AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFL SECONDARY READING CURRICULUM IN MALAYSIA: APPROACHES TO READING AND PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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This case study examined the overarching approaches to second language (L2) reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum and how well this curriculum prepares students for tertiary reading in EFL. The Malaysian context was chosen because it highly values EFL instruction and has many similarities with other English as Foreign Language (EFL) countries, in terms of EFL reading issues at the tertiary level.

The research questions for this study included: What types of reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum? What types and length of reading passages are used in the Malaysian Form Five English language textbook? What levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum? What types of learner roles are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

This explorative study used document reviews as the primary data collection and analysis method. The Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum and the EFL secondary textbook were analyzed using a revision of Richards and Rodgers's (2001) framework for analyzing EFL teaching. The findings indicate that the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum frequently uses reading as an explicit skill to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum. Nonetheless, the curriculum is developed based on the cognitive information

processing theory of SLA, Top-Down theory of L2 reading reflecting Non-Interactive Whole Language instruction as well as learner roles that are primarily in the form of individual tasks. The findings on passage analysis show that the EFL textbook primarily uses narrative passages with the majority of passages below grade-level length. The curriculum, however, emphasizes reading tasks that require high cognitive demand as well as important types of reading tasks.

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PREFACE

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents Mohd. Sidek Syeikh Jahanggir and Naemah Abd. Rahman, who never stopped emphasizing the significance of education. My eternal indebtedness to my adored children Amnan Amani, Adlan Ardani, Azra Auni, and Afnan Ahlami who were consistently patient, understanding, and supportive despite my divided attention during the pursuit of my doctoral degree, especially during the completion of this dissertation. My heartiest gratefulness goes to my trustworthy companion Fauzi Ahmad, who never failed to be there in times of struggles and helped me get back on my feet each time I felt defeated. To my dearly loved sisters Rokaidah and Rakibon, I cannot thank you enough for being there and helping me in any way you could throughout my studies.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

English has been widely acknowledged as an international language (Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). According to Bruthiaux (as cited in Ridge, 2004), "English has all the key characteristics that make it likely to remain the dominant worldwide language" (p. 415). The importance of the English language has been established universally as a tool for social, economic, and political success (Phillipson, 1992). As a result, many non-English speaking countries promote English proficiency as an effort toward modernization and internalization (Pennycook, 1994; Tollefson, 1995). For example, in Hong Kong, the shift from English to Chinese language instruction was rejected by many education stakeholders, such as parents, because English continued to be seen as the language of economic opportunity (Tsui, Shum, Wong, Tse, & Ki, 1999).

Another example is Japan where the English language is strongly emphasized at the junior and high school as well as university levels in response to practical needs in the business domain (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). Hence, the majority of Japanese junior and high schools students choose to learn English instead of other foreign languages to fulfill their foreign language requirement (Kitao & Kitao, 1997). These scenarios across non-English speaking countries exhibit how the world acknowledges the value of acquiring, maintaining, and enhancing English language acquisition. According to Jung and Norton (2002), "the dominant role of English in current international trade and computer communication makes English teaching and learning an important issue in the educational systems of many non-English

speaking countries" (p. 245), such as China, Norway, Thailand, France, Israel (Korean Ministry of Education, 1997 as cited in Butler, 2005), and Japan (Hashimoto, 2006).

The importance of English is even more prominent at the university level in this era of globalization. Tsui and Tollefson (2006) label proficiency in the English language as the "global literacy skill" (p. 1) which has become a commodity for communication (Crystal, 2003; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999) and a vehicle for knowledge transfer (Welch & Welch, 2007). From an educational viewpoint, Stoynoff (1997) contends that academic success at higher education institutions is contingent on many factors, one of which is language proficiency. A study conducted by Songy (2007) revealed that the level of English language proficiency students possess may predict their success in academic achievement at the tertiary level. Due to the magnitude of the impact of English as a foreign language (EFL) literacy on academic success, institutions of higher learning in many countries, such as Korea (Yim, 2006) and Japan (Stout, 2003) have included an English proficiency test as part of the university entrance criteria.

Within tertiary academic contexts, reading is an important part of language proficiency that affects academic literacy and success. "The ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that university students of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign language (EFL) need to acquire" (Levine, Ferenz, & Revez, 2000, http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/past-issues/volume4/ej16/ej16a1/). Therefore, students' ability to read well becomes imperative for academic success provided that their reading ability translates to information literacy. Rockman (2004) defined information literacy as a level higher than reading comprehension where students are able to identify the information that they need to acquire, and to act effectively as well as efficiently based on their reading needs. Literacy skills,

as such, are critical for content area learning and may directly affect academic success (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 2002).

Currently, the majority of printed academic references such as journals and books as well as textbooks for content areas are mainly offered in the English language. Graddol (1997) found that 28 percent of the world's yearly book production is in the English language; this suggests that at least 28 percent of academic references as well as textbooks are offered in the English language. In addition, literacy in the English language is also needed to obtain information on the Internet. According to a survey by the Netcraft Web Server Survey (2009), there are approximately 108 million websites. In February 2007, a count of web pages by Netcraft indicated that there were 29.7 billion web pages on the World Wide Web. According to Internet World Statistics (2009), English is ranked first in the top ten languages used on the Internet with 478 million out of 1.7 billion worldwide Internet users with a growth of approximately 237.2 percent from 2000 to 2009. Internet World Statistics (2009) also reported that approximately 1.3 billion out of 6.8 billion of world population uses English. Thus, having the ability to read and understand and achieving information literacy in the English language allows university students global access to information via printed materials as well as hypertexts to assist them in meeting their academic demands.

Nonetheless, there have been reports that many EFL university students are not able to read and understand well materials in the English language. For example, in Korea, many university students learn English but rarely read in English (Vlack, 2009), a situation which may result in poor reading ability in EFL, particularly among university students. Chen (1998) conducted a study on Chinese college students' ability to comprehend English texts. It was revealed that although the participants were categorized as being intermediately proficient, they

still had difficulties in sentence processing when reading English texts. Other studies have found that readers' language proficiency in a foreign language is directly correlated with their ability to generate inferences in foreign language reading (Barry & Lazarte, 1998; Hammadou, 1991), which reading skill if without may result in comprehension difficulties. In another study among college Chinese EFL readers, Lu (1999) found that linguistic proficiency in EFL played a decisive role in determining EFL readers' ability to generate inferences as well as to process text meaning at the sentence and discourse levels.

Without reading comprehension skills that lead to information literacy, students' academic performance, particularly at higher education institutions, could be severely handicapped due to their inability to acquire the required content. The findings of past studies also suggest that EFL students at university level in many EFL countries are faced with difficulties reading English texts despite the duration of their EFL preparation at the secondary school level. For example, in Korea students receive EFL preparation for 10 years (Ahn, 2003) at elementary and secondary school levels, however, many of them are poor speakers and readers of English at the university level (Dickey, 2004). Furthermore, underdeveloped EFL literacy skills can affect educational and economic development and opportunity among EFL countries in terms of competitiveness in the era of globalization. Considering that education is fundamental to the transition of social, economic, and political success (World Bank, 1995), the impact of English language literacy on academic success deserves further exploration.

The purpose of the present study is to find out how the secondary EFL reading curriculum in an EFL country prepares students for the university-level EFL reading skills they will need to attain information literacy in the current global economy. To this end, the researcher studied the EFL secondary reading curriculum in Malaysia by examining specific aspects of the

Malaysian Form Five English Language Curriculum Specifications document and the Form Five English language textbook in terms of (a) theories of and approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and second language (L2) reading, (b) the types of reading tasks reflected in the curriculum, (c) the types and length of reading passages used in the Form Five EFL textbook, (d) the level of cognitive demands of the reading tasks reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, (e) types of learner roles reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, and (f) the frequency of the reading skill mentioned explicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher used an explorative case study method (Yin, 1993) because the current study examined only one EFL curriculum in a selected country or a single-case (Pyecha, 1988). Focusing on a single case allows an in-depth analysis of the variables under investigation (Coburn, 2006). The extent of in-depth analysis in a case study offers opportunities to generate new insights or build theory concerning the relationships among the variables under study that without such in-depth analysis might otherwise go undetected (Hartley, 1994). Therefore, on the international level, the study may serve as an impetus for larger and more comprehensive studies of a similar nature in the future. On the national level, the importance of this study is even greater for institutions where the English language is the medium of instruction. In Malaysia, the secondary EFL curriculum does not seem to adequately prepare students for such institutions. David and Govindasamy (2006) wrote, "the lack of academic language skills is most strongly felt among undergraduates who are pursuing their studies in institutions in which English is the medium of instruction" (p. 59).

The Malaysian setting was chosen for several reasons. Malaysia has had a history of valuing EFL instruction since the British occupation from the 18th to the 20th century

(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Malaya, accessed on 13 October 2009). English was the only medium of instruction in all schools until it was completely phased out in 1983. Although currently the medium of instruction in Malaysian schools is the national language (Bahasa Malaysia, which uses the Roman alphabet), the English language continues to be highly valued and remains as a required subject beginning from pre-school to university level. At the secondary school level, the same amount of time is allocated for EFL learning as for learning the national language. Due to efforts to preserve the importance of the English language, Malaysia is becoming a more significant exporter of English language services to many Asian countries (Graddol, 1997). Malaysia is also the largest provider of international undergraduates for courses in the United Kingdom (HESA, 1995), a situation which makes secondary school English language literacy preparation more crucial among secondary school students.

In addition, Malaysia has a fast-growing economy, with increasing privatization. According to a report by Asiatradehub.com (2009), the private sector plays a significant role as the engine to the Malaysian economy. English is used within the private sectors, locally and internationally. Because of the use of English in the economic domain, particularly within the private sectors in Malaysia, the English language maintains its status as the language of commerce. Thus, Malaysia recognizes the importance of English at the global level. Powell (2002) found that English is the second most important language in Malaysia within the educational, economic, and political domains. Due to the importance of English language at the local and international level, the Malaysian educational system values the acquisition of the English language among students at all school levels, especially at the university level. It is compulsory for university students in Malaysia to attain a required level of EFL proficiency in order to graduate. In fact, the major emphasis of this entrance test is primarily on EFL reading

comprehension, which counts for 40% of the entire test (http://www.malaysia-students.Com /2007/03/muet.html), a language policy which translates to the significance of EFL reading comprehension as an important skill for academic preparation at the university level.

Another reason why the Malaysian setting is important to study is because the similarity of its EFL learning status with other EFL countries such as Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, and China in which many school-going students have English as the third language learned due to the existence of many other spoken dialects besides the native language. Hence, Malaysia may reflect the EFL situation in other non-English speaking countries. Therefore, the findings from this study may have implications for other EFL settings.

Within the Malaysian context, enrollment in Malaysian institutions of higher learning has increased within the past two decades. However, approximately 60% to 70% of the school-going population in Malaysia is from the rural areas where English is at least the third language taught to students (David & Govindasamy, 2003) and is a foreign language with which they least frequently associate. As a result, many secondary school graduates who obtain a good score in English on the national standardized test known as the Malaysian School Certificate (SPM) "are not able to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate information available only in the English language…in their respective subjects," (David & Govindasamy, 2006, p. 58-59) at the university level. As in the case of other EFL countries such as China (Chen, 1998), Korea (The Korea Herald, 22 September 2009), and Japan (Day & Bamford, 2005), Pandian (2000) found that in Malaysia, 76.2 percent of secondary school students and 80.1 percent of university students are reluctant readers of English.

As a result, as in other EFL countries, Malaysia currently has many students who lack EFL literacy skills to cope with rigorous academic demands at the university level (Pandian,

2000). The findings of previous EFL literacy studies in Malaysia indicate that college students are facing literacy problems in EFL which subsequently affect their academic performance (e.g., David & Govindasamy, 2006; Faizah, Zalizan, & Norzaini, 2002; Nambiar, 2005, 2007; Seng, 2007; Seng & Hashim, 2006; Sidek, 2009). Teachers of EFL at the tertiary level are overwhelmed with the low proficiency level in EFL that post-secondary students possess (Kaur & Thiyagarah, 1999). Students in Malaysia receive 11 years of EFL instruction, similar to the situation in Korea (Ahn, 2003). Despite the long term exposure to EFL education, students still face comprehension problems when reading in English at the university level and the majority of university students in Malaysia possess poor EFL reading proficiency (David, 2004).

EFL instructors at the university level in Malaysia often argue about being able to equip their students with the required EFL literacy skills while these students simultaneously struggle with English in their content areas; a similar problem faced by instructors at many Japanese universities (Otlowski, 2008). Students with low English language proficiency are often faced with literacy issues in the content areas when the language of print is in English (Buly & Valencia, 2002; Valencia & Buly, 2004). This situation creates an imbalance between acquiring language and content learning. In a condition where literacy skills in the foreign language should be used as vehicles to acquire content knowledge, students often have to struggle with language learning at the expense of content acquisition.

It is questionable whether these students have been provided with appropriate training in EFL literacy at the secondary school level as preparation to meet the more rigorous challenges in the world of academia. Thang and Kumarasamy (2006) conducted a study on the Malaysian Secondary English Language Syllabus concerning topic interest among upper secondary students. They stated that "being in the upper secondary, students know the importance of

English for tertiary education and yet they show disinterest in the learning of the language" (p. 191). In response to the EFL reading problems, this study attempted to understand how the EFL secondary reading curriculum prepares secondary school students in Malaysia with EFL reading skills to meet the academic demands at the tertiary level involving EFL literacy.

Previous studies in the Malaysian context often focused on the issues concerning university students' poor EFL reading proficiency and how these problems affect their academic achievement without looking at the impact of secondary school students' EFL literacy training and the academic demands at the university level (e.g., Krishnan, Rahim, Marimuthu, Abdullah, Mohamad, & Jusoff, 2009; Noor, 2006; Nor, Hamat, Azman, Bakar, & Noor, 2009; Ibrahim, 2006). Although some implicit connections have been made between secondary school EFL literacy ability and university academic demands in the Malaysian context, these connections have not been systematically analyzed by studying the EFL reading curriculum at the secondary school level. As a consequence, EFL literacy problems at the secondary school level remain and are subsequently transferred to the tertiary level, resulting in a perpetual cycle of lack of EFL literacy ability and academic problems. Hence, this situation calls for an investigation of how secondary school students in Malaysia are being prepared for EFL literacy as an important skill especially to meet academic demands at institutions of higher learning.

The rest of this chapter presents the research questions guiding this study and a brief description of how each research question is addressed.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the overarching approaches to second language (L2) reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum with the aim of determining how well this curriculum prepares students for tertiary reading in EFL.

The method of analyzing the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum in this study is substantially influenced by the language teaching model of Richards and Rodgers (2001) (see Figure 1.1), a revision of Edward Anthony's (1963) model. This model presents a conceptual framework for language instruction proposing that at the fundamental level, language instruction can be analyzed in terms of *Approach* (foundational theory), *Design* (e.g., selected language skills, learning tasks, learner roles), and *Procedure* (e.g., classroom techniques, classroom observation, teacher interviews).

Since this study examined the overarching approaches to L2 reading instruction that are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, many elements in Richards and Rodgers' (2001) language instruction conceptual frameworks are applicable to the study, although with modifications. For example, the component at the *Approach* level in Richards and Rodgers's (2001) model provides a tool for analyzing the Malaysian secondary EFL reading instructional approach in terms of its implicit foundational theories of SLA and theories of L2 reading. Some components at the *Design* level in Richards and Rodgers's (2001) model can be used to analyze the frequency of EFL reading skills used to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, the types of reading tasks, and the learner roles in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. Nonetheless, the study does not use the entire original framework of these researchers because some of the components in the framework are not relevant to the current study and some other components that were examined in the study are not part of

Richards and Rodgers' (2001) model. For example, Richards and Rodgers's (2001) *Procedure* level was excluded because the study did not examine actual classroom teaching or interviews with teachers.

This study adds to Richards and Rodgers's model an analysis of the levels of cognitive demands of the reading tasks as well as the types and length of reading passages found in the secondary EFL textbook. Past studies on foreign language instruction have indicated the importance of analyzing the cognitive levels of language skills as an important aspect for language mastery (e.g., Lee & Sawaki, 2009; Sawaki, Kim, & Gentile, 2009). Figure 1.1 presents the analytical framework for the current study.

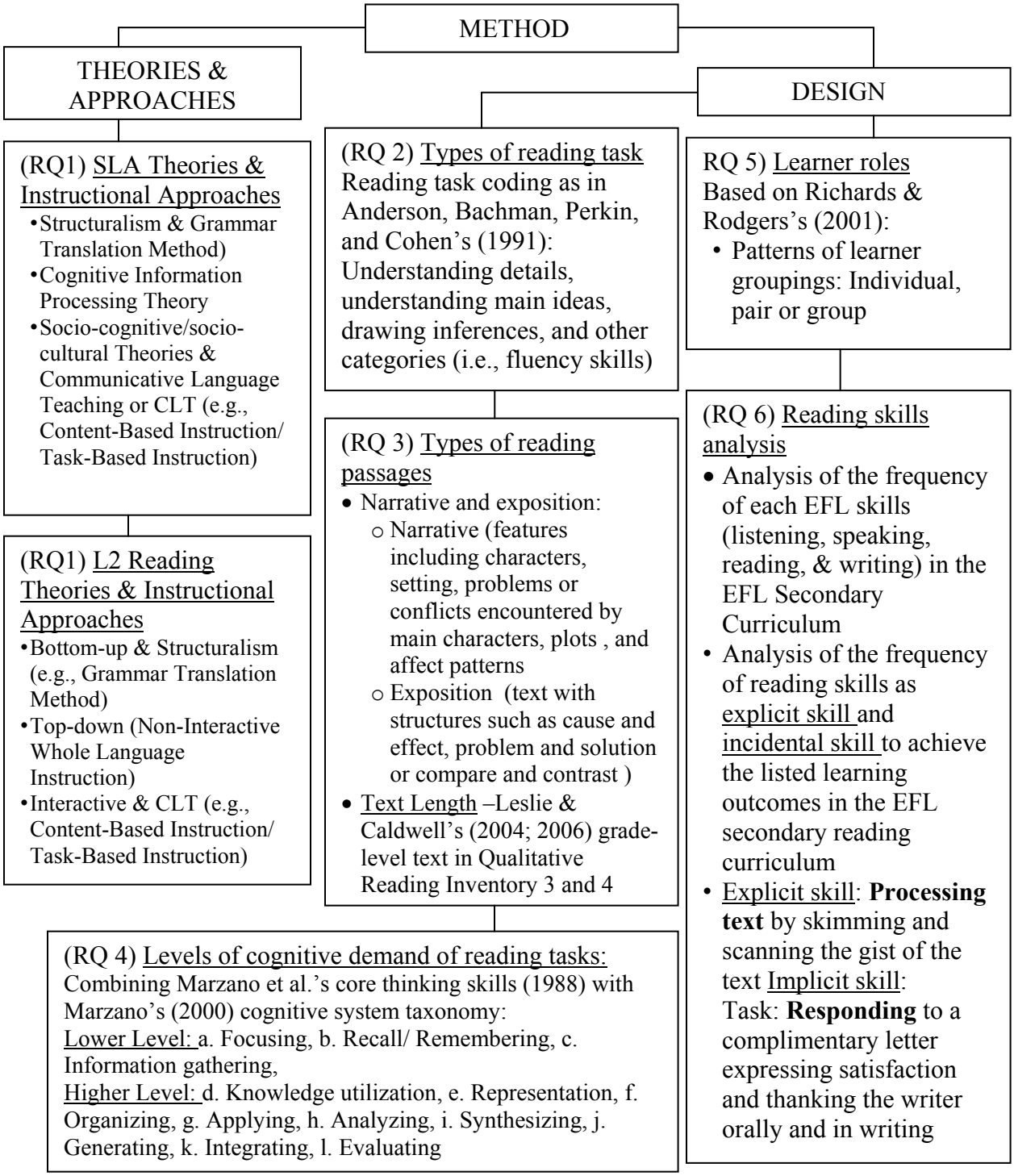

Figure 1.1 Analytical Framework

The research questions that guided the study reflect the aspects of EFL curriculum and instruction described above. Below, the justification and approach for each research question is explained in greater detail.

1.1.1 Research Questions 1: What theories of and instructional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and second language reading are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

In the Malaysian context, the term *curriculum* might best suit Robertson's (1971) definition that "…..the curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programs" (p. 564). The term *EFL Secondary Curriculum* refers to the Malaysian Form Five English Language Curriculum while the term *EFL secondary reading curriculum* refers to statements in the Malaysian EFL Curriculum Specifications document and in the Form Five EFL textbook that are related to EFL reading skills. Henceforth, the Malaysian EFL Curriculum Specifications document will be referred to as EFL Curriculum Specifications while the Form Five EFL textbook will be referred to as the EFL textbook. The Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum was developed based on certain theories of and approaches to second language learning and L2 reading. Therefore, it is appropriate to understand the theories of SLA and L2 reading theories and instructional approaches that are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum.

1.1.2 Research Question 2: What types of reading tasks are reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum?

The types of reading tasks in the selected documents are analyzed because past studies in L1 and L2 reading instruction have shown that types of reading tasks are related to reading abilities (e.g., McKeown & Beck, 2001; Scanlon & Vellutino, 1997; Swaffar, 1985). Furthermore, reading tasks may also indicate students' cognitive abilities in foreign language reading comprehension (e.g., Alderson & Lukmani, 1989; Bernhardt, 1983; Davey, 1988). This question was answered by analyzing the types of reading task in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook. The selected reading tasks coding is as in Anderson, Bachman, Perkin, and Cohen's (1991) study which categorizes reading tasks into three categories; identifying details, identifying main ideas, and drawing inferences. This reading task coding was chosen because based on the researcher's preliminary examination of the selected documents, the majority of the reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications and the EFL textbook seemed to fall into these categories. However, for the reading tasks that did not fall into Anderson et al.'s (1991) coding categories, new categories were created based on the nature of the reading tasks.

1.1.3 Research Question 3: What types and length of reading passages are used in the Form Five EFL textbook?

The purpose of the present study was to find out the overarching second language reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum in order to determine how well this curriculum prepares students for tertiary reading. First language (L1) reading studies have suggested that students may benefit from reading instruction that resembles the reading demand

at university level (e.g., Feathers & Smith, 1983; Nist & Kirby, 1986). For example, exposing students to reading expository texts might map with the type of texts they may frequently encounter at the tertiary level (e.g., Carrell, 1985). Hence, in order to see the types of EFL reading texts students are trained with at the secondary school level, it was considered appropriate to analyze the types of reading passages found in the EFL textbook in terms of genre and whether the texts are at students' grade-level. Text genre was analyzed in expository and narrative categories because past studies have come to a consensus that in general, narrative and expository are the two major text types (e.g., Avaloz, Plasencia, Chavez, & Rascon, 2007; Gaddy, Bakken, & Fulk, 2008; Grabe, 2008; Koda, 2007). On the other hand, grade-level texts in this study were examined in terms of text length using Leslie and Caldwell's (2004; 2006) Qualitative Reading Inventory 3 and 4.

1.1.4 Research Question 4: What levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks are reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum?

Past studies on foreign language instruction have indicated the importance of analyzing the cognitive level of language skills as an important aspect for language mastery (e.g., Lee & Sawaki, 2009; Sawaki, Kim, & Gentile, 2009). At the tertiary level, students need to have the required level of reading skills that will enable them to achieve information literacy for academic success (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 2002). Therefore, the levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook were analyzed in order to acquire data on the types of reading tasks secondary school students are prepared for. Past studies (e.g., Alderson, 1990; Whalley et al., 2006) examined the cognitive

demand of reading comprehension tasks because it identifies students' "internal mental processes" (Chamot, 1983, p. 463).

In determining the cognitive levels of the reading tasks, Marzano et al.'s Core Thinking Skills taxonomy (1988) and Marzano's Cognitive System taxonomy (2000) are combined as follows:

Lower Level:

a. Focusing: Attending to a specific information and disregarding others

b. Recall/Remembering: Retrieving information from long-term memory

c. Information gathering: Obtaining information through one or more senses or seeking information through inquiry

Higher Level:

d. Representation: Organizing information such as the use of graphic organizers (e.g., maps, charts).

e. Organizing: Comparing, classifying, ordering, representing

f. Applying: Using relevant prior knowledge within a new situation

g. Analyzing: Identifying details, relationships and patterns, main ideas as well as errors

h. Synthesizing: identification of the most important components and deletion of insignificant information.

i. Generating: Inferring, predicting, and elaborating information.

j. Integrating: Summarizing and restructuring

k. Evaluating: Establishing criteria and verifying.

These taxonomies were used because they describe the cognitive skills or thinking skills that students need to have in order to process information successfully at various levels of cognitive demand. One of the main goals of the EFL Secondary Curriculum is to prepare students for higher education. Hence, the purpose of EFL secondary reading preparation should be to enable students to acquire information literacy in order to ensure their success in content areas. This means that students need to be equipped with not only the lower cognitive skills such as retrieving knowledge and comprehension, but also higher order cognitive skills such as the ability to analyze and utilize information learned. The analysis of the cognitive demands of the reading tasks at the secondary school level may provide insights into the level of EFL reading mastery in terms of information processing skills that secondary students are prepared for.

If the cognitive demands of the reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum are primarily at the knowledge retrieval and comprehension level of the selected taxonomy such as recalling and focusing, secondary students may not be prepared for the more difficult cognitive demands of reading tasks in EFL at the tertiary level.

1.1.5 Research Question 5: What types of learner roles are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) it is important to analyze the roles of learners because "the instructional system will be influenced by how learners are regarded" (p. 27). To answer this question learner roles were coded using Richards and Rodgers's (2001) coding of which was based on the description of Johnson and Paulston (1976). The coding of learner roles in this study comprises types of learning tasks set for learners in terms of learner groupings whether individual or pair/group.

1.1.6 Research Question 6: How frequently is the reading skill mentioned explicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum?

In order to analyze the extent to which EFL reading is used as the means to achieve the learning outcomes in the EFL secondary curriculum, the revised language skill analysis component as in Richards and Rodgers' (2001) model was used. In order to find out the degree of emphasis on EFL reading in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, two analyses were conducted. The first analysis was the analysis of how frequent each EFL language skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) appears in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook. The second analysis involved the rating of statements in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook which were considered EFL reading tasks as either being explicit or implicit tasks. This analysis will provide insights into the extent to which EFL reading skills are emphasized in the EFL secondary reading curriculum.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the overarching approaches to second language (L2) instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum in order to determine how well this curriculum prepares students for tertiary reading involving EFL literacy. Therefore, this chapter provides a review of major approaches to L2 instruction and L2 reading instruction in terms of their underlying second language acquisition (SLA) and L2 reading theories, types of reading task, and cognitive demands on learners as well as learner roles. This chapter also provides background information on the Malaysian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program for secondary school; a review of Malaysian secondary EFL educational policies, approaches to the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum, and EFL reading issues at the Malaysian tertiary level.

2.1 THEORIES AND APPROACHES TO L2 INSTRUCTION

The Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum has been identified as a communicative curriculum (Malaysian Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003), "an organization of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) around a specification of communication tasks" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 164). Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches and related theories of SLA are first reviewed. However, other approaches to L2 instruction and related theories of SLA

are also reviewed because these approaches might also be reflected in the curriculum, such as audiolingual approaches and the approaches that Richards and Rodgers (2001) categorized as alternative approaches since they belong neither to the audiolingual nor to the CLT approach.

2.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approaches and Related Theories

In contrast to a direct approach or traditional approach, the communicative approach is considered an indirect approach to L2 instruction (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Terrell, 1997) and is also viewed as a learner-centered approach (Nunan, 1988). Current communicative approaches to L2 instruction are the products of CLT methodologies which emerged in the 1970s and spread in the 1980s. CLT as a general approach to L2 instruction is based on the theory of language as communication with the goal of developing communicative competence; grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), and strategic competence (Canale, 1983). This is in line with socio-cultural theory (SCT), which views language as a tool in a socially mediated process (Vygotsky, 1978) and as a central tool for the development of thought processes or the crucial means of mediation for one's cognition.

The CLT approach is based primarily on the principle of providing students with meaningful communicative language activities in which the language activities are suitable to learners' needs and thus promote the development of communicative competence (e.g., Hymes, 1972; Paulston, 1974; Savignon, 1983). Such language activities entail communicative processes which learners engage in. Activities that encourage students to ask for more information, seek clarification, and to use linguistic and non-linguistic resources to make meaning are considered communicative activities (Savignon, 1991). Every aspect of the CLT approach is done with communicative intent (Larsen-Freeman, as cited in Rao, 2002). Within the CLT approach,

learners often play the role as a negotiator whereby they negotiate meaning in small groups or as a whole class in order to fulfill the assigned tasks; this ideally creates an interdependent social relationship in which learners affect others' learning and their learning is also affected by others in their learning context (Breen & Candlin, 1980). These features of CLT can be found in more specific communicative approaches to L2 instruction such as Task-Based Instruction (TBI), Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), and the Natural Approach, each of which will be explained briefly in order to demonstrate their additional features apart from the ones mentioned in the general CLT description.

2.1.1.1 Task-Based Instruction (TBI)

Task-Based Instruction (TBI) is a form of CLT in which tasks or activities are viewed as central to meaningful language learning (Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1998). The primary goal of TBI is to prepare learners with language that matches their needs (Long & Crookes, 1993) and is suited to their context and familiarity (Ellis, 2003). TBI teaching and learning activities typically involve learners as problem solvers who have to fulfill a specified real world task in relation to the instructional objectives or learning outcomes such as making travel arrangements with a travel agent (Crookes, 1986; Prabhu, 1987). Within the context of L2 reading, when reading tasks foster meaningful communication, such tasks imply learners as problem solvers within the communicative approach (e.g., Oxford, Lavine, & Crookall, 1989).

When reading is situated within communicative activities based on texts, as part of a problem solving process readers collaborate to negotiate text meaning in order to build a mental representation of the text as intended by the author. In addition, learners are also positioned as the monitors of their own learning by attending to the grammatical forms that are highlighted in the tasks and as risk-takers who have to attempt the target language by devising language

innovation such as paraphrasing, restating, using paralinguistic signals and so forth due to their lack of control or knowledge of the L2 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Reflecting a social interactionist view, Hatch (1978; 1992) found that the types of interaction in which the members of a particular learning community are involved may provide appropriate scaffolding for the learning of new linguistic forms. Therefore, within the context of L2 reading, interaction not only assists in developing better understanding of text meaning, but also assists in the development of the linguistic aspects of the second language. Many L2 researchers have recommended TBI as a suitable and practical instructional approach for second and foreign language learning because it promotes real-time communication and learning is meaning-centered (e.g., Basturkmen, 2006; Long & Robinson, 1998; Robinson, 1995; Shehadeh, 2005; Skehan, 1998, 2002, 2003; Van Lier, 2004; Wesche & Skehan, 2002).

Fotos and Ellis (1991) conducted a study on the impact of TBI on grammar rules acquisition. The results show that communication around tasks increases students' knowledge of even difficult grammar rules in L2. In an experimental study on the effect of task-based instruction on L2 vocabulary development, Newton (1995) found that language interaction around tasks assists in improving vocabulary acquisition. Another TBI study using text reconstruction as the communication task was carried out by Storch (1998) among adult ESL learners. The results indicate that text reconstruction task or combining jumbled-up text ideas into a coherent text assists the ESL learners in analyzing text meaning beyond sentence level. However, some L2 researchers have argued that the focus on task may disadvantage learners in developing linguistic competence which they need as academic preparation (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Widdowson, 2003) because the focus of TBI is primarily on the fluency of communication flow and task completion rather than on language accuracy.

In line with the goals of TBI, the general goal of the Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum developed in 1975 and 1981 (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) was to prepare upper secondary students "with the ability to communicate accurately and effectively in the most common English language activities they may be involved in" (p. 230). Richards & Rodgers' (2001) assessment of the previous Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum in 1975 and 1981 concluded that it was a task-based communicative curriculum, based on their examination of the general English use objectives for EFL oral communication as well as the introductory parts of the documents. However, Richards and Rodgers (2001) neither analyzed whether the reading tasks in the previous Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum were in line with TBI nor examined the most recent Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum introduced in 2003. The present study built on their scholarship by examining if TBI as part of CLT instructional approaches is the instructional approach of the most recent Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum.

2.1.1.2 Content-Based Instruction (CBI)

One of the greatest obstacles that L2 learners face is learning academic English language skills (Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996). Content-Based Instruction or CBI is an L2 communicative instructional approach that seems to assist students in their academic areas (e.g., Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). CBI is based on both information processing cognitive theories of SLA and socio-cultural theories. At the fundamental level, cognitive theories of SLA perceives language as an interaction between the surface structure or grammatical forms of a language and the deep structure or meaning (Shirai, 1997). The information-processing theory of SLA involves linguistic information processing, textual information processing, and the synthesis of text information and prior knowledge processing (Koda, 2005). Linguistic information processing refers to cognitive processes on the mapping of forms and their functions (e.g., MacWhinney &

Bates, 1989; MacWhinney, 1992) such as word processing. Textual information processing refers to comprehension process involving building a mental representation of the propositional content for the purpose of understanding the author's message (e.g., Pulido & Hambrick, 2008) such as discourse processing. The synthesis of text information and prior knowledge processing includes cognitive processes such as inferencing, reasoning, and remembering (e.g., Nassaji, 2007). CBI focuses on developing students' information processing abilities through comprehensible yet challenging content information presented in the foreign language, a combination of processes which places a high cognitive demand on the student (Met, 1991). However, CBI also builds on socio-cognitive and socio-cultural theories such as Swain's (1985) theory of communicative competence which characterizes CBI as a communicative instructional approach.

Socio-cultural theory and socio-cognitive theory overlap in the way that both view language learning as cognitive and social in nature. Socio-cognitive theory posits that one's language acquisition is primarily learned through their context of social interaction as well as through interaction with their environment. Therefore, an individual's environment and changes in that environment affect the individual's thought processes which in turns influences the development of his or her language acquisition (Matsuoka & Evans, 2004). Within the realm of L2 reading, socio-cognitive reading activities in Content-Based ESL Instruction may be reflected in activities such as giving a reflection speech based on an informational content-based text in the content area. Although socio-cognitive theory overlaps with the socio-cultural theory, unlike the latter, the former does not promote communicative competence as central to language activities.

CBI also adopts CLT by promoting learners to engage in purposeful communicative interaction around cognitive activities or activities that are related to learners' psychological aspects which are the reading processes in the mind of an individual reader (Bloor, 1985) such as vocabulary development, discourse organization as well as study skills (Stoller, 1997). Thus, reading tasks for CBI reflect information-processing theories of SLA which textual information processing occurs via meaningful communicative interaction.

In terms of reading passages, the types of text used in CBI vary. Some researchers suggest that the content be only expository and related to academic content (e.g., Curtain & Pesola, 1994) while others contend that the content can also be narrative (e.g., Eskey, 1997; Genesee, 1994). In contrast to TBI, which is organized around a central task or activity, CBI is designed around the content or information as well as the discourse of the content that is intended for learners to acquire (Eskey, 1997). According to Schleppegrell (2001) as well as Schleppegrell, Achugar, and Oteiza (2004), in addition to helping students to achieve the ability to read grade-level texts, CBI may also assist in the development of second language proficiency. These researchers contended that based on the functional theory of language, it is important to develop students' ability in mapping specific linguistic features to the meaning of the text, which makes linguistic development central to content learning. This link between language and content or knowledge is in line with the socio-cultural approach. The socio-cultural theory of SLA views language as a central tool for the development of thought processes or the crucial means of mediation for one's cognition. Thus, CBI emphasizes cognitive activity related to text information processing (learner-input mental processes) as well as communicative activity. Hence, the goal of CBI is to concurrently prepare learners for general L2 proficiency as well as a

strong L2 academic language in their content areas (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) via communicative negotiation of meaning.

Past studies related to CBI showed that CBI may assist learners in both general L2 as well as academic language development (e.g., Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Crandall, 1993; Short, 1993). However, some researchers contended that content-based and task-based approaches are not necessarily suitable in certain EFL contexts (e.g., Swan, 2005; Ur, 1996) due to factors such as limited instruction hours (e.g., Lightbown, 2000) and also lack of expertise in the content subject matter among EFL teachers (Murphy, 1997).

2.1.1.3 Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), also known as Collaborative Learning (CL) builds on the socio-cultural view of language as a tool to mediate interaction geared towards language learning development. Therefore, CLL that is learner-centered in nature highly emphasizes the role of social interaction in language instruction. The purpose of CLL is to provide learners with naturalistic L2 acquisition and to promote communicative functions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Learners are viewed as problem solvers who collaboratively work towards achieving the same goal. In general, learning tasks under CLL are primarily group tasks (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994) in which learning is interdependent and collaborative (Coelho, 1992). CLL can be used as the vehicle for L2 instruction to assist students in L2 development as well as L2 reading development (e.g., Dornyei, 1997; Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004; Shaaban, 2006). CLL often provides learners with a more learner-oriented instruction through engaging communicative activities based on texts which may help improve reading skills in L2 (e.g., Eljana, 2009; Jacobs & Yong, 2004).

Past studies have also shown that CLL is effective in enhancing L2 development. Bejarano (1987) compared the effectiveness of Whole Language instructional approaches and CLL among middle school EFL students. The findings suggested that CLL is a superior instructional approach because students in the CLL group obtained superior scores in the listening comprehension test. In a more current study, Ghaith and El-Malak (2004) conducted an experimental study on the effects of CLL on literal, higher order, and overall L2 reading comprehension. However, there was no significant difference between the two approaches in the development of overall reading comprehension ability. Nonetheless, CLL was found to have a significant effect on students' performance on higher order reading comprehension questions. In a later study of similar nature, Shaaban (2006) conducted an experimental study by comparing the effectiveness of CLL and Whole Class instructional approach. In terms of general reading comprehension, the result in this study corroborates with the finding of Ghaith and El-Malak's (2004) on the positive effect of CLL in improving general reading comprehension.

2.1.1.4 Naturalistic Approach

Like CLL, another form of CLT that promotes naturalistic language acquisition is the Naturalistic Approach to L2 instruction. Krashen and Terrell (1983) argued that learning activities in the form of drills such as the ones advocated by the Audiolingual Method do not provide learners with the necessary skills for communication. Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach to L2 instruction views language as communication and therefore its goal is to promote communicative abilities via communicative exchanges. Hence, the Natural Approach promoted by Krashen and Terrell (1983) is also known as the Creative Construction Approach. The Naturalistic Approach is based on five interrelated hypotheses which characterize the learning tasks to comprise comprehensible input, non-threatening learning environment, sub-

conscious learning, and sequential language learning in which language is presented in stages according to its sequence.

As in Richards and Rodgers's (2001) analysis of the previous Malaysian EFL Secondary Curricula (1975 and 1983 versions), the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum (1975) and the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum (1983) were designed around communication tasks which reflected the TBI curriculum design. One of the characteristics of TBI curriculum conforms to Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Order Hypothesis which is one of the five hypotheses in the Natural Approach to L2 instruction. This hypothesis proposes that language is learned in a natural order beginning from simpler language tasks to more complex tasks and thus language should be taught in such a sequence.

As reflected in the 1975 and 1983 Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum, reading tasks are sequentially presented from lower level tasks such as focusing on pronunciation to higher level tasks such as making inference. Hence, it was expected that this TBI feature would be reflected in the current Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum. The Natural Approach to L2 instruction is considered effective for L2 development by a number of SLA researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Long, 1996; Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996). Tudor and Hafiz (1989) conducted a single-subject study on the effects of comprehensible input on L2 writing based on the Natural Approach. The result show that the subjects' command of the language system significantly improved. In another study, Furuhata (1999) compared the effectiveness of a traditional instructional approach, the Natural Approach to L2 instruction, and Total Physical Response (TPR) among ESL students. The finding reveals that the Natural Approach assisted students in achieving a higher level of communicative language use. In a more current study, Lin (2008) tested a pedagogy based on the Natural Approach by focusing on the relationship of affects such

as learners' motivation and attitudes and how the pedagogy enhanced communicative activities. The findings show that an instructional approach that takes affective factors into account is effective in enhancing communicative language activities.

2.1.2 Audiolingual Instructional Approaches and Related Theories

The audiolingual instructional approach is related to the use of oral-aural skills as the primary vehicle in L2 instruction. This instructional approach was widely practiced before the emergence of communicative approaches. Although the Malaysian secondary EFL curriculum is officially claimed to be based on a communicative approach (from 1975 to present), the analyses in this study will reveal that the curriculum also contains characteristics of audiolingual instructional approaches. Audiolingual approaches to SLA are based on behaviorist theories of second language learning. Behaviorist theories postulate that in order to acquire a language one needs to acquire the forms of the language, which are best taught using reinforcement or repetitive practices. Reinforcement of responses to particular stimuli is believed to form the desired learning behaviors. Typical language instruction within the behaviorist theory often involves activities such as rote-memorization and drills.

2.1.2.1 Oral Approach

The Oral Approach to L2 instruction is an approach which is based on the behaviorist theory. Hence, it focuses on bottom-up processing to develop learners' lower level language processing skills such as phonological processing skills, word recognition and word identification (e.g., Koda, 2005; Nassaji, 2006). Learners merely listen and repeat what the teacher utters and only respond to the teacher's questions and commands; thus, the learners have no control over the

learning content (Davies, Roberts, & Rossner, 1975). This instructional approach emphasizes the role of vocabulary and grammar in language learning based on the theory that speech is the basis for language and structure is pivotal for speaking ability. This approach is based on behaviorist habit-learning theories. Knowledge of structure is assumed to always link to situations because speech is expressed for a purpose (Frisby, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, the Oral Approach to L2 instruction is also known as Structural-Situational instructional approach or Situational Language Teaching (Palmer, 1923). Learning activities involve the presentation of new sentence patterns with drilling as the primary vehicle to reinforce the new patterns. These drills are typically skill-based and based on a bottom-up process (Brown, 2000). Language activities typically require lower cognitive skills such as recall and memorization. This instructional approach is criticized in terms of its assumption that simply focusing on grammatical form via oral practice will lead to language acquisition (e.g., Krashen, 1996; Ney, 1987; Willis, 1996). Merely acquiring language structure via reinforcement may not result in learners who are capable of using language competently.

2.1.2.2 Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)

Another instructional approach that also focuses on oral-aural teaching and learning activities is the Audio-Lingual Method or ALM. The learning theory is heavily drawn from behaviorism (Castagnaro, 2006). This method is based on structural linguistics in which language and speech are considered synonymous (Saville-Troike, 1973). The goal of language learning in this approach is to acquire the structural organization of the target language as it is used by native speakers. In terms of learning tasks, dialogue, drills, and pattern practice are the common language activities (Oebel, 2001). Learners are viewed as performers who are directed for skill training to produce correct language utterances in line with the behaviorist learning theory. Such

activities are considered to require lower levels of cognitive demand, and therefore fail to give learners practice with more cognitively demanding language activities such as involving in a discussion or defending a point of view in the target language. Hence, the audiolingual instructional approach has been criticized by many because it does to take into account other important aspects of language learning such as higher mental processes and learning contexts which cannot be separated from language learning process (e.g., Castagnaro, 2006; Griffiths & Par, 2001; Valdman, 1980).

Despite the general critiques of ALM, studies of ALM have shown mixed findings. Daniel (1983) compared ALM and the natural language acquisition instructional approach. The result suggests that the natural acquisition instructional approach contributes to L2 developmental acquisition more than ALM does. In another study, Samimy (1989) compared the effectiveness of ALM and Counseling-Learning (CL) instructional approach among EFL learners. The finding suggests that CL has more positive impact on students' EFL learning than ALM as indicated by their final grades. On the contrary of Samimy's (1989) findings and despite the criticism of ALM, Wu (1991) found intensive ALM is more effective than the traditional method in developing L2 proficiency among EFL learners. The examination of the Malaysian secondary EFL curriculum in this study considered aspects of the audiolingual approach that may be present in the curriculum.

2.1.3 Alternative Approaches to L2 Instruction

In addition to audiolingual and communicative approaches to L2 instruction, some curricula include alternative approaches such as Total Physical Response (TPR), the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Whole Language, the Lexical Approach, Multiple Intelligences,

Competency-Based Language Learning, and Project-Based Instruction. However, these other alternative instruction approaches are not discussed except for TPR because based on the researcher's preliminary examination of the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, other than TPR, these approaches are not relevant. However, it is possible that elements of the other alternative approaches may be found in the curriculum under study.

2.1.3.1 Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response (TPR) is grammar-based in nature in accordance with the behaviorist stimulus-response view of learning theory. TPR is one of the early instructional approaches to L2. It is a language teaching approach that is built around the coordination of speech and action (Asher, 1982). Learning tasks primarily involve learners listening to a stimulus and responding using motor activities (Conroy, 1999; Lin, 2010). The goal is to teach oral proficiency for beginners through active listening (Asher, 2003) which is believed to lead to linguistic competence (Finnochiaro & Brumfit, 1983). Cognitive activities are merely within the listen-understand-react-memorize learning chain which can be categorized as a low-level cognitive task. Studies have shown that TPR could be affective for developing L2 acquisition at word, phrase or simple sentence level in a formulaic manner (e.g., Elliott & Yountchi, 1999; Lin, 2010). Since this instructional approach focuses on learners acquiring language chunks or formulaic language, it does not promote communicative competence for real language use. Learning tasks employs individual pattern of learner grouping with the teacher influencing student learning in a one-way direction of instructional communication.

Within the L2 reading domain, due to its characteristics, TPR does not cater to learners' needs to develop information processing skills beyond word recognition. As discussed earlier in the CLT approaches section, studies have shown that CLT approaches are superior to TPR (e.g.

Furuhuta, 1999). The majorities of studies in TPR were conducted in the 1960s. However, among current studies by Kariuki and Bush (2008) and Omari (2001) on TPR have shown positive effects in L2 areas such as the acquisition of vocabulary and language chunks which suggest that TPR is useful for lower level language processing skills such as at the phonological level, word recognition, and word identification (Asher, 1966; Asher & Kunihira, 1965).

2.2 THEORIES OF AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES TO L2 READING

In addition to providing a description of the general EFL instruction approach found in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, this study focused more specifically on analyzing the reading strand of the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum. Only the reading-related portions of the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum, which was labeled as the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, were examined. In order to see what prominent approach to L2 reading is reflected, several current approaches to L2 reading that might emerge in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum are described: The grammar-translation method, whole-language reading instruction, and content-based ESL instruction. Instructional approaches such as Direct Explanation, Transactional Strategies Instruction, and Explicit Strategy Instruction are not discussed because there has been no published evidence that such approaches to L2 reading instruction have been used in Malaysian secondary schools. In addition, the theories of L2 reading that undergird each approach are discussed, such as Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Interactive theories. Bottom-Up theory focuses on the lower level reading processing skills at the word level because language learners need to be able to process vocabulary and words before they can process the text at the sentence and text discourse level for reading comprehension. On

the contrary, Top-Down theory disregards the roles of lower level processing skills and places importance on the roles of higher level processing skills such as semantic processing in reading comprehension process. The current Interactive theory postulates that reading comprehension may best occur when there is an interaction among the text, the reader, and others.

2.2.1 Bottom-Up Theories and L2 Grammar Translation (GT) Reading Instruction

Bottom-up theories of reading are text-driven in nature and focus on the lower level components of the reading process such as phonological processing, word recognition, and word identification (e.g., Nassaji, 2003). Comprehension is perceived to be dependent on linguistic skills or decoding skills (Carrell, 1988) which reflects both a structuralism view of language learning. One reading instructional approach based on the Bottom-Up theory is the Grammar Translation (GT) instructional approach. GT was originally used to teach literature to L1 speakers (Chen, 2008). In an EFL classroom, GT involves the teacher translating the English text, explaining grammar rules, and focusing on vocabulary (Wang, 2009). Learners are often instructed to read the text and their attention is commonly directed to learning grammar rules and vocabulary (e.g., Griffiths & Parr, 2001) which results in individual pattern of learner grouping.

This form-focused instructional approach for reading has been criticized for centering on the teacher, involving substantial drilling, and disregarding the role of meaning (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1995). Research has shown that the reading process does not only involve linguistic competence, but also discourse competence that is having knowledge of discourse markers and how these markers connects parts of the text into a coherent whole (Koda, 2005). Hence, GT may not contribute to the development of learners' higher order processing skills in EFL reading because reading instruction is primarily focused on lower level text processing skills as well as

learning the rules of grammar with less attention to text content or information processing for meaning.

In relation to knowledge acquisition, another important purpose of L2 reading instruction is for learners to construct meaning of new concepts presented in L2 (Grabe, 2008), which GT fails to address. Lu (1996) compared GT and the natural acquisition instructional approach among ESL learners and found that the natural acquisition instructional approach is superior to GT in developing ESL learners' text information processing. Holden and Usuki (1999) contend that GT also limits learner autonomy in L2 learning. Despite the criticism for the primarily form-focused characteristic, some studies found that GT is effective for language structure, clause, and sentence acquisition (e.g., Hadley, 2001; Fotos, 2001) which contribute to the linguistic competence that L2 readers also need for text processing at the word level.

2.2.2 Interactive Theories and Communicative L2 Reading Instruction

The interactive theory of L2 reading is a combination of reader-driven and text-driven processes which integrates both lower level and higher level processes (Bernhardt, 1991; Grabe, 1991; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991; Lee, 1997; Fender, 2001; Nassaji, 2002) and takes into account readers' background knowledge of content, text structure, and cultural factors (Roebuck, 1998). Grabe (1991) defines the term *interactive* as describing two important and related characteristics of reading processes: (a) the interaction of various processes; text-driven and reader-driven, (b) the interaction between the reader and the text/the author; a process in which the reader attempts to construct a mental representation of the text by integrating text information and the reader's world knowledge. "Thus, in interactive models, reading involves the continuous integration of

the available information, from both 'inside' and 'outside' the text, in order to construct a coherent representation of the text," notes Roebuck (1998, p. 3).

However, within the present decade, L2 reading researchers have begun to shift their focus towards the importance of having students to be actively engaged with the text by linking social context and cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1987). Hence, the Interactive theory of L2 reading has been expanded to include communicative theories of SLA, especially sociocultural theory. In line with socio-cultural theory, socio-cognitive theory, and the communicative approach, the interactional theory of L2 reading promotes discourse competence around text information using language as a tool in a socially mediated process (Vygotsky, 1978) and also as a central tool for the development of thought processes which may assist in enhancing L2 reading processing. The growing interest in the communicative instructional approach has extended the current interactive theory of L2 reading to include the interaction between the reader, the text, and the reading context.

One of the communicative L2 reading instructional approaches which is based on Interactive theories and SCT is Content-Based Instruction (CBI). In contrast to the Grammar Translation instructional approach, reading within Content-Based ESL Instruction, which is a communicative approach to L2 instruction (see 2.1.1), is designed to concurrently train learners for foreign language skills as well as academic-related subject matter (Hyland & Hamps-Lyon, 2002; Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989). Since Content-Based ESL Instruction places importance on both language skills and meaning construction in L2 reading, it reflects an interactive theory.

CBI and other communicative instructional approaches to L2 reading that are grounded in interactive and sociocultural theories focus on collaborative and communicative text-based discussion as ways to enhance students' engagement with texts and to support student

comprehension. The communicative characteristic of CBI is reflected in pattern of learner grouping such as learning tasks that are designed in pairs or groups. Such learner grouping enables learners to learn not only from the teacher, but also from peers and teaching resources.

Some current studies of L2 reading instruction have examined the effectiveness of communicative L2 reading approaches. For example, Salataci and Akyel (2002) investigated the effect of text-based interaction using reciprocal teaching on EFL reading comprehension among Turkish EFL learners. The instructional technique included a think aloud procedure and group discussion based on informational passages. The results show that reading instruction that is interactive in nature had positive effects on EFL reading comprehension. Through social interactions, students are given the opportunity to share ideas and provide explanations (Chi, de Leeuw, Chiu, & LaVancher, 1994) which contributes to reading comprehension development.

Similarly, Saricoban (2002) conducted a study among EFL university learners on the effects of reading instruction which used various modes of classroom interaction around texts. The instruction used in Saricoban's study was designed based on the interactional theory of L2 reading which incorporated bottom-up, top-down, and interactional approaches. The instructional procedure included vocabulary practice, activating prior knowledge, locating answers in reading texts, making prediction, generating questions, and giving opinions with reasoning. Based on the findings, Saricoban contended that such instruction may help students understand EFL texts better. Yitiger, Saricoban, and Gurses (2006) replicated Saricoban's (2002) study among advanced and low proficiency EFL readers. The findings indicate that reading instruction which includes interactive activities such as generating questions and giving opinions with reasoning promotes reading comprehension in EFL at the while- and post-reading stage of the reading process. In line with Vygotsky's (1987) notion of learning and development, these studies

suggest that when students express and hear their ideas and others' responses to their ideas during reading activities, they will gradually develop an internalized ability to construct and reconstruct or refine ideas independently.

Similarly, Seng (2007) examined the effects of combining think-aloud and collaboration tasks in an ESL reading comprehension classroom at the college level in Malaysia. The classroom session involved extensive think aloud tasks both individually and in groups. Discussion in a collaborative situation was also conducted in the reading session. The discussion was either peer-led or teacher-led. The results show that the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension measures suggesting the effectiveness of using think-aloud with collaboration in a small group accompanied by teacher scaffolding. Taken together, the studies reviewed above suggest that communicative classroom activities based in interactive theories of reading result in "a group environment in which students can observe peers' responses, receive feedback on their own responses, as well as receive the guidance of an expert, the teacher" (Sandora et al., 1999, p. 179). As such, reading instruction which utilizes interactive and communicative activities may help improve reading comprehension. The contribution of interactive and communicative activities to L2 reading comprehension has also been indicated in a more recent study by Zhang (2008) who conducted a quasi-experimental study involving EFL participants with Chinese as the first language. The reading instruction for the experimental group was developed based on an interactional model of L2 reading while the control group received more traditional, teacher-centered mode of instruction. The instructional procedure for the experimental group included teacher modeling, scaffolding, and student discussing in small groups to perform reading tasks based on expository reading passages. The results indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group in academic reading

performance. Such finding suggests that an interactive model which includes meaningful interaction among learning agents in the reading context may contribute to academic reading proficiency in EFL.

Content-Based ESL Instruction is commonly practiced in English for Academic Purpose (EAP) courses and also in general English as a Second Language (ESL) or EFL programs. Therefore, Content-Based ESL Instruction is also commonly used in EFL reading lessons using content-based texts such as Science and History (e.g., Shang, 2006) for students to learn new concepts presented in L2. The goal of Content-Based ESL Instruction is to provide students with academic literacy in content areas as well as to enhance students' genre knowledge in expository type of texts for academic success (Song, 2001). Content-based texts are texts of advanced literacy that require more cognitive demands in terms of knowledge and language (e.g., Anderson, 1993; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Schleppegrell, 2001). Kasper (1998) examined the effect of CBI on ESL college students' academic progress. She compared the performance between CBI group and non-CBI group. The CBI group focused on content while the non-CBI group focused on developing reading skills instead of content. The results show that the CBI group scored significantly higher in the ESL final examination, particularly on reading comprehension than their counterparts.

2.2.3 Top-Down Theories and Whole Language Approaches to L2 Reading Instruction

Top-down theories of L2 reading emphasize higher level text processing skills such as contextual and background knowledge sources based on the idea that readers' ability to use syntactic and semantic cues compensates their lack in graphic cues (Goodman, as cited in Nassaji, 2003, p. 262). In contrast to the bottom-up model of L2 reading, as exemplified by the Grammar

Translation instructional approach, the top-down model undergirding approaches such as Whole Language signifies the importance of higher level text processing skills (e.g., semantics) and de-emphasizes the functions of lower level text processing skills (e.g., word recognition). In contrast to the Grammar Translation instructional approach, the Whole Language approach to L2 reading instruction is a recent approach to L1 and L2 literacy education (e.g., Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987) in which reading is considered a process of constructing meaning from whole to part (e.g., Bergeron, 1990).

The Whole Language instructional approach was developed based on the theory of language as communication or social activity. Learners use their experiences to construct meaning from the text. The primary goal is to teach reading and writing skills by using real communication. Learners are viewed as collaborators with their peers and evaluators of their own learning (Goodman, 1989). In L2 reading instruction, learning tasks assimilate the use of language in real world such as reading activities for comprehension and real purpose that are related to learners' real life experiences (Moorman, Blanton, & McLaughlin, 1994). The tasks require higher order thinking and linguistic skills such as arguing on the author's viewpoint in a discussion and provide reasoning, discussing cause and effects of events in an expository text and so forth. Reading and writing are integrated in meaningful and functional activities (e.g., Freeman & Freeman, 1992) such as writing in response to a reading activity.

The findings of past studies of the Whole Language approach varied depending on how this approach is defined. However, many L2 studies have found that the Whole Language instruction contributes to reading development. Beccera-Keller (1993) conducted a study on the effects of the Whole Language instructional approach on vocabulary and reading comprehension achievements among three different age groups of ESL readers. She found that the Whole

Language instructional approach contributes to better reading comprehension achievement for older readers but not for younger readers. In this study, there was no significant achievement in vocabulary in the post-test in all three groups. Older readers may tend to benefit more from the Whole Language instruction due to the degree of previous knowledge that they have in comparison to young learners. Chen (1991) investigated the effect of the Whole Language instructional approach on EFL high school students in Taiwan and found that this instructional approach helped improve the students' reading and writing abilities in ESL. Chen's finding is congruent with the finding of Beccera-Keller (1993) regarding the benefits that may accrue from the Whole Language instruction among older learners. These previous findings are supported by the findings in another study conducted by Liaw (2003), who found that the same instructional approach significantly improved Taiwanese high school students' EFL proficiency test scores.

In a similar vein, Serrano (1995) conducted an experimental study the effects of Whole Language instruction on reading achievement among six graders ESL students and found improved reading achievement. From a slightly different angle, Ottero (1993) compared the effectiveness of Direct Instruction and Whole Language instruction on reading comprehension performance among ESL college students. The result indicates that Whole Language instruction is superior in promoting students' ESL reading comprehension performance. In sum, past studies have shown that in comparison to traditional grammar translations approaches, Whole Language instruction could be an effective L2 reading instructional approach especially for older learners.

2.3 A REVIEW OF MALAYSIAN EFL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

In this section an overview of Malaysian EFL educational policies is provided, including their history and previous scholarship on them. Prior to delving into the history of Malaysian English language educational policies, the nature of language policy decision making in the Malaysian context is first described. Gill (2006) described the Malaysian language policy and planning processes to be "top-down" instead of "bottom-up" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 196) in nature. The top-down mode constitutes "people with power and authority who make language-related decisions for groups, often with little or no consultation with the ultimate language learners and users" (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 196).

English education in Malaysia began in the early 19th century (Powell, 2002) during the British colonization and was made a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools (Course of Studies Regulation 1956, II as cited in Foo & Richard, 2004). However, during the British colonial era, historical evidence suggests that there was no consistent English language educational policy (Muthusami, 1987) due to the British *divide and rule* ideology. During this era, the Malay ethnicity in particular shunned English education for the fear of being Christianized (Asmah, 1996). However, the prosperity of crop agriculture in the early 20th century resulted in more Malays were hired in the government sector and by the 1930s, the Malays demanded from the British for better English education for employment purpose.

During pre-independence, the Malay language and English held equal status in education. An education ordinance in 1952 proposed a Malay or English primary schools despite the emphasis in the Razak Committee (1955) on the importance of having a single system of education and language instruction. Although primary schools used Malay as the medium of instruction, contrarily, the medium of instruction for secondary schools was allowed to be either

in Malay or English. However, on the eve of independence, the Malaya government at that time realized that bilingual educational system may cause divisiveness among the citizens. Therefore, the Education Ordinance (1957) proposed the Malay-medium and the National-type Chinese and Tamil primary schools with English taught as one of the language subjects. The 1957 constitution declared Malay as the national language with special provision for the official use of English (Foo & Richards, 2004).

In 1960, the Rahman Talib Report emerged and required all Chinese secondary schools to convert their medium of instruction either to English or Malay resulting in most Chinese secondary schools switching to English. At the end of the tenth year of independence, in order to maintain educational standards (Asmah, 1979), the National Language Act (1967) proposed that English be retained as a required subject in all schools with secondary schools being shifted to Malay-medium schools. The National Language Act (1971) re-emphasized the leading roles of the Malay language and the secondary roles of English within the Malaysian educational context (Heng & Tan, 2006). In vernacular or national type Tamil and Chinese primary schools, the English language is taught beginning from the third grade.

"English was relegated to the position of a second language in the education system, a language which is compulsory to take, but not to pass, for all Malaysian schoolchildren" (Gill, 2006, p. 84). Due to the low status given to EFL, the English subject has recently become somehow marginalized since it is not a requirement to advance to the next school level. By the early of 1980s, all schools and universities in Malaysia except the International Islamic University shifted from English to Malay as the medium of instruction. "A credit in English was made unnecessary as a condition for university entry in 1988; and in 1995 it became official that English was not a compulsory subject to obtain the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (*Sijil*

Pelajaran Malaysia) after 11 years of school education" (Heng & Tan, 2006, p. 309). As a result of this situation, for the past three decades, proficiency in the English language among Malaysian students at all school levels continues to decline, resulting in a significant university graduate unemployment (Lee, 2004).

The English language competency issues have raised concerns in Malaysia. The issue of competence in English among students regained attention of language policy makers in Malaysia in the 1990s (Ridge, 2004). With political stability, the Malaysian government is making effort to reinstate English language competence via its educational systems. Mahathir Mohammad, Malaysian fourth prime minister (1981-2004) was concerned with how English was cast aside in the educational system (Mahathir, 1986) despite the importance that this language should be acquired "for its utilitarian value, for employment and for guaranteeing access to the science and technology of the West" (Gopinathan, 2003, p. 21).

While the native language is deemed to have an integrative value in non-English speaking countries, English is considered to have a greater instrumental value for economic advancement and in the case of Malaysia, the number of less proficient students in the English language is becoming more prominent (Powell, 2002). This situation exists despite the fact that in 1985, the Malaysian Ministry of Education has increased the number of hours for English language instruction (Kalaverny, 1986) to enhance English language proficiency among students. Subsequent efforts was made in the mid-1990s when the Malaysian government increased provisions for the English language to be the medium of instruction for content areas at the university level such as science, medicine, engineering, and law (Powell, 2002) as well as technical areas (Ridge, 2004). The University of Malaya, the first university established in Malaysia, for example, requires a high attainment in English for entrants (Asmah, 1996).

However, at the post-secondary level, for a three-year diploma, students in technical disciplines such as engineering are required to obtain a pass in English and a credit for a Secretarial Science course (Shukor et al., 1993). Nonetheless, post-secondary institutions do not require a pass in English at the certificate level. This reduces the importance English and the motivation of post-secondary students to acquire the English language.

In 2002, the change of paradigm concerning the importance of English for knowledge-based purpose has resulted in a new English language policy with the emergence of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) for pre-tertiary education students.

According to Heng and Tan (2006), this test was perceived as:

> Providing the essential continuity in the exposure and use of English for students leaving the general school system. In other words, students who aspired to further their studies in local tertiary institutions would sit the MUET in order to qualify for entry. This gave the impetus for English to play a bigger role in the national educational system, even though the MUET was limited to the promotion of general academic English (p. 310).

As stated by Heng and Tan (2006), the MUET sustains the importance of acquiring the English language up to the tertiary level by making the MUET a requirement for university entry or graduation. EFL reading proficiency is the major component of the MUET (see Table 2.1). The MUET is a norm-referenced entrance exam that qualifies college students to enroll in Malaysian public universities. However, because so many students do not pass the MUET, many students who do not pass are still accepted into the public universities but are required to achieve the minimum requirement in order to graduate. Hence, for these students, this entrance exam becomes an exit exam for graduation. Students are allowed to take this test without limit until they obtain the minimum requirement. There has not yet been any data within the Malaysian

context which indicate EFL reading as the primary emphasis of EFL teaching; however, the reading portion of the MUET carries the highest weight in comparison to the other EFL components (speaking, listening, and writing) on the test. Table 2.1 shows the components and weight allocation on the MUET (http://www.malaysia-students.com/2007 /03/muet.html) which indicates reading as the most emphasized component on the MUET assessment.

Table 2.1 MUET Components and Specifications Beginning 2008

Test	Test Specifications	Possible Genres
Listening	45 marks (15%)	Lecture, talks, interview, briefing
Speaking	45 marks (15%)	Contemporary issues
Reading	120 marks (40%)	Articles from journals, newspapers, and magazines; academic texts; electronic texts
Writing	90 marks (30%)	Report, article, letter, essay

The emphasis on English language competency among Malaysian graduates was further enforced by 2003 in which a new EFL policy was implemented to teach science and mathematics in English to junior primary and secondary students as part of a pragmatic approach to enhance the competency in the English language. In the same year, as a complement to the introduction of science and mathematics in English, a genre-specific approach to learning English known as English for Science and Technology was also introduced at the upper secondary level beginning from Grade 10 as an additional subject to the existing English language subject. The new EFL policy implementation was also partly due to studies conducted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education that showed that the majority of local graduates from Malaysian universities possessed a poor command of English, which led to the failure in getting employment from the private

sector (Star, 29 June 2003 as cited in Gill, 2005). Malaysian public universities were also affected by this new language policy. "All public universities will also have to switch to English as the medium of instruction in science and technology subjects in 2005 when the first batch of STPM students taught in English enter university" (Sunday Star, as cited in Kaur & Thiyagarajah, 1999). Nonetheless, adding English for Science and Technology and teaching science and mathematics in English will not help improve students' English language competency if the teaching of English remains ineffective.

2.4 APPROACHES TO THE MALAYSIAN EFL SECONDARY CURRICULUM

Prior to the emergence of the National Education Policy (1970), English was made a compulsory subject throughout the school system, however, with no common content syllabus; one syllabus for national type English school and another type for non-English medium schools. Non-English medium primary schools used structural syllabus until 1965 (Sarogini, 1969). Beginning from 1965, a common content syllabus was introduced to primary schools with Structural Situational method or Oral Method as the prominent pedagogical approaches to the teaching of the English language. For secondary schools, there were two different English language curricula: The Syllabus for Secondary Schools (Malay-medium) known as English 1966 and the Syllabus for Secondary Schools (English-medium) known as English 1968. Due to the difference in curriculum, two different English assessments were administered (Abu Samah, 1983).

When the English-medium secondary schools were phased out, the National Education Policy established one common content English language curriculum for the primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. The primary schools and lower secondary schools (Forms 1 to 3

or Grades 7th, 8th, and 9th) curricula used the Structural Situational approach or the Oral Method. Nonetheless, the upper secondary (Forms 4 and 5 or Grades 10th and 11th) English language Curriculum used the Communicative Language Teaching approach or also known as Communicational Syllabus (Abu Samah, 1983). The communicative syllabus was a task-oriented, situational syllabus adopting a skill-based approach to the teaching and learning of reading. The upper secondary English syllabus was designed based on the Third Malaysian Plan 1976-1980 which emphasized the need for Malaysian to be fluent in English as an international language. In 1974, a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based syllabus emerged in line with the goal in the Third Malaysia Plan that was to produce manpower with competency in the English language. The shift to the Communicative Syllabus was also to keep abreast with the universal trends in English language teaching that was moving toward a communicative approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Foo and Richards (2004) contended that the three different syllabi for primary schools, lower secondary and upper secondary schools were created in isolation therefore disregarding the importance of integrating the syllabi as parts of a whole English language curriculum. In addition, the development of the syllabi did not take into account students from non-English speaking backgrounds especially in rural areas (Rajaretnam & Nalliah, 1999). As a consequence, these students were not able to benefit much from the syllabus in terms of enhancing their English language proficiency resulting in many leaving the secondary education with low English proficiency. Due to these discrepancies, the English language curriculum for Malaysian public schools was revised in 1979. With the complete shift from English-medium schools to Malay-medium schools in 1983, The Malaysian Ministry of Education revamped the English language curriculum and its pedagogical approaches.

Heng and Tan (2006) stated that:

> The structural–situational syllabus of English was replaced with the communicative syllabus, which emphasized the teaching of language functions and forms and de-emphasized the teaching of grammar. The curriculum change was top-down as the communicative syllabus was first implemented in the upper secondary schools in 1977 (p. 309).

The Cabinet Report (1985) on the Review of the Implementation of the Education Policy 1979 stresses the objective of teaching the English language in schools that is to empower students to use English in their daily situations as well as preparing them for higher education. It is also the objective of the curriculum to strengthen students' foundation in the English language especially at the primary level in the hope that students are better equipped when they move to higher grades and be fully prepared with the required English language skills to meet academic demands at the tertiary level. New integrated curricula for the primary and secondary schools emerged in 1989.

Maintaining the Communicative Language Teaching Syllabus, several amendments were made to the content of the syllabus such as ensuring that the subject matter included in the syllabus should contains more local than foreign elements to make it easier for students to relate to, emphasis on reading and writing, equipping students with skills and knowledge that would enable them to enter the job marker or further their education after secondary level, enhancing English language proficiency to acquire knowledge in science and technology, and emphasis on oral activities to enable students to relate the language to the environment. A literature component was included in the new Secondary English curriculum to enable students "to engage in wider reading of good works for enjoyment and for self-development" (Malaysian Ministry of

Education, 2003). The teaching of English in Malaysian schools for knowledge acquisition, effective communication, and literary works reading enjoyment fulfills the aims and objective of the national philosophy of education and the Educational Act (1996).

The English language curricula were further revised in 2003. The Malaysian English language curriculum adopted the general proficiency approach. The Secondary English Language Curriculum was based on learning outcomes geared towards equipping students to communicate effectively, function appropriately in everyday life, and access information as well as able to understand and respond to literary works. English grammar, phonology, vocabulary, ICT skills, thinking skills as well as values and citizenship education were also included in the curriculum.

The MOE has set a guideline that any target language is to be taught using the target language itself only (David, 1999). This approach to EFL teaching has been practiced and continued in Malaysia and many other EFL countries and is deemed to be optimal on the assumption that the use of national language as the medium of instruction is not at the expense of proficiency in English (Powell, 2002). However, many studies have shown that the use of native language is beneficial in enhancing L2 learning including L2 reading (Taniguchi, 2005; Tickoo, 2008; Widdowson, 1996).

2.5 EFL READING ISSUES AT THE MALAYSIAN TERTIARY LEVEL

The issue of EFL literacy at the tertiary level has been the focus in many countries including Malaysia. The difficulty in comprehension when reading in EFL among university students is a critical issue within the Malaysian context. For example, the Academic Division of Islamic

Science University of Malaysia provided data that the average MUET score for the reading section for 685 third and fourth year students at Islamic Science University of Malaysia in 2007 was about 49.6 percent or 67.5 in raw score out of 120 points in total. Since the reading component in MUET carries the major weight in the total test score, students' poor performance affects their overall MUET grade which results in them failing to meet even the minimum requirement to pass the test. As a result, many students are not eligible to graduate until they manage to achieve the minimum passing level for MUET. This is an economic liability, not only at the individual level, but also at the national level. In addition, based on the researcher's personal experience teaching EFL reading at Malaysian higher institutions, in general, the central tendency of EFL students' reading performance is often less than satisfactory, an experience that corroborates with the previously mentioned data provided by the Islamic Science University of Malaysia.

Again, from the researcher's personal experience as an EFL teacher at the Malaysian public secondary schools, instructional practice for EFL reading is often in the initiation-response-evaluation format (students read silently, teacher asks questions, students response and the teacher evaluates either the response is right or wrong). Ponniah (1993) contended that the teaching of reading in Malaysian schools often focuses on literal comprehension skills at the sentence level such as word recognition. According to Nambiar (2005), such practice implies that when teaching EFL reading students are trained to fulfill comprehension tasks without having the appropriate understanding of the entire text. Nambiar (2005) also added that it is customary in the Malaysian EFL reading classrooms that teachers' instructional focus is primarily on teaching students strategies to answer comprehension questions to prepare them for

examinations, which are comprehension-based in nature. Oftentimes, the main aims are for students to get the right answers.

The following is a typical EFL reading lesson in Malaysian classrooms as described by Nambiar (2005):

> Reading lessons are often conducted in a mechanistic manner with learners having to read a text first, underline difficult words and then use a dictionary to source the meaning of each word. Then the comprehension questions are used to identify the important ideas in the text. A very popular method employed in school is to get learners to identify main ideas in each paragraph and more often than not these main ideas are usually in the first few lines of each paragraph.
>
> (http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=radha+nambiar-gopal)

Reading tasks such as described above show lack of cognitive demand in the training of EFL reading skills at the secondary school level in contrast to the cognitive demand in reading tasks that students are expected to engage in at the tertiary level. In addition, students are often taught to break the text into simpler segments to make it easier for them to understand the information without any instruction on how they should connect the dissected information into an integrated whole (Shih, 1992). According to LeVasan (1983), EFL reading instructional practices within the Malaysian context is highly influenced by the EFL reading assessments in which 70 percent of EFL comprehension assessments comprises direct reference type which influence the EFL reading teachers to be inclined toward such a teaching approach. Again, based on the researcher's personal experience as an EFL teacher at Malaysian secondary schools for thirteen years, this is the prevalent instructional practice in the teaching of EFL reading. In fact, the researcher was trained to teach EFL reading using the same method when she attended an

intensive teacher training for EFL teaching in 1989-1990. Teaching students to merely get "the right answer" conforms to the Initiation-Response-Evaluation or IRE format, a method that has been argued to be less effective in assisting students to build understanding from texts (Beck & McKeown, 2006).

As a result of such training, students are merely able to perform short-answer questions and literal recalls, but fail to demonstrate the ability to infer and make connections among text ideas, a skill that is required in content area reading (e.g., Kanagasabai, 1996; Nambiar, 2007; Ponniah, 1993). Students' inability in EFL reading becomes a more crucial issue especially for those studying at institutions where English is the medium of instruction. Not only do students not perform well on their EFL assessments, but their overall academic performance is also affected by their EFL reading ability (e.g., Ramaiah & Nambiar, 1993; Ramaiah, 1996; Faizah, Zalizan, & Norzaini, 2002).

A study by Kaur and Thiyagarah (1999) among EFL students at a public higher institution indicated that 48.6 percent of the respondents in the English Language and Literature Studies program rated their EFL reading comprehension ability as not being very efficient when reading materials in English in general as well as literary works. Based on the data in this study, it was concluded that students' enrolling at Malaysian universities merely have developing academic readiness due to lack EFL reading comprehension ability. As contended by Kaur and Thiyagarah (1999), reading in English plays a substantial role in meeting the academic demand at higher institution level in Malaysia. Therefore, academic literacy and achievements at the university level could be directly affected by students' ability to read and comprehend printed materials in English.

In another current study, Sidek (2009) conducted a survey on EFL reading attitudes among students at a Malaysian public university in which one of its mediums of instruction is English. Among the popular students' responses are such as, "Reading in English is a daunting task for me", "Every time I tried to read in English I easily give up because I don't understand most of the words in the text", "I would be very proud if I could finish reading an English text and be able to understand what I read." The majority of the respondents admitted that being able to read and understand well in English is important and also reported that they do not have the reading comprehension skills that they need. Zaliha Mustapha, an EFL professor at the National University of Malaysia who has taught EFL reading to university students for 14 years, contended based on her experience that at the university level, "many of the so-called "fluent" readers are still incapable of reading for comprehension. The problems become more prominent when they have to read for information and without the teacher close at hand to help them" (Mustapha, 1995, p. 28). This situation indicates that Malaysian university students are not self-regulated readers, a required condition for successful academic reading activities.

As earlier mentioned, although students in Malaysia receive EFL instruction which includes reading comprehension instruction throughout elementary and secondary school, they are still facing with comprehension problems when reading in English at the university level. In line with this phenomenon, the current study attempted to find out how secondary school students in Malaysia are being prepared for the EFL reading skills that they are expected to have in order to meet academic demands at the tertiary level. Past studies of EFL reading in Malaysia especially at the tertiary level have found that majority of tertiary students at Malaysian universities are faced with difficulties in EFL reading. Unlike past studies in the Malaysian context, this study compared the EFL reading preparation at the secondary school level and the

EFL reading skills that students are expected to have at the tertiary level. Therefore, the findings of this study will provide insights into why Malaysian university students are currently lacking the required EFL skills at the tertiary level despite the longitudinal EFL reading preparation that the students receive beginning from the elementary until the end of the secondary school.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the present study was to find the overarching approaches to second language reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary curriculum as well as to determine how well this curriculum prepare students for tertiary reading. This chapter explains the research methodology, the methods of data collection and data analysis, as well as the reliability procedures that were used to answer the research questions.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

This study is considered explorative research (Gatbonton, 1999; Hedgcock, 2002; Johnson, 1999) because it was not seeking to prove a hypothesis or to implement an intervention; rather the purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between curriculum and instruction in order to offer suggestions for how the Malaysian education system prepares secondary school students for the English language literacy demands they will encounter in institutions of higher education. Past studies examining L2 curriculum used content analysis (e.g., Bachman, Davidson, & Milanovic, 1996; Lee, 2009). According to Basturkmen (1999, p. 21), "Content analysis is widely used in historical and communication research. It involves the analysis of the content of communication (documents) as the basis for inference." Therefore, content analysis can be a useful tool for examining trends and patterns in documents (Stemler, 2001). Since the

current study solely involves document analysis to make inferences, content analysis was used as the method of data analysis.

Past studies that examined EFL curriculum often used key documents such as the EFL curriculum documents, EFL policy-related documents as well as EFL assessments to gather relevant data followed by document review (e.g., Alwan, 2006; Hung, 2006; Su, 2006). Therefore, following previous EFL curriculum studies, EFL curriculum documents were also reviewed and analyzed in this study in order to obtain data related to the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum.

The documents that were reviewed were the Form Five Secondary English Language Curriculum Specifications or in this study referred to as the EFL Curriculum Specifications and the Form Five secondary English language textbook or the EFL textbook. The aspects of the EFL Secondary Curriculum that were examined were SLA theories and L2 reading process theories, types of reading tasks, types of reading passages, cognitive demand of reading tasks, learner roles, and the frequency of reading skills used to achieve the listed EFL learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum. Some of these curricular aspects have been examined in past studies on L2 reading curriculum and instruction. For instance, some L2 reading researchers studied the types of reading tasks and how they affected students' L2 reading comprehension (e.g., Liaw, 2007; Swaffar, 1985) while others examined the effects of text types on L2 reading comprehension ability (e.g., Carrell, 1985; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Song, 1998). Besides reading tasks, some past studies have also examined learner roles (e.g., Hung, 2006; Shawer, Gilmore, & Banks-Joseph, 2009). Past studies of EFL reading have not only examined the types of reading tasks given, but also the level of cognitive demand associated with those reading tasks (e.g., Alderson, 1990; Alderson & Lukmani, 1989; Lin & Chen 2006; Whalley et al., 2006).

3.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to find out the overarching second language reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum six research questions were answered:

(1) What theories of and instructional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and second language reading are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

(2) What types of reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

(3) What types and length of reading passages are used in the Malaysian Form Five English language textbook?

(4) What levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

(5) What types of learner roles are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

(6) How frequently is the reading skill mentioned explicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum?

3.3 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Malaysian public secondary and tertiary educational systems were the research contexts for the present study. Malaysian public secondary schools comprise Grades 7th to 11th or Form 1 (seventh grade) to Form 5 (eleventh grade). The Form Five EFL curriculum was selected for analysis because the Form Five is the final year in secondary school and thus it represents the continuity in education between secondary school level and the tertiary level. Therefore, students' proficiency in the English language at the Form Five level reflects the English language capacity that they have developed in secondary school EFL preparation in order to meet the academic English demands at the post-secondary level.

3.3.1 Malaysian EFL Educational Context

In the Malaysian educational system, EFL formal instruction begins in primary education and extends from Standards 1 to 6; that is from age 7 to 12. EFL instruction continues to be taught as a compulsory subject during secondary education from age 13 to 17 (Forms 1 to 5).

At the conclusion of secondary school, students have to sit for a standardized norm-referenced entrance test known as Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or the Malaysian School Certificate. At present, students' performance in the English language subject on this test is not a determinant for university enrollment. Instead, secondary school graduates who seek entry into public universities and colleges have to obtain a minimum required EFL proficiency level on an EFL test known as Malaysian University English Test (MUET), developed and managed by the Malaysian Examination Syndicate.

In Malaysia, currently, there are 20 public universities and 11 private universities (www.etawau.com/edu/IndexUniversity.htm). There are two public universities that use English and Arabic as the mediums of instruction instead of using the national language, Bahasa Malaysia. At these universities, courses other than Islamic Studies are commonly taught in the English language. However, almost all private universities in Malaysia use English as the language of instruction. Additionally, the majority of academic references available at university libraries and selected textbooks at Malaysian universities are also in the English language. It is estimated that approximately 650 thousand scientific journals are produced every year (MASTIC, 2004) worldwide for references. However, most scientific, internationally recognized, indexed journals that meet international standard mainly come from English speaking countries (Marusic & Marusic, 1999). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that content area references at the university level are primarily available in the English language. Due to the importance of the English language, EFL teaching is a required subject at every educational level in the Malaysian educational system, as demonstrated in Figure 3.1.

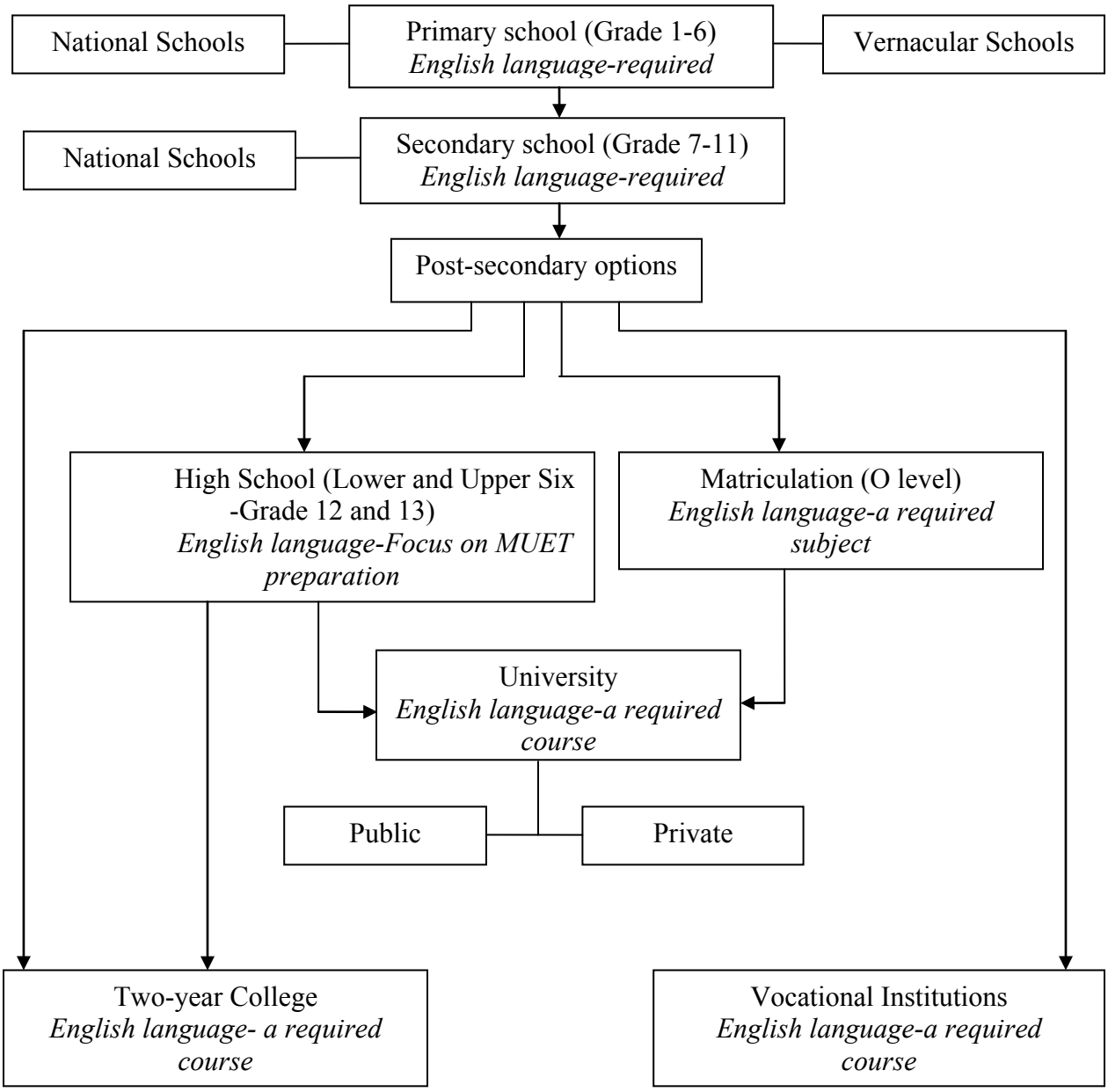

Figure 3.1 EFL Requirements in the Malaysian Educational System

3.3.2 The Malaysian Secondary EFL Educational Framework

Malaysia exercises a centralized educational system with a hierarchical organizational structure. The Ministry of Education (MOE) of Malaysia develops educational policies and oversees the education domain as a whole. The MOE is assisted by the state educational department which is assisted by the district educational department in each state. In terms of educational framework, the curriculum, syllabus and the curriculum specifications for all subjects taught in school including the English language are designed and developed by the MOE. There are two English language syllabi: The primary school English language syllabus and the secondary school English language syllabus. The MOE develops English language curriculum specifications for each grade in both primary and secondary school. The English language panel in each Malaysian public school develops the English language weekly plan for each grade in the school which English teachers use to develop their daily lesson plan.

3.3.3 The Malaysian Secondary and Form Five EFL Educational Framework

The current Malaysian English language educational framework comprises four hierarchical levels; The Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (overall curriculum), the Secondary School English Language Syllabus (Overall English language curriculum for Form One to Form Five), the Curriculum Specifications the Form Five English Language Syllabus (Detailed syllabus), and the Form Five English Language Scheme of Work (weekly instructional plan based on the Form Five Syllabus Curriculum Specifications). Figure 3.2 illustrates the structure.

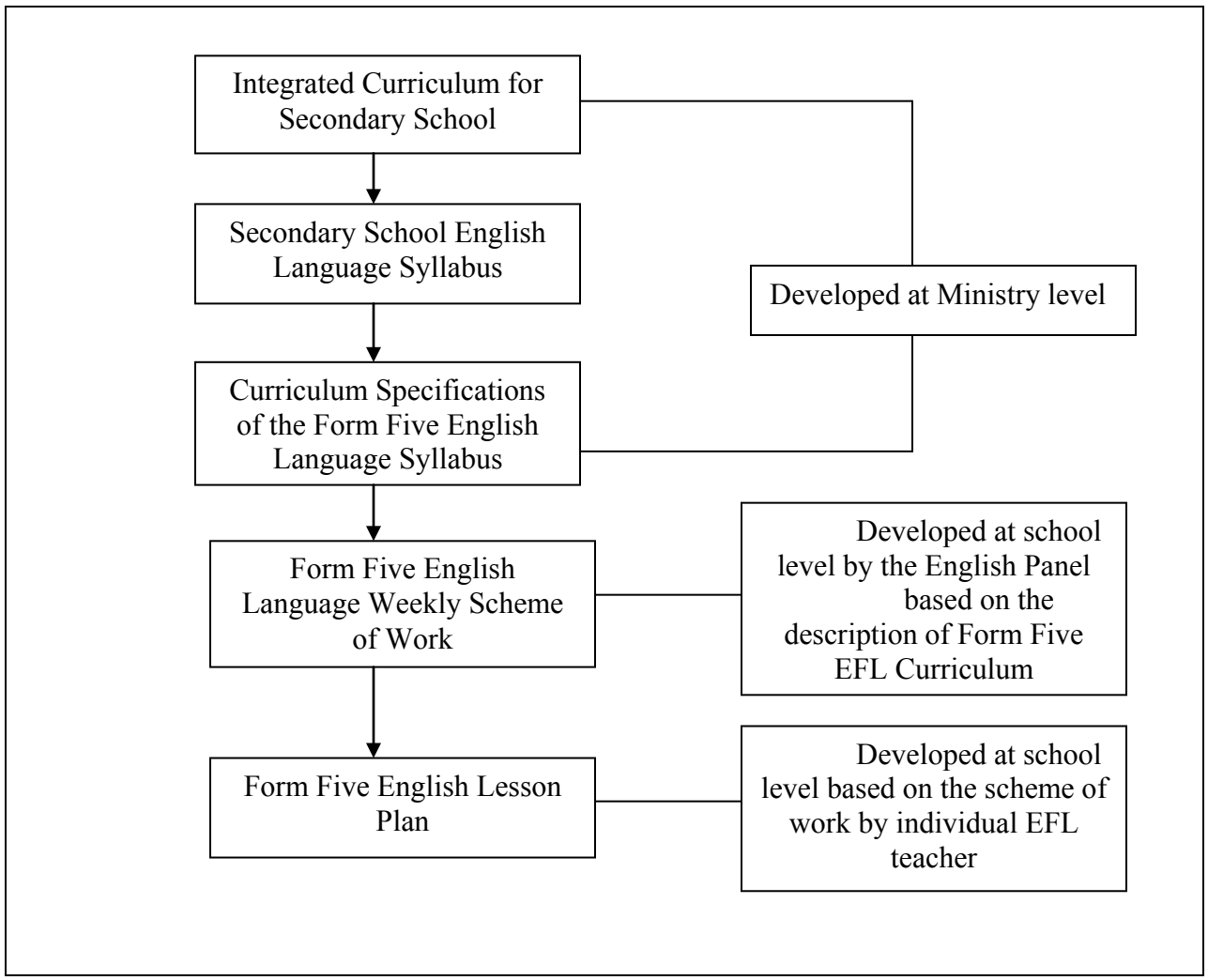

Figure 3.2 Conceptual Structure of the Malaysian Form Five English Language Curriculum

3.3.4 The Form Five English Language Curriculum Specifications

The development of the current EFL secondary syllabus and specifications are based upon the educational philosophy and the philosophy of the national curriculum. The Malaysian national philosophy of education states that:

> Education in Malaysia is an ongoing process towards further effort in developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner; so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal wellbeing as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the society and the nation at large (cited in Ismail et al., 2009, p.162).

Therefore, developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner by developing students' knowledge and skills in various areas which includes the EFL skills and knowledge is also in line with the Malaysian national philosophy of education based on Malaysian Educational Act (1966) which states that,

> ... an educational programme that includes curriculum and co-curricular activities which encompasses all the knowledge, skills norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to help develop a pupil fully with respect to the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional aspects as well as to inculcate and develop desirable moral values and to transmit knowledge.

Based on the above educational philosophy and the philosophy of the national curriculum, the Form Five English Language Specifications are designed to promote the Malaysian secondary school students' EFL skills in the aims of equipping students with the appropriate foreign language skills and knowledge. This effort is part of the aims to produce

Malaysian citizens who are competent and knowledgeable and able to acquire and transmit knowledge to others as well as to contribute to the development of the nation. In line with the national educational goals, one of the primary goals of the Form Five English Language Curriculum Specifications is to produce students who are competent in EFL skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as part of their academic preparation for higher learning.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

The theories and practices underlying a foreign language curriculum can be analyzed by examining textbooks, teaching practices, and assessments (Shohamy, 2006). Therefore, in order to answer Research Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook were examined. The EFL Curriculum Specifications document comprises three main sections; the Learning Outcomes to be achieved by the learners, the Language Content (grammar points and selected word lists) to be incorporated into lessons, and the Educational Emphases (e.g., moral values). However, since this study focuses on English language reading, only the Learning Outcomes section is relevant and thus only this section of the document was examined. For this study, the statements in the Learning Outcomes section of the document which were related to EFL reading skills were regarded as the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum and thus analyzed.

The EFL textbook was also analyzed. Textbooks are curriculum materials that represent social artifacts developed by curriculum designers which teachers use to implement the curriculum (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Salomon, 1993). In addition, studies that involve curriculum often examine curriculum materials (e.g., Remillard, 2000; Schneider, & Krajcik,

2002; Singer, Marx, Krajcik, & Chambers, 2000). The EFL textbook was selected as a sample of standardized instructional material proposed by the Textbook Division under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Based on the description on the MOE Textbook Division website the textbook is organized by topics. Only the reading-related statements in the EFL textbook were analyzed for this study.

The guidelines of the EFL textbook selection were analyzed for their explicit and implicit approach to EFL reading (http://www.moe.gov.my/bbt/konsepbt_en.php). Based on the information cited on the website of the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) textbook division, the EFL textbook for Malaysian public schools is based on the learning scope and learning outcomes stated in the EFL secondary syllabus and EFL Curriculum Specifications. The textbook was developed based on a comprehensive approach to ensure there is an integration of content, presentations, graphics, language, terminologies, the activities and exercises. Among the characteristics of the textbook are that it contains knowledge and skills as well as experiential learning tasks.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Research Question 1: What theories of and instructional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and second language reading are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

Research Question 1 was answered in two parts; instructional approaches to and theories of SLA and instructional approaches to and theories of L2 reading. Based on the reviews of the theories used in L2 instructional approaches (see Chapter 2), the first research question was analyzed as follows:

To analyze the SLA theories and instructional approaches that are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, reading-related statements in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and in the EFL textbook were inferred as one of the three prominent SLA theories and its related instructional approaches; structural/behaviorism, cognitive information processing, and socio-cognitive/socio-cultural.

The structuralism theory might be reflected in L2 reading instructional approaches such as the Grammar Translation approach (GT) which involves using reading to explain grammar rules and to learn vocabulary (Wang, 2009). The structuralism theory was inferred in statements from the selected documents such as the following:

- Listening to, repeating and knowing the difference between consonants, vowels, dipthongs, consonant clusters, homophones, homographs, and words borrowed from other languages in a dictated text;
- Using the dictionary to find the meanings of words

- When reading aloud, learners need to observe - correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, correct phrasing, pauses, stress, emphases, fluency and rhythm;
- Read an excerpt and underline all verbs in Simple Present Tense
- Read an excerpt and change all verbs into Simple Past Tense
- Read a poem and changed underlined verbs into the Past Tense form

The cognitive information-processing theory of SLA reading involves linguistic information processing, textual information processing and the synthesis of text information and prior knowledge processing (Koda, 2005), which processes only occur within a learner's cognition without the inclusion of communicative activities in the reading context. Hence, statements that were inferred as in the cognitive information-processing theory of SLA category were such as:

- Process information by skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas in a text;
- Systematically making tables to compare the information in a text;
- Process information by extracting main ideas and details in a text;
- Process information by discerning sequence of ideas in a text;
- Process information by getting the explicit and implicit meaning of text;
- Reading silently a variety of materials in print and from the internet;
- Process information by skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas in a text;
- Process information by predicting outcomes in a text

Since the socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theories of SLA overlaps in the way that both view language learning as cognitive and social in nature, the analysis of findings for these two theories will be combined to represent the theory for communicative instructional approach.

The socio-cognitive theory of SLA views language learning as not only comprising "mechanical features of language learning/teaching and acquisition from a psycholinguistic viewpoint" (Matsuoka & Evans, 2004, p. 3), but also primarily learned through the interactive network of cognition, social interaction and the environment (Atkinson, 2002). The social interaction which characterizes instructional approaches based on sociocultural and socio-cognitive theories is commonly reflected in communicative instructional approaches to L2 reading. In the data analysis, statements that were inferred as reflecting socio-cognitive theories of language learning were similar to the following:

- Get students to read and tell the view of different people who saw the incident as reported in the newspaper
- Filling in a form or writing a short note stating precisely what is required (based on information in a reading text)
- Responding to a complimentary letter expressing satisfaction and thanking the writer orally and in writing (based on information in a reading text)
- Obtain information for different purpose by reading materials in print such as reports and articles and using other electronic media such as the internet
- Making enquiries after reading the adverts column in the newspaper/yellow pages and identifying a number of similar services and products orally and in writing
- Writing reports on specific topics based on a text read

- Presenting/Making a speech based on a text read
- Listen to, read and respond to literary works by understanding and telling in one's own words the story and poem heard and read, and giving one's opinion of the text

Along the same line, the socio-cultural theory of SLA views language as a central tool for the development of thought processes or the crucial means of mediation for one's cognition. Thus, language learning is perceived as a socially mediated process, and this theory is reflected in communicative instructional approaches. Socio-cultural theories of SLA might be reflected in L2 reading instructional approaches such as Content-Based to ESL instruction, Whole Language Reading instruction, and Task-Based instruction.

Examples of statements that were inferred as reflective of socio-cultural theory are:

- Encourage student to give logical reasons based on a text read
- Reading topics of current interest and exchanging ideas
- Responding to problem page letters in the newspaper or in popular magazines by first discussing them and then writing letter to the editor
- Comparing and contrasting the information obtained (from a text) and deciding on a choice via a discussion
- Discussing values explored in the text
- Encourage student to give logical reasons based on a text read
- Discussing the theme and message of stories and poems

Based on the researcher's review on L2 reading theories and instructional approaches, there are three prominent theories of L2 reading processing: Bottom-Up; Top-Down; and

Interactive. Reading-related statements in the EFL curriculum specifications and textbook were coded for these three theories.

The Bottom-Up theory which is text-driven in nature focuses on the lower level text processing skills such as phonological processing, word recognition, and word identification (e.g., Koda, 2005; Nassaji, 2003). The Bottom-Up theory to L2 reading might be reflected in an instructional approach such as the Grammar-Translation method to L2 reading. Examples of statements that were inferred as reflective of the Bottom-Up theory of L2 reading are:

- Listening to, repeating and knowing the difference between consonants, vowels, dipthongs, consonant clusters, homophones, homographs, and words borrowed from other languages in a dictated text
- Pronouncing words clearly and correctly and asking questions and making statements with the correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm
- When reading aloud, learners need to observe:-correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, correct phrasing, pauses, stress, emphases, fluency and rhythm
- Highlighting keywords and phrases in a text
- Using the dictionary to find the meanings of words
- Taking note of chapter headings, sub-titles, keywords in a text
- Acquiring vocabulary in a text through word association
- Acquiring meaning of words by understanding word formation through the use of prefix and suffix and contextual clues

Reading is considered as a top-down process when meaning is constructed from whole to part (e.g., Bergeron, 1990). The top-down theory emphasizes higher level text processing skills

such as contextual and background knowledge sources based on the idea that readers' ability to use syntactic and semantic cues compensates their lack in graphic cues (Goodman, as cited in Nassaji, 2003, p. 262). The Top-Down theory might be reflected in L2 reading communicative instructional approaches such as the Interactive Whole Language instruction. However, the reflection of the Top-Down theory solely merely reflects part of the Whole Language instruction because as a communicative approach to L2 reading, meaningful interaction with the reading context is the primary focus of the reading tasks design. Hence, without the communicative aspects, the Whole-Language instructional approach is considered as non-interactive and thus will be coded as the Non-Interactive Whole-Language instructional approach under the Top-Down theory category. Examples of statements that were inferred as reflective of the Non-Interactive Whole-Language instructional approach under the Top-Down theory of L2 reading are:

- Relating personal experiences
- Reading silently a variety of materials in print and from the internet
- Process information by skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas in a text
- Process information by extracting main ideas and details in a text
- Process information by getting the explicit and implicit meaning of text
- Process information by predicting outcomes in a text
- Summarizing ideas in a text

Recent communicative understandings of Interactive theory of L2 reading focuses on the interaction between the reader, the text, and the others in the reading context, and is in line with

socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theories. Examples of statements that were inferred as reflective of an Interactive theory of L2 reading which incorporates communicative features are:

- Reading topics of current interest and exchanging ideas
- Giving opinions on articles read
- Responding to a complimentary letter expressing satisfaction and thanking the writer orally and in writing (based on information in a reading text)
- Identifying and discussing point of view in the text read
- Discussing values explored in the text

3.5.2 Research Question 2: What types of reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

The types of reading tasks found in EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook were analyzed because past studies in L1 and L2 reading have shown that the types of reading tasks assigned to students influence their reading abilities (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2001; Scanlon & Vellutino, 1997; Swaffar, 1985). Reading task coding used in this study was the one employed in Anderson, Bachman, Perkin, and Cohen's (1991) study which categorizes reading tasks into three categories; identifying of main ideas, identifying details (textually explicit), and drawing inferences. This reading task coding scheme was used because based on the researcher's preliminary examination of the selected documents, the majority of the reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook seem to fall into these categories. However, for reading tasks that did not fall into Anderson et al.'s (1991) coding category, new categories were created based on the nature of the reading tasks.

Reading task categories such as identifying main ideas, identifying details, and making inferences can be generally considered tasks that reflect Top-Down reading theories because these tasks focus on meaning making. However, when these types of reading tasks are designed so that meaning is constructed collaboratively among the members of reading context, such reading tasks types can be considered to be reflective of communicative-related Interactive theories. On the other hand, reading tasks in other categories such as fluency can be generally considered to reflect Bottom-Up L2 reading theories because such reading tasks involves lower level text processing skill which is not related to meaning making. Nonetheless, reading tasks developed based on Bottom-Up reading theories can be considered interactive and communicative if such tasks are designed with communicative intentions for meaning–making (e.g., Singhal, 2001). For example, a lower level text processing skill such as word identification can be categorized as interactive and communicative if the word identification task is carried out via meaningful interaction in making meaning at word level. The following are the examples of tasks in the selected documents for each of the L2 reading theory categories.

Examples of statements in the *identifying main ideas* category in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document:

- Process information by extracting main ideas
- Process information by making short notes and mapping out ideas
- Skimming for the gist of the text read
- Following the sequence of ideas
- Identifying main ideas in the text read

- Identifying cause and effect in the text read
- Identifying and discussing point of view in the text read
- Get students to read and tell the view of different people who saw the incident as reported in the newspaper
- Get students to mind map ideas in various ways based on a reading text

Examples of statements in the *identifying main ideas* category in the EFL textbook:

- Read a newspaper extracts on people's personality traits and answer open-ended questions on main ideas
- Read a newspaper extracts on people's personality traits, select relevant points
- Read a passage on unsung heroes and answer open-ended questions on main ideas
- Read a passage on unsung heroes, select relevant points and write a summary by connecting the relevant points with conjunctions
- Read a passage on youth power and answer open-ended questions on main ideas
- Read a passage and write a summary by identifying relevant points
- Read an article on the smart consumer and answer open-ended questions on main ideas of the article

Examples of statements in the *identifying details* category in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document:

- Making enquiries after reading the adverts column in the newspaper/yellow pages and identifying a number of similar services and products orally and in writing
- Process information in a reading text by skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas
- Filling in a form or writing a short note stating precisely what is required based on a reading text
- Systematically making tables to compare the information in a text
- Process information in a reading text by extracting details
- Process information by getting the explicit meaning of texts

Examples of statements in the *identifying details* category in the EFL textbook:

- Read a newspaper extracts and do a true/false exercise on supporting details
- Read a newspaper extracts and do a matching exercise on meaning of words and phrases
- Read a newspaper extracts and do multiple-choice questions on the meaning of idiomatic expressions that appear in the extracts
- Read a set of statements and determine if the statements are relevant to the figures in the extracts
- Read a story and understand its setting

Examples of statements in the *drawing inferences* category in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document:

- Giving opinions on articles read or accounts heard
- Process information by getting the implicit meaning of text
- Process information by predicting outcomes
- Process information by drawing conclusion

Examples of statements in the *making inferences* category in the EFL textbook:

- Read a newspaper extracts on people's personality traits and answer open-ended questions by making inferences
- Read a passage on unsung heroes and answer open-ended questions by making inferences
- Read a passage on youth power and answer open-ended questions by making inferences
- Read an article the smart consumer and answer on open-ended questions by making inferences

Statements in the selected documents that did not fall into the above three categories were assigned to other reading task categories. For example, the following statements were coded as in the *Reading Fluency Skill* category:

- Listening to, repeating and knowing the difference between consonants, vowels, dipthongs, consonant clusters, homophones, homographs, and words borrowed from other languages in a text

- Pronouncing words in a text clearly and correctly and asking questions and making statements with the correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm

- When reading aloud, learners need to observe correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, correct phrasing, pauses, stress, emphases, fluency and rhythm
- Read sentences aloud to practice the selected sounds

3.5.3 Research Question 3: What types and length of reading passages are used in the Malaysian Form Five EFL textbook?

Secondary students in Malaysia need to be prepared to handle reading tasks that they will face later in their educational careers (Grabe, 2001). L1 reading studies have suggested that students may benefit from reading instruction that resembles the reading demand at university level (e.g., Feathers & Smith, 1983; Nist & Kirby, 1986). For example, asking students to read expository texts might map with the type of texts they may frequently encounter in their content areas (e.g., Carrell, 1985; Pugh, Pawan & Antomarchi, 2000). In addition, exposing students to grade-level texts in reading instruction may assist students to read and comprehend grade-level texts in the content areas (e.g., Boling & Evans, 2008). Therefore, in order to see how the EFL reading instruction at the secondary level applies to tertiary academic contexts, the text types in terms of genre and grade-level that students read were analyzed in order to provide another perspective into the EFL preparation process.

In general, there are two major text types; narrative and exposition (e.g., Avaloz, Plasencia, Chavez, & Rascon, 2007; Gaddy, Bakken, & Fulk, 2008; Grabe, 2008; Koda, 2005, 2007). The common features of narrative text include characters, settings, problems or conflicts encountered by main characters, plots, and affect patterns (Gurney, Gursten, Dimino, & Carnine, 1990; Koda, 2005). Based on this definition, a passage with such characteristics is labeled as a narrative text. In contrast to the narrative genre, expository texts are often written for the purpose of knowledge sharing and thus the content is often informational (Koda, 2005). Expository texts often use text structures such as cause and effect, problem and solution or compare and contrast (e.g., Meyer & Freedle, 1984; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Taylor, 1980). Should a text in the Form Five EFL textbook reflect any of these structures, the text is labeled as an expository text.

In terms of text length, some studies have claimed that shorter or simplified passages may better facilitate L2 reading comprehension (e.g., Leow, 1997; Oh, 2001, Shook, 1997; Young, 1999). Some studies examined the role of authentic and simplified texts in which authentic texts are commonly longer than simplified ones (e.g., Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007; Tomlinson, Dat, Masuhara, & Ruby, 2001) and the focus of such studies on text length was often related to the manipulation of text linguistic features such as in the case of simplified texts. It is still inconclusive whether shorter or longer texts are best used in L2 reading comprehension instruction (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998). However, the question is how the type of passages used in reading instruction would affect students' ability to read grade-level texts in the content areas which texts are commonly long and complex in nature (e.g., Beck, McKeown, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1991). The importance of L2 readers reading L2 texts at grade-level, particularly in relation to academic performance has not yet much examined in the field of L2 reading research because more often than not, research focus is concentrated on how L2 learners

can comprehend L2 reading texts without much consideration to comprehending grade-level texts. Past studies on L2 reading which examined text length hardly considered whether the texts used in the study were grade-level texts (e.g., Crossley & McNamara, 2008; Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007; Rott, 2007). Therefore, the significance of exposing students to grade-level texts in EFL reading instruction at the secondary school level to prepare them for EFL reading in the content areas at the university level still needs further investigation.

Grade-level texts in this study were examined in terms of text length using Leslie and Caldwell's (2004; 2006) Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI 3 & 4). These inventories were used as proxies because there is no published inventory for grade-level texts in terms of length for L2 reading. Based on these inventories, the grade-level length of texts for upper secondary should be between 470-550 words. The means of length of reading comprehension passages were calculated and served as the basis to generalize whether grade-level passages are used in the EFL reading instruction for both text types. Therefore, if the means of text length of both types of passages in the EFL textbook are less than 470 words, the texts are considered as not grade-level texts for the Form Five level and vice versa.

3.5.4 Research Question 4: What levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

Past studies on foreign language learning have indicated that the level of cognitive demand of language tasks is an important factor in language mastery (e.g., Bialystok, 2002; Fotos, 2001; Lee & Sawaki, 2009; Sawaki, Kim, & Gentile, 2009). At the tertiary level, students need to have the required level of reading skills that will enable them to achieve information literacy for academic success (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 2002). Moreover, students' ability to

perform reading tasks of various levels of cognitive demands may reflect their cognitive abilities in foreign language reading comprehension (e.g., Alderson & Lukmani, 1989; Bernhardt, 1983; Davey, 1988). Therefore, the levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specification document and the EFL textbook are analyzed to determine the types of reading tasks secondary school students are prepared for. Past studies (e.g., Alderson, 1990; Whalley et al., 2006) also have examined the level of cognitive demand reflected in reading comprehension questions because they identify students' "internal mental processes" (Chamot, 1983, p. 463) related to the tasks that they are expected to perform.

In determining the cognitive levels of the reading tasks, Marzano et al.'s Core Thinking Skills taxonomy (1988) and Marzano's Cognitive System taxonomy (2000) were combined as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Marzano et al.'s (1988) and Marzano's (2000) Core Thinking Skills Taxonomy

Cognitive Skill	Explanation	Example	Level of Cognitive Demand
a. Focusing	Attending to a specific information and disregarding others	Read sentences aloud to practice the selected sounds; Read aloud and observe pronunciation	Low
b.Recalling/ Remembering	Retrieving information from long-term memory	Read a text and recall what the text is about; Listen to a text and recall important details	Low
c. Information gathering	Obtaining information through one or more senses or seeking information through inquiry	Read topics of current interests; Obtain information from various reading materials;	Low
d. Organizing	i. Comparing: Comparing information regarding similarities and differences ii. Classifying: Grouping and labeling entities on the basis of their attributes iii. Ordering: Sequencing information according to	i. Comparing (e.g., Read a dialogue and compare and contrast two products) ii. Classifying (e.g., Read an extract and do matching exercise) iii. Ordering (e.g., Read an passage and do sequencing exercise) iv. Representing (e.g., Read a passage	High

	specified criteria iv. Representing: Changing the form but not the substance of the information	and complete a diagram)	
e. Applying	Using relevant prior knowledge within a new situation	Encourage learner to tell about certain characters or events in the story that reminds them of a certain character and events in real life	High
f. Analyzing	i. Identifying details: Determining characteristics or parts of something ii. Identifying relationships and patterns: Recognizing ways in which elements are related iii. Identifying main idea: Identifying the central element such as hierarchy of key ideas or line of reasoning iv. Identifying errors: Recognizing logical fallacies and correcting them where possible	i. Identifying details (e.g., Read a passage and answer question on details in the passage) ii. Identifying relationships and patterns (e.g., Read a passage and identify cause and effects) iii. Identifying main idea (e.g., Read a passage and identify main ideas) iv. Identifying errors (e.g., Read a passage and do true or false exercise)	High
g. Synthesizing	Identification of the most important components and deletion of insignificant information	Read a story and draw conclusion	High
h. Generating	i. Inferring: Going beyond text information to claim what can be reasonably true ii. Predicting: Anticipating next events, or the outcome of a situation iii. Elaborating: Explaining by adding relevant details	i. Inferring (e.g., Read a newspaper extracts and make inferences) ii. Predicting (e.g., Predicting outcomes from a text read) iii. Elaborating (e.g., Read a train schedule and write an expanded description of the schedule)	High
i. Integrating	i. Summarizing: Combining information efficiently into cohesive statement ii. Restructuring: Changing existing knowledge structures to incorporate new information	i. Summarizing (e.g., Read a newspaper extract and select relevant point to do a summary) ii. Restructuring (e.g., Read a sample essay as a model and write an essay of a similar topic)	High
j. Evaluating	i. Establishing criteria: Setting standards for making judgments ii. Verifying: Confirming the accuracy of claims	i. Establishing criteria (e.g., Discuss values explored in the reading text) ii. Verifying (e.g., Give opinion of a story read and provide reasons)	High

The combination of these taxonomies were used instead of Bloom's Taxonomy because the taxonomies incorporate a wider range of thinking skills and were also developed to provide more research-based theory to assist teachers to improve students' thinking (Marzano, 2000). One of the main goals of the EFL Secondary Curriculum is to prepare students for higher education. Hence, the purpose of EFL secondary reading preparation should be to enable students to acquire information literacy in order to ensure their success in content areas. This means that students need to be equipped with not only the lower cognitive skills such as retrieving knowledge and comprehension, but also higher order cognitive skills such as the ability to analyze and utilize information learned. By analyzing the cognitive demands of the reading tasks at the secondary school level, insights could be acquired regarding whether the level of EFL reading mastery in terms of information processing skills which secondary students are prepared for are the cognitive skills that they are expected to have at the tertiary level.

If the cognitive demands of the reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum are primarily at the lower level of the selected taxonomy such as *focusing, recalling* and *information gathering,* students will likely not be prepared for reading tasks at the tertiary level.

Table 3.2 presents examples of how the cognitive demand of reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum are coded.

Table 3.2 Examples of the Analysis of Levels of Cognitive Demand for EFL Reading Tasks in the EFL Secondary Reading Curriculum

READING-RELATED STATEMENTS IN THE FORM FIVE EFL CURRICULUM SPECIFICATIONS	MARZANO'S TAXONOMY
1. Relating personal experiences	Applying
2. Reading topics of current interest and exchanging ideas	Information gathering
3. Giving opinions on articles read or accounts heard	Evaluating
4. Comparing and contrasting the information obtained and deciding on a choice via a discussion	Organizing
5. Making inferences from a reading passage	Generating
6. Read a newspaper extracts and answer open-ended questions on main ideas.	Analyzing
7. Read sentences aloud to practice the selected sounds.	Focusing
8. Read a newspaper extracts and select relevant points to do a summary.	Integrating
9. Read extract and discuss related schemata in group	Applying
10. Drawing conclusions based on a text read	Synthesizing
11. Obtain information for different purpose by reading materials in print such as reports and articles and using other electronic media such as the internet	Information gathering
12. Get students to brainstorm on the types of questions they will ask after reading a text	Focusing

3.5.5 Research Question 5: What types of learner roles are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum?

Learner roles reflect the instructional approach that the curriculum advocates. Richards and Rodgers (2001) contended that it is essential to analyze the roles of learners because "the instructional system will be influenced by how learners are regarded" (p. 27). Based on Richards and Rodgers's (2001) model, learner roles were examined in terms of patterns of learner groupings. The current study does not examine learner roles in terms of learning influence agents and learners as problem solvers, as Richards and Rodgers did because the data for these variables

could only be gathered through classroom observation and thus were beyond the scope of this study.

Upon preliminary analysis of the selected documents, the researcher found that there appeared to be three types of learner groupings mentioned in the curricular materials: Individual, pair, or group. Reading tasks that are designed to be carried out in pairs or groups reflect communicative instructional approaches to L2 reading because information processing of text occurs via meaningful collaborative effort to construct meaning. On the contrary, individual reading tasks reflect the audio-lingual approach because such tasks are limited to information processing within individual learner's cognition without the inclusion of the reading context. Therefore, patterns of learner grouping in this study were analyzed by categorizing the reading tasks into these three categories. Since reading tasks involving pair or group work are both considered to be communicative in nature, these two categories were combined in the data analysis.

Examples of reading tasks categorized as individual grouping were:

- Read a passage and write a summary
- Read a text and summarize ideas in the text
- Read a passage and answer open-ended questions
- Read a passage and answer multiple-choice questions on main ideas and details

Examples of reading tasks categorized as pair/group were:

- Read a passage and discuss point of view in the passage
- Read topics of current interest and exchange ideas

- Read a passage and discuss in a group a given statement related to the passage
- Read a newsletter and discuss the comments in the letter

3.5.6 Research Question 6: How frequently is the reading skill mentioned explicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum?

The frequency of reading mentioned explicitly as the means to achieve the listed learning outcomes can provide evidence about the emphasis on reading in the EFL Secondary Curriculum. In order to analyze the extent to which EFL reading is used as the means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, the language skill analysis process in Richards and Rodgers' (2001) model was used. In order to find out the degree of emphasis on EFL reading in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, two analyses were conducted. The first analysis was the analysis of how frequent each EFL language skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) appears in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook. The second analysis involved the rating of statements in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook which were considered EFL reading tasks as either being explicit or implicit tasks used to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum. Table 3.3 shows examples of the EFL skills analysis while Table 3.4 presents examples of how reading skills were coded as explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the EFL secondary reading curriculum.

Table 3.3 Examples of EFL Skills Analysis in the EFL Secondary Curriculum

EFL Tasks	EFL Skills
Introducing oneself to a friendly stranger and initiating a conversation	Speaking
Talking about self, family and friends, interest, part events, feelings, personal experiences and understanding when others talk about themselves	Speaking
In pairs, identify and discuss each other's personality traits	Speaking
Listening to, repeating and knowing the difference between consonants, vowels, dipthongs, consonant clusters, homophones, homographs, and words borrowed from other languages	Listening
Listen to a conversation among five friends who have made a choice in a personality test and complete the diagram.	Listening
Listen carefully to Eric's account of Evelyn's illness and fill in the blanks with information about her.	Listening
Reading topics of current interest and exchanging ideas	Reading
Read the journal entries below and answer questions that follows	Reading
Reading silently a variety of materials in print and from the internet	Reading
Responding to questions and comments in writing	Writing
i. Writing reports on specific topics	Writing
v. Write your speech using the information provided and the sample speech to guide you	Writing

Table 3.4 Examples of Emphasis on Reading Analysis

EFL Reading Tasks	Emphasis
Relating personal experiences	I
Obtain information for different purpose by listening to spoken texts such as talks, speeches and viewing television documentaries and multimedia	I
Listen to, read and respond to literary works by understanding and telling in one's own words the story and poem heard and read, and giving one's opinion of the text	E
Listening to and understanding a variety of texts	I
Reciting poems with feeling and expression and with correct pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm	E

KEY E – Explicitly mentioned I – Implicitly mentioned

3.6 RELIABILITY ISSUES

Since this study solely involved document analyses, it was imperative that reliability procedures be conducted. According to Weber (1990), “to make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way" (p. 12). In this study, reading tasks refer to any statements in the Form Five English Language Curriculum Specifications document and the Form Five EFL textbook that can be considered as being related to EFL reading skills. Reliability procedures for coding the tasks related to reading skills were conducted by asking an EFL expert who is an EFL Form Five secondary teacher in a Malaysian secondary public school.

To indicate agreement or disagreement on whether the elicited statements selected by the researcher were reading tasks. The same reliability procedure was conducted on the elicited reading tasks to determine whether those tasks are mentioned explicitly or implicitly as a means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum. Any disagreement on items tested for reliability was resolved via discussion. For the reliability of tasks inferred as reading tasks, out of the 97 statements that the primary researcher inferred as reading tasks from statements elicited from the EFL Curriculum Specifications document, the second rater considered 85 statements as reading tasks, reflecting a 0.876 inter-rater reliability index. Out of 203 statements that the primary researcher inferred as reading tasks in the EFL textbook, the second rater perceived 191 statements as reading tasks, reflecting an inter-rater reliability index of 0.941. The second reliability procedure was to rate whether the selected reading tasks were mentioned explicitly or implicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum. The reliability of explicitly mentioned reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document resulted in 0.91 inter-rater reliability while the rater and the researcher’s ratings of the implicitly mentioned reading

tasks were in perfect agreement of 1.0 reliability index. For the EFL textbook, the reliabilities for explicitly mentioned and implicitly mentioned reading tasks were both 0.98.

3.7 INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The findings related to the research questions concerning theories of SLA, L2 reading theory, and learner roles were analyzed to infer the overarching L2 reading approach in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum. Because the EFL Secondary Curriculum identifies itself as a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum, the researcher expected that the SLA theory and L2 reading theories found in the curricular materials would reflect this approach.

Analysis of the types of reading tasks, cognitive demand of reading tasks, and passage types in the selected documents were used to compare the reading tasks and texts in the EFL Secondary Curriculum with existing literature on the types of reading tasks and passages that students are expected to engage with at the tertiary level. If Malaysian secondary school students are to be prepared for tertiary reading, the reading tasks and texts at the secondary level should align with those at the tertiary level.

In terms of the frequency of reading skills presented as the primary skill or only as incidental skill to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, the findings were analyzed to determine the extent to which the EFL Secondary Curriculum places importance on training secondary school students with EFL reading skills, the skills that they need at the tertiary level especially to meet academic demands.

4.0 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the data derived from two documents analyses; the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL Textbook, referred to in this study as the EFL textbook. Since research questions six provides the general picture of the emphasis on EFL reading in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum, the findings for this research question will be presented first as the launching point for other analyses. In analyzing the data for each research question, the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook were analyzed separately. This approach was utilized in order to see the extent to which the instructional approach in the EFL textbook and the EFL Curriculum Specifications document were in alignment. Then, the data from the two documents were combined in the form of an overall percentage in order to generalize the instructional approach to EFL reading in the EFL secondary reading curriculum as a whole.

4.1 CURRICULUM EMPHASIS ON EFL READING

This section presents the findings for research question six: How frequently is the reading skill mentioned explicitly as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum? In order to find out the degree of emphasis on EFL reading in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, two analyses were conducted. The first analysis was the analysis of

the frequency of each EFL language skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook. The second analysis involved coding the EFL reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook as either explicit or implicit tasks. For example, if students were asked to read a passage to do a writing activity, this reading task was considered an implicit reading task. On the other hand, if students are required to read a passage and identify main ideas, this reading task was considered an explicit reading task. The frequency of explicit and implicit reading tasks in the EFL Secondary Curriculum was used to infer the extent to which EFL reading is being emphasized in the curriculum.

Table 4.1 EFL Skills Analysis in the EFL Secondary Curriculum

Document/Language Skill	Listening (%)	Speaking (%)	Reading (%)	Writing (%)
Language Tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications	19.0	28.0	37.0	16.0
Language Tasks in the EFL Textbook	11.4	19.2	54.6	14.8
Overall Percentage	14.6	22.8	47.4	15.2

KEY: %= Percentage of Language Tasks

Table 4.1 shows that in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document, reading (37%) and speaking (28%) seem to be the two EFL skills that are most frequently used as a means to achieve the listed learning outcomes. The use of reading to achieve the listed learning outcomes is even more explicitly reflected in the EFL textbook (54.6%). Combining the data in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook, in general, reading is the EFL skill

most frequently used to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum, at 47.4% of the total. This finding suggests that the EFL Secondary Curriculum considers reading the most important EFL skill and appropriately emphasizes it as an English language skill necessary for the kind of English language tasks students will be asked to complete at the university level.

Table 4.2 Analysis of Reading Mentioned as Explicit/Implicit Skills in the EFL Secondary Reading Curriculum

Documents / Emphasis	Explicit (%)	Implicit (%)
Reading Tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications	80.0	20.0
Reading Tasks in the in EFL Textbook	77.0	23.0
Overall Percentage	77.9	22.1

KEY: %= Percentage of Implicit and Explicit reading tasks

Table 4.2 shows that in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document, whenever reading tasks are involved, 80% of the language activities use reading as the primary tasks or the main skill focus of EFL instruction to achieve the listed learning outcomes. In the EFL textbook, 77% of EFL language activities treated reading as an explicit language skill in EFL instruction. To generalize, the EFL Secondary Curriculum emphasizes reading as an explicit language skill (77.9%) rather than as an implicit language skill (22.1%) in EFL instruction to achieve learning outcomes stipulated in the EFL Curriculum Specifications. Considering that reading in EFL is an important part of language proficiency that affects academic literacy and success (e.g., Levine, Ferenz, & Revez, 2000), such explicit emphasis on EFL reading in the EFL secondary reading

curriculum also conforms to the EFL Secondary Curriculum objective to equip students with language needs in order for them to further studies at the post-secondary level.

4.2 THEORIES OF AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA) AND SECOND LANGUAGE READING

This section presents the findings of the first research question: What theories of and instructional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA) and second language reading are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum? In analyzing the theories and instructional approaches of SLA reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, elicited reading tasks from the EFL Secondary Curriculum and the EFL textbook were assigned into four SLA theories and their corresponding instructional approaches; structuralism (Grammar Translation Method), cognitive information processing, socio-cognitive (Communicative Instructional Approach such as Content-Based Instruction/Task-Based Instruction), and socio-cultural (Communicative Instructional Approach such as Content-Based Instruction/Task-Based Instruction). However, since socio-cognitive and socio-cultural overlap in their theoretical underpinnings regarding the role of interactive learning, the findings from these two theories were combined as supporting the communicative category of SLA theories.

Table 4.3 Analysis of Second Language Acquisition Theory and Instructional Approach

Documents / SLA Theories & Related Instructional Approaches	Structuralism (%) (Grammar Translation Method)	Cognitive Information Processing Theory (%)	Socio-Cognitive Theory (%) (Communicative Instructional Approach --- Content-Based Instruction / Task-Based Instruction)	Socio-Cultural Theory (%) (Communicative Instructional Approach --- Content-Based Instruction / Task-Based Instruction)
Reading Tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications	4.7	64.7	15.3	15.3
Reading Tasks in the EFL Textbook	16.2	77.0	1.6	5.2
Overall Percentage	12.7	75.7	5.8	8.3

Key: % = Percentage of theories of SLA and corresponding instructional approaches

Table 4.3 shows that approximately 65% and 77% of the reading tasks proposed in the EFL Curriculum Specifications and in the EFL textbook respectively are highly influenced by cognitive information processing theory. In contrast, if we combine the findings for reading-related statements based on Socio-cultural and Socio-cognitive theories, the total percentage of reading-related statements reflecting these theories and communicative instructional approaches is about 31% for the EFL Curriculum Specifications and approximately 8% for the EFL textbook. The overall representation of communicative approaches to language learning in the EFL secondary reading curriculum was merely 14.1%. Although there is a trace of structuralism and Grammar Translation Method in the curriculum, as a whole, they only account for 12.7% of statements related to reading.

Given that 75.7% of reading-related statements in the curriculum reflect a cognitive information processing theory of SLA, a model in which students are mainly asked to work

individually and take on roles as information processors, it seems that the EFL secondary reading curriculum was primarily developed based on this theory. Therefore, the claim that the EFL Secondary Curriculum is a communicative curriculum does not seem to be in tangent with the theories and instructional approaches reflected in the statements about reading in the EFL Curriculum Specifications and the EFL textbook. This calls into question the extent to which the communicative instructional approach was considered by the EFL curriculum development panel when developing EFL secondary reading curriculum. This finding will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

The L2 reading theories employed in the curriculum design were also analyzed by examining reading tasks that focused on lower level text processing, such as phonological processing, word recognition, and word identification (e.g., Koda, 2005; Nassaji, 2003), coded as reflecting Bottom-Up theories and an instructional approach such as the Grammar Translation Method. For example, reading task such as *when reading aloud, learners need to observe:- correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, correct phrasing, pauses, stress, emphases, fluency and rhythm* were coded as reflecting a bottom-up theory. Reading tasks that focused on higher level text processing at the semantic level, such as contextual and background knowledge sources were coded as reflecting Top-Down theories and an instructional approach such as the Non-Interactive Whole Language instruction. For example, reading task such as *read silently a variety of materials in print and from the internet* was coded as reflecting the Top-Down L2 reading theory and Non-Interactive Whole Language instruction because reading task is done individually without interaction with others in the reading context. The interaction of three processes; reader-driven, text-driven, and reading context-driven or interaction with others was coded as reflecting the Interactive theories of L2 reading and instructional approaches such as

Content-Based Instruction and Task-Based Instruction (e.g., Bernhardt, 1991; Grabe, 1991; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991; Lee, 1997; Fender, 2001; Nassaji, 2002; Seng, 2007; Zhang, 2008). For example, reading task such as *reading topics of current interest and exchanging ideas* was coded as in the Interactive theory category.

Table 4.4 Analysis of Second Language Reading Theories and Instructional Approaches

Documents / L2 Reading Theories and Related Instructional Approaches	Bottom-up (%) (Grammar Translation Method)	Top-down (%) (Non-Interactive Whole Language Instruction)	Interactive (%) (Content-Based Instruction/ Task-Based Instruction)
Reading Tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications	15.3	60.0	24.7
Reading Tasks in the EFL Textbook	25.1	65.4	9.4
Overall Percentage	22.1	63.8	14.1

Key: % = Percentage of L2 reading theories and related instructional approaches

Table 4.4 shows that the Top-Down theory to reading instruction is the most prominent L2 reading theory in both the EFL Curriculum Specifications document (60%) and the EFL textbook (65.4%). This L2 reading theory is in line with instructional approaches such as Whole Language instructional approaches (e.g., Goodman, Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987). However, the use of Top-Down theories in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum primarily involved individual tasks such as students' reading texts and finding main ideas via the use of schemata, but without any interaction with others in the context. In order to make a distinction between reading instruction based in top-down theories of L2 reading and interactive theories of reading, reading instruction reflecting Top-Down theories was considered Non-Interactive Whole Language instruction.

In the EFL Curriculum Specifications, the Interactive theory of EFL reading instruction is most frequently implied in reading-related statements (24.7%) after Top-Down theories. However, in the EFL textbook, the Interactive theory is least reflected (9.4%). This finding suggests misalignment between the prominent L2 reading theories in the EFL textbook and in the EFL Curriculum Specifications. Table 4.4 exhibits that as a whole, the Interactive theory and the corresponding instructional approaches of EFL reading instruction are least reflected in the entire EFL secondary reading curriculum (14.1%). In fact, as a whole, Bottom-Up theories and Grammar Translation Method are more strongly evidenced (22%) than the Interactive theories and communicative instructional approaches (14%) in the EFL secondary reading curriculum.

In general, the findings on L2 reading theories indicate that the Top-Down theory of L2 reading and Non-Interactive Whole Language instruction are the most prominent approach reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. The infrequency of Interactive theories and communicative instructional approaches and the prevalent reflection of Top-Down theories and Non-Interactive Whole Language instructional approaches in the EFL secondary reading curriculum suggests that the curriculum was not primarily developed based on CLT grounding. This inference is further supported by the findings on SLA theories and related instructional approaches which suggest that the majority of reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum frequently reflect cognitive information processing theories instead of reflecting the socio-cognitive and the socio-cultural theories and related communicative instructional approaches. In summary, the findings on SLA theories and L2 reading theories and the corresponding instructional approaches are in contrast to the communicative label of the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum.

4.3 TYPES OF READING TASKS

This section presents the findings of the second research question: What types of reading tasks are reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum? To answer this research question, reading tasks elicited from the selected documents were assigned into three categories: Identifying details, identifying main ideas, and making inferences. Reading tasks apart from these three categories were grouped under *Others* category. The data obtained from documents analyses on types of reading tasks are presented in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Table 4.5 Analysis of Types of Reading Tasks

Documents / Types of Reading Tasks	Details (%)	Main Ideas (%)	Inference (%)	*Others (%)
EFL Curriculum Specifications	22.4	35.3	23.5	18.8
EFL Textbook	24.1	22.0	22.0	31.9
Overall Percentage	23.6	26.1	22.5	27.9

*Others-Refer to Table 4.6 Key: % = Percentage of types of reading tasks

For clarity, Table 4.6 presents the details of the analysis for *Other Types of Reading Tasks*.

Table 4.6 Analysis of Other Types of Reading Tasks

Documents / Other Types of Reading Tasks	Vocabulary (%)	Grammar (%)	Writing (%)	Schemata (%)	Fluency (%)	Total (%)
EFL Curriculum Specifications	4.7	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	8.8
EFL Textbook	8.4	11.0	6.3	3.1	3.1	1.9
Overall Percentage	6.9	8.7	5.4	3.3	3.3	7.9

Key: % = Percentage of other types of reading tasks

As shown in Table 4.5, in the EFL Curriculum Specifications, locating main ideas carries the highest weight of about 35% followed by making inference (23.5%) and identifying details (22.4%) while other reading tasks combined resulted in about 19% of the reading tasks in the documents. This evidence suggests that the EFL secondary reading curriculum at its design level sets a priority for reading tasks such as identifying main ideas, making inference, and identifying details to be the most important reading tasks which should be emphasized in EFL secondary reading instruction. This evidence is also congruent with the high percentage of reading tasks in the curriculum that draw from Top Down theories of L2 reading. These reading tasks require high level cognitive demands involving the ability to analyze text information (e.g., Marzano, et al., 1988).

University level content area texts which are often highly condensed with information require students to have information literacy, part of which is the ability to analyze such texts (e.g., Rockman, 2004). Therefore, particularly at the university level, when reading in the content areas, students are expected to be able to analyze reading texts by identifying details, identifying main ideas and making inferences for implied text information. The findings on reading tasks in this study suggest that the emphasis on the primary reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document seems to be designed to prepare secondary students for the type of required reading tasks that they are expected to have when reading in the EFL at the university level.

It was expected that the same pattern of reading task emphasis would emerge in the EFL textbook because the MOE Textbook Division requires that the EFL textbook conform to the EFL Curriculum Specifications (http://www.moe.gov.my/bbt/bukuteks_rekabentuk_en.php). In line with the findings of types of reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document,

identifying details, identifying main ideas, and making inferences are also the primary types of reading task that are promoted in the EFL textbook. The use of reading in *Other Reading Tasks* category indicates that reading skill is also used as a vehicle for learning areas such as vocabulary, writing, and grammar. In addition, the EFL secondary reading curriculum also addresses other reading skills such as fluency and schemata use – skills that are also deemed important for L2 reading comprehension (e.g., Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Wilson & Anderson, 1986--schemata; Cunningham, Stanovich, & Wilson, 1990; Gough & Tunmer, 1986--fluency). These findings suggest that the EFL secondary reading curriculum addresses primary and secondary reading skills that students need in order to comprehend difficult texts. As such, in terms of types of reading tasks, the EFL secondary reading curriculum seems to be designed to prepare students for EFL reading at higher education level.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF TYPES AND LENGTH OF READING PASSAGES

This section presents the findings of the third research question: What types and length of reading passages are used in the Form Five EFL English language textbook? To answer this research question, only the EFL textbook was analyzed because the EFL Curriculum Specifications document neither provides reading passages nor specifies what passages that should be used in the EFL textbook. Reading passages in the textbook were categorized as either narrative or expository. Reading passages that are not for the purpose of reading comprehension such as reading passages for grammar, vocabulary and writing practices were not included in the analysis of EFL reading passages in this study. The length of the selected passages was also analyzed by calculating the number of words in each passage.

Table 4.7 Analysis of Types and Length of Reading Passages in the EFL Textbook

CHAPTER	NARRATIVE		CHAPTER	EXPOSITORY	
	TITLE	LENGTH (words)		TITLE	LENGTH (words)
1	Reach for the Stars	363	3	Rakan Muda to the Rescue	418
2	Infantry Officer, War Hero	678	4	The Armchair Shopper	419
5	Unhealthy Fish and Vegetables	336	5	Harmful Effects of Acid Rain	359
7	Battle for Freedom	749	6	Smoke Screen	630
7	Sara's Past Experience	183	6	Passive Smoking	350
7	The Pearl-excerpt 1	189	8	Smart Cars, Smart Roads	598
7	The Return-excerpt 1	182	8	New Sources of Energy	551
7	Jungle Hope-excerpt 1	165	10	Clearing of Forest	589
9	Partnership on Safe Driving	576	11	Waste Disposal	591
9	Dinesh Menon's Accident	253	11	The Proper Disposal of Clinical Waste	760
10	The Pearl-excerpt 2	186	12	What is a Robot	559
10	The Return-excerpt 2	129	13	Paradise Lost	652
10	Jungle of Hope-excerpt 2	138	15	Job Interview	549
12	A novel excerpt	636			
12	The Necklace-excerpt 1	89			
12	Mr Robbie's Encounters	79			
13	Looking for a Rain God –excerpt	106			
14	Rude Behavior	574			
14	Incidents at the Enchanted Park	409			
14	David Copperfield-extract	54			
15	The Choice is Mine	781			
15	The Sound Machine	170			
15	The Man Eater of Maguldi-excerpt	147			
	23 Narrative Passages			**13 Expository Passages**	
	63.9%			**36.1%**	
	Mean of passages length = 312 words			**Mean of passages length = 540 words**	

In terms of types of passage in the EFL textbook, Table 4.7 shows that EFL reading instruction at the Form Five level exposed students to both narrative and expository genres. There were altogether 36 passages for reading comprehension in the EFL textbook. Twenty three of the passages were narrative passages (63.9%) and 13 expository passages (36.1%). This finding indicates that the EFL secondary reading curriculum exposes students significantly more to the narrative type of passages than to the expository passages. In relation to reading in EFL at the university level, such finding seems to be in contrast to the aim of preparing students to read texts in content areas which are primarily expository texts (e.g., Pugh, Pawan & Antomarchi, 2000). Past studies have shown that narrative and expository texts require different cognitive processing and cognitive demands (e.g., Baretta, Tomitch, McNair, Lim, & Waldie, 2009; Horiba, 2000; Trabasso & Magliano, 1996). As such, if EFL instruction at the secondary level focuses on training students more on reading narrative texts than reading expository texts, students might be faced with difficulty in processing expository texts, which texts they encounter the most at the university level. Therefore, to prepare students for reading in EFL at the university level, reading instruction that exposes students highly to expository texts may assist them to efficiently process such texts in the content areas. This finding will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

In terms of length, the mean of passage length for the narrative type was approximately 312 words while the mean length for the expository passages was about 540 words. The narrative passages used in the textbook are primarily much shorter than the expository passages instead of in approximately equal length. The Textbook Division of the MOE stated in the textbook specifications section (http://www.moe.gov.my/bbt/bukuteks_konsep_en.php) that the content of the textbook should be at the target students' grade level. Since the Form Five is equivalent to

11th Grade in the American high school, the mean length of the expository passages conform to grade level, but not the length of narrative passages (e.g., Leslie & Caldwell, 2004; 2006). The EFL Curriculum Specifications indicates developmental instruction in which language activities are divided into different levels from elementary to a more sophisticated level (see an example in Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 A Sample of Developmental Stages in the EFL Curriculum Specifications Design

	Curriculum Specifications for English for the Form 5	
LEARNING OUTCOMES	**SPECIFICATIONS**	**EXAMPLES / ACTIVITIES / NOTES**
2.2 Process information by	**B. Processing texts read by:**	
a. skimming and scanning for specific information and ideas;	**Level 1** i. Stating the type of text being read. ii. Skimming for the gist of the text.	Provide students with the title of the passage and keywords
b. extracting main ideas and details;	**Level 2** iii. Identifying main ideas in the text read. iv. Listing important details	completing information gaps; detecting errors; sequencing; filling in details, etc.
c. discerning sequence of ideas;	**Level 3** iv. Predicting outcomes with reason. v. Identifying cause and effect.	Encourage students to give logical reasons.

If instruction is presented developmentally from a lower level to a higher level, the length of reading passages in the textbook should be in the graded pattern from shorter to longer passages. However, the length of passages in the textbook does not follow such pattern; the bar graph in Figure 4.1 shows the irregular pattern of reading passage length in the textbook.

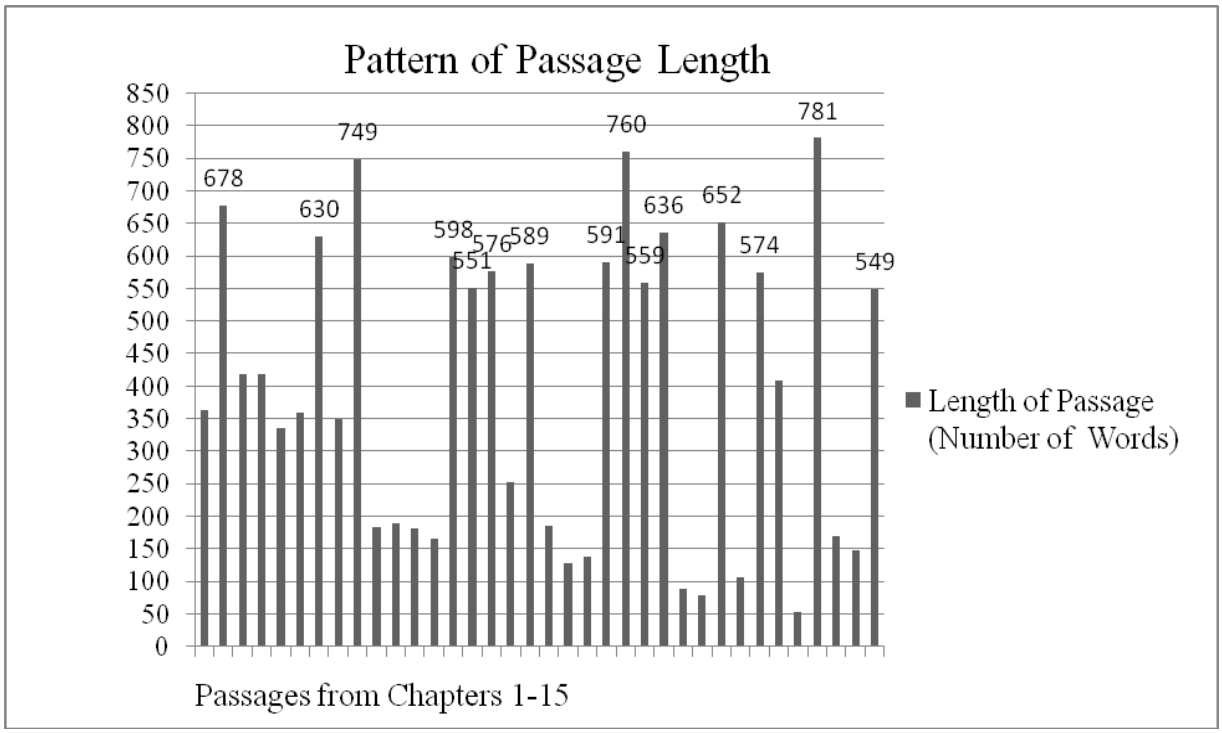

Figure 4.1 Pattern of Reading Passage Length in the EFL Textbook

Considering the high irregularity of passage length in the selected EFL textbook, the importance of grade-level passage length seems not to have been given appropriate attention in the textbook planning and development. At the Form Five level students should be trained to read and comprehend passages in the English language that is somewhat equivalent to the corresponding grade level for English as first language readers of which the range of words for upper secondary should be between 470-550 words (Leslie & Caldwell, 2004; 2006) in order for them to be able to read at grade-level when enrolling in tertiary education. However, there are only about 15 passages (41.7%) that meet the grade level word range while the other 21 passages (58.3%) are far below grade level. At the university level, students have to read materials in the EFL in their content areas in a similar way as native speakers do in order for them to be

academically successful. Therefore, such an approach to EFL reading instruction in terms of the appropriateness of teaching materials selection may not prepare students with the EFL reading skills that they need at the tertiary level.

With regards to the vocabulary presented in the reading passages, Table 4.5 also exhibits that vocabulary learning is the next prominent language task attached to EFL reading tasks (6.9%). In each chapter in the EFL textbook, vocabulary learning is addressed as a component of reading comprehension in the form of finding the meanings of words in context. Because the majority of the passages are in the narrative genre, it seems that vocabulary related to narrative text genre is more emphasized than vocabulary that is related to the expository genre. Considering that students primarily have to read expository texts at the university level, they might be faced with difficulty understanding expository texts due to lack emphasis and exposure to vocabulary that are used in content area texts which are primarily expository texts (e.g., Pugh, Pawan & Antomarchi, 2000).

4.5 COGNITIVE LEVEL OF READING TASK

This section presents the findings for research question four: What levels of cognitive demand of the reading tasks are reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum? To answer this research question, elicited reading tasks in the selected documents were coded for ten categories of cognitive demand categories proposed by Marzano et al. (1988) and Marzano (2000).

Table 4.9 Analysis of Cognitive Demands of Reading Tasks

	Low Cognitive Demand			**High Cognitive Demand**						
Documents / Cognitive Demand	FOCUSING (%)	RECALLING (%)	INFORMATION GATHERING (%)	ORGANIZING (%)	APPLYING (%)	ANALYZING (%)	SYHTHESIZING (%)	GENERATING (%)	INTEGRATING (%)	EVALUATING (%)
Reading Tasks in EFL Curriculum Specifications	12.9	2.4	4.7	16.5	4.7	29.4	3.5	8.2	8.2	9.4
Reading Tasks in EFL Textbook	5.2	0.5	0.5	13.6	8.9	46.6	0.5	8.4	11.0	4.7
Overall Individual Cognitive Demand Percentage	7.6	1.1	1.8	14.5	7.6	41.3	1.5	8.3	10.1	6.2
Overall High & Low Cognitive Demand Category Percentage	10.5			89.5						

Key: % = Percentage of each level of cognitive demand reflected in reading tasks

Table 4.9 shows that the EFL secondary reading curriculum incorporates reading tasks that require both the lower level and the higher level cognitive demands as proposed by Marzano et al. (1988) and Marzano (2000). In fact, 41% of reading tasks focus on analyzing, an important reading skill for university academics. In general, Table 4.8 shows that approximately 90% of the reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum require high cognitive demand. About 11% of the reading tasks involve low cognitive demand, a reflection that the curriculum does not completely disregard training students on low cognitive skills such as focusing, recalling, and information gathering. In line with past studies which indicate the importance of training

students with reading tasks that require high cognitive demand for academic purpose (e.g., Alderson, 1990; Alderson & Lukmani, 1989; Bernhardt, 1983; Connor, 1997; Davey, 1988; Wade & Moje, 2000; Whalley et al., 2006), the significant emphasis on high cognitive demand reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum suggests that the curriculum considers the importance of training students to deal with reading tasks that require high cognitive demand, which may contribute to an effective content area reading in the EFL especially at the university level. Hence, the findings suggests that the EFL secondary reading curriculum seems to prepare students for the required cognitive skills in EFL reading at the university level in line with the EFL Secondary Curriculum goal that is to prepare students for EFL reading in higher education.

Further analysis was also conducted to find out the extent to which the cognitive demands of the reading tasks in the EFL textbook and those in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document are in alignment because reading tasks and the type of cognitive demands that the reading tasks require as presented in the EFL textbook are the ones EFL teachers implemented in classroom instruction. Therefore, in order to achieve the EFL Secondary Curriculum goal that is to prepare students with the necessary cognitive skills for EFL reading at institutions of higher learning, it is necessary that the cognitive demands of reading tasks in the textbook are in alignment with the ones presented in the EFL Curriculum Specifications.

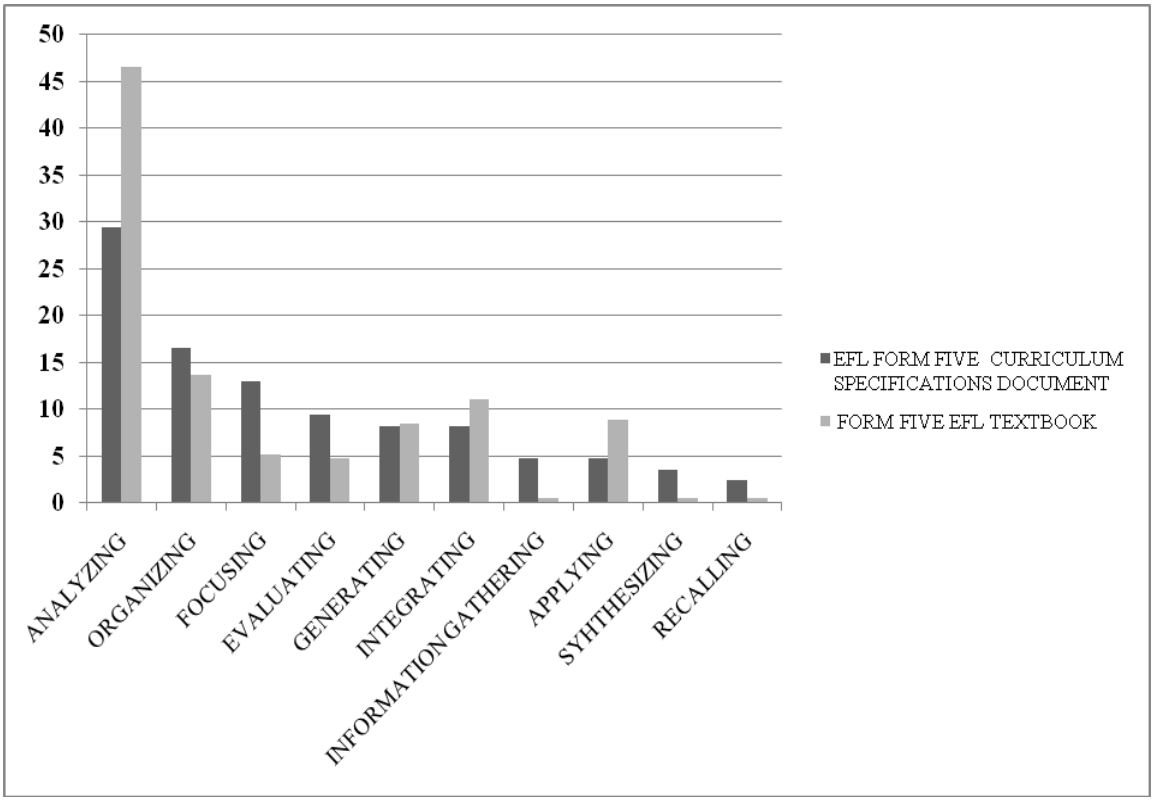

Figure 4.2 Training Trends of Core Cognitive Skills in EFL Curriculum Specifications Document and the EFL Textbook

As shown in Figure 4.2, in general, a similar pattern of emphasis of the cognitive demand for reading tasks is reflected in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and in the EFL textbook. In line with the EFL Curriculum Specifications document, the EFL textbook primarily stresses on reading tasks that require high cognitive demands such as analyzing, organizing, evaluating, generating, applying and integrating. This suggest that the cognitive demands of reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and those in the EFL textbook are in alignment and therefore reflecting a coherent design and effort in preparing students for EFL reading at the tertiary education level.

Nonetheless, the EFL Curriculum Specifications and the EFL textbook reflect less emphasis on reading tasks that require other types of high cognitive demand such as organizing, evaluating, generating, integrating, applying and synthesizing. Within the context of higher education, in order to succeed academically, students need to have information literacy skills that involves dealing with reading tasks that require various high cognitive demands (e.g., Levine, Ferenz, & Revez, 2000; Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik, 2002; Rockman, 2004). Synthesizing is one of the higher-level cognitive skills that is crucial for reading comprehension (e.g., Nathan & Stanovich, 1991), however, the least addressed in the high cognitive demand reading tasks category in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. Hence, in order to ensure that students are well prepared for reading which involves EFL at the university level, EFL reading instruction at the secondary level should also consider incorporating equally reading tasks that require other types of high cognitive demand.

4.6 ANALYSIS OF LEARNER ROLES

This section presents the finding for research questions five: What types of learner roles are reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum? Elicited reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specification document and EFL textbook were analyzed based on Richard and Rodgers' (2001) components of learner roles that is by examining patterns of learner grouping; whether reading tasks are carried out individually or in pair/group.

Table 4.10 Patterns of Learner Grouping

Documents / Types of Learner Grouping	Individual (%)	Pair/Group (%)
Reading Tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications	82.4	17.6
Reading Tasks in the EFL Textbook	88.0	12.0
Overall Percentage	89.1	10.9

KEY: %= Percentage of individual and pair/group reading tasks

As indicated in Table 4.10, in terms of pattern of learner grouping, the reading activities in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document are 82% designed as individual tasks in nature, such as *read a text and systematically make tables to compare information in the text* and *read silently materials in print and from the internet*. The same pattern emerged from the EFL textbook in which 88% of the reading tasks are individual activities such as *read a newspaper extracts and do true or false exercise* and *read a passage* and *answer open-ended questions*. The overall findings indicate that in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, individual reading activities carry 89% of the total activities with the remaining 11% designed as pair/group activities.

These findings add evidence to the claim that within the EFL secondary reading curriculum, reading is perceived to primarily involve cognitive information processing; a perception which results in an instructional approach in which reading revolves around the individual reader and the mind (e.g., Bernhardt, 1991; Grabe, 1991). In contrast to the communicative label of the EFL Secondary Curriculum, readers' interaction with peers and the teacher as part of the reading context in the process of meaning making seems to be significantly disregarded. Hence, the finding on learner roles reflected in the EFL secondary reading curriculum indicates incongruence between the EFL Secondary Curriculum instructional design

and its current communicative approach label. This finding will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

The Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum as a whole is labeled as a communicative curriculum (Ministry of Education, Malaysia [MOE]). This label suggests that the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum is also communicative in nature. The MOE chose the communicative approach due to the effectiveness of such approach. Nonetheless, the overall findings suggest that the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum does not conform to the features of a communicative curriculum. The findings on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook indicate that the EFL secondary reading curriculum is primarily developed based on cognitive information processing theories of SLA. Minimal socio-cognitive theories and socio-cultural theories are reflected in the reading tasks; theories of SLA that are the principle grounding of Communicative Language Teaching or CLT. Figure 5.1 provides the summary of the findings of the present study.

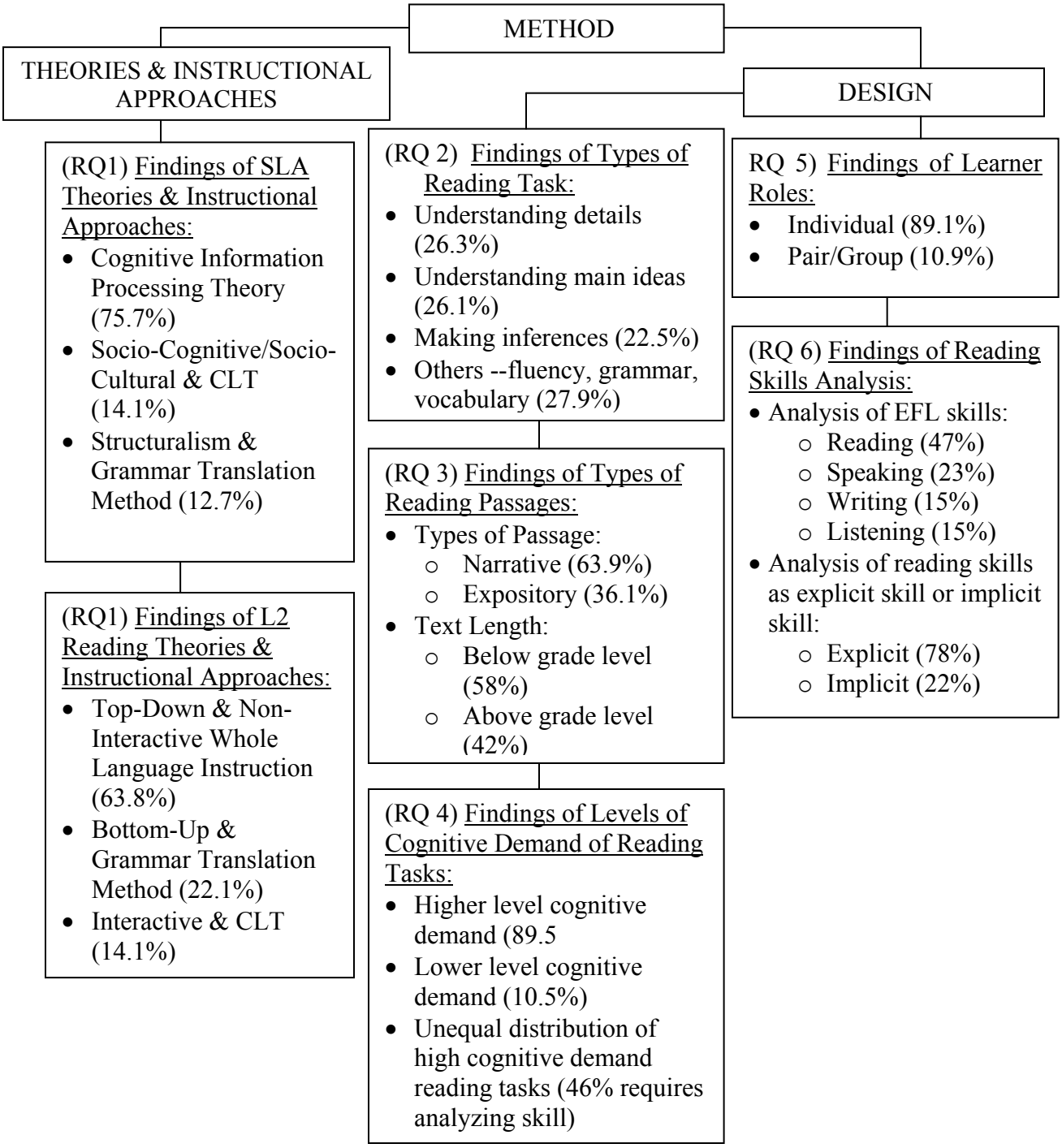

Figure 5.1 The Findings of the Study

Analyzing the theories of L2 reading and their corresponding instructional approaches in the reading curriculum generated a 2:7:1 ratio for reading tasks reflecting Bottom-Up theories and Grammar Translation instructional approach as compared to task reflecting Interactive theories and Communicative instructional approaches. The high percentage of Top-Down L2 reading theories and Non-Interactive Whole Language Instructional approaches in the reading tasks indicate that L2 reading instruction in the EFL Secondary Curriculum was principally designed based on the cognitive information processing model. Within this model, the reading process is perceived to occur mainly in the readers' minds while readers acting as information processors completing individual reading tasks.

Without the inclusion of interaction with others in the reading context, the reading tasks in the curriculum lack communicative features. This claim is also supported by the findings on learner roles which show that 89% of reading tasks in the curriculum are individual tasks and only 11% of the tasks involve interaction with others in the learning context. The finding on the types of learner grouping corroborates with the findings of Nambiar (2005) and Ponniah (1993) regarding EFL reading instructional procedures within the Malaysian setting. Although communicative features such as collaborative learning in the form of pair and group work was evidenced, individual reading tasks outpaced the pair/group reading tasks with a ratio of 9 individual reading tasks to 1 pair/group reading tasks (9:1). Such a disparity in the ratio is further evidence of lack of CLT features. Therefore, the findings on theories of SLA, L2 reading theories and their corresponding instructional approaches as well as the finding on learner roles stand in contrast to the current communicative curriculum label of the EFL Secondary Curriculum as a whole. Hence, the findings also suggest that Richards and Rodgers' (2001)

claim that the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum is a communicative curriculum might hold true for other EFL skills but not for EFL reading.

Should the curriculum be designed based on the CLT grounding, collaborative reading tasks in the form of pair and group work would be highly reflected in the reading tasks along with significant reflection of CLT approaches such as Content-Based Instruction, Task-Based Instruction, and Interactive Whole Language Reading Instruction.

Within the Malaysian EFL secondary school setting, one possible reason the EFL reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum are designed to be individual tasks in nature is that the tasks are geared toward training students for the EFL reading national examination in which, as in other tests, students have to process text information independently on their own. Such assumption is supported by the prevalent reflection of the employment of cognitive information processing theories in reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. The reflection of cognitive information processing theories in reading tasks also suggest the belief among EFL Secondary Curriculum developers that reading processes are principally cognitive in nature. Since L2 reading is assumed to be principally a cognitive process, individual reading tasks are perceived to be the most appropriate in producing independent and self-regulated EFL readers which instructional practice would prepare students to perform on EFL reading tests.

Nonetheless, those who developed the EFL secondary reading curriculum based on the premise that the curriculum is intended to be communicative should have the understanding of what constitutes the principles of CLT in terms of its underlying SLA theories, L2 reading theories and the related communicative instructional approaches. Misunderstanding of the conceptualization of a theory selected as the fundamental grounding of a curriculum may cause erroneous design of instructional approaches and implementation against what it is intended to

be (e.g., Thompson, 1996). Having the appropriate understanding of learner roles within the CLT would not translate into individual reading tasks even when taking the goal of EFL reading instruction as preparing students for the national EFL reading test. CLT may assist in preparing students for the EFL reading test because CLT principles revolve around socio-cultural theories which posit that cognitive development occurs surrounding meaningful interaction (e.g., Hymes, 1972; Paulston, 1974; Savignon, 1991). For example, in Task-Based Instruction (TBI) for the teaching of L2 reading, learners not only have to process and comprehend data in the reading text, part of information processing that is cognitive in nature, but also fulfill an assigned task based on text information, via meaningful interaction (Nunan, 2004; Nunan, 1993).

Instructional approaches to reading that disregard the roles of meaningful interaction with others in the reading context have been debated as less effective in developing EFL reading comprehension ability (e.g., Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004; Shaaban, 2006) and as such may not prepare students for EFL reading at the university level (e.g., Faizah, Zalizan, & Norzaini, 2002; Nambiar, 2005). CLT was chosen for the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum because past studies found that communicative reading instructional approaches were effective in developing reading comprehension in EFL (e.g., Seng, 2007; Seng & Hashim, 2006; Zhang, 2008). Therefore, communicative instructional approaches which integrate information processing and meaningful interactive learning process may serve as a better instructional approach for EFL secondary reading curriculum, particularly within the Malaysian setting. It is acknowledged that students at the university level are rarely expected to do communicative tasks in their courses or for English language assessments. However, training students to do communicative reading tasks at the secondary school level, training which focuses on the development of the efficiency of text information processing via meaningful interaction, would assist students to gradually become

self-regulated readers in the content areas. At the university level students have to be effective and efficient independent readers. Thus, producing such readers at the secondary school level is the goal of a communicative secondary reading curriculum.

Because the characteristics of the EFL secondary reading curriculum do not conform to the CLT principles, a revision of the EFL secondary reading curriculum is called for. Such revision is to ensure that the instructional approach and design for EFL reading presented in the curriculum are coherent and explicitly reflective of the intended communicative instructional approach. As such, the curriculum can be interpreted in unison by EFL textbook authors as well as by EFL teachers. Such revision may also enable the curriculum to serve as a clear guideline for EFL textbook development and classroom instruction. In addition, misalignment between the EFL Curriculum Specifications and EFL textbook can be significantly minimized. When the EFL Secondary Curriculum is reflective of its intended communicative instructional approach and in alignment with the EFL textbook, instructional implementation will better reflect best practices.

In addition to issues of inconsistent theories of SLA and L2 reading, instructional approaches, and curriculum design in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, the instructional implications of the inconsistencies are also serious concerns because classroom instructional planning, design, and implementation are conceptualized based on the curriculum (e.g., O'Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995; Williams, 1983). Thus, what is prescribed in the curriculum is translated into classroom procedures which influence instructional outcomes. Incongruity issues within the curriculum at the approach and design levels could be one of the contributing factors to the persistent EFL reading issues at the secondary school level which might be transferred to the

tertiary level within the Malaysian educational setting (e.g., David & Govindasamy, 2003; Kaur & Thiyagarajah, 1997; Nambiar, 2005, 2007; Rajaretnam & Nalliah, 1999).

5.2 PREPARATION FOR UNIVERSITY READING IN EFL

This study's analyses of reading tasks, types and lengths of passages, cognitive demands for reading tasks, and emphasis on reading provide evidence for the extent to which secondary students are prepared to read effectively in the EFL at the university level.

In terms of the types of reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum, in general, the findings suggest that the EFL secondary reading curriculum emphasizes important primary reading tasks such as identifying main ideas, identifying details, and making inferences, tasks that are important for effective reading comprehension. In addition to the primary reading tasks, EFL secondary reading curriculum also reflects the inclusion of reading sub-skills such as fluency, the use of schemata, and vocabulary. The incorporation of these primary and secondary types of reading tasks can be considered as a strength of the EFL secondary reading curriculum because an effective reading curriculum should include the training of not only major skills of reading, but also subordinate skills (e.g., Duffy, 2009). However, this study's findings concerning types of reading task in the EFL textbook show that there was a misalignment between the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook in terms of the distribution of types of reading tasks related to *identifying main ideas*.

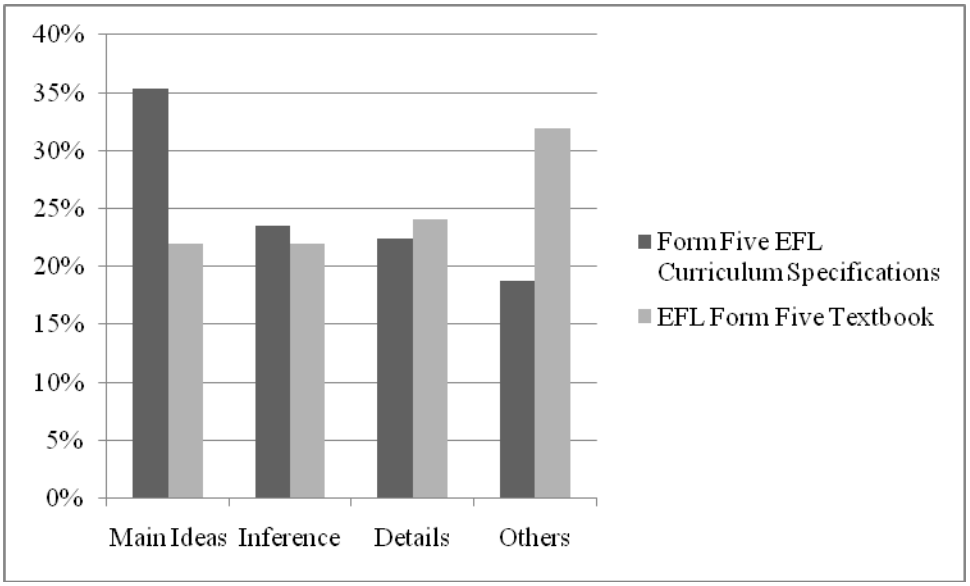

Figure 5.2 Distributions of Types of Reading Tasks

As shown in Figure 5.2, identifying main ideas is highly emphasized in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document, followed by making inferences, identifying details, and other reading tasks. On the other hand, the EFL textbook seems to give equivalent emphasis on identifying main ideas, identifying details, and making inferences. Contrasting the distribution of identifying main ideas reading tasks in the two documents, the gap seems to be significant. The more significant emphasis on identifying main ideas than identifying details and making inferences reading tasks in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document is reasonable because oftentimes students struggle to get the main text ideas especially when reading texts that are highly condensed with information (e.g., Beck, McKeown, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1991; Hare, Rabinowitz, & Schiebel, 1989; Kanagasabai, 1996; Nambiar, 2007). These texts are often the types of texts found in the content areas. The importance of identifying main text ideas is further supported by Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) who contended that the ability to identify main ideas is crucial for reading comprehension.

Past studies have also found that teaching students with major reading skills such as identifying main ideas impacts the efficiency of L2 reading comprehension process (e.g., Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004; Koda, 2005; Oh, 2001; Shaaban, 2006). Hence, such ability may affect students' academic performance in the content areas involving EFL reading. In relation to EFL reading at the university level, particularly in the content areas, lack of training in identifying main ideas may cause reading comprehension difficulties which situation may adversely affect students' academic performance (Ramaiah, 1996; Ramaiah & Nambiar, 1993; Faizah, Zalizan, & Norzaini, 2002). Thus, the instructional design and balance of reading tasks in the EFL textbook should be in better alignment with the instructional design and balance proposed in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document.

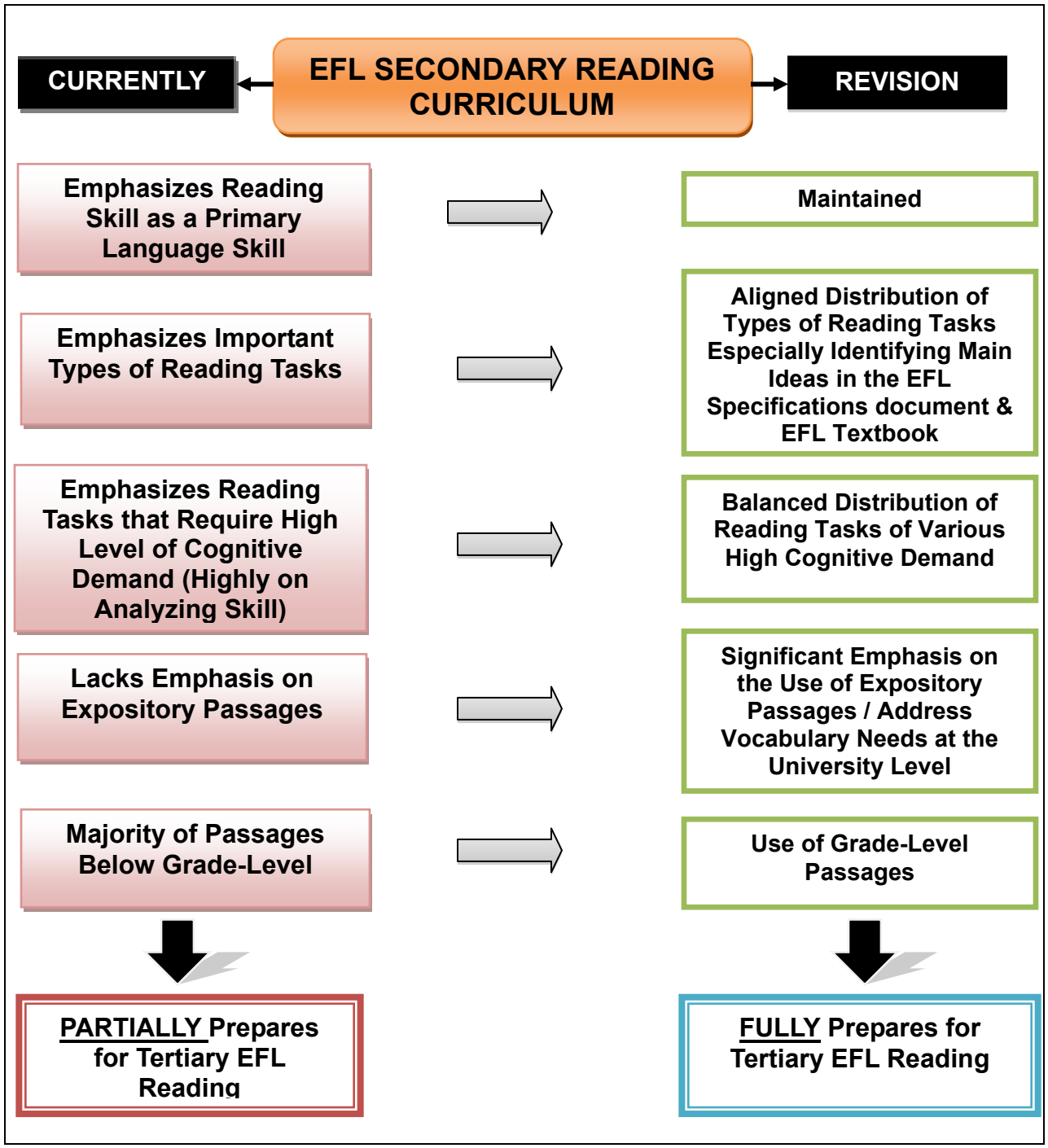

Figure 5.3 Recommended Revisions

Figure 5.3 provides the recommendations for the revision in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. The findings of the study indicate that currently the curriculum emphasizes reading as a primary means to achieve the listed learning outcomes in the Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum. The curriculum also places emphasis on important reading tasks, however, the emphasis on "Identifying Main Ideas" reading tasks in the curriculum specifications document and textbook is not aligned. In addition, the curriculum promotes the training of reading tasks that require high cognitive demand. Nonetheless, the majority of high cognitive demand reading tasks is concentrated on analyzing skills, and therefore marginalizes the importance of other types of high cognitive demand reading tasks. In terms of the reading passages used in the EFL textbook, the curriculum includes too few expository passages and the majority of the passages are below grade level. In synthesis, these findings suggest that currently, the EFL secondary reading curriculum only partially prepares students for tertiary reading in the EFL.

In order for the curriculum to fully prepare students for tertiary EFL reading, a revision is called for. Besides maintaining the emphasis on reading skills, there should be an aligned distribution of the types of reading tasks especially in the "Identifying Main Ideas" category in the EFL Specifications document and in the EFL textbook. There should also be a balanced distribution of reading tasks of various cognitive demands as well as significant emphasis on the use of grade-level expository passages that address students' vocabulary needs at the university level. With such revision, the goal of the EFL Secondary Curriculum to prepare students for EFL reading at the university level could be met.

When the instructional design in the EFL Curriculum Specifications is not carefully analyzed in a textbook development, it leads to a gap between curriculum goals and classroom instructional goals and implementation. This misalignment issue must be reconsidered and

addressed because within the Malaysian context, teachers oftentimes use the textbooks as instructional guidelines (Noordin & Samad, 2003). Also, based on the researcher's personal experiences as a secondary EFL teacher, the textbook is considered the most reliable source for teaching guidelines because it is endorsed by the Textbook Division at the Ministry of Education (MOE) to have met the educational requirements one of which is that it conforms to the EFL Curriculum Specifications document (http://www.moe.govmy/bbt/bukuteks_rekabentuken.Php).

It is common practice for teachers to use textbooks as instructional guidelines because textbooks are curriculum materials that represent social artifacts developed by curriculum designers (Putnam & Borko, 2000; Salomon, 1993). However, whether the secondary school EFL teachers within the Malaysian setting are capable of evaluating the extent to which the textbook conforms to the EFL Curriculum Specifications document is an area of question. As contended by Williams (1983) who studied EFL teachers' knowledge in evaluating EFL textbooks within the Malaysian setting, most EFL teachers are neither trained to interpret a textbook's intentions, nor able to evaluate its content and method. As such, within the Malaysian secondary educational setting, the textbook seems to be commonly used as instructional guidelines that teachers often assume to fully represent the intended instructional approaches as designed in the EFL Curriculum Specification document. In effect, the misalignment in reading tasks between those in the EFL textbook and the ones presented in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document may subsequently affect classroom implementation which in turn may defeat one of the ultimate goals of the EFL Secondary Curriculum, that is, to prepare students to perform the required EFL reading tasks at the university level.

Although the EFL secondary reading curriculum addresses the importance of teaching major reading tasks, Malaysian EFL readers at the university level are still reported not to have

the ability to identify and make connection among text main ideas as well as to make inferences, the important reading tasks that students are required to perform competently in content area reading (Kanagasabai, 1996; Nambiar, 2007; Ponniah, 1993). Part of the limitations of this study is that secondary students' EFL reading skills were not assessed.

Besides incorporating various important types of reading tasks in the curriculum, the level of cognitive demand that the reading tasks require is an equally important element of effective EFL reading instruction. It should be reemphasized that the socio-cultural theory, which serves as the basic theoretical underpinning for CLT, is a theory of cognition (e.g., Lantolf, 2000). Therefore, besides developing EFL reading competence via meaningful interaction, the goal of a communicative curriculum should be to develop students' ability to deal with reading tasks of various levels of cognitive demands especially those that require high cognitive demands. In order for students to meet high academic demands, they need to be engaged in challenging literacy tasks (e.g., Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003). To develop cognitive capacity, students should be given tasks which require high cognitive demand (e.g., Paas & van Gog, 2009). Therefore, teaching learners with core cognitive skills is considered crucial in order for them to function in content area reading (e.g., Crano & Johnson, 1991; Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, 1998).

The findings on levels of cognitive demand analysis for reading tasks in the EFL secondary reading curriculum show that the reading tasks are primarily designed to require high cognitive demands. A significant emphasis seems to be placed on reading tasks that require students to analyze text information. Based on Marzano et al.'s (1988) core cognitive skills definitions, by prioritizing the analyzing skill, the EFL secondary reading curriculum stresses the importance of learners' acquiring cognitive skills such as identifying details and identifying main

ideas. These cognitive skills map onto the types of reading tasks of identifying details and identifying main ideas in the EFL secondary reading curriculum.

However, while other high cognitive reading tasks are incorporated in the curriculum, the inclusion is in a significantly low amount. The unequal distribution of reading tasks requiring high level of cognitive demands in the EFL secondary reading curriculum is an area of the EFL Secondary Curriculum that needs to be appropriately redressed. A balanced EFL secondary reading curriculum which appropriately incorporates reading tasks of various high cognitive demands is called for in order to equip students with the ability to perform reading tasks of various cognitive demands in English at the university level.

In addition to teaching students how to accomplish high cognitive demand reading tasks, reading passage selection should be given appropriate attention (e.g., Cheek, 1983) because learners' ability to comprehend a text is often influenced by the types of passages that they are frequently exposed to in reading instruction (e.g., Williams, 2005). The study's findings concerning the types of reading passages indicate that narrative passages are more emphasized than expository passages. There is a special section in each chapter in the textbook allocated for literary texts comprehension which results in a stronger emphasis on narrative types of reading comprehension passages than on expository passages. In fact, one third of the learning outcomes in the EFL Secondary Curriculum is allocated for *Reading for Aesthetic purpose,* which focuses on literature. Such emphasis on literary texts marginalizes the importance of content-based literacy in meeting the curricular goal of preparing students for tertiary reading in EFL. Although the analyses of passages in this study covered the entire book, in actual classrooms, EFL teachers may not include all these passages in their instruction. Thus, not only do expository passages less frequently appear in the textbook, there are chances that students' exposure to expository texts

might even be marginalized because of the teacher's ability to pick and choose from the teaching materials in the curriculum at their discretion. As such, considering that narrative texts outweigh the expository texts, chances are narrative texts might be more frequently used than narrative texts in EFL reading instruction.

However, the content area texts that students encounter at university level are commonly in the form of exposition rather than narrative (e.g., Pugh, Pawan & Antomarchi, 2000). In fact, in English as a first language (L1) setting, in order to prepare students for the next school level, it is considered as best practice to expose students to content area literacy by training them on expository texts beginning from the elementary school (e.g., Moss, 2005). If such training is advocated and practiced in the L1 setting beginning from the elementary school level, the needs to facilitate students with a similar training especially at the upper secondary level in an L2 educational setting is even more crucial. Reading instruction that highly focuses on students' analyzing literary texts is not in alignment with the curricular goal of preparing students for content literacy in English at the university level. In order to achieve such a goal, EFL reading instruction should emphasize the analysis of expository texts using an instructional approach such as Content-Based Instruction (CBI). In addition, with regards to the history and current EFL policy within the Malaysian setting, part of the aims of EFL reading instruction is to enhance students' access and advancement in the field of science and technology. However, the focus on literary texts is not in alignment with the goal of EFL planning and policy. Reading instruction as such will not assist the achievement of Malaysia's national goal to use EFL instruction to prepare students for advancement and careers in science and technology, fields in which communication is completely in English. Hence, the current emphasis on narrative passages calls into question how well secondary students in the Malaysian secondary school setting are prepared for reading

the kinds of expository texts in English that they will commonly encounter in their content areas at the university level.

Apart from text type, the length of texts in the EFL textbook seems to be another factor that is not given an appropriate attention in the EFL textbook development. The pattern of passage length for EFL reading comprehension in the EFL textbook is highly irregular from the first chapter to the final chapter in the textbook. Using Leslie and Caldwell's (2004; 2006) reading text length taxonomy according to grade level, only 15 passages out of 36 passages are at grade-level while the other passages are way below grade level. As found in the EFL textbook, longer expository passages which are not meant for reading comprehension instruction but instead for other activities such as EFL writing can be considered as merely providing students with incidental exposure to expository passages but not instruction in reading comprehension processing for such types of passages. As presented in the EFL textbook, the focus of reading such expository passages is steered towards other elements such as format or organization instead of making meaning from the texts.

Therefore, within the Malaysian EFL secondary reading context, the gap between the length of passages used at the secondary school level and the length of reading texts that students are expected to read at the university level should also be reconsidered in order to materialize the EFL Secondary Curriculum goal of preparing secondary students for reading in English at the university level.

Within the Malaysian setting, it is acknowledged that weak learners should be taken into account in material selection in terms of passage length because the majority of the population of Malaysian secondary students is comprised of non-urban students who lack exposure to English reading materials (e.g., David & Govindasamy, 2003; Rajaretnam & Nalliah, 1999). However,

instead of using random and irregular pattern of passage length, conforming to the graded curriculum, the text selection should at least move from shorter texts to longer ones as the chapters increase and as students' learning progresses in the academic year. This way, students can be prepared to read at post-secondary grade-level by the end of their secondary school year.

In general, in terms of the specifications of passage types and length, apart from the literary passages extracted from the mandated novels by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) to be included in the textbook, there were no specifications for the selection of reading passages provided in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document which the textbook should conform to. Other than the requirement to base the textbook content on the EFL Curriculum Specifications, there are no detailed guidelines or specifications from the Textbook Division at the MOE concerning the types and length of EFL reading passages that should be used in the EFL textbook. Below are the data found at the MOE's Textbook Division website regarding the design of the textbook which only partially includes the general characteristics of passages in the textbook:

> The design of the primary school textbook packages must take into consideration the type of book and the age of the pupils. Usually, the design of primary school textbooks is simpler and the text is less dense. Whereas, the design of secondary school textbook packages is more complex with more texts and additional information.
>
> (http://www.moe.gov.my/bbt/bukuteks_rekabentuk_en.php)

Nonetheless, there is no explanation or detailed descriptions of what entails "more complex with more texts and additional information." However, these general specifications could be an explanation of the inclusion of many passages in the textbook although the other

factors involved in the passages selection on types and length are determined based on the data acquired from the EFL Specifications document, the EFL textbook, and the MOE's Textbook Division website. Since there were no explicit guidelines for the types and length of passage selection, it seems likely that it was entirely up to the textbook writers' discretion to decide on the types and length of the passages, the frequency for each type of passage to appear in the chapters throughout the textbook as well as the length for each passage.

Based on the researcher's review of the selected curriculum documents in this study, the five revolving themes stipulated in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document; People, Environment, Social Issues, Health, Science and Technology seem to allow the choice of reading passages to either be presented in the narrative or expository genre. Therefore, it seems that the themes were not directly a decisive factor for the selection of types of passage in the EFL textbook. The imbalance inclusion of the narrative and expository reading passages and the issue of grade-level text length for the passages in the EFL textbook raise the question of how the decisions on the selection of types of reading passage and length were made at the EFL textbook planning and development levels in relation to the curriculum goal of preparing students for EFL reading at the higher education level.

The types of passages presented in the EFL textbook also raise the issue of vocabulary instruction which area may also affect reading comprehension (e.g., Cubukcu, 2008; Webb, 2009). In the EFL textbook, vocabulary is addressed as part of reading comprehension exercise in each chapter. However, considering that the majority of the passages were narrative, the question is whether the passages contain appropriate vocabulary that students may need for content reading at the university level (e.g., Coxhead, 2000; Nation, 2001; Swales, 2009). At institutions of higher learning, it is imperative that students are prepared with the required

vocabulary to function in the content areas which commonly involve complex expository text in terms of concept and language.

Therefore, spending the majority of EFL reading instructional time on narrative texts rather than expository texts reflects the deficiency of EFL academic word training and exposure at the secondary school level to training that may help prepare students for information literacy in their academic fields at the university level. In order to comprehend an L2 text, readers have to understand 98% of the words in the text (e.g., Koda 2005). Thus, substantially exposing students to narrative vocabulary instead of academic vocabulary at the secondary school level may perhaps deprive students from the opportunity to use EFL reading instruction as a vehicle to improve their academic reading skill in the EFL at the university level which involves substantial reading of printed academic sources that are primarily in English (Graddol, 1997). Thus, it is important to expose students more to expository texts which contain high frequency academic vocabulary such as the ones in the Academic Word List compiled by Coxhead (2000).

Nonetheless, the analyses of the emphasis on EFL reading in achieving the listed learning outcomes in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document and the EFL textbook show that reading is emphasized to a greater amount in comparison to other EFL skills. Reading is also more explicitly rather than implicitly emphasized in the EFL secondary reading curriculum. This finding suggests that the EFL Secondary Curriculum perceives EFL reading to be an important skill not only for EFL learning, but also to fulfill its goal to prepare students to further studies at the university level and for lifelong learning. Yet, explicit emphasis on EFL reading alone will not guarantee the success of EFL reading instruction in preparing students for university reading involving the EFL without the curriculum appropriately aligning its approach and design. Thus, it is appropriate to revisit the current EFL secondary reading curriculum in order to ensure that

the curriculum's objective to prepare secondary students to read effectively in the EFL at the university level can be materialized.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The present study set out to find the overarching second language reading instruction reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum. The Malaysian EFL Secondary Curriculum was redesigned in the 1970s into a communicative curriculum because this instructional approach was believed to be effective in enhancing EFL teaching and learning within the Malaysian setting. Thus, it is important for the Malaysian secondary reading curriculum to be in alignment with the intended CLT. However, based on the findings of the present study, the EFL secondary reading curriculum as a whole seems to be lacking CLT characteristics at the curriculum approach and design levels. In addition, the brevity of instructional guidelines in the EFL Curriculum Specifications document seems to cause misinterpretation of the intended communicative instructional approach. Such misinterpretation could be the cause of misalignment in instructional approach and design between the EFL Curriculum Specifications and the EFL textbook.

The findings of the current study also provided insights into how the issues in the EFL secondary reading curriculum might be one of the causes of the persisting EFL reading flaws at the university level as indicated by many past studies particularly within the Malaysian setting (e.g., Faizah, Zalizan, & Norzaini, 2002; Kanagasabai, 1996; Nambiar, 2005, 2007; Ponniah, 1993). Therefore, a revision is called for the Malaysian EFL secondary reading curriculum in relation to its communicative label and as a step toward enhancing the effectiveness of the EFL

secondary reading instruction with the implications for academic preparation for EFL reading at the university level. In addition, this study's revision of Richards and Rodgers's (2001) model of methods of analysis in language teaching can be used as a valuable tool for program evaluation in other settings.

5.4 FUTURE STUDIES

The present study only examined the EFL secondary reading curriculum. Since EFL secondary reading instruction prepares students for EFL reading in content areas at the tertiary level, future studies may investigate the relationships between secondary school EFL reading preparation and students' ability to meet academic demands at the university level by comparing secondary and tertiary textbooks for passage types, length, types of reading task, cognitive demands of reading tasks, and vocabulary demands. Past studies have shown that these factors play a role in reading comprehension (e.g., Buchweitz, Mason, & Hasegawa, 2009; Brantmeier, 2005; Cutting & Scarborough, 2006; Cobb, 2007; Keenan, Bettjeman, & Olson, 2008; Perkins et al., 1995; Shaaban, 2006). In addition, interviews with secondary school EFL teachers as well as content instructors at the tertiary level should also be made part of such study in order to reveal the relationships between how students are being prepared with the EFL reading skills at the secondary school level and what EFL reading skills are expected of them at the tertiary level.

Additionally, a longitudinal mixed-method study is called for to investigate the extent to which an implementation of a fully communicative reading curriculum would assist students in EFL reading development within the Malaysian secondary school setting. The EFL reading curriculum design should entirely conform to communicative instructional approaches such as

Content-Based and Task-Based instruction with the aim of examining how these communicative instructional approaches affect students' ability to manage various tertiary level content reading texts in EFL. Such a study may provide insights into the types of secondary EFL reading instructional approach that best suits students' academic needs involving EFL reading at the tertiary level.

One of the most current literacy instructional approaches to L1 and L2 literacy is the genre-based instructional approach or text-based approach. Swales (1992) is one proponent of this approach. The genre-based instructional approach is commonly used in English for a Specific Purpose (ESP) program especially for the teaching of EFL reading and writing. Like Whole Language instruction, the genre-based instructional approach is based on the top-down theory of L2 reading, but is believed to provide students with a better pragmatic understanding of texts (e.g., Johns, 2002). The genre-based instructional approach is a type of communicative instructional approach to L2 reading which has yet to be implemented in Malaysia. Although this approach is more commonly implemented in the ESP classrooms, it might have potential to improve students' general EFL reading. Therefore, another potential niche for future study would be to conduct an experimental research on the effects of a genre-based instructional approach on general EFL reading comprehension against the existing EFL reading instructional approach in Malaysian EFL reading classrooms.

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