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THE CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED MALAYSIAN IDENTITY IN THE UPPER SECONDARY ENGLISH LITERATURE CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, ethnic and cultural tension and conflicts have escalated in the past 5 years bringing undesirable impacts on the nation's economy and, most importantly,on inter-ethnic relationships. In line with the government's 1Malaysia effort to produce a more integrated society, this study proposes the need to construct a shared Malaysian identity, starting from the classroom, which is facilitated by teachers through the use of Malaysian short stories. This proposition, amidst the differences in cultural, religious and beliefs systems, aims to close the ethnic and cultural divide and cultivate widespread inter and intra cultural awareness. The study is grounded in the notion of hybridity in the Third Space espoused by Bhabha (1994) and ameliorated and geared towards the classroom context by the works of Gutiérrez (1999, 2004, 2008). The inquiry was designed using primarily qualitative research instruments employing non-participant classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with 7 English Language teachers, and group interviews with 6 groups of students from 4 different schools in Kuala Lumpur. A one-day workshop was also conducted with the 7 teachers to introduce new Malaysian short stories and also for the purpose of sharing experiences in teaching literature in English. This data source was then supported by secondary quantitative data derived from self-completion questionnaires administered to the students of the teachers involved in this study.The findings from the analyses of the resultsshowvariousattitudes, beliefs and teaching and practices in the English language classroom in response to the notion ofconstructing a shared identity in the Third Space. The notion of the hidden curriculum is also investigated to determine how it can be usefully theorise towardsidentity construction in the classroom. On the one hand, students mainly accepted the shared identity concept as a basis for classroom practice, whilst teachers had a range of views about this idea. In the conclusion, the thesis explores the implications of the classroom practices adopted by the teachers in this study as part of the process of constructing a shared Malaysian identity. It also examines the plausibility of and barriers to creating an awareness of the Third Space through the use of narratives produced by local writers, both as a medium for developing the skills to access the Third Space and also as the container of messages about Malaysian society and identity. Finally, this study suggests the way forward for realising the country's aspiration of a unified society and becoming a full-fledged developed country, which can possibly start in the classrooms.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKGTH	Ah Khaw Goes to Heaven
CoP	Community of Practice
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ESL	English as a Second Language
GI	Group Interview
HC	Hidden Curriculum
HOL	Head of Languages
JPWP	Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan
KBSM	Kurrikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
PBL	Peach Blossom Luck
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SMI	Shared Malaysian Identity
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SSI	Semi Structured Interview
TDFD	The Deep Fried Devils

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Prologue

A senior citizen (Malay origin) shared one of her many 'inter-cultural' experiences of living in a multiethnic Malaysia. She said:

During those days…there were three popular phrases used by people in this community (Translated version from Bahasa Malaysia)

Kelambu Cina (A mosquito net belongs to a Chinese man)

Basikal India (A bicycle belongs to an Indian man)

Janji Melayu (A promise is made by a Malay man)

(Personal communication)

The phrases above were common stereotypes used in the 1950s to 1970s by members of the Malaysian community to mock each other. It was quite fascinating as I had only heard about the 'Malay promises' and the way in which people in the community 'relate' to each other in a number of unusual ways.

So what do these stereotypes imply? One thing the three stereotypes above have in common is that the objects (the mosquito net, the bicycle and the promise) in relation to each ethnic group are all worthless. Why are they of no value? The underlying meaning was that the Chinese and the Indian optimised their usage of their mosquito nets and bicycles so that others were no longer able to reuse or recycle them. And as for the Malays, it seemed to

connote that no one should believe a promise made by a Malay man because Malays often break promises. These stereotypical utterances are considered to have been mild, compared to other more current ethnic stereotypes conveyed sporadically by word of mouth or through the media and the web.

Although the stereotypes quoted above are almost confined to history, other stereotypical phrases have emerged which remain quite common today such as questioning a person's ethnic background if s/he speaks more than two languages such as Bahasa Melayu (Malay) and Mandarin (Chinese). Due to the higher occurrence nowadays of inter-marriages between members of different ethnic groups in Malaysia, the children of these marriages have blurred the boundaries between race, ethnicity and also language. The desire to know the origins of a person does not necessarily spring from foreigners, but from fellow Malaysians. The question now is whether an individual's ethnicity still plays a crucial role in this ever evolving multiracial community. The answer is 'Yes' as this study will show by providing evidence that it is through ethnicity that Malaysians most strongly identify themselves.

One student related his experience of stereotyping in a group interview during the data collection period of this study:

> I have heard of one [stereotype] by the Malays…no offence to the Indians… [He spoke in Malay]; (orang tua-tua dulu ada mengata kan…kalau terjumpa ular dan orang India semasa dalam perjalanan…bunuh orang India tu dulu) [**My translation**: In the olden days, people used to say that if you accidentally bump into both a snake (python) and an Indian during your journey… you have to kill the Indian first before the python].
> (PU64 AH,M)

The stereotype above according to my understanding was a means to describe an Indian as sly, untrustworthy, conniving and more dangerous than a snake. Ethnic stereotyping is still largely endemic and is a common

occurrence in a multicultural society such as Malaysia. Burgess (2003) believes that people generally start to stereotype others when they are reluctant or unable to acquire enough information to make a judgment about the personbeing stereotyped.

Stereotyping (and it can be positive or negative) is widespread, and not uncommon. Negative stereotyping causes a lot of discomfort in society as it can damage good inter-ethnic relationships and lead to feelings of anguish and distress by those who are the target of the stereotyping. These feelings, which could be intensified in a moment, could lead to catastrophic consequences. For instance, the act of stereotyping has divided people of different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia even further as ethnic-based turmoil has been on the rise in the last five years. An example of this conflict was the rally staged by the Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) first in 2007 and subsequently followed by many other similar demonstrations which, according to the Prime Minister and reported by Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA), created bad publicity for Malaysia and caused a huge tensioning of relations among the different communities in Malaysia. (http://www.mmail.com.my/content/64990-hindraf-deliberately-creating-bad-publicity-malaysia-says-pm).

1.2   Motivation for the Study

The negative stereotyping mentioned above, the increase in inter-ethnic discontent and the awareness that these issues should be adequately and efficiently addressed created the impetus for carrying out this study. This study does not aim to produce solutions to the problems of a fragmented

society but to suggest and recommend ways in which teachers can construct a Third Space where differences in beliefs and customs can be put aside and potential cultural collisions can be amicably neutralised.

Specifically, I decided that the investigation of these issues should spring from the domain of educational institutions (secondary school) where I was once a student and also an educator. I strongly believe that the education system has a role to play in shaping the country's citizens. Researchers have long argued that the Malaysian educational system is partly to blame for the further disintegration of the multiethnic society of Malaysia (Prabakaran, 2008), due to its multiple types of school (National, vernacular, private) systems.

Heterogeneity in the Malaysian school system has divided students from their various backgrounds even further. The chances of getting a group of multicultural students in a classroom are far slimmer in the rural areas than in schools situated in the urban areas. The classroom composition in the urban areas displays a different pattern depending on the location of the schools. With this imbalance, Malaysia's existence as a multicultural nation lies more in name than in reality. In essence, it is a nation which is still deeply segregated and fragmented economically, culturally and also psychologically. This is the driving force behind my study.

Research investigating ethnic relationships and differences in different settings has long been carried out in Malaysia, including studies of classroom settings. As far as this research is concerned, however, hitherto, no study has investigated multiethnic students' discursive engagement concerning the

possibilities of exploiting Malaysian short stories[1] in the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2004, 2008; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carillo & Collazo, 2004). The main aim of this investigation therefore, is to delve into the issue of ethnic disparity, which inevitably generates gaps (in communication and relationships) in the classroom and to find ways in which these gaps could be bridged.

1.3 Background and Context of the Study

Malaysia was shaken by an abhorrent racial riot mainly between Chinese and Malays in 1969. This watershed event marked the beginning of the implementation of various new policies by the ruling government to support the Malay section of the population. Singh and Mukherjee (1993:90) allege that:

> The outburst of racial violence in May 1969 completely changed the ethnic equation in Malaysia, bringing to the fore the urgent need for strengthening Malay political will to improve the socio-economic position of the Malays.

These policies favouring the Malays subsequently caused dissatisfaction among people from other ethnic backgrounds, hence worsening interethnic relations. Scholars felt compelled to research what might be the best way to address racial unrest and conflicts amongst Malaysians. Thus, research in the areas of nation building, nationhood and national identity began to be encouraged by the Malaysian government.

Whilst the issues of national integration indubitably demand the amalgamation of shared values so that all the people within a society can co-

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[1] Malaysian short stories characterise all ethnic communities in Malaysia.

exist peacefully, the notion of shared identity is still unclear, blurred and eludes Malaysian people. It is interesting to note that there is perhaps a clearer awareness of ethnic identity than there is of national identity in the case of Malaysia (Tan, 2005).Thus, the government through many of its campaigns has, and still is trying to nurture in citizens the idea of the importance of having a shared identity accessible to all.

1.3.1   1Malaysia Political Initiative

The question of how Malaysia can achieve unity in diversity and a shared common identity is of great concern to the government in the current situation where conflicts amongst the different ethnic groups have intensified and caused a lot of discontent, turmoil and divisions. These conflicts can be examined and viewed through the different lenses of some Malays, Chinese and Indians' perceptions of the current situation in the country. I should stress that these views are not general views advocated by people from different ethnic groups but more the views that originate from groups of people. Thus, the 1Malaysia concept is actively promoted to disseminate this idea of unity in diversity.

The core concept of 1Malaysia (One Malaysia) promoted by the current government is to uphold national unity and improve the relations between Malaysians from diverse backgrounds. It caters to the needs of all sectors of the plural society and ensures equal distribution of wealth between racial groups, between states and federal government.

The Malay Mail (17th May, 2010) reported that:

> As Malaysians, we have a vital role to play in helping to realise the nation's aspirations and visions. Without unity and loyalty to the

nation in a diverse country like ours, all our efforts to achieve a better life for our citizens will be futile.

http://www.mmail.com.my/content/36533-1malaysia-concept-moving-forward-one-nation

In responding to this initiative, this current investigation explores students and teachers' understanding about this 1Malaysia concept and the extent to which they believe they have the role to play in the achievement of a more integrated society. In addition, this study also explores the degree to which the education sector, specifically in the teaching of literature, could contribute in the quest for a firm inter-ethnic understanding of the need to create a common identity which is acceptable to people from different ethnic backgrounds so they can all contribute to the notion of collective identity.

1.4 Overview andAims of the Study

It should be clarified at the outset that this investigation started by virtue of its empirical contingency. By this I mean that the data collection conducted was not guided by any pre-determined theoretical constructs. Pre-selected themes were used as a guide for data generation; however, the theoretical constructs emerged from the analysis. (This is elaborated further in Chapter Four). This emergence of the theory from the data analysis paved the way for the discussion of the findings (in Chapter Seven). The theoretical constructs that emerged from the analysis include Hybridity Theory (Bhabha, 1994), which then led to the Third Space Theory (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, 2004, 2008; Moje et al.2004). These theories are discussed in Chapter Three.

Fundamentally, this study attempts to examine the perceptions of teachers and students about whether and how narratives taught in multicultural

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classrooms can construct a sense of shared Malaysian identity among students. Schools identified consisted of two co-ed schools, one all-girls and one all-boys schools. Using interviews, classroom observations, group interviews and self-completion questionnaires with the teacher and student respondents, I aspire to identify whether teachers' classroom practices (and instructions) have any impact on students' interactions with each other during task completion.Student interactions could be the gateway to the construction of both 'self' and 'group' identity.

The results obtained aim to be informative in pointing to the viability of facilitating shared Malaysian identity construction using selected Malaysian short stories. From the analysis, I then used Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity for locating the Third Space. Concurrently, I explored the similarities and differences between teachers and students' perceptions within similar themes and linked these perceptions to aspects of the hidden curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jackson, 1968; Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Snyder, 1970). The hidden curriculum according to Day (2007:535) refers to a '*subtle, tacit understanding about how the curriculum is structured and delivered*'. She further explains that the hidden curriculum compasses the things students learn in school which are not clearly included '*in organisational arrangements and the formal curriculum*' (ibid). The hidden curriculum is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. As this investigation looks specifically at English language teachers teaching the literature component of the English language curriculum, an overview of ESL teaching and learning is necessary to contextualise this study (English language is a compulsory subject for all students in public and private schools

in Malaysia). A brief examination of ESL syllabus is presented in section 1.6 below.

1.5   Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two main research questions:

1. **To what extent do teachers and students feel that they have a role to play in furthering the government's 1Malaysia concept for producing a more integrated society?**

2. **To what extent can the classroom use of Malaysian short stories be helpful in the construction of shared Malaysian identity?**

In order to answer theseresearch questions, I attempt to identify teachers' perceptions of their students' classroom interactions while studying selected Malaysian short stories; explore students' perceptions of their engagement with their peers and the texts selected by their teachers in their literature lessons; investigate in what ways discursive engagement in the Third Space in a hybrid multicultural classroom can help to develop a sense of shared identity and investigate in what ways differences and similarities of perceptions between students and teachers can be usefully theorised in terms of the hidden curriculum.

1.6   English Language Teachingand the teaching of literature in Malaysian classrooms.

1.6.1   Literature and Language Teaching

It should be clarified at the outset that this investigation made limited and instrumental use of literature in that the short stories were employed as a

tool in promoting the construction of shared Malaysian identity. They were not used, for example,to explorein depth the different era in which a particular story was set or the aesthetic value of their particular literary culture. The study of form and function was less important than the exploration of themes which related to national and cultural identity. Literature - in - language education in the late 1970s has shifted from a focus on language purely as a system and structure towards a concern with the ways in which language is used by speakers (Kaur & Wijasuriya, 2004). Carter and Long (1991) have classified the models of literature teaching into three, namely the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model. The cultural model is a more traditional approach to teaching literature in which literary texts are viewed as products without any specific language work done on a text. Language model approach concentrates on the way language is used including a focus on grammar, vocabulary, stylistics and linguistic features of the texts. The personal growth model which is a more learner-centred approach to literature teaching encourages learners to draw on their own interpretation, opinion and personal experiences of the texts.

The teaching of literature in Malaysia has also evolved from the cultural model towards personal growth model since the incorporation of a literature component in the English language syllabus.With this approach which was introduced to the Malaysian literature teaching context, larger output of studies was produced to discuss the advantages and limitations in light of among others, student and teacher understanding towards teaching and learning the subject, motivation and literature appreciation, (Sidhu & Chan,

2010; Sivapalan & Subramaniam, 2008; Subramaniam, 2003, Subramaniam & Vethamani, 2007; Quayum,2008).

1.6.2 The Teaching of English as a Second Language

The Malaysian education system provides eleven years of basic compulsory education to every child in the country consisting of six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education and two years of upper secondary education. This structure is designed to work towards the principle of universal primary and secondary education. One of the major roles of the Malaysian educational system is to promote unity among the different racial and ethnic groups (Education Act 1961). To achieve this goal, after independence (1957), the system adopted a common language, curriculum and public examinations (for public national and 'vernacular schools' (Chinese and Tamil medium schools)), although within different types of school system: the Malay medium, the English medium and vernacular schools systems.After 1970, the English medium school system was abolished. By 1980, the process of the change of the medium of instruction from English to Malay was complete. The positive ramification of this act was that the English language was taught as a second language and hence became accessible to all pupils in all schools rather than to a minority elite group educated in English-medium schools (Ali,1995).

From 1970 onwards, the English language was taught as a compulsory subject throughout the eleven years of mandatory education, with at least five to seven hours teaching a week. Due to its importance as a subject in schools, English is treated and perceived as a second language rather than a foreign language due to its function as one of the main tools for

communication, particularly in trade and industry and especially in an international context. The teaching of English language in Malaysia is in accordance with the National Education Philosophy, which is based on the concept of lifelong education geared towards the development of a morally upright person who is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically integrated (Mustapha, 2008).

The design for the English Language Secondary School Syllabus (Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah) is a notional-functional syllabus witha theoretical basis in the communicative approach. Its aims are to equip students with the communicative skills and competence to perform language functions using the correct language forms and structures. The syllabus was arranged according to themes which are drawn from familiar contexts such as the home, school, community, friendship and so on. These themes provide the context through which the language skills and language content are to be taught in an integrated manner. This approach was introduced and implemented to produce more competent English language users in future generations.

However, according to Murugesan (2003), despite the move to introduce different types of approach and initiatives in delivering English language teaching in schools, a sharp decline in English language proficiency became apparent although measures were taken to prevent further decline.

> The decline is largely due to the backwash effect from a change implemented in the early 1960s and 1970s when *Bahasa Malaysia* replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools and as the language used for official matters. (Murugesan, ESL Magazine, March/April 2003)

Abu Samah (2008) however questions whether there was a real decline in the command of the English language in the 1980s to the 1990s as she claims that there was no empirical study done. Nevertheless, one of the measures taken to combat the decline of the English language proficiency was the introduction of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English starting from 2003 onwards. Abu Samah (2008) provides empirical evidence in her research around the new policy of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, in which she states that there was an increase of students' performance in the English language at the SPM level, from 49.9% passes in 1982 to 63.8% passes in 2000.

However, in a recent development, with intense pressure from the Malay nationalists, the teaching of Science and Mathematics will be taught once again in Bahasa Melayu starting January 2012 (The Star Online, 2009). There are still ongoing debates about this issue. Nonetheless, I personally feel that the decision will have some impact to the teaching of English, directly or indirectly.

English language is a compulsory subject both in the mainstream public schools and vernacular schools. The mainstream public schools start English language lessons from Year 1 (7 year-olds) to Form 5 (17 year-olds) of about 200 minutes a week, while in vernacular schools(Tamil and Chinese primary schools), English language starts in Year 1 to 6 and from Junior Middle to Senior Middle (6 years) with at least 60 minutes minimum allocation for this subject per week. School administrators can use their discretion in the allocation of time for English language teaching.

1.6.3   Literature teaching in Malaysia

In 1979, the School Division, MOE initiated the introduction of the English Language Reading Programme (ELRP). It was devised to encourage good reading habits amongst school children to improve their English proficiency. Graded readers were selected by the Curriculum Development Centre and provided to schools. However, according to Abu Samah (2008) due to a shortage of staff and other administrative constraints, the programme suffered from a lack of monitoring and training with the result that the books were not properly utilised. After these problems and the KBSR *(*Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah) and KBSM (Kurikulm Baru Sekolah Menengah*)* curriculum reform, the Class Reader Project (CRP) was introduced in 1990. A compilation of abridged literary texts were selected by a special committee at the MOE, which stipulated that one of the five weekly English periods should be devoted to the CRP. Despite the improved plan, the success of this programme was very limited as it was not an examined component of the curriculum. As a result, the MOE made the bold decision to absorb the literature component directly into the mainstream English language syllabus.

The literature-in-English component was introduced in March (2000) at Form One and Form Four levels in every secondary school in Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 2004:3). Developed in line with the Malaysian philosophy of Education to produce holistically developed individuals, the ministry hoped that through the literature component, students would be able to get a firm groundingin the appreciation of literature in English '*with its concern of humanity, values, beliefs, and customs as well as its great*

tradition and heights of imagination and creativity'. (Ministry of Education, 2004:5)

Additionally, Hajjah Noor Baba, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Education in Malaysia, in her Keynote address at the Malaysia English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) 2005 stated that the ministry had made provision for the study of English literature as a 'stand-alone' subject, not integrated into the English Language syllabus. She further affirmed that English Literature too had evolved and new directions in the approach to English Literature had been designed, as she further describes:

> .....especially in the shift from classics to contemporary works by both native and non-native writers from all over the world thus resulting in a change of labelling from English Literature to literature in English. Another significant change is the inclusion of more genres at the SPM level, where instruction is not restricted to the study of novels and plays alone, a practice which was prevalent before the late 1990's. Students of literature today are exposed to short stories, poems, novels, and plays. (Baba,2005:90-96).

However, the aimto make English literature a stand-alone subject at secondary level has not materialisedas it is still a component of the English Language curriculum from Form 1 to Form 5. Baba (2005) highlights some critical issues concerning, for instance, the teaching and learning of literature in Malaysia which displays a mismatch between study demands and teacher supply. She further explains that teachers who are qualified to teach literature are sent to places where literature is not in high demand orschools where literature is a popular subject but short of qualified staff. Another concern, Baba added, is teachercompetence. Although the intake for language teachers is high, this doesnot necessarily mean that they are all capable of teaching English literature. Baba sums up, trainee teachers now are the

product of the fully implemented Malay or *Bahasa Melayu* curriculum. This means some trainees are less proficient than others.

Apart from Baba's concern above, the curriculum content is also of concern. The criterionfor what is to be taught is an ongoing issue, and how literature should be taught is another, which brings the issue of materials or text selection. The question is what should be the basis of the text selection and the genre of texts? Are texts written by native speakers superior to those written by non-native speakers and they are culturally suitable for Malaysian learners? These are some of the issues that are surrounding the literature teaching realm in the Malaysian setting.

1.7   Overview of Historical Background andRationale of the Study

The Malaysian Statistics Department, in its latest demographic report (Population Distribution and basic demographic characteristic report, 2010) stated that the population as of December 2010 was 28.3 million. Malays and *Bumiputera²* (lit. son of soil) was estimated to reach 67.4 %, Chinese, 24.6%, Indian, 7.3%, and others 0.7% (See Figure 1.1 below). At the same time, 91.8% were Malaysian citizens and 8.2% were non-citizens.

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²*Bumiputera* includes Malays and all indigenous groups in Malaysia.

Figure 1.1: Malaysian population by ethnic group and percentages of Malaysian citizens and non citizen (Malaysian Statistic Department, 2010).
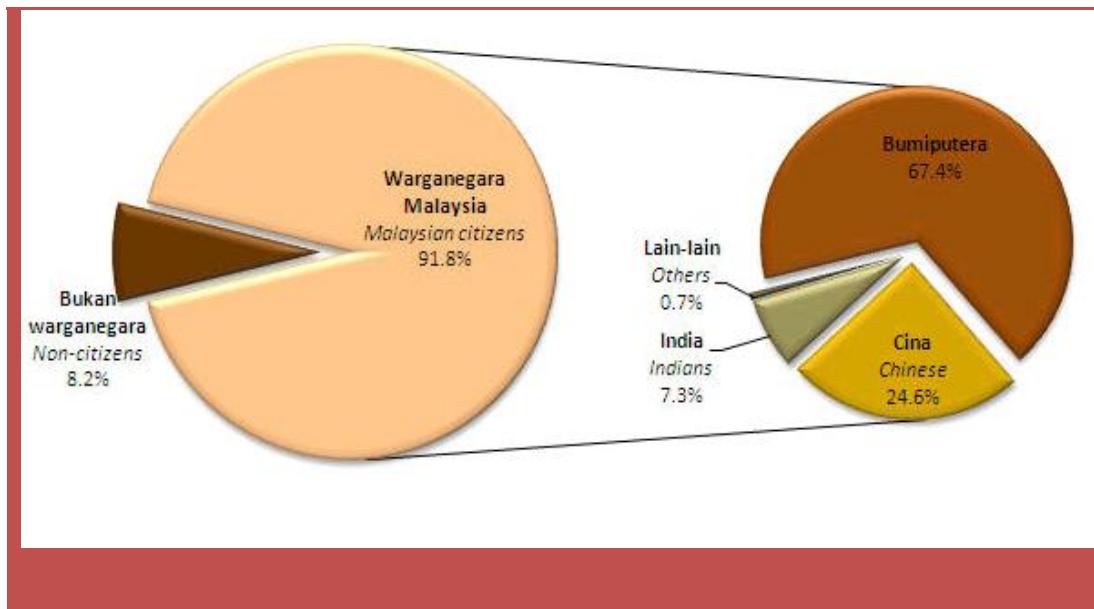
In a multicultural society such as Malaysia, inter-ethnic relations are always at the forefront of the news. In recent years (2005 onwards), inter ethnic conflicts have mounted on a larger scale, spreading from the capital city of Kuala Lumpur to other smaller states throughout the country. The conflicts which arose between ethnic groups in Malaysia more often than not emerged from the dissatisfaction of the non-Malays with the privileges bestowed upon the Malays by the constitution. These privileges include, but are not restricted to,the ownership of land, education scholarships in universities, greater allocation of places at the universities, business licences and many others. On the other hand, Malays questioned the loyalty of other ethnic groups to the country and felt that the Chinese and Indians had a bigger tendency to relinquish their citizenshipwhen trouble erupted (ethnic violence) more so than the Malays did. This issue has been heatedly debated amongst laymen and politicians alike. By contrast, the Chinese, Indians and other minority

ethnic groups (non-Malays) have differing views about their status as Malaysians, why the residents of Malaysiaare not united, and why they do not consider themselves as belonging to one nation.

The main reason for non-Malays'dissatisfaction can be traced back to the period before independence where automatic citizenship for the Chinese and Indians was part of the bargain for giving ethnic Malays 'special privileges' during the process of independence from the British, and following this agreement, these privileges could not be questioned. In addition to the issues mentioned above, other special privileges included extensive Malay reservations of land, quotas for civil services, bursaries and special boarding schools for 'bright' Malay students, making the non-Malays feel deprived and discriminated against.

Kua (2007) wrote a controversial article entitled 'Racial Conflict in Malaysia:Against the Official History' and accused the ruling government at the time -13 May 1969 – of hiding the truth about the reason for the riot. He stated the official version of the 13 May 1969 riots put the blame on provocation from the opposition parties after they had made significant gains in the 1969 general election. He continued that the predominance of the ethnically based political party UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), the ethnic Malay political party within the alliance of the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) and MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association) had thus guaranteed the ethnic Malays their control. He stated:

> Non-Malays who failed to abide by these rules of cooperation (between the alliances) with the UMNO and disregarded the "sensitive issues" of Malay "special rights", language and religion were barred from access to the political system(p.38)

This statement made the non-Malays even more disgruntled with the ruling government in general and, specifically, the Malays.

All these issues are common in other multi-ethnic and multi-cultural countries around the world such as Nigeria, Iraq, and Australia, to name a few. The difference is in the intensity of the issues and how they are handled and dealt with in different countries,that makes each one unique but all working towards the same objective; that is, to unite the citizenry so that they can live in peace and harmony with each other.

The desire to unite people of different backgrounds and culture has its roots in education systems, many of which have been the principal agent for moulding and developing the mentality of citizens. Although education plays a key role in shaping the nation, it cannot stand alone without political and economic support. Thus,to achieve the aims and objectives of this study, it is vital to look briefly at the historical background of Malaya/Malaysia, its economy, politics and policies overseen by the colonial masters, and the former and current government policies, to understand why common identity construction is still a struggle although Malaysia has achieved 54 years of independence (see section 2.3).

Most importantly, this study will look into the inter-ethnic relations and interactions at the micro level of the learning institution – the students and teachers in selected schools. It is assumed at this point that inter-ethnic relations between and among students start to fully develop when they are exposed to a variety of engagement within the school compounds, in multicultural environments. Schools which lack this kind of environment have

the tendency to cultivate a sense of xenophobia among their communities (Hutchinson, 2009).

The purpose of this research is to untangle the tendencies for misconceptions, prejudice and stereotyping amongst Malaysians in general, thus to bring to thesurface common ground for a genuine Malaysian identity. It also seeks to contribute to the professional development of teachers, who have the best opportunities for becoming the catalysts of change and moulding good citizenry amongst their students.

This study aims to contribute to knowledge by providing a sounder understanding of the multicultural society's concepts rather than undertaking the production of a 'how – and what-to-do' manual. Italso aims to contribute to the academic literature on identity construction with possible links to literature teaching, and the opening-up of related academic debates on these issues and other related research avenues, especially the potential for utilising the concept of the Third Space in the classroom.

1.8   Significance of the Study

Besides valuing and appreciating my own experiences as a student in a multiethnic classroom and as a school teacher, this study derives from my profound interest in Malaysia's inter-cultural communication, interactions and views as well as from debates around the complex issues of ethnicity. My background in the teaching and learning of English as a second language contributes to this interest specifically through the experience of learning in multiethnic and multicultural classes (which, to date, are currently very few

in the cities of Malaysia), and then at a later stage when I became a teacher in several schools around Kuala Lumpur which had a large population of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. One important point that I think had a significant influence on the development of this investigation was my own ethnic background. I am a Malay researcher (from ethnic majority group) and an outsider to the ethnic minority (Chinese and Indians) involved in this study. Interviewing participants from different ethnic backgrounds might or might not pose 'reservations' from the participant. This is discussed further insection 8.1.

The central premise of this study is that school is one of the best and most ideal settings to imbue intercultural understanding, and that teachers play an important role in moulding the shape of future citizens to become well-balanced, not just academically, but as responsible social beings in a multicultural society like that of Malaysia. Bacchus (1989:28) contends:

> There is evidence that one of the main outcomes of schooling is that it does succeed, at least to some extent, in passing on some of these universalistic values which obviously contribute towards social integration and the development of a sense of national unity among the various groups in the population.

Additionally, teachers are also seen as the catalysts, the initiators of any new ideas for change; and that if teachers are positive about changes, the likelihood of a successful transformation is greater and vice versa. In the context of this study, teachers are assumed to be directly involved in the creation and maintenance of shared identity construction amongst their students. Following a variety of studies and ongoing debates surrounding the formation of identity in Malaysia (e.g. Mahathir, 1998b; Rustam, 1993; Shamsul, 1996; Ibrahim , 1996; Ishak,1999; Palmer,2006), this study aims to

study the awareness of 'others' andhow to build on this to extend inter-cultural understanding amongst students from various ethnic groups in Malaysia and an understanding of shared Malaysian values and experiences and thus the creation of shared identity. This is the point of departure of this study. In achieving the objectives of this research, the teaching and learning of literature, specifically using Malaysian short stories, is seen as a medium to induce positive thoughts and values about other ethnic groups, which has the potential to keep doubts, mistrust and suspicions at bay. The Malaysian short stories are treated as one of the resources within the realm of the Third Space (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three).

Another impetus for conducting this study is the dearth of research in the ESL context focusing on the construction of shared identity through the teaching of literature, making the research timely and significant. Thus, this research is, I believe, an important contribution to turn the government's aspirations for generating a more integrated societyinto reality, by bringing together various ethnic groups as one nation to strengthen solidarity and national unity. Hence, this study is relevant as indicated earlier that the current government is pushing forward the concept of 1Malaysia (refer to 1.3.1). BERNAMA (15 June, 2009) reported on the Malaysian Prime Minister's speech during the launch of the 1Malaysia concept:

> 1Malaysia is not a new concept or formula and [...] its ultimate objective of national unity was the main vision of past leaders of the country, albeit in various forms. In other words, 1Malaysia is a concept to foster unity in Malaysians of all races based on several important values which should become the practice of every Malaysian.

Differences in labels (national integration, national unity, nation building, *Bangsa* Malaysia, 1Malaysia) have been used by the previous and present governments, all with the ultimate aim of bringing together people of diverse backgrounds. Works on national identity and nation building have been championed by many Malaysian anthropologists, especially evident in the extensive works ofShamsul (1994, 1996, 2001), in an attempt to explain the importance of understanding the concept of intercultural awareness amongst people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. The different studies and research projects conducted by Malaysian researchershave taken many different directions including communication design projects, literary works, cinematic representations, historical accounts, and commissions on human rights projects, and in almost all the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, all of which headed towards one destination,which was to create a national identity commonly shared by all Malaysians. This study thus has taken another turn in training its lenses on identity construction, through the teaching of literature in English, specifically utilising Malaysian short stories.

This investigation focuses on the construction of 'shared identity' more so that the exploration of the notion of 'national identity'. As mentioned above, the research on national identity is extensive and hasbeen pursued in many different areas. However, I strongly believe the issue of understanding unity lies at a more microcosmic level, which is the classroom. Therefore, the literature on national identity is not the focus of the discussion in the exploration of identity issues in this study.

1.9   Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis has been framed into eight chapters which integrate the theoretical and empirical approaches. This first chapter introduced the study and described the rationale, context and aims of the research. It also outlined the research questions which seek to be answered through the investigation conducted with the help of the instruments identified in the Chapter Four, and outlines the significance of the study. Chapters Two and Three present a review of related literature focusing on the main concepts related to the issues investigated in this research. These chapters outline and elaborate the broad theoretical perspectives of related concepts, which are then linked to the discussion of findings in Chapter Seven. The review includes a detailed discussion on the issues of identity construction in the multicultural society and the classroom context (Chapter Two) and the issues of hybridity, the Third Space and the notion of the hidden curriculum (Chapter Three). It critically addresses these concepts across disciplines and then repositions them in relation to the context of this study.

Chapter Four frames the methodological considerations in carrying out this investigation. It looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the mixed methods design applied and the different methodological assumptions related to using this approach. It explains in detail the strategies adopted, data collection procedures, approach to the analysis and related ethical considerations.

The aim of Chapters Five and Six is to present detailed analyses of the data collected after its rigorous coding and categorisation, and thematic analysis using the methods described in Chapter Four. Chapter Five analyses teacher

perceptions of the themes identified, while Chapter Six analyses student perceptions of similar themes.

A synthesis of similarities and differences in teachers' and students' perceptions is presented at the beginning of Chapter Seven. Following that, a synthesis of the working concepts and constructs derived from Chapters Two and Three is applied in the detailed analyses. The aim of this chapter is two-fold: firstly, to demonstrate that the analyses of Malaysian short stories and classroom discursive engagement are a possible point of access for the construction of a shared Malaysian identity, and secondly, to demonstrate the existence of a promising avenue for renegotiating identity in the Third Space by highlighting its potential for supporting teaching and learning in the literature classrooms.

The final chapter considers some anticipated problems for the construction of a shared Malaysian identity and suggestions are made for the next steps in improving these conditions. The overall aim of this thesis is based on the utilisation of selected narratives in the development of materials for Malaysian students. Finally, the organisation of this thesis is laid out in the graphical representation provided below.

Figure 1.2: Graphical representation of thesis outline

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                        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                        │         Chapter 1           │
                        │  Introduction and setting   │
                        │          the scene          │
                        └─────────────────────────────┘
                           ╱                      ╲
          ┌──────────────────────────┬──────────────────────────────────┐
          │       Chapter 2          │           Chapter 3              │
          │ Literature Review :      │  Literature Review: Hybridity,   │
          │      Identity            │  Third Space and Hidden          │
          │                          │  Curriculum                      │
          └──────────────────────────┴──────────────────────────────────┘
                │              ╲                  ╱                 │
                │          ┌─────────────────────────┐             │
                │          │       Chapter 4         │             │
                │          │      Methodology        │             │
                │          └─────────────────────────┘             │
                │             ╱                ╲                    │
          ┌──────────────────────────┬──────────────────────────────────┐
          │       Chapter 5          │           Chapter 6              │
          │ Analysis : Teachers'     │  Analysis : Students'            │
          │      Perceptions         │       Perceptions                │
          └──────────────────────────┴──────────────────────────────────┘
                │              ╲                  ╱                 │
          ─────▶┌─────────────────────────┐◀─────
                │       Chapter 7         │
                │ Discussions of findings │
                └─────────────────────────┘
                           │
                ┌─────────────────────────┐
                │       Chapter 8         │
                │ Conclusion and          │
                │ recommendations         │
                └─────────────────────────┘
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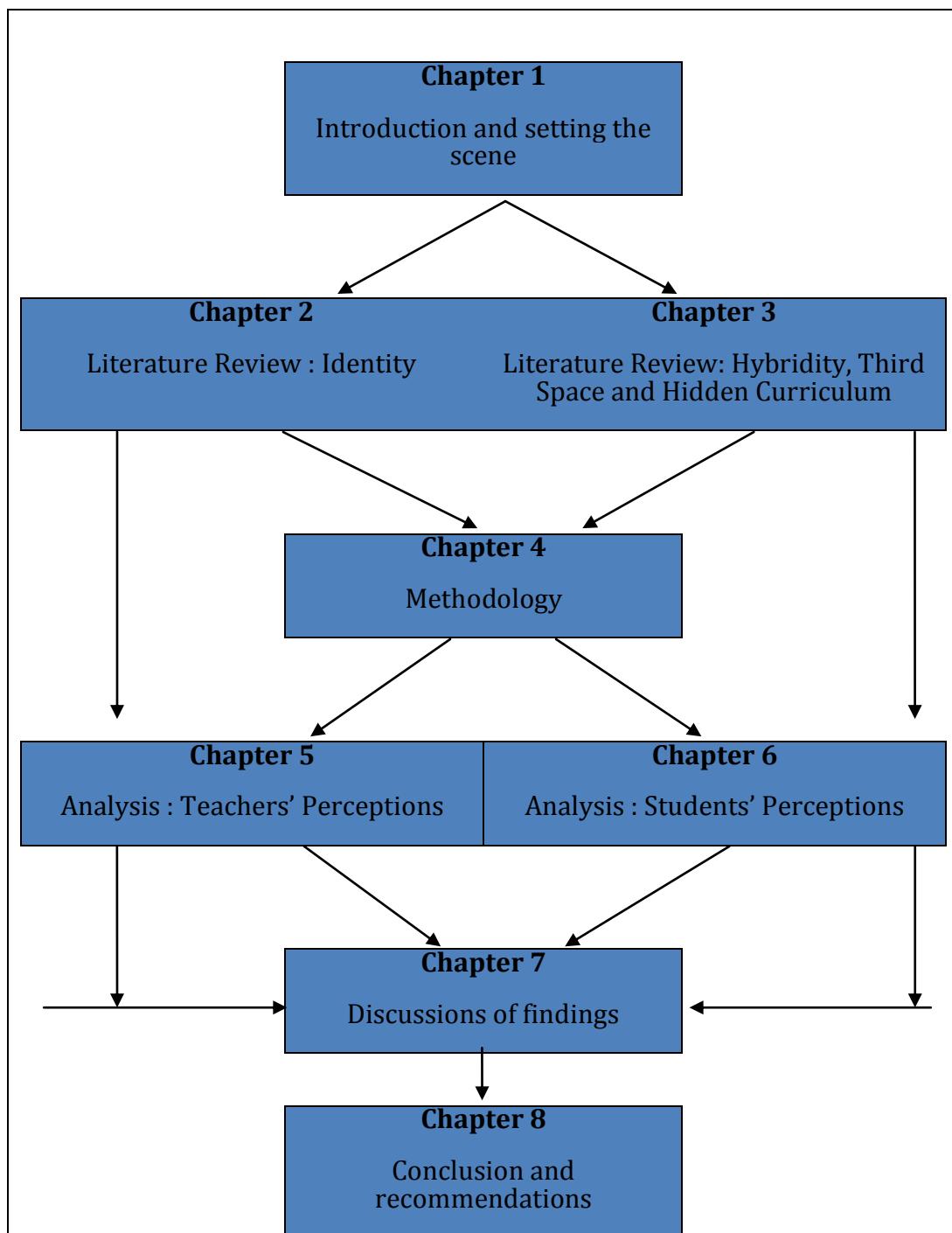
CHAPTER TWO

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN A ROOM FULL OF FAMILIAR YET DISTANT PEOPLE

2.0 Introduction

Chapter One set the context of the need for collective identity construction in the Malaysian setting. This chapter and Chapter Three extend the discussion of the theoretical constructs of this research project. The interdisciplinary nature of this investigation is evident as the frameworks are drawn from several different disciplines: language and education, social psychology, sociology and applied linguistics. The relevant literature related to these disciplines is consulted in light of the integral issues expounded in this study. The literature review contextualises this study and serves to illuminate the research questions. In this chapter the discussion revolves around the notion of identity and stereotyping in a multicultural society, and subsequently, links will be made to the classroom context.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

'Theory is essential and inescapable' (Sikes, 2006:43). In determining the theoretical framework for my study, the term 'bricolage' seems appropriate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004) to refer to its interdisciplinary aspects. The notion of bricolage encompasses the eclectic process which a researcher must undergo to maintain theoretical coherence (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Kincheloe and Berry (ibid) further

describe how '*bricoleurs act upon the concept that theory is not an explanation of the world – it is more an explanation of our relation to the world*' (p.2)*.* Therefore, this study considers different theoretical constructs to inform its direction. Besides understanding identity construction, the core issue of this investigation, hybridity theory, the Third Space and the hidden curriculum (all of which are discussed in Chapter Three) contribute to the theoretical framing. The different theoretical constructs address the key concept of this investigation, which is the construction of shared Malaysian identity.

It is essential, despite the specificity of the Malaysian context, that the questions of identity and the impact of colonial intervention on the formation of multicultural nations are discussed and understood in the context of broader debates and discourses. My focus will be to investigate the possibility of constructing a shared Malaysian identity amongst students in the literature classroom. To examine the research questions set out in this study particularly requires locating theories that can explore and explain the relationship between the roles of teachers and students in shaping a shared Malaysian identity at the same time as the recent re-emergence of explosive inter-ethnic discontent.

The discussions of these relevant theories within a larger context is interwoven with a specific focus on the Malaysian circumstances so that the examination of theories focuses on finding answers to the research questions. It should be clarified at the outset that the theories which frame this study emerged from the data collected, hence, the investigation was not driven by one pre-determined theoretical perspective; rather the

theoretical perspectives were driven by the data, which then delineated the literature review and discussion of findings.

2.2   Understanding the Concept of Identity

2.2.1   Illustrating the term 'identity'

The realm of identity and identity construction is vast and multidimensional. It is not my purpose to provide a comprehensive survey of the literature on identity; rather, the discussions will touch on the surface meaning of identity, specifically, group/collective identities in a pluralistic society such as Malaysia's. I start by outlining the understanding of various related aspects of identity. I then discuss each of these in turn and the ways identities are shaped, taking into consideration the implications of the colonial policies in Malaya (as it was known before independence) and its impact on the different fabrics comprising the societal milieu. Finally, the discussion of the proposed shared identity construction is linked to classroom teaching and learning, specifically in the Malaysian literature classrooms.

A fairly large number of researchers have taken 'identity' to be the central focus of their studies and therefore its definitions vary. However, I have selected a few pertinent examples to explore the concept of identity in relation to this present study. The many explanations of the word 'identity' include Farrell's (2006), where she uses identity to understand the impact of globalisation on work environments. Her study highlights the resulting changes in work practices where identities were constructed and understood. In order to understand Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by immigrant women in the United States, Norton (2000:5) in her longitudinal

study asserts that identity is '*how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future'.* Thus, identity is not just identifying oneself against the characteristics one possesses; it crosses the boundaries of here and there, then and now, into the future. In other words, it is not static, time and space bound, but fluid, multi-dimensional and ever-evolving.

Fearon (1999) who analysed the term 'identity' in his study (language analysis of the meaning of identity) found it to be complicated and unclear. He further claims that many researchers who work on the word identity provide definitions which were closely related to their own work or the studies they conducted. Fearon claims that most dictionaries' definitions of the word identity '*have not caught up, failing to capture the word's current meaning in everyday and social science today'* (p.8).For example, the 'Oxford English Dictionary' defines identity as: '*The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality'.* In addition, Brown (2000) argues that the term 'identity' is in itself contested in that it has been assigned many different meanings in the vast body of literature exploring the notions of identity.

The notion of 'sameness', the static notion of identity, is not applicable to the description of cultural identity or national identity, which is a complex, sometimes contradictory, multifaceted and not a simplistic notion. Some believe identity is relatively stable (Herrigel, 1993; Wendt, 1994) and some

believe it is fluid and changing; thus it produces uncertainties (Hall, 1990; Katzenstein, 1996; Taylor, 1989). In his 1992 study on identity, West describes identity as relating to desire - the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliations, and the desire for security and safety. Identity can be about how individuals see themselves; for example, as a Kuala Lumpur lass, then Malaysian, then Southeast Asian, then Asian, then an academic, mother, wife, daughter – some or all or none of these in various orders of importance, reflects the view that people adopt multiple roles/identities and behaviour according to a particular context and the relationship involved.

By and large, identity is one's own concept of who one is, on the one hand, and how other people see us, on the other. Each one has a persona, the self-image that they portray to others, and their commitment to and identification of their choices (Deng, 1995; Erikson, 1980; Friedman, 1994; Hall, 1990; Herrigel, 1993; Peirce, 1995; Schecter & Bayley, 1997;Taylor, 1989;Wendt, 1992). The term can be broadly broken down into but not confined to the bases of personal, social, religious, cultural (race and ethnicity), language and national identities.

2.2.2 The notion of personal identity

Identity relates to individuals' concepts of themselves as well as their own interpretation of what 'self' means. Identity formation is not simply a conscious process but is influenced by unconscious psychological processes (Vos, 1992). Although identity is more than one's cultural identity (as we saw in the previous section), it has tremendous influence on the way people communicate in different situations and the individual's perception of how

and when to communicate in different places, different situations and with different people.

The concept of personal identity refers to how one perceives oneself and '*it is formed, sustained, and changed by* [...] *interactions with others*' (Lane, 2008:68). Additionally, Fearon (1999:11) argues personal identity as:

> a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways and that (a) the person takes a special pride in; (b) the person takes no special pride in, but which so orient her behaviour that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do without them; (c) the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to.

Often, the aspects that make up and are included in this personal identity are traits such as personal style, red hair, being an outstanding violinist, one's choice of food (likes or dislikes), supporting a specific football club, political convictions and others. The personal identity of an individual includes their experience and life history.

In discussing the notion of identity, one can link the relationship between and among the different elements mentioned earlier, but it seems impossible to discuss one aspect of identity in isolation without linking it to others. This is especially true in the context of Malaysia in that people in the society come from various cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds; and with them come every aspect of different individual and collective identities with which they associate themselves or from which they disassociate themselves (and are associated with or disassociated from by others). This negotiation of identity is exemplified in this study through students' task engagement in the classroom, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

As mentioned above, identity is a multidimensional construct and includes individual (the self), group (discussed in next section), cultural, language, religious, and work aspects, among numerous other factors. In relation to identity in Malaysia, Nagata (1974) postulates that one of the most salient features of modern Malaysian society is its poly-ethnic character which pervades most of the institutions, activities, and attitudes of the population in all spheres of life. She further asserts that '*All Malaysians are, first and foremost, members of one of three major "races", Malay, Chinese, or Indian, and are only secondarily "Malaysian"*'(p.333). Nagata's point is supported in this study in that from the students' feedback presented in Chapter Six, there is confirmation that Malaysians are first and foremost driven by their ethnicity more than other types of identification. Although Nagata's work was undertaken almost 37 years ago, very little has changed in regard to self-identification. However, with Malay being the dominant race over many decades, indubitably their cultural practices have permeated and infiltrated the cultures of minority ethnic groups and therefore, possibly altered the identity of not only the minority but the majority too. Along similar lines, Hoon (2006:153) asserts that '*in any society, a certain group (or groups) will be considered 'dominant' through establishing and universalizing its culture and experience as the society's norm'*. An example of this diffusion of culture lies in the *Baba and Nyonya's* practices of Chinese descendants – of what are believed to be the first Chinese circumnavigators and traders to set foot in the Malay Peninsula - married to local women and who practice Malay culture but remain Buddhist.

In addition to personal identity, Brown (2000:20) asserts:

> Continuity, consistency, individual integrity are all emphasized in notions of self. It seems that in order to achieve integrity of self, multiplicity must merge into an organised unity, to speak with one voice and it is this one voice which is the true self.

Each individual is responsible for choices made and their further actions about belonging, confronting dilemmas and demonstrating that they possess the characteristics of the collective. Continuity is important to our understanding of who we are, but changes suggest that identities are not fixed and constant; they change too. It is with this fluidity that teachers in the Malaysian classroom are able to facilitate and shape students' collective identity.

2.2.3   Group/Collective Identity

The concept of a collective identity refers to a set of individuals' sense of belonging to a group. Collective identity is the idea that through participating in social activities, individuals can gain a sense of belonging and in essence an "identity" that surpasses individuality. This idea permeates through an individual's intersection with groups of people from the same ethnicity, professing similar religion, practising analogous rituals or cultural traits, holding similar hobbies or interests or identifying themselves as belonging to a single nation. Schopflin (2001:1) asserts that *'collective and individual identities exist and impact on one another reciprocally'*. Looking at some definitions and understanding of collective identity, Cerulo (1997) postulates that a collective's members are believed to internalise the qualities of 'we-ness', and 'being united' within the boundaries of shared attributes, where members are united with a unified singular social experience. However, the ideal notion of 'we-

ness', is more appropriate in a mono-cultural nation or a nation where one major ethnic identity is prevalent.

In multicultural societies, these identifications are prominent. The individual can derive great satisfaction but sometimes great risks from participating in group activities. Within a typical collective, agreement is often valued over debate, although more often than not, serious conflicts may erupt.

The shared ideology that groups possess forms the basis of their group identity (the concept of 'we-ness'). The vast majority of actions, choices and ways of being are based on implicit understandings of what is right and proper in a particular context of time and place. It is when these understandings are questioned or placed under pressure that they become open to discussion and scrutiny.

For the purpose of this investigation, I use the term 'shared identity' to mean the ways in which an individual builds a new common identity that combines elements of a diversity but enables that individual to feel part of the wider society (Johnson, 2007). The term 'collective identity' refers to shared representations of diverse people in a community with common interests and experiences which shape or forge images of what the groups stand for and how they wish to be viewed by others. While the two terms can represent almost similar aspects of shared experiences, collective identity, I believe represents a bigger picture of unityas expressed in the 1Malaysia concept, while shared identity in this study relates to students' shared experiences in the classrooms.

2.3 Historical Background to Ethnic identity in Malaysia

In the case of Malaysia, distinct ethnic identification was used during British colonial rule to serve the colonial masters' specific economic and political aims. The three main ethnic groups were separated geographically and rarely crossed paths. Thus, ethnic group solidarity became stronger during the period of colonisation. As the process of decolonisation advanced and Malaya was given the mandate for self governance, this diverse society was suddenly thrown into processing concepts such as integration, assimilation, and amalgamation to the extreme of creating '*Bangsa* Malaysia'(the Malaysian nationhood). The construction of '*Bangsa Malaysia'* according to Ridge (2004) is the nation building strategy to balance the demands for indigenous and Malay rights with those of other groups.

Thus, this collision of contrastive ideologies has continued to pose a profound dilemma for governments over the years as ethnic-based identity is still strongly held by Malaysians. The aim of this current investigation, however, is not to outline a new set of proposal for an amalgamated identity, but rather for the students in the classroom context to be able and willing to negotiate the boundaries of their identity where and when necessary.

2.3.1 The Construction of 'Others' in Colonial Malaya

The concept of 'other' is fundamental to understanding oneself, as people construct their identities, which define and constitute them and their groups, in contrast to others. In other words, 'the other' is perceived by the group as not belonging, different in many fundamental ways and lacking some essential characteristics possessed by the group. Otherness can take many different forms such as in the dimensions of race, nationality, religion, social

class, political ideology, historical events, sexual orientation or origin (Sampson, 1993). The concept of understanding others is imperative in distinguishing the role one adopts as opposed to the roles of 'the others' in their social practices.

Imperialism, implemented by the colonial masters in Malaya, created an unequal economic, cultural and territorial relationship between the coloniser and the colonised based on the notion of domination and subordination. In this context, the oppressor often developed methods to highlight the weakness of the oppressed, thus justifying the moral responsibility of the stronger to educate, convert or civilise 'the others' who were often seen as incapable and inadequate. In the case of imperial Britain, it saw the values or good qualities of other cultures or powers as a threat to its own power (Hyam, 2010). The colonised economic power in Malaya at this point was based upon rubber plantation and also tin mining.

In addition, Hall (1990) argues that the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference. To the developed West, the colonised belong to the marginal, the underdeveloped, the periphery and the 'Other'. In this context the term 'other' refers to the masses as seen by the native elites but they are still 'other' in the eyes of the colonial master. The question also is how to describe this 'difference' within the colonised identity. Diaspora identities according to Hall (1990) are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.

In his seminal work 'The Other Question', Bhabha (1994) argues that 'fixity' (a pre-eminent aspect of colonial discourse) is a vital element of the

ideological construction of otherness, which blurs the ambit of cultural and racial difference (p.71). Bhabha further explains that fixity is a paradoxical mode of representation which implies rigidity and unchanging order and disorder. In this context, in the colonial system, for which it was crucial to the exercise of power, colonial discourse produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible.

The emergence of a pluralistic community during the era of imperialism created yet another angle of 'the other' as the colonised nation was transformed from an agrarian to an industrial-based community. The influx of foreign labourers to fulfil the demands of industries saw rapid transformations brought about by urbanisation, thus reinforcing the notion of 'otherness' for the natives. The 'other' label has since remained within each community. Abdul R. Jan Mohamed (1985:84), a post-colonial theorist, mentions that '*genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideologies of his culture*'. Strongly held beliefs in cultural values, such as the Malaysian society,negating one's own culture is possibly an arduous endeavour because societies are culturally formed and negating oneself from one's culture is literally impossible.

In a number of colonised contexts, emphasis is given to the role of 'Other' in the construction, maintenance and transformation of identities (Billig, 1995; Brubaker, 1996; Gellner, 1983;Hobsbawm, 1996;Petersoo, 2007;Smith, 1995). As Billig (1996:78) puts it '*There can be no 'us' without 'them'*". Petersoo (2007) further points out that with the importance of the 'other' in the formation of national identity, the role of this significant other remains

blurred. In relation to hybridity and identity, Hoon (2006: 162) reminds us of the consequences of the concept of hybridity to the construction of 'other'. He says:

> ...it has to be understood that hybridity does not necessarily lead to empowerment...In some cases, even when individuals adopt the cultural traits of their host society, they may still remain marginalised and othered as 'foreigners'.

An example illustrated by Hoon (ibid) was the Chinese-Indonesian experience in which the Chinese community felt that regardless of their effort to localise their identity as Indonesian, they were never accepted as 'true' Indonesians and were never able to shed their identities as 'foreigners'. The term hybridity is traditionally associated with being 'impure' or 'racially contaminated' and 'genetically deviant' (Hoon, 2006) and is used in many areas such as hybrid economy (the mixture of private enterprises and government active participation in global economy) (Koizumi, 2010); hybrid cars, hybrid language (creole and patois), and most importantly in relation to this study lies in the arena of hybrid cultures (Brah & Coombes, 2000; Tomlinson,1999).

Within the Malaysian school setting, the notion of otherness needs cautious handling by teachers, school administrators and the learners themselves. The awareness of others needs to become deeply rooted in individuals by developing their understanding of the similarities and differences between groups with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This includes the conception of attitudes towards ethnic stereotyping, which will be elaborated further in the following section.

2.4   Stereotyping in a Pluralistic Society

Ethnic stereotyping, as illustrated at the beginning of Chapter One, is almost unavoidable in most multicultural societies, especially nations which were once re-engineered by imperialists from being a monocultural – to becoming a heterogeneous society. Stereotyping is an important element in Bhabha's (1994) work, which goes to mean an exaggeration of beliefs towards certain people or groups of people. A more general definition of stereotype is when an individual or a group of people is generalised for having or not having certain characteristics that the speaker has. This is an unfavourable stereotype. In other words, fair judgement about people is not being made in the absence of enough information which leads to discrimination and prejudices.

 In aiming at redefining stereotype, Bhabha (1994:94) postulates that:

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its independence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness...it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.

He assumes that stereotyping is an ideological exploitation which constructs the one or group being stereotyped as 'the other'. Through the complex production of difference, 'the other' is constructed. This is what Bhabha (ibid) attempts to illustrate; he sees stereotyping as a process by which individuals fall victim to the rules imposed on certain/select people by the community. In this case, not only is the person being stereotyped affected, but the one who makes use of the stereotype is also implicated. Bhabha (ibid) explains that it is the emphasis of difference between the coloniser and the colonised that

has given the stereotyping of the marginalised recognition by society. He further clarifies:

> …[stereotyping] produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excessof what can be empirically proved or logically construed. Yet the function of ambivalence as one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power – whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan – remains to be charted (p.95).

The implication of Bhabha's quote above suggests that it is impossible to fully understand an individual, let alone groups of people or a community. There will always be a gap in which most often information is misconstrued (for example, colonisers' construction of the colonised without having a full account of the aspects being stereotyped). The gap needs to be filled and more often than not the way people think about the 'other' is largely established on the grounds of 'difference', not 'similarity'.

The act of stereotyping the Malays has long been documented. In a historical view from a western writer describing Malay men, Morgan (1941:5) recalls Abdullah's writing to describe the people of Malacca (Abdullah was a famous eighteenth century Indian/Malay writer):

> …For I saw that they were men in shape just as we are, but in manner mere animals, and even lower than animals, for the beasts of the field know at least how to keep themselves clean. They had matted hair, but I could not tell its colour, so plastered was it with dirt. God alone knows what lice and maggots were in it! They wore no coat and no skirt. Not a piece of cloth on them, only a strip of bark, no bigger than a man's hand to serve as a loin cloth. Their moustaches and beard were untidy, and all through life they went unshaven. Their skin was not as human skin, as it was thick with layers of dirt…

In fact, the description above was actually Abdullah's account of the 'Jakuns', one of the many tribes of aborigines found in the jungles of the Malay Peninsula. Morgan further stresses that the Jakuns had the same ancestral roots as the Malays. Abdullah's stereotyping of the Malays as referred to by Morgan (ibid) and several other colonial writers such as Swettenham (1975) and Winstedt (1909) was believed to be true. In the preface of his book 'The Malays', Milner (2008) observes that the term 'Malay' evokes many images such as 'mysterious, dangerous pirates', 'the best-mannered gentlemen of the East', or 'the lazy natives', all of which were analogous to colonial discourse. In a new version of stereotyping the 'New Malay', Milner (2008: x) adds that the term:

> ...includes entrepreneurs of modern, triumphant Malaysia; the skilful region-builders of ASEAN; the supporters of a multitude of monarchies and royal courts, a people divided over the proper role of Islam and a Southeast Asian front in the struggle against terrorism.

The Indians too were not free from being stereotyped. Jayapalen (2007:1) relates a response to the question he posed of what a typical Indian is. He writes:

> ...greasy hair, smelling of coconut oil, shabbily dressed in bright coloured clothing that could blind you if you stared long enough, foul mouthed, looking scruffy and dirty.

Rabushka (1971) believes that the more often people from different ethnic backgrounds come into contact and communicate, the less prejudiced they are about 'the other'. However, studies conducted after Rabushka's have often resulted in showing the flaws in his assumptions (Anglin & Whalley, 2006; Jayapalen, 2007).

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2.5   Negotiating the Complex Construct of Identity

Research and studies on Malaysian identity have been funded by Malaysian research organisations and public and private universities, and greatly encouraged in order to enlighten the policy makers of the needs and important steps to be taken in moving towards Malaysian nationhood (Don, Knowles & Fatt, 2010; Ibrahim, Z. 1996;Lee, S.K., 2003a; Pillai & Subramaniam, 2009). One of the questions highlighted in this study is to find out whether Malaysians do need a shared identity in order to function properly as a society and nation or, indeed, is such a shared identity a real possibility?

Inevitably, shared identity is significantly related to having shared values and practices, which as far as Malaysians are concerned, is arduous due to the multiple nature of the country with its various languages, cultures and religions. If these shared practices need modifications in terms of religious beliefs and cultural practices and values (and these values are vital in the case of multi-racial and multicultural Malaysia), then it is almost impossible to arrive at a destination for shared Malaysian identity. What then will be the basis of shared Malaysian identity? In the limited space of this study, it is almost impossible to provide a precise answer to the question. However, some of the archetypes of a physical foundation for collective identity are exemplified in the analysis of the findings of this investigation (see Chapter Seven) through students' classroom task engagement and group interviews.

Another significant feature of identity formation is the use of language. Lee (2003) comments on this by saying:

> ...the system of communication comprising codes and symbols which is used by humans to store, retrieve, organize, structure and communicate knowledge and experience. It is

not a static process. It is the primary instrument in the expression, transmission, and adaptation of culture.

Therefore, students in the classroom use language to engage in various learning tasks and to identify and transform their 'selves' while constructing and reconstructing their identities to fulfil the demands of peers, teachers and others in the learning environment.

Bakhtin (1981, 1986) constructs an illuminating foundation for the understanding of the relationship between the identity of the language users and linguistic meaning. He introduced the concept whereby linguistic meaning cannot be understood without specific reference to the speakers' and hearers' identities. These speakers' and hearers' existence or presence can be acknowledged through multiple 'voices' within a discourse. Subsequently, other language users are able to gain 'voices' through intertextuality, which then becomes 'dialogic', 'heteroglossic' or 'polyphonic' (Piller, 2001; Silverstein & Urban, 1996).

Gutiérrez and her colleagues in their 1997 study, affirm that '*language is fundamental to the construction of self and is at the core of our social, emotional, and cognitive experiences* (p.369). They further assert that language is a tool which people use to express themselves and make sense of their surroundings and experiences. Thus, it is an instrument to transform our thinking. Students' shared identity development, I believe, is influenced by their access to various forms of language use and learning engagement that require various ways of participating in classroom activities and is also affected by the selected materials used. Thus, the diffusion of language, materials, space and approaches transforms conventional classroom

environment to that of a hybrid (convergence of different elements in the classroom learning environment such as bringing to it the knowledge of home and community) which, if sufficiently explored, could be the impetus for the construction of shared identity.

The concepts of hybridity which have been extensively discussed and debated in post-colonial studies are frequently employed to problematise identity (Anzaldua, 1987; Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha (1994) uses his idea of hybridity to describe the exclusive sense of identity commonly shared and experienced individually by members of the post-colonial nations. He contends that the community of formerly colonised nations have an identity which has been constructed by their own unique cultural history interlaced with that of the colonisers. Therefore, for example, a Chinese man in colonial Malaya would have incorporated both his personal and national identities (at this point Chinese people considered their identity to be Chinese from mainland China) by being, for example, a Buddhist or Taoist, and being Malayan. The hybridised Malayan cultural conditions according to Bhabha (Ibid)are also forms of a vernacular cosmopolitanism that emerges in multicultural societies and explicitly exceeds a particular national location.

On similar grounds, Hall (1990:225) postulates that '*identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past*'. He claims that one speaks or writes or draws from a particular place and time, or from a specific historical and cultural background. Accordingly, what one says is always in context from the position one is in. The challenges which lay ahead for these people are in

interpreting meaning in the context of their dilemma of having to 'reserve' a space (the Third Space) for inter-cultural interactions.

In locating the relationship between language and identity in this study, the language hybridity phenomenon is further discussed. This is an indication of the continually evolving aspects of language and identity; as the multicultural society evolved in Malaya then Malaysia, languages evolved in tandem. This discussion involves the emergence of Malaysian English or 'Manglish' in the social interactions within each ethnic community or with the other communities at large.

To contextualise identity formation in relation to the context of this study, students' engagement with tasks and identity as agentic properties are discussed in section 2.8. There are four agentic properties(Bandura (2008); intentionality (action plan strategies), forethought (future directed plans), self-reactiveness (self regulatory) and self reflectiveness (examining self).

2.6 Multiple Identity Formation in the Language Classroom

Studies of identity in the language classrooms are extensive and vary depending on the context within which the studies were conducted. Investigations of identity and intercultural language learning specifically in the foreign and second language setting have been extensively developed by researchers, for example, Kramsch, (1993), Byram (1997), Byram and Fleming (1998), Lee (2003) and Block (2009), to name a few. In the context of this study, students' identity is assumed to be constructed through a

myriad of ways depending on who they interact with (peers, teachers, strangers), the types of engagement they are involved in (activities, formal and non-formal events), and their own personal and cultural backgrounds compared to those of the others. Thus, it can be surmised at this point that students in a multicultural classroom (as in this investigation) construct multiple identities based on the context of their engagement, especially in language classrooms. Rollin (2009) maintains that '...*language learning involves redefining oneself publicly, socially and personally'*. Therefore, in this regard, it can be said that students' identity formation can be relatively fluid and constantly changing depending on the situation at hand.

The construction of multiple identities can be exemplified in the classroom context whereby, by working individually, students may retain their own personal and cultural identity, for example, in writing an essay. This identity can then change whilst discussing in groups where the dichotomy of us (the student's own group) and them (other groups) pervades. This identification can differ again if groups consist of peers mainly from similar backgrounds, and if other groups consist of members from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Students' identity whilst talking with their teachers and strangers could be distinctively different if the binary of respect for authority and being compliant permeate the conversation.

Based on the fluidity of identity construction, students can be said to have multiple identities as they traverse different pathways of their learning, within or outside the classroom context. Thus, the premise that multicultural students in this investigation negotiate and renegotiate their identities in the 'literature in English' classroom is somewhat dependent on their teachers'

instructions and the types of interactions they accomplish through engagement with their tasks.

2.6.1 Co-constructing identity in a multicultural classroom environment - Familiar yet distant peers

A multicultural classroom is fraught with ambivalence and uncertainty despite being familiar in its architecture. This ambiguity can be further reinforced by a curriculum/syllabus design which does not support the growth of inter-cultural relations in the classroom. Students in a multicultural classroom are generally accustomed to the existence of 'others' around them and continue to collaborate on the tasks assigned. If these tasks do not involve understanding the 'others' further in terms of an in-depth understanding of others' cultural backgrounds, beliefs and customs, there seems to be less effort or less need, on the part of the students and sometimes the teachers, to know their peers' and students' cultural backgrounds. This is what is meant by the metaphor 'familiar yet distant'.

Thus, in invoking the construction of collective identity in the classroom setting, a culturally responsive curriculum (Gay, 2000) has to be carefully designed taking into consideration a myriad of possibilities which would help this to happen. Gay (2002:106) sees Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) as:

> using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly.

Gay (ibid) further characterises how CRT builds bridges between students' home lives and school experience, bringing significant meaning to their school and social lives. CRT also acknowledges the dynamics of different cultural heritages from different ethnic groups which, by and large, would have an effect on students' attitudes and approaches to learning. According to Gay, CRT also incorporates multiple resources and instructional strategies which can be used across all content subjects in the school curriculum. CRT's characteristics are akin to the notion of the Third Space, in that teachers' willingness to provide the 'space' for CRT to be applied increases the possibilities of constructing a collective identity amongst the students. Once the cultural gap is brought closer, the 'other' students are no longer so aloof.

Teachers, I feel, nevertheless, have to be careful because cultivating collective identity may be substantially more important for the development of some students. For example, some students more than others may feel that in their self-perception, their ethnic identity is far more significant for them than any other identity in identifying themselves. Thus, a teacher who is aware of CRT would have a greater possibility of handling the dilemmas of a multicultural classroom more adeptly. It is thus imperative that teachers of multicultural classes are first and foremost knowledgeable about their students' cultural backgrounds to make progress towards the construction of shared identity. The other lens in looking at students' construction of identity is through their task engagement and interactions which are discussed further in the next section.

2.7   Constructing Identity through Classroom Engagement and Interactions

Bomia et al. (1997) define classroom engagement as '*students' willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in the learning process*' (p.3). Some researchers believe that engagement itself is a multidimensional process in that it involves different stages (Krausse & Coates, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). According to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Australia, the stages of classroom engagement include:

1. Behavioural engagement - students follow rules, adhere to norms, participate in classroom activities and pay attention to instructions;

2. Cognitive engagement whereby students invest in learning, learning goals and also self-regulate their learning process; and

3. Emotional engagement- students react to classroom activities with interest, anxiety or boredom (DEEWR, 2011).

Along the same lines, Willms (2003) states that studies in classroom engagement largely refer to how students identify themselves with the challenges they face in and around the classroom and the school as well as the values embedded in that process. He further asserts that engagement pertains to students' sense of belonging towards the school and their consent to the activities they participate in. On the other hand, Kuh (2009:5) argues that the premise of classroom engagement:

is straightforward and easily understood: the more students study a subject, the more they know about it, and the more students practice and get feedback from faculty and staff members on their writing and collaborative problem solving, the deeper they come to understand what they are learning and the more adept they become at managing complexity, tolerating ambiguity, and working with people from different backgrounds or with different views.

The view by Kuh above aptly describes the types of activities and collaboration observed in the classrooms investigated in this study. I could simplistically assume that students were disengaged if they were not involved in any of the exchanges stated in Kuh's elaboration of engagement.

Platt and Brooks (2002) characterise task engagement as '...*dialogic activity, which become associated with the transformation of task, self, and group'* (p.365). They further suggest that '*task engagement can be found in the discourse when learners display through either private or social speech their own structuring of the task*' (ibid).

In the context of this investigation, in order to accomplish the objective of a task, the students firstly have to be engaged with their peers and the materials they are working on. This requires an extensive collaborative exercise in which they communicate, argue, negotiate and, at times, submit to and comply with the decisions of their peers.

Students' collaborative engagement in this investigation was seen as a pathway to collective identity construction. One of the methods employed by teachers in the quest for inter-ethnic awareness and identity construction was through the use of Malaysian short stories, which is explained in greater detail in Chapter Four (4.16).

2.8   Identity as Agentic Property

Bandura (2008) illustrates that '*to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances*' (p.15). Collective identity formation, Bandura (ibid:16) further explains, involves four principles of human agency, which are 'intentionality', 'temporal extension of agency through forethought', 'self-reactiveness' and 'self-reflectiveness'. Thus, in the process of constructing collective identity, people first, form intentions that include action plans and the strategies for carrying them out. When their intentions have been formed, people then anticipate the outcome of their plan and also outline actions to ensure their workability. Next, as agents, they have to self-regulate their efforts whereby they closely monitor their activities. Finally, they constantly reflect on their actions. All these efforts require '*commitment to shared intentions and coordination of interdependency*' (ibid: 15).

To put Bandura's theory of agentic property into perspective, teachers, students and other institutional personnel should be made aware of and be exposed to the 'self' as 'agent' in the process of collective identity formation. In the classroom context, teachers and students interact regularly and constantly, provide self and group evaluative feedback in that they continuously interpret and evaluate actions and their consequences (Little, Snyder & Wehmeyer, 2006). As students develop and begin to discover who they are and their capabilities in the classroom 'community', they start to integrate their sense of personal agency, which will then be moulded into an 'agentic self' (ibid). This is the foundation of the development of various challenges for task engagement to create a sense of shared identity in the classroom.

From the general discussion of identity to specific identity construction in the classroom, it can be concluded that there is a need for identity to be developed as an agentic property for collective efficacy (Bandura, 2008). The construction of shared identity would not only enable the society to work towards a shared plan, but at the same time stabilise the community in terms of inter-ethnic relationships. In the classroom context, this fosters more effective learning, and is meaningful once students are able to negotiate and renegotiate their identities in any type of learning environment. This means that once students are able to relate their identity in a learning environment, the process of sharing experiences with peers from any backgrounds will not be problematic.

2.9   Summary of the chapter

In this chapter working definitions of the multidimensional notion of 'identity' and its representations have been established alongside the discussion of the need for a collective identity in the Malaysian context. Stereotyping and otherness in a multicultural society were also discussed. The construction of collective identity in the classroom was discussed in light of the medium of teaching and learning in the literature lessons where Malaysian short stories were used as a tool. Emerging from the review of literature on identity, a number of concepts which play a critical role in strengthening the conceptual frame of this study have also been identified characterising identity as complex, fluid and co-constructed. The notion of hybridity, the Third Space and the aspect of the hidden curriculum are discussed in the following chapter, in relation to the discussion of shared identity construction in the classroom setting.

CHAPTER 3

HYBRIDITY, THE THIRD SPACE AND HIDDEN CURRICULUM

3.0 Introduction

In Chapter Two, the significance of the construction of identity, stereotyping and otherness in a pluralistic society such as Malaysia was elucidated. Linking those concepts, this chapter seeks to extend and elaborate the notion of hybridity in relation to the basis of this study, which discusses the construction of shared identity in the classroom context. In discussing the concept of hybridity, attention turns to the issue of teacher awareness of the possibility for working in a 'Third Space' in the literature classroom. Discussion of the Third Space espoused by Gutiérrez (2004) following Bhabha (1994) and the subsequent use of his work by Moje et al. (2004) is then undertaken, extended and linked to the concept of the hidden curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gordon, 1982; Sambell & McDowell, 1998;Snyder, 1970). The discussion of these aspects is related to the discursive teaching and learning practices in Malaysian literature classrooms, their consequences and the plausibility of constructing a shared Malaysian identity via the utilisation of Malaysian short stories.

Attention is also given to Bhabha's notion of the Third Space and whether it can help to establish a collective identity in students' 'zone of development' (Gutiérrez, Baqudano-Lopez and Tejeda, 1999). It is hoped

that the concept of hybridity in the Third Space can provide an arena for a better rapport between teachers and students and the creation of a zone of mutual understanding amongst students through teachers' utilisation of Malaysian short stories as a medium for constructing a shared Malaysian identity. Thus, the notion of hybridity, discussed in the following section, demonstrates the connection between the Third Space and the multicultural classroom.

3.1   The concept of hybridity

The concept of hybridity lies at the heart of my argument about the Third Space in a multicultural classroom. It shapes and supports the grounds upon which shared identity construction can be made possible through teachers' increased and explicit awareness of the existence of the Third Spacein teaching and learning. Moje et al (2004) define Third Space as an integration of 'knowledges and Discourses'[3] that are drawn from the first space (home and community) and second space (school and classroom). This possibility relates to the problem mentioned in Chapter One; the tensions and conflicts in various aspects of Malaysian society due to differences in values and beliefs, religion, language and myriad of other tiny yet significant aspects of everyday life; for instance, in the food choice related closely to religious observance. These conflicts have long been witnessed, and contested. By recognising that a complex domain such as the Third Space can be conceptualised, conflicts and differences can be transformed into 'rich zones' (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejeda, 1999) of collaboration and

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[3] Gee (1990:142) uses 'Discourses' with a capital 'D' which refers to more than just language […] forms of life which integrate words, acts values, beliefs, attitude, social identification etc.

learning. Thus, the construct of the Third Space in the realm of something a notion of hybridity can be advantageous in helping individuals to understand the intricacies of a multicultural environment and the potential for transformation and adaptation. First, the concept of hybridity will be discussed followed by the concept of Third Space and then this Third Space concept is linked to the idea of the hidden curriculum. In this study, I do not advocate hybridity as a substitute for the concept of 'unity in diversity' or multiculturalism; rather, I attempt to relate the importance of understanding diversity to the concept of identity which occurs through hybridity in the common everyday experience of the culturally diverse Malaysian classroom context.

To reiterate, hybridity arises from the flow of information and the movement of people around this ever-evolving, interconnected and interactive world. It has been a profound aspect of the creation of new cultures through the mixing of local and foreign ideas and values. In the colonial discourse, hybridity has been used as a term of abuse for those who are products of miscegenation or mixed-breeds. Such mixing is a tiny part of the loose and slippery meaning of the term 'hybridity'.

To grasp the concept of hybridity, one has to look around and try to identify an item or mechanism which is genuinely pure. This search for purity is problematic as the society in which we are living today is unable to avoid the existence of a 'mixture' of items, people or cultures. Luke and Luke (1999) point out that the hybridity concept is not about a representation of things generated from different cultural value systems and practices which are disconnected; '*rather cultures and hybridities are a creation of something new*

out of difference' (p.231). Examples of this new creation in Malaysia are the 'Baba and Nyonya' and the 'Chetti of Malacca' communities. The Baba and Nyonya community are the descendants of Chinese migrants from mainland China in the early fourteenth century, while the Chetti of Malacca are the descendants of Tamil migrants in the fifteenth century who settled in Malacca, spoke their mother tongue but eventually adopted the Malay culture, food, clothing and practices, although they remained Buddhist and Hindus respectively (Tan, 1988). In the context of the hybrid urban Malaysian classroom, mixed marriages are common between different races. They are so common that there is a recognised linguistic term to describe the offspring of a Chinese person married to an Indian, which is popularly known as 'Chindian' (Chinese and Indian).Although intermarriage between ethnic groups were commonly 'frowned upon' in the early days of independence (1960s onwards), now it is more commonly accepted by society.

Hybridity became an instrumentforshaping a discourse of 'racial mixing', which was seen as an impairment in theeighteenth century. The kind of hybridity in this period mainly referred to the inter-marriage of 'black' and 'white' and their offspring were identified as a hybrid product, as in the case of Baba and Nyonya and 'Chindians' in the Malaysian context.

Hybridity can be seen both negatively and positively. Ang (2001) reminds us that the concept of hybridity is still unacceptable to some people '*because they have been captured by the dominant essentialist ideology of identity, nationality, race and ethnicity'* (p.200). Papastergiadis (2000) in Werbner & Modood, 2000:258) on the other hand, asserts that:

> ...the positive feature of hybridity is that it invariably acknowledges that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference and that the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions is not necessarily a sign of failure.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006) assert that hybridity occurs in post-colonial societies as a result of economic and political expansion and control when the coloniser 'diluted' the indigenous peoples' (the colonised) social practices and assimilated them into a new social mould. They also explain that hybridity extends beyond the period of imperialism through patterns of migration such as from rural to urban regions or from one area of colonisation to other colonised areas; an example would be Chinese and Indian labourers coming in to the Malay Peninsula during the requirement for an increased labour force in the eighteenth century.

With the end of imperialism, however, and the growth of international migration and economic liberalisation, the term hybridity has been used in many different ways and is one of the most disputed terms in post-colonial discourse. It can take many forms in socio-economics, politics and linguistics. In post-colonial studies, the term 'hybrid' commonly refers to '*the creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation*' (Ashcroft et al., 2003). Another dimension of this term is the '*hybrid talk*' which is associated with the emergence of post-colonial discourse and its critique of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1999; White, 2001).

Post-colonial scholars acknowledge that in discussing the theory of cultural hybridity, the hybrid culture itself has the power to question and break the superiority of the Western culture as the hybrid culture is richer, impervious, diverse, heterogeneous and democratic (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1994;

Tomlinson, 1999). These scholars maintain that any predominance within a culture can be diluted and negotiated - as pointed out by Jin (2010), it can be '*less orchestrated and less purposeful because culture can then be negotiated by local and global power*' (p.4).

The discussion of hybridity in this study focuses on the contemporary debate about culture, ethnicity and identity which underpins de Toro's (2004) model of hybridity as a cultural category. In addition, this study locates hybrid practices in everyday classroom activities which could be the mainspring for the construction of shared Malaysian identity. Therefore, the concept of hybridity is useful in addressing the problematic nature of managing the differences in cultural, ethnic and religious groups in Malaysia's pluralistic society in general, and specifically in the classroom context, in the quest for the construction of shared Malaysian identity. Thus the discussion of hybridity in the Malaysian classroom context in this study is not about finding an alternative pedagogy, or changing the existing Malaysian literature classroom context; rather it is about highlighting the advantages of being able to recognise the existence of different types of hybridity in the classroom, which could promote the construction of shared Malaysian identity. Having an awareness of the usefulness of hybrid cultures, narratives and language, teachers and students can identify a space where cultural, religious and ethnic beliefs amidst 'difference' can be mutually understood and experienced.

One feature of a post-colonial nation such as Malaysia is that it produced hybrid languages due to the mixing of not one but many distinct languages. Following Bakhtin (1981, 1986), the language hybridity phenomenon is

another aspect discussed at considerable length in this study. As Malaysia's multicultural society evolves, languages evolve in tandem. The discussion of language hybridity here involves the emergence of Colloquial Malaysian English or 'Manglish' (LaPonce, 1987; Rajadurai, 2004; Young, 2009) which developed in the social interactions within the ethnic community or with other communities. Besides Manglish, other hybrid languages have appeared in Malaysian societies that have fused the different languages spoken in everyday communication. One example is the mixture of Malay and Javanese which is called 'Jawa Pasar' (literally the marketplace Javanese).

3.1.1 Malaysian English (and/or Manglish)

Standard Malaysian English and Colloquial Malaysian English (Manglish) (Rajadurai, 2004) have developed in leaps and bounds since the English language was brought in to the country by the British during the imperial era (at the turn of the 18th century). 'Manglish' is used as an everyday medium of communication as opposed to 'Standard Malaysian English,' which is widely used in academic discourse. In the context of this study, I use Standard Malaysian English to refer to use in the academic setting and Manglish as widely spoken for general communication. In her study of the intelligibility of Malaysian English, Wang (1987) states that '*the English language has filtered through to the heterogeneous local populace*' (p.45) as Manglish is widely used by Malaysians regardless of their ethnicity. Wang goes on to describe how Malaysian English has similar features of phonology, syntax and lexis to that of the standard English language, but:

> ... those linguistic levels have had influences from the local languages as well as modifications (by the way of various communicative strategies like over-generalisation,

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simplification, omission etc) that have now been fossilised deep enough to be recognisably Malaysian(p. 46).

Conversely, Manglish (more widely spoken than written) is the colloquial version of Malaysian English and it is enriched with vocabulary from mostly Malay, Mandarin or other Chinese dialects, and Tamil. The most popular suffix in Manglish is the particle '*lah*' at the end of a sentence. An example of this is when 'lah' is used to affirm a statement and usually ends with an exclamation mark.

Example: *Don't be stupid lah!* (Don't be stupid!)

Another example of Manglish fusing words from local languages is:

Trygostan, see can or not. If cannot,no choice meh…got to jalan lah. What to   do…

(Let's try and reverse (this car). If it is not possible, we have no other choice but to walk). *What to do* is a direct translation from the Malay language '*Apa nak buat*', which means that the speaker has no alternative but to carry on with the plan.

In the Manglish version, '*gostan*' was believed to originate from the nautical term 'go astern'. '*Meh*' is similar to '*lah*' but it is a particle used in Hokkien, while '*jalan*' is a Malay word which means 'to walk'. The Manglish sentence used in the example above represents a hybrid language which is widely used in Malaysian everyday discourse. A combination of Malay, Hokkien, English and sometimes other words originating from different local languages brings about the uniqueness of a hybrid language similar to a patois, a pidgin or Creole.

On the other hand, Malaysian English used in formal spoken and written English, although in many instances it is localised or dialectal, this does not impede the understanding of non-Malaysians. An example is the sentence below adapted from Wang (1987:47):

> Four men were arrested in a dusun (orchard) off Kuala Ketil for allegedly having murdered a kadi (judge in Islamic law) who rebuked them for previous instances of khalwat (close proximity with partner of the opposite sex which is unlawful in Islam).

The word '*dusun*' is a Malay word while '*kadi*' and '*khalwat*' are borrowed Arabic words which are accepted and used as part of the Malay vocabulary. Thus, it can be concluded that the languages used in Malaysia are more exceptionally hybrid than the neighbouring countries due to the fusion of the different languages spoken from people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The essence of hybrid utterances is captured in Bakhtin's (1981) heteroglossia (a variety of jargons and dialects used within the same language). The discussion of language hybridity, which is related to hybrid language in Malaysia, is elaborated at greater depth in Chapter Five. The discussion emphasises the variety of influences on modern Malaysian language communication in light of Bakhtin's perspective of linguistic hybridity.

3.2   The Significance of the Hybridity Concept in this Study

The pursuit of the formation of shared Malaysian identity is central to this study, and a discussion of hybridity is fundamental to a multicultural society

such as Malaysia. Hutnyk, Kalra and Kaur (2005) assert that *'hybridity is better conceived of as a process rather than a description'* (p.71), and they further maintain that as multicultural society evolves, the process of hybridisation develops and progresses alongside the people and society.

Along the same line, the essentialist view that the process of hybridisation weakens the fabric of a society as pure culture becomes diluted is a weak assumption and has become almost a myth. This also assumes culture is static, not dynamic, therefore doomed to die. On the contrary, the mixing of migrant and the local (host and guest) cultures has been advantageous and constructive for socio-economic development and the progress of shared identity. Bhabha (1990:211) reminds us of the importance of hybridity:

> ...the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge.

Thus, the emergence of this new position sets up a new structure and power basis to be understood and experienced by the new hybrid culture of a society.

The migrants' survival (in post colonial era) was part of their *'shared sense of civic virtue'* (Knowles, 2007) at the same time of managing their new life and meeting new sets of people from different cultural backgrounds, maintaining their language, culture and customs. This quest for the perpetuation of the language, identity and customs of the early migrants in Malaya can be seen by many minority groups as an ongoing struggle for the Chinese, Indian and other migrant communities in modern Malaysia.

In relation to the connection between Bhabha's post-colonial work and the classroom context, Moje et al. (2004:43) conducted a study on literacy learning in secondary school content areas and believe that discourses of academic texts used in most classrooms in their study are akin to '*the privilege accorded to the ways of knowing of the coloniser*'. They further explain that the prescribed academic texts used in classrooms can restrict some students' learningas students struggle to adjust to, or accommodate, the different ways of knowing, doing, reading, writing and talking to other students who are advantaged in terms of access to learning materials, perhaps outside school hours.. They assert '*School texts can act as colonizers, making only certain foreign or outside knowledge and Discourses valid*'. (Ibid)

The students in Moje et al.'s (ibid) study of 30 young people from different neighbourhoods within a Latino, low income/working class community struggling to compete with other 'privileged' (upper class) students can experience anxiety in what Bhabha (1994) terms the 'splitting' of discourse, culture and consciousness. In Moje and her colleagues' (ibid: 43) words, thedisadvantagedstudents are those who struggle '*to achieve a strong sense of self, but who must always articulate themselves in response to an 'other*''. In this case, the students who come from different language and cultural backgrounds struggled to compete, take up with or resist the other 'privileged' students already 'in' the culture and using the language of privilege and academic contexts.

In contrast to Moje and colleagues' study, the context of this present study explores the hybrid classroom consisting of students from different cultural and language backgrounds, in that the language used in the literature

classroom (the English language) is a second language for almost everyone. Any anxiety students may have felt, I believe, would be in having to compete with each other to achieve higher grades. Moje and colleagues (2004) attest that prescribed academic texts used in the classroom may, to a considerable extent, impede students' learning, as they stifle teachers' creativity in text explorations, which may also be so in the Malaysian classroom context. The discussion of prescribed texts as opposed to the unofficial texts[4] is discussed further in the Chapter Five of this thesis.

The discussion of hybridity above suggests that there are positive and negative implications of the hybridisation process in a multicultural context (in the case of this research, the multicultural classroom), so hybridity of itself is not the solution, but rather, an increased awareness and heightening of consciousness of the conflicts of living with and alongside differences. Adjustments need to be tailored to suit the context of the contemporary but evolving society.

3.3 The Third Space

3.3.1 What is the Third Space?

The focus of the Third Space used in this study is on the construction of shared Malaysian identity in the literature classroom through the utilisation of selected Malaysian short stories. The aim is to identify productive learning spaces during the process of teaching and learning within the classroom

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[4] Unofficial texts here refer to the Malaysian short stories (selected by teachers from the one-day workshop) to be used with their students for the post-workshop observation

setting. One of these spaces involves the use of hybrid texts[5]. The aim is to encourage critical thought facilitated by some Malaysian short stories, understood as mediational tools in this space, in what Gutiérrez (2004:150) claims is a '...*hybrid text with several seemingly contradictory or inharmonious conventions and practices'*. Hybrid texts in this context can harness or draw on knowledge and experience of teachers and learners from home or their communities (informal context) to the classroom (formal institutional context), which can be exploited to enhance learning.

Although discussing the Third Space from a variety of platforms, these scholars (Moje et al. and Gutiérrez et al.) all see the Third Space as a hybrid space where the 'first' and 'second' space coalesce (DeMont, 2010). English (2005:87) claims the word 'Third' refers to '*the constructing and reconstructing of identity, to the fluidity of space*.' She further explains that the word 'Third' indicates the location where negotiation occurs and where identity is constructed and reconstructed. The Third Space acts as a defence to regulating, rigid views and presents a way of seeing things differently as it becomes the viewers' own space (Ibid, 2005).

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Turner's (1997) school-based research, links the Third Space in their study to shifts in knowledge and knowledge representation whereby the Third Space can become a common ground so that   the interests of the teachers and students are available to each other. In a different study by Gutiérrez and associates but in a similar context, the Third Space is referred to as a discursive space in which alternative and competing discourses and positionings transform conflict and differences

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[5] Snell-Horby (1999) maintains that hybrid texts are texts which involve 'new languages' and elements ranging from lexical and grammatical innovation to culture-bound items

into rich zones of collaboration and learning (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995:). They see the Third Space construct as beneficial in helping teachers understand the intricacies and complexities of learning environments and their transformative potential.

Moje and her colleagues (2004) in their study 'Working toward Third space in content area literacy: An examination of everyday funds of knowledge and Discourse' contend that the Third Space merges the 'first space' (home, community and peer network) to the 'second space', which is school (formalised space). The Third Space in their study is a navigational tool which guides the students in negotiating their way through the official content texts using their everyday funds of knowledge and Discourse (Gee, 1990).This space for everyday funds of knowledge and Discourse is used in a variety of ways that challenge and extend learners' literacy practices, which is highly valued in school (Moje et al., 2004).

Moje et al. (ibid) present their findings based on the patterns in various funds of knowledge and Discourse of 30 middle school students in a predominantly Latino/Latina urban community in Detroit, Michigan, in the United States in school science learning. Moje and associates use 'fund' (borrowing from Moll & Greenberg, 1990) to mean networks and relationships. Funds of knowledge in this context according to Moje et al. (Ibid):

> include [...] homes, peer groups and other network relationships which shape the oral and written texts young people make meaning of and produce as they move from classroom to classroom and from home to peer group, to school, or to the community (p.38)

In their study, they examined the types of literacy practices used in the different funds stated above. They integrate knowledge and Discourse in which the Third Space is drawn from the merging of the 'first space' and the 'second space' mentioned earlier. Moje and colleagues (2004) grounded their research in hybridity theory, and argue that an effective mixture of multiple funds of knowledge and Discourse support young people in the quest for text utilisation and improve literacy practices for the continuity of their schooling, both inside and outside formal institutions. In their study, Moje and associates (2004) identify three ways in which the Third Space is conceptualised in education. Firstly, it acts as a bridge between marginalised and conventional knowledge and Discourse. Secondly, the Third Space functions as a 'navigational' space enabling students to bring their 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992) from home to be used in classroom learning. Finally, it creates a place where the integration of knowledge and Discourses from home and school will generate new forms of learning.

Moje and associates' (ibid) concept of the Third Space fits well with the present study whereby the Third Space provides an avenue through which the utilisation of Malaysian short stories (the unofficial texts) in the literature classroom can help students and teachers construct their own (pleasant or unpleasant) experiences of 'reality' in society. These experiences can differ from those generated by the demands of the official curriculum where students extract and write about the characters, plot and the values of prescribed texts to enable them to answer examination questions.

Additionally, the notion of hybridity, according to Moje et al. (2004:42) can be applied to the integration of knowledge and Discourse in which they relate:

> ...to the text one reads and writes; to the spaces, contexts, and relationship one encounters; and even to a person's identity enactments and sense of self.

Hybridity theory thus is valuable in that it connects to the Third Space because '*Third Spaces are hybrid spaces that bring people together*' (ibid). Thus, in the present study, the hybrid spaces are not only the availability of groups of students from different cultural backgrounds in what could be conceived as 'convenient hybridity' in the classroom, but also the active introduction of Malaysian short stories (induced hybridity) in the integration and amalgamation of knowledge from the official and unofficial curriculum. Convenient hybridity mentioned above carries the meaning of the readily available multicultural students in a classroom. In this study, students from different backgrounds are not taken from several schools but are all in one single school. This aspect of convenient hybridity is akin to the convenience sampling technique when carrying out research. Induced hybridity, on the other hand, is the 'planned' hybridity in which the Malaysian short stories are used. The induced hybridity is to optimise responses from the participants, so 'familiar ground' is chosen to induce reciprocity.

Other education-based studies which utilise the concept of Third Space include the work of Pane (2007). In her study, Pane investigated how the blend between face-to-face and online instruction supports the development of Third Space content-area in a reading education course. She identifies the

Third Space in her study as a 'zone of transformation' that is generated when teachers and students socialise together in and through language, integrating everyday and academic knowledge. Similar to the context of teaching and learning derived from Pane, the Third Space in this study is identified as an area (zone) where students and teachers explore the Malaysian short stories and link them to their everyday experiences of 'reality' in society. With the ability to link stories to reality (the favourable and unfavourable events happening in society), teachers may also be able to facilitate the construction of shared Malaysian identity by getting the students to critically reflect on their own experiences in a direction which recognises the importance of unity amidst their differences.

In tune with the concern to recognise differences, Kostogriz (2002), by contrast, asserts that the Third Space is not about finding a solution to differences or searching for familiar ground in literacy representations and practices. He contends that the main purpose is for students to be aware of contradictions and ambivalence and their acceptance of situations where ambivalence could help in their learning and also their lives. By this he means that the students would be able to understand conflicts more readily in their lives from being aware of the differences that exist amongst themselves. His perspective fits well with the intention of this study in that by understanding cultural conflicts, students can develop the notion of shared identity in a more sensible way.

Gutiérrez and her associate (1999) have a slightly different perspective to that of Bhabha on Third Space. They perceive the Third Space as a link between community/home-based Discourse and school-based Discourse

(Moje et al., 2004). However, Gutiérrez in her more recent study of the Third Space proposes that a paradigm shift is needed in literacy education for young people in which the collective Third Space and 'sociocritical literacy' (Gutiérrez, 2008) are emphasised. Sociocritical literacy, according to Gutiérrez (Ibid:148):

> ...historicizes everyday and institutional literacy practices and texts and reframes them as powerful tools oriented toward critical social thought.

In her study, students in their everyday social environment re-examine who they are and what their potential could be to enable them to achieve academically and beyond. In other words, students are encouraged to critically re-conceive their 'self' and the 'others' around them. Gutiérrezfocuses on the design of a particular social environment of development (learning ecology) in which the construct of a collective Third Space is developed. She contends that the construct of this Third Space is very much akin to that of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gutiérrez's perspective in this sociocritical view of literacy, however, challenges contemporary definitions of the Zone of Proximal Development in which Vygotsky's (1978) construct of ZPD is at the heart of scaffolding. In ZPD, learners are given support by their teacher or a more competent peer until the learner decides the support is no longer required. Gutierrez's notion of ZPD is conceptualised in the Third Space from three different aspects. First, the Third Space is a 'movement' in which the reorganisation of school-based concepts takes place. Second, the main activities suitable to learners'

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development reorganise everyday functions in this Third Space, and finally, the development in this Third Space is grounded as the transformation of the individual learner (Gutiérrez, 2008). From her perspective, Gutierrez believes that learners' development and their sociocultural environment '*actively seek to change the other to their own ends*' (p.153). This is Gutiérrez's point of departure from ZPD.

To this end, Gutiérrez's work resonates with the focus of this study, insofar as firstly, there is a reorganisation of 'movement' in terms of the utilisation of Malaysian short stories in the literature classroom. The 'movement' resembles the progression from the official text prescribed in the syllabus to the unofficial texts (Malaysian short stories). Then there are the main activities which constitute teaching and learning in the classroom, similar to the day-to-day literature lessons but comprising carefully orchestrated (planned) participation. Thirdly, there is the development in the Third Space which Gutiérrez cites as the transformation of the individual learner through carefully designed, ecologically-grounded practice. However, Gutiérrez's call for learners and their sociocultural environment to actively seek to change the other to their own ends is not applicable to this study as the main aim of this investigation is for the students to understand the other not 'to change' them. Teachers and learners and their sociocultural environment in this case actively use their understanding of difference (of self and other) to aid the formation of a shared Malaysian identity.

3.3.2 The advantages of exploiting the Third Space

Scholars in the realms of Third Space have highlighted the potential of exploiting this space. Gutiérrez and her colleagues (1999) state that the

construct of Third Space has been advantageous in helping educators to understand the complexity of learning environments and their transformative potential – *'Hybridity in diversity serve as the building blocks of Third Space'* (p.287). By this they mean that the careful use of hybridity and diversity permits the transformation of activities into becoming a strong developmental context in which students can learn.

In their 2004 study, Moje and colleagues go on to show that by connecting marginalised and conventional knowledge, there is an increase in academic engagement when the Third Space is utilised in the classroom context. Secondly, the Third Space serves as a 'navigational' space where students are able to bring resources from home to the classroom context. In this way, learners are able to take advantage of the different resources they bring to the classroom to support their abilities to operate in different contexts by drawing upon the different skills learned in different situations. Thirdly, the Third Space provides a place where the integration of resources from home (experience) and school Discourses produce new learning patterns. This space is characterised by the Discourses and roles adopted by the actors (the teachers, students, parents and community) within them and generates new knowledge which can sometimes challenge their sense- making of the subject in relation to the knowledge generated from home and the world outside the classroom. Moje et al (2004:44) suggest that:

> The few studies of classroom practices that seek to challenge dominant knowledges and Discourses generally demonstrate gains in students' academic literacy skills because of the bridges that are built even as students move toward developing new knowledge.

Thus, Moje and associates urge the need for more studies of the Third Space in the classroom context using a variety of methods in which every day and academic Discourses can be challenged and new knowledge produced.

Wolf (2008) delineates several advantages to be gained from the exploration of the Third Space, and suggests that the Third Space should not be seen just as a 'space' but rather as a contact zone for controversial potentials, a space for transition that helps make visible '*the idea of something incompatible, concealed, unconscious*'(p.13). This space of transition could be one that has long been avoided by teachers (and family members or society) such as discussions of controversial issues including ethnic stereotyping and the 'privileges' awarded to certain groups of people by those with 'power' vested in them. The controversial potential is what Bhabha (1994:39) refers to when he says '*Self can be experienced as the Other*'. In the literature-teaching context in this thesis, what Bhabha indicated in the quotation above can be interpreted as the role playstudents create and present to the class - 'them' in the shoes of the characters they carry. Thus, the Third Space is a space of transition to being 'them' to becoming someone else, from the narrative used. As a consequence of the Third Space as a space of transition, Wolf points out that it can be a platform for negotiation, and in this study negotiation between students and other students and also students and their teacher. The Third Space is an interactive arena where conflicts and differences between students can be transposed into constructive features.

The Third Space as described in the studies mentioned above fits very well with the aims and objectives of the present study - using Malaysian short stories so that students and teachers alike can share their home experiences

with the others in the classroom. These different experiences not only heighten their knowledge about the other cultures around them but also of the complexity of 'reality' in society, which can then strengthen the drive to construct a shared Malaysian identity. The Third Space as a hybrid space can open up avenues and broaden access for the students to renegotiate their identities, thus taking steps beyond their normal unitary 'fixed' identities (as Malays, Chinese or Indians) to a hybridised space that is negotiable and fluid.

3.4 Locating the 'Third Space' in this Study

Luke and Luke (1999:234) conceptualising the Third Space, assert:

> The third space is the site and moment of hybridity, of ambivalence, or reworking and renaming, of subverting and recreating identity from among multi-embedded social constructions of Otherness. These constructs are not exclusively the representations of the dominant culture, but intertwine with community, family, or nation narratives that index 'home', 'race', 'origin' and 'culture'.

Therefore, the concept of the 'Third Space' has considerable ramifications for the possible construction of shared Malaysian identity in a space where cultures collide and beliefs and values can tend to contradict each other. As highlighted by Luke and Luke above, the hybrid space is where re-identification or reformulation can occur without the superiority of the dominant culture. In the context of this study, this is the culture of the Malays. It offers the possibility of cultural politics whereby polarities between different ethnicities can be avoided. It is not a halfway space but, rather, centred on the adaptation and transformation of the culture and identity of a society that attempts to reconcile differences. Meredith (1998) affirms:

> The concept of hybridity and the third space contributes to an approach that avoids the perpetuation of antagonistic binarisms and develops inclusionary, not exclusionary, and multi-faceted, not dualistic, patterns of cultural exchange and maturation.

Thus, the ultimate goal in locating the Third Space in this study, following Gutiérrez, is to create rich zones of development (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). In this sphere, students learn collaboratively by participating in activities through which they share ideas, materials, experience, language and also their cultural resources.

The notion of hybridity is exemplified in the use of local narratives (Malaysian short stories), proposed as the mediating tool for the construction of shared Malaysian identity. This notion of hybridity according to Moje et al. (2004) can be applied to the integration of competing knowledge and discourses. By this they mean:

> [...] to the texts one reads and writes; to the spaces, contexts, and relationships one encounters; and even to a person's identity enactments and sense of self. Hybridity theory connects in important ways to Third Space, because Third Spaces are hybrid spaces that bring together any or all of the constructs named above.

The constructs, as they are referred to by Moje and colleagues above, require collaborative participation (Oxford, 1997) from the actors (text, space and context). Fundamental to the idea of collaborative participation is the conception of hybridity which is a crucial element in knowledge generation in the Third Space.

Moje et al. (2004:43) further argue that the Third Space can become an effective hybrid cultural space under certain conditions:

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> ...rather than a fragmented and angst-ridden psychological space, only if teachers and students incorporate divergent texts in the hope of generating new knowledges and Discourses.

Accordingly, the use of Malaysian short stories in this study (unofficial texts) fits the purpose of creating a Third Space in the literature classroom where not only new knowledge can be produced but also the awareness of the need to construct an identity that is responsive to the development of a more integrated society.

3.5   Manifesting the Hidden Curriculum

Locating and utilising the Third Space as discussed in earlier sections (3.3.1 and 3.3.2) can bring in a new dimension for teachers and students in their classroom interactions. This dimension includes a space where teachers and students can experience learning not readily available in the formal curriculum tailored specifically for students belonging to a specific year group (key stage). The space also creates opportunities for teacher-student, student-student socialisation, which is not easily accessible or convenient outside the school compound; however, although this space can be located and used, it is not visible. A useful concept in relation to the explanation above is the notion of the hidden curriculum (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Jackson, 1968; Sambell & McDowell, 1998; Skelton, 1997;Snyder, 1970).   Hidden Curriculum was coined by Jackson (1968) to illuminate that schools do more than just transmitting knowledge to students. Skelton (1997:188) defines hidden curriculum as:

> That set of implicit messages relating to knowledge, values and norms of behaviour and attitudes that learners experience in and through educational processes.

It is important to note the diverse processes through which the concept may be applicable to different people and different dimensions in education. The hidden curriculum exists in the classroom, place of worship, social gatherings, or perhaps in a musical theatre which is a popular meeting spot among urban youth, particularly in Malaysia. It must be stressed at this point that hidden curriculum can have both negative and positive impacts in the realm of classroom teaching and learning.

3.5.1 The varying concepts and approaches to the hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum is the curriculum which is latent and 'submerged' and cannot be seen; it includes the beliefs and attitudes to teaching and learning transmitted via the structure of schooling or teaching methods, as well as the values held by teachers and students in daily life, the expectations or forms of motivation that no one has been directly taught (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Hubbard, 2010; Macionis & Plummer, 2008; Paechter, 1999). The hidden curriculum contrasts with the 'overt' curriculum which can be clearly seen in such things as timetables, syllabi, examinations, and subjects. Sambell and McDowell (1998:391) in their study of 'The construction of the hidden curriculum: messages and meanings in the assessment of student learning' define hidden curriculum as:

> ...an apposite metaphor to describe the shadowy, ill-defined and amorphous nature of that which is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction

By this they mean that the hidden curriculum is not easily described because more often than not teachers and students are not aware of the hidden curriculum, or how it influences what they think and what they do. They add that at the micro-level, the hidden curriculum is a distinction between 'what is meant to happen' (the official curriculum) and 'what teachers and learners actually do and experience' in the classroom.

Dreeben (1976) was doubtful about the term 'hidden curriculum', and poses the question: '*If the unwritten curriculum is really unwritten, hidden, tacit, or latent, how do we know it is there and has an impact that we should pay attention to?*' (p. 114). He goes on to argue that hard empirical evidence for the notion of hidden curriculum is lacking and that the notion of hidden curriculum might lead us to make false assumptions. Dreeben suggests that the social environment can influence how students perceive themselves in relation to their social relationship and identity formation. He considers this as important as he believes that schooling contributes to the learning of norms. He continues by saying that the hidden curriculum seems to be related only to the social environment and is associated with the teaching of norms, for example gender roles, patriarchy, not necessarily a 'good thing' or to be dismissed as minor, which is challenged by other hidden curriculum theorists (Burbules, 1990; Lakomski, 1988). In relation to Dreeben's uncertainty about the notion of hidden curriculum, Chiang (1989) warns of the inherent dangers of unexamined hidden curriculum debates. He says:

> ...the hidden curriculum, or its speculation, is the very structure and organizing principle of the formal curriculum. The survival of the whole educational system depends upon the integrity of the hiddenness of this hidden curriculum. To dispense with it is to demolish the entire educational enterprise(p.192).

To him, the hidden curriculum is such an important component in educational improvement that rather than being hidden, it should be exposed. He believes from a practical point of view that educators should try to do just that.

Gordon (1982) identifies three different ways of characterising the hidden curriculum; through outcomes, environmental and latent influences. The hidden curriculum concept divides school learning outcomes into two mutually exclusive groups; academic learning (formal curriculum), and non-academic learning (attitudes, values, dispositions, certain social skills). Gordon gives an example of students learning an implicit message communicated by the teacher through various 'clues' about how to succeed. According to his argument, the hidden curriculum is best described as '*beating the system*' (p.188). Secondly, the hidden curriculum focuses on the school environment which is also divided into two: the cognitive environment (official curriculum), and the physical and social environment (hidden curriculum). Gordon refers to the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) who assert that there appears to be a correspondence between the social relationships of personal interaction in the work place and the social relationships within the educational system. Explaining the physical environment, Gordon refers to the work of Getzels (1976) in which the latter discusses how the ways chairs and tables are organised in the classroom made a significant difference to the students' conception of learning and 'how' they are supposed to learn. In his third and final definition of the hidden curriculum, Gordon goes on to distinguish between two modes of influence; a conscious deliberate influence (official curriculum), and an

unconscious and unplanned influence (hidden curriculum). He identifies the hidden curriculum as a by-product of learning, something which is learnt but not deliberately planned.

Gordon's concepts of hidden curriculum link closely to the desired outcomes of this study where the formal and informal learning outcomes – derive from the teachers' and students' attitudes and transformations in the literature classroom. Teachers and students in this study were both aiming for the same formal goal, the production of 'excellent' results in the school's high-stake examinations (extrinsic value). This is what Dreeben (1968) refers to as the 'social environment of schooling' whereby the expectations of the school and society produce competition not only among the students, but also the teachers, and between schools. The competition also places greater emphasis on subjects such as science and mathematics, which pushes subjects such as language and literature to the periphery (Halpern et al., 2007). Gordon's concept of outcome is very much related to the school environment where the classroom organisation, spaces and the nature of the learning process implicitly send messages to the learners, which influences the teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, teachers and students in this present study are accustomed to the norms of 'learning to pass the examination' as opposed to teaching and learning values, cultural relationships, understanding others or working towards a more unified society (intrinsic values). These are, by and large, the by-product of learning, if they exist at all, and fulfilling the ultimate goal of grade-achieving is the focus of education. Therefore, Gordon's third concept of the latent influenceof

the hidden curriculum, which is unconscious and unplanned, thereby, by nature a hidden curriculum.

Additionally, Tekian (2009) asserts that classifying and analysing the essential features of the hidden curriculum is a complex task, and the main challenge is to identify what comprises the hidden curriculum as it goes beyond the informal curriculum, which is more of an unscripted form of teaching and learning. Lynch (1989:84) claims that schools have '*universalistic and particularistic hidden aspects that enable an unequal environment for students*'. Universalistic refers to something visible such as syllabi, school timetables and exams, while particularistic aspects are what she believes are the hidden aspects of schooling, such as the interpretation of the 'rules' for rewarding good behaviour which are interpreted by individual teachers, therefore particular to them.

In their recent research on the way a classroom functions, Konidari and Abernot (2008) adopt a definition of hidden curriculum that fits their research purposes. They say that hidden curriculum:

> … does not depend on what the institution demands of the students, but on the social dynamics of the class of students, on what the classmates demand, and how the attitudes suggested by the students' immediate social environment create an **habitus** and influence identity and learning. (p.1)(original emphasis)

The quotation above differs slightly from the archetypal definitions of hidden curriculum of theorists such as Jackson (1968), Dreeben (1976) and Gordon (1982), and does not place emphasis on the institution or school, but locates classmates at the centre of the hidden curriculum. Peer influence undoubtedly affects attitude, disposition and the choices of students and

creates an habitus for their own learning. Konidari and Abernot (ibid: 1) believe that the classroom is a complex system:

> Each classroom is thus a system that relates acting persons in spaces of signification collectively constructed and negotiated, an artificial system that sets up the fundamental field for their success. It is not only the 'relationship to knowledge' and the 'results' or 'process knowledge' that are important, but also the relation to the context, to the field where this knowledge takes place that are crucial.

The success of students, according to Konidari and Abernot, is mainly influenced by how they identify themselves in the classroom and how they negotiate their learning amongst their peers, i.e. not necessarily how they gain knowledge that matters or the process and results but it is the situation in the classroom that determines their achievement.

3.5.2 The Classroom as a contested space

The classroom environment has always been traditionally associated with teaching and learning and with expectations that students conform to the regulations (latent or explicit) imposed on them. It is also a place where tensions and anxieties flourish should any of the expected norms be bent or become broken. Sometimes, without realising it, what is encountered in the classroom is tension or conflict. This is why Shaw (2006) believes that the hidden curriculum is not only subtle but far more powerful than the formal curriculum:

> ...as the messages we communicate through **how** [original emphasis] we teach embed themselves deeply within the psyches of our students and influence their attitudes, motivations, and behaviours in a way that our words rarely accomplish (p.26)

This means that certain elements of classroom teaching and learning become deeply rooted in students' minds (for example, the notion of equality for everyone, despite the fact that in the Malaysian school system, only certain groups of students are eligible for free textbooks or are exempted from paying school fees). Societies differ in their 'unspoken rules' depending on the geographical sphere within which the classroom is situated. For example, a student's criticism of a teacher's idea can be considered acceptable in the urban areas but the same student would be deemed ill-mannered, say, for example in rural areas in Malaysia. Thus the hidden curriculum (unspoken rules) can vary according to location and actors. Similarly, how far the classroom is a contested space differs greatly depending on the context within which a particular classroom is situated. For instance, the responses of a literature lesson conducted in Kuala Lumpur city are likely to be different to that of Kota Bharu, Kelantan, in that English language is generally well accepted in the former but not the latter.

The idea of classroom context and peer influence on the hidden curriculum is explained by Regalsky and Laurie (2007), who say that the classroom is a contested space where encounters and conflicts between different cultural groups and economic power become visible. Farrell and Holkner (2006) claim that the classroom ambit in itself is contested; as it is created by and for hybrid communities of practice aided by communication technology. Although Farrell and Holkner's work is mainly centred around communication technology and the classroom, this notion of hybrid community of practice resonates with the notion of hybridity in the Third

Space. Community of practice literature is well established and will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Giroux (1983), in theorising the reproduction and resistance in the New Sociology of Education, criticises the ways traditionalist educators perceive the concept of school as simply a site of instruction which:

> [...] is a reproductive in the cultural sense functioning in part to distribute and legitimate forms of knowledge, values, language and modes of style that constitutes the dominant cultures its interests [...] as part of state apparatus that produces and legitimises the economic and ideological imperatives that underlie the state's political power(p.258).

Instead, he views schools as a contested space where conflicts and struggles between groups characterised by cultural and economic power become apparent. The hidden curriculum in the context of his study (reproduction under capitalism) consists of the ways in which the workplace is reproduced in daily practices, which then create social relations within classroom boundaries and in turn constitutes the hidden curriculum of education.

Similarly, in his study of reform ideas in the Texas classroom, Craig (2009) encounters tensions in the classroom space in what appears to be where a high- stake testing movement develops. Alongside the teachers' intention to enact the formal curriculum and adhere to the guidelines and expectations of administrators and supervisors, tensions and conflicts erupt. He reports:

> The intensification of the struggle over what occurs in the classroom space...through teachers' knowledge forged in their relationship with one another within their community of knowing...soon, teachers realized that the 'model of teaching' reform not only stifled their creativity but also infringed on their in-classroom places where they and their students actively co-created curriculum. (p.1043)

Craig further reports that the teachers in his study declare they have become '*slaves to a mandated curriculum process'* (Craig, 2009:315) and that they are deeply dismayed by the teacher-as-implementer role which restricts their practices and limits their creativity. These strains are intensified by other directives and instructions as well as having to face the students who are already aware of the severe pressures on the teachers, which affect the students' lives as well.

This latent concept of the classroom as a contested and negotiated space is highlighted in the analysis of this study (Chapters Five and Six) in relation to the Third Space discussed in 3.3 above, where students try to interpret and challenge the unspoken norms (hidden curriculum) of classroom activities.

3.5.3   The Classroom as a discursive space

When describing classroom space in general, in her work on Space, Power and the Classroom, McGregor (2004) refers to the classroom as a space which:

> …hides things from us, through our lack of understanding of it as constructed and contestable. This is a particularly the case in secondary schools, which are often well away from the gaze of the adult public, yet where space is continually organised to maintain power relations so deeply embedded that we fail to recognise them. (p.13)

In McGregor's concept of the hidden curriculum, she not only implicitly imparts concepts which are hidden such as abiding by school rules or behaving well, as expected by school-attendees, but also the concept of classroom (physical or metaphorical) as a discursive space which is more

often than not taken for granted by the community, teachers and the students themselves.

Simpson (2011:12), in his empirical study of discursive space and narratives in the ESOL classroom says:

> ...when students are encouraged to claim control of classroom discourse, they produce longer utterances and express more complex ideas than in the types of classrooms which rely mainly on invented dialogues or teacher prescribed topics.

Simpson suggests the opportunity to claim control of the class allows students to produce more complex language (in his case, the English language) and ideas, greater fluency and extended turn-taking in their conversations. In another study, Baynham (2006:37) illustrated how student agency stimulated possible responses from their teachers. He goes on to explain that these are:

> ...unexpected irruptions of students' lived experience which can interrupt and derail the planned pedagogical sequence, yet if the teacher responds to them contingently can provide unexpected opportunities for learning.

Agency, according to Duranti (2004:453) includes:

> [...] control over one's own behaviour, producing actions that affect other entities as well as the self and producing actions that are the object of evaluation.

Based on such agency, Baynham recommends a more intricate and refined account of agency and partnership in classroom discourse and the '*contingent responsiveness*' (ibid) of teachers. Student agency is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven (7.5.5).

Based on the discussions of the classroom as a contested and discursive space, some inferences can then be drawn. Space, regardless of whether it is within the classroom boundaries or not, is always contested, and conflicts can arise from manifest differences, especially when social groups are constantly driven to claim territories, and to include and exclude some or others from specific areas (Massey, 1998). The ability of teachers to use space creatively (not restrictively) can enhance not only learning but students' ways of 'seeing' and interpreting the world through their own lenses. The Third Space can be the avenue for this 'interpretation' and making use of the concept of hidden curriculum in this space can be an opportunity to understand others constructively.

Both the Third Space and the hidden curriculum are culturally – and psychologically – bounded contested space. By this I mean that in a multicultural hybrid classroom, students and teachers may bring with them their own values and beliefs which arguably conflict with those of others with whom they are engaged in teaching and learning in the classroom. Thus, sometimes the classroom can be an outlet for students to immerse themselves in arguments and heated discussions as it is considered neutral ground. As mentioned in section 3.4 above, this space can be an effective hybrid space if teachers and students are able to handle it with caution and free from anxiety.

3.6 The Impact of the Hidden Curriculum on Teaching and Learning

The notion of the hidden curriculum in this study relates to the argument that the classroom environment affects the conditions of teaching and learning that take place within it. The insights gained from my data about teachers and students' perspectives can be helpful in illuminating the hidden curriculum, especially in utilising the Third Space. Through an understanding of the boundaries of the hidden curriculum and how it can be manipulated to the advantage of teachers and students alike, although it is a complex process, it puts the quest for the pathway to the construction of shared Malaysian identitywithin reach. Thus, conflicting opinions about teachers' views of the construction of students' shared identity in the classroom will be analysed in the light of the notion of the hidden curriculum. These conflicting views are grounded in the mismatch between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their actual practices. One of the main causes of conflict lies in how far teachers and students prioritise school examinations, as well as the pressure imposed on schools by the local education departments to produce good results, extensively criticised in the Malaysian education system (Nurul-Awanis, Hazlina, Yoke-May, & Zariyawati, 2010).

It is not the intention of this study to advocate or suggest that the hidden curriculum is superior in some sense to the formal or the official curriculum because this is not the case - the hidden curriculum has no existence without the formal curriculum. Nonetheless, the impact of revealing the hidden curriculum in this present study is significant and, if managed effectively, could bring about considerable improvements to teaching and learning in the

Malaysian classroom context; for example, by allowing the exploration of the Third Space. Therefore, an understanding of the hidden curriculum, both its positive and negative aspects, could create a greater awareness in learning communities (teachers, students and parents) and among policy makers (syllabus and curriculum designers). In addition, teachers and education administrators need to be aware of the hidden curriculum and how it operates in schools and whether its dynamic can support the school philosophy and educational policy.

The hidden curriculum, according to Anderson (2003), if revealed, '*becomes negotiable, visible, allows for remediation, change, defence, improvement and none the least, informed dialogue*'. In a similar vein, O'Neil and Schmidt (1992) state that teachers who unveil the practices of the hidden curriculum in their classroom have the upper hand in handling classroom conflicts as they become the '*facilitators of well-orchestrated learning'*. By this they mean that the hidden curriculum agenda can complement the official curriculum when teachers are able to explicitly make students aware of the nature of any conflict (in the hidden curriculum) they are faced with and encourage them to suggest solutions to the conflicts at hand, so bringing the hidden curriculum out into the open and making it a tool for learning.

Another problem with trying to open up the hidden curriculum may be that students are reluctant to confront their teachers on classroom matters because they wish to avoid conflicts. For example, a student may be afraid to respond to a biased comment from a teacher and ignores it in order to avoid confronting the teacher. Conflict avoidance is very much at the heart of this present study as the culture of schooling in Malaysia, until recently, was to

accept knowledge directly from teachers without questioning it (Neo, 2005; Ng, Kamariah, Samsilah, Wong & Petri, 2005). This non-criticising behaviour on the part of the students has long been accepted in Malaysian culture and can be seen as part of the hidden curriculum considered by Western education as passive learning. Students accept what is conveyed by the teacher as 'knowledge', and the teacher, as the 'authority' in the classroom, cannot be questioned. Thus, by opening up hidden curriculum, students' dilemma of having to be submissive or passive towards teachers can be one way in improving teaching and learning in the classroom.

Another unfavourable effect is that the hidden curriculum, according to Anderson (2003), may limit teachers' instruction, (in terms of pedagogical creativity) because the culture of schooling encourages the teachers to tolerate certain behaviour which may not enhance learning; for example, when teachers impose strict disciplinary rules, e.g. silence in the classroom, this prevents students from collaborating or learning from others and so can restrict students' creativity.

Teachers, on the other hand, generally feel that they are accountable to many different people in the learning community, not just the students; another point that can be seen as an unfavourable effect of hidden curriculum. Parents, administrators, supervisors, and principals are among the various people teachers encounter in their daily teaching lives; to meet such a range of expectations is arduous, and in many ways, can impact on the nature of students' learning. Hubbard (2010) claims that many hidden curricular issues are the consequence of assumptions and expectations that are not

officially communicated, established or transmitted within the learning environment.

3.7   The Impact of the Hidden Curriculum on the Construction of Shared Malaysian Identity

The classroom is a complex structure. The complexity is heightened by a combination of teachers' and students' diverse backgrounds and students' different goals in attending school. Teachers inevitably are the key people in making choices that will be reflected back in students' views of teaching and learning. Teachers and students have different responsibilities but they all focus on similar goals for learning. Thus, assumptions are made by both teachers and students about the best ways to achieve these goals. Giroux (1983) asserts that teachers' failure to examine their assumptions about how certain materials/texts can mediate meanings between students, teachers and the society more often than not limit students' ability to produce their own understanding or meaning-making and develop critical thinking. To this end, Giroux's (2001) work on Mis/Education and Zero Tolerance emphasised that schools are sometimes identified as political institutions inextricably linked to the issue of power and control in society. Hence, there are hidden messages embedded in the hidden curriculum itself which are largely obscure. In the context of this thesis, the materials/texts usually used in the literature classroom were largely taught to enable students to answer examination questions at the end of each term. Teachers have little power to determine the direction of their classroom instruction when the end result has to be 'proof' of students' progress at the end of the year as measured by

examination results. The hegemonic control of the curriculum is in the hands of the policy makers and curriculum designers, thereby teachers are the agent of implementation. The accountability of the teacher is at stake if targets are not met. Teacher's accountability is part of the demand for 'social reality'; in that the demands from parents and administrators for teachers to produce good results.

'Social reality' is often illustrated or described by sociology theorists (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) as 'unification and cooperation' and by the members of a society as 'the best way of life'. They assert that any action that is frequently repeated becomes habitual and part of a pattern of behaviour. Teachers in schools are mostly equipped with teaching strategies and materials to convey the mission of 'unification and cooperation' to their students, overtly or covertly. However, the meaning of 'unification and cooperation' implies a value orientation, and values, like beliefs are not susceptible to being proved true or false. But schools are an important platform where values and beliefs are inculcated and positive ones could be established, as schools are considered 'neutral ground' (Apple, 2004). Apple (2004:78) however adds:

> The fact that schools normally seem neutral and are usually overtly insulated from political processes and ideological argumentation has both positive and negative qualities. The insulation has served to defend the school against whims and fads that can often have a destructive effect upon educational practice. It also, however, can make the school rather unresponsive to the needs of local communities and a changing social order.

Apple questions the claims by critical theorists that the school is competent in maintaining hegemony, and that conflict in the school curriculum can lead to '*political quiescence*'. Thus, in the present study, the hidden curriculum can

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be a tool which has the potential to promote unity in difference and cooperation in the quest for a shared identity construction which, if successful, will serve the society through a variety of positive outcomes such as a holistic understanding of others and their cultures, producing more tolerant and liberal-minded citizens. It is therefore crucial that students in the classrooms are equipped with critical thinking skills so that they are able to address the nature of the conflicts around them (in and outside the classroom contexts).

Although there have been some initiatives by certain institutions to openly debate conflicts, laudable as they are, they are insufficient to generate critical thinking in students. Apple (ibid) comments on the nature of conflict in the classroom:

> While some schools and classrooms are alive with issues and controversy, the controversies usually exhibited in schools concern choices within the parameters of implicitly held rules of activity. Little attempt is made to focus on the parameters themselves. (p.81)

This means that the hidden agenda in the school curriculum serves to strengthen the basic rules surrounding the nature of conflict and its uses. As an example, students are expected to abide by the rules imposed on them by the school authority, where failure to comply may result in disciplinary action being taken against them. In addition, students are not expected to critically 'reason out' why these rules are seen to be necessary and whether they work. When these rules are transmitted to students, they are established and accepted as legitimate and not questioned; the tacit hegemony is thus reinforced. It is disheartening that certain school cultures avoid any open

discussion of stereotyping and the conflicts present in a multicultural society such as Malaysia, and conform to the narrow curriculum's ultimate aim of producing good results.

The hidden curriculum can be seen as promoting 'incidental learning' (Bandura & Huston, 1961; Carter, 1995; Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Akin to the notion of the hidden curriculum, incidental learning is a by-product of some other activities in the formal learning process. The importance of 'hidden' teaching according to Apple (2004) reinforces 'incidental learning', and contributes more to political socialisation than any other subject such as citizenship lessons or any other types of intentional teaching of specific value orientations.

Looking at the positive side, the hidden informal curriculum can provide a space for practical and sensible meanings to be explored to enhance learning, and which, in the case of this investigation can contribute to the formation of shared Malaysian identity. The concept of the hidden curriculum can be exploredto fit the purpose of any teaching objectivesthat the teacher has planned or is planning to execute. Taking an example from Putzel (2007) in handling a complex classroom situation, a teacher should not only facilitate but also show that effective leadership produces excellent results. In managing teaching and learning, the medium that the teacher uses can be the message (McLuhan, 1994). In the case of this present study, it could be the concept of the Third Space in learning by doing, whereby:

> ...students can experience the concepts they are learning if the curriculum is organized and run according to the management and organization principles being taught(p.5).

Thus, a teacher, as both facilitator and leader should make sensible and logical decisions about learning goals, even if these goals are 'unwritten' or implicit. The ultimate aim is that the students thriveandunderstand the hidden messages, so that they can be trained to be aware of the messages embedded in each type of activity carried out in the classroom. As a result, they can become more engaged in learning and tasks can become more meaningful. Thus, drawing from each other's experience including their own, teachers could facilitate discussions around the intended goals which would enable the students to work towards the construction of a shared Malaysian identity.

3.8 The Third Space and Hidden Curriculum: An Overview

The discussion about the Third Space and hidden curriculum is encapsulated by the representation of the diagram in Figure 3.1 below. It presents the latent power relation from the state (authority) until it reaches the home.

Figure 3.1: Latent Power Relations
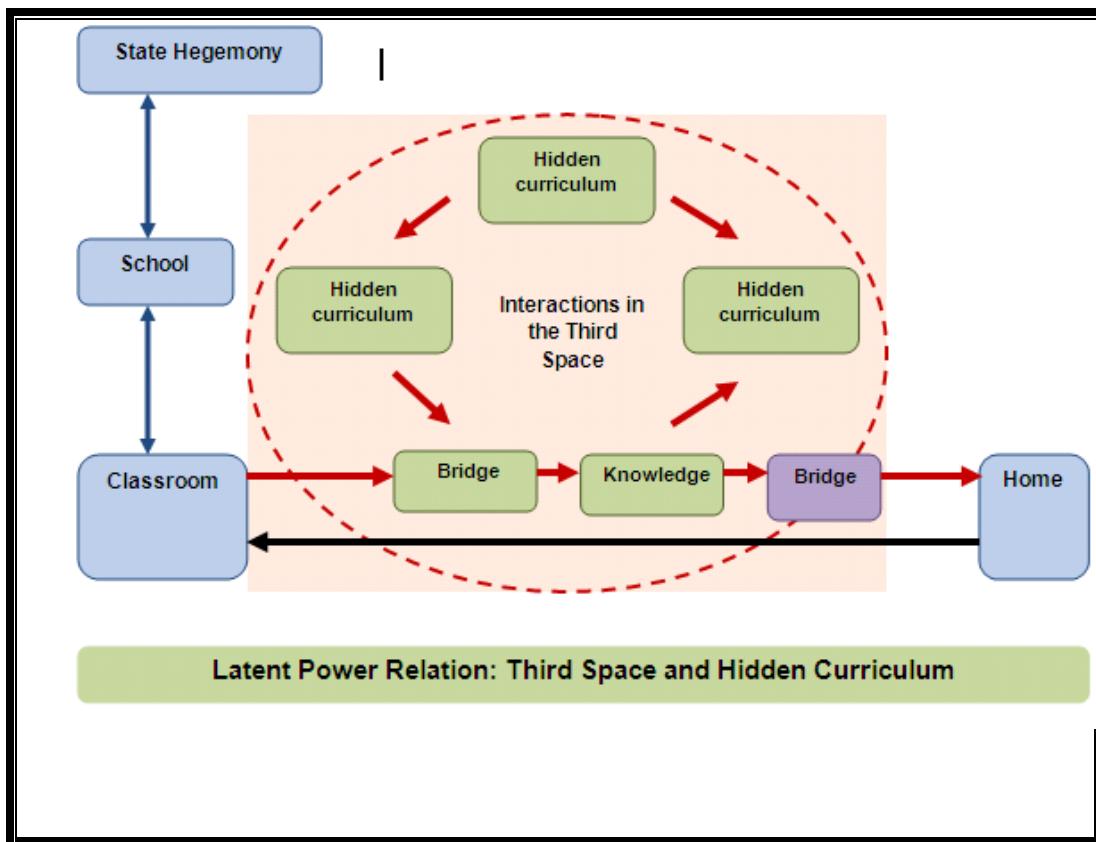
Interactions in the Third Space that take place within the boundaries of the classroom are not only linked to hidden and subconscious meanings but are deeply rooted in power structures at the macro level (state hegemony and school administration, administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students).At the micro level, the hidden curriculum in this investigation relates to students' interactions and exchanges towards hybrid spaces, text and classroom communities. The hidden signal of identity construction can be positioned within these boundaries and the classroom as the social landscape.

Since the Third Space bridges the gap between home and school in terms of knowledge sharing, where students relate their own home and community

experiences to that of their friends from different cultural backgrounds, it can be part of a hidden curriculum space in which personal home experience is always latent and implicit, unless the teacher makes it otherwise. The often submerged home experience can be more explicit in the classroom (in the Third Space) if knowledge sharing is augmented.

3.9　　　Summary of the chapter

This chapter discussed the concept of hybridity and its application to the notion of Third Space. The works of Gutiérrez (1999, 2004) and Moje et al. (2004) are proposed as a medium for locating the Third Space in the multicultural classroom. The hidden curriculum literature is also reviewed in relation to its potential application as an analytical tool to distinguish between what teachers believe they do and what actually happens in the classroom. An attempt was made to link the notion of hidden curriculum and the Third Space to the aim of the study to facilitate the construction of shared Malaysian identity in the literature classroom. Drawing from the concepts of Identity, Stereotyping and Otherness (discussed in Chapter Two and Hybridity, the Third Space and Hidden Curriculum (this chapter), the next chapter sets out to map the methodological aspects used in this study, thus informing the interpretation and explanation of the research data, and their relevance to the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the fundamental research design of my investigation andthe research questions, then details the specific methods employed. Firstly, I describe the mixed methods approach which I have chosen and the rationale for this approach. Qualitative inquiry was the primary approach to the investigation and was supported by quantitative data (responses to a questionnaire). Then, I link the objectives to the research questions in order to support my argument for the mixed methods approach. This is followed by a description and justification of the research instruments, sampling, the participants, sites, ethical considerations and data collection procedures. The steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study and limitations of the methods used are also explained. The final section gives an overview of the treatment of the data and also an exemplification of how the Malaysian short story can be used as a medium for shared identity construction in the classroom. The chapter ends with a summary of the whole discussion.

4.1 Research Design

According to Bryman (2004:27), a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The choice of research design reflects

decisions about the priority given to the dimensions of the research process. These include the importance attached to:

- Expressing causal connections between variables;
- Generalization to larger groups of individuals than those actually forming part of the investigation;
- Understanding behaviour and the meaning of that behaviour in its specific social context;
- Having a temporal (i.e. overtime) appreciation of social phenomena and their interconnections.

Similarly, Yin (2003) points out that a research design must have five components; the research question(s), its proposition (if any), its unit(s) of analysis, the logic of how data are linked to the propositions and criteria against which the findings are interpreted. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2008:34) point out that a research design:

> ...situates the researcher in the empirical world and connects him or her to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive materials, including documents and archives.

The function of a research design is to ensure the data obtained can permit investigators to answer the initial questions clearly. With evidence from the data, the design keeps the direction towards the aim of the research in which to test a theory or to describe a phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln further point out that a research design also involves working out specific ways in which research questions can be answered as precisely as possible. Therefore, with an action plan of the direction of the research, a workable framework for data collection and analysis, the researcher positions herself in her research, and finally works out the ways in which the research questions can be answered

clearly.To reiterate, this study was designed using the mixed methods approach, with a primary focus on the qualitative research instruments of semi-structured interviews with selected teachers, group interviews with students and also non-participant classroom observations. The questionnaire, a quantitative data instrument, was administered to students of the teachers involved in this study. Before elaborating on the research instruments, the research paradigm is elucidated in the next section.

4.2 Research Paradigms (Theoretical underpinnings)

4.2.1 Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm

It is vital for a researcher to ensure the most suitable research strategies for conducting her study. Blaikie (2007:12) believes that research strategies '*are located within the broader framework of theoretical or philosophical perspectives, commonly referred to as paradigms*'. Similarly,Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that a paradigm can be seen as a set of beliefs or values which represents a *worldview* (p.107), which grounds the holder of the view within the nature of the 'world', the position of the holder within this 'world' and the extent of the holder's relationship to that 'world'. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that a researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological ground can be described as a *paradigm*, or an interpretive framework. They further assert that:

> All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied... Each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher, including the questions the researcher asks and the interpretations he or she brings to them.(p.22)

Thus, Denzin and Lincoln (ibid) affirm that the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological grounds, shape how the researcher '*sees the world*' and '*acts in it*' (ibid).

On a similar note, Trauth (2001) postulates that the researcher's theoretical lens plays an important role in the choice of methods for the research as the researcher's paradigm or underlying belief system defines the research methods to a great extent. Similarly, Krauss (2005) states that despite the differences in epistemological beliefs over the quantitative and qualitative divide, '*ultimately, the heart of the quantitative-qualitative 'debate' is philosophical not methodological*' (p.759). By this he means that the theoretical paradigm reflecting the nature of reality is the vital element in understanding the overall perspective in relation to the ways in which the research is designed and carried out.

Thus, in relation to the discussion of the research paradigm above, the basic assumption underlying my research approach is that 'knowledge is a socially constructed reality' and that understanding 'reality' in this complex world is derived from the lived experienceof those who live in it (Schwandt, 1994:125). These assumptions fit in the interpretive/constructivist paradigm (Brophy, 2002; Fosnot,2005; Pritchard & Woollard, 2010).Schwandt (1994) in Denzin and Lincoln (1994) asserts that constructivism is synonymous with interpretivism. In addition, Williamson (2006) declares that:

> Since the central tenet of interpretivism is that people are constantly involved in interpreting their ever-changing world, researchers who are interpretivists believe that the social world is constructed by people and is therefore different from the world of nature...They favor "naturalistic inquiry" (where field work usually takes place in a natural setting), embrace an

inductive style of reasoning, and emphasize qualitative data. It is the use of constructivist frameworks*.

Correspondingly, Fosnot (2005: ix) asserts that '*constructivism is a theory about knowledge and learning; it describes both what "knowing" is and how one "comes to know"*'. She further explains that the theory interprets knowledge which is '*not as truths to be transmitted or discovered, but emergent developmental, non-objective,viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse*' (Ibid), which is established by humans who are engaged in meaning-making in their interactions within cultural and social communities. Learning within this context, Fosnot elaborates, is self-regulatory in that people are constantly confronted with conflicts and self doubt about the occurrences around them and of the world. With an understanding of these occurrences, the emergence of new insights comes into play as the result of these conflicts.

In the teaching and learning context, teachers are encouraged to ground their teaching perspectives on the basis of constructivism, as the theory suggests that learners should be given the opportunity to create concrete and contextually meaningful experience in their quest for knowledge. Fosnot (2005) further clarifies that, while making meaning through their interactions in the classroom, students '*search for patterns; raise questions; and model, interpret, and defend their strategies and ideas*' (Ibid: ix). In this context, a teacher takes the role of a facilitator rather than the traditional teacher's role in a teacher-centred classroom where the teacher is the 'knower' and the 'conveyer of knowledge'. Instead, the teacher facilitates and sometimes learns from and with the students in their joint quest for knowledge. Thus, the

underlying principles of interpretive/constructivism are advantageous in that they serve the purpose of this study which lies in the 'knowledge' derived from the participants whose experience informed the results of this research.

Taking a general view of both positive and negative perspectives of constructivism, it cannot be denied that this approach is not free from criticism. Firstly, constructivism is criticised as favouring learners who come from a privileged background where a comfortable learning environment can be secured, high quality teachers and teaching maintained in well-equipped classrooms(Thirteen Ed Online, 2008). The argument is that, less privileged learners would not benefit from this mode of learning, as they lack the necessary contextual elements of that privileged background. Secondly, the nature of social-constructivism, which advocates group discussions and thinking, would produce the 'tyranny of the majority' (www. thirteen Ed online) where the dominant voices of the group emerge while the less dominant ones have to conform. Finally, since evaluation is seen as a hindrance to progressive learning in constructivist learning, students' and teachers'accountability for progress in the classroom is severely flawed without credible evaluation.

Thus, the application of constructivism in teaching and learning according to Jonassen (1991) among others enables students to '*focus on realistic approaches to solving real-world problems and provide tools and environments that help learners interpret the multiple perspective of the world*' (p.12).

4.3   Mixed Methods Approach

This study employed a mixed methods approach whereby the qualitative research instruments were the primary focus while the questionnaires' results were used to support the qualitative ones. This combination of methods, I felt, was the best way to gain deeper and comprehensive insights that would shed light on the research questions. In the first issue of *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, Tashakkori and Creswell (2007:4) define mixed method research as:

> research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and /or methods in a single study or program of inquiry.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) provide another clear definition of mixed method research. According to them, mixed method research is '*the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study'* (p.17). They further explain the importance of *a 'single study'* as many researchers have different opinions of what constitutes a mixed method approach. The value of the mixed method approach is that the production of converging evidence from the mixed inquiry is more than what might have been produced by any single method alone (Yin,2006).

Researchers using the mixed method approach in their design, data collection and analysis of their research have one main reason for doing so; to obtain a better understanding of the research problem and questions than through either qualitative or quantitative methods alone. This involves different types of research design depending on the purpose of the research. For example, the design can incorporate the collection and analysis of two types of data at the

same time, in sequence or in combination. It can also involve mixing, connecting or integrating both forms of data at some stage in the research (Plano Clark & Creswell,2010) (see Figure 4.1 below).

Figure 4.1: Mixed Method Research Design in the Process of Research (Following Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010:302)
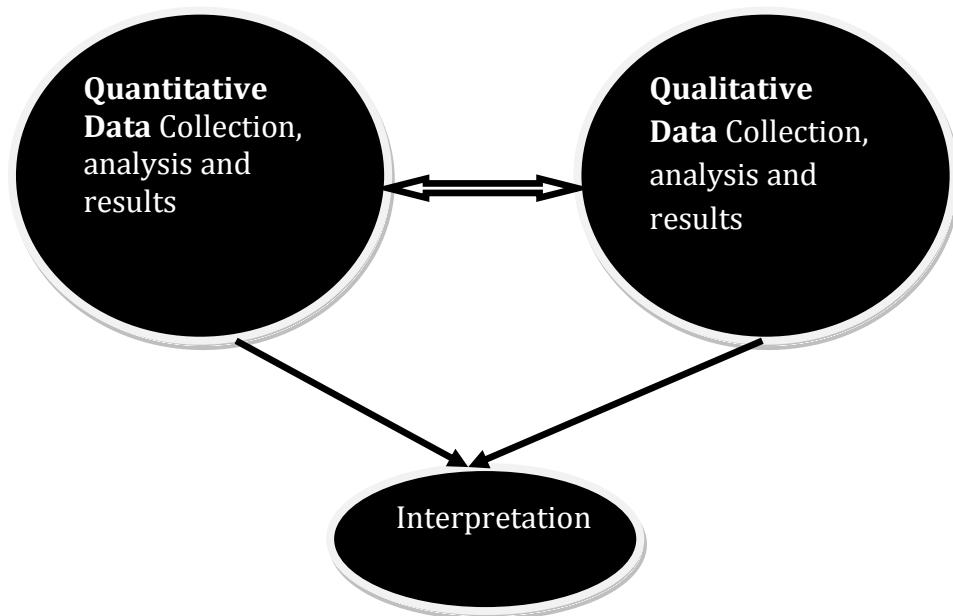
Four mixed method designs that are most frequently used by researchers are Explanatory Design, Exploratory Design, Triangulation Design and Embedded Design (ibid). An explanatory design suggests explanation; qualitative findings are used to help explain, refine, clarify or extend the quantitative results. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected in sequence; first quantitative data is collected and analysed and the same process is used for the qualitative data. An exploratory design is used when a researcher needs to first explore a topic using qualitative data before testing it quantitatively. In triangulation design, at least three types of quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, an analysis is done and the results are then compared. An embedded design is used when a researcher needs to answer a secondary

research question that requires the use of different types of data within a traditional qualitative or quantitative design. One type of data collection and analysis is embedded or nested within the design associated with other type of data.

4.3.1 Justification of the use of the Mixed Method approach in the present study

In this study, I employ a concurrent triangulation designdue to the nature of the data collection which was almost simultaneous for all methods. For example, after an observation, the self-completion questionnaires were distributed to the students, to triangulate the data, separate data analyses were carried out and the integration of databases occurred at the interpretation or discussion stage of the report. I chose this approach as a viable research strategy because the findings can be corroborated or questioned through comparing the data produced by different methods (therefore improving accuracy). In addition, the findings can be complemented by adding something new and different to what is known about the topic through using more than one data source (therefore improving credibility)(Denscombe, 2007).In this design, I use two different methods (qualitative and quantitative) to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate the findings within a single study (Greene et al.,1989; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

4.3.2 Critiques of the Mixed Methods Approach

The fundamental criticism of mixed methods research is in the way mixed methods is conceptualised. It is necessary to make a distinction between mixed methods as a collection and analysis of two types of data (qualitative

and quantitative) and, on the other hand, as an integration of two different approaches to research (Tashakkori& Creswell, 2007). However, there is now a considerable understanding of a variety of ways in which quantitative and qualitative research can be mixed (Bryman,2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie,2003). The central issue was the degree to which mixed method researchers genuinely integrate their findings, which Tashakkori and Teddlie believe has not been sufficiently addressed. Bryman (2007) argues that '*the integration of mixed methods findings may not always be intended*'(p.9). Therefore, the failure of researchers to integrate their findings may possibly lead them to not make the most of the data they have collected.

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006:60) are concerned about the validity issue in mixed method research. They argue that:

> … because mixed research involves combining complementary strengths and non overlapping weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods, assessing the validity of findings can be particularly complex, yielding a problem of integration.

An example of the problematic integration described in the quotation above can be '*if the two* (qualitative and quantitative) *research methods are applied separately it is observed that the results obtained are incomplete. Hence, it is difficult to choose definitively between quantitative and qualitative methods for specific research'* (Lázaro&Marcos, 2005: 762). In relation to this investigation, the quantitative data is used to support the findings of the main inquiry through qualitative data sources. Thus, the question of problematic integration is less serious.

4.4   Sampling

The principles and procedures used in sampling are usually associated with quantitative surveys (Mason, 2002). However, a similar rigorous and systematic sampling strategy is important even for a small-scale qualitative study (Patton, 2002; Silverman,2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Cohen and associates (2007)assert that the quality of a piece of research does not merely relate to the suitability of the methodology and the instrumentation used but also relies on the appropriateness of the sampling strategy. A conscientious sampling strategy, according to them, further enhances the validity of the research. Therefore, using a careful sampling strategy (described in 4.4.1), I aimed to maintain the credibility of this investigation (see 4.13).

Merriam (2002) affirms that in qualitative researchit is not the 'how much' or 'how often' which is important. Therefore, random sampling as often used in quantitative inquiries makes very little sense. On the other hand, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants, and therefore it is important to select participants who will yield the most useful information. This is called 'purposeful sampling' (which is used in this present study). Patton (2002:230) states:

> ...the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling.

Another sampling strategy is convenience sampling which, in Patton's words is '*doing what's fast and convenient*' (ibid:241). It is the strategy used when samples are simply available to the researcher by virtue of their accessibility (Bryman,2004). In convenience sampling, respondents are selected, in part or in

whole, at the convenience of the researcher. There is little or limited attempt to ensure that the selected samples are an accurate representation of some larger group in the population. However, convenience sampling provides useful information, especially in a pilot study.

4.4.1 Sampling procedures of the study

This study employed 3 phases of sampling (see Figure 4.2below).

Phase one: A purposeful pilot sampling of 9 Malaysian school students who were residing in the United Kingdom and an English language teacher (SS) and her students(17 year-olds) in Malaysia for piloting the questionnaire and group interview questions

Phase two: A purposeful sampling of 9 English Language teachers from 6 secondary schools around Kuala Lumpur and their students. In this phase, questionnaires were distributed to all the students of the teachers selected, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 9 teachers and group interviews with 6 groups of students consisting of 6 students each. 9 teachers were interviewed and observed initially before the one-day workshop. (The one day workshop was intended for the teachers to share experience of teaching the literature subject and also to expose them to several Malaysian short-stories. This is elaborated in 4.12). Only 7 teachers were selected as they completed the whole cycle (Observations, interviews, attending one-day workshop, second interview). This is discussed in greater detail in 4.14.

Phase 3: The second round consisted of semi-structured interviews with 7 teachers (after 6 months had elapsed since the first classroom observations).

Teachers were asked to reflect on their literature lessons after the introduction of the Malaysian short stories.

Figure 4.2 summarises the three phases of the sampling procedures
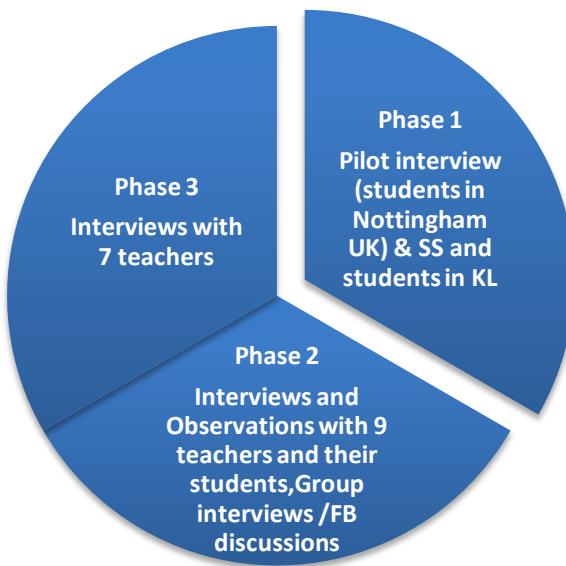
4.5   Ethical Considerations

4.5.1   Gaining Access

Before embarking on the data collection procedures, there were several ethical issues which had to be taken into consideration. A comprehensive set of ethical measures were designed in pursuit of consent from the participants. The first move was to obtain permission from the School of Education, University of Nottingham (UoN) to conduct the research and data collection. Upon receiving permission from the School of Education, UoN, I applied for formal permission for access to schools in Kuala Lumpurfrom the Economic Planning Unit the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia. A letter of approval from EPU was received on 7th of August 2009 (see Appendix 1). With the approval from EPU, I applied for permission from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia and

Ministry of Education Malaysia, and the JPWP (Kuala Lumpur's LEA) separately to gain access to schools, teachers and students. (Refer to Appendix 2 for JPWP's approval).

4.5.2 Informed Consent and Anonymity

Once approval was obtained, I then wrote letters and e-mails and made telephone calls to 15 school principals in Kuala Lumpur telling them of my hope to conduct research on their premises and with their staff and students. 6 school principals finally gave their consent. Before starting to collect information from my intended participants, informed consent forms were distributed which outlined the purpose and the stages of the research.The participants were also informed that they could at any time withdraw from participating in the research process and that the anonymityand confidentiality of the information given was guaranteed (see Appendix 3 for participants' consent forms).

4.5.3 Confidentiality

Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the participants is important. Cohen and colleagues (2007) highlighted the dilemma surrounding individual 'right to privacy' and contrasted it with public 'right to know'(Pring,1984). They further elaborated:

> It gives to the individual or collectivity the freedom to decide for themselves when and where, in what circumstances and to what extent their personal attitudes, opinions, habits, eccentricities, doubts and fears are to be communicated to or withheld from others. (Ibid: 63)

This means that ethical research should care to maintain the rights and dignity of participants, and they should not suffer any negative impact from their co-operation. Cohen and his colleagues further added that the 'right to privacy'

may be easily breached during the investigation or denied once it is completed, therefore exposing the participants. To ensure anonymity in my investigation, each respondent and school had been given an acronym.

4.6   Fieldwork Protocol

Fieldwork was conducted from January 2010 – March 2010 (second phase) and in November 2010 (third phase) at 6 schools around Kuala Lumpur (4 co-ed schools, one all-boys school and one all-girls school). Figure 4.3 below outlines my data collection procedure and shows how data collection was carried out, from getting permission from the relevant authorities to the collection of the data itself. Once my applications to the relevant authorities had been approved, I went to see the principals of schools which had earlier agreed to accommodate my investigations on their premises. The principals then directed me to the Head of Languages (HOL) who then identified who would best be able to assist me in my investigations. Teachers were first identified by HOL by looking at their teaching schedules and selecting those which fitted best with my criteria for selection (Form 4 English teachers with more than 5 years experience) and whom the HOL felt would be able to contribute more effectively than others. Although selected by HOL, several teachers (in 2 schools) declined to participate for various reasons and volunteers were then sought among other English language teachers.

Figure 4.3: Flowchart of the bureaucratic and other procedures necessary prior to data collection.
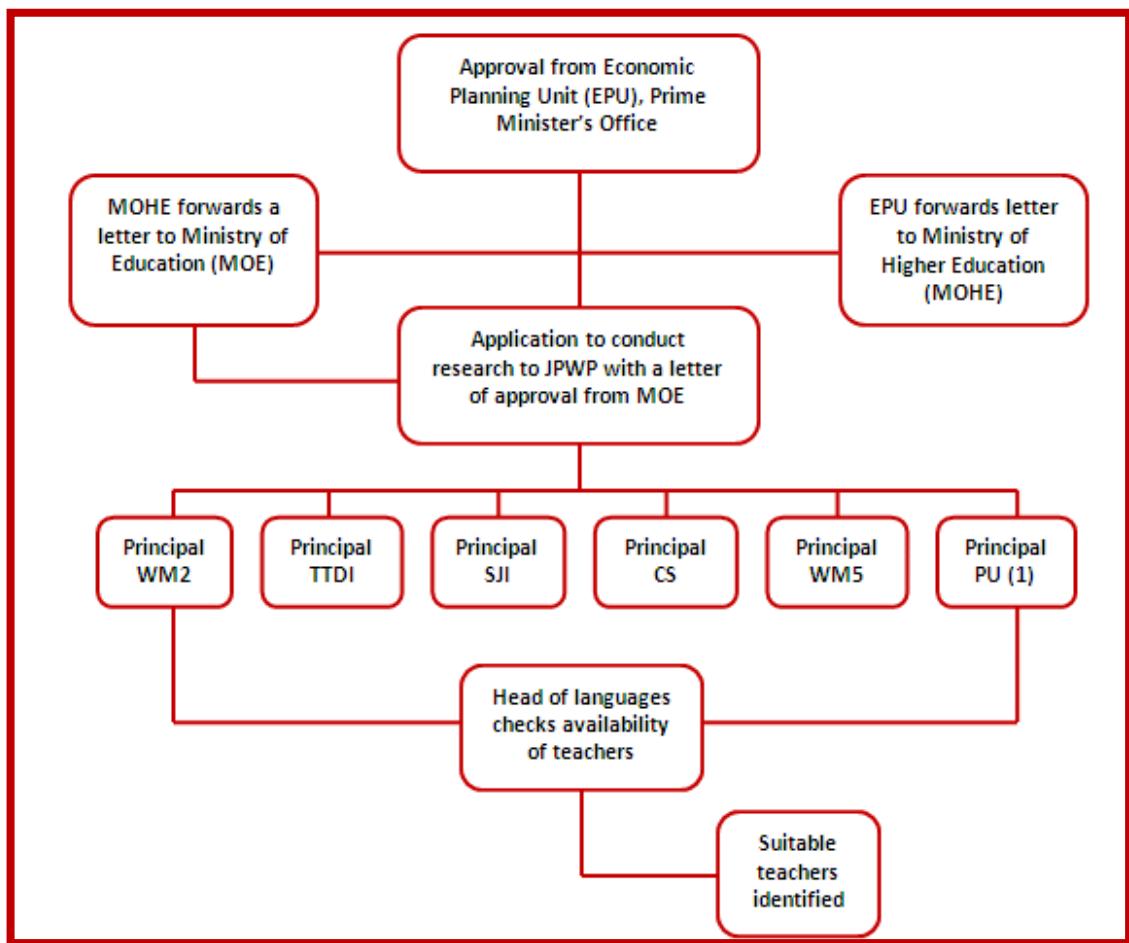
4.7　　The school selection process

This study intended to explore teachers' and students' perceptions about stories as vehicles for the construction of identity. 15 schools located within a 25 kilometre radius from the heart of the city were shortlisted and appointments were arranged with school principals, but only 6 responded. The selection of schools was therefore carried out using a convenience sampling procedure (Cohen et al., 2007). The 6 schools identified in this study were SJI, WM5, WM2, CS, TTDI and PU1 (see table 4.4 below).

Although the accessibility to the samples followed the guideline of ethical conduct in research (Data Protection Act, 1998), the pilot study and the actual

data samples collected relied on those school principals who responded fairly quickly to my request to conduct research. This took into account the limited time duration of my data collection period (granted by my sponsor (MOHE) due to the financial aid approved for the period of three months), the location of schools which was around 25km radius from the city centre and the consent given by the principals of the schools.

4.8   Research Participants

The research participants in this study were divided into two categories:firstly, the research participants selected in the pilot study (see section 4.11) and secondly, those selected for the actual data collection process. The pilot study involved two different phases. Phase one was carried out to pilot the self administered questionnaire and group interview questions (see table 4.1 below) with Malaysian children residing in Nottingham (see table 4.2 below)because their parentswere students at the University of Nottingham. 3 female and 6 male participants were chosen and their ages ranged from 14-16 years old. They were selected in order to test the questionnaire construct and also the interview questions before the actual pilot took place in Malaysia. This enabled me to anticipate the problems (if any) of these instruments.The children selected were in the age range of 14-16, mainly because younger children would not be appropriatefor pilot informants as the research was to be of secondary school students in Malaysia. 9 children participated by piloting the questionnaire and group interview discussions. Their parents' consent was initially requested before conducting the pilot exercise.

The main researchdata collection was spread over 3 months in the second phase and 3 weeks in the third phase. The data was derived from both English language teachers and their students (Form Four; Ages between 15-16 years old). In the student group interviews, each group consisted of 2 Malays, 2 Indians and 2 Chinese students. Below are the tables of the number of research participants and the types of instruments used during the pilot study and the actual data collection period**.**

Table 4.1: Piloting instruments used on Malaysian children in Nottingham, UK

Pilot 1 (participants)	Instruments
9 Malaysian children in Nottingham, UK.	1. Questionnaire 2. Group Interview

Table 4.2: Malaysian children in Nottingham, UK-Piloting instruments

Participants	Sex	Age
KL	F	15
AIZ	M	16
NorH	F	16
IR	M	16
IMN	M	15
AD	M	15
HKM	M	16
NGH	F	15
IMM	M	15

Table 4.3: Piloting instruments at a school in Kuala Lumpur

Pilot 2 (participants)	Instruments
A female teacher (SS) and 35 of her students	1. Questionnaire (students) 2. Group Interview (students) 3. Non-participant observations (of teacher and students) 4. Semi-structured interview (SS)

Table 4.3 above represents the second phase of piloting the instruments with SS who volunteered. All the instruments used in this investigation were piloted with her class.

Table 4.4: Total number of teachers and instruments (pre-workshop)

	Teachers	Ethnicity	School	Instruments
1.	NA	Malay	TTDI	Obs
2.	SH	Indian	TTDI	SSI
3.	PL	Chinese	WM5	SSI, Obs
4.	RA	Indian	WM5	SSI, Obs
5.	SR	Malay	WM2	SSI, Obs
6.	NR	Malay	WM2	SSI, Obs
7.	AN	Indian	CS	Obs
8.	SL	Chinese	SJI	SSI, Obs
9.	FN	Malay	PU1	SSI, Obs

There were 9 teachers involved (see table 4.4 above) prior to the one-day workshop. Semi-structured interviews (SSI) and non-participant observations (Obs) were scheduled. However, due to teachers' other commitments, 3 teachers were unable to either be interviewed or observed.

Table 4.5: Total number of teachers who attended the one-day workshop

	Teachers	Ethnicity	School
1.	PL	Chinese	WM5
2.	FN	Malay	PU1
3.	RA	Indian	WM5
4.	AI	Malay	CS
5.	AN	Indian	CS
6.	GR	Punjabi	WM2
7.	RL	Malay	WM2

From the list of 9 teachers approached before the workshop, 7 were able to attend the workshop sessions (see table 4.5 above). 2 teachers had to opt out as there were other pressing commitments requiring their immediate attention.

Table 4.6: Total number of teachers observed (post-workshop)

	Teachers	Ethnicity	School
1.	PL	Chinese	WM5
2.	FN	Malay	PU1
3.	RA	Indian	WM5
4.	AI	Malay	CS
5.	GR	Punjabi	WM2
6.	RL	Malay	WM2

From the 7 teachers who attended the workshop, only 6 were able to be observed (see table 4.6 above). 3 Malays, an Indian, a Punjabi and a Chinese teacher were observed. The aim of the observation was to see strategies teachers employed using their selected Malaysian short stories which were introduced during the workshop. Their strategies are discussed further in Chapter Six.

Table 4.7: Group Interviews (6 groups from 4 schools)

	Group Interviews	Descriptions
1.	SJI	One group
2.	WM5	Two groups
3.	WM2	Two groups
4.	PU1	One group

Each group was represented by 2 Malays, 2 Indians and 2 Chinese students.

Table 4.7 above refers to 6 groups from 4 schools each consisting of 6 students from different ethnic backgrounds who participated in the group interview/discussions. Students from CS and TTDI were not able to be interviewed as both schools were having their sport-days training throughout the week and because AN was away on a course, I was not able to carry out the interview with her students.

Table 4.8 Total returned questionnaires: 326

School	Total number
SJI	28
WM5	125
WM2	47
TTDI	31
CS	61
PU1	34

Table 4.8 above shows the total number of returned questionnaires from the schools involved. The high number of returns (100%) was due to the fact that the questionnaires were distributed by the teachers on the same day as the observations. Therefore, students who were present that day filled out the questionnaires, which were administered by their respective teachers.

4.9   Framework for data collection

The framework in table 4.9 below outlines my approach to data collection in this study and the steps that I took to enhance the quality of the research. This framework aimed to address the specific research questions to which the study aspired to find answers. With this framework, I was able to create an overall grounding for this study. Detailed discussion of the research instruments used is found in section 4.10.

Table 4.9: Framework for data collection

Pre-Workshop Semi-structured Interviews
Exploring teachers' perceptions of the teaching and learning of literature and their beliefs about the subject as a means for engendering inter-ethnic awareness and the construction of shared Malaysian identity.

Pre- Workshop Observations
Exploring rationale for pedagogical decisions, students' task engagement and links between perceptions of literature teaching and practice.

The research instruments used in the data collection process are elaborated in the following section.

4.10   Research Instruments

4.10.1   Questionnaire

The self-completion questionnaire, sometimes referred to as a self-administered questionnaire, offers an objective means of collecting information about people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour (Oppenheim, 1992). While the characteristics of methods such as interviews and observation may affect the behaviour or responses of the participants, the

questionnaire has the advantage of minimising the investigator effect, making answers more reliable.

In this study, a questionnaire was used to elicit responses from a large student population on the issues relating to literature subject, materials used and Malaysian identity. Specifically, the underlying construct of the questionnaire was targeted at obtaining students' responses to questions relating to the key issues about friendship, their interaction with peers other than from their own ethnicity, their experience in literature lessons and how they feel about being Malaysian (Refer to Appendix 4 for questionnaire sample). Each construct consisted of several related questions. Dönyei(2010) discusses issues related to the advantages of having more than one question in each construct in a questionnaire. The questionnaire's results in this investigation were used to cross reference with teachers' perceptions of similar issues.

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into four sections, A, B, C and D. Section A was about demographic information. Students were expected to provide some personal details - the area they live in and the language/s they speak. Section B revolved around students' classmates and friends. In this section, the information needed was about those who students mixed within school; whether their friends were from the same or a different ethnic background. Section C was about the respondents' literature lesson and what their thoughts were about the texts being used in the classrooms. The final section asked respondents about what they understood about their own identity as a person and also as a Malaysian. Sections C and D used a 5-level Likert-scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree Not sure, Agree and Strongly Disagree (Cohen et.al, 2007; Parker, P. L., McDaniel, H. S., & Crumpton-Young, L. L., 2002). I decided to

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use the 'Not Sure' option as it will give the respondents a middle point in making a choice. This is also a way to avoid a-forced choice common in a 4 point Likert scale.

4.10.2   Semi-structured Interviews(Teachers)

A semi-structured interview, Bryman (2004) maintains, is where the researcher has a list of questions or a fairly specific topic to cover, often referred to as an 'interview guide', but the interviewee has a great deal of freedom in how to respond. Patton (2002) names this type of interviewas the Interview Guide Approach where the topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance in outline form. The interviewer then decides the sequence and wording of questions through the course of the interview.

In this investigation, I utilised the semi-structured interview for the purpose mentioned above as its strength isin the outline and interview guide which increases the comprehensiveness of the data and can make the data collection systematic for each respondent (Patton,2002). In addition, the logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed and the interviews can remain fairly conversational and situational to maintain the interest of both the interviewee and the interviewer. (Refer to Appendix 5 for interview questions).

4.10.3 Justification for using the semi-structured interview

Bryman (2004) delineates the differences between qualitative and quantitative interviewing. He describes qualitative interviewing as less structured whilst quantitative maintains its structured approach to maximise the reliability and validity of the measurement of key concepts. In this study, I used the interviewing technique as a tool to gather data from teachers and

students. Their opinions and perceptions were then compared with each other so that rich data could be explored and then conclusions were drawn.

The purpose of using interviews in this study was three fold:

1. To investigate and to establish pre-existing beliefs about teaching and learning among ESL teachers in their literature classrooms.

2. To investigate teachers' perceptions of the 1Malaysia concept and the idea of shared Malaysian identity amongst their students

3. To study the extent to which teachers are willing to go forward (or not) on the basis of the idea of using Malaysian short stories to develop intercultural awareness amongst students in the construction of shared Malaysian identity.

Thus, the objective of these semi-structured interviews was to find out what teachers think about the lesson they had taught, issues relating to the teaching of literature, teachers own awareness of 'others' and their perceptions of the 1Malaysia concept. This is in tandem with the research objective which is to explore ways in which teachers are able to facilitate the construction of shared Malaysian identity amongst their students.

Each interview was taped which lasted between 30-45 minutes. All interviews were transcribed and notes were also written (see Appendix 6 for sample of interview transcript). These interview notes facilitated the process of writing my analyses at a later stage. The interviews were all conducted in the English language as the teachers were all English language teachers and mentioned that they were comfortable using the language.

In qualitative interviewing, 'rambling' or going off at a tangent is often encouraged as and when the interviewer finds it important to provide a more in-depth insight into the issue discussed. This 'rambling' can be an avenue to build on new questions that follow on from interviewees' replies and therefore there tends to be more flexibility in the direction in which the interviewee takes the interview.Patton (2002) points out the main purpose of the interview, i.e. to allow interviewers to see things from another person's perspective. Therefore, in my own interviews, I allowed my respondents to 'ramble' to gain more insights from them.

4.10.4   Group Interviews

The group interview technique has grown in popularity over the years(Cohen et al., 2007). It can be highly structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Robson (2011:294) explains that the more common version of group interviewing techniques have '*a substantial degree of flexibility and are effectively some form of hybrid with characteristics of a discussion as well as of an interview*'. The group interview is useful as it has the potential for discussions to develop, thus yielding a wide range of responses. Cohen et al. (2007) point out several advantages of group interviews: a group interview is timesaving as it is often quicker than individual interviews and the group interview '*can bring together people with varied opinions, or representatives of different collectivities*' (ibid. p.373). In the case of this study, the group interviews consisted of representatives of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Arksey and Knight (1999) suggest that:

> ...having more than one interviewee present can provide two versions of events- a crosscheck- and one can complement the other with additional points, leading to a more complete and reliable record. It is also possible to detect how the

> participants support, influence, complement, agree and disagree with each other and the relationship between them.

Severalpractical benefits of usinggroup interviews include sample size. Throughgroup interviews, the investigator is able to increase the sample size considerably and instead of hearing from one individual, the investigator is able to hear from several participants. Additionally, in groupinterviews, individuals respond to others' views and this is a better way to get reluctant or rather shy participants to speak up and be more confident in the presence of people with whom they are familiar (See Appendix 7 for Group Interview discussion topics). In my context of study, the students were relatively relaxed being amongst their friends and this enabled them to respond to the issues discussed in a more stress-free environment. The average number of participants in the group interviews was around 6 students and this gave ample opportunity for everyone to give their opinion and feedback on the matter being discussed.

The group interviews in this investigation were mainly conducted after an observed lesson. These discussions were intended to generate in-depth information about what students felt about living in a multiethnic, multi-cultural country like Malaysia and some discussion topics were similar to the questions asked in the questionnaire but students were able to elaborate and I was able to probe deeper into the discussions. The interviews were tape recorded and, at the same time, I took down notes whenever I felt necessary.

6 group interview/discussions of 6 students per groupwere conducted, involving 36 students aged between 16-17; representing a balanced sample in terms of student composition. It is important to note that the multicultural

setting of schools around Kuala Lumpur may not be representative of schools in suburban and rural areas in Malaysia as student composition differs greatly in these areas. The groups consisted of 2 students representing Malays, Chinese, and Indians respectively. All the interviews and discussions were tape-recorded and transcribed. There were 29 male students and 7 female students involved. The gender division is illustrated in Table 4.10below.

Since 6 schools were involved, I chose one group interview/discussion group from each school. However, group interviews were only possible with 4 schools as the students from the other 2 schools were involved in their sports day training. With a relatively manageable number of students in each group, it was possible for everyone to contribute almost equally within the timeframe given (about 45 minutes for each group) and the transcribing process was less complicated compared to having more than 6 in a group.

Although the students were chosen at random (except for SJI, an all-boys' school), there was an apparent unequal division between male and female students. This, however, was coincidental and gender was not an issue of concern in this study. Group interviews and discussions were mainly carried out after an observation but after the questionnaire administration and all discussions took place within the school compounds. (Refer to Appendix 8for a sample of the group interview transcription).

Table 4.10: Group Interviews: Gender Divide

Schools	Male	Female
WM2(NMC)	4	2
SJI	6	0
WM2	4	2
WM5 (PL)	4	2
WM5 (RA)	5	1
PU 1	6	0

The interviews mainly revolved around the pre-selected and emerging themes. My intention was not only to interview the students but to get them to discuss a question posed, so it resembled a focus group discussion. I initially found it quite difficult to get the students to talk as they needed a lot of prompts to move them forward in the discussions. I assumed that they were not used to having an outsider present in a discussion and that the topic (which was not an everyday classroom discussion topic) made it a little challenging for them to 'open up'. However, once I had them 'warmed up' the discussions went quite smoothly and I was pleasantly surprised at how proficient some of the students were in the English Language; their maturity in talking about sensitive issues was often remarkable. Perhaps this was due to their family educational backgrounds and having lived in the city, which exposed them to the language more favourably. I believe this would not have been the case had I organised this discussion in the suburban or in the rural areas, something I am keen to explore later when I expand this study further.

Students in their group interviews were given the freedom to respond either in Bahasa Melayu (Malay) or the English language. Almost all the students

responded in the English language. Only one or two used Bahasa Melayu and English intermittently. None of them responded in just Bahasa Melayu.

Although there can be complications such as one individual dominating the discussion and some may be reticent in front of others, measureswere taken to ensure every respondent was able to contribute equally such as thanking the speaker and move on to the next person.

An important aspect of group interviewing is that the view of the whole group and not the individual members is analysed. Another problem that might be encountered in group interviews is that they may produce a 'group think' discouraging individuals who hold a different view from speaking out in front of the other group members and the information withheld might be of significance. Therefore, there is bound to be information loss from individuals who have different opinions but their voices are not heard due to the nature of 'group opinion'. In order to minimise information loss, at the end of each interview, a summary of the discussion (which I wrote while it was taking place in note form) was read out to the participants and comments were sought to ensure that there was an agreement by all members.

4.10.5 Non-participant Classroom Observation

Delamont (2009) asserts that observation is '*spending long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying*', in order to '*understand how the cultures the researcher is studying work*' (p.51). In addition, Cohen and colleagues (2007: 335) maintain that observation methods are '*powerful tools for gaining insights into situations*'.

The unique feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather 'live' data from naturally occurring social situations. Hence, the investigator is able to observe directly, at first hand rather than relying on secondary accounts. In addition, it can potentially yield more credible and authentic data than relying on methods that use inference as a means of obtaining data. The investigator is also able to discover things, events or moments that participants might not freely talk about in other processes such as interviews, reflective diaries or focus group discussions.

I conducted two phases of observations during the data collection period. One session was observation of teachers teaching one of the components in the literature syllabus (poem, short stories, novel or drama)before the workshop. This was to enable me to see the normal day-to-day English literature teaching techniques teachers used in their lessons, the group dynamics amongst students and interaction between students and also with the teachers. The second phase was the observations undertakenafter the workshop and aimed at looking at how teachers made use of selected Malaysian short stories, the way teachers conveyed the objectives of their lessons and the students' responses to the introduction of Malaysian short stories in their classrooms.

I was able to observe what actually took place in the classroom and was able to explain why certain activities went well (from my perspective) or otherwise or whether what I really wanted to see (students' interactions with peers from different backgrounds mediated by teachers) did or did not happen during the observations. Hence, non-participant observation was clearly the appropriate

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choice of instrument to elicit and make sense of information enabling me to come closer to answering my research questions.

4.10.6   My role as a researcher in the observation process

In this study, I took the role of a complete observer (non participation) where the participants were fully aware of my aims in doing the study. This is the outsider's approach (etic) according to Patton (2002). The etic approach involves "*standing far enough away from or outside of a particular culture to see its separate events'*, primarily in relation to their similarities and their differences, as compared to events in other cultures (Pike,1954:10, Patton, 2002: 268).

I was aware of the limitations of being an outsider to the participants where participants may behave differently when they know they are being observed and the fact that they were told about the purpose of my observations. However, since I hadthe chance to see the students and teachers several times (making appointments and getting to know the students) before the actual observations took place, that, to a larger extent, prepared them mentally (for my presence) and I felt the teachers and students behaved as in a normal classroom situation, and sometimes I felt that they had forgotten all about me during the observation. This was a good sign that they had adapted to the notion of having an outsider in their presence.

My aim was to observe the interactions between teacher and students and students and students during the lesson to determine the pattern of collaboration and what decisions were made in terms of working together between students from different ethnic backgrounds. When some conversations or even unexpected behaviour occurred and I needed to know

more about that particular incident, I asked the teacher's permission to have an extended informal conversation with the particular students or pair or groups of students outside class hours to get some insights from them about what they felt about the lesson, their friends and the instructions from the teacher, what made them behave in a particular way or why they did not contribute to the discussions. This gave me a clearer understanding of what had occurred earlier in the classroom or the reasons behind certain actions. This was another advantage of carrying out observations where I could have further discussions about what had occurred in the classroom outside the observation period.

4.10.7 Recording the Observation

Two observations were conducted with every participant teacher. One observation was conducted before the workshop where teachers basically followed their daily scheme of work (their record book was given to me for a closer look), and the other was carried out after the workshop where teachers agreed to conduct a lesson using a short story they had selectedduring the workshop. An observation protocol was used and field notes were taken during the observation process. The observation protocol was adapted from established observation protocols (http://ed.final.gov/trc; http://horizon-research.com) to fit the objectives of this study. Specifically, items added to the protocol were; student group formation, teacher intervention and instruction (Refer to Appendix 9 for a sample of the observation protocol; Appendix 10 for sample of observation notes).

4.11 Piloting the instruments

Stewart (2001: 2) argues that a pilot study is '*a small preparatory investigation that is in no way intended to directly investigate or test the research hypotheses of interest*'. My aim in conducting the pilot study, first and foremost, wasto get myself acquainted with the school's surroundings and the staff, and then to test the data gathering instruments to see whether the design and content of the questionnaire, the interview questions, the non- participant observation forms with notes for guidanceand the group discussion topics would reflect the actual data collection process. I also adapted an observation protocol to be used during my observation.

What I found from this particular experience was that some of my pilot participants (children who had lived in Nottingham for at least 2 years) were not able to answer section 4 of the questionnaire on their identity as Malaysian and the current development on 1Malaysia. I felt that this would not pose a lot of difficulties with students who are currently in Malaysia. Some of them were also unable to remember what took place in their literature lessons whilst they were in Malaysia (There is a common curriculum specification for all secondary schools in Malaysia).I retained some of the group interview discussion questions in the second pilot exercise. Although the Malaysian children's group in Nottingham were not able to discuss topics such as the 1Malaysia concept, experience in the literature classrooms and what they shared as Malaysian (This will be discussed at length in Chapter Six), I had anticipated that these topics would not be a problem for the students in Malaysia as they would have a lot more information and experience in the Malaysian setting.

The second pilot study was carried out at PU1 as this was the first school where I had obtained permission to carry out my research. This pilot study was conducted at the beginning of January 2010. As the school term had just begun, I was given a Form Five class to pilot my instruments. My actual target was Form Four as this was the level where students do not have major National Examinations at the end of the year.

Six students from this class volunteered to take part in the group discussion and these students did not find any of the topics posed to them problematic. I also carried out a semi-structured interview with the teacher (SS) as well as non-participant observation. SS's class was not a literature class but a writing class, but I was still able to see the students' group dynamics and their interactions with one another, which gave me important insights into what to look for in the actual data collection process. The teacher's interactions with students were also jotted down as field notes.

However, what I learnt from this pilot study was, generally,that a researcher cannot anticipate or predict the outcome of the effectiveness or success of their instruments before piloting them. Instruments may look flawless; instructions were thought simple and clear and easily understood until they were actually used with the target population (the students). Interview questions may seem direct but in carrying out the pilot study I learnt to be more patient with my respondents, interfere less while they were talking and noted the questions I needed to clarify and what I needed to askthem to clarify later.

4.12   Why the need for the Workshop?

In this study, a workshop was needed to explore teachers' awareness and also reflect on their own practices in the literature classrooms. Through the one-day workshop, teachers, perhaps will be able to take certain actions and measures to improve or refine their strategies (if need be) to maximise students' understanding of the concept of understanding others. This was to ensure that the aim of supporting the process of shared identity construction could potentially be disseminated to other teachers in their schools and the process is hoped to be continuous.

After the workshop, some practical changes to teachers' approaches and teaching strategies in the teaching of short stories were anticipatedin order to fit the objectives of their lessons which, among others, were to enable students to bemore aware of the other cultures around them and the need for a shared identity.

Prior to selecting the Malaysian short stories, I had studied quite a number of short stories from around the world, including stories from Africa, North America, South America, Asia and Europe. Since the construction of 'national identity' is universal, some of these short stories could be applicable (to the Malaysian setting) to meet the objective of my study. However, there were certain values, norms and customs that were necessary for the Malaysian context and which could not be successfully highlighted by stories not originating from the South East Asian region. For example, the values respecting cultural norms of other ethnic groups such as taking off ones shoes before entering Malay or Indian residence. These were the values that I had hoped to be able to highlight for the Malaysian students and thus to ignite their

understanding and awareness of living with people not from their own cultural background. As Lopez (2001:29) asserts, shared values:

> ...are one of the foundational structures around which communities are built [...] these value-attached understanding carry a great deal of affective weight in that people internalize the value system prevalent in their external environment.

Therefore, the selection of Malaysian short stories depicting Malaysian values, customs and belief systems has the potential to foster in-depth understanding of students own culture and their peers from different cultural backgrounds.

The workshop was intended to bring the participants (teachers) in this study together and I had hoped that they would be able to highlight the importance of knowing 'others' in the Malaysian multicultural context. It was also important as it served as a stepping stone or platform for possible transformation (if need be) fora more reflectivepractice. Reflective practice here denotes developing a habit, structure, or routine in examining experiences (Amulya, 2006). This workshop was also intended to add to teachers' existing practical approaches, to the understanding of others using a collection of selected Malaysian short stories, which could be used inteachers' own literature classrooms.

The aims of the workshop were threefold.

- to explore teachers' understanding of others (inter-cultural awareness), in their social context and in the context of teaching and learning.
- to explore and develop classroom activities using short stories which can promote the understanding of otherstudents, thus facilitating the construction of shared Malaysian identity.

- to inspire participants to put into practice the key concepts generated through the workshop.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to explore how teachers can make use of short stories to:

- reinforcean understanding of others (intercultural awareness) amongst the students.
- develop the notion of shared Malaysian identity.
- reduce any ethnic bias amongst students.

So, the specific aims and objectives of the workshop outlined above enabled the participants to understand the objectives of my investigation better and therefore to be able to carry out effectively the teaching tasks that were asked of them. The details of the workshop are outlined in the next section.

4.12.1   The Workshop (objectives and programme outline)

Session 1

Introduction

Participants were shown images of several people on power point, and were asked to write and later comment about those images. This was a very interactive session where the participants managed to discuss their thoughts and exchange information with the others and also relate their own experiences in connection to the pictures. Some of the responses were about what others think about the people in the pictures and how some perceptions were over-generalised. For example, a woman in 'burkha' is unapproachable, very religious and keeps to themselves. That discussion brought the session to the next.

Session 2

Identifying prejudices and stereotypes in the Malaysian setting.

Teachers worked in pairs and discussed their understanding of prejudices and stereotyping and reflected on their own experience in the classrooms. Then they reported back to the whole group the outcome of their discussion. The main idea here was to elicit information and ideas as to whether stereotyping and prejudices should be highlighted as and when necessary in their literature classroom. Teachers had conflicting ideas and mixed feelings to these issues as some raised concern of cultural and religious sensitivity. According to one participant 'on one hand its good for the students to know about prejudices and stereotyping as these can actually opened their eyes to the reality surrounding them, on the other hand it may trigger sensitive issues and the feeling of discomfort not only to the students but also the teacher'. Then they also discussed as a whole group the notion of shared identity amongst Malaysian specifically Malaysian students which included food, games, clothing, language and music.

Session 3

The Deep Fried Devil

Teachers were given the story (to be read) prior to the workshop and almost all said they had had a go at the story and found it to be interesting and different from the stories they used in their classrooms.

Again teachers worked in pairs and first of all they were asked to comment on the story or any particular issue they would like to highlight about this pieces

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of text. Then, they discussed how they could explore the story and turn it into a lesson/series of lessons. Teachers were not asked to write or construct the whole lesson plan but a brief overview on how they could develop this story. Then they presented their ideas.

All the teachers agreed that this story can actually be suitable to be utilised in the classroom to highlight the issues of stereotyping and prejudices in the society and then according to them how these issues can be explained and countered, perhaps by asking the students to come out with problem solving activities.

On the whole, in this session teachers were able to discuss:

1.   The suitability of the text.

2.   What values could be drawn from this story.

3.   How teachers could develop a lesson or lessons from this text.

4.   Suggested some activities for the lesson.

When participants have completed their presentation, I highlighted several points I had picked up from my pre-workshop observations such as time constraints on the part of the teacher, students' interactions, movements in the classrooms and group dynamics and also teacher-talk. Participants were encouraged to speak up about these issues and how some teachers' good strategies should be retained and reflected in the next observations using the story they picked from the list given. Finally, I gave a sample lesson plan which I had developed from 'The Deep Fried Devil' (TDFD) to the participants.

Session 4

Working with new text

After coffee break, participants were asked to examine the compiled stories from the pack given earlier. There were 3stories :

1.   Ah Khaw goes to 'Heaven'.
2.   Peach Blossom Luck.
3.   Nannan

Participants worked individually. They needed to read all 3 stories and pick only one and justify their selection. This was a long session as these stories were new to them and they needed time to read. I really felt that I should have given the stories to them earlier so that I could have more time for the rest of the sessions. But then again, I thought that they might not have time to read at home. They took a good half an hour to read and then another 15 minutes to write notes on their selection. They presented their ideas individually. Their selections:

3 chose Peach Blossom Luck

2 chose Ah Khaw goes to heaven

2 chose End of The Deep Fried Devils

None chose Nannan. The main reason given was the text was a bit too difficult for their students.

Teachers were then asked to outline a first lesson from the story they had selected. This session had also taken quite a bit of time and they were then asked to present after lunch break.

Session 5

Presenting lesson plan

Before the break participants were asked to plan a lesson from the story they had selected. A little bit more time was given for them to prepare and then they presented the outline of their lesson plan individually. Teachers were aware that they had to have the main aim of the lesson which was to highlight cultural diversity and the understanding of others in the classroom. Comments were also welcomed from the others and some gave good suggestions to activities proposed. I was very excited to hear what they had planned and looked forward to seeing them in action.

Session 6

Reviewing, Reflection and Summary

Since session 5 took quite some time to finish, I was unable to carry out the session on 1Malaysia and its impact on teaching and learning in the classroom. I decided that I will try and have conversations with teachers to probe more on their thoughts about this ongoing campaign by the government. I also planned to highlight and discuss this issue in the social networking site I had created.

Teachers reviewed and reflected on the possibilities of using different short stories apart from the stories prescribed in the curriculum to facilitate the understanding of others' cultures amongst their students. Most of the issues

were about completing the syllabus, preparing for examinations, packed co-curricular activities in school and also finding suitable time to use the story with their students.

Finally, in identifying the next step ahead, teachers were asked to suggest tentative dates for my visit and carry out another round of observation. The problem I faced was, I was due to fly back to the UK in 3 weeks and the week that followed was a term break and the teachers were left with only 2 weeks to decide, having in mind all other schools activities that had been pre-arranged.

A summary of the workshop is shown in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: Outline of the workshop

Time	Session Title	Sequence of Events and Objectives	Resources/Notes
8.30-9.00	Registration and introduction to the workshop	Participants to familiarize with the venue and facilities. • Overview of the whole idea of this research and the overall plan. • To introduce and explain the aims and objectives of the workshop	Welcome pack Powerpoint presentation
9.00-9.30	**Session 1 Exploring Intercultural awareness**	As an aspect of intercultural understanding, • Participants watch clips or given a picture then write comments of what they think about what they have just watched (individually). (5-7 minutes is given for them to write down their thoughts) • The facilitator starts the discussion by giving comments on the obvious or not so obvious or hidden message from the clips or photographs. • Highlighting the issues of lenses of difference. An example is the commonly held perceptions about inter-racial marriage, or the 'kiasu' attitude etc. Teachers then discuss in pairs what	Photograph, A clip from an advertisement or from a movie which depict stereotyping, 'kiasu' attitude

		they have written earlier and exchange information. Then they discuss how the issues of not understanding enough of others are taken for granted. Then they tell others briefly about their discussion and how they can highlight issues related to prejudice and stereotyping in the society (at home and school) in the classroom.	

9.30-10.00	**Session 2 Understanding differences**	Participants brainstorm their definitions of :
		  a. Prejudice
		  b. Stereotyping
		  c. shared identity
		
		• and reflect on their own experience in the classrooms.
		
		• Identify a situation where one's behaviour was culturally constructed but at the time seemed to be usual.
		
		Based on their own experience in the classroom (prior to the workshop) teachers discuss its implications on the promotion of shared Malaysian identity and indirectly to teachers and learners.
			Laptop, powerpoint presentation

10.00 - 10.20		**COFFEE BREAK**	
10.20 - 11.00	**Session 3 Using Texts**	Working in pairs, teachers select two stories from the collection of stories given to them in the pack. Teachers justify their selections. Extract scenarios from the stories that could represent or enable them to : • highlight prejudice and stereotyping in the society • depict shared or common identity from the stories. • Work the texts towards the construction of shared Malaysian Identity How they could use these extracts	Collection of stories

		effectively to promote shared identity amongst students (strategies) e.g. dialogue, sketch, campaigns, songs etc.	
11.00 - 11.30	**Session 4** **Overview of 1Malaysia**	• Participants discuss in pairs of their understanding of 1Malaysia • Giving opinion, argue/debate about : The concept/idea Implementation Implications to teachers and students in particular. • Each pair will present the outcome of their discussions and then open to question and answer to the rest of the groups	Get opinions from other pairs, drawing conclusions on potential problems and advantages of the 1Malasyia concept to students' learning and also their social development.
11.30-1.00	**Session 5 Mock Teaching (15 to 20 minutes each pair)**	Teachers use strategies discussed before the break to plan a short lesson highlighting key issues discussed earlier. Other groups become the students. (Could also seek help from trainee teachers or university students from department of Education to be students in this session)	Videotaping equipment
1.00-2.00		**LUNCH BREAK**	
2.00-3.00	**Session 6 Reviewing and Reflections**	Teachers review and reflect on their mock teaching and comments from other groups are also sought. The possibilities of using the strategies with their own students and asking oneself: 'How can I include/insert a tiny portion of the notion of shared identity in my lessons? Their concerns (pros and cons or constraints based on strategies used) Highlight the issue of teachers' autonomy which could indirectly facilitate the formation of common identity amongst students.	Arguments or concerns in which they agree or disagree about strategies used and perhaps idea for improvements. Identify which of the strategies used in the presentations they are most inclined to.
3.00-	**Session 7**	Reflect on the whole issue raised in	Weblog

4.00	**Summary of the workshop and next step ahead**	the workshop today. Concerns and suggestions and evaluation The next step after the workshop. - Using weblog to reflect - The observations - The Interviews - Students' questionnaire - Students' focus groups	address Possible dates for visiting purposes Send participants the summary of the strategies used by teachers in this workshop and other possible strategies
4.00-4.30		**Coffee and Disperse**	

4.13 Establishing trustworthiness in this study

Reliability and validity are considered as key tests for judging the adequacy of research. Hartas (2010) refers to reliability as the consistency and stability of a measurement, and is concerned with whether the results of a study are replicable or repeatable with another set of respondents. He further explains that:

> ... replicability can be achieved by offering adequate details on the definitions of variables and the procedures employed to collect and analyse data. The consistency of a measurement is examined in terms of consistency over time (stability), equivalence and internal consistency(ibid: 71).

Consistency over time is the degree to which a measurement is the same each time it is testedunder the same conditions with the same participants. Reliability of equivalence, said Hartas (2010), is established by estimating the degree of agreement between two sets of measures obtained via two administration methods of the same instrument/test. Three important factors are involved in determining whether a measure is reliable: its stability,

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internal reliability and inter-observer consistency (Bryman:2004). Stability requires a measure to be stable over time. Internal reliability concerns whether each respondent's individual score for one indicator is related to the score of other students and other indicators; (particularly an issue for multiple choice questions)whereas inter observer consistency refers to whether another investigator (or member of the research team) have had the same results.

The concept of validity is used to judge '*whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon which it is intended to describe*' (Bush: 2002:65). Meanwhile, Hartas(2010) states that it is '*an important criterion regarding the meaningfulness of the results and the overall value of a research*'. (Hartas,2010:74).

Within the qualitative research paradigm, the primary focus is for researchers to capture authentically the lived experiences of people, which Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue is created in the social text written up by the investigator. Some investigators invite the informants to comment on or contribute to the 'social text' so that it is more rounded and reflects better the respondents' perceptions of events. This, according to Denzin and Lincoln, is a representational problem. Thus, part of their solution to the 'validity issues' has been to reconceptualise traditional quantitative validity concepts and to use the labels that are more acceptable to qualitative researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They suggested replacing internal validity (as used in quantitative research) by using the term 'credibility', external validity (in quantitative research) can be replaced by 'transferability', reliability can be

paralleled by'dependability' and the concept of objectivity in quantitative research by 'confirmability'.

Another term frequently used in qualitative research is 'trustworthiness', which is akin to the idea of reliability since both refer to the consistency of the investigator's presentation style in writing, data recording techniques and data analysis and interpretation.

I addressed the issue of trustworthiness following Shenton (2004:64) by addressing (1) credibility of the research, (2) transferability (3) dependability and finally (4) confirmability.

In assuring credibility of the research, I have ensured the research methods and instruments used for this study are the 'correct operational measures' (Yin, 2006) in that they are well established methods and have been used successfully in other similar projects. I have also triangulated my methods in order to ensure that any limitation inherent in one particular method can be compensated by other methods of data collection. Although transferability in qualitative research is most likely to be impossible (Merriam, 2002) as each case is unique, I have provided sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork and thick description of data to enable readers to make the transfer to their own similar projects. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that the most vital strategy for establishing trustworthiness and credibility is member checking. At the same time, I evaluated whether the participants believed that what I captured from the interview matched with what they actually said by reading out the summary of what they said from my notes.

In addressing the issue of dependability, (which has a close relationship with credibility) following Lincoln and Guba (1985), I have explicitly described the process undertaken in this study in detail; thereby any future researchers will be able to repeat. The aspect of confirmability is addressed by ensuring that the results of the findings were genuinely derived from the participants and not 'how the researcher perceived it to be'. The use of triangulation methods in this study helped to reduce researcher's bias.

4.14   Data Familiarization (Making sense of data)

In making sense of my data I organised them with a systematic approach to facilitate intensive analysis. Since my main data was from seven respondents who were (teachers) and six group interviews, I decided against the use of Nvivo as a small number of respondents allows manual data coding relatively straightforwardly. (Refer to section 4.15 for the discussion of thematic coding).I organised the interview transcripts manually into a single, comprehensive file, which enabled me to see and gain a comprehensive picture of all the interview data. The next step was to classify and code them according to themes which I had identified earlier, noting also new, emerging themes (see 4.15.3). I cut and pasted interview transcripts on a broad sheet based on these themes and then reread the original transcripts to confirm that the codes were allocated the correct themes. With the second reading of the transcripts, I recoded and collapsed redundant and overlapping codes. Finally, I reorganised the themes and codes based on my research questions (See table 4.12 below for the coding process).

Table 4.12: Outline of the visual model of the coding process used for the interview transcripts (teachers and student group interviews)

1	Initial read through of interview transcripts
2	Arrange (teachers and group interviews separately) into a single comprehensive file.
3	Classify and code according to identified themes
4	Identify new emerging themes
5	Cut and paste transcripts into the designated themes
6	Reread the original transcripts to validate accuracy of the distribution of excerpts/codes against the themes
7	Identify overlapping/redundant codes
8	Reorganise themes according to potential flow of discussions

4.15   Data Coding and Analysis Technique

The process of data codingand analysis for this study is described below:

1. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and group interviews with students: Transcriptions of interviews were thematically coded using a coding system following Braun & Clarke (2006).

2. Observation notes from classroom observations were thematically coded using a coding system devised by the researcher (detailed below) as described by Braun & Clarke (2006).

3. Questionnaire results derived from SPSS were categorised into specific themes and then triangulated with students' group interview discussion themes.

The main analytical approach in this study was guided by thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006:82) posit that a theme '*captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of 'patterned' response or meaning within the data set'.* Thematic

analysistherefore, is a process of segmentation, categorisation and re-linking of aspects of the database prior to the final interpretation (Grbich, 2007).

Thematic analysis in this study was driven by 'prevalence' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) determined by the number of data items (themes appearing in individual interviews or group discussions) articulated across the entire data set.An iterative, inductive process was used in the coding and analysis of data. The inductive approach to analysis according to Patton (2002), means that the themes identified are strongly linked to the data. In this context, the research questions for this study evolved through the coding process. The unit of coding according to Boyatzis (1998: 63) '*is the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way*' in relation to the phenomenon that appears interesting to the analyst. As Miles & Huberman (1994:66) put it,'*the process of coding itself is part of the analysis.*'

4.15.1 Thematic coding of data source: Semi Structured Interviews with teachers and Group Interviews with students.

Coding according to Taylor and Gibbs (2010) is the process of '*combing the data for themes, ideas and categories and then marking similar passages of text with a code label*' (online QDA). In analysing the transcriptions of interview data from teachers' interviews and students' group interviews, a coding system was developed and the unit of analysis identified (words, phrases, themes, ideas). A code list discussed below was developed, and relationships between the themes investigated. Throughout this inductive coding, interpretive analysis was undertaken. Interpretive analysis, in this context, means interpreting the subject matter through questioning its meaning and significance and also evaluating its value as effective or ineffective.

There were several emerging themes that surfaced in the course of analysis of data related to the representation of understanding others in the literature classroom context, which then led to the emergence of the 'Third Space' construct. To reiterate, the data collection processes were conducted based on general pre-selected themes relating to the construction of shared Malaysian identity without any pre-determined theoretical construct. From teachers' and students' interview feedback, I then gathered more information on certain keywords such as 'more platform'(PL), 'more space'(GR) 'willing to set aside space'(FN), 'home environment' (FN); in other words, the emergence of the 'Third Space' construct appeared after studying the keywords described by teachers using multiple sources such as book, journals and search engines. This brought me to research literature on the Third Space which was usedas a theoretical framework underpinning this investigation.

4.15.2 Teachers' profiles

Although this study does not investigate in-depth information about teachers' practices or beliefs, I believe that a brief profile for each of all nine teachers involved (two teachers not involved in the post workshop observations) is necessary to obtain a clearer explanation of teachers' actions and instructions in their lessons. Table 4.13 below presents their brief profiles.

Table 4.13: Teachers' Profiles

Teacher's ID	Gender	Ethnicity	Teaching experience	Position in school	Other responsibilities held
PL	F	C	25 years	English Language and Maths teacher	Advisor to the Young Entrepreneur Club
RA	M	I	20 years	English Language and Moral teacher	He is a 'Jack of all trades'

FN	F	M	10 years	English language teacher	Advisor to the Drama club
SN	F	M	30 years	English Language teacher	Head of Form Six
GR	F	Punjabi	27 years	English Language teacher	Assistant Advisor to the English language club
SL	F	C	15 years	English Language teacher	Advisor to the reading club
AI	F	M	5 years	English language teacher	Advisor to many clubs including sports and cultural club.
RL	F	M	7 years	English language teacher	English Language Club Advisor
AN	F	I	18	English language teacher	Head of English Language Department

7 teachers were identified (6 females and 1 male) by the HOL to assist in this investigation. 6 teachers (3 Malays, 2 Chinese, 1 Indian and 1 Punjabi) had ten years or more teaching experience (which was one of the criteria of participant selection). AI was chosen by her HOL (although she had only five years experience behind her) as the other English language teachers in her school had other prior commitments. All of these participants held 'important' responsibilities in their schools and based on their HOL's comments, were very committed and responsible teachers.

4.15.3 Thematic Coding of data source

Table below outlines the thematic coding employed in the process of identifying significant themes and useful phrases from categorization of themes to the selected extracts from the interviews.

Table 4.14: Thematic coding of data source: Semi – Structured Interviews with teachers and Group Interviews with students.

Broad Category	Codes Identified	Selected Themes Identified
1.Understanding the 1Malaysia concept	1. Ethnic relations 1. Interaction and Integration 2. Promoting understanding 3. Sharing experiences 4. More time needed 5. Language as a medium 6. Theory into practice	1. Understanding of 'others' 2. Roles of teachers and students in the process of shared Malaysian identity construction (in relation to 1Malaysia concept)
2. Ethnic/Racial issues in school/classroom	1. Superficial relationships 2. Relationship with 'others'	The challenges of learning in multicultural classrooms
3. Teacher's instructions in group work formation	1. Authority 2. Students' decision making 3. Mixed ethnic groups	Constraints for teachers in introducing practices
4.Highlighting stereotypes	1. Treat with caution 2. Willing to highlight with conditions 3. Bad idea 4. Cause discomfort	Highlighting stereotypes in the classroom
5.Awareness of 'others'	1. No concern 2. Satisfaction 3. Admiration 4. Celebration of different festivals	Students' understanding of others in the classroom
6.Material selections	1. Text preferences 2. Local/Foreign authors/writers 3. Other texts 4. More flexibility	1. Selection of suitable texts for classroom use 2. Utilising Malaysian short stories

From the broad category, codes and themes identified in Table 4.14 above, a matrix was developed which included summaries of keyword-in-context and word repetition, and these were organised into a coding frame to allow for a more comprehensive view across all the coded data. Table 4.15 below provides a sample of the matrix of extracts used in the teachers' semi-structured interviews. A similar measure was used for the treatment of coded

data from the student group interviews and from the non participant observations.

Table 4.15: A sample of the matrix of extracts used in the teachers' semi-structured interviews.

Understanding the 1Malaysia concept (Category)		
Code	**Summary of coded text**	**Interviewee ID/Line from extract**
Promote understanding	The idea of promoting understanding and living under one umbrella regardless of colour, race or languages.	FN 44
	It's a good idea after years of segregation. Ethnic relations are still a problem	RA 21
	Teachers share experience and nurture the students with all the good values so that the 1Malaysia concept aims to engender	SH 82
Relationship with 'others'	There is no problem as long as people do what is expected of them and adapt to different situations with an open mind	RA 29
	There's a lot of understanding amongst teachers from different backgrounds	SN 16
	The Malays, Chinese and Indians work well with each other although they have a superficial understanding of each other's cultures.	PL 99
	Educators must realise the importance of understanding others themselves	SL 52

4.15.4 Thematic coding of data sources: Non Participant Classroom Observations

Data coding for the non-participant structured observation was carried out utilising the field notes (observation notes) taken during the observations. The observation notes included the researcher's analytical reflections. The objects of concern in the observations are listed in the 'Broad category' column

in Table 4.16 below. The observation protocol (Appendix 9) was adapted from

www.http://ed.fnal.gov/trc_new/program_docs/instru/classroom_obs.pdf.

Table 4.16: Thematic coding of data source: Non Participant Classroom Observations

Broad Category	Codes Identified	Selected Themes Identified
1. Students' reactions to lessons 2. Material used in lessons 3. Teacher decision making in group work formation 4. Student decision making in group work formation 5. Teacher role in creating inter-cultural awareness in the classroom 6. Student role in creating intercultural awareness in the classroom	1. Teacher's authority 2. Student decision making 3. Responsive 4. Unresponsive 5. 'Under-utilised' materials/texts 6. Cultural awareness	**A. Pre-Workshop** 1. Student interaction during lessons 2. Students' reactions to lessons 3. Materials used in the lessons 4. Student negotiation and decision making on group work **B. Post-Workshop** 1. Student interaction during lessons 2. Students' reactions to lessons 3. Materials used in the lessons 4. Teacher classroom instructions, control and decision making

4.15.5   Thematic coding of data source: Group Interviews

Table below outlines a sample of thematic coding applied to the group interviews data source.

Table 4.17: Thematic coding of data source: Group Interviews

Code	Summary of coded text	Interviewee ID/Line from extract
Promote understanding	Bringing people of different races together	WM5L 55
	The importance of unity and that it has been taken for granted for so long	PU 46
	Not understanding each culture is different and people come to realise that eventually	NMC 66

	No problem in interacting with students from other races	SJI 30
	I can have an open discussions about certain topics and get different perspectives from friends from different cultural backgrounds	PU 41
Relationship with 'others'	Some people are so used to mixing with their own kind	NMC 08
	In Malaysia many people can speak at least 2 languages fluently and this makes it easier to communicate	WM5 38

4.16 Using Malaysian short stories as the medium for identity construction

Another important issue in relation to the process of constructing shared Malaysian identity was my selection of short stories. Limiting my selections to Malaysian short stories and not short stories from around the world can to a certain extent restrict the robust-ness of the investigation. Short stories from around the world may represent global issues than stories from Malaysia, which is likely to be understood by a larger section of people around the globe.However, I took advantage of the 'scenario familiarity' in the teaching of literature, specifically using Malaysian short stories as a tool in my investigation to find out the possibilities of how shared Malaysian identity could be constructed in the classroom and mapping strategic ways for achieving this objective. Students' familiarity with the Malaysian values and customs which can be found in the stories is likely to enable them to understand the messages embedded in those texts.

In making the decision to use Malaysian short stories, I examined their advantages and disadvantages closely and found that the Malaysian short

stories were better able to serve the objectives of my investigation. With familiar norms, values, customs and also familiar problems and conflicts which exist around and within the multiethnic Malaysian community, students would be in a much better position to relate the purpose of my research to their day-to-day lives. Therefore, with this understanding, students would be able to contribute much more effectively by giving responses to questions pertaining to Malaysians' societal encounters and dilemmas.

The stories were chosen for the following reasons:

1. They were relatively straightforward (this feedback was given by teachers during the workshop session) and could be easily understood by Form Four students.

2. There were also elements of suspense and love which I thought would appeal to students at age 16-17.

3. I also chose stories written by writers from different ethnic backgrounds. For example 'The Deep Fried Devils' (by the Chinese author,Shih-Li Kow,), 'Ah Khaw Goes to Heaven' (by the Malay author A. Samad Ismail,), 'Peach Blossom Luck' (by Chua Kok Yee, Shih-Li Kow (Chinese) and Rumaizah Abu Bakar (Malay)) and 'Nannan' (by Cynthia Anthony, an Indian writer). All the stories were written in the English language.

The fundamental issue here was to get students to read and discuss the underlying arguments found in the stories in the quest for an understanding of empathy amongst peers from different backgrounds which had the potential to foster the construction of shared identity. All these initiatives were mediated by teachers. But most importantly, I felt that the issues embedded in these stories would generate discussion of various cultural dilemmas between

ethnic groups and students would be able to elicit references to certain problems and conflicts that had been shrouded in society such as bias and prejudice amongst different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Exemplifications of these issues are detailed in 4.16.1 below. Finally, these stories were not in the syllabus and this brought in the elements of surprise and interest as the stories were new to the teachers and also the students.

These stories were made available to the teachers during the workshop and they were given a copy of each of the stories to take awayto decide which short story to use in the observation scheduled after the workshop. None of the teachers had come across these stories or read them before as they were not listed as texts used in the Malaysian English literature syllabus, and little was known about the writers except A. Samad Ismail, a prolific writer.

4.16.1 Locating the 'hybrid identity'- An example from 'The Deep Fried Devils' (TDFD)(Refer to Appendix 12 for full story).

4.16.1.1 Overview of TDFD

Main Characters

Lan Jie(Chinese), Ah Wai (Chinese coffee shop owner), Kakak (Lan Jie's Indonesian helper), Din (Malay), Rahimah (Din's wife, also Malay)

Setting
Street hawkers by a stretch of busy lanes in the city.

Plot of Story
Confrontation occurs between a Chinese and Malay hawker selling 'Char Kwai' (a Chinese baked roll) each accusing the other of

stealing their traditional recipe. Solidarity emerges between them when they suddenly realise that foreigners too had taken the opportunity to copy their ideas and were about to sell 'Malaysian' delights.

Summary

Lan Jie who sells 'Char Kwai' is furious when Din, a Malay hawker sells the same delicacy, which she thinks has spoiled the original Chinese recipe. Din on the other hand defends his right to sell 'Char Kwai' but accuses the Chinese of stealing several Malay traditional recipes and selling them. One morning, both realise that foreign immigrants (like the Bangladeshi and Indonesians) are also selling the same delicacy in their same street. National solidarity becomes apparent between Lan Jie and Din when they are adamant that foreigners have no right to compete with them in selling 'Char kwai'.

Values/Beliefs

The belief that certain traditional cuisine belongs to certain ethnic groups is common in Malaysia. However, this has changed over the years as people from different communities have accepted and like delicacies from other communities.

4.16.1.2 Locating its 'hybrid cultural identity'

TDFD presents hybrid cultural practices and language, shared concerns and vision in the ordinary day-to-day life of some people in the community. Chinese, Malays and also immigrants'

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interactions are portrayed in a busy street. Hybrid practices are sampled by the small business. Lan Jie and Din are in dispute over what dish belongs to which ethnicity. Their solidarity as Malaysian is apparent when they realise that ethnic disputesare not important when 'others' (immigrants) duplicate their business.

4.16.1.3 How teachers can use this metaphor

TDFD can be one of the many more Malaysian short stories which can be unpicked to bring in the aspect of loyalty and solidarity between people from different ethnic backgrounds and that it is important to understand the different cultures in the homeland to be able to build a stronger generation.

4.16.1.4 Initiating teachers and students' awareness of the 'third space'.

Malaysian short stories such as TDFD can be used to bridge the gap in knowledge between the home, the community and the formal learning environment, such as the classroom. The ability to merge this knowledge is a starting point for the utilization of the Third Space, in that the texts, the time, the willingness, the motivation to explore are examples of Third Space exploration. This exploration is one of the key points championed in this investigation in which shared/collective identity can be constructed in the teaching and learning process. Teachers' willingness to provide an avenue for students to discuss 'reality from the society' in the classroom (such as prejudice and bias), turned the discussion into one about understanding 'others' in more realistic ways; this is an approach which should be lauded and highly encouraged.

Based on the outline of TDFD above, it is clear that it is an 'authentic' text which portrays real true-life issues in the city of Kuala Lumpur, perhaps in other cities in Malaysia and neighbouring countries as well. Through the story, the learners are exposed to real language outside their classroom (Collie & Slater, 1987; Lee, 2008). This enables the students to bring their home and community experiences into and through the text, making the process of reading, discussing and interpreting the text more exciting, and most importantly carries real social meaning to them. Lee further stresses that lack of cultural awareness may lead to difficulty in understanding a text.

4.17   Limitations of the methods use

There were a number of limitations to the methods I selected and used:

- The sample size was relatively small, especially of the teachers. This was a possible limitation. However, qualitative investigation provides rich data which can compensate for the relatively small sample. Reiterating Merriam (2002) (see 4.4), it is not necessarily *'the how much'* or *'how often'* that matters.

- In the group interviews, I was consciousthat the more 'vocal' students could tend to dominate the discussions and might have prevented the quieter students from contributing. Therefore, as far as possible, I encouraged all the students to contribute but this was balanced against not wanting to silence those who obviously had a lot to contribute. Besides, having group interviews saved a lot of time.

- There was a time limitation in the short period of three months over which observations and interviews could be carried out. It is possible

that another time in the school year might have produced different results but I was constrained by the regulations.

- Limitation of time also meant the scope of this investigation was narrower and only involved short stories. With more time, I would have been able to employ a wider range of literature including poems, novels and drama in order to determine which genres and literary forms could most appropriately be used to construct students' shared identity in the classroom.

- The social relationship in the research process between the researcher and the interviewees formed insider and outsider positions. The issue of the researcher being Malaymight haveaffected the responses given by interviewees from a different ethnic Malay background as some questions could be considered ethnically sensitive by the participants.

- Having the researcher lead the group interview and discussions could affect the responses from the students compared to having one of them conducting and leading the group interviews and discussions.

4.18   Summary

This chapter has presented the design of the study. It includes the sampling strategy, choice of data collection methods, ethical considerations, data collection protocols, field work procedures,the research questions and data analysis procedures. It also describes the limitations of the methods used (see also section 8.4). The following chapters will present the analyses and discussions of the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION: ISSUES RELATED TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF SHARED MALAYSIAN IDENTITY

TEACHERS' SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATION ANALYSES (TEACHERS AND STUDENTS)

5.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected using the instruments described in Chapter Four. It is divided into two sections. Section one describes the analyses from teachers semi-structure interviews and the second section describes the analyses from teachers and students classroom observations. The presentation of data is guided by the research questions framed at the outset. The research questions were answered, informed by data collected using the four sources of empirical data:

1.   Semi structured interviews (teachers only)

2.   Non-participant classroom observation (of teachers and students)

3.   Group interviews (students only)

4.   Questionnaires (students only)

Data from teachers' semi structure interviews are first analysed followed by data from the classroom observations of teachers and students to answer all the research questions detailed in Chapter One. A representation of the

structure of the discussion for teachers' interview is presented in Table 5.1below, which maps the relationship between the research questions and the methods employed with the pre-selected and emerging themes. It also shows the evidence from the area where data were synthesised. Thus, this chapter seeks to clarify the analyses undertaken from teachers' responses and classroom observations of teachers and students for the purpose of answering research question below:

To what extent can the classroom use of Malaysian short stories be helpful in the construction of shared Malaysian identity?

Specifically, this chapter seeks to find answer to the research question below:

What are the teachers' perceptions of their students' classroom interactions while studying selected Malaysian short stories?

SECTION 1: THE PRESENTATION OF RAW DATA AND DISCUSSION(TEACHERS SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS)

5.2 Semi-Structured Interview Themes

In this section, data from teachers' semi-structured interviews are analysed from the pre-selected themes and emerging themes listed in Table 5.1 belowwhich outlines the organisation of the discussion.

Table 5.1: Themes derived from teachers' interviews

	Themes (Semi-structured Interviews)
RQ 1 **Data from Teachers' interviews**	5.1 Students' interaction in the classroom 5.2 Constraints for teachers in introducing classroom practices 5.3 Highlighting stereotypes 5.4 Utilising Malaysian short stories 5.4.1 Teachers' perceptions about Malaysian short stories 5.4.2 Teachers' exploration of selected short stories 5.5 Teachers' roles in facilitating the construction of shared identity and its challenges

5.3   Teachers' Views on Student Interactions in the Classroom

Although the composition of students in this study is multicultural in nature, teachers were not particularly concerned about creating groups from different ethnic backgrounds. This might have been due to their belief that there was no need for it. In addition, they stated that priority was given to covering and achieving the lesson's teaching and learning objectives. Since every lesson lasted between 45-50 minutes, many teachers would not encourage students to take longer than 3-5 minutes to decide who they wanted to work with. The time constraints meant the teachers did not have sufficient time to ensure the students were working in a multi-ethnic group. Time constraints according to Phaneuf (2005) are one of teachers' favourite defence mechanisms in carrying out classroom activities and can inhibit students' and teachers' creativity.

I asked teachers to comment on their students' interaction. RA had this to say:

> There are not many Chinese and Indians **[**in the classroom**]**.
> So, if there happened to be more **[**Chinese and Indians**]**, then I

think they would probably choose their own kind...easier to communicate, may be. But I will always emphasise in using the English Language in my classroom. (RA 95)

(**[ ]** indicates my additions)

Another comment akin to RA's comment came from SN:

Sometimes if you give them the freedom, the students will find their own friends from their own race. But then again the majority are Malay. So the tendency of having more Malay students cannot be avoided.(SN37)

FN made a similar comment:

I give the freedom for the students to choose. I noticed sometimes the students like to stick to their own race.(FN26)

From the teachers' accounts above, they were quick to point out that the students were more inclined to collaborate with their peers from similar backgrounds. In other words, students preferred to work with classmates from similar ethnic backgrounds if they had the opportunity, rather than with classmates of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The question that can be asked in this context is, who shaped students' attitudes in accepting and being comfortable in groups of their own 'kind'? Students' knowledge and experiences from home and their community can contribute to this phenomenon. However, what students' perceive as 'comfortable' could also be shaped by their interactions within the classroom environment.

5.3.1 Summary of teachers' views on student classroom interaction

Based on the discussions above, I summarise the essence of teachers' perceptions of the themes identified in the analysis and again listed in the Tables 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Summary of teachers' views about student classroom behaviour

Issues	Summary of responses
Composition of students	Malays were in the majority. Therefore, a greater number of Malay students per group could not be avoided
Choice of friends to work with	Students were more comfortable working with peers from similar ethnic backgrounds if they are given the chance.
Students' decision making	Teachers in general made efforts to let the students decide on their group members but sometimes had to intervene.

5.4 Constraints onTeachers in Introducing New Classroom Practices.

In creating a shared vision which could possibly lead to shared identity construction amongst not only students but teachers alike, understanding other people from different cultural groups is very important. Teachers are likely to be the most important people besides parents as the architects or initiators shaping and landscaping the field of shared identity (Fairclough, 1995; Reeves, 2009; Rex, Murnen, Hobbs & Mc Eachen, 2002). Fairclough (1995), for example, believes that teacher discourse powerfully shapes students' beliefs about their identity and their latent identity construction. Fairclough argues, since students come from various cultural backgrounds, they are brought with different attitudes and behaviour from home to school, some of which may be culturally intolerable; for example being racist and intolerant towards others. Therefore, as teachers come in contact (interact)

with students almost every day, they (teachers) have opportunities to detect misbehaviour and negative attitudes amongst their students. This gives teachers ample opportunities to reshape or bring students back on course where necessary if they (teachers) themselves are aware of the importance of understanding 'others' and have the inclination to do so.

During the interviews, teachers expressed concerns and anxiety over the pressure placed on their shoulders by parents, school administrators and the students themselves in their teaching. This pressure confirmed the hypothesis that their ultimate aim was to produce good results. Teachers were under immense pressure to gear and tailor their students' progressin preparation for examinations.From the interviews and observations carried out with teachers, they believed that the responsibility for constructing shared identity amongst students was by no means an easy task. Some teachers were enthusiastic about the idea, some were less so. SN commented:

> Most of us are pretty much busy with completing the syllabus and getting the students ready for exams. At the end of the day, the administration and parents want to see results. So how much room is the teacher left with to get the students to think about how they can actually understand each other or to (be) involve (d) in each others' festivities? (SN 158)

Besides the difficulties in finding extra time for other activities apart from academic encountersthe teachers' attitudes towards the introduction of 'new ideas' varied. These attitudes can be divided into negative and positive attitudes towards 'new ideas' – which may not be new to some teachers, but only mean a new task for them to take on. When I posed the question of whether or not there were problems amongst students in understanding classmates from different cultural backgrounds, FN had this to say:

emm...now (voice lowered and almost whispering),...
.sometimes when I look at my friends…at the teachers…they themselves emm… refused to emm...I would say mix with others. Especially during meetings…(Teachers' meetings). Chinese teachers will sit with Chinese, Indians with Indians and Malays with Malays. If we ourselves, we refuse to break away from our race, it would be quite difficult to implement the things that we are going to highlight in class, about this shared identity.(FN 148)

It was interesting to note that while saying the above, FN was cautious and lowered her voice as if she wasconcerned that what she was saying could be heard by other teachers, although at that time we were in a closed room. It was clearthat FN did not want what she said to be heard by anyone else, especially teachers from different ethnic backgrounds. When asked why she was so discreet when discussing the matter, she said that she did not want the segregation between and amongst teachers from different ethnic groups to become worse than before. One way to verify this statement from FN was to talk to other teachers in the school. I had the opportunity to discuss my research with the Deputy Head, Co-curricular Affairs of the school and she gave me almost the same account as FN. Being Malay, similar to FN, the Deputy Head's comment might or might not have influenced the responses given to me.

FN had more to say about this issue and she continued:

Even sometimes the teachers are sent on short courses, ok we have this in-house training and all that, but we're just merely attending the courses…the session. But once everything is over, the teachers will go back to their own ways. It's very difficult for them to change. (FN 158)

There are two ways of interpreting what FN mentioned above. Teachers are seen to be the role modelsas students can easily follow their guidance and

imitate any behaviour that is portrayed to them. If the teachers are more inclined to socialise amongst teachers of the same ethnic group, then students may have a greater tendency to copy their example. When a teacher socialises with teachers from the same ethnic background, this does not necessarily mean that the teacher is not aware of, or does not understand, 'others' from different ethnic backgrounds, However, to a large extent, there is truth in FN's comments above, that if teachers found it hard to break away from their norms of sticking to their own friends from the same ethnic group, it may well seem an arduous task for teachers to promote the idea of understanding others to their students.

Another attitude that was particularly negative was the indifferent attitude shown by some teachers. An example of this was what PL said in the interview '*I think it's quite a normal thing…you know…*[to stick with friends of similar ethnic backgrounds] *especially in some classes'*(PL 21). In this case, the teacher believed that it was normal for the students to choose group members from the same ethnic background to work with, and that this happened all the time. From my observations in PL's lesson (both pre- and post-workshop) she was less interested in encouraging her students to mix more with classmates from different ethnic backgrounds.

RA and GR had similar beliefs that teachers were overburdened with responsibilities, so they should not be blamed for resisting new ideas. Therefore, it put more constraints on the teachers in introducing new classroom practices.

Thus what can be concluded from the discussion above is that 'new ideas' are quite difficult to introduce,or to be accomplished as teachers were constrained by the pressure placed on them bythe education management team, peers, parents and also students. Teachers' attitudes (such as indifference towards 'new ideas') and theirpersonal beliefs about social interactions added to the difficulties in constructing a shared identity.

5.4.1 Summary of teachers' perceptions of the constraints on introducing new ideas

Table 5.3 below summarises the discussion above on teachers' perceptions of their constraints on introducing new ideas.

Table 5.3: Summary of teachers' perceptions on constraints in introducing new ideas

Issues	Teachers beliefs
Demands	Teachers felt they are being pressured by institutional management, parents and students to produce good results.
Students exam preparations	A lot of class time was being allotted for revision in preparations for examinations.
Time	There was very little time for other matters other than exam preparations.
Scepticism	Some teachers were sceptical of new ideas.
Attitudes	Some teachers portrayed unfavourable attitudes towards the concept of knowing others from different cultural backgrounds.
Replication	Students may replicate their teachers' behaviours in their communication with others from different cultural backgrounds.

From the summary above, several factors appeared as constraints to teachers. They include demands from people of different echelons in the community, exam preparations and attitude towards new idea.

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5.5 Materials Selection

5.5.1 Selection of suitable texts for classroom use

I chose the short story as a means to achieve my research objectives for several reasons:

- The length of short stories makes them easier for the slower readers/students

- The use of local or colloquial language could be more interesting to the students and makes its use acceptable in the classroom discussions so these can be seen as less formal and more community based.

- Insertion of authentic, natural dialogue which occurs in the multicultural community in Malaysia

- Short stories maintain high interest and attention levels

- Short stories often capture the brief attention span of learners

Teachers in this study attended a one-day workshop for the purpose of gaining some insights into this research and also to share some ideas and strategies for using short stories with their students. The section that follows discusses the teachers' perceptions of the way selected Malaysian short stories were used in their classrooms and of the strategies they employed.

Firstly, I discussed general themes related to Malaysia shared identity (Refer to 4.12.1 for outline of the workshop). Then, I narrowed the themes down to several sub-themes which explored a more in-depth understanding of using Malaysian short stories and their connection to the 1Malaysia concept and the idea of shared identity. The decision to explore and utilise Malaysian short stories instead of short stories from around the world was made on the

basis of students' direct association with the themes presented and, in a later development of this thesis, the quest to locate the 'Third Space' within these texts. Identifying the 'Third Space' as a hybrid context in teaching and learning could be the basis on which the notion of identity can be unpacked and the construction of shared identity could progress. Although awareness of the Third Space came later in this research, teachers could be informed of its potential through an extension of this research in the near future.But, before looking at how teachers felt about their use of the Malaysian short stories, I examined teachers' perceptions of the existing materials used in their literature lessons.

The literature components of the English Language syllabus for Malaysian upper secondary schools (Forms Four and Five) 2010 comprised Novels, Short Stories, Poems and Drama. Drama was a newly introduced component starting in 2010. Different types of texts were used from Form One to Form Five and these texts differ from region to region. For the Form Four students in the Central and Southern Region (which includes Kuala Lumpur), an anthology of new texts was introduced at the beginning of 2010. This compilation included poems, short stories and drama. The novel was a text on its own. During my data collection period at the beginning of January 2010, teachers were just starting to use new texts in the literature component. The main reason why several of the teachers approached earlier were reluctant to participate in my study was because of these newly introduced texts as they felt uncertain about how these texts would best be used as they had not been on any induction courses, as no in-house training

was conducted at that point (personal communication with me). I could understand their anxiety.

The new short story for Form Four at this point was 'The Fruit Cake Special' by Frank Berman. Throughout my data collection period, none of these teachers had used this story mainly because most of them started off introducing the new poem 'In the Midst of Hardship' by Latiff Mohideen, a local writer. Hence, I did not experience how teachers dealt with new texts or how they felt about this. It would be very interesting to find out from these teachers the difference between previous and new stories and whether any of the narratives could possibly be exploited further to promote inter-cultural awareness amongst students.

Using culturally appropriate texts and most importantly, the strategies teachers used to exploit these narratives, are among two important elements in focusing on the direction for shared identity construction in the classroom. Teachers are the key players in demystifying cultural barriers in the classrooms and can take the leading role in ensuring that cultural interchange takes place, if not all the time, most of the time. Having the vision of creating a more integrated community in the classroom can ensure that students move towards that shared vision. Nonetheless, teachers in this study had their own opinions about using texts with their students, especially with the introduction of the new text for Form Four. The question I posed was whether the texts used in the literature lessons could play any possible role in guiding the students towards the idea of a shared Malaysian identity.

Teachers were asked about their choice of text after their lessons and whether the text itself had served the purpose and objectives of their lessons for that day. As mentioned earlier, teachers had both similar and differing ideas about the texts they were using in their lessons. To recapitulate, out of all the new texts introduced in January 2010 for Forms Four and Five, only two of the texts (poems) selected were written by local writers. They were 'In the Midst of Hardship' by Latiff Mohideen and Zurinah Hassan's 'Are you still playing your flute'. The other five were all written by foreign writers, and depicted foreign cultures. In their interviews,teachers expressed different preferences for the current and previous texts used,but with regard to the suggestions of using Malaysian short stories to highlight unity in diversity and understanding others and their cultural perimeter in Malaysia, the teachers were divided in their responses.

SH mentioned the importance of balancing the issues highlighted in selecting texts for the students at this age (16-17 years old). She believed that there should be a balance between the issues raised in the texts regardless of geographical sphere, but insisted on the students knowing their own cultural issues first before going on to discussing more global issues. She further lamented:

> The use of Malaysia's own stories has its setback too...students will be bombarded with the same issues all the time, in the news...in the papers and the media...they discuss the same issues all the time but giving it a different title...so to say.(SH77)

SH also mentionedthe purpose of the teachers teaching the lesson, what issues they wanted the students to discuss at length or only superficially. This she said had had a profound effect on the students. Students could find what

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they were learning now useful and it could be applied in their daily lives; for example tolerating 'others' festivities and understanding the customs of others.

Teachers commonly agreed that any type of texts could be used in the classroom to highlight the importance of understanding others. What they thought was vital was the way in which the texts were exploited and the strategies that teachers used to convey the message of appreciating diversity in a multicultural country like Malaysia. As 2010 was the beginning of the introduction of new texts (after using the old one for more than 10 years), teachers' discussions about texts were pitched or angled more towards the comparisons of new and old texts. Teachers obviously had differing views about the new and the former texts.

> I thought they (students) like it (old text) better as some words and some events are totally foreign and the students tend to like it. If I were to comparethemwith Latiff Mohideen's poem In the Midst of Hardship (new text), this is very straightforward and I don't think the students find it interesting. For example the flood and the Albino Buffalo are common for students. In the old texts, the students were constantly asking questions. For example 'There's a Death in the opposite house' by Emily Dickinson. Where is the house? What is a dark parade etc, those are foreign elements which generated a lot of questions. (SN57)

When it was pointed out that the new text depicted a 'local angle', which meant that students might find familiar things easier to grasp and relate to, SN stood by her point:

> Yes they can relate better [to local scenario] but there's nothing new there and it is very 'flat'. It's our own culture and they know it. I myself don't find it exciting to teach the students with this text. But I have started on a short story 'The Fruit cake special'. This is a love story which students find so interesting. Of course at this age they want something that is more related to their own lives, love, broken hearts etc.

> So the theme of a story will very much influence the students'
> likings of any text.(SN 64)

In her response above, SN indicates a number of crucial points about students' preferences in relation to texts used and also teacher's motivation. Firstly, she thought that scenarios depicted in texts which were familiar to the students made the texts uninteresting or 'flat'. Next, she mentioned she herself was not 'delighted' by the text, and therefore had little interest in teaching it to the students. In a situation where a teacher is not interested in the text, the students will clearly be disadvantaged, worse still if the students themselves are not interested in learning as a result of their teacher's lack of interest in the text. SN suggested that students are more inclined towards texts with themes relating to teenage life or love themes they can relate to, such as the new short story 'The Fruit Cake Special'. Unfortunately I was not able to observe her class when she taught the short story lesson with her students.

Similarly, PL preferred the former texts compared to the new ones, but her reason was different:

> On the whole, I would prefer last year's texts to this year's. I find that the new texts are much too simple, especially the poems. The previous poems introduced the students better to people like William Shakespeare and famous international poets (PL 37)

The school PL was teaching in was located in a middle-class catchment area where most residents were either professionals or in business, in upper rank posts in public services or some other industries with reasonable incomes, affording them good living conditions and amenities such as big semi-

detached or detached houses with spacious gardens. These residents were usually better educated, and their children, to a larger extent, had been exposed to the English language since they were very young; and some even used English as their main medium of communication, which may explain why PL said some of her students found the new text too simple and not challenging enough.

SR had a different opinion. She said:

> It's simple and direct [the new text] and I feel that it's easier for the students, especially the weaker ones in terms of proficiency and mastery of the language(SR 53).

In contrast to PL's school, SR's school is located in a lower-income catchment area, which could mean that the parents of these students had more meagre educational backgrounds than PL's students; which explained why their English proficiency was relatively low. It was not surprising as to why SR believed the new texts were easier for her students to understand.

SH's response was the opposite view to SN's of the Poem 'In the Midst of Hardship' by Latiff Mohideen (refer to Appendix 10), but she agreed with SR. According to SH, students in a city like Kuala Lumpur had hardly ever seen a cow or a buffalo, for that matter. So, an Albino buffalo in the poem would be very interesting and would attract the students' interest in reading and interpreting the poem. She went on to say that 'flood', also referred to in the poem, had its own attraction to which students could relate. Kuala Lumpur has had its own experience of flash floods and the states located in the east of the Malaysian Peninsular have frequent floods from November to January. So,

with students' hands-on experience of this phenomenon, they could vividly describe and interpret the poem according to their understanding.

Another point raised during the interview was the question of whether texts written by either local authors or foreign authors could make a difference in getting the students to understand each others' culture better so that the construction of shared identity could be less problematic. In relation to preferred texts, teachers expressed their preferences in different ways; SH said:

> We have to look at it very objectively. You know, when we look at the text, what do we look for? We look for subject matter or we look for the message of what we want to teach. I think it's immaterial. You can use local or foreign material. It doesn't matter and it is also good to have a balance of both.(SH 53)

From the comment SH made above, she was of the opinion that it was good to have a balance of both local and foreign books in the classrooms but to her it was better to really understand one's own culture first and foremost before dealing with cultures which were foreign and alien to students. Above all, she believed that teachers played the most important role in directing students' learning because to her, the values necessaryfor the students to be integrated and to understand and respect the customs of others were already there in the syllabus but werenot being utilised or applied appropriately. FN and SL had the same opinion when they said that a combination of both local and foreign written materials would be ideal for the students as they would learn about other cultures, not just their own.

Teachers' awareness of the Third Space in the situation above can benefit them and their students in exploiting the texts. Being able to understand what students bring from their home and community, combined with teachers' own experience, enables any text (local or foreign) to be exploited for the benefit of understanding not only the text, but others' cultures better.

5.5.2 Teachers' perceptions of their selected Malaysian short story

In relation to using texts which depicted a Malaysian scenario, PL had initially planned to use 'Peach Blossom Luck' (PBL)but changed her mind at the last minute. She said:

> I wanted to use 'Peach Blossom Luck', but when I looked back at my lesson's objectives, I decided 'The Deep fried Devils' was much more suitable to bring out the essence of unity amongst the students. Moreover, I felt that 'The Deep Fried Devils' was more interesting and the students would most probably enjoy it.(PL 119)

I was able to have a discussion with PL after her lesson using TDFD,as I wanted to know how she felt afterwards. She said that initially, a few students came to her before the lesson asking why she had chosen the TDFD because they felt the issues discussed in TDFD were intimidating and would make some students feel uncomfortable (TDFD was given to the students the day before the lesson for them to read). But PL had made her lesson objectives clear to the students, and after the lesson, she reported everyone seemed to enjoy it and had very encouraging discussions. The students even turned TDFD into a short play later that month (in conjunction with their language week) as they felt the message in the story could be shared by other students in the school. (Personal communication with a student). This is an

example of an exploitation of the Third Space (turning TDFD into short play) as well as hidden curriculum (sharing 'intended' message (conflicts between ethnic groups within the community)) with other students, without them realising it.

FN had a different idea about using Malaysian short stories. She used 'Peach Blossom Luck' (PBL) in her lesson after the workshop.When I asked her what made her choose PBL over the others, she said that since TDFD was used in the workshop, although to her it was very interesting, she wanted to try another story. She said the next most interesting story was PBL and she had thought of some ideas to use with her students the minute she decided on it. RA, GR, AI and RL were all in agreement that what was most important was the way a text was used with the students and what could be drawn from the text that could enhance students' understanding of others. They believed the balance between Malaysian and also depictions of foreign societies was the best way to get students to understand the world and society around them. On the whole, most teachers felt that for the students to know others' cultures, it was helpful to have a combination of texts written by local and foreign authors, although SR and SH seemed to disagree.

Again, it is important to note that from the discussion above, the awareness of the Third Space by the teachers can be advantageous in that teachers would be able to make decisions about what they could draw from any text they were using regardless of the origin, as long as both the teachers and students can share experiences and knowledge of home and community in relation to that of the text being used.

5.6   Highlighting Stereotypes in the Classrooms

Stereotyping has always been associated with negative thinking about an individual, group of people or a society, particularly in a multi-ethnic society like Malaysia. Paul (1998) maintains thatstereotypes are taken to mean simplistic and uncritical judgements of people based on characteristics such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and skin colour, ascribing to them attributes learnt early in life from society. There were many reasons for the lack of understanding of the concept of stereotyping in a community. The main reason why stereotypes have not been discussed in the public sphere in Malaysia is the memory of the horrific ethnic clashes experience within many people's living memory (13 May 1969). With repeated stern warnings from the government and the promise of severe punishment should ethnic-related issues be raised, stereotyping was only heard behind closed doors (a discussion of the 13 May 1969 incident is found in section 1.3).

This notion of how negative teachers felt about the concept of stereotyping was evident during my interviews throughout the data collection process. Several teachers were not ready to and three teachers plainly rejected the idea of highlighting stereotypes in the classroom as they did not want to be accused of being racist or making the students feel uncomfortable whenever ethnic-related issues were raised. Even with the clarification of how negative stereotypes could be countered afterwards, teachers were still sceptical and were not ready to accept the idea of highlighting and revisiting certain ethnic stereotypes,ordiscussing what effect stereotyping had had in the Malaysian community. SN, RA and SL rejected the idea outright of highlighting stereotypes in the classroom by saying

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It's not a good idea I would say. Personally, I do not stereotype especially when it comes to matters related to race(SN 74).

RA was of the view that if stereotyping happened in the classroom, teachers should take the initiative to explain to the students the danger of stereotypes and the negative implications of stereotyping due to misunderstanding of others. In a similar vein, SL voiced her disagreement with stereotyping. She said:

I never agree with stereotyping. I feel that as humans we should believe in humanity. So whether they are Indian, Malay or Chinese, they are human. I always want to make them understand each other, respect their beliefs and respect them.(SL 42)

From the teachers' accounts above, it was clear that these teachers had only one understanding of stereotype in mind, which was ethnic/racial stereotyping. To several teachers and perhaps many people in general, the act of stereotyping had negative connotations and should be avoided at all costs. Hence, it was not uncommon for teachers to reject this idea of introducing the reasons for the occurrence of stereotyping in the community, although this was accompanied by suggestions of how to overcome and counter ethnic stereotyping.

Some teachers who were a little optimistic about the idea of highlighting stereotypes in the classroom whether it was ethnic or other kinds of stereotyping showed some inclination towards the idea but not without a struggle. There were situations where they thought they might be able to

highlight stereotypes. For example, those suggested by RA and FN are stated in the extracts from their interviews, below:

> emm...yes...I would say that I'm willing to highlight all these issues that actually exist in our society, community...I won't do it like very obviously or directly highlighting the issue...it is worth highlighting this concept errr...but in my opinion I do not want to overdo it with this idea...students get bored with it. Cos...I do not want it to be a sensitive issue, students get offended and they will sort of say that 'this teacher is racist' (FN 77).

> I think emmm... (pausefor about 15 seconds) as long as the teacher knows his/her boundaries and does not bring in sensitive issues, that will be all right. This is a sensitive issue. We have to be very smart in tackling this issue. It all depends again on the situation and what kinds of issues are being brought up. (RA 107)

Teachers were concerned about the consequences of highlighting stereotypes in the classroom and said they would avoid discussing issues related to ethnic stereotypes especially to avoid misunderstandings arising between their students. As mentioned by SR in her interview,she considered it better for the students to not know about stereotypes rather than knowing about them then using them against other students and creating more conflict between them.

5.7   The 1Malaysia Concept and its Challenges to the Construction of Shared Malaysian Identity

5.7.1   Teachers' views on the 1Malaysia concept

The 1Malaysia (One Malaysia) concept (as detailed in Chapter One) according to the Malaysian Prime Minister's blog is 'a concept to foster unity amongst the multi-ethnic Malaysian, substantiated by key values that everyone should observe' (www.1Malaysia.com.my). Accordingly, this means that 1Malaysia is

a formula conceptualised to ensure that the aspirations of the country to secure a fully developed status by 2020 are met, by inculcating positive thought towards others from different backgrounds and practised by the entire community. According to the blog, 1Malaysia is the 'roadmap' to guide the people to achieve the 2020 vision. To achieve the status of a fully developed nation in the predetermined timeframe, the key requisite is a strong and stable country, which can only be achieved when its people stand united.

Achieving unity in a multicultural and multi-religious country like Malaysia is complex and delicate. The importance of standing united under whatever circumstances needs to be in every citizen's mind from the beginning of their primary years, according to this vision. Therefore, the teachers play a crucial role in disseminating ideas of unity, using, applying and experiencing this unifying concept to teach the students. As a result, part of this study has been designed to investigate and ascertain teachers' understanding of the 1Malaysia concept and values. The findings of this study will provide a pathway to establish how teachers can best facilitate the construction of shared Malaysian identity in line with the government's efforts to make 1Malaysia a clear concept for Malaysians.

The discussion that follows details the analysis of the interviews with teachers concerning their understanding of the 1Malaysia concept and how this understanding, on the one hand, could be the catalyst of change and enable the construction of shared identity, but on the other hand, how their different understandings could be a hindrance to the 1Malaysia aims.

Teachers on the whole were aware of the 1Malaysia concept but had differing opinions about its purpose. FN believed that the concept:

> …is the idea of promoting understanding and living under one umbrella regardless of our colours, races, and different languages that we have. We try to understand how Malaysia can be a melting pot of all these. (FN44)

But SN had a different idea:

> Frankly speaking, I really don't know. I think I was and still I am in that system for a very long time. I have always been in a multiracial school and I have always been in an English medium school and I feel English language is a good subject to get students from other racial backgrounds to integrate. And the spirit has always been there. So when this 'hoo haa' about 1 Malaysia comes, I asked myself ' Are we not?' It is there all along. So what's the fuss! It has always been there in my heart and soul.(SN94)

Based on the above account, SN was baffled by the 1Malaysia concept, which, according to her, had always been there and felt that a big fuss about it was unnecessary. It is indeed true that the concept (as discussed in Chapter One) is not a new concept. This was confirmed by the Malaysian Prime Minister in his blog, stating that:

> …it is not a new concept or formula. Rather, the ultimate goal of 1Malaysia which is national unity, has been the main vision of our country's leaders before me, and has been interpreted in various shapes and forms over the span of five decades of independence…what has changed is the approach and implementation according to the ever-growing times and generations (www.1Malaysia.com.my).

On the whole, the 1Malaysia concept takes on what had been repeatedly promoted and advocated over the span of more than 50 years. The difference is that the reinforcement of unity amongst the multi-ethnic groups in 1Malaysia is now seen as essential for a stable country and ensures Malaysia

achieves its bigger goal, which is the vision for 2020, which is necessary for Malaysia to become a fully developed country.

RA admitted that there were still problems concerning ethnic relations. This did not come as a surprise as, during the data collection period for this study, there was discontent amongst the Indians and the Malays, and street demonstrations were common. Although the demonstration issues were more political than racial, they were made to look extreme and disastrous by the media. For example the Daily News and Analysis (DNA), made a headline 'Cow Killed in Malaysian Temple Row' and 'The Price of Malaysia's Racism' in the blog which belongs to the Malaysia's political opposition head, were among several sensational items of news that made headlines in the media. RA agreed that the1Malaysia concept was a revisited concept but emphasised that the earlier ideas had not been put into practice and Malaysians were still segregated into different ethnic groups. He said:

> It's a good idea. All this while, even with so many years of independence, we are still segregated. We still have that kind of er…you know…ethnic relations are still a problem. It [the concept] has already been here for so long. It's nothing new. It's not practised. So I think that's why Najib [the PM] emphasised this.(RA21)

Essentially, teachers were in agreement that the 1Malaysia concept could help bring the people together, although a few were sceptical of its actual purpose or its apparent 'newness'.

5.7.2 Teachers' views on the challenges of the 1Malaysia concept

Introducing new ideas or concepts is unequivocally difficult in any circumstances, and particularly so when it involves a whole array of people

from different cultural and religious backgrounds. The acceptance of the idea is made more difficult when it is not a new idea but an old idea which has been given a new name and with a new approach. This is what 1Malaysia is all about. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers have a clear and united understanding of the aims and implications of 1Malaysia to enable them to be the catalyst for the construction of shared Malaysian identity amongst their students, and when the idea can be accepted, the process of constructing a shared Malaysian identity in their teaching and students' learning would become more natural.

SN commented on the 1Malaysia concept:

> What could have happened is maybe it is noticeable in this new generation that the unity is there… I feel many things have been taken for granted like when you ask the students what is the significant of the lion dance during Chinese New Year. We thought they know but they don't. Perhaps they have found something that is common to them that they could just survive on that without having to find out more or what's behind it… or having the thought like I don't need to know your culture in order to be close to you. Or maybe being a Malaysian is enough without having to know what, for example, the Indians do during their festive season. But above all I think political agendas are actually making it look worse.(SN100)

> …to a certain extent, sometimes I feel that we're close to that concept, okay, to reach the objective…but er…when I read in the emmm… newspaper and the news…you see like recently we had…the…what was it…the incident of that e church being torched…yeah…(FN48)

> This concept is good, it's really good. But I think we need time to make it…make it a success.(SL36)

The main challenge here is teachers' acceptance of this concept. The interviews with the small sample of teachers in this study suggest that they (the teachers) are not yet convinced by the idea (1Malaysia). The teachers

agreed that it would take time for people to accept this concept as currently, there are a lot of conflicts in society. According to the teachers, these conflicts and racial disagreements would evidently lessen the possibility of getting the people to work closely with each other and/or forget about their differences. Therefore, I believe, the best place to spread the ideas of unity, followed by constructing the shared Malaysian identity is to start from schools and its community,

5.7.3   What are the roles of teachers in making 1Malaysia a success?

As I have consistently asserted in earlier sections, teachers are the key to ensuring that students are able to grasp the concept of understanding 'others' and highlighting the significance of unity between the different ethnic groups in Malaysia. With this understanding, it can be a platform for teachers and students to understand the need to construct shared Malaysian identity in the effort to achieve stability. This is important as stability would be more likely to ensure economic growth, which in turn would lead Malaysia to become a fully developed country. Thus, teachers were asked during the interviews to give their comments on their own roles in realising this 1Malaysia dream and the construction of shared Malaysian identity amongst their students.

SN was enthusiastic and sounded very positive when discussing this matter. When she was questioned about teachers giving the reason of a heavy workload for not being able to contribute, she said:

> But, we, as teachers, have all the means to start right? Although with the amount of work, I feel it's pretty important for teachers to take responsibility to at least take the initiative

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> to make the students understand their diversity and the richness of each other's culture. We have to start somewhere! In short, whatever books are given to us, it's up to the teachers to diversify and to enrich the students with not only what the system wants us to do and to deliver but to also in terms of the social responsibility that actually brings meaning to our students in their daily lives.(SN194)

SN also mentioned the need for teachers to have a clear and positive attitude towards efforts such as 1Malaysia that will benefit the students in the long run. SH, on the other hand, mentioned that teachers are the role models for students to look up to. *'The teacher is the facilitator… the main person, the mentor, all in one. The role she or he plays is very important'*(SH24). FN added that teachers have an important role to play as school is the place where students could be nurtured to become good citizens, although teachers have no control over what takes place at home. She said:

> Definitely, the teacher has an important role to play…emmm… school especially…'cos you don't know what happens at home, ok. And we try to impart our knowledge and share our experience and nurture the kids with all these good values so that this 1Malaysia concept could be achieved.(FN 82)

RA highlighted the importance of teachers knowing others' cultures and then trying to adapt at the right place and time. He commented:

> Teachers themselves must be aware of or understand other people's cultures. Then try to adapt wherever possible. But I myself will take the initiative to talk to 'ustaz' (a teacher teaching the Islamic subject) in the school to understand more about the Muslims'practice.(RA 59)

Hence, the role teachers have to play according to RA is to weigh up and balance the issue at hand, then make decisions wisely, in order not to aggravate ethnic or racial issues in school. He continued by saying that

teachers should themselves understand the concept and be aware of its importance to the country. Malaysians, he said, at the same time, should maintain positive attitudes towards new concepts.

SECTION 2: OBSERVATION ANALYSES (TEACHERS AND STUDENTS)

5.8 Student interactions in the classrooms

The non-participant observation data are divided into two categories. The first is the data from classroom observations carried out before the workshop to enable me to observe the day-to-day teaching and learning of the literature component in classrooms using the prescribed materials imposed on all Form Four students. These observations were also aimed at getting to know the students and their classroom dynamics. Student – teacher interactions according to Matsumoto (2008) increase classroom dynamics, in that they shape the characteristics of the learners. Additionally, the pre-workshop observation was aimed towards 'familiarity' in that for the students to be comfortable with my presence in their classrooms.

The second setof data comes from the non-participant observations, which were conducted after the workshop, whose purpose was to look at how teachers utilised the selected short stories with their students, along with their ideas and approaches. They also aimed to observe student reactions and interactions in the classrooms towards the narratives used.

Similar pre-selected themes were used in both phases of observation for guidance in writing the observation notes; however, there were new

emerging themes which appeared during both phases of the observations. The pre-selected themes were:

- Student interaction during lessons

- Student reactions to the lesson

- Materials used in the lessons,

while the new emerging themes included:

- Negotiations between student-teacher and student-student during lessons

- Student decision-making about group formation

- Teachers' classroom instructions and control which influenced students' interactions with each other.

Table 5.4 below summarises the discussion themes for the classroom observations.

Table 5.4: Data from area of evidence (Classroom Observations)

Data from areas of evidence
Pre-Workshop and Post-Workshop
1. Students' interactions in the classroom
2. Students' reactions to the lesson
3. Materials used (Prescribed texts and selected text)
4. Students' negotiation and decision making (group work)
5. Teachers' instructions, control and decision making

5.8.1 Studentinteractions during lessons (Pre-Workshop Non-Participant Observations)

One classroom observation was carried out with each of the seven teachers before the one-day workshop and a second after the one-day workshop. Therefore, I carried out seven non-participant observations before the one-day workshop with teachers who at the outset had agreed to participate in this study, to find out their routines in a normal English language or literature lesson. Informal rapport with the teachers prior to the observations revealed that they were all enthusiastic about their literature teaching. Six out of seven teachers stated that what I observed was a typical day-to-day lesson. Unlike other teachers, SR was the only teacher who admitted that she had deliberately used a different strategy to accommodate the purpose of my research. I wrote in my observation notes:

> SR mentioned that she had carefully chosen the topic for my observation today as she needed to match my research purpose to the topic. When asked whether this particular lesson is prescribed in the syllabus, the teacher said 'No'. And the only reason for doing this lesson was because I had told her the intention of my research and what I will be looking for in a lesson. And she also said that the activities she carried out were very much the same type of activities she had done with other literature lessons but using the prescribed book and texts. So to her, there would be no problem at all for her and her students and that it'll be more interesting to bring in something new which the students did not expect. (PreSR)

It was clear that although SR was very sensitive to my research purpose and tried to accommodate in every way possible, there was an inclination towards the presence of the Hawthorne effect (Adair, 1984; Jones, 1992). According to Adair (1984), this effect occurs when the subjects are aware that they are being observed and thus modify their everyday behaviour to tailor it to the

purpose and needs of the research, or to look good in the eye of the researcher. The possible implication of the Hawthorne effect for this study is that it could compromise the reliability of the findings. I stressed to all the respondents the importance of giving an honest and true depiction of their classroom teaching and learning process, which I perceived they had taken seriously.

Observations conducted with seven teachers across six different schools before the scheduled one-day workshop provided similar results in relation to students' interactions in the classrooms with their classmates and their teachers alike. To a great extent, the types of interactions produced by students during these observed lessons was influenced by the decisions teachers made relating to the approach they employed during their lessons. Most teachers continued with their weekly/daily teaching plans for their lessons during the pre-workshop observations. I noticed that teachers had similar patterns in the approaches or strategies they employed.

The most apparent dearth throughout the classes observed was the group or pair work essential for getting the students to communicate and interact with each other, and to get students from different backgrounds to collaborate with each other more effectively. Out of the seven teachers, only three had group work planned for their lessons and only two carried out pair work with the students. Two teachers let students work individually while completing tasks while the rest carried out whole class teaching for almost their entire lessons. Table 5.5 below shows the approaches or strategies teachers used in their lessons during the pre-workshop observations.

Table 5.5: Approaches teachers used in lessons during the pre-workshop observations

Teacher	Whole class teaching	Individual work	Pair work	Group work
PL	√	√	√	X
RA	√	X	X	X
FN	√	X	X	√
SR	√	X	√	√
SL	√	√	X	X
SN	√	X	X	√
AN	√	X	X	X

Table 5.5 abovewould seem to indicate that the teachers were more comfortable carrying out whole class teaching throughout all the lessons, more so than putting students into groups or encouraging pair work to induce more interaction between them. After each lesson, the teachers were asked their reasons for opting for a whole class teaching approach during. In my notes I wrote:

> No group work for this lesson as the teacher said that this was just a 40-minute lesson and she normally would have group work during a double period lesson. Moreover, the class was in the chemistry lab, so it was difficult to organize group work with a lot of apparatus around. (PrePL)

The defence mechanism of time constraint mentioned earlier was again being used by PL. In another lesson I observed,

> A lot of teacher-talk. Students were passive listeners. No group work or pair work. Not even individual work for students to do. They answered questions in unison almost every time. (PreRA)

SL had a different approach in her lesson:

> Students were read the story out aloud by the teacher as they did not have a copy of the Novel. Teacher directed the students to the setting of this story, characters and conflicts in this story. Teacher also highlighted the values hidden in this novel and got the students to discuss as a whole groupabout losing their loved ones, about the desire to change one's identity etc.
>
> There was no group work in this lesson but students had a lot of interaction opportunities with one another by predicting

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what came next in the story to the person seated next to them or telling the whole class aloud. They questionedthe choice a student made about having a limb changed or replaced. It was a bit chaotic but really interesting and encouraging to see students communicating with each other, at times shouting at the top of their lungs.(PreSL)

A lesson could be relatively teacher-centred but still effective as demonstrated by SL. Although there was no group work, students interacted with each other and the teacher. It shows that the strategy a teacher employs, if combined with enthusiasm, can really get all the students involved in a discussion. Through carefully designed classroom interactions, Allwright (1984b) is of the view that learners can become '*skilled at actually doing the things that have been taught about, that is turning 'knowledge that' into 'knowledge how''* (p.2).

In another observation at AN's school, however, a different teacher-centred approach to a lesson was displayed. I wrote:

This was an all-girls school and coincidentally was the researcher's former secondary school. The teacher began the class by introducing me as a researcher and as a former student of the school. There was no group work. Teacher asked the students to answer questions one by one, only when they raised their hands. Teacher discouraged the studentsfrom answering in unison. She repeated this instruction many times... Being a former missionary school, perhaps, it was ingrained in the school system in ensuring that discipline is observed at all times, especially during lessons and that students must always be at their best, especially during the presence of an outsider.(PreAN)

AN's strategy was not surprising as her intention was primarily to keep the students under control. However, the effectiveness of this type of approach to the effectiveness of fostering learning is interesting as teachers (in many

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instances during informal talks) appeared more concerned about maintaining order and discipline in the classroom than about students' learning.

Based on these pre-workshop observations, it can be said that the teachers perhaps focussed more on immediate classroom priorities such as completing the syllabus in time for examinations, and emphasising the important aspects that would be examined rather than getting the students to interact with each other by working in pairs or groups. Students' achievement in the mid-year exam was prioritised. This was mentioned to me during the informal feedback session after lesson observations. Another point raised by teachers was the teachers' focus on immediate classroom priorities like achieving the daily lesson objectives together with keeping discipline and order within the classroom. The issue of fulfilling lesson objectives was clearly part of an implicit hidden curriculum largely practiced by teachers in Malaysian classrooms without them realising it. As Shaw (2006:27) indicates, '*effective education can only take place when a hidden curriculum is intentionally designed rather than unintentionally accepted*'.

5.8.2   Studentinteractions during lessons (Post-Workshop Non-Participant Observations)

The post-workshop observations revealed a number of recurrent themes such as students' interaction and reactions to the lesson and the materials used. Emerging themes, as indicated earlier, include students' negotiation and decision making with peers and teachers and also teachers' classroom instructions. Observations were carried out with several aims in mind. The first was to look at how teachers made use of Malaysian short stories which

were introduced and suggested during the one-day workshop. By looking at the ways in which teachers utilised the Malaysian short stories, suggestions could then be made about how these narratives could be a catalyst for the construction of shared identity amongst secondary school students in Malaysia. The next aim was to see how students responded to the selected narratives depicting some common inter-cultural misconceptions which still occur in Malaysian society. Would students reject and despise or accept and enjoy these sorts of stories? The outcome of student acceptance or rejection would then be reported and, again, recommendations could be made about how literary genres, such as Malaysian short stories, could best be used to create the 'other space' for the students to construct a shared Malaysian identity. Finally, the observations carried out aimed to identify and suggest further actions to be taken in balancing the imposed syllabus, geared towards assessment, to appreciating and valuing messages embedded in texts, which were not prescribed but were highly beneficial for student learning so that the 'imagined' shared Malaysian identity could become a reality and absorbed in their lives.

PL selected 'The Deep Fried Devils' and used it with her students. Although this text had already been used as a sample during the workshop, PL insisted that she wanted to share this text with her students as she found it interesting. In addition, she felt that the story was 'authentically Malaysian'. She hoped her students would be able to sense the 'Malaysianness' of the story. Her approach to the text, though, was different to that taken in the workshop. PL stressed that she wanted to experiment with her approach to the story with her students. In order to optimise inter-ethnic interaction, PL

started off by asking her students to form groups of six, consisting of members from different ethnic groups. In my notes I wrote:

> The teacher distributed handouts to students which detailedthe tasks they needed to work on. Students were asked to discuss the characteristics of Lan Jie and the Malay couple before and after the maid ran away. Then students elected a spokesperson to present their findings. The questions to be discussed were:
>
> Is there any behavioural change in the people mentioned after that event (of the maid running away)?
>
> Students were also asked to explain two conflicts found in the story; were they resolved? And if yes, how were the conflicts resolved?
>
> Finally, students were asked to identify the values embedded in the story.
>
> Students were absolutely engrossed in their discussion with their group members and I could see that everyone was interested to hear what others had to say and then gave their own opinion of the matter discussed. This was totally the opposite scenario to what I had seen when I first came into this classroom where students had fewer interactions with each other. They also managed to get cultural input from group members about the food, 'Char Kwai', which was quite unknown to some.
>
> Students also seemed to enjoy discussing the possibilities that could happen to characters in the story (character development), which I really felt were very close to their hearts.
> (PostPL)

PL's students seemed to be motivated and confident, and enjoyed themselves throughout the lesson. It was worth noting that the motivation came from the stimulus provided by PL, which was the text. The story drew their attention, thus motivating them to participate fully. Familiar scenarios sparked their confidence and ability to contribute to the discussion. Motivation, confidence and ability are considered part of the learning dimension (Butler & Lumpe,

2008;Wu & Marek, 2010) and are closely interrelated. The Deep Fried Devils

had certainly triggered these dimensions.

FNutilised the short story entitled 'Peach Blossom Luck' which revolved

around the Chinese beliefs in 'Feng Shui' or fortune telling. In my notes I

wrote:

> This was a ninety-minute lesson. FN divided the class into
> several groups where every ethnic group was represented.
> She used her authority in regrouping students although some
> of them had already formed a group consisting of members of
> their choice. This was done in the hope that a Chinese
> student would be able to enlighten the other members of the
> group about 'Feng Shui' and that the assignment to be carried
> out would flow much more smoothly as the topic of the
> discussion involved cultures of different groups in Malaysia.
> (PostFN)

FN had assumed at the beginning that a Chinese student would be able to

explain the Feng Shui belief to the other non-Chinese students; however,

she was proven wrong in that several Chinese students did not know the

origin and history of Feng Shui and it was not something they were brought

up to believe in. Surprisingly, several Malay and Indian students were able

to provide explanations because they either had read about it in a book or

watched a programme about it on television.

On the whole, the students were thrilled to role play the characters from the

story where every group had a different twist to the original story. They

seemed to enjoy the lesson and were able to inform and fill the gap about

'Feng Shui' beliefs for students who needed more information. Although

there were several tasks for students to accomplish and some sections were

hurriedly finished in order to move on to the next, they were able to

optimise their interaction with each other. This lesson I believe, was the

most appropriate as an example (approach for other teachers to use) in achieving the objectives of this research as a whole. FN's strategy was successful in getting her students from different backgrounds to elaborate on a topic that was related to a specific cultural community group in Malaysia. It was not a surprise that several Chinese students were not able to explain the meaning of 'Feng Shui' since they had grown up in a multicultural environment which did not practise the art of 'Feng Shui', especially when their home environment was surrounded by the Malay community.

GR also utilised 'Peach Blossom Luck' in her lesson. Students were seen to be enjoying their discussions and it was almost like a competition between groups to present the best sketch. The interactions between students of different ethnic and cultural groups were the best (I felt) in this particular lesson. In my observation notes I wrote:

> Students took about 40 minutes to discuss rolesand then presented their sketch. There were a lot of interactions amongst the students; some could be heard discussing in Malay, othersin a mixture of Malay and English. Most of the groups had a combination of Malay, Chinese and Indian members. (Post GR)

From the my observation notes, it was clear that teachers gave freedom to their students to choose their group members during classroom activities but encouraged them to have a mixed group in terms of ethnic variation. Teachers, however, did not deny that students preferred to work with friends from the same ethnic background. During my observations in these classrooms, I noticed similar patterns between teachers when assigning group work to their students. In addition, from my observation notes, I

noticed that teachers waited less than five minutes (on average)before using their authority (in making a decision) to group their students, although some teachers said the students were given the freedom to choose. Three out of seven teachers were seen to make every effort to ensure the students' groups had members from different ethnic backgrounds although the students had initially formed their own groups. SR and FN admitted that sometimes they wanted the students to make their own decisions to choosethe members of a group that was ethnically diverse but, in the end, had to use their judgment in making sure that the integration worked.

Generally, teachers admitted that the students chose group members based on the feeling of being 'at ease' with one another if they had the same ethnic background. This statement was contradicted by the results of the questionnaire data used in this investigation where students from different ethnic backgrounds were asked about how they felt about working together. The results in Chapter Six of this study indicate that:

> From the questionnaire feedback, when it came to group work (C2 in the questionnaire), 71.8% students agreed (20.2% strongly agree and 51.2% agree) that they would normally choose their own friends as their first priority irrespective of their friends' ethnic backgrounds. This could be seen clearly when 46.5% disagreed that they chose group members who were of similar ethnicity to them. However, a handful of students (9.5%) strongly agreed that they chose group members based on ethnicity.

From the percentages stated in the quotation above, more students were comfortable working with their own circle of friends, whether they came from similar or different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore it can be said that the teachers' understanding appears to be ill-conceived.

The teachers in this study found that students were able to interact with each other relatively 'hassle-free' regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, although many students preferred to be in a group with members of similar ethnicity (if they were given the choice). The reason behind this could be that the number of students from minority groups was much smaller compared to that of the Malay majority.

Table 5.6 below summarises the observations on teachers' observed behaviour before the one-day workshop session.

Table 5.6: Summary of observation of teachers' behaviours (Pre-Workshop)

Pre-Workshop Issues	Summary of observed behaviour
Lesson Strategy/aim	Teacher centred, whole class teaching. Lacked group and pair work.
Purpose	Focus on immediate classroom priorities. Preparing for exams and finishing weekly scheme of work.
Students' Interactions	Minimal interactions as teachers focused on revision and exam preparations.

Table 5.7 below summarises the observations on teachers' observed behaviour after the one-day workshop.

Table 5.7: Summary of observation of teacher's behaviours (Post-Workshop)

Post-Workshop Issues	Summary of observed behaviour
Lesson Strategy /aim	Most teachers planned their lesson to include group work and pair work. Various activities carried out including, sketches (which included role-plays) dialogues, group presentation. Teachers saw themselves more as facilitators than 'knowledge conveyors'.
Purpose	To encourage multicultural exchanges between and among students stemming from the texts used.
Students' Interactions	Highly interactive in four out of six classes observed. Students seemed to enjoy their lesson more than the pre-workshop observed lesson.

5.9 Students' Negotiations and Decision Making on Group Work Formation

5.9.1 Data from Pre-Workshop Observation

My main intention in conducting the observations was to see how students interacted, specifically, with students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. With this purpose firmly embedded in my mind, I then directed my observations to how they made their decisions on who they wanted to work with and how they negotiated with each other in order to make group cooperation work. Seven literature lessons were observed and on the whole students negotiated differently across different classes. Students' English proficiency appeared to be the more important factors in choosing group members. Besides that, students apparently were more comfortable working with friends of similar ethnic background.

In FN's classroom, I noticed that:

> When students chose their group members it was evident that they chose members of the same ethnic group. One group consisted of four Chinese girls and one Indian girl. At the other corner of the classroom, there was a group of five Malay girls. There wasa greater mixture of different ethnic backgrounds with the boys, who made three different groups. Students without any groups were then grouped together (a mixed ethnic group). They did not seem interested in the discussion and the class teacher tried her best to motivate them so that they were able to get the discussion going. (PreFN)

From the notes above, it seems that it was not difficult for the girls to decide who they were going to work with as they were quick to form their groups; although there appeared to be no intention on the part of the teacher to have single sex groups. It was different with the boys as they struggled to decide who to work with. Although gender issues were not the main area of concern

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in this study, it was interesting to note the differences in behaviour between how the girls and the boys got themselves organised in group work. This resonates with research by Charness and Rustichini (2010), who found that female students cooperate more with their in-group members, while male students cooperate less, unless there is some kind of competition or group threat that forces them to cooperate more with their peers. According to Van Vugt,De Cremer & Janssen (2007:19) this is called the male-warrior hypothesis.

In PL's lesson, although there was no group work planned, students were seen to be very comfortable communicating with each other and also with their teacher. There was a balance in the composition of students from different ethnic backgrounds in 6 different groups; (2 Malays, 2 Chinese and 2 Indians) and they were at ease with one another in the way they interacted and seemed to enjoy their friends' sense of humour. In my observation notes I wrote:

> Although it was the beginning of the year, students were fairly comfortable with each other and there was a lot of interaction between students from different ethnic backgrounds. This could be seen by their choice of seats. There seemed to be a balance between the seating arrangements where, for example, a Chinese girl satbeside a Malay or Indian friend. (PrePL)

Unlike FN's class, in SR's class, the students had a lot of say in the forming of groups. There were, however, one or two students who were clearly leaders whom the members listened to. Nevertheless, they (the leaders) acted more like moderators in making sure that the transition to group formation went

smoothly. Students appeared to be capable of handling group formation with little if any intervention from their teacher. As I noted below:

> It could be clearly seen that there were negotiations going on about who should join which group to ensure that all races were represented. I could see that there were one or two dominant voices in this class but no one seemed intimidated by that. There wasn't any argument at all while forming these groups.(PreSR)

From the above accounts, it can be said that students attempted to negotiate between themselves and with their teachers in making decisions about who they wanted to work with during their lesson, although in certain cases, negotiation was not needed. Many of the teachers I observed gave plenty of opportunities for the students to make decisions themselves, while in one or two cases, teachers had to interfere and used their authority to get the students to work with one another. The point here is that group dynamics are important to enable the students to create a comfortable and healthy discussion. While some students appeared to need more support in group formation, others were better able to handle it themselves.

Based on my account above, students were seen to have had minimal negotiations with their teachers concerning group formation. Teachers, on the other hand, varied in their decisions about planning group work for their students. Some teachers did not waste time by arranging the formation of groups themselves, while others let the students decide. Some students, however, did attempt to negotiate with their teachers but, in other classes, students obeyed their teachers' instructions. Teachers' perseverance and alertness are seen as crucial in making multi-ethnic/cultural group work a success.

From the classroom observations, students appeared more comfortable working with their friends from the same ethnic backgrounds. Some teachers suggested this was due to being familiar with each other's cultural background, language and customs, making it easier for them to 'code-switch' to their own mother tongue whenever they felt a need without having to accommodate to others from different ethnic backgrounds. In this respect, Elwood (2008) suggests that code switching in the classroom, if accurately investigated, can disclose and acknowledge the relevance of unseen factors that contribute to students' identities. However, it is not the intent of this study to specifically look at code switching. It is also interesting to note that during the observations, not only did students code switch, but also two out of the seven teachers, code switched from English to Bahasa Melayu or their mother tongue while explaining to students from the same background as themselves. It shows a possible significant indicator that regardless of age and position, teachers and students 'code-switched' to their own mother tongue in order to get intended messages across accurately.

5.9.2   Students' negotiations and decision making about forming groups (Post Workshop Observation)

Similar observations of group formation occurred after the workshop (see Table 5.8 below). The importance of looking at the ways groups were formed in the classes I observed was to identify how students interacted with their peers from different ethnic backgrounds. During informal discussions after the workshop, the teachers had seemed enthusiastic to start using their selected story and wanted to execute group work; however, only three (PL,

FN and GR) decided to implement group work discussions during their lessons. RL and RA decided to get the students to do pair work discussion while AI settled for whole class teaching throughout her lesson.

Table 5.8: Approaches teachers used in lessons during the post-workshop observations

Teacher	Whole class teaching	Individual work	Pair work	Group work
PL	√	√	√	√
RA	√	X	√	X
FN	√	X	X	√
GR	√	X	X	√
RL	√	√	√	X
AI	√	X	X	X

The formation of group work differed across classes. Teachers either let the students decide on the group formation or used their authority to get students to work with different people. In PL's class I noted: '*I could see that she was getting a little agitated by the students' attitude. She hurried her students along but still let them decide who they wanted to work with*' (PostPL). Teachers are always pressed for time and sometimes classroom management left them with little room for the most important aspect of the teaching and learning, which is to facilitate the students' understanding of the content of the lesson. Therefore, it is not uncommon for teachers to use their authority to get their students focused on the task.

GR did not give her students the freedom to choose their own group members to work with. Instead, she took charge of the group formation. I noted '*The teacher divided the class into groups of six to seven members*'(PostGR). From my observation, although group formation was exclusively at the teacher's discretion, students were able to execute the tasks given to them with some

success. There seemed to be a lot of chemistry between the students in all the groups and they looked comfortable working with one another.

FN also made her own decision on her students' group formation. Although one or two students tried to protest, she had an answer for that. I wrote:

> Students did not make decisions about group formation but one or two did protest. FN was firm and told the students that this was one of the rare occasions that they get to work with someone they had never worked with before. With the topic at hand, she said that the students would find it very useful to have different people in their groups. (PostFN)

The students who initially protested seemed to be satisfied with the explanation and carried on with the tasks they were given. They seemed to get on well with the other members of their groups. FN's determination to ensure multicultural group work took place successfully was important in this case.

5.9.3   Summary of teachers' responses

Table 5.9 below summarises the analysis of teachers' responses towards students' group formation and decision making from classroom observations.

Table 5.9: Summary of teachers' responses towards group formation and decision- making

Issues	Summary of responses	
Issues	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop
Group formation	Teachers used authority in group formation	Teachers used authority in group formation
Students' decision making	Very minimal	Minimal

In sum, teachers appeared to be in control over group formation in both pre and post workshop lesson observations, while students' decision making was left to very minimal.

5.9.4   Selection of materials used in lessons.(From Pre-Workshop Observation notes)

Teachers were encouraged to carry on with their daily routine during the observation. Five out of seven teachers used materials prescribed by the syllabus and continued where they had left off the day or week before the observations. My main aim was to see whether the texts used were able to stimulate interactive discussions amongst students from different ethnic backgrounds. In addition, I wanted to see whether these materials could be used as tools to create and construct a shared Malaysian identity amongst the students.

 PL and RA each examined a poem entitled 'In the Midst of Hardship' by Latiff Mohideen, with their students. I noted in PL's lesson:

> There was no attempt on the part of the teacher to bring in the intercultural elements during her discussion with students although, in reading the poem again, I felt there should be plenty of opportunities and room for this; for example, in discussing the elements of flood, a typical occurrence of flooding would be the east coast of Malaysia and the majority of people there are Malays. This could lead to the culture of hardship faced by underprivileged people who live in the rural areas. But there was no such attempt. (PrePL)

According to RA, his students were of a low proficiency level. He said students in this class could understand instructions in English well, but refused to speak English because they were overly concerned about making mistakes while speaking in English or had very little confidence in using the language. He translated his lesson into Bahasa Melayu throughout the lesson. I noted:

> Almost every line of the poem was translated and most of the discussions were carried out in Bahasa Melayu.When I asked

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> the teacher the reason why he translated most of the content in his lesson, he said that the students were not proficient and that they would not be able to understand the task or the questions asked if no translation was done.(PreRA)

Since most of the discussion led by RA was done in Bahasa Melayu, the students were able to grasp the gist of the poem. Several more proficient students were seen trying their best to respond in English although RA kept translating everything into Bahasa Melayu. In contrast to PL and RA, SR used a short story taken from the internet, a ghost story which originated from Chinese beliefs. Copies of the story were distributed at the beginning of the lesson. I wrote in my observation notes:

> Although the text used was not prescribed in the syllabus, the story chosen by the teacher clearly gave newer insights to the students on the beliefs and customs of different ethnic groups in Malaysia, which some of them said they had never heard of before. Some students said they now knew a little better why certain people believe in certain ghosts. For me, if this kind of effort and willingness/awareness of teachers to expose students to the cultural elements of others, indicates that the construction of shared identity will be possible. In essence, if some of the texts used in the classrooms (in relation to awareness of others' cultures) were prescribed in the syllabus, the chanceof achieving the objectives of comprehensive inter-cultural awareness and shared identity construction will be much higher. (PreSR)

SR's effort above represents the Third Space theory aptly, in that she was able to draw her students' home experience, as well as her own in achieving her objective which is 'to understand others better'. Although the text was not the usual text used in the classroom, she was able to keep to her overall lesson objective which was to expand characters in a story.

Likewise, SL selected a text (Novel) entitled 'The Garden of Eden' by Ernest Hemingway which was not listed in the syllabus for this particular Form. The

reason for the selection was because she wanted to share this story with her students as she believed they would appreciate it and the values embedded in it. Although the students were not given a copy of the text, the teacher read aloud the gist of the story and highlighted several important incidents and quotations/phrases. Putting aside the Hawthorne effect mentioned earlier, the teacher's effort in trying to bring in new materials was commendable. The students' engagement with the text could clearly be seen in the questions they asked and in how they answered the teacher's and their friends' questions. In addition, reading aloud could be an interesting approach if a teacher is able to execute it effectively. From the reactions of her students, SL was successful in capturing her students' attention and engaging them. SL decision to read aloud and her students' engagement above can be related to the hidden curriculum experience in that the unwritten rules of teaching and learning were portrayed such as listening to teachers instructions closely without the aid of a textbook/text and responding to the teacher's questions positively.

It was a revision lesson in AN's class. She used 'Flipping Fantastic' by Jane Langford. She discussed all the characters in the short story by posing questions to her students. She had firm control of her class and would not allow any kind of disruption from her students to take place. I observed that the students were compelled to focus on every word the teacher was saying if they did not want to get into trouble. The teacher did almost all the talking during this lesson. I wrote in my notes:

> Teacher discussed the characters in the story and every now and again she threw questions at the students for them to answer. The students were asked to stand up before answering a question. Those who were not able to answer a

question remained standing unless the teacher asked them to do otherwise.(Pre AN)

Since it was a revision lesson, the text was hardly referred to in the sense that students were encouraged to remember characters from the story by heart. Although it was only the second month of the year (February 2010), teachers had already started to go through texts that had been used in previous years as a preparation for the mid-term examinations (which would take place in March). Similarly, FN's class was also a revision lesson. She used 'The Pearl' and, like AN, students were not asked to refer to the text as most of them were able to answer the teacher's questions about the story.

In conclusion, the ways in which teachers selected their materials for the purpose of my observations varied. I was hoping that teachers would carry on with their daily or weekly teaching scheme as usual;however, some teachers decided otherwise. Two key points can be deduced from the pre-workshop observations. Firstly, the purpose of the text used for the students was to prepare them for their examinations and secondly, students seemed detached in that they were not able to bring their home or community experience into the classroom as there was very little opportunity to do so, except in SR's class.

5.9.5   Teachers' approaches to selected text used in the lessons. (From Post-Workshop Observation notes)

During the workshop, three short stories were suggested from which teachers might select one to use in their lessons during the post-workshop observation. The short stories were, 'Peach Blossom Luck,' 'Ah Khaw goes to

Heaven', and 'Nannan'. 'The Deep Fried Devils' was used during the workshop to suggest how best teachers could utilise a narrative to fit their lesson objectives and therefore it was not encouraged to be reused during the observation. However, three out of six teachers decided to reuse 'The Deep Fried Devils' for different reasons (explanation of teachers' choice is described in this section). Table 5.10below,lists the text selected by each of the six teachers observed after the workshop. 'Nannan' was not selected by any of the teachers as they felt that their preferred story best served their teaching and learning objectives.

Table 5.10: Teachers' text selection

Teacher's ID	Text Selected
1. PL	The Deep Fried Devils (TDFD)
2. FN	Peach Blossom Luck (PBL)
3. GR	Peach Blossom Luck (PBL)
4. RL	Ah Khaw Goes to Heaven(AKGTH)
5. AI	The Deep Fried Devils (TDFD)
6. RA	The Deep Fried Devils (TDFD)

PL, RA and AI selected TDFD. PL's class was the first to be observed after the workshop. She used TDFD as she wanted to share her excitement about the story with her students. She distributed a copy of the story a day before the lesson so that the students could prepare and understand the gist and characters in the story. I concluded in my observation notes:

> Teacher was able (to a great extent) to highlight the issue of stereotyping in society. For example, when it comes to food, 'Nasi Lemak' is very much related to the Malays, but nowadays, all the ethnic groups in Malaysia eat 'Nasi Lemak'. The teacher was able to direct the discussions to the objectives of the lesson and the text was used to good effect, getting students to interact. (Post PL)

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The students were very happy to talk about food which was the main topic in the story. It provided them with the opportunity to bring in their own home and community experience with foodor ethnic food in general. The difference in students' reactions to the text was clear compared to the poem used in the pre-workshop observation lesson. I noted

> There was a type of food called 'Ma kiok' (in Chinese) in the story, which the teacher wasn't sure of and she asked a Chinese student for confirmation. A little discussion happened between the teacher and the student but unfortunately, the conversation didn't get the attention of the others when I felt that it was important to the students to know that even a Chinese may not know all the foods belonging to other Chinese groups. This situation could have been highlighted as intra-cultural understanding which the teacher could have used as a platform for understanding others, not only from different ethnic groups but also the same ethnic group but a different sub-groups. (Post PL)

The inclusion of 'funds of knowledges' (Moll,1992)(see 3.3.1)such as described above if followed through by the teacher, '*can be an important "scaffolding" for childrenwhose languages, heritages and ways of being in the world are not valued in schooling*' (Thomson & Hall, 2008). Thomson and Hall address similar issue in their study in what they call an '*opportunity missed and/or thwarted*' (p.87).

In contrast to PL, RA's lesson with TDFD aimed to fulfill a different learning objective. Based on an informal talk before the lesson, RA mentioned that he wanted his students to be able to sense the reality of competitiveness in the Malaysian multicultural community. In his pre-workshop observation, RA used a direct translation approach to his lesson and this approach remained the same during the post-workshop observation. Almost everything I

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observed in the previous lesson was similar except that this time he used TDFD and he had set a clear learning objective. RA's objective of the lesson appeared to resonate with the Third Space theory in that the 'reality' in a competitive community is conveyed through the text and then attempts were made to connect them to students own experience. RA's translation approach to the lesson can be linked to Schaffner and Adab (2001) point of hybrid text, in that hybrid text which is a result of a translation process is able to fulfill its intended purpose in a communicative situation (which is the lesson objective) in the quest for better understanding.

On the other hand, AI's decided to ask her students to read aloud one by one intermittently while at the same time trying to explain the characters and the storyline. I wrote:

> I wondered how the research objectives could be achieved if teachers themselves were not very interested in achieving them. I remembered (during the workshop) how she was very excited to use one of the stories suggested during the workshop but she finally resorted to the text that had already been used during the workshop. What if these objectives were prescribed in the syllabus...would that make a difference...I wonder... (Post AI)

It is undeniable that reactions to 'new ideas' or change differ greatly from one person to another. Often, according to Hutchinson (1991), the change is slow and filled with contradictions. Some teachers may have felt that such changes contravened their requirements to complete weekly and daily syllabi. AI must have her own reasons as to why she opted for that particular approach apart from her personal communication before the lesson that the class she was going to teach was not her own; she was taking another teacher's class.

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There was a marked contrast in FN's lesson compared to the pre-workshop lesson. Students were much more participative. FN did not use the white board this time (as compared to her pre-workshop lesson) but concentrated on the text and checked on the students' understanding of the story. In my observation notes I wrote:

> It felt like this was a totally new class as the students interacted and behaved differently compared to the observation using the prescribed novel two weeks ago. Students were much more participative, interactive and engaged totally in the task they were assigned to. In several instances, students rechecked the text for confirmation as they were discussing. I felt this was an important move. Since the topic of the story relied on Chinese culture, the teacher placed Chinese students evenly in each group so that there was a representative in each. Their task was to enlighten students from other backgrounds about what 'Feng Shui' was, and the cultural aspects of this belief. (Post FN)

FN however indicated at the outset of the lesson that she normally would not spend as much time on group work as in the lesson that she was going to teach but admitted that she would love to do more role-play with her students if she was not constrained by time. Figure 5.1 below outlines the difference in students' interactions in both pre and post workshop lessons in FN's classroom.

Figure 5.1: Differences in students' interactions In FN's lessons

Pre -Intervention

- Question and answer about the narrative used
- Students referred to text to find answers to teacher's questions
- Student were put into groups to outline characters from the text

Post-Intervention

- Teacher provided a bit of input about 'Feng Shui'
- Students were put into multicultural groups to discuss about 'Feng Shui' belief and discuss about characters found in the text.
- Students discussed a short playlet based on the characters found in the text but giving their own version of the 'climax' of the story; and then presented it to the class.

Besides the differences in approaches, (FN's lessons are taken as examples) the classroom management and arrangements differed after the workshop. Teachers made use of the spaces available in the classroom much more effectively by rearranging students' group discussions in a small circles or semi-circles.Teachers went round the groups while they were discussing and listened to students' discussions and sometimes joined in. (The difference of FN's classroom arrangements and management between pre and post-workshop observations are shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3 below).

Figure 5.2: Classroom arrangements- Pre-Workshop observation
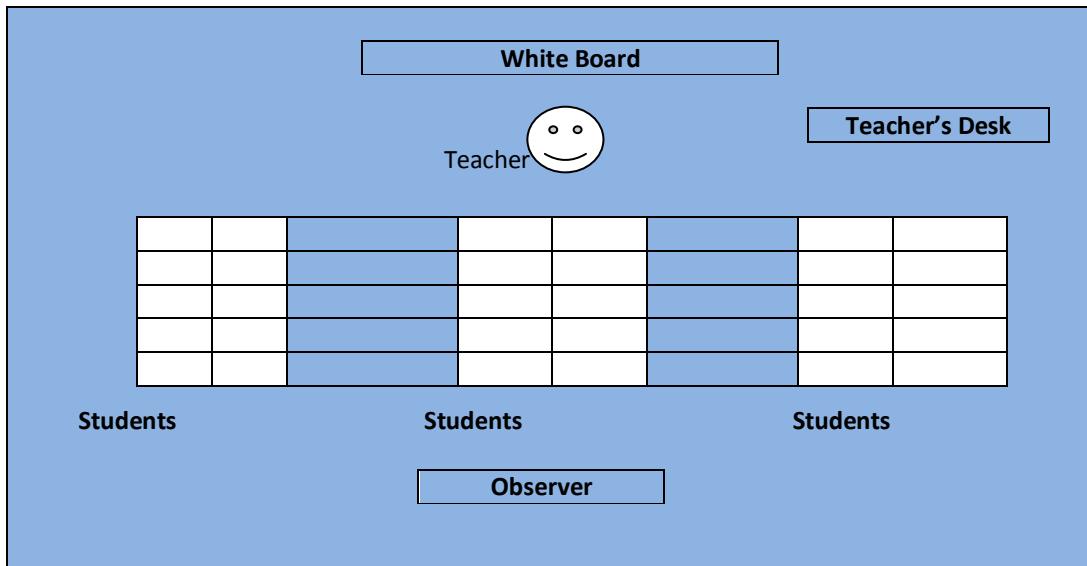
Figure 5.3:Classroom arrangements- Post-Workshop observation
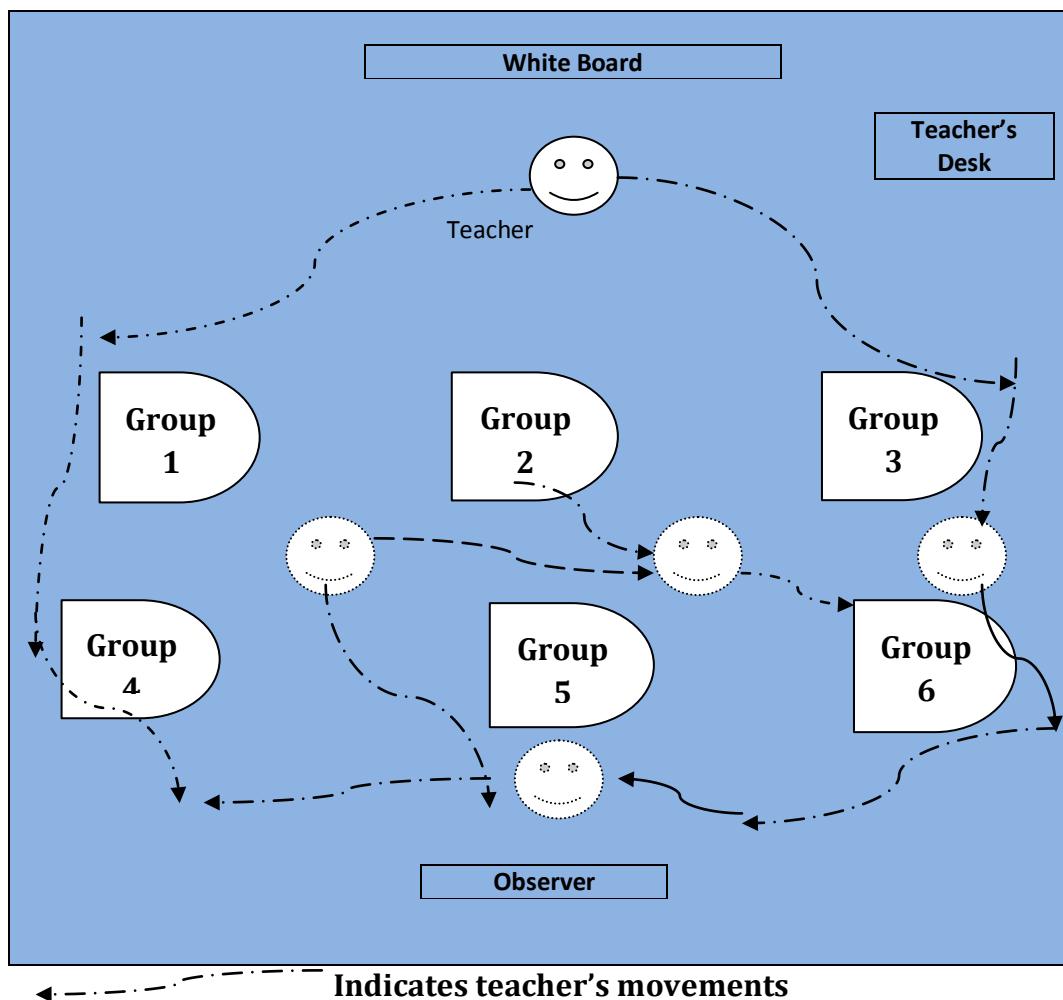
In another observation, GR, who also used 'Peach Blossom Luck', admitted that her students struggled to understand the text. The main reason was probably because many students did not have the chance to read the story, given to them the day before, thoroughly. The teacher did give them the gist of the story at the beginning of the lesson but did not go through the characters from the text. However, the main task set by the teacher was for the students to role-play characters from the story. I wrote:

> Students were given 10 minutes to read the whole story and many were not able to do so. Teacher rushed the students to tackle the role play and they were given 30 minutes to prepare. I found the students were struggling to understand the storyline and then to discuss the characters and finally to prepare for the role play. But why role play when the students were obviously not ready? *(*Post GR)

There was a noticeable pattern amongst teachers during the post-workshop observations (with the exception of RA) in that teachers had generally demonstrated changes in their teaching approach as compared to during the pre-workshop observation lessons. There was a notable difference in the way texts were executed through carefully planned activities with the exception of RAmentioned above. It could be that the way they used the text became central to achieving their lesson's objectives. However, the recurrence of the 'Hawthorne effect' among one or two teachers could be observed as they had deliberately tailored their lesson to what they thought I was expecting.

5.9.6   Summary of classroom observations on materials used

Table 5.11 below summarises the texts and methods teachers used during the pre- and post-observation phases.

Table 5.11: Summary of classroom observations on materials and methods

Summary of activities with texts				
Teacher	**Text**	**Pre. Workshop**	**Text**	**Post Workshop**
PL	In the midst of hardship	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'.	TDFD	Group work. Teacher as facilitator. PL elicited information from students' home experience. Lively discussions.
RA	In the midst of hardship	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'. Lesson translated to Bahasa Melayu.	TDFD	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'. Lesson translated to Bahasa Melayu.
FN	The Pearl	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'. Group work towards the end served very little purpose.	PBL	Whole class teaching, Group work, pair work. Students presented a playlet based on the text.
SR	Ghost Story	Whole class teaching, group work. Students presented their finding on issues related to beliefs in ghosts in different cultures.	Nil	Nil
SL	The Garden of Eden	Whole class teaching but students were fully engaged in discussions.	Nil	Nil
AN	Flipping Fantastic	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'. Students answered when asked to by their teacher.	Nil	Nil
GR	Nil	Nil	PBL	Whole class teaching, group work. Role play. Students seemed disengaged as they were not sure of the storyline.
RL	Nil	Nil	AKGTH	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'.
AI	Nil	Nil	TDFD	Whole class teaching. Teacher-centred. Teacher acted as 'knowledge conveyor'. Students took turns to read aloud the story.

From the summary above, teachers clearly differed in their approaches to a lesson depending on the text with which they were working, and also their intended purpose of the lesson (shown after the pre and post workshop observations).

5.10   Students' Responses to Lessons

5.10.1   Students' reactions during the Pre Workshop Observation

As indicated earlier, my main observation aim before the one-day workshop was to see genuine day-to-day classroom activities in the classroom during a literature lesson. I needed to also see (1) how students interacted with each other, (2) who they chose to work with; (3) whether classroom interactions were based on teachers' instructions only, or (4) whether there was any negotiation between the teacher and the students and between the students themselves, and finally (5) to what extent students were making decisions about their own learning. Students' reactions in the lesson observed were noted with the guide from the observation protocol prepared in advance. The observation guidance moulded the observations to be systematic in such a way that only the prescribed behaviour patterns were noted.

Concerning the students' reactions to lessons I noted several points. In general terms, students' enthusiasm for the lesson was very low. Although it was the beginning of the year, they seemed to know much of the topic and themes discussed since teachers had not started with new texts for this level. Instead, revisions of the previous year's texts were carried out. Another issue was that there seemed to be a minimum amount of interaction between

students while they were working on the texts, so students did mostly individual work. In PL's classroom I found their relationship with one another quite interesting.

> ... there were a lot of interactions amongst students from different ethnic backgrounds (PrePL).

By contrast, when it came to the lesson itself, the students did not show a lot of enthusiasm. I noted:

> Students seemed restless and seemed to find the lesson uninteresting and too easy (it appeared easy) for them. Although the class was interactive (pair work was executed), some students in the back row of the class could be seen chatting throughout the lesson and some seemed to be doing their own stuff.(PrePL)

Similarly, in FN's class, whole class teaching was carried out for almost the entire lesson (a ninety-minute lesson) except for group work which was arranged towards the end. In my 'other remarks' column in the observation protocol sheet, I wrote:

> There was an apparent lack of control over the students and unclear instructions made the whole lesson a bit messy. Students were trickling in for various reasons and affected the flow of the lesson (PreFN).

I also noticed that the group work carried out in the final fifteen minutes of the lesson did not serve a lot of purpose as the task was to list important characters from the novel 'The Pearl' as these had been done as a recap at the beginning of the lesson. At the same time, several students left the classroom to attend to their prefectorial duties.

RA's approach came as a surprise to me. He translated almost the entire lesson from English to 'Bahasa Melayu'. When I asked (after the class) why he had used Bahasa Melayu in his English lesson, he said that he feared that his students might not be able to understand what he was saying if he didn't as this was a low proficiency-level class. I noted:

> A lot of probing from the teacher… No group or pair work. Students answered questions in unison almost every time (in Bahasa Melayu). A lot of teacher-talk in Bahasa Melayu. Students were passive listeners.. Not a lot of interactions happened between and among the students as there were no opportunities. Some students seemed to be doing their own thing and not concentrating on the lesson. (PreRA)

RA's teacher-centred approach to the lesson left almost no room for students to interact with one other. The students were encouraged to respond to the teacher's question by shouting answers out. Several times I noticed that teacher gave very little time to allow the students to respond to his question; he would quickly offer his own answers. I believe that some of his students were quite used to the teacher's method in that they did work hard to search for answers, even though they knew the teacher would provide the answers at the end.

In another observation, SR by contrast had geared her lesson to my research objectives, which I had informed her about when she and I first met. She told me at the beginning of the lesson that this (lesson) was not actually written in her record book but the learning outcome remained the same. Despite my assurance that I was only interested in looking at the students' interactions and negotiation amongst them, and not the teacher, she had prepared her lesson as separate from her day-to-day plan. In my observation notes I wrote:

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> Students were active and seemed to enjoy every section of the lesson. I would say that the students in this class had a relatively good command of the English language, which made a lot of difference to the flow of the lesson. What made it more interesting was looking at the teacher-student relationship. They were very casual and looked very comfortable… Teacher was friendly and cracked a lot of jokes while delivering her lesson. This made the class lively and amusing but most importantly, effective… Interesting… I wonder if it is like this in her normal daily lessons with these students? (PreSR)

As mentioned earlier, the Hawthorne effect could not be dismissed in the case of SR's lesson. However, the teacher's efforts to introduce something new to her students were commendable and the most important thing in this particular lesson was to see the students' genuine interaction with one another. In other words, it seems multicultural group interaction can be successful through the efforts and aims of the teacher.

While in SL's class (which was in an all male school), I had a more positive outlook at the outset as her school was renowned for its excellent academic achievements, students' communication in English and the appointment of teachers was particularly meticulously carried out. At the beginning of SL's lesson, I could sense that the students were quite tense, perhaps due to my presence there as an outsider. Some students turned to look at me several times, perhaps to check who was actually being observed, them or the teacher. After a while, however, when the teacher had engaged them with her lesson, they seemed to forget about me.

AN's class had a different scenario when it came to how students responded to the lesson. It was an all-girls school in contrast to SL's. The students seemed tense throughout the lesson and compelled to be alert at all times.

The teacher looked firm and she did not tolerate anyone trying to cause problems or disrupt the lesson. In my notes I wrote:

> No group work or pair work. Student-student interaction was obviously absent. Teacher asked the students to answer one by one, only when they raised their hands. Teacher discouraged the students from answering in unison. She repeated this instruction many times... (PreAN)

I felt students were, to some extent, deprived of freedom in their own classroom, but perhaps being used to the situation, they did not appear at all bothered by this. There was clearly no room for social interaction except when they had to respond to the teacher's questions. I had hoped with the workshop I was going to conduct later that month that the importance of student interaction could be demonstrated clearly and could shed a little light on the construction of students' collective identity. However, AN was due to be away for that workshop date and her place was taken by AI.In relation to the teachers' treatment of their students, researchers have found that part of students' achievement resides in the hands of teachers. As stated by McKinley (2003), students' higher academic achievement can be known to emerge from a positive rapport and exchanges in student-teacher interactions. However, in AN's case, she might perceive that her firm control over her students, without having to have the 'rapport', could produce favourable examination results.

5.10.2   Students' reactions to the lesson (Post-Workshop Observation)

I was really looking forward to the observations after the one-day workshop, particularly concerning the students' reactions to the narratives used. This was due to teachers' own reactions and feedback during the workshop which was really encouraging, (refer to section 5.11 below for teachers' feedback on

the workshop) as they were very enthusiastic and excited to introduce and work with their selected short stories. I was able to observe six out of seven teachers who attended the workshop. AN was away on an assignment on behalf of her school's administrator, hence I had to be satisfied with six teachers.

The first lesson I observed after the workshop was PL's. She used TDFD. I wrote:

> Students seemed to be engaged with the discussions of the gist of the story and the activities planned for them. They were able to relate their discussions to their own experience of being in a multicultural society.
>
> Before the lesson started, PL had a brief conversation with me. She said, upon reading the short story, that a few students came to her (the day before) asking why such a story was selected. They thought this particular story was a bit 'racist' in terms of the depiction of characters. They said that the writer was really horrible in that she brought up such matters. When I asked the teacher what was her reaction to this, she said that it was really important to know how to highlight certain things (sensitive issues) like stereotyping and be able to tackle it efficiently. I asked her what she thought of the story and she said that 'it is interesting and it is something that happens (normal) to people living especially in the city'. (PostPL)

The students in this class demonstrated a change in their reactions and behaviour (a positive change)in the lesson with a great degree of difference from the pre-workshop observations. There was an increase in student-student interaction and also student-teacher interaction. The biggest change I observed was students' negotiation and decision making about their group formation and the exchanging of ideas between them. The presence of a stranger or an observer may disrupt what is 'natural' in the classroom setting,

but not so in PL's class, as the students focused on their tasks in the most interactive manner with their peers from other ethnic backgrounds.

This was also the case in FN's class. The students were enthusiastic and since they had been put into groups almost from the beginning of the lesson, I witnessed an increase in interaction between them and their teacher from the previous lesson. I wrote in my notes:

> The students were very keen on the lesson and showed a lot of interest in the given tasks. They took the discussion on the tasks that were given to them seriously and almost everyone was involved in planning the playlet.(post FN)

I had not anticipated the students' reactions in RL's lesson, although RL had warned me about the students' attitude towards lessons in general. Being the lowest achieving class of the year group, by and large, students in this class were not very interested in learning, according to their teacher. However, their communication and interactions with one another were perfectly adequate from my observations, although they used Bahasa Melayu at all times. Occasionally, they became be unruly, even with my presence as an 'outsider'. I wrote:

> Although the students responded in the national language, they understood the meaning of 'understanding others' and one student responded to a question of 'what made you Malaysian?' (Apa yang menjadikan awak seorang rakyat Malaysia?) saying 'the clothes I and many other students wear' (pakaian yang saya pakai dan yang pelajar-pelajar lain pakai). The student explained that in Malaysia the Chinese wear 'baju kurung' which technically belong to the Malays and everyone was in agreement with that statement. The same went for the other types of clothing and other ethnic community wear. So, according to the student this made them truly Malaysian. (Post RL)

The students' responses suggested that teachers should not underestimate the students' ability to give their opinions, even though these students werestereotyped as under achievers. In the situation mentioned above, while the students may lack proficiency in English and other subjects, they had gathered information through their own experience in and outside school, which in this case echoes the proposition of the Third Space theory. Therefore, even without being proficient in English, the students were able to indicate they had their own opinion about shared Malaysian identity.

A similar occurrence to what happened in AI's class although the students were much better-behaved than in RL's and I noted:

> I found that although (a so-called weak class like this),some students were able to interact with and respond to the teacher. With the appropriate techniques and strategies, the objective of helping to construct shared identity is doable and workable.
> (Post AI)

GR's students on the other hand, were high achievers. I was looking forward to her lesson as I had very high expectations of her students, the same students I had observed with SR in the pre-workshop observation. I noted:

> Students seemed to be shy and not prepared to present their ideas. Another reason was students did not fully understand the storyline as they had not read the story earlier. Overall they were not prepared. This was, I thought due to not understanding the purpose of this lesson. The teacher did not clarify the objective/s to the students at any point inthe lesson, which may have made a lot of difference. The students could not really see the relevance of this lesson to their everyday classes, the only difference being, there was an outsider in the classroom. (Post GR)

The same students, similar subject with different teachers and produced different types of interaction; in SR's lesson they were very responsive and in GR's lesson they were 'lost'. One possible explanation to this can be the

approach teachers executed in their lessons which can determine whether a
lesson is successful lesson or vice versa.

5.10.3 Summary of students' responses to the lesson

Table 5.12 below outlines the essence of the discussions during the pre- and
post-observation analysis.

Table 5.12: Summary of students' responses to the lesson (Pre- and Post-observations)

Teacher	From observation notes	
	Pre-workshop	Post-workshop
PL	Lively but indifference towards the lesson.	Fully engaged with the lesson. A lot of multi-ethnic interactions as they were grouped multi-ethnically.
FN	Very low in enthusiasm towards the lesson. Responses were mechanical and dull.	Showed a lot of interest in the lesson. Everyone was seriously involved in their discussions.
RA	Students responded in unison most of the times to teacher's question.	Similar exchanges from the pre-workshop lesson.
SR/GR	Students were totally engaged with tasks set by the teacher. A lot of interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds.	Students interacted in multicultural groups but disengaged with the lesson as they did not quite understand the tasks set.
AN/AI	Students only answered questions when asked by the teacher. There was no opportunity for interactions between students.	Students took turns to read the story aloud. Question and answer led by the teacher.
RL	NIL	Students discussed in Bahasa Melayu but able to understand gist of story. Students were engaged in task but seemed out of control.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these classroom observations is that
teachers are able to make their lessons interactive if they choose to make the
required efforts forachieving this. They are able to turn normal, linear
classroom teaching into less constricted activities that captured the students'
attention. There were striking differences in students' reactions before and

after the workshop. In the pre-workshop observations, teachers in their day to-day lesson did not encourage student interaction, but taughtin order to meet the objective of their lesson that particular day. In the observations after the workshop, onthe whole, the students seemed to enjoy working together with their peers, regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

5.11   Teachers' Responses to the One-day Workshop

At the end of the one-day workshop for the teachers, an evaluation form was distributed to everyone who attended to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of the session. (A sample of the evaluation form is in Appendix 12). On the whole, teachers were satisfied with the outcome of the session and felt that it was a good opportunity for reflection on what they had been doing in their classes. They also felt that the workshop would benefit from being extended so that more areas could be covered to try out the new ideas learnt in the workshop. As one of the responses from the evaluation form:

> I really like the idea of thinking of ways to teach short stories to the students in a creative and meaningful way…at the same time, it made us aware of these materials…(Evaluation Form 3).

This one-day workshop, I felt, was just an introduction and I personally believe that a great deal more could have been achieved in terms of getting teachers to implement their ideas and to share them with a wider spectrum of teachers. There were no negative comments. This point is elaborated in the final chapter of this thesis in which a suggestion for improvement to the workshop is recommended.

5.12   Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented the analyses of data generated from teachers' semi-structured interviews, as well as pre- and post-observation analyses of teachers and students as well as teachers' workshop feedback. The themes discussed included teachers' views on students' interactions, their constraints in implementing new ideas, highlighting stereotyping to their students, the use of short stories in their lessons and also their own roles in the construction of students' shared Malaysian identity. The next chapter presents analyses of the data generated from the students' questionnaire, combined with data generated from group interviews.

CHAPTER SIX

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES RELATED TO CLASSROOM INTERACTION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analyses of student responses from two different data sources. It is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the analysis of data that emerged from the self-completion questionnaires, detailed in Chapter Four. The second section deals with the analysis of student responses from six group interviews (also explained in greater depth in Chapter Four). The first section analyses quantitative data from the questionnaire feedback whilst the second section deals with the analysis of the group interview/discussion data. A summary of the issues and responses discussed throughout the chapter is offered at the end and a short description of the following chapter is also provided.

6.1 Self-Completion Question – Student Responses

This section focuses on the explanation of the results of the analyses of the data obtained from the self-completion questionnaire. It was expected that the feedback from the questionnaires would generate a wide range of student perspectives on issues related to the study, and lend support to the findings derived from the group interview/discussions. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program was used in the analysis. SPSS is a

comprehensive system for analysing data. It can take data from almost any type of file and use them to generate tabulated reports, charts, and plots of distributions and trends, descriptive statistics and complex statistical analysis (www.spss.com). In this study, SPSS version 18.0 was used.

The questionnaire used in this study consists of four parts: Student profile; school, classmates and friends; literature lessons and Malaysian identity. The student profile section required the respondents to provide information about their ethnic background, where they live, the language(s) they speak and the school they currently go to. The second part asked respondents to indicate their interaction with classmates and friends in and out of school hours. The third section addressed questions relating to students' literature lessons in general and the final section asked them to respond to statements about the 1Malaysia concept, their understanding of shared identity and the problems and challenges related to the construction of this shared identity. (Refer to section 4.10.1 for a detailed description of the questionnaire's construction.)

The questionnaire was given to the students of the seven teachers involved in this study fromsix schools; all 326 respondents returned their questionnaires completed. The questionnaire responses were to provide contextual information about the students to augment the findings from the group interviews aimed at answeringResearch Question 2, which was

'What are the views of students of their engagement with their peers and texts selected by their teachers in the literature classroom?'

The questionnaire responses were related to the key themes of friendships, understanding of others, the literature lessons and how students feel in general about what washappening around them. At the time the data collection was carried out (January-March, 2010) ethnic discontent had mounted, causing considerable unrest in Malaysia. The government proposed and launched campaigns to reduce the further racial discord. It was coincidental that this experience was still fresh in students' minds, and it was thus useful to get feedback from them about these issues.

6.2   Questionnaire Data Analysis

6.2.1   Respondents' demographic information

The questionnaire was administered to students in six schools and included both sexes: From the total of 326 students, forty three (43%) were female and fifty seven (57%) were male. The percentage of respondents and their schools is represented in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1:The number and percentage of respondents from each school

School	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
WM5	125	38.4	38.3
WM2	47	14.4	14.4
TTDI	31	9.5	9.5
SJI	28	8.6	8.6
PU1	34	10.4	10.4
CS	61	18.7	18.7
Total	326	100.0	100.0

In Table 6.1 above, frequency denotes the number of respondents who responded to the question. The differences between 'percent' and valid percent' is that 'percent' takes the number as a percentage of all participants,

including the people who did not answer; while 'valid percent' expresses the number responding as a percent of those responded. Thus 'valid percent' is what I looked for throughout this analysis. The reason that WM5 had 125 respondents (more than 38% of the total respondents) was because the questionnaires were distributed to three different classes instead of two classes; or in a few cases, a single class. The respondents from this school were the students of two teachers involved in this study and an additional class where a teacher had willingly offered to distribute the questionnaire to her students. I accepted the offer on the grounds that this could be the backup source should any of the other schools involved be unable to distribute the questionnaire on time. TTDI, SJI and PU1 had only a single class each responding to the questionnaire as only one teacher from each of these three schools was involved in the study. Therefore, the move to accept the offer from the teacher at WM5 proved advantageous.

The schools that were involved in this study are located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur city and generally comprised of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Table 6.2 below, shows the frequency and percentages of respondents based on ethnicity. Since Malay students were the majority in all six schools, it was inevitable that a higher number of respondents were Malays followed by Chinese, Indian, those of mixed race and others.

Table 6.2: The number and percentage of respondents based on ethnicity

Ethnic group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Malay	193	59.2	59.2
Chinese	60	18.4	18.4
Indian	43	13.2	13.2
Mixed	28	8.6	8.6
others	2	.6	.6
Total	326	100.0	100.0

In the demographic information section, respondents were asked to indicate the language(s) they speak at home. A large number of respondents indicated that they spoke more than one language at home. The common languages spoken at home included Bahasa Melayu (Malay), different Chinese dialects (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka), Tamil, a variety of languages originating from India including Punjabi and Urdu, English and others. Since the majority of the respondents were Malays (59.2%), a high percentage spoke the Malay language at home. From the bar chart in Figure 6.1 below, it is clear that the Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) was widely spoken at home by the respondents (34.4%). The next highest percentage (20.2%) is a mixture of Malay and English spoken at home. This information on students' ability to speak more than one language is important as this implies the more languages they speak, the wider their circle of friends could be. This means they potentially would be able to communicate with larger sections or groups of people in the community; thus have an opportunity to bridge the cultural gaps between them. Table 6.3 below describes the legends of languages spoken at home (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Languages spoken at home
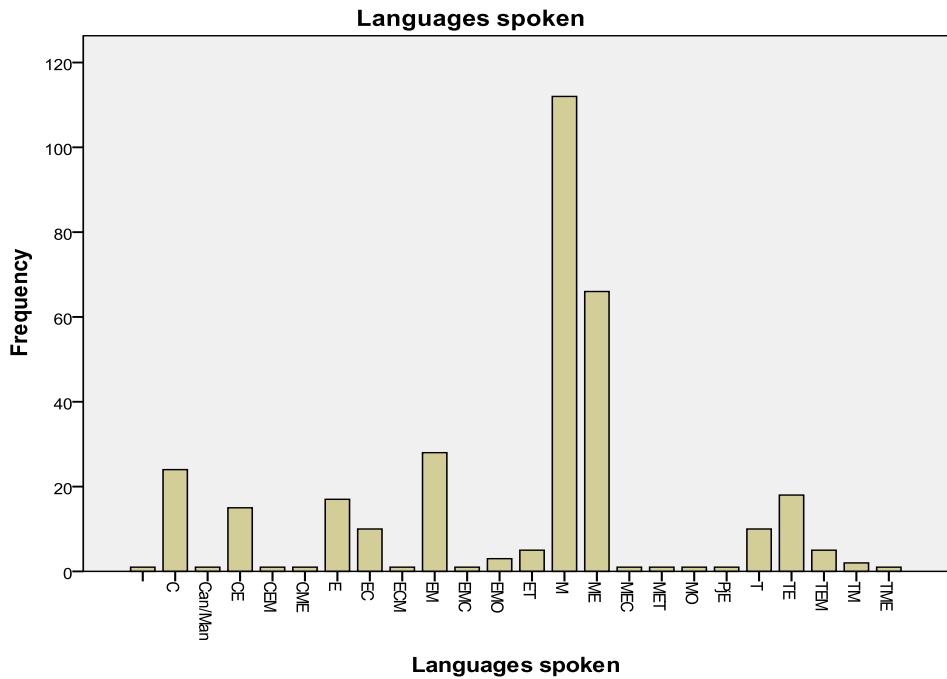
Languages spoken

Table 6.3: Languages Spoken by students -Descriptions of legends

C	Chinese
Can/Man	Cantonese/Mandrin
CE	Cantonese/English
CEM	Cantonese/English/Mandrin
CME	Cantonese/Mandrin/English
E	English
EC	English/Cantonese
ECM	English/Cantonese/Mandrin
EM	English/Malay
EMC	English/Malay/Cantonese
EMO	English/Malay/Others
ET	English/Tamil
M	Malay
ME	Malay/English
MEC	Malay/English/Cantonese
MET	Malay/English/Tamil
MO	Malay/Others
PE	Punjabi/English
T	Tamil
TE	Tamil/English
TEM	Tamil/English/Malay
TME	Tamil/Malay/English

6.2.2 Respondents' classmates and friends

Students are allocated to particular schools by the Education Department for various reasons including the proximity of the school to where they live. The catchment area of the school is the main consideration for placing children in both primary and secondary schools. Although there are restrictions, placement in primary or secondary schools in Kuala Lumpur is, however, negotiable (between the parent/guardian and the Education Office) subject to the parents/guardian having valid reasons to support their application (JPWP, 2010). This means that if a particular school has a vacancy and the parent/guardian has a valid reason for their request for a particular school although they are not in its catchment area, there is no reason why it should be rejected. This applies to all public day-schools in Kuala Lumpur and in many other states in Malaysia. There is also no ethnicity restriction on placement in public day-schools.

In section B of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to state what they felt about their classmates and their friends. As mentioned earlier in the section above, a large number of students in the schools selected in this study are Malay. Therefore it was not surprising that 63.2% of the total number of respondents agreed that there were more Malays in their classroom than any other ethnicity. In this section, respondents were also asked about their preferences during group work assigned by their teachers. They had to indicate whether they prefer to work with friends from a similar ethnic background and if there were any friends they felt comfortable working with. The teachers, as discussed in the previous chapter, played a role in how student work groups were made up.

In asking the students to form groups, the teachers selected and observed in this study varied in their approach; some would leave the group formation decisions entirely up to the students others used their authority and they decided how to group the students. From the questionnaire feedback, when it came to group work (B2 in the questionnaire) 71.8% students agreed (20.2% strongly agreed and 51.2% agreed) that they would normally choose their own friends as their first priority irrespective of their friends' ethnic backgrounds. This could be seen clearly when 46.5% disagreed that they chose group members who were of similar ethnicity to them. However, 9.5% strongly agreed that they chose group members based on ethnicity.

Table 6.4 below shows 72.6% of the total respondents said that they would speak to friends from different ethnic background during breaks or recess (B5) while only 60 respondents (18.5 %) said they wouldn't.

Table 6.4: **The number and percentage of respondents who spoke to friends regardless of their ethnicity during breaks**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	97	29.8	29.8
Agree	139	42.6	42.8
Not Sure	29	8.9	8.9
Disagree	37	11.3	11.4
Strongly Disagree	23	7.1	7.1
Total	325	99.7	100.0
Total	326	100.0	

The response above was encouraging as it suggests that these students avail themselves of opportunities to socialise with friends from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

6.2.3   The literature lessons

Literature in English is a component in the ESL syllabus and consists of Poems, Short Stories, Novels and Drama. Malaysian students start their Literature in English subject from Form One to Form Five, and it is a compulsory subject for everyone. This study involved looking at the Form Four literature in English class, particularly the short story component. In section C of the survey, students were asked to indicate their interest in literature in general (C1).

Table 6.5: The number and percentage of respondents' agreement to the statement: 'literature is an interesting subject'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Strongly agree	75	23.0	23.1
	Agree	159	48.8	49.1
	Not sure	72	22.1	22.2
	Disagree	12	3.7	3.7
	Strongly disagree	6	1.8	1.9
	Total	324	99.4	100.0
	Missing	2	.6	
Total		326	100.0	

Table 6.5 shows about 72% of the total respondents indicated that literature is an interesting subject. Less than 2% said that they strongly disagree that literature is an interesting subject. The table shows that slightly more than 23% of the respondents strongly agreed that literature is an interesting

subject while 49% agreed with the statement.Only about 5.6% (including those who strongly disagreed) indicated disagreement with the statement.

Regardless of respondents' inclinations towards certain subjects or their components, it is vital to ensure they are able to grasp and understand the messages embedded in them. Understanding these embedded values enables the students to appreciate 'others' around them, rather than merely studying for formal, overt aims- getting through the subject, passing the exam and moving on. Literature could be a subject that evokes a sense of togetherness and appreciation of others around them. The experiences in the literature classroom could help the students in their real lives outside school and prepare them to fit into the society.   Within this terrain, the hidden curriculum takes precedence as students are likely to be unaware of their decisions.

6.2.4 Students' responses to texts used in the literature classroom.

As mentioned in Chapters Four and Five, the texts used in the literature components for Forms Four and Five, were replaced with new texts at the beginning of 2010. From the list of the newly introduced texts, only two poems were written by Malaysian writers ('In the Midst of Hardship' by Latiff Mohideen and Zurinah Hassan's 'Are you still playing your flute'). The rest of the texts were written by foreign writers. The questionnaire aimed at finding out whether texts written by local or foreign writer had any impact on the literature lessons.

The respondents were asked whether they found the texts used in theirliterature lessons (from Form One to Form Four) closely related to

Malaysian settings or scenarios (C2). It was quite surprising to note that a large number of students were unsure whether what they had read in their literature classrooms over the years depicted Malaysian settings or otherwise. 44.8% was unsure whether the texts they had read depicted Malaysian settings. Looking back at the selection of texts from Form One to Form Five, it seems relatively easy to point out and differentiate between local and foreign settings, for example, the names of characters and the setting/location of the texts should have given a clear indication whether it was a local or a foreign context. Perhaps in this case, students just couldn't remember what texts they have studied in the past.

Table 6.6: Percentages and frequency of responses: 'Texts used in the classroom depicted Malaysian scenarios'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	strongly agree	15	4.6	4.6
	agree	98	30.1	30.2
	not sure	146	44.8	45.1
	disagree	47	14.4	14.5
	strongly disagree	18	5.5	5.6
	Total	324	99.4	100.0
	Missing	2	.6	
Total		326	100.0	
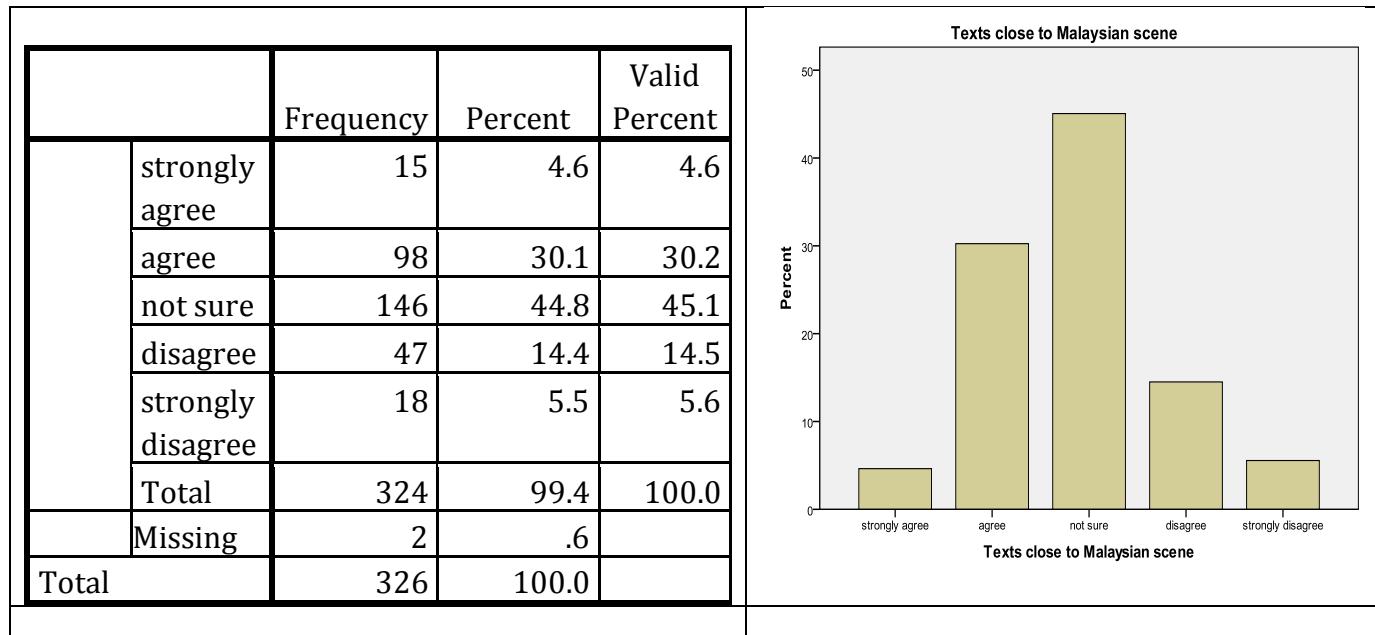
Another related statement, aimed to find out what the respondents felt about the level of difficulty of the texts used in their literature lessons. The statement they have to respond to was; 'The texts used were difficult for me to understand' (C3). 31.3% students disagreed with the statement. This

indicates that that they found the texts used were relatively easy to understand. This was about 125 students out of the 326 respondents. Only 99 students agreed that the texts used were difficult. As already stated, this investigation was conducted in Kuala Lumpur (the capital), where students were exposed to the English language at an early age and many were highly proficient in it. That was why some of them felt that the texts used were not difficult. The response might have been different had the study been conducted in suburban or rural areas.

Table 6.7: **Percentages of responses to the statement: 'the texts used were difficult'**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
strongly agree	14	4.3	4.3
agree	85	26.1	26.1
not sure	91	27.9	27.9
disagree	102	31.3	31.3
strongly disagree	34	10.4	10.4
Total	326	100.0	100.0

Table 6.7 indicates that 27.9% of the respondents were unsure whether the texts were difficult. An explanation of this might be that students were unsure which texts I was referring to (In fact I was referring to all the texts they had used in their literature lessons from Form One to Form Four, which might have caused some confusion). Another explanation was that students might feel that some texts were difficult and others not and there were no other choices available to them. This might also have caused them to tick the 'not sure' box. From the responses, 31.3% of the total respondents disagreed

that the texts were difficult. This means that, generally, this group of students did not have difficulty understanding most of the texts used.

The next statement (C4) was that the narratives (short stories, poems or novels) the students had used in their classrooms could be utilised to promote racial harmony between and amongst different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Figure 6.2, below, shows that almost 60% of the respondents indicated that they felt the texts in their literature lessons promoted racial harmony between and amongst different races, while 33% were unsure and only about 7% disagreed that the texts promoted racial harmony. It also suggests that some students just could not remember their classes with the high percentage of 'not sure' responses.

Figure 6.2: Percentages indicating beliefs that narratives can promote racial harmony
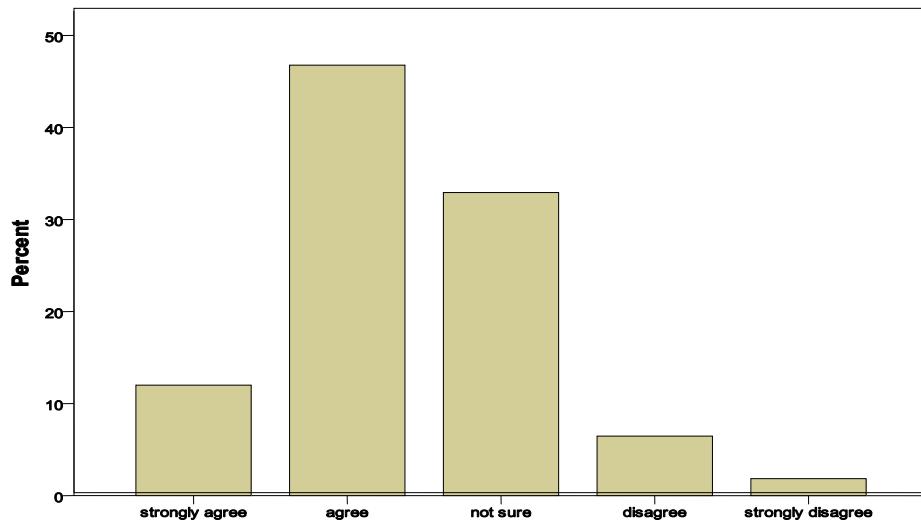
There is evidence that relationships between people (racial harmony or conflicts between them) are portrayed in most of the texts used from Form One to Form Five; for example 'The Pearl' by John Steinbeck was a story about the lives of the poor and how they dreamt of being rich one day and

wanted to do what others who had money normally do. Although it did not actually portray inter-ethnic relationships, it did portray the relationship between the rich and the poor. Another example is 'The Return' by Maniam, K.S. (which was in the 2009 text selection). This novel portrays the life of Indian immigrants in Malaysia (previously known as Malaya before independence) who were held back by age-old beliefs and practices. Inter-ethnic relationships were evident in this novel.

6.2.5   Students' perceptions of Malaysian identity

Section D revolved around students' understanding of issues relating to Malaysian identity. Firstly, they were asked to indicate whether they had heard about the 1Malaysia concept championed by the current Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato Seri Najib Tun Razak (D1). This was an important proposition – 'I have heard of the 1Malaysia concept' - as an indication of whether the students were alert to the current issues highlighted in the media. It is also a way to gauge their knowledge of issues that had transpired in the months before the data collection was carried out. Based on Table 6.8 below, 95.7% of the respondents indicated they were aware of the concept. The 1Malaysia concept was new at the time of the data collection and information about it was not found in textbooks or taught in the classroom. This concept was readily available in the newspapers, television, websites, magazines and brochures. Since all the questionnaires were administered in the classroom, therefore, it could be said that the students had good common knowledge and were aware of the happenings around them.

Table 6.8: Percentages of respondents' agreement towards their awareness of the 1Malaysia concept

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	131	40.2	40.3
	Agree	180	55.2	55.4
	Not sure	3	.9	.9
	Disagree	11	3.4	3.4
	Total	325	99.7	100.0
	Missing	1	.3	
Total		326	100.0	

The next proposition is related to the 1Malaysia concept and responses indicate the extent to which students were aware of whether it was a new concept (D2). From Table 6.9 below, it is clear that 66% students felt that this was a new concept. Just over 30% disagreed that this was a new concept and 3.4 % were unsure. Perhaps at this point it was not really important whether this concept was new or a revisited concept one as long as they were aware that there was such a concept and that it was worth noting.

Table 6.9: Percentage of respondents'agreement that 1Malaysia is a new concept

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	64	19.6	19.8
	Agree	150	46.0	46.3
	Not Sure	11	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	99	30.4	30.6
	Total	324	99.4	100.0
	Missing	2	.6	
Total		326	100.0	

The next proposition (D3) was to find out whether respondents believed that there was a need to have a common Malaysian identity or shared identity for

Malaysians (Table 6.10 below). From the questionnaire feedback, 82.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a need to have a common identity amongst the Malaysian people. Only 11.6% disagreed.

Table 6.10: Percentages of responses to the proposition 'there is a need to have a common identity amongst the Malaysian people'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	89	27.3	27.9
	Agree	174	53.4	54.5
	Not Sure	19	5.8	6.0
	Disagree	37	11.3	11.6
	Total	319	97.9	100.0
	Missing	7	2.1	
Total		326	100.0	

Then, in D4, the proposition was that 'there would be problems creating a common Malaysian identity'. The respondents were divided on this issue. More than 45%, including those who strongly agreed, agreed that there would be problems in creating a Malaysian shared or common identity while almost 11% were unsure and most interestingly, about 42% disagreed that there would be problems in creating or constructing a shared Malaysian identity. It was really intriguing to know why some respondents anticipated problems in the construction of a shared Malaysian identity while some seemed to expect that the process of constructing a shared Malaysian identity would be less problematic. This issue was also discussed in the group interviews/discussions after the questionnaire was administered. A more detailed discussion of this issue is found in the discussions of findings, (see

section 7.7). Table 6.11 below shows the percentage of respondents anticipating problems in the construction of shared Malaysian identity.

Table 6.11: Responses to the proposition: 'there will be problems in the construction of a shared Malaysian identity'

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	22	6.7	7.0
Agree	122	37.4	38.6
Not sure	34	10.4	10.8
Disagree	134	41.1	42.4
Strongly Disagree	4	1.2	1.3
Total	316	96.9	100.0
Missing	10	3.1	
Total	326	100.0	

6.2.6 Students' perceptions on building shared Malaysian identity

Students were asked to read the 8statements (below) of ways in which they could help to build or construct a Malaysian shared identity (D5 A-H) and to indicate a response – strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree to each statements

A. Speak the national language more

B. Mingle with friends from other ethnic backgrounds

C. Eat more local foods

D. Participate in activities which involve people from all ethnic backgrounds

E. Celebrate common festivals

F. Have the same religious beliefs

G. Wear each others' national dresses

H. Watch more local movies.

Language has always been one of the most important unifying factors in multi-ethnic countries, like Malaysia (Omar, 1983). The respondents were asked whether they agreed about the use of Bahasa Melayu as the official language in Malaysia. In question D5A students were asked whether they agreed with the statement that in order to construct the Malaysian shared identity they have to use the national language (Bahasa Melayu) more. A significant 72.6% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with this statement; about 19% said they were unsure; while 8.3 % disagreed (or strongly disagreed). Table 6.12 below indicates the range of responses to this statement.

Table 6.12: (D5A) Responses to the statement:' It is necessary to speak the national language (Bahasa Melayu)' more

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	strongly agree	97	29.8	29.8
	agree	139	42.6	42.8
	not sure	62	19.0	19.1
	disagree	16	4.9	4.9
	strongly disagree	11	3.4	3.4
	Total	325	99.7	100.0
Total		326	100.0	

In E5B respondents were asked to state whether they agree or disagree with the statement that 'in order to have shared identity I need to mix more with friends from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds'. From Table 6.13 below, it can be seen that 36.2% strongly agreed and 41.2% agreed.

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Table 6.13: (D5B) Responses to the statement: 'I need tomix with friends from other ethnic backgrounds'

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
strongly agree	117	35.9	36.2
agree	133	40.8	41.2
not sure	61	18.7	18.9
disagree	10	3.1	3.1
strongly disagree	2	.6	.6
Total	323	99.1	100.0
Missing		.9	
Total	326	100.0	

The next proposition (D5C) in the questionnaire was related to food. Food had always been and still is a pull factor for bringing different people together whether formally or informally. Eating and drinking outlets have also always been the meeting places for social interaction or meetings throughout history. What is surprising is the range of different kinds of dishes that originally belonged to certain ethnic groups which have become 'national' or common dishes enjoyed by everyone regardless of their ethnic background. One such example is 'roti canai' originally only eaten in the Indian community, but which is now the most popular breakfast in Malaysian society. It can be found everywhere, in fine dining restaurants or at small kiosks by the road sides.

The students were asked to agree or disagree with the statement 'in constructing a shared Malaysian identity I/we must eat more local dishes'. Of 326 respondents 215 (66.2%) agreed that eating more local foods was one of the ways in which shared identity could be built, while 21.2% were not sure.

Just a little over12.5% disagreed (including strongly disagreed). Table 6.14

below shows the percentage of responses to each option.

Table 6.14 (D5C): Responses to the statement: 'Eat more local dishes'.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	127	39.0	39.3
	agree	135	41.4	41.8
	not sure	49	15.0	15.2
	disagree	10	3.1	3.1
	strongly disagree	2	.6	.6
	Total	323	99.1	100.0
Missing	System	3	.9	
Total		326	100.0	

Table 6.15: (D5D)Responses to the statement: ' Participate in activities which involve people from all ethnic backgrounds'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	strongly agree	77	23.6	23.7
	agree	138	42.3	42.5
	not sure	69	21.2	21.2
	disagree	29	8.9	8.9
	strongly disagree	12	3.7	3.7
	Total	325	99.7	100.0
	Missing	1	.3	
Total		326	100.0	

Table 6.15 above shows the degree of agreement or disagreement with the

statement that 'participating in activities which involve people from all ethnic

backgrounds' is one of the many ways to construct shared Malaysian identity.

It was not surprising to see that as many as 81.1% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) with this statement. About 15% were not sure and only 3% disagreed with it. Malaysia's historical past has witnessed the impact of disintegration between and amongst the ethnic groups in the Malaysian community. The peak of the fragmentation was the catastrophic event of 13 May 1969. This event had also been highlighted in the students' history syllabus as an important episode in Malaysian history. (A description of this occurrence is in Chapter One). A high percentage of agreement with this question was expected.

Following on from D5D above was the next statement (D5E) which required the respondents to indicate their agreement or vice versa with the statement that 'everyone should celebrate Malaysia's common festivals' in the quest to construct Malaysian shared identity. From Table 6.16 below, it can be clearly seen that 33.6% respondents 'strongly agreed' that everyone should celebrate Malaysia's common festivals while 51.2% agreed with this statement. The percentage of respondents who expressed agreement is 84.8%, one of the highest percentages to any proposition in the questionnaire. This statement is therefore significant and is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Table 6.16: (D5E)Responses to the statement: ' Celebrate common festivals'

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
strongly agree	109	33.4	33.6
agree	166	50.9	51.2
not sure	31	9.5	9.6
disagree	13	4.0	4.0
strongly disagree	5	1.5	1.5
Total	324	99.4	100.0
Missing	2	.6	
Total	326	100.0	

There are four main religions in Malaysia. According to the Malaysia Population and Housing Census (2000), Islam makes up the largest percentage (60.4%), followed by Buddhism (19.2%), Christianity (9.1%) and Hinduism (6.3%). Other religions that made up 5% of the population include Taoism, Confucianism (and other Chinese religions) and Sikhism (Malaysian Statistic Department, 2010). Despite Islam being the main religion of the majority of the people in Malaysia (mainly Malays), religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution of the country.

In the questionnaire, students were asked to agree or disagree that having the same religious beliefs is one of the criteria for the construction of shared Malaysian identity. Respondents were almost equally divided on this question and it was really interesting to see their responses. Figure 6.3 below, shows a normal distribution (bell curve) which indicates a spread of views: 9.6% strongly agreed and 21.4% agreed; 26.9% were unsure while

26.3% disagreed and 15.8% strongly disagreed. Since religion is considered by many as a sensitive issue, especially in a multi-religious country like Malaysia, it is imperative that this point is approached with caution (in general and in this thesis) to avoid any misinterpretation which could lead to more anxiety amongst the people in the community.

Figure 6.3: (D5F) Responses to the statement: 'Have the same religious beliefs'

Histogram
Mean = 3.17
Std. Dev. = 1.211
N = 323

has the same relegious beliefs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	strongly agree	31	9.5	9.6
	agree	69	21.2	21.4
	not sure	87	26.7	26.9
	disagree	85	26.1	26.3
	strongly disagree	51	15.6	15.8
	Total	323	99.1	100.0
	Missing	3	.9	
Total		326	100.0	
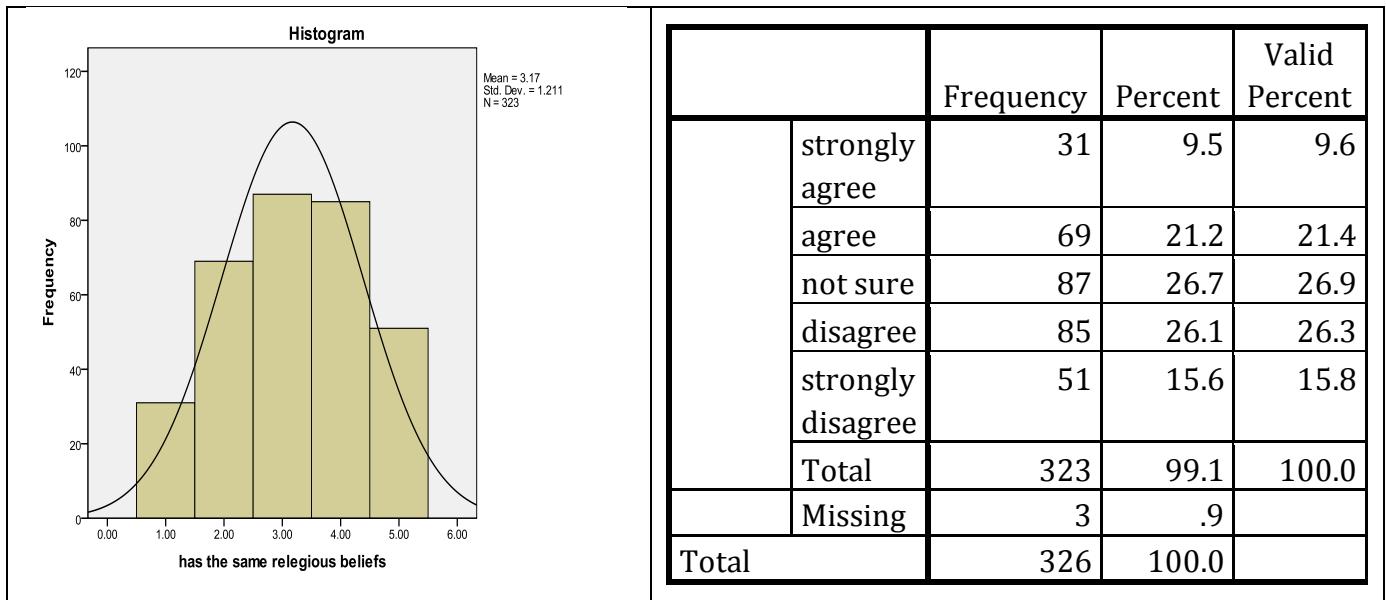
The next statement addresses the choice of clothing in Malaysia. It is not uncommon to see a Chinese girl wearing 'baju kurung' (Malay national costume) to school or a Malay wearing a 'Cheongsam', a Chinese costume for ladies. This is largely the accepted norm in Malaysian society. Many fashion designers produce ethnic-fusion designs which are very popular among the younger generations, for example (www.fibre2Fashion.com). A renowned designer and enthusiast of 1Malaysia designs is Rizalman Ibrahim, who takes inspiration for his designs from the multicultural society of Malaysia. (Refer to Appendix 13 for samples of couture by Rizalman Ibrahim). In relation to this, a statement was put to the respondents (D5G) that wearing each other's

national costumes contributes to the construction of Malaysian shared identity. Table 6.17 below shows that 61.4% of the respondents agreed (or strongly agreed) that wearing each other's national costume helps in the construction of shared Malaysian identity. About 25% were unsure and 13.6% disagreed (or strongly agreed). It is most likely not typical in a multicultural country that people are willing to wear attire that belongs to another culture; in Malaysia, however, this is considered 'normal' and the wearing of clothes from different cultures is not unusual. A more detailed discussion about attire is found in Chapter Seven.

Table 6.17: (D5G) Responses to the statement: 'Wear each other's national dress'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	religion	140	42.9	43.6
	ethnicity	153	46.9	47.7
	Others	28	8.6	8.7
	Total	321	98.5	100.0
Missing		5	1.5	
Total		326	100.0	

The next statement is about movie watching in the questionnaire (D5H).

Table 6.18: Responses to the statement: 'locally produced movies could enhance the construction of shared Malaysian identity'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	40	12.3	12.3
	agree	107	32.8	32.9
	not sure	108	33.1	33.2
	disagree	53	16.3	16.3
	strongly disagree	17	5.2	5.2
	Total	325	99.7	100.0
Missing		1	.3	
Total		326	100.0	

The statement was that 'locally produced movies could enhance the construction of shared Malaysian identity'.The advent of technology has transformed film making over the years, making movies more desirable and interesting to watch. Teenagers and young adults especially make up the biggest percentage of movie-goers and watchers. This phenomenon has also brought about changes to the lives of Malaysian people over a few recent decades. Although statistics for Malaysian movie-goers are not available, statistics from other countries give some indication. According to the UK Office of National Statistics, in 2002, 50% of movie-goers were in the age group 15-24, making it the largest group compared to 17% in the age group 35 and above (www. statistics.gov.uk, 2002). As similar movies are screened all around the world, the movie-going public according to age group is likely to be similar globally, including in Malaysia. Table 6.18 above shows 33.2% of the respondents were 'not sure'. A very straightforward deduction can be made from this. The phrase in this question is 'local movies'. The local movie producers in Malaysia are not very productive in terms of making movies which appeal to people from varying backgrounds. Some movies only attract certain ethnic groups in the country, not the case compared to any international or foreign movies screened in local cinemas such as US, UK or Hong Kong movies. Foreign movies attract people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, which draw more interest especially young Malaysian people.From table 6.18 above, however, it can also be seen that about 45% of the respondents agree that locally produced movies could be one of the criteria to consider in the quest to construct a shared Malaysian identity, while 21.5% disagreed with the statement.

The last two statements in this section were mutiple choice response statements. Respondent needed to choose only one statement for each. The statements are:

D6. If a foreigner asks you about your nationality, you will say…**and**

D7. How would you identiy yourself the most?

Figure 6.4: Responses to the statement: 'If a foreigner asks you about your nationality'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Malaysian Malay	61	18.7	18.8
	Malaysian Chinese	20	6.1	6.2
	Malaysian Indian	8	2.5	2.5
	Malaysian	228	69.9	70.4
	Others	7	2.1	2.2
	Total	324	99.4	100.0
	Missing	2	.6	
Total		326	100.0	
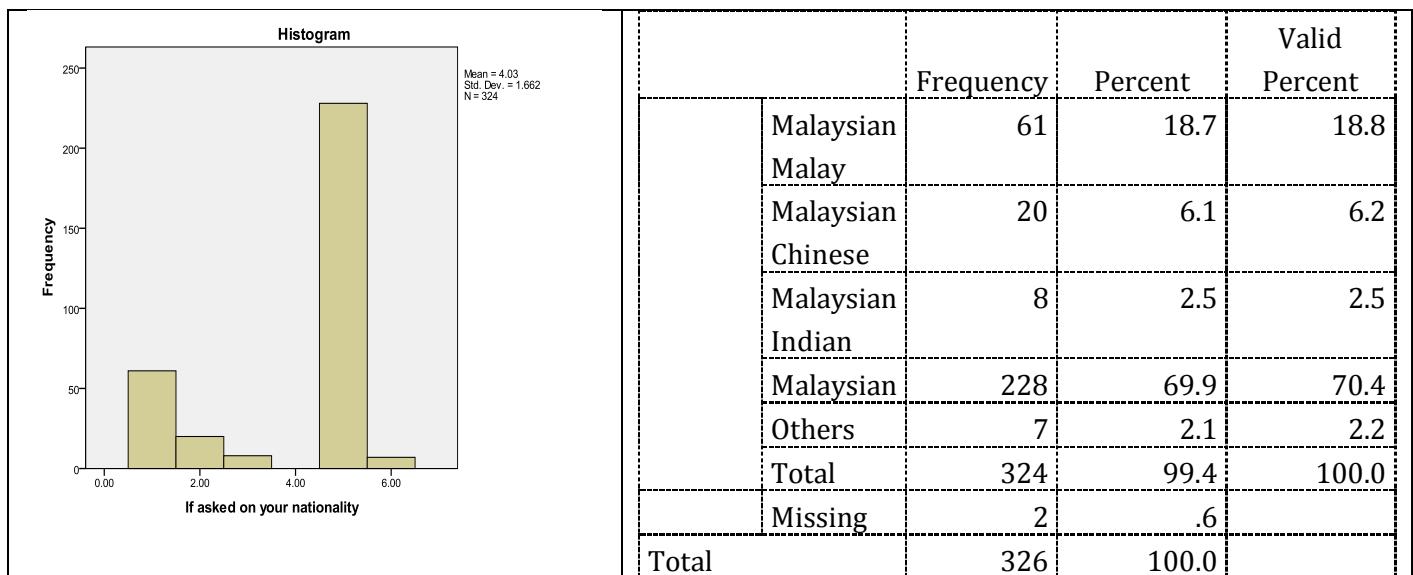
Malaysians, in general, introduce themselves differently to non-Malaysian when they are abroad. Many identifications are based on ethnicity, religion and/or just being Malaysian. Proposition D6 was designed to include a general perspective about what the respondents would say to an outsider if they were asked about their background. As mentioned in the demographic information (Table 6.2) almost 60% of the respondents are Malays, 18.4% Chinese, 13.2% Indian, and almost 9% were either mixed or belonged to other ethnic backgrounds.

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Looking at the percentages in Figure 6.4 above, it shows an overwhelming 70% of the respondents said that they would identify themselves as 'Malaysian'. This means that nationality was the main identity preference when introducing themselves to non-Malaysian rather than ethnicity; 18.8% out of 59.2% of the Malay respondents would identify themselves as Malaysian

Malay, while 6.2% out of 18.4% of the Chinese respondents would identify themselves as Malaysian Chinese and 2.5% of the Indians would describe themselves as Malaysian Indian.

Table 6.19:(D7) Responses to the statement: 'Association of self'

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	religion	140	42.9	43.6
	ethnicity	153	46.9	47.7
	Others	28	8.6	8.7
	Total	321	98.5	100.0
	Missing	5	1.5	
Total		326	100.0	

In D7, the respondents were asked to state what they would associate themselves with most, with only three options given: by religion, ethnicity or other. 47.7% of the respondents chose 'associate with and identify themselves by their ethnicity', 43.6% by 'religion' and 8.7% 'other' (Table 6.19). From D6 and D7 it can be said that nationality and ethnicity were the respondents' choices in identifying themselves to others.

6.2.7   Summary of section

This section discussed the findings that emerged from the questionnaire given to 326 respondents from six different schools around Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The outcome of the analyses from this section serves as a support to the qualitative analyses discussed with the teachers, and also with the students' group interviews. The following section discusses the analysis of students' group interviews and collates the findings from both the questionnaire and group interview/discussions.

6.3   Data presentation and interpretation – Student Group Interviews/Discussions

This section analyses the data derived from group interviews/discussions (GI) carried out with six groups of students (six students in each group) across four different schools around Kuala Lumpur.

As elaborated in the methodology chapter, the GI discussions and self-completion questionnaire targeted the students of the teachers involved in this study. The results of both methods are presented separately. However, to get a 'sharper picture' the GI discussion topics are supported with the questionnaire results throughout this section. A summary of the analyses is offered at the end of each section.

To reiterate, the research question guiding the analyses of data obtained from the questionnaire and group interviews is students' perceptions on issues relating to the construction of shared Malaysian identity, is as follows:

What are the students' perceptions of their engagement with their peers and the texts selected by their teachers in the literature lessons?

6.3.1 Coding the Group Interviews

In this study, Data from the group interview transcriptions were coded and categorised according to the pre-selected themes and new emerging themes (Refer to 4.15.3 for codes derived from pre-selected and emerging themes). The final themes are listed in Table 6.20below.

Table 6.20: Themes derived from students' group interviews

Pre-Selected Themes	New emerging themes
1. Understanding the 1Malaysia concept 2. Ethnic/racial issues in the classroom 3. Understanding stereotypes 4. Tests used in the literature classroom 5. The need for shared Malaysian identity	1. Relationship with friends from different cultural backgrounds 2. Common things shared with friends from different cultural backgrounds 3. The Deep Fried Devils

The themes listed in Table 6.20 above guided the analysis of students' perceptions in the quest to answer the research question stated in 6.3.

The extracts taken from the interviews were grouped together by:

- Synthesising group agreement in which the ID is written such as WM5PL (the group by school) followed by the line of the extract from the transcription. (WM5PL 09)

- Individual opinions from the group. In this case the group is identified first (WM5PL) then the line from the transcription (09), then the person (MY) and finally the ethnicity of the individual; e.g. (I) for Indian. Thus the identifier for the extract becomes WM5PL 09 MY:I

Figure 6.5: Code Identifier
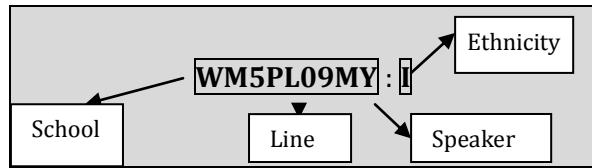
6.3.2 Students' perceptions of the 1Malaysia concept

Participation in the group interview and discussions was mostly voluntary. However, 3 teachers had nominated students when there were no volunteers. At the beginning of the discussion, the students were quite reserved and seemed reluctant to speak up. Eventually, when they had warmed up and felt comfortable, the discussions went smoothly and what struck me most was the students' maturity in discussing current topics such as 1Malaysia.

1Malaysia, discussed in Chapters One and Five, is a concept promoted by the Malaysian government to encourage people from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds to work together harmoniously, putting aside their differences. To know whether students were aware of the development of this concept, they were asked to explain what they knew or had heard about this idea.Most of them had a clear idea on the subject and were able to elaborate on the topic well. This corroborates the findings from the questionnaire in which 95.7% of the respondents were aware of this concept. (The questionnaire was administered to them before the group discussions).

There was however, a small number of students (3.4 % from the questionnaire findings) who had heard about the concept but were not sure of the actual idea behind it. From the discussion of students' understanding of the 1Malaysia concept, the SJI and WM5PL groups agreed that the concept

promotes unity amongst the many ethnic groups in Malaysia. They believed that the 1Malaysia concept was timely as incidents involving clashes between different ethnic groups were on the rise. In addition, they collectively agreed that this project brings the whole nation together and that the government is working very hard to make it successful.

The arguments and demonstrations staged by different ethnic groups who took to the streets to express disagreement and discontentment were mostly driven by a political agenda. During the data collection period, there was a series of mosque torching and church burning by radical extremists which was seen by the government as hampering the progress of the 1Malaysia concept (Church fire-bombings: 'Remember this day'. www.malaysiakini.com/news/121533). Students were aware of these incidents.

From WM5R's discussions, they agreed on the actual meaning of 1Malaysia:

> One Malaysia is about us... the different races want to be known as 1(one).(WM5R 03)

The 1Malaysia discussion with PU1 became a platform for the group members to express their dissatisfaction and annoyance with certain groups of people who used ethnicity as a basis for arguments, and they believed that 'racism' had fragmented society. One member of the group commented and other members were seen nodding in agreement:

> There have been a lot of people who still believe in being 'racist'. They normally only mix among the same race as them...for example...emm Chinese with Chinese, Indian with Indians and so on. (PU1 46)

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The students in this group were very enthusiastic throughout their discussions. Everyone wanted to contribute their ideas and this made the whole process very exciting. All the other groups were generally in agreement that the 1Malaysia concept should aim to promote unity, and according to them, it required people from all ethnic groups to work together towards a shared purpose. Having stabilised as an integrated society, the students believed people could and should work together without fear.

6.3.3   Ethnic/Racial Issues in school/classrooms

Among all the themes discussed during the group interviews sessions, the ethnic and racial issues were the most intensely and passionately debated by all the group members. Although each group consisted of two students representing the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, there seemed to be an overall understanding between them throughout the discussions in relation to ethnic/racial issues in the school or classrooms. They also seemed relaxed in giving their opinions although the discussions revolved around sensitive issues such as stereotyping and bias in society. Upon reflection, I wrote in my notes:

> I was amazed by the maturity of these students discussing
> issues such as stereotyping and bias in society. They seemed
> unperturbed and carried on their discussions with a lot of
> conviction and confidence. They were alert to the current
> situation in certain parts of the country which implicated major
> ethnic groups in Malaysia. I enjoyed these discussions so
> much... (Reflective Notes: 03/02/2010)

I was also aware that the agreement shown by the students throughout the discussions might or might not have been genuine. One reason for this was that my own ethnicity (Malay) as an outsider, a teacher-figure, or as an adult,

may have had an indirect influence on their responses. However, this was something that I had no control over and what I had conveyed to the students repeatedly was to give me an honest opinion, regardless of position or ethnicity.

One of the main issues discussed was the students' relationship with one another in and outside the classroom. (The issue of students' relationship with 'others' is an emerging theme and is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.5). The students were asked to discuss about working together with their friends from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds and also the problems that they had encountered or perceived as barriers to the idea of working collaboratively. Groups from PU1 and NMC had similar ideas on this issue. SH from PU1 stated that problems developed when people did not understand the need to work together and the importance of unity:

> Some people do not realise the importance of unity and it has been taken for granted. That is why we can still see fractions and arguments between races in Malaysia. (PU 49 M, I)

Contributing to the discussion above, a Malay student (NN) commented:

> There are a lot of people who still believe in being 'racist'. They normally will only be found among the same race as themselves.For example, Chinese with Chinese, Indians with Indians and so on. They also practice racism even amongst the Malays. For example, my friend who is in a boarding school told me that the Kelantanese [a person who comes from the state of Kelantan] only wants to mix with students who come from Kelantan and they speak their own dialect and keep to themselves. (PU52 F,M)

NN's experience could be attributed to differences in perspectives and '*different access of thoughts*' (Dovidio et al., 2000) by people around her

and/or the speaker herself. Therefore there is the potential for bias emerging from a conversation without the respondent being aware of this.

A similar experience was disclosed by IM:

> I remembered when I was in Form Two...there were Malay students saying to the Indians that they [the Indians] are not Malaysians because they were not originally from here. They were from India and that made the Indian students very angry with the Malay students. It happened a lot of times and I felt scared at that time. When I thought about it, maybe these Malay students did not understand how to behave in a mixed school [multiracial].... but the teachers were like...did nothing and said nothing... I really wanted the teachers to say or do something about it,...but they never did... (NMC 57 F,M)

Incidents such as racism unavoidably still occur in educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities in Malaysia (www.humanrightspartymalaysia.com).

When asked to comment about racism, MSA from WM5L said without hesitation:

> Racism is not a big problem in Malaysia. It's propaganda. People in Malaysia get most of what they want to know from the politicians. And politicians let them know what they want to hear. 1Malaysia, unity, doesn't that sound nice. But that's not really the big issue.(WM5L57 M, M)

Additionally, a very straightforward response was given by IB from the NMC group when asked how he felt being around students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. He said:

> I will feel uncomfortable being with other races and that is the feeling of not being able to 'click' with them. It's hard actually to feel fit or trying to fit because we have different thinking. I think it's because from when we were very young, we were so used to being with the kind of...emm people we are familiar and used to...and suddenly ... it's hard to be around people from different cultural backgrounds... (NMC24 M, M)

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Students on the whole did not deny that some students had not been able to break away from congregating only with their friends of a similar ethnic and cultural background and that these students found it difficult to immerse themselves in others' cultures or understand others around them. Some even clung to the their friendships with others originally from similar regions to them, as this enabled them to speak in their dialect more freely without having to speak standard Malay or English.

However, from the questionnaire findings, only 18.5% respondents agreed they spoke only to friends from similar ethnic backgrounds during their lunch break in school. This indicates that ethnicity is likely to be a less preferred option for interaction between students. In the findings of his study on social integration among multi-ethnic students, Mustapha (2008) found that popular conceptions of students' racial segregation at universities in Malaysia may have been influenced by religious demands relating to their reluctance to share rooms with other students from different religious backgrounds.Although students in this study were still at secondary school level and lived at home, their social integration may have some resonance with that of the study by Mustapha.

6.3.4   Understanding stereotypes in the classrooms

One of the discussion themes in the group interaction was for the students to describe the meaning of the word 'stereotype' and their understanding of the word in relation to Malaysian society. Surprisingly, quite a number of students were not able to contribute to this discussion as they did not understand the meaning of the word 'stereotype'. If this happened in any of

the groups, I would then ask those students who understood its meaning to explain by giving examples. In one of the discussions I gave them a popular stereotype which had been handed down through the generations by the Malays, Chinese or Indians, which was 'Malays are lazy' or 'Chinese are 'kiasu' (greedy). Many other students were able to give the correct definition of the word 'stereotype' and gave some fascinating and thought-provoking examples. This is described in more detail below. Describing stereotypes and what the effect was on the society, BM from WM5R said '*Stereotype is like… when you see for example Indians, you think they only eat 'Roti canai' for snacking and nothing else. That's what I think'.* 'Roti canai' is a type of food popularised by the Indians. It is made of flour and is believed to originate from a Malay word 'canai' which means to 'knead' (Krich, 2009 at www.wsj.com). As I mentioned earlier, 'roti canai' is among one of the most popular food for breakfast in Malaysia regardless of people's ethnic backgrounds. However, to have it as a 'snack' is quite strange.

SH from PU1 said:

> I know of one…they say Chinese are 'kiasu'… It means that they are greedy, always want to be the first and would not tolerate others in their effort to gain something. (PU74 M,C)

SZ added:

> I've heard this one as a joke actually… emm… many people said that we Asians are prone to road accidents.(PU1 78 M, M)

In the context of what was said by SZ above, the phrase 'we Asians' is an exclusive identification of shared identity as 'we' the people of Malaysia and

her neighbouring countries are Asian. This is a positive beginning of constructing their shared Malaysian identity.

IM from NMC commented:

> When I was younger, there was this belief that if you go to a Chinese school, you'll be good at Maths, and if you mix with the Indians you'll be good at English and I grew up having this belief. (NMC75 F, M)

A comment from AH (Malay) from PU1 made their group members laugh. He apologised to his Indian friends first before carrying on with his statement:

> I have heard of one [stereotype] by the Malays...no offence to the Indians... [He spoke in Malay]; (orang tua-tua dulu ada mengata kan...kalau terjumpa ular dan orang India di dalam perjalanan..bunuh orang India tu dulu) [My translation: In the olden days, people used to say that if you are making a journey and you accidentally bump into both a snake (python) and an Indian... you would have to kill the Indian first before the python].(PU64)

I asked him to interpret what he had said and he said basically it meant that both Indians and pythons were dangerous but the Indian was more dangerous than the python as the Indian could bring down the whole constitution as compared to a python which could only kill one person at a time.

It was quite surprising that this aged stereotype narrated by AH above had appeared in this young people's discussion. The kind of stereotype mentioned was used by the Malays decades ago, and when asked if any other group members had heard of this particular stereotype, everyone else said they had never heard of it. What can be drawn from this is that although many people in Malaysia may think that racial stereotyping had gradually

diminished over the years, a knowledge of some very sensitive racial stereotyping had successfully been passed down to the younger generations. On the other hand, the students were likely to show awareness of some examples of ethnic stereotypes which resonates with the comment of their maturity in the discussion.

I was intrigued by BM's response when he was asked to comment on the effect of stereotyping in a society like Malaysia. He said:

> It is a very sensitive issue and we should avoid that…we are good friends you know… [pointing at his Chinese and Indian friends]. I think it's not good [stereotyping] because it will bring back the 1969 tragedy where people from different races fought with each other. (WM5R36 M,M)

BM's comment was echoed by CH *'…we read this* (13 May 13 1969) *in the history book and I feel it's very bad to have fights like that'* (WM5R38 M, C). Others in that group also objected to the idea of stereotyping as they believed that highlighting it could trigger more unwanted tensions than there already were in the community.

A comment from LH left me wondering, and convinced that I needed to extend this study further to find out what students from sub-urban and rural areas had to say on this matter. LH said:

> Stereotyping I think is not a big problem. People nowadays, especially in the city, are more open than the rural[people]. The people who live in the rural [areas] actually take stereotyping a little more seriously than city folks. The main one and popular one will be 'Malays are lazy' and people would take it hard in therural[areas] but in the city, we joke about it.(WM5L45 M,M)

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From the students' discussions above, it can be summarised that they were not keen to stereotype as they felt that it had a negative impact on their relationships with one another, especially friends from different ethnic backgrounds. Some of them were able to define the meaning of stereotype while many had not heard that particular word used, but others could give a clear example of common racial stereotyping in society. To summarise the students' perspectives discussed above, they believed that fundamental measures for Malaysians to take in their stride are to be open-minded and non-judgemental, and not to provoke the sense of distrust by being aware of or promoting stereotyping.

6.3.5 Relationship with others from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds

This data collection was carried out around schools in Kuala Lumpur. Since these students had lived in Kuala Lumpur city most of their lives, they had been exposed to the presence of other students from various backgrounds from an early age. Some students who came from the more advantaged and higher-income family backgrounds had more exposure to people from different ethnic backgrounds than their friends. Therefore, there seemed to be less problems when they were asked whether they were comfortable communicating and interacting with friends from different cultural and religious backgrounds. IR from SJI said:

> I have no problem interacting with students from other races. As a child, I lived in Tanzania for two years and I went to the International English Grammar school with all other nationalities, Americans, British, African, and I was exposed to many cultures and nationalities. I never had any problems before. It's even easier here in Malaysia. (SJI30 M,M)

Students' surroundings can have a large influence on their attitude towards others. In IR's case above, his experience of being able to interact with many people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds proved an advantage as he was very positive about making friends, regardless of their background.

Since most schools had a larger number of Malay students compared to students from other ethnic groups (from the findings of the questionnaire, 63% students agreed that there were more Malay students in their classrooms compared to students with other backgrounds), I deliberately asked the non-Malay students to comment about being around Malay students at school and also at home. On the whole, non-Malay students from all the groups agreed that they were comfortable being around their Malay classmates as several of them thought their Malay counterparts were, among other things, '*well-behaved*' (KN,SJI), and '*respected others*' (CCF,SJI). At the same time, they felt that the Malays '*have delicious food*' (SL, PU1) and also '*interesting dialects'* (TN, PU1). Students generally felt that they were part of the community regardless of ethnicity. KT from WM5L added that he and his other Malay friends had been friends since they were in their primary years and that they felt perfectly 'at home' with their peers.

There was, however, a tiny fraction of students who felt otherwise. They said that being susceptible to being in similar ethnic backgrounds with other students sometimes could not be helped as they felt much more at ease and that it was easier to communicate with and understand each other. This was strengthened by the composition of a larger majority of Malay students in

every school compared to Indian and Chinese students. KL from NMC commented:

> Normally in a Malaysian environment, the Malays will stick to the Malays and vice versa. It's rare to see that they really mix with others. Probably they are so used to having their own kind around and feel much more at ease. (NMC08 F, M)

This was supported by IM from the same group. She said:

> I think it's because from we were very young, we were so used to being with the kind of...emm people we are familiar and used to...and suddenly ... it's hard to be around people from different cultural backgrounds. (NMC32 F,M)

The response above is an example of how interactions between and among students of diverse backgrounds may fail to develop if there is no intervention from the teacher to rationalise the importance of working together despite cultural and ethnic background differences.

IM from NMC said another reason for not being able to integrate with students from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds was the lack of support or intervention from teachers. The school environment did not encourage students to mix and get to know each other better. She believed that teachers play a crucial role in getting students to interact or not, with students of different cultures to theirs.

MH from NMC commented:

> My former school had a lot of Malay students. Very few students from other races, so ... I didn't really have any friends from other races except, one or two who were my classmates. That too, I did not have a lot of opportunities to talk to them. (NMC32 M, M)

Based on the discussions above, it was evident that not all students were comfortable being around students from other ethnic backgrounds. It can be deduced that the environment plays a very important part in students' inclination or otherwise to being around and interacting with friends from different ethnic backgrounds.

6.3.6   Common things shared with friends from different cultural backgrounds

The idea of food as a unifying factor is ubiquitous. Food, according to Phillips, (2006) has long functioned as a commodity in global production and trade systems in that the idea of globalisation itself has been cultivated through food. In the process of looking for the combination of ingredients which could make up the elements of a shared Malaysian identity, I asked the students to discuss the things they had and would share with everyone despite their differences in culture, language and religious backgrounds. The discussion about this issue was exhilarating and amusing as they shared their experiences and also contributed some new ideas about things which could be shared by the people of this country.

The most common idea the group members suggested was the gastronomy, which play a crucial part in Malaysian people's lifestyles. To reiterate, a lot of activities revolve around food. Food is considered one of the most important elements of being Malaysian as a large number of people would look for something to eat throughout the day. Eating outlets are aplenty and available round the clock everywhere, especially in big cities and towns. Most students agreed that food could be the unifying factor. The questionnaire findings

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(E5C) supported this statement in that 81% of the students agreed that eating local foods would provide a better platform for the construction of a shared Malaysian identity. LH from WM5 commented:

> I think being Malaysian, we eat our local foods. Malaysians are more open nowadays compared to a few decades ago. I think…during the times of my grandparents… emmm…'roti canai' or 'chee cheong fun' was almost unheard of…never mind eating them. (WM5L12 M,M)

BM from WM5R agreed that foods had made different people come together; and eat in the same place regardless of religious and cultural backgrounds. This statement was supported by YTL from PU1, and DH and LH from SJI in saying that different foods from different cultures had long been enjoyed by Malaysians, such as *Nasi Lemak*, *Roti Canai* and Chinese noodles.

SV from PU1 said that it would be wonderful if we Malaysians could come up with one dish that represented all the races. When asked what that could be, he responded: '*nasi lemak' with Malay, Indian and Chinese food gravy… how about that?*' (PU1 48 M, I).

The discussion about food by the SJI group resulted in similar responses by the group members. Most of them mentioned types of food that could represent Malaysia in the eyes of the world.

The NMC group was asked to discuss how they would identify themselves as Malaysian if they were living far away from home. Some interesting responses were gathered from them. INM said '*It's easy… I eat loads of Malaysian foods…that make me more Malaysian I guess…* (NMC47 M, M)

However, AIZ from the NMC group had a different idea; he was convinced that the most important unifying factor was language. He said '*Speak Malay* [Bahasa Melayu]*. Bahasa Melayu… emm… I share BM* [Bahasa Melayu] *with friends from other races…*'(NMC50 M,M). He further added that it would be good if everyone in Malaysia was able to speak Malay fluently so that there would be better communication among all the people in this country. Once again, the statement from AIZ above is in tune with the findings of the questionnaire which indicated that 72.6% strongly agreed and agreed that speaking the national language (Bahasa Melayu) regularly could increase the success of constructing shared Malaysian identity.

On the other hand, KL disagreed with AIZ and said:

> … but the Chinese and Indians will ask why Malay? ..not Tamil or Chinese? The Malays should also speak Tamil and Chinese as fluently as what they have been doing [speaking the Malay language]. (NMC 53 F, M)

MH who had been listening to the conversation between KL and AIZ said '*It'll be good if Malaysian schools have* [offer subjects] *like… Mandarin, Tamil or other languages…make it a compulsory subject to others who do not speak the language…*'(NMC 85 M, M). When I probed further on the issue of making the subject compulsory, MH responded:

> Yes…at least until UPSR …or when they are about to go to secondary schools and then later…emmm…they could choose whether they want to pursue the extra language they had learnt in primary school…but it must be available [offered] in the secondary school. (NMC 97 M,M)

Currently, students in public secondary schools are not given an opportunity to do extra language courses, unless they request to do a public exam, for

example, French (which is offered as an examined subject) but has to arrange a private tutorial outside school hours. The suggestion from MH above is an idea which can be taken up by Curriculum Development Centre in Malaysia.

On elements, besides food and language, that could unite Malaysians, IKH from WM5R said there were other things that could unify Malaysian such as its unique cultures. SRA from WM5L on similar note added:

> We Malaysians wear clothes that originate from other races. For example now, many Chinese girls wear 'baju kurung' to school. They have the choice of wearing a pinafore but many are comfortable wearing 'baju kurung'. So I think that is the Malaysian spirit (WM5L14 F,M)

This was supported by a similar comment by MAY from WM5R:

> Wearing traditional dress like the 'Cheongsam' or 'Baju kurung' by people from different races will definitely prove that we are absolutely Malaysian... Now many Chinese and Indian girls wear 'baju kurung', especially to school.(WM5R18 F,C)

The questionnaire findings reinforced the statement from MAY above in that 61.4% of the respondents agreed that wearing each other's national costumes strengthened the idea of building a collective Malaysian identity.

Students had their own ideas and opinions on the elements that could contribute to unifying Malaysians. These ideas and opinions are valuable and should be carried further as the voice of the younger generation and what they feel are the factors that could bring people together; and 'them' in particular. Among some other things that students indicated having in common was the celebration of festivals in Malaysia and becoming involved in activities run by different groups of people in Malaysia. The students

believed that school could be just the right place to support the idea of a more unified Malaysian society and felt that their teachers could be more supportive in ensuring that tasks involving diversity worked in their classrooms. The discussion of the classroom/school as a beneficial space for the construction of a shared identity is elaborated in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

6.3.7   Students' views of the texts used in their literature lessons

2010 marked the beginning of a new selection of texts for Forms Four and Five. The former texts had been used for over 10 years and The Curriculum Development Ministry of Education Malaysia decided (in 2009) that it was time to introduce new texts. My data collection period coincided with the introduction of new texts, which started in January 2010. Therefore, teachers had just got the new materials, and most had not started teaching short stories using the new prescribed texts. I wanted to know whether the literature subject was among the more popular subjects. From the questionnaire results 72.2% of the students agreed that it was a more favoured subjects.

Since classes had not really resumed by the time I started my data collection, I had general discussions with group interview students on the types of texts or short stories they preferred, the reasons they liked them, and whether the stories had any impact on their own lives as students. I started off by asking them to discuss the types of stories or other texts they liked from the texts they had used from Forms One to Four. From the discussions with the WM5R

group, it was evident that their preferences varied as everyone had their own favourite, but the most popular choice was 'The Pearl' by John Steinbeck. Y and BM agreed that 'The Pearl' was their choice as it discussed the environment and nature which to them was interesting, and made them think about their own environment.

A different choice was made by E and LK from SJI, and SV and SH from PU1; without hesitation they preferred 'Phantom of the Opera'. SV (PU1), FTH (WM5R), and SH (WM5R) preferred Shakespeare as they found it amusing. SV added:

> ...the best... actually I can say the best because all the poems are nice but I quite like 'Phantom of the Opera' because it's interesting...we cannot imagine what's going to happen next [in that poem]... so I feel it's better than the rest. (PU92)

Quite a number of students voiced their preferences for stories related to their lives as teenagers, which had kept them interested in the subject. SH from WM5R mentioned '*Shakespeare was interesting. I like to read about the way people lived during that time, the language and the love story*'(WM5L25 M,I). On the other hand, DJ from the same group said otherwise. He said that it was difficult to understand Shakespeare or Jane Austen as the stories were set in a different century and the settings were strange. He said:

> It's definitely difficult [Shakespeare]. We have to rely on the teacher to explain it to us. It's quite boring too. If it's simplified... then it'll be more interesting. I think if it's something like Twilight... emmm... I wonder why girls go crazy watching that movie... [hilarious laugh](SJI 79 M, I)

When the students were asked to discuss the kinds of texts they preferred to use in the classroom, many had their own preferences and their own

ideas of what would most interest them and also their friends. SH from PU1 said:

> I have read a book by Mitch Albom, 'Tuesdays with Morrie'…
> so I would love to share this story with my friends because it's
> interesting…because it discusses the flaws of human…
> (PU124 M,)

SRN from PU1 had his own opinion about stories to be used in the classrooms. He said '*If I have a choice I would like to bring in the Harry Potter series*' (PU132 M, C).

From the discussion above, some students clearly preferred world literatures which according to them were able to capture their interests based on the themes or plot of the stories. For them, stories from around the world widened their knowledge of the world or/and new approach to fictions (such as the Harry Potter series).

IKH from WM5R had a more 'local' idea. He said '*I like Lat's cartoon and it's very interesting. It shows a lot of Malaysian scenes and how different races live together*' (WM5R32 M, M). Lat, a famous and prolific Malaysian cartoonist, has produced volumes of cartoons depicting multicultural Malaysia. In most of his cartoons, the presence of Malay, Chinese, Indian and Punjabi characters are almost mandatory. Most of the characters in his cartoons are drawn from aspects of his own life when he was young and growing up in a village where many people from different cultural backgrounds coexisted and worked together closely. Many of his cartoons have been turned into series of cartoon programmes on television and recently (in 2009) a cartoon strip was drawn on a famous Malaysian budget airline Air Asia. (Refer to

Appendix 14 for a sample of Lat's cartoons). Lat's cartoons according to MH are embedded with values that could unite the different ethnic groups with simple and direct message such as 'respect your neighbours'.

Discussions about the differences between locally written stories, or stories from around the world which could be used to cultivate students' understanding of other cultures in the Malaysian classrooms drew similar ideas from the students. They generally felt that a combination of local stories and stories from around the world should be used as long as they were based on good values that encouraged all students to work together despite their cultural and religious differences. KL from NMC had this to say:

> I think there should also be a combination of Malaysian people's stories and also the western cultures so that Malaysian students will not be left out by not knowing the cultures of the world...but it is still good to know the culture around and within us first. (NMC111 F, M)

AIZ said:

> It's good to have a combination of stories as this will expose us to more stories from around the world... but more emphasis on Malaysian stories where Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures are emphasised. It's good because we tend to know more about each other's culture, because even though we live side by side with each other, we still don't know a lot of things about them (friends from different cultural background), their culture and so on.(NMC87 M, M)

IM agreed with AIZ and added, '*That would be interesting too [*Malaysian stories*]. But we haven't done a lot about stories like that... maybe one or two'.* (SJI72 M, M)

Many students liked to have a combination of foreign and local stories to broaden their knowledge of the world and at the same time to be able to

understand their local cultures better. Therefore, they believed that texts used in the classroom could contribute to enhancing their understanding of others.

6.3.8 Do students feel that there is a need for a shared Malaysian identity?

Shared identity, which can be also known as collective identity in this investigation, is when a group of people have common interests, experiences and solidarities and a sense of belonging to the same group. Looking at the current state of comradeship amongst Malaysian people (both young and old), with the rise of ethnic conflict, solidarity, I feel, is diminishing. This study was carried out with the joint aims of finding ways in which Malaysians from different (majority or minority) ethnic groups could be able to integrate better, and ways of closing the gap that are apparent in the lives of Malaysians.

In this part of the group discussions, the students were asked to give their opinion of the need for a shared Malaysian identity. At the beginning of the discussion many students were unsure what I meant by the need to have shared Malaysian identity and I explained in detail by giving examples of shared culture, language, food and experience the students might have encountered but did not realise. Once they understood the issue, the discussion proceeded smoothly and at length. DJ from SJI commented:

> Yes, definitely….because this is our country [Malaysia]. This is where we live. We cannot be somewhere else…emmm… We need to be who we are. That's why we need this shared Malaysian identity. (SJI 79 M,I)

IM echoed what DJ had said:

> … of course we are different in many ways… race, religion, and culture…. But we are Malaysian. This is our identity. We have a lot of things that we share…(SJI 85 M,M)

SZ from PU1 contributed to the discussion by saying:

> I feel that we already have our shared identity. We are different people from different cultures…and we [had] lived…emmm…in peace for a very long time now…we have to keep that. We need the identity that we held… for many years to come. (PU1 162 M,M)

AM offered his idea about the issue discussed. He said:

> … like food and clothing that we share…those are our identity. Not many people in the world would want to wear traditional clothes from a different culture as if it is theirs…but Malaysians…we do just that…that's our identity. (PU1 167 M,M)

From the discussion with WM5L, LH had this to say:

> I have a strong feeling that we do. Looking at our neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Thailand and [The] Philippines, they do not have to have shared identity… because the majority of people there are from the same culture…maybe not religion… but my point is…emmm… they still fight with each other. We Malaysians are lucky. Although we come from different cultures, races and religions, we live in harmony. That's why we have to keep our identity…theseshared experiences that we have. (WM5L 72 M, M)

Shared experience stated by LH above is another possible ways in which students are able to construct a shared identity in that they can relate their own experiences as members in the community.

IKH from WM5R commented:

> Most definitely. We want everyone to be united…and how can we do that if our goals in living in this country are different…We have to have the same target for our country… that is to make the country safe…for our future generations. (WM5R 48 M, M)

These views corroborate the findings of the questionnaire as 82.4 % of the respondents agreed that there was a need for a common identity among Malaysians. It can be concluded from the students' discussions that, by and large, they understood the meaning of having a shared Malaysian identity. Although their reasons about why the need for a shared identity varied, essentially everyone agreed that they wanted to live in harmony with people from different ethnicities, cultures and religions. They wanted the place they currently live in to be safe for them now and in the future, hence the need for a shared Malaysian identity so there would be no conflicts amongst Malaysian people.

6.4   Discourse features which indicate evidence of alliance and harmony amongst the students.

In addition to the kind of thematic analysis that has already been presented, another way in which insights can be gained from group interviews is through analysis of the discursive practices involved. There are, of course, a number of different approaches to discourse analysis that can be used, but for the purposes of this study, it was felt to be useful to consider some particular features which have been shown to be good indicators of the relationships between speakers. These items can be subsumed under the broad category of features which encode interpersonal/interactional information in some ways (see McCarthy, 1998; O'Keeffe et al., 2007 for more detailed discussion). Such

features are useful because they give us another lens through which to interrogate the data. The particular discursive practices considered here include the use of discourse markers 'lah', the use of vague language, pronoun choice and patterns of experience.

6.4.1 The use of 'lah'

'Lah' is pervasively used in the Malaysian lexicon. Much like other Malaysian phrases or colloquialisms, its usage varies to signify diverse emotions, connotations or expressions. It is normally used as a suffix to affirm a point or statement. According to Goddard and Wierzbicka (1994), the illocutionary force of *lah*expresses something to do with the speaker's motives in producing a particular speech act.Goddard and Wierzbicka (ibid) advocate four different functions of *lah* which are informational, declarative, imperative in various functions and also optional, whereby a sentence does not become ungrammatical if *lah* is removed. Examples are given below:

1. **Informational**

   Itu bukan girlfriend lah! Peminat! (Bahasa Melayu)

   That's not my girlfriend. Just a fan

2. **Declarative**

   Engkau ni kacau saja lah! (Bahasa Melayu)

   You're such a pest

3. **Imperative in different function**

   Kalau ya pun, jangan lah cakap kuat! (Bahasa Melayu)

   Even so, no need to speak so loud

4. **Optional**

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Ya lah! (Bahasa Melayu)

Yeah, sure!'

(Goddard& Wierzbicka, 1994:148)

In the present study, the students in the group interview had a high occurrence of *lah* in their conversations. The usage of this clitical particle (Ibid) by the speaker and their group members was seen as an acceptance of normality and produced a sense of solidarity amongst them. An example taken from the PU(1) group interview:

(PU21) Int :Can anyone tell me the percentage of students' composition by ethnicity in this school?

(PU22) Ln : I think 90% are Malays.

(PU23) Am : I don't think its 90% *lah…*

(PU24) Shv : *Weiii…* I think it's more of 70% or so *lah*

Based on both occurrences of *lah* in the extract above, they (*lah*) fall under the declarative function where Am (a Malay) disagrees with Ln (a Chinese) while Shv (an Indian) in a way affirms Am's response by offering his own figure. The use of *lah* here goes to show the built-in solidarity these students have despite their disagreements.

In another instance, the group interview with WM5PL shows a further example of the optional usage of *lah*:

Int : So… we shouldn't be highlighting stereotyping in the classroom then?

Unison : No…Not so much (some heard saying)

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Jst   : Not too seriously *lah…*

6.4.2   Vague language

Channell (1994) describes vague language as when '[*a*]*ny social group sharing interests and knowledge employs non-specificity in talking about their shared interest and that the speakers share knowledge of how to understand them'* (Ibid:193) and it is apparently impossible to describe their meanings independently of considerations of context and interference (Ibid:196). Examples of vague language include 'and stuff', 'something of that sort', 'something like that' and 'you know'.

In group discussions with the students, vague language emerged from at least two and sometime more students in each group. These vague phrases were seen as a connection between them, such as an understanding of what was being said by a speaker and acceptance of that by another. For example, in the discussion with PU group:

> (PU26) Shv   : It's nice…emm…we can learn their culture…*we're like*…we get more friends

> (PU98) Szn   : …We can actually imagine what it's like to be living underground *and stuff like that.*

In WM5PL's group discussion, a similar pattern was traced:

> (WM5LK 19) LK   : I think being a Malaysian *is like*…we eat our local foods. Malaysians *are more like*…open nowadays compared to a few decades ago…

(WM5LK 51) D   : Stereotype *is like…you know*…when you see for example…

Further, in the NMC group, similar occurrences took place among group members.

(NMC 06 NH)   : I think it depends on the person himself, *if you're like*…emm…grew up in a mixed cultural environment…

(NMC 128 KL)   : … programmes and campaigns to let people know about each other's festivals and religious beliefs *and stuff*…

The usage of a 'code' can strengthen their identity as teenagers. In addition, it is vague in the sense that it has multiple interactional uses like 'lah' and 'you know/you know what I mean' and is informal. Therefore there is more feeling of group solidarity. The use of the expressions 'like' and 'stuff' are often identified as typical of teenage language, and are seen as markers of solidarity (Stockwell, 2007). The use of this kind of 'in-group' code can be seen as an indication that the speakers, in this case the participants in the group interview, are demonstrating solidarity with each other. At the same time, the use of vague category markers ('stuff like that', 'religious beliefs and stuff') suggests that the speakers perceive that they, and the researcher, are all to draw on the same shared knowledge to 'unpack' these vague expressions. Similar use of vague language has been shown by Evison et al. (2007) in informal seminar situations, where a shared sense of academic identity is created amongst the students and their tutor.

6.4.3   Pronouns used

The use of the pronoun 'we' is another way for the students to demonstrate their allegiance with other group members although what is discussed may not necessarily be agreed upon. More often than not, they use 'we' to express their own opinion rather than the opinion of others, possibly in the hope that others will be in agreement. Some examples below are drawn from students' group discussions.

(NMC 27 AI)   : I think it's because from **we** were very young, **we** are like…so used to being with the kind of…emm… people **we** are familiar…

(NMC 74 IR)   : Maybe **we** can have one type of school but learn different languages.

(WM5PL 19 LK)   : I think being a Malaysian, is like…**we** eat our local foods.

(WM5RA 48 IK)   : **We** have beautiful cultures, if combined, **we** can make Malaysia famous.

6.4.4   (Dis)agreement as a shared conversational practice

Although the students do not always agree with each other, it is clear that their discursive practice foregrounds agreement, something which suggests that solidarity is important to them. Regardless of their ethnic background,students articulated their opinions and were either supported or opposed by other members,but in a relatively pleasant and unintimidating manner.

(PU 28 LN)	: And also don't forget about the food. Malay food is delicious! Malay foods are spicy and I like spicy food.
(PU 30 SHN)	: Yes, I like it too. I don't speak Malay though…

In this first example, there is initial agreement, before difference is introduced.

And in another group discussion:

(WM5RA IK 35)	: I like Lat's cartoon and it's very interesting. It shows a lot of Malaysian scenes…
(WM5RA WG 37)	: I have never heard of Lat's cartoon…but I will try and look it up.

Back to PU's group on the debate aboutthe Harry Potter books. Here we can see a supportive assessment from the second speaker immediately followed by a challenge which is mitigated slightly by the use of '*lah*'.

(PU 133 SH)	: If I have a choice, I would like to bring in the Harry Potter series.
(PU 138 AM)	: Harry Potter is a page turner.
(PU 139 SRM)	: but why?..why..*lah*?
(PU 140 SZN)	: If it's simplified…then I think it'll be more interesting…

The relative value of Harry Potter is clearly co-constructed by the different group members. The utterance of short turns by a number of different speakers is a well-attested characteristic of social talk where the speakers perceive themselves as having equal rights to the conversational floor and a

shared responsibility to contribute to the evolving talk (Tannen, 1984). In cases such as the one shown here, disagreement is not seen as indicative of distance between speakers, but of personal and conversational closeness.

A similar use of 'we' to signal group membership has been shown in business meetings (Handford, 2010), for example, where it is particularly important to construct a shared identity. Therefore, based on the discussions above, certain discourse features such as the usage of *lah*, vague language, the use of certain pronouns and patterns of experience suggest alliance and harmony amongst the students. These four discursive practices provide, I believe, another useful insight into the shared identity of the students, and a different window into looking at the possibilities of using the Third Space as a platform for shared identity construction.

6.5   Summary of responses

Table 6.21summarises the essence of the students' responses based on the themes/issues discussed.

Table 6.21: Summary of responses based on issues presented

Issues	Summary of responses
4. 1Malaysia concept	Students understood the concept and felt that it could be the catalyst for a more unified and integrated Malaysian society
2. Ethnic/racial issues in the classroom	Ethnic/racial issues were seen as still prevalent in the Malaysian community and students need to be more 'open'
3.Understanding stereotypes	Students on the whole rejected the idea of highlighting stereotypes as they felt it could make ethnic relationships deteriorate
4.Relationships with peers from other ethnic backgrounds	Students were more than happy to interact with peers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds
5.Common things shared	Students share among other things food,

with peers	fashion, festivals, religious celebrations and activities with others from different cultural backgrounds
6. Texts used in the literature lessons	Students preferred texts that portrayed both Malaysian and foreign cultures which allowed them to understand others better
7.Is there a need for shared Malaysian identity?	They generally believed that there is a need for a shared Malaysian identity
8.Other discursive practices	Other discursive practices that showed alliance among the students included Malaysian English (the use of '*lah*'), vague language, pronouns used and patterns of experience

6.6   Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the analyses of students' responses from data generated by the self-completion questionnaires and group interviews/discussions. Once again, the data presented in this section were guided by my research question concerning students' perceptions of issues relating to the construction of a shared Malaysian identity through their literature lessons. The questionnaire results were discussed first, followed by the analyses from students' group interviews/discussions. It is important to point out that some of the findings from the questionnaire results were used to support the findings that emerged from group interviews/discussions and attempts were made to link the findings with the notion of the Third Space and hidden curriculum where necessary. The discussions were directed by the themes identified at the beginning of this chapter. Further elaboration of these findings is presented in Chapter Seven, drawing on the analyses of both Chapters Five and Six, and linking these to the theoretical constructs that were discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF SHARED IDENTITY

7.0   Introduction

This chapter seeks to discuss the findings from the analyses of both teachers'
and students' perceptions of issues relating to the construction of shared
Malaysian identity. It outlines and describes the similarities and differences
in their views based on the selected themes described in Chapters Five and
Six. The ways in which discursive engagement in the Third Space can help
develop a sense of shared identity are then discussed, drawing on teachers'
and students' perceptions, the lessons observed and also from a summative
evaluation of the overall research process. To conclude, the last section of
this chapter integrates the whole discussion so that it can be usefully
theorised in terms of the hidden curriculum. Finally, a summary of the
chapter is offered to tie the findings together.

7.1   What are the implications of the differences and similarities of perceptions between teachers and students?

Teachers' and students' perceptions of teaching and learning and of
classroom issues have been productively synthesised in research conducted
in the last few decades (Brok, Bergen & Brekelmans, 2006; Khine

&Lourdusamy, 2006). Brok, Bergen and Brekelmans (2006) affirm that the investigation of teachers and students' perceptions is deemed highly beneficial because '*divergence and convergence between students and teacher perceptions have proven to be usable variables in investigating the teaching-learning process*' (p.2).

In this study, teachers' and students' perceptions were sought to address the issue of how materials/texts used in the literature lesson would enable the development of a sense of shared identity amongst the students. At the same time their perceptions of their roles in achieving the government's aspiration of a more integrated society through the 1Malaysia concept were also investigated.

By drawing comparisons between the differences and similarities of the perceptions of teachers and their students, a general conclusion can be drawn about what could be strengthened in student-teacher interaction in the classroom to help develop this notion of shared identity. In addition, not only would this enlighten teachers about how their students feel about their classroom interaction, but it would also offer possible directions for teachers' professional development. A more general point that can be made is that very little classroom interaction occurred during the observations of the pre-workshop classes. If teachers do not encourage classroom interaction, it is difficult to see how students can develop the skills which will help them interact with people from a different background.Communication skills' development is needed, e.g. students'awareness of the audience to whom they are communicating, being confident or being able to take criticism, listening carefully to conflicting ideas or views. Being comfortable in each

other's company is the key. Research conducted into teachers' attitudes suggests that they do notoften want to do anything that threatens their control base (Brekelmans et al., 2011; Brok, Fisher & Koul, 2005; Brok, Fisher & Rickards, 2006) – this is a kind of fear of not just teenage, but racial revolt as well, so they stick to 'rules' and avoid discussion, so that students learn very few communication skills in the classroom and the teachers hardly set an example.

Most of the research investigating similarities and differences of perceptions between teachers and students has been within the realm of a paradigm in which survey data are quantified and statistically measured to determine scores of differences and similarities between the two (Wubbles et al., 1991). A considerable amount of qualitative research however has been conducted in the area of teachers' and students' perspectives on classroom teaching and learning, which has produced relatively convincing results as these results can be adaptable over time and can be applied in different types of classes (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Goh & Tobin, 1998). This current study, however, has applied a combination of the two approaches and hopes to add to the pool of knowledge.

Based on the discussion above, several important aspects can be highlighted. These are elaborated under the following sub-headings.

7.1.1   Autonomy in the classroom

One important aspect in the investigation of the different perceptions of teachers and students in this study is around the degree to which students were given control over their own learning activities. Some teachers felt they

had given some autonomy to the students in their decision making in group work formation; however, several students tended to disagree (see 5.9). From the analysis in 5.9, students' decision making about group formation was more often than not overruled by their teachers, if the teachers felt that the combination of group members did not match the lesson objectives. In addition, most students were observed to have had minimal negotiations with their teachers regarding group formation. The implication is that the differences in teachers' and students' perceptions can probably indicate differing purposes in group work formation. Whilst teachers were mostly prepared for completing the syllabus and gearing students for examinations, students, on the other hand, demonstrated their eagerness to have their own 'voices' heard in classroom processes of decision making. Thus, teachers' openness to other voices is crucial for laying the foundations for the success of multi-ethnic group work, fostering 1Malaysia and paving a pathway for a tangible use of the Third Space construct.

In relation to the issue of autonomy discussed above, firstly, some students were seen to demand from their teachers more 'voice' and decision making in their quest for task completion. Secondly, in contrast to some students' contrary opinions, teachers were explicit about what students had to learn and how it should be learnt (see 5.4). Teachers and students have different ways of interpreting and making sense of 'autonomy'. Benson (2007) states that, by and large, teachers view autonomy essentially as related to classroom learning arrangements and that this falls within what has been indicated in the syllabus. This goes hand in hand with what most teachers in this study generally believed: that they (teachers) should determine the plan

for teaching and learning, not the students. Some students felt that a degree of student autonomy in decision making about classroom learning would enable them to better communicate their ideas, by selecting group members for collaborative problem-solving tasks (see 5.8 and 5.9).

Little (2007:16) asserts that '*the essence of learner autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning*'. However, Chan (2000) attests to the notion that it is problematic for teachers to have room for learner autonomy in exam-driven contexts such as Malaysia, where the classroom teaching and learning is run '*in a formal and structured manner*' (p.78). From my observations, it seems that there was little learning autonomy (i.e. choices for students) in any other aspect of classroom learning such asself-assessment, goal-setting and self-reflection (although these aspects of learning were not directly within the scope of this investigation).

7.1.2 The importance of creating a dialogic interactionalspace in the classroom

The use of dialogic talk in small group interactions can be seen as a platform for acquiring the skills necessary for the construction of a collective identity. To reiterate, the term 'dialogic', as discussed in Chapter Three from Wells (2000), signifies the establishment of a classroom community working together towards a shared goal in the search for an understanding which involves dialogue rather than a teacher monologue.

Teachers, however, were observed to focus on immediate classroom priorities such as finishing the syllabus before the examination, and emphasised the important aspects that would be examined rather than

developing the skills required for students to interact with each other by working in pairs or groups (see 5.4 and table 5.5). Students' achievement in exams was prioritised. Thus, it was not surprising that providing more interactional space such as allocating time for pair and group work (see 5.8.1) for students would have seemed to inhibit teachers' objectives in completing their syllabus on time.

The conclusion that I reached when observing lessons before and after the workshop confirms the urgent need to provide spaces for students to be more interactive with their peers and their teachers. Long and Porter (1985) in their study of group work, interlanguage and Second Language Acquisition, acknowledge that group work does not only increase language practice opportunities; it also improves the quality of student talk, motivates the learners and promotes a positive affective climate for both peers and teachers, the subject and the learning environment (see Table 5.5). What can be drawn from the classroom observations in the present study is that teachers could make their lessons interactive if they wished and could, without great difficulty, turn a linear classroom teaching session into an interactive one that captured students' attention. As stated by Blatchford et al. (2003:175) '*teachers are the best judge of what works best in the specific context in which they practice...*'.

I also noted that there were striking differences in students' reactions before and after the workshop in that, teachers in their day- to-day lessons had somehow neglected to consider the role of studentinteraction in achieving their teaching objectives. In the observations after the workshop, on the whole, students enjoyed working together with their friends regardless of

their ethnic and cultural backgrounds because teachers had in general made greater effort to create a 'space' for more interactions and dialogues to occur. In this regard, Wells (2000) reminds us that 'covering' the syllabus should not be the ultimate goal in education; this argument perhaps is not convincing for teachers who feel a need for time to prepare students for examinations.

Students' participation in classroom discussion can be motivated by a combination of factors, ranging from how the discourse is structured to the content of the lesson and the comfort of surroundings, and the extent to which they provide a supportive atmosphere (Consolo, 2002). So, a number of students are willing to 'take risks' to enable classroom communication. The observations suggested that the more favourable atmosphere provided by teachers during the literature lessons was largely generated as a kind of 'imposed action' whereby the teachers accommodated the atmosphere due to 'the research', (see 5.8.1) not because they believed in the importance of a favourable atmosphere. In other words, the teachers provided the 'space' for students due to the research investigation. Otherwise, the 'space' was more likely to be ignored under the more normal conditions of their day-to-day classroom teaching.

Pierce (1995) suggests that when teachers provide a positive classroom interactional space, students respond in a more meaningful way, thus increasing student motivation, which in turn leads to higher achievement.This assumption is supported by Hall and Verplaetse (2000:10), who affirm that:

> It is in their interactions with each other that teachers and students work together to create the intellectual and practical activities that shape both form and the content of the target language as well as the processes and outcomes of individual development.

Thus, it can be concluded that as part of the desire to construct a shared Malaysian identity, first and foremost, teachers should be willing to create this dialogic interactional space, from time to time, in order that students can practise the dialogic intercultural skills necessary to move forward towards the construction of a collective identity.

7.1.3 The construction of shared knowledge in students' collaborative assignments

The construction of shared knowledge, a possible prerequisite of a shared identity, requires students to negotiate with other individuals or groups of people. Negotiation according to Maier (2001) can be understood as '*a process in which conflicts of interest concern the distribution of the good desired by each participant*' (p.228). Researchers have shown that collaborative work between students and their peers and also with their teachers provides 'the rich zone'(Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez and Tejeda, 1999). From the evidence of the observations and teachers' and students' feedback in this study, this 'rich zone' is not yet fully tapped, although some teachers are aware of its potential.

The hybrid multicultural setting as reflected in the classrooms in this study offers a plethora of opportunities for teachers and students to construct a place for shared knowledge, including discursive reference to their own home experiences, so providing a Third Space for collaborative work. From

the classroom observations, the experiences students brought to the lessons were channelled when they had an opportunity to use materials depicting local scenarios, more favoured by the students than the teachers. Although the use of selected Malaysian authored textwas a 'one off' experience for teachers and students, nonetheless, such texts could be used again and teachers are the key players in the longer term success of this initiative, i.e. motivating students to keep the communication and interaction going so that this shared knowledge can be expanded to make this study of literature the basis of a shared Malaysian identity.

There are, of course, bound to be both productive and unproductive interactions in the construction of shared knowledge during students' collaborative engagement. Ferguson (2009) argues that productive interactions occur when students are engaged in *'interactions that help the groups to extend their understandings and to achieve goals'*, while an unproductive interaction '*does little or nothing to support the construction of knowledge or social understandings, which may create confusion or tension within the group*'(p.185). The results from the data analysis confirmed that productive interactions enriched students' understanding of topics which were rarely discussed in the classroom, such as the impact of intercultural elements or stereotyping. These types of interactions were largely observed in lessons which used materials depicting Malaysian scenes. On the other hand, unproductive group interactions mainly occurred when students were not able to connect to the group work assigned to them such as when discussing the novel 'The Pearl' (see 5.9.2). This was mainly due to the teacher's ambivalent attitude to group work, which did not produce

productive results. Thus, in the quest for the construction of a collective identity in the classroom, I would argue that teaching strategies which help lessons 'connect' to students so that they can practice communicative and intercultural skills, should be given the highest priority on every teacher's agenda.

7.1.4 Why learner centred techniques would support shared Malaysian identity construction

Dupin-Bryant (2004:42) affirms that a learner centred teaching style is:

> ...a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centred, and democratic in which both students and the instructor decide how, what and when learning occurs.

Dupin-Bryant characterises a teacher-centred style as '*a style of instruction that is formal, controlled, and autocratic in which instructor directs how, what, and when students learn*'. Similarly, Kain (2003:104) maintains that:

> ...students' construction of knowledge is shared and learning is achieved through students' engagement with activities' and in teacher-centred approaches 'judgments about appropriate areas and methods of inquiry, legitimacy of information, and what constitutes knowledge rest with the teacher'.

In regard to the construction of shared Malaysian identity, a learner-centred teaching approach is likely to be more effective than a teacher-centred approach as learners are given the 'space' for collaborative and interactive engagement (see 5.9.1). In this type of approach, they are likely to be given the chance to make their own decisions in their collaborative engagement in that they are able to use their home and school experiences to negotiate the kind of identity they want to portray in different situations (see 5.8.1). For

example, a non- Muslim member working in a multicultural group may want to tolerate a Muslim friend who wants to go and perform his/her prayer time during their discussion. Their identity as tolerant Malaysian would be shown in this situation.

Teacher-centred teaching approaches, on the other hand, are likely to hamper the construction of shared identity as teachers commonly are regarded (by the students and themselves) as the people who have exclusive power in the classroom, determined by their focus on completing the syllabus and in deciding where the focus of the lesson should be directed (see 5.4 and 5.9.3).

Therefore, in achieving the objective of constructing shared Malaysian identity, teachers are encouraged to be aware of the significance of their pedagogical choices, as their choices for teaching strategies may have serious consequences for their students' development of shared identity.

7.1.5   Meaning-making and intended interactions

Finally, the similarities and differencesin the perceptions of teachers and students in this study pointed to the collective meaning-making between student-teacher and student-student in the classroom. This relates to the decisions they made during the lesson and whether those decisions were made solely by teacher or through a collective decision. The making of meaning in this process is always fraught with uncertainties and is not a straightforward procedure. With their experience, teachers are seen by the students as persons of 'authority',who have the upper hand in determining teaching strategies which are deemed suitable for their sets of students.

Kurzman (2008) states that meaning making is the way in which people continually explore in order to understand their surroundings and '*...that the imposition of meaning on the world is a goal in itself, a spur to action, and a site of contestation'* (p.9). He further points out that meaning includes

> moral understandings of right or wrong, cognitive understandings of true or false, perceptual understandings of like or unlike, social understandings of identity and difference, aesthetic understandings of attractive and repulsive...(p.9)

From classroom observations and interviews conducted in this study, some students' found that they were likely to be more 'connected' in groups of friends from similar ethnicity (see 5.9 and 6.2.2) in their classroom decision making. Teachers on the other hand, were seen exerting their cognitive understandings which seemed to best serve their teaching objectives for that particular lesson (see Table 5.5).

The findings, however, suggest that although there is a clear aim on the part of the teacher for the students to achieve the intended learning objectives in group discussions by making meaning through collaboration, it does not always work out as planned (see 5.9). Some teachers are more likely to perceive that group work collaboration at times inhibits knowledge construction since it takes more time for students to collaborate than to undertake individual work. Therefore, it was not surprising that some teachers in this study were sceptical and excluded group work from their lessons. An example is RA's pre- and post-classroom observations (refer to sections 5.9.2 and 5.9.4) in that he executed a whole class teaching approach through the entire lessons.

What can be concluded from the similarities and differences of perceptions between teachers and students mentioned above is that their insights into teaching and learning are inextricably related and contribute to different overarching ideas about the teaching and learning process. By giving a greater degree of 'voice' to the students and more autonomy to the teachers, as well as students, in their classroom decision making, schooling would arguably provide the best terrain for the cultivation of any new, positive inter-ethnic relations in a multi-ethnic country such as Malaysia.

7.2   What type of discursive engagement can occur in classroom interactions?

I use the word 'engagement' to mean the activities and practices in the classroom which cultivate the construction and reflection of 'realities' (what is happening around students) through actions and interactions which could lead to the shaping of a shared identity with or without the aid of their teachers. The use of the word 'discursive', following Young (2009), refers to students' participation in their literature lessons through negotiation, arguments, explanations, the choice of language used in which they interpret meaning from those resources, therefore creating their own identity (see 6.4). Another aspect of this classroom 'discourse' is the way in which the quality of participation changed or remained the same after the introduction of new stimuli (in this case new texts). Student discursive engagement in the classroom is therefore grounded in the understanding that '*meaning is negotiated in interaction, rather than being present once-and-for-all*' (Young, 2009:2).

In addition, Lave and Wenger (1991:98) state that who one becomes depends on what type of activity system one is engaged in. Students and teacher share their understandings of the activity they are involved in and the ways in which these activities help them to understand their goals. A two-way process of information exchange is necessary for an effective and healthy classroom atmosphere. In the quest for the construction and development of a sense of shared identity amongst the students in their literature classrooms, discursive practices including teacher-student interactions during the data collection period were scrutinised very closely.Similarly, Young (2009), in describing the relationship between language learning and discursive practice, comments that with the emphasis on socially constructed knowledge, discursive practice:

> ...is viewed not only as the changing linguistic knowledge of individual learners but also primarily as learners' changing participation in discursive practices. (p.135)

In so changing, learners not only learn the language but, most importantly, learners learn how to participate in the language learning classroom. This is especially true in the context of this study in that students in the literature classroom not only required to engage themselves with the plot, characters and conflicts found in a text; they also needed to use the English language to interact, negotiate, argue with their peers and to get their message across and be understood.

Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez & Chiu (1999) in their study entitled, 'Building a Culture of Collaboration through Hybrid Language Practice', assert that:

> Coordinating actions with others, or joint activity, is a socially mediated process that can be understood not only in terms of the more expert learner assisting the less capable one but in terms of how human beings utilize social processes and a variety of cultural resources to construct potential zones of proximal development. (p.87)

From the analyses discussed in Chapters Five and Six, there are several overarching themes in relation to student and teachers' interactions that can be highlighted in terms of these discursive practices, in that the space (zone) identified is potentially a 'rich zone' (Moje et al, 2004) for learning to occur in (see Chapter Three). 'Rich zone' in this context refers to the Malaysian classroom community where diversity and differences of cultures and languages can potentially be resources for creating productive new learning spaces. As Moje and associates (ibid) put it '*utilizing multiple diverse, and even conflicting mediational tools promote the emergence of Third Spaces, or zones of development, and thus, expands learning*'(p.288).

7.2.1 Negotiations and collective meaning-making and its dilemma

As mentioned in Chapter Six, group dynamics are important in order for the students to be able to engage in a comfortable and healthy process of meaning-making. Students in this study attempted to negotiate between their peers and also with their teachers in making decisionsabout who they wanted to work with during the learning process. This was because they needed peers with whom they were able to collaborate and, at the same time,with whom they could come to a decision about the assigned tasks. Specifically, some tasks involved discussion of 'sensitive' issues pertaining to stereotyping in the Malaysian community. There are two sides to this

dilemma. Firstly, teachers' acquiescing to students' demands that they should only work with their selected friends will defeat the purpose of the goal of understanding 'others'. If students are commanded to work with peers with whom they are clearly not able to work, the learning objective is not likely to meet with success.

Discursive engagement in a hybrid classroom does not always work as planned. Sometimes delicate negotiations on the part of the teacher and the students need to take place. If teachers are not willing to consider further 'negotiation' from students, the objective of understanding 'others' cannot be achieved.

Another dilemma observed throughout the data collection period was that students did not always seem to make the fullest meaning out of their communication and interactions with their peers. Sometimes the teacher's intention was noble in aiming to create a more supportive environment for students' learning, but this was hampered by other factors such as students' reluctance to participate, and lack of preparation on the part of both the teachers and the students (see 5.8.1). Negotiations that brought very little meaning to the students were also observed when students could not understand the tasks assigned to them and then the teacher changed tack e.g. asking the students to perform a dramatized playlet (in GR's lesson, refer to section 5.9.4). Other teacherscontrolled students' group interactions to keep the students on task (see 5.9.3). Discursive engagement in the quest for meaning-making can be unproductive without a careful and meticulous planning and teachers' exclusive focus on the end product (a playlet for

example; see 5.9.4), can sometimes be counterproductive. Processes which allow students to make meaning out of their learning should be prioritized wherever possible.

7.2.2   Choice of language and structures used

Students' and teachers' language structure and use in their interactions and communication can produce a construction of shared knowledge, thus facilitating the development of the pathway to shared Malaysian identity.

In the context of this study, the persistent use of Malaysian English (Manglish) not only between the students but also between the teacher and students' interactions (see 6.4) raised an overriding question in the teaching and learning of English in Malaysian classrooms; does the use of Manglish provide more learning opportunities for students? Or will it be an impediment to the development of more robust and rigorous methods for English language learning? There are differing ideas concerning this issue. On the one hand, the use of Manglish could be seen as undermining the state decision to allocate more English language-learning hours, which has been one of the key items on the Malaysian education agenda since the decision was taken to teach and learn science and mathematics through the medium of Bahasa Malaysia, starting in 2012. The use of 'globally accepted' English or International English (Seidlhofer, 2003) is very much advocated in the Malaysian setting as Manglish has generally been associated with inaccuracy and has been regarded as non-standard and colloquial, thus inhibiting communication with the wider English-speaking community (i.e. UK, USA, Australia and others). However, while it is an acceptable form of spoken

discourse is some contexts, it is rarely used in written form. On the other hand, researchers have found that language learning can be made more meaningful if students are given the opportunity to link their home experience and knowledge to their classroom enterprises (actions and activities) (Paiva et al., 1999). However, Janks (2009) cautions:

> ...more often than not, this [the use of varieties in language learning] is tied to the question of power; it is not an accident that it is the language varieties of social elites that are institutionally sanctioned and naturalised. (p.267) (My emphasis)

Many English language experts in Malaysia emphasise the need to focus not on how the language is spoken, but upon the accuracy with which the language is used including grammatically correct sentence construction; at the same time, however, colloquialism in communication is not rejected, as long as the message intended is understood. This is acknowledged by researchers who conducted several studies in the Malaysian context (Baskaran, 1994; Gaudart, 2000; Lee, 1998; Pillai & Fauziah, 2006). Govindan and Pillai (2009) aptly sum up the discussion on the use of Malaysian English rather than Manglish in the classroom:

> Awareness that Malaysian speakers can switch from more colloquial to standardforms of English (provided they have these sub-varieties in their linguistic repertoire) helps to shake-off stereotypical views about ME (that is, it does notequal the colloquial variety), and helps to shape more realistic views about notionsof correctness and appropriate use of language. Such awareness can provide someform of assurance to speakers that the English that they speak is not necessarily thewrong kind of English or bad English. It is also of use to teachers of English whocan use knowledge of the different sub-varieties to make their students aware of theappropriate use of language (p.90).

From the perspective of this study, 'knowledge of the different sub-varieties' of languages, mention above is relevant for teachers and students so that they can explore their experience of the language thereby reinforcing the notion of the Third Space.

7.2.3 The nature of student-teacher interactions

In the classroom setting, teachers always have a certain amount of power. However, the degree of power allocated to students differs considerably from one teacher to another. McCroskey and Richmond (1983) suggest that '*the more power is employed by the teacher as a means of control, the more likely it will be required as a means of control*' (p.175), suggesting that teachers who frequently make use of power to control their classroom learning have no other tricks in their box and hence use power to a greater extent than teachers who have multiple strategies. The data analysis in this study reveals that teachers exerted different degrees of control during their lessons, some more so than others. But, by and large, the kind of control executed by teachers determines the direction of their lessons. By this I mean that the teachers whodid not impose an excessive amount of control in their classrooms offered more room for negotiations between and among the students, and the teachers were observed to be more flexible, creative and spontaneous in executing their lessons. These behaviours undoubtedly increased the students' motivation to carry out the tasks which they were set, as evidenced by SR's and FN's lessons (See 6.5.3 and 6.5.4).

When the level of control is reduced by the teacher, students tend to be more comfortable and this reduces fear of the teacher, as compared to the situation

in lessons of teachers who are very controlling. Research suggests that a positive classroom environment (student-teacher, students-student relationship) is one of the most important factors in successful collaborative work (Wang et al, 1994; Wubble & Levy, 1993).

Levy et al. (2003) reported that the more experience that a teacher had, the greater the perception of dominance, leadership and strictness by the students. This finding was not borne out in this study as PL, who had twenty years experience was approachable and affable, and had more affinity with her students compared to AI who had five years of experience and was seen as very distant, unapproachable and strict towards her students (see Table 4.13 for teachers' profiles). Typically, the issue here is about younger teachers who are exposed to more contemporary approaches to and strategies for student learning, but was not affable, while older teachers do more 'chalk and talk' but showed considerably more confidence.

7.2.4 Participation in collaborative hybrid engagement in a community of practice

Collaborative learning, as explained by Dillenbourg (1999), is defined in different ways by different scholars, but it can be loosely defined as '*a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together*' (ibid:1) (original emphasis). Thus, collaborative engagement in this study is used to characterise students' activities for task completion in order to identify favourable or unfavourable practices that would support the construction of collective identity amongst the students and teachers. Moje et al. (2004:41) further explain:

> Some scholars have taken up hybridity theory to describe how teachers, students, and others in school settings establish new forms of participation that merge the first space of school science with the second space of the home to create a third space that has elements of both.

The term Community of Practice (CoP) is summarised by Wenger, Dermott & Snyder (2002:4) as

> ...groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

The description above is highly significant to the domain of this study because it envisions the construction of a collective identity. In the CoP, people in a society/community share similar concerns, in this case, the construction of an embodied society for a more politically and economically stable country. The findings of this investigation reveal that the idea of CoP can be applied to the classroom context in that students interact regularly with different sets of people in the school community, whether intentionally or otherwise. Students and teachers do not necessarily work together every day but occasionally, as and when they find the necessity to share experience and knowledge relating to a shared value. This can be exemplified in the group work the students carry out in the classroom. Whilst working on tasks, they implicitly build on understanding/misunderstanding of working as a group and try to overcome problems and conflicts.

The main concern is that a CoP needs to be nurtured by teachers and by the students themselves in order to support the construction of a shared Malaysian identity. In the findings on students' preference for working in

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groups, I concluded that teachers found that students were able to interact with each other regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, some students preferred to be in a group with members of similar ethnicity (if they were given the choice). Therefore, some students would seize every opportunity to work with peers from a similar ethnic background. In order for a CoP to be successful and effective, teachers would have to play a major role in developing students' interest in working with peers from different backgrounds, and, most importantly, teachers need to set a good example themselves by working very closely with teachers from other ethnic backgrounds.

Another aspect of my notion of engagement is the participants' engagement with materials other than the ones prescribed by the syllabus. Teachers chose narratives from a list of suggestions during the one-day workshop. Teachers and students generally came to an agreement that it was beneficial for students to be exposed to a combination of foreign and local texts, which would enable students to be more globally sensitive to the cultures of the world (see 5.9.3, 6.2.4 and 6.3.8). However, that aside, the findings revealed that students were much more collaborative and proactive and contributed much more easily during the lessons when materials depicting the 'home' environment were used to which they could relate effortlessly. This suggests that students benefit from materials/texts which are suitably related to their identities as teenagers, regardless of whether the materials have a local or foreign context.

One teacher (SH) suggested that it is essential to understand the cultures of people in one's own country before moving on to understand the cultures of

the world. With a multicultural and multi ethnic community like Malaysia, understanding people from different cultural backgrounds is likely to take time, effort and a lot of motivation as some may believe that 'understanding others' may not bring any 'personal' benefit to them. Therefore, generating and usingmaterials, such as those related to the experiences of home, community and the world, would help students to be more willing to collaborate and engage with students from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds as they could share values and aspirations in a community of practice.

7.3 In what ways does the notion of Third Space help to develop the sense of shared identity from teachers'/students' perceptions?

7.3.1 What makes literature suitable for identity work?

'*Literature has always been concerned with questions about identity, and literary works sketch answers, implicitly or explicitly, to these questions'* (Culler, 1997:106). Culler goes on to say that literary works suggest multiple ways in which identity is constructed. This present study concerns the teenage years when changes are likely to be prominent emotionally, psychologically, and physically. Besides home, the classroom is a place where they have the opportunity to understand and explore their identity through reading, writing, researching, discussing and many other modes of self-expression. Through studying literature, students have wider opportunity than in subjects such as geography or mathematics to explore who they are in

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the context of a wider community. Literature study can provide a platform for dialogues between the students and their peers as well as their teachers about their own identity in a multicultural classroom.

For example from TDFD, Lian Jie represents a wife, a hawker, an employer, a Chinese in a multicultural community and finally a Malaysian in the rise of immigrant communities. More often than not '*literature is an expression of and influence on the times in which it was written*' (Wilson, 2009). For example, TDFD was written just after the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and consequently this event was still fresh in students' minds. Literature also deals with global themes of stereotyping in multicultural countries around the globe which affects all cultures and societies. Additionally, literature for adolescents is frequently narrated through the lens of a teenage narrator (as depicted in AKGTH). In AKGTH, the narrator, being young and sometimes 'naive' characterises 'Mother' as demanding or insistent, particularly stereotypical of teenagers. The narrator also deals with Ah Khaw struggles to ignore or to embrace his own identity as a Chinese in a dominant Malay community.

In the process of creating their own identity, students from the minority group, more often than not are divided between two conflicting identities; their own (which can be similar or different from that of their parents),   and the values of the dominant identity. Through the power of literature study, not only does the text link to their experiences, it also helps them remember the plot and characters of the story more easily. Scholes (1985:xi) asserts that:

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> Texts are places where power and weakness become visible and discussable, where learning and ignorance manifest themselves, where the structures that enable and constrain our thoughts and actions become palpable.

Thus, studying literature is an opportunity for the students to re-examine their own views of themselves and others, in light of the views of others.

7.3.2   Constructing the Third Space in the classroom

Reiterating my earlier point, the notion of the Third Space informed the study at a later stage after the data analysis had been completed. It was a theoretical construct which emerged out of the data analysis. From the data, it emerged that students and teachers were positive about the different ideas that could be introduced in their teaching and learning (see 5.8 and 5.10). In addition, according to the literature, the understanding which takes place through sharing experiences through dialogues of argumentation, negotiation and explanation can strengthen the foundation of knowledge generation (Wells, 2000). I realised that these new ideas could benefit students' learning if teachers were aware of ways in which the Third Space can be a transformational space for teaching and learning, and that if the Third Space was beneficially exploited, any new curriculum ideas could be introduced without having to adhere to a prescribed official syllabus, at the same time attaining the intended learning outcomes and still getting students to work towards their examination objectives (see 7.3.3 for exemplification of a model lesson sequence).

In the discussion of hybridity and the Third Space, I have drawn upon concepts fromMoje et al.'s (2004) study based on hybridity theory.These

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authors assert that '*people in any given community draw on multiple resources or funds to make sense of the world*' and that being '*in-between several different funds of knowledge and Discourse can be productive and constraining in terms of one's literate, social, and cultural practices*'(p. 42*)*. The findings in this present study indicated thatstudents only drew on their home and community experiences and knowledge during their lessons, if the teachers gave explicit instructions to do so when using the Malaysian short story, so that they were able to link and connect their own experiences to the problems and conflicts presented in the story (see 5.10). However, from the pre-workshop observations, students often seemed detached from the content of lessons in that they were not able to bring their home or community experiences into the classroom as there was very little opportunity to do so and no attempt or guidance from the teachersto encourage them.This suggests that there could be value in explaining the relevance of this Third Space in the classroom to teachers by indicating its parameters and boundaries and ways in which it can become a medium for the construction of collective identity.

In explaining the relevance of the Third Space as a medium of shared identity construction, a possible framework could involve three applications following Hulme, Cracknell and Owens (2009): a **recognised space** in which students and teachers can negotiate their learning and teaching; an **excursion space** where the space is used to travel into their designated lesson activities such as in the forms of role-play, drama, dialogues and a **transmission space** in which communication, information and correspondence are exchanged. A sequence of lessons using AKGTH story

proposed in 7.3.3 below, exploits the idea of a recognised, excursion and transmission spaces.

Ideally, activities based on all three modes can be planned as 'excursions into learning' whereby messages and values are translated into role-play, drama and dialogues between and amongst the students as well asin teacher-student interactions. Finally, messages that are translated through excursions (drama, role-play, dialogue)can be transmitted to the rest of the class sothat information can be exchanged and communication reciprocated. Through the course of these transactions, the Third Space can actively serve as a platform for the students to construct collective identity through their heightened knowledge and awareness of 'others' around them.

Thus, in the context of this study and the Malaysian classroom setting:

- The Third Space was promoted through the official curriculumby the use of Malaysian short stories;teachers were given more autonomy in choosing suitable texts in order to engage the students in the construction of a shared Malaysian identity.

- Teachers were encouraged to integrate Malaysian short stories within the official curriculum so that the amalgamation could possibly facilitate students' own version of shared Malaysian identity.

- The development of Third Space within a hybrid discourse context is a tool for navigating students through unfamiliar learning contexts and/or theories while building on their everyday knowledge and discourse. These unfamiliar learning contexts, also known as border

crossings, (Giroux, 2006) emphasise differences amongst students, and making the strange (or new ideas) familiar.

In this sense, the Third Space provides an avenue for 'differences' in beliefs, customs and traditions to be able to make an appearance, unlike in the course of day-to-day classroom practices through which students tend to be geared towards a general acceptance of a phenomenon where differences are set aside.

Thus, the points discussed above indicate some possible ways in which the Third Space could become an active medium of transformation with the potential to generategenuine interests in the construction of sharedidentity.

7.3.3   A model of a sequence of lessons based on 'Ah Khaw Goes to Heaven' (AKGTH) showing how the Third Space theory can be applied by teachers.

In modelling how the Third Space can be applied in the classroom, I will outline a possible project which can be undertaken by a teacher using AKGTH. The overall objective of the project (through a sequence of lessons) is to construct students' identity between home, the community and the school whereby the notion of the Third Space can be applied. Students' out of school experiences in the home and community are recreated and familiar discourses/contexts[6] (Cook, 2005) are encouraged, thereby activating schooled discourses, in which several different funds of knowledge meet (Moll et al., 1992).

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[6] Home-type contexts according to Cook (2005) are naturally occurring types of discourses within family members and schooled-type texts are those discourses occurring within school.

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Objectives of the project:

1.   To create an actual 'space' in the classroom, i.e. a mini-exhibition space in which the history of Japanese occupation in Malaya (1945-1948) is presented through illustrations of the sequence of major events.

2.   To prepare the class for a play for the end of year concert.

3.   To prepare the class for the school 'open-day' where parents and members of the community are invited to witness students' work/projects

4.   To construct students' own identity as Malaysian in a multicultural community

Objectives of the sequence of lessons:

1.   **Lesson 1 :** To identify plot of the story, settings and main characters from AKGTH.

   Students familiarise themselves with the flow of the story and discuss types of characters such as hero, heroine, villain etc. For example: who is: the narrator, Elder Brother, Ah Khaw or Mother? Where was this story set? Why was Ah Khaw in dilemma?

   What are the some of the conflicts in this story? Teacher directs the discussion towards the culture and religion and their controversies in the Malaysian community. Students are encouraged to talk about their own religion to peers from different religions.

2.   **Lesson 2** : Teacher facilitates discussion about the setting of the story

anddifferent themes which can be explored by the students.

Students form multicultural groups (if this is possible) to start on their project. Each group will select one theme which explores the notion of either hybrid language, customs, food, clothing and representation of the place in which one lives such as in the village (kampong), in a shed (such as Ah Khaw's shared house). Hybrid language can be the form of sentences or phrases Ah Khaw used such as 'Aii yaa, sister..'

Students discuss while teacher moves from one group to another, joining in the discussion and offering his/her own experiences. Students then present their findings to the whole class.

3.   **Lesson 3:** Building on the discussion on themes, the teacher asks the groups to undertake out-of-school activities in which more information is gathered, e.g. from:

   1. Historian (possible interviews with the likes of Prof. Khoo Kay Kim and Prof. Shamsul Amri) (Malaysian historians)

   2. Pictures of Japanese invasion in Malaya from National Archive

   3. Watching a film entitled 'Bukit Kepong' depicting the horrors of Japanese invasion in Malaya and writing a report on the sequence of important events.

   4. Carrying out interviews with older family members or people in the community about life in the 1950s.

4.   **Lesson 4 :**   Students first work on the identified 'space' in the classroom in which their exhibits can be laid out (time is given to work on this outside school hours).

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Teacher then turns back to AKGTH and asks the students to choose any part of the story to recreate a dialogue (students' own and unscripted) using their experiences of interviews and stories from family members. In this way, students can start compiling their own materials (each group and then put together as a whole class sketch) based on AKGTH. Students are given flexibility to modify the ending if they wish. This kind of spontaneous dialogue and group discussion can be carried out in two lessons during which students try to construct their own identity as Malaysians in a multicultural community.

The lessons proposed above could thereby constitute an amalgamation of students' and teacher's own experiences between home, community and school in the Third Space. In this process, students need to decode unfamiliar terms such as '*baju kurung*' which is used to indicate men's clothing in AKGTH. In the present day, *baju kurung* is associated with ladies' clothing. Therefore, in order to decode this unfamiliarity, students need to use their home and community 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992).

The lessons also explored ways in which home discourses (with family members) could be integrated into the literature syllabus, preparing students to work with their interpretation of characters and plot and also to improve their communication and presentational skills; students need to explain the objectives of their exhibition and provide information for visitors.

Similarly, these lessons fulfilled the demand of the literature syllabus and the students' preparation for examination. In this vein, the notion of hidden curriculum is revealed in that students are expected to complete the proposed project in order to gain project marks, or praise for the play they produced (by the public, teachers and other students in school) and will conform to the demand of schooling process (getting good exam results in the subject).

7.4 How did the use of Malaysian short stories facilitate the 1Malaysia concept in the construction of shared Malaysian identity?

The selected Malaysian short stories were an instrument for investigation in this study. The teachers involved were given a choice of pre-selected stories depicting Malaysian settings and happenings in the community. The materials used in the classroom, I believe, are one of the most important determinants for successfully engaging students to generate meaningful exchanges with their peers. Wright (1987: vii) asserts that:

> Although often the social and psychological factors inherent in the roles are hidden, the process of learning a language in the classroom is underpinned by this teacher-learner relationship. It is further enriched by the part played by learning materials and the types of role implicit in the materials that are used.

Ways in which hybrid spaces (home, community and school) and hybrid practices (amalgamation of studying for examination and, for example, producing playlet for class presentation) can be explored by teachers and may serve as sparks for the transformation and expansion of literature

learning, specifically in this context. Drawing from the findings of classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and students' group interviews, the illustration is given in 7.3.3 above of how productive cultures of collaboration and utilisation of Malaysian short stories can create hybrid activities, roles and practices that lead to a very productive context of learning and development (Gutierrez et al., 1999).

Conflicts in the narratives used and in discussing racial/ethnic (and other) stereotyping (such as in TDFD or in AKGTH) could become the catalyst for expanding learning in the Third Space. Every Malaysian teacher should keep an open mind towards and keeping abreast with the government's effort of a more integrated society through campaigns such as 1Malaysia and also discussing sensitive issues such as racial 'slurs' and ethnic stereotyping. Additionally, the narratives used by teachers in the post-workshop observations were not part of the official syllabus of the literature component. However, the research indicated that both teachers and learners produced a variety of significant interactional patterns (see 5.10) which could become hybrid activities to bridge the formal and informal spaces between the formal and informal syllabus and between home and school experiences. Malaysian short stories have the potential to serve as a tool to help create a shared Malaysian identity and could become an intermediary to forge interest in understanding diverse cultures, hence working towards a more integrated society. By contrast, prescribed texts are arguably more likely to reduce the potential of constructing shared identity as they tend to be examined in specific ways (i.e. around issues such as character, plot,

values) so that teachers gear text exploration towards the potential of what could be asked about in the examinations.

7.5 How can the findings be usefully theorised in terms of the hidden curriculum?

As discussed in 3.5, Rowntree (1981)describes the hidden curriculum as the understanding, values and also beliefs which are being conveyed to students in schools subconsciously through implicit demands placed upon them. These implicit demands include but are not restricted to aspects such as arriving on time to school, finishing assigned homework and submitting it on the stipulated date, abiding by school rules, working hard, respecting others and many other demands. Kentli (2009) suggests that when a researcher intends to examine the hidden curriculum, the concepts of hegemony and resistance are significant in exploring how the pedagogical practices of the school inform and socialise students (see 7.5.1 below for greater discussion on power and hegemony). Thus, from the analysis of teachers' and students' perspectives in my study, the concept of hegemony was evident in the education policies and informed practices and teachers classroom control. Teachers' and students' resistance was also apparent (see 5.4 and 6.3.7 (page 267).

Within this framework, both the concepts of the Third Space and shared Malaysian identity construction are somewhat abstract and can only be realised through heightening the awareness of this concept. Consciousness-raising as teacher's teaching strategies can be geared towards any content

subjects in the formal curriculum. Although it is implied in the formal curriculum that students should be working alongside each other regardless of culture and ethnicity, there needs to be a framework to support this noble intention. Thus, this investigation suggests that an awareness of the Third Space provides an opportunity for the hidden curriculum to be manifested and acknowledged by teachers and students. For instance, working through the Malaysian short stories, students were able to bring their own experiences of the values and beliefs of the home and community into the classroom to share with their peers (see 6.3.5). It is this opportunity that should be seized by teachers to implement what was always implied by the political agenda of 1Malaysia - respect for other cultures, learning about others' religious celebrations and many other examples. Teachers' exposure to the notion of Third Space can be accomplished through workshops and hands on experience in that those teachers who have attended the workshop in this study can be potential facilitators.

The selected Malaysian short stories in the research served as an intermediary towards the formation of a shared identity amongst students in the classroom context. These stories were promoted by teachers involved, through the execution of 'meaningful' activities or tasks they had prepared. Meaningful tasks in this setting are activities which enhance the students' understanding of the different cultural and societal demands around them.

Teachers and students in the group interviews were encouraged to talk about 'others'' cultures, customs and beliefs, in that they shared their home and community experiences with the others in the group (see 6.3.4 and 6.3.5). The practice of bringing home experience into the classroom can potentially

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be enhanced. The knowledge of home and community is again an aspect which is 'taken for granted', is latent, and needs to be sufficiently exposed and explicitly spelled out in the formal curriculum.

Focussing on the utilisation of stories depicting Malaysian settings and scenarios which challenge the cultural differences inherent in a multicultural society is a valuable way to bring about different forms of discursive engagement amongst students and teachers in that it forges the basis for the generation of new sets of ideas. McLaughlin, McLellan, Waterhouse,& Morgan (2009:11) suggest:

> It is an idea**[**discursive engagement**]** both permissive and invitational, encouraging creative, radical thinking, denying the simplicity of binaries and valuing hybridity as a normal component of a disparate grouping. This is arguably a necessary starting point for an analysis of a complex, relational collaboration. **[**my emphasis**]**

7.5.1   Power and hegemony

The policies reflected in the curriculum which are put together by curriculum designers (who are appointed by the ruling government) delineate what should be included in the curriculum and what students should learn in school. The prescribed curriculum also reflects what sort of knowledge is considered important, and therefore is strongly emphasised and vice versa. Through power and hegemony (mentioned briefly in previous section), suitable attitudes are dictated to members of educational institutions. Within the hegemonic curriculum, '*measurable "excellence" and maximum efficiency has contributed to the proliferation of standardized tests*' (Bonikowski, 2004:14). This is one of the main foci in the process of schooling in many parts of the world, including Malaysia.

From the analysis of this investigation, the hegemonic power exerted by the formal curriculum through the education department, then to school management and finally to teachers was apparent in the teachers' responses. In the teachers' interviews, they were aware that there were other aspects of learning such as understanding cultural values, student autonomy and agency that could be media for understanding 'others' better. Due to the stringent and rigid curriculum specifications, however, teachers generally had little alternative but to follow syllabus requirements strictly and adhere to stipulated timetables (see 5.4).

7.5.2   Constraints for teachers when introducing new classroom practices

Several factors emerged during informal communication with teachers after their observed lessons relating to the constraints and problems they faced in introducing new classroom ideas and practices. The main problem reported was time constraints. This meant that since they had used one lesson for my observation, they were one lesson behind schedule. In addition, the short stories that I wanted the teachers to introduce to their students were not the ones which they were using in their normal literature lessons. So this did not actually prove effective for them in preparing students for the mid-year examinations due to take place three to four weeks after the post-workshop observations.

A great deal of teaching preparation at this time involved equipping students for the examination. An exam-oriented curriculum had been in place in the Malaysian education system since it was introduced during the colonial era

by the British. Although the curriculum had been revised many times over a period of more than five decades, assessment had been an integral part not only in schools but also at tertiary level. Teachers realised that they needed to gear their students towards the exam as pressure from every corner awaits them; the Ministry of Education demands schools produce good, intelligent students; the local education department pressurises heads of schools to produce excellent results, who then order teachers to do their best to at least beat the results of neighbouring schools, not to mention being under pressure to meet the expectations of parents who want their children to do well under the guidance of the teachers.

So, how does this study fit in to the situation mentioned above, when teachers play a very limited role in decision making in the syllabus design? They are just disseminators; at least, that was what they led me to understand. That was why teachers said that they had to focus on finishing the syllabus and carrying out revision in time for the more important examination at the end of the term.

Brooks and Brooks (1999: viii) in their discussion of a highly exam-oriented classroom stated that:

> There is much evidence (from NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] and TIMSS [Third International Mathematics and Science Study], to name but two sources) that classroom practices specifically designed to prepare students for tests do not foster deep learning that is applied to new settings. This evidence has led many school districts to question the philosophical underpinnings of the long dominant pre test-teach-post test model of education. Despite completing all their assignments and passing all their tests, too many students simply are not learning.

The quotation above sums up the dilemma in the school system in Malaysia in general and specifically for the teachers involved in this study. They hold immense responsibility to different echelons of people in the learning institution and there is an enormous pressure of accountability in delivering the prescribed syllabus in order to achieve good end results that are objectively measurable through increasing students' academic scores. Taking this into account, it is understandable that several teachers in this study were sceptical about the idea of using texts apart from the prescribed ones as 'covering' the syllabus must be prioritised in preparing their students for the examination. Wells (2000:8) offers a different view:

> Curriculum is a Means not an End: If the aim is to engage with particular students in productive activities that are personally as well as socially significant, 'covering' the curriculum should not be thought of as the ultimate goal of education. Instead, the specified knowledge and skills that make up the prescribed curriculum should be seen as items in the cultural tool-kit which are to be used as means in carrying out activities of personal and social significance. (Original emphasis)

However, the teachers' feedback in this study points to other directions - they generally felt that, by not 'covering' the syllabus in the stipulated time, and by not engaging students with activities other than 'upping' their test scores, they were taking a 'pedagogical risk' and putting themselves out of step with the 'effective' and the 'required'.

Besides teaching, most teachers hold other responsibilities from planning extra- curricular programmes to executing them, in and around the school curriculum. With this in mind, teachers have to balance teaching responsibilities and administrative accountability. It is not unusual for

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teachers either to decline other unrelated responsibilities, or to take on far more than they already have.

At the beginning of this research several teachers declined to take part in the study for this very reason. New ideas indubitably evoke both excitement and anxiety in different people, and teachers are no exception. The proposed idea of constructing shared Malaysian identity in the classroom drew different reactions from teachers and students in this study. Some were not sure of its viability and some were quite positive (see section 5.7). If this idea were implemented, it could imply changes to both the teachers' 'regulated' teaching schedules and their workload. They would be exposed to the 'unknown', which deviates from their familiar pathways. This could also mean more teaching deadlines and might bring about the fear of being 'off track'. Many teachers will resist proposals for curriculum change if they fear that it will bring more work.

7.5.3   Taken-for-granted assumptions

One of the many aspects of the hidden curriculum relates to taken-for-granted assumptions of schooling (including teaching and learning). One of the more common ones according to Bonikowski (2004) is students' submission to teachers' demands for minimal noise, and movement, and a clear distinction between work and play. The other is for the students to aim for the highest grades possible. Teachers, more than students in this investigation, agreed that one hidden assumption of the classroom environment is the need for orderliness (see section 5.8.1).A responsible student is one who lives up to the expectations of those in authority and follows the rules.Langhout and Mitchell (2008: 595) maintain that '*When*

students are denied opportunities for self-direction in the classroom, they are more likely to academically disengage'. As the teacher is the authority and decides what, when and how to learn, students are expected to submit to the teacher's command. An authoritarian teacher is most likely to create a rigid classroom environment, and thus students have the potential to become disengaged.

One other way in which the hidden curriculum can be manifested is where subjects such as science, mathematics or technology are prioritised above, for example, literature, history or geography. At the same time, in the Malaysian educational system, a 'more able' student in terms of assessment scores, is highly encouraged (or pushed) to do science-related subjects in their upper secondary levels leaving the 'less able' or 'low achievers' to do the Arts, which are considered secondary subjects in the curriculum (Boniskowski, 2004). Nonetheless, in the Malaysian public examinations Bahasa Melayu is a compulsory subject, and therefore candidates need to get good grades in order to move on to higher education (college and university). Thus, a higher status is given to this language in the Malaysian educational setting. In this case, getting a good grade in Bahasa Melayu is a 'ticket' to college and university. Therefore, it emphasizes another value within the hidden curriculum, i.e. attaining 'good' scores not only qualifies a student for a higher education, but is also potentially a passage to obtaining a good job, thereby drawing reasonable income and assurance for a fairly good future.

7.5.4   Teachers as facilitators of the hidden curriculum

Based on the analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions and reactions towards the proposal of shared Malaysian identity, inferences can be drawn

as to the advantages of the notion of the hidden curriculum as a medium for its implementation. Teachers can be the role models (as in their socialisation and personal habits) so that the students are able to see the logic of teachers' decision making in the classroom. For instance, if a teacher emphasises the need to communicate and socialise with peers from other cultural backgrounds, but never personally shows any inclination to socialise with others, then his or her words will carry very little status. Another example is when a teacher stresses the strengths of team work and effort but is not him/herself a good team member.

The classroom provides access to the 'other world' when teachers have the opportunity to diversify teaching strategies by using role play, skits, socio-dramatics, case studies and many more methods with students, thus not only creating excitement in learning and boosting students' engagement with the subject, but also making manifest aspects of the hidden curriculum. As Skinner and Belmont (1993:578) suggest, '*Students who identify with school, classroom and lessons are more likely to be academically engaged and have positive school feelings*'. When teachers have a positive outlook, dynamics of the hidden curriculum can be used to the advantage of the students.

7.5.5 Students' agency in classroom engagement

Strengthening my firm belief that knowledge is constructed through students' interactions with other individuals during the course of socially constructed events, the notion of students' agency contributes to the establishment of a 'student voice' in the classroom. Van Lier (2008:163) asserts that agency '*is not simply an individual character trait or activity, but a contextually enacted way of being in the world*'. An example of agency in the

classroom is when students act individually as well as in groups or as a whole class negotiating certain tasks set by the teacher. As Van Lier (2008) puts it, '*students can speak from an **I** as well as from a **we** perspective* (p.164). Furthermore, the ability to enact agency to create new possibilities is afforded to all people (Emdin,2009). In his analysis of classroom interaction, Baynham (2006:38) suggests that it:

> ...moves from the notion of the authoritative teacher permissively creating space and opportunity for student agency, which is, I would suggest, typically implicit in current classroom discourse models, towards one where the classroom is a site of dynamic pushes and pulls, with teacher and student agendas robustly shaping interaction, claiming space. This creates a messier, but arguably a more dynamic, agentive and contingent classroom environment.

Creating spaces for student agency, as suggested by Baynham above, can very well be associated with the generation of learning opportunities in the Third Space.

One other aspect in which agency can be emphasised in the classroom is through its close relationship with autonomy, which is discussed in section 7.1.1 above. Other aspects relating to agency include volition, intentionality, initiative and intrinsic motivation (Van Lier, 2008). As autonomy is related to taking control of learning, which includes interdependence (Benson, 2001), agency relies on *actions carried out of one's own accord* (Van Lier, ibid) in the classroom context. Interdependence, Van Lier further explains, also suggests the aspect of students' engagement/interactions in the classroom.

A corollary from the analysis of classroom observations is that student agency can be exploited in getting students to be more involved in classroom

decision making, provided teachers are willing to relinquish a certain part of their authority to the students. The premise for constructing shared identity in this research demands student and teacher initiatives, contingency (Baynham, 2006), more self-regulated learning (Duckworth, Akerman; MacGregor, Salter & Vorhaus, 2009), interdependency, awareness of the need for a shared Malaysian identity, and contingency, all of which characterise agency in the classroom. An example that revealed student agency from the findings was when students took charge of what they wanted to present in their sketches (refer to section 5.8.2). They made decisions about which characters they wanted to extend or otherwise, and they outlined the direction of the sketch, and the form of their presentations.

Thus an understanding of student agency in the classroom such as that displayed by many students' activities in the post-workshop lessons, can help teachers to create a more favourable teaching and learning atmosphere to fit a range of valuable teaching objectives.

7.6   Stereotyping and Identity Construction

From my earlier account of the students' and teachers' discussionsof stereotyping, we can see that teachers were concerned about the consequences of highlighting stereotypes in the classroom and would tend to avoid discussing issues related to ethnic stereotypes, specifically to avoid misunderstandings between their students. Students,however, were found in general more ready to discuss stereotyping as they felt that people should be aware of how it impacts on relationships with peers, especially friends from different ethnic backgrounds. They believed that some fundamental

measures that Malaysians should take are to be open-minded and not judgmental, and not to start something that could provoke a sense of distrust. This implied, for them, discussing bias and prejudice as well as critically examining one's own basic assumptions, which can often be grounded in taken-for-granted stereotypes.

Although teachers showed some kind of approval of, and agreement with the process of discussion of stereotypes and prejudices should the need arise, they were adamant that this would have to be done in the most discreet and subtle ways. Teachers' willingness to take on this task I believe is vital as they need to negotiate the boundaries of cultural sensitivities such as ethnic stereotyping.

7.7   Shared Malaysian Identity: Its Workability and Barriers

Reiterating, the shared Malaysian identity can be the mainspring for a more tolerant and understanding society in that people from different cultural backgrounds identify themselves as belonging to one nation that is Malaysia. Having built trust in each other, the country can focus on building towards a fully developed nation which will be beneficial for strengthening its economy and thus the quality of life.

For the government to sow the seeds of success, teachers must be at the forefront of this 1Malaysia effort and thus promote the construction of shared Malaysia identity amongst students. Teachers must play a leading role in ensuring that the concept is fully understood by their students and apply

suitable approaches and strategies while delivering their lessons. Students at the ages of 16-17 can be regarded as being at the transitional stage to adulthood. This is a very sensitive and crucial stage where life begins to develop either positively or negatively depending on the kind of worldview which pertains. At this age, students have begun to realise their rights and to voice their opinions and at this stage they are inclined to develop certain principles to guide their actions. Hence, inappropriate strategies used in approaching these young adults may ultimately have severe consequences.

The rigid curriculum specifications delineated throughout the country not only in the teaching of literature but in all the subjects offered in the school curriculum also constitute a barrier to the development of shared identity. The rigidity of the syllabi and exam-oriented curricula offered little space for the construction of shared identity as working on texts that were not prescribed in the syllabus can be seen as extra work for the teachers. Teachers did not reject the idea of working with non-prescribed texts outright, but admitted that the most important task was to complete the syllabus and gear students towards the examination (see also 7.4).

In sum, what can be concluded from the foregoing discussion of grounds for possible successes and also potential barriers to the idea of shared Malaysian identity, in my opinion, is that teachers should be willing to embrace the learner-centred approach more openly, and also to use appropriate teaching strategies with their students, especially young adults in the classroom. Teachers' acceptance of a need for possible changes in their 'routine' approaches to teaching and learning is essential.

7.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the discussion of the findings following the analysis chapters (Chapters Five and Six). These findings were derived from a small sample of teachers and students in six selected schools around Kuala Lumpur. A larger sample may or may not reveal similar occurrences as different groups within the society react to their environment differently in this ever changing society. This chapter has attempted to discuss all the possibilities arising from the data analysis, and has extended them through a broad discussion about ways in which teachers and students can support the construction of shared Malaysian identity. The next chapter summarises the key findings, and the implications for theory and practice, and offers conclusions and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARISING THE KEY FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Transforming Classroom Engagement in the Third Space towards the construction of shared Malaysian identity: A Reflection

8.0   Introduction

This study set out to investigate how students' and teachers' classroom engagement in the literature teaching and learning process could be a platform for a shared Malaysian identity construction. Six schools in Kuala Lumpur were identified, lessons observed, interviews carried out and the data were then analysed. The findings of the analysis were discussed in the light of several overarching issues related to the key themes of the discussions such as identity construction in multicultural settings, the 1Malaysia concept, the notions of hybridity and the Third Space and also aspects of the hidden curriculum.

The notion of the Third Space emerged from the data analysis and was not explored during the data collection process; however the findings have shed new light on the direction of this research, especially in informing the course of further studies. Therefore, in this concluding chapter I reflect on the whole research process, its strengths and weaknesses, and its implications for theory and practice. To conclude, I will outline my suggestions and recommendations and then map the directions for further research.

8.1   Personal Reflections

As mentioned in 8.0 above, my personal experiences as a student, a teacher and then a teacher of teachers in a multicultural setting have enabled me to identify situations that can destroy or help build inter-ethnic relationships in the Malaysian community. With an interest in probing deeper the inter-ethnic realms within society, I set sail to the world of research which was not totally unknown to me. However, it was not a plain sailing endeavour as there were barricades to overcome and boundaries to cross. The intention of covering as many schools and teachers for data collection in Kuala Lumpur as possible proved to be futile as time was limited, access and bureaucratic rules had to be adhered to, and cancelled appointments had to be rescheduled.

Discussing sensitive issues such as problems and conflicts with participants from various backgrounds was challenging in many aspects. Two important angles were identified as problematic; my role as a researcher (outsider) and my ethnic background (Malay). Teachers and students were initially sceptical of my questions around the issues of inter-ethnic relations and I could feel the tension in my communication with them. With Malays being the majority in Malaysia, my questioning participants from other ethnic backgrounds on issues such as ethnic stereotyping and their perceptions of 'others', could possibly have made the respondentswant to feel 'acceptable' or to look good in the eyes of the researcher (see also section 4.10.6). This behaviour may be displayed if respondents subsequently modify their responses or perceptions to fit the research being conducted or to 'please' the researcher. The way in which I dealt with these issues was to reassure my participants that the exercise was purely for research purposes and that their reflections and

feedback were absolutely confidential and that I needed and respected their views.

8.1.1   The implications of the one-day workshop

When I decided to conduct a one-day workshop for teachers, I was questioned (during my first-year viva) on how it would contribute to the outcome of this research, and whether a single day would have any impact on the teachers, the students and, most importantly, on the direction of my research. My main intention for the workshop was not to observe the impact of an attitudinal or behavioural change but to share experiences, ideas and strategies with the teachers for using Malaysian short stories. Subsequently, I hoped that teachers would apply some of the strategies they had discussed in the workshop with their students. Thus, I planned and modified my proposal for that workshop and finally I was able to carry it out with seven teachers from the original list of nine participants. Although the workshop lasted for only one day, the teachers (as stated in their feedback form) and I felt that it was a starting point for possibly more workshops in the future.

The notion of the Third Space did not emerge until after my data had been analysed and, retrospectively, I feel that the workshop sessions were a huge opportunity to share with teachers the advantages of the idea of the Third Space as a medium for identity construction. In addition, had I known earlier about aspects of the Third Space notion, the structure of the workshop would have been different from what I had prepared. Therefore, it is my intention to extend this study further to be able to put the Third Space theory into practice, suggesting ways in which teachers could be better able to facilitate the construction of a shared Malaysian identity using Malaysian short stories.

Despite my misgivings, it seems that the teachers in general thought that the workshop sessions were very informative and that they should be extended so that many more teachers could participate, contribute and share ideas in relation to the construction of shared identity. However, despite saying that they had acquired new ideas and approaches to teaching short stories, the post-workshop observations showed a different set of outcomes in which they seemed to have made little impact. Therefore, it is now an essential agenda for me to plan another workshop in the near future to clarify teaching methods involving the Third Space in the hope that this would strengthen their theoretical grasp of the pedagogical issues involved in a project such as this one.

8.2 The Central Thesis derived from this Research and how the Research Questions were answered

The main purpose of this study was to establish an investigation into evaluating the viability of constructing a shared Malaysian identity in the multicultural classroom. The aim was to explore how this construct could be facilitated through the teaching of literature, specifically short stories. In guiding the study, two main research questions were engineered and strengthened with teachers' and students perceptions on the issues investigated. These provided the structure of the research. The two research questions were:

To what extent do teachers and students feel that they have a role to play in furthering the government's 1Malaysia concept for producing a more integrated society?

and

To what extent can the classroom use of Malaysian short stories be helpful in the construction of shared Malaysian identity?

In order to answer theseresearch questions, I investigated teachers' and students' perceptions of the 1Malaysia political initiative and how they perceive their roles to be in a multicultural classroom setting. Student classroom interactions through their use of selected Malaysian short stories and students' perceptions of their engagement with the texts selected by their teachers were also exploredto determine whether discursive engagement in the Third Space in a hybrid multicultural classroom helped to manifest the components of an identity shared by the students. Finally, the investigation was carried out to determine whether differences and similarities of perceptions between students and teachers contribute to notions of the hidden curriculum and assumptions made about the 'other' which might be stereotypical, even though those holding such views may be unaware of that fact.

Through rigorous analysis of the pre-selected and emerging themes in Chapters Five and Six, I was able to draw out a number of implications. First and foremost, this study suggests that the differences in perceptions between teachers and students are not likely to be a major hindrance in the facilitation of a shared Malaysian identity in the classroom, but rather establish significant points for further discussion. Teacher-student age and experience gaps had clearly been among the factors contributing to their distinctive views in that teachers were generally seen by the society as persons who had extensive views on aspects of inter-ethnic interaction in the society.

Additionally,teachers and students' similar perceptions of inter-ethnic relations are stepping stones towards the idea of a collective Malaysian identity.

Next, from the results and the discussion of the analysis, the research suggests that there is an urgent need for agency and autonomy to be developed and employed by teachers in the classroom. Further development on agency and autonomy can only successfully be carried out if teachers are ready to change their more traditional classroom teaching with its emphasis on assessment to a more autonomous learning style in which students take more responsibilities for their own learning. Teachers also need to be encouraged to create a dialogic interactional space for their students in order for them to use it to create meaningful engagement with their peers in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

By the same token, factors that affect the success of the construction of shared Malaysian identity can be grounded through the concept of the Third Space. The point of departure is the willingness of teachers to take 'pedagogical risks'and try out methods and materials outside the restrictions of the syllabus. From their feedback, however, teachers were certain that a wider selection of materials based on home grown products (Malaysian short stories) would enhance the meaning-making in teaching and learning literature and be highly advantageous for developing interactive skills which would transfer later to the world of work and all spheres of social interaction. This suggests the teachers would be prepared to take such risks.

The most interesting factor derived from this study appears to be the use of Malaysian short stories in which the students' collaborative engagement with their peers and teachers were at their best (see 5.82 and 5.9.4). This may be because they and the principle of the Third Space offered a relatively stress-free space, not subject to formal examination, hence allowing more informal, non-assessed comments from students, greater freedom and creativity of expression and were generally more student-centred. Thus, in order to answer to what extent Malaysian short stories were able to facilitate shared identity construction, the evidence of student-teacher, and student-student group discussions and interactions about 'the happenings' in the community, through their own experiences, suggest that they have a role to play in the classroom.

Finally, another point deduced from the discussion is that teachers already understood the concept of the classroom as discursive and contested space without explicitly or theoretically realising the advantages of these valuable spaces (see 5.6 and 5.7.3).

8.2.1   Benefiting from the 1Malaysia initiative for the construction of shared Malaysian identity

Since ethnic-related issues have been highlighted in Malaysia's recent newsand during the data collection process, it was not surprising that the students felt some common elements were needed that could bind the people together. With a common shared Malaysian identity, students and members of the broader community are able to identify themselves more closely with each other, thus creating abundant opportunities to interact, developing a

strong and integrated society, and a willingness to fully embrace the 1Malaysia concept with an open heart.

To initiate this, school is the best place to start, because it creates a level playing field for all students asthe home environment may not be conducive to inter-ethnic communication. Therefore it is crucial for the teachers and administrators to help students understand the importance of understanding friends from other backgrounds and to cultivate and promote a positive atmosphere in schools in order to have more successful and effective inter-ethnic interactions and communication. However, students more than teachers, felt that they had bigger roles to play in seeing that the 1Malaysia concept is successful by being given more opportunities (by teachers and also school programmes) to communicate with their friends from other backgrounds.

Malaysia is generally noted as a harmonious and tolerant society. This needs to be sustained. With more effort from teachers, students can be given more exposure to the need for a shared Malaysian identity and they will consequently be more likely to work hard to ensurethat Malaysia achieves the status of a fully developed country regardless of her people's ethnicity, culture or religion.It will take years or even decades for the country to move from a developing country to a fully developed country. In the meantime, it is the young adults currently in school who are going to face the challenges in ensuring that the transformation from developing to fully developed country materialises. Hence, it is crucial for them to fully understand the philosophy of 'unity in diversity' and its correlations with the 1Malaysia concept, when

they are aware of their own identity as Malaysians, working together despite religion, ethnic and cultural differences will not be as problematic. Therefore, a shared Malaysian identity creates an opportunity for a new representation of Malaysian society in which new cultures of belonging re-emerge to chart a course towards a more just and unified society, which is the basis of the 1Malaysia initiative.

8.3   Contribution to Knowledge and Community: Implications for TheoryandPractice

The outcome of this research is that tangible theoretical and practical implications have emerged from the data analysis and the discussions. Students' engagement in the Third Space in the classroom can provide a stepping stone to the wider community of practice (school, home and community) from the evidence of students' and teachers' preparedness as well as disposition to engage in a discursive and contested space consumed with conflicts, problems and also differing characters typical of a multicultural setting.

8.3.1   What are the theoreticalcontributions of this study?

Following Whetten (2009), my contribution to theory is based on the premise that the theoretical constructs which frame this research have been used to contribute to the existing theory in that '*it can be characterised as a shift in focus from* **looking through the lens** *to* **improving the lens**' (Ibid)(original emphasis). Based on the discussion and the summary derived from this study, I attempt to delineate several concepts for the theory-development process rather than creating new abstraction or conception of

theory. I have focused on two key theoretical areas: firstly the notion of the Third Space theory within the domain of hybridity theory advocated by Bhabha (1994), and applied in different educational contexts by Gutierrez (2008); Gutierrez et al. (2004) and Moje et al. (2004), among the prominent advocators of this theory. This concept was discussed in Chapter Three and elaborated in Chapter Seven and delineates theimportance and advantages of the Third Space in a multicultural classroom in the quest for shared identity construction among the students. Space in the context of this study can be described as 'physical', 'abstract' or 'imaginary' which transcends the boundaries of the first (home and community) and second (school and classroom) spaces in which it helps to shape individual and group experiences in order to negotiate the generation of a collective identity.

I proposed an initial framing of the Third Space by using Malaysian short stories to induce meaningful collaborative engagement amongst the students and their teachers. Students' and teachers' home and community experiences which were characterised in a textual medium (short stories) provided opportunities for constructing a collective identity (evidence from the discussion of how Malaysian short stories were used by teachers is in section 4.16).These new materials couldlead students in a direction supportive of teachers as well as the students in that conflicts arising from the narrative read were shared, discussed and justified through discussions, arguments and explanations with evidence.

Secondly, I focussed on the hidden curriculum centring on teachers' and students' 'unconscious behaviour and attitudes' and the covert meanings underlying teaching and learning in the classroom. For instance, although

unstated, subjects such as science and mathematics are commonly given priority over other subjects such as literature. Thus, the discussion of this theory contributes to the awareness of the importance the hidden curriculum not only to teachers and students but also the community (parents) and policy makers (syllabus designers).

The theoretical constructs which underpin this study have been developed across academic boundaries (education, socio-linguistics, post-colonial theory and ESL) which, I believe, when integrated in a study, constitute a strong interdisciplinary convergence which extends the breadth of these academic areas. It is hoped that it will promote valuable contributions to theory development by closing the gap between theory and practice within the domain of the classroom context, the community and curriculum planning.

8.3.2   What are the practical contributions of this research?

The practical aspect of the contribution of this study lies within teachers' and students' beliefs in the field of teaching and learning in the literature classroom. Regardless of respondents' inclinations towards certain subjects or components of those subjects, it is vital that they are able to grasp and understand the messages embedded in them. Understanding these embedded values enables the students to appreciate 'others' around them.It is also a life skill and has an intrinsic value for students, that of learning to use language – any language as the medium for any subject – as their own tool, but best illustrated in the literature component of English language and through Malaysian short stories, the most appropriate 'homebase' for all Malaysian students in the multi-ethnic classroom. The ability to understand

and be open to 'the other' is a skill underpinning all personal, social, business, professional and political relationships throughout life. Learning and language learning is too valuable to be treated just for subject content, to get through the subject, pass the examand move on. Literature could be the subject to evoke a sense of togetherness and appreciation of others and 'otherness' around them. The experiences in the literature classroom could help the students in their real life outside school and will prepare them to integrate themselves into the society.

In filling the research gap, this study differs from previous studies in a number of respects, adding to the existing knowledge of students' engagement in a multicultural classroom and its scope for creating possibilities towards a shared Malaysian identity which hitherto have been rarely discussed within the area of Malaysian educational research (see 1.6.1). Therefore, I would like to re-emphasise that this study is timely at the point when ethnic divisions are mounting in Malaysian community.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

Ioannidis (2007) claims that all research work inevitably has its limitations and that the knowledge and analysis of these limitations is fundamental for an in-depth understanding of one's research findings. Understanding limitations is also likely to inform the direction of future research by incorporating the new information into further development. In this study, I have identified several limitations which, however, do not compromise the credibility of this study. Firstly, the time constraints for data collection (in Malaysia) allowed by my sponsor limited my intended sample size which

could have included a few more schools and teachers in Kuala Lumpur. A larger sample would have enabled me to have a larger range of schools in terms of multi-ethnic populations. Even so, I still would have not been able to generalise my findings to the wider Malaysian context as the ethnic composition of students varies enormously from urban to sub-urban, rural and remote areas.

Secondly, the limitation that I felt could have had a considerable effect on my study was the potential for researcher bias and her particular ethnic background. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, being a Malay researcher and carrying out interviews about sensitive issues such as ethnic stereotyping and inter-ethnic relations among others, with teachers and students from minority groups, could have led them to say what they thought I wanted to hear. However, I ensured that teachers and students understood the main intention of this study and that it would not affect anyone's position or status directly or indirectly. Teachers and students were assured that this study would not put them at any risk such as being reprimanded by the school authorities due to their honest responses to questions probed, or put teachers in the 'hot seat' due to their willingness to try out new texts and approaches not within the formal curriculum. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and permission given to use the data they provided.

This study focused on identity construction issues which are highly contested in the Malaysian setting which, more often than not, has been politically manipulated in a country which consists of ethnically-based political parties. Thus, teachers, more than students, were very sceptical and extremely cautious about giving feedback on inter-ethnic relations amongst their

students. Despite several limitations, a corollary to these perspectives is the belief that these limitations provide a stepping stone for extended research in the near future.

8.5 Recommendations Emerging from the Findings of this Study

Based on the findings from this study, recommendations are made for:

8.5.1 Policy makers

It is understandable thatto change any educational policy takes time along with comprehensive research in the areas where change is expected to occur, not to mention the risks and costs involved. This isparticularly true in a historically segregated educational policy in a country like Malaysia. Any changes to educational policy have to take into account a multitude of criteria from various angles. Nevertheless, while the educational system is highly and consistently debated, the need for the implementation of a culturally responsive curriculum (CRC) (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008) is genuinely needed at a time where society is more inclined to move in the direction of preferring 'alternative' education for their children; many parents now opt to send their children to a private schools orinternational schools (British, Australian or American- curriculum-based schools).

8.5.2 Syllabus designers

Another recommendation is to encourage curriculum designers and planners to be more sensitive to the needs of the multicultural classroom and to design culturally responsive/relevant curricula (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008)

in which the contents reflect the cultural diversity of the students. For example, the contents of a syllabus does not simply mean using names such as Ali, Ah Chong, Marriapan, Santokh Singh or Sanut anak Gedeh as a representation of a multicultural Malaysia, but refers to the design of an in-depth CRC. The CRC, for example, in all relevant content areas should be meticulously planned to take into account all aspects of the Malaysian community and, most importantly, it should be honest in its portrayal of Malaysian society (not just an ideal depiction of the community but include problems and conflicts).

8.5.3   School Administrators

First and foremost, school administrators should be alert to the changes that are taking place locally and globally and of the need to promote more culturally responsive programmes in schools. This would perhaps encourage teachers and students to review their perspectives in understanding of 'others' in more succinct but effective ways.

8.5.4   Teachers

In the words of Kea, Campbell-Whatley and Richards (2005) some teachers do not want to appear 'anti-diversity' and try without much conviction new approaches that they themselves are grappling to understand. From the analysis of the findings (see section 5.6), several teachers were willing to 'take risks' by stepping out of their normal teaching lessons, and introduced new texts and discussed aspects of stereotyping in the Malaysian community, as they believed that there were some positive aspects to this. However, during their interviews, they clearly felt that if they could avoid drawing the

issues of stereotyping to the attention of their students, they would. Teachers may have brought up the topic on stereotyping to fulfil my expectations in conducting the research and/or might have thought very little about its workings or implications. It wasn't on the syllabus.

To reiterate, teachers are among the key players able to support the construction of shared Malaysian identity. Thus, it is vital for them to:

• Be kept up to date on new strategies that can promote more collaborative exchanges between students.

• Believe that certain behaviours and instructional strategies can enable teachers to build stronger teaching/learning relationships with students of diverse cultures and fit them with the life skills they need for their futures.

• Be mindful of the fact that teachers have to continuously seek to understand the importance of the knowledge or skills to effectively bridge school knowledge with out-of-school ways of talking, knowing, and doing (Brickhouse & Potter, 2001; Lee & Fradd, 1998).

• Be conscious of the need to change (system, strategies, attitude, perspectives) and be dynamic, not static.

• Face up to difficult/challenging issues about themselves (attitudes and behaviours)

8.5.5   Implications of the study on teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

An important implication of the study is related to the Continuous Professional Development arena. An effective CPD programme must be

structured and teachers should appreciate the value of and remain committed to attending these programmes. One issue that arises from this research is the proposal for the encouragement of teachers to understand the promising avenue of the Third Space in teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers home and community experiences are most likely to be valuable to students if these experiences can be used to 'connect' students with conflicts or/and stability that surround their learning process. Additionally,this study highlighted the way in which several teachers were perceived as willing to venture further in their careers by attending courses and programmes. Teachers need support and time to allow them to do this. For instance, seven training days a year could be officially set aside for in-service training and self-study work or research set for students on these days.

8.5.6   Community/Parents/ Students

This leads to a final, yet extremely important recommendation relating to the aspect of identity. I discussed in Chapter Two how people enact their identities differently. However, that does not mean that one is more Malaysian than the other. As Elwood (2008: 554) asserts:

> The multilayered and emergent nature of identity means that the bodies in our classrooms are not merely learners, but are complex beings engaged in an ongoing process of constructing and enacting new selves; their code-switches make it clear that how they present themselves and how they wish to be seen by others are both of great significance.

A further and perhaps more difficult step is to improve, balance and promote positive attitudes to diversity. Parents, students and the community's involvement in general generate strong support for the development of

shared Malaysian identity. School is a time when students' choices of peer groups, mentors, achievement, and after-school programmes play a central role in the future direction they pursue and in supporting and informingwhat they seek to become; and in so doing, they have to remain engaged in collaborative partnership with their peers, teachers and their surroundings (Lee, 1997; Orenstein, 1994). Thus, it is more than crucial to provide a positive environment and to support these children/students' needs in their identity development.

8.6   Directions for Further Research

The areas worthy of further exploration are:

- Replicating similar research in various locations in Malaysia especially rural and remote areas. Similar methods and approaches (with the refinements suggested) can be conducted in areas such as around Sabah and Sarawak (Borneo), Kelantan, Perlis and Johor in the Peninsula, and then compared.

- An area of research that is greatly needed currently is the examination of the long-term outcomes of school and classroom engagement (exploiting the Third Space). As mentioned in sections 3.3 and 7.3.2relating to the notion of the Third Space, a more comprehensive in-depth longitudinal study should be carried out to understand how students interact with people from different backgrounds, and also how teachers' instructions affect students' task engagement not only in the literature class but also in all other related content subject areas.

- Another line of inquiry is to carry out a workshop such as a refined version of the workshop carried out (Section 4.12. See also section 4.16) that would complement the present study. This workshop would introduce teachers to the concept of the Third Space and how an understanding of this space could create more teaching and learning opportunities.

- In-depth investigations of Popular Culture in the construction of collective identity could provide touchstones to unite the young from the various cultural backgrounds. Popular culture according to Ladson-Billings (1994) *'permeates, and therefore is culturally relevant to their lives and identities'.* The popular cultures can include popular comics (such as Anime), music (current music genre which appeals to the younger generation), movies, computer games and so on.

- Researching the efficacy of turning LAT's cartoons into animated short stories -as these permeate the lives of 'real' Malaysian in society - and using these stories as Third Space learning opportunities (refer to Appendix 16 for samples of Lat's cartoons). Some of Lat's cartoons have been transformed into television cartoon series. However, up to date, the cartoon has not been used as a text in the formal curriculum.

- Further research into the usefulness of a more integrated approach to areas such as teacher motivation and attitude change should be carried out in the light of teacher identity construction amongst their peers.

8. 7 Is Shared Malaysian Identity a Worthy Pursuit?

Teachers are likely to be the most important people to spearhead the 1Malaysia effort and thus promote the construction of a shared Malaysian

identity for young adults in Malaysia. Amongst the possible barriers could be targeting the wrong group of initiators, if those selected cannot reach or appeal to young adults (the people who are going to take forward the country's progress to the future). To be able to shift from a developing country to a stable fully developed country does not happen in a matter of two or three years. It could take much longer. When these young adultsare aware of their own identity as Malaysians, working together despite religious, ethnic and cultural differences would be less problematic. Therefore, the government's effort in promoting 1Malaysia should be lauded, well accepted and practised by Malaysians from all walks of life. But government practical support as to how this should be achieved could include mandatory in-service teacher-training days. (The government could also offer financial support or other support for NGOS working in the area of multi-ethnic youth and community grassroots associations, even some with political agendas). The issues are outside the scope of the present study, but success is more likely to occur with bottom up conviction and with financial and strategic support from the top, in other words, with holistic support in conviction, strategic and practical areas.

How conflict and diversity can become the catalyst for curricular change to support individual and collaborative learning and the larger teaching and learning system has also been exemplified in the analysis. Opportunities created by teachers provideda new learning context where hybrid practices fostered development in understanding others' cultures and thus formulated ways forward in constructing the 'contested'shared Malaysian identity.

The construction of shared identity amongst students in the classroom can be an initial measure for developing a more comprehensive national identity which, to date, is still blurred, hazy and uncertain despite the many investigations into the realms of national identity and nation building.

Teachers should adopt a more positive attitude towards understanding the collective identity concept. When students understand the reason for having a shared Malaysian identity, they will be able to work in harmony side by side, thus creating a more stable society. Hence,shared Malaysian identity is the potential 'superglue' for diverse and divided communities such as Malaysia (Wetherell et al., 2007). The answer to the question at the beginning of this section is unquestionably 'Yes'.

8.8   Coda

In preparing Malaysia to face the challenges of becoming a full-fledged developed country, more comprehensive and ongoing efforts should be plannedby the government and also NGOs, and supported by the community. I believe this measure should start, if not at home, then in the classroom context. Classroom delivery which has all the materials it needs, and is equipped with the best technology and the best teachers and students possible is nonetheless open to failure if there is lack of opportunities given to teachers and students alike to create knowledge. The creation of knowledge or what knowledge is should always be challenged to enable the establishment of more room for interaction and engagement. One of the ways in which teachers and students are able to engage in knowledge formation is to equip themselves with comprehensive critical thinking skills; in that skills

teaching which are transferable to the world outside the classroom.At the same time, rather than dwelling on differences, let us celebrate similarities in diversity.

My concluding remark is that there will come a day when people in this country (Malaysia) are not just willing but proud to say they ARE Malaysian (not Malaysian Malay, or Malaysian Chinese or Malaysian Indian) and no matter how arduous and demanding this effort can be, the most reassuring phrase is *'Malaysia Boleh'*.[7]

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[7] Literally: Malaysia can (or has the ability)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Letter of approval from EPU

UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
JABATAN PERDANA MENTERI
Prime Minister's Department
BLOK B5 & B6
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA

EPU

Telefon : 603-8888 3333
Telefax : 603-888

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.: UPE: 40/200/19/2473

Ruj. Kami:
Our Ref.:

Tarikh:
Date: 7 August 2009

Faizah Idrus
50 Chadwick Road
Nottingham, Nottinghamshire
NG7 5NP UK
Email: ttxfi@nottingham.ac.uk

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application dated **10 June 2009**, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been *approved* by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name : **FAIZAH IDRUS**

Passport No. / I. C No: **640621-05-5334**

Nationality : **MALAYSIAN**

Title of Research : "FACILITATING COMMON IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE IN MALAYSIA"

Period of Research Approved: **FOUR MONTHS**

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the **Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya** and bring along two (2) passport size photographs. You are also required to comply with the rules and regulations stipulated from time to time by the agencies with which you have dealings in the conduct of your research.

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3.   I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

   a)   A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and

   b)   Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

4.   Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

(MUNIRAH ABD. MANAN)
For Director General,
Economic Planning Unit.
E-mail: munirah@epu.gov.my
Tel: 88882809/2818
Fax: 88883798

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and **cannot be used as a research pass**.

C.c:

Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia
Bahagian Perancangan Dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan
Aras 1-4, Blok E-8
Kompleks Kerajaan Parcel E
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62604 Putrajaya
(u.p: Dr. Soon Seng Thah)   (Ruj. Tuan: KP(BPPDP)603/01/ Jld. 10(23)

Appendix 2

Letter of approval from JPWP

JABATAN PELAJARAN WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR
PERSIARAN DUTA, OFF JALAN DUTA,
50604 KUALA LUMPUR.
Tel : 03-6203 7777
Fax : 03-6203 7788

JPWP 12-21/Jld.6 - 09/(183)
28 Ogos 2009

Faizah Idrus
50 Chadwick Road Nottingham,
NG7 5NP Nottinghamshire United Kingdom

Y. Bhg. Datin/Tuan/Puan,

KEBENARAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH, MAKTAB-MAKTAB PERGURUAN, JABATAN-JABATAN PELAJARAN DAN BAHAGIAN-BAHAGIAN DI BAWAH KE MENTERIAN PELAJARAN MALAYSIA

Dengan hormatnya saya diarah memaklumkan bahawa permohonan Y. Bhg.
Datin/Tuan/Puan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk :-

" Facilitating Common Identity Construction, through the teaching of Liferature in English in Malaysia "
adalah diluluskan tertakluk kepada syarat-syarat berikut:-

a) Kelulusan ini adalah berdasarkan kepada apa yang terkandung di dalam cadangan penyelidikan yang telah diluluskan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
b) Sila kemukakan surat kebenaran ini ketika berurusan dengan Pengetua/Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan.
c) Kelulusan ini untuk sekolah-sekolah di Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur sahaja
d) Y. Bhg. Datin/Tuan/Puan dikehendaki mengemukakan senaskah hasil kajian tuan/puan ke Jabatan ini sebaik sahaja ianya siap sepenuhnya.
e) Kebenaran ini sah sehingga 31.12.2009

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(SITI HALIMAH BT SYED NORDIN)
Penolong Pendaftar Sekolah
Jabatan Pelajaran Wilayah Persekutuan
b.p Ketua Pendaftar Sekolah & Guru
Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia

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Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form

University of Nottingham
School of Education, The Dearing Building,
Jubilee Campus
Nottingham, NG8 IBB

The University of
Nottingham

STUDENTS INFORMATION SHEET

My name	: Faizah Idrus
Institution	: School of Education University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
What do I do	: I am a research student and I am conducting a research entitled 'Facilitating Common Identity Construction through the teaching of short stories in Malaysian Classrooms'.

How can you help?

From January 2010 to end of March 2010, I will be collecting information about teaching and learning in your classroom. This is in NO way to assess you, your teacher or how you behave in class. I am just interested in looking at your interactions with your fellow classmates. I will be distributing questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of my visit to your classroom.

If you agree to participate with the consent from your parents, please sign the consent form. I can confirm that at no time will you be put under any undue pressure to be involved in the research activities and at all times have the right to withdraw from the project. No prejudice or risk will occur should you wish to withdraw from the project. Data generated up to date of withdrawal may be used in the findings unless you request otherwise.

Contact for Further Information

If at any stage during this study you wish to contact me, my details are as follows:

Student email	: ttxfi@nottingham.ac.uk
Mobile phone (UK)	: +4407518491157
Mobile phone (Mal)	: 019-2202328
My blog	: ramblesinshambles. blogspot.com

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The University of
Nottingham

STUDENT'S CONSENT FORM

Project Title : Facilitating Common Identity Construction through the teaching of short
stories in Malaysian Classrooms.

Researcher : Faizah Idrus. MA, BA (Hons TESOL), Dip ESL, ITTC

My name   : Faizah Idrus

Institution   : School of Education
                      University of Nottingham
                      United Kingdom

- I have read the information sheet and the researcher has explained to me what her project is about. I understand and agree to fill in the questionnaire which is related to the project she is currently doing.

- I understand that if I wish, I can ask the researcher not to use the outcome of the questionnaire I have completed.

- I understand that the information I have given to the researcher will be kept in a locked safe or database and no one else can see it but the researcher and her supervisors and the people examining her study.

- I understand that my parents can speak to the researcher or her supervisors, if they want more information about the project, and that I may ask my parents to talk to the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I feel it is necessary to do so.

Your Signature   : _____

Your Name   : _____

Date   : _____

University of Nottingham
School of Education, The Dearing
Building, Jubilee Campus
Nottingham, NG8 1BB

The University of
Nottingham

Project Title : Facilitating Common Identity Construction through the teaching of short stories in Malaysian Classrooms.

Researcher : Faizah Idrus. MA, BA (Hons TESOL), Dip ESL, ITTC

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

Thank you for indicating your interest in my research project which forms part of my PhD thesis as a funded student from The International Islamic University Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. My study aims to explore the experiences of English language teachers and student teachers majoring in TESL and also their students in the English language classrooms.

You have been invited to take part in this research project as you have been identified by your principal, to be the person who would be able to fulfil the criteria of an experienced, dedicated English teacher and with potential of conducting your own research in future. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research project is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully discussing any aspects with colleagues or friends if you wish to. Please feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear of if you require more information on any aspect of my project.

Having carefully read this information sheet, if you wish to be involved further as a participant, please sign the attached consent form which will be countersigned by myself and a copy will be provided for you. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at anytime and without giving reason.

Background to the study

My name is Faizah Idrus and I have been in the teaching profession, teaching the English language for more than 20 years. I started off as a primary school teacher in one of the schools in Kuala Lumpur. Upon completing my first degree I went back to teach the secondary school and later moved to tertiary education, also teaching the English language. My passion for teaching and learning led me to a whole host of questions related to ESL in the Malaysian context and thus undertake this research project. My interest lies in teaching and learning in multicultural and multi-religion society and as a student and later a teacher in Kuala Lumpur specifically, has exposed me to a lot of issues and conflicts. In particular, the ethnic issues in the community and in the classrooms. This research project aims to investigate these issues from teachers and students point of views. Your support would be invaluable in exploring how best teachers can be the initiator and facilitator in extending intercultural understanding and in the construction of a shared identity or common identity

among Malaysian students thus fulfilling the government's aspiration of our 'Bangsa Malaysia'.

What does this study involve and why you?

From January 2010 until April 2010, I will be collecting data from a range of participants. Data will be gathered using confidential interviews and observations with myself as facilitator. These will be held at a mutually convenient time and place, lasting approximately 1 hour on the interview and 1 hour and a half on the observation. These activities will be audio/taped/videotaped but can be stopped at any point during the interview and observation. I am interested in collecting a range of views from teachers and student teachers who are from a variety of ethnic background, experience and locations.

What do you have to do?

If you wish to be involved as a participant, please indicate your interest by signing the consent form. I will make a regular contact with you via your preferred method (i.e. participant personal email account and/or mobile phone). I can confirm that at no time will you be put under any undue pressure to be involved in the research activities and at all times have the right to withdraw from the project. No prejudice or risk will occur should you wish to withdraw from the project. Data generated up to date of withdrawal may be used in the findings unless you request otherwise.

What is something goes wrong? Who can you complain to?

In the unlikely event of a complaint, please initially raise your concerns with me or failing that please contact either one of my supervisors, contact details provided at the end of this sheet.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

This research has received ethical approval from the School of Education with all data generated handled according to British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (www.bera.ac.uk). Ethical approval was also gained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan (JPWP) (Federal Territory Education Department). All data that is collected about you during the course of the project will be kept on a password protected database and is strictly confidential. The collection of data from participants will be anonymised throughout the research process and in any future publications as well as the PhD thesis. All data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence unless not doing so will result in harm to participants. No academic staff, school of Education staff, MOE and JPWP staff, supervisors, colleagues, examiners or other research students will have access to your data or data generated.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The research findings will be published as part of my PhD thesis in addition to any papers that may be published on my work. The final thesis, subject to a successful Viva, will be held electronically on The University of Nottingham e-thesis facility in addition to the School of

Education library (as required by the University). This will be no sooner than September 2011 and should you wish to be notified of any publications based on this study, please inform me. All data will be anonymised.

Contact for Further Information

If at any stage during this study you wish to contact me, my details are as follows:

Student email	: ttxfi@nottingham.ac.uk
Mobile phone (UK)	: +4407518491157
Mobile phone (Mal)	: 019-2202328
My blog	: dizzydyzza blogspot.com

For your information, my PhD supervisors are Dr. Paul Thompson, School of Education (paul.thompson@nottingham.ac.uk) and Dr. Ian McGrath (Assoc Prof) (ian.mcgrath@nottingham.ac.uk)

May I take this opportunity to thank you for agreeing to assist me in my research project to gain my PhD.

Yours Sincerely

Faizah Idrus
Doctoral Research Student
School Of Education
University of Nottingham

APPENDIX 4

Questionnaire Sample

Section A- About You

1. Male ☐   Female ☐

2. My ethnic background:

   Malay ☐   Chinese ☐ n   ☐ rs: (☐ e Specify)

3. The school I go to ; _____

4. The language(s) I speak : _____

Section B: Your classmates and friends

Please read each statement in order; placing a circle around the response which represents your feelings most closely.

B1. Most of my classmates are:

   Malay ☐ inese   In ☐   A good m ☐ re of all races   ☐

B2. In group works, I normally will choose my own friends.

   Yes ☐   No ☐

B3. In group works, I normally will choose members from the same ethnic

   backgrounds as I am. Yes ☐   No ☐

B4. During school recess and breaks, I normally will speak to everyone regardless of

   their ethnic backgrounds.

   Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Seldom Neve ☐   ☐

B5. I always speak and socialise with students of the same ethnic backgrounds as I

am. Always ☐   Sometimes ☐   Seldom ☐   Never ☐

Section C- Your Literature lessons
The following statements are about your literature lessons. Tick:

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree   3= Not Sure   4= Disagree 5= StronglyDisagree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
C1	Literature is an interesting subject					
C2	The texts used in my literature class are closely related to Malaysian's lives					
C3	The texts used in literature lessons are difficult for me to understand					
C4	The storyline of the texts used can be used to promote racial harmony in Malaysia.					

Section D: Malaysian Identity

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
D1	I am aware of the 1Malaysia concept					
D2	1Malaysia is a new concept					
D3	Is there a need for Malaysian to have a common identity					
D4	There will be many problems in creating a common Malaysian identity.					
	Ways in which I could help build Malaysian shared identity:					
D5A	Speak the national language more					
D5B	Mix with friends from other ethnic backgrounds					
D5C	East more local foods					
D5D	Participate in activities which involve people from all ethnic backgrounds					
D5E	Celebrate common festivals					
D5F	Have the same religious beliefs					
D5G	Wear each other's national dresses					
D5H	Watch more local movies					

D6. When you're abroad, a foreigner asks you about your nationality; you will say: I am:

Malaysian Malay ☐   Malaysian Chinese ☐

Malaysian Chinese ☐ Malaysian Indian ☐

Just Malaysian ☐

D7. How would you identify yourself the most?

Religion ☐

Ethnicity ☐

Others (Please Specify) _____

Appendix 5

Interview Questions (Teachers)

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your work as a teacher (experience) generally?

2. Where do you live (area)? Why do you/did you choose to live there?

3. Why do you choose to teach in this school?

4. How long have you been teaching in this school? How does this school differ from any other school you have taught in before (if applicable)?

5. What is your own concept of a Malaysian identity?

6. Do you think the 1Malaysia concept promoted by the government meets your own concept of Malaysian identity?

7. Do you have any other comments in relation to 1Malaysia or Malaysian identity or the aspiration of having ONE shared identity?

8. Are we there yet? Or close?

9. What is your own understanding of the words stereotyping, prejudice and bias?

10. Do you think it's worthwhile highlighting these issues? Why?

11. What are the most stereotypical images of Malaysian in general? Or if you prefer by ethnic group (that you know of)?

12. How do you think you would be able to highlight these issues using the texts that are already assigned by the Ministry of Education?

13. Do you think as a teacher you have a role at present to play, in promoting a shared Malaysian identity? How and Why? If not, what would you do?

14. Do you foresee that there will be any problem in fulfilling this/these roles?

15. Which ethnic group do most of your students belong to?

16. Does this composition pose any difficulties in assigning group or pair work?

17. Does the ethnic make- up of your classroom have any advantages or disadvantages when you are teaching literature and using stories/events/social lives in Malaysia?

18. Do you think as a Malaysian, these issues (stereotyping, prejudice and bias) are pertinent and should be highlighted in the literature classroom? Why?

19. What text are you currently using in your literature classroom?

20. What do you think of this text, personally?

21. Do you think this text could help you in promoting better inter-cultural communication between your students of different ethnic groups? Why?

22. If you have a choice what other text would you bring into the classroom in order to promote a shared Malaysian identity amongst your students?

23. What strategy/ies would you then use to promote the issues of stereotyping, prejudice and bias?

Teacher Follow up Interview Questions

1. How do you believe literature (any genre) should be taught?
2. How would you describe your typical literature lesson?
3. What do you think are the main problems in teaching literature in your classroom?
4. How would you approach teaching a short story? What strategy/ies would you use?
5. How did you find 'The fruitcake special'? Can it be used to promote unity?
6. How do you handle the class with students coming from different cultural backgrounds?
7. What are your comments on:
   Group work
   Whole class teaching
8. Do you believe that students are sufficiently challenged in your literature classroom? How? Why?
9. How would you describe the level of collaboration among your colleagues in terms of sharing classroom experience and teaching strategies?
10. How would you describe students' classroom behaviour during your literature classes:
    Interaction
    Contributions during lessons
    Challenging others' responses
11. Do you think your strategies improve with practice?
12. How often do you reflect on your teaching?
13. What knowledge of others do you think you need at the moment?
14. How well do you know your students cultural background?
15. What do you think would be the Malaysia shared identity?
16. What is your opinion on shared Malaysian identity? Is it achievable?
17. How can we achieve it?
18. Do you think it's worth pursuing?
19. Will it work?
20. What do you understand by stereotyping and could you give some examples?

Appendix 6

A sample of teacher interview transcript (SL)

Int   : How long have you been teaching and specifically in this school?

Selina : Oo..I have taught for about 8 years. Actually I didn't choose to teach here but I was posted

here.

Int   : How do you like it here?

Selina : Happy and the students' English proficiency level is not bad. It's fun to teach them.

Int   : Did you teach in other schools before coming to this school?

Selina : Before this I was in a sub-urban school. They (the students there) were not conversant /well versed in English. They were shy and passive. If you ask them question, most students couldn't answer.

Int   : What is the composition of students in terms of ethnicity?

Selina : More Malays.

Int   : Percentage?

Selina : Malays 60%, the Chinese about 30 % and then Indians.

Int   : So, if you assign them with group work, who will normally…do the students get to choose their friends?

Selina : If I let them choose their own (friends), they will surely group themselves..like the Malays with the Malays, Chinese with Chinese and so on.

Int   : What is the reason for that if I may ask?

Selina : Well, actually, I think the reason …they are more separated than before..they are not united..looks united but I don't think that is the case. Teacher paused for a short while)

Int   : Can you elaborate on that please..

Selina : I think we should have a programme, a good programme, to really integrate these students.

Int   : What about the 1Malaysia programme, hasn't this being implemented in schools?

Selina : Its starting, but I think it needs sometime (to see the effect)

Int   : Can you suggest the kind of programme that will enable the three major races to come together?

Selina : I haven't thought about that at the moment.

Int   : ohh, ok.

Selina : The Education department has started to emphasize on that and I think it's in the pipeline.

Int   : What is your own perception on the 1Malaysia concept?

Selina : This concept is good, it's really good. But I think we need time to make it…make it a success.

Int   : Are we close..or are still far away in achieving this?

Selina : We are right now at the beginning…so I think this is a good time to start.

Int   : Stereotyping happens a lot of time in a multiethnic country like Malaysia. What is your opinion if we highlight this issue in the classroom?

Selina : I never agree with stereotyping. I feel that as human we should believe in humanity. So whether they are Indian, Malay or Chinese, they are human. I always want to make them understand each other, respect their beliefs and respect them.

Int   : With the happenings around the country nowadays, do you discuss these issues in class?

Selina : I haven't done that yet…yeah..I haven't done that yet. But sometimes I mention that we are living in a multiracial country and there bound to be misunderstanding. So when the Chinese speaks with a higher volume, it doesn't mean that they are shouting at people or someone. Its jut their way..their habit.

Int   : So does this mean that there is lack intercultural awareness amongst Malaysian?

Selina : Yes and its very important and I feel that educators must realize this all the time. Don't ever try to say something that will segregate them (the students) more.

Int   : Moving on to the text you used just know. I understood that that book was not prescribed in the curriculum. What made you choose it?

Selina : I always feel that Johannians (St. John students) they are clever students. And they are the students who always want more and I hope and I am quite positive that this book will mean something to them. That's why I chose this book.

Int   : What about the prescribed texts?

Selina : I will make sure I finish the syllabus according to the requirements and when I finished, I will use other books including this, so that they (the students) won't feel bored. I want variety ..

Int : So let say you have the freedom to choose you own texts, what kkind of book or any specific title would you like to use in the classroom?

Selina : I don't really bother whether its local or a book written by foreigner, what I see is their product. Is it worth to be recommended, worth to go on (using). I have to read through and I will try to see the context. The content is important. The storyline must be meaningful and we can learn something from that. Something that could make them (the students) think. This is also very important.

Int : What about the text that are being used?

Selina : I would say that the texts that were previously used were better in terms of the selection, more meaningful.

Int : What was the reason of the change?

Selina : I don't know. But those were good selection. A combination of local and foreign authors.

Int : Is there any particular story, poem that you think you would like to use in your classrooms?

Selina : The book that I used just now, The Garden of Eden. It's a very good book. This story relates to the students and its very close to their hearts. The issues and question are very much about them.

Int : That's about all I want to ask you. Thank you very much.

Selina : No problem.

Appendix 7

Group Interview Discussion Topics

Research Question

What are the students' views in relation to the government's wish to establish a feeling of a shared Malaysian identity?

Group Interview: Discussion topics.

1. What is your understanding of 1Malaysia?
2. Do you think that is a good idea?
3. What do you understand by the word identity?
4. Is identity similar to likings/habits/hobby/they way you look?
5. What do you think is your identity?
6. What do you think is Malaysian identity?
7. Do you think Malaysians (including yourself) need a shared Malaysian identity?
8. Do you think you meet the criteria of having a Malaysian identity?
9. What are some of the criteria of having shared identity?
10. Do you think you have a role in achieving the government's goals to create a share Malaysian identity?
11. Do you feel your school or education have been promoting this idea of 1Malaysia? If so, how?
12. In your English literature class, you use textbooks to uncover and discover certain aspects of lives in a community, region or as a person. Do you think what is portrayed in the book helps in any way in creating or constructing a common identity? How?
13. What kind of books/texts or story books can you suggest that can help you understand others or other groups in your schools?
14. If your teachers says/ tells you something that you disagree of..how would you react?
15. What do you think are the problems in the construction of Malaysian identity?
16. Can you suggest any solutions to the problems?

Appendix 8

A sample of Group Interview transcript

GD WM5 (PL)

Int   : Good morning everyone.

Unison : Good Morning.

Int   : We're going to have a short discussion about you being Malaysian. How do you feel being a school surrounded by mostly Malay students?

May   : I feel perfectly fine and I chose to come to this school myself.

Jason   : I don't feel left out at all. I feel I'm in.

Justin : Its ok and I'm so used to it. I went to the same primary school with most of my classmates now.

Int   : What does being a Malaysian mean to you? (There was silent). For example, if you go abroad, someone asks you 'what are you?'

M   : I'll just say I'm a normal Malaysian. If that's the way to put it.

Lokman   : I think being a Malaysian, we eat our local foods. Malaysians are more open nowadays compared to a few decades ago.

Shera: We Malaysians wear clothes that originate from other races. For example now, many Chinese girls wear 'baju kurung' to school. They have the choice of wearing pinafore but many are comfortable wearing 'baju kurung'. So I think that is the Malaysian spirit.

Int   : Now let me now ask you about your literature class. How do you find the books and the texts?

Lukman   : I guess the books are an interesting mixed from many different cultures. But most of it represents the Malay culture. I would like something more exciting and adventurous.

May   : I find them interesting and quite easy to follow.

Jason   : I would want something more exciting. The ones we have now are quite boring.

M   : I would like something that is related to the teenagers' daily life. That should be more interesting that what we have now.

Shera   : Shakespeare would be interesting. I like to read about the way people live during that time, the language and the love story.

Int   : Have you not done Shakespeare before?

Unison : Yes, we have.

M   : In form 1. Just a poem. It would be more interesting if we could have Macbeth or Hamlet to be used in the class.

Lukman   : I can't really understand Shakespeare because its old English. Some words are totally alien. In face many words are strange. I would like something new or current.

Int   : Let's go back to our society. Do you understand the word 'stereotyping'?

Daniel : Stereotype is like..when you see for example Indians, you think they only eat 'Roti Canai' for snacking and nothing else. That's what I think.

Jason   : I'm not quite sure of the word.

Int   : That's ok. But I know you know. Don't be offended in anyway.

Lukman   : The main one surrounding Malaysia is related to the 3 races. You've mentioned the first one. For the Chinese, they say that they are hard working.

Int   : We heard many of these stereotypes. What do you say if teachers highlight these stereotypes in the classroom?

Unison : No.

Int   : Why not?

Jason   : I think teachers should explain it (the word).

Lukman   : Stereotyping I think is not a big of a problem. People nowadays, especially in the city are more open than the rural. The people who live in the rural actually take stereotyping a little more seriously than city folks. The main one and popular one will be 'Malays are lazy" and people would take it hard in the rural but in the city, we joke about it.

Int   : We shouldn't be highlighting stereotype than in the classroom in case..

Unison : Not so much.

Int   : Lets talk about 1Malaysia.

Daniel : All I know is just the concept of bringing everybody together as 1, living in peace and get along with each other.

Jason   : stop violence

Suresh : Bringing people of different races together.

May   : The concept of war against racism and bring the nation together.

Lukman   : Racism is not a big problem in Malaysia. It's a propaganda. People in Malaysia get most of what they want to know from the politicians. And, politicians let them know what they want to hear. 1Malasyia, unity, doesn't that sound nice. But that's not really the big issue.

Int   : Do you think, with the efforts form the government, this 1Malaysia will work?

Jason : I think it will. Given time.

Lukman : Provided that it doesn't go haywire, I'm sure that it'll work since not many people are really aware of what's going on. Sometimes ignorance is bliss. Sometimes cover up story is a good thing.

Int " 'Cover –up thing' why do you say that?

Lukman : Take a look at other countries for example, some are going through corrupted government officials as well. But in Malaysia, we're lucky, although these things happened, there are many other things that keep our minds positive about things. We are improving and some use race as their tools.

Appendix 9
A sample of observation protocol (Adapted from Classroom Observation protocol.htm)

Classroom Observation Protocol

[handwritten annotations: "role play", "Tch tried to connect with Ss's everyday life", "2", "10.20", "90 mins"]

Date : 8.03.10

Time:9.20
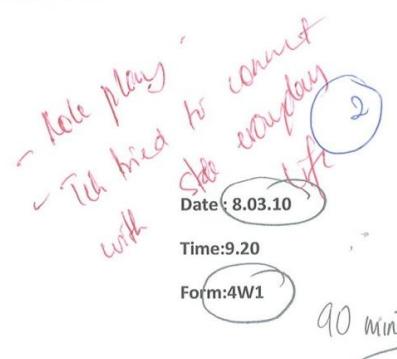
PART 1

Form:4W1

SECTION A

1. Name of Teacher   : _____Pn. Gurmeet_____ ethnicity___Punjabi_____

2. Gender   : Female

3. Name of School   : _____SMK WM2_____

4. Total No. Of Students :_____   No of Male _____ Female ___   (37)

5. Ethnic Breakdown : Malays___ Chinese___ Indians ___ Others ___

6. How familiar am I with the topic of this lesson?
   Very familiar
   ✓ Fairly Familiar
   Slightly Familiar
   Not Familiar

7. Describe any unique or outstanding aspects of the school as they relate to this study.

8. Topic of lesson : _____ Peach Blossom__ luck -_____

9. The design of the lesson incorporated tasks that required students to interact which each other. Strongly Agree 1 2 ③ 4 5 Strongly Disagree

10. The instructional strategies in this lesson were appropriate for accomplishing the purposes of creating inter ethnic interactions . 1 ② 3 4 5

11. The design of the lesson included 'framing' the activity to help students understand the purpose of the lesson. ① 2 3 4 5

12. The design of the lesson provided opportunities for students to consider application of the concepts (contexts) ① 2 3 4 5

1

13. The teacher's background, experience, and/or expertise enhanced students' understanding of the concept (Shared identity) 1 ②3 4 5

14. Students demonstrated a willingness to share ideas and take intellectual risks. 1 2 3 ④5

15. Group work : Comments
— Tch put stdn into grps at the beginning
— Tch made decision who worked with who.
— Students were quite 'lost' not understanding the task.

Section B. Purpose of the Lesson:

In this section, you are asked to indicate how lesson time was spent and to provide the teacher's stated purpose for the lesson.

1. According to the teacher, the purpose of this lesson was:

– understand culture of others .

2. Based on time spent, the focus of this lesson is best described as: (not clear) .

Section C. Lesson Ratings
I. Design
A. Ratings of Key Indicators
1. The design of the lesson incorporated tasks, roles, and interactions consistent with initial plan.
   1   2 ③4 5

2. The design of the lesson reflected careful planning and organization. 1 ②3 4 5

3. The instructional strategies and activities used in this lesson reflected attention to students' experience, preparedness, prior knowledge, and/or learning styles. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The resources available in this lesson contributed to accomplishing the purposes of the instruction. 1 2 3 ④5

5. The instructional strategies and activities reflected attention to issues of access, equity, and diversity for students (e.g., cooperative learning, language-appropriate strategies/materials) ①2 3 4 5

6. The design of the lesson encouraged a collaborative approach to learning among the students.
   1   2 3 ④5

7. Adequate time and structure were provided for "sense-making." 1 ②3 4 5

8. Adequate time and structure were provided for wrap-up. ①2 3 4 5 6 7

2

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thinking when planning this lesson. It would be appropriate to say "The teacher perceived himself as highly knowledgeable about… " or "The teacher indicated that the students already understood… " even if you have reason to believe that the teacher's perceptions are inaccurate.)

Section D.

PART THREE: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

1. The Story of this Lesson
Summarize why this lesson was taught, why it looked the way it did, and how well it worked.

Students were given the text in advance. Q&A about the story. Tch asks how many characters in the story.

Tch tried to connect the ~~act~~ story to students' everyday life.

2. Tag Line
Write a phrase or brief sentence that captures the essence of the story of this lesson.

The storyline is a story common to the students' culture and many students have heard of this kind of story.

Teacher relates the story to the different cultures in Malaysia and students gave feedback.

Groupwork: Tch asks the students to form groups of three and act out the scene from the story.

3. Overall assessment of the quality of the lesson in layperson's terms:

```
_____ Bad
___✓__ Fair
_____ Good
_____ Very Good
```

4. Additional Information
Use this space to write anything else you would like to say about this lesson, e.g., to suggest specific issues that may or may not be central to the story of this lesson, but illustrate a dilemma or issue particularly well.

Students are quite reserve and this is due to students not having read the story in advance.

Perhaps tch did not clarify the objective of having this lesson to the students. They could not actually see the relevance of this lesson to their work.

sometimes a bit out of control.

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5. Recommendation

Check here if you would recommend that this lesson be

Students are quite excited to act out the story. Groups consist of students from different ethnic background as they need to understand different cultures to be able to act out the story.

Students discussed in dual languages BM and English and prepared the storyline.

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Appendix 10

A sample of observation notes

School   : SMKWM5   Observation : Pre Workshop (1)

Teacher's name   : PL   Date   : 21.01.2010

Total no. of students   : 40   Time   : 8.40 – 9.15

M_18__, C_12__, I__8_, O _2__

Genre   : Poem
Topic of lesson   : In the Midst of Hardship (Latiff Mohideen)
Type of class   : High achievers (Based on the students prior national exam result, PMR)

1. Introduction
Teacher goes through the poem line by line and asks students of the underlying meaning. Students have no difficulties in understanding the poem and give their own interpretations.

2. Activities
Pair work: Teacher asks the students to discuss about their understanding of the poem to a friend who sits beside them

3. Group work
No group work for this lesson as the teacher said that this is just a 40-minute lesson and she normally would have group work during a double period lesson. Moreover, the class is in the chemistry lab, so it's difficult to organize group work with a lot of apparatus around.

4. Summary of the lesson
This class is a floating class as there is insufficient room to accommodate all the students in a proper classroom. Although according to the teacher, the class is rated the best in form four based on achievement, they have been chosen to be a floating class as they are more organized and do not cause a lot of hassle while moving from one classroom to another.

This is an introductory lesson and the first literature class of the year. Students are able to answer teacher's questions in relation to the poem and I feel that the text (poem) is not exploited enough. Teachers asks questions on a superficial level such as 'what do you understand hardship'. Give me an example of hardship…' Perhaps this is just the first lesson and teacher would have planned some other activities based on this text. There are a lot of question and answer based on the meaning of words found in the poem and what's students' understanding of phrase like 'their soaky clothes torn'..and teacher asks what do students understand by that phrase and students are

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able to give their opinion without any difficulties. Students answered in unison most of the time.

5. What's interesting
Although it's the beginning of the year, students are fairly comfortable with each other and there are a lot of interactions amongst students of different ethnic background. This can be seen by the choice of seats they have chosen. There seems to be a balance between the seating arrangements where for example a Chinese girl is seated beside a Malay or Indian friend. And there appears to be no gender boundary in the class where female and male students are evenly distributed throughout the class.

6. What's not so interesting
Students seem restless as I feel that the lesson is so straight forward and easy for the students. It appears that this lesson does not pose any challenge to them. Although the class is interactive (in terms of students discuss the questions that are posed to them with the person who is seated next to them), I feel that a lot more can be done with the lesson in terms of getting the students more engaged in the discussion. Some students at the back row of the class can be seen chatting throughout the lesson and some seem to be doing their own stuff.

7. Students Reaction to the lesson (General)
Students are active and react to questions almost immediately at any time the teacher poses a question and amazingly, not the same student answered. Most probably this is due to the streaming of students based on their achievement, considering that this is the best class of the whole form four.

8. Teacher
Teacher has more than 20 years teaching experience. ELT is her second major. She is a mathematics major. She appears confident in her ability to teach the subject. Teacher is affable towards students and students seem to be comfortable with her, cracking jokes at times and I can see the teacher-student bond between them. While discussing the poem, teacher sometimes relate other stories which are unrelated and this I feel, is able to bring the students closer to the teacher. Students are able to discuss events occurs related to the poem or other events they feel would have connection to their discussions.

There are a lot more teacher talk during the class and the nature of the chemistry lab poses constraints for the teacher to have students' activities which require them to form group work. Her questions however are able to enhance the development of students' conceptual understanding to the context of the story in the poem.

There is no attempt for the teacher to bring in the intercultural elements during her discussion with students although, in reading the poem again, I feel there should be plenty of opportunities and room for it. For example, in discussing the elements of flood and the typical occurrence of flooding will be the east coast of Malaysia and the majority of people there are Malays. This could lead to the culture of hardship faced by the under privileged people who live in the rural areas. But there is no such attempt.

9. Materials

This new collection of Poems and short stories is newly introduced for Form Four starting this year (January 2010). The poem below is used in this lesson and this is found on the first page of the book. According to the teacher, this is her first Literature lesson of the year with this class.

10. **Other Remarks**

- The instructional strategies in this lesson were not appropriate for accomplishing the purposes of creating intercultural awareness amongst the students.
- The design of the lesson incorporated tasks that require students to interact with each other.
- Interactions amongst students do not entirely reflect collegial working relationship amongst students.

Appendix 11

The Selected Short Stories

1. **Ah Khaw goes to heaven**
2. **The Deep fried Devils**
3. **Peach Blossom Luck**
4. **Nannan**

Appendix 12

A sample of workshop evaluation form

EVALUATION FORM

RESEARCHER EVALUATION

(Please use the following scale to indicate your response to the statements below :

5 = excellent   4 = very good   3 = good   2 = poor   1 = very poor

1. The researcher : Puan Faizah Idrus.

	1	2	3	4	5
1.knowledge of subject material was				✓	
2. quality of instruction was				✓	
3. presentation, explanations and examples were				✓	
4. command of the language was				✓	
5. communication skills were				✓	
6. overall, how would rate her?				✓	

2. Programme Evaluation.

1. I understood the researcher's purpose for having this workshop				✓	
2. Materials were sufficient				✓	
3. The workshop is too elaborate and could be cut short	Timing	was	ok.		
4. I would be able to apply the key concepts of the workshop to my students.				✓	
5. I anticipate there would be problems in applying the key concepts into the classroom.		Not really			
6. Item/section I found useful :	Session 3.				
7. Item/section I found least useful :	—				

Other Comments :

Gave me some insights to new materials. It's good and really appreciate this opportunity. I also had the chance to hear others' ideas and suggestion of using short stories... interesting

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Appendix 13

A sample of infused Malaysian couture by Rizalman Ibrahim.

(http://malaysianhijab.blogspot.com/2010/01/rizalman-ibrahim-hijabi-ready-to.htm)

http://www.weddinginspirasi.com/2008/11/13/wedding-gown-designer-rizalman-ibrahim-pereka-gaun-pengantin-rizalman-ibrahim

Appendix 14

A sample of LAT's cartoon

At a 'mamak shop'.http://www.etawau.com/HTML/AirAsia/Lat.htm

'Nasi lemak for breakfast' :http://www.oocities.org/woo_ben/lat/lat.htm

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http://www.etawau.com/HTML/AirAsia/Lat.htm

Air Asia Boeing 737 with livery of Lat's cartoons.

"**Lat** epitomizes all we believe in to create a Malaysian identity...The Lat characters portray the colorful lives and unique blend of our multi-racial society... Everyone reads Lat, everyone can fly on AirAsia."
Tony Fernandes, Group Chief Executive Officer, AirAsia Sdn Bhd

http://www.etawau.com/HTML/AirAsia/Lat.htm