

Exploring the Application of ChatGPT to English Teaching in a Malaysia Primary School

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Abstract

As ChatGPT has gained popularity, more academics have looked into its application to English instruction. In this study, interviews with English teachers at a primary school in Malaysia were conducted using a qualitative research approach. This study displays how ChatGPT was utilized in the preparation of English teaching for Malaysian instructors, which refers to ChatGPT can be used as an immediate help for English teachers in designing or preparing their teaching content, as well as what effect ChatGPT has on the teachers' instructional strategy, which refers to effectiveness and efficiency.

Keywords: ChatGPT, English teaching, qualitative research, Malaysia, primary school

1. Introduction

English was regularly presented in close conjunction with notions from the economic area, like "employability" and "skills", in the Malaysian policies' (Lorente & Tupas, 2013). Following the 1967 National Language Act, English rose to become the second most significant language. In all schools and higher educational institutions, English started being used to teach mathematics and science in 2003 (Chang, 2011). English education has received more and more importance as globalisation of education has progressed (Shi, 2018). Due to the fact that English is taught in schools, many Malaysians are capable of speaking the language fluently to varied degrees (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014; Pillai & Lok, 2018). With the implementation of the policy of the language education, students at national primary schools are required to receive 210–240 minutes of

English instruction each week, compared to that of 60–90 minutes at vernacular national-type schools (Azman, 2016). For instance, an English instructor from a Chinese private school in Penang mentioned that pupils learn English with a timetable of 10 sessions each week, two (2) of which are scheduled daily and last for thirty-five (35) minutes each. Students have no other access to the English language in any other context, thus they only study it for one hour and ten minutes every day (Yee & Ganapathy, 2017). Azman (2016) reviewed the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025) and the Malaysia English Language Roadmap (2015–2025), examining the effects of the implementation of yet another significant language in educational reform in comparison to already-existing issues relating to teacher language proficiency, a lack of properly trained and skilled teachers, a mismatch between syllabus and practises, a lack of

exposure to other languages, and most importantly, the ominous perception of the English language. In addition, Scheme of Work (SOW) (2021) of Malaysia's national-type primary schools provide the supporting information that includes Lesson (such as Lesson: 5, Reading 2), Main skill focus (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing), Theme, Topic, Cross Curricular Elements, Language/Grammar Focus, Content and Learning Standards, Main Skill and Complementary Skill, Learning Outline, Materials/References, Differentiation strategies (<https://www.moe.gov.my/>).

In order to prepare students for advances in science and technology, Selvaraj (2010) distinguishes between the use of two different pedagogical approaches: content-based instruction (CBI) and aesthetic approaches, which aim to develop students' reading habits, as well as their capacity for both creative and critical thought. In order to be more effective, teachers should employ a variety of interactive language communication techniques that are more likely to have an influence on students' English learning and usage. The use of games, songs, and talks during pair and group work, as well as in whole class, small group, and one-on-one teacher-student interactions, are among these strategies (Alexander, 2008). They are also supplemented by instructor explanations, recitations, conversations, and discussions. In order to be more effective, teachers should employ a variety of interactive language communication techniques, such as games, songs, and talks, that are more likely to have an influence on students' English learning and usage. Besides, students are also supplemented the understanding of the knowledge by instructor explanations, recitations, conversations, and discussions. (Alexander, 2008). The new curriculum, which was published under the title Malaysian English Language Curriculum for Primary Schools, was designed around a modular approach, with each module focusing on the development of the four main language modes (writing, reading, listening, and speaking) (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 10). Azman (2016) also states that the KBSR English curriculum is built on a communicative approach and strives to give Malaysian English learners useful and relevant teaching so they can utilise English in their everyday life.

However, Hardman and Rahman (2014)

discovered that classroom discussion was strictly regulated and that students were placed in the role of passive recipients of texts created by the instructor. Instructors received inadequate feedback from their students in class: dialogues were mostly planned and regulated by their instructors, and students only offered declares when requested, which severely restricted the use of investigative discussion. For instance, according to Alexander (2008), students need to memorise (through repetition of drills), recite (using brief question/answer sequences to review or test what is expected to be understood), instruct (telling kids the steps to do and the approach to do), and explain (delivering information and interpret things). On the face of it, activity-based methods that involve songs, games, and dialogues appear to take a more active approach to teaching and learning. Nevertheless, as there was nothing in the way of knowledge, ideas, information, views, or sentiments being communicated, a deeper look at the structure of these activities showed that they did not give actual opportunity to develop meaningful and purposeful relationships with instructors and student peers (Hardman & Rahman, 2014; Chen & Maarof, 2017). Vocabulary and grammar continue to be the main difficulties that ESL students encounter. The majority of pupils lack the vocabulary necessary for successful reading, writing, and speaking. Additionally, suburban English teachers in Malaysia encounter pupils that lack motivation, confidence, and comfort speaking or performing English in educational settings due to the lack of demand for English in a rural context (Ab Aziz et al., 2019; Ag-Ahmad & Lidadun, 2020). On the other hand, when novice teachers are constrained by a lack of information, work experience, or competence in teaching (Senom, Zakaria & Shah, 2013), many professors utilise online instructional devices to address issues brought up by students in the classroom, or they might offer other approaches to issues (Ahmad et al., 2019).

A variety of specialised expertise is needed by teachers since teaching is an extremely complicated procedure. It is impossible to educate students and gain knowledge of English in a classroom with only a textbook (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The viability of this concept has also been proven by further studies. For instance, it has been shown that using Microsoft PowerPoint demonstrations and other electronic

learning technologies significantly improves the vocabulary of EFL students (Mahmoudzadeh, 2014). Students utilise the guessing approach whenever they come across a new term. They prefer to figure out from the context by initially attempting to identify what part of a phrase relates to. In every other case, they make a guess based on an image, description, or explanation. When pupils are involved, pictures have been proven to grab their attention particularly well. It has been discovered that lower-level pupils use this technique more frequently (Yaacob et al., 2019); The results of Bayuon, Yunus, and Ashairi Suliman (2019) demonstrate that participants can expand their vocabulary by adopting intriguing words or phrases from online sources into books; the supply of reading materials in the learning environment, including daily newspapers, monthly magazines, and storybooks, with the objective to foster kids' passion for reading is seen by instructors as being particularly important (Muhamad, Azmi, & Hassan, 2020); Process-product and process-genre approaches can be used effectively in ESL classes at the middle and elementary school levels. However, writing anxiety develops when students struggle to write; as a result, students master how to compose according to the example work and may generate a text that is comparable by using process writing approaches, such as sketching, rewriting, modifying, and releasing (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019).

The ChatGPT, which was created by OpenAI, has garnered interest from all over the world for its capacity to handle difficult language analysis and conversational production challenges (Wu et al., 2023). Artificial Intelligence Generated material (AIGC), which refers to the production of digital material such as pictures, music, and spoken words using artificial intelligence models, includes ChatGPT and other generative artificial intelligence (GAI) technologies. In order to produce high-quality content more quickly, AIGC strives to improve accessibility and efficiency in creating content (Cao, 2023; Farrokhnia, Banihashem, Noroozi & Wals, 2023). AIGC is accomplished by deriving intent data via human-provided instructions, comprehending that information, and then producing content in accordance with both its comprehension as well as the purposeful details (Cao, 2023). Since they can enhance intent collection and, consequently, the outcomes

produced, large-scale models have grown in significance in AIGC in recent years. While this is going on, ChatGPT may be taught to do a number of tasks, including as recognising words, inquiry responding, and text completing. The development of chatbots and other interfaces for conversations can also benefit from it (Gill & Kaur, 2023).

The use of new technology must be embraced if academia is to grow, and the teaching and learning process is to be supported. Innovative educational tools support the sharing of instructional materials by, for example, enhancing their interactivity and immersion (Ahmad et al., 2019). Multimedia programmes may be used in English courses to engage students and give them with engaging new learning opportunities. This demonstrates how instructors may improve their students' English language proficiency and create an optimal learning setting by integrating and using information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom to instruct English (Raman & Mohamed, 2013).

ChatGPT is a flexible and useful device that has a lot of promise to support motivating and flexible language acquisition, it is helpful to motivate language instructors to investigate ChatGPT's educational potential and employ technology to enhance instruction in ways that are both ethical and conceptually sound (Kohnke, Moorhouse, & Zou, 2023). It may be a useful tool for teachers since it gives them a place to start when developing lesson plans, instructional resources, or evaluating assignments (Lo, 2023). Additionally, it is interesting how ChatGPT developed a lesson plan that adhered to conventional lesson plan phases and successfully recognised the framework of a teaching design (Cheong, 2023). The development of syllabuses that are tailored to particular pedagogical requirements and preferences is ensured by the teacher's inventive and collaborative method of working with ChatGPT. This leads to the development of more successful teaching methods (Cheong, 2023; Koraishi, 2023).

People can access the information they want quickly and easily by utilising this chatbot. Because it can present information in an understandable manner, this chatbot can also aid in improving understanding of a subject (Fitria, 2023). By giving students access to pertinent and excellent reading resources,

ChatGPT can help students study (Kasneci et al., 2023). ChatGPT can create writings using language that is simple to grasp and suited for students' comprehension levels since it has the capacity to interpret spoken words. ChatGPT may be used by teachers to provide excellent reading resources for their pupils. Teachers will find it simpler and more efficient to generate pertinent test questions and exams as a result (Ausat et al., 2023). For instance, this characteristic makes it simpler for English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers to address the specific requirements of learners by enabling them to develop context-relevant and level-appropriate reading materials that smoothly include diverse terms (Cheong, 2023; Koraishi, 2023). Additionally, ChatGPT may respond to all inquiries on a variety of subjects, covering English essays with narratives about Solo and My Family, accounts of memorable experiences, resolutions for 2023, and future careers. ChatGPT takes into account the writing format, particularly the use of topic sentences, explanations, and conclusions. Both the active voice and the passive voice are used. Additionally, it takes into account the tenses used in relation to the essay's theme (Barrot, 2023; Fitria, 2023).

A recently developed smart tool software called ChatGPT aids educators in their task of teaching and learning. I was researching the use of ChatGPT in the teaching field when I came across campus information from the official website of S School in Malaysia, which stated that the school leader of the school encourages teachers to integrate ChatGPT with their own teaching design. I contacted the school leader via email and the school leader agreed to offer one of the English teachers in the school to corporate with my interview. The aim of my study is to ascertain how ChatGPT was utilized in the Malaysian instructors' English classes and what effect it had on the teachers' instructional strategy. Fortunately, the head of the school assisted me in locating an English instructor who was open to speaking with me about my study.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted in the S School, which is a government-run Chinese primary school in Serdang Lama, Petaling Perdana, Selangor, Malaysia. I conducted a face-to-face interview an English teacher, Sample A, for around 30 minutes and I type the answer of Sample A on

the computer.

2.1 Research Question

- 1). How to apply ChatGPT to English teaching in the S School?
- 2). What impact does ChatGPT have on English teaching in the S School?

2.2 Participants

Sample A, who has worked in the S School for 24 years, is an English teacher.

2.3 Data Collection

The interview was conducted by face to face and the text was transcribed.

2.4 Data Analysis

I use the thematic analysis to analyze the data I collected and present it in the next chapter.

2.5 Research Design

In order to explore how ChatGPT can be applied to English teaching in the S School and what ChatGPT has an impact on English teaching in the S School, this study used a qualitative approach to gather information through purposive sampling, and ultimately settled the study in the S School.

3. Findings

3.1 The Basic Information of the Participant

Sample A, who has worked in the S School for 24 years, is a female English teacher. Sample A teaches four classrooms' English lesson with 179 students. As for the academic performance of English, in the four classes taught by Sample A, around 20% of the students gain the grade of "Excellent", nearly 50% of the students are at the grade of "Middle", and the rest of approximately 30% students perform weak academic performance of English.

3.2 Syllabus and Teaching Content of English Teachers in the S School

The material on SOW (2021) cited in Chapter 1 leads us to the conclusion that primary school English instructors in Malaysia must prepare their lessons by using SOW (2021), a document that has been formally released by the government. My participant, Sample A, expressed a negative response when I asked if S School had a unique lesson preparation guideline for her own school based on the SOW (2021) official guide, but she stated that each teacher has their own teaching habits and styles as well as unique student learning situations in each classroom. Therefore, depending on the

two official guidelines, DSKP or SOW, instructors can modify the subject matter of their classes and the tempo of their sessions to suit their own needs.

"The teachers can use their own teaching methods to deliver the lessons as long follow the DSKP or follow the Scheme of Work (SOW)." (Sample A)

Additionally, in section 3.1, Sample A notes that only 20% of the 179 students in her four classes are at the "Excellent" level in English, indicating that the students lack a strong foundation in the language. With each of S School's recommendations, this suggests that the students need more help. Students have extremely limited exposure to English because they only have six English courses each week, lasting three hours each. Thus, Sample A mentioned that:

"Each student has a distinct rate of information assimilation, thus there is absolutely no way I can teach the kids exactly what the SOW (2021) intends to teach. Second, we need to review the material prior to the students' mid- and end-of-year assessments, so I can only cover a portion of the material that I believe is crucial. I often focus on five main skills to prepare my teaching content, which refers to Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing and Language Art, and I also pay more attention to students' absorption of vocabulary and grammar. Besides, in order to make my students better understand what I say in the class, I try to find some of the topic that suits the daily life and the culture of our country or make up short stories that match the grammar points and vocabulary learned."

3.3 Teaching English in a Multimedia Format and the Setting of Teaching Activities in the S School

Sample A responded that S School does encourage multimedia education, stating that every classroom has computers and internet connection, some have smart whiteboards, while others have projectors and curtains. The instructor can utilise the internet to obtain images or videos to aid the students grasp what the teacher is saying if they discover that they don't understand the concept or vocabulary covered in the session.

"Most of my lessons, I will search some videos in YouTube that are related to the syllabus in text book, interesting things, pictures in internet, some assessment papers for exercise etc. Pupils will focus more and pay attention."

The head of the school encourages the teachers

to plan classroom activities, but it is not required because the students have so little time for English lessons each week and the teachers concentrate more on explaining the points and practising in class, Sample A responded when I asked if the English teachers at S School organise classroom activities:

"I do plan a class activity, but I believe it will be more like the style of a cooperative learning group. I would have teams compete against one another, and the team who won would get a surprise present from me. The pupils would be motivated to work hard for their group to receive the award as a consequence of this mysterious present. In each group, there is always a good student as the leader to help and guide the weak students, this method is much effective."

3.4 The Application of ChatGPT in English Teaching Design in the S School

ChatGPT makes life and work a lot more convenient for everyone. When I asked Sample A if he had ever used ChatGPT, he said that he had and that it had greatly facilitated his life and job.

"Yes, I often ask on ChatGPT about aspects of life and teaching related content."

"I tried it to find out some information like writing a resume, registration letter and I often use ChatGPT to find some stories for pupils storytelling competition. It's really work and help a lot." (Sample A)

Sample A responded that she uses ChatGPT to locate short tales that correspond to the topic points and phrases she has to recall for the unit, which aids students in remembering and applying what they have learned, when I asked her how it would help in teaching. As a result, instructors have significantly less stress, especially when organising lessons because they don't have to spend as much time gathering additional materials like textbooks or picture books.

"For instance, in the city unit I'm teaching right now, the vocabulary phrases the students need to retain are "cinema, theatre, monument, shopping centre," and the grammatical rules they need to master are the grammatical point is "There is/there are," thus I'll type these phrases as keywords into ChatGPT's chatbox to find some stories that fit my requirements. I may use these tales in the storytelling contest I stated before, or I can extract a few phrases from these tales, remove a few words, and use them in a lesson plan to assess students' word memory or grammar

proficiency.” (Sample A)

3.5 The Application of ChatGPT in English Course in the S School

The use of ChatGPT in English curriculum design is covered in section 3.4, however, when I inquired about how ChatGPT may be used in the classroom, Sample A replied that she did not presently use it:

“Currently, I solely use this programme as one of my tools for my preparation for teaching English, such as to assist me in finding the knowledge I need more quickly and efficiently or to offer various types of answers to a problem. The Head of English does want us to integrate AI into teaching English, but I haven’t yet discovered a method to employ AI in the classroom. I may contemplate utilising AI in the future, like ChatGPT.”

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Limitation

This study uses a qualitative methods approach based on a review of the literature to understand the English education in Malaysia and the integration of application between ChatGPT and education. The findings of the section 3.2 presented syllabus and teaching content of English teachers in the S School, the participant stated that all Malaysia teachers are required to follow the official guideline DSKP or SOW (2021), but teachers can modify the course pace depending on students’ current situation, which is consistent to Selvaraj’s (2010) statement that the Content-Based Instruction in the policy of English teaching and learning. In addition, the participant claimed that the students in this school have extremely limited exposure to English because they only have six English courses each week, lasting three hours each, which is consistent to Azman (2016), Yee and Ganapathy’s (2017) statements that the English learning time is limited to Malaysian primary school students. Sample A responded in the section 3.3 that S School does encourage multimedia education, stating that every classroom has computers and internet connection, some have smart whiteboards, while others have projectors and curtains, Sample A searches some videos in YouTube that are related to the syllabus in text book, interesting things, pictures in internet to gain attention from students, which is consistent to Mishra and Koehler’s (2006), Mahmoudzadeh’s (2014), Bayuong, Yunus, and Ashairi Suliman (2019)’s statements that using social media or technology in the class helps to improve the learning

interests for students. The attitude toward using ChatGPT for my participant in the section 3.4 is positive and my participant also applies ChatGPT to design the preparation for English teaching with the feature of ChatGPT with convenience and practicality, which confirms the statement of Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou (2023) that ChatGPT has great potential to promote the language learning as well and proves the statement of Lo (2023), Chenong (2023) and Koraishi (2023) that ChatGPT can be a practical and useful tools for teachers to prepare for teaching materials.

The findings of section 3.2 and section 3.3 display the information of English teachers’ teaching in the S School, which presents the background information for the findings of section 3.4. The findings of section 3.4 show the application of ChatGPT in English teaching design in the S School that Sample A uses ChatGPT to locate short tales that correspond to the topic points and phrases she has to recall for the unit, which aids students in remembering and applying what they have learned. Besides, Sample A also mentioned that using ChatGPT for searching teaching materials is more effective and efficient, which helps to reduce the working pressure of preparation for teaching. However, the findings of section 3.5 shows that ChatGPT has not been applied in the English course, we can not understand whether ChatGPT has an impact on students’ learning results. Overall, this study displays how ChatGPT how ChatGPT was utilized in the preparation of English teaching for Malaysian instructors, and what effect it has on the teachers’ instructional strategy, which refers to effectiveness and efficiency.

But this study refers to an interview with a Chinese primary school in Malaysia and to an interview with an English teacher. Therefore, the information presented by this teacher cannot summarise the whole situation of English language teaching in Malaysia. Moreover, as ChatGPT has only just emerged, the use of ChatGPT as a function of a teacher’s teaching tool is not yet very popular. Therefore, from the interviews in Chapter 3, it is clear that ChatGPT can currently only be used as an immediate help for English teachers in designing or preparing their teaching content, but its impact on students’ English performance or the change in their attitude towards learning English is debatable.

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