Title	Media literacy in the teaching of English in Singapore
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EDUCATION RESEARCH FUNDING PROGRAMME

PROJECT CLOSURE REPORT

Media Literacy in the Teaching of English in Singapore

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Given the extraordinary pace at which especially new media technologies have developed in the last five to ten years, as well as the unprecedented amount of leisure time youth spend engaging with media such as television, Facebook, or games, there has been greater recognition by scholars, educators, and policymakers of the importance of incorporating media education and media literacy in schools and curricula. Current curricular approaches have moved away from a protectionist rationale toward a concern with supporting youth to become active media users (Buckingham, 2002). This shift towards recognizing youth's agentive role particularly through digital social media has also led to a focus in media literacy programs on both production and consumption; in other words, fostering youth's critical and reflective capacities in relation to both their consumption and production of media texts/content. Learner-centered pedagogies that draw on students' everyday understanding, experience, and use of media in and out of school are advocated (Hobbs, 2011b). Recognizing and building on students' media experiences is a key principle of media literacy curricula that aim to empower students to become active, reflective, and critical users of contemporary media.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Compared with the United States, Australia or the UK, media literacy education has been less systematically introduced in primary and secondary schools in Singapore. This is surprising given the Singapore government's efforts to brand Singapore as a "global media city" (MDA, 2003, p. 1) and given available statistics about youth's intensive use and engagement with media and technology. There are public education initiatives such as the work of the Media Literacy Council. In addition, the current English language syllabus explicitly recognizes media literacy as of key significance and most crucially, identifies subject English as a strategic curricular area for school-based media literacy education. Yet while the place of media literacy is firmly established in the syllabus document, there have been no empirical studies examining whether and how these curricular innovations have been implemented in classroom teaching. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining media literacy education through subject English in Singapore secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this project was to explore how media literacy education could be integrated into the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools. Media literacy is understood here as the ability to critically analyze, evaluate and create texts in diverse forms and media. The study had three key objectives, which broadly correspond to three phases of the proposed project:

1. To survey current pedagogical practice in Singapore secondary schools in relation to how media literacy is implemented and infused in English lessons. (Phase 1)

2. To examine the teaching of media literacy in two select secondary schools in Singapore as well as assess contextual factors that will shape the development of a pilot framework for teaching media literacy through English. (Phase 2)

3. To develop and trial an English unit that systematically integrates media literacy into the teaching of English and takes into account current practice and contextual factors gauged through the first two steps of the project. The unit would be developed and deployed in two select secondary schools in Singapore. (Phase 3)

PARTICIPANTS

In phase 1 of the research project, 202 in-service English Language teachers from 18 secondary schools participated in a survey designed by the research team. Two of the 18 schools that participated in phase 1 volunteered to participate in phase 2 and 3 of the research study. These two schools were from different strata of the academic spectrum; one was a high performing co-educational school while the other was a lower-performing co-educational school (see below for sampling). At each of these two schools, two in-service English language teachers and two classes of each 40 upper secondary level students participated in phase 2 and 3 of the study which involved observations and collaboration with teachers to develop teaching units on media literacy.

METHODOLOGY / DESIGN

The research questions were formulated in alignment with the three research phases. The three main research questions were:

1. How is media literacy integrated in the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools? (Phase 1 but also informed by qualitative data from Phase 2)

2. What contextual factors influence the integration of media literacy in English in the two select Singapore secondary schools? (Phase 2)

3. What contextual factors inform and shape the development and implementation of a pedagogic framework for media literacy through English language? (Phase 3)

In phase 1 an online survey was validated on a pilot sample and then administered to 202 English teachers in a sample of 18 secondary schools in Singapore. The sampling frame was the list of Singapore secondary schools available on the Ministry of Education's website. Due to the cessation in the publication of GCE-O level examination results, the research team decided to stratify the schools according to PSLE Median T-score. Inferential and descriptive statistical analyses and qualitative coding were the primary means of analysis.

In phase 2, the research instruments included classroom observation of English language lessons of participating classes, two interviews with each of the four participating teachers, one focus group discussion with select students from each class, and one-week worth of student log of media engagement outside of classroom by the selected students who participated in the focus group interviews. Interviews were semi-structured and observation protocols were adapted from the Singapore Pedagogy Coding Scheme (Luke, Freebody, Cazden & Lin, 2004) to fit the study's focus. Teacher interviews and student focus groups were analyzed using qualitative coding procedures, as well as discourse analysis. Student logs were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative coding.

In phase 3, the Media Literacy framework was drawn on in the development of a thematically driven media literacy unit. Three main research methods were used: 1) classroom observations of the implementation; 2) teacher reflection and interview; 3) student feedback and focus group. Classroom observations were analysed primarily using the coding scheme based on the framework while teacher interviews and student feedback were analysed using qualitative, inductive coding to identify positive outcomes and challenges.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

The project generated the following key findings with reference to the key research questions:

1) **Integration of media literacy in EL (RQ1).** The survey results indicated that English teachers had a good understanding of key principles of media literacy. However, there seemed to be stronger support for a traditional conceptualization of media literacy; i.e., that media literacy is about the critical evaluation of media texts, with a concern for their impact on audiences. Less support was noted for expressive and productive dimensions of media literacy that are emphasized in the current research literature and also noted in the EL Syllabus. This was also evident in teachers' responses about their current pedagogic practice. Pedagogic rationale for the inclusion of media texts (e.g., videos, newspaper articles, brochures) was linked to text-level skills more than to the core principles of media literacy such as global issues or aesthetic design. Classroom observational data from phase 2 aligned with these findings and indicated a lack of attention to the social-cultural practices that produced the texts and shaped their consumption. Engagement with media-related texts was often formulaic, focused on the matching of structural features with purported function, with context reduced to a general notion of 'audience'. This was particularly noticeable in School A. While survey results showed the inclusion of a range of media texts in the teaching of English, there was less inclusion of new and dynamic forms of media. This is despite survey findings that teachers themselves use a wide range of digital and social media for leisure. Alternative forms of assessment such as portfolio or digital production were rarely employed. Many teachers viewed media literacy as necessary primarily in order to foster students' critical abilities, with no mention of agentive, expressive and creative uses of media being important.

2) **Contextual factors in schools (RQ2).** Observation from the two schools indicated that teachers in School A primarily focused on the aspects of media literacy that received the most emphasis in the syllabus. These were text-level functional and critical skills that also feature on the national exams. Teachers in School B who followed a language arts approach seemed to be more balanced in crafting lessons, tasks and activities that fostered a wider range of literacies. Particularly noteworthy is how one of the School B teachers who had a graduate degree in literature provided a more extended engagement with English and texts. In short, these findings point to the influence of school type (regular vs. IP curriculum) and also the

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potential of a literature training in realizing a more holistic approach to EL and media literacy. Data from students suggested a big gap between media literacy education in schools and what students saw as relevant for their out-of-school literacies. At the same time, students were very much aware of the high-stakes educational environment and wanted media education to also help them to excel academically. Most students were critical of what they saw as disproportionate emphasis on cyber wellness at the expense of more holistic media/literacy education.

3) **Development and implementation of media literacy framework (RQ3).** The project team successfully developed a pedagogic framework that incorporated the EL syllabus' emphasis on text-level skills while giving equal weight to the social and contextual embedding of language use that is emphasized but not fully elaborated on in the Syllabus. It combines four aspects of media literacy: functional, critical, ethical and aesthetic. Teachers welcomed the extended notions of literacy and increased student engagement, particularly in School A where everyday EL teaching was heavily decontextualized. Yet they remained concerned about skills and students' ability to do well in exams, as they saw 'content' (the thematic focus of units) and 'skills' as fundamentally separate. This concern was more marked in School A. Students in general welcomed the engaging and learner-centered pedagogies of the unit. Students in School B (IP school) found the largely similar thematic issues among humanities subjects (social studies, history, EL) somewhat repetitive, and therefore intellectually less challenging.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The study's key contributions are in the area of curriculum and practice, with implications for policy (as discussed in the Conclusion).

1) The study provided insight into the implementation of the 2010 English language syllabus, highlighting in general teachers' adherence to syllabus goals and content, as gleaned from the survey responses. Yet findings indicate that teachers' focus on print text, rare use of alternative assessment, and understanding of media literacy that primarily emphasizes receptive skills falls short of international curricular models.

2) The framework developed integrates current research on media literacy with goals of the Singapore English Language Syllabus (see appended *Guide for Teachers*). It has been shown to expand classroom teaching of media literacy to more purposefully include ethical and aesthetic aspects. In other words, it augments current decontextualized, linguistic work with media-texts by embedding media texts within their socio-cultural contexts of production, thus also connecting classroom language learning to real-world literacy.

3) The project also shed light on students' perspectives on media and media literacy education, which has so far been unexplored. This is also a gap in the research literature. Student experience and attitude toward media and school-media literacy must be taken into account as the basis for curriculum and instruction. It is clear that the currently heavy emphasis on cyber-wellness and protectionist ethos must be supplemented with media literacy approaches that build on students' agency and expertise.

CONCLUSION

School-based media literacy programs in Singapore show potential in that teachers recognize the need for its inclusion as part of (language) education. However, an important challenge for educators is to move away from a heavy focus on print texts toward recognizing multimedia and digital production as not only legitimate but dominant modes of communication for many young people today. In addition, media literacy education (both school-based and public outreach) should also go beyond the current overemphasis on cyber wellness and emphasize creative, multimodal, digital production to foster students' expressive capacities. At the same time, given the heavily exam-driven teaching of EL especially in upper secondary years, there is a need to more intentionally locate media literacy education beyond the goals of English Language education. EL can play a key role in media literacy; a role that is best realized through a language arts approach that allows for a broader vision for language learning. At the same time, media literacy should be taught as a distinctive component in English teachers' pre-service and professional development courses, emphasizing both the historical development of the field and its broader objectives beyond those articulated in the English Language syllabus.

Media Literacy in the Teaching of English in Singapore

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INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Media literacy has become a central concern for educators and researchers in many different contexts around the globe. Given the extraordinary pace at which especially new media technologies have developed in the last five to ten years, as well as the unprecedented amount of leisure time youth spend engaging with media such as television, Facebook, or games, there has been greater recognition by scholars, educators, and policymakers of the importance of incorporating media education and media literacy in schools and curricula. In fact, the systematic integration of media/literacy education into the formal school curriculum has had quite a long history in countries such as the United Kingdom (Hart & Hicks, 2002), the United States (Kellner & Share, 2005), Australia (Curriculum Council, 2010), and Canada (MediaSmarts, n.d.).

When media literacy programs emerged in the mid-20th century, great attention was paid to empowering students to be critical consumers of media as scholars and educators assumed that young people had to be protected from the harmful effects of media (Buckingham, 2002). More recent curricular approaches however have moved away from such protectionist rationale toward a concern with preparing youth to become active users of media (Buckingham, 2002). This shift towards recognizing youth's agentive role particularly through digital social media has also led to a focus in media literacy programs on both production and consumption; in other words, fostering youth's critical and reflective capacities in relation to both their consumption and production of media texts/content. In fact, for Morrell et al. (2013), critical media production is a key strategy for increasing academic literacy, social awareness and civic engagement of historically underserved urban youth. Similarly, Hobbs

(2011a) also emphasizes creation as an important dimension of digital and media literacy that provides students with rhetorical and textual power.

Media literacy educational initiatives take a constructivist approach to both text and learning in an effort to develop student-centric pedagogic initiatives to foster media literacy (Hobbs, 2011b). Constructivist learning approaches rest on the belief that people learn by building on their knowledge and experience while interacting with others in purposeful social activities (Dewey, 1938). As learners play an active role in acquiring new skills and knowledge, media literacy approaches have advocated learner-centered pedagogies that draw on students' everyday understanding, experience, and use of media in and out of school (Hobbs, 2011b). Recognizing and building on students' media experiences is therefore a key principle of media literacy curricula that aim to empower students to become active, reflective, and critical users of contemporary media.

Media scholars have also identified goals and challenges associated with youth's participation in the new "networked publics" (Ito 2008). Jenkins et al. (2009) discuss three concerns for media educators: the participation gap, the transparency problem and the ethics challenge. The first emphasizes the need for schools to provide equal opportunities for youth to acquire the cultural (and not simply technological) competencies needed for meaningful and successful participation in online communities. Literacy skills in the new media, Jenkins argues, are fundamentally social and develop through collaboration and networking, prompting a need in schools to shift emphasis away from literacy as individual expression. Ito et al. (2013) also highlight a concern with growing inequity in opportunities for learning as public educational sectors continue to insist on a "no frills" approach instead of aiming to build learning communities that span young people's social and institutional networks. The second challenge Jenkins et al. identify points to the complex ways in which the media shape our perception of the world, prompting the inclusion of critical, reflective skills in media education. Adding nuance to this argument, Lim et al. (2013) stress nurturing youth's negotiation skills to manage risks involved in participatory media, especially for at-risk youth. Third, as members of (online) communities, young people need to develop an awareness of the ethical standards of these communities and the impact their participation may have on others.

While these general principles underlie most research and documented practice of school-based media literacy education, media literacy education is always couched within particular socio-political settings where local policies significantly shape its substance and direction. The next section outlines key contextual features of Singapore's policy landscape as a backdrop to the rationale that motivated the study.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Compared with the United States or the UK, media literacy education has been less systematically introduced in primary and secondary schools in Singapore, despite being well represented at the post-secondary level. Media Studies was introduced as an examinable subject in 2009 to only three secondary schools, and subsequently expanded to two more schools. The study of media texts is not infused in other subjects such as Literature, which continues to focus on the three traditional genres – poetry, prose, and drama – to the exclusion of other genres such as film and the graphic novel.

This is surprising given the Singapore government's efforts to brand Singapore as a "global media city" (MDA, 2003, p. 1) and given available statistics about youth's engagement with media and technology. For instance, 97% of households with school-going children have home internet access while close to 100% of residents aged 7-49 have internet access at any location (Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, 2013) which is not unexpected considering a mobile phone penetration rate of around 155% among the population in the first half of 2014 (Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, 2014). Internet and media use among youth (age 15-34) is especially high, with many accessing the internet daily to inform themselves of current affairs, to use social networking sites or for entertainment (National Youth Council, 2014). Perhaps in recognition of the implication of such a highly networked population, in August 2012, the Singapore government set up the Media Literacy Council (MLC) as a public education and community engagement initiative that aims to foster "discerning Singaporeans who are able to evaluate media content effectively, and to use, create and share content safely and responsibly" (Media Literacy Council, n.d.).

In the formal education arena, in 2010, the Ministry of Education began to more intentionally infuse media literacy through English Language, which is a compulsory first language subject in all

primary and secondary schools in Singapore. First, one of the core guiding principles in the most recent English Language Syllabus is that teaching will be enriched through "the use of a variety of print and non-print resources that provides authentic contexts for incorporating the development of information, media and visual literacy skills in the teaching of listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, and representing" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 9). In line with international scholarship, the syllabus defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create information in a variety of forms and media" (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 129). Further, media literacy is incorporated to different degrees in the first four out of six areas of language learning – listening and viewing; reading and viewing; speaking and representing; writing and representing; grammar; and vocabulary.

In Singapore, a robust IT infrastructure has enabled the majority of Singaporeans to be connected and use digital media, particularly young people. There are initiatives such as the work of the Media Literacy Council that serve the function of public education and outreach. In addition, the Ministry of Education's ICT Masterplan 4 also recognizes the importance of digital technology in aiming to develop "future ready, responsible digital learners" (MOE, n.d.). As briefly described in the preceding section, the current English language syllabus explicitly recognizes media literacy as of key significance and most crucially, identifies subject English as a strategic curricular area for school-based media literacy education, following a long tradition particularly strong in the US (e.g., Alvermann and Hagood 2000; Hobbs 2007, 2011b) that sees language arts as a key vehicle for media literacy development. Yet while the place of media literacy is firmly established in the syllabus document, there have been no empirical studies examining the extent to which these curricular innovations have been implemented in classroom teaching. This study aimed to fill this gap by examining media literacy education in Singapore secondary schools.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this project was to explore how media literacy education could be integrated into the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools. Media literacy is understood here as the ability to critically analyze, evaluate and create texts in diverse forms and media. The study had three key objectives, which broadly corresponded to three phases of the proposed project:

1. To survey current pedagogical practice in Singapore secondary schools in relation to how media literacy is implemented and infused in English lessons.

2. To examine, in an in-depth manner, the teaching of media literacy in two select secondary schools in Singapore as well as assess contextual factors that would shape the development of a pilot framework for teaching media literacy through English.

3. To develop and trial an English unit that systematically integrates media literacy into the teaching of English and takes into account current practice and contextual factors gauged through the first two steps of the project. The unit would be developed and deployed in two select secondary schools in Singapore.

The research was carried out in three stages, with each stage contributing to the accomplishment of the overall research objective.

The first stage involved a survey of current pedagogical practice in Singapore secondary schools with regards to how media literacy is implemented and infused in English lessons. It was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is media literacy integrated in the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools? Specifically:

   1a. What types of media text do teachers currently incorporate in English lessons?

   1b. What is the rationale for the inclusion of these media texts?

   1c. What instructional strategies do teachers employ in using these texts?

   1d. To what extent and how are media texts incorporated in English assessments?

   1e. How do teacher (age, gender, level of education) and school variables (school ranking) impact teachers' current pedagogical practice of media literacy?

The second stage involved a more in-depth investigation of how media literacy was taught in two select secondary schools in Singapore. While the methodologies employed were different (see next section), this phase was guided by the same questions (RQ1 and sub-questions) stated above. In addition, since these two schools were the sites for the third part of the project, other aspects of context besides pedagogy were explored. The question guiding our inquiry at this stage was:

2. What contextual factors influence the integration of media literacy in English in two select Singapore secondary schools?

Guided by extant literature, we were particularly interested in:

2a. How do teachers' attitude, skills, knowledge and experience with media influence media literacy pedagogy?

2b. How do students' attitude, skills, knowledge and experience with media influence their engagement with media texts in the classroom?

The third stage of the research involved the development and implementation of an English unit that incorporated media literacy as well as took into account teachers' and students' experience with and attitude toward media and media texts. We conceptualized this component as a case study of how a consideration of current pedagogic practice and curriculum as well as teacher/student experience, knowledge and attitude could inform and shape the development and implementation of a pedagogic framework for media literacy through English language. A number of research questions guided this stage of the project:

3a. How does teachers' current EL pedagogy impact the pedagogical approach taken to teach media literacy in the teaching of English?

3b. How does student and teacher experience with media texts in and out of classroom impact the selection of materials and media to be used for fostering media literacy in English language lessons?

3c. How can the guiding principles and learning outcomes outlined in the 2010 EL syllabus be used to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of media literacy with particular emphasis on the critical, aesthetic, and ethical domains?

In addition, as part of understanding how media literacy could be incorporated into the teaching of English, we were also interested to find out:

3d. What were the challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of the unit?

3e. What were students' experiences with the implemented unit?

PARTICIPANTS

Phase 1: Survey

Participants in the first phase were of two types. For the pilot survey that was used to validate the survey instrument, 50 pilot participants were recruited primarily through convenience sampling. The pilot sample included personal contacts of the researchers who were or had been English teachers in local schools, as well as postgraduate students who were also English teachers. The survey was then administered to the recruited participants on an online survey platform (Qualtrics).

For the main survey, the sampling frame was the list of 162 Singapore secondary schools available on the Ministry of Education's website. The decision to sample schools rather than teachers was made as no reliable sampling frame could be established for English teachers in Singapore. The main consideration for sampling was to include schools with a range of school achievement backgrounds, as gauged by the Primary School Leaving Examination aggregate score that is published for each secondary school. This score represents the lowest aggregate score that a given secondary school uses as the cut-off point for admission into its various streams. As such, it is used as a proxy measure for school academic achievement in the absence of any other publically available data that compares schools based on academic achievement. The 162 schools were then divided into three bands, and from each band six schools were selected randomly. The 18 selected schools were then contacted via email, and information sheets and consent forms were distributed. If a randomly selected school declined to participate, a new school was then selected using the same procedure, until all three bands had six schools participating. From each school we requested that at least 75% of their English teachers take the survey, and reminders were sent out until that threshold was reached. Due to the difficulties getting the requisite number of participants, the survey period spanned five months. In the end, 202 respondents completed the survey. Appendix B gives a breakdown of key demographic features of the teacher respondents.

Phase 2 & 3: School-based study

Schools were recruited for this phase of the study during the survey stage. As invitation emails to participate in the survey were sent out to school principals, they were also informed of the possibility of participating in the follow-up phases of the research. Two secondary schools indicated interest and thus

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participated in the second and third phase of the study. School A was a neighbourhood school, with two participating English teachers and two participating classes. Both classes were graduating classes, one from the Express stream and the other from the Normal Academic stream. A total of 80 students participated in the study from School A. School B was an Integrated Program school with two participating teachers and two participating classes, both from the Secondary 3 level. A total of 80 students participated in the study from School B.

METHODOLOGY/DESIGN

Phase 1

The first stage involved a survey of current pedagogical practice in Singapore secondary schools with regards to how media literacy is implemented and infused in English lessons. The general research question guiding this phase was: *How is media literacy integrated in the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools*?

A survey comprising close and open-ended questions was designed, validated and administered to over 200 secondary EL teachers from Singapore following random stratified sampling. The survey consisted of six sections that aimed to collect information on teachers' understandings of media literacy education (11 items), media habits (40 items), pedagogy and instructional strategies (42 items), assessment of media literacy (24 items), personal views about the teaching of media literacy in Singapore (2 open-ended questions), and demographic variables (12 items). Survey data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods as well as qualitative, inductive coding for the open-ended responses.

Phase 2

The second stage involved a more in-depth investigation of how media literacy was taught in two select secondary schools in Singapore. The question guiding this stage was: *What contextual factors influence the integration of media literacy in English in two select Singapore secondary schools*? The project team worked together with 2 teachers from each of the two participating schools. Given that the purpose of this phase of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices and factors shaping those in the two select schools, mostly qualitative research methods were used. Key data sources included: (a) classroom observation of a total of 49 English language lessons; (b)

interviews with teachers (8 in total); (c) focus group discussions with students (n=32); student log of media engagement outside of classroom (n=32).

Classroom observations were analyzed using a coding scheme designed based on the pedagogical/conceptual framework developed by the project team. Teacher interviews and student focus groups were analyzed using qualitative inductive coding procedures, as well as discourse analysis. Student media logs were analyzed through descriptive statistics in order to provide summative data on the type and intensity of media usage by students.

Phase 3

Building on the first two phases, the third phase entailed the development and implementation of one English teaching unit incorporating media literacy based on the framework developed and was guided by the question: *How can the guiding principles and learning outcomes outlined in the 2010 EL syllabus be used to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of media literacy with particular emphasis on the critical, aesthetic, and ethical domains*?

This required collaboration with participating teachers in the design of the unit as well as the documentation of the implementation. For the latter, three main research methods were used: 1) classroom observations of the implementation; 2) teacher reflection and interview; 3) student feedback and focus group. Classroom observations were analysed primarily using the coding scheme based on the framework while teacher interviews and student feedback were analysed using qualitative, inductive coding to identify positive outcomes and challenges.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

Findings will be reported according to the main research phases and with reference to the research questions. Given space limitations, only key findings are reported here. It must be noted that phases and research questions do not directly map onto each other and do not always reflect a chronological order. This is especially the case for Phases 2 and 3 which were still guided by RQ1 and two additional RQs but involved completely different methodologies and were informed by the media literacy framework we developed. As such, it was deemed best to present findings according to phases but with explicit reference to the research questions and commentary about cross-phase links.

Phase 1 (RQ1)

The main research question guiding this phase of the project was: How is media literacy integrated in the teaching of English in Singapore secondary schools? This question was answered through a survey of English language teachers. In the following, results are presented according to the sub-research questions, which are presented in three sections. RQ1a-b are grouped under the heading of 'Teachers' pedagogic practice' while RQ1d (assessment) and RQ1e (impact of teacher/school variables) are discussed in a separate section each. In addition to these original research questions, the survey surfaced important insights about teachers' understanding of media literacy, as well as their views on the challenges and importance of media literacy education. These results will also be discussed. As we had to limit items on the survey, questions pertaining to details of instructional strategies were not included in the final version, although several of the questions under assessment pertain to this topic. This question was more relevant for the in-depth qualitative study and will be reported on there in detail.

Teachers' pedagogic practice of media literacy (RQ1a-b)

One key question the survey aimed to shed light on concerned teachers' use of media texts as materials for teaching media literacy in English (RQ1a). As can be seen in Table 1 (please see Appendix A for all tables), teachers used a wide range of audiovisual and linguistic texts with regular frequency, including newspapers, visual and audiovisual texts as well as videos and material from websites. Somewhat less frequent was their incorporation of audio sources (e.g., radio broadcast, music) as well as content from social media into their English classes. Teachers also reported more frequent use of static media such as posters, newspaper articles or images as materials in their teaching as compared to dynamic forms of media such as movies or music as well as social media. The frequency of teachers' use of literary texts and books was comparable to their usage of static media in the classroom.

The survey also aimed to elicit teachers' main rationale for the inclusion of media and media texts in their EL teaching (RQ1b). Teachers were asked to rank order a set of given rationales (See Table 2). The majority of teachers indicated 'student interest' as the key driver of media choice. The second most important rationale was to "teach features and structures of text types" – the core subject concern for English language in Singapore. At the same time, pedagogic rationales connected to the

core principles of media literacy (critical analysis, global issues, aesthetic design) were ranked at the bottom of the list.

More promisingly, when asked about which aspects of media literacy education they cover in their EL teaching, most teachers reported covering a number of important themes, as detailed in Table 3.

Assessment of media literacy (RQ1d)

In terms of assessment, Table 4 summarizes results about teachers' assessment practices in relation to media literacy, concerning the type of assessment as well as what aspects of media literacy teachers were likely to assess. As can be seen, alternative (i.e., non-exam) forms of assessment were reportedly used somewhat rarely, although student presentations appeared to be utilized with more frequency when compared to others such as portfolio or digital production, which were rarely employed. In terms of what facets of media literacy teachers were likely to assess, results indicate that functional-critical aspects – i.e., those relating to understanding texts in relation to their purpose, audience and point of view – were frequently targeted in teachers' assessment practices with the most likely question being, 'What is the purpose of this website'. Ethical and aesthetic dimensions of media literacy, i.e., engaging with notions of aesthetic design and response, as well as empathetic perspective-taking, on the other hand, were less likely to be assessed by teachers.

The impact of school and teacher variables (RQ1e)

The survey results were also analyzed in order to see how various demographic (age, gender, level of education, types of degree) and school variables (school ranking) interacted with teachers' understanding and current pedagogical practice of media literacy. A one-way ANOVA revealed that level of education attained was associated with the use of print and audiovisual media/texts. Both teachers with a bachelor degree and those with a postgraduate degree reported using such media/texts more frequently than those without a bachelor degree. Teachers with a postgraduate degree were also found to use audio and social media/texts more frequently than their counterparts with a bachelor degree only. A *t*-test revealed that male participants used static media/texts more frequently than female participants. A between-groups one-way ANOVA also found a significant difference in the use of literary texts/books by teachers with different bachelor degree specializations. Post hoc comparisons

with the Bonferroni correction showed that teachers specializing in English Literature/English Literature Education used literary texts/books more frequently than teachers specializing in other fields.

Inferential statistics identified significant differences in assessment practices, too. The type of school where participating teachers were working was found to be related to the tendency to assess the functional-critical aspects of media literacy. Teachers from Band-1 and Band-2 schools were more likely to engage in functional-critical assessment than those from Band-3 schools. A similar pattern was found in the assessment of ethical-aesthetic aspects of media literacy, showing that teachers from Band-2 schools were more likely to assess these aspects than their colleagues from Band-3 schools. Age was also related to ethical-aesthetic assessment. Teachers in the 50-59 range were more likely to adopt such assessment than those who were below 30 years of age. Teachers' bachelor degree specializations were also significantly associated with likelihood to assess critical-ethical aspects of media literacy, with teachers specializing in English Literature/English Literature Education more likely to engage in such assessment than those specializing in English Language/Applied Linguistics/English Language Education.

Teachers' understanding of media literacy

As can be seen from Table 5, teachers' responses to questions about media literacy and media literacy education indicated a good understanding of key principles. However, there seemed to be stronger support for a traditional conceptualization of media literacy; i.e., that media literacy is about the critical evaluation of media texts, with a concern with their impact on audiences. The mean score for the extended understanding of media literacy/education indicated that teachers were less in agreement with notions that go beyond a narrower scope, i.e., that media literacy education should encompass a wide range of texts (including literary texts), involve production and an awareness of students' media habits. It is worth noting that teachers were least agreeable to production being a part of media literacy (Q1) and that the idea that media literacy education should be part of subject English (extending the notion of literacy) elicited only moderate agreement (Q3).

A between-groups one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the traditional understanding of media literacy education (MLE) between teachers holding different positions. In addition, post hoc comparisons found that those holding middle management positions also agreed

more with a traditional understanding of MLE than ordinary teachers. Finally, independent-samples *t*-test also found a gender-based difference in the extended understanding of MLE that approached statistical significance. The female teachers as a group had a broader understanding of MLE than did their male counterparts.

Teachers' responses to the open-ended question about the importance of media literacy also shed light on their understanding of media literacy. The majority of respondents agreed that it was important and many respondents provided elaboration, although three teachers stated that media literacy education was not important. Based on a qualitative coding of their responses into themes, the following key justifications for the importance of media literacy were found. Percentages indicate the percentage of respondents (n=194) who offered a particular justification (some respondents stated more than one justification).

- **Critical reading/thinking** (50.8%): justifies the importance of media literacy on the basis that students need to have skills of critically analyzing and evaluating media content, messages and information
- **Media-saturated world** (45.3%): justifies the importance of media literacy because of the ubiquity of (social) and digital media and youth's regular use of it
- **Curriculum** (12.4): justification makes reference to curricular notions or priorities (e.g. applied learning, cyber wellness)
- **Responsibility** (9.8%): justifies the importance of media literacy in order to ensure responsible media use
- **Student engagement** (1.5%): justifies the importance of media literacy as a way to engage students

Teachers therefore see the need for media literacy in order to develop students' critical, evaluative skills. None of the responses made any reference to the need to foster creative, expressive uses of media or the use of media for collaborative problem-solving.

Teacher views on the challenges and importance of media literacy education (RQ 3)

As the final part of the survey, teachers were asked to provide their personal views on two questions: 1) What are the key challenges for you in incorporating Media Literacy in the teaching of English? 2) Is it important for you that Media Literacy be taught in Singapore secondary schools? Please elaborate.

In regards to challenges, teachers identified the following key factors. Percentages indicate the percentage of respondents (n=191) who identified a particular factor as important (some respondents identified more than one). ML=media literacy

- **Time** (33%): refers to the constraint as posed by competing curriculum and pedagogical demands (e.g. preparing students for examinations, time needed to research on media resources).
- **Resources/materials** (27.7%): refers to the difficulty in locating appropriate media resources that meet curriculum objectives in terms of content relevance and in developing specific language skills. It may also point to the constraint posed by copyright in the distribution of media materials.
- **Teachers' training** (27.7%): refers to the perceived lack of competence in at least one of the four areas: (1) technical proficiency in new media, (2) familiarity with new media contents and contexts, (3) pedagogical approaches in teaching ML, and (4) schema or grammar in teaching ML.
- **Curriculum** (20.4%): refers to all curriculum related concerns (e.g. scope and structure of ML within EL syllabus, suitability in embedding ML within a traditional EL syllabus) in incorporating ML in the teaching of EL.
- **Teachers' attitudes** (11.5%): refers to teachers' reluctance towards the incorporation of ML in the teaching of EL.
- **Infrastructure** (8.9%): refers to ICT support, both hardware and software, in enabling the streaming of multimedia resources in all EL classrooms.
- **Students** (2.1%): refers to respondents' concerns in keeping students engaged.

Phases 2 and 3

The school-based phases of the project aimed to explore in more depth how media literacy was taught at the secondary level in EL. As stated at the beginning, Phase 2 of the project was guided by the same set of questions as Phase 1 (i.e., RQ1), with the addition of two more questions that related to a more in-depth, contextual examination of media literacy in EL. Phase 3 of the project involved the development and implementation of a media literacy unit in each school, with research questions probing some of the contextual influences on this implementation.

Since much of Phase 2 and 3 was built around the framework that was developed, we start by describing that framework and briefly explicating its links to the EL Syllabus, in response to RQ3c. This is followed by findings from classroom observations which shed light on RQ1, specifically on classroom

instruction (RQ1c). Next, findings that help us answer RQ2, which was focused on contextual factors, are presented. Given that results from Phase 1 gave a comprehensive overview of teacher belief and pedagogic practice, and given that qualitative insights gained from teachers in Phase 2 and 3 largely confirm the survey findings, the main emphasis here will be on students. Finally, RQ3a-b and RQ3d-e will be answered through a presentation and discussion of relevant findings.

Media literacy pedagogic framework (RQ3c)

A key component and also outcome of the research project was the development of a framework that provided a basic conceptual-pedagogic model for how key ideas of media literacy education, as identified in the literature review, could be infused in the teaching of English in Singapore. The framework has four main components highlighting different aspects of media literacy: functional, critical, ethical and aesthetic. While each component is important for a holistic conception of media literacy, the functional and critical can be conceptualized as text-level aspects of literacy while the ethical and aesthetic components move beyond the immediacy of texts and view them as elements of socio-cultural practices. Further, while the functional and, to some extent, critical components have been associated with English language education, the ethical and aesthetic domains represent an extended notion of literacy.

Functional component. This component encompasses notions of students as code-breakers (Freebody & Luke, 1990) and recognizes the value in explicitly teaching skills and strategies that aid students in recognizing recurrent structural patterns in language and texts (in multiple semiotic modes) and their role in meaning-making. In a functional orientation, we ask students to identify, state, describe, comprehend and paraphrase; for instance, to identify key words or state key ideas of a paragraph, answer comprehension questions about the content of a passage or perhaps paraphrase a sentence from a text. With a visual text, we may ask them to simply describe what is in the picture, state what modalities are involved, and comprehend the visual at the denotative and possibly connotative levels. Also included are aspects of Hobbs' (2011b) notion of access here; skills involved in gathering information in multiple platforms and semiotic modalities. Similar to the notion of the code-breaker, a functional orientation might be helpful as an entry point for literacy activities but is far from sufficient for students becoming resourceful meaning-makers who can create and access texts in multiple modes

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and for various purposes. The functional dimension has specific links to the following aim of the 2010 EL Syllabus: "**Listen, read and view** critically and with accuracy, understanding and appreciation a wide range of literary and informational/ functional texts from print and non-print sources. {…} Pupils will speak, write and represent for creative, personal, academic and functional purposes by using language in a sustained manner (e.g., in speech and writing) and by representing their ideas in a range of multimodal texts and text forms" (MOE, 2010, p. 10)

Critical dimension. We use the term critical to refer to what are sometimes termed 'critical thinking skills' or higher-order literacy skills. It also parallels the emphasis in social semiotic approaches to literacy on the need to understand how text-makers use from a range of available multimodal semiotic resources those that most aptly serve their contextualized communicative goals. These considerations often surface in students being asked to analyze texts for how their micro and macro features contribute to their social purpose and articulate these connections. In this process, students will explain for instance why a multimodal ad is effective by interpreting the interactive meaning of visual and linguistic elements in the text in consideration of their impact on viewers. This is an area that receives considerable attention in Singapore's 2010 English Syllabus under the banner of *Critical reading, viewing and appreciation*: "This process involves close and critical reading of texts, the organisational structure of texts and the artful use of language for impact. Pupils will realise the connection between language features and the types of texts. They will also identify the meanings conveyed by the interplay of what is written and the visuals in a text." (MOE 2008, p. 34). What separates the functional dimension from a critical dimension is a move from description to interpretation and inference.

Ethical dimension. An awareness of the need to incorporate ethics as part of media literacy has emerged due to the participatory potential of new technological forms of communication (Jenkins et al., 2009). Developing reflective, socially sensitive perspectives is seen as an important aspect of media literacy, and the ethical dimension therefore aims to promote this other-orientedness when engaging with texts. This means developing students' ability to recognize and take multiple perspectives as they engage with an issue through exposure to texts. Apart from fostering empathy, the ethical dimension also entails an understanding of texts as potentially biased or partial representations of events and

groups. This is an aspect of literacy that is often subsumed under 'critical' in Western notions of literacy. But in our view, critiquing texts or systems for marginalizing identities is a normative endeavor and is thus fundamentally a matter of ethics. This also enables us to reserve the term 'critical' for a specific usage that is much more prevalent in Singapore curriculum discourse; that is, critical thinking (as above). The ethical dimension in this sense is not explicitly articulated in the 2010 EL Syllabus, although it makes a vague reference to the need for students "to question and evaluate what is read from a variety of sources" (p. 34).

Aesthetic dimension. This is possibly the most important dimension as it seems to be completely absent in many mainstream English language classrooms in Singapore. We chose aesthetic as a label in acknowledgment of existing traditions to understanding literary texts (such as reader-response theory) that emphasize personal response to works of art as an important aspect of their meaning. As such, the term also draws on Rosenblatt's (1994) notion of an aesthetic (as opposed to efferent) reading stance during which the reader "pays attention to the associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas that these words and their referents arouse within him" (p. 24f). It is also connected to the emphasis within critical literacy approaches to ground classroom textual practices within students' lived experience. The 2010 EL Syllabus does acknowledge the importance of personal response when it states, "Pupils will deepen their understanding of the text by relating it to personal experiences, real life, its context and similar writing or works, including visual texts" (p. 34). When taken into the Singapore English language classroom, this dimension also bridges the curricular separation of literature and language and aims to remedy the resultant fragmentation of English teaching into compartmentalized chunks made up of distinct skills and text-types.

To answer RQ3c, *How can the guiding principles and learning outcomes outlined in the 2010 EL syllabus be used to develop a systematic approach to the teaching of media literacy with particular emphasis on the critical, aesthetic, and ethical domains?* we already identified for each dimension specific links to the syllabus document. The framework assumes that teachers orient to the general aims as well as the Principles of EL Teaching as outlined in the Syllabus. For instance, learner-centeredness is one of the guiding principles of EL Teaching (p. 11). The aesthetic dimension explicitly aims to highlight learners' experiences with and responses to media texts and therefore aligns with this

principle. At the same time, the framework goes beyond the Syllabus by giving equal emphasis to the structural, text-level dimensions of language use and its social situatedness. In our analysis, while the social dimension is endorsed by the syllabus' focus on language use, in its details the syllabus is heavily focused on language skills with very little elaboration of the social beyond the notion of audience and appropriateness. The framework stresses that language is not merely a means of communication, but also a powerful tool for shaping the world. As such, a truly literacy approach such as media literacy should involve a careful analysis and orientation to the social, political and contextual factors shaping practices of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing. Our emphasis on a social and contextual approach to media and English literacy was informed partly by previous research on the decontextualized nature of classroom EL pedagogy (Kramer-Dahl, 2008) but also confirmed by classroom findings of the present study (see next section). The framework therefore aims to provide a 'bridge' between the curriculum and classroom teaching on the one hand, as well as between the scholarly literature and the realities of Singapore's secondary classrooms on the other.

Media literacy in the English classroom (RQ1)

While the survey results yielded large-scale findings about how media literacy is integrated in EL, examining this question in four classrooms provided a more in-depth understanding. Specifically, the sub-question RQ1c was explored further in this phase by observing teachers' classrooms with reference to the four dimensions of media literacy identified above. Two researchers coded classroom activities involving a media text independently based on the media literacy dimensions the activities facilitated. Coders considered the skills that tasks and activities focused on as well as the overall pedagogic purpose guiding the activity. Coded sheets were then compared after each lesson and any discrepancies eliminated. The below charts indicate the percentage that each dimension occupied if we take all activities that involved a media text as 100 per cent. Phase 2 refers to observations conducted prior to the implementation of the media literacy unit, while Phase 3 refers to the observations of the media literacy unit lessons.

School A ('neighborhood' school)

Figure 1. School A Phase 2 observation

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Aspect of media literacy fostered: Phase 2

- Functional
- Critical
- Aesthetic
- Ethical
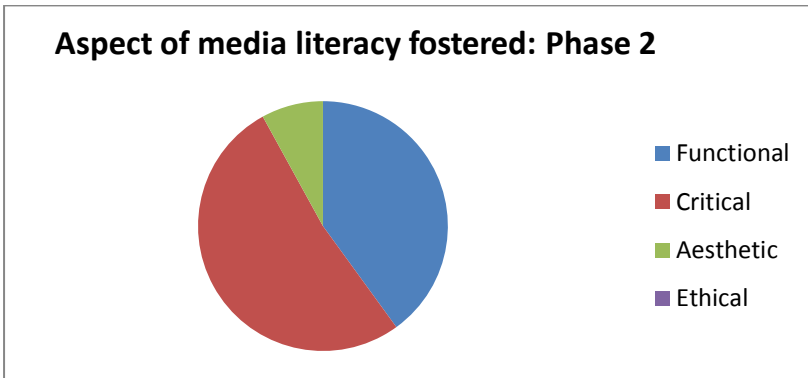
As can be seen from Figure 1, functional and critical dimensions predominated classroom activities during which media texts were utilized. These two dimensions deal with text-level skills such as basic comprehension (functional), but also higher level skills (inference) and relating textual form/structure to function. An example would be to look at a brochure from the Singapore Zoo and determining the key structural parts of the text, including some discussion of predominant language features. There is very little evidence of aesthetic engagement and no activities fostered ethical aspects of media literacy during the lessons observed.

Figure 2: School A Phase 3 observation

Aspect of media literacy fostered: Phase 3

- Functional
- Critical
- Aesthetic
- Ethical
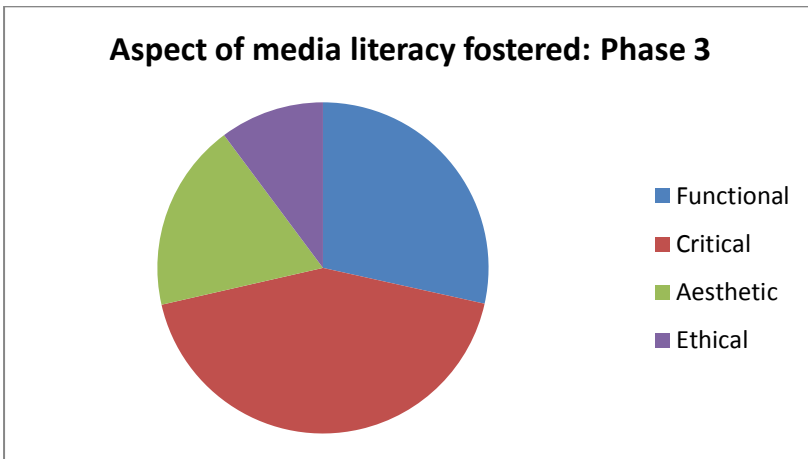
The media literacy unit aimed to balance out the four components and as can be seen from Figure 2, succeeded in implementing lesson plans where activities and tasks involving various media texts went beyond text-level work and attempted to consider the social and personal aspects of issues raised by texts. For School A, this was done in the context of the overarching theme for the unit, which was 'SG50: Who is Singapore for'?

School B (IP school)

Figure 3. School B Phase 2 observation
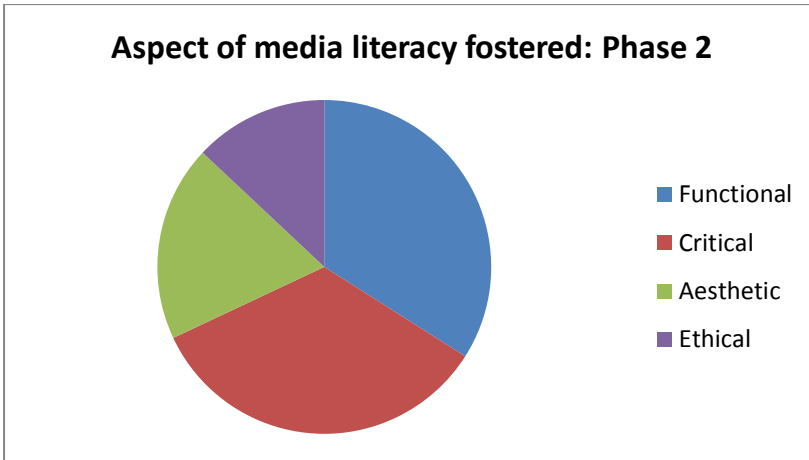
As can be seen from Figure 3, functional and critical dimensions predominated classroom activities in School B as well, although we do see some activities that fostered all aspects of media literacy. It must be emphasized that School B is an IP school with a language arts program. Moreover, during the observation period in Phase 2, the participating classes were having lessons that involved a literary text (Macbeth) which we believe played a significant role in having the ethical and aesthetic components well represented in the chart.

Figure 4: School B Phase 2 observation
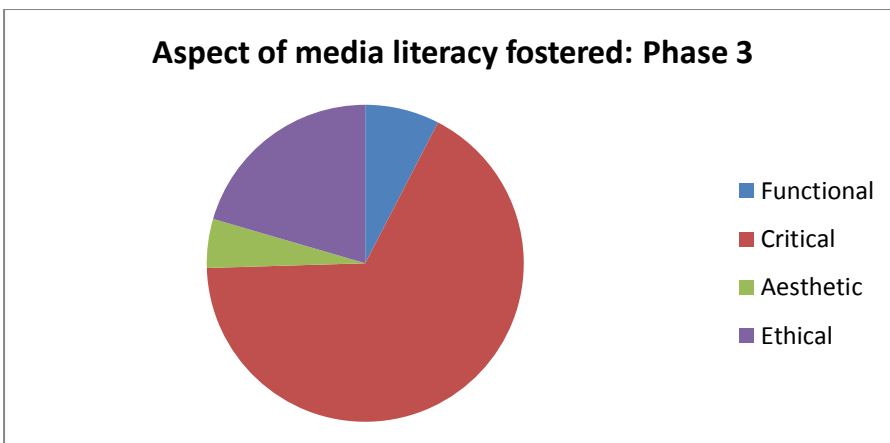
Figure 4 indicates the outcome of observations during the unit implementation in School B. The large percentage of critical is noticeable; as is the significant decrease in activities that mainly target functional aspects of media literacy. The media literacy unit theme for School B was 'National identity'.

Overall, what the observation data indicate here is that teachers in School A primarily focus on the aspects of media literacy that received the most emphasis in the syllabus, which are functional and critical. Teachers in School B who follow a language arts approach seem to be more balanced in crafting lessons, tasks and activities that foster a wider range of literacies. As we saw from the survey findings, schools from Band 1 (which School B falls in) and Band 2 differed in their assessment from schools in Band 3 (which School A falls in). The qualitative evaluation of classroom practices indicated that there is also a difference between Bands in that those with a language arts curriculum that encompasses both literature and language design and deliver lessons that foster multiple literacies. As such, the direct impact of the implementation was more noticeable in School A where it resulted in the widening of literacies.

Contextual factors influencing the integration of media literacy in English (RQ2)

Student perspectives (RQ2b)

Here we focus on insights gained from discussions with 32 students from the two participating schools during focus group meetings. The discussions were semi-structured with a prepared protocol comprising the following broad themes: 1) Personal use of media; 2) Experience and perceptions of media use in school; 3) Prompt-based discussion (prompt was a local newspaper article on sexting). Each discussion lasted for 45 minutes on average, was video and audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Initial thematic coding of the transcripts yielded the following categories:

1. Age/social role-related differences in teachers' media use
2. Age/social-role-related differences between students and teachers in terms of media use/knowledge
3. Lack of use of media and teaching about media
4. Overemphasis on cyber-wellness
5. English language as school work
6. Students' need for skills, interactive media

Connecting these six themes was an articulation by students of their school experiences with media as a series of *disconnects*: disconnect between their and their teachers' use and knowledge of media; a disconnect between their needs in relation to media skills and knowledge and what schools see as

priority; and a disconnect in terms of understanding the relevance of school-based media and literacy education. In the following section, we briefly explicate each of the three types of disconnect with examples.

Disconnect between students' and teacher's media use and knowledge. All focus groups invoked the frame of a 'generational gap' in accounting for perceived differences between themselves and their teachers. In other words, much of their reasoning for differences was articulated as having to do with age and teachers' professional role. In general, students were quite skeptical and critical about their teachers' media knowledge and skills, and the lack of media use in their daily teaching and learning. Two of the groups (from different schools) took particular issue with PowerPoint as the 'pinnacle' of classroom media tools, both in the amount and characteristic use, which entails lots of text and minimal visual or interactive features. But while students bemoaned teachers' lack of media or technological savvy, their primary critique concerned not so much this lack of expertise but rather *how* a particular media tool was used in the classroom, as it seemed to be disconnected from students' media experience and knowledge. Specifically they critiqued teachers' media use on the basis of literacy (text vs. visual; monologic vs. interactive), aesthetics (as one student put it, using 'disgusting blue against white' in slides) and media 'divergence' (token inclusion of social media in a heavily academic context). Importantly, students readily acknowledged teachers' facility with more academic uses of media.

Disconnect between students' and school's needs and priorities. Another point of divergence concerns what schools teach *about* media as opposed to what students would like to learn about media in school. When asked what they learn about media in school, all four groups noted a predominant focus on cyber-wellness, which typically covers topics such as cyber bullying, appropriate use of social networking sites, and as one student put it, 'teaching us to be nice to others and not to say things that hurt people'(male student, School A). Many students expressed that these lessons and lectures were somewhat pointless, partly because they were often repetitive with the same basic message delivered throughout their formal education so students just 'turn off' (female student, School B). They were also seen as useless since students claimed to already be quite aware of potential cyber-safety issues. Interestingly, while all groups seemed to think the emphasis was disproportionate,

some female students appreciated opportunities to hear about at least some aspects of cyber-wellness in the school.

If the school's priority in teaching about media lay in teaching about the dangers and ethics of the online world, students' understanding of media was markedly different. As mentioned previously, the way they talked about media revealed an orientation that was technical, practical and emphasized skills, as opposed to a concern with conceptual, ethical or critical issues. This was also pronounced in discussions about what they would like to learn about media in school or what they would change about the current use of media in school. Students in three groups expressed a strong desire to acquire 'technical' skills that ranged from using a keyboard, learning lesser-known functions of Word to creating and producing things through media. Two of the groups wanted to know more about how various media and technologies could help them in their studies, for instance learning applications for various subjects or getting better at searching for school-related content, all of which they acknowledged teachers were better at than students. Finally, in terms of media use in school, most students seemed to 'crave' media to engage them 'instead of just sleeping in class' (female students, School B). There were many suggestions to include songs, videos, and social media to get students interested and engaged, and not merely for entertainment. Students expressed a desire for more collaborative learning using media, and were enthused to mention past examples of such uses.

Disconnect in the relevance of school-based media/literacy education. The third dimension of disconnect has to do with students' perceptions and understanding about the relevance of school-based English and media literacy for life outside the school walls. When asked about how relevant their school media and literacy experiences were to their everyday life, students were highly skeptical across all groups. On the one hand, there was a strong sense in students' discussions that everything that happened in school was very academic, geared toward content and exams. As a result, even topics that clearly connected to their lives (such as body image) failed to resonate with students because of the type of rote academic work that inevitably followed even interesting topics. When asked specifically about the relevance of their English literacy learning in school to their everyday life, students saw no connection, with one group claiming that school literacy learning is just a source of stress for them.

One key insight here is that the question of relevance is far from straight-forward. Students expressed a disconnect in terms of the relevance of school media and literacy skills for their everyday practices outside of class. However, there was some indication that the issue is not simply with classroom learning activities but rather with how students experience them. In other words, if students experience their school learning primarily as an academic exercise to get through examinations and ultimately through formal education, then even seemingly obvious connections will be either meaningless or difficult to discern.

Impact of current pedagogy and experience with media texts on the teaching of media literacy (RQ3a-b)

As to be expected, teachers' understanding of their role as English teachers as well as their current classroom pedagogy had a significant impact on how they taught media literacy as well as how they implemented the unit. This was quite nuanced and distinct for each of the four teachers that were involved in Phases 2 and 3. Here we would like to report on two teachers, each from a different school, as their contrasting cases seem to echo some of the points raised so far about the teaching of media literacy through EL.

Lynn, from School A (neighborhood school) was an experienced teacher with a Master's degree in English language who had been recently posted to the school for a key position. When asked about what she considered her role to be as an English teacher, she responded (emphasis added): "I think the challenge is really the **application of the skills that we cover**. Content is so wide it can be anything under the sun [...] so for me it's, **can my students apply whatever skills or structures or you know or language features** that we teach the class and are they then able to show in their writing or their speaking you know. [...] so it feels good when I actually see their work and it's like Okay! **You got it right now and the structure is good** [...] imparting those skills is I feel very important." This emphasis on skills and structure was definitely noticeable in her daily teaching of EL which we observed to be driven by worksheets and explicit teaching of strategies in a teacher-led classroom. When asked to clarify what she meant by 'application', she said, "For the assignments given to them or when we assess them for oral exam or when ah for example when I was teaching them listening uh skills and uh I taught them certain tips and certain strategies to listen uh attentively and actively etc and then uh when I walk around when they are doing the assessment and I see them applying and I feel

very happy." Lynn included a range of texts in her teaching, but classroom work remained at the textual level with basically no connections to the contextual (i.e., ethical and aesthetic) dimensions. The inclusion of two structurally-focused lessons in the implemented media literacy unit was also at Lynn's and the other teacher's request as they were worried about covering report writing. This was understandable as the classes were graduating classes who would soon sit for the O-level exams. In fact, it was very clear that as HOD, Lynn felt responsible for the school's English exam results and stated that as a concern. We observed her only in upper secondary classes, which generally see a heavy dose of drills and exam practice, so it is not fair to draw wide-ranging conclusions here. She seemed to command students' respect and showed genuine care toward them, and had a strong commitment toward continued professional development. But Lynn also epitomizes a Singapore English teacher who responds to the structural constraints (exams, syllabus) pragmatically, enacting pedagogies that are efficient in achieving results valued by the system but also reduce the contextual richness of language use.

Surina had taught language arts and literature in School B for less than three years and had a Master's degree in literature. When asked what she understood her job to be as a language arts teacher, she stated without hesitation: "To create a love for language," elaborating, "Many of my students don't necessarily speak English at home. They come from Chinese background. So, though they do communicate quite a bit, in English, it's more for the sake of convenience than, the real joy and the love for language per se. So, to try and explore the nuances of language and see how it works, in different ways. And to try and make them move away from, taking literally everything that they see in the word." Her concern with "getting students engaged" and "making them articulate their thoughts" was visibly driving her classroom pedagogy, which often rested on Socratic questioning and saw Surina follow up student responses with questions that probed their thinking, often touching on deeper issues. This was evident both in our observations of her teaching prior to and during the implementation of the media literacy unit. It must be added that half her class was taking literature taught by Surina as well, which may have contributed positively to the engaged and thinking-based classrooms we observed. And as she herself acknowledged, working in an IP school where the immense pressure of the O-level exams is largely bypassed gave her much more leeway in both pedagogy and assessment. Yet Surina

represents a kind of English teacher in Singapore who has not, or has not had to, lose sight of the 'bigger picture' of language education; that learning a language is not just about effective communication but about being in the world and finding a voice.

In sum, it is clear that these two English teachers were operating under very different conditions; in fact it is impossible and unfair to separate their personal philosophies from the contexts which have shaped them. What seems clear however is that Surina's training in literature gave her a different perspective on language, one that does not start from or stop at skills but rather aims to facilitate a much broader cognitive and emotional engagement with English. This is something that the survey results also hinted at as literature degree holders were more likely to assess critical-ethical aspects of media literacy and to include literary texts in their teaching of English.

Experiences and challenges with the implementation of the unit (RQ3d-e)

The implementation units were designed in collaboration with each school and tailored to their needs and student profiles, which makes cross-comparisons more difficult. On the whole, both teachers and students deemed the learning experience with the unit a highly positive one. For teachers, one key positive outcome was in professional learning; stretching themselves pedagogically as well as in their own thinking about the topics we covered (*SG50: Who is Singapore for?* and *National Identity*). Teachers from School A valued the extended approach to language that the framework provided, as well as the strong coherence and progression of lessons anchored through a common theme, which is not how they normally organized their scheme of work. Both teachers from School A admitted underestimating their students' potential for arguments and ideas and welcomed the very high engagement the lessons produced. Students from both schools noted the prevalence of group/collaborative work during the unit as a positive aspect that was not the case for their regular English classes. They also reported enjoying the variety of activities and media, the engaging nature of classroom interaction, and the opportunity to learn about social issues. Some School B students commented on the overlap between the unit theme and the coverage of this topic in civics education.

In terms of challenges, all teachers noted the constraints of time, in planning such a unit as well as in implementing it in the given timeframe, which was deemed too short (the project had to work with the timeframe allowed by the school). All of them also highlighted the open-endedness of the

pedagogical approach taken in the unit as difficult; i.e., that the progression of the lesson was not teacher-led but rather students' ideas and responses shaped classroom learning to a great extent. As one teacher from School B put it, "But this amount of ownership where you really let them in the first few minutes decide where the next half an hour is headed, that kind of ownership I haven't experienced." It seems therefore that regardless of type of school, the challenges identified by teachers were quite similar, and related to time but also the tradition of teacher-led, teacher-controlled learning and pedagogy.

DISCUSSION

The project findings are promising in that Singapore teachers are aware and already infusing media texts and media literacy in their teaching of EL. However, print texts still dominate, and alternative forms of assessment are rare. There is thus a need to move away from a heavy focus on print texts toward recognizing multimedia and digital production as not only legitimate but dominant modes of communication for many young people today. Of course, curricular priorities shape media literacy education: one key obstacle in moving toward the direction of multimedia production in schools is the fact that key national exams in English (and most other subjects) are still pen-and-pencil tests of basic literacy skills. The introduction of critical reading and viewing in the 2010 EL Syllabus, which paved the way for a new (albeit small) segment of the 'O' levels paper that is devoted to visual texts and visual literacy, is a small but significant step toward a more holistic view of language and communication in the school teaching of English. Such a view is absolutely necessary if media literacy education in schools is to go beyond critical analysis of media bias and cyber wellness and foster engagement with media as an avenue for creative and collaborative action and community building.

At the same time, it may be necessary to locate media literacy education beyond the goals of English Language and English Literature education. As Buckingham observes (2003), English Language education tends to be conceptualized according to activities and skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). This is clearly the case in Singapore as well. Media education, on the other hand, has traditionally focused on "key concepts" such as representation, bias, and credibility in examining texts. Meanwhile, English Literature education tends to prioritize passive aesthetic appreciation of texts and its ethical themes that then ignore more sociological emphasis involving media production and

media audiences. Given the limitations of both fields (i.e., EL and Literature) in adequately providing a holistic approach to engagement with media texts, media literacy should be taught as a distinctive component in English teachers' pre-service and professional development courses, emphasizing both the historical development of the field and its broader objectives beyond those articulated in the English Language syllabus. This is not to suggest that EL should not continue to play a key role in fostering media literacy. Yet given its heavy focus on text-level skills, as established by this study, a more holistic media literacy approach could be realized through a language arts curriculum where students are exposed to a wide range of texts, including literary works, and can gain a broader appreciation for the multi-faceted nature of language.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDY

The research study had the following key contributions:

1) It provided an empirical account of how the media literacy (understood with reference to the 2010 EL Syllabus) is currently implemented in English language teaching in Singapore. Results from the survey as well as classroom observations from the in-depth study highlighted close adherence to the English syllabus in terms of skills. At the same time, it is clear that media literacy education focuses mostly on the critical and receptive skills, at the expense of productive and expressive skills. Fostering critical reading and responsibility was emphasized in teachers' motivation for the importance of media literacy, as evident from the survey results. In doing so, they also adhere to the broader policy direction in Singapore that stresses cyber wellness and responsibility, for instance through the work of the Media Literacy Council and the key mission of ICT Masterplan 4.

2) The project also highlighted students' perspectives who expressed frustration with the curtailed media literacy and media education they experience at school. It is also noteworthy that students across the two schools voiced very similar sentiments, with no significant differences in the discussions. Given the high access and usage rates of mobile digital technology among Singaporean youth, these young people have similar experiences and expectations in terms of their everyday media use, as also ascertained by their media logs. Thus despite the differences in educational pathways, these youths share a similar experiential baseline against which to

assess media/technology in schools. There is also evidence from students' perspective that the desire for more engaged and connected learning through/about media coexists with the pressures to succeed academically. This creates tensions, not only for youth but also for educators that need to be acknowledged and addressed. In other words, while there is a clear need to broaden the literacy learning to include expressive, ethical and aesthetic considerations in order to bring it closer to students' social or community experiences, any attempt to do so must take account youth's desire to succeed in the narrow confines of the education system.

CONCLUSION

The project started with three main objectives, which were achieved by answering three sets of research questions. With regards to the first question, the survey results indicated that English teachers had a good understanding of key principles of media literacy. However, there seemed to be stronger support for a traditional conceptualization of media literacy; i.e., that media literacy is about the critical evaluation of media texts, with a concern for their impact on audiences. Less support was noted for expressive and productive dimensions of media literacy that are emphasized in the current research literature. This was also evident in teachers' responses about their current pedagogic practice. Pedagogic rationale for the inclusion of media texts was linked to text-level skills more than to the core principles of media literacy such as global issues or aesthetic design. The predominance of instruction that targeted text-level skills, at the expense of broader engagement with the socio-cultural context within which these texts were produced and consumed, received much less focus. This was particularly the case for School A. While survey results showed the inclusion of a range of media texts in the teaching of English, there was less inclusion of new and dynamic forms of media. This is despite findings (not detailed in this report) that teachers themselves used a wide range of digital and social media for leisure. Alternative forms of assessment such as portfolio or digital production were rarely employed. Many teachers viewed media literacy as necessary primarily in order to foster students' critical abilities, with no mention of agentive, expressive and creative uses of media being important.

The second research question aimed to examine contextual factors impacting media literacy education through EL. Observation from the two schools indicated that teachers in School A primarily focused on the aspects of media literacy that received the most emphasis in the syllabus. These were

text-level functional and critical skills that also feature on the national exams. Teachers in School B who followed a language arts approach within an IP curriculum seemed to be more balanced in crafting lessons, tasks and activities that fostered a wider range of literacies. The teacher with a graduate degree in literature provided a more extended engagement with English and texts. In short, these findings point to the influence of school type (following regular vs. IP curriculum) and also the potential of a literature training in realizing a more holistic approach to EL and media literacy. Data from students suggested a big gap between media literacy education in schools and what students saw as relevant for their out-of-school literacies. At the same time, students were very much aware of the high-stakes educational environment and wanted media education to also help them to excel academically. Most students were critical of what they saw as disproportionate emphasis on cyber wellness at the expense of more holistic media/literacy education.

In response to the third research question about developing and piloting a media literacy framework, the project team successfully developed a pedagogic framework that incorporated the EL syllabus' emphasis on text-level skills while giving equal weight to the social and contextual embedding of language use that is emphasized but not fully elaborated on in the Syllabus. The framework combines four aspects or components of media literacy: functional, critical, ethical and aesthetic. Teachers welcomed the extended understanding of literacy provided by the framework and the increased student engagement observed during the unit. Yet they remained concerned about skills and students' ability to do well in exams, as they saw 'content' (the thematic focus of units) and 'skills' as fundamentally separate. This concern was more marked in School A. Students in general welcomed the engaging and learner-centered pedagogies of the unit, although students in School B found the largely similar thematic issues among humanities subjects (social studies, history, EL) somewhat repetitive, and therefore intellectually less challenging.

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pseudonyms have been used in place of the actual names of schools, teachers and pupils in

this study.

NOTES

1. Values for the various statistical analyses are be provided for ease of reading but are available

   upon request.

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APPENDIX A (TABLES)

Table 1. Sources and media texts used in classrooms

SCALE	SURVEY QUESTIONS	MEAN	SD
Use of print and audiovisual media/texts (α=.82)	4-point Likert scale: 1=*Strongly agree*; 4=*Strongly disagree*	**1.93**	**.43**
	Q1. I have regularly used fiction/literary texts (e.g., poems, short stories, plays) in my English language class in the last 12 months.	1.98	.69
	Q2. I have regularly used non-fiction books in my English language class in the last 12 months.	2.07	.71
	Q3. I have regularly used visual texts (e.g., photo/comic) in my English language class in the last 12 months.	1.79	.58
	Q4. I have regularly used newspaper/magazine articles in my English language class in the last 12 months.	1.78	.58
	Q5. I have regularly used promotional materials (e.g., poster, brochure) in my English language class in the last 12 months.	2.07	.64
	Q6. I have regularly used movie or TV clips in my English language class in the last 12 months.	2.08	.72
	Q7. I have regularly used online videos in my English language class in the last 12 months.	1.80	.63
	Q8. I have regularly used content from websites as teaching materials in my English language class in the last 12 months.	1.87	.59
Use of audio and social media/texts (α=.60)	4-point Likert scale: 1=*Strongly agree*; 4=*Strongly disagree*	**2.77**	**.54**
	Q1. I have regularly used radio broadcast in my English language class in the previous 12 months.	2.94	.61
	Q2. I have regularly used recorded music in my English language class in the last 12 months.	2.67	.76
	Q3. I have regularly used social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) as teaching materials in my English language class in the last 12 months.	2.71	.79
Use of static media/texts (α=.79)	4-point scale: 1=*75-100%*; 4=*0-25%*	**2.6**	**.70**
	On average, over the last 12 months, what proportion of your English lessons has incorporated each of the media stated? Q1. Visual texts (e.g., photo, comic)		
	Q2. Newspaper, magazine articles	2.46	.84
	Q3. Promotional materials (posters, brochures)	2.41	.91
	Q4. Content from websites	2.89	.88
		2.65	.93
Use of dynamic and social media/ texts (α=.66)	4-point scale: 1=*75-100%*; 4=*0-25%*	**3.32**	**.56**
	On average, over the last 12 months, what proportion of your English lessons has incorporated each of the media stated? Q1. Radio broadcast		
	Q2. Recorded music	3.85	.43
	Q3. Movie or TV clips	3.59	.68
	Q4. Online videos	2.92	.88
	Q5. Content from social networking sites	2.50	.94
		3.37	.86
Use of literary	4-point scale: 1=*75-100%*; 4=*0-25%*	**2.67**	**.84**

texts and books (α=.76)	On average, over the last 12 months, what proportion of your English lessons has incorporated each of the media stated? Q1. Fiction/literary texts Q2. Non-fiction books	2.50 2.85	.95 .92

Table 2. Teachers' rationale for including media texts in EL teaching.

#	RATIONALE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL	MEAN	SD
1	Connect with students' interest	77	33	38	27	23	5	0	203	2.51	
2	Teach features and structures of text types	44	68	29	36	22	4	0	203	2.68	
3	Demonstrate or illustrate a concept	33	31	60	39	29	11	0	203	3.16	
4	Raise awareness of social and global issues	24	42	34	70	29	3	1	203	3.25	
5	Provoke critical analysis of media texts	21	25	33	24	89	11	0	203	3.83	
6	Guide students to appreciate aesthetic design of media texts	4	4	9	7	10	167	2	203	5.58	
7	Others: Please state and include in your rank order. Otherwise, enter N.A. and rank this as #7.	0	0	0	0	1	2	200	203	6.98	
	Total	203	203	203	203	203	203	203	-		

Table 3. Aspects of media literacy covered by teachers in their EL teaching

Which of the following aspects in Media Literacy do you cover as part of the teaching of English? Choose all that apply.				
1	Persuasion, point of view and stereotypes in media		194	96%
2	Quality and credibility of media content		147	72%
3	Cyber wellness		106	52%
4	Responsible media use		104	51%
5	Artistic and design aspects of media texts		99	49%
6	Technological/IT skills		48	24%
7	Others: Please state accordingly, or enter 'N.A.'		40	20%

Table 4. Teachers' assessment of media literacy

SCALE	SURVEY QUESTIONS	MEAN	SD
Alternative assessment (α=.68)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Very frequently*; 6=*Never* On average, in the past 12 months, how often have you assessed Media Literacy in your teaching of English via the following? Q1. Production of a media resource (e.g., video clip) Q2. Journal reflection Q3. Portfolio Q4. Student presentation	**3.75** 4.20 3.52 4.41 2.88	**.94** 1.39 1.42 1.30 1.11
Assessing functional-critical aspects of ML (α=.82)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Highly likely*; 6=*Not at all likely* If I included a news website in my English summative assessment, I would ask the following question: Q1.What features of the website contribute to its purpose? Q2. What values or points of views are represented on this website? Q3. Discuss how images and text interact to convey the intended purpose of the media text Q4. Who is the intended audience of this website? Q5. What is the purpose of this website?	**1.71** 1.99 1.86 1.74 1.49 1.50	**.60** .89 .80 .86 .68 .69
Assessing – ethical aspects of ML (α=.82)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Highly likely*; 6=*Not at all likely* If I included a news website in my English summative assessment, I would ask the following question: Q1. To what extent is the source of the information for the news story credible? Q2. Discuss to what extent this website relies on facts or opinions in conveying information.	**2.51** 2.40 2.58	**.91** 1.04 1.13

	Q3. Is this website responsible in the way it represents information?	2.56	1.02
Assessing ethical-aesthetic aspects of ML (α=.71)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Highly likely*; 6=*Not at all likely*	**2.34**	**.74**
	If I included a news website in my English summative assessment, I would ask the following question:		
	Q1. In your opinion, whose interests should be represented but are not?	2.71	1.04
	Q2. Who does this website benefit?	2.23	.92
	Q3. Discuss how the website uses language creatively.	2.02	.98
	Q4. Discuss the visual design of the media text.	2.38	1.12

Table 5. Teachers' understanding of media literacy

SCALE	SURVEY QUESTIONS	MEAN	SD
Traditional understanding of MLE (α=.79)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Strongly agree*; 6=*Strongly disagree*	**1.83**	**.58**
	Q1. Media literacy education teaches students to process and comprehend messages in media texts.	1.78	.61
	Q2. Media literacy education teaches students to analyze the effects of messages on readers/viewers of media texts.	1.76	.60
	Q3. Media literacy education teaches students to evaluate the credibility of media texts.	1.96	.82
Extended understanding of MLE (α=.72)	6-point Likert scale: 1=*Strongly agree*; 6=*Strongly disagree*	**2.35**	**.54**
	Q1. Media literacy education teaches students to appreciate the aesthetic design of media texts.	2.30	.89
	Q2. Media literacy education teaches students to utilize media to engage in social and global issues.	2.27	.87
	Q3. Media literacy education teaches students to be active creators of media texts.	2.83	.98
	Q4. Media literacy education teaches students to be responsible media users.	2.33	.85
	Q5. In addition to traditional print media and digital forms of media, media literacy education should involve literary texts.	2.24	.82
	Q6. For media literacy education to be effective, teachers need to understand the media habits of their students.	1.93	.81
	Q7. Media literacy should be a required subject in Singapore secondary schools.	2.22	.98
	Q8. Media literacy is best taught in Singapore secondary schools through English language/language arts as opposed to other subjects.	2.68	1.11

APPENDIX B

Table 1. Demographic features of teacher respondents (n=202)

CATEGORY	VALUES
Banding of schools based on PSLE cut-off scores (Band 1 having the highest score, Band 2 the next highest and Band 3 the lowest)	Band 1: 60 (29.7%) Band 2: 75 (37.1%) Band 3: 67 (33.2%)
Gender	45 Male (22.3%); 157 Female (77.7%)
Age Range	Younger than 30 years old: 80 (39.6%) 30 – 39 years old: 59 (29.2%) 40 – 49 years old: 32 (15.8%) 50 – 59 years old: 23 (11.4%) Above 60 years old: 8 (4%)
Number of years since graduated with highest degree	Mean: 12.85 years Median: 8 years
Bachelor Degree Specialization	Arts & Social Sciences/Media/Comm. Studies: 76 (37.6%) E.Lang / App. Ling. & E.Lang Edu: 53 (26.2%) E.Lit & E.Lit Edu: 31 (15.3%) Others or none: 42 (20.7%)
Masters Specialization	Arts & Social Sciences/Media/Comm. Studies: 2 (1%) E.Lang / App. Ling. / E.Lang Edu: 13 (6.4%) E.Lit / E.Lit Edu: 4 (2%) Others or none: 183 (90.6%)
Years of teaching experience	Mean: 10.4 years Median: 6 years
Current position	Key appointment holders (P/VP/HOD): 14 (6.9%) Middle Management (Subject Head/Level Head/Snr Teacher/Master Teacher): 30 (14.9%) Teacher: 151 (74.8%) Others (Flexi/Contract/Allied): 7 (3.5%)
Levels currently teaching	Lower sec (Sec 1 – 2): 61 (30.2%) Upper sec (3 – 4): 74 (36.6%) Both lower and upper sec: 67 (33.2%)