



## Teachers' Perceptions on Using the Pulse 2 textbook

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### Abstract

*With CEFR coming in to the system and curriculum, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia has introduced MacMillan's Pulse 2 to be used as English Form 1 and 2 textbook, replacing the locally written and published main textbook used for the particular forms. The change has been highly debated among educators, researchers and policy makers on the relevance of using Pulse 2 as the main textbook. As for the educators, teachers' perceptions could be greatly contributing to improve the quality of teaching and learning better, as well as to review any aspects that could be highlighted. The study aims at exploring the teachers' perceptions towards the use of Pulse 2 textbook in teaching and learning English in Malaysia. The paper is a case study, where the data was collected from 5 teachers teaching Form 1 and 2 students in a rural school in Marang. The instrument used was interview and the respondents were interviewed on five questions. The findings disclosed mixed perceptions from the respondents showing that some aspects of Pulse 2 were both positively and negatively viewed where cultural content and students' engagement have been the focus. In a nutshell, the study is deemed necessary to benefit the policy makers to review the opinions and views from the teachers on the relevance of using Pulse 2 in Malaysian classroom. Results are vital to Malaysian education system as teachers' perception matter in looking at whether Pulse 2 is relevant and practical to be used in our context.*

Keyword: Pulse 2, teachers' perception, textbook selection, teaching and learning, pedagogical issues

### Introduction

CEFR is the abbreviation of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which describes what can be done by language learners at different phases of their learning through sets of thorough 'can do' statements. It is developed by the Council of Europe as a measure to standardise language proficiency. It is applicable to other foreign languages and is recognised in Europe and other countries. Its function as the 'comprehensive reference tool' has been taken into the educational curriculum of many countries. In Malaysia, the implementation of CEFR is along the lines of Cambridge-level English. There are six levels of English-language ability structured in CEFR. The levels begin with A1 being the lowest and most basic language proficiency level a language learner can have while C2 is the highest and most advanced language proficiency level. The levels go from A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. A1 and A2 level are categorised under basic users while B1 and B2 are classified for the independent users. The last C1 and C2 are labelled for proficient users. These levels are concisely provided in the practical CEFR global scale. Through CEFR, it is believed that language learners are able to fall under the international standard levels of English in which case that there is no such claim like B2 English learners in India are better than the B2 English learners in Poland. The six levels of English proficiency are widely recognised to produce learners who can compete globally. CEFR stresses on generating language learners' skills by emphasising the learning outcomes which put them to understand, read, write, communicate, where they should complete every learning stage. It has also been placing emphasis on prioritising the expectations and results of language learning.

Malaysia education system through the Ministry of Education has come up with the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) which has introduced 11 shifts in transforming our education system. The first shift which is on providing equal access to quality education of an international standard links to this study. This has led to the emergence of the new curriculum, prioritising student-centeredness and differentiated teaching. The Ministry of Education has decided to implement CEFR into the English language curriculum thus changing the syllabus, assessment as well as materials to align to the reference set worldwide. Aligning to CEFR, the Ministry of Education has replaced the previous local textbooks for Form 1 and Form 2 with MacMillan's Pulse 2. A single Pulse 2 textbook is used for both forms where Unit 1 to 5 are specifically used for Form 1 students, while the rest Unit 6 to 9 are for the next form, in delivering all four main skills of English. The need to be proficient in English is vital and steps have been taken to produce students who use English in their daily life.

Pulse 2 is an international Cambridge-certified textbook, written and edited by British linguists. It has been introduced to Form 1 students since 2017 and Form 2 students since 2018 as the main textbook to be used in teaching and learning English in Malaysian schools. According to Macmillan Education Publication, Pulse 2 is claimed to be an ideal material for teachers and students with complete incorporation and integration of digital content and resources, which motivates students for its rich British context and interactive activities. The book aims at developing students' receptive and productive skills as well as their communicative competence through its skill-based integrated approach. Its plethora connection to CEFR scales is one of the reasons why it is selected as the main English textbook for Form 1 and 2 in Malaysia. Pulse 2 also comes in Teacher's Book which provides extra input and guidance for teachers. Looking at how Pulse 2 works would intrigue teachers and educators on the reasons and criteria for its selection to be the main English textbook introduced by the Ministry of Education. Putting the local English textbooks aside, there should be criteria to evaluate Pulse 2 to be taken as the national English textbook. Subsequently, the introduction of Pulse 2 as the national English textbook has sparked debates related to redundancy as there are currently two English textbooks – Pulse 2 and the locally-produced English textbooks, operating in the teaching and learning of English language in

Malaysia. This led to the Ministry of Education releasing a directive by classifying Pulse 2 as 'textbook material' and locally-produced English textbooks as 'non-textbook material'.

Pulse 2 has been used by the teachers since 2017 and since then teachers have been comparing it to the former local English textbook for Form 1 and 2. Teachers have the right to evaluate the materials they are using for their class and by using the relevant textbook for particular group of students. Getting teachers' perceptions on using textbook would perhaps lead to the effectiveness of teaching English. They influence what teachers do in classroom. The skilled teachers have the opportunity to report and reflect their perceptions on the usefulness and weakness of the textbook they use in a given class. Teachers' perceptions are significant as they are the basis for teacher to form judgment or make decisions. They result in how teachers deal with shortcomings in their teaching situations. Besides, they also help gain deeper understanding of teachers' behaviours in classrooms and provide guidance for enhancing teachers' practices. The perceptions gained from the teachers would provide significant insight into aspects of education.

The study underpins the relevance of Pulse 2 textbook in Malaysian classroom context, based on the teachers' perceptions towards it. The study intends to explore the teachers' perceptions towards the use of Pulse 2 textbook in teaching and learning English in Malaysia, especially in rural schools. The paper sets the context for the study by reviewing recent studies on teachers' theoretical beliefs in the area of classroom instruction.

One limitation of the study would be the limited studies done on Pulse 2 textbook, an international textbook. Most studies circle around the locally published textbooks because of the curriculum standard and national education philosophy set in the country. Why isn't there any research on Pulse 2? The first reason would be because it is still very new. Another reason would be due to the implementation of Pulse 2 textbook which comes directly from the government, the policy maker. It is a top-down approach, where the education system and policy maker decide to use the international textbook and it goes down to the schools to be implemented. The textbook comes down from the government, so there is no reason for researchers to conduct research because it is not a choice. It is directive. Pulse 2 could be perhaps used for Spanish speakers, a set of foreign English speakers. There is a controversy but nothing much can be done.

## Literature Review

Textbooks are viewed as the main materials in English language learning that can convey the knowledge and information to the learners (Ahour and Ahmadi, 2012), through their linguistic features which are deemed "easy and organised" (p. 176). Textbooks and other classroom-related materials play a dominant role in all learning conditions other than assisting teachers with their responsibilities (Azizfar, 2009; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Textbooks are precious in language teaching and learning but their role and usage can vary in different education systems and countries (Ahmadi and Derakhshan, 2016). It is quite different in the Malaysia classroom situation. Ramazani (2012) highlights that teachers in Malaysia seem to be rejecting the idea of using the textbooks recommended by the ministry and government, and would tend to have used the other published materials which are more commercialised. Textbooks are not used to its full potential due to the fact that textbooks are not sufficient enough when it comes to the content and questions related to the examination. Brown (1995) points out in (Ahmadi and Derakhshan 2016, p. 260) that textbooks are a source of language, a learning support, motivation, stimulation, and reference besides influencing teachers and students on teaching and learning. In learning, students would find textbooks helpful to progress and obtain their learning goals besides helping them to feel safe (Ramzjoo, 2007).

Textbook plays a crucial role in teaching a language as they are the first conceptualization of the syllabus that the teacher encounters (Mustapha, 2008, p. 163). In Malaysia, a study by Pillay (1995, cited in Mustapha, 2008, p. 163) identified that with exception of teachers from urban schools, most Malaysian teachers depend on textbooks, as the nature of their jobs do not allow them the luxury of developing their own materials. The textbooks in Malaysia are written and passed down from the Ministry of Education to teachers (Mukundan, 2007, p. 80).

### The Need for Pulse 2

Textbook is fundamental in teaching and learning. It is almost a universal element in ELT classroom. It assists teachers on what to teach and guides students on what they will focus on. For being a strong guide for both teachers and students to refer to, textbook saves time and money. Regardless of having a variety of teaching materials, teachers have textbooks which reduce their time to prepare their own materials and so, they will spend more time in teaching. Time spent on creating in-house materials can be minimised. The question now is, is the current English textbook used relevant to the Malaysian students and classroom? In Malaysia, millions of English textbook copies are sold and bought for every student in the particular forms. Since 2017, a new CEFR-aligned textbook called Pulse 2 has been introduced and used in Form 1, and 2018 for Form 2 curriculum, as Ministry of Education has taken the full initiative to follow CEFR which changes KSSM (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Sekolah) for English subject and the Standard Based English Language Curriculum (SBELC). Pulse 2 textbook comes with a new format and different content and activities from the previous local English textbook used for Form 1 and 2 students.

Since Pulse 2 has been introduced in the system, there are discussions and disputes on its relevance as the new and main Form 1 and 2 English textbook. The then-Deputy Education Minister Datuk P. Kamalanathan mentions that Pulse 2 is “a part of the ministry’s English reform to ensure students achieve proficiency levels aligned to the international standards” (Chin & Rajaendram, 2017, para. 2). Pulse 2 is introduced as an effort of developing the students’ level as well as the system to a level recognised internationally. Similarly, a textbook certified by Cambridge is without doubt increases the reliability of the English language system used in Malaysia. National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Harry Tan Huat Hock (2017) claims that the shift is deemed to influence local textbook publishers to produce CEFR-aligned textbooks locally by following the standard set by asking the ministry for guidelines. There is no existing textbook published locally that has met such standard so far.

### Possible Problems in Pulse 2

Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand (2014) stated that “textbooks are one of the elements that may promote or discourage learners depending on their materials” (p. 95). Some materials are considered good as they are helpful to the learners by promoting them to learn the language. Problems seen in any teaching materials seem to exist in textbook. All textbooks do have limitations. To some extent, textbook can be insufficiently adequate to supply each and every student’s needs. To save money spent on a textbook, it is used for several to many years in the curriculum, which eventually results in topics being outdated and irrelevant to the current situation. The topics can feasibly bore students which definitely demotivate them to learn. On top of that, textbook may also hamper teachers’ creative minds from working. Its set structure and sequence may limit their creativity. Some researchers also point out one disadvantage of a textbook that it may not be cost efficient. Some can be expensive. As for Pulse 2, the price is almost RM40 per book and looking at the size of it, teachers and parents would think that it is too expensive.

Having English as the second language may sound great but the students’ performance in the language as a school core subject is still below par. Utilizing a foreign textbook to be used as the main English textbook could be a lot to take in, judging from its wide cultural content, lexical density, layout and a few more to cover. The usage of Pulse 2 in the secondary school English

curriculum possesses advantages and disadvantages that has sparked discussions among educators.

Pulse 2 is a global, foreign book taken into the education system and its relevance to the Malaysian ESL classroom context is still debatable and highly criticised. According to Khoo and Knight (2015), global textbooks tend to be seen as “irrelevant, culturally inappropriate, incompatible with the latest teaching methodology, of mixed levels and just generally fail to match the diverse needs of their wide range of audience” (p. 130). These are the negative aspects pointed out by teachers who are teaching Form 1 and Form 2 students. Apart from that, Pulse 2 is also accused to have contained mismatched needs. The lexical density might be pretty high for the rural students of those particular forms.

### Disputes on Cultural Content of Pulse 2

Harry Tan the secretary-general of National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) states that foreign content can be useful to the students explaining that other cultures would urge them to read more. He finds that it is certainly fine for the students to gain inputs on cultures that they are foreign to them (The Star online, Feb 4, 2018). On the other hand, Tan Ai Mei (2017), an education consultant, claims that there is a potential threat of using imported textbooks which promotes larger global exposure since the context is fully different to the local one produced. She also argues that it would be better for students to learn the language in a familiar context, especially to the students coming from rural areas who might struggle with the unfamiliar context. This has also been supported by Zairil Khir Johari, a member of the parliament, stating that Pulse 2 has “zero local content” and thus are enriched with extremely strong British context (Chow, p. 2017). Aziz (2017, para. 15) states that “the cultural content in these textbooks might be distant and alien for many students”. The content of the textbook might be too foreign to the students. In supporting this statement, Dr. Zuwati Hasim highlights that “textbooks should relate to the local context” (‘Let’s have our own textbooks’, 2018, para. 10). This aspect of a textbook enables it to connect its content to the students’ real life. This essentially makes learning effective. Likewise, Dr. Surinderpal Kaur, the deputy dean of postgraduate studies at the Universiti Malaya Faculty of Languages and Linguistic states that it is agreeable to have dynamic content in the textbook, but only by having a mixture of Malaysian cultural content and “a little bit of everything else” of the world, global culture and identity would make an English textbook beneficial (‘Let’s have our own textbooks’, 2018, para. 6).

### The Significance of Teachers’ Perceptions

Teachers’ perceptions play an important role in examining whether Pulse 2 is relevant to the Malaysian context or not. Teachers’ perceptions are equivalent to the personal beliefs held by the teachers on the curriculum, subject matter they are teaching, responsibility they are holding as well as beliefs regarding the students and classroom (Pajares, 1992). Teachers’ perceptions come from teachers’ “experience and personality” which aid them in their profession” (Donaghue, 2003, p. 344). Srakang and Jansem (2014, p. 50) point out that teachers’ practice, judgement and processes related to making a decision are all affected by the teachers’ perceptions (Barcelos, 2000; Pedersen & Liu, 2003; Yu, 2004). This further leads to the thorough important information for ‘educational development’ (Zacharias, 2003 in Srakang & Jansem, 2013). Srakang and Jansem (2013) also sum up that teachers’ perceptions are the foundation for teachers to decide. It shows how they tackle any limitation and weakness in the classroom teaching. Teachers’ perceptions are thoughts and opinions on anything related to their teaching and practices which is useful for the researchers to enhance teachers’ practices and improve the current situation in Malaysian classroom. This will further lead to result in noteworthy insights and outcomes the education



system and teaching as a whole. Ramazani (2012) points out that the “voices and insights of teachers” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 5) definitely contribute towards the betterment of the education as they provide input for the “reflection and discussion” circling in the areas of teaching and learning (Ramazani, 2012, p. 1749).

## **Methodology**

### Research Design of the Study

The study is a qualitative research where the data collection method is based on interpretive method aiming at theory building. The study aims at in-depth teachers’ perceptions on using Pulse 2 and so it employs case study, an inductive approach. It starts with the data and it is then derived into a theory. Case study is found suitable for the study as it is “a method of intensively studying a phenomenon over time within its natural setting in one or a few sites” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 93). The study has been conducted for a period of time, looking at the pros and cons of Pulse 2 as viewed by the respondents, who happened to be the secondary school teachers. The study comes with a few data collection methods which are interviews and observations. The data collected may be “rich, detailed, and contextualized” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 93).

Unlike quantitative research which mostly focusses on “top-down” research, case study is more on “bottom-up” research as the data starts to be visible as the research progresses. Another pro of conducting a case study is that the research questions can always be altered to suit the focus of the study and if the questions made earlier seem inappropriate and not suitable. With intense and plentiful readings and references done, case study ought to produce “richer, more contextualized, and more authentic interpretation of the phenomenon of interest than most other research methods by virtue of its ability to capture a rich array of contextual data” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 93).

### Population and Sample of the Study

The study aimed at five English subject teachers who are teaching Form 1 and 2 in a few rural, Band 4 schools in Marang, the smallest district in Terengganu. The school is a Malay-populated school in a homogenous population. It is a locale in a rural surrounding. The teachers have the experience of using both the current Pulse 2 textbook and the old, local English textbook for Form 1 and Form 2. The respondents have the experience of teaching English in secondary school ranging from 5 to 28 years. They are proficient and competent in their work scope and have been handling English-related programmes and activities inside and outside school. When it comes to English proficiency level, the school students ranged between pre A1 to B1 level.

### Research Instrument

The research instrument used was interview. The qualitative study emphasised the interview or structural question which strengthened the research findings. The interview was done face-to-face between the researcher and the respondents individually. Having “open-ended questions would generate unexpected insights” and eventually detailed and further discussion could be developed from them (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 41). The interview was done after the school session has ended. Each interview session took around 15 minutes. The interview questions were on the issues and aspects regarding Pulse 2 as well as the respondents’ views pertaining Pulse 2 textbook. Textbook features and criteria, such as price, layout and design, range and balance of activities, methodologies, content, skills appropriateness and integration, social and cultural considerations, subject content, and language types represented in the textbook and language

input (Litz, 2005) were issued in and have become the subjects of the interview. The data collection from the interview would enable the study to go deeper and to analyse any area related to the study and education in detail.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected in late November 2018. To begin with, the respondents were introduced to some background information of the study before they were interviewed individually, at a separate time. A set of open-ended questions had been asked during the interview on their perceptions, views and opinions on using the Pulse 2 textbook in classroom. It was done to obtain insightful answers. English language was used as the medium in the interview with very minimally inserted Malay words, to add to elaborated explanation and expression. The whole interview was recorded and transcribed in written form for data analysis.

After the interview session, two classroom observations were carried out for each respondent where each of them taught either Form 1 or 2 students. The observations were conducted on how the respondents utilised Pulse 2 in teaching. The observations were also taken as a sharing session to complement the collaborative learning program called PLC (Professional Learning Community) which is common among the English subject teachers. The data collected from the interview was later analysed and interpreted to obtain the overall teachers' perceptions from the respondents on using Pulse 2 in the Malaysian classroom.

### Results and Discussion

The findings show the responses from the respondents in the interview that has been conducted. The focus of the interview was their views and opinions on using Pulse 2 textbook in the Malaysian classroom. There were five questions and each question was responded in detail. The interview questions were as follow:

1. How do you find using Pulse 2? What do you think of it?
2. Is it relevant to Malaysian students?
3. What are the aspects of Pulse 2 that you find helpful and noteworthy as a textbook?
4. How do you use Pulse 2 in your class?
5. What could be the factors of selecting Pulse 2 for the Malaysian students?

The relevance of using Pulse 2

The responses may vary, depending on the respondents.

Interview Question	Responses
How do you find using Pulse 2? What do you think of it?	<p><b>Respondent A:</b> <i>Pulse 2 is an interesting, colourful yet thin textbook. A good textbook, usable for Malaysian students but there are some aspects of the book that seem to be criticised. It is rare to have a <u>thin textbook</u> in Malaysia. From <u>the layout and appearance itself</u>, Pulse 2 is unique and new to the system. As compared to the previous English textbook, there are a lot to take in. I'm used to using textbooks similar to the previous ones, so at first it takes sometimes to use it. I would say that it is not easy to use it especially to the weak learners. Simple task takes minutes to be explained. Somehow the <u>tasks and exercises are pretty doable</u>. One skill can take a few lessons to cover. The global weather, environment parts including the <u>foreign cultural celebration</u></i></p>

	<i>which are alien to the students seem to be quite acceptable to be learnt and to good learners, intermediate to advanced students are able to take in the input quite well. But, it is pretty challenging for the weak learners.</i>
	<b>Respondent B:</b> <i>I find Pulse 2 as an engaging textbook which has a variety of activities that can be utilized for language learning. The learners are able to engage with the activities as it allows room for personalization. One downside would be that it is not very contextualised and this might harm learners' engagement.</i>
	<b>Respondent C:</b> <i>Pulse 2 is quite interesting but some vocabulary words are difficult to our students.</i>
	<b>Respondent D:</b> <i>It is okay and quite interesting but the content may be difficult to the students. Some words are unfamiliar to the students.</i>
	<b>Respondent E:</b> <i>Pulse 2 is a useful textbook to me. The language input is well organised and simple to be understood by my students. UK input is rich and kind of exposes students to the culture you can find there.</i>

Table 1 Respondents' response on the first interview question

Based on the first question asked in the interview to all five respondents, Pulse 2 has been used well in the classroom. Respondent A highlights some interesting aspects of Pulse 2 including the fact that it is thin, has unique and new layout, doable tasks and exercises, acceptable global topics especially for good students. Echoing on a similar tone, Respondent B stated that it is an engaging textbook with a variety of activities that can be utilised for language learning. Respondent C and D point out that Pulse 2 is quite interesting, and Respondent E adds that it is useful where the language input is well organised and simple to be understood. However, Pulse 2 has some disadvantages and flaws according to the respondents where the foreign cultural content could be too rich that it is not contextualised and this might harm learners' engagement. The vocabulary and language input could be wide enough to the extent of making it difficult for the students. This aspect of Pulse 2 appears to be challenging for weak learners who are struggling to grasp the language. Richards (2001, in Srakang & Jansem 2013) points out that because textbooks are usually published for international markets, they may not fit learners' needs. Somehow, having foreign content helps but it also has the ability to "widen the learning gap" between students in urban schools and those in the rural ones. This has been highlighted by Dr. Zuwati Hasim adding that rural school students depend highly on the textbook provided, ('Let's have our own textbooks', 2018). Exposing the students to the culture from where the language comes from would be good, yet, the local cultural content like the festive and celebrations happening in Malaysia should be made priority. Lacking general knowledge of our roots and traditions affect the future generation to understand the diversity embedded within the Malaysian social fabric. Dr. Zuwati Hasim (2018) also mentions that textbooks should have moral values and character-building which are upheld in the society, practiced in different ethnic groups and reflecting the diversity in Malaysia.

Interview Question	Responses
Is it relevant to Malaysian students?	<b>Respondent A:</b> <i>As a whole, it might be relevant. Since I'm mostly teaching weak learners, it is difficult to digest to input from Pulse 2 and I would say it is not relevant to my school students.</i>
	<b>Respondent B:</b> <i>I feel it is relevant to some extent because at end of the day, a textbook is only a tool to facilitate language learning</i>



	<i>and the teacher has the power on how to utilize the textbook to match learners' schemata. However, I feel the textbook does not reflect the Malaysian identity as the textbook was written for a different set of audience/learners. Nonetheless, a counter argument would be this textbook would be appropriate to introduce different cultural contexts for the students. Overall, I find this textbook for language learning as a whole, but it does not reflect the Malaysian values that the MOE would want to inculcate among students.</i>
	<b>Respondent C:</b> <i>Some units are irrelevant to Malaysian students for example 'It's My Life' and 'Wild Weather'. The examples and pictures are in European background</i>
	<b>Respondent D:</b> <i>I don't think so. No.</i>
	<b>Respondent E:</b> <i>Yes, definitely yes. If you look at it closely especially the linguistic aspects of English language, this textbook offers a variety of advantages. However, if you look at the lexical density of the vocabulary and intense foreign culture to teach weak learners, teachers actually need to adapt the textbook. Teachers to get ready with other additional materials to connect this type of students to the input that is going to be taught.</i>

Table 2 Respondents' response on the second interview question

The second question of the interview is on whether Pulse 2 is relevant to be used to the Malaysian students or not. The responses vary from it being irrelevant to definitely relevant to be used in Malaysia. Two respondents state that Pulse 2 is not relevant as the cultural aspect of the textbook would limit the students' engagement level to the lesson. Respondent A thinks that it is not relevant to be used for weak learners as the content is hard to be digested, but says that it might be relevant to be used for proficient language learners. According to Respondent B, to some extent, Pulse 2 appears to be relevant as it is a tool to facilitate language learning and teachers have the control over how they utilize the textbook. Somehow, he adds that Pulse 2 is not relevant as it does not reflect Malaysian identity and values that seem to be projected by the Ministry of Education, to the students. Similar to other respondents, Respondent E agrees that the vocabulary load is quite high and the foreign culture is intense for weak learners to digest, making the teachers to actually provide support by supplementing the textbook with other additional materials. Yet, she is sure that Pulse 2 is relevant to the Malaysian students, as a whole.

Here, the Pulse 2 textbook does contain actual language models and beneficial language input which according to Richards (2001) would be a positive principle for using textbook. Learners come in different needs and so, Pulse 2 might not be relevant to be used for weak learners as according to Ur (1996), it is not a suitable textbook.

#### Noteworthy aspect of the Pulse 2 textbook

Interview Question	Responses
What are the aspects of Pulse 2 that you find helpful and noteworthy as a textbook?	<b>Respondent A:</b> <i>Besides the layout and appearance of the textbook, the activities, tasks, exercises can make the teachers use a variety of methodologies in English Language Teaching. Teachers can try any teaching methods and approaches that they find interesting on any topic with the students. The activities are interesting.</i>

	<b>Respondent B:</b> <i>The activities that allow room for personalization. The activities ‘push’ learners to think critically and not merely rote learning. This simultaneously provides space for critical thinking and reflective learning, making learners as reflective practitioners. This engenders authentic language learning.</i>
	<b>Respondent C:</b> <i>Grammar, reading and writing activities</i>
	<b>Respondent D:</b> <i>Reading text, writing and grammar exercises</i>
	<b>Respondent E:</b> <i>The language and foreign elements yet true linguistic components of English language.</i>

Table 3 Respondents’ response on the third interview question

Pulse 2 has notable aspects which makes it a useful textbook to be used. Pulse 2 has a good, catchy and attractive layout and appearance. Teachers can apply a variety of methodologies in ELT when using Pulse 2 to vary the activities. It also allows teachers to personalise the activities in the textbook and encourages learners to think critically besides providing rooms for reflective learning. Both Respondent B and E agree that Pulse 2 contains contents which are appropriate for real, authentic language learning. Looking at the detailed activities and skills, Pulse 2 seems to have good reading texts, writing, and grammar exercises and activities. According Ramazani (2012, p.1749), textbooks “offer a framework of guidance and orientation (as cited in Hutchinson and Torres, 1994)” for teachers and in this case, Pulse 2 does comply.

Interview Question	Responses
How do you use Pulse 2 in your class?	<b>Respondent A:</b> <i>I would follow the scheme of work outlined and there are weeks where I must focus on Pulse 2 textbook only. To finish one skill, it may take more than one 60-minute lesson. I would use all parts and skills in the textbook but sometimes I do adapt the reading texts or exercises to fit my students’ ability. The vocabulary has also been displayed/introduced well in Pulse 2 and I would use it a lot with my students.</i>
	<b>Respondent B:</b> <i>I use Pulse 2 to introduce vocabulary (each section begins with vocabulary activities) and also for reading. I find the reading activities are easy to do. However, for very weak learners, I usually supplement them with Youtube videos. For example, in the topic Money, I played a video on how the evolution of money to the students, to show to them how money has evolved over the centuries. This gets learners engaged and also builds schemata for their upcoming lesson.</i>
	<b>Respondent C:</b> <i>Sometimes I use Pulse 2 in class especially grammar, reading and writing system and skill.</i>
	<b>Respondent D:</b> <i>I use it as a reading material and for the pictures.</i>
	<b>Respondent E:</b> <i>I use Pulse 2 holistically and I follow the step-by-step outline of the textbook and of course it takes longer to cover each part, when I teach weak learners.</i>

Table 4 Respondents’ response on the fourth interview question

Pulse 2 can be used differently by teachers. ‘How Pulse 2 is being used in the class’ is one of the interview questions asked. Every respondent has a different response to it. Respondent A says that she refers to the scheme of work provided which means that she will take a few weeks to cover one unit of Pulse 2 before moving to any non-textbook lessons which is based on other teaching and learning materials. Being a less experienced teacher could be one of the reasons of why she

refers and follows Pulse 2 closely (Ramazani, 2012). However, Pulse 2 being exceptionally new to the system would make teachers depend heavily on it for guidance. Respondent A has been using the vocabulary component in Pulse 2 well and finds it helpful for students. Similarly, Respondent B begins his lesson with the vocabulary introduced in Pulse 2 for each section, and would add any supplementary resources to his lesson, especially in teaching weak learners. In one of the units of Pulse 2, Money, a video on how money has evolved over the past decades can get learners engaged. Respondent C uses Pulse 2 sometimes for grammar, reading and writing system and skill as well as the picture, as added by Respondent D. As discovered by Brophy (1982, cited in Ramazani, 2012), some teachers do not follow textbooks strictly. They adapt and adopt topics or any particular aspect of teaching found in a textbook to fit their students' needs. Some teachers simply pick and choose any topics from its collection album, which is the textbook. Respondent E does something similar to Respondent A and she agrees that covering each part in Pulse 2 does take a lot of time.

#### Factors of selecting Pulse 2 as English textbook

Interview Question	Responses
What could be the factors of selecting PULSE 2 for the Malaysian students?	Respondent A: <i>CEFR. The current curriculum has changed and CEFR has been added as a major part of the English curriculum. There is no locally produced textbook created/published yet, so I think the government is taking in step to introduce CEFR by selecting this textbook. The Ministry of Education might think that Pulse textbook matches with the specifications of the syllabus and curriculum.</i>
	Respondent B: <i>I think this is because the government needed a book that complies with the CEFR goals and the PULSE 2 seems to have complied with all the requirements of CEFR. I think it could also be an economical reason or vendor reason. Most probably, PULSE 2 could be the cheapest option or the vendors distributing Pulse 2 had made an agreement with the government/ministry. It could also be a materials reason as Pulse 2 is easily understandable for intermediate speakers of the language.</i>
	Respondent C: <i>I don't know and clueless.</i>
	Respondent D: <i>I have no idea.</i>
	Respondent E: <i>I think there is a specific textbook evaluation checklist and perhaps Pulse 2 scores high in it, besides the CEFR content contained.</i>

Table 5 Respondents' response on the fifth interview question

The last interview question is the respondents' view on the factors of selecting Pulse 2 for the Malaysian students. Most responses fall under CEFR as the main factor behind the selection of Pulse 2. With the new curriculum and system coming, Pulse 2 would be the best-found textbook to comply with all the requirements set of CEFR. Pulse 2 is also thought to match the specifications of the syllabus and curriculum. It is not locally published and this has made Pulse 2 having no local cultural content which respondents find a bit challenging, and becomes the limiting factor towards it being a less preferred textbook, as compared to the locally produced one. Richards (1998) states that textbook used should represent the curriculum. Ramazani (2012, p. 1749) adds that textbooks "reflect the objectives of the language programme, the kind of syllabus used, the skills being taught and the methodologies espoused, and might be seen to function as a 'mediating object' between the teacher and learner" (Littlejohn and Windeatt, as quoted in Johnson 1989, p. 155). Respondent B adds that the cost of Pulse 2 might be another reason of it

being selected. It might be the cheapest yet economical international, CEFR-aligned textbook accessible in the market to be supplied to all students in Malaysia. As compared to local textbooks, Pulse 2 costs a lot more expensive. Due to the production cost, a textbook could be poorly produced to fit one's education system and budget set (Srakang & Jansem, 2013). As for Respondent C and D, they do not specifically know the factors of selecting Pulse 2 as the main Form 1 and 2 English textbook.

## **Conclusion**

### Cultural Differences

Pulse 2 contains very minimal cultural content of Malaysia. There is almost none. This aspect of the textbook makes it disadvantageous as it provides unsuitable "cultural understanding" for the students which eventually is not successful in offering contextualised language activities and appropriate "discourse ability" (Ahmadi and Derakhshan, 2016, p. 262). Learners need to connect to the content of any material for them to be able to digest the language input of the material. English language is difficult enough to be learnt by learners who are not used to practising and being exposed to it in their community. Learning the language by using a different, foreign setting might add to the confusion, and disengagement from the lesson. Aziz (2017) states that understanding of other cultures is required for learners to be interconnected to the globalised world. The cultures may come from different races and ethnics in Malaysia in our country, and it would be sufficient. The celebrations rejoiced could be introduced and the content could be expanded for a deeper cultural understanding.

### Concept of Neo-colonialism

Mastery of the English language is closely linked to economic advancement in Malaysia. As supported by Aziz (2016), low proficiency in English is one of the chief reasons in the rise of unemployment of local graduates. Thus, the introduction of a CEFR-aligned English is one of the strategies of the Ministry of Education Malaysia in combatting the decline of English proficiency. However, the nature of CEFR implementation can be linked to the concept of neo-colonialism, which can be defined as the "conscious policies of the industrialized nations to maintain their influence and power over the Third world" (Altbach, 1982, p. 190). Therefore, this idea merits further exploration.

The introduction of Pulse 2 in the system is due to its close alignment to the linguistic/language global and standard reference called CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Uri and Aziz (2018, p. 21) emphasise the centralised objective of CEFR which is "to establish international standards for foreign language education to cater to the needs of language learners as well as academics and other professions related to assessment, teaching and learning of languages". The fact that CEFR is generated as a guideline, it is also a requirement that would eventually permeate at all levels of language learning, coordinate English teaching and learning system worldwide while standardising the learners' levels in all four skills in English; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Malaysia has decided to apply all-inclusive CEFR to the education system in order to match up with both the developed and other developing countries. Therefore, this evidently shows that English language education in Malaysia is basing its guidelines on the demands of CEFR, which can be characterized as a form of neo-colonialism.

Pulse 2 is imported from England, UK, a country that has a colonial history with Malaysia. It is no doubt that developing countries look at developed Western countries for new ideas and innovations. This relationship can be characterized as dependency (Altbach, 1982) as Western nations are deemed to be superior due to its advancement in terms of research institutes,

educational facilities, and publishing firms (Altbach, 1982). Thus, the implementation of CEFR, an innovation from the Council of Europe, is an example of Western hegemony in Malaysian education. The implementation of CEFR has created a domino effect in Southeast Asia, with Thailand implementing CEFR after Vietnam and Malaysia. This example shows that Malaysia looks at quick-fix policies from the Western influence without paying attention to its local context. Therefore, the usage of Pulse 2 can be clearly stated as a form of neo-colonialism, as England, a powerful former colonial country, is able to spread its influence over its former colonies through the English language. To exemplify, the establishment of Cambridge English and its products such as Pulse 2 signals that the claimed-to-be-good-and-useful textbooks are partially planned policy to uphold and preserve “their influence in the developing countries” (Altbach, 1971, p. 237). Altbach (1971, p. 237) defines colonialism as perhaps “the direct political, economic and educational control of one nation over another” and further solidifies that neo-colonialism:

“designates the continued post-colonial impact of advanced industrial countries on the educational system and policies as well as the intellectual life of developing areas. Modern neo-colonialism does not involve direct political control and leaves substantial leeway to the developing countries” (p. 237).

Pulse 2 can be an obvious example/principle of neo-colonialism where it links well to the curriculum set and designed by the ministry reflecting British’s orientation. The foreign model provided by the former colonial ruler is likely to impact the English language education in Malaysia, a developing country, as the Malaysian Education Blueprint affirms that CEFR is set to be a dominant benchmark in delivery of English language education.

## SUMMARY

Based on the study sample of Malay, homogenous population, locale in a rural surrounding, Pulse 2 is not relevant. Will there be a mismatched of success? In this specific context, Pulse 2 is not relevant. Factors like the learners’ socio-economic level affect how Pulse 2 textbook is viewed in use. Having no direct connection to the students’ schemata makes Pulse 2 irrelevant to be used. In order for the learning to be efficient, the students’ schemata and previous knowledge should be connected well.

According to Ahmadi and Derakshan (2016), as stated by Litz (2015), textbooks play an indispensable role in innovation and as for Pulse 2, it is regarded as a highly functional to convey at the same time deliver some parts of the CEFR concept. Viewing at the advantages and disadvantages that Pulse 2 possesses and most other English textbooks that were previously and are still used, there is no impeccable, complete textbook (Grant, 1987). However, “the best book available for teachers and their learners does exist” (Grant, 1987, p. 8). Pulse 2 may not be the best available textbook, yet to bear the cost spent, its usage would be made better through teachers’ role and responsibility as facilitators in the classroom, helping learners to have a grip on the language input. Teachers should help simplifying and supporting the language content of the textbook according to levels. Differentiation and adaptation should be applied to optimise the use of Pulse 2 textbook.

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