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The Effectiveness of a Literature-Driven English Programme in Improving the English Language Skills of Secondary One Students in Singapore

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# CHAPTER 7

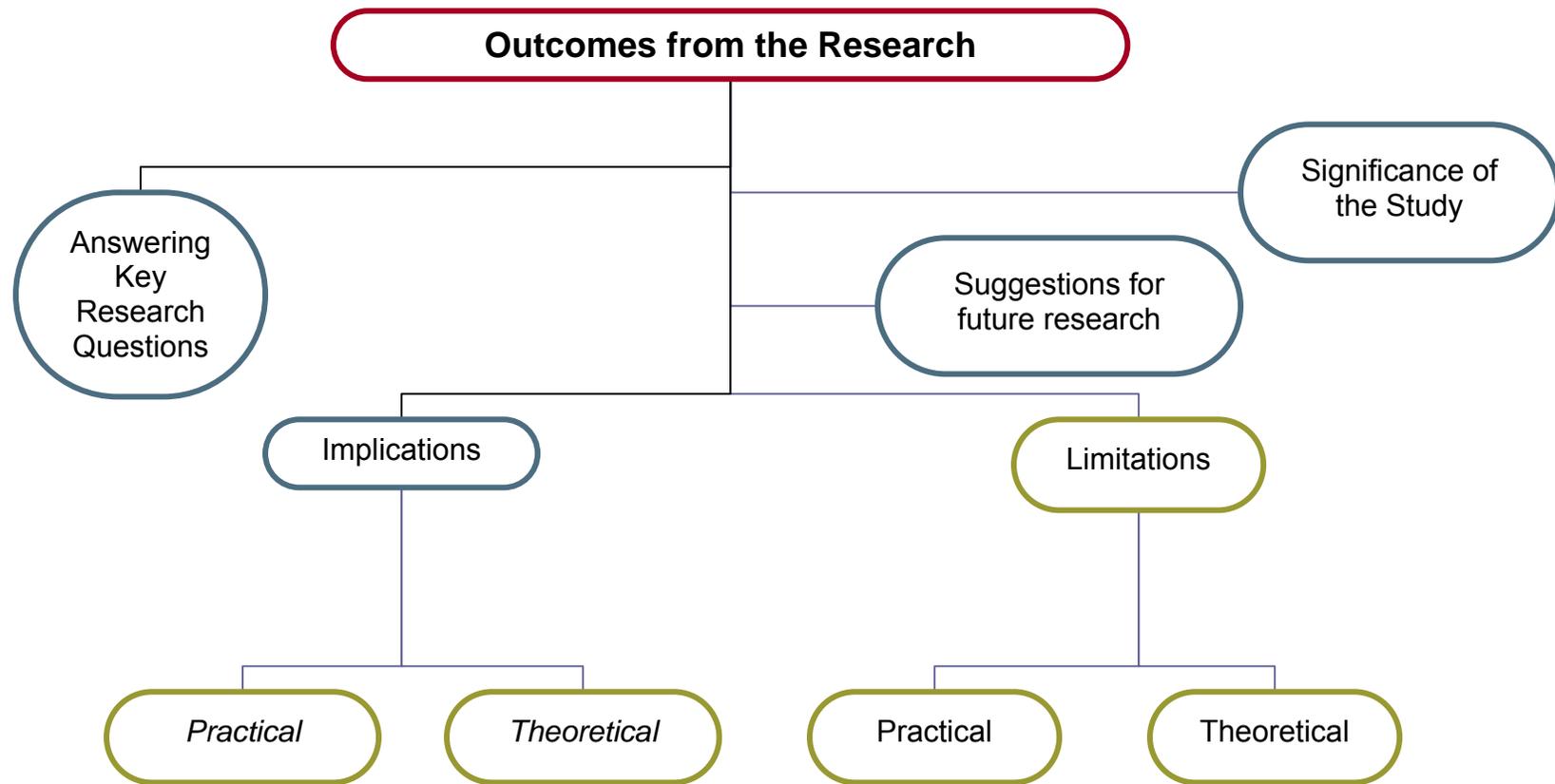
## CONCLUSION

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the key research questions that were raised in Chapter 1 are answered. These research questions are examined with reference to the quantitative and qualitative findings presented and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to discover if these questions were answered in the affirmative during the course of the research on the LDEP. In addition, the practical and theoretical implications of this research are considered. To what extent was the utilitarian aim of the research achieved? If there were any theoretical implications, were there any discrepancies between these theoretical and practical implications? Apart from the limitations of the research, proposed improvements are also suggested for future research endeavours in this area.

Figure 7.1 offers an overview of Chapter 7. As Figure 7.1 indicates, from the outcomes of the research, an attempt is made to answer the key research questions and the five sub-questions. Then, the practical implications of an curriculum initiative project which was conducted in naturalistic environments and studied as multiple site case studies are offered in the light of the findings. Aside from the practical implications, the implications of the LDEP as a theory pertaining to the teaching of English Language are examined (Figure 7.1). The practical and theoretical limitations of conducting the multiple site case studies as well as suggestions for improvements should future research in the area be undertaken are also offered at the end (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Overview of Chapter 7



## **Answering Key Research Questions**

There are five sub-questions as well as a major research question that this research sought to answer (c.f. p.12). The major research question asks whether an integrated English language and literature curriculum would enhance the English Language skills of the students. Three of the sub-questions relate to whether teaching contextually and using a literature text to teach narrative writing skills and grammar would improve the writing skills of the students. The fourth sub-question asks whether reading comprehension skills would improve if a literature text is used to teach comprehension skills contextually. The final sub-question focuses on whether literary analysis is aided by the combined analysis of the language and content of the text.

In this section, evidence from the quantitative findings found in Chapter 4, the qualitative findings located in Chapter 5 as well as the conclusions drawn from the evaluation of the programme in Chapter 6 are combined to answer the major research questions and the sub-questions.

The five sub-questions which were generated from the major research question (c.f. p.12) are given below.

### ***1. Are the students able to write more effective narratives if they use a given literature text as a model of a good narrative?***

The literature text was an integral part of the LDEP. It was employed to highlight to the students the features of an effective narrative. One of the sub-questions relates to discovering if the use of the literature text as a tool to teach narrative writing skills was successful. The question is answered through the analysis of the quantitative data from the writing skills pre-test and post-test scores and surveys as well as the qualitative data from the interviews with the teachers and the small group of students from each of the experimental classes.

The students in the experimental group improved in the writing skills assessment while the students in the control group did not improve (c.f. Table 4.3, p.112).

The teachers who taught the experimental group of students observed improvements in the writing skills of the students (c.f. pp.184-185) while many of the students during the small group interviews were of the opinion that their writing skills had improved (c.f. pp.204-205). Additionally, some of these students in the experimental group also commented that the literature text helped them to better appreciate the different writing techniques used (c.f. pp.205-206). Schools 1, 3 and 4 did not have integrated English and Literature programmes yet many of the students of these schools mentioned that they preferred using the Literature text to the English textbook which included extracts, not complete stories (c.f. p.205). Some of the students from School 2, which had a literature-based English programme, also mentioned that analysing the literature text developed their understanding of how to use the different narrative writing techniques effectively (c.f. pp.206). Moreover, over 65% of the students who completed the survey reported understanding the elements of a story better under the LDEP (c.f. p.160). In understanding the elements of a story, through having the narrative writing features of the literature text highlighted, the students were better able to appreciate these features and apply them in their own pieces of writing (c.f. pp.204-206). These quantitative and qualitative findings are in accord with the suggestion of Marcus (1977) and Bakhtin (1981) that the literature text can aid the students in acquiring technical knowledge of a particular genre of writing.

The evidence presented in this section substantially supports the claim that students are able to write more effective narratives if they use a given literature text as a model of a good narrative.

## ***2. Do students become better writers if they are taught contextually rather than in “bits and pieces”?***

Another aspect of the LDEP was the teaching of writing skills contextually with the aid of a literature text. By making use of the literature text as a holistic piece of work from which writing skills could be learned contextually, it was hoped that the writing skills of the students would improve as well. This question is

answered with the aid of the qualitative data consisting of the interviews with the teachers and students.

Through the LDEP, the students were taught skills contextually when they examined the literature text as a complete work instead of studying extracts of works. In analysing the text in its entirety, the students were able to read a story from the beginning to the end and identify all the narrative elements therein. Some of the teachers were of the opinion that teaching contextually through the literature text had helped the students to better understand the concepts taught (c.f. pp.185-186). Students offered various examples to demonstrate the usefulness of learning contextually (c.f. pp.205-206). By including in the lessons on the elements of a story exercises that required students to identify the fundamentals of narrative writing in the literature text, the students were able to see in a concrete way the effects of the different features of a narrative. It appears that learning about the elements of a narrative from the literature text had aided the students in transferring these concepts into their own writing. Some students reported considering the elements of a narrative when writing their own narratives (c.f. pp.204-205). The improvement that the students in the experimental group displayed appears to give credence to the calls made by Knoeller (2003) and Langer and Flihan (2000) to link reading with writing so as to improve writing skills.

Comments by the teachers and students on how the literature text had helped students improve their narrative writing skills are substantiated by the overall improvement in writing displayed by the students (c.f. Table 4.3, p.112). From these strands of evidence it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that learning writing skills in context from a complete work of literature aids the students in becoming better writers.

### ***3. Are students able to produce a more grammatically accurate piece of writing if they are taught in context through a Literature text?***

During the LDEP, the students were taught selected grammatical concepts through the literature text. It was hoped that through teaching these concepts in context by highlighting the manner in which these concepts are utilised in the

literature text, the students would begin to learn to employ these concepts in their own narratives. Teaching contextually also meant employing a utilitarian approach to the learning of the grammar concepts. This question is answered through the findings from the quantitative data comprising the writing pre-test and post-test scores and surveys as well as the qualitative data from the interviews with the teachers and students.

Apart from showing greater improvement in the category of “conventions” in the post-test from the students in the control group (c.f. pp.115-116), many of the students in the experimental group also mentioned in the surveys they completed that they had grasped at least three of the six concepts taught (c.f. p.159). Some of the teachers also mentioned during the concluding interviews that they saw a greater awareness of grammatical rules and a conscious effort being made by the students to incorporate in their writing at least some of the taught grammatical concepts (c.f. pp.189-190 & pp.185-186). In the small group interviews, some students stated that they paid greater attention to the grammatical aspect of their writing (c.f. pp.204-205). It appears that teaching grammar explicitly through the use of the literature text helped many of the students to grasp some of the grammatical concepts taught and to apply these concepts when writing their narratives.

The evidence presented in this section and in pp.235-240 substantiates the stance that the contextual teaching of grammar leads to the students producing a grammatically more accurate piece of writing.

#### ***4. Are students able to comprehend better if they are taught comprehension skills in context through a Literature text?***

Through the literary analysis and analysis of the language of the literature text during the teaching of the writing skills, it was hoped that the comprehension skills of the students in the experimental group would improve. To discover if there was improvement in the reading comprehension skills of the experimental group of students, the quantitative data from the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test scores are examined.

With regard to students with PSLE English Grade A\*, or close to it, it was found that the reading comprehension tests may not have been challenging enough for them. The inconsistent results of these high ability students may be due to the “ceiling effect” or the phenomenon of regression to the mean (c.f. pp.143). Thus, only the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test results of students with PSLE English Grades A, B and C from Schools 3 and 4 were analysed (c.f. pp.144-145). However, there were too few students with Grade C and the results of the students were excluded from the discussion of the findings. The experimental group of students from Schools 3 and 4 performed better than the control group of students from the same schools (c.f. Table 4.25, p.146). Among the students with PSLE English Grades A and B from Schools 3 and 4, generally the experimental group performed better than the control group (c.f. Table 4.26, p.148). When the results were analysed by gender, it was found that the boys and girls in the experimental group performed better than their counterparts in the control group (c.f. Table 4.27, p.149).

The experimental group of students with Grades A and B had improved more than the control group of students with similar grades in the reading comprehension skills assessment. The greater improvement displayed by this group of students in the experimental group indicate that the experimental group of students may have benefited from the merging of the learning of writing skills with reading skills and the study of literature. Under the LDEP, reading skills were not explicitly taught but were expected to flow from the literary analysis and the teaching of writing skills. This finding agrees with the suggestion made by Langer (1999) and Langer and Flihan (2000) that combining the teaching of reading and writing skills along with literary analysis would aid in improving reading comprehension.

The claim that there is improvement in the comprehension skills of the students taught comprehension skills contextually with the aid of the literature text is substantiated by the evidence presented in this section and in pp.232-235.

**5. *Are students better able to critically analyse a Literature text if, in addition to content, they analyse the language of the text as well?***

Under the LDEP, the literature text was also utilised as a tool to teach language skills. It was hoped that the integration of the study of literature and the teaching of language skills would aid in developing the literary analytical skills of the students as well. The quantitative data from the survey as well as the qualitative data from interviews are used to discover if the literary analytical skills of the students improved as well.

During Literature lessons the focus is usually on the analysis of the narrative in the literature text. The writing craft of the author is often not analysed. In the LDEP, the students were led to explore the techniques of the craft used by the author in creating the narrative. According to about seventy percent of the students surveyed, the literature text helped them in the analysis of the story (c.f. p.160). Teachers also felt that the students were more critical in their analysis (c.f. pp.187-188). The LDEP, by combining the study of Literature with English language, appears to have aided the students to critically analyse the literature text as reported by participant students and their teachers.

The survey findings and comments by the teachers during the interviews are persuasive in supporting the position that students are better able to critically analyse a literature text if they analyse the content and language of the literature text.

Having answered the sub-questions, the major research question is next answered.

***Does an integrated English language and literature curriculum enhance the English Language skills of the students?***

The major research question relates to the integrated programme as a whole. As an integrated English Language and Literature programme, did the LDEP aid in developing the English Language skills of the students? In answering the question, conclusions drawn from the responses to the sub-questions are

utilised. These responses include all the findings from the quantitative and the qualitative data. The quantitative data comprise writing and reading comprehension pre-test and post-test results and survey findings while the qualitative data consist of interviews, log book entries, field notes and observational notes.

From the answers to the research sub-questions, it is apparent that the experimental group of students had improved over the control group in the reading comprehension and writing skills assessments (c.f. pp.250-255). In addition, teachers and students also reported an improvement in literary analysis (c.f. p.255). The affirmative answers to the research sub-questions indicate that the students from the experimental group had improved in English Language skills through integration when the literature text was used to teach language skills. More detailed conclusions from the findings are presented in the next paragraph.

The students from the four schools produced better crafted narratives in the post-test (c.f. Table 4.14, p.130). Most of the students also improved compared to their counterparts in the control groups (c.f. Table 4.3, p.112). Though School 3 did not fare as well as the students from Schools 1, 2 and 4, the students from School 3 nevertheless showed signs of improvement in the post-test over the pre-test whereas the students in control group from their school did not improve at all (c.f. p.135). The improvements displayed by most of the students in the experimental group were apparent even across the various sub-groups based on the mediating variables mentioned in the next paragraph. Since the control group had negative improvement scores, the writing pre-test and post-test results of the group were not analysed further.

Among the sub-group based on gender, boys and girls improved in the writing skills test (c.f. Table 4.10, p.124). Students with different PSLE English grades, indicating differing language abilities, also improved irrespective of the PSLE English grades (c.f. Table 4.8, p.122). Likewise, the boys with different PSLE English grades improved (c.f. Table 4.11, p.125) and so did the girls with PSLE English grades A\*, A and B (c.f. Table 4.12, p.126).

The Normal (Academic) class improved in the writing skills assessment with a large improvement score ES of 0.88 (c.f. Table 4.16, p.134). Most of the students in the Express classes also improved in their writing (c.f. Table 4.16, p.134). There was improvement irrespective of the styles of different teachers. The experimental classes improved in the writing skills assessment whereas the control classes taught by the same teachers did not improve (c.f. Table 4.17, p.135). Within all the sub-groups, created on the basis of the different variables, the experimental group of students improved in the writing skills assessment. Not only did the experimental group of students improve and the control group did not improve, but students within each sub-group in the experimental group displayed improvement in the writing skills test. The findings indicate that the integrated English and Literature programme aided the experimental group of students to improve in the writing skills, irrespective of the variations in ability, streams, gender, school and class cultures and teaching styles.

From the perceptions of the students of their own performances in their writing assignments over the course of the LDEP, most of them felt that they had shown some improvement in their writing. In the survey completed by the students in the experimental group (c.f. p.160) and from the interviews conducted with the small groups of students from all the experimental classes in the four schools (c.f. pp.204-205) many of the students felt that they had improved in some aspects of narrative writing. Similarly, some of the teachers also felt that the students had improved in their narrative writing skills (c.f. pp.184-185).

In the reading comprehension assessment, there might have been a ceiling effect for the students more fluent in the English Language. Generally, these students in the experimental and control groups did not display much improvement in the post-test. The reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were uniform tests with just four, out of twenty-five questions, being higher order questions in each test (c.f. Appendix 11). It is probable that most of the students who were already competent in reading comprehension did not find the tests challenging. Thus, the results of the Express students in Schools 1 and 2 and those of students with PSLE English grade A\* from Schools 3 and 4 were excluded (c.f. pp.142-145). When the reading comprehension results of students

with Grades A, B and C from Schools 3 and 4 and the results of the students from the Normal (Academic) class from School 1 were analysed, it was determined that the experimental group performed better than the control group across the two schools and across sub-groups of different variables (c.f. pp.232-234). These variables included gender, PSLE English grades and schools. Additionally, the Normal (Academic) class achieved a large improvement score ES of 1.10 in the reading comprehension assessment (c.f. Table 4.33, p.156). Furthermore, it should be remembered that reading comprehension was not explicitly taught in the LDEP but was anticipated as a flow-on effect of the explicitly taught writing skills programme and the literary analysis carried out during some of the lessons.

In summary, it appears that the integrated LDEP was a contributory factor in the improvement registered by the students in their writing skills. The LDEP also appears to have contributed to the improvement displayed by students from the Normal (Academic) class and the Express students with Grades A, B and C in their reading comprehension skills. Even though the programme ran for a very short period of time and many topics were covered, it appears to have had a positive impact on the students. Overall, an integrated English and Literature curriculum appears to have advanced the writing and reading comprehension skills of the students.

The evidence supports the claim that teaching contextually and utilising the literature text to highlight features of an effective narrative and to teach grammar would improve the writing skills of the students. Additionally, reading comprehension skills appear to be enhanced through the use of the literature text as a tool to teach these skills contextually. There is also persuasive evidence to demonstrate that analysing the content and the language of the literature text improves the ability of the students to critically analyse the text. Finally, the evidence substantiates the contention that the English Language skills of the students are further developed through an integrated language and literature curriculum. Thus, there are strong indications from the evidences derived from the quantitative (c.f. Chapter 4) and qualitative (c.f. Chapter 5) findings and from the conclusions reached in Chapter 6 to suggest that the use of the literature text

aids in the learning of writing and reading comprehension skills because content and language are taught in context and in conjunction with each other.

### **Practical Implications**

In this section the practical implications of conducting a multiple site curriculum initiative project are examined. In any school system within a district, region or country, there are many variables to consider. In order to discover if a curriculum would be successful in teaching the requisite skills, a curriculum development project must be undertaken and tested in naturalistic conditions where many variables could play an influential role in the success or failure of the project.

If the curriculum does not succeed, then the causes could be innumerable and the lack of controlled conditions would mean there may be little chance of discovering a cause for the failure. However, from the start the intent was not to discover under what conditions the curriculum would work. Rather, the aim was to ascertain whether the curriculum was strong enough pedagogically to enhance the language skills of various students, in different schools that included a diversity of norms and teachers with differing teaching styles.

In being able to describe the improvements of students across a wide diversity of naturally occurring situations, the research intent was achieved. The curriculum was tested in naturalistic conditions. The curriculum was taught by different teachers, to students of differing streams and abilities and in schools with different working styles and needs. There were control groups of students in three schools which followed the usual school curriculum. Comparison with these control groups of students also enabled the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the LDEP.

In most schools in Singapore, class sizes are rather large with each class accommodating close to forty students. Classes include students of varying language abilities. Therefore, testing a standardised curriculum, the LDEP, in diverse conditions would increase the applicability of the findings and perhaps, be of use to more schools. The curriculum, since it appeared to have improved

the writing and reading comprehension skills of most of the students, regardless of gender, language ability, stream or school may well succeed in other schools as well. Since the texts that were used for the project were chosen by the schools the LDEP demonstrates that it is adaptable to multiple texts and is not dependent on any particular text. The success of this project should be a strong encouragement to other educators to try the curriculum in other schools, and preferably for a longer period.

### **Theoretical Implications**

In addition to practical implications, there are also theoretical implications. The research was based on the theory that an integrated Literature and English programme that includes the explicit teaching of grammar would aid in the development of the English Language skills of the students. The literature text used as a tool could be used to teach language skills contextually, thereby linking reading with the acquisition of language skills.

The success of the curriculum may give credence to the belief of other researchers that there should be a more direct inter-relatedness between the teaching of writing and reading and the contextual teaching of language and grammar (Langer & Flihan 2000; Shafer 2001; Smoot 2001). Similarly, the LDEP also draws on the advantages suggested by advocates of learning through process (Daiker, Kerek & Morenberg 1990; Shafer 2001) and those who espouse the virtues of teaching explicitly (Fox 1998; Hagemann 2003). The success of the LDEP indicates that the explicit and implicit teaching of skills can be effectively combined to advance the learning of language skills. The combination of explicit teaching of skills and then getting students to apply those skills appear to have worked in improving the writing and reading comprehension skills of many students.

### **Practical Limitations**

There were some practical limitations to this research. The researcher – and thus, the research – was limited by her own resources of time and availability. Other limitations were a consequence of conducting a curriculum initiative project

in naturalistic environments in four diverse schools with many variables. There were also constraints that arose from adjusting and adapting to the needs and requirements of the individual schools.

A description of the limitations is presented below.

1. There were limited time and resources available to the researcher in the conduct of the research. The researcher was working alone in schools that could afford only a limited time to complete the programme. One consequence of the time limitation was the short period of time the researcher could spend with the teachers from each of the four schools. As a result, she left it to the teachers to get back to her if they had any difficulty in the implementation of the LDEP. As it happened, many teachers did not contact the researcher to request for assistance, and the researcher became aware of some problems only during school visits and interviews at the end of the programme. However, studying four diverse schools as case studies increased the utility of the findings in that it may lead to wider contextual generalisation and generate greater interest than if the implications of the LDEP on one case study was explored (c.f. pp.63-64). Moreover, the reduced contact time with the teachers also ensured that the teachers had full ownership over their classes and acted as colleagues in the research process (c.f. p.67).
2. The original design provided for in-service preparation of the teachers. The preference of the teachers was to omit the in-service preparation since the teachers were also under time constraints as they had school commitments to fulfil even during the holidays. Though an attempt was made to include comprehensive briefings before the implementation of the LDEP, it became apparent during the implementation of the programme that these briefings were inadequate. If a workshop on the programme was held before the implementation, more of the teachers would have been better prepared to teach the programme. At the same time, the current research being an curriculum initiative project was viewed as part of an evolving process of understanding the effectiveness of the LDEP as

an integrated English and Literature programme (c.f. p.55). Practical constraints were in fact beneficial as they allowed for a better appreciation of the inherent merits of the LDEP. In spite of the constraints, generally the experimental group of students improved in their writing and reading comprehension skills (c.f. Table 4.3, p.112, Table 4.25, p.146).

3. There was the possibility that the texts selected by the schools might have inherent limitations. For instance, the content may be unappealing to many of the students, and that could impede the learning of the different skills. The selected texts may also not be good models of effective writing. In the two co-educational schools the stories appealed to girls more than the boys. In School 1 one of the stories appealed to only half the male students, and in School 4, the first story appealed to about half the male students and the second appealed to a quarter of the male students (c.f. pp.163-164). Yet, the male students registered a larger improvement score Effect Size than the girls in the writing skills assessment (c.f. Table 4.10, p.124) and the male students in School 4 improved by a large improvement score ES of 0.92 in the reading comprehension assessment (c.f. Table 4.27, p.149). The LDEP appears to have been successful in improving language skills even when the literature texts may have had inherent limitations.
  
4. The variability within classes and across schools in this small sample could have made the analysis of the findings difficult if there were inconsistent outcomes across the schools or even within a school. There were differences in the findings of two of the classes and School 3 compared to the findings of the other classes and schools. However, there were similarities between the two classes as many of the students in these two classes were unmotivated and inattentive in class (c.f. pp.217-219). With regard to School 3, there were problems with the implementation of the LDEP in the school that were not encountered by the other three schools (c.f. pp.195-197). Theoretical replications may be generated from the similarities between the two classes and the unique problems encountered in School 3. It may be hypothesised that lack of

motivation, inattentiveness during lessons and implementation problems that led to inappropriate sequencing of lessons and inadequate preparedness of the teachers to teach under the programme (c.f. pp.217-219 & pp.195-197) could adversely affect the effectiveness of the LDEP.

5. The period of about five to six weeks spent in each of the seventeen experimental classes may have been shorter than desirable. The short time frame meant that there was insufficient time for more reinforcements to be included because a large number of concepts was covered within the given time span. However, though a longer period would have been preferable, the short period in the current research did not adversely affect the research. The LDEP dealt with the teaching of particular skills and only these skills were assessed or evaluated. Thus, in the case of the current research, the issue of a short time span did not prove to be detrimental to the conclusions drawn about the learning of those skills. Time period may be more relevant in a study on whether there is long-term retention of taught concepts but this is outside the scope of the current research.
6. There was also the possibility that since the research was being conducted in multiple sites with very different characteristics there would be no literal or theoretical replications (Yin 1994). However, the outcomes from the research yielded literal replications (c.f. p.231, p.235).
7. The different schools had different needs and adjustments had to be made. Only one of the schools had an integrated programme where the same teacher taught the English and Literature components under English Language. In the other three schools, in most cases, different teachers taught English and Literature. Having two teachers to teach an integrated programme such as the LDEP presented some difficulties for the schools and the researcher. To aid the teachers, steps were taken to differentiate the English and Literature lessons in the lesson outlines and plans of these three schools. In two of the schools without an integrated

programme coordinators were appointed to ensure that there was coordination between the English and Literature teachers.

There were practical limitations in the current research. However, in the current research because its design incorporated elements of action research with multiple cases these limitations might be viewed as strengths (c.f. p.13).

### **Theoretical Limitations**

There were a number of theoretical limitations to the current curriculum initiative project undertaken in multiple sites. There was the problem of reconciling the conflicts that could arise from the many variables found in the multiple sites. Another limitation was related to the discrepancies in outcomes and discovering the reasons for these discrepancies. Finally, if no reasons could be discovered for the discrepancies, there was a possibility that no theory could be created from the research.

The theoretical limitations are elaborated upon below:

1. One of the limitations included reconciling the many differences and conflicts in the pertinent variables. For instance, when findings from the results of the writing skills assessment were analysed from the perspective of gender, the girls from the two co-educational schools and a girls' school were grouped together. However, the outcome of the improvement score Effect Size of the students from the girls' school was lower than the Effect Sizes of the other schools. Therefore, during the analyses it was decided that the performance of all the girls as one sub-unit of gender would be analysed. Then, a second sub-unit was created to differentiate the performances of the girls from the co-educational schools from the performance of the girls in the girls' school. The broader analyses prevented a hasty conclusion being drawn based on gender. Instead of basing the conclusion merely on gender, other factors were taken into account (c.f. pp.195-197).

2. The second challenge lay in explaining any possible discrepancies in outcomes between schools or classes. Since there were many variables, it would be difficult to decide on which variable or variables might have influenced the difference in the outcomes. For example, Schools 1, 2 and 4 registered similar improvements but the improvement achieved by the students in School 3 was significantly lower. An attempt was made to answer the question by examining the unique implementation difficulties encountered by the teachers in School 3 (c.f. pp.195-197).
  
3. The final challenge rested on the premise that if there were discrepancies to which answers could not be easily sought, there could be no literal or theoretical replication. Then, the results would be pertinent only to the individual cases and would have no significance for any other schools. Fortunately, in the research on the LDEP, there were more similarities than discrepancies and an attempt could be made to theorise about the differences whenever discrepancies did crop up. Within classes with discrepancies there were similarities. At the same time between these classes and the other experimental classes there were differences.

### **Suggestions for future research**

In this section, some suggestions are offered for future research on the LDEP. Since many of the students in the experimental group in the four schools displayed improvement in the writing skills and reading comprehension tests, in spite of the uncontrolled variables and limitations, there appears to be merit in the LDEP. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to conduct research in this area in other schools for a longer period of time. The suggestions offered below take into account the limitations experienced during the course of this research so that there may be fewer limitations when future research into the LDEP is conducted.

The following suggestions are offered when future research on the LDEP is undertaken:

1. Some of the teachers commented that their students had difficulty grasping some of the taught concepts (c.f. p.191 & p.199). Teachers should be actively supported to adapt the curriculum where necessary. For instance, if they observe their students experiencing difficulty when learning a particular concept, they should be encouraged to include more exercises and more explanations. The explanations, in the form of explicit teaching, should however, not take more than fifteen minutes of the class time since some students had complained about the long duration of the explicit teaching (c.f. p.208). Instead, more time should be spent on teaching the concepts through activity-based work as discontent was expressed over the repeated explicit teaching of concepts (c.f. pp.210-211).
  
2. Some teachers had reported that there were too few reinforcements of taught concepts since too many concepts were taught during a short time span (c.f. p.192). The five to six week programme should therefore be extended to at least a term (ten weeks) or even a semester (half a year), thereby allowing for more time for the teaching of the concepts. At the same time, it would be possible to include more reinforcements of the concepts taught. Moreover, more literary analysis of the literature text could be included as well which would counter the objection that some topics were treated superficially (c.f. p.193).
  
3. More language skills should be taught and adequate test instruments for language skills other than writing should be included. Due to the short duration of the research, the focus was mainly on the writing skills. More lesson time should be given to the reading comprehension skills component especially with regard to teaching students more skilled in reading comprehension. The performances of students more competent in reading comprehension could not be assessed because of an inadequate test instrument for high ability students (c.f. pp.142-143). Additionally lessons on oral communication and vocabulary should also be included and assessed to discover the effectiveness of the LDEP in improving the skills in these areas.

4. It would be preferable to extend the research on the LDEP to cover the curriculum of a single year. Other levels in the secondary school should also be included in the programme. By implementing the LDEP across all the levels in a secondary school for a whole year it may be possible to fully assess the effectiveness of the LDEP as a language instruction model for secondary school students.
5. There are advantages to including a broader range of student ages. Apart from the Secondary One classes, the students from the other levels, Secondary Two to Four or Five, could become participants to see if the programme would work for them as well. There was a suggestion from one of the teachers that the LDEP might work even better with older students (c.f. p.195). Moreover, extending to the other levels would mean that there will be continuity to the LDEP. When students move from Secondary One to Two, it would be beneficial if they could continue with the programme in Secondary Two.
6. The survey responses of the students indicate that some of the texts may not have been popular with some students in particular the male students (c.f. pp.163-164). A few teachers also commented on disadvantages of using some of the texts selected by the schools (c.f. 199). It might be preferable to carefully choose the literature texts so as to take into account the preferences of the students and the utility of the texts in teaching the selected concepts. With regard to the literature texts chosen for the LDEP, they were selected beforehand by the respective schools even before these schools had a chance to look at the curriculum. The selected texts should be age-appropriate, interest the students and be good models of effective writing in terms of the language usage and writing genre being taught.

Additionally, the study of the implementation of a uniform curriculum in diverse schools with students of various abilities has generated recommendations on the ways in which the LDEP can be further developed. The teachers and the

researcher have suggested significant improvements to the LDEP itself (c.f. pp.198-200, pp.243-245). These planned improvements include:

- Modifying the curriculum, where necessary, to better suit the individual needs of the learners as some teachers reported that there were students who had difficulty grasping some of the taught concepts (c.f. pp.198-199),
- Including more reinforcements of the concepts taught through additional exercises and activities (c.f. p.199, p.244),
- Making the overall objective and sub-objectives of the programme and lessons respectively clear to the students (c.f. p.243),
- Ensuring explicit teaching does not take up more than fifteen minutes of lesson time (c.f. p.208),
- Diversifying the explicit teaching component so that varied approaches are used (c.f. p.244),
- Ensuring that long periods include interactive activities (c.f. p.214), and
- Setting ground rules and expectations for group work (c.f. pp.244-245).

### **Significance of the Study**

This research on the LDEP is significant for a number of reasons. It was conducted in multiple sites without manipulating any of the variables. In other words, the curriculum was tested in naturalistic conditions in four schools. In spite of the existence of so many variables, the curriculum succeeded in improving the language skills of many of the students in the experimental group. The LDEP appears to have merit as a curriculum since it was effective in developing language skills.

As a curriculum, the LDEP brings the literary text and the student together. The central principle of the LDEP is that the literature text as a model of communication in action assumes the role of an expert. The teacher acts as a facilitator to highlight where there is merit in the text in terms of the language and literary analysis. In being made aware of these merits, students would be able to transfer what they have learnt into their narratives. An additional consequence of interacting with the text is that the student could also become a better reader.

The aim of this research was to discover if the students could be led, explicitly and implicitly, to make the appropriate learning links with the text and be instructed to use the text as a model to aid in their own journey in becoming an effective reader and writer. By implementing the LDEP in four different schools, the researcher also hoped to discover if this form of curriculum could succeed in the real world where the presence of many variables within and between schools could be a daunting task for any researcher who wants to conduct a research into a curriculum initiative.

In the current research, in all four schools, the experimental group of students improved in the writing skills assessment (c.f. p.112). In Schools 3 and 4 the experimental group of students also improved in the reading comprehension skills assessment (c.f. p.146). The findings and analysis in Chapters 4, 5 & 6 support the claim that the LDEP could likely succeed in other schools as well since it had been tested under naturalistic, and not controlled, conditions and appeared to have succeeded in imparting writing and reading comprehension skills to the different sub-categories of students in diverse schools.

Many of the students, over various intersections of gender and skill level, appear to have internalised the concepts and learnt more effectively when they were taught through the LDEP. Thus, teachers have at their disposal a curriculum that appears to have been an effective mode of teaching English Language skills to the Secondary One students in Schools 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Singapore.

The LDEP has succeeded with the Secondary One students, in spite of the many different conditions found in a naturalistic group of classes in four different types of schools in Singapore. It is recommended as the next step that the programme be tested in a broader context to discover if more students might be aided in their development as readers and writers through the LDEP.