

# Challenges and Suggestions to Improve the Implementation of Dual Language Programme (DLP) in Primary Schools

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the challenges and propose improvements for the implementation of the Dual Language Programme (DLP) in primary schools. This programme, which involves teaching Science and Mathematics in English, is seen as a measure to enhance English language proficiency among pupils. However, its implementation faces various obstacles, including a shortage of trained teachers, low English proficiency among both teachers and pupils, as well as limited parental support and inadequate teaching materials. This study proposes continuous professional training, improvement of the bilingual curriculum, and strong support from administrators, parents, and the Ministry of Education to ensure the effectiveness of DLP implementation in the Lubok Antu district.

**Keywords:** Dual Language Programme (DLP), Non-Option Teachers, English Proficiency, Policy Implementation, Educational Challenges

## Introduction

The importance of the English language can no longer be denied. Proficiency and mastery of English are essential skills required to excel in all professional and academic fields. This is true not only in other countries but also in Malaysia. The Malaysian government has implemented numerous programmes to help citizens acquire English fluency, investing substantial funds to strengthen English language mastery among Malaysians.

Excellent command of English allows individuals to communicate more effectively in daily life. It enables Malaysians to understand basic instructions, grasp academic terminology, and function confidently in modern settings. Therefore, we can no longer deny the role of English, which has become an integral part of our everyday lives.

According to former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, a nation can only advance in all aspects when its future generations master English, the language of trade and business (Melor Md Yunus & Saiful Islam Ahmad Sukri, 2017; Joash, 2015). Although Malaysia is optimistic about developing in various national sectors, English proficiency among its citizens remains relatively weak.

To address this issue, the Dual Language Programme (DLP) was introduced. This programme closely resembles the earlier PPSMI policy (Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English) implemented in 2003. Teachers involved in DLP are typically trained in Science and Mathematics. However in some schools, non-option teachers without specialization in these subjects have also been selected to teach DLP subjects, creating a significant challenge in the programme's implementation.

### *Research Objectives*

1. To identify the challenges faced in implementing the DLP in primary schools.
2. To identify the suggestions for improving DLP implementation in primary schools.

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the challenges faced in implementing DLP in primary schools?
2. What are the suggestions for improving DLP implementation in primary schools?

### **Significance of the Study**

According to Jolly Rubagiza, Jane Umotoni, and Ali Kaleeba (2016), teachers are agents of transformation responsible for implementing policies and educational systems guided by the National Education Philosophy, which aims to produce Malaysians capable of achieving excellence at the international level.

Teachers are responsible for implementing DLP for Science and Mathematics subjects in schools. Naturally, they will face numerous challenges and issues. However, teachers must maintain a rational mindset and positive attitude toward the implementation of DLP.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the challenges and provide recommendations to improve the implementation of DLP in primary schools.

### *Challenges in Implementing the Dual Language Programme (DLP) in Primary Schools*

There are many challenges faced in implementing the DLP.

One of the main challenges is that non-option teachers—those who are not trained in Science or Mathematics are often assigned to teach these subjects in English. This usually occurs due to a shortage of qualified teachers in a particular school. These teachers, lacking specialization and adequate English proficiency, often struggle to prepare materials, deliver content accurately, and explain scientific or mathematical concepts effectively in English.

Juliana Othman et al. (2020) found that 43.7% of teachers involved in DLP were non-option teachers. Hafizati Husna Ibrahim and Suziyani Mohamed (2021) also stated that non-option teachers carry a heavier burden, particularly in mastering content knowledge, compared to teachers with formal qualifications in the subjects they teach. Their lack of expertise and effective teaching strategies often hinders successful DLP implementation.

Another major challenge lies in teachers' readiness to adopt English as the medium of instruction. Many teachers who have long taught Science and Mathematics in Malay may find it difficult to adapt to English instruction. According to Ashairi Suliman, Mohamed Yusoff, and Melor (2020), teacher readiness is a critical factor in ensuring the effective implementation of DLP. Teachers who are less proficient in English often mispronounce terms, make grammatical errors, and lack confidence in teaching the subjects in English.

Escamilla (2014) emphasized that DLP teachers should be able to test and refer to both languages simultaneously to ensure that students can effectively use both. Thus, low teacher readiness negatively affects DLP's effectiveness, as teacher confidence plays a vital role in delivering quality instruction.

In addition to teacher-related issues, students' English proficiency also affects DLP success. Many students struggle to understand lessons taught in English, as it is their second language. This leads to difficulty in grasping key concepts in Science and Mathematics, hindering the overall learning process. Therefore, students' English proficiency must be enhanced to achieve DLP's original goals effectively.

Parental acceptance also influences DLP success. While some parents support the programme, believing it will improve their children's English skills, others worry that it will make learning Science and Mathematics harder, especially for students from non-bilingual backgrounds. Parental perception and support directly impact students' motivation and learning outcomes.

Lastly, the lack of adequate resources and reference materials is another challenge. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan effective lessons. Darling-Hammond (2007) noted that schools serving low-income or rural populations often lack sufficient resources. Jaar (2017) also observed that DLP teachers are burdened with the task of translating general pedagogical practices into bilingual education without adequate financial or material support. Therefore, sufficient bilingual reference materials are crucial for successful DLP implementation in Malaysia.

### **Suggestions for Improvement**

Several key improvements are necessary, focusing on curriculum enhancement, pedagogy, and stakeholder collaboration.

Firstly, the Science and Mathematics curricula should be refined to better integrate English language learning with subject content. The CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach, as proposed by Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010), emphasizes that language and content learning should occur simultaneously. This can be achieved by identifying key English terminology for each topic, incorporating activities that encourage English-speaking and writing, and providing structured bilingual learning resources (Hashim & Hashim, 2022).

Secondly, continuous and targeted teacher training is essential. The success of DLP largely depends on teachers' preparedness and competence to teach Science and Mathematics in English while supporting language acquisition (Mustafa et al., 2020). Training should go beyond general English improvement—it must focus on specific bilingual teaching methods, strategies for comprehensible input, encouraging student output, managing bilingual interaction, and using appropriate teaching aids (Mohd Noor et al., 2021). Professional development (CPD) programmes—such as workshops, mentoring, or professional learning communities (PLC)—should be ongoing to ensure teachers continually refine their skills and adopt best practices (Khatijah et al., 2022).

Thirdly, the Ministry of Education (MOE) must develop a comprehensive and flexible policy that considers the diverse contexts of primary schools. Adequate resources—such as bilingual textbooks, digital materials, and interactive learning applications—must be provided. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to measure the effectiveness of DLP, assess students' English proficiency, and make data-based adjustments (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2016). Incentives or recognition for teachers who demonstrate strong commitment and success in DLP should also be introduced.

At the school level, administrators play an important role in fostering a bilingual environment that extends beyond the classroom. This includes promoting English communication among teachers and students, creating English reading corners, and organizing English-based school events (Ting & Mohamad, 2017).

Schools should also offer continuous support for teachers and students through internal training, mentorship programmes for new DLP teachers, and language support sessions for students who face difficulties. Additionally, administrators should ensure that DLP teachers have a reasonable workload that allows adequate preparation time.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of the Dual Language Programme (DLP) in Malaysian primary schools is a progressive initiative aimed at enhancing English proficiency without undermining the role of Bahasa Melayu as the national language. However, the policy's implementation faces significant challenges related to resources, teacher competency, community support, and the learning environment.

In conclusion, while DLP has great potential to improve English mastery and expand students' access to global knowledge, its success depends on realistically addressing these challenges. This study provides guidance for policymakers, school administrators, and teachers to improve and support DLP implementation more effectively and inclusively.

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