

## ANALYSING THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION ALIGNMENT OF THE MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL SPEAKING CURRICULUM

Dr. Hazleena Baharun<sup>1</sup>  
Assc. Prof. Dr. Harison Mohd Sidek<sup>1</sup>  
Dr. Ramiaida Darmi<sup>1</sup>  
Haliza Harun<sup>1</sup>  
Norhana Abdullah<sup>1</sup>  
Zarina Ashikin Zakaria<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)

**Accepted date:** 29 July 2017

**Published date:** 2 October 2017

### **To cite this document:**

Baharun, H., Sidek, H. M., Harun, H., Abdullah, N., & Zakaria, Z. A. (2017). Analysing the Theoretical Foundation Alignment of the Malaysian Secondary School EFL Speaking Curriculum. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 2(5), 70-82.

---

**Abstract:** *Every language curriculum is designed based on a particular theoretical orientation. Thus, when a language curriculum is designed based on specific theory, it is imperative that the contents presented in that curriculum align with its theoretical underpinning. This is to ensure the effectiveness of the curriculum. If the curriculum is not coherent, then the overall goals of the curriculum will not be achieved. The present Malaysian English language curriculum is developed and designed based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In line with its label, the contents presented are expected to be coherent and in alignment with its communicative label including at its theoretical level. Thus, it is the aim of this current study to investigate if the theoretical grounding of the Malaysian form 4 English language curriculum, in particular, the speaking curriculum, is in alignment with its communicative label. The focus of the study is on the Malaysian form 4 English language speaking curriculum. Hence, data were collected from the form 4 English language curriculum specifications document and the form 4 English language textbook. Speaking-related statements were extracted from the documents and categorized under major Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories and second language (L2) speaking theories in order to identify their alignment with the communicative approach. The findings show that the socio-cognitive and socio-cultural (SCT) theories, the two theories which were merged to represent the SLA theory for communicative instructional approaches, were highly reflected in the Malaysian form 4 English language speaking curriculum. Results also exhibit that both the Interaction Hypothesis (IH) and Output Hypothesis (OH) which made up the Interactive L2 speaking theory were reflected in the data analysed. This confirms that the Malaysian form 4 English language speaking curriculum is primarily in alignment with its communicative label as reflected in the two main documents analysed. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Malaysian English*

*language speaking curriculum for Form Four is coherent with its communicative label at the Approach level.*

**Keywords:** *Communicative Language Teaching, L2 Speaking Theories, English Language Speaking Curriculum, Interaction*

---

## **Introduction**

Every language curriculum is designed based on a particular theoretical orientation. Thus, when a language curriculum is designed based on specific theory, it is imperative that the contents presented in that curriculum align with its theoretical underpinning. This is to ensure the effectiveness of the curriculum. If the curriculum is not coherent, then the overall goals of the curriculum will not be achieved.

The present Malaysian Form Four Secondary School English language curriculum, revised in 2003, adopts the general proficiency approach. It is based on learning outcomes geared towards equipping students to “use the language in everyday life, to further their studies and for work purposes” (Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications, Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2). English grammar, phonology, vocabulary, ICT skills, thinking skills as well as values and citizenship education are also included in the curriculum. The objectives of the Form Four English language curriculum include the ability to “form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interactions; and obtain goods and services” (Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications, Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2). Apart from that, learners are also expected to be able to use information gathered from different sources in oral presentations and in written forms. The curriculum also enables learners to express themselves creatively in spoken and written form. Equally important is to express appreciation and love towards the nation.

Based on the curriculum document, the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated into three areas of language use. The three areas are Interpersonal, Informational and Aesthetic. In other words, learners use language to build and maintain friendships, engage in social interaction, obtain and present information, and appreciate literary texts as well as to engage in creative expression. Six broad areas become the focus of the curriculum. They include people, environment, social issues, values, health, and science and technology. These six areas are translated into topics using tasks and activities to enable learners to read, write and talk about them. Lessons are activity-based, learner-centred and involve real-life tasks. This is to ensure that learners are given the opportunity to engage in activities that require them to use the language. Thus, it could be concluded that the Malaysian Form Four Secondary School English language curriculum was developed based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the form of Communicative Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The curriculum however, does not have an exclusive speaking curriculum and objectives. Nonetheless, based on the general objectives outlined in the curriculum document, it is observed that the speaking objectives are integrated and included in the general objectives.

## Literature Review

### *The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and related theories*

According to Brandl (2007), “communicative language teaching (CLT) is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 5)”. CLT does not adhere to any particular theory or method. Even though it does not adhere to one particular theory or method, CLT is based on the notion that the main function of language use is communication.

One of the core assumptions of CLT is that ‘language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, and trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning, the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently’ (Richards, 2006, p. 22). In the realm of speaking, the primary goal of the communicative approach is to obtain native-like fluency and to ensure that discourse is maintained without breakdowns. Thus, specifically, one of the aims of CLT is to provide interaction opportunities to learners where the primary goal is to communicate meaning than to learn the language. This is because the primary goal of CLT is for learners to develop communicative competence (Hymes 1972). To achieve this, learners are provided with meaningful language activities in which interaction among them is vital when they engage in those activities.

A theory that places emphasis on the importance of interaction is the Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) by Vygotsky. The SCT stresses on the role of social interaction in learning. The argument is that interaction is an opportunity to learn as it is through interaction that learners regulate or restructure their knowledge. This means that knowledge is socially constructed by interaction and is then internalized. Within the SCT approach to L2, language knowledge is constructed through social interaction between individuals and is then internalised (Vygotsky, 1978). The underlying assumption is that knowledge is created through interaction and not simply transferred. It is the process of interaction that allows mediation process to take place. In other words, during social interaction, as learners interact with one another and negotiate, they can develop their language skills as well as cognitive and problem-solving abilities (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). Thus, in this case, CLT could be viewed as “in line with socio-cultural theory (SCT), which views language as a tool in a socially mediated process” (Vygotsky, 1978) and “as a central tool for the development of thought processes or the crucial means of mediation for one’s cognition” (Sidek, 2012, p. 110).

Another SLA theory that is closely linked to the CLT is the socio-cognitive theory. Based on the socio-cognitive theory, interaction promotes language learning. One is through the context of social interaction and the other is through interaction with the environment. Thus, “an individual’s environment and changes in that environment affect the individual’s thought processes which in turns influences the development of his or her language acquisition” (Matsuoka & Evans, 2004 cited in Sidek, 2010, p. 24). The SCT and the socio-cognitive theory overlaps in the way they view language i.e., as cognitive and social in nature. However, unlike the SCT, the socio-cognitive theory “does not promote communicative competence as central to language activities” (Sidek, 2010, p. 24). The socio-cognitive theory is rather limited to the interaction between the mind, the body and the language without considering the role of others or context. Nonetheless, due to its emphasis on interaction, the CLT is very much in line with the socio-cognitive theory views on SLA as well.

In terms of L2 speaking theories that are considered very much in line with CLT, two stand out prominently. They are the Interaction Hypothesis (IH) and the Output Hypothesis (OH). Both place emphasis on interaction among learners. In general terms, the IH suggests that conversational interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive the target language as input, produce output, and through interactional modifications or adjustments, learners direct their attention to mismatches between their interlanguage and the target language. It is through interaction, learners receive comprehensible input and feedback from their interlocutors (Gass, 1997, 2003; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994; Varonis & Gass, 1985). It further suggests that the more opportunities learners have to negotiate, both meaning and content, the more likely they would acquire the language. Negotiation for meaning is an activity that occurs because of interaction “in which learners seek clarification, confirmation, and repetition of L2 utterances they do not understand” (Pica, 1994, p. 56). The more learners get the opportunity to interact, ask questions, seek clarification, request for explanation and negotiate both contents and meaning, the more likely they would acquire the language and become better speakers.

The notion of interaction in language learning is also closely linked to Swain’s Output Hypothesis. In the Output Hypothesis (2005), Swain places great emphasis on the importance of output in language learning processes. She asserts that to develop target-like usage of a language, learners need to comprehend language as well as produce it and this can be achieved through the process of interaction with one another. What happens during the interaction process is that learners receive feedback on the form and meaning of their messages, whether their messages are clear or otherwise. If their messages are not clear, learners would be informed in various ways by the other speakers. For example, the other speakers may ask questions, seek clarification and request for explanation. Hence, the learners need to make adjustments to their messages so that the messages become clear, comprehensible and can be understood by the other speakers. This leads them to modify their speech in order to enhance the comprehensibility of their messages. In other words, they are pushed in their production of language. In doing so, simultaneously, they may also push the other speakers/learners to do the same i.e. modify their speech. It is believed that when learners are pushed in their production, they cannot avoid paying attention to language forms as they would have to do so in gaining comprehension. They would process language both semantically and syntactically and second language acquisition is promoted when learners are pushed to produce language output that is accurate and precise. In other words, for interaction to facilitate language acquisition, learners need to have the opportunities to produce the language during interaction. This is because by only receiving input, it is not sufficient for language acquisition to occur effectively. Learners need to produce language as well. In sum, as highlighted by Mackey (2007), second language learning and development occur when learners have the opportunities “to negotiate for comprehensible input, receive feedback, and modify their output” (p. 100).

Both the IH and the OH place emphasis on the importance of interaction and producing output in L2 learning. Both IH and OH also support the use of task-based activities in a language classroom as one possibility of providing interaction opportunities to learners is by using communication tasks. When learners are given communication tasks to work on, they would be involved in a variety of activities. They ask questions, seek clarification, request for explanation, express opinions, contribute ideas on issues and negotiate both contents and meaning. In other words, they engage in purposeful activities and meaningful interaction. It is believed that communication tasks are effective for language learning because as learners interact, they use language to convey meaning as well as develop meaning (Swain, 2005). Additionally, these tasks also help learners internalise and consolidate their L2 knowledge,

provide opportunities for problem-solving and negotiation of meaning (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Further, when they produce language through collaboration, learners get to do many things all at the same time. They produce output, and while trying to make their meaning precise, they also get help from their peers as well as assist others (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 2005). In short, their focus would be directed toward meaning and comprehensibility of the language, and developing their interlanguage (Foster & Skehan, 1996).

Within the realm of CLT approach to speaking, “second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication” (Richards, 2006, p.22). They interact and negotiate meaning in small groups or class to complete tasks assigned to them. In this case, though not specifically labelled as L2 speaking theories, the CLT approach to L2 speaking is very much in line with both the IH and OH.

### *The study*

The present Malaysian English language curriculum is developed and designed based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In line with its label, the contents presented are expected to be coherent and in alignment with its communicative label including at its theoretical level. Numerous studies on EFL (e.g., Abdullah & Sidek, 2012 - writing feedback; Saad et al., 2016a; 2016b - EFL learning experience; Baharun et al., 2016a - task-based learning; Baharun et. al, 2017 - collaborative tasks; Sidek et. al, 2016a - EFL reading fluency; Sidek et al., 2016b - abstract writing in EFL) have been conducted in Malaysia. However, studies on the Malaysian English language curriculum itself are still very few and not comprehensive. For example, currently, studies on the Malaysian English language curriculum had been conducted predominantly on EFL secondary school reading curriculum only (e.g. Sidek, 2012, 2013, 2014; Sidek, & Abdullah, 2013; Sidek, Abdullah, & Rahim, 2013).

Within the Malaysian setting, studies on EFL speaking have also been widely conducted. The studies investigated different issues related to EFL speaking. They include among others research on language anxiety among English language learners and their speaking performance (Chan, Abdullah & Yusuf, 2012), using tasks to foster learners’ speaking abilities (Mohammadipour & Rashid, 2015), using films to teach speaking in the EFL classrooms (Shing, & Yin, 2014), turn-taking strategies among learners in class discussion (Rahmat, Rahman, & Yunos, 2015) and task-based oral discourse (Baharun, 2015). Not many have been done at the root of it, which is the speaking curriculum itself. It has been found that despite its importance being the foundation of the EFL instruction, studies on EFL speaking curriculum at the secondary school level are scarce in the mainstream publications (e.g., Baharun et. al, 2016b). Hence, the present study is a pioneering study of its nature as to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, such study is still very few in Malaysia or in other EFL settings. It is the aim of this current study to investigate if the theoretical grounding of the Malaysian form 4 English language curriculum, in particular, the speaking curriculum, is in alignment with its communicative label. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: *What are the SLA theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

RQ2: *What are the L2 speaking theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

## **Methodology**

### ***Research approach***

The method of analyzing the Malaysian EFL secondary speaking curriculum in this study is substantially influenced by the language teaching model of Richards and Rodgers (2001), a revision of Edward Anthony's (1963) model. This model presents a conceptual framework for language instruction, proposing that at the fundamental level, language instruction can be analyzed in terms of *Approach* (foundational theory), *Design* (e.g., selected language skills, learning tasks, learner roles), and *Procedure* (e.g., classroom techniques, classroom observation, teacher interviews). However, as this study examined the curriculum coherence in terms of the alignment of theories and the overarching approaches to L2 speaking instruction that are reflected in the Malaysian EFL secondary speaking curriculum and instruction, only the Approach component in Richards and Rodgers' (2001) language instruction conceptual frameworks was applicable to the study, although with modifications.

### ***Data collection***

To address the research questions posed in this current study, we used document analysis as the research instrument to generate data. The sources of data were in the form of speaking-related statements extracted from two written documents. The documents were the:

- i) Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2003) – this document is used by teachers of English language as their teaching guidelines.
- ii) Form Four English Language Textbook – this book is used by both English language teachers and Form Four students in the classroom during English language lessons.

Below are samples of speaking-related statements extracted from the Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications;

- Taking part in conversations and discussions
- Suggesting ways to solve a problem
- Pronouncing words clearly and correctly, and asking questions and making statements with the correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm

The speaking-related statements from the Form Four English Language Textbook are as follows;

- Look at the pictures below. What aspects of friendship do they show? Discuss in groups
- In pairs, take turns to read out the dialogue
- Listen and repeat after the teacher

### ***Data analysis***

For the present study, only the 'Approach' aspect was relevant as the aim was to determine whether the theoretical groundings of the Malaysian Form Four English language curriculum, in particular the speaking curriculum, is in alignment with its communicative label. Richards and Rodgers' (2001) model at the Approach level provided a tool for analyzing the Malaysian secondary EFL speaking instructional approach in terms of its grounded foundational theories of SLA and theories of L2 speaking. To answer the research questions for the current study, speaking-related statements were extracted from the Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2003) and the Form Four English Language

Textbook. The data from the two sources were analyzed using straightforward percentages and compared in order to determine the alignments. The analysis for each research question is explained individually.

*RQ1: What are the SLA theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

Based on the reviews of SLA theories, the speaking-related statements in the curriculum specifications and in the text-book were inferred as one of the three prominent SLA theories: the structuralism, the socio-cognitive theory and the SCT. From the researchers' preliminary examination of the curriculum documents, these are the major SLA theories reflected in the documents. As such, these theories were selected as the coding for the current study at the level of approach. The structuralism theory was inferred in statements such as saying words after the teacher and saying sentences with the correct intonation, word stress and sentence rhythm. The socio-cognitive theory was inferred in statements such as role-playing given dialogues, presenting speeches and reporting findings. The SCT of SLA was inferred in statements such as interviewing people to get more information, engaging in small group discussions and responding to questions and comments.

*RQ2: What are the L2 speaking theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

Based on the researchers' review on L2 speaking theories, there are two prominent theories of L2 speaking; the Non-interactive speaking theory and the Interactive speaking theory. The Non-interactive speaking theory to L2 speaking was reflected in the instructional approach such as the Audio-Lingual Method, Direct Method and Oral Approach to L2 speaking. It was inferred in statements such as pronouncing the words correctly, reading the dialogue and practising the following ways of expressing opinions. Speaking is considered interactive when there is interaction between the interlocutors and involves tasks-based language teaching. Hence, it is reflected in the IH and OH take on L2 speaking. The Interactive speaking theory to L2 speaking was inferred in statements such as discussing and exchanging ideas, expressing opinions and asking questions either in pairs or small groups. The speaking-related statements in the curriculum specifications and in the text-book were coded following these two theories above.

## **Findings**

A total of 208 speaking-related statements were extracted from the Form Four English Language Textbook and 55 speaking-related statements were obtained from the Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications. Data, in the form of the speaking-related statements, were analyzed using straightforward percentages. Findings show that the socio-cognitive and the SCT, the two theories which were merged to represent the SLA theory for communicative instructional approaches, were highly reflected in the Malaysian form 4 English language speaking curriculum. Results also exhibit that both the IH and the OH which made up the Interactive L2 speaking theory were reflected in the data analysed. These confirm that the Malaysian form 4 English language speaking curriculum is primarily in alignment with its communicative label. Detailed discussions based on the two RQs are presented below.

### ***SLA theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum***

This section presents the findings for the first research question:

*What are the SLA theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

In terms of the SLA theories, findings revealed that both the SCT and the socio-cognitive theory were prominent as reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum in both the Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications and in the Form Four English Language Textbook that were examined. This could be observed in the speaking-related statements identified in both documents. A total of 49.1% of the speaking-related statements identified in the curriculum specifications exhibits the SCT approach while an equally significant percentage (43.6%) is found to exhibit the socio-cognitive theory approach.

The speaking-related statements extracted from the English language textbook also exhibit similar findings. A total of 48.1% of the speaking-related statements from in the textbook reflects the SCT approach and a total of 39.4% of the speaking-related statements in the English language textbook reflects the socio-cognitive theory approach.

Even though the Form Four Malaysian English language curriculum was developed based on CLT, it is found that there is a trace of structuralism as well. This could be observed in the speaking-related statements extracted from both the curriculum specifications (7.3%) as well as in the English language textbook (12.5%). However, the percentage is not significant. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the Malaysian English language speaking curriculum for the Form Four is coherent with its communicative label. Details are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Analysis of SLA theories in the Form Four English Language Speaking Curriculum**

Documents/ SLA Theories	Socio-Cultural Theory	Socio-Cognitive Theory	Structuralism
Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications	49.1%	43.6%	7.3%
Form Four English Language Textbook	48.1%	39.4%	12.5%

### ***L2 speaking theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum***

This section presents the findings for the second research question:

*What are the L2 speaking theories reflected in the Form Four English language speaking curriculum?*

The speaking-related statements extracted from both documents were inferred as one of the two L2 speaking theories, the Interactive and Non-interactive speaking theories. The Interactive L2 speaking theory, which made up of the IH and the OH, is found to be prominent in both documents - the Form Four English speaking curriculum specifications document (90.9%) and the textbook (64.9%).

Both IH and OH place great emphasis on interaction, negotiation and output in speaking and this could be observed in the speaking-related statements extracted from the documents. For example, *Work in groups. Discuss other events and activities that can help promote intercultural understanding and harmony on the international level, In groups, discuss your vision of the world of the future.* These speaking-related statements require learners to work in

groups, take part in conversations and discussion, and exchange ideas, information and opinions on topics of interest.

The Non-interactive L2 speaking theory reflected in the speaking curriculum is related to the behaviourist theory. They include the Direct Method, the Oral Approach and the ALM. Emphasis is on correct pronunciation. Hence, the speaking activities emphasize accurate repetition of dialogues, oral drills and pattern practice. The Non-interactive L2 speaking theory reflected in the speaking curriculum could be observed in some of the speaking-related statements. For instance, *Listen and repeat after your teacher, Read the sentences below and make sure you pronounce the /I/ and /i:/ sounds correctly, Work in pairs. Take turns to say the following sentences.* A total of 9.1% of the speaking-related statements from the curriculum specifications and 35.1% from the textbook are non-interactive in nature. Findings are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Analysis of L2 Speaking Theories in the English Language Speaking Curriculum**

<b>Documents/ L2 Speaking Theories</b>				<b>Interactive L2 Speaking Theory</b>	<b>Non-interactive L2 Speaking Theory</b>
Form Four	English	Language	Curriculum Specifications	90.9%	9.1%
Form Four	English	Language	Textbook	64.9%	35.1%

## Discussion

The two main documents examined (the Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications and the Form Four English Language Textbook) show that the theoretical grounding of the Malaysian Form Four English language curriculum, in particular the speaking curriculum, is in alignment with its communicative label. It is found that the speaking curriculum embedded in the Malaysian Form Four English language curriculum is developed and designed based on the CLT and reflects the CLT approach. The principles of CLT in the form of TBLT are evident in both documents.

The teaching and learning activities centre around language tasks. The aim is to provide maximum opportunity for learners to engage in language use. For example, a speaking-related statement extracted from the textbook says, *In groups, talk about what you want to achieve in the near future and in the distant future.* To execute this task, learners need to engage in social interaction between individuals in their groups. They are expected to share their dreams for the future with their group members. Meanwhile, to further understand, other group members may ask for further clarifications and explanation. This forces the initial speaker to provide further input. Thus, it is during the interaction process that learners receive feedback on the form and meaning of their messages, whether their messages are clear or otherwise. If their messages are not clear, the learners need to make adjustments to their messages so that the messages become clear, comprehensible and can be understood by the other speakers. In another example, the speaking-related statement extracted from the textbook requires the learners to engage in the process of negotiation and decision making. The statement says, *In small groups, discuss the*

*following. Do you expect a better world or do you expect Earth to be beyond help in the future?* To perform this task, learners are required to share their opinions on the issue discussed. They negotiate meaning to make others able to comprehend their ideas. They engage in a discussion in which they argue, express agreement or disagreement, and eventually make decisions. Not only they receive comprehensible input from group members, they also produce output. By producing output, learners are forced to focus on both accuracy and fluency of their speech.

It is clear that the tasks above are very much in line with the tenets of IH and OH in which interaction is important in facilitating and promoting language learning. These are all reflected in the speaking-related statements extracted from the two main documents. When examined, they exhibit the SCT and Socio-cognitive theories of SLA and the Interactive L2 speaking theory, the IH and the OH.

In task-based instruction, learners use language to transact or perform tasks rather than learn individual language items (Foster, 1999, Nassaji & Tian, 2010). The tasks in focus are group communication tasks that require learners to work together in small groups or pairs. Researchers believe that when they work in small groups, learners have more “opportunities to participate, observe, reflect on and practice socially shared ways of knowing and thinking” (Kumpulainen & Wray, 2002, p. 3). Thus, using tasks as the core for language teaching and learning as exhibited in the documents analysed, it is expected that the curriculum could equip learners with the abilities to “form and maintain relationships through conversation and correspondence; take part in social interactions; and obtain goods and services” (Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications, Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 2).

However, despite most of the speaking-related statements are interactive in nature, it should be highlighted that there is a significant percentage of the statements that reflects the Non-Interactive L2 speaking theory i.e., the Direct Method, Oral Approach and the Audio-Lingual Method. Even though the revised Malaysian Form Four English Language curriculum is developed based on the principles of CLT in the form of TBLT, it is observed that emphasis is still placed on accurate production of the target language form as found in the curriculum specification and textbook, albeit not the primary focus. For example, *Listen as your teacher reads the words below. Repeat what you hear* and *Listen and repeat*. These are common oral activities that are in line with the behaviourist learning theory. It is believed that “in order to acquire a language one needs to acquire the forms of the language, which are best taught using reinforcement or repetitive practices” (Sidek, 2010, p. 29). Nonetheless, it is in contrast with what CLT advocates. Within the CLT approach, learners are to interact with one another and negotiate meaning. Thus, the language activities should include those that would encourage learners to engage in discussion and negotiation, ask for more information, seek clarification and use language meaningfully. However, the existence of speaking-related statements as shown in the above shows that Non-Interactive L2 speaking theory still underpins the revised curriculum.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the findings of the present study generally show that the theoretical underpinning reflected in the Malaysian English language speaking curriculum is in alignment with the communicative approach as the speaking tasks in the curriculum significantly reflect the socio-cognitive and SCT theories. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Malaysian English language speaking curriculum for the Form Four is coherent with its communicative label at

the Approach level. In terms of the L2 speaking theories, it can also be concluded that the Interactive L2 speaking theory is reflected in the curriculum. However, it is believed that the alignment can be revised and improved to ensure that the Malaysian English language curriculum is effective and can achieve its communicative goals.

## Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) (Grant NO. PPP/USG-0215/FPBU/30/16015).

## References

- Abdullah, H & Sidek, H.M. (2012). L2 writing feedback: Alignment of instructional planning and implementation. *Journal of Language Studies*, 15, 15-17.
- Anthony, E. (1963). Approach, method, and technique. *English Language Teaching*, 17(2), 63-67.
- Baharun, H. (2015). EFL learners' task-generated interactive discourse. Doctor of Philosophy, University of Malaya.
- Baharun, H., Sidek, H.M., M.M. Idrus, N.S.M. Saad, (2016a). Task-Based Language Learning: Investigating the Dynamic of Learners' Oral Interaction. *International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(5), 570-580.
- Baharun, H., Sidek, H.M., N.S.M. Saad, M.M. Idrus, Harun, H., Darmi, R., Abdullah, N. & Zakaria, Z. A. (2016b). The Malaysian secondary school EFL speaking curriculum: A theoretical foundation alignment analysis. *International E-journal of Advances in Education*, 2(6), 465-474.
- Baharun, H. & Zakaria, A. R. (2017). Enhancing EFL learners' language development through collaborative tasks, *Advanced Science Letters*, 23(3), 2083–2087.
- Brandl, K. (2007). Principles of communicative language teaching and task-based instruction. *Communicative language teaching in action: Putting principles to work*, 1-38.
- Chan, S.H., Abdullah, A.N. & Yusuf, N. (2012). Investigating the construct of anxiety in relation to speaking skills among ESL tertiary learners. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 18(3), 155-166.
- Form Four English Language Curriculum Specifications. (2003). *Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE)*. Retrieve from <http://www.moe.gov.my>.
- Foster, P. (1999). Task-based learning and pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 53(1), 69-70.
- Foster, P. & Skehan, P. (1996). The influence of planning on performance in task-based learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(3), 299-324.
- Gass, S. M. (1997). *Input, interaction, and second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gass, S. M. (2003). Input and interaction. In C. Doughty & M.H. Long (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Kowal, M & Swain, M. (1994). Using collaborative language production tasks to promote students' language awareness. *Language Awareness*, 3(2), 73-93.
- Kumpulainen, K. & Wray, D. (2002). (Eds). *Classroom interaction and social learning: from theory to practice*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

- Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. Ritchie and T.K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of research on language acquisition: Second language acquisition volume 2*. New York: Academic Press.
- Mackey, A. (2007). Interaction as practice. In R. DeKeyser (Ed.), *Practice in a second language: Perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Matsuoka, R. & Evans, D. R. (2004). Socio-cognitive approach in second language acquisition research. *Journal of Nursing Studies*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Mohammadipour, M. & MD. Rashid, S. (2015). The Impact of Task-Based Instruction Program on Fostering ESL Learners' Speaking Ability: *A Cognitive Approach*. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(2), 113-126.
- Nassaji, H. & Tian, J. (2010). Collaborative and individual output tasks and their effects on learning English phrasal verbs. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(4), 397-419.
- Pica, T. (1994). Questions from the language classroom: research perspectives. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28, 49-79.
- Rahmat, N. H., Rahman, S. A. B. S. A. & Yunus, D. R. M. (2015). Investigating turntaking strategies in class discussions among ESL adult learners. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 3(2), 139-144.
- Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2ed). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Saad, N.S.M., Sidek, H.M., Baharun, H. & Idrus, M.M. & Yunus. M.Y. (2016a). A Conceptual Framework to Explore the English Language Learning Experiences of International Students in Malaysia. *International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(6), 453-464.
- Saad, N.S.M., Yamat, Y., Sidek, H.M., Baharun, H. & Idrus, M.M. (2016b), Acts of Agency in English Language Learning Experience. *International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(6), 733-746.
- Shing, S. R. & Yin, L. K. (2014). Using films to teach speaking in the ESL classroom: A case study. *UNISEL Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(1), 50-56.
- Sidek, H. M. (2010). An analysis of the EFL secondary reading curriculum in Malaysia: approaches to reading and preparation for higher education. Doctor of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh.
- Sidek, H. M. (2012). EFL reading instruction: Communicative task-based approach. *International Journal of Instruction*, 5(2), 109-128.
- Sidek, H. M. (2013). Communicative reading instructional approach: A Curriculum Review. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies*, 7(1), 9-20.
- Sidek, H. M. (2014). English Language Reading Preparation for Higher Education: An Evaluation of the Form Four English Language Textbook and Instructional Design, 22(2), 539-558. *Journal of Social Science and Humanities (PERTANIKA)*.
- Sidek, H. M. & Abdullah, H. (2013). EFL Reading Comprehension and Preparation for Higher Education: A Textbook Analysis. *Journal of Teaching and Education*, 24(4), 425-435.
- Sidek, H. M., Abdullah, H. & Rahim, H.A. (2013). Reading Curriculum and Instructional Analysis: Preparation for Academic Literacy at Higher Institutions. *Journal of Teaching and Education*, 2(2), 389-396.
- Sidek, H.M., Baharun, H., Saad, N.S.M., & Idrus, M.M. (2016a). English as a Foreign Language Fluency: A Pilot Study. *International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 70-79.

- Sidek, H.M., Saad, N.S.M., Baharun, H. & Idrus, M.M. (2016b). An Analysis of Rhetorical Moves in Abstract in Conference Proceedings. *International E-journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 24-31.
- Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *The handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (2001). Focus on form through collaborative dialogue: Exploring task effects. In Bygate, M., Skehan, P. & Swain, M. (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (2002). Talking it through: Two French immersion learners' response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 285-304.
- Varonis, E., & Gass, S.M. (1985). Non-native/non-native conversations: A model for negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 71-90
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.