a detailed understanding recognised the need for a delicate balance between teacher control and student autonomy. To achieve the latter, it was acknowledged that careful teacher planning is required. Mr Ng (detailed) explained that in CL settings some children sought to be uninvolved in the group process. He believed that the 'free-rider problem' (Slavin, 2014; Dingel, Wei, & Huq, 2013) only occurs if there is a lack of teacher planning and control in the learning environment.

Table 3
*Participant's level of understanding cooperative learning (CL) knowledge*

| Pseudonym | CL knowledge categorisation | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Ali | Limited | "The cooperative learning methodologies that I know are group work and discussion." "Cooperative learning involves group work. Right…" |
| Mr Syafiq | Limited | "I don't have much understanding of it...it's something to do with group work and working as a team". |
| Miss Elizabeth | Limited | ... I have used group work ... you can get around to each group and see what they're doing, I try and make it so that there is a higher achiever that can sort of control the group, and then a lower achiever so they can benefit ... the higher achiever can help the lower achiever. |
| Miss Nadia | Limited | Cooperative learning is "one of the teaching approaches"…. that uses "the strategy of groupings, putting pupils in smaller groups with different competencies." |
| Miss Khaltom | Limited | "Cooperative learning is a method that is used in classes whereby pupils are grouped…such that when they are given tasks they contribute ideas." "Cooperative learning to me is the children working cooperatively in small groups through research tasks or they undertake lessons or activities and it's more child-centred and directed rather than teacher- directed." |
| Mr Salvan | Limited | I've mostly had experience with teaching in English subject about one year and I haven't used it very much because it's very hard to do especially in English subject and not suitable for young students...." |
| Mr Lim | General | "Cooperative learning means involving the students to cooperate and share knowledge and what they know together and finally they present… It is almost similar to group discussion…" |
| Mrs Suri | General | "Cooperative learning is a type of learning where children are grouped according to age, sex and ability and the activity given is done as a group." "Cooperative learning is one of the methods of teaching where students work together in groups during the teaching and learning process." |
| Mr Kamal | Detailed | "It is an approach where children actually learn collaboratively in groups and it targets the development of social skills, and the same time teaching of content." |
| Mr Ng | Detailed | "Cooperative learning to me would be children working together ... to develop an understanding of what is being taught ... first off maybe individual instructions by the teacher and then moving together to get the children to teach each other, because the way they explain it to each other is at their level, and much better than the way the teacher can actually explain it to them. So, we give them some sort of guidance and then allow for the students to do their own building and teaching to each other" |

Guzzetti, Young, Gritsavage, Fyfe and Hardenbrook (2013) stated that the majority of teaching in schools is characterised by teacher control and student submissiveness and powerlessness, in essence a teacher-directed learning environment. However, a student-centred learning environment, which is more conducive to CL, provides students with opportunities to explore, examine and critique content and concepts whilst applying their knowledge, understanding and skills to solve real-life problems (Slavin, 1996).

For teachers, however, it may be difficult to relinquish control of their students. For instance, teachers with a general and limited understanding of CL saw lack of teacher direction as a barrier. As Mr Ali (limited) stated, lack of understanding of CL can make it difficult to practise CL in the classroom, especially among students who are not proficient in English. Mr Salvan (general) also gave the same idea that most teachers still do not have the confidence to use CL because it requires advance planning methods and the amount of time for English language in school is not enough. Moreover, Mrs Suri (general) and Mr Lim (general) believed that that some teachers might not employ CL because they perceived that allowing for more student control could increase behavioural management issues and lack of student focus. They also argued that there was no training regarding the implementation of CL at primary schools. Miss Khaltom (limited) stated that there was no specific module on CL that could guide teachers. On the other hand, Mr Kamal (detailed) believed that barriers to implementing CL could be easily overcome by teachers themselves. In this instance, Mr Kamal expressed the stereotype that good teaching is an individual trait. This assumption, however, can be problematic because it assumes that teachers cannot be taught how to change their practice (Pattanpichet, 2011; Elmore, 1996, 2007).

Table 4
*Teacher planning and control based on cooperative learning (CL) knowledge*

| Pseudonym | CL knowledge categorisation | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Ali | Limited | "Teachers still feel a lack of understanding and difficulty to practise the method of cooperative learning in the classroom especially for student who are not proficiency in English…". |
| Mrs Khlatom | Limited | "…I found out there was no special modules to provide guidance for English teachers to implement cooperative learning method in the classroom …." |
| Mr Salvan | General | "When I was entrusted to educate English subject at primary schools, most teachers still do not have the confidence to use cooperative learning method because it requires advance planning methods and the amount of time for the English subject is not enough ...." |

Table 4 *(continue)*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Lim | General | "Another barrier is there's no teacher-direction. Not no teacher-direction, but say certain points that a group can be working without teacher direction and then list some key elements that if the teacher was there they'd have to focus their attention on that." |
| Mrs Liza | General | "I think very young teachers are frightened about implementing cooperative learning approaches. It's difficult to implement than traditional method…" |
| Mr Kamal | Detailed | "... they're only there if you set them ... I don't see any barriers there to it. It comes down to the individual; do you want to do it or don't you? Do you want to include the children in the decision-making process? It's up to the individual to come to terms with that and go for it." |
| Mr Ng | Detailed | "... children who will tend to allow other children to do all the work for them, children feel lazy and thinking like 'well, good, group work, I can sit back and have a rest.." |

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this study does not highlight the challenges that teachers' face when attempting to implement an instructional methodology that is well theorised and advocated, but not well embedded in teacher training nor traditionally supported in schools. The study showed that only two teachers in the sample had knowledge of CL pattern language required to meet Johnson and Johnson (1994) and Bain, Lancaster and Zundans' (2009) criteria. Moreover, this study showed that the extent to which factors were perceived as barriers to CL, or issues that could be effectively managed by teachers, differed depending on the teacher's knowledge of CL features and function. On the other hand, few teachers who had a more sophisticated understanding of CL features, functions and language pattern could describe more effective CL practice or provide preliminary evidence to support the view that when teachers have this pattern language and understand it they can have effective practice (Zoghi, Mustapha, & Maasum, 2010; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 2000). Coupling this outcome with the finding that most teachers in the sample had limited knowledge and practice of CL reinforces the need for the embedded design of CL pattern language in teacher training (Bain et al., 2009) and continuous structural support (above management) for the implementation of CL in primary schools (Putnam, 1998; Veenman et al., 2000).

As explored by Whitehead (2014), a large number of teachers who have started to use CL do not receive support from instructors, administrators, schools or colleges, and teachers normally learn about CL through one-off workshops or on their own initiative. Without repeated exposure to CL language pattern throughout teacher training programmes or the reinforcement of this language in on-going professional development courses, how can we expect teachers to adopt CL effectively in practice?

How can we improve practice in education on a larger scale if teachers do not have the required professional language pattern to manage the barriers and to implement CL successfully? How can students improve their proficiency in English if teachers lack knowledge of CL?

Further research needs to be done to consider primary school teachers' understanding and definition of CL, their preparedness to employ CL in the classroom and their experience of using this approach. Also, given that the researchers did not assess the implementation of CL in this study, a follow-up could involve testing the influence of teachers' CL knowledge on the implementation of CL and measuring the effects of the mediating factors identified in the current study, such as the teachers' perception of the need to control. Gaining more insight into teachers' perceptions, uses and understanding of CL will shed light on how to: (a) effectively address the (perceived and actual) barriers faced by teachers in their unique context; and, (b) manage the on-going challenges of translating theory into practice on a larger scale across schools.

Although the study findings indicate that CL was not fully implemented as a 21st-century teaching method, participants in this study still had a positive attitude towards CL as a teaching approach that can lead to improvement of classroom instruction. In summary, based on the above study, for the success of teaching methods or approaches, whether CL or other teaching methods, the most important requirements are full understanding of the method by the teachers and support by the top management seen in the provision of enough facilities and training for teachers.

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