

# The Book of Change



**English Language Teacher  
Development Project**  
in East Malaysia 2011-13

# contents

## BRITISH COUNCIL THE BOOK OF CHANGE



*Hasiq, from SK Matu Baru in Kuching, Sarawak South zone, enjoys new books donated to his school as part of the British Council's Power of Reading Project.*

### Foreword

TRICIA THORLBY Project Director ..... 03

### Introduction

WORKING TOGETHER TO  
MAKE THE CHANGE ..... 04

### The Changes

CASE STUDIES FROM	
SARAWAK	
South.....	09
South Central .....	27
Central .....	45
North .....	59
SABAH	
South and Labuan.....	77
Interior .....	93
North .....	105
East.....	121



# foreword



I am delighted to recommend this book of change to you.

Having lived in Malaysia for many years and worked with Malaysian teachers and schools throughout that time, it's always been my dream work with the Ministry of Education to set up a project which can support local teachers in their desire to develop and improve the outcomes for their students.

I believe that the English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP) has ably achieved that aim. Based on the principles of participation, relationship building and sustainability, we believe we have forged new relationships, identified new tools for change and cultivated new perceptions of teacher development, learning and change.

The stories in this volume are a testimony to that change.

TRICIA THORLBY

ELTDP Director  
British Council Malaysia

# WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE THE CHANGE

PROJECT CONTEXT

The British Council is a registered charity and the United Kingdom’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. It is dedicated to building trust between the people of the UK and other countries and has a long history of working with the Malaysian Government.

The British Council was therefore delighted to be invited to tender to deliver part of the Malaysian Government’s *Projek Penutur Jati Bahasa Inggeris* (PJBI), which forms part of the Malaysian Government’s Upholding Bahasa Malaysia and Strengthening English programme, part of the 10th Malaysian Plan.

Having successfully secured the contract to deliver the *Penutur Jati* project in East Malaysia, the British Council was therefore able to bring to bear over 60 years of experience delivering excellence and leadership in the field of English language teaching worldwide.

The Penutur Jati project coincided with the introduction of the new *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* (KSSR) English curriculum which aims to transform the way children are taught, combining a “back to basics” approach with a commitment to making learning English fun. A focus on communicative teaching and early literacy is also combined with a new emphasis on continuous assessment through the new *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah* (PBS) system.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Fast Facts:

- 120 mentors spread across Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan.
- 600 state primary schools on the project.
- Each mentor works in five schools.
- 1,200 Malaysian English teachers (Year One to Three) each receiving 75 hours of input each year.
- Over 2,000 more “bonus” teachers also receiving support.

The project started in January 2011, with the British Council delivering the Penutur Jati project under the title of the “English Language Teacher Development Project”.

The mentors each work in a “sub-cluster” of five schools, usually a mixture of SK (National Schools) and SJKC (Chinese medium) schools and with a minimum of ten teachers across the five schools. As can be seen from the Book of Changes case studies, some mentors are posted in the main cities and towns of Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Miri and also in very remote districts such as Kapit, Maludam, Kinabatangan and Nabawan.

Our 120 mentors:

- 15 nationalities in the team.
- All have strong experience teaching English to young learners.
- Minimum qualifications are a degree and CELTA (or equiv).
- Nearly 20% hold a PGCE and over 60% have another post-graduate qualification.
- One in three holds a DELTA.
- Most have precious experience of teacher training or mentoring.

ADDED VALUE

The project sets out to provide 75 hours of professional input to each teacher each year, but in 2012, actually delivered over 100,000 hours of professional input to teachers, an average of 84.6 hours per teacher – almost 10 hours over target. In addition, the project actually worked with almost 2,000 teachers beyond what we were expected to deliver.

The Four Project Objectives

1. To improve classroom teaching and learning as demonstrated through classroom observations, mentor- and self-assessment.
2. To improve English language proficiency of the participating teachers as shown through mentor- and self-assessment.
3. To improve the participation teachers’ ability to source, assess, develop and utilise a range of appropriate and learning materials that can be used inside and outside the classroom for both students and teachers.
4. To sustain ongoing development by encouraging participation and relationship-building amongst pupils.

WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL’S. APPROACH?

From the start, the British Council rejected a straightforward training approach, aware that “expert trainers” cascading knowledge and training to local teachers can have limited success and that although teachers are often aware of modern communicative methods such as pair-work, games and group-work, in the classroom they often fall back on traditional rote-learning which is failing to deliver the required outcomes.

Instead, the English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP) involves one-to-one mentoring to help teachers explore and reflect on their own professional practice and develop new approaches for themselves. Teachers are not taken out of school; instead British Council mentors go to the schools to find out about local needs and help teachers find their own solutions. The British Council’s approach to the project focuses on supporting Malaysian teachers to develop their own reflective practice so that teachers take ownership of their own professional development.

As can be seen from the change stories that follow, this involves a more challenging and more developmental path. There is more and more research showing that engaging teachers in reflective thinking is the most effective approach to sustainable, on-going and responsive change. The ELTDP adopts this model to promote enquiry-based, reflective practice amongst teachers and to leave them with the skills to engage in their professional development beyond the project life.

The change stories show how our mentors help Malaysian teachers discover, investigate and address their own needs in their own context. This form of mentoring is fully directed by the teachers and therefore they support the process.

WHAT DOES MENTORING LOOK LIKE?

The change stories show the wide range of tools used to support the processes of teacher-reflection. Teachers are encouraged to become researchers, using tools such as reflective journals and learning portfolios, in-depth interviews, workshops and group discussions, storytelling/ narratives, video observations, peer observations, drawings and diagrams. Through trying different approaches, teachers find out what works best for them.

Some of the stories show how the project doesn’t just work with teachers. We work with head teachers, district officers, other teachers and departments to facilitate networks and to help give teachers the space, knowledge and support to develop and this whole-school approach is reflected in some of the stories.

WHY DOES IT WORK?

The ELTDP engages with teachers to tackle their own problems in their own contexts. On top of this, the project approach gives teachers the capacity to identify and solve problems for themselves in the future.

As evidence of impact, new evidence shows that teachers with the project for more than a year showed an average improvement of more than one level using a teacher competency framework adopted by the project. Teachers’ English has improved too, with shifts towards “independent” and “proficient” levels as measured by the Common European Framework (See Table 1).

	BAND	BASELINE	OCT 2012
BASIC	A1	6%	1%
	A2	18%	8%
INDEPENDENT	B1	32%	23%
	B2	31%	39%
PROFICIENT	C1	12%	24%
	C2	1%	5%

Table 1 shows the percentage of teachers assessed at each CEF band at the start of the project in early 2011

POWER OF READING

In addition to hitting our core key performance indicators the British Council, as a registered charity, has also given something back by supporting a major literacy project in the form of the “Power of Reading” project.

The Power of Reading project saw the British Council donating 32,000 high quality English language picture books to 40 schools in Sabah and Sarawak, with some schools receiving as many as 1,600 books.

The Power of Reading seeks to show that by a “book flood” of children’s books, together with training around reading methodologies, will significantly improve pupils’ literacy and English language. The British Council hopes to secure sponsorship to roll out the project to other schools in East Malaysia in the near future.

TEACHER AS RESEARCHER SYMPOSIUM

The project has also sought out opportunities to share the learning gained through the project. In February 2013, a ground-breaking Symposium was held in Kuching around the theme of “Teacher as Researcher”, which was attended by over 220 local teachers, Malaysian Ministry officials, British Council staff and keynote speakers.

Teachers, head teachers and language officers travelled from all around Sarawak, Sabah and Labuan to explore the reflection and professional enquiry that the project mentoring had supported teachers to engage in. Key international names in education such as Professors Andrew Pollard, Simon Borg and Carol Read attended but the stars of the event were the local teachers themselves who facilitated a range of fascinating workshops on subjects ranging from classroom management, through differentiation and inclusion to the use of puppets in the classroom.

IN CONCLUSION

Showcased here are just some of the contributions made by the ELTDP. In addition, countless resources have been developed by teachers with support from mentors and teachers are taking on a significantly more language rich approach. Above all, change is thoroughly owned by the teachers, which gives the changes the potential to carry on making a difference to Malaysian pupils for years and years to come.





# SARAWAK

## SOUTH REGION

### **Fun and Creativity**

“My students have become more creative, are having lots of fun and are not afraid to learn English”

– SAMARAHAN TEACHER

A TEACHER at SK Jagoi talks about the participation of parents in the school.

SINCE 2011, the Bau district has been fortunate to have a mentor from the English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP) working in five of its schools. At SK Jagoi, the presence of the British Council mentor has helped tremendously to enhance classroom teaching and learning activities and this has been extended to our children’s parents. This year, SK Jagoi for the first time has introduced parent workshops. Five workshops have now been successfully completed using the British Council’s new “Learn English Family” resource. The workshops help parents to be involved in their children’s literacy development. We targeted the parents of the slower learners believing that parent participation will help their child’s progress.



Twenty-three attendees came, a good indication of the parents’ keenness. To our pleasant surprise, we had a continuing steady attendance at the following workshops. Parents were actively involved with various activities including sharing stories, singing action songs and rhymes, simple conversations and reading books. Our aim is to educate the parents to be more involved in their children’s reading as this will have greater impact on their children’s future literacy. We had positive feedback from the parents to the extent that some parents were taking leave from work to attend the workshops.

At our last workshop, we invited the children to attend with their parents. Together, they participated in language activities and shared reading books. The highlight of the session was when a mother and her son modelled a parent and child reading a book together to the other parents. As English teachers, we are seeing the impact on the children. There is improvement in their work and attentiveness in the classroom. It is our greatest hope that parents will continue to be involved in making an effort to spend quality time reading with their children.

A spin-off from these workshops resulted from parents requesting English lessons. This was addressed by the mentor facilitating English language development activities. Increasing numbers of interested

parents chose to attend the 45-minute sessions held prior to the start of the workshops. To date, four of the ELTDP schools in Bau have successfully facilitated parent workshops. Schools intend to continue working with their parent communities in 2013.

The following are questions and answers in follow-up parent interviews held two months after the last parent workshop:

- Q. What were the most useful ideas presented at the workshops?  
A. Learning to talk about pictures, using closed and open questions, learning and practising techniques to help my child read at home, the bilingual pictures and labels which we cut-up and placed around the house.
- Q. How did you feel about working with your child at home?  
A. It was fun.
- Q. Are you still working with your child at home?  
A. Yes, we are singing songs, talking about and reading books, have bought an English picture dictionary, reviewed the English test papers with my child and we are watching more English television programmes.
- Q. What changes have you noticed in your child?  
A. He is enjoying school more, is more enthusiastic, keen to read books together, is reading three to four-word sentences, a general improvement in English usage.

MY MENTEES and I have worked together to make the classroom more learner-centred, more interactive and engaging, and to involve as many students as possible in classroom participation. We try to see that no student is left out. We try to reflect constantly on what we do and why we do it and to think outside the box and to encourage our students to do so too. Here are comments on the work from the teachers:



“WE CONDUCTED extra classes after school for weak students. It was voluntary and we were happy when many students came. Those who came regularly improved and even those who came only once or twice became confident and not shy. Though the students finished at 12 noon, they waited until 1.15pm for our class. I also spoke to some parents and told them how to help their children.”

“I feel I should think every lesson is an observed lesson so I will do my best every day. It is quite hard but I must keep trying.

“We replaced our very old dictionary and now my students and I have our own vocabulary books. I am very interested and my vocabulary has improved. Do you know the meaning of ‘philtrum?’”

“Now, before I punish, I think first and see what is good for each child as they are all different. There are many more students interested in English than last year and I am also more interested in teaching them. Sometimes when I am teaching a weak student, he doesn’t get up even when the break bell rings. I praise the students more than I ever did before and I find it joyful. I am glad that I was chosen for this useful programme.”

“I was just teaching phonics from the textbook without really thinking or understanding. Now I understand English spelling and pronunciation and the students also understand. I realise that attending a workshop is not enough; we have to do a lot of follow-up and make and use good resources to help us teach and students learn.





**P**ECHA KUCHA is a presentation format used to tell an idea using 20 images and in words tell the story in 6 minutes and 40 seconds (20 seconds per slide). The mentees (core and bonus teachers) at each of the five schools in my district were asked to create a Pecha Kucha in order to tell what the most significant change has been at their schools since they have been involved in the ELTDP.

I suggested the use of a Pecha Kucha presentation for several reasons. First, it is creative. The mentees used images that they had chosen to best tell their story which also supported their words. Second, because they could only talk about each slide in 20 seconds, they had to choose their words carefully and be concise in English. Therefore, the Pecha Kucha supported the mentees' work in improving their English language proficiency, fulfilling KPI 4.

Lastly, the mentees had an opportunity to do reflection as a group on the changes that took place during the project. Each school presented their Pecha Kucha at our district meeting on July 11, 2012 and we had to choose which school showed the most significant change among the five.

The school that was eventually chosen demonstrated that significant work had been done by the teachers to help raise the level of literacy at their school. There was work done with parents in the forms of meetings and workshops. Also, work was done directly with students (peer reading, teachers preparing reading materials for pupils and their parents to use at home, and encouraging students to read in the classroom when finished with other work). It was apparent that their efforts were having an impact on the students.



**WHEN I BEGAN working at this school, it was apparent that the English teachers seldom collaborated as a team and felt they had little support in implementing their initiatives and ideas. Through our work together in various projects, I have been very happy to see significant positive changes in the level of team-working and the confidence teachers have in pushing their ideas forward. These are some comments from the head of the English department:**

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**W**HEN I began working at this school, it was apparent that the English teachers seldom collaborated as a team and felt they had little support in implementing their initiatives and ideas. Through our work together in various projects, I have been very happy to see significant positive changes in the level of team-working and the confidence teachers have in pushing their ideas forward. These are some comments from the head of the English department:

I would like to look at this project as the "light but mighty breeze" that will rekindle the flickering embers of desire to acquire the English Language. This project has brought some of the English language teachers closer. This positive professional proximity has led to lots of serious sharing and discussions related to the teaching and learning of the language.

I have also noted an increased interest to acquire the language among the students. This is probably due to more engaging activities and materials in class. The project has also left a good impression on the school administrators, who had once branded the English Language as the school's "killer subject". They are now giving the English Language Department more support in term of materials and morale.

When our book flood project is fully implemented, I'm hoping to see the "flickering embers" burst into a flame so intense that every English language teacher will work together towards teaching the language effectively while all the students would be seeking eagerly to acquire the language.



**I WOULD LIKE TO LOOK AT THIS PROJECT AS THE "LIGHT BUT MIGHTY BREEZE" THAT WILL REKINDLE THE FLICKERING EMBERS OF DESIRE TO ACQUIRE THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.**



Lisa Walsh  
British Council Mentor

**I DISCUSSED CHANGES** with my teachers and after developing ideas further on their own, they came back to me with the points below. As a mentor, it was great to hear the teachers being so positive about the KSSR programme. It was different when the project started and they were quite sceptical about it and dreaded phonics. When I asked a teacher the other day if she preferred teaching grammar or phonics now, she answered with a very emphatic “Phonics!” Some of the reasons behind this attitude change are given below.



**Before with the KBSR**  
It was good but the teachers didn't have much guidance about running the programme. It depended on the courses teachers attended. Teachers who attended the course knew more about the programme. Because we attended fewer workshops, we tended to forget the teaching techniques and approaches we had learned. The KBSR Reading programme overall was not very clear. Teachers struggled to try various methods to teach reading and pupils seemed to hate the reading activities. The whole class read together out loud or silently. It was all about reading. It was more exam-orientated and pupils couldn't use what they learned as it only applied to exam questions.

**Now with the KSSR**  
When the KSSR started, we weren't very confident and the lessons were a bit dull. We used less teaching aids and relied on the “chalk and talk” teaching approach. The pupils didn't have much interest in speaking English and we didn't have many ideas on how to encourage them.

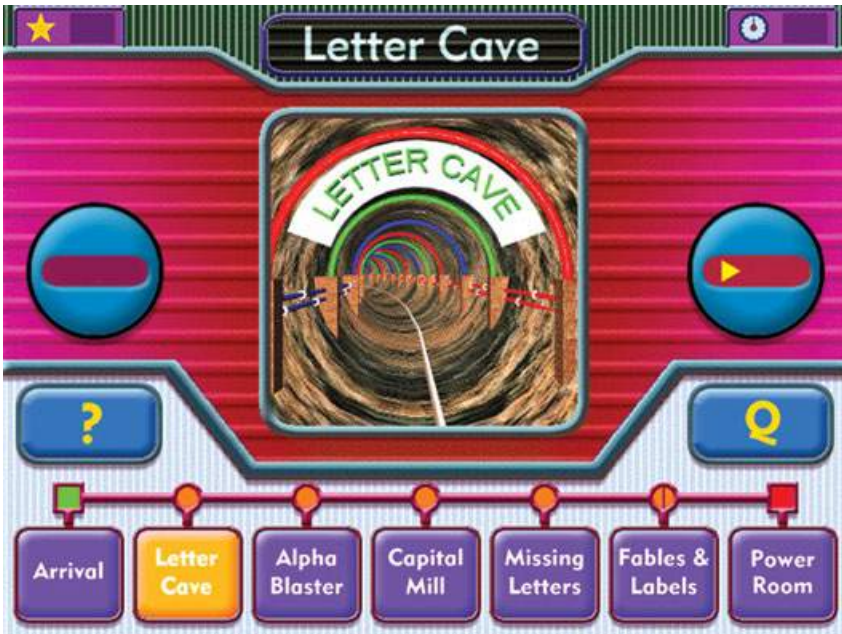
The KSSR is better than the KBSR. Teachers who are involved in the programme were given courses about the programme. The modules are given by the Ministry and teachers are also involved in the making of the module during the workshop. These help to enrich the teaching techniques, by meeting our fellow KSSR teachers and exchanging ideas. Now, we are more confident and familiar with the KSSR approach and techniques and the banding system. Now classes are livelier.

In class, teachers are not concentrating on the exams anymore but on pupils' performance. The KSSR programme gives the pupils the opportunity to have fun in their learning with language arts activities, singing etc. These are enjoyable for the students and also fun for the teacher. This has an effect on the pupils. The pupils' attitudes are very different from KBSR pupils. Now they show an interest in their learning. They try to communicate in English. In Year Two, most of the pupils can read and understand what they read. Phonics in the early stage of their reading has really helped and they can use phonics to read new words. They have more confidence. We are more confident teaching phonics and have more ideas for activities. Pupils welcome their teacher and they don't say “Thank you Teacher” five minutes before the lesson ends anymore!”



Nick Pailthorpe  
British Council Mentor

# LEARNING ON DESKTOP



**MOST OF THE SCHOOLS** in my district have computer rooms/labs, but these are sadly underused by English or any other teachers. Several of them also have computer technicians, frequently amenable to helping as they often seem somewhat under-employed. Even if the labs have significant numbers of computers working, they may not have web access.

Bearing this in mind, the impact of downloadable resources can still be considerable. Some teachers are culturally extremely reluctant to get involved in activities that may display an area for improvement, so a lack of personal IT skills may be an initial concern. I have been met with reluctance from head teachers who don't seem to want anybody to use their new computer room, particularly the children, though others have greeted the idea enthusiastically. Teachers may be concerned that the games will take a lot of extra work, and it is true that if left unattended and unexplained the games may be removed (from individual desktops).

The potential for less academically-inclined children to use these games has been very illuminating, remarked on and appreciated by most of the teachers who have used them. I have seen a permanent C stream English teacher with her mouth left, literally, hanging open after watching her “LINUS” (Literacy and Numeracy Screening

programme) boys (finding nouns, adjectives and arranging stories in order during the games activities. (In this school, the computer technician doubled as a classroom assistant.) Sadly, the teacher (not the lady below!) does not expect to return to the lab as she is concerned about some missing floor tiles.

**Suzi Kipli, English Teacher, Year 2B, SK Muara Tebas**  
*Mr Nick installed the Times Key Stage English Games onto the desktops of the computers in the school's computer lab in September. I had never used computers with children before and I thought they would find it difficult but I was surprised how quickly they were able to use the computers to play the games. Some of the slower learners were able to do more on the computers than they could with their textbooks – for example, finding missing letters, correcting spelling and “opposite” words. Since their first introduction to using the computers the children have asked to go back on many occasions and I have taken them back twice.*

Lastly, I'd like to explain that I've only been at this for a couple of months so it hasn't become established/customary anywhere yet, but it has already seen interest from other subject teachers, particularly of Maths. I hope that with further encouragement the use of IT games might become an institutionally and individually sustainable element of our project.



Patty Smith  
British Council Mentor

**THE FIRST TIME** I observed Amy in the classroom, it was obvious she had a joy for teaching and a natural ability to engage her students. She is a keen mentee, always willing to discuss teaching issues and to try new ideas. Early in the mentoring program, she felt some of her students seemed to lack the motivation to learn. After discussing this, Amy tried several suggestions until she found the one that worked for her, and, as her story illustrates, it was a powerful experience.

**In the last six months, what has been the most significant change in your approach to teaching?**

*I believe that I am able to change my pupil's view of the English language. Earlier, my pupils kept telling me that it was hard to learn*

*English. Because of this, they sometimes seem to give up. My mentor told me to use good words and praise them. Sometimes I used stickers or stamps as rewards to show appreciation.*

*One day, a little girl asked me the timetable for English. I said, "We have English lessons everyday. Why do you ask?" She told me she didn't want to go to school unless there is an English lesson and that sometimes, she cried if I was on sick leave or not at school. I never thought that one simple thing could have such a big impact on my pupils and I can proudly say that most of them have achieved more than I expected.*



**"IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN YOUR APPROACH TO TEACHING? I BELIEVE THAT I AM ABLE TO CHANGE MY PUPIL'S VIEW OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE."**

Elizabeth Aliyah Eastwood  
British Council Mentor

*Year Six students were paired off with Year two students for 'The Power of Reading' drive.*



**MADAM IRENE** is what I would call a rare "natural" teacher – she's a brilliant teacher and I always look forward to working with her. When I first started working with Irene in February 2010, she was slightly confused about the new PBS, as it was a new of form of continuous assessment which was still being tweaked. She started experimenting with different ways of assessing but in the early stages it was fairly teacher-centred. Over time, as the PBS became clearer and Irene gained confidence, the focus then moved to the students as assessors and the activities became fun, varied, communicative and student-centred forms of assessment.

According to Irene: "Before, when the KSSR started, I thought that only the teacher could be the assessor for the PBS. The KSSR training went into detail about the banding but not in ways in which the assessment could be done. I started to worry about the PBS and I was concerned about the time issues. If I was assessing the students one by one, what would the others do while the assessment was being carried out? I thought that the KSSR assessment was done in the 'traditional' way with the teacher as assessor. Then, I experimented with a peer assessment with my Year Ones, which went well. My mentor also gave very positive feedback.

"After the UPSR had finished, I thought about the PBS again and

about pairing up the Year Sixes (who were very free) with the Year Twos. This also tied in with the Power of Reading books that had recently arrived in the school. I arranged all the POR books on a table so that they looked inviting and the students could easily select a book. The paired students then had to select a book together. If the Year Two student had problems in selecting an appropriate book, then the Year Six reading buddy could act as the book selector guide. They then sat on the floor and the Year Six student read the story to the Year Two.

"After reading, the Year Six with the aid of a tick sheet, then asked questions such as, 'Did you like the cover?', 'Tell me about the picture on the cover', and 'Is the cover hard or soft', etc. This was for band descriptor B5 DL2 E1. When I discussed with the mentor the positive aspects of this activity, I felt that it gave the Year Twos one-on-one attention, it was authentic and non-threatening, students could pace themselves, and it was confidence building because the activity was done in the spirit of an older brother or sister helping out. It also kept me free to monitor.

"I also received feedback from the Year Sixes and they said they enjoyed the activity and would like to do it again but not all the time. The Year Twos also liked the activity and their responses were positive and they loved being read to by their older friends."



Jeff Memler  
British Council Mentor

**MENTOR** Laura Phelps (replaced in 2012 by Jeff Memler) worked in the Padawan district, south of Kuching. When the Padawan teachers were recently asked what the most significant impact of the ELTDP has been, the general consensus was the instilling of confidence: Confidence in using English and confidence in trying new and creative techniques in the classroom. Teacher/Mentee Madam Maria Sindop from SK St Peter, Simpok said:

**“A**T THE BEGINNING, it worried me a lot when thinking of teaching phonics to my pupils. I was scared of making mistakes as I was not familiar with phonics. As a result of my involvement in the ELTDP, my attitude towards phonics gradually changed. We attended workshops and my mentor taught us about the units of sound starting with the short vowels and the consonants, a few at a time. Gradually, I began to feel confident when teaching my pupils how to recognise letter sounds and blending individual sounds to build words. Some of my pupils are able to join syllables together to form simple words.”

Maria also spoke of the confidence she has gained to be creative and try activities which she herself must adapt from ideas found both in the KSSR handbook as well as ones introduced by her mentor.

“My pupils and I gained a lot from the workshops, classroom observations, team-teaching and reflections done by my mentor. I am indeed grateful and thankful for taking part in the ELTDP project.”

Another Padawan teacher, Miss Bong from SJK Chung Hua Siburan, credits the ELTDP for developing her proficiency in English which has contributed to her increased confidence as an English teacher. Miss Bong is showing more confidence in English both with her pupils and with fellow staff members.

In the two major focus areas of language proficiency and teaching, Padawan teachers have gained from the continual contact with the ELTDP. Most importantly, they have gained the confidence needed to not only deliver meaningful and successful lessons but also to continue to learn and grow as speakers of English. Ultimately, the biggest beneficiaries of this new confidence are their fortunate students.



Maria Jose Franco Pereira  
British Council Mentor



Madam Wong Siew Ai

**M**ADAM Wong Siew Ai became a qualified teacher in 2005 and although she could not choose schools, she has been happily teaching Mandarin and English at SJK Chung Hua Kim Choo Seng. She has a BA in Mandarin and Business Management and 2011 was her first year teaching English so she was very excited about having a mentor to discuss issues and ideas regarding English language teaching. Her decision to become a teacher was made when she came back to live in Kuching – the job and its hours offered flexibility and would let her spend time with her family.

Madam Wong is always striving to improve her English and it is encouraged by her school, although no formal training is given to achieve this. She reads Ministry of Education articles and books and has compiled a great variety of resources like other KSSR textbooks, resource books as well as storybooks and toys since the ELTDP started. She is an extremely resourceful and adaptable

teacher who is always willing to listen and share any advice about teaching and improving stakeholders' feelings towards education.

I feel very lucky for having the opportunity to work with somebody as enthusiastic and who cares so much about education and professional development like Madam Wong. Below are the positive changes which she feels the ELTDP has made in her teaching:

*The most significant change for me is my English language confidence level. I am much more confident in lessons and I think I could now teach upper primary too. Also the Power of Reading project has brought a new life to the library and all the students like to spend some of their break times reading or just looking at books. My mentor has helped me to tell stories in a fun way and reading lessons are now more fun.*

*Students are more confident speaking too and with simple resources like the microphone (handmade) they are happy to talk in class and don't feel embarrassed. They really like it when the mentor comes into school and joins the lessons. The mentor has also facilitated the sharing of resources not only in our school but with other SJK schools in this project and we can share exams and evidence activities.*

*I was a bit nervous at the beginning of the ELTDP project because I thought I was being tested as a teacher but I now realise that my mentor is only trying to help. Thank you, British Council.*





Mindy Scott  
British Council Mentor



Mr. Chin

**THE FOCUS** of this case study is the use of a Rewards System in relation to classroom management. This practice was not employed consistently by all teachers at the outset of the programme and this report reviews the progress made by two teachers who have been experimenting with its use.

Both Mr Chin and Mr Lim identified this aspect of their teaching as an area which required development. Chin decided to implement the system at the start of the ELTDP Project and explains below how he went about doing this.



**MY FIRST STEP** towards effective classroom management was to establish solid rules and regulations. Based on these rules and regulations, I then set up and managed activities in the classroom. It could be challenging to get the attention of students, especially a large number of noisy children at the beginning of the class. My Mentor, Mr Gary, introduced me to some techniques to change their focus. These techniques included clapping, short songs, count down and so on?

When I first observed Chin's class he was using the system sporadically and after discussion, he decided to re-introduce it to his class. In order to get increased buy-in from pupils, he asked them to choose their own mascot.

I applied the Reward System during the running of the class. Students started to compete and became calculative about marks. I also made my instructions short and simple so that students could adopt the system faster. Next, I applied stirring and settling activities to maintain classroom control and efficiency. Stirring activities were such as role-play, group work, games and so on. While settling activities included writing, silent reading, fill in the blanks, etc.

Lim explained that he had implemented the Reward System with mixed results. He admitted that he wasn't consistently using it. Lim and I then worked together to plan how he would reintroduce the system.

Lim prepared a chart and planned how he would group his students. He felt that having mixed-ability groups was the best way to work the system. Lim then asked the children to choose an animal to be their mascot and to come up with their own list of Rules and Regulations which he displayed at the front of the class.



Mr. Lim preparing for his class

The pupils now police themselves and make sure that their classmates stick to the rules as well as trying to answer questions and complete activities on time to get extra points. Lim has expressed his satisfaction in how the class is being managed now.

*"I have learnt about classroom management. The introduction of classroom instruction, rules and regulations, Reward System and others has given me confidence in dealing with the students in my class. However I have to be consistent in implementing this approach in the class so that I can hopefully manage my class better."*

Chin also explained how he has benefited from the improvements in his classroom management: *As a summary, I feel confident while conducting the class. The classroom became smooth and under control.*

It is interesting to note that both Chin and Lim comment on combining Rewards with the setting of boundaries. Encouraging progress has been made by both teachers. Their experience shows how small but significant shifts in approach can lead to more effective teaching and more efficient learning.

Gavin Fry  
British Council Mentor

*Cikgu Rosmah Bt Ahmad of SK Endap and her Year Two class have been on the ELTDP from February 2011.*



## A SENSE OF FUN

**"MY STUDENTS** enjoy every activity, they've become more creative, are having a lot of fun and, the most important thing, they are not afraid to learn English!" So says Cikgu Rosmah Bt Ahmad of SK Endap, a small kampung school in Samarahan, Sarawak. Both she and her Year Two class have been on the ELTDP from February 2011. Speaking about the children's confidence she says, "Sometimes they are able to converse and communicate with the teacher and peers using simple English words spontaneously". They are now even confident enough to even be paired in class with the ELTDP mentor.

The driving force behind the children's progress and motivation has been Cikgu Rosmah's commitment to learner-centred activities, fun and her creativity. For teaching directions she used a map of the school to practise understanding directions in English, before launching the children in groups on a treasure hunt around the school. She makes "big books", adapting material from the textbook or other sources such as the British Council's Learn English website. The example pictured is *The White Radish* from the textbook. She put the narrative in her "big book" but left out the dialogue, which she put on cards so that the children had to work out where it belonged

in the story. And follow-up activities included role-play with masks.

But if you ask the children which activities they remember most, many will say "chocolate milk shake". Unit 6 of the Year Two textbook features instructions for making cup cakes and chocolate milkshake. Cikgu Rosmah's students made both. One day they each had a cup cake to take home. The next day it was a lesson where they made and consumed milkshake with a blob of ice-cream added, not to mention Cikgu Rosmah's spontaneous rap song *Shake, shake, shake*. And they'll tell you that even simple classroom activities can be great fun: pronunciation practice, for example, involves tossing pillows across the classroom!

It's serious fun and it's a good example of the more communicative style of learning that KSSR is promoting. The last word belongs to Cikgu Rosmah herself: "I've used a lot of ideas in working on teaching aids and thinking of activities that should be carried out in the classroom. But thanks a bundle to my mentor for helping me by giving ideas and providing support. Above all, every teacher has to win students' hearts and make sure they love learning English for ever and ever".





**T**HIS TEACHER describes the first month in her new school as being “one of the most demotivating moments” of her life. As a non-optionist teacher, she never had the chance to teach English and felt a little overwhelmed but nevertheless was thrown in at the deep end and had to teach two Year Three classes.

She started by just carrying out her lessons according to the textbook and the activity book but found that the students were still a little distracted. This was made even harder as the students’ level of English was lower than in her previous school, and they lacked a lot of basic vocabulary and communication skills.

However, through discussing with her mentor and fellow teachers, she now feels that she has a much firmer understanding of how to teach effectively. She is confident that she can carry out interesting activities with the students, through the use of a lot of supplementary teaching aids such as flashcards, word wheels, and other visual aids, and has created a more language-rich learning environment to engage the students. She believes that “pupils learn faster through these activities compared to when they only use the textbook and activity book”, and she herself feels motivated “when pupils’ vocabulary and communication skills improve”.

Now the students can even read simple texts with the correct pronunciation and intonation, and some can communicate in simple English effectively. She hopes that these foundations allow the students to effectively progress to Level Two. The teacher feels that she is “lucky to have the opportunity to be an English teacher” and only hopes that she will be a much better teacher in the future.



**“Thank you.”**

**“You’re welcome, but why?”**

**“For providing the motivation and pushing me to do more. I’ve always wanted to use games and stories in the lessons but have been lazy.”**

**T**HESE were the words that prompted an enlightening and mutual appreciation discussion between myself and one of my mentees, Ms Ng, a teacher at SJK Chung Hua Lundu. We have been working together since February 2011 and there have been numerous occasions when the prospect of meeting with her mentor has prompted sighs, excuses, unexpected urgent appointments, phone calls, marking, work of higher priority, et cetera. And yet there have also been questions, requests for assistance and advice on various activities, advice to other mentees and colleagues, demonstrations of achievements and acknowledgement of changes taking place.

This particular acknowledgement of change came from a recent request on how to use storytelling and books in her Year One and Two classrooms. Time was spent in the school library discussing different types of books available, how to use stories, the purpose of using stories, and many other quite overwhelming new ideas. We looked at a selection of picture books for her to choose something she thought her class might enjoy. Simple advice was to just take five minutes to sit down with the class and tell them a story, no activities, no expectations, no “work”, just a story.

At our next meeting, the teacher returned two of the big books and reported that:

*I just went through the book telling the story and letting the students look at the pictures. A few days later, the students asked when they could have another story.*

This was an achievement in student feedback and demonstrating the power of stories that gave the teacher a clear message – there needs to be more stories in her classrooms.

*I have tried to replace some of the text-book stories to use pictures, activities that interest the students, questions to make them think, and prizes and more.*

This is only a first step, but this is enough to have led to a quite emotional period of reflection in recognising that she can and is capable of pushing herself to make real changes for her students. Her long-held ideas of using stories and games overcame her insecurities and the rewards are clear.



## Mark Silverlock

British Council Mentor

British Council mentors and teachers celebrate a symposium run by the teachers themselves

**W**HEN I first started working with this teacher, she was very nervous and unsure about her own ability. This was made worse due to the fact that she did not have a great deal of experience in teaching English. Over time, through discussion with peers in our group and myself, she has become more confident in herself and this has shown in her classes.

She has a lovely manner with her students and is very dedicated to her job. This year, she will be an invaluable part of our team, and will help others, making the progress that she has made. *"The first time I was told to teach Year One English, I wondered how I was going to overcome this 'big problem' since I had no experience in it. My problem was how to control these little kids. They were all very active – Oh No! The problems became critical and we were told to be ready to join the Native Speaker Programme in February 2012. I could feel that this programme would bring me back to my college life again. My mentor came to our school at last. He said he wanted to observe my Year One English class. I felt I wanted to cry because I was so nervous. My mentor is a soft-spoken man, and I eventually felt comfortable around with him. Things got better and my*

*control over the class also improved. He helped me a lot on the class control. I felt more confident at last.*

*"He also shared with us some fun and interesting websites – they are very useful and help me a lot in my teaching. From this programme, I have learnt many new ideas for my lessons. At last, my pupils are happily learning English and of course, I also enjoy my teaching. As a teacher, I feel happy as a lark when I see my students can learn very well. It is a precious gift for me to see the pupils gain their knowledge from me. I am proud to be a teacher!"*

**"FROM THIS PROGRAMME I HAVE LEARNT MANY NEW IDEAS FOR MY LESSONS. AT LAST MY PUPILS ARE HAPPY LEARNING ENGLISH AND OF COURSE, I ALSO ENJOY MY TEACHING."**





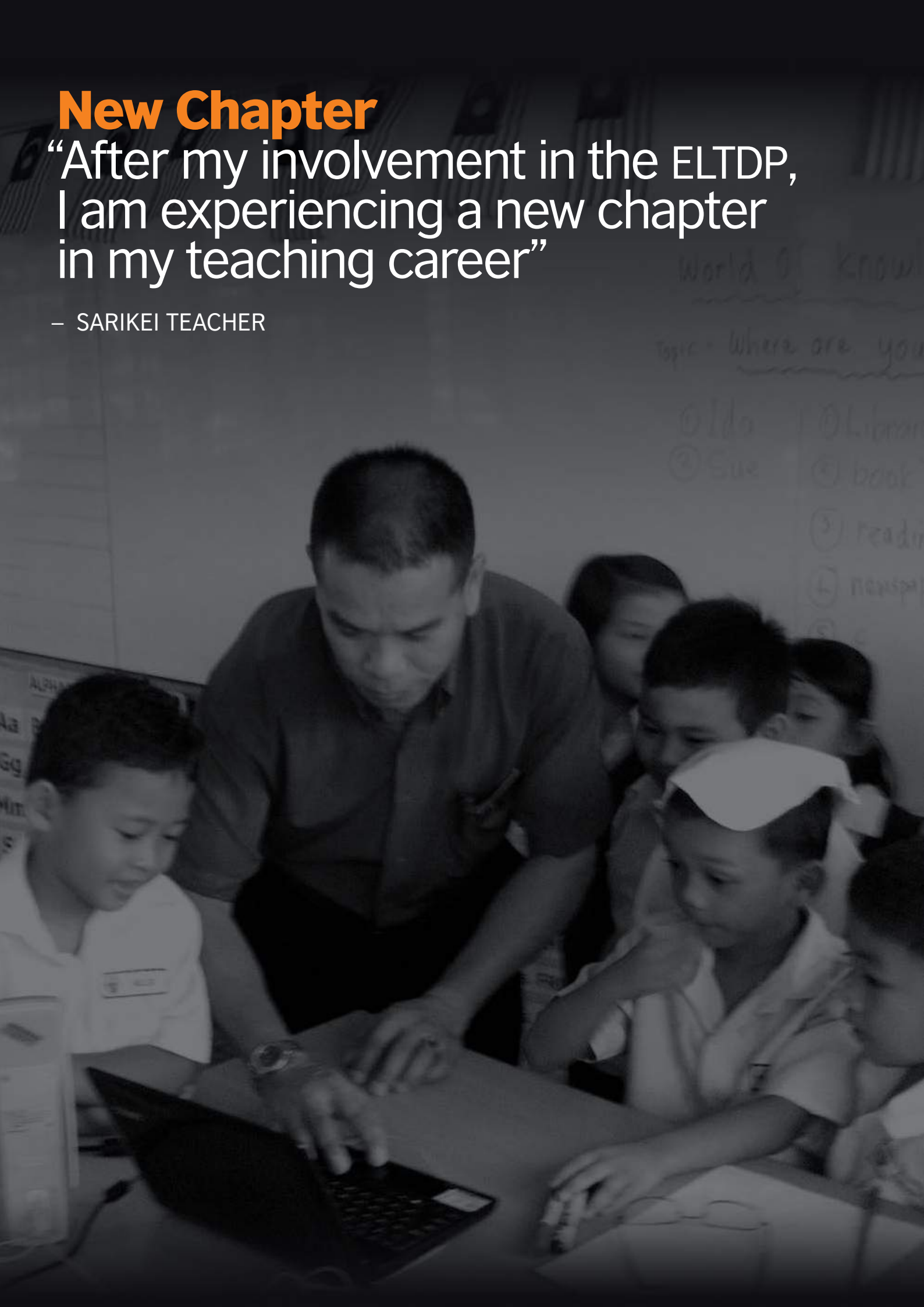
## New Chapter

“After my involvement in the ELTDP,  
I am experiencing a new chapter  
in my teaching career”

– SARIKEI TEACHER

SARAWAK

SOUTH CENTRAL REGION







Above: British Council mentor Tim Hughes and local teacher Mr Panggie work with parents at Kampung Tanjung Bijat, near Sri Aman, Sarawak South Central zone.

# ELTDP JAZZ CHANT



Our input for this Book of Changes  
You might consider rather strange as  
It is different from all the others  
That you'll find between these covers.  
But we've learned to be creative,  
To try new things, be innovative.  
So get the rhythm, feel the beat  
Snap your fingers, tap your feet.  
Chant the lyrics. That's correct!  
The ELTDP effect!

We did not know what to expect  
When we started this new project.  
What was it going to be about?  
Views were mixed, of that, no doubt.  
Teachers, in anticipation,  
Showed a lot of variation,  
Some eager, showing motivation  
Hadn't any reservation.  
Others felt some consternation,  
Nervous bags of trepidation,  
Jam-packed full of deprecation  
About their own pronunciation,  
Professional qualification ...  
They dreaded lesson observations.

First experiences did confirm  
That we had a lot to learn.  
Phoneme blending and segmenting  
Gave confidence a thorough denting.  
It was suggested, too much drilling  
Was hardly thrilling, unfulfilling.  
That, repetition has its place  
But lessons need to have some pace.  
So lesson planning took a relook,



Supplemented use of text book.  
We tried out games and group activity,  
Planned class control with sensitivity.  
Made resources, laminated  
Speaking activities created  
Flashcards took the place of chalking  
Role play was fun, it got kids talking.  
Did English concerts, parents came  
Children loved the chance for fame.  
Stories showed the joy of reading  
(So, please, more books is what we're pleading!)

As time's passed, we've made progress  
And we're pleased with our success.  
Some banished nerves, to volunteer  
For the MELTA conference last year  
At the Creative Teachers exhibition  
They did well ... gained recognition.  
The main thing that we now concede  
Is it's not just training that we need.  
Guidance offered and advice  
Whilst useful will not alone suffice.  
We learn what doesn't work, what does  
The things that fail, the ones that buzz.  
Action research, retrospection  
Lead us now to self-reflection.

*Debak Zone ELTDP teachers: Abart, Hajar, Patricia, Wan Hazleen, Yusril (SK Datuk Bandar), Dayang Faridah, Stella (SK St Christopher), Gurhka (SK Muton), Joseph (SK Nanga Gayau), Serani (SK Dit).*

**Note: \*MELTA is the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association.**





**FUN NEW ACTIVITIES**  
helped teacher Jenifer AK  
Andrew Bugat, or SK Abang Moh  
Sessang in Saratok manage her  
once unruly class.

**L**AST YEAR, Jenifer had Year One, Year Four and Year Six classes for English, was new to the school and missed her old colleagues. However, she formed a close and mutually supportive relationship with her new colleague, Selamah.

When I joined the project in September 2011, Jenifer was feeling dispirited and frustrated. There were 34 children in Year One and the classroom was dark, gloomy and became very wet whenever it rained. The class teacher wanted the furniture arranged in rows making it difficult to move around the room and the children were noisy, excited and unable to listen. Jenifer even considered leaving teaching. We discussed classroom management and organisation ideas, letting children work more independently, motivating the class and Jenifer experimented with ways of getting the children’s attention and interest.

There was a group of boys in the class who showed signs of specific learning difficulties and they were not willing to attempt

anything, but used their energies to disrupt activities. We used classroom research activities to find out what the children responded to best. One morning, Jenifer described the activity she had planned. I thought it was too complex and chaotic but kept quiet. The lesson involved cutting, matching and sticking graphemes to complete words to match with pictures. It meant negotiating very small pieces of paper, sharing scissors and glue, with 34 children sitting close to each other on the floor. The class worked in near silence for over an hour, speaking only to share ideas about their work or to ask for glue or scissors. We looked at each other in stunned silence with ear-splitting grins!

“The biggest thing has been to learn to let go. To accept that kids can actually be independent – I mean much younger kids especially my Year Two. The bubble map we did for water – I thought that kind of thing could only be done by much bigger kids and it didn’t suit young learners. But when I tried it – Oh my God! There was something beyond my expectations there and I should try more things with them instead of doing the same things.” said Jenifer.

What have the children enjoyed?

“I split them into groups and they had to write a page each about sea animals (to make a group book). They have learnt it doesn’t have to be perfect – it means they are less tense and it gives them freedom to be more creative, which is something I have always wanted the them to be – more creative,” she shared.

As the class moved through Year Two, Jen continued to introduce them to more and more independent activities, inventing complex language games and composing her own songs to teach phonics and vocabulary. They always responded well and there is a dramatic change in their attitudes to Jenifer and English.

Jenifer is always reflective, evaluates her own performance and has a developed a genuine interest in individual needs and how children learn. We’re looking forward to working with the same class in Year Three. Jen is my hero, especially when she rejects my ideas, but uses them to come up with something much more innovative and exciting!

**MR JEMAT** is a deputy head with 33 years teaching experience. This rhyme was written after discussing with him the changes he has gone through this year teaching Year One KSSR after many years of teaching Level Two. Despite initial fears, he has willingly embraced all the changes involved and has earned the respect and affection of other teachers for his humility, honesty, willingness to cooperate and openness to suggestions. He is a great role-model for younger teachers and an example of someone who truly embraces the ideals of life-long-learning.



**THINK:** Reflective Practice. Any fears? The thinking part. I have no ideas.

**PLAN:** The important thing is class control. I’ll scold them severely if they get too bold.

**DO:** *O.K. Class. Back to your seats. Listen to teacher. Repeat. Repeat. Open your books and turn to page 3. Open your books and listen to me!* (Oh dear, there’s no response at all. I’m afraid I’m talking to the wall).

**REVIEW:** (The pupils are naughty. They’re not very nice. Won’t listen to instructions or take my advice.) (Their level’s too low. They don’t know a thing. And I truly don’t know where to begin.) No! Teaching Year One really won’t do. I wish I was back in Level Two.

Are you willing to try something new? Keep it simple. Keep it calm. Get them involved. It’ll do no harm. Praise them readily. Let them have fun. Prepare some resources. It’s easily done. Don’t say it’s impossible. Don’t say you can’t. Why not a song? Why not a jazz chant?

Talk, talk, talk. I used to talk. Lots of repeating, drilling in ranks, copying words and filling in blanks. Talk, talk, talk. I used to talk. (Now I must change. It’s not easy I know. But I want to succeed, so I’ll give it a go.)

**THINK-PLAN-DO:** The important thing is that they must all take part. I’ll praise them for trying. That’s a start. Pictures and pair work, role-play or a game. No two lessons will be the same. And I’ll give them a hand if they don’t understand. *Class, are you ready? Now we’ll begin. Today’s special sounds are p – i – n, pin. You’re doing your best. That I can tell. And you’re all thinking hard. You’re all doing well.*

**REVIEW:** (We’re on the same page! We’re on the same line! I just can’t believe it. And discipline’s fine.) (The pupils are great. They’re all very nice. They listen to each other. They take my advice.) (We all work together in the same direction. If we keep on like this we’ll reach perfection!)

They’ve made books. They’ve played shops. They’ve practised their writing. They’ve all tried to listen. It’s really exciting. They’re trying to read. It’s taken a while. They’re all speaking English. And with a smile.

Teaching Year One is nothing to fear. I look forward to teaching them all next year.



**SNIPPETS** from teachers on the theme of “Enjoyment”.

“The most significant change in my English teaching is that my pupils can learn in an enjoyable environment with the help of a variety of English language material and English teaching approaches that I use.”

– **Hamsa, SK Beladin**

“Before I was involved in this programme, most of my teaching and learning activities were teacher-centred. I have now been taught how to conduct a number of enjoyable activities that attract the pupils’ attention. Before this programme was held, most of the pupils in Year Two were not interested when it was English period.”

– **Azrul, SK Semarang, Pusa**

“I can see the response from the children is very positive and my class control is even better. I can monitor them without worrying about the noise that they make because I now know the noise shows they are actively involved in the activity that I have prepared for them. I have to make the language exciting to learn and create the correct atmosphere for them to learn. It is all about discovering new things and we as teachers must provide the children with the correct environment.”

– **Abang Johari, SK Maludam**

“The pupils have become more enthusiastic about learning English. Pupils have learnt to work in groups and help each other. They have new experiences in learning English by using many types of materials. The assessment activities have become more joyful with more variation and this makes pupils keener to be evaluated. Many different strategies used and learning styles catered for so pupils will not get bored.”

– **Zuraida, SK Beladin**

“Pupils cannot wait for group activities. They become enthusiastic and try to compete with each other. Pupils feel energetic during English class. They become excited and always ask what the next activity for the next class is.”

– **Jiha, SK Spinang**

“[By using warmers] ... They feel happy and enjoy themselves, doing something before the start of a lesson.”

– **Suriha, SK Beladin**



# CHANGING CONFIDENCE



**C**ONFIDENCE – without it, we lack passion and motivation, the drive to further our knowledge and to experiment in our classrooms. We cannot do our best for our pupils or encourage confidence within them. To be a confident teacher is to be more self-aware, knowing our strengths and weaknesses, when to ask for help and continuously reflecting. Reflecting not to look for reasons to be discouraged but to examine honestly and have the confidence to be inspired. Some extracts from teachers writing, about changes to their confidence:

“I have become more confident in speaking English, even though I still make a lot of grammar and sentence structure mistakes. At first I was very shy and didn’t want to make mistakes, now I have become more spontaneous when I want to speak English. I don’t have to think for a very long time and make sentences before I speak. As a result, I make more mistakes. And you know what? I don’t care as long as I speak in English!

“I now feel less worried if I happen to approach someone who can’t communicate with me unless it is in English – like the mentor. I know they can understand me, even if I make mistakes. Even though I became busier after joining the ELTDP, I am really appreciated for I

have a chance to learn new things and get to know more people during the programme.”

“I also noticed that my confidence level has increased. I can feel that my nervousness during the observation is decreasing and I am more comfortable with having the observer in my class. I feel free to speak English with my pupils without hesitating as to whether it is correct or not. Besides, I think that I have been motivated to be more hard-working than before. Having a variety of resources and access to resources also makes me more confident in my class. I have noticed that as I have become more confident, so have the children.”

“Compared with last year, I feel more satisfied with the achievement of my Year One pupils, although there are a few naughty pupils in the class and some are still out of control. I used to feel worried before entering the class and I still feel worried about the progress of the lesson, whether or not it will go well but I know now that most of the pupils will respond well. They try to speak and answer questions in English although it is in short sentences or a single word. This is the big change since the ELTDP has been running in this school. I feel proud of their positive attitude. I hope that they will cultivate this attitude for the future and forever.”



Anne Clarke  
British Council Mentor



**M**Y FIRST MEETING with this teacher was memorable in that, of all of my teachers, she seemed to be the most “traditional” in her approach to teaching. Although very hardworking, she was frustrated that her efforts were not producing motivating lessons. This is the story she wrote in October 2012, which shows how her approach has changed – after 15 months on the project, she is now an extremely effective teacher who produces excellent results.

I have been teaching English for more than 17 years but I have never found any of my pupils wanting to do writing. Previously, the children copied from the board or they did gap fill in their activity books. It was really about practising handwriting. There was nothing interesting in this for the children and they found it was exhausting work. They didn’t want to do it but they had to, even if it was very boring for them.

Only after my involvement in ELTDP am I experiencing a new chapter in my teaching profession. There are so many things that I have learnt from my mentor and one of these things is using big books to teach English. This works very effectively in introducing new vocabulary and language patterns. Also big books are useful for encouraging writing activities. And my children love it! And the most surprising thing is that they love to do their own writing. When I come into the classroom and start teaching them, they will say, “Write, Teacher, write!” after a few minutes of the lesson and they will shout with excitement when I say, “OK, you can do some writing.”

When my mentor suggested that the children could do their own independent writing, I was very sceptical! I did not think that Year One children could do anything except copy. My mentor suggested that the children could choose a picture from the big book and write about the picture. This allows the children to have a choice in what they are doing and teaches them that writing is a way of expressing themselves, not just copying what the teacher writes.

Now I know that I have to let the children try to do their writing, and if they make mistakes, they can learn from their mistakes. It was very difficult at first because we teachers just think about right and wrong. Now all of the hard work has really paid off with the children full of enthusiasm for writing and I feel great when the children produce amazing results – although not from everybody. You can see the remarkable outcomes of it. When the children first started doing their independent writing, I was so happy. I have never felt so satisfied with my teaching before. It’s a great feeling seeing the children enjoying doing their work and doing a great job for themselves. With the big book, you can’t hold back the children’s excitement when they see you walking in the classroom with it.

All my children come from low income families where most of the parents are illiterate and English is the foreign language. They have no other source of learning English other than their English teacher – and that’s me! Thus it is my responsibility to be the best language provider. With my mentor’s guidance, I can do my best and a lot of thanks to my mentor who goes beyond her scope of duty to provide me with the best guidance. With all these, I know I am on the right path to be a good English teacher who can make learning English fun.

Jose Ariel Ramos  
British Council Mentor

Madam Lau Ling Huong



**MADAM** Lau Ling Huong in the Sarikei district has, from the get-go, tried to understand and cooperate as much as possible with her mentor and the mission of the ELTDP to bring about a positive change in English teaching in Sarawak. Here are just some of her thoughts.

**On the ELTDP in general:** I’m happy that I really gained a lot of information and knowledge on English language teaching. I was exposed to new methods, materials, activities, and language games to make English learning more meaningful and interesting.

**On the role of the mentor, mentee, and the importance of preparation of materials:** The mentor will usually discuss and provide an idea on the following lesson. In this way, I’m more prepared and more focused on the lesson. I have to get myself well-prepared in advance – this learning process is more interesting and motivating. I was also taught how to prepare teaching materials which are very useful for the learners such as phonics wheels, small phonics books, and word monsters.

**On the effect on her students:** With the different activities and methods taught by the mentor, pupils are really motivated and energetic when learning English. Their listening skills have also improved.

**On the importance of networking and sharing ideas:** The teachers under the same mentor meet once a month and we are able to share ideas and teaching materials together. The mentor will record and take pictures of the learning and teaching process in certain schools. Thus we are able to see other teachers’ teaching processes and their materials. These are useful because different teachers have different ideas. Besides that, we can also see the work of the other groups using the Sarikei district web blog.

*Madam Lau has not only continually tried to change her working methods for the better but also continuously tries to improve her language skills. Despite her busy schedule at school and being a working mom, she also finds time to attend voluntary English lessons with a small group of dedicated Sarikei teachers. Good job, Madam Lau, and keep up the positive attitude!*



Zoe Hibbert  
British Council Mentor

Anne Dye  
British Council Mentor

BECOMING A MORE  
INDEPENDENT AND  
RESPONSIBLE TEACHER

This is an interview I conducted with Miss Salmah Binti Taip, a teacher at SK Penghulu Andin who has undergone a huge transformation since participating in the ELTDP. When we started working together, Miss Salmah was in her first year of teaching English. She admitted to feeling a little lost and not really knowing where to find answers to questions she had. Now, having produced and confidently delivered a series of her own resources and sourced resources using a variety of different approaches, I talked to her about how this transformation came about.

What has been the biggest change for you in terms of your teaching this year?

I think the biggest change has been the range of resources I use and how I choose what language to teach. Last year, I had a wide supply of resources but it didn't feel like it because I didn't know how to choose. Now, I can pick resources that are suitable for my pupils.

Last year I often found that only a few of the pupils were able to follow my class, but now with the different choices I am making, even the weaker pupils are engaged and learning something every lesson. It is not that you are telling me what to do, but through your suggestions and ideas, and the things we try out, I have come to learn how to choose. I try things out and if they work, I proceed with them.

What is it that you are doing differently exactly?

Before, I used to go to the bookshops and look for anything that was for Year Two English. I looked at the textbook, the activity book and the syllabus but that was all. The KSSR syllabus guides us but it doesn't tell us exactly what language structures to use or how many nouns to teach each week. The teacher has to decide the content. This year, I have managed to choose the content according to the needs of my pupils. I am thinking more and in doing so, I find out what problems my pupils are having and I try to counter them. I realise that there is never just one solution. I have many different pupils in my class, so I need to use differentiation.

What classroom activities have been successful?

I have lots of activities so I cannot remember them all. The ones my pupils respond to most are sharing big books and related resources, guided reading, pair-work speaking and role-play. Visual aids help to focus pupils so big books, for example, are very effective in teaching a new language. They get involved and

Miss Salmah Binti Taip giving special attention to her students



point at the pictures and the pictures help them to understand. Guided reading is effective because I can give pupils a book that is good for their reading level. Even the weakest pupils can take part. The pupils really enjoy role-play and pair-work speaking activities. They like to talk to each other and again they can all take part.

What role has the ELTDP played in helping you grow as a teacher?

It has helped me a lot. I get ideas from my mentor and from meeting up with other teachers in my district and I think about them. Talking to other teachers helps me to develop my ideas. I hope I will always have a variety of people to share ideas with. Maybe my group can remain in contact.



David Sze Ah Lim, conducting his class with aid of a laptop computer

**FIRST MET** David after I had been visiting his school for two weeks. As an assistant head, David was always called away on other duties. We finally met when I observed his Year One English class. He obviously cared for and about his students and his classroom management was excellent but the lesson was hardly stimulating even though his classroom evidenced an attempt at creating a visually exciting educational environment. However David, due to his administrative duties, had little time or the inclination to discuss his lesson plans let alone reflect on the success or otherwise of his lessons. I persisted – varying my approaches to David many times until gradually he began to comprehend what the ELTDP is all about, how it could assist his pupils in this rural area in which he has lived with his family and taught for a number of years, and how it could help him to be a more exciting, stimulating and even fulfilled teacher of English. He became an extremely cooperative mentee – suggesting meeting times to discuss and reflect on his lessons, submitting written lesson plans and written reflections in the notebook which I provided for each of my mentees.

David took over the organisation of two or three district-wide meetings held at his school. At one of these meetings, David's Year One English classroom was the centre of attention for all the mentees with its fantastic visually exciting and educational decorations! David is a joy to work with, always an accessible enthusiastic professional and shares his experience and ideas with us all. My task has been very easy really with David – I just awakened the sleeping guru within! I believe that with many mentees – this is a

common key to the sustainability of the Project. Now let's listen to David's version ...

David Sze Ah Lim. SK St Dominic Pichin

With the implementation of ELTDP and the presence of an English mentor in my school, it seems to be great changes have taken place in the environment of the teaching of English especially in Years One and Two, when compared to the previous year. Same goes to the teaching approach and techniques that we got through the sharing of ideas during the English Workshop Sessions. These new ideas and approaches – we introduced and applied in our schools and they work well. I myself have more confidence in the teaching of English; my pupils have enjoyed most of my lessons especially my media lessons (i.e. the using of ICT, projectors, screen, etc.) and my *Oh My English* TV lessons. Also with guidance, advice and suggestions given by my kind-hearted and open-minded mentor, I always have no fear and always have confidence in myself especially in the teaching of English.

Regarding my classroom management, I believe my classroom set-up has helped a lot. I did copy some ideas from my pre-school teacher's classroom on how to arrange the seating for better class control and I added display charts, teaching aids and did some decoration to my Year One classroom also.

My conclusion is that I hope that the ELTDP should be continued and should be carried out again in the coming years.





**MADAM CHONG DECIDED TO THROW HERSELF ENTHUSIASTICALLY INTO THE PROGRAMME AND WAS VERY RECEPTIVE TO NEW IDEAS AND ADVICE.**

*Madam Chong with her pupil of SJK Chung Hua Batu 35.*

**W**HEN I first met Madam Chong of SJK Chung Hua Batu 35, she was very nervous and quite upset about meeting a native English speaker who wanted to work with her as an English teacher. As a non-optionist, she was not a very confident English speaker and she had not chosen to teach English. Although SJK Chung Hua Batu 35 has experienced and hardworking English teachers, English was seen as a very difficult subject in this school and it was not very popular.

As the weeks passed, Madam Chong's fluency in and confidence with English improved. She has spoken in front of a large group of teachers and district education officers this year to explain why the ELTDP is useful. Madam Chong decided to throw herself enthusiastically into the programme and was very receptive to new ideas and advice. As a dedicated teacher, she soon adopted the philosophy of the KSSR and she is able to devise suitable lesson plans and activities.

Madam Chong's English class (now Year Two) enjoy English lessons and they are used to speaking in pairs or groups in English. The lessons are entirely in English medium with very rare use of Mandarin.

Early in 2012, Madam Chong was in the library with this class and a Level Two class came in. They were very surprised by the younger pupils' ability and willingness to speak English. They asked her how the Year Twos could speak English better than them. She was very pleased with her class. Some colleagues also told her they had noticed that Year Two (and now also Year One) often choose to greet teachers and sometimes make simple comments in English. This is a real change of attitude towards English in that school.

It has been suggested that Madam Chong should keep this class for English at least for Year Three and maybe beyond. Senior teachers are wondering if the new teaching methods could lead to improved UPSR (or whatever it will be called) results in English. Madam Chong is trying to develop her knowledge of English grammar in order to be able to do this confidently. Madam Chong and her fellow mentee, Madam Hiu, made a huge effort to help me with organising an English afternoon for families. It was an inclusive and successful event and replaced the usual English Day which normally has a focus on competitions. Parents and children took part in fun English activities including storytelling, role play, action songs, rapping and rhymes.

Madam Chong's dedication and enthusiasm have been recognised and she has the support of her colleagues in spite of some initial reservations. Both head teachers at this school have been very positive about the programme and Madam Chong's progress with her English class.

Madam Chong has supported her colleague who is teaching Year One English this year. She has even helped teachers in schools without ELTDP mentors by passing on and explaining information and ideas. It has been very rewarding working with Madam Chong.



**W**HEN I FIRST ENTERED Hilda's classroom, it was immediately apparent that she had a great rapport with her pupils. She has a very friendly and open classroom manner. She also liked to get her pupils out of their chairs and sit them on the floor. She had a tendency to address her pupils in Bahasa Malaysia, her first language on occasion. Also, her teacher talk time was quite high.

Over time, Hilda and I worked on trying new things in her classroom. We tried broadening interaction patterns using pair work, peer correction and activities that appeal to various different learning styles. When I asked Hilda what she said in Bahasa Malaysia, I then asked her if we could use English instead. She has worked very hard on introducing common functional language which has had the added advantage of making her pupils more fluent and more comfortable with English.

Hilda is a very positive person to work with. She routinely asks questions regarding the English language and teaching methodologies as she is genuinely keen to improve her teaching for both her own and her pupils' benefit.

"I will elaborate the changes that have resulted from the ELTDP into two perspectives. Firstly, I would like to write about how this project changes my teaching styles. Before getting involved in this project, I

**"THIS PROJECT HAS GUIDED ME ON HOW TO TEACH SPEAKING AND LISTENING. COMING UP WITH CREATIVE ACTIVITIES AND GIVING PUPILS A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN ENGLISH IS THE KEY TO TEACH SPEAKING AND LISTENING."**

tended to talk in Bahasa Malaysia with my pupils. My mentor guided me a lot on how to overcome it by telling me to use pictures, gestures and many more," said Hilda.

"Besides that, this project has guided me on how to teach speaking and listening. Coming up with creative activities and giving pupils a lot of opportunity to speak in English is the key to teach speaking and listening. The workshops organised by our mentor also provide me with a lot of new knowledge which I can apply during my teaching and learning session," she added.

"I noticed that my pupils have also shown some significant change. They are able to understand simple classroom instructions. Some of them are able to talk in simple English sentences regarding the text they have read and stimulus pictures shown. They also able to take words, phrases and sentences dictation correctly. Hopefully, there will be more significant changes in future."



Martin Froggett  
British Council Mentor

Michael Earley  
British Council Mentor

**W**HEN I FIRST STARTED working with this teacher, it was clear that she had the capacity to be a great teacher. She was creative, full of life and all the students waited on her every action. However, her lessons didn't capture her full potential and there wasn't as much learning happening as there could be. By her own admission, she had become a very routine teacher, caught up in all the external obstacles that slow teachers down.

We have always had a very open relationship and spend most of our time together discussing problems as she and I perceive them and reasons for these problems as well as a number of different approaches and possible solutions to get around these things. When possible, she takes these ideas into the classroom and tries them out before reflecting on their success or lack of success. This is then the basis for our next discussion, and so it goes.

The depth of our conversation and understanding of issues around teaching and learning has developed our mutual view of the work dramatically over the last two years. She is incredible to talk to now and I often go to her seeking advice for other mentees. She seems to know my job better than I do and really understands why this project was created and why it is so beneficial. She's always thinking ahead and looking at the bigger picture and trying to see how we can

extend our work beyond the teachers involved and beyond the lifetime of the project. I love our time together.

*This is what she had to say: Training was previously very old-fashioned and not particularly useful or developmental. It didn't really lead to any professional development as we were just told new things to follow. This new way is really helping me. It is a project and we are the research. This is how development is happening. I feel I'm really starting to understand and develop personally and professionally. I fear less and gain courage and confidence. I have more enthusiasm to see that they will be a person one day. The kids are developing daily, not drastically but step by step. They have less fear and more courage to speak and learn English as a third language.*

*One day when I lost my voice, I let the students work on their own and I had the courage to do this. They managed to read with help from their peers and gained confidence and enthusiasm from doing this. I noticed that they were doing so much in the lesson and I wasn't saying anything. I realised how selfish I had been – always talking, being an entertainer, just asking a few who knew the answer so that they would give the correct answer and I could carry on. It had been about me, but now I try to learn from them. If I teach and they follow, nobody learns but if I research and think then everybody develops.*

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**ZALEKHA** is a shy individual who found it difficult to manage classes and for whom it was the first time she had been asked to be a Year One English teacher. Over a period of 18 months, she has worked on a number of techniques to help her with both student behaviour and setting up tasks effectively. Working with her has been a pleasure as she has always been happy to ask for help and try out the suggestions that I have given her. To see her so happy in her work today gives me great satisfaction.

**B**EFORE MY MENTOR ARRIVED, I had never taught English before. But when one of our English teachers left, I was told that I must teach English. I was afraid because I didn't think my English was good enough. When I started teaching, my mentor told me that the students must use English to learn. And to do this, I should let them practice with activities and games.

I am quite a shy person and I find it difficult to control my students without a cane and I was worried that my *guru besar* (head teacher) would be unhappy with me because my students made lots of noise. At first, I found things really difficult. Sometimes I played too many games and the students misbehaved, and when I played no games at all, they still misbehaved! I didn't know what to do and I found myself crying one day on the way to class.

My mentor saw me and agreed to come to my class every Tuesday morning. He once again showed me how to use reward systems, and

asked me to put myself in the shoes of the children and think back to how I used to treat my daughter when she was young. I felt so desperate that I was even thinking about giving my students money so that they would be nice, but my mentor told me that stickers and certificates that they could show their parents would be enough. I tried to do this and I was surprised at how easy it was to get the attention of my students!

Sometimes though, I forget other things that I have spoken about with my mentor but my lessons are much better than they were and I now enjoy my classes! Only two weeks ago, I left my students on the mat for over 30 minutes and they started to cause some problems. However, when I went back to the staffroom to talk about the lesson with my mentor, I said to him that I knew why I had problems, and I feel that I am now better able to understand why things happen in the classroom. Instead of always blaming or praising the students, I can look at my own teaching and ask myself what I did right or wrong during the lesson.



# EVERY CHILD ENGAGED

Jaimy Goh from SJK Chung Hua Pantu



**F**ROM my very first meeting with Jaimy Goh, a young teacher and Head of English at SJK Chung Hua Pantu, I could see clearly that she had real potential. Jaimy showed that she had already developed some ideas that reflect the aims of the ELTDP. Since then, Jaimy has worked relentlessly to develop a communicative, child-centred approach to teaching and learning English. Her attitude and motivation have always been high. She has led a class from Year One to the beginning of Year Three. Through Jaimy's skilful approach and patient encouragement, the children in this class are able to speak and understand English really well and with great confidence. Jaimy's positive focus now extends beyond her own classroom to others in the school and to parental involvement. I am always delighted and happy when I visit SJK Pantu as I know that Jaimy will be constantly trying out new ideas, experimenting, willing to keep on learning, perfecting and developing tirelessly.

A positive attitude, dedication, that extra mile – special teachers like Jaimy deserve a medal for the stamina, staying power and determination they display. As her mentor, I have been encouraged and so happy to see how she has nurtured every single child in her care with careful thought, planning and patience. Witnessing exciting, innovative and fun times leading to clear progress in learning is just so uplifting. Here is what one of Jaimy's students and Jaimy herself had to say about the ELTDP experience:

**Cheong Huei, student:** "I like learning English but it is very challenging and difficult. Jaimy shows us beautiful, attractive pictures and very interesting books. The best thing is when Jaimy asks me to practice speaking."

**Jaimy Goh, teacher:** "My approach to teaching is child-centred, with lots of speaking practice. Children need to think and internalise to find answers through acting, dialogue work, sentence-building, asking and answering questions and phoneme discrimination to name a few. They work a lot in pairs and groups and really enjoy mingling activities."

"I consider what the children already know and build on that, planning in stages from input to feedback, with provision for lots of examples and practice in between. In written work, I differentiate, providing levels of work appropriate for different abilities. I listen to the children, guiding them when necessary. I involve every child. In KSSR, the focus on listening and speaking is a must. That is why in my lessons, I engage the children in more oral participation to build up their language skills. So when I find they are able to take part in all the activities I have planned and the lesson is successful, I feel happy about it. These children have the potential, so if I give them the right opportunities, they will just get better and better."



**M**AKING LESSONS appropriate for lower primary learners with low exposure to English can be tricky. Throughout the project, all teachers have become increasingly able to see lessons from the pupils' point of view, make them more child-friendly, motivating and easier to understand. This is a gradual process; it is an ongoing success story. When asked to describe their situations before the ELTDP, the mentees shared that there were classroom management difficulties such as calming the pupils, getting their attention, classroom control, giving instructions and transitions. They also felt that they were just told to "go and teach" without enough guidance given and had to find out for themselves what was appropriate.

Teachers are now identifying their role in making lessons motivating, clear and child friendly. E.g. allowing students to listen to stories without being forced to read aloud, then doing simple, enjoyable activities like drawing favourite characters.

One mentee described this reflective process: "It's meaningless if we do lots of talking but the pupils do not understand. I can be speaking and they do not understand. Before, I just blamed and scolded. Then, I thought, 'Do something about your own strategies and classroom management'."

All the mentees have done so and they now find that the children are easier to control and motivate, and by using routines, gestures, clear instructions, they find it easier to understand the class. Some teachers even ask simple questions to ensure the children understand before proceeding. Here are some interesting examples

of how teachers have put this thinking into practice:

**Motivating through teams and reward systems – points and stars for good work and good behaviour:** The children now finish their work promptly and ask friends to keep quiet and behave. Rewards are given for answering questions, doing written work silently, good behaviour, doing work fast and well and speaking in English. When students get enough points they can choose a sticker they like.

**Scripted instructions and stages:** One teacher carried out action research into strategies to help students understand exercises and participate in them more by controlling and grading her own use of English in class.

"Scripting and simplifying instructions is very useful. Now I make steps for each exercise, explanations of meanings and questions to ask pupils. Steps for important things are scripted. I prepare my instructions. Usually this is easy to remember and I write it on A4 or small pieces of paper I can keep in my hand."

**Professional Sharing Network:** The schools in our district all have strong teams of teachers who try and help each other. Now we have regular "Professional Sharing Network" meetings where teachers from schools in our district can exchange ideas, successes, advice and practical tips for making their lessons child friendly and motivating.





## Increased Confidence

“Now I feel more confident  
about my teaching work,  
life at school and my life in  
Sarawak”

– JULAU TEACHER

SARAWAK  
CENTRAL REGION



Katie Goldsmith  
British Council Mentor



Parents reading with their children in Kanowit

**A TEACHER** shares his experience of a hugely successful initiative engaging parents in Dalat.

**F**OR ME, one of the most significant changes which happened during the ELTDP was the “Learn English Family” programme (LEF). Although it was merely an experiment in the beginning, I was very worried and under-confident about whether or not the parents would be willing to sacrifice their time for the programme. I thought maybe they were not ready for this kind of thing.

During the sessions, we were so proud and glad that the parents were so positive, supportive and showed great interest in all the sessions organised. When it came to the Sharing Rhymes session I thought, “Will the parents really join in with these activities, as they are acting like kids?” I was pleased to see that they really joined in and enjoyed it.

Most importantly, the project has created a



strong relationship with the parents. They had the opportunity to experience the challenges and difficulties of teaching their children and to see what it’s like to be a teacher. The beauty of it is that the parents are involved in their children’s learning process and learn a lot themselves.

Before this, I never really realised that the parents were so concerned about their children’s progress. After the LEF programme, I was really surprised when they said they would be willing to come in and help the school in the future. One or two of them said to me that they had been waiting a long time for the school to call them to discuss the progress of their children.

Dave Best  
British Council Mentor



**THIS STORY** shows how a bit of reassurance helped a teacher who was new to Sarawak gain in confidence and really blossom.

**T**HE MOST IMPORTANT change that occurred during the year was gaining control of my Year One class. This sounds easy to say but in fact, it was very difficult and took a long time. At the start of the year, all I knew was that the class was difficult to control. I had to work hard to find ways of changing the students’ behaviour. I faced a number of significant problems at the start of the year.

The first problem was that I was new to Sarawak. I had never been here before. It was my first posting so the school, the environment, the student population, language and culture, were as new to me as perhaps they may be to someone who is not from Malaysia.

The second problem was that I had no specialist training in English language

teaching. My major study area was not in language teaching at all. But I was told that I had to teach Year One English! My training at teacher’s college was very different from the reality that I found in my classroom on that first day. The methods, teaching aids and equipment I used on my teaching practicum were simply unavailable to me in my new posting.

Another problem was that most of my students were Iban. It was difficult for us to understand each other in Bahasa Malaysia (my first language), never mind in English. Early in the school year, I was told that I must use English at all times in the English class. But it didn’t work! The students could not understand my English instructions. I began to get really quite depressed.

When my mentor came to the school, I really felt quite nervous. It looked like one more “problem” I had to deal with at a difficult time. But we began to talk about the

challenges I faced in my Year One class and about my life at school. The mentor shared some ideas about classroom management and some teaching techniques. I tried them and they worked.

More importantly, the mentor helped me to realise that what I was doing in the classroom was okay because it was my first year in a totally alien situation. My confidence began to improve.

So although this year has been difficult for me in many ways, I now feel more confident about my teaching work, the life at school and my life in Sarawak.

Next year, if I have to teach Year One again, I know I will walk into the classroom on the first day with a clear idea of what I have to do, how I can teach the students and the challenges I will need to face.



**W**INIFRED Raphael from SK St. Francis has been teaching for 26 years. The school year 2012 was her first year teaching English in the KSSR curriculum and six years since she had taught English to young learners. When I first observed Winifred's class, her passion for teaching and her ability to relate to young learners was evident in her lesson.

However, as these students were just beginning Year One, they lacked the attention span and focus to fully participate during lesson time. Particularly, there were a few students who were disruptive and distracting to the other students. When discussing this challenge with Winifred, we analysed different methods that she could use to gain control of her students. Within a week of our conversation, Winifred reflected on these methods, adapted them to suit the needs of her students, and employed them in her class. The result was immediate with all students paying attention and participating during the lesson. The initially disruptive students have made good progress in their attitude towards lessons and have made great strides in learning English, some of them have become team leaders and are helping others.

I look forward to being in Winifred's class each week to see what new song or activity is introduced to the students. Furthermore, I look forward to seeing the reaction of the students and their joy at having fun while learning English.



Above right: Winifred Raphael with Jessica Kosakevitch, her British Council Mentor

The following is Winifred's reflection in her own words:

*Over the past six months, the biggest change for me has been in controlling my class. At first, I was excited to teach Year One again. But, I found that some of my students were not paying attention during my lessons, some of them were naughty.*

*I am happy to have the support of my mentor with this issue. We talked about different methods I could use in class to help control the students. I chose the methods that I felt would work the best in my class. I created teams with animal names and this helped to control the movement of the students. I made the difficult students my "special helpers" in class and gave them tasks to assist me. The behaviour and learning of these difficult students has improved a lot and they are now good students. Also, I used some of these methods in my Year Four and Five classes – this has helped those students to be better behaved during lessons. Because I have better classroom management, there is more learning happening during my lessons and I able to spend more time on useful activities. I spend less time disciplining the students. All of my students have been able to learn better and become stronger English students.*



**CLARA** is not an English optionist teacher and felt a bit perturbed about teaching the language for the 2012 academic year. She wanted her lessons to be fun, engaging and inclusive. We worked together on her lesson planning and staging to ensure that her lessons had a range of stirring and settling activities. One activity that fulfilled all her criteria and that can be used in any stage of the lesson has been a hit for her and her pupils – the "alphabet cards". She shares her story below:

The pupils in the class now enjoy spelling because of the wide range of fun activities that we do during the lesson. One of the most effective tools that I have been using is my "alphabet cards". Not only are the pupils motivated by the activities but they are also motivated during the presentation stage because they know that they have to be attentive to do well in the subsequent game/activity. The alphabet cards are very inclusive as every student is involved.

I use the cards for group work and the pupils have started to collaborate better as a team. The weaker students are actually inspired by the stronger students. One of the girls used to be quite shy and hardly said anything in class. Now, she is much more confident and is eager to know the answer. She feels less self-conscious during the group activities and when working individually, she will ask me how to spell something or check if a spelling is correct. Before, she was too afraid to ask. In fact, all the children feel less threatened or bored when learning new words. As a result of their growing confidence in spelling, their reading has improved.

Although it was a little tedious to make the alphabet cards, I feel there is less pressure on me in the classroom. I can use the cards as a simple activity to consolidate what they have learnt or use them to occupy fast finishers. They are also useful in an emergency. For example, when a colleague is unexpectedly absent, I can occupy the pupils easily while I come up with something.

What is most surprising is that the children give me ideas on how to use them, making them more motivated in the activity. And, of course, once laminated they can be used over and over again.

I feel that the improvements mentioned above have come about since I started staging my lessons better and thinking things through during the planning stage. This has been a direct result of my mentor's guidance and in this case, the spelling workshop helped.



Derek Kelly  
British Council Mentor

Below right: Keizer Ak Ula with Derek Kelly, his British Council Mentor



**KEIZER AK ULA** from SK Nanga Antaroh near Kapit speaks of how changes due to the ELTDP have brought a big smile to his face.

**A**S A TEACHER, so far the biggest benefits are the changes in my teaching and learning atmosphere especially the “routine”. Now, I can say I have a very good start of classroom routine. I enter the Year Two class with a big smile on my face when I find that everything is ready. This includes the group names, date, day, weather, topic, groups in their formation, clean tables and all bags at the back of the class. Every task mentioned above will be given marks and that drives the pupils to act accordingly.

I use simple and attractive resources in my classroom to keep good communication with the pupils. For example, the dice, word cards, balls (throw and say it), and the new one called the “spinning wheels”. The dice was used in vocabulary, speaking and even writing. Pupils say the word as the face of the dice appears, and then write the sentence.

For the spinning wheels, it is the same as what you see on television. Spin the wheel, you get the question and at the same time, you learn. All of this including your movement in class, eye contact, voice tone, and an element of surprise will get everything under control.

Unlike before, I don’t have to shout now; I don’t feel tired, frustrated and angry after class. Of course not every day is perfect but now I have moved one step up to another level. I have my resource box filled up and the word wall placed in my class.

Group work keeps pupils in a competitive mood and that’s what matters the most. Like us adults who always try to be the best when there’s competition, young learners feel this twice as much as us, and they love it. They give the best discipline, the best action, and work because they really want to win. Therefore, group work keeps pupils in their best learning mood. Pupils love me now as I do feel for them too.

Colin Brooks  
British Council Mentor



**AT THE START** of the project, most of the teachers hadn’t heard of classroom research or had the opportunity to engage in it. By researching their own classroom, teachers have the opportunity to decide for themselves what issues are important and what to try to overcome them. Teachers have the opportunity to investigate the effects of their teaching on student learning and to make modifications or adjustments if necessary. The following is from a teacher, who researched her classroom, to address the lack of speaking and the overall difficulty the students were having in speaking English:



**W**HEN I FIRST started on this project, most of the classroom activities were teacher-centred. Speaking activities were rarely implemented in the classroom and pupils – especially the moderate and weak-level ones – rarely spoke English.

For my first classroom research project, I wanted to examine this issue. I wanted to find out why my pupils were struggling in speaking. Was there anything I could do differently to help them? Were the strategies I was using working? To find out the answers and solve my issue, I used many research tools.

The first step was mind-mapping. It helped me see all the possible causes, not just the ones that I had thought of before. I also videoed my lessons and took pictures to help me see what was happening. My mentor helped me and gave me ideas to try.

After several discussions with my mentor and through my classroom research, I was able to overcome my problems teaching English in the classroom. The implementation of suggested activities such

as think-pairshare, turn and talk, questionnaires and other speaking activities means the lessons are less teacher-centred and more student-centred. This has made a big difference and has given more opportunities for the students to speak in class.

All students have the opportunity to speak in English and they look like they are having fun and are actively involved with the activities carried out. Researching my problem allowed me to solve this problem. Hopefully in the future, my students can speak English with each other and are keen to learn English. I’m looking forward to researching another issue and solving different problems in my classroom.

**THE FIRST STEP WAS MIND-MAPPING. IT HELPED ME SEE ALL THE POSSIBLE CAUSES, NOT JUST THE ONES THAT I THOUGHT OF BEFORE.**



Louise Studds  
British Council Mentor

Below: Teacher Munah Ugin conducting her lessons to a captivated class.



## TEACHER MUNAH UGIN describes the changes that occurred when she set about researching ways to improve classroom management in her classroom.

**M**Y RESEARCH focused on classroom management. I worked on instruction, whole class, group and pair work and using a rewards chart to improve my classroom management. The reason this was my focus was that I often felt frustrated and exhausted after the lesson ended. Frustrated because effective learning did not happen and I had to stop in between activities to control the students.

I began to create opportunities for the students to use the language in the classroom. Peer checking and learning were opened to the students which improved the level of confidence and maintained their self esteem. Great changes are happening among the students. For example, Carlos, Maxwell and Shahari Dev have begun to take part in the lesson and engage. They love working in groups and share rewards. One very touching moment that I will never forget is when a student, Amirul, who had recently transferred from Bintulu, greeted me with: "Good morning, teacher." He was well known as the silent boy who hardly opened his mouth. I was so glad he spoke to me. Now, he is as active as the rest of the students.

These changes have developed since I began to encourage the use

of classroom language. I labelled one corner of the classroom as an English corner and this really helped them in the language. Now, I am able to use the language in the classroom without translation.

Another great thing is that the students began to use English naturally. One day, a student called Nasrinna said, "Teacher, I don't want Hagimi to be in my group because he is noise". Although her choice of word was not accurate, she made the effort to use English in the classroom. They are all beginning to do the same. I believe all these great things do not happen just like that. I believe I have created a variety of activities which allows them to use the language in context, by creating a real situation in the classroom. I feel that role-play is an effective activity to encourage the use of language meaningfully. I created a stall in the classroom and the pupils use the language to buy and sell food. It was effective to encourage the students to use the language. Besides that, the pupils enjoyed themselves a lot.

I feel I have changed as a teacher. Since improving my instruction giving, I do not have to shout and get mad anymore, it is very tiring for teachers if this always happens in the classroom. I began to consider small things that happen in my class as very important and this motivated me to be more hard-working. I began to use my skills effectively. I began to plan my lessons properly, taking the small issues into my consideration and not taking conclusions that small issues will not cause a bad impact on my students.

Philip Edwards  
British Council Mentor

**C**ANCIRA, a teacher at Batu 36, is one of the younger teachers on the project and a non-optionist English teacher. Because English was not her major, Cancira felt that her level of language was below that of many other teachers in the ELTDP and she lacked confidence in herself.

However, during the course of the year, her attitude has been terrific and she has made a lot of effort to improve her speaking by engaging fully in the meetings she has had with me and a co-teacher, who is also on the project. Cancira has also participated well in the sub-cluster workshops we have held. At our most recent workshop, she demonstrated an electronic resource that she has been using to teach phonics in her classes.

As her confidence in speaking has improved, so has her teaching. At the beginning of the year, she relied heavily on drilling but she has proved herself to be very receptive to input and has introduced many of the ideas we have discussed into her classes. In particular, it has been noticeable that her classes have become more communicative. For example, she has made use of role-play scenarios. Cancira has also tried to make her lessons more entertaining for her students by introducing language games into her classes. She was initially worried that this would result in her losing control of her students but she has overcome this potential

problem by interspersing physical activities with sedentary activities.

Cancira shares her experience below:

*Before this year, I felt shy about speaking English and made many pronunciation mistakes. I also had some problems in the classroom and found it difficult to keep the attention of my pupils in class.*

*However, during the course of this year on the ELTDP, I've become more confident at speaking English and make fewer mistakes with my pronunciation. I also have a better understanding of the theory about teaching English. Over the past year, I introduced new ideas and activities into the classroom and the pupils seem to be more interested in learning English than previously. I'm also getting more enjoyment out of teaching than I used to because my teaching methods have improved. I feel lucky to be one of the mentees in the programme and think that it should eventually be taken up to Year Six.*

*The emphasis on phonics in the new KSSR has also had a positive impact in the classroom because it has helped the students improve their reading ability. The new syllabus has also fitted well with the ELTDP because many of the new teaching skills I've learned can be related to the teaching of phonics.*



Above: Teacher Cancira in front of her enthusiastic students.





**THIS IS A STORY** about a teacher who has made some significant changes to his practice over the past nine months. He has been teaching a Year One class for 2012, which was very challenging for many reasons. Perhaps most significantly was the fact that English was the fourth language these children were learning. To further compound this situation, Year One students were re-streamed following their first three months of tests. He found that his class was now filled with the students that had the lowest test results. At this point, his motivation for teaching English was very low! Here is his story:

**T**HIS IS my first time teaching Year One KSSR English. I lack experience in teaching it but luckily, I have a capable and helpful mentor in guiding and helping me for the whole year in teaching Year One English. At the beginning, I felt quite troubled for me to be observed once a week for the whole year because I had too much of a workload. I also teach Year Six English. Furthermore, I need to undertake continual assessment and at the same time, I am also the trainer for sports activity and many others matters.

My Year One class pupils are very weak in English and other subjects. So I need to conduct the lessons according to their level, slowly. Some of them didn't even know how to write the letters of the alphabet. I had a lack of ideas in teaching these type of pupils efficiently and effectively.

Under my mentor's guidance, we tried many efforts, including different teaching techniques, class control, lively and attractive teaching aids and many other resources. My mentor helped me in improving phonics teaching and also the correct pronunciation of letter sounds. So I started by making a lot of picture cards and word cards to teach phonics. We also share the teaching aids with other teachers from other schools.

We have gained a lot of knowledge and ideas from the teaching aids that we share together. Since then, I have been trying to use lively and attractive resources from the Internet to present my lessons. I have found that the pupils enjoyed the lessons very much. I have also used animated pictures to tell stories. At the end of the year, I am very thankful to have such a helpful mentor in helping me to make the learning fun and effective. Although the pupils are weak, they now really enjoy their lessons and have improved a lot in English.

This on-going change that has taken place has also been noticed by other teachers in the school and they have shared these comments with me:

"He has really changed this year; he is always at school very early now."

"This man is always busy preparing for his classes now."

Mentor's note: In conclusion, this teacher is much more confident and positive about teaching English. He is excited about the things that he is learning and is also beginning to share these with other teachers. Recently, we had a conversation about next year. This was his comment: "I really want to be involved in this project. I am learning lots and enjoy my teaching now. I want to do this next year too."



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR ONE PUPIL

**A**T THE BEGINNING of the year, I noticed a girl who was passive, shy and did not want to speak in class. Often, she would just cry. She was bullied by other children and got angry with them and they would go to their teachers about her. This made her more sad and angry. The only time she communicated with me was to ask to go to the toilet or for a pencil but she would just point. I had to ask her lots of questions to find out what she wanted. She had no stationary and no books.

In the beginning I was frustrated but then I realised I wanted to help her. I spoke to colleagues and with my mentor. We discussed what we could do for the girl. Through team teaching with my mentor, we had the opportunity to observe and research her class behaviour in more detail and think of solutions. My colleague helped me a lot and supported us in making positive changes for her. Also, some of the pupils have really supported her too and help her a lot in class. I moved her away from the bullies and I spoke to the class about bullying and how it made children feel and how it made me feel. I bought her pencils and colours and a pencil case but these kept disappearing so now I keep hold of them and give them to her at the beginning of the day and take them back at the end. I have written her name on everything so they won't disappear.

Her handwriting was very bad and in the beginning she couldn't hold a pencil properly. I am left-handed so couldn't help with showing her how to hold the pencil so I asked a colleague to help us and support her with her handwriting practice. She has improved a little. I also give her little cards, like Angry Birds and she likes this very much. The cards are really motivate her. I praise her a lot and gently touch her head and she then realises she has done something good and she wants to do it again.

I work with her in my free time and help her read simple words, or even just chat. Now she is more active. Sometimes she tries to give the answer and raises her hand. Her writing has started to improve, she has started to make friends and talk to them. She joins in group work and the other pupils help her. My mentor was surprised when we did a chant with masks, that the girl was the first to volunteer to take part.

Now I want her to make more friends, to speak out more and to talk to friends. I will encourage her more and do more work to encourage her to participate. She likes action songs so I will try and do more of these. I am satisfied with her and her progress and I am a little proud that I could help her. I hope I have made a difference.





**TEACHER THERESA** talks about how her involvement in the project has resulted in an improved relationship with the students and a better enjoyment of teaching English.

**M**Y NAME is Theresa Mariam. I teach at SK Perbandaran Sibu No.4 school. In the beginning, I was reluctant to teach English because I am a non-optionist English teacher. I did not like teaching English which reflected in my teaching. I used to be very frustrated and strict with my students. As a result, my students did not enjoy the English lessons. When I was told that I had been chosen for the British Council's ELTDP, I was wary and even a bit concerned about being involved in it.

When I first met my mentor, I was apprehensive. "My lesson is going to be observed every week on Tuesdays!" I thought to myself. As time went on and in working together with my mentor, I felt more comfortable during our discussions. We could exchange our opinions. He helped me a lot with my Classroom Research Project. He always reminded me to be more relaxed in the lesson, to put a smile on my face and to be consistent with my classroom rules. Yes, of course I faced some difficulties in applying this with my students but, after only a few weeks, my students got used to the rules and my more relaxed style. The lessons became much more enjoyable and I feel that I have a better relationship with my students.

Through the project I gained a lot and I learned to relax and smile more with my students. Now my lessons are very different! I enjoy teaching English and being with my students. Thanks for the transformation!



Above: Teacher Filisia shares a book with a pupil – SK Nanga Lipus near Kanowit, Sarawak Central zone.





# SARAWAK

## NORTH REGION

### **Whole School**

“Other teachers in the school are also motivated by the changes that have taken place”

– LIMBANG TEACHER



Children working as a team on school projects.



**I WISH** that I could say that due to my brilliance, this teacher is amazing. The truth of the matter is that this teacher is a natural and just needed some encouragement, some fresh ideas and someone creating an environment where she could work more collaboratively with other teachers at her school. Siti Nursyakimah Md Aziz of SK Tanjung Batu has this to share:

**E**VER SINCE I joined this Native Speaker programme (ELTDP), I have gained a lot of knowledge especially in the pedagogical area of knowledge. The most significant change that I noticed was the improvement in my classroom management. The ELTDP has helped me a lot in creating better learning environment especially in my 2 Bestari class (39 pupils) as well as in my 2 Effisien class (41 pupils). The most critical problem in these two classes was the pupils would talk while I am teaching. It was not that they did not respect the teacher but it seems like they always had interesting stories to share with their friends while teaching process is in progress. What a stressful situation!!

The other problem that arose was their walking around either while I was teaching or while completing the classroom exercise, which in turn led to the next problem – them being unable to complete given task on time. To overcome these, I have introduced three simple classroom rules:

- 1- Do not talk while the teacher is talking.
- 2- Do not leave your seat without teacher's permission.

- 3- Complete your work on time.

The other significant change that helped me a lot in creating an enjoyable learning process is applying positive reinforcement in my teaching. I have reminded myself to always praised the kids for whatever good they do, and even the slightest bit of help from them get at least "thank you" from me.

I have introduced the clapping game, "I am clever", especially in the reading class so that they will be much more motivated to read. On the problem of them being unable to complete the classroom exercises – in the case of some pupils, I have had to make a home phone call so that the parents will also be involved in the child's learning process.

When I first heard about the Professional Learning Community (PLC) last year, I was eager to know more about it and how it would help boost my pupils' performance in English.

Our final project this year was developing the PLC (what a dream come true!). Apart

from establishing ten core learning objectives which were taken from the curriculum standard, I have developed about 10 –15-minute mini lessons. These mini lessons act as a refresher before I start the lesson for the day. The mini lessons were based on previous lessons which I found that my pupils had yet to master it. As there was not much time left before the final examination, I have developed mini lessons which focused more on the participating in daily conversations; stressing on the introducing of one's self, family members and friends and articulating sounds in phonics lessons. It really worked. It created some significant changes in my pupils' learning performance and helped them revise and prepare for their final examination, as well as in their school-based assessments.

As the PLC has made the most significant changes to my teaching, I will continue this effort next year and in years to come to help my pupils enjoy learning English with the hope that they will no longer find English a burden and something difficult for them to learn. I will also share this PLC experience with my other colleagues in the school.

British Council mentors Tim Hughes and Wynne Kline support teachers to engage parents with their children's learning at a longhouse near Sri Aman.



**IT'S** been a joy to work with Zuraidah on the project. From the beginning she was open to the idea of change and willing to try new things suggested by me or other teachers. I've very much enjoyed watching her grow from someone who could use others' feedback to improve her classes to someone who comes up with her own ideas of ways to liven up the classroom. Zuraidah is a very naturally creative person, and it's been amazing to see her use that creativity in the classroom as well as share her ideas with other teachers. Here she shares the significant change she feels the ELTDP has brought:

**T**HE most significant change that has resulted from the ELTDP for me over the last few months has been the ability to show my students that English can be fun and interesting rather than scary or boring. I've tried many new techniques which have been shared with me by my mentor such as using songs, storytelling, games and speaking activities, all of which have engaged and interested my students. They enjoy the class and are learning more as well!

My students are becoming more comfortable and confident in using English. Before, my students dreaded English class but now they are always coming to me and asking what we're going to be doing in the next English lesson. They wait with anticipation for English class every day. I've very much enjoyed being a part of this programme, knowing that I can go to my mentor at any time for guidance or suggestions. Being involved in this programme has been a big blessing and I'm very happy to be a part of it. The ideas and suggestions offered by my mentor have helped me a lot with my lessons, and I'm more confident when I enter the English classroom, because I know I'm always prepared.



Cikgu Zuraidah

# THE LITTLE BUD OF CHANGE

The teachers in Lawas poetically describe the process of change through the medium of a story.



**T**HIS is a story about a caterpillar and a grasshopper, a bee and her friends; the sun and the rain. The main character is a little flower bud which one day, not knowing when, bloomed into a beautiful flower whose charm and beauty were so strong that she managed to beautify the whole world around her. There was a ground but not very fertile. There was a stem, but not very healthy...

Who were these guys? Well, they were the fantastic characters in our story which we teachers put together to illustrate the changes that have happened since the project started. So we drew the caterpillars of excuses and grasshoppers of obstacles, snakes of challenges and fig stranglers of fear. They were all there like destructive forces making it difficult for the mentor-bee to motivate the little unassuming buds to grow in order to one day open up to reveal the beautiful sweet-smelling flowers

irresistible to the many incredibly colourful butterflies.

The buds were us just over a year ago – mentally unready for the change, understanding little about the beauty of teaching, following blindly the text books mistaking them for the curriculum. We, the little buds, did not realise how powerful creativity can be. No language games were present in the classroom, very little English in the English class. Constant drilling, teacher-centred lessons... boredom was knocking on the door.

**WE, THE LITTLE BUDS,  
DID NOT REALISE  
HOW POWERFUL  
CREATIVITY CAN BE.**

But slowly, the sun started to shine and the rain was there too. The mentor-bee was buzzing, motivating us to action. The buds started to open to the many new approaches, introducing interactive activities and fun into learning, using many resources, focusing on specific skills. All of a sudden, we were able to use simple instructions in the target language. And one day, we noticed that all around us fairytale-like creatures were circling – amazing butterflies... our pupils. We didn't know why they were there. They said they simply couldn't wait to have another of the new English lessons. The ground of self-confidence used to be barren; the grass of self-esteem is green here now.

The mentor-bee is always flying around us and between the butterflies motivating us to grow, encouraging us not to be scared of the new world and inspiring us to try to have more and more and even more fun in class.





The only chance for the students from this remote area to find jungle food and catch fish in the river is after school. So at night, they get tired and fall asleep whilst doing their revision or homework.



Challenges not just for the children but their parents as well. Because the syllabus now is more difficult compared to when we were young. Our parents cannot communicate in English with their children so the challenge is for them to help their children.



The fish are just waiting there to be fed every day. As humans, we should not be like them. We should be independent and try to find our food.

# THE CAMERA PROJECT

**S.K. LONG SEBANGANG** is a small rural school near a logging road into the interior with connections to many other isolated villages on the way to Bakalalan near the Kalimantan border. Most of the pupils and just under half the staff are members of the Lun Bawang ethnic group. Although the school is very proud of its community and culture, teachers reported there was not much engagement between the community and the school regarding educational matters. Teachers felt that because parents work, they don't have time and therefore expect the school to educate their children and don't want to get involved themselves. One teacher said, "Some parents may have had negative experiences at school and don't feel qualified to talk about education."

During discussions, we started developing the idea of a camera project as a way to engage parents. Parents would submit an entry for a photography exhibition illustrating an aspect of education they felt was important to them or their children accompanied by a few lines in BM explaining why they took the picture. Following discussions with the head teacher and deputy head, the teachers held a meeting with parents about the camera project idea. Parents wanted the exhibition to reflect how the remote rural location of the school affects education and suggested photographs around the theme "What are the challenges and opportunities faced by rural students?"

The turnout at the exhibition was excellent. Parents and children were very curious about the photos which were arranged in rooms according to *kampung*. Teachers and parents were able to talk about the pictures over food and drink supplied by the school. Following the exhibition, the head teacher, assistant head, and my mentees discussed how to build on the exhibition. One teacher, Tunong, reported a parent saying that they felt "unable to help my child with their studies because the syllabus is changing and I don't know how to help."

To address issues such as this, the teachers decided to hold a meeting for parents of pre-school children about to enter Year One. The workshop was designed to inform parents about the curriculum and what would be expected of the children. During the workshop, parents were given advice about working with their children to prepare them for the first year of primary school and the new curriculum.

**"PARENTS WANTED THE EXHIBITION TO REFLECT HOW THE REMOTE RURAL LOCATION OF THE SCHOOL AFFECTS EDUCATION AND SUGGESTED PHOTOGRAPHS AROUND THE THEME 'WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACED BY RURAL STUDENTS?'"**

# UP WITH ENGLISH CAMP

Below: the mentees and secondary school facilitators organised an abundance of games, workshops, dramatisations and creative craft activities for the participants.

**AFTER BEING** inspired by SK Ulu Lubai's English in Camp in 2011, when they won the prestigious UNESCO award, we decided to arrange a similar camp in our district for 100 low-performing children. It will be a three-year project and the first camp took place over three days in 2012, hosted by SK Menuang.

Wanting to reinforce our ELTDP message of having fun with English, the mentees and secondary school facilitators organised an abundance of games, workshops, dramatisations and creative craft activities for the participants. There were films, aerobics, a treasure hunt, songs and jazz chants, an obstacle race and of course, jungle cooking and dancing.

Three brand new teachers (Dayana, Johnny and JC) said that there were so many activities that it gave them ideas to use in their lessons, adding that it helped "pupils and teachers to improve in the English language."

"All the students, regardless which school they were from, managed to build a beautiful friendship and worked together as if they had known each other for years," said a



teacher.

"The pupils are trying to communicate in English!" observed an experienced English teacher called Madam Nurisenisah. When we asked the head teachers what they thought the best thing about the camp was they replied, "Having the same goal and direction" and the "spirit of working together".

Was it worthwhile? "Very worthwhile, interesting and enjoyable."

When thinking about 2013, Dayana enthused, "Maybe we could do a pantomime at the end of the camp!"





# CREATION AND INNOVATION



**THE CHANGES** that have taken place during Busak Sia's English lessons and classroom have had a profound and positive impact on her pupils, colleagues and school as well as visiting English teachers. Observing teachers sit wide-eyed and amazed as they watch lessons full of variety and motivating learner-centred activities conducted mostly in English. There is the evidence before the observing teachers' eyes to behold – language learning can be fun, enjoyable and motivating; even learning English! The smiles on the children's faces tell their own story. They can't wait to find out what they're going to be doing in their next English lesson! Busak Sia of SK Bandar shares her experience.

**T**HE Native Speaker Programme (ELTDP) has continued to result in changes to my teaching life. The programme has generally made me more creative and innovative in my teaching. I can also see the changes in my pupils – they have become very active in the classroom and enjoy learning English and look forward to my English lessons. I also noticed that some of my pupils can now speak English confidently with their friends and other teachers as a result of the pair work, group work and mingle speaking activities that we do in the classroom. They are very motivated by the variety of activities that we carry out everyday. The programme also shows a big impact on parents. Some parents commented that the children are eager to talk or share what they have learned during their English lessons when they go home.

My mentor has encouraged us to do observe each other and take into account his observations as well. I'm fortunate to have a good English teacher working in the same school as me. We always discuss and share ideas and give feedback after observing each other's lessons. We have also been involved in inter-school visits and observing other mentees in their own schools and classrooms. From one such visit, for example, I got the idea about how to display picture and word cards in a better

way and make the classroom environment more interesting and stimulating for the pupils. We also discuss and share ideas on what went well and what did not go so well in the lessons we observe.

Recently, when I was teaching the topic "In the Garden", I realised that the way to arouse my pupil's interest was to use realia. So, I brought frogs, worms, snails, grasshoppers, ants, flowers and leaves into my class. I also took the pupils outside for them to find out what's in the garden. They loved and enjoyed the activities very much because they could touch, smell and see the real things and this helped them remember better.

Other teachers in the school are also motivated by the changes that have taken place and they have positive reactions to the programme and project. Some teachers are trying to apply the teaching methods, ideas and activities we are using to their teaching in Bahasa Malaysia or other subjects. From the inter-school visits, other mentees and teachers from other schools have also begun to use these methods or activities in their classes. Our school administration is happy with this programme because it impacts positively on the teachers and pupils progress and performance in the school. I'm glad that we are all involved actively in this programme.

**THE job of an ELTDP mentor can be framed as a three-step process:**

- 1- Encourage the teachers (mentees) to think about the lessons they have delivered.
- 2- Help the teachers to identify manageable positive changes for future lessons.
- 3- Support the teachers to implement the identified changes.

**This process is often described as "developing reflective practice", but I prefer to look upon my job as simply helping teachers get better at what they do. As an aid to "developing reflective practice", I use "Most Significant Change" (MSC) – teachers thinking about how their teaching has changed during their last few months in ELTDP and writing a short story to describe their most significant development.**

**What follows is an MSC story telling how one of my mentees latched onto her children's interest in the well-known Mr. Bean character and used this interest to generate a series of engaging lessons for her class. Prior to the ELTDP, this teacher would have shied away from such a learner-centred approach to her work. ELTDP has clearly helped this teacher to get better at what she does.**



CHRISTINA AYAN, SK ST. EDMUND

**"I NEEDED TO CHANGE MY MINDSET FROM AN EXAM ORIENTATED APPROACH TO ONE OF ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING."**

**T**HE MOST significant change that has resulted from the ELTDP for me has been a mental paradigm shift in my teaching technique. Having given much thought to this project, one thing which was certain was that I needed to change my mindset from an exam-orientated approach to one of engaging students in learning. To allow this to happen I need to teach a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities in order to motivate and engage the pupils.

During my teacher training days, I was taught to design fun and pleasurable activities. However, as years went by, those activities were forgotten since my focus shifted to getting my pupils through their examinations with good results. The ELTDP has awakened me to interpreting the text book to provide a variety of engaging activities for my lessons. There have been times when I have fallen back into my old teaching methods. Nevertheless, it is my hope that I can continue to deliver a variety of fun and pleasurable activities so as to encourage my pupils to listen, speak, read and write in English.

One recent success I've had in my English classroom has been a sequence of lessons designed around the subject of the popular television character Mr. Bean. My pupils saw a

picture of him on a poster for a motivational English competition which my mentor made and we displayed at my school. They asked if I could show them a movie about him. Initially, I was reluctant because I could not see how the subject had any connection with the syllabus. Nevertheless, thinking from a learner-centred perspective, I decided to show the movie but also put together a series of lessons around the Mr. Bean theme.

I was very delighted to note the active participation among the pupils during the Mr. Bean lessons. They really enjoyed the activities. It was one of my euphoria moments in my teaching career. Their level of enjoyment and engagement increased after each lesson. And during the role-play, scheduled as the final lesson, all the children had fun acting like Mr Bean in front of the class.

To conclude, the Mr. Bean Project helped to promote the use of English among my pupils and has also helped them to learn some English and to become more comfortable with using English.





*My motivation chart created a sense of competitiveness amongst the kids. They try to be good in order to get rewarded.*

**WHEN** I first started working with Anna, the classroom felt a bit too informal. This also didn't help with setting student-teacher boundaries. There are only two students in the class, which made it easy for them to become overly familiar and try and get out of doing the work. As Anna and I started working together, we explored a variety of classroom management techniques. I left it up to Anna to choose what she wanted to use to help with the discipline of a very small classroom. The difference was amazing. She now has a great handle over her classroom, and has set the students into gear. It was great watching the students responding differently to her, and becoming more involved. The following is her account of the experience.

Dealing with kids is something I was afraid of when I knew that I was being posted to a primary school. However I'm getting more comfortable with kids with the guidance from my mentor now.

I tended to be very close with my kids when I first started teaching them. I always sat together with the students instead of standing in front of the classroom. I have only two kids in my class. Consequently, the kids became playful and rather disobedient.

My mentor noticed this problem and suggested a few ideas in order to help me with classroom management. First, I changed my habit of sitting next to the kids. This helped them realise that I am actually their teacher and created a barrier between us indirectly. Second, I set up classroom rules along with a motivation chart. I explained what they were supposed to do and what not to do. If they did something good, I put a mark down in the happy column. If they did something not so good, I put a mark down in the sad column. When they reach five marks, I give them a little token (a sticker, a lollipop ... something symbolic).

The motivation chart created a sense of competitiveness amongst the kids. They try to be good in order to get rewarded. At the same time, they started reminding each other of what they should and shouldn't do in the classroom. My classroom management has definitely improved!



**MIRIAM** Janine Malarn of SK Good Shepherd is a motivated teacher and keen to improve her skills. Her story highlights how the project has made an impact on her own development as a teacher and how this has affected the teaching and learning in her classroom.



*Miriam Janine Malarn, SK Good Shepherd*

**“SEEING THEM IMPROVE IN THEIR LEARNING REALLY MADE ME REALISE THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTIVE TEACHING. I CAN'T THANK MY MENTOR ENOUGH FOR HELPING ME IN THIS AREA.”**

**K**NOWING that I wanted to spend my career devoted to children, I opted for teacher training college after my first degree. I learnt a lot and felt very prepared to start my career. But as time went by, so did my ideas, enthusiasm and energy. I felt burnt out.

Having the opportunity to be in the ELTDP, I feel very refreshed, as if I've just been woken up. It has helped me in so many ways I cannot describe. All the methods and approaches I've learnt and used before have come back at me, waiting for me to use and implement them in my teaching. I am so eager to attack my classroom with all the wonderful ideas and tips shared by my mentor. However, the most significant change that I can share here is reflecting on my lessons. I did reflect on

my lessons before but all of my reflections seemed to be the same, boring, unnecessary comments throughout the year. (More to making sure that the reflection space is not empty before handing my lesson plan for the headmaster to check)

Now, by reflecting on my lessons the way my mentor taught me, I find out that my lessons are more engaging now. Before this, I did not take into consideration how and why some of my students struggled with the content of my lessons. I always told myself, it's not my fault (am I a bad teacher for thinking like that?). However, that won't happen anymore, as now I know by reflecting on the lessons, I can now tackle the weaknesses and help my students (all of them) to learn more.

Seeing them improve in their learning really made me realise the importance of reflective teaching. I can't thank my mentor enough for helping me in this area. I also love to teach them reading, as I love to read. I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth but my parents always ensured we had lots of reading materials at home. We lived in a

rural area; there was no TV or any sort of entertainment other than running around with friends, playing hide and seek, and reading at night. Thank God, *Reader's Digest* was always available as well as other books.

I also read all the fables in the school library and even my mum's recipe books. Having been exposed to all those books and reading, I know I have to instil this in my students too. But I didn't really know the best approach to teach reading to my students. My ideas were very limited. All I used to do was, read from the text book, and they follow (wasn't that boring?). With Vicky's help, I can now say that I won't face any problems in teaching them the skill. I am sure all the efforts my mentor made will not be wasted as I really think they are all very helpful. I would like to thank her too for the help and encouragement. I hope the project will be continued next year and years to come for the benefits of our children. Thank you Vicky, ELTDP and the Education Department!





## READING CARDS

One significant change this year came in a collaborative approach to materials creations: “Classroom Reading Cards”.

**M**ENTEES had teaching concerns about their inability to give more personal attention to “slower” children in their Year One and Two classes. After much discussion and reflection, the mentees concluded that the issue was not with the slower children but with keeping the faster children usefully active while the teacher’s focus was elsewhere. The mentees thought that independent reading was an appropriate activity for fast finishers, so the mentees decided to create a set of classroom reading cards. Instead of teachers having to carry (to every class) a large heavy set of class readers, they would write, print and laminate a series of 50 to 60 colourful, topical and personalised A5 cards.

Using KSSR as their starting point, they wrote short texts of four to five sentences using simple structures and previously learned vocabulary. These texts were carefully written with the students in mind, picking topics that were relevant to their lives e.g. *nasi lemak* and Deepavali. The English department was very supportive and provided funding for printing and laminating.

The mentees regularly use the reading cards in their lessons for children who have finished an exercise and need an activity to

keep them busy while the teacher spends more time working directly with the weaker ones. Not only does it give children more reading practice but the teachers have also found that the cards help with classroom management since the children are constructively engaged and are less prone to cause disruptions. The children thoroughly enjoy using the cards as they are colourful and relevant. Since there is a large variety of reading topics divided into three (loosely banded and colour-coded) reading levels the children are able to self-select suitable and interesting cards. Teachers now have found the extra quality time to help the slower children.

The creation of the reading cards has sparked a deeper interest in ELTDP as the mentees have experienced a positive impact on their own teaching and the benefit of encouraging independent learning in their children. They have been able to make links with previous programmes such as *Nilam*. One mentee has combined the cards with her reading records. Furthermore, other members of staff at the home school and others in Miri have asked how they can get a set. The mentees have volunteered to make sets for them on one condition that they write ten new cards.

## REFLECTIVE TEACHING



**TEACHING** is changing and in some ways, becoming a more difficult job. This story details the development of a primary English teacher who has incorporated reflective teaching into her teaching practice and pedagogy. An experienced teacher, she was asked to teach Year One for the first time.

**“M**Y REAL BIG PROBLEM was actually classroom behaviour management. I had tried many methods but they were only effective for a short time,” she said.

The teacher began this process by asking “what went well and what would I like to improve next time”. This led her to consider how her lessons are structured, both in terms of content and in terms of the way they are carried out. Changes were made in lesson planning which then carried through to instructional language, resources and teacher behaviour during lessons. Clearly there had been a change in students’ behaviour due this reflective process.

“I could feel the significant change in my teaching especially success in doing. For instance, reading a story from a big book to students at every beginning of a lesson. To do it as a routine really can help to overcome behaviour problems in my class. Students really like listening to stories,” she explained.

This teacher has also sought to incorporate reflective practice into her daily in-class behaviour. This has meant taking five minutes per lesson to “step back” and consider student behaviour as they move through the set of activities planned. Incorporating reflection into the lesson itself, rather than as a post lesson activity, has ensured that the teacher remains aware of the practice as an ongoing and changeable process, rather than a product.

Finally, this teacher has seen such value in reflective practice that she has begun to share her successes with fellow English teachers.

“I shared this good experience with other English teachers who faced the same class behaviour management issues,” she said.



Sanjay Dubey  
British Council Mentor

# LAMBIR VILLAGE SCHOOL



Pupils working in a group

**T**HE year 2012 witnessed several significant changes both in the way English was taught under KSSR and the way the pupils learnt English. In short, the teaching of English under KSSR had become increasingly pupil-centred. The mentees adapted and supplemented the textbook materials to make their lessons fun and interactive throughout the year. Furthermore, they reflected on their lessons with their colleagues as well as the pupils and took a keen interest in team teaching and peer observation.

Pupils enjoyed their classes. Not only did they learn English from their teachers but also from their classmates. They worked individually, in

pairs and groups to accomplish their classroom tasks. In most classes, I felt that there was an atmosphere of “let’s learn together”. As a result of this, the weaker learners were always helped by stronger classmates.

In order to optimise their pupils’ English, my mentees managed to showcase their teaching methods and approaches to parents through “Learn English Family” programme workshops. These workshops were also effective in equipping the participants with some basic tools such as story-telling to help children with their English at home.



Team teaching with a project teacher



Helping a classmate with reading

Zoya Kaldramova  
British Council Mentor



**“B**EFORE, when I entered the class, it would be very noisy with pupils shouting and talking in their first language. I found out that most of them were not interested in learning the language, they didn’t want to get involved, and some of them were too shy to talk. My mentor then discussed things with me and we planned various types of activities which gave me more ideas on how to deal with my pupils. I’ve introduced classroom rules, started giving simple instructions and using body language. Now my pupils are able to listen and respond quickly to my instructions and work together as a group. Furthermore, I have changed their mind set from ‘English is hard’ to ‘English is fun’. Every time they see me, they greet me in English and try to talk to me in English. I also found out that they are very proud to say that I’m their English teacher.”

“Thanks to the Learn English Family (LEF) workshops, I’ve created a new environment in my school. Now, it’s not only the teachers who have to do the job, but also the parents. A lot of parents have contacted me to ask how they can get involved to help their children and improve their achievements.”

“Before the first lesson teaching the story *Joey the Elephant*, I was struggling because I knew that I did not have the confidence to become a storyteller. I tried my best to prepare to tell it and I felt scared. But I started storytelling by using big books, mingling activities, and using pictures, body language, facial expressions and intonation. I never thought that my pupils would enjoy the story so much. By the end of the class, my pupils could remember the whole story, even the pupils who usually show no interest in learning English.”

“My pupils have changed from hating to learn English to loving English because they have realised that learning English through using lots of games, competitions, stories, actions and a lot more in the classroom is fun. Their parents have thanked me because their children love my classes and have started reading books in English at home.”

## A YEAR FULL OF POSITIVE CHANGES

**The year 2012 was particularly interesting and I would say, successful. It was interesting because of my work with all my teachers and the children at my schools and successful because I can see a lot of changes not only in what happens in the classroom but also in the attitude towards teaching and learning English as a second language. Here are some examples given by my mentees, which look back at our work together.**



# ELTDP IN SUBIS

## THE START

Five schools, ten mentees, 200+ Level One students and their parents, five head teachers, one English Language Officer, teacher colleagues, school and district education office staff. Everyone's commitment was needed to make the ELTDP a success. First visits were in March 2011. First impressions were positive – young, keen mentees facing similar challenges and sharing the same goal, i.e. that the pupils participate actively in the classroom to improve their language skills. The big question... how to achieve this goal?

### The change(s)

Mentees have been faithful to their common goal of getting the pupils to engage in their own learning – these photos are worth a 1,000 words!



*What a change from reading from the text. these Year Two pupils are learning about the five senses, by experimentation!*



*Where's the teacher? This Year Two classes are leading the activities!*

### The Outcomes (so far)

Just to name a few – pupils are speaking more and more naturally, they are working together as teams on tasks, making creative use of the language, enjoying competitive activities, and starting to read independently. Most importantly, they are experimenting with the English language, recognising it as “real”, and trying it out even between classes, greeting and asking questions.

Furthermore, with the Learn English Family reading programme and the Power of Reading projects, parents are seeing learning as something they can contribute to, by encouraging their children to read, and by reading to/with them at home. And last but not least, mentees continue to work hard, producing resources to involve pupils, engaging pupils in games, songs and many activities to activate all four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing.



*Teacher up front and pupils at their desks? Not always! This Year One teacher is reading to her class in a circle on the floor with full attention from her pupils!*

*SK Kuala Penganan teacher Dayana binti Nayan from Limbang, Sarawak shares how she uses puppets to encourage her students to speak English during her mentee workshop presentation entitled "Using puppets to increase pupils' confidence in the language classroom". Dayana was a participant in the British Council's English Language Teacher Development Project (ELTDP) Symposium at the Kuching Hilton in Kuching, Sarawak, which ran from February 20 to 22, 2013.*





## Motivation and Ideas

“Our mentor gives us motivation and ideas to improve our teaching in English”

– PENAMPANG TEACHER

SABAH

SOUTH AND LABUAN REGION







Above: ELTDP manager Ahmed Kanwar visits remote villages with Sabah teachers.



**THIS STORY** is about a Year One/Year Two teacher from the Beaufort district, who had issues with her classroom management. When I first met this teacher, I felt that there was a tense atmosphere in the classroom and both, pupils and teachers seemed to feel “uneasy”. Her class was quite big (40 pupils) and she had problems with classroom management and pupils participation. Her lessons were very teacher-centred. Throughout the project, we discussed classroom management techniques and how to make lessons more student-centred. She used techniques we talked about but applied them to her context to make them work for her classroom. The atmosphere in her classroom has changed tremendously. Pupils are engaged and participate and the relationship between the teacher and the pupils is now one that is governed by respect.

This change also was recognised by other teachers in her school who started to approach her to find out more about her classroom management and pupils’ involvement in the lesson. She shared her experience with other teachers which encouraged many of them to change their classroom management style and try out new ways to create a better learning environment. The following is the teacher’s feedback.

*The project helped me find out more about how to deal with a larger class and my classroom management has improved. Before the project, I used to get stressed out a lot and I would shout to try to gain control. Now, I have learnt many useful tools that I can apply in the classroom to manage my pupils and create a good learning environment. I am more relaxed now and so are my pupils. The behaviour of my pupils has changed as well – they pay more attention in class, treat each other with more respect and take more responsibility for each other and their classroom.*

*Through all the new techniques I have learnt and use in the classroom, it is now easier for the pupils to do their tasks/ activities. Even the lower ability pupils seem to be able to do better because they are now more motivated. I now have a good, friendly relationship with my pupils and we treat each other with respect. My pupils even made me a card a couple of weeks ago saying how excited they are to come to my class every day. This made me so happy!*





**W**HEN I FIRST MET RAHMAH, she seemed quite shy and complained to me that her English was not good enough, even though her level of English was perfectly adequate. She also lacked confidence in her teaching ability. On my first visit to observe her class, I noticed that she had a very good manner with the pupils and she used some good techniques. However, her lesson was based mainly on doing the workbook and lacked variety. The students seemed a little bored and started misbehaving.

During our one-to-one and group meetings with the other mentees, Rahmah always seemed very interested and seemed to take everything in. She would always take notes and would then apply what she learnt in her classroom, such as games or different teaching techniques. At the next observation, I was pleasantly surprised by the improvement she had made. She started using more picture flashcards and simple games with her pupils, and this reflected on the pupils' attitude and behaviour in the class. During subsequent observations she kept making positive steps forward

and the atmosphere in the classroom was great. She mentioned to me how much more confident she felt in the class and how happy she was that her pupils were enjoying her lessons and learning more.

Rahmah's language proficiency and confidence in speaking English have also improved greatly through the interaction with the other mentees and me. Her lessons are now a pleasure to watch and, as always, it is great to spend time with such an eager and hardworking teacher.

Rahmah had this to say: "I think the big impact is on my proficiency. Before this, I was always facing difficulties finding activities to achieve my lesson objectives. But through the group meeting, with the activities that our mentor suggests, shows and does with us, I found that there are many simple activities we can do in our lesson. So now, I always try to do activities that previously I thought I couldn't do in the classroom, as long as they are easy for the pupils to understand and also exciting for them. I also feel more confident in speaking English."



**D**UE TO THE SUCCESS of the project, in the second year of the ELTDP, we opened a new group of five schools in Kuala Penyu District, and I have had the honour of working with them. Kuala Penyu is a beautiful seaside area where the teachers are easy-going and relaxed. We have done a lot of work on in-class changes, and we have seen a dramatic improvement in thought regarding active learning and using English more often in the classroom. We are also starting to see that we are teaching children, not only subjects! One of the teachers relates her experience:

This is my second year as a teacher. I have always been embarrassed about speaking English. I used to work in a hotel – I was always scared of foreign tourists and when they arrived I would hide in the backroom. I didn't want to talk to them because I was afraid of speaking English. My English was very bad and I was embarrassed.

If I had to take their order in the café, I was too afraid to ask them to repeat something if I didn't understand. I couldn't check their order because I was afraid to make a mistake. When I became a teacher, it was more difficult to hide from speaking English because I had to teach it, and I always felt inadequate teaching English because I didn't feel confident in my ability. Sometimes, it is hard to speak English with the other teachers too because maybe they feel embarrassed to speak it, or they think that I should speak in Bahasa Malaysia.

When the *guru besar* (head teacher) told me that I was to be involved in the ELTDP, I wasn't worried because I thought that the mentor was going to be Chinese person, because the mentor's name sounded Chinese. I was very shocked when the mentor arrived because he was a foreigner! I was so scared and all that I could say was "Yes" to everything. I was too scared to say anything else and it took a long time to feel comfortable to talk about things with the mentor because I didn't want to make a mistake and sometimes, I couldn't find the right words.

Once I started working with the mentor, I started to feel more comfortable because we had to speak in English and my mentor would ask me to explain what I was doing, what I want to do, and what I mean. I feel much more confident communicating in English now. I always try to speak English in my class. Sometimes I'm still worried about teaching in English, even though I feel confident about doing so in BM. Now I try to use activities that get my students using English, and practising the skills I am teaching them. The mentor encourages me to use student-centred activities and to engage with the students more.





**MY INITIAL OBSERVATIONS** were that the children were not interested or engaged. This newly graduated teacher was struggling with classroom management and ideas for teaching English. As we reflected, the teacher was happy to try to change the lessons with some support. We decided to introduce storybooks in the lessons. The children’s interest and focus improved greatly and this created a great tool for the use of English. Here is an account of this teacher’s on the process of change.

The most significant change after being in the native speaker programme. I think I was given the very heavy task of seeing that the children use the English Language but they did not like language very much, or did not know the language. For some of them, English was probably their fourth or fifth language.

I had a hard time teaching English without any guidance from the experts. But the ELTDP mentor helped improve my teaching technique. The programme was an eye-opener and helped guide me while diversifying my teaching and learning. I gained a lot of knowledge with step-by-step instructions and ideas to improve my skills and the children began to understand and even like the English classes. I am grateful to my mentor for the never-ending guidance – I am more confidence in teaching English now.



**“WHEN THE PUPILS FINISH THEIR WORK QUICKLY, I ENCOURAGE THEM TO READ THE STORYBOOKS THAT WE KEEP IN THE ROOM RATHER THAN COLOURING THE PICTURES IN THE ACTIVITY BOOK. DOING PUPIL-CENTRED ACTIVITIES HAS REALLY MADE A BIG CHANGE IN MY TEACHING APPROACH.”**

**S**EVERAL years before the ELTDP started, an enterprising English teacher had transformed an unused classroom into an English Room. She drew murals on the walls, stored English story books there, and even built a small stage in one corner for pupils to practise public speaking and drama activities. Despite all her good intentions, the room soon fell into disuse. When the ELTDP started, one of the mentees decided that the room, which had little furniture and lots of space for pupils to run around and play games or to lounge around and read books, would be an ideal place to carry out KSSR English lessons.

The room has become a favourite place not only for pupils who love to go there for exciting English lessons where they get the chance to run around and play games, and also to read books there at break time, but for the teacher herself, who is rarely found in the staff room these days!

“Before this, my teaching was dull and boring. This is because it lacked interesting activities, I was not creative enough to think and do interesting activities to attract my pupils. I used traditional teaching activities by doing drilling, reading aloud and writing. Following the mentor workshops, I did some research and it has really changed the way I teach. Now I am more focused on pupil-centred activities. I really know now that by doing storytelling and games in the lesson, it makes the pupils take part and enjoy the lessons. It really makes a big difference. My lessons are more interesting than the previous ones. When I want to do storytelling, I always take my pupils to the English Resources Room. I have storytelling activities in the room because the room is a suitable place and has a wide space for the pupils to move around while doing storytelling activities and games.

I use the big books to do my storytelling. I can involve my pupils in the lessons and it’s a two-way interaction between the pupils and me. Before this, I only asked the pupils to read a paragraph or short story with limited illustrations in the textbook. The pupils didn’t really pay attention. I also play games with the pupils during the lesson. It really involves the pupils. Most pupils like the games, especially in the English Resources Room. If I don’t do any games in the lesson, they will ask me why. My pupils like the English Resources Room so I always bring the pupils there. When the pupils finish their work quickly, I encourage them to read the storybooks that we keep in the room rather than colouring the pictures in the activity book. Doing pupil-centred activities has really made a big change in my teaching approach.”



Sally Scott  
British Council Mentor



**I FIRST MET PRISCILLA**  
in February 2011. As a newly qualified teacher, this was her first teaching post since graduating. She had been thrust into teaching English, not willingly as she was a Maths optionist, and was not familiar with the methodologies of language teaching. From the outset, the teacher was willing to try new ideas and this story, written six months after we met, illustrates the changes.

**REALLY LIKE** what we've done so far and it helps me a lot in my teaching especially since it has reminded me that the main purpose of learning language is to communicate! Early on, I was too focused on pronunciation, grammar etc. The pressures from superiors/education system made me forget the core of teaching is to educate, not to create robots. I enjoyed my practical days, in my training centre, because I felt that I was really teaching children, in knowledge and life. My teaching changed when I officially became a teacher. I became a robot and the learning was no longer fun because teaching was always teacher-centred which made me feel extremely tired. I don't feel that I was "educating" or teaching the kids. All they learnt was to finish workbooks, assessments etc. They copy, copy, copy and copy. This made me frustrated!

I love what we have done especially the reflection journal. It really helps me to think about and improve my teaching, though sometimes I do struggle to write, mainly because I was exhausted and a little bit lazy. When I wrote reflections, I realised what I like and dislike. I was having problems with class control as I had mentioned in my journal. Then I realised the best way to improve class

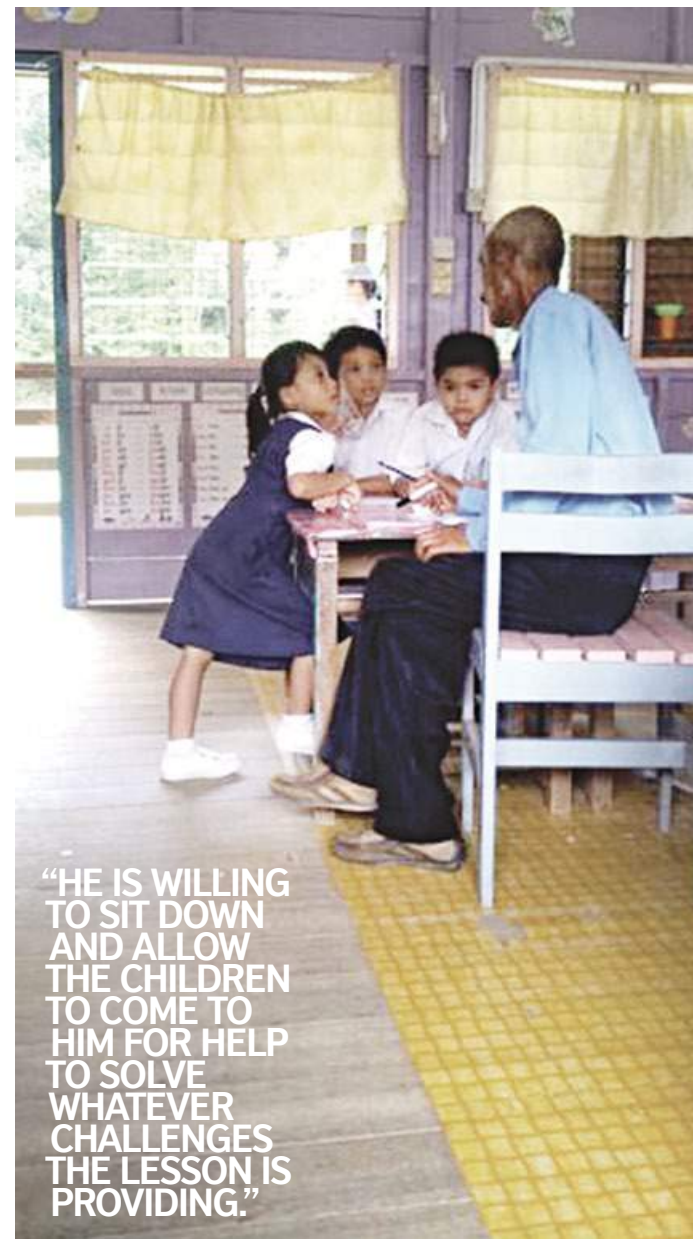
control is not to become more strict or through punishments/rewards, but to keep the children occupied through the fun learning. They were communicating and learning! I felt so good and extremely happy. Yes, they were making noise but that's fine because when people start talking, for sure there will be noises, right?

For me, the most significant change before and after working with this Project would be the way of teaching in the classroom. Before, the teaching was boring since the same process happened over and over again. It was always the teacher who was speaking and working so hard. Now, it's more pupil-centred and I'm just assisting the children. I really like the idea of sitting in groups. After grouping the children, I felt it was easy to control and check on the children. So, the most significant change I would say is the way of learning and the fun of learning. I am having fun. So are the children.

**Two years later, Priscilla is still working with the Project although she has not been a core mentee since 2011. She is now head of English department in her school and is active in encouraging new practices amongst other teachers.**

Julian Campbell  
British Council Mentor

**WHILE**  
all mentees have shown some improvement, it is not always the visible changes that are the most impressive.



**"HE IS WILLING TO SIT DOWN AND ALLOW THE CHILDREN TO COME TO HIM FOR HELP TO SOLVE WHATEVER CHALLENGES THE LESSON IS PROVIDING."**

Mohiddin Moktar (SK Tanaki)

**T**HERE are mentees who have created amazing activities and done wonders for the school community in general. But for me, there is one particular mentee who has looked inward with his development and is trying to change who he is as a teacher. Mohiddin has been teaching for almost 30 years. He has seen so many students and has taught so many subjects, he is generally confident. But he is frustrated with certain situations. He tries to avoid English as much as possible, and thinks he is out of his depth in using the language as a medium of communication and instruction, even though he speaks the language fluently and reads the newspaper in English. He was very worried about his interaction with the learners. He did not feel he was suitable to teach a low level ability Year Two group. Neither teacher nor students looked forward to the 90-minute English lesson each week.

Mohiddin always talked of not "reaching" his pupils and their being not interested. There was a communication gap between him and the students. After discussing the problems, we decided to examine the teacher-centred approach that was being used. While teacher and students were comfortable with the familiar drilling and memorisation, students appeared uninterested. Both the teacher and students needed something new to bridge the divide.

It was clear the change would not come from the learners. After a lot of coaxing and consultation from me and his peers in the school, Mohiddin did two things. The first one was to start grading the tasks to the learners' ability. The textbook became the start of learning instead of the totality. The second and more important thing was that he relaxed his tight control. He realised that the children should be allowed to have more say in how they learn. He says that they are much happier now.

He is willing to sit down and allow the children to come to him for help to solve whatever challenges the lesson is providing (see picture). He listens to them and is more a presence in the class than its ruler. It does not happen this way every day, but it is happening with more frequency. I respect his effort to do something different, enough to consider it the most notable development.



Maria Drysz  
British Council Mentor

A teacher talks about how the ELTDP has changed her and her students.

**USED TO DO A LOT OF DRILLING AND** worksheets. I wanted my pupils to answer all the questions correctly and I never really thought about what the pupils needed. I would always worry about other people's perceptions of my teaching. A lot of my teaching used to involve techniques of answering questions without the children even understanding the questions. Through the ELTDP, I have learnt a lot from my mentor, the discussions in the district meeting and my classroom research. I know about interesting activities for my pupils and what my pupils can get from the lesson through my research. It helps me a lot in my teaching. I understand my pupils better. I get more involved with my pupils. I can feel a different relationship now with my pupils and the change is how I interact with my pupils. The activities make students think and I try to make them think. They enjoy the activities. Their behaviour and attitude has changed. They don't waste time going out to the toilet or sharpening pencils. They put more effort into the activities; they complete work at home and don't give many excuses.

Before, there was a gap between us. Now, I am confident in dealing with younger kids better, and have a closer relationship with their parents. Having contact with parents and knowing their situations helps me learn more and get to know the pupils; attitudes and behaviours better. And the pupils have accepted me as one of their family.



Mentor's note: These statements reflect the changed relationships teachers are experiencing with their pupils through the ELTDP. Whether through school events that involve all the students, enrichment activities, or during lessons in the classroom, pupils of all ages are seen to be responding eagerly to new and challenging expectations. As the teachers start to draw on learners' experiences and knowledge and use meaningful activities, there is less need for overt classroom management, and an increase in motivation for both learners and teachers. The invisible wall between teacher and pupils, the hierarchy of information giver and information receivers, dissolves into a partnership of learning.

Louise Miller  
British Council Mentor



**S K PENAMPANG** decided that they wanted to increase the amount of English seen and spoken by pupils and to introduce dedicated English areas around the school. Mentees had a couple of projects on the go to achieve these aims, the first being a dedicated English reading slot on Friday mornings where the children would spend 10 to 15 minutes reading English books. Previously, children read Bahasa Malaysia books during the reading slot but Friday was named an "English is Fun" day and all parents were sent a letter asking them to provide an English book for their child to read on Fridays. Mentees were aware that this might not materialise so they also prepared a box of English story books from the library that to take to the reading area each Friday for any child who does not have an English book of their own.

Mentees also re-decorated an old notice board hanging in the canteen and updated this with a short English story, word of the week, song of the week and pupils' best work. They also painted a blank wall by the waiting area and used the same format as the notice board but with different songs, stories and words. This wall also has a dedicated Parents information corner where at the moment it has information about why reading is important. Mentees decided that this area was the best place since parents congregate here when collecting their children from school and it was hoped that having a brightly coloured display in both BM and English would attract their attention. On Fridays during "English is Fun", pupils are asked questions about the stories, song or word of the week on display on the notice boards and given a small prize if they can answer correctly.

According to a teacher, they sometimes focus on "questions for



different levels, for example, for Year One or Year Two so that they don't feel excluded and left behind. This encourages the pupils to go to the boards each week and read the new display. There are also other games that the teachers do in English so that pupils can have fun with the language.

"The pupils really enjoy the Friday activities. When we ask questions, the pupils are eager to answer. I think it helps their confidence," said another teacher.

This school has really encouraged all the English teachers to be involved in the "English is Fun" programme, not only the ELTDP mentees. Other teachers from the English department helped to paint the wall, one teacher was the emcee every Friday and all English teachers helped with the Closing Ceremony. They are already thinking about what can be done next year with the pupils. The English department has also started an English Staff Club and is encouraging all teachers (optionist and non-optionist) to be more confident and speak English as much as possible.

Each week, a new question is posted on the staff board and teachers write down their answers and small prizes are offered. These activities seem to have created a good atmosphere in the staffroom, which has become a safe environment for not so confident teachers to practice their English.

As one of the teachers said: "This is good for everybody – pupils, teachers, parents, because it's a really good chance for them to speak, learn and explore more in English."



Dan Kirk  
British Council Mentor

Rafidah Ag Abbas and Haslinah Hj Abd. Salim - SK Pekan Putatan



**BOTH** Rafidah Ag Abbas and Haslinah Hj Abd. Salim of SK Pekan Putatan joined the project in 2012 and expected a programme where I would tell them what to do. But as we continued to develop our relationship, they began to understand that they controlled their own continued professional development and then they started to get interested in the project. They began to look at themselves, assessed their school environment and identified their own targets for 2012. By taking responsibility for the resurrection of the Self-Access Learning (SAL) Room, they have inspired other schools to take on similar grandiose projects – and within my district, there are now three schools working on developing SAL Rooms/English Rooms which were motivated by the work of these teachers.

**B**EFORE we were involved with the ELTDP that took place from early January until November 2012, I was sometimes not confident about my teaching ability. And when we spoke in English, it was sometimes broken English, which is a shame. We had to refer to the dictionary and other teachers to make sure that we gave our pupils the right words or spelling. And during the English class, most of our pupils would not use English because the language is not their mother tongue. After we started working in this project, with Mr Dan Kirk as our mentor, there were a lot of changes. He was a very nice and helpful person. We improved our confidence in speaking English language. Whenever we talked to him, my mentor would help us by correcting our mistakes. We are now more independent in the way we teach than before.

Our mentor never pushes us to do a lot of work but gives us many ideas/activities that we can do in class or on teaching, besides helping us improve our English language and teaching us how to use/teach phonics properly. Now we are more confident and know ways to teach phonics to our pupils. It is not easy for us to teach the English Language to 38 to 41 pupils in one class. The classroom is also one of the other things that impacted our teaching so we started to develop the Self-Access Learning (SAL) room, helped by our friends and mentor.

Children experience a key part of their childhood in their primary school and it forms one of their principal social spaces (classroom). And a good teacher should be able to inspire the children in learning. They should nurture every pupil. English teachers often find themselves in the situation of being responsible to teach English as a Second Language with little or no specific training in teaching. My mentor also showed us how to use the Internet and that it is amazingly rich in resources for the English teacher – there's so much help. We're so grateful and happy with our mentor who gives us motivation and ideas to improve our teaching in English.

Rachel Meadows  
British Council Mentor



**O**N JULY 24, 2012, the teachers at SK Padang Berampah received the news that their school had been accepted to receive a donation of 1,000 books from the British Council. Naturally there was a great deal of excitement at this news – a lot of work had gone into the application so everyone was happy to hear that their efforts had paid off. And now was time for even more hard work to begin!

The first step was for all ten members of the English department and the mentor to sit down together to finalise the action plan. In this meeting, the use, storage and security of the books were discussed, as well as improvements which would show success of the project. The school had an empty room which the English teachers planned to convert into a Self-Access Learning (SAL) room, so it was decided that the new books would be stored here and that any activities would also be held in this room.

The next few weeks saw a massive effort from all the English teachers to get the room ready. Many teachers' free periods, as well as weekday afternoons and Saturdays were spent cleaning, painting, putting books onto shelves, creating a book catalogue and making displays and extra resources for the room. One teacher brought her sewing machine to make curtains for the room, others used recycled boxes to make displays; it really was a grand team effort.

After several weeks of hard work, the room was finally ready and the school held an open day on Wednesday, October 31. Teachers and head teachers from the other nine schools participating in the ELTDP in Sipitang, the English Language Office, ELTDP mentors and Project Manager were invited to a presentation about the Power of Reading "journey" and also had a chance to visit the SAL room. Teachers were

happy to showcase their work, which was inspirational to visitors and many positive comments could be heard throughout the day like, "It's beautiful", "Wow, they've worked so hard", and "I think the children would really enjoy coming to a room like this." Since then, three other schools have started working on similar English spaces and the BM teachers in the same schools have also begun work on a similar room for their subject – a true testimony to the inspirational effect SK Padang Berampah's English team have had.

Of course the journey will not stop now that the room is finished. In fact, the fun is just beginning! Teachers have already started taking students to the SAL room and using the new books and the positive effects are already noticeable. All teachers reported that the students were excited to see the books and enjoyed the stories.

"When they see the colourful books, they feel excited. It gives them motivation to learn English and get better at reading so that they can understand the stories," said a teacher.

Another teacher added that the pupils really enjoyed it when she used new techniques for telling stories with sound effects and actions. She is looking forward to trying out more new reading activities in the class room as well. Aside from the long list of classroom activities, teachers also have a long list of extra-curricular activities including parent workshops on storytelling and sharing sessions with teachers from other schools. They are looking forward to applying these plans later in 2013 and beyond.





**MY MENTEE** was experiencing a lot of discipline problems, particularly during storytelling. She was not satisfied with the way she acted but had no other strategies to apply. She believed that classroom research is something students do during their college years, not something done at work. She was excited to get started. In her research, she wanted to find out how student behaviour would be affected if the meaning of unknown words were explored first and then read the story as opposed to drilling it first followed by the introduction of the meaning. She found out that meaning is paramount to focus students' attention. I hope she continues to use research to find solutions to problems she will face after I leave.

The most significant change would be in my teaching approach. Rather than using a limited set of language, I expose pupils to a variety of English sentence structures to familiarise them with the language and enrich their experience in learning the language. This change is effected by my own childhood experience where I was exposed to the English language in my daily interaction. I think it improves my English in terms of listening. Although I still unable to speak well in English, I was able to translate my listening advantage in writing and slowly develop my English proficiency. So, I will let pupils listen to a lot of English sentences and make sure that they know the meaning. The English sentences would be in form of instruction, simple conversation, or storytelling. All the experience they get will help them in the long term where they will be able to construct sentences easily in writing, speak simple English or watch English movies without subtitles.



Above: Rungus girl at community celebration, SK Pinawantai, near Kudat, Sabah North Zone.



## Enjoying Teaching

“I feel like a different person.  
I have learnt many things but most  
of all I have learned to enjoy my  
teaching”

– RANAU TEACHER



SABAH

INTERIOR REGION



## A CROCODILE GLIDES THROUGH KAMPUNG MENINIPIR

**IN FEBRUARY 2012**, villagers in Kampung Meninipir, near Keningau, came out of their houses to catch the first sighting of a 25-metre long crocodile. But the chickens and humans were safe as this “crocodile” was made up of excited Year One, Year Two and Year Three children linking hands walking to Desa Meninipir Library.

The trip was led by SK Meninipir English teachers Mohammad Tahir, Jupirin Anakung and Sabdin Ibrahim. During the 15-minute walk, students proudly used the English language, learnt to exchange greetings and pointed out their houses, their cars, their mothers and even their pets to their friends. Students were particularly proud to show off their *kepingan getah* and *kantalan* stored under their house. The trip sparked such interest with the bewildered villagers as it was the first time they had seen such a long line of students walking through their kampung.

At Meninipir Library, local librarians Hainimi Gusti and Jane Suzaini welcomed the students and gave an introductory talk. English teachers carried out fun activities that the children really loved including quizzes about the library and a lively storytelling session by their English teacher using puppets. Students were enthralled and loved this new way of learning English. Idham Waiman, a Year Two student, remarked: “The library is beautiful because it has many books.”

“I like the library because I can gain knowledge from the books here,” said Year Three student, Rahibah Abidin.

The English teachers found that the library trip was really beneficial to the students. “This is a new learning environment for the students and a new experience for me,” said Year One teacher Tahir, who never had the opportunity to visit a kampung library prior to this.

“Storytelling at the local library allows me to do a variety of different activities that I can’t do in class,” added Year Three teacher Sabdin.

Sabdin also felt that there was a huge educational value in the trip as the children involved were learning something from the very start to the very end of the trip. News of the exciting library trip soon spread like wildfire to older brothers and sisters at school and before he knew it, his Level Two students were asking him if they could do these activities in their class. Sabdin believes these fun English activities are making his students fall in love with learning English. The head teacher at SK Meninipir, Rahimin bin Rajadi, has been very supportive of the ELTDP and he is keen for the English teachers to organise another library trip soon. He believes it is good to expose children to different learning environments as it will sustain their interest in language learning.

The local library trip was supported by British Council’s ELTDP mentor, Susan Verghese. Susan has been working at SK Meninipir since March 2011 to improve the English teaching and learning at this school and four other schools in Keningau. All involved on this school trip can’t wait for the next opportunity to visit the local library again. Beware, the kampung crocodile will be back!



Above: ELTDP Manager, Ahmed Karwar, and mentor Sam Murdoch, travel with teachers by longboat to deliver workshops for Murut parents in Sabah interior.



# THE STORYBOOK PROJECT

**“We understand more about teamwork because we made the book with five students.”** – Max Owen and Davide Godwin, students of SMK St. Francis Xavier, Keningau.

**“Our students could merge their skills in drawing and building sentences in a more creative way.”** – Ms Beatrice Able, English Teacher at SMK St. Francis Xavier, Keningau

**“It is the simplest way for children to express their ideas and imagination.”** – Ms Lydia Tumin, English Teacher, SMK St. Francis Xavier, Keningau

**“We’d like there to be even more participation in the future.”** – Madam Andy, Director of Keningau District Library and Madam Beatrice, Librarian

**“Next time, it would be great if the students’ writing could be printed and published. It would really help to motivate them more.”** – Madam Jamilah Talib, Assistant Officer at the PPD, Keningau

**“The students wrote a story and created a book with the purpose of presenting and telling their story to the target group (primary school pupils). That’s the importance of a language writing activity: writing for a purpose and realising the purpose.”** – Mr Sirhajwan Idek, English Teacher and consultant to the project, SMK Teknik (Vok Keningau)

**“It made us happy when the secondary school students came to visit. They made us laugh and if they come again, the pupils here must be brave and not shy.”** – Brenda, Vyonne, Rico, Rizuan, Sean, Primary School Pupils, SK Bunga Raya, Keningau

**“It built confidence for both the primary and secondary school pupils.”** – Aloysia Christianus, Primary School Teacher, SK Bunga Raya, Keningau

**“The cooperation between the teachers and pupils was a really positive part to this project. Secondary students’ contributions were so creative and far beyond our expectations.”** – Madam Hilina Lawrence, PK1, English Teacher and Storybook Project Competition Judge, SK Penagatan, Keningau

The Storybook Project was a bit of an experiment. Getting secondary school students all across Keningau town to write for and share books with the pupils of neighbouring primary schools was never going to be easy, but teachers persevered and amazing stories were written and enjoyed. There is already a lot of discussion taking place about how to improve the project this year.



**W**HEN I FIRST MET Vivian, she was de-motivated and bored, and her classes were mainly filled with exam questions and drilling. Being on the Project motivated her to change her situation, simply by being a part of the mentee community and feeling that there was someone “on her side”. Her decision to return to university, her head teacher’s decision to move her to Level One to give pupils the best foundation, and her dramatically improved UPSR results are all a result of her renewed commitment and ability to develop herself professionally, and to seek out new teaching strategies. This is what she has to share.

I am impressed with the significant changes in me and my career since I started in this project. My previous situation was a nightmare. I was a teacher with no future. I was worried when the English subject became a killer subject in school, and I was the one who was always blamed by the school staff and parents because of bad results in the examinations. My teaching tended to be so boring and I felt so stressed out. Sometimes I felt like I was not qualified to have the title “Teacher” and that I would rather quit.

Now, I love my job very much. I feel refreshed and motivated like I am

just at the beginning of my career as an English Language teacher. I know now I have become a dedicated teacher to my students. But the biggest change has been my confidence. Before, I didn’t even think of furthering my studies. There are so many things that made me change. I became strong when I had a mentor to support me. I am glad to have been helped to have a more positive mental attitude and be open-minded in everything. I work so hard to improve my teaching. I read books and it really helps me to improve my vocabulary and grammar. Having discussions with my *guru besar* (head teacher) and other teachers in my school and on the Project to get their opinions and ideas is so helpful.

I was not able to do this before because of shyness, and the Project has helped me to create a stronger relationship with these people. The biggest benefit of the Project, and my most significant change, has been that, because of my new confidence in myself, I have decided to go back to university to study my bachelor’s degree in Education! I feel happy, proud, and a little nervous. I am thankful to have the opportunity to be involved in the project. I hope I will never lose my motivation and I plan to develop my career in the future, becoming a more creative and interesting teacher and always finding out about new techniques and materials to keep pupils interested in learning English.



Fiona Wright  
British Council Mentor

Sam Murdoch  
British Council Mentor

*Cikgu Rozaini with her pupils,  
enjoying a game of Snakes and  
Ladders.*



**R**UWAIDA IBRAHIM was a teacher that had no confidence in herself and particularly felt that she was not capable of teaching English. In the past year and a half, I have watched her confidence grow and seen her enjoyment and ability to teach English blossom. Teachers come to her for advice now and she has instigated a programme with Preschools and Year Ones. At the time of writing, she was scheduled to run a workshop at the ELTDP Symposium in Kuching in February 2013. I am very proud of all her achievements. This is Ruwaida’s story.

When my mentor arrived in August 2011, I was not in a good way. I felt down because I did not want to teach English. I am a Science teacher and was a researcher before I got married. What did I know about English teaching? I knew nothing and I did not understand the new curriculum and I have a class of very low level Year Ones. My mind felt crowded and the worst thing was the class was out of control. I was always yelling at the class because they did not want to listen to me. I felt angry with them and then at myself because I could not teach them well.

I asked my colleague in Year One to help me and we put the pupils together in front of the video but still I knew that was not really a solution. That was before. When I think of myself last year, I feel like a very different person. I have learnt many things but most of all, I have learnt to enjoy my teaching. I know how to attract the pupils’ attention and how to manage the behaviour without getting angry. When I come to the class, we are happy to see each other. I am always thinking of different and fun ways to teach the children and now I apply this approach to the older pupils when I teach Science. I know that learning doesn’t have to be boring. It is up to us teachers to make it interesting. I have also started to play the guitar and sing – something I have never done before – and I hope I will continue to do so as the pupils love it when we sing in class.

I have also presented something on Language Arts when we had a mini-conference. I was very nervous but I was proud after I had finished. My mentor wants me to apply for the Symposium in Kuching. I find it hard to believe that I am the same person as last year. I have more confidence in my ability and want to continue to develop and become a better teacher. Symposium? Why not?



*Story sacks made by the parents at  
SK Pekan*

**ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT** changes which took place in Nabawan district over the last academic year was the increased involvement of the parents. A lot has been learned by both the teachers and the local community from this joint working. The teachers and the local community had previously had no opportunity to come together to work towards a common goal – that of helping the pupils in various aspects of learning. All of the schools in the Nabawan district team decided to try to involve the parents and local community by delivering a series of workshops to encourage reading amongst parents, grandparents and pupils.

The workshops were loosely based on the British Council’s Learn English Family programme. However, the programme also had an additional benefit of breaking down barriers between the schools and the local people – the parents discovered that teachers are not the scary beings they had thought they were.

“The teachers are really nice,” said Mr. Madin, a local community leader.

“The workshop was interesting and we got to do things,” commented a parent.

Norima, a mother, said: “I liked the programme and it was interesting. I thought it would be boring but it wasn’t”.

These sentiments were echoed by her friend Mijan who went on to say, “It was good. I made more friends and the community can join together.”

Nasrah Lintong, the language officer in Nabawan said: “It’s great for the parents to become involved and learn what the children do in school and they now have some tools to help support that learning.”

From the teachers’ perspective, they found that parents had skills they did not know they had and were willing to help out in other school activities. “The story sacks the parents made were amazing” said Jonathan Yui. “It brings closer ties between parents and teachers”.

“Parents find the workshop rather different from any other motivational workshop where instead of sitting and listening to the talk, parents get more on hands-on activity,” added Editha Anthonius.

“I didn’t know the parents could be so creative” stated Iffah Zuleha.

Mazlinna Jalil and Saidtul Hassan both agreed that “It’s the best way for parents and teachers to work together and share the responsibility for educating our kids. It encourages reading at home.”

In addition, the parents have become more active in some schools. Most of the schools have used “parent power” to improve the school environment and they have also provided transport and support with behaviour on school trips. Working together, everyone involved has learned that the responsibility for educating children does not rest solely with the schools and that parents have a vital role to play.





**T**HE PARENTS Workshop at SK Timbou, Tambunan with teachers Emeliana Benjamin and Rosalind Munti was significant because these teachers had organised the whole workshop themselves. They decided on the date, venue, programme, and programme content. They sent out the invitations, prepared packs for parents, and refreshments and aid for everything out of their own pockets with some help from other teachers. They invited me along at the last minute. Thirty-three parents attended, where at least half were fathers. They received very nice feedback from the parents and they were very proud of the workshop because it was "theirs". Rosalind shares her thoughts below.

Throughout the year, we have done many projects which our mentor arranged for us. I can say that we have conducted the Parents Meeting successfully from the positive response shown by them. The project has been conducted twice this year (and once last year) and still, the momentum is there. This, for me, is one of the many ways that teachers, especially English teachers, can get parental involvement in their children's learning process.

The project was focusing on storytelling and as well as using songs/rhymes and using English as part of their daily activities. All the parents were really positively involved and they said that it was a fun way to learn the language along with their children. Double thumbs up for us! And what is the most significant change for me? I learnt that there is no excuse for not making English a local community language; with correct methods and approaches, this language is accessible to anyone.

I really opened up to my mentor's project because it actually happened to be my subject for my TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) degree for this semester. What a convenient experience! I clearly understand biblio-therapy and its purpose more after conducting this project and related it with the parents and together with the children. My deep gratitude goes to my mentor - you've helped me much in my research. I'm looking forward to any other projects by her; because I know that the aims will be profitable to both parties (teachers, parents and pupils).

*Mentee Big Book Workshop Jan 2013: Marysia Harry, Suzie James, Bona Gatium, Adabert Kanor, Susan Sabin, Saili Labi, Evelyn Matius, Yentichia Damin, Easter Gusop*



**I WOULD LIKE** to share some thoughts from Tambunan teachers as they reflect on their teaching practice.

**L**OOKING BACK over the last six months, I am glad I took the decision to have a positive change. I have become creative with teaching aids and my pupils enjoy my lessons and are improving in English. I have become much more energetic and the most important thing of all is that I am happy. And to my surprise, I managed to make the other teachers see the positive changes and make them change themselves too. We worked together to change the library and even the gardener and the security guard joined us in the process. Parents are more than willing to lend a hand and everyone is eager to make the positive change a success."

"Before this, I was not confident with myself. I felt ashamed if I made mistakes and thought that people would laugh at me. But from this project, I learnt that if we want to improve we have to let go of those feelings. I gained some confidence and believe that it's not wrong if we make mistakes because we learn from our mistakes."

"I much prefer using story books to the textbook because in the textbook the stories are not interesting and don't have many pictures. When I use real books, the children are much more

motivated and they love the colourful pictures."

"Before, I used to shout and hold up my cane to frighten the pupils. Now I try clapping my hands, blowing a whistle, tapping the table or white board, using the sound 'Sh', Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques. But the most important thing I found out is that pupils behave much better when I use interesting resources."

"I never knew that I could be creative until my mentor taught me to modify the topic 'Looking good' to a real activity by making stick puppets. The Year Two pupils loved it and even the naughty boys in the class were so creative. We need to work together with the pupils to make the learning process alive for them."

As some of the quotes from the teachers in Tambunan show, positive change is not always an easy process. It can be stressful and even painful to let go of old habits and methods of working but it is liberating. These teachers have taken a brave step and they can see the difference in themselves and their colleagues, in the school environment and most importantly of all, in the children's response to stimulating resources and interesting activities.



Barbara Milburn  
British Council Mentor

**THIS TEACHER** arrived straight from a teacher training college in another state, and immediately transformed my hitherto uneasy relationship with the school and its English teachers.

**I HAD BECOME ACCUSTOMED to a general reluctance on the part of the teachers, regarding all things connected with the teaching of English. None of them were optionists, and being assigned an English class to teach was tantamount to being punished, it appeared to me. There was a lack of confidence in their own ability to teach this subject, which seemed to permeate the staff-room, and although the classes I observed were well- planned and executed, the dearth of enthusiasm could be sensed by the pupils. With the support of a cooperative new head teacher, this teacher has brought to the school that enthusiasm so noticeable by its absence, together with creativity and a very modern, communicative approach. She shares her experience below.**

Being the new teacher in school is not an easy adaptation process. Being the only trained English-optionist teacher brings even more responsibilities upon one’s shoulders, especially when English is most of the pupils’ third language. However, the ELTDP brought forth much relief as much support and assistance was gained from the mentoring process.

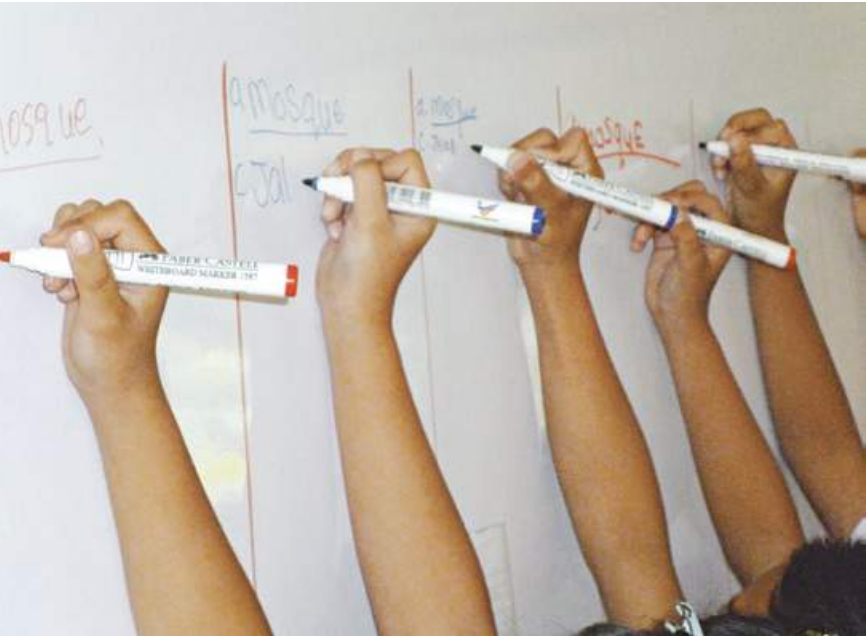
The first change that I could reflect on was of my change of mentality in coping with pupils and teachers alike, who are apprehensive towards any teaching or learning of English. In such situations where I felt quite estranged, I found solace from my

mentor who very much understood the emotions I was going through. Through her encouragement, I have learnt to view the negative state of affairs as new challenges that could be excellent learning opportunities for me as a new teacher. From then on, the teaching and learning process was carried out with a more optimistic approach and I became more encouraging and patient towards pupils who were still very much hesitant and timid in picking up and using the English language in the classroom. Nevertheless, as the pupils were exposed to more and more communicative language activities, I noticed an attitude change as well as a slow but evident progress in their language learning.

Subsequently, older pupils were found to be making use of the English language without much persuasion from the teacher i.e. greeting teachers outside the classroom, singing snippets of English songs, and requesting to have more English language activities like word searches or singing English songs in the classroom. Both pupils and teachers have come a long way since the day when English was perceived as a foreign learning area in school.

Last but not least, being under the ELTDP also taught me the importance of constantly carrying out research activities for self improvement as well as documentation of pupils’ progress. With records for reference and reflections it has made continual improvement of pupils’ and teachers’ development for a better teaching and learning process an uncomplicated course of action.

“THROUGH HER ENCOURAGEMENT, I HAVE LEARNT TO VIEW THE NEGATIVE STATE OF AFFAIRS AS NEW CHALLENGES THAT COULD BE EXCELLENT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ME AS A NEW TEACHER.”



The teacher, Stephenie, in the classroom.

**THE REMOTEST SCHOOL** in the Tenom district is SK Kuala Tomani, some 40km from Tenom town. The school is also one of the largest in the area, with over 700 pupils, a mixture of Lundaiyeh, Murut and Malays from the surrounding villages. Stephenie is an English optionist in the school, working with Year Two, Year Four and Year Five. When we first met in January of this year, we discussed what she would like to gain from the programme. She said that she wanted to focus on motivating the pupils, making the lessons more student-centred and using only English in the classroom. This was quite a challenge given the size of her Year Two class, and also the fact that the class had a large proportion of boys, resulting in classroom management issues.

Throughout the year, I have watched Stephenie develop her teaching, re-discovering her own sense of fun and creativity, and taking control of her lessons in a confident manner. Previously, lessons were dominated by simply trying to control a class that was unused to discipline, whereas now I witness the pupils being engaged, attentive and evidently enjoying their English class, despite distractions from outside the class. Additionally, both mentees in the school support each other,

talking through problems and even instigating their own peer observations so that they can learn from each other and offer each other advice and support. This is slowly trickling down to the other teachers in the school, with whom they have shared ideas, games and activities with, influencing beyond their own classes throughout the whole school. When we sat down again recently, these were Stephenie’s reflections on her year.

*I have grown in self-confidence, in my teaching and my English. I feel more able to control the class and speak English in the lesson and with my mentor. I also realised that we often just teach to the exam, but this is wrong, the class should be student-centred, teaching what they need and making them active in learning. So I have been focusing on changing my lessons from being teacher-centred to student-centred, using games and activities that the pupils really enjoy. This gives me much more motivation too, when a lesson is successful, or the pupils enjoy a new activity that we try in class. It makes me happy and I want to try new things. I think that there should be a mentor in every school, and not just for English, but for every subject.*

“NOW I WITNESS THE PUPILS BEING ENGAGED, ATTENTIVE AND EVIDENTLY ENJOYING THEIR ENGLISH CLASS, DESPITE DISTRACTIONS FROM OUTSIDE THE CLASS.”



Left: Stephenie and Azizah (the other mentee) teaching heads, shoulders, knees and toes to the parents.

Above: A book that Stephenie made and illustrated herself.



## Sharing Ideas

“The biggest change is the opportunity to share and discuss ideas and opinions regarding teaching and learning with other teachers”

– KUDAT MENTOR



SABAH

NORTH REGION



# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PROJECT



**S** K PIASAU is a small school in a rural area and some of the pupils have not been to kindergarten, so Year One may be their first experience of formal education. Because of this, teachers frequently reported behaviour problems in the classroom, many of which were referred up to the counsellor to be dealt with on an official basis. As it is such a small school, the counsellor was also asked to teach a few English classes since she is quite fluent in the language and had been recommended to participate in the ELTDP. She was quite recently out of training college at the time, and as she was concerned about the project taking focus away from her counselling duties, we agreed to work on her own understanding of how the teacher can affect pupils' classroom behaviour.

Although there are few serious behaviour issues at the school, many of the problems were minor yet persistent problems that caused constant disruption to the lessons and frustration for the teachers. The mentee suggested that her new understanding of behaviour management led her to feel that too many pupils were being referred to her or the discipline teacher for minor behavioural problems that could be prevented or managed in the classroom by the teacher.

However, many of the teachers did not do this, and we concluded this might be due to lack of training. She wanted to find a way to help teachers manage these problems in-class so they can be dealt with directly and suggested a project which would help all teachers at the school develop basic classroom management techniques. Through discussion, we concluded that it might be best done through a participatory process where we first engage and interest teachers, before moving on to formulating and implementing whole-school classroom management procedures. We felt that in this way, all the

teachers would receive some training and support for developing new classroom management skills and pupils would benefit from having all teachers using the same rules and systems for behaviour, as it would create more of a consistent routine for them. However, we were always aware that getting teacher buy-in would be a challenge.

"The most challenging part of this was convincing people. As we know, different people will handle things differently. Some might not have difficulty in handling a class, but some need a system to handle/manage the pupils' attitude. To change the mindset of the first group was not an easy part," said the mentee.

After a series of meetings spread over the year, the teachers finally agreed to a system that most felt they could implement and the system was put into place in the last term of 2012. The project has been running for more than a month now and while there have been problems with the implementation, the counsellor reports that fewer pupils are being referred to her for behavioural problems. Although there have been some teething problems with implementing the system, the counsellor reports that teachers are seeking help and discussing the system in the teacher's room to support each other.



Above: Rungus girl enjoys a book donated by the British Council, SK Pinawantai, near Kudat, Sabah North Zone.



**INITIALLY**, it seemed like every Malaysian primary school English class was characterised by a standard approach – drill the word/sentence and spelling, repeat many times as a class, group and individually, then follow with a worksheet. Therefore, to see and experience how far Halijah Arif of SK Kulambai has developed as a teacher is testament to her astonishing hard work and the approach this project has taken in the simple act of listening and supporting teachers as they themselves explore and develop as professionals in their classrooms. In her change story below, Halijah writes about how crucial flexibility is to the teaching of English.



Cikgu Halijah Arif of SK  
Kulambai

**Flexibility in Planning:** The teachers don't feel burdened by the plan, they don't have to stick to the plan or book, they can continue teaching happily and adjust the teaching depending on the class/situation – the teachers need to be alert and flexible.

**Flexibility in Teaching:** Before the KSSR, I thought I taught well but now I have realised that my previous lessons were more teacher-centred. I seldom asked the students what they were doing (checking instructions), spoke too quickly and relied on chalk and talk or simple drilling techniques. Now I feel I am more sensitive to student's needs – using different learning styles and techniques as well as combining/ integrating skills.

**Flexibility in Assessment:** Finally, the latest assessment needs the teacher to be alert to students' potential instead of their achievement in the exams. Usually, we judge the students by their performance in the exams. What if a particular student was ill and couldn't do his best in the exam?

In KSSR, the assessment is a continuous process throughout the year. Students have "exams" but through daily activities which the teacher can assess. This is a more flexible way of assessing them. The teacher will choose the student's best performance in the respective month. All students have fair chance to be good in English at their own pace, ability, environment, background, etc. Students can perform better and achieve higher marks than before. Assessment now means no one fails – all are banded. This is a great opportunity for pupils to learn. In the exam, the question format is different. Before, we had to make them like the UPSR, now they match the activities in the class. The previous test papers didn't make sense, students who had only been exposed to basic English skills in the class were now being tested in reading and writing way beyond their ability – previously I just cut and pasted activities from other books, not what they had been taught. The banding means that most can "pass" the exam.

Previously, there were a lot of failures. Now even the weakest pass – the teachers have seen a lot of improvements. Even the new banding system helps the students to be more confident in their ability. My misconception of the conventional method also limited my own true ability. The KSSR has helped me to develop my own style of teaching according to my student's needs. I'm not bound to follow any technique.

KSSR as well as mentoring really assists me in my teaching and learning process. Before, I seldom pushed my students to achieve something that I thought was beyond their willingness and ability. Now I realise that my students are capable of doing great things as long as I give them the opportunity to show it. Before, I simply judged them by their marks in assessments. Now I definitely give a fair chance to my students regardless of their background, ability and so on.

Below right: Clement Liew of SJKC Chung Hwa Tamparuli discussing projects with his mentor, Amna Rafiq



**DURING 2012, the mentees of Tamparuli recorded videos of their lessons. The idea was to capture a neutral picture of what happens in class as a basis for reflection, sharing and development. Each mentee had the chance to view each others' lessons. One teacher noticed how a colleague got pupils sitting at the front of the class for story-time, and later tried it herself. Teachers also noticed pupils' responses. For instance, in one class, they saw the pupils seemed quite intimidated by the teacher, which made them question their own approach to discipline.**

**The teachers watched their own videos and wrote up what they saw, as in the example given. Here the teacher noticed a lack of continuity between activities, and a mismatch between his tone of voice and body language. Since this observation, this mentee has increased his awareness on the importance of body language with young learners. This method builds teachers' self awareness, by helping them to see their classes objectively. It has enabled teachers to experiment and take risks, often with positive effect. Additionally in some cases, we were able to link theory and practice, allowing for meaningful links between knowledge and experience. Here, Clement Liew of SJKC Chung Hwa Tamparuli reflects on a video of them teaching Year One English:**

*My manner of expression and speech to convey messages to the pupils in the class was somewhat showing the lack of interest. I was thinking that I may be able to control the class better if I show them a strict facial expression but after watching the video, I figured that even if I were a pupil in the class I wouldn't be afraid of the teacher because of my mismatch of voice intonation. Maybe what I can do next time is to tell them off directly instead of just giving them the stare or look. Pupils who do and/or pupils who don't understand were bored.*

*When I was trying to get pupils to turn to the page of the activity book, I couldn't believe it took me over a minute to do it. They simply weren't paying attention at all. They were behaving as if I wasn't there at all. I think the class itself was boring as it didn't really involve the pupils. Most of all it was just drilling after drilling and more drilling. Nothing was actually interesting in it. About the teaching syllabus of the textbook and activity book, they were not matched for this class. The vocabularies taught earlier were not applicable to completing the task in the activity book.*

*The conclusion part of the teaching and learning process is satisfactory but still can be improved as not all of the pupils were involved to read the words needed, or maybe it was because they were busy finishing their work given.*



James Farnham-Long  
British Council Mentor

# DIVERSITY IN TEACHING

This story is about a teacher's realisation that different methods and opinions can contribute to change.

**F**OR ME, the most significant change has been my knowledge and understanding of opinions and teaching techniques of teachers from around the world, and diversity of ideas of different teachers, such as communicating with pupils, arranging the classroom and analysing language. I feel I have learned that differences or disagreements are not important, only sharing ideas and taking the good from it. The important thing is not getting angry, but accepting others' opinions as correct to them and appropriate for different situations. Different is good.

Before this I didn't meet many other teachers or know of any other ways of teaching, apart from reading about them. For me, this understanding is significant as it is a lesson that I want my pupils to get from me, that they should appreciate all of the things in the world and their differences. As a teacher, I should be a model for my pupils. I often tell them when I am teaching, that this is something I've learned from my mentor, or another place; or this is how others do it. I try to focus on the good about other people.

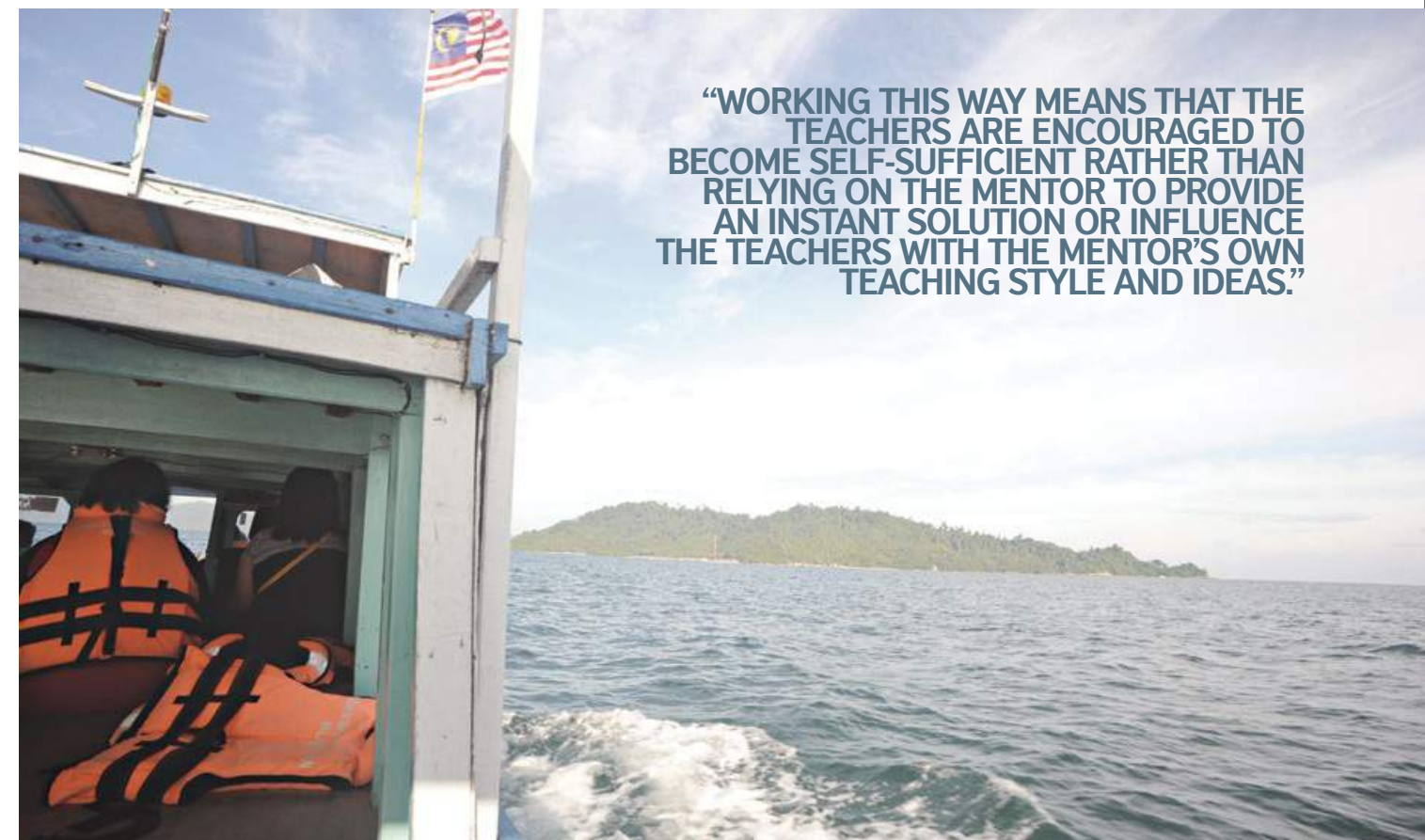
The project has contributed to this change by giving me the basic frameworks to start questioning and looking for more information

about how to teach. Before this, I had no guidance or support, no one to really talk to about teaching in the school, as the support for non-optionist teachers like me is limited. I just followed the textbook or worksheets, and just relied on what my teacher taught me in the past. In our meetings, we looked at websites and talked about books, or watched YouTube videos of different teachers. Now I feel proud to be an English teacher and much happier, I feel I've had opportunity to develop and that my opinions are more mature.



Emma Twitchett  
British Council Mentor

**“WORKING THIS WAY MEANS THAT THE TEACHERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT RATHER THAN RELYING ON THE MENTOR TO PROVIDE AN INSTANT SOLUTION OR INFLUENCE THE TEACHERS WITH THE MENTOR'S OWN TEACHING STYLE AND IDEAS.”**



**T**HERE IS MUCH JOVIALITY on this sunny Saturday morning as the group tease each other, exchange personal information, catch up with each other's news and discuss other topics such as current affairs and whether or not we will see any of the mischievous macaque monkeys they have heard so much about from their mentor. The entire boat is buzzing with English. We are heading to SK Pulau Sepanggar for the second district meeting where the content and venue of the meeting has been agreed on by the project mentees – a mix of optionist and non-optionists. We are joined by numerous other English and other subject teachers and assistant heads who are not mentees, but welcome the opportunity to actively join in the programme. None of these teachers received a calling letter and all were there voluntarily with support from their schools. All of them will be presenting their own resources, reflecting on their teaching and learning and sharing ideas in 100% English. But this willingness to share success and failures, have a reflective approach, problem solve and be able to communicate with each other in English has not always been the situation in this district.

My project approach is a whole school approach to facilitate change by using the collective culture that the local teachers are used to working within. By using group meetings, both within each school and regular district meetings, the teachers have become confident in identifying reasons behind issues and sharing ideas and experiences to find solutions to these. Working this way means that

the teachers are encouraged to become self-sufficient rather than relying on the mentor to provide an instant solution or influence the teachers with the mentor's own teaching style and ideas. They also realise that there is more than one way to do things and it is okay to try something, if it does not work, then try something else.

Most teachers have found this group work as “one of the best things about being part of this project.”

“We get to share our problems and ideas with our friends and colleagues in our own school and other schools. We realise we are not the only one with these problems which helps us”.

Another teacher also states a major benefit of this approach is “now we can talk with other teachers and share activities, teaching aids and other resources – even from different subject teachers. This makes our lesson more enjoyable and also saves preparation time”.

The positive reaction of the teachers prompted me to facilitate the same type of group meeting with the school administration teams, including the assistant head (English) within my district group. This has been very well received and as one of the head teachers said “just because we are part of the school administration, does not mean we are not able to find improvement. This will be of benefit to us and the school”.



## A TEACHER IS INSPIRED TO ORGANISE AN ENGLISH WEEK IN HER SCHOOL.

Before the ELTDP, I was afraid to organise any English events in my school. But once I joined this programme, I wanted to hold an English Week with my colleagues, which was my first research project. “What’s the best way to organise English week? My mentor, Sophie guided me step by step. I chose it because there had not been an English Week in my school for many years.

At first, I had very low self-esteem because I’m not good at English communication. But my colleague, Madam Tina, supported me as she is good in that area. I really believed that teamwork and cooperation could make a big impact on our event. After meeting with the school English panel, I met with our BM teachers to ask their opinions about having an English corner be the focal area of English week. They suggested I do it next to their corner. To decorate the corner, Sophie suggested I use unused material resources so that we



can save money. I met some parents who spent their time in the canteen and asked them to help sew some curtains.

Lastly, I asked the cleaners to make a gate for the English corner to keep our English teaching aids and story books safe. After we had made our English Corner, we started to paint banners to promote our English week. We had small informal meetings with other English teachers about the competitions and activities for English week. We finally carried out an English Week with an action song competition, colouring, drawing and a treasure hunt. Our pupils really enjoyed participating in the competitions because it was a chance for them to show their talents to their teachers and friends and we also managed to involve many stakeholders, including teachers from other subjects, administration staff and parents in an English activity.

After this project, I was inspired by another school’s activity – SK Likas Parent Meeting in Learning Phonics – to carry out a parent meeting in my own school, SK Sembulan. And I was more motivated when Sophie said to me, “Suhaina, you can handle a big project”. This statement really motivated me to do something different again in my school. Our biggest obstacle was that we did not have a comfortable place to do the meeting because my school is under construction. I started to survey a suitable place to hold the big event and had the idea to do it in the Dewan Muhibbah (Community Centre) in Kampung Sembulan. I asked Tina and the other English teachers to join me. After a small discussion with our headmaster and senior assistant, we agreed to hold the meeting during the UPSR week so that all teachers in school could attend.

Our objective was to improve the relationship between teachers and parents, introduce the KSSR objectives and expose the parents to how to support their children’s learning at home. Speeches were made by the Language Officer, Madam Shirney Lim and our Deputy Head 1. Activities were carried out by three English teachers, where parents and teachers worked together in groups. We really enjoyed that day because the parents understood the objective of the programme and many teachers also attended. And again, I was impressed to see the stakeholders’ involvement and commitment.



“BECAUSE OF THIS PROJECT, WE ALWAYS CONTACT EACH OTHER TO TALK OR DISCUSS ABOUT HOW TO TEACH BETTER ENGLISH, DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, AND MANY MORE WAYS TO IMPROVE OUR TEACHING – SOMETHING WE SELDOM DID BEFORE.”



**I SELECTED** this story from the Most Significant Change stories submitted by the mentees in my district at the end of the 2012 school year. Although it was not selected as the winner in the mentees’ balloting, I feel that the change discussed by this mentee is the most significant because it marks the beginning of a pattern, which if sustained, will change the way teachers in the district see themselves as educators and their relationships with their colleagues.

The most significant change that has resulted from the ELTDP is working together with my mentor and also with my colleagues who are involved in this project – not only my colleagues in my school but also the other teachers in the district. Because of this project, we always contact each other to talk or discuss about how to teach better English, different activities, and many more ways to improve our teaching – something we seldom did before. This is significant for me because I think this is the first time we are given chance to work and co-operate with a foreign mentor that will give us different views in our teaching and English. The British Council mentors contributed a lot – the ideas in teaching English, the praise given to us that definitely will boost our confidence to do better next time, and a lot more. I think the mentor helps us in all aspects.

**Mentor’s note:** Certainly the presence of the ELTDP in the schools contributed to this change. Without the Project, it is unlikely that any kind of professional development meetings (other than, for example, KSSR training) would have been organised and held. The mentees are now enthusiastic about district meetings, where they can share ideas with their colleagues. Working together in English increases their level of confidence to discuss their problems and how they are working to solve them.

Another factor is that some mentees (including the teacher who submitted this change) have formed professional alliances with their colleagues who are attending the same professional development course in Kota Kinabalu.





Syntiana Juvil and Robyana Jamun,  
SK Masalog, Kota Marudu

**A**T THE two young teachers' suggestion, we decide to produce this story as a short video. Watching both these rural primary school teachers converse confidently in English with the camera, unhampered by the insecurities that beset English communication just over a year ago, listening to them speaking not only with confidence, but also with command of the process and methodologies they are describing, I am struck with the realisation that from my perspective as a mentor, this is the most significant change I have witnessed.

Would it have been conceivable, 13 months ago, that these two teachers, who eyed me with suspicion and concern during our first few

meetings, would in the not too distant future seize the initiative, describing a process of teaching using photography and video as their principle medium for recording lessons? I very much doubt it. As such this is a change story, as much about professional achievement, as a salutary reminder to maintain faith in others.

As though reading my thoughts, the two young women develop their ideas with knowing confidence, explaining how the camera has made them look at their teaching from a new, more objective perspective, how they have been challenged to rethink the use of space within the classroom, how they have had to change their methodologies to include learner-centred activities that allow them to record, how this has encouraged their pupils to gain in confidence, how in the process they have had to re-evaluate best practice in the classroom.

"The children loved planting seeds in poly bags. It was great they completely forgot that they were speaking English. It was so natural," said Syntiana Juvil. "For me, it was great because I was able to watch

the lesson I gave on video and to think about what worked and what didn't work."

"Our English has definitely improved because we have this opportunity to work with a native speaker. Now if we don't understand we have someone to ask," said Robiyana Jamun. "Photographing the lessons has helped me think about my teaching and it is also important evidence for our KSSR files."

Most importantly, these two teachers are clearly enjoying their new-found confidence with English. Before finishing with the story I asked them if, having employed a wider, more eclectic, less teacher-centred approach to English, they are enjoying teaching more. Without hesitation, their answer is an emphatic, "YES!"

## A TEACHER shares her change brought about from teaching phonics.



**I**HAVE been involved in the British Council ELTDP since it started in February 2011. I am a KSSR Year One English Teacher at SJKC St Peter, Kudat, and have taught for a number of years. I have developed my understanding and approach to teaching phonics and reading through the ELTDP. Before the KSSR, I was not familiar with phonics as a reading development tool. My learning on the subject came mainly from watching children's television programmes with my young son.

Previously, I approached phonics and literacy through teaching the alphabet. This revolved around students identifying the names of letters and improving their spelling. While I found this to be effective with some students, others struggled. During the initial six months, I worked closely with my mentor on planning phonics and reading lessons. This involved weekly planning and review sessions whereby we looked through a set of resources and matched them to both the KSSR Learning Standards and text book for the week. I selected activities from the resources I felt linked to the lesson learning aims, engaged students and allowed me to experiment in my classroom within my comfort limits.

Planning sessions always began with a discussion of the previous lesson. Occasionally the mentor would visit my class when I felt it necessary. Having the opportunity to plan and discuss lessons with someone gave me the freedom to explore

my teaching, student responses and to develop a stronger understanding of phonics based on what was happening in my classroom. Over time, I have begun to see real differences in how my pupils learn. Before, the lowest-ability pupils were non-responsive during lessons but many can now at least write simple words in English. Developing a teaching approach to phonics has taught me a number of things, beyond reading. For example, I have learnt that pupils respond better to a teacher they see as a friend rather than a disciplinarian, a teacher they respect rather than fear. Through getting to know my pupils individually, and by planning lessons to suit them, I have learnt what they respond positively to and how best to support them.

Overall, through engagement with the curriculum, ELTDP and my classroom, I feel that I have made steady progress in adapting to the new KSSR curriculum. I have learnt through doing things and discussing my practice with others. The result has been a more enjoyable classroom experience for my pupils and me.

Madam Ong Koh Lu, SJKC St Peter



Carolina Da Cruz  
British Council Mentor

**THIS IS THE STORY** of Siti, a teacher who identifies the opportunity to share and discuss with other teachers as her most significant change. She is part of the Eat, Play, Teach Club formed by the Matunggong zone in the Kudat district.

**A**CCORDING to their Facebook page – where they share teaching tips, discussion on wide educational issues, websites, photos from workshops, as well as jokes, proverbs, songs, cooking recipes, joys, frustrations – they are a group of “fun, full spirited English teachers trying to make a difference”. They are also involved in conducting and facilitating district workshops every two months.

Mentees typically share materials, resources, approaches, as well as well as experience and expertise from their Action Research projects or topics of interest. They have also shared problems they face in their teaching to brainstorm advice and solutions with the group and demonstrated activities, games, IT tools and skills. Sharing has helped to overcome the distance and remoteness of schools in a district consisting of four rural school schools and one urban school and provided a platform for friendship, sharing and sustainable teacher development. The group is now interested in networking and starting to plan ways to involve other project and non-project teachers and schools.



“SHARING HAS HELPED TO OVERCOME THE DISTANCE AND REMOTENESS OF SCHOOLS IN A DISTRICT CONSISTING OF FOUR RURAL SCHOOL SCHOOLS AND ONE URBAN SCHOOL AND PROVIDED A PLATFORM FOR FRIENDSHIP, SHARING AND SUSTAINABLE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT.”

Siti says that sharing has helped her to find many new interesting ideas to use in the classroom and also to save time as Googling is very time-consuming. The group has also given her the confidence to innovate and use fun and interesting activities, whereas before, she was afraid that those activities would be not be accepted in Malaysia. Most importantly, it has made her realise that she is indeed not alone.

“The biggest change is the opportunity to share and discuss any ideas or opinions regarding to teaching and learning with the other teachers. I benefit a great deal from it. It makes me realise that I’m indeed not alone in my effort to impart knowledge to the young learners in our schools. Through sharing ideas, I’m able to learn something new that I find very useful, something I can improvise for me to apply in my classroom,” said Siti.

“Before, I used to do most of my idea-searching on the Internet, which was very time-consuming. I found many fun and interesting activities but I often hesitated to use them in case they were unsuitable for our education system here in Malaysia.”

Nathan Waller  
British Council Mentor

**TEACHER JOE JUNIOR TANN** of SRK Tinangol talks about the various changes he has seen as a result of being involved in the ELDTP.

Joe Junior Tann of SRK Tinangol, has the class transfixed during story-telling time.



**T**HE MOST SIGNIFICANT change for me has been the change in the attitude towards English from the students in my classes. There are many reasons for this change, but at the core of the change is the fun that the children now have when learning English in class. The English panel worked together, with support from the mentor in our school, to change the way we teach and assess English in our school.

We wanted to organise a wider variety of activities, beyond the textbook and activity books, and use more strategies during the lessons to stimulate the children’s learning. As a team, we held many discussions on the variety of resources available to us, and decided to reduce the number of paper-based worksheets and use technology where possible.

The mentor supported us in finding or creating useful resources to make teaching the students easier and more effective. Based on the discussions with my mentor, I then experimented with my activities and the resources I could use to support those activities. Where I would use the textbook and worksheets to do activities before, I now use apps on my tablet computer, or videos and interactive websites that I can show on the projector. This has been especially useful in helping me organise my classroom. I can give tasks to stronger students while I support the weaker students, who respond well to the learning applications on the tablet in a one-to-one situation.

As a result of this change, this year we have also focused more on using stories and storybooks to help the children use and understand English better. I now regularly have story time with my students, where we can practice the language we have learnt in a more realistic way. It has also proved to be a good way to check their understanding and I am working towards using this to support their banding assessment. The students have enjoyed stories so much we have even made our own story books in class based on the topics in the curriculum. It gives many opportunities for them to show their creativity, and to be honest, the students can really surprise me with the things they can do.



Nick Alexander  
British Council Mentor

Eszter Nagy and Duncan Smith  
British Council Mentors

Cikgu Siti Norbari



THE  
PITAS DISTRICT  
has motivated pupils to  
write through a pen pal  
system.

**The beginning:** The idea for setting up a pen pal system between schools came as result of discussions with several mentees who felt quite frustrated about how poor their pupils’ writing is generally. Teachers who taught Level One pupils identified the biggest challenge being how to improve their pupils’ writing while also making lessons interesting. Much of the writing that Level One pupils undertake in the classroom consists of copying from the board or in their workbooks. While this is undoubtedly useful in improving handwriting, it doesn’t allow pupils any freedom or to formulate their own sentences.

After discussing this situation with mentees, we decided to start a system in which pupils could exchange letters with a pupil of the same age in a nearby school. Initially, some regarded it as extra work in an already busy schedule. Regardless of this, all agreed to give it a go.

**Getting started:** To begin with, pupils were shown a teacher-made example of a pen pal letter. The first ones were fairly structured and pupils were only required to fill in the blanks with their own information: name, age and where they lived, as in the given example. This first stage was useful in giving teachers the opportunity to teach ways of beginning and ending a letter as well as some useful questions and phrases

such as “Hope to hear from you soon” and “What about you?”

The letters were collected from each school and distributed to another one in the area. The mentees all told me that their pupils were happy and excited to receive a letter, some of which had been decorated with colourful pictures.

Ery Araen, a Year One pupil from SK Bongkol said, “I feel happy because someone is sending me a letter” while Edly Udin from the same school simply said, “I like it.” The pupils were eager to write back to their pen pal, answering any questions and giving information about themselves.

After the system had been set up, the next challenge was how to keep the momentum going and develop the pupils’ writing. It was generally agreed that they needed to have more freedom to write about topics which interested them and to be able to ask any questions they wanted to. In order to do this, the pupils needed to know how to ask questions in the classroom, so the teachers designed and made large posters with useful questions, such as “How do you say \_\_\_\_ in English?” The posters also had the translation of the questions in Bahasa Malaysia to help.

**Where do we go from here?**  
Feedback from mentees has generally been positive and there seems to be genuine interest in continuing. Year

One teacher, Kamisah Inding from SK Kanibongan said, “Writing letters is one of the best ways to instil pupil’s interest to learn the language. And Siti Norbari, who teaches both Years One and Two at SK Pinggan Pinggan added: “My pupils enjoy writing now and really like to get letters from their friends.”

The pen pal system is still in its early stages but by giving the pupils the language they need and helping them to write about what they want, it is hoped that the letters will become more personal and each correspondence will take a different path over an extended period. Mentee Patsy Alison from SK Bongkol talked of the benefits of the system to her pupils by saying it “gives them the opportunity to think independently.” It is hoped that not only will the pupils’ writing improve, but that friendships will develop as the letters continue.



USING  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
FOR TEACHER  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND LITERACY

**SOME OF THE ISSUES** identified by the project teachers/mentors in the first year of the project were:

- Teachers’ sharing is not consolidated and practices are not shared throughout the Zones
- Limited awareness amongst stakeholders of what was going on in the classroom
- Understanding of teacher excellence
- In cases, low levels of literacy and motivation among students.

In our district, we decided to use photography as a tool to address some of these issues. Most teachers had already been using the technique to record extra-curricular activities. However, rarely did teachers’ photos document the processes and products of learning in the classroom. Also, teachers tended to focus on special events/extra-curricular activities and high achievers. The photos were not usually seen by other stakeholders, especially those outside their schools. As a group, we consulted various websites to research the use of photography in education and those who were interested embarked on the following mini-projects of their choice.

**Photography for Teacher Development Project (All schools)**

- Mentor/Teacher takes pictures of different stages of a lesson. Gives jumbled up photos to a teacher who then recalls the stages by unscrambling the pictures.
- Teacher chooses the most significant photo and explains her choice to her peers.
- Teacher gives a slide show to peers who can ask her about different aspects of the lesson. To compare/contrast aspects of their practice this way.

**Photography for literacy projects (Two schools)**

- Body Alphabet chart – take photos of

students posing as letters. Use the photos to make an alphabet chart.

- Picture dictionary – take photos of students acting out/miming vocabulary from the course book to make a picture dictionary.
- Fashion show and parents-students look-alike competition – take pictures of students and parents on the catwalk. Write captions describing what students are wearing.
- Students give feedback/star rating – take photos of various stages of the lesson. Students rate the activities by placing stars next to them.

The most significant photos from all the projects above – selected by the teachers and mentor – were made into a slideshow. This was shown in the end-of-year district meeting to other stakeholders (Language Officers, head teachers, non-project teachers). The four teachers participating in the Literacy Projects explained their work in a discussion with other district teachers. They also showcased their posters on the schools’ communal display board and used the rest of the photos to make a year book for Parents’ Day.

**Positive outcomes**

- Improved sharing of teaching and learning practices, especially among teachers and across project schools in the district.
- Due to their immediacy, photos proved to be successful in generating discussion about classroom practices and in prompting teachers to compare, contrast their teaching.
- Discussing practices through self-selected photos empowered teachers as they had more control over what aspect(s) of their work they wanted to highlight (as opposed to video or peer observation where nothing goes unnoticed).
- Techniques/ideas/materials illustrated

through teachers’ photos proved popular among peers and were more likely to be used.

- The literacy project activities generated a lot of students’ English and were popular with both the teachers and learners.
- Inclusion: Almost all the Year One and Two students – a range of abilities – participated in their schools literacy projects

**Recommendations**

The following issues which emerged during the project need to be considered when designing development activities in the future

- Classroom display tended to fulfil a visual function as opposed to being a tool for learning (e.g. in all cases the photo display – including the captions – were prepared by the teachers rather than the students).
- Teachers used own funds for the project (developing pictures, stationery, etc.)
- A few teachers who did not participate in the Literacy projects expressed concern that publicising teacher excellence may adversely affect them. (E.g. extra work delegated by stakeholders; more monitoring from stakeholders; complaints from various stakeholders if other KSSR subject teachers are seen to be doing less than the ELTDP KSSR teacher.)
- For various reasons, a few teachers saw the completion of all course book activities/ extramural activities as a priority and opted out of the Literacy project.
- Negative stereotypes about parental involvement still prevail among some teachers (e.g. genuine or perceived parental disengagement was among the reasons why in cases photos were not shared widely with parents)

We have yet to receive feedback from parents who were involved in the project.



## English Fluency

“I speak English in class more fluently and have become more confident to teach English in class”

– BELURAN TEACHER



SABAH

EAST REGION



Chris Leed  
British Council Mentor

Emmy Bronsema  
British Council Mentor



**B**EFORE teachers started meeting to make resources, most teachers were limited in their use of teaching aids in class or were making temporary teaching aids for use in one class then discarding them after the lesson with no reusable resource bank or sharing between teachers.

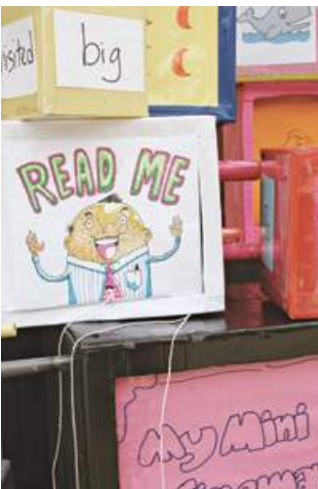
At first, teachers were quite reluctant to meet with each other and speak in English as some felt unconfident in their English ability compared with peers whilst others felt embarrassed or didn't want to appear to be showing off in front of less able colleagues. Also, some felt that they had nothing to share with colleagues as they were not doing anything in class that others did not already know. Once the first meeting was held, they quickly realised that they were all feeling similar anxieties.

The meetings were relaxed, enjoyable and gave the teachers valuable time to reflect and share with colleagues they had only ever previously met in large, impersonal training sessions held in Bahasa Malaysia. The teachers realised that, after sharing ideas and experiences, what they previously thought of as common practice or knowledge in terms of resources, games and teaching techniques were of great use to peers who welcomed new ideas. The teaching aids have all been used by the teachers in their lessons with positive reactions from pupils and teachers. I have enjoyed watching the bond and rapport between my teachers develop and relationships become closer, as well as the confidence in communicating solely in English and gaining experience in being in charge and chairing meetings as each meeting is held. The following is a teacher's account of how the mentor-teacher workshops have helped.

Before project members attended the British Council mentor-teacher workshops, we encountered similar problems in making time for creating teaching materials; we were extremely shy and reluctant to speak English amongst our colleagues; and we used the same orthodox methods in class because we lacked opportunities to share ideas. But the workshop has enabled teachers to get together and individually contribute to organising workshops for (English) KSSR teachers.

So far, we have managed to make full use of our time by creating giant box dice, big box story books and phonics flash cards during the workshops. We talked about successful class activities from other teachers like the Bowling Phonics game, the Alphabet-Carpet and various puzzle games and also class management strategies such as silent hand gestures or use of time limits. After attending and co-organising the workshops, meeting up has become an ease for the teachers as we manage to spend time creating teaching materials and exploring varied techniques or resources that can be used in our class. We have also discovered that we are more confident of speaking in English amongst our colleagues. It has enabled us to bond with other teachers who are optionists and non-English optionists.

All in all, the workshops serve as a platform for teachers to gain knowledge and advice from each other and improve their proficiency as well as making attractive teaching aids for our pupils' benefit. We feel that we have achieved most of the ELTDP objectives in the past and we can continue organising the workshop in the future even after our mentor leaves.



Other teachers in this district added:

**"It's both fun and useful."**  
– Tai Han Sa, SK Pekan;

**"An opportunity to share ideas and concerns."**  
– Charlene Athanasius, SK Pekan;

**"It has helped me how to stay creative when teaching English in rural schools"**  
– Intan Zulkifli, SK Sungai Nafas



**M**Y MENTEE, whose story is listed below, only spoke English with me when she started to work on the project in 2012. She didn't feel confident about speaking in English with others in her school and found it hard to teach her classes in English. By working hard on her proficiency, she has boosted her confidence and improved her fluency. She now speaks English with several people in the school and is more confident in teaching in English. This is what she has to share:

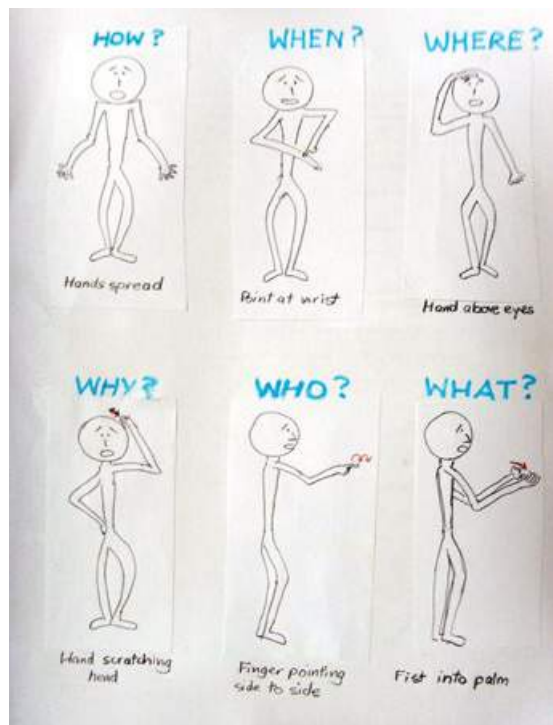
The most significant change that has resulted from the ELTDP is the improvement in my proficiency, particularly in speaking. Before I joined the programme, I used to speak mainly in Bahasa Malaysia in most of my conversations. But after being involved in this

programme, I have increased speaking in English especially with my mentor, my colleagues and of course with my pupils too when I teach English. Sometimes, I also introduce certain terms in English to my pupils in the other subjects that I teach. When I meet my headmaster (GB) and the co-curricular principal (PK-KOK), I also speak in English with them. Before the project, I didn't have enough confidence to speak with them in English. I have also started to watch more English TV programmes. For example movies, *National Geographic*, discussions, news and other entertainment programmes. I try my best to understand what they are saying without switching on the subtitles.

I have also become a member of the library in Sandakan and I borrow an English book once a fortnight. In the library, I also read English magazines on health. Besides going to the library, I read articles online, especially on health matters. Whenever I have problems understanding a new word, I search for its meaning in the dictionary or sometimes, I go online to find the definition and pronunciation. At the beginning of this year, I had difficulty speaking English during my English lessons. Now in class, I do not need to think too much about English words during English lessons and the words come more naturally. I speak English in class more fluently and have become more confident about teaching English in class.

**"AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR, I HAD DIFFICULTY SPEAKING ENGLISH DURING MY ENGLISH LESSONS. NOW IN CLASS, I DO NOT NEED TO THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT ENGLISH WORDS DURING ENGLISH LESSONS AND THE WORDS COME MORE NATURALLY."**





**“AT THE SAME TIME, STUDENTS WERE ASKED THE QUESTIONS MORE DIRECTLY, EVENTUALLY LEADING TO A GROUP VERSUS GROUP COMPETITION WHERE THE TEACHER WENT ROUND WITH A STOPWATCH ASKING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS RANDOM QUESTIONS WHICH THEY HAD TO ANSWER AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.”**

**T**HIS CHANGE story is about a teacher who, in common with many English teachers, was frustrated at the difficulty in getting children to understand or answer “wh-” questions. Teachers are encouraged to ask open questions to test understanding, but nowhere in the curriculum do we actually teach them systematically; we simply throw out “wh-” questions randomly like a casual farmer sowing seeds, and hope that some of them land in fertile soil and grow. In conjunction with the mentor, this teacher tried a new method of doing “wh-” questions which the mentor had modelled in an earlier training workshop.

This revolves around a simple formula of repeated work on 6 questions:

- Q1.** How do you go to school?
- Q2.** Where do you go to school?
- Q3.** When do you go to school?
- Q4.** Why do you go to school?
- Q5.** Who do you go to school with?
- Q6.** What do you go to school with?

**There are two big advantages with this question format:**

1. The children know the answers to these questions, if only initially in BM – there’s not the added complication of interpretative thinking; it’s a question about their lives, not Chad the Farmer’s or an anthropomorphic duck’s.
2. The stem of the question is essentially the same, so children are free to focus on the root of the question, the first word.

In the first 30-minute session, the Year Two class were introduced to the questions one by one, with the teacher writing them on the board, along with the BM translation of the wh- word, and a selection of answers (by bus/car/foot, etc; at SK (school); 6 o’clock/every day; to study; father/sister/friends; schoolbag, pencil, pen, headache...) They were also shown a gesture for each question. In the second session a week later, the students were taken through the questions and answers again, with questions asked randomly to the whole class and sometimes to individuals.

In subsequent sessions of 20 to 30 minutes at roughly weekly intervals, the questions were revisited but with the clues slowly removed – BM, written answers, written questions, gestures – like scaffolding from a building. At the same time, students were asked the questions more directly, eventually leading to a group versus group competition where the teacher went round with a stopwatch asking individual students random questions which they had to answer as quickly as possible.

“After six weeks about half the class could give the answers straight away; they can even answer them if you meet them around school during the day,” says the teacher. “Most of the others can do it if you do the action. One or two students, maybe they will never get it! I will do this with all my classes from now on.”



**THIS IS THE STORY** written by one of the heads of the English department in Kunak, Sabah. It has been chosen as it illustrates teacher’s understanding of the importance of engaging parents in children’s education. This teacher keeps inspiring her colleagues within and outside the district and encourages them to build a close relationship with parents. She sends the message that collaboration is the key to success in education.

**T**HE ELTDP has brought about a lot of positive changes to my school, but the most significant is in my relationship with the parents. When the ELTDP mentor talked to me about having a parents’ meeting, I quickly and enthusiastically agreed. My school conducts meetings with parents from time to time, but it has always been conducted very formally. Most of the time, only the teachers would talk and the parents would listen. The parents’ meeting that the mentor suggested was something different – the parents would do the talking. The meeting went really well and it was an eye-opening experience for me. I believe I learned more about the school and my pupils during that one-hour meeting with the parents than in my seven years of teaching.

Another great opportunity to work with the parents came when the Learn English Family (LEF) Workshops were introduced by the ELTDP mentor. I see the LEF Workshops as yet another platform for mingling with the parents, getting to know them better, making them feel comfortable with me and with the school. I have tremendous fun conducting the workshops, and I can feel the positive energy from the parents. We are starting to trust one another. Parents are starting

to be more open in approaching me and asking me questions. On my part, I am starting to drop all the baseless assumptions about how reluctant and resistant the parents of SK Kunak 2 are in giving their cooperation to the school and the teachers. I can now see teachers and parents working together towards a common goal to provide the pupils with the best opportunities to learn.

I think what has brought about this significant change is the way the ELTDP encourages partnership and collaboration. Success, especially within the school context, is not about a single person. It is about the cumulative contributions of many people who work together for the common good. I realise that in order for me to really see progress, I have to work with everyone – the teachers, the pupils and the parents.

I hope and pray that this collaboration with the parents will continue, and I aim to spread the message to every teacher in the school. This can be a start for a new way of working with the parents for my school. I am very positive that if this continues, we would soon be able to see the progress that we have been dreaming of.





**THIS GROUP** of Kunak teachers have formed an excellent developmental network where they regularly share the progress and outcomes of their various development activities on areas of personal interest. The teacher below shares her reflections on action research on how the behaviour of a previously difficult class was transformed by the introduction of a system of rewards.

**I** HAVE been involved with the ELTDP for almost nine months. Thank God I was chosen to be part of the most dedicated and motivated team to be mentored. During these nine months, I have realised that many things have changed from my perspective as a teacher. The most significant change in my class is the pupils becoming more disciplined after I introduced the rewards system. Before this, my pupils in Class 2 Gemilang were uncontrolled and always badly behaved. They were always fighting each other, making noise even when the teacher is teaching, and they were not serious when they studied. Most of them did not bring their books, finish their homework and were not motivated in the class. The teachers always complained that they were so bored of entering that class because of the negative environment. It was the same for me until I was helped by my mentor to find a solution for that situation. Finally, I tried to introduce the reward system in my class.

The implementation of the reward system changed my pupils in many aspects. The most significant change that I could see was my pupils becoming more disciplined. It is because they do not want to get an “X” symbol, which means that they are bad compared to their friends. The pupils gain confidence if they get the “flower” symbol when they are good – something which they proudly show to their friends. Automatically, a healthy competition to give their best was established among them. Slowly, the pupils’ behaviour became more positive. What was a surprise was that their achievements improved too. I then came up with the theory that their performance is related to their attitude.

The most significant change that occurred in my class gives me a feeling that can’t really be explained in words. I enjoy teaching more and feel motivated when entering the class. This is because I feel appreciated after what I did for them. This little sacrifice gives me a very valuable experience for my whole life as a teacher.

**THROUGH JUNAIDAH’S RESEARCH** into improving children’s reading, she became aware of the impact parental involvement could have on the pupils. She experimented with reading workshops for parents, which revealed their desire to be more involved in school life. As a result, the school administration will support future activities to increase parental involvement.

Junaidah Sarikul, Teacher, SK Pekan, Lahad Datu

**Q1. What was the situation before?**

I rarely met the parents or discussed the pupils with their parents. In the past, any reading activities at school gave opportunities to the best pupils to show their reading skills but there was no connection with parents.

**Q2. What happened?**

For my classroom research, I looked at how to help the pupils improve their reading and the link between home and school. I surveyed the parents to see if they were interested in a reading programme at school. Almost all the parents responded that they would like to be involved. When we began the Learn English Family (LEF) programme, the attendance was great! The parents were keen to know what the programme was all about. They even chose to do the activities using the English language. However, the attendance gradually became lesser.

When I asked a few of the parents, their responses were: Nobody to baby-sit their children; They have to rush back to their workplace; The fathers cannot make it (most of the parents were mothers!); Most of them work far from Lahad Datu; and The programme was held on weekdays.

So next year, the programme will be put under the supervision of the school’s library. The administration will support us (the English teachers) by including LEF in the Year One Transition Programme. Although I am not 100% satisfied with the programme this year, by “word of mouth” from the attendees, a few of the parents did come to discuss their children’s learning progress. I discussed with them ways to support the children at home. Due to this, their children became more engaged in the classroom activities. Teaching has become a lot easier and more fun. I hope that we will have more cooperation from more parents next year. I can see that more learning is happening at home and this supports the teachers.



Cikgu Junaidah Sarikul of SK Pekan Lahad Datu explaining book selection, with her mentor, Anna White seated behind her.



**Q3. What is the change?**

Parental involvement at school has increased and especially parental support to help the children read. I really understand the importance of parental involvement and have a co-operative relationship with the parents now. I have found lots of ways to help them and help the pupils remember through after-reading activities using drama, puppets etc. I used to think reading the text was the full activity and it only needs to happen at school, I never thought the parents could help.

**Pupils:** Increased engagement in class and improved reading skills through extra practice at home.

**Parents:** They feel welcome in school and know that we want to help, through involvement in the programme they can see that they have the ability to help their children learn and they know how to tell stories.

**School:** The school administration will support activities with the parents next year involving the English teachers and the library coordinator. We’ve never had a programme like this before and the support from the school administration will mean the attendance should improve.



Michael White  
British Council Mentor



## FOR NURHANISAH,

involving parents in the school community was a daunting prospect. Nurhanisah and all the teachers at SK Lahad Datu 2 would rarely have contact with parents and that contact usually only involved dealing with queries and complaints from parents. However, after running a course for parents in the school about how they can become involved in the education of their children, Nurhanisah has grown in confidence and regularly communicates with parents.

The teachers were very wary of the parents before the project but now they have grown in confidence and actively encourage parents to become involved in the school. The change in attitude of Nurhanisah and the other teachers involved and their increased confidence when working with parents is an extremely positive change. I am pleased to be working alongside such a dedicated and dynamic teacher.

### Nurhanisah Biran, English Teacher, SK Lahad Datu 2

Before the ELTDP, my school did not conduct activities with the pre-school teachers and parents. We now work with the pre-school parents and teachers to help improve the students' reading skills. My school has a lot of plans to involve the pre-school parents and teachers in the school even more next year. I wanted to involve the pre-school in the reading project because the children are going to be in Year One the next year and this will make it easier for the students and Year One teachers when they start school.

My main objective is to encourage the parents to read with their kids at home since this will give them an advantage in reading because everything starts at home. I invited the pre-school parents and teachers to come to school on Saturday for a reading project. I used the Learn English Family book to help me organise the project. The English teachers from my school were there to help the parents. The programme for the reading project includes how to use songs and rhymes, how to do storytelling and how to create materials at home.

The project was a success, the parents and teachers all received certificates and the parents gave very good feedback – they all felt their confidence had improved and they were going to try some of the activities at home. We only had a small number of parents, and for next year, we hope the project will grow and we will get more parents attending. We also have some parents who have volunteered to help with next year's project. Next year, the project will be bigger and include a mini-theatre session, phonics session and storytelling workshop lead by the volunteer parents. The guru besar (head teacher) is very happy with the involvement of the pre-school because it will improve the reading of the students, and when they come to Year One, they will already be able to read some phonics and simple words in English. We will also already have a good relationship with the parents. This is a big change which is still happening at my school.

Pauline Bezzant  
British Council Mentor

# MY NEW CONFIDENCE



## ASNIE PATRASAH

is head of the English department and project teacher at SK Payang, Lahad Datu. She has been teaching English for almost four years in her hometown of Lahad Datu. This is her story.

**M**Y TEACHING has changed so much since I became involved in the project. Last year, I taught KSSR Year One English as I do now. I was so scared to teach phonics because I had no idea how to blend and segment the sounds. Also, I did not have enough confidence to speak out in English because of fears over my own English ability and in particular, my pronunciation. I remember I never used to teach phonics at all though I did teach Reading to my Year One class. Then, after I joined the project in October last year, I attended the district-based workshop and learnt all about phonics and practised activities I could use in my own class. The phonics sharing session was given by other teachers in Lahad Datu and supported by the project mentors.

This year, at the start of the year, my pupils could only read in Bahasa Malaysia, and when they tried to read the sounds, they pronounced them like in Bahasa Malaysia. My English class taught them how the sounds should be and how to improve their Reading by phonics.

Muhd. Afiq As-Siddiq, a 7-year-old boy in Asnie's class offered his views on reading in English: "I like reading very much. I now have many English books at home. Sounds help me to read. I sometimes speak English, but my English has improved a lot since the start of Year One. My English class makes you like to read more English."

Asnie concluded: "I'm so happy with my Year One classes this year compared to last year, and also with my own improvement."



Brenna Cheers  
British Council Mentor

**THE STORY** below was selected by the teachers of a Sandakan district as the most significant change and it describes the experiences of a non-optionist gaining confidence in his teaching and increased knowledge and ideas for teaching reading. These changes came about through his interactions with the teacher mentees who shared what they had learned about the KSSR, phonics, and reading. The teachers in this district have been working on these and other areas of development, including assessment, writing and involving parents and have found ways of involving other Level One English teachers from their schools in their activities.



**“I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT TEACHING PHONICS AND I AM TRYING NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING INCLUDING USING STORIES.”**



**L**AST YEAR, I was not an English teacher. I haven't taught English since 2004 and I was a Year Six teacher before that. This year, I am teaching Year One English because one of our English teachers transferred to another school and there wasn't a replacement. At first, I thought it would be easy because Level One is not as challenging as Level Two. I soon learned that it was a lot more challenging than I had imagined. I began to realise that the students in Level Two were failing because they had not learned to read in Level One. I also realised that I was not as prepared to teach the students as I had thought. Although I was not a mentee, I began to get involved in some of the activities that the mentor in our school organised so that I could learn more about the KSSR and different methods of teaching.

During one of the workshops on Year Two KSSR held early in the year, I had the opportunity to meet teachers from some of the other schools involved in the project. I used to think that to be a good English teacher you had to be an optionist and as a non-optionist I felt alone and that other teachers were not facing the same problems I was. After meeting some of the other teachers, my opinions changed. I met mentees who were non-optionists and saw that although they used to feel the same way I did, they had overcome this. One of the teachers who gave a session on phonics was also a non-optionist and it was inspiring to me how much she had learned about teaching phonics and how confident she was speaking in front of a large group of teachers. I came away from these meetings feeling that if other non-optionists could do it, so could I.

Since then I have attended all of the meetings and workshops and have learned a lot about teaching English, especially teaching reading. I feel more confident about teaching phonics and I am trying new ways to teach reading including using stories. As a result, I have seen an improvement in my students' abilities. What I have learned has not only been useful in teaching English, but has also changed the way that I teach Maths.

Malik Farooq  
British Council Mentor

# THE CHANGES

**CECILIA AMBROSE**, a teacher at SK Sungai Kayu, is a keen learner. She absorbed the maximum input and today she is a very confident, active and reflective teacher. She has made good progress on all fronts, takes initiatives and goes an extra mile, which has led her to success. She shares her ELTDP experience below.

**M**Y NAME IS CECILIA and I am a mentee in Sandakan. In May 2011, I was introduced to my mentor Mr. Malik, a qualified and experienced professional who encouraged and motivated me. I must admit that I have improved a lot in my teaching practice, classroom management, preparing teaching aids, sharing ideas and judging students' needs and their interests. It was all made possible because of continuous support, regular discussions, classroom observations, individual face-to-face discussions, district meetings, team teaching, shadowing, peer observations, classroom research and reflective practice. This professional input was through the mentor's weekly visits.

Major changes were observed which included active participation and involvement of the parents. Now parents have a closer improved relationship with the teacher. In parent-teacher meetings and Learn English Family workshops, parents express their views, ideas and proposals individually as well as through group discussions.

Today, at the time of writing, I feel that I am a different teacher who is much more confident in the use of English. I would not have had such a productive experience if I had not been chosen on this programme. Thanks to British Council and special thanks to my mentor, Mr. Malik, with whose help has made it all happen."

**“Before, I never thought of using additional material other than the prescribed books in my class.”**  
– A teacher

**“Now we can hear teachers using English in the staffroom. ELTDP has brought a kind of active and lively atmosphere and an overall change.”**  
– PKP

**“I have no words to thank the mentor for waking us up and for reminding us of our responsibilities, engaging us through parent-teacher meetings and teaching us through Learn English Family workshops.”**  
– Chairman, PIBG (Parent Teacher Association)

**“Thanks to the ELTDP which has brought us closer to the teachers and school management. You have provided us a platform to come to school on regular parent-teacher meetings to discuss the issues related to children's academic and social development, and cultural awareness.”**  
– A parent

**“We are now very well aware of the importance of additional teaching material and have prepared CDs on ‘Rhymes’ and ‘Story telling’ which the students enjoy. Active use of audios and videos has changed my teaching and it is more productive and has sparked an interest in the learning of English among my students.”** – A mentee





**PRISCILLA** talks about her experience with holding up her hand and using it as a signal for the students to stop working and look at the teacher. Before, she used to shout at the students until they were quiet; now she simply holds her hand in the air.



**Priscilla:** It's easy for me to teach them. At first, I was like a lion. I took over this class two months ago and I tried these new methods of classroom management. They wonder why I am so silent and it makes them pay attention to me. I don't have to shout. When they all look at me I say, "Thank you".

**Mentor:** I then say you are rewarding them and appreciating that they are cooperating with you by saying, "Thank you". Priscilla then has an "Aha!" expression. What about the students who are not looking at you to know that you are holding your hand up?

**Priscilla:** The students who are looking at me help me by tapping the other students on the shoulder and telling those students that I am asking for their attention. Now I can control three classes (even a lower ability class) and I love them. Each class has a mixture of different characters and personalities. In addition to getting the pupil's attention and discovering a different more effective method to manage her classes, Priscilla also uses a stick man to help the students complete their work and keep them on task.

I also use the stick man. The goal is to get a complete stick man. If they behave, they get a part (the head, a limb or the torso). When they don't follow my instructions or are not paying attention, not completing their work or participating in the class activity, I erase a part of it. And at the end of the class, they question each other as to why they didn't get the whole stick man. I wonder if she recognises that her energy level is not like before.

**Mentor:** How do you feel when the class is over?

**Priscilla:** I am less tired now.

**Mentor:** Would it be okay for you to share this with the other mentees?

**Priscilla:** I have shared it with another mentee at my school. She also recognised that it was her first time talking about it but I don't know if she was aware that she was reflecting on what she has experienced the last few months. I plan to continue working with her on her new skill in classroom management by asking her next year, "Which methods on classroom management do you want to continue?"



**THIS STORY** of wide-ranging change as a result of the ELTDP comes from Ida Suzilawati Ibrahim at SK Pekan Semporna 2. Ida first came to the school in March 2012, joining her colleague, Hasnah, who arrived in January 2012. Both are young, creative and caring teachers who work with Year One and Year Two pupils. Ida and Hasnah are non-optionist teachers who have had to teach English because of the severe shortage of English teachers in Semporna. We have worked closely together all through 2012, planning lessons, creating resources and watching as the effects of the hard work of both teachers has led to a transformation of the Year One classes in English. Ida shares her views below:

"The most significant change is the interest of the pupils in learning the English language. This project gives impact to the teachers and their pupils too. We compared the before and after of this project, and now every pupil likes to learn English every day.

"English is not the boring subject like it was before. I can see from their faces when I enter the class to teach English. They are smiling and welcome the teacher by greeting her with what they have learned. The pupils have also become more confident in speaking English

with the teacher and mentor. They like to practice speaking every day. Pupils are more interested in the lesson. The teaching and learning process is more meaningful to them and every pupil wants to participate in the teaching and learning activities. They learn by playing.

"As for the teacher – since I entered this project, I have learned many new things. Now, I have become more confident in speaking English with everyone. The teacher becomes more able to teach with teaching aids, etc. The mentor gives us the opportunity to teach in different ways. That is all I can discuss here. Thank you to all for helping us."

Ida and Hasnah are now delivering effective, imaginative classes using role-play with home-made props, action songs, song boards, puppets, masks, mini-dialogues, group work and a range of games and activities using their self-created resources. Their hard work and flair was rewarded in the Action Song Competition in Semporna's first ever English Carnival. A combination of their Year One and Year Two pupils brought back to Pekan Semporna 2 a very well-deserved trophy they received for finishing second.





I felt that I could not connect to my pupils. But I soon realised that there were other things to consider when one is teaching English. It was somewhere at the middle of the year that I realised that there were changes in my teaching methods. No longer do I rely heavily on text books as my teaching source, but I learned that I change or alter the contents of the text books to cater to the needs of my pupils. I learned to incorporate more activities and games as a method to increase my pupils' attention towards their lessons. Also the interactive learning activities and various teaching aids that I learned from the programme have helped me a great deal to encourage learning among my pupils.

Another thing that I have noticed is that my pupils are having fun learning. Before, my classes were 100% serious. But gradually I learned to loosen up and I was having fun teaching as well. I was slowly creating a more interesting environment for my pupils. I hope to learn more from this programme since I believe it is an excellent way for English teachers to learn and develop."

**MET Aqmal** when I started the project at the end of July 2012 and it was clear from the beginning that he was very dedicated to the project. He has worked at SK Bum Bum on the island of Bum Bum where English is a third language for most pupils for one year and is head of the English department, a role which he uses to foster a love of English among colleagues.

His interest in English started from an early age, hence he is very articulate and has a wide knowledge of colloquial language which encourages his less fluent peers to have fun with the language and try new things. His aim is to foster a love of the language among his pupils, which he plans to do using interactive, fun activities in his classroom. He shares his story below:

**Aqmal bin Ekhlis, SK Bum Bum**  
I started teaching at SK Bum Bum on October 10, 2011. Fresh graduate from the teaching institution I had very little exposure and did not know what to expect. I was introduced to this programme shortly after I arrived. At first, I was a bit passive in my teaching methods and

**THE TEACHERS** in this Semporna district selected the following story as the most significant change in their group. This account describes the value of simply using English in order to improve English – both for teachers and for our students.

**I AM** an English teacher in my school and have been teaching for four years. Frustrated with the students understanding, I usually use BM during teaching to make my lesson run smoothly. I used to mostly teach writing and reading during class as there is less talking. This year, I had to teach Year One KSSR English and needed to be with my mentor. Meeting her and speaking to her made me realise that my English had become so poor compared to when I was studying because I hadn't been speaking or communicating in English. This made me feel that my mentor could be a big help.

One day, one of my colleagues saw me talking to my mentor fluently and she asked, "Why don't you speak English to all the people around you?" Since that moment, I have been trying to speak fully in English in my class, to my colleagues, and during assembly and it has

been my most significant change. I also speak in English to classes that I don't directly teach. In the beginning, the pupils would stare blankly at me but they still tried to follow my instructions and to understand. They have acknowledged that I am the teacher who speaks in English and that they need to speak English to me.

On reflection, I have said to myself, "It serves you right for not doing this from the start of the school year" as I have noticed that the pupils' behaviour in class has also improved along with their attention as they try to understand me. Things started getting interesting the moment I started to speak in English and the best thing is that my headmaster has also given his full support to improve English as a subject in my school.





**T**HIS story is about a teacher called Shang who has been an absolute pleasure to work with. She has become a good friend and I am sure that we will keep in touch after the project is over, as lifelong learning and laughter never stop.

She has made great improvements over the last year – when I first met her, she could hardly put together a full sentence in front of me but she is more confident now, and chats away quite happily to me and the other teachers (and more importantly with the pupils) in English. Each time I see her, she has a dozen questions about the correct pronunciation but her confidence has grown and, to my surprise, she joined the Toastmasters Association where she gave her first speech.

Shang is truly engaged in the teaching and learning process. As a result of attending focus groups with other teachers she has absorbed ideas and adapted them for her own teaching. She has started to take the pupils into the computer room to teach them English using ICT, and to the library to read the English books there. She has started to use puppets in her teaching, and has even started to write a blog on teaching and learning.

For a teacher who is only in her second year of teaching since graduation, this is all very positive and she is already planning on doing her PhD. These first couple of years as a new teacher are absolutely crucial for building confidence and gaining experience, so I am glad that she has embraced the English Language Teacher Development Project with such enthusiasm. Shang has the following to share:

The main benefit for me in this project is that I get to know more friends from other schools. My courage has grown a little bit. I didn't speak English with native speakers before. The first part of the project, I was scared to talk to my mentor - I had no idea what topics to talk about. As you know English is not my option. Now I speak English with other teachers if they talk to me in English first.

I can talk to the department head if I have a problem. She can be my mentor in the future. Sometimes, I think the teachers who teach English have a more open mind because they have some Western influence. I thought that because I was a new teacher I had nothing to share but now, I learn more. I do my planning with the other Year Two teachers; otherwise I have to think of it myself.

We have better cooperation in our school now but sometimes it's better to do things yourself. I have learnt many teaching and learning techniques from other teachers in the focus groups – for example, how to do storytelling. When the mentor leaves, we will still improve because now we have KSSR and we can't teach like we did many years ago. I don't think the project should end in September as I still have a lot to learn, but we can e-mail each other, right?

Shang at storytime



**A**T THE START of the year, Jainah informed me that this was “Jainah – Season 2. Better than last year ...” I had no idea what it meant. She had decorated her classroom and there was a puppet theatre at one end, but that did not prepare me for what would happen shortly after.

I observed a class there where the pupils made the finger puppets from the Year Two textbook, and it was amazing to see them walking around the classroom using the puppets to greet each other. They seemed a lot more confident, and enjoyed speaking English. She said: “My pupils speak out more when they use puppets.”

Jainah then talked to me about using glove puppets, and borrowed my *Teaching with Bear* book and DVD to get some ideas. She was asked to present a session at a focus group for other teachers, and she prepared one for a three-hour session in March 2012. She used parts of the DVD and extracts of the book, alongside videos and photos that she had taken in her own classes to help other project teachers (and non-project, other subject teachers) see how puppets can be used in classes.

This session led other teachers to begin to try and use puppets in various ways, and the mentors saw them used in different classrooms. The BM and Science teachers from other schools who came to the sessions also started to use them, and the BM teacher later introduced puppets to the other LINUS teachers as part of a Professional Learning Community.

Jainah presented part of a session in the following focus group in June 2012 about using puppets for storytelling, and even bought

along a group of students to demonstrate this to other teachers. At both the parents meeting and the opening of the English Language Centre, children from Years One to Three performed, which the parents and other attendees enjoyed. A science teacher at her school also helped make a small shadow puppet theatre which is now being used for both subjects, and a Permulihan teacher has found her pupils confidence increases when they use puppets. A few Year Two teachers at another school, SK Kinabutan, reported:

“The puppets have helped my pupils; they are more happy and confident.” – Year Two teacher No. 1. “The pupils laugh when I use my puppets, they relax.” – Year Two teacher No. 2

Jainah was given the keys to a disused teacher's house in March 2012, and quickly started cleaning it and painting it up to use as an English Language Centre. She sought donations from other teachers and bookshop owners, and in a matter of a few weeks, had transformed the house into a place where children are surrounded by English. The room is used by English teachers for both classes and co-curriculum activities. Parents have also been invited to look at the room, and were involved in a session of making big books for the pupils to use in the ELC.

Jainah later co-presented a session about puppets at an international conference in Myanmar in August 2012. She regularly invites other teachers to resource and sharing sessions at the ELC and also tries to network with other teachers both in person and via Facebook. She also asked her mentor to assist in making a video on classroom management to share with her friend who was having issues and she wanted to help.





Sandra Randall  
British Council Mentor

**ZUANAH** was looking for inspiration when the ELTDP began. Her teaching was still in the old style from the previous curriculum, and her activities were quite textbook-based. However, she knew she needed help and on my first visit to her school, she approached me asking how she could make her lessons more interesting and fun. She was able to adjust quickly, and even when I didn't observe her lessons, pupils were coming to tell me how much they loved English class. This is how she describes the journey of change.



Zuanah Azala, teacher at SK Batu 4

**A**FTER THE ARRIVAL of my mentor in July 2011, my confidence increased a lot. Prior to her arrival, my lessons were boring and uninteresting. I was looking for new ideas. After she arrived, my mentor introduced me to many new ideas. Through observations, discussions and attending focus groups, I learnt new ideas and experimented with them in class. Now I feel confident to try new activities in my lessons, video them and then show my mentor to reflect and learn from them. My mentor encouraged me to use my smartphone as a tool and it helps me a lot!

One of the biggest changes was to use puppets in class. This happened by accident at the beginning of 2012 and my mentor videoed my pupils using them. She showed some colleagues, which led to other teachers using puppets. This increased my confidence and I started to use puppets more in class. It helped my pupils to speak more confidently, especially the weaker pupils who were often shy and spoke in BM. All of my pupils started speaking more English. I began to do more drama, role play, dialogues and jazz chants in class to encourage the use of puppets and masks.

In September, just before the UPSR exams, my *guru besar* (head teacher) asked me to arrange a performance by my Year Two pupils for the Year Six pupils. I got the Year One teachers involved as well, and we held a mini-concert showing different ways of using puppets. My pupils loved performing for the “big kids” and they keep asking when they can do it again! We then asked the Year Six pupils to make their own puppets. Some of them also did a small performance using the puppet they had made. They were very creative. It helped them to relax before the stress of the exams.

Another change was to use music in class. This has helped in behaviour management. My classes are better behaved and a lot quieter, but also more interesting. I use music to time activities, for relaxing, for movement, songs and creating mood in my lessons. I don't need to shout anymore. I play quiet music during group activities which helps focus my pupils. I play louder, rock and pop music during noisy games. I have experimented with different types of music for different activities. My pupils love coming to class now and I enjoy teaching a lot more!”