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A KODÁLY BASED MUSIC TEACHING SEQUENCE FOR TEACHING  
SINGING TO YEAR ONE PUPILS IN A MALAYSIAN  
CHINESE PRIMARY SCHOOL

LIM LI WEN



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## ABSTRACT

Sequential teaching is essential for learning musical concepts for young beginners. There is a lack of Chinese teaching materials that sequenced according to a child-developmental approach in Malaysia. While there are many singing materials written in the Chinese language, none arranged in a sequential order, which Hungarian music educator Kodály believed is essential for pupils to build or extend their musical vocabulary and musical concepts progressively. The purpose of the study is to provide a set of sequenced Chinese materials for Year One Malaysian Chinese pupils to be used by general music teachers who teach in Chinese primary schools. Reflective action research, document research, journal writings and voice recordings serve as the primary data for analysis in this investigation. Data were analysed through thematic analysis, and conclusion of the analysis served as a primary source in forming the sequence. 22 cycles of action research were carried out in the classroom. In conclusion, a set of sequenced teaching materials was formed. The implication of this study introduces a core teaching sequence for music teachers to refer to when they sequence their teaching objectives and materials.





## **PENGAJARAN BERURUTAN BERASASKAN KAEDAH KODÁLY UNTUK MENGAJAR NYANYIAN MURID TAHUN SATU DI SEBUAH SEKOLAH RENDAH JENIS KEBANGSAAN CINA DI MALAYSIA**

### **ABSTRAK**

Pengajaran berurutan adalah penting untuk mempelajari konsep muzik terutamanya pada permulaan pembelajaran konsep muzik. Terdapat kekurangan bahan pengajaran lagu pendidikan muzik dalam Bahasa Cina (mandarin) yang sesuai untuk pembelajaran berasaskan perkembangan kanak-kanak di Malaysia. Terdapat banyak bahan-bahan nyanyian ditulis dalam bahasa China, namun tiada bahan yang disusun mengikut urutan yang mana pendidik muzik Hungary, Kodály percaya adalah penting untuk kanak-kanak membina atau meluaskan perbendaharaan kata muzik dan konsep muzik mereka secara progresif. Tujuan kajian ini ialah menyediakan satu set bahan (lagu) dalam pengajaran bahasa Cina yang berturutan untuk pengajaran pendidikan muzik murid Tahun Satu. Kajian tindakan reflektif, penyelidikan dokumen, tulisan jurnal, dan rakaman suara berfungsi sebagai data utama untuk analisis dalam penyelidikan ini. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan analisis bertema dan kesimpulan dapatan kajian digunakan untuk menyusun urutan bahan pengajaran yang berurutan. Melalui 22 kitaran penyelidikan kajian tindakan yang dijalankan di dalam bilik darjah, satu set bahan pengajaran yang tersusun mengikut tahap kesukaran pengajaran telah dibentuk. Kajian ini memperkenalkan urutan pengajaran teras bagi seorang guru muzik untuk dijadikan rujukan bagi merangka objektif pengajaran dan bahan (lagu) mereka.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|      |   |
|------|---|
| ETM  | Education Through Music                   |
| KBSR | <i>Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah</i> |
| KPM  | <i>Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia</i>     |
| KSSR | <i>Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah</i>  |
| UiTM | <i>Universiti Teknologi MARA</i>          |

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

A carefully considered sequence in teaching and learning music has been shown to create smooth transitions and continuity between lessons. However, in the early seventies, Dorman (1973) demonstrated that in the organisation of content, the use of a sequence of stages was negligible. Teachers often have a limited understanding of the process of helping students to move from the enactive to the iconic, and finally to the representational stage of imaging (Dorman, 1973). The mastery of imaging is an important skill for development which further establishes the pupil's music reading skills. He also reasoned that teaching which relies on repetitious drills would end up creating consistency of error rather than achieving their objective of performance improvement.

Practitioner experience in the exploration and study of the professional teaching sequence is desirable in achieving optimal learning outcomes through teaching objectives and sorted teaching materials. Harper (1995) demonstrated his approach to teaching general music through Gordon's Music Learning Theory where he highlighted that it is critical that the first five to 10 minutes of each music class consists of skill development for a successful teaching outcome. He also argues that the Music Learning Theory is a sequential process based on the precise developmental nature of pupils, where pupils are taught a basic vocabulary of tonal and rhythmic patterns. Similarly, Spurgeon (2004) demonstrated that a classroom music teacher needs to understand and use an instructional sequence for developing competency with each music element and skill, progressing from the simplest to the most complex. The curriculum design must be clearly understood by teachers in order to generate meaningful awareness of their teaching material. Basic experience with the techniques of Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze, and Gordon would provide beneficial learning experiences so that effective teaching can take place.

Music must be built on pupils' acquisition of vigorous and robust foundations in basic skills before mastering other more advanced topics. Choksy (1999) showed the refinement of a teaching sequence used in the USA by Kodály practitioners and educators where it was adapted from its country of origin, Hungary. In every country, the sequence of learning is unique for each individual pupil due to the different cultural backgrounds, prior knowledge and language that they speak daily.

A learning sequence according to Kodály is a child development framework (Choksy, 1999b). Kodály formed a child development sequence of music learning that

completely changed music education in Hungary (Scott, 2004, p. 23). His sequence of music learning has been adapted by practitioners in different countries who have made the methodology relevant to their own classrooms by incorporating culturally appropriate songs into their teaching repertoire (Marsh, 2008). An effective practical child development framework is of greater importance compared with a logic-based learning sequence. Various educational theorists such as Rousseau, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel believed strongly in the child-centred approach to curriculum (Niland, 2009).

The Swiss pedagogue, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) believed that the school curriculum should be based on children’s natural development in which children learn best through self-discovery as well as immersion in the environment (Scott, 2004, p. 25). A logic-based learning sequence in music refers to learning in conjunction with the longest note value to the smallest note value, from high-pitched notes to low-pitched notes, and from duple meter to triple meter, then quadruple meter. A child development framework in teaching provides an understanding of musical concepts through well-planned, sequenced materials and purposeful objectives based on child-centred learning. This creates a meaningful learning experience for the pupils through practical musical activities. However, the classroom teacher must reinforce the concepts known to the pupils before making the unknown explicit.

Similarly, Bowyer (2015) argues that careful sequencing should always move from what is known to what is unknown and be based on pupils’ prior knowledge. Kodály lessons review and reinforce previously learned concepts in the provided

materials before introducing new, increasingly complex musical concepts and involves a carefully scaffolded teaching plan which helps develop a foundation of musicianship that promotes in-tune singing, musicality, inner hearing, and strong music literacy. Pupils learn best when they relate newly acquired knowledge to their experience. This concept is known as ‘Constructivism’, where the learning environment supports multiple perspectives or interpretations of reality, knowledge construction and context-rich, experienced-based activities (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). The presented materials and the teaching sequence must be meaningful and make sense to the pupils so that they can assist them to understand musical concepts better. Furthermore, the sequence of instructions must be organised in such a way that it remains relevant to the pupils’ daily activities. The vast amount of exposure to elements such as speech, language, movement and cultural practices affect a pupil’s learning style and behaviour. For instance, we walk in two-beat patterns with our left and right foot; we practice the beliefs within our culture; Chinese pupils speak Mandarin in school, and we behave within the scope of our living context. A learning process becomes meaningful and easy to understand once there is a connection between the pupil’s daily life, behaviour or activities.

The main purpose of teaching music is to enable children to achieve basic musical literacy. According to Scott (2004), “children must be comfortable with singing and have accurate singing skills. They must also be comfortable with movement and have accurate beat keeping abilities” (p. 24). Children must be able to express sensitivity to music (Feierabend 1997b; Gordon 1996). It is also suggested by Scott (2004) that “during the first two to three years of elementary music instruction, children should be immersed in active music making” (p. 24). Scott (2014) asserts that “children

should be led to explore sounds, tunes, beat, rhythm, and movement, and should be comfortable experimenting with music” (p. 24).

Many studies report that learning music benefits students in various ways, including improved academic achievement overall (Ruppert, 2006; Schellenberg, 2004). The following section outlines ways in which music learning, especially singing using one’s mother tongue, provides many benefits to a young child such as strengthening their development in language acquisition. The use of languages provides child-centered learning and hence, promotes positive learning in singing and music learning. Developing appropriate teaching sequences requires an understanding of the Malaysian music education system, therefore, this will also be explained in this section.

## 1.2 Mother Tongue

There are a variety of ethnic groups in West and East Malaysia. The three main ethnic groups in West Malaysia are Malay, Chinese, and Indian. The need to analyse music learning materials (children’s folk songs) in the classroom according to the pupils’ mother tongue is vital in assisting pupils to learn progressively starting with easier concepts before moving on to more challenging ones. Various well-known music education figures such as Zoltan Kodály, Shinichi Suzuki and Carl Orff used mother tongue teaching materials in their practical teaching, especially for the young child (Kendall, 1996; Parncutt & McPherson, 2002; S. Scott, 2016).

Shinichi Suzuki grounded his method on how children learned their mother tongue and sequenced a system whereby children learn to play their violin before learning to read the notation (Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). Scott (2016) argues that Shinichi Suzuki developed his approach to education around the mother tongue approach. He highlights that typically developing children can learn to speak Japanese (their mother tongue) and that is the main reason that Shinichi Suzuki used many teaching materials which use their mother tongue language in materials for beginner violin instruction. By teaching music in the pupils' mother tongue, understanding of musical concepts is simpler and more meaningful to the young. The suggestion of using songs written in the mother tongue for learning singing is also due to the child-centred approach that is based on a child's understanding of their speaking language's melodic contour (Davidson, 1994). In Chinese primary schools, the Chinese language needs to be analysed according to its linguistics criteria when sorting the teaching sequence, in terms of both melodic and rhythmic aspects.

General public-school teachers who teach the subject music must achieve the desired teaching objectives within the designated 30-minute period of instruction in Malaysia. Generally, a year of schooling will have roughly 42 to 43 weeks (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2016). The total hours for the delivery of music lessons for one class will be about 21 hours a year. An optimal teaching sequence would enable music teachers to achieve the desired teaching objectives within the limited time. Willis (1995) states that one of the characteristics in objective-rational instructional design is careful sequencing, and the teaching of sub-skills is essential. Willis (1995) also states that sequential learning may provide an organised way of

systematically preparing materials for educators and may provide support on developmental ways of gaining knowledge for the educators.

### 1.2.1 Music Syllabus for Primary Schools in Malaysia

The current standard primary school syllabus (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah - KSSR) introduced by the Ministry of Education has been implemented since 2011 (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, n.d.). The KSSR was intended to replace the primary school syllabus (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah – KBSR). At the time of writing this dissertation, the KSSR curriculum was being transformed in stages in

2016 until it was fully implemented in all primary schools from Year One to Year Six.

The KSSR syllabus was then reviewed, and a newly revised KSSR syllabus was implemented starting with Year One pupils in 2017. In the new KSSR syllabus, music is one of the compulsory subjects for pupils from Year One (aged seven) to Year Six (aged 12).

In the 2017 music curriculum for primary Year One, the units are presented using a thematic approach in which lessons are structured around a series of topics and merged with the Visual Arts subject under a new subject called Arts Education, or ‘*Pendidikan Kesenian*’ (Wong, Chan, Tee, & Loh, 2016). In the newly revised curriculum, music has been integrated into various themes such as ‘My Best Friend’, ‘Happy New Year’, ‘Simple Games’, ‘Count On’, ‘Underwater World’ and other similar themes. It consists of 22 units for the whole year and pupils are required to learn

music before moving on to the Arts subject in each unit. Both music and arts have corresponding chapters. Pupils sing songs before learning arts that are related to the music they have sung and learnt previously. Music has been placed in odd-numbered units while arts are in the even-numbered units.

The music subject as taught in Malaysian primary schools prior to 2017 was called ‘World of Music’, and it was one of the compulsory subjects in the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR). The National Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Education, 2012) highlights that the music subject contains essential knowledge that every pupil in Malaysia should learn. Daniel Pink (as cited in Moyer, 2013) asserts that art education is critical in providing the pupils with the skills to reason both analytically and algorithmically. Similarly, Houlahan and Tacka (2015a) state that learning music gives pupils many opportunities to perform music, develop critical-thinking skills (reading and writing music), be creative, become stewards of their cultural heritage and be informed listeners and audience members. Therefore, it is vital for every growing child to experience and learn music.

After the above overview of the Malaysia Music Curriculum, the Kodály teaching philosophy is discussed in the next section. The development of a Kodály-based teaching sequence is then argued. The Kodály teaching philosophy is used as a guideline towards enhancing teaching and learning within the Malaysian Music Curriculum.

## 1.2.2 Kodály Teaching Philosophy

Zoltan Kodály's (1882–1967) philosophy and approaches are well known in the Music Education field. Kodály's native country, Hungary, has a well-planned teaching and learning sequence based on folk music and composed material, which is highly beneficial to learning music (Szonyi, as cited in Choksy, 1999). In Malaysia, pupils in primary school would benefit from the development of a learning sequence based on Kodály's philosophical and pedagogical approaches. In the 1990s, Johami Abdullah (2010) highlighted the need for studies on the use of the Kodály method in Malaysia due to a lack of research in this area in the country. Kodály was introduced in Malaysia under one of the courses hosted by the Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in collaboration with the Young Choral Academy in 2009. The Kodály method then started to be developed actively in the private sector in Malaysia. Such efforts were carried out by the Young Choral Academy and Poco Studio. The Young Choral Academy has collaborated with the Australian Kodály Society to host various courses, giving certification to the attendees of courses with the Australian Kodály certification programme. The Poco Studio also invited clinicians from the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Kecskemet, Hungary to organise a course for music teachers in 2016. The development of Kodály activities has become vibrant in Malaysia ever since.

In this dissertation, I argue that Malaysian primary schools should have a specific teaching sequence that is suitable for the local pupils who would benefit from a curriculum that is based on either local folk songs or local children's songs. A learning sequence which is constructed using Chinese children's folk songs and other

appropriate composed music or chants (as the core teaching materials) could provide a progressive teaching structure in which students could gradually master increasingly difficult skills after mastering the basic skills. Kodály's teaching sequence model in the national curriculum of Hungary is an experience-based approach to learning rather than a cognitive developmental approach (Organization of American Kodály, 2012). Materials (songs and tunes) that are already known to the school children themselves need to be identified and analysed to support the learning sequence. An analysis of the existing Malaysian collections of Chinese children's folk songs and compositions in the Chinese language would reveal appropriate music materials that are consistent with the teaching objectives of the syllabus.

### 1.3 Singing Materials

Kodály method materials are drawn strictly from two sources which are "authentic" folk music and "good-quality" composed music (Choksy, 1999, p.16). In this research, various sources of Malaysian Chinese children's folk music and "good-quality" composed music were collected, analysed and categorised for use in classroom teaching.

The presentation of music materials, concepts, and development of skills can be achieved in a meaningful way only if the curriculum is well sequenced (Organization of American Kodály, 2012). The singing materials must be carefully selected, sequenced and matched with the teaching objectives, and pupils' background, prior knowledge, and age. With a careful selection of educational materials (songs) and

purposes (learning objectives), the teacher can progressively teach according to best practice principles.

Kodály (1964), as cited in Organization of American Kodály (2012) and The University of Oklahoma (2016), argues that the compositions of every country, if original, are based on the songs of its people. These folk songs must be regularly sung, observed, and studied, as it is important to examine the music of each country of origin to understand the localised values of its people. In selecting resources and songs for children, I have observed that teachers in schools tend to use many English songs due to the availability of many published scores in that language. However, English educational materials (songs) which are native to local young pupils who speak Mandarin as their mother tongue are much more challenging for them to build a sense of musical concepts especially at the beginning of their learning. This was part of Kodály's philosophy where using mother tongue language songs and child-centered based teaching is crucial for teaching beginners. Young pupils should be introduced songs from their own mother tongue before introducing songs in the native language such as English.

In phonology, language and dialects contain different sounding systems. The standard dialect in Chinese primary schools in Malaysia is Mandarin. Therefore, pupils in Chinese schools are familiar with the language system itself. Various music educators have used mother tongue instructional materials such as Kodály (Choksy, 1999a), Suzuki and Carl Orff (Brathwaite, 1988; Liperote et al., 1961; Liperote, 2006; Osborn, 1966). Pupils can start with accurate reading and speak in their mother tongue

while enjoying singing musically in that same language. Musical concepts and accurate singing enable teachers to teach young beginners to achieve quality foundations in learning music by rote before learning symbols. Kodály points out the importance of learning music by first learning in the mother tongue (Choksy, 1999a). However, while Bahasa Malaysia is the national language of Malaysia and is spoken mostly by Malays as their mother tongue, the Chinese speak Malaysian Chinese, and most Indians communicate in Tamil or English as their first language.

The materials used for singing must be analysed and aligned for the purposes of teaching. The teacher must take into consideration the educational materials used in every teaching classroom. According to Houlahan and Tacka (2015b), elements such as tone set, rhythm, melody, form, games for songs, and musical signs such as the ‘repeat sign’ must be taken into consideration when sequencing teaching materials. ‘Repeat sign’ refers to the musical symbol indicated in a music score that requires a section of music to be repeated. Singing games provide a fun way of learning while the repeating patterns in music enable re-inforcement of pupil’s musical learning.

According to Houlahan and Tacka (2015), one of the vital components of the Kodály method is the teachers’ ability to sequence materials along with presenting concepts and elements to pupils that are derived primarily from the singing repertoire. This is regarded as an experience-based approach to learning. The three main elements of sequencing in the Kodály programme include the presentation of materials, concepts, and development of skills. This can be done in a meaningful way only if the curriculum is well sequenced, carefully planned, and well taught, which will result in successful

experiences for both the pupils and their teacher. This could foster a love of music among the young if the teaching is effective.

### 1.3.1 Sequence of Teaching

The sequential teaching approach in the Kodály method is based on child developmental levels, where the melody of songs used to teach pupils at a younger age relies on their ability to understand and sing melodies in tune. Harper (1995) demonstrated that only activities appropriate to students' level of development are used in his teaching. He also highlighted the importance of evaluating the activities

according to the skills required and placing them in a proper sequence before presenting them in the classroom.

In the earliest melodic stages, two- or three-note songs and chants are the optimal materials to be used as teaching materials. Pupils can instinctively identify accurate pitches and sing in tune with three-note songs and chants. As voices mature and musical abilities increase, musical materials can be extended to include larger intervals and notes in the pentatonic scales. Various Chinese folk music tunes are also based on pentatonic scales, for example, 'This is My House' and 'Little Pigs'. Pupils explicitly gain a clear context of the musical elements which are present in the songs. The learning principle which underpins this practice is that the pupil begins learning melodically and rhythmically in the simplest form before moving to more advanced or complex forms – in educational theory terms, moving from the concrete to the abstract. Binder, Westbury, McKiernan, Possing, and Medler (2005) explain the distinction

between the brain system for the processing of concrete and abstract concepts. The understanding of musical concepts comes through applying them in the classroom.

Kodály-based music instruction embodies a sequential process (Hanson, 2003), in which a culture's folk songs and active, authentic singing games are implemented to teach a broad range of musical concepts including rhythm, melody, harmony, form, timbre, texture, and expression, in addition to the skills of singing, listening, moving, reading and writing notation, and music analysis. Singing is one way to acquire language proficiency; therefore, the need to collect a set of songs based on the children's development centre, and based on the mother tongue of the children is important. Children learning from meaningful experiences can closely connect the concrete facts with what they have learnt, such as the theory of music and foundations that are

included in the subject music.

By employing a music teaching sequence with selected songs that are sorted in an order which highlights specific musical skills (including melodic and rhythmic concepts), the teacher could use the songs to achieve specific objectives. The proposed child-centered learning sequence is intended to provide pupils with a meaningful learning experience, related to their background while fulfilling the objectives of the music subject in the national standard curriculum (KSSR). This is similar to what Harper (1995) drew attention to when he explained that the unequal potential and background of all students should be assessed to tailor instructions to each student's abilities. The role of the teacher becomes decisive in the process of identifying a set of suitable sequential activities for teaching activities in the classroom.

Gordon (2012) states that there is only one music learning theory but four music learning sequences: skill learning sequence, tonal learning sequence, rhythm learning sequence, and pattern learning sequence. Content sequencing is a way of ordering information in a logical sequence which helps the learner to grasp ideas in a more efficient and effective manner. It also plays a major role in helping the learner to understand and learn the information (Morrison, Ross, Kemp, & Kalman, 2010). The sequence in teaching is an important process as contents are clearly laid out in smaller chapters or steps for the pupils to master. The teacher plays an important role throughout their entire teaching session, starting from the planning stage, to the teaching session and then reflecting on the session after the teaching is over. A large chunk of information can be broken up into smaller chunks for the pupils to absorb more easily through the careful sequencing of the teaching session, including the teaching objectives, materials used and teaching outcomes.

Clark (2009) emphasised that the sequencing and structuring of materials should be the last steps in the design phase to ensure the learning objective is met. A proper sequence is crucial in providing the learners with a pattern of relationships and to make sure that every activity has a definite purpose; it is easier for the pupils to learn effectively about the concepts and avoid inconsistencies in the content of the instructions. Clark (2009) cited that seven elements were identified in the sequencing process. These include job performance order; from simple to complex; the critical sequence where objects are ordered regarding their relative importance; from the known to the unknown; dependent relationships (mastery of one objective requires prior mastery of another objective); supportive relationships; and cause to effect. These

elements are crucial in the current research where the arranged sequence shapes the outcome of the investigation.

### 1.3.2 Malaysian Based Kodály Child-centered Learning Sequence

The Young Choral Academy introduced the Kodály method to Malaysia in 2009, by organising Kodály workshops and the Australian Kodály Certification programme (Young Choral Academy, 2013). Currently, the Kodály approach is widely known in Malaysia in collaboration with the Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia which provides Kodály courses in Malaysia. Teachers who attended the course are endorsed with an Australian Kodály Certificate.

The adaptation of child-centered learning sequences in Malaysia based on the Kodály-based child-centered learning sequence approach; it is important to enable materials to be presented in the local context. For instance, the mother tongue for Malaysian Chinese would be the Mandarin language. The sequence of the teaching materials and songs may start with what the Kodály approach emphasises, providing an effective approach to teach pupils to sing. Therefore, careful research is needed to create a teaching sequence based on local children's folk songs that will help to bridge the gap of teaching and learning in the music subject.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

The need for preparing a sequence in teaching music in Malaysia is an important aspect of enhancing the process of pupils' knowledge acquisition. Madsen (1994) argues that the prominence of a teaching sequence is important for educators. Therefore, the teaching sequence of materials needs to remain central to research within the field of music education. The teaching materials for the music subject are provided in the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia. This research will provide an improvement on the sequence of instruction for teaching singing in the classroom. The teaching sequence of selected music could assist teachers in providing a smoother teaching and learning transition for their pupils, so that they will be better equipped to learn the

concepts of music progressively and accumulatively.

Gardner (in Pound and Harrison, 2002), suggested that there is an "important convergence among researchers on the importance of the ages six to seven in musical development" (p.31). Through examining the learning patterns of seven-year old children, this research suggests core foundation teaching strategies which take various aspects such as identifying the available Chinese children's folk songs, sequencing of teaching materials (Chinese children's folk songs) based on child development and localising the teaching strategies for use in Malaysia.

### 1.4.1 The Need for Child-centred Teaching Materials

There are various published books for teaching level one music in the market including Nan Yang Publishers (n.d.), 乐声出版社[Yue Sheng Publishers] (n.d.), and 杨晓雍 [Yang Siao Young] (2010). The topics and musical concepts in these teaching materials are based on units. There are also non-sequenced teaching materials that enable pupils to learn to sing collectively.

Figure 1.1 shows an example of a song for Year One pupils in the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010), teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia, entitled 'Good Morning'. It is the first song in the resource book that is used at the beginning of a music lesson. From the relevant aspects of singing of this song, it appears to be an appropriate and simple song to begin learning.

## Song that Consists of Challenging Interval for Singing

早安曲 (Selamat Pagi)

早上到学校, 向老师请安。见到同学  
zhao shang dao xue xiao, xiang lao shi qing an. jian dao tong xue

们, 微笑说早安。 la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu  
men, wei xiao shuo zhao an. la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu

la la la. la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la.  
la la la. la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la.

Figure 1.1 Composed music, 'Selamat Pagi' from the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia.

However, this melody has a musical range of an octave which is too difficult for many younger pupils to sing accurately in tune. Choksy (1974, 1999) stressed that the range of young children's voices is limited and usually consists of not more than five or six tones. Nichols (2016) also argues that "students can be asked to sing simple songs with varying tempos and keys before proceeding to songs of greater length with more difficult intervals" (p. 44). He emphasises that large interval leaps provide an opportunity for students to modulate to lower, more comfortable key centres, while teachers are encouraged to sequence song materials to suit the individual singer's needs. The teaching materials used in the new syllabus for teaching music could be substituted with more children's folk songs or authentic music, to assist the pupils in understanding their culture better while learning the musical concepts more easily.

Figure 1.2 shows another song that is provided in the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia. This song is in C minor. The dotted crotchet notes can be difficult for pupils to sing at the beginning of their music learning. This is due to the pupils having not yet been exposed to any dotted crotchet note patterns prior to learning of this song. In a well-established teaching sequence, the dotted crotchet is usually recommended to be taught at a later stage after the introduction of the crotchet, minim and semibreve. Choksy (1999b) has an exemplar of sequenced teaching structure for music educators which is prominent in sequencing teaching materials. The arrangement in a melodic pattern such as "Mi Mi Re La, Do Re Mi Re Mi" is unusual when singing in Chinese. The leap of intervals from 'Re' to 'Fa' (Figure 1.2, bar 2 to 3) also causes difficulty for young pupils (age of seven) who are still trying to grasp the correct pitch.

The rhythm consisting of a dotted crotchet followed by a quaver is not optimal for a beginner. In Kodály teaching, the dotted crotchet followed by quaver rhythm is read as 'Tam-Ti' and it is placed in later teaching materials for 4<sup>th</sup>-grade pupils (Choksy, 1981, 2000; Houlahan & Tacka, 2015a). The complexity of singing in half-step intervals is difficult for pupils as the pupils' daily activities such as speaking, walking or moving are not consistent with this pattern. This rhythm consisting of a dotted crotchet followed by quaver should be introduced after the pupils have mastered the basic rhythms which they can clap or play evenly.

## Song that Consists of an Irregular Pattern and Different Moods

我的心在跳(Jantungku)

听 听 感 觉 心 儿 在 跳 动, 扑 通 扑 通  
ting ting gan jue xin er zai tiao dong, pu tong pu tong

永 远 不 停 息, 听 那 心 儿 在 跳 动, 感 谢 上 苍 的 恩 赐。  
yong yuan bu ting xi, tin na xin er zai tiao dong, gan xie shang cang de en chi.

Figure 1.2 Composed music, 'Jantungku' from KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia.

The song in Figure 1.3 consists of a wide range of leaps (singing from low 'Do'

to high 'Do') which is known for its difficulty in singing, especially for beginners. Such leaping passages are not optimal for pupils at the age of seven who should ideally be given singing materials with a range no wider than intervals of a perfect fifth (Goetze, Cooper, & Brown, 1990; Welch, Sergeant, & White, 1997). In my personal experience of teaching the 'Let's Sing Together' song (Figure 1.3) to my pupils, many of them shouted when they sang high C notes in bars 1, 2 and 6. The purpose of the song is to show the difference between high and low pitch, but when the song is used for singing, it does not only promote unmusical singing but also stresses the vocal muscles far too much for a young beginner.

### Song that Consists of a Wide Range of Leaps

一起唱首歌(Mari Menyanyi)

Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do 我 们 唱 首 歌。  
Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Do Wo men chang shou ge.

唱 低 音 唱 高 音 优 美 的 旋 律。  
chang di yin chang gao yin you mei de xuan lv.

Figure 1.3 Composed music, 'Mari Menyanyi' from KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia.

### 1.4.2 Providing a Sequence of Chinese Children's Folk Songs for Teaching in Music Class

The collected local and non-local children's folk songs to be taught should be organised based on their patterns of melody, intervals, rhythm, modality, meaning, text and expression. The analysed children's folk songs have been sorted according to their difficulty, according to the suggested child-centered learning sequence.

Although there are many dialects used by the Malaysian Chinese, the main communication and language used in Malaysian Chinese primary schools is Mandarin. Since Mandarin is the main language used in school, there is a need for collecting songs in the Chinese language which is also the pupil's 'mother tongue'.

## 1.5 Objectives of Study

This research has two main objectives:

- To recommend teaching sequences from a set of teaching materials based on the Kodály method that incorporates the teaching of Malaysian Chinese folk songs.
- To identify melodic and rhythmic characteristics in Malaysian Chinese folk songs and sort according to their level of difficulty based on Kodály teaching sequences

## 1.6 Research Questions

The resources to deliver instruction provided by the Ministry of Education, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (2010) contain a variety of styles and different songs composed by selected individuals. There are a broad range of pitches used, compound time ( $\frac{6}{8}$ ), dotted crotchet notes, and anacrusis quavers followed by crotchets. The teaching materials seemed exciting and challenging for my pupils, however, in my teaching experience, my pupils were not able to learn gradually due to the limited vocabulary of pitches, rhythm, time, space and other musical elements they possessed at the time of learning. The music within the materials consists of advanced pitch intervals and complex rhythms.

In my own teaching situation, it is necessary to have teaching materials where the materials are well-sequenced from the first class. By assuming that every pupil has



little knowledge about music, I structured my teaching materials sequentially and guided them through achieving musical literacy. Achieving the correct rhythms, beat and intervals of the pitches at the beginning, will assist in achieving the highest output from every learning and teaching session. This research is therefore focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the materials to use in a teaching sequence developed for a Chinese primary school in Malaysia?
2. What is the best melodic and rhythmic order to adapt in a teaching sequence based on the idiosyncrasies of the Malaysian Chinese language?

It is important to note that in Malaysian Chinese primary schools, there is a significant proportion of Chinese pupils from Cantonese families who speak various Cantonese dialects. However, the Mandarin language is the formal language used to communicate and to learn and teach in school. Therefore, songs sung in the Mandarin language would be more appropriate to assist lower primary pupils (Year One, Two and Three) to sing accurately and in tune due to the natural sound system that the pupils understand.

Besides using the strength of the language, singing which mimics environmental sounds, animal sounds and vehicle sounds in melodic singing is beneficial where the concepts are clearly conveyed. Pupils tend to sing at their best when they hear the song sung by their teacher, who must then guide them from simple high and low melodies up to pentatonic five melodic intervals high depending on the collected and analysed materials.





## 1.7 Research Aims

The research aims in this dissertation were to:

1. provide a set of sequenced teaching materials (songs) for use in the classroom.
2. provide a teaching sequence which can be referred to other schools including the national primary schools or Tamil primary schools in Malaysia.

## 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the current study includes a collection of Chinese children's folk songs. Chinese children's folk songs in the Mandarin language were formed with natural sounds and linguistics which aid the learning of musical concepts through singing activities. Simple melodies with small melodic intervals were found in the Chinese children's folk songs which enables the music to be used as teaching materials for beginners. The simple beats and rhythms found in the carefully selected Chinese children's folk songs were largely related to young children's daily activities such as walking, running or galloping. This study will demonstrate that through singing and movement with the selected music, young children at the age of 7 (Year One pupils) are able to picture the high and low pitches found in the melody of the songs through expressive movement while singing along with the music. Besides they are encouraged to make an exploration of the sounds (timbre, colour, thickness) when they were singing along with their peers. Through practical activities, pupils can then conceptualise and generate a meaningful link with the musical concepts which involve musical literacy.



The teaching sequence is based on the input of each activity and trial and error in the classroom teaching.

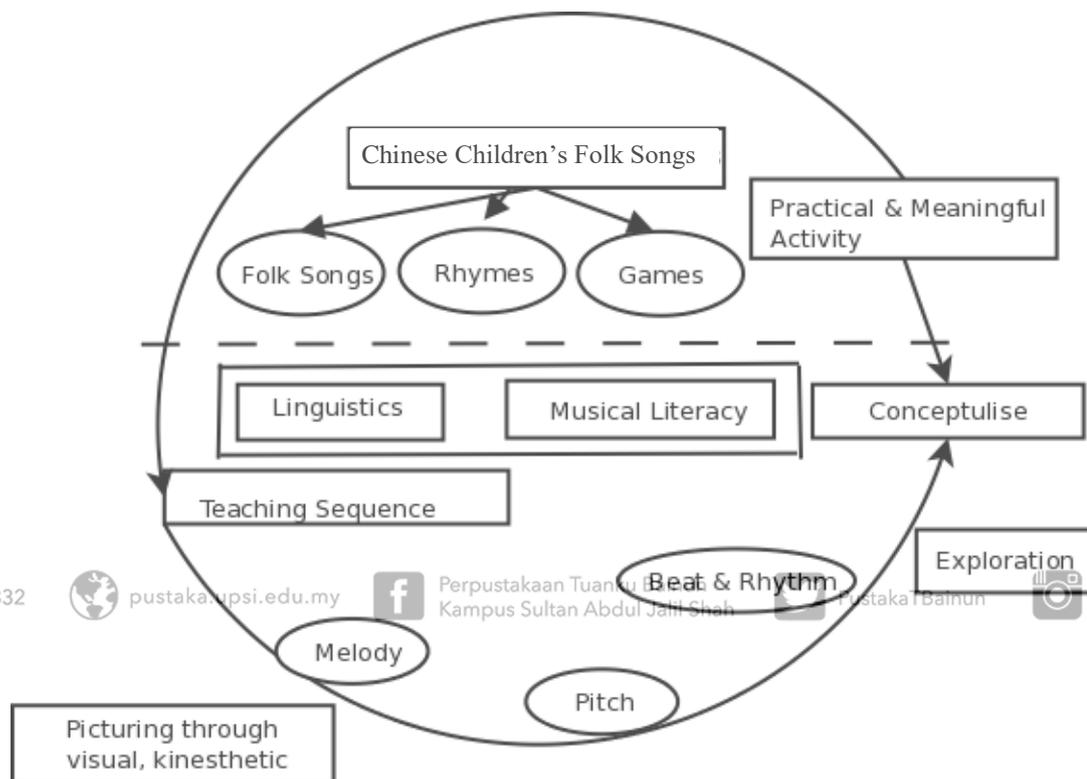


Figure 1.4 Theoretical Framework.

### 1.9 Significance of the Study

This study demonstrates an appropriate and effective sequence for arranging Chinese children's folk songs for teaching Year One pupils in Chinese primary schools. After analysing the melody and rhythms, local and non-local Chinese children's folk songs were sorted progressively. Finally, this study suggests a music learning sequence of

melodic and rhythmic concepts based on the Kodály child-centered teaching method for use in Malaysian Chinese public schools.

This study provides an insight into how the sequencing and alteration of teaching materials can be achieved through the cycles of action research. Action research in this study refers to the cyclical reflective process through the practitioner's own 'plan', 'execute' and 'reflect' process. The output observation and 'reflect' process from the action research provides insights into changes made to the alteration of teaching materials for educational purposes, the sequence of teaching materials and which should be taught first. Through the sorting of singing materials into an appropriate sequence, teachers could then provide a guideline for sequencing teaching materials and evaluate the output of their sequenced materials after every teaching

## 1.10 Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to (1) Action research carried out in one Chinese school in Rawang, Selangor, Malaysia; (2) participants were Year One pupils, and (3) the selected Chinese children's folk song teaching materials were in Mandarin language.

## 1.11 Definition of Terms

This dissertation will use the following definitions of terms:

**Children's Folk Song:** Folk song is a traditional or composed song typically characterised by stanzaic form, refrain, and simplicity of melody ("Merriam-Webster.com," n.d.). In this dissertation, children's folk songs refer to songs that originate in traditional popular culture, are well-known within the community and are sung in the mother tongue.

**Child-developmental Approach:** Musical experiences, including movement, are arranged according to the normal growth stages of the child (Gordon, 2012; Woods, 1987). In this dissertation, child-developmental approach represents the learning of skill based concepts based on the psychology and development of a child.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism asserts two principles in which (1) knowledge is not passively received by actively building up by the cognizing subject and (2) the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organisation of the experiential world, not the discovery of ontological reality (Von Glasersfeld, 1989). In this dissertation, constructivism means pupils construct their understanding and knowledge through experiencing things and reflecting on their experiences.

**Learning Sequence:** A learning sequence is an ordering of student's learning activities (Edutech Wiki, 2009). Learning sequence in this dissertation means an ordering of student's learning activity which related to the flow of teaching sequence.

**Teaching Sequence:** Teaching sequence or sequencing is an important skill which helps to correctly identify beginning, middle and ends (Linde, n.d.). In this context, teaching sequence is the logical and meaningful arrangement of what should be taught first and what should be taught later, in terms of the music concepts based on a child's development.

**Music Literacy:** Music literacy refers to culturally determined systems of knowledge in music and to musical abilities (Csíkós & Dohány, 2016). A person who is knowledgeable in music and capable of understanding music similar to understanding a language by reading or writing.

**Malaysian Chinese School:** The development of schools starting from the early 1950s was largely the result of untiring efforts by the Chinese educationists (*huajiao renshi*) to safeguard the interest of the mother tongue education of the Chinese in Malaysia (Raman & Sua, 2015). In this dissertation, a Malaysian Chinese school refers to a type of vernacular national school in which the Mandarin language is the medium of instruction.

**Malaysian Chinese:** The Malaysian Chinese consists of people of full or partial Chinese particularly Han Chinese, ancestry who were born in or migrated to Malaysia (Wikipedia contributors, 2018). In this dissertation, Malaysian Chinese refers to the descendent who resides in Malaysia and is a Malaysian citizen.

## 1.12 Summary

Chapter 1 has provided a brief overview of a Kodály-based teaching sequence, the problem statement, the objectives of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, significance of the study, limitation of the study and the definition of terms used in this dissertation.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW



#### 2.1

#### Introduction

This review focus on the research related to the vocal development of young pupils as it plays a major role in facilitating sequencing and the re-arranging of a collected Chinese children's folk songs in the Mandarin language, pupils' learning developments, and the sequencing of teaching materials. The study of child's acquisition of phonology and vocal production in Vihman (1996) traces the nature and timing of prosodic and segmental development has shown evidence of individual differences from cross-linguistic studies.



## 2.2 The Benefits of a Developmental Approach in Teaching Music to Young Children

Jellison and Kostka (1987) found that elementary school students recalled more specific musical information than non-specific social information when antecedent or student responses or consequent teaching patterns were used. Subsequent research has extended the observation database and solidified operational definitions for each of the 10 sequential patterns (Price, 1992; Rosenthal, 1989; Yarbrough & Price, 1989, 1991). Furthermore, complete and incomplete patterns were quantitatively and qualitatively investigated by Hendel (1995), who then expanded the cycle categories.

Bowyer (2015) states instruction itself should follow a ‘developmental approach’ which is a highly structured, sequenced approach with well-defined skill and concept hierarchies in teaching the concepts of music. In the development of children’s vocal ranges, young primary pupils at the age of seven have voices that are light and high, while a few may be low (Anderson & Lawrence, 2014). Anderson and Lawrence (2007) described children at the age of seven as being able to sing at least short phrases in tune and can begin to sing alone. Additionally, they can understand the difference between high and low pitches, as well as be able to sustain a single pitch. (Bowyer, 2015a) highlights that children’s singing range expands from five to six consecutive pitches ranging from D to B above middle C. Similarly, Young (1971) has observed that the voice range development of first grade children ranges from D3 to F3-Sharp or A2 to E3-flat; A2 to F3-sharp; A2 to C4; A2 to D4 and above. Children at the age of seven also understand the difference between a playground shouting voice and a singing voice.

Bowyer (2015) asserts that a Kodály sequence should begin with familiar songs affording children a tone set with which they can use solfège and hand signs, highlighting that teachers should introduce such songs only if the songs themselves are already familiar and are developmentally appropriate. They also begin to understand the importance of breathing in singing. They can sing melodies in major, minor and pentatonic scales (Bowyer, 2015a; Flowers & Dunne-Sousa, 1990; Michel, 1973). They may also sing call-and-response songs, as well as songs in two- or three-part forms (Trehub & Trainor, 1998; Turner, 1999). Children sing with attention to dynamics and changes in tempo (Nakata & Trehub, 2011). They can sing rhythmically, accenting strong beats and performing simple syncopated passages, simple music notation, as well as melodies with simple harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment in solfa (Bowyer, 2015a). Each of these developmental characteristics is an important aspect of teaching that all music teachers should consider whenever they prepare teaching materials and teaching objectives. It needs to be child-centred and tailored to their pupils' capabilities, different backgrounds, as well as their basic understanding of the subject matter.

In the Kodály method of teaching, pitch discrimination and the concepts of high and low are taught first. The folk songs of a child's linguistic heritage constitute a musical 'mother tongue' and therefore, should be the vehicle for all early instruction. The natural patterns of rhythm and melody are found in the folk music of all cultures. Through folk music, children can gain a sense of identity with the present and continuity with the past (Anderson & Lawrence, 2014, p. 92).

The essential teaching sequence could be arranged from the ground up by applying pitch discrimination and concepts of high and low from the Kodály method of teaching. By considering what Anderson and Lawrence (2007) referred to as the Kodály teaching essence, thoughtful sequencing can enable pupils to adapt the concepts they

learn in every lesson to their real life. In the next section, singing activities in learning music will be discussed.

### 2.3 Singing Activities in Learning Music

Cutietta (2013) states that one of the most overlooked instruments for beginner instruction is the singing voice. Often parents and young children are sent to music centres or private music classes for instrument-based learning. Singing activities can help to build a musical mentality and awareness for playing music on an instrument. Various teaching methods such as the Kodály method, Carl Orff's instrument method, Suzuki's violin method and Colourstrings' violin approach are such examples of successful teaching which provide instruction in singing before learning the instrument.

Kodály believed that "singing is the best foundation for musicianship" (Mark & Madura, 2014) as the music is internalised. Houlahan and Tacka (2015, p.22) explain that "singing requires the rapid internalisation of sound and provides immediate participation in the musical experience."

Murphey (1998) asserts that music is highly memorable and highly motivating. Singing music is one of the essential tools for language learning and teaching. He also argued about the importance of music and song in language learning, specifically that the singing of songs resembles what Piaget (1923) described as an egocentric language in which children talk with little concern for an addressee. The involuntary repetition suggested by Krashen (1983) showed that it is the manifestation of Chomsky's "language acquisition device" where our brains have a natural propensity to repeat what

we hear in our environment. Music and song singing provides variety and fun, and encourages harmony within oneself and a group. Pugmire and Pugmire-Stoy (1977) also asserts that a good melody helps a child to remember a song (p.199).

John Dewey (as cited in Newman, 1995) stated that the purpose of music education in school is to simplify, purify, and balance the various parts of the child's development. The teacher simplifies the environment by leading the child from the obvious to the subtle and purifies the child's musical environment by omitting the trivial and selecting the best examples of each type of music to be studied.

According to Anderson and Lawrence (2007), all people capable of lingual literacy are also capable of musical literacy. Learning to read music, like learning to read words, is a taught skill. Knowing how to read this language increases the quality of life itself. Every pupil should be given the opportunity to learn about music as well as express their feelings through the music that they have learnt.

Welch (2006) revealed that children's ability to reproduce the words of songs increased substantially every year at the age of five, six and seven. Their ability to pitch the tunes of the songs accurately lagged significantly behind word accuracy. Indeed, significant improvements in singing accurate pitch were not seen until the final year of the study.

Swanwick and Tillman (1986) described the stage from four to nine years of age as "imitation", in which there is a move "towards socially shared vernacular

conventions". Children at this age become more aware of the cultural conventions of the music they hear and develop an increased ability to recognise changes in tonal melodies (Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel, 1981). They are also able to identify the same tune played at different speeds (Sloboda, 1985). Their growing musical competence is shown in an increased ability to sing in tune, to control dynamics and to perform and respond rhythmically and in time.

## 2.4 Teaching Materials and Songs

In this section, the selection of songs and primary music education in Malaysia will be discussed.

### 2.4.1 Selection of Songs

The selection of music for the teacher to use in their classroom, especially for singing, should be age appropriate, tuneful, easily understandable and meaningful to the young children. Almost 50 years ago, Bobbitt (1970) highlighted that instructional materials must be programmed. This is to enable pre-established subject matter to be separated into small steps and organised into a logical sequence. The learning of each item could then be reinforced through repetitive affirmation and immediate application. Careful selection of songs and other music allows the teacher to teach musical concepts without difficulty. Similarly, Kodály highlights that only music of the highest artistic value,

both folk and composed, should be used in teaching. All music used to teach children should have intrinsic value and come from their heritage, so that the child will then learn to value good music (Anderson & Lawrence, 2007; Choksy, 1999; Houlahan & Tacka, 2015).

In a typical Orff Schulwerk class, children sing children's songs, rhymes and stories while moving, clapping hands and playing drums and xylophones. The purpose of this is to use melodies that come from the people's traditions so that children can understand music without having to read music from a score. Music is hence learnt through movement, singing, dancing and playing an instrument and not with a left analytical brain.

Efforts have been made towards the internalisation of teaching materials such as finding suitable folk songs that are used in different countries. For example, Denise Bacon published the translation of Hungarian folk songs in the USA because they were available as didactically arranged, with the convenience of a sequence of musical elements by music teachers (Liu, 2008). However, the action taken by Denise Bacon, in the beginning, was not consistent with Kodály's belief (Bacon, 1993) of having children learn about singing through singing songs in their mother tongue. Therefore, teachers need to collect their teaching materials (songs) based on their pupil's background. By having a set of suitable teaching materials, sequencing of the teaching materials can take place. The teacher is required to analyse and make a suitable selection of teaching materials (songs) as well as logical connections with their teaching objectives. This would guarantee that the teaching objectives are achievable and progressive.

## 2.4.2 Primary Music Education in Malaysian Chinese Primary Schools

Many children in Malaysia went to kindergarten where they were exposed to lullabies, children's rhymes, or folk songs. There are various songs which are commonly sung by kindergarten pupils in learning the language. Songs such as 'Two Tigers' (两只老虎 or 'Liang Zhi Lao Hu') and 'A Little Mouse' (小老鼠上灯台) are the examples of Chinese children's folk song. Kiester and Lew (2006) stated that some Chinese children's songs such as 'Big Head' (大头), 'The Playful Kitten' (顽皮的小猫咪) and 'The Little Fish' (一条小鱼) are examples of singing materials that are used in Malaysia for teaching kindergarten children. The songs are based on the teaching requirements provided in the standard syllabus documents for kindergarten by the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Malaysia (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2001).

The selection of songs is important as indicated by Barrett, McCoy, and Veblen (1997), who explain that in a classroom setting, the study of songs offers opportunities for pupils to be sensitive to the rhythms of language, vocabulary, and phrase structure (p. 144). Many songs that can be sung by heart or are frequently heard around our community or society have interesting origins and valuable histories that may be worth studying. In one example, a song used in teaching such as 猫来了 'cat comes' plays an important role in telling the story about a cat and a mouse in the kitchen. In the song, the quick movement of a mouse trying to escape when hearing a cat's meow and the falling sound 叽哩咕噜 'ji-li-ku-lu' are so natural to young children to learn quavers and imagine the falling sound of the mouse. The characteristics of the song itself consist

of the natural sounding system which are reflected along with the natural spoken language.

The KSSR syllabus implementation started incrementally with Year One in 2011; and by 2016 all six years of primary education followed the new curriculum (Samuel, 2017). The KSSR syllabus is being reviewed incrementally with Year One in 2016 followed by Year Two in 2017, Year Three in 2018 and up to Year Six in 2021. Prior to 2017, it was a standalone music subject with 30 minutes of weekly lessons. Before the introduction of the KSSR syllabus in 2011, the music subject in the KBSR syllabus comprised an hour of lessons weekly. In the newly revised KSSR music syllabus, new songs have been introduced.

In the transformation of the KSSR syllabus, all primary school music education subjects have undergone a major transformation. The transformation also affected vernacular schools such as Chinese and Tamil primary schools. In the revision of the KSSR syllabus for the primary school music syllabus starting in 2017, the music subject has been merged and integrated with art into one main arts education subject called “*Pendidikan Kesenian*”. World music was introduced in the most recent KSSR syllabus towards transforming the Malaysian music education curriculum (Wong & Chiu, 2017). Appendix F contains compared the sequence of songs found in the first published KSSR Year One Music Education teacher’s module textbook, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (2010) and the sequence of songs from revised version of KSSR Year One Arts Education textbook by Wong, Chan, Tee, and Loh (2016) for national Chinese primary schools.

The text book division from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia has published an “Arts Education” text book with different content for national school and vernacular schools based on a single KSSR syllabus. Figure 2.1 shows a new song titled “Good Friends, Good Students” which was composed by Wong Kwan Yie and published in the Year One Chinese primary school textbook (Wong et al., 2016). This song is an example of the improved teaching materials since the previously published song in the 2010 teacher’s guide book.

词曲：黄君伊

好朋友，好同学(Good Friends, Good Students)

好 朋 友 好 同 学 大 家 手 拉 手  
hao peng you hao tong xue da jia shou la shou

5  
你 在 左 我 在 右 一 起 向 前 走。  
ni zai zuo wo zai you yi qi xiang qian zhou.

Figure 2.1 Composed music, ‘Good Friends, Good Students’ from the KSSR Arts Education Year One textbook. (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2016).

Pupils’ learning development is a part of song selection consideration and will be discussed in the following section.

## 2.5 Pupils' Learning Development

Emotional development at the age of seven underpins all other learning. Pupils are capable of learning to understand their emotions through singing. Internalising the singing sound helps pupils to stabilise their emotions. Kodály believed that “singing is the best foundation for musicianship” as the music is internalised (Mark & Madura, 2014, as cited in Björkman, 2016). Through an understanding of emotions, pupils at this age learn to control their fear, happiness, sadness, anger and other emotions that appear during their schooling. Music continues to play a vital role in children’s personal, social and emotional development in these very early years of education.

Turner (2004) purports that “children who practice singing in tune and playing ear-training games before they turn six years of age have the best chance of developing excellent relative pitch” (p.93). In tune singing in the classroom would help very young children to establish relativity in interval singing (spatial skills) and promote the lifelong learning opportunity of enjoying music through singing beautiful tunes. While young children at an early stage cannot accurately sing in complex tones and rhythms, they can sing correctly in a limited range of tones such as pentatonic scales. Similarly, Turner (2004, p.33) believes that primary-grade children (age seven to eight years) are learning to match their voices to a pentatonic scale (five notes on a major scale, between ‘Do’ and ‘La’) and sing that scale in both ascending and descending order.

For beginner pupils or those who have little or no experience with notation, their perception of learning rhythmic patterns makes them tend to naturally group sounds

into meaningful chunks (Bamberger & Brody, 1984; Upitis, 1987). Bennett (1991) argued that in music, teachers' perceptions of patterns may tend to be visual and metric where they are able to focus on a steady pulse underlying the surface events of melody compared with children who try to chunk the information into meaningful perception for them to absorb as knowledge. In this case, the teacher needs to first present the aural and figural patterns in their instructional teaching and then direct visually and metrically through reading music notes and counting at a much later stage. Kodály also took the step of using a five-unit scale rather than a seven-unit scale to train pupils in intonation, which proved effective for pupils in gaining interval perspectives (Bobbitt, 1970). In general, beginners learn to strengthen their perspectives towards different high and low pitches while learning to sing accurately. Accurate singing of pitch during their early instruction establishes strong, positive learning. Musical literacy can then be

built upon in terms of temporal-spatial recognition and the execution of practical, accurate singing at a later stage. The Brookline experiment was one of the most successful examples of this, where fifth-grade pupils were able to identify and sing octaves, perfect fourths, and major and minor thirds correctly after training (Bobbitt, 1970). This is consistent with Nash (1974) who stated that it is wise to exercise and secure the young voice within a three to five-tone range but from different starting pitches. This voice process 1) extends their range gradually while strengthening the voice muscle and the understanding of pitch relationships within a given range, 2) permits simultaneous development of muscular coordination in patterned accompaniments with the singing, and 3) extends aural awareness and discrimination as different sound textures and registers in percussion instruments are introduced with the singing.

### 2.5.1 Musical Development

Turner (2004) states that children of seven to eight years are sensitive to musical style, and tend to get excited when the feel or mood of a predictable piece of music changes because they hear it performed with a different underlying rhythm. They tend to like jazzy rhythms, rock rhythms, calypso and reggae rhythms and look to rhythms for musical adventures that match their high-wired energies. Chapman (2011) highlights that singing could allow them to be captured by a moment, open experience, attend with an expectation of pleasure in performance and undergo a change of heart or mind whenever they participate in the performance.

Learning to sing notes in different intervals using solfège and corresponding hand signs helps six- to eight-year-olds sing all notes in tune. They learn to hear and match pitch faster at this stage, and the tunefulness lasts a lifetime (J. B. Turner, 2004). Six- to eight-year-old children begin to gain control of their voices, and they have a greater ability to sing softly and tunefully, or with intentional volume and power. This means that they can handle choral arrangements of songs that require them to sing dynamically. Children in this age group can also sing different kinds of songs with leaders and followers, partners, and two-part arrangements, indicating that they can begin to sing accurately for short choral arrangements of songs. Music vocalisation and call-and-response games are a natural part of how infants acquire spoken language, constantly experimenting with a range of sounds and pitches. This shows that the foundation for language acquisition through singing is important before moving into teaching reading, especially to young children.

## 2.5.2 Pupil's Vocal Development

In the early sixties, Bentley (1968) reported that approximately twice as many boys were designated in singing monotones before the age of eight. The influences due to age are significant and some findings related to the interval matching skills of children from Argentina, Poland, Spain and the USA indicate that children correctly sang ascending and descending to-tone contours 97% of the time and performed precise intervals with 60% accuracy (Moore, Fyk, Frega, & Brotons, 1995). Therefore, there is a need to carefully design teaching materials to suit the singing skills according to the pupils' development.

Young and Glover (1998) state that the singing ranges at the age of three to five are still limited. Therefore, music educators must understand their entire pupil's vocal range and design teaching materials (songs) based on their capabilities and singing range. Teachers need to identify their students' backgrounds and select singing materials that can increase their interest in learning music and language acquisition that is based on culture, and are rich in moral and musical values. Similarly, in this research, the sequence of teaching materials will start from collecting familiar local songs, analysed by tone set and based on the Kodály teaching principle where the teaching sequence is based on the 'developmental centre' of pupils. The rationale and songs used in sequencing the teaching are reported in Chapter 4 – Findings.

Pound and Harrison (2002) found that children as young as three years of age start to enjoy repeating familiar songs and develop a repertoire of favourites. Children's

vocal development starts as soon as they are born. Therefore, it is important for music educators to use every child's voice and enhance it through learning to control their production of sound. This is the foundation for music learning by practical singing.

Pupils generally develop a wider repertoire of songs through the ages of five to seven. Pound and Harrison (2002) reported that at this age, their ability to sing in tune continues to develop within their 'natural' vocal range. The songs chosen should offer opportunities for them to develop vocal control including dynamics and tone quality. The singing of slow call-and-response songs such as 'Tongo' (a Filipino folk song) also helps pupils at this age to develop the skill of sustaining longer notes. The young children's singing range suggested by Cutietta (2013) is from middle C to G above that.

He emphasised that singing is a skill that needs to be developed over time and should not be hurried, requiring good planning to reach the ultimate goal of acquiring more complex musical skills.

### 2.5.3 The Child's Voice: Speaking and Singing

In the 1970s, Nash (1974) stated that the educational goal for the child in the early years from kindergarten and first grade is to find, feel and use his or her singing voice, within a five- to six-tone range, omitting the half-steps 'Fa' and or 'Ti' (p. 49). However, learning pitches without reference to key, form, or harmony is like seeing many different colours without understanding that you are looking at an impressionist painting (Caldwell, 1995). The materials and singing tones must be able to be sung

within the capabilities of young children. The text and song should be easily understood by young children especially at the very beginning of their learning. This is crucial to promote positive and fun learning while developing a proper understanding of the content by linking it to their prior knowledge.

Newman (1995) highlighted that the teacher should demonstrate the differences between speaking and singing. The child's speaking voice pitch is usually around middle C (Cutietta, 2013). The comfortable singing range for children starting school is from D above middle C to B on the third line of the treble staff. With maturation and training, the singing range expands, eventually extending to high F or G, and A or G below middle C. Male teachers may find that some children will try to match the adult male voice range, which is usually an octave lower than the unchanged child voice.

#### **2.5.4 Tone Set and Rhythms for Teaching Singing to Young Children**

Cutietta (2013) stated that when singing with young children, teachers are encouraged to select songs with a limited range of pitches, and use pitches that are adjacent to one another – in other words not leaping around. Bobbitt (1970) highlighted that it is not possible for pupils to sing a group of tones derived from a specific intervallic combination without understanding the structural origin of the pitch sequence. This seminal research is cited in various recent research studies such as Ward (2011). The minimal interval leaps enable children to progressively learn and relate the intervals of pitch.

The findings of a Czechoslovakian study (as cited in Nash, 1974) found that the natural range of the young child's voice is capable of singing five tones only. Singing within this recommended range for a young child's voice would help them achieve focused learning especially in singing accurate pitch. Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2014) emphasise that not all children sing accurately in tune, although the majority of children are capable of it. Pitch matching exercises may help children who are weak in singing in tune.

Gilbert (as cited in Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel, 1981) found that children aged seven on average could assess the direction of some intervals as small as two-thirds of a semitone. Mills (1988) found that they assess an interval as small as one-sixth of a semitone. In the mid-1960s, Bentley (1966) found that the average child at the age of seven could recognise one-third of a semitone, which indicates that seven-year-old children can normally discriminate slight differences in pitch.

Campbell (2001) argued that the natural sound of calling a person from far away with the falling minor third interval shows the sounding system that has come naturally over a long period of time (p.164). It is also called Ur singing where only two or three pitches are sung. Howard Gardner observed Ur singing and proposed that every ear from around the world can identify the three-note motive like the songs '*Ring Around the Rosie*', or '*This Old Man*'. This is what he refers to as singing with most simplistic songs where pupils at a very young age easily could identify and sing a song with accurate pitch.

The children's taunt tune is an easy and natural song to sing for pupils. Various sources (Marsh, 2008; Romet, 1980) have reported on the usefulness of the children's taunt tune as a source of natural learning material. Ashton (1955) discussed the words and meaning in his collection of children's taunts and teases while there were still many sources that argue about the origin of children's taunts. The children's taunt tune which consists of three different pitches 'So', 'Mi' and 'La' could serve as part of a teaching sequence in enhancing pupils' foundation towards accurate singing.

When teaching a song by rote with a conceptual emphasis, the focus is placed on some aspects of the song, such as an ascending or a descending melody, duple meter, beat, or repetition of a melodic or rhythmic pattern. The following teaching strategies focus on both rhythm and pitch concepts:

1) Rhythm: focus the pupils' attention on an aspect of rhythm. For instance, the teacher could clap a rhythmic pattern from the song and ask the children to echo it. This could be extended to saying the words or playing the rhythm on a classroom percussion instrument.

2) Pitch: focus the pupils' attention on an aspect of pitch. You could 'map' the melody, indicating where it goes high or low or has long or short durations. Tone matching might be included as you ask pupils to imitate a high pitch or a short pitch pattern. You can ask the pupils to sing the melodic patterns or play them on resonator bells or xylophones to practice tone matching.

There have been various studies related to the teaching of rhythm literacy. Colley (1987) demonstrated the difference between how pupils achieve learning rhythmic notation through two groups, the first using the Kodály method and the second using the Gordon teaching method.

## 2.6 Teaching Sequence in Education

Kodály and Orff have a well-developed teaching sequence for the teacher to follow in teaching music concepts in the classroom. The Orff and Kodály organisations and other groups representing “rigorous, sequenced, skill-based curriculums” (Kay 1999, p.4) were cited in Spurgeon (2004). Cutietta (2013) argued that one component of musical aptitude is related to a person's rhythmic potential, and another is the tonal potential. A child with high rhythmic aptitude and lower tonal aptitude is more likely to be drawn towards dance, rhythmic instruments such as drums or guitar, or even sports. Likewise, a child with high tonal aptitude but lower rhythmic aptitude might be drawn towards learning melodic instruments such as the violin, flute or voice. We can conclude that musical aptitude affects a person's characteristics in expressing music either by singing or playing on an indefinite pitch instrument or a pitched instrument.

Cutietta (2013) also highlighted that incorrect patterns could be laid down just as easily as the correct ones at the time of teaching. Therefore, it is important to choose instructions wisely. Bobbitt (1970) suggested that instructional materials must be programmed, so that pre-established subject matter is separated into small steps,

organised into a logical sequence and then reinforced through repetitive affirmation and immediate application. Bennett (1991) also highlighted that organising music into patterns has not been neglected in elementary music education. Methods such as sequences based on tonal and rhythmic patterns that are idiomatic to a culture as suggested by Zoltan Kodály will be the most efficient ways for pupils to obtain musical concepts. Pupils are arguably not getting much musical value out of an experience if the concepts are not taught correctly. Teaching with appropriate timing and materials plays an important role especially when it would provide positive learning attitudes towards the learning objectives to be achieved within the teaching session.

According to Cutietta (2013), the primary purpose of early instruction is the development of aptitude and musicality, not building achievement. The pupils should work on learning to lay down certain mental skills towards the right pitch, singing with the right key and carefully discriminating different pitches. They should be trained to be able to acquire an intervallic sensitivity for melodic progression, including the function of tendency tones and other important directional units in given teaching materials (Bobbitt, 1970). They should be progressing in listening skills and adjusting their physical motor skills. Through singing with shape and tonal control, pupils can develop their perception in listening and expressing feelings through songs.

### 2.6.1 Kodály Teaching Sequence

Kodály teaching sequences have been developed locally in many countries such as Hungary, USA, Taiwan, Japan, and Australia (Choksy, 1999b; M Houlahan & Tacka, 2015b; Liu, 2008; Peng, 2006). The Kodály based music teaching sequence is grouped by rhythmic concepts, melodic concepts, and other musical elements such as tempo and dynamics, as well as the theory of music. Houlahan and Tacka (2015) highlight that the idea of sequential pedagogy has created a way of presenting musical concepts with appropriate use of materials and provides a guide for teachers to develop skills. Various studies have laid out several melodic and rhythmic sequences that general music teachers can use in their classrooms (Choksy, 2001; Eisen & Robertson, 2002; Houlahan & Tacka, 2008; Klinger, 2012).

Kodály, working in his native Hungary, advocated a sequential and developmental music programme with musical literacy as its goal (De Vries, 2001). Paechter (2001) showed that numerous educators from other countries such as Australia, USA, and Canada adopted both Kodály's sequence for teaching melody and Hungarian folk music. In Malaysia, this teaching sequence could be adapted and incorporated into the core of musical instruction in primary schools. The Kodály method is also referred to as the Kodály concept, which is an approach to music education developed in Hungary in the mid-twentieth century by Zoltan Kodály. The core idea is not to attempt to duplicate real-world practice, because the aim of music education is not to educate all pupils for careers as professional musicians but to organise music classrooms and programmes as effectively and genuinely as possible by



simulating the ways in which music and listening are carried out by artistic music practitioners (De Vries, 2001).

Choksy (1974) stated that Kodály's highly structured and sequenced music instruction was inspired by his belief in the importance of sequencing in the teaching and learning of music. The sequential music instruction was designed by considering the developmental stage of the children, or the child development centre. He considered a young child's mental and physical development and then selected a sequence of concepts to be taught based on the frequency with which the musical elements occur in folk and composed repertoire. However, Brandl (2000) argued that the Kodály sequence was not developed by Zoltan Kodály in Hungary, but it is certainly an example of effective brain-based construction as it takes advantage of the brain's ability to understand patterns and gestalts. The incorporating of a carefully sequenced teaching

could be an effective brain-based construction.

Feucht (1998) suggested that Sequential Lesson plans for other grade levels could be developed by teaching the Kodály concept of music education with deliberate application of Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligence in year one, two and three.

It took Dániel three years to adapt the sequence for each grade. The first year of each three-year period was spent in teaching and experimenting with the Hungarian method in its traditional format. She then refined the curriculum in each successive year. Thus, her second year at San Roque School involved formulating the second-grade curriculum while she refined the first-grade curriculum she had experimented with the previous year. In the third year, she continued to experiment and refine even more extensively, though by then she



was more knowledgeable as to which songs and pedagogical techniques would work. (Ferrell, 2003, p.31).

In an interview with Kopecky by Ferrell, he showed that it took years to formulate each different teaching sequence for different school grades. The sequence of instruction should be experimented with while teaching in order to determine which sequence is most appropriate to be incorporated into teaching the music subject. An important tenet of the Kodály philosophy is that the materials and sequence used in the process of instruction must be embedded in the indigenous culture of the people to whom it is taught (Ferrell, 2003). By using a sequential way of instruction, the teacher will have the ability to derive the most simple concept then show how to elicit appropriate responses from the pupils.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2014) showed that works by Choksy (1999a, 1999b), Zone (1971-1974), Sony (1974-1979), Forrai (1988) and Houlahan and Tacka (2008) provide information on materials and sequences espoused by Kodály. The importance of a sequence in teaching is a basic requirement in classroom music teaching. The contemporary music educator, Edwin Gordon showed that teaching is accomplished through informal guidance that is based on and responds to natural sequential activities and the responses of the child (Harris, 2009, p. 31).

Sequencing the teaching of concepts and skills through the Kodály trilogy is accomplished by using three important strategies, which are 'prepare', 'present' and 'practice' (Boshkoff, 1991). Newman (1995) states that many music teachers follow a 'prepare-present-practice' structure in planning and teaching music reading skills. Each

new learning is prepared through speech, song, movement, and many other activities that do not use notation or rhythm syllables. When children are familiar with the new element, it is then presented (named and identified) and practised in other songs and activities in lessons that follow. As the sequence of learning continues, children become increasingly aware of notation relationships: each note or rest is equal to two of the next smaller units (p. 15). Children begin with crotchet notes, crotchet rests, and quaver notes, before learning longer and shorter note and rest values.

The Kodály approach emphasises music in early childhood, unaccompanied singing, the use of selected folk songs and art music, and a carefully organised sequence of instruction that extends from early childhood to advanced musicianship (Cutietta, 2013; Woods, 1987). The Kodály pedagogy includes singing games, visual aids, and instructional techniques that make music classes enjoyable as well as productive. Pitch notation is introduced through many gradual increments, each presented in a developmentally appropriate, child-centered learning sequence. During the child's first-grade year, for instance, only 'La', 'So', 'Mi' and 'Do' are "made conscious" even though children will still sing and listen to many songs which contain the entire diatonic scale (p.272). Generally, *So-Mi* and *So-La-So-Mi* are also well-known pitch sequences (Jacobi, 2012).

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2014) showed that the Kodály method offers a sequence for the teaching of melodic patterns that are derived logically from traditional songs. The sequence begins with songs with just *So-Mi* pitches and gradually move to songs with tetratonic scales, tetratonic scales, pentatonic scales and finally with a full

diatonic scale. As children develop abilities to discriminate pitches and to sing in tune, they should also be developing tonal memory. The teacher can guide children in strengthening their tonal memory by playing "name that tune" in which they identify the title of a familiar song sung by their teacher. Tonal memory, like rhythmic memory, requires children's utmost concentration. With it, their musicianship and their repertoire of songs can grow (p. 83).

This research includes a skill sequence and a content sequence which according to Latten (2005), provides an ordered list of benchmarks for optimal pupil achievement, which is sometimes based on research in developmental patterns in pupils, and sometimes on observations of successful teaching practices. A content sequence organises the information and strategies to be utilised in a certain order based on the progression of levels of the pupils' ability and, sometimes, children's developmental stages. Skill sequences and theories of developmental stages each guide the construction of content sequences.

Students can be asked to match intervals and patterns that increase in difficulty by using the pitch sequences discussed by Moore et. al (1995) Jones (1971), Sinor (1984), Wolf (2005), and Young (1971). Teachers can use songs from textbooks or Kodály and Orff Schulwerk methods to evaluate singers' abilities with specific pitch sequences. Singing research has employed pitch-matching tasks such as single pitches, intervals, patterns, phrase singing, and song-singing. Roberts and Davies (1975) and Nichols (2013) established that at least four of these - the single pitch, interval, pattern, and song-singing tasks - are discriminators of accurate singing. Therefore, it is clear that these four tasks can be used in informal or formal singing assessments. (Nichols, 2016, p. 44)

Various studies have found that using a Kodály-based teaching sequence can be developmentally important to primary age pupils in their studies. Torkelson (1990)

found that students in the Kodály group grasped the Kodály concepts with more ease compared with those exposed to the Gordon learning sequence activities in a comparative study of Gordon and Kodály-based rhythm in first-grade pupils. Gordon learning sequence activities, however, might be useful in helping the pupil understand rhythm. Therefore, we can integrate some of the Gordon learning sequences in our lessons.

More recently, Olson (2000) examined the effects of extra Kodály-based music instruction. He found that first-grade pupils' music, reading and math achievement and social skills development correlated at .87 (Spearman correlation). With the proper teaching sequence, the skills can then be built progressively.

## 2.6.2 Differences in Kodály Teaching Globally

The idea of the Kodály teaching sequence originated from Hungary. In Malaysia, the adaptation of teaching sequences is mainly influenced by the Australian Kodály Society and the Kodály Institute of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Kecskemét, Hungary. In the USA, teaching sequences are found in Kodály Today by Mícheál Houlahan and Tacka (2008b), Kodály I, Kodály II by (Choksy, 1999b). In Taiwan, extensive research has been carried out in designing a teaching sequence for use in Taiwanese- based local Chinese folk songs (Zheng, 2002, 2003). Other detailed sequences found in different literature sources can be found in Appendix E.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2013) showed that the Kodály pedagogy in Hungary stipulated four to six weekly periods of music from kindergarten through to secondary levels and a sequence of musical experiences that progresses from rhythmic training through to singing and instrumental lessons. American-style Kodály Today (Mícheál Houlihan & Tacka, 2008) retains the use of pentatonic folk songs, the tonic ‘*So-Fa*’ approach to sight-reading, with its hand signs, a rhythmic system of mnemonic syllables, and an emphasis on the unaccompanied song. As part of the focus on music reading and writing, a preparatory period of ear training emphasises rhythmic and melodic patterns that are encountered in songs and later in visual form (p.53).

“According to some Kodály-based curricula in America, children are expected to begin reading and writing music notation in first grade” (Scott, 2004, p. 23). In the sequence of concepts that is commonly used in elementary music curricula, first-grade students are expected to aurally and visually identify the ‘*ta*’ syllable (one sound on the beat), ‘*ti-ti*’ syllable (two sounds on the beat), *ta*-rest, accent, the meter of simple and compound meter songs, and ‘*So*’, ‘*Mi*’, and ‘*La*’ tones.

## 2.7 Chinese Children’s Folk Songs

The use of Chinese children’s folk songs in teaching enables the discovery of the richness and breadth of our musical heritage, the exploration of the music of other cultures, the discovery of relationships between music and other arts. Bowyer (2015b) stressed that folk songs are culturally significant and are often quite singable and can



lead to very musical sight-singing. This also aids in the discovery of the degree of musical talent that students possess, appeals to the imagination, gives opportunities for self-expression and creativity, increases the pleasure pupils derive from music, and brings opportunities for success and increases children's joy and pleasure in life. Bennett (1991) argued that natural inflexions and rhythms of the spoken language are among the criteria used for selecting folk songs.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2014) argued that Kodály recognised art music of the European tradition and its folk or traditional origins as worthwhile. He favoured the beautiful pentatonic melodies of the Hungarians and greatly admired the *a cappella* vocal music of the Renaissance. For American teachers, not only Western European art music but also the many coexisting musical cultures of American society present rich resources of good music for use with children (P. Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2014, p. 53). In Malaysia, incorporating existing music from the local culture may present many benefits to children especially in terms of music appreciation. The study of local ethnomusicologists in discovering the local tradition and its folk music can be included as part of music teaching in a classroom setting.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (2014) suggested an holistic approach to music instruction which is called Education Through Music (ETM). This was an historical movement begun by American music educator Mary Helen Richards some 50 years ago to examine ways in which the ideals of Kodály's Hungarian pedagogy could be adapted to the needs of children and teachers in the USA. Richards first published her songs and instructional sequence in a series of books and charts that were a prelude to ETM.



She used Kodály's suggestions in finding folk songs from the North American continent to introduce to children, and she became fascinated with the relationship between the way songs and language were acquired through pattern recognition. The ETM spirit is alive and well in the curricular approaches of Peggy Bennett (1997-2010). The approach makes use of folk songs and singing games of the United States and the British Isles. Many of the songs are selected because they involve children in both singing and kinaesthetic experiences (actions, circle games, line and partner dances and so forth). (P. Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2014, p. 64)

One of the characteristics found in children's folk music is that the length of the music is short with many repeating rhythmic and melodic patterns. Nash (1974) argued that the act of repeating a rhythmic pattern, singing and consciously listening to accompanying patterns requires total involvement. Because the actions and the total sound (rhythmic and tonal) are irresistible forces which draw the child into participation, he is stretching his potential to accomplish the feat. Long (1977) showed that the relationship between pitch memory in short melodies and selected factors affect the way we memorise melody. The tonal melody is highly preferable compared to the atonal melody in a better memorisation of melody.

To pupils whose mother tongue is the Chinese language, Chinese children's folk songs are easy to sing. This includes rhymes that are made along with basic pentatonic scales. These can be called a nursery rhyme, a children's chant, or a Chinese rhyme. The language used in the rhyme is simple and can be easily sung without any notation. The natural falling and rising tones from the basic sounding system of the language itself could guide a person who reads to almost rhyme in singing. For example, the short phrase like 'Rain, rain, go away. Come again another day' could rhyme up and be sung in simple crotchet and quaver beats. This is the main purpose of the present research where the identified songs are being placed into a sequential order for teaching melody,

musical intervals, and singing. Singing activities are placed first and foremost throughout the entire course to learn musical concepts physically.

Cutietta (2013) highlighted that fundamental to the Kodály approach is the use of folk songs, whereby much emphasis is placed on developing the pure singing voice of children through the singing of traditional songs from the children’s culture (p. 129). In Malaysia, local folk songs have been collected by Abdullah, Nasrifan, Rahim, and Ramli (2013a, 2013b) and have also been included in Kiester and Lew (2006), “Games Children Sing: Malaysia” by Jackie Choi-Theng Lew and Patricia Campbell. There are also various Chinese published books for Music Education in Chinese primary schools. However, there are non-sequenced materials in these books for classroom instruction.

Therefore, the need to collect Chinese children’s folk songs and arrange them according to teaching objectives is urgent.

## 2.8 Action Research

The term “action research” was first coined by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1934 (Marrow, 1969). The development and studies in action research have since then been widely used in multiple disciplines including Music Education. Bresler (1995) showed that through the study of experiential knowledge, students’ experiences reflecting a perspective which is holistic and often unanticipated could enable the researcher to expand and fill them with deeply personal meanings. The teaching also requires a phenomenological sensitivity to students’ realities and their life, where teachers should

have the ability to facilitate pupils output and to realise the pedagogic significance of every different situation while interacting with children (Van Manen, 2016a).

Action research requires careful monitoring of planned changes in practice. Collaboration is an important element identified in action research. This research is the first-person mode of action research which has as its focus some dimension or aspect of the researcher's life and practice. The first-person research is centred on what effect and impact the research-practitioner has upon the world while they are acting in it and not just being a detached observer.

Herr and Anderson (2014) highlighted that positionality in action research is also called self-study by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), or autoethnography by Bochner Ellis (2002) and Reed-Danahay (1997). However, Donald Schon (1983, 1987) mentioned that such studies add to the literature on reflective practice and professional teaching which has a greater emphasis on narrative, or a self-reflective method. According to Herr and Anderson (2014), self-studies often use journals and diaries as major sources of data. In my research, the self-study methodology is relevant. In my teaching practice, I jotted down everything related to my research into self-reflective journals and diaries for later analysis. The sorting order (sequence) of teaching materials and teaching environment enabled me to sort properly, analyse and re-order the teaching materials as well as to provide analytical views on my teaching practice.

Bell (1999, p.106) highlighted that “most educational projects will require the analysis of documentary evidence”. In this research, the documentary evidence includes

diaries, journals and field notes, which are important raw data for analysis. Anything significant regarding the teaching sequence or the teaching activities that have been carried out were recorded in the journal. In analysing data, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), meaning can be drawn from clustering information, counting frequencies of occurrence, and seeing plausibility (Taylor, Wilkie, & Baser, 2006).

Freeman (1998) in Taylor, Wilkie, and Baser (2006) argued that the process of action research is investigating what, as a researcher, you feel you know already, but in carrying out an investigation, you push yourself “to examine the sense of certainty, to expose, to scrutinise, to question, not because you are mistaken but to find out what is true and why”. It is important that the significance, generalisability, reliability, and validity are required as suggested in Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight (2001).

Action research in a Master programme according to Zuber-Skerritt and Perry (2002) showed that a master core action research project needs only to progress through one major (or several minor) planning, acting, observing, or reflecting the cycle of professional practice to demonstrate the mastery of the research methodology is rigorous. This provides a core guideline which was important in the shape and design of this research.

## 2.9 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the Kodály method, a Kodály teaching sequence, a brief history of the Malaysian music education system and the benefits of using the Kodály method in the classroom. The pupils' learning development and action research were also discussed. This literature review has revealed how music teaching affects children's learning. Different teaching sequences from various countries were presented in this chapter. The main objective of this research, it is to present a teaching sequence for Malaysian Chinese primary schools which will contribute to the body of knowledge in this field. The sequence patterns used in teaching singing through arranging the teaching materials which can be clearly defined after the plan, act, and reflect phase in action research. Through an analysis of the melodic and rhythmic patterns from the collected resources and internal findings from the literature, this

research will present a validated and concrete report on the designing of a teaching sequence (including materials) for teaching Year One Chinese school children in Malaysian Chinese primary schools.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY



#### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this action research study was to describe the pedagogical strategies in sequencing teaching materials for Year One pupils. The study was undertaken in a school to identify suitable materials and sort them in sequential order. The sequenced teaching materials were then used to explore the possible teaching strategies as well as identify the positive effects in pupils from specific classes in a school. In this chapter, the research methodology were discussed, including the research design, action research, teaching plan, and instrument of the research.

A carefully planned Kodály-based teaching sequence was used in this research.

The sequence was arranged based on the selected music. The research was carried out



over a total of 12 weeks, and every lesson was carefully detailed in a reflective journal (Appendix D), reflecting on the teaching and learning process. The songs used were analysed to determine whether their difficulty levels were suitable and appropriate for the teaching sequence. After being analysed and sorted according to the difficulty level, the list of songs was used throughout the cycles of reflective teaching in the classroom.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research design for this study is action research based on Kemmis' action research model from Carr and Kemmis (2002). In this research, the first step taken was to collect Chinese children's folk music, which was subsequently analysed. The main study of this action research was to design a music teaching sequence, and this was carried out in a Chinese Primary School in Rawang, Selangor, Malaysia. The Kodály-based teaching sequence was designed based on several cycles of teaching Year One pupils (seven years of age) in a national primary school. Below is the diagram outlining the research carried out throughout the research.

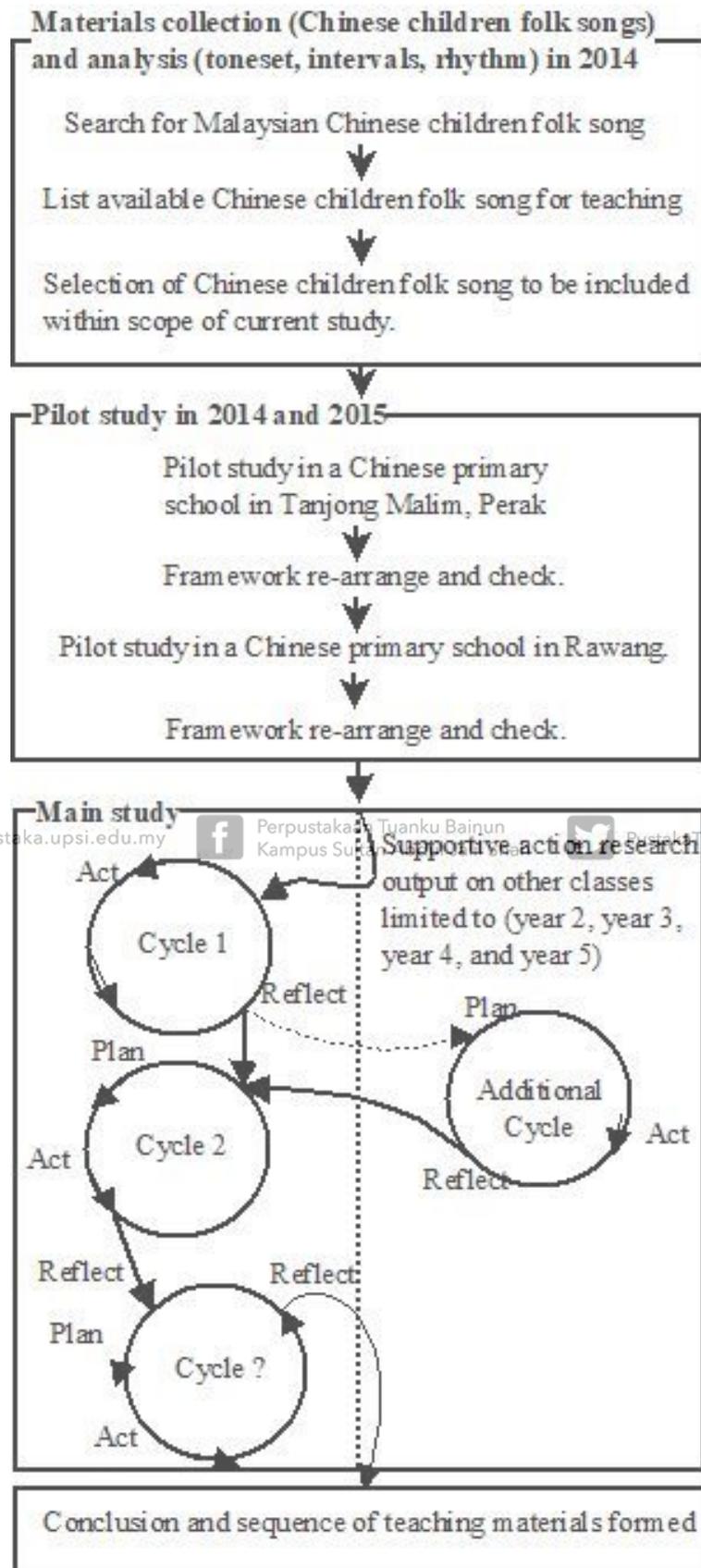


Figure 3.1 Action research design in the current research by adapting the Kemmis model of action research.

### 3.2.1 Action Research

Carr (as cited in Noffke & Somek, 2009) argues that practical wisdom can only “be acquired by practitioners who, in seeking to achieve the standards of excellence inherent in their practice, develop the capacity to make a wise and prudent judgment about what, in particular, situations, would constitute an appropriate expression of the good.” (p. 426). As a teacher, I needed to collect and arrange the teaching materials in a systematic way; analyse the collected teaching materials; carry out the practice through practical teaching in the classroom using the analysed materials; and lastly, produce reflective reports with a critical evaluation towards arranging my sequence of teaching. Using adaptive material that promotes a constructive learning environment was central to my study. Carr (as cited in Noffke & Somek, 2009) argued that constructing local knowledge of practice is understood as a process of building and critiquing conceptual frameworks that link action and problems to the immediate teaching context, hence contributing to larger and more public social, cultural, and political issues. In my research, I employed a process of “plan”, “practice” and “reflect” continually until the whole concept of sequencing teaching materials (songs) became evident. The altering of teaching materials thus became routine in my teaching practice. I employed conceptual frameworks that were then verified by my critical reflection and observation. The process of critiquing self-practice was then able to generate new knowledge contributing established literature in this area of teaching.

According to Reason and Bradbury (2013), there are five main types of action research which range from (1) an insider studying his or her own practice, (2) an insider in collaboration with other insiders; (3) insiders in collaboration with outsiders; (4)

insider or outsider teams working in reciprocal collaboration; and (5) outsiders in collaboration with insiders. Reason and Bradbury's action research (as cited in Creswell, 2015) can then be categorised into two main types of action research which are (1) practical action research and (2) participatory action research. In this research, self-study action research, or an insider studying his or her practice, and practical action research were carried out, according to the method proposed by Reason and Bradbury (2013). The work of Marshall (1999), Whitehead and McNiff (2006) both strongly influenced my self-study action research, primarily because I am the only teacher teaching music to Year One pupils at my school. Therefore, I was only able to receive feedback from other teachers such as class teachers in the school. The feedback from pupils when learning music in my classroom served as part of the data for designing my teaching sequence. The pupils' responses included their thoughts on the use of Chinese children's folk songs, teaching activities, learning content, as well as their mood or motivation towards learning the subject.

Pine (2008) discussed the reflection phase of action research, and he quoted Hart, Sorensen, & Naylor (1992) who purported that without reflecting on teaching and having a purposeful direction, teachers would be unable to identify the effectiveness of our teaching. If we are aware of our teaching effectiveness, we are then able to modify our teaching if the outcomes are shown to be ineffective. There are some key elements that should be captured during an action research including (1) it occurs during ongoing activity; (2) arises spontaneously from the activity; (3) produces a decision during the activity; and (4) is usually intuitive and tacit (Lauden, 1991; Pine, 2008). In the current research, I used autobiographical reflection, that is an action where researchers examine the "metaphorical meanings of their stories to understand and explain the practice"

(Pine, 2008, p.181). The main focuses in researching a teaching sequence are to understand more about the pupil's responses to learning the sequenced songs, their implicit feelings about the planned learning sequence through their nonverbal gestures, as well as constraints such as the short period allocated to music teaching in the school schedule.

By investigating teaching sequences, I aimed to provide a systematic and analytical questioning towards answering various questions that arise during the teaching and learning process. In achieving the quality of reflection in my research, the work of Dewey (1997), Calderhead and Gates (2003), Lyons (2010), Palmer (2009), Schön (2014), and Van Manen (1990, 2016) were integral sources used for my literature and applications. According to Pine (2008), reflective documentation is an important part of the most productive approach for examining the wide range of contextual and multi-dimensional variables that impinge on the development of both teachers' and pupils' learning process. For this purpose, the observations were collected through a short video recording, voice recording, journal writings, and diaries. These became the primary data of my research that were used towards analysis and critical discussion. Journaling and recording events and thoughts during the day became an essential process in my teaching practices.

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations to improve the rationality and justice of their practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.162) in Smith (2013).

While teaching in the classroom, I often encountered problems in my teaching practice regarding the sequencing of materials and which musical concepts to be taught. An understanding of a music learning sequence that is child-centred and development-based is the precept laid down in Kodály’s education philosophy. A sequence pattern was identified through “reflective action research” in my classroom while working with participants, pupils in my class, and reflective documentation was used for the analysis of the outcome of this research.

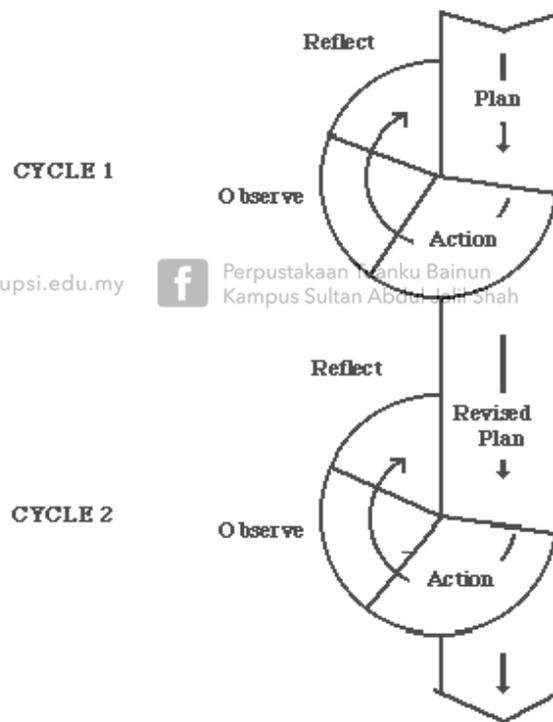


Figure 3.2 Kemmis action research model (Kemmis, 2008).

### 3.2.2 Validity and Problem Bias in Research

In the aspects of validity of research, it is argued that the tests of good research here were rather around reflections on links between theory and practice, understanding of the meaning and the significance and impact of constructions of meaning, and making knowledge shareable, useful and relevant to practice (Sikes & Potts, 2008).

Sagor (2010) showed that the collected data could be triangulated by using personal journals, video collection, and audio clips, as well as cross-classroom techniques. In the current study, the descriptions of each classroom teaching session from 5 different classes of Year One in 2016, one class in 2015 and three classes in 2014 were used to compare and produce valid research findings. These were critically compared and contrasted to ensure the higher reliability of the research findings, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Masters (1995) notes that there are three main action research areas: technical action research, mutual – collaboration and participatory. In the current research, one-person self-study action research, in the form of technical action research was carried out. Although it does not have outer validation, there is internal validation such as a literature review, journal validation, as well as cross-teaching of different groups of pupils such as Year Two and Four pupils. The objective of this study is to identify an appropriate teaching sequence and relevant teaching materials. Through a literature review, explanations and reports, the emerging patterns in the data have provided

valuable information about student responses to the teaching materials, as well as what level of achievement they are capable of.

Kaplan (1998) stated that the innovative action researcher could assist in implementing new ideas in new organisational settings where the scholar is engaging in a particularly difficult yet powerful form of prediction known as the central aspect of science. Although the early implementations of the proposed ideas will not represent the full capabilities of the concept through skilful practice and subsequent theory development, the researcher may benefit from the real-life teaching settings regarding experience and context. The validity of the proposed new ideas will then move away from focusing on the learning outcomes of the reporting practice in the current settings.

This is the literature that guided the methodology that I am applying in this research:

An exploration where I generate new knowledge through multiple cycles of a trial and error process in cyclical action research. Validating the proposed new ideas, demonstrates my intention to report on the feedback of students, behaviours of students, and skills that they could mastered within the teaching objective and less on their learning output which moves away from reporting bias.

### 3.2.3 Teaching Plan

The teaching plan in this research was adapted from Micheal Houlahan and Tacka (2008, p.401-418). Most of the content has been re-designed to suit a Malaysian Chinese teaching environment. The teaching plan was designed for a 30-minute lesson, for the pupils who attended the school where the research took place and to investigate their understanding of music and exposure to singing, as well as their demography, family background, and activities.

Following is an overview of the teaching plan employed in the practical cycle of this action research.

#### Teaching Plan 1 (Greeting Song)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Routine singing in ‘So’ ‘Mi’ tone and pitches   |
| <b>Material</b>  | Customised greeting song with only ‘So’ and ‘Mi’ pitches  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher chants the greeting song in ‘So’ ‘Mi’ tones in the Chinese language 起立同学们 “<i>Stand up everyone</i>”.</li><li>2. The pupils stand up and quickly reply in chants after the teacher ends his greeting phrase. They would then reply to the teacher with 林老师早安 “<i>Good morning, Mr Lim</i>”.</li><li>3. After the pupil's response, the teacher quickly answers. The teacher would answer with 请坐下, “<i>Please sit down</i>”.</li><li>4. The pupils then reply 谢谢林老师 “<i>Thank you, Mr Lim</i>”.</li><li>5. The teacher ends the answer and reply activity with 不用客气, “<i>You are welcome</i>.”</li></ol> |

### Purpose

The purpose of this customised greeting song is to help pupils become familiar with the descending ‘*So*’ and ‘*Mi*’ interval singing, through daily repetition or repetitive reinforcement. This will strengthen their singing on the descending minor third intervals. The pupils would then realise their role in singing and pay attention to the teacher’s voice when the teacher sings. The pupils learn to pay attention to the descending minor third before they begin to imitate the teacher’s singing.

### Rationale

The greeting song comprises largely of descending ‘*So*’, and ‘*Mi*’ pitches and could repeatedly sound in their mind after singing the song. This activity becomes routine for the pupils whenever they have a music class. For this song, the key of F major was chosen to provide a secure singing image (spatial recognition of high and low intervals) in the pupils’ voices. The teacher sang the ‘Good Morning’ in the ‘*So-Mi So-So-Mi*’ pattern, and the pupils replied with the ‘*So-So-Mi So-So-Mi*’ pattern when answering the greeting. This activity enhanced their sense of the singing voice. The repetition of the singing activity also strengthened (reinforced) their singing of descending minor third intervals.

## Teaching Plan 2 (Children's Taunt Tune)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Match and sing in tune with the teacher's voice   |
| <b>Material</b>  | Universal children's chant  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher starts singing a chant 'So So Mi La So-So Mi'.</li><li>2. The pupils reply with a 'So-Mi' chant 'Ne Ni Ne Ni Bu Bu'.</li><li>3. The teacher repeats a different pattern with the limited 'So', 'Mi' and 'La' pitches.</li><li>4. The pupils reply by imitating the teacher's singing.</li><li>5. This is repeated until the high, and low pitches are matched.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The goal of this activity is to help pupils get used to the <i>So-Mi-La</i> pitches in a natural manner where they match the pitch or tunes in the solid descending minor third and provide the <i>la</i> as an introductory guide for them to learn new tones following it.  |

### Rationale

The logic of using this chant is to make singing as engaging and exciting as possible, in such a way that the natural singing voice of the pupils comes from their instinctive singing of "So-So-Mi-La-So-So-Mi". They could then become relaxed and sing out more confidently. The shouting voice could also be avoided by singing this chant, which provides a playful and fun way for the pupils to learn.

### Teaching Plan 3 (Call and Response Song)

- Objective** To train independence in singing in tune
- Material** Call and response songs
- Activity**
1. The teacher asks any question with only three pitches, 'So', 'Mi' and 'La'.
  2. The pupils then reply with any answer in 'So,' 'Mi' or 'La' patterns like the teacher's singing pattern.
  3. The teacher repeats asking a question with a different pattern of 'So,' 'Mi' and 'La' sequences.
  4. The pupils reply by giving different text in response by imitating the same pitch and rhythm of teacher's singing.
  5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune and match to the 'So,' 'Mi' and 'La' pattern sung by the teacher.

**Purpose** The purpose of this exercise is to help pupils respond with the same pitches that the teacher gives but with their unique answer. All given responses must include the given pitches and the sequence patterns given by the teacher must be followed.

### Rationale

The call and response song is used in the early stages of teaching as the pupils are expected to be able to sing 'So', 'Mi' and 'La' pitches confidently without any guidance. This activity lays the essential foundation for learning minor third and major second intervals at the beginning of the lesson. These two intervals were also the intervals required to be learned in semester 1 of Year One.

## Teaching Plan 4 (Guest Song)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Introduce ‘ <i>Mi</i> ’, ‘ <i>Re</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Do</i> ’  |
| <b>Material</b>  | Guest Song  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The goal of this exercise is to introduce ‘ <i>Mi</i> ’, ‘ <i>Re</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Do</i> ’. It is usual to find ‘ <i>Mi</i> ’, ‘ <i>Re</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Do</i> ’ in Chinese children’s folk songs.  |

### Rationale

The singing of ‘*Mi*’, ‘*Re*’ and ‘*Do*’ begin soon after they are introduced to ‘*So*’, ‘*Mi*’ and ‘*La*’ in the previous lesson. ‘*Mi*’, ‘*Re*’ and ‘*Do*’ are very commonly found in Chinese children’s folk songs. Learning them is necessary and must start by singing a descending pattern of ‘*Mi*’, ‘*Re*’ and ‘*Do*’ because the falling ‘*Mi*’, ‘*Re*’ and ‘*Do*’ are natural movements of the sounding system in the Chinese language as well. We normally do not speak in ascending fashion and either maintain the same pitch or move in descending fashion.

## Teaching Plan 5 (Grandmother Moon is Coming)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Introduce the ascending singing of ‘Do’, ‘Re’ and ‘Mi’  |
| <b>Material</b>  | Grandmother Moon is Coming  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase.</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using the Curwen hand signs while singing.</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen the ascending singing of ‘Do’, ‘Re’ and ‘Mi’.   |

### Rationale

The rationale of teaching this is, to begin with leap-wise intervals learning. Pupils with the progressive learning knowledge of step-wise motion (for example singing intervals from ‘Do’ to ‘Re’ – major second ascending) are required to start learning leap-wise singing where they are introduced to the descending minor third (‘So-Mi’ intervals) and followed by the combination of the ascending ‘Do-Re-Mi’ in a stepwise, major second interval. This manner of singing promotes and strengthens their vocabulary and singing.

## Teaching Plan 6 (White Swan)

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b>  | Strengthen the ascending singing of ‘Do’, ‘Re’ and ‘Mi’   |
| <b>Materials</b>  | White Swan  |
| <b>Activities</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase.</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing.</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>    | The purpose of singing this song is to enforce the ‘Do’, ‘Re’, ‘Mi’ movement of pitches while getting the pupils to be familiar with the semiquaver (quick movement) towards the end of the song.   |

### Rationale

At first glance, I thought that the semiquaver movement of notes in this song would become a critical problem for the pupils when singing. I believed that the pupils would be unable to sing in a correct rhythmic fashion, so I altered the song’s rhythm. After the first cycle of action research in the classroom, I noticed that I should not have changed the semiquavers as it gave the pupils the chance to learn about the quick movement of fish jumping out of the lake and playing with the swan. I changed it back to the original version, and the pupils could sing it better as a non-altered song.

## Teaching Plan 7 (Sitting Song)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Strengthen the singing of an ascending major second interval  |
| <b>Material</b>  | Sitting song  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase.</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing.</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The purpose of singing this song is to reinforce the 'Do', 'Re', 'Mi' movement of pitches while getting the pupils to become familiar with the semiquaver (quick movement) towards the end of the song.   |

### Rationale

The song derived from a Cantonese song. It contained a unique major second like 'Do-Do Re, Mi-Mi Re' and followed with 'So-So Mi Do Re Mi Re'. The structure makes it more challenging for the pupils to sing and learn and is valuable in getting the pupils to become familiar with the odd ascending major second and introduces the ascending perfect fourth in this song.

### Teaching Plan 8 (After School)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Strengthen the singing of the ascending minor third interval.   |
| <b>Material</b>  | After school  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase.</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing.</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The purpose of singing this song is to enhance the ascending minor third melodic intervals. The pupils are capable of singing with the ascending movement of ‘ <i>Mi-Do-Re-Mi Do-Re-Mi- So – Mi</i> ’.  |

### Rationale

The rationale behind the singing of this song is to reinforce the ascending movement of a minor third and to ascend in ‘*Do-Re-Mi*’ melodic intervals. This will strengthen their singing while also encouraging good moral values related to their daily schooling life.

## Teaching Plan 9 (Little Pigs)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Strengthen the ascending singing of a perfect fifth   |
| <b>Material</b>  | Little Pigs   |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | Introduction to singing the 'So-Do' perfect fifth.  |

### Rationale

“Little Pigs” is a famous, simple song that many Chinese people know, as the symbol of the pig is important in Chinese society. The lyrics in the song start with an ascending perfect fifth, which is a good way for the pupils to learn different melodic placements followed by an ascending major third.

## Teaching Plan 10 (This is My House)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Strengthen the ascending singing of ‘ <i>Do</i> ’, ‘ <i>Re</i> ’ and ‘ <i>Mi</i> ’  |
| <b>Material</b>  | This is My House  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings song phrase by phrase</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The purpose of singing this song is to learn larger intervallic leaps such as a descending perfect fifth.   |

### Rationale

The descending perfect fifth is introduced in this exercise as the pupils’ singing vocabulary continues to grow. However, this interval was more difficult than I realised in the beginning, especially for young pupils.

## Teaching Plan 11 (Let Us See)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Objective</b> | Strengthen the ascending singing of ‘Do’, ‘Re’ and ‘Mi’   |
| <b>Material</b>  | Let Us See  |
| <b>Activity</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase</li><li>2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing</li><li>3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.</li><li>4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.</li><li>5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.</li></ol> |
| <b>Purpose</b>   | The purpose of this song is to enable pupils to creatively add their lyrics over the repetitive pattern of the melody.  |

## Rationale

Introduce a new pitch, namely the low ‘So’. This is a very interesting and fun song. The pupils can change their ‘lyrics’ to include different modes of transport such as an ‘Aeroplane’ or a ‘Trishaw’. The modified lyrics can then be matched to the pitches towards the end of the song. The pupils can also do fun actions followed by the transportation mode of their choice by matching it with the pitches in the melody.

## Teaching Plan 12 (Rock, Scissor, and Paper)

**Objective** Full diatonic scales from ‘*So, La, Ti, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La*’

**Material** Rock, Scissor, and Paper

**Activity**

1. The teacher sings the song phrase by phrase
2. The pupils follow, using Curwen hand signs while singing
3. The teacher repeats and reinforces learning.
4. The pupils sing along with the teacher.
5. This is repeated until every pupil can sing in tune without the teacher singing.

**Purpose** The main purpose of this exercise is to allow the pupils to explore a wide range of diatonic scales. Although this song contains a wide range of pitches, the intervals are still limited to allow the pupils to sing easily in tune. However, this material could provide valuable input towards the designing of the sequence.

### Rationale

This is the final stage of learning to sing a song in a full diatonic scale. The current learning system and pace require pupils to not only master pentatonic scales as well as sing securely but also to learn different types of sung repertoire. Since this is the last song in the teaching sequence, it can lead the pupils to learn other types of music such as composed music, songs in other languages, or different scales. This does not imply that the pupils can master all the diatonic scales, but it exposes them to the typical Western diatonic scales and different moods. Year One pupils have a limited range to sing the given songs, however, in this research, the purpose was to identify an appropriate sequence of songs to be taught in Year Two after the research was carried out.

### 3.3 Research Methodology

Songs were collected from within the available published music teaching resource books at the time of the study. The main teaching module published by the Book Division Department, Ministry of Education, Malaysia (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) was also included in the study. Various other sources including the internet, books, and CDs were used to gather songs that could be located at the time of the study which focuses on Chinese children's folk songs in the Mandarin language. As the second step, these songs were listed out; then analysis was undertaken to determine their level of difficulty, pitches, intervals, and tones. The last step was to attempt to match the activities and musical concepts that work along with all of the chosen children's folk songs.

Musical elements and concepts such as pitch, melody, beat, tempo, intervals, and rhythm were taught along with the selected music. The story behind the music was also taught, such as introducing the pupils to Malaysian culture and the fisherman's life. The physical actions for the music were taught to increase the pupils' awareness of the meaning of the text. The pupils were made aware of various intervals through practical singing. The explanation was given when the pupils were ready for operational thinking which develops at about the age of 10. According to Piagetian developmental norms, pupils are taught to take their teacher as their role model in singing, movement, and performing style. The pupils were exposed to different styles of performing songs that were selected, starting from the style they were familiar with to the styles that were new to them.

### 3.3.1 Main Study

Action research over a period of 12 weeks was carried out with the selected children's folk songs. The pupils' achievements were evaluated through formative assessment at the end of every lesson.

*Table 3.1*  
*Twelve weeks of action research studies*

| Week | Dates                   | Singing Songs                            | Classes                                   |
|------|-------------------------|--|---|
| 1    | 4/1/2016-<br>8/1/2016   | 请安曲<br>Greeting Song                     |   |
| 2    | 11/1/2016-<br>15/1/2016 | 儿童音<br>Children's Taunt Tune             | <u>Main classes</u><br>1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E |
| 3    | 18/1/2016-<br>22/1/2016 | 问答曲<br>Call and Response Song            |   |
| 4    | 25/1/2016-<br>29/1/2016 | 客人来<br>Guest Song                        |   |
| 5    | 1/2/2016-<br>5/2/2016   | 月亮婆婆出来了<br>Grandmother Moon is<br>Coming |   |
| 6    | 15/2/2016-<br>19/2/2016 | 大白鹅<br>White Swan                        |   |
| 7    | 22/2/2016-<br>26/2/2016 | 排排坐<br>Sitting Song                      |   |

*(continue)*

Table 3.1 (*continued*)

| Week | Dates                   | Singing Songs                   | Classes |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 8    | 29/2/2016-<br>4/3/2016  | 放学歌<br>After School             |         |
| 9    | 7/3/2016-<br>11/3/2016  | 小猪<br>Little Pigs               |         |
| 10   | 14/3/2016-<br>18/3/2016 | 这是我的家<br>This is My House       |         |
| 11   | 21/3/2016-<br>25/3/2016 | 我们一同瞧瞧<br>Let Us See            |         |
| 12   | 28/3/2016-<br>1/4/2016  | 来猜拳<br>Rock, Scissor, and Paper |         |

### 3.4 Demographics

A total of five classes of Year One pupils were involved in this research. The research was carried out in a Chinese primary school in Rawang. There were 32 pupils in 1E class and 33 pupils in the other classes which are 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D. A total of 164 pupils were involved in this research, comprising 70 male pupils and 94 female pupils. Among the 164 pupils, 126 were Chinese pupils, 18 Malay, 12 Indian, and 8 for other ethnicities including Khek (Hakka), Indian Muslim, Bidayuh, Kenyah and Indonesian.

*Table 3.2*  
*Class demography of Year One pupils*

| No.           | Classes | Gender |    | Total |
|---------------|---------|--------|----|-------|
|               |         | M      | F  |       |
| 1             | 1A      | 12     | 21 | 32    |
| 2             | 1B      | 15     | 18 | 33    |
| 3             | 1C      | 14     | 19 | 33    |
| 4             | 1D      | 14     | 19 | 33    |
| 5             | 1E      | 15     | 18 | 33    |
| <b>Total:</b> |         | 70     | 94 | 164   |

### 3.5 Research Cycles

The action research cycle proceeded as joint planning, action, observation, and reflection. Nested cycles of action research were used to identify the sequence. The benefits of nested cycles in action research was reported by List (2006) in his multiple futures perspectives studies. Within the cycles, the main iteration in this action research consists of responsive of intervals in songs by the pupils, the involvement of pupils in achieving a singing voice, and their response towards singing the songs. In each depth of the research cycles, a set of new action can be adjusted by the new understanding that is uncovered in every full cycle.

#### 3.5.1 Preliminary Cycles

The preliminary cycle started during the practical teaching in the years 2014 and 2015. During the preliminary cycle, various songs was sung in the classroom. In 2014, songs



used in the classroom were from the music teacher guidebook provided by the Ministry of Education (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010). All the songs were sung in three different languages: Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and sometimes Tamil. During this year of study, songs were sung where pupils do specific actions while singing. A song requires at least two weeks of instruction to be completed. Activities were varied such as playing a musical instrument (castanet, double tone woodblock, bell and triangle) and fun movement activities.

### 3.5.2 Cycle 1 (Week 1)



Cycle one began in 2016. During this cycle, the greeting song were introduced through the singing of solfège ‘*So, Mi and La*’. In a typical class, the pupils will greet the teacher whenever any teacher comes into the classroom. They will normally stand up and greet the teacher together by saying ‘Good Morning, Teacher’ (see Appendix B, Song number 1). I introduced the sung version of ‘Greeting Songs’ by using the only combination of ‘*So, Mi and La*’ pitches. These three pitches were used and introduced by Zoltan Kodály at the beginning of the teaching sequence to teach melodic intervals and accurate singing.



### 3.5.3 Cycle 2 (Week 2)

Week two started with the children's taunt singing (see Appendix B, Song number 2). The pupils could modify the singing by limiting to 'So, Mi and La' pitches. They were encouraged to explore the given notes. By giving an opportunity for the pupils to explore, they could have much fun in creating the musical environment for themselves and their peers.

### 3.5.4 Cycle 3 (Week 3)

Cycle three started with a call and response song (see Appendix B, Song number 3) where the teacher gave a phrase of solfège by singing 'So, Mi and La' and pupils were required to reply with an answer by using only the 'So, Mi and La' pitches. They could alter different rhythms by applying crotchets; crotchet rests, quavers; quaver rests and minims into their answer. The singing then translated into words with the limited 'So, Mi and La' pitches.

### 3.5.5 Cycle 4 (Week 4)

During cycle four, the pupils were introduced to the Guest Song (see Appendix B, Song number 4). Guest songs consist of nearly all the pitches in a full pentatonic scale except for the 'La' pitch. The descending melodic intervals of 'Mi, Re and Do' which are found

in this song fit the natural sounds of the Mandarin language. It also aligns with child-centred learning where the pupils can easily sing the pitches in tune without any difficulty.

### 3.5.6 Cycle 5 (Week 5)

The introduction of the song ‘Grandmother Moon is Coming’ (see Appendix B, Song number 5) marked the beginning of cycle 5. This song consists of pitches in full pentatonic scales. The lyrics of the song describe the moon. The pupils are required to sing in a lullaby tempo (speed) where the beauty of the melody depicts the moon. The pupils sing the song which consists of crotchet notes, quaver notes and crotchet rests.

There is also a bar with slurred quavers that comes with an added slur where Mandarin block words were required to sing in pitches that move in descending stepwise motion in two distinct pitches from one another.

### 3.5.7 Cycle 6 (Week 6)

In cycle 6, the song ‘White Swan’ (see Appendix B, Song number 6) was introduced. This song teaches about a pair of swans swimming in the river and about the fish jumping out of the water. The melody uses full pentatonic tones similar to ‘Grandmother Moon is Coming’ but with the introduction of semiquavers near the end.

The semiquavers describe the fish jumping out of the water when the climax of the song is reached.

### 3.5.8 Cycle 7 (Week 7)

‘Sitting Song’ (see Appendix B, Song number 7) was introduced in cycle 7. The Sitting song uses the pentatonic scale, and introduces the major second interval at the beginning of the song. It includes the major second interval, as well as major and minor thirds.

### 3.5.9 Cycle 8 (Week 8)

‘After school’ (see Appendix B, Song number 8) includes the minor pattern (*La – Do – Re*). The song was introduced in this week after the pupils could accurately sing the major second in an ascending direction. This song also includes slurs where the pupils are required to slide up and down a single tone from one to another. This not only strengthens their pitch discrimination but also develops the accuracy of pitch through experiencing how far should they slide from a single tone to another.

### 3.5.10 Cycle 9 (Week 9)

The song ‘Little Pigs’ (see Appendix B, Song number 9) consists largely of quaver notes. It describes a lazy pig, and most pupils of school age well know the tune. It is a short (9 bars) melody in a pentatonic scale starting with low *So*. Most of the pitches in ‘Little Pigs’ were centred around ‘*Do*’, ‘*Re*’ and ‘*Mi*’ which is similar to the Chinese children’s folk songs found in Taiwan by Zheng (2003).

### 3.5.11 Cycle 10 (Week 10)

During Cycle 10, the pupils were given the song ‘This is My House’ (see Appendix B, Song number 10) to sing. The song includes major third intervals, as well as perfect fifth intervals towards the end, which is slightly challenging. The rhythmic patterns are generally even and similar throughout.

### 3.5.12 Cycle 11 (Week 11)

During cycle 11, the pupils were required to learn and sing ‘Let Us See’ (see Appendix B, Song number 11). This song consists of many quaver notes along with some leaps such as a perfect fourth. The pupils were also required to sing with a contour from a low pitch to a higher pitch in stepwise intervals.



### 3.5.13 Cycle 12 (Week 12)

The song ‘Rock, Scissors and Paper’ (see Appendix B, Song number 12) includes major second intervals. The full diatonic scale in this song poses difficulty for the pupils, along with the dotted crotchets. The song also had to be sung in a fast tempo.

## 3.6 Data Collection Method

The data collection method in this research employs 1) observation, 2) journal writing, 3) reflective journal, 4) literature study and 5) the survey of documents

(Literature Review).



### 3.6.1 Observation

The observation was made by the teacher (researcher as a practitioner) when the teaching and learning process was being carried out. The observer filled in a prepared form and checklist as a reference for the reflective teaching process. The observation was validated through the literature review.

Observation has been highlighted by (McKernan & James, 2013) as a fundamental activity associated with action research but is a requisite tool for scientific enquiry. The observation in this study is mainly called ‘participant observation’ where



the researcher observes the pupils and tries to understand the feedback from pupils which include their singing voice, physical movement, engagement in learning in the classroom, and the ability to sing independently in tune without accompaniment.

Lange (2006) stated that elementary music teachers constantly evaluate their students; however, having written evaluations based on objective measurement tools allows the teacher to determine the learning sequence that will need to take place in consecutive lessons. Having written evaluations provides documentation and justification for the grades that students receive, and these written evaluations or assessment tools are something that a non-musical administrator can understand. Having this documentation gives music educators further justification that music education is important.

### 3.6.2 Journal Writing

All efforts from the planning stage to the final report were reported in the journal writings (Appendix E) which included:

- a) A set of selected Chinese children's folk songs,
- b) Analysis of Chinese children's folk songs for use in the classroom

### 3.6.3 Reflective Journal

The reflective journal was part of the documentation carried out in this research to provide insights into the next action research cycle planning, as well as insights and analysis at the end of the report. Ortlipp (2008) showed the effective use of reflective journals in creating transparency in the research process.

The reflective journal (Appendix D) in this research is divided into the pre-research journal and research journal. The pre-research journal began and started at the beginning of the research study. It gives the practitioner, as a researcher, a glance into problem identification in the teaching field. Through the pre-research journal, the problem in my teaching practice was identified. Problems such as classroom management, suitability of activities for the selected repertoire, difficulty level of teaching materials, pupils' learning styles and other unexpected conditions which arose in the real-life teaching scenario were documented.

Exploratory and reflective journal writing allowed me to map my growing and to change the understanding of my role as researcher, interviewer, and interpreter of the data generated via interviews, and to record decisions made and theoretical justification for the decisions. (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 703)

The reflective journal provided important evidence and feedback that was used as the main data for generating a theoretical framework. The reflection scope contained the following questions:

1. What is the feedback (their emotions) from the pupils in learning the pieces?
2. Do the songs require more breaking down before being taught to pupils? Too many breakdowns in part show that the songs are difficult for the pupils to sing.
3. Did 90% of the pupils achieved pitch and rhythmic accuracy in singing the songs?
4. What activities can be added to enhance the teaching session?
5. What musical skills can be explored through the sequenced activities?

#### 3.6.4 Literature Study

Literature studies from written documents were compared to this research to provide an in-depth comparison and to avoid inconsistency due to the bias of self-study. The literature study in this qualitative research involved: a) the study of child development; b) learning style of children at the age of 7; and c) the learning sequence from different teaching methods.

#### 3.6.5 Survey of Documents (Literature Review)

The survey of the documents included Kodály teaching materials used in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. This indicated how Chinese children's folk songs can be arranged chronologically according to child development. Different arrangements of

music teaching materials such as singing were also taken into the careful analysis in this study.

### 3.7 Song Analysis

All the collected Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs were analysed melodically and rhythmically. The songs were then catalogued and incorporated according to the musical concepts that were related to the music teaching sequence based on the KSSR syllabus. The song analysis assisted me, as a teacher and researcher, to make minor modifications to the songs for teaching purposes. The amendments to the songs used were based on the teaching objectives, natural vocal development, musical background, and cognitive development of the children, and followed the teaching guidelines provided by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (e.g., KSSR Curriculum Standard Documents).

### 3.8 Research Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out through descriptive analysis, a reflective journal and validation by a checklist of the pupil's performance in the classroom. The data which included audio clips, research journal and reflective journal entries were tagged and analysed based on the research objectives and questions. The report data is presented in Chapter 4. The journal serves as the main documentation in this research. The data

analysis in the journals was based on Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The Reflective Journal which consists of a report for every session of action research was used to conclude how the suggested sequence for teaching materials affected the pupils' learning process and output.

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter has described the research methodology, an action research design, which systematically documented data that was used to avoid bias, as well as provide a high quality and precise report about the research being carried out. The process of using the different selected songs was explained, in addition to how musical learning concepts in singing can be incorporated by the teacher in the teaching session.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS



#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the song selection process, teaching sequence, pupils' feedback about each song, and recommendations for future studies will be presented. The findings of my action research project in which I observed that my sequenced lessons were delivered most effectively when the pupils learnt progressively every week will also be summarised in this chapter. This chapter suggests how the practitioner may deliver a successful and effective sequential teaching in developing the musical skills based on (a) a well-planned teaching objective, (b) progressive, child-centred teaching materials, and (c) continuity of practice through consistent lessons.



## 4.2 How Were the Songs Selected?

The idea of selecting a list of songs for teaching Year One pupils first came to me after listening to a song called, “La La Li Li La Tam Pung”. According to Du (2011), this song is a type of game that is typical of some children’s folk songs from Penang, Malaysia where children can play, while singing a rhyme, and have fun with their friends. The variations of this rhyme were sung in three major languages including Chinese, Malay, and other various dialects found in Malaysia. In my journal, I noted that:

The singing form is likely to be a simple chant. I discovered it difficult to identify the exact pitch and rhythm of this rhyme due to the lack of information and materials from the written text of a published book... (Journal Report 2014, Appendix C).

In the search for local Chinese children’s folk songs, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Soo Khin Wah, a professor from the University of Malaya whose research is based on the song, 过山歌 “Guo San Ge”. According to Soo (2014), songs about migrating overseas were sung by Chinese immigrants when they boarded a ship from China to Malaysia. The immigrants left their families and children due to the adverse economic conditions at the time; however, these songs were sung in multiple Chinese dialects including Minnanese, Hakka, Chaozhou, Cantonese, and Hainanese. Therefore, it was important to analyse the collected materials before the songs could be selected and used as teaching materials in the classroom. The analysis included a verification of the original lyrics, with some needing to be altered for teaching to remove unsuitable words.

A study of the available materials in music education books published locally revealed that the activities and songs provided are activity-based and theme-based rather than sequentially based. Some of these included the Unified Curriculum Committee of Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School Working Committee (2016), the Unified Curriculum Committee of Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School Working Committee (2016b), Unified Curriculum Committee of Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School Working Committee (2016), the Unified Curriculum Committee of Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary School Working Committee (2000), Yue Sheng Publishing (n.d.-d), Yue Sheng Publishing (n.d.-c), Yue Sheng Publishing (n.d.-d) and Yue Sheng Publishing (n.d.-b). For Year One teaching materials, Yue Sheng Publishing (n.d.-a), Nan Yang Publishers (n.d.), Yeoh (2010), Pustaka Ma-Tu (n.d.), Heng Hui Enterprise (n.d.), and Luo (2007) were used as references in the selection of songs.

Due to a lack of research covering the musical aspects of collected local Chinese children folk songs for use in a classroom setting, commonly known children's folk songs by locals in the Mandarin language were selected as the main materials for designing the teaching sequence in classroom settings. During the action research cycle, I made several different attempts at altering the original songs as a way to identify if the logical sequence of using quavers in exchange of the original semiquavers found in the music could be used to ensure effective learning for the pupils; the alterations were made based on the criteria required in the teaching syllabus. For instance, semiquavers are written in the "Two Swans" song, however, these note values are not covered in the Year One syllabus.

### 4.3 Malaysian Chinese Song Material

Malaysian Chinese song materials are largely comprised of the traditional music that is sung in mainland China, including children's folk songs, primarily because Mandarin is the main language used in Chinese primary schools in Malaysia. I reported in my journal that:

“The lack of documented materials for Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs could not be used as primary source of my research. To get the main lists of Chinese children's folk songs, Chinese children's music (in the Mandarin language) that are known to the Chinese in Malaysia were used in this research.” (Journal Report 2014, Appendix C)

Through years of following the teacher's resource book provided by the Ministry of Education and other music resource books published locally, I encountered difficulties in training my pupils to develop their musical skills sequentially. The presented materials (songs) in the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia were too difficult for my pupils to develop a good foundation in singing solfège and accurate pitch. Further, I found that it was more effective to teach the songs by breaking them down into small chunks which allowed my pupils to sing more accurately and rhythmically. The value of using chunking mechanisms is well documented in previous research (Gobet et al., 2001; Rosenbloom & Newell, 1982; Servan-Schreiber, 1991). I also noticed by teaching with the teacher's guidebook for primary school by Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (2010) that my pupils were not able to expand their skill-based knowledge progressively such as with singing. This was due to the barriers created because of having to sing challenging songs which caused doubt and uncertainty in their learning; they appeared to be having fun singing

the songs, but were not in tune. I found that this way of teaching was too slow and resulted in a loss of the pupils' interest. They were not improving greatly because the songs they were trying to learn were too difficult to sing in tune and with accurate rhythm, which affected their confidence in singing. Given this, I took further steps when using the teaching materials that were within the learning capability of my pupils to carry out my teaching, thus enable my pupils to learn progressively by placing clear, achievable goals in my teaching objective. One challenge was to match the pupils' skill set with the teaching materials (songs) for use in the classroom, and this required careful consideration.

Teaching sequence which was carefully designed would able to provide optimised learning based on locality and specific pupils' needs. Kodály highlighted that the teaching sequence must be approached differently in different countries, and this was evident through my studies of teaching sequences from Hungary, the United States of America, Australia, and Taiwan (Reflective Journal 2015, Table 8.1).

Kodály's method of teaching was easily applied to my situation as it can be carried out without needing much space in the classroom. In Kodály's early period of teaching, he had limited space to move around, which was similar to my own classroom, which houses approximately 44 pupils and is full of tables and chairs. It was impossible to apply "ideal" teaching methods which use a lot of movement and classroom games unless the music lesson was carried out in the music room. I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to request a classroom that could be re-arranged with no tables or chairs, and this enabled my pupils to move around during their music

lessons. However, I also wanted to ensure that the music I was teaching could be recalled wherever they went, which is how the original idea of sequencing teaching materials came about.

#### **4.4 Teaching Sequence for Year One Pupils (Melodic Sequence) Throughout One Year of the Study Syllabus**

During this study, a teaching sequence using Chinese children's folk songs was developed. Through the use of Chinese children's folk songs in addition to trial and error teaching practices in the classroom, a teaching sequence was identified as one of the critical steps in the process of instruction. The seminal work of Miller (1956) showed that because humans have limited short-term memory capacity, information should be grouped into meaningful sequences. This simply means that by chunking information, the learning process will be more efficient. Subdividing incoming information into small perceptual units, i.e., chunks, has been shown to help pupils develop their learning (Witt & Vinter, 2017). An understanding of the sequencing of singing materials is a process that every music teacher would benefit from as it can assist them in tailoring the teaching requirements and teach what is meaningful and purposeful for their pupils. Additionally, having a good understanding of each pupil's learning capabilities, existing knowledge, family background, exposure to music, and their culture facilitates the sequencing of teaching materials, as well as learning activities.

In a 1975 study (Hurwitz, Wolff, Bortnick & Kokas) on the effects of the Kodály music curriculum on primary children's reading skills, it was found that first grade children who were taught intensively with the Kodály method (five days per week for 40 minutes per day) did significantly better on standardised reading tests (Brandl, 2000). This indicates that the Kodály music curriculum, if implemented with great effort, could contribute to other intelligence enhancement as well as achieving better results in academic work. These studies were also supported by Choksy (1999a) and Zheng (2003). Teaching activities should not be too complex for pupils during the early stages of learning. Today, teaching materials are based on the teaching syllabus and teaching contents that teachers are required to teach, enforce, and reflect upon. However, teaching materials should be tailored based on the learning capacity of the pupils themselves. While there are challenges teaching in classroom settings with teaching methods or materials that suit a vast range of learning styles and preferences, an experienced and effective teacher should aim to select a teaching focus (specific objective) and use the most effective materials as their teaching aids.

Table 4.1 shows the suggested sequences that were identified and derived from the action research process in this study. Through a literature review and analysis, I identified different characteristics and teaching sequences in various countries (See my 2014 Journal Report, Appendix D). My report notes that there were slight differences in how the music materials were sequenced in different countries. The findings from documented research enabled the sequenced teaching materials to be justified and avoid biases. The documented teaching sequences which were reported in other countries were used as key references in how their teaching materials were sequenced, including the materials that they employed in their teaching, native language used, the

characteristics of their teaching materials (melodic/ rhythmic aspects), and how the musical concepts in different teaching sequences were employed. The differences in the sequencing teaching materials in different countries and places were primarily due to the mother tongue that the group of local people spoke, including the English language in Australia, the Malay language in Malaysia, and the Mandarin language for Malaysian Chinese. The accessibility of the teaching materials also affected how the teaching materials were sequenced for teaching in the classroom. For instance, if the mother tongue for my pupils was the Malay language, they performed better while singing Malay children's folk songs compared to my Chinese pupils. As I carried out my research in one of the Chinese schools in Malaysia, 85% of the pupils were Chinese who speak Mandarin. Therefore, Chinese children's folk songs in the Mandarin language were the most appropriate materials for them to start their learning with.

Rhythmic patterns of the materials effect how materials should be sequenced. From the collected Chinese Children's folk songs, there were varying levels of difficulty that could be categorised and arranged for teaching sequences. However, an analysis of the materials was insufficient to determine how these teaching materials should be sequenced for practical use in a classroom setting. It was only through the identified practical output from the pupils' responses toward their learning and achievement that I could sequence the teaching materials appropriately.

The materials (songs) were carefully selected and analysed so that they were based on the requirements of the Malaysian teaching syllabus. Sequencing teaching materials provide a teaching session that flows well for the pupils to learn about the

concepts of music while also helping to improve the teaching quality of the music itself.

#### 4.5 Music Used in Research

Table 4.1  
Songs used in the study

| Number | Song Title                               | Pitches/ Intervals            | Rhythm   | Skills                     |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1.     | 请安曲<br>Greeting Song                     | <i>So, Mi</i>                 | <i>Ta Ti-Ti Sa</i>   | Listening<br>Improvisation |
| 2.     | 儿童诵杨<br>Children's Taunt                 | <i>So, Mi, La</i>             | <i>Ta Ti-Ti</i>  |                            |
| 3.     | 问答曲<br>Call and Response Song            | <i>So, Mi, La</i>             | Crotchet,<br>Quaver,<br>Crotchet Rest,<br>Quaver Rest,<br>Minim<br>Introduced. |                            |
| 4.     | 客人来<br>Guest Song                        | <i>Do, Re, Mi, So</i>         |  |                            |
| 5.     | 月亮婆婆出来了<br>Grandmother<br>Moon is Coming | <i>Do, Re, Mi, So,<br/>La</i> |  |                            |
| 6.     | 大白鹅<br>White Swan                        | <i>So, Mi, La, Re,<br/>Do</i> |  |                            |
| 7.     | 排排坐<br>Sitting Song                      | <i>La, Do, Re, Mi,<br/>So</i> |  |                            |
| 8.     | 放学歌<br>After school                      | <i>La, Do, Re, Mi,<br/>So</i> |  |                            |
| 9.     | 小猪<br>Little Pigs                        | <i>So, La, Do, Re,<br/>Mi</i> |  |                            |

(Continue)

Table 4.1 (*Continued*)

| Number | Song Title                        | Pitches/ Intervals                           | Rhythm | Skills  |
|--------|-----------------------------------|--|--------|---|
| 10.    | 这是我的家<br>This is My House         | <i>So, La, Do, Re,<br/>Mi, So</i>            |        |   |
| 11.    | 我们一同瞧瞧<br>Let Us See              | <i>So, La, Ti, Do,<br/>Re, Mi, Fa)</i>       |        |   |
| 12     | 来猜拳<br>Rock, Scissor and<br>Paper | <i>So, La, Ti, Do, Re<br/>Mi, Fa, So, La</i> |        | Recommended to be Taught in<br>Year Two Syllabus. |

#### 4.5.1 Song 1: Greeting Song (请安曲)

The “Greeting Song” was the first type of song that every pupil learned when they started music classes during this study. I taught them how to greet by singing, “Good morning teacher” and. “see you again” at the conclusion of every lesson. Every child sang throughout their music class, and this cultivated the singing activities among my pupils. Singing became a natural culture in the school once the pupils practised their singing in every music lesson:

“When I attempted to teach the Year One pupil in my class to sing at the beginning of the music class by using this ‘Morning Songs’ (figure 4.1), most could not sing at the correct pitch, especially from the intervals of “*Re*” to ‘*Fa*’ well...” (Reflective Journal 2014, Appendix D).

I found that my pupils were unable to accurately sing the first song in the music textbook, “Morning song”, at the beginning of my music lesson. This was due to the major second interval in the song which my pupils sang with inaccurate pitch. While it was evident that my pupils did not seem to realise or care about this weakness in their singing, I recognised that there should be a change in my teaching materials. I needed to have a “Morning Song” with simplified notes, and be able to introduce the musical concepts which cover the singing voice, high and low/different sound frequencies, basic beat, rhythm, and contours in a song. The song had to be able to cover these characteristics but in a much simpler form.

Newman (1995) showed that singing and hearing chant-like melodies with two or three notes (such as “Rain, Rain, Go Away”) develops aural and vocal skills used in the early stages of in-tune singing and music reading. Teachers often create simple chants to greet their pupils when they enter the room, carrying on musical conversations made from the *La-So, Mi* pitches (p. 268). In various Kodály sequences found in the literature, high and low pitches were effectively demonstrated through “See-saw” singing where a major third of “*So*” and “*Mi*” is sufficient and effective. The greeting song was used as a routine that acted as a conversation between the music teacher and pupils. In my experience, pupils are likely to sing more often whenever they see any teacher, so it becomes natural and normal to sing and greet them after learning the greeting song.

When teaching pupils to sing greeting songs, their gestures and expressions indicated that they were ready to learn the music. The music was unique and

meaningful to them because they could learn while the experiencing the beauty of the Arts. For pitch, the introductory *So, Mi* (falling minor third) is a good place to start because all pupils are required to become familiar with that interval. I noted in my diary that:

“... “*So*’ and “*Mi*” pitches were the basic construction of this song. Pupils were enjoying the two pitches greeting song in every music lesson. The reason behind of singing greetings song is to foster the high and low pitch discrimination and accurate singing among pupils...” (Reflective cycle 11, Appendix D).

The singing of “greeting songs” requires the music teacher to be creative. The teacher must be able to quickly match any lyric using *So, Mi* to get responses from pupils. The pupils were required to sing while echoing *So, Mi*, and *La* pitches whenever possible. It does not matter if the pupils are not singing absolutely in tune at first, however, the teacher needs to assist in repeating the pupils’ singing which reinforces their perception of accurate pitch. In my classroom, I found that this process enhanced and provided feedback to the pupils. It also enabled the pupils to make their own judgement and discrimination of certain pitches by reflecting upon their singing by comparing it to what their teacher sang. I noted in my diary that:

“I am surprised that pupils are starting to gain the norm of singing during the music class. The class monitor has started to sing the greetings before the class starts. However, the singing of greetings song from the class is not yet as perfect or near to accurate. So, I guided them again with greetings song and followed by them” (Reflective cycle 12, Appendix D).

My pupils were able to start singing the greeting songs on their own without accompaniment on any musical instrument. This was a success as the discrimination of high, middle, and low pitches were shown through their independent singing.

Generally, however, when they sang the greeting songs, their singing voice was not yet “warmed up”. On average, after a few minutes of singing, their singing became in tune and more technically accurate.

#### 4.5.2 Song 2: Children’s Taunt Tune (儿童诵杨)

The Children’s Taunt Tune proved to be an effective natural melody to start teaching my pupils. This teaching material helped my pupils to make connections between the basic concepts of high and low sounds through practical singing. I commenced with this song to make a meaningful connection between the solfège pitches “*So*”, “*Mi*”, and “*La*”, and the tunes my pupils were familiar with (Reflective Cycle 5, Appendix D). It was also useful because it gave a simple introduction for the pupils to start singing and playing in a fun way. This was so effective that the students went home and sang these tunes to their parents (as indicated through feedback from their parents during parents’ sharing session with teacher), demonstrating that this activity deeply impacted upon the pupils. It was also effective for teaching the pupils with the natural descending minor third, in the solfège “*So*”- “*Mi*”. I always start by using a tuning fork in A key (singing of solfège start with “*Mi*”) and singing consistently every lesson. I found that this was the optimal way to promote a solid understanding of the minor third intervals when teaching my pupils.

If the pupils were not able to sing accurately, I repeated the singing of the children’s taunt tune a few times, where they sang “*So, So, Mi, La, So, Mi* to re-inforce

and refresh what they had previously learnt (Reflective Cycle 10, Appendix D). The singing of children's taunts tunes also reinforced solfège singing and resulted in improved pitch accuracy among the pupils. However, when I sang the solfège of "So", "Mi", and "La" for the tunes, the pupils were sometimes still confused as to which pitches they should sing. Through some reinforcement of the concepts in various lessons for the warm-ups and recapitulation sections in the song, I noticed that the pupils began to achieve the desired objectives in linking the tune to the accurate "So", "Mi", and "La" solfège.

#### 4.5.3 Song 3: Call and Response Songs (问答曲)

The Call and Response songs were made up by myself with the aim of singing the natural intervals of "La", "So", and "Mi" pitches where the sounding syllable was the core nucleus to the natural tones and harmonics of the music. The call and response songs required the pupils to improvise on the "So", "Mi", and "La" pitches. The teacher would sing a phrase first, and the pupils were required to sing a different phrase to answer the teacher's singing. Typically, it would sound like "So-Mi-La-So-Mi" when the teacher asked, "What is your name?" In response, the pupil would sing, "I am Andy".

Through the observations during my teaching sessions, I found that my pupils felt shy before the lesson started. However, they slowly became used to their singing voices and started to be more comfortable in the classroom. I found that this call and

response activity was useful in giving pupils the courage to sing and helped them to overcome their shyness. It also promoted interpersonal skills among all the pupils, as well as creative thinking. I felt that there was a breakthrough from passive learning into more active learning while carrying out this activity.

#### 4.5.4 Song 4: Guest Song (客人来)

The guest song is a type of lullaby that is commonly learnt by very young Chinese pupils. The short length of the guest song is easy to repeat and sing while reflecting on good values and the appropriate manner to greet a guest in Chinese culture. In one of my teaching sessions, I introduced this song to a Year One pupils, and they enjoyed singing this song very much (Reflective cycle 2, Appendix D).

The Curwen hand signs were helpful when teaching the song to my pupils and assisted in helping the students to sing at the correct pitch (Reflective Journal Quarter 1 of 2015, Appendix D). Although my pupils could not indicate the right-hand sign, the distinctive high and low pitches were emphasised during the session. The clear high and low pitches as shown by the hand sign(s) through space was helpful in differentiating the stepwise descending of the pitches “*Mi*”, “*Re*”, and “*Do*”.

The “Guest song” starts with descending, stepwise singing of the pitches, “*Mi*”, “*Re*”, and “*Do*”. The interval of a major third (“*Do*”-“*Mi*”) is the only leap that is contained in the song and was introduced after pupils could master the major

second interval. Pupils were required to master the singing of small leaps in the ascending and descending direction of the melody. Through my observations, I noted that the singing of “*Mi*”, “*Re*”, and “*Do*” did not create many challenges for my pupils. The singing of ascending and descending “*Re*”-“*Do*”, however, proved to be difficult in achieving accurate intonation from my pupils.

#### 4.5.5 Song 5: Grandmother Moon is Coming (月亮婆婆出来了)

I taught my Year One pupils “Grandmother Moon is Coming” without the lyrics because I wanted them to listen attentively and to learn it by rote. I sang along with the pupils and included actions that were related to the meanings of the lyrics in the song.

I witnessed a dramatic change from the initial overactive actions from the pupils into a quiet, careful, and attentive listening when they sang these songs. They were able to focus their attention on the sounds within their classroom environment. I guided them through soft dynamics that gradually became louder and gave shape to their singing. I noticed that my pupils started to sing in a softer voice when they had previously shouted while singing. The characteristic of shouting is a cultural distinction in Mandarin speakers among Chinese society across Malaysia, and was highlighted by Ms. Suzanna Saw, one of the clinicians at the Kodály Workshop which I attended during the International Kodály Symposium in 2015.

Two “*Do*”, “*Re*”, “*Mi*” patterns appear in “Grandmother Moon is Coming”. The pupils did not have any difficulty singing the ascending stepwise intervals

correctly in the classroom session. Based on this experience, I would recommend that materials containing the ascending stepwise “Do”, “Re”, “Mi” pattern are introduced and sequenced for teaching immediately after pupils master songs that include stepwise interval singing of the descending “Mi”, “Re”, “Do” pattern. The frequency of ascending “Do”, “Re”, and “Mi” intervals in Chinese songs is high and consistent with the natural sounding system of the Chinese language. My teaching experiences here are similar to the outcome reported by Zheng (2003), in Taiwan, who introduced the sequence containing the ascending stepwise “Do”, “Re”, “Mi” followed by the “So”, “La” pattern, then the “Mi”, “So”, and “La”.

After a few classes, my pupils began to sing more gently, and their negative hyperactive actions were temporarily controlled. I posit that achieving attentive listening and learning how to sing beautifully are an important part of what Kodály was trying to promote. Through teaching this song, physical movements assisted in describing the beauty of the moon and reflected the singing contour of the song. I noted in my journal that:

“...physical movement along with singing enhanced my pupils understanding of what they sing” (Reflective Cycle 1, Appendix D).

My pupils grasped the singing of the pentatonic scale (“Do”, “Re”, “Mi”, “So” and “La”) well. Their singing range also increased gradually through the learning of materials when the pitch, “La”, was added. Since this song contains mostly smaller intervals (major second and major third) and perfect fourth intervals, the pupils did not have much difficulty singing this song. However, I emphasised the leaps of the perfect

fourth intervals by repetitive singing as well as physical and facial gestures. My pupils showed improvement in achieving the ascending perfect 4<sup>th</sup> when using these gestures.

#### 4.5.6 Song 6: White Swan (大白鵝)

When using “White Song” to teach my pupils, I tried to experiment by changing the original rhythm which includes semiquavers. However, at the end of my reflection and teaching, I found that this was not as effective as using the original rhythm. My pupils could not sing the song well after I made the alterations despite being altered in a way which maintained the character of the song. The original song includes the semiquaver rhythm which is not usually covered in the Year One music syllabus. So, I attempted to change the semiquavers to quavers which did not work well. I also tried to change the semiquaver to a crotchet, however, through a few cycles of my action research (cycle 1, cycle 6, cycle 7, cycle 8, and cycle 9), the result was not pleasant. At the end of my action research cycle, I realised that the songs needed to be sung as they were written originally.

I taught the pupils the altered version of the song (Figure 4.2) during this lesson. They sang with inaccurate pitch and rhythm, and had difficulty joining the final phrases of the song together. (Reflective Cycle 6, Appendix D). In the final cycle, I used the original version of the song. In my reflection, I noted that the original semiquaver rhythm was more appropriate for the lyrics, which were about the fish jumping out of

the water. My pupils sang with a more natural sound, and better rhythmic accuracy on the semiquavers, which can be heard on my recording (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Last two bars of 大白鹅 (White Swans) original music.



Figure 4.2 The last two bars of 大白鹅 (White Swans) - altered version.

#### 4.5.7 Song 7: Sitting Song (排排坐)

The “Sitting Song” is a folk song that was originally sung in Cantonese. It is based on a pentatonic scale, so it was an appropriate teaching material for my class. I noted in my diary that the:

“Sitting Song” is a more complex song for my pupils to learn as the song consists of major second intervals and in the middle of the song, it consists of starting which starts from re pitch and mi pitch. I find that this part requires much attention and repetition in assisting my pupils to learn about the running pattern of pitches and intervals” ... (Reflective Cycle 10, Appendix D).

A question I had was whether it was appropriate to introduce the major second interval in the singing. My reflective journal shows that the pupils had difficulties singing major second intervals This was due to the major second intervals not

necessarily being easier for the pupils to sing compared to the major third. However, the reinforcement of major second intervals was introduced after the pupils achieved secure singing of the major third intervals.

#### 4.5.8 Song 8: After School (放学歌)

When teaching the folk song “After School”, the pupils could easily sing the lyrics through rote learning. I used rote learning as a teaching tool, because when I tried to show the lyrics, the pupils tended to put too much of their focus on the text rather than on the pitches and intervals of the song. With the rote learning technique, I discovered that they listened attentively and tried to mimic the sounds. Additionally, when I asked about their understanding of the meaning of this song, they could easily answer. This process demonstrated to me that my pupils were picturing all the meanings of the song and lyrics that they were required to learn during the listening session. This is because the folk song is clearly describing pupils finishing their homework, packing up their bags to go home, meeting with their parents, greeting their parents, and their parents returning with a smile. For a song like this, doing actions enhanced their listening and understanding as they rote learned a skill from a teacher.

I found that it was important to verify the pitches I was singing so that the song could be sung comfortably by the students. In my classes, I typically sang using low pitches, starting all my lessons with solfège starting on F, in the key of F major. I found that the consistency of using a secure tonic key helped the pupils to establish a

firm singing foundation. Singing with the similar key in every lessons helped my pupils to understand the concepts of high and low pitches accurately.

Teaching this song also enabled me to do two-part singing and round songs for my grade four pupils, which they appeared to enjoy very much. For a more challenging and streamlined class, I asked the pupils to form four groups and sing round songs. However, for the Year One pupils, I would not encourage this as my Year Four pupils found singing in parts quite challenging. I wrote in my diary that:

“Although more than half of my pupils were listening attentively, there were few pupils who could not stop talking with their friends and kept their hands on other things such as their pencil, flipping the books and playing with their pencil box. This could be improved by designing a lesson with minimal movement on next session to keep pupils’ attention and concentration on the singing...” (Reflective Journal 5, Appendix D).

The reflective journal showed that the song was slightly difficult for my pupils to sing, and some began to show a lack of interest and attentiveness toward learning the song. I tried other interesting activities to keep my pupils motivated about learning, and many of these movements and activities motivated them to sing better. By pointing out the high and low distances of the different pitches through hand signs, the pupils improved slightly in accuracy. Therefore, I found it is necessary to include songs with a simpler range of intervals, which was more effective than using a more technically challenging song.

#### 4.5.9 Song 9: Little Pigs (小豬)

“Little Pigs” is a hilarious song that my pupils enjoyed singing very much, and found amusing. As the song is about animals, I demonstrated the sound that pigs make, which they seemed to find enjoyable. Most pupils were already familiar with this song and had learnt it before entering primary school. I reflected in my diary that:

“...my pupils were able to sing only first and second part almost accurately. The rest of the bars they sang in uncertainty and unclear dictation. I also notice that when singing the first and second bar, some pupils were singing in chanting style...” (Reflective cycle 18, Appendix D)

I noticed that my pupils could chant this song, however, they were not able to sing it correctly. They were much more familiar with singing the first half of the song and did not clearly articulate the lyrics of the song correctly from the middle part of this song. They also showed difficulties in singing the major second ascending intervals found in bar six of the song:

“I discovered that singing melodic intervals which are too near (major second) or melodic intervals which are too far apart (perfect fifth followed by perfect fourth) is difficult for my pupils” (Reflective cycle 19, Appendix D).

The last two bars of the song consist of large melodic intervals which are considerably challenging for pupils to “hit” the right notes. Thus, music with such large leaps must be carefully taught and placed later in the teaching sequence.

#### 4.5.10 Song 10: This is My House (这是我的家)

“This is My House” is a folk song that promotes the good values of taking care of everyone in their own home, including siblings and other family members. In this song, the children are also taught to appreciate the beauty of flowers. This song was the most difficult for my Year One pupils to learn and sing accurately because it consists of the full range of an octave in a pentatonic scale and ends on the dominant note. Additionally, there are perfect fifth leaps in the sixth bar (See Figure 4.3) which seemed like a ‘hurdle’ for my pupils. It was difficult for them as it does not leap from the lowest “So” pitch but the tonic “Do”.

椰子树, 义种, 很多  
ye zhi shu you zhong hen duo  
多和气, 我爱我的  
duo he qi wo ai wo de

Figure 4.3 Sixth bar and seventh bars of the song, “This is My House”.

In my reflective journal, I wrote:

“My pupils could not sing the high pitch of “So’ at the end accurately. I had noticed that when “Mi” and lastly “So’ intervals were very difficult for my pupils to sing ... pupils began to be less motivated to sing. A student sang with a different voice to make the song much more interesting for himself” (Reflective cycle 21, Appendix D).

This is a song which requires pupils to master the foundations of smaller intervallic leaps prior to singing this song. They started to show a lack of interest in

continuing to sing this song, perhaps due to being unfamiliar with it. I found two versions of this song when I was collecting music and although I selected the simple version, I also tried the second version of this song which is much more complex. I tested both the simple version and the other which consists of complex rhythms and melodic intervals, and this helped me to identify certain clues which assisted in my sequencing of the teaching materials. The song has a range of an octave including the pitches, “So”, “La”, “Do”, “Re”, “Mi”, “So”, and “La”. The pitch, “La”, appears only once in this piece and is the highest in the song. The song’s melodic contour also includes the intervals of a major second, major third and perfect fifth: I wrote in my journal that:

“...singing from the third to the fourth bar is also difficult for my pupils to sing. They could not sing the “So, So, Mi, Do, and Re” (Reflective cycle 16, Appendix D).

From the other song entitled, “This is My House”, I found that it was difficult for my pupils to sing the melodic intervals of a major third followed by a major third which ends with an ascending major second. This posed new challenges for my pupils who were barely able to sing this part accurately.

#### 4.5.11 Song 11: Let Us See (我们一同瞧瞧)

“Let Us See” was the hardest song for the pupils to sing. While all of the pupils in the class mastered the minor third intervals by singing “So”, “Mi”, a major second (“La”, “So”), and “Do, Re, Mi,” or Low “So” and “La”, they sang weakly in minor second

intervals (“*Mi*” to “*Fa*”) or falling “*Fa*” to “*Mi*”. The chromatic tones and close intervals of a minor second required more drilling practice compared to the more natural sounding “*So*”, “*Mi*”. I believe that there could be a more effective way of teaching minor second intervals, for example, by teaching it at a later stage (Year Four and onwards) or teaching pupils to sing diatonic scales.

#### 4.5.12 Song 12: Rock, Scissor, and Paper (来猜拳)

“Rock, Scissor and Paper” proved to be an interesting song for the pupils especially as they could play the rock, scissors, and paper game. This song is comprised of a single-octave range of a diatonic scale which starts with low “*So*” to a high “*So*” followed by high “*La*”. After mastering all the different intervals, I introduced the one-octave diatonic system. Although this song consists of all the notes in an octave, the arrangement of the song has limited leaps (more stepwise melodic intervals arrangement), which made it easier for the pupils to sing and process. This showed that is important not to limit the possibilities of learning and gaining new knowledge with a limited range of tones and to go back to the solfège of “*So*”, “*Mi*”, and “*La*” whenever necessary.

#### 4.6 Research Questions – Findings

1. What are the materials to use in a teaching sequence developed for a Chinese primary school in Malaysia?

This research revealed that the most appropriate musical materials to use in a teaching sequence developed for a Chinese Language Primary School in Malaysia consist of:

- a) Mandarin songs for pupils who speak the Mandarin language as their mother tongue
- b) A learning sequence which starts with the intervals of a falling minor third, followed by falling major second and an ascending major second and major

- c) Songs which avoid the ascending interval “*Re*”-”*So*” (perfect fourth) when teaching beginners. Sequence songs with an ascending perfect fourth melodic interval can be taught at a later stage.

2. What is the best melodic and rhythmic order to adapt in a teaching sequence based on the idiosyncrasies of the Malaysian Chinese language?

The best melodic and rhythmic conceptual order to adapt in such a teaching sequence is simple Chinese children’s folk songs with short, repetitive patterns. The melodic intervals should not be more than a perfect fifth and should start in descending melodic intervals such as a minor third. In Chinese children’s music, there are various “Do” pentatonic songs that require pupils to start

learning the “Mi”, “Re”, “Do” descending pattern starting at an early stage. Therefore, when designing the teaching sequence, I propose that songs with descending “Mi”, “Re”, “Do” should be taught before the “Do”, “Re”, “Mi” pattern. Singing melodic intervals which ascend in stepwise motion are more difficult compared to singing melodic intervals which are in a descending direction. Leaping melodies should be minimised to help the pupils sing securely in their current stepwise intervallic patterns. A leap can be introduced after they feel secure when singing both ascending and descending patterns in stepwise movements. When introducing leaps that are different, I recommend starting with three melodic notes which are “So”, “La” and “Mi”. In learning leaps, ‘Mi-La’ singing was easier for my pupils to sing. This should then be followed by the ‘Mi-La-So’ to produce stability and in-tune singing. The singing of “La” must not be stopped in the middle as it may not give an anchor for the young pupils to catch the moving interval securely.

Through carefully planned and structured lessons with a systematic sequence, the pupils were able to enjoy their lesson while at the same time, achieving the teaching objectives, despite the limited class time.

#### 4.7 The Use of Chinese Children's Folk Songs

During the research, the use of Chinese children's folk songs in my teaching had a calming effect on the students, and led to better engagement than when using other materials. They were able to sing the melodies beautifully. The harmony and songs in general were not too challenging in aspects such as tempo, pitch, and intervals. The pupils' reaction to these singing materials was positive. Using these materials provided an alternate solution to maintain class control despite having a large number of Year One pupils. This finding is consistent with Kodály, Orff and Suzuki who emphasised the importance of teaching folk songs and songs that are familiar to a young child.

Mason (2008) suggested teaching music and singing from "sing by note", hymns to "Pestalozzianism" by Mason where the 'child-centred approach' takes place.

Through my classroom observation, the pupils could not pay attention or listen attentively before being exposed to the Chinese children's folk songs. One of the reasons was due to the difficulties in presenting teaching materials that were outside of the pupil's understanding of musical concepts. However, when they were singing and playing musical instruments, they were curious to hear the different sounds. They wanted to know where the sounds were coming from and about the instruments that were producing the sounds. When I started to sing, the pupils became quiet and paid attention to my singing. Importantly, the pupils could listen to my singing, without needing to shout over the top, even though the singing of the songs was in a softer dynamic than they would have normally sung the song. From this point of observation, I assert that the beauty of the singing of music became evident in that it did move the pupils to feel and pay attention. They sensed the feeling of safety through me using a

calm singing voice. This was evident through their body language and acceptance in the classroom. Their eye contact, facial expressions and physical movements seemed to indicate that they appeared to be listening attentively to my singing voice. Additionally, it was apparent that they were trying to match the singing voice of their teacher.

When singing folk music together with Year One pupils, they showed their greatest interest in singing when the songs were easy to sing, and when they were able to accurately identify the difference between a speaking and singing voice and established the proper fundamentals of pitch and contour control. The singing instilled many intrinsic values because it is tied to the natural language or the ‘mother tongue’ that all pupils learn since they are born. Young pupils are familiar with their speaking language, and hence it is natural and easy for them to sing and understand. The meaningful lyrics in the songs also promoted many daily activities that support a child’s understanding of their culture. Using teaching materials which relate to a child’s own culture is important, so that the younger generation will gain a better understanding of their heritage.

#### 4.8 Other Identified Areas

During this research, I identified the teaching patterns in solfège which were easy for my pupils to grasp. However, during this research it was not possible to cover the following patterns, which could be investigated in a future research project:

- *So-Mi-So-Mi-La-So-Mi*
- *La-So-La-So-So-So-Mi*
- *Mi-So-Mi-Re-Do-Do-Do*
- *Mi-Re-Mi-Re-Do-Do-Do*
- *Mi-Re-Do-Do-Re-Re-Do*

The above solfège teaching patterns may be used in singing exercises. While teaching these solfège exercises, I found that they were easy to sing, and my pupils could sing them accurately by rote. My observation was that they were enjoying the lessons and that the natural descending pitch patterns could be sung without any difficulties. I found that this was also a useful exercise for pupils with poor pitch discrimination to learn how to sing in tune.

## 4.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have reported on the findings from the action research that was undertaken in my classroom. The distinctions between the selection of teaching materials and how teaching materials may be sequenced were crucial in providing a smooth learning transition for the pupils. Careful sequencing of these teaching materials through a detailed analysis of my classroom practices revealed the pupils' reactions toward learning the selected songs were positive. The pupils' showed interest when they could achieve the expected result and showed a lack of interest when singing became difficult. This also enabled the practitioner or teacher to have a clear indication about how the teaching materials should be sequenced in their teaching syllabus. I

identified the appropriate teaching materials that could be used in accordance with the pupils' achievement and learning without strictly following the provided teaching materials. The course of study also revealed the “logical” versus “child-developmental” approach which is highlighted in the Kodály philosophy.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION



#### 5.1 Introduction

By referring to Kodály's philosophy along with extensive research on different ways of sequencing teaching materials in countries such as Hungary, Australia, United States of America, and Taiwan, it is possible to gain a better understanding of how classroom music teaching materials can be sequenced in a progressive order. This chapter will present a summary of the key findings of over 22 main cycles of reflective action research where participants were Year One pupils in a Chinese primary school in Malaysia.



## 5.2 Sequencing of Teaching Materials

After reviewing and analysing a range of teaching sequences from various countries (See Appendix E), classroom teaching materials (songs) used in Malaysian Chinese primary schools should (ideally) be based on materials that are accessible and familiar to Malaysian Chinese pupils. In this study, the suggested sequence by Zheng (2002) in Taiwanese national schools was the most suitable as a guideline and reference for sequencing Mandarin songs in the Chinese primary school where this study was undertaken. Due to the limited scope of this research, Chinese children's folk songs were used in this study. While Mandarin songs are the main materials used in music classes in Malaysian Chinese primary schools, Malay, English, and local songs from Sabah and Sarawak would provide contrasting teaching materials. However, it is recommended that songs which are not in the pupils' mother tongue should be carefully sequenced and minimised in the early stages of teaching young pupils. Other language materials could be added once pupils obtain a certain mastery of a language other than their mother tongue which would provide pupils with opportunities to learn other languages.

## 5.3 Teaching Music Concepts Through the Sequencing of Materials

I have revealed three Year One repertoire choices in the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia as suitable materials that can be used to teach music and its function including child-centred, logical, and theoretical perspectives. While the songs in the

textbook were composed in a way that is interesting, they are, unfortunately, not optimised for teaching young pupils to sing because of the wide leaps, wide vocal ranges, upbeat patterns, and complex rhythms and note values which seem to be more suitable for instrumental teaching. This is consistent with the work of previous music educators such as Kodály, Suzuki, and Edwin Gordon.

Although two of the songs proposed in this research (Song 11: “Let Us See” and Song 12: “Rock, Scissor, and Paper”) have wider leaps and proved difficult for young pupils, I recommend that they are sequenced for Year two teaching. The two last songs were less suitable for teaching beginners, but could be used as part of the extra materials to promote more challenges at a later stage. In my reflective report, I noted that most of the pupils were weak in singing accurately in the two songs and hence demonstrated that there should be much simpler songs to be sequenced before teaching song 11, “Let Us See” and song 12, “Rock, Scissor, and Paper”.

It is likely that there will be a debate about whether folk songs or more traditionally composed songs are most appropriate to use in class as teaching materials. While it is not easy to preserve our heritage, teachers can encourage new generations to learn more about our roots and culture. For this reason, I recommend using local folk songs as some of the teaching materials to provide positive learning experiences, particularly as they relate to preserving the history of ones’ own culture.

In today’s market-driven society, there is pressure to motivate pupils to do well in language acquisition, be competitive in future market demands, and be capable of handling computers, as well as many other aspects related to becoming part of the

education ecosystem. As a result, music and other arts related subjects are being compressed from 60 minutes to just 30 minutes a week. This can be challenging for a music teacher to have the time to teach and strengthen the roles of developing knowledgeable pupils who have high artistic appreciation values. Pupils need to be taught how to appreciate the beauty of their singing voice while managing their emotional states well before proceeding to learn other subjects.

#### 5.4 Pupil Responses and Repertoire List

This study has shown that when young pupils sing children's folk songs in their mother tongue Mandarin, it is easier for them to understand the meaning of the lyrics. They could also easily learn to control their vocal placement which resulted in better overall progress. Singing formed a significant portion of the music learning in my class, and the sorted and sequenced songs also enhanced the progress of both my teaching and the pupils' learning. The songs that they learnt were also repeated to expand their song vocabulary. As they learned and memorised a greater variety of songs, their memorisation skills and singing technique improved.

Singing intervals from within the songs used in the classroom worked well with my young pupils, a finding that is supported by the literature which suggests that children at the age of seven can sing best with intervals not greater than a perfect fifth. If the purpose of teaching is to introduce high and low pitches, the major third or perfect fifth interval singing is sufficient to be able to demonstrate these concepts.



Learning music is not merely about learning loud, soft, high, low, long, and short, but it is teaching children to appreciate the beauty of music by listening attentively to moving intervals and rhythms through time. Teaching music to young pupils moves beyond teaching theory – it is teaching a beautiful experience through the internalisation of the melodies where the pupils can “picture” the melody and texture when listening to any music.

Internalised singing, as suggested by Kodály, must be taught at the beginning of each music lesson and enables children to sing with a beautiful, gentle voice. Due to the natural speaking manner of Mandarin and the culture of Chinese pupils who often speak with a loud voice, I found that my pupils were paying too little attention to their “soft” voice. Encouraging singing with a soft voice led to more attentive listening in my lesson. My Year One pupils, through singing and moving with their body gestures, were able to discriminate between high and low pitches more accurately. It also important to keep in mind that they should not be exposed to very wide intervallic leaps at this stage. The pupils should be given the opportunity to identify the difference between a speaking and singing voice during their lessons. I recommend that songs with a broad range of intervals should be introduced at a later stage unless a specific rhythm is a norm within the spoken language, daily movement activity, or natural to the young children themselves. Additionally, careful sequencing of teaching materials and objectives require various physical activities that should be considered.





## 5.5 Sorting of Materials (Sequencing)

The sorting of materials in a meaningful sequence is important in creating a smooth transition between the teaching and learning of musical concepts. Without suitable planning or sequenced materials, pupils learn without direction, and may not achieve the main goal of musical learning throughout the whole year of music instruction. Specific objectives and skills set must be clear during the preparation stage to provide a roadmap for the teacher to achieve the optimal teaching and learning session at the end of Year One studies. The suggested teaching sequence enables many different skills and musical concepts to be covered over one year of studies and contributes beneficial input and guidelines in the design of a yearly teaching syllabus.



This research employed action research to identify which music is most appropriate for beginner pupils in their early stages of learning. I found that pupils sang more accurately when they moved along with their body gestures. For those pupils who were singing with less accurate pitch, I had to guide them through by holding their hands high up to their chests and then moving them lower toward their waists to represent high and low pitches during the solfège singing. The vibrations through the body and vocalisation from the pupils' bodies bridged the tones and tunes of their teacher. They were then able to beautifully perform the music without any difficulties. This was crucial to equip all the Year One (age of seven) pupils to sing accurately and move around using their bodies. They were then able to sit or move around with intrinsically flowing body movement. They could sit quietly, move or walk gently, and sing in a soft voice while appreciating the atmosphere they created in the music classroom.



## 5.6 Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of cyclical action research, the teaching sequence developed in the current study is only justified within the scope of a limited selection of songs and were specific to the pupils in a Chinese school in Rawang. More materials (songs) would enable a broader view of how they could be sequenced in the teaching. However, if the pupils were from a school in a rural area, the use of teaching materials could be more specific to their mother tongue. In the scope of the research, only Mandarin songs were used, however, the scope of future research could include teaching materials such as different folk songs representing the different ethnicities in Malaysia. This would enable pupils to learn about other musical cultures in Malaysia apart from their own. For instance, teachers of Chinese pupils in the state of Sabah could draw upon the multiculturalism there, and include songs of the local indigenous people, who are used to listening and singing about harvesting. Therefore, it would be appropriate to include harvest music in a teaching sequence of materials used in music classrooms in Sabah.

## 5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers could create a repository of music teaching materials, as well as appropriately sequenced teaching materials for students across Malaysia. Further research is needed to develop a collection of Chinese folk songs that must be analysed in their distinctive keys, singing intervals and sorted in a logical order. The sequence will work better if there are many more Chinese children's folk songs or any of the appropriate folk songs such as songs from East Malaysia, West coast of Malaysia or

national folk songs for educational purposes. This would assist the children to sing well, in addition to learning practical and theoretical concepts through singing.

### 5.7.1 Repository for Music Materials in Different Languages

The need for a music materials repository for education purposes in the languages most commonly spoken in Malaysia such as Chinese, Malay, and Tamil is urgent. Locally accessible songs must be useful for an educator to arrange and design during the preparation of teaching sessions for their specific teaching needs. A music materials repository would ideally consist of songs which originate from Malaysia and represent most of the ethnic groups in Malaysia. Chinese and other non-Malay pupils may benefit from starting to learn music in their mother tongue first, then gradually learn more songs using their native language before progressing to a wider variety of music genres.

The repository would ideally contain a bank of analysed music regarding musical concepts such as melody, rhythm, length, key signature, time signature, and language. The analysed repository of music could help music teachers to sequence their teaching objectives more easily and accurately; music teachers could also tailor the unique learning styles and needs of every individual pupil. In a classroom context, music teachers could tailor the designed teaching sequence with songs appropriate to the pupils' level, age, and learning preference.

### 5.7.2 Sequencing of Teaching Materials

The sequencing of teaching materials requires constant updating of the song lists to provide an efficient teaching sequence. The laid-out foundation of sequencing will be more appropriate if the collection of teaching materials is broadened. The more collected teaching materials there are, the more teaching materials that can be sequenced into one distinct order based on the characteristics of the music, child learning centre, and become the main guidance for music educators to teach more efficiently. The portion of teaching materials could be sequenced in 80% Mandarin songs and 20% of other songs including Malay songs or other local ethnic folk songs.

The sequence is a process that all music teachers need to learn and apply in their planning session before teaching takes place in the classroom. A module of analysed teaching materials with suggested sequenced teaching could provide a guideline for the local music educator. This will enhance their teaching through proper sequencing of materials and teaching objectives. Through the course of this research, there were aspects identified which affect the process of sequencing in teaching including (a) the mother tongue used by the pupils, (b) the genre of folk songs, (c) the difficulty of each selected song, and (d) the teaching syllabus.



## 5.8 Summary

Overall, this research suggests a teaching sequence that can be designed by any teacher using suitable teaching materials which include age-appropriate folk songs, or other composed music. In this research, the sequence of teaching materials was focused specifically on a national Chinese primary school in Malaysia. Future research could include a much wider scope of national schools such as the National primary schools and other vernacular primary schools in Malaysia such as the national Tamils schools. By using a teaching sequence similar to the one proposed in this research, teachers can offer a high-quality teaching system through a progressive way of teaching.





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## APPENDIX A CHINESE CHILDREN'S FOLK SONG LIST

Table 6.1

Collected Chinese children's folk songs and composed folk songs

| No. | Title in Chinese | Title in English             | Notes |
|-----|------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| 1.  | 客人来              | Guest Song                   |       |
| 2.  | 月亮婆婆出来了          | Grandmother Moon is Coming   |       |
| 3.  | 大白鹅              | White Swan                   |       |
| 4.  | 排排坐              | Sitting Song                 |       |
| 5.  | 放学歌              | After School                 |       |
| 6.  | 小猪               | Little Pigs                  |       |
| 7.  | 这是我家             | This is My House             |       |
| 8.  | 我们一同瞧瞧           | Let Us See                   |       |
| 9.  | 小小皮球             | Small Ball                   |       |
| 10. | 小小蚂蚁             | Little Ant                   |       |
| 11. | 三轮车              | Trishaw                      |       |
| 12. | 数蛤蟆              | Count the Toad               |       |
| 13. | 捕鱼歌              | Fishing Song                 |       |
| 14. | 一条小鱼             | A Fish                       |       |
| 15. | 勤读书              | Reading Song                 |       |
| 16. | 六只小鸭             | Six Ducklings                |       |
| 17. | 一根竹子             | A Bamboo                     |       |
| 18. | 懒惰猫              | Lazy Cat                     |       |
| 19. | 拔萝卜              | Harvest Carrots              |       |
| 20. | 客人来              | Guests Song                  |       |
| 21. | 找朋友              | Find a Friend                |       |
| 22. | 要想歌儿唱得好          | To Sing a Good Children Song |       |
| 23. | 小毛驴              | Little Donkey                |       |
| 24. | 不倒翁              | Roly-poly                    |       |
| 25. | 伦敦铁桥垮下来          | London Bridge                |       |
| 26. | 懒惰虫              | Lazy Boy                     |       |
| 27. | 小蜜蜂              | Little Bee                   |       |
| 28. | 母鸡骂小鸡            | Hen Chicks Curse             |       |
| 29. | 找东西              | Looking for Something        |       |
| 30. | 点人数              | Head Count                   |       |
| 31. | 船夫小唱             | Boatman Singing              |       |
| 32. | 来猜拳              | Rock, Scissor and Paper      |       |

## APPENDIX B SELECTED CHINESE CHILDREN’S FOLK SONGS

Here is a list of the songs sorted in the final report of the teaching sequence (materials) which were used to teach in-tune singing, as well as learning of other musical concepts such as beat, rhythm, and phrase.

### 1. Greetings Song & Goodbye Song

Chinese Version

请安曲 (s,m)



Figure 7.1 Music score for Greetings Song (composed).

再见曲 (s,m)



Figure 7.2 Music score for Goodbye Song (composed).

### English Version

Greetings (s,m)

stand up ev-ery- one Good mor-ning Mis-ter Lim please sit  
 6  
 down thank you mis-ter Lim You are wel- come

Figure 7.3 Music score for Greetings Song (composed) in English.

Good-bye song (s,m)

stand up eve-ry- one thank you mis-ter Lim see you-  
 a gain see you- mis-ter Lim Please sit down

Figure 7.4 Music score for Goodbye Song (composed) in English.

## 2. Children’s Taunt

开开心笑 (s,m,l)

Ne ni ne ni bu bu ne ni ne ni bu bu

Figure 7.5 Music score for Children’s Taunt.

### 3. Call and Response Song

#### Chinese Version

回答游戏 (s,m,l)



Figure 7.6 Music score for Children's Taunt.

#### English Version

Singing Games (s,m,l)



Figure 7.7 Music score for Call and Response Song (English).

### 4. Guest Song

客人来 (d,r,m,s)



Figure 7.8 Music score for Guest Song.

## 5. Grandmother Moon is Coming

月亮婆婆出来了 (d,r,m,s,l)

月 亮 婆 婆 出 来 了, 又 大 又 圆 又 大 又 圆  
yue liang po po chu lai liao, you da you yuan you da you yuan  
月 亮 婆 婆 躲 起 来, 又 圆 又 高 又 圆 又 高  
yue liang po po duo qi lai, you da you gao you da you gao

7  
像 银 圈, 月 亮 婆 婆 向 我 招 招 手。  
xiang ying quan, yue liang po po xiang wo zhao zhao shou  
挂 天 边, 月 亮 婆 婆 向 我 摆 摆 手。  
gua tian bian, yue liang po po xiang wo bai bai shou

Figure 7.9 Music score for Grandmother Moon is Coming.

## 6. White Swan

05-4506832 大白鹅 (d,r,m,s,l) pustaka.upsi.edu.my

双 双 对 对 大 白 鹅, 结 伴 游 过 河,  
shuang shuang dui dui da bai er jie ban you guo he

5  
河 里 鱼 儿 多 又 多, 跳 出 水 面 戏 白 鹅。  
he li yu er duo you duo tiao chu shui mian xi bai er

Figure 7.10 Music score for White Swan.

## 7. Sitting Song

排排坐 (l,d,r,m,s)

排排坐 吃果果 我的学校朋友多  
pai pai zhuo chi guo guo you er yuan li peng you duo

朋友多好唱歌 唱歌跳舞真快活  
peng you duo hao chang ge chang ge tiao wu zhen kuai huo

Figure 7.11 Music score for Sitting Song.

## 8. After School

放学歌 (l,d,r,m,s)

功课完毕 太阳西 收拾书包回家去  
gong ke wan bi tai yang shai shou shi shu bao hui jia qu

看见父母行个礼 父母对我笑嘻嘻  
kan jian fu mu xing ge li fu mu dui wo xiao xi xi

Figure 7.12 Music score for After School.

## 9. Little Pigs

小猪 (s,,l,,d,r,m)

小 猪 小 猪 肥 嘟 嘟, 吃 饱 就 睡 呼 噜 噜,  
xiao zhu xiao zhu fei du du chi bao jiu shui hu lu lu  
小 猪 小 猪 肥 嘟 嘟, 地 上 打 滚 粘 满 泥,  
xiao zhu xiao zhu fei du du di shang da gun zhan man ni

5  
叫 它 起 它 闭 起 眼, 张 嘴 就 说 不 呼 噜,  
jiao ta qi ta bi qi yan zhang jui jiu shuo bu hu lu  
叫 它 起 它 闭 起 嘴, 呼 噜 呼 噜 呼 噜 噜。  
jiao ta qi ta bi qi yan hu lu hu lu hu lu lu

Figure 7.13 Music score for Little Pigs.

## 10. This is My House

这是我的家 (s,,l,,d,r,m,s)

这 是 我 的 家, 在 那 山 脚 下,  
zhe shi wo de jia zai na shan jiao xia  
爸 爸 在 工 作, 妈 妈 打 理 家,  
ba ba zai gong zhuo ma ma da li jia

5  
门 前 有 棵 椰 子 树, 又 种 很 多 花。  
men qian you ke ye zhi shu you zhong hen duo hua  
我 们 兄 弟 多 和 气, 我 爱 我 的 家。  
wo men shiong di duo he qi wo ai wo de jia

Figure 7.14 Music score for This is My House.

### 11. Let Us See

我们一同瞧瞧 (s,,l,t,,d,r,m,f)

我 们 一 同 瞧 瞧, 我 们 一 同 瞧 瞧,  
wo men yi tong qiao qiao, wo men yi tong qiao qiao,

5  
飞 机 来 了, 飞 机 来 了, 嗡 嗡 嗡 嗡 吱 叫  
fei ji lai liao, fei ji lai liao, wong wong wong wong zhi jiao.

Figure 7.15 Music score for Let Us See.

### 12. Rock, Scissor and Paper

来猜拳 (s,,l,t,,d,r,m,f,s,l)

小 朋 友 我 们 行 个 礼 握 握 手 呀 来 猜  
xiao peng you wo men xing ge li wo wo shou ya lai chai

8  
拳 石 头 布 呀 看 谁 赢 输 了 就 要 跟 我 走  
quan shi tou bu ya kan shei ying shu le jiu yao gen wo zhou

Figure 7.16 Music score for Rock, Scissor and Paper.

## APPENDIX C RESEARCH JOURNAL

### 1. Journal Report 2014

#### The Process of Searching for Malaysian Chinese Children's Folk Songs.

The research in designing a teaching sequence for Chinese primary schools commenced with a search for Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs that were intended to be used for teaching purposes. Through an internet search, I found information about the song rhyme, "La La Li Li La Tam Pong". This Chinese folk rhyme is a song game from Penang, Malaysia. It is reported that the rhyme has various variations that are sung in three major languages including Chinese, Malay, and other various dialects in Malaysia. The song, "La La Li Li La Tam Pong" is likely a simple chant. I discovered that it was difficult to identify the exact pitches and rhythms of this rhyme due to the lack of information and materials from the written text of a published book by the author, Du (2011). Further, an extensive search was required to explore this area to gain insight into the definitive tunes and songs for preserving this cultural art. The search began by analysing Kodály's collection of folk songs for teaching use which was then followed by an examination of similar methods of cataloguing and sequencing for teaching music in Hungary, the US, Taiwan, and Australia. This is to justify the relationship and process of sequencing the availability and suitability of teaching materials.

Throughout the search for Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs for my classroom's instructional use, I met a DJ from the Ai FM radio station, Chong Keat Aun (张吉安). He has a programme called 乡音考古 (Xiang Yin Kao Gu) in which he puts effort into collecting and studying a range of Chinese traditional music, including folk music and folk songs that are sung in different dialects found throughout Malaysia (Chong, 2010). He organised a few public meetings and invited various experts to give talks related to Chinese culture and the roots of Malaysian Chinese. In addition to this, he invited senior citizens whom he identified as key persons in their respective fields of expertise to talk about and explain the culture and art of the Malaysian Chinese. His works ranged from documenting the development of Chinese culture, music and arts, which is part of his normal employment, as well as his own personal interest. I had the chance to attend one of the talks given by Dr. Soo Khin Wah from the Chinese Faculty of University Malaya about his research on "Guo San Ge" 过山歌 organised by Mr Chong Keat Aun. "Guo San Ge" are songs that were sung by ancestors of the Malaysian Chinese when they migrated from mainland China to Malaysia (Soo, 2014). The songs represent the sadness of leaving mainland China to find a job and to work as labourers overseas. From this experience and understanding of his works, I found that most of the songs collected by Dr. Soo Khin Wah are less suitable to be used in my classroom teaching compared to other songs considering his collection consists only of text in dialects which take years to master. In addition, these languages are not allowed to be used in Chinese schools as only Mandarin is permitted as the formal language.

Although I gathered many songs related to Chinese folk songs to use for my teaching, none were suitable for formulating quick and suitable music to use in my classroom. Therefore, I took a step forward by selecting children's rhymes and nursery rhymes which are common in Malaysia. Since the implementation of the Mandarin language in Chinese primary schools, fewer children can speak in their own native Chinese dialects. Furthermore, many children in Chinese primary schools have little intention of learning their own dialects in the current trend. It is because of this that I felt I must look for songs that are in the Mandarin language to use as teaching materials in my music classroom.

The second attempt in searching for Chinese Children's folk songs was through browsing internet sources. I found a book written by Du (2011) entitled "Hokkien Nursery Rhymes in Old Penang" who documented 80 Chinese folk songs in Penang. His work has played an important role in preserving the history of children folk songs in Penang. The children's rhyme, "La La Li La Tam Pung" could also be found in his writings. In one of his published books, the text of rhyme is clear but without any singing melodies or contours for singing. There were many works which identify the melodies for this song prior to being used in the classroom teaching for music education purposes. There was also inappropriate text in the song which needed to be carefully altered to suit general classroom use.

### **The General Music Subject in Malaysian Chinese Primary School Context.**

In the sessions that I have conducted in the classroom as a primary school teacher, I carried out my duty to handle the requirements of the position. Generally, teachers in Chinese primary schools would need to teach not only his or her subject but are also expected to cover at least one additional subject either in Language, Mathematics, or Science. I had the opportunity to teach Music as a part of my teaching subjects and taught my pupils using the provided national Music education syllabus called KSSR (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, 2017). As a teacher, I must follow all the given guidelines in teaching music. However, through the years of teaching, I have found that the provided materials could be simplified for my pupils to learn about musical concepts. When teaching musical concepts, I met various challenges such as how to teach composed songs which are not purposely composed for children to sing. The songs provided in the teacher's guide book are merely composed songs which provide interesting, catchy, and fun music to attract pupils to learn about music. This was evident through my own observation based on my pupils' development in singing accurately without accompaniment. I hoped to see some improvement in my own teaching and was wondering if I could try to use other singing materials and music to build my pupils' singing skills, musical skills, and performance skills. This motivated me to collect and analyse the children's nursery rhymes; I then sorted them sequentially to use for my own music lessons.

Through the literature review, while preparing for Chapter Two of this dissertation, various aspects which included pupils' development, pupils' psychology, learning styles, prior knowledge, and pupils' readiness which were required to be considered when preparing a lesson for instructional teaching, I noticed that good lesson preparation is vital to achieve a successful class and desired teaching objectives.

In Malaysia, children start their primary education at the age of seven. During that time, they will try to adapt to their learning routines in schools. They also meet new friends while they are adapting to the school and classroom rules, disciplinary practices, and expectations. During this period, some pupils may be frightened and shy in their classrooms while others are excited and free to express their thoughts. In the Chinese primary school scenario, pupils usually have less space as there are about 40 pupils in a class.

In my situation, the school had about 44 pupils in a class which made it more difficult for every pupil to have a chance to speak. Thus, pupils must take turns in expressing their thoughts. It is difficult to listen to all the pupils' opinions, complete the teaching syllabus, and finish off the workbook which are focuses that I must prioritise. Therefore, communication became limited due to the large number of pupils in the classroom. I had to focus on teaching while rushing to complete the syllabus on time while also doing exercises and drills which are a norm in Chinese primary schools. This is because it is normal to have many hands-on exercises on each unit that is learnt.

In the situation where space was limited due to too many pupils in the classroom, I found that teaching using the Dalcroze method was not viable as I needed to find a much larger space for pupils to move and do activities with rhythms. I realised that the Kodály method was more applicable as it enables teacher to teach in both spacious classrooms and within a classroom with less space to move. I came across the Kodály method where pupils can sing and dictate the solfège pitches accurately while internalising the sound in their head without moving around with their whole bodies. Using this method, they could pay attention when their teacher was singing slowly and clearly. Not only were my pupils actively listening, but I also gained much better class control without distractions.

### **Involvement and Participation in Kodály Workshops and Symposium**

Throughout the year, I joined various Kodály workshops organised by the Young Choral Academy in collaboration with the Australian Kodály Society. I incorporated what I learnt in 2009 when I attended the first Kodály workshop organised by the Faculty of Music, University Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Through this active involvement in Kodály workshops over the years, I have gained greater insights into the way in which I can execute aspects of Kodály teaching in my own classroom. I also had the opportunity to attend the Asia Kodály Symposium in Jakarta, Indonesia this year which helped me to understand Kodály teaching better.

I spoke with Dr. James Cuskelly, the current President of the International Kodály Society during the Kodály Symposium Meeting in Jakarta about my current research. He gave me much insight into Kodály practice and teaching along with valuable information about Music Education and Kodály.

I also attended practice sessions for Kodály teaching in the classroom which were given by experienced clinicians such as Miss Susana Saw and Judith Johnson. During these sessions, I learnt about Kodály teaching and its practical methods for classroom teaching. Having attended all the given teaching sessions with their valuable

approach to teaching children, the direction of my dissertation became much clearer. Hence, there was a vital move toward collecting songs in my own mother tongue for sequencing; this is an echo of what Kodály was doing throughout his lifetime. According to Kodály, to make the lessons and practical teaching more effective, it is best that the materials are based on the pupils' own mother tongue because they will be more natural and child-centered if it comes from the heart of each young individual. This was the knowledge gap that was clearly identified in this research for which the materials should be collected and analysed for use in the classroom teaching. With this new knowledge, collection can be a part of the local materials that is, "on its own" and "for its own". This is consistent with Kodály's philosophy of using the "best teaching materials" in teaching.

## 2. Journal Report 2015

### The New Teaching Environment and Settings.

After teaching for five years in a Chinese primary school in Tanjong Malim, Perak, I was transferred to a new Chinese primary school in Rawang, Selangor (a different state of Malaysia) in 2015. The learning environment in the Chinese primary school in Rawang was somewhat different to my previous school in Tanjong Malim. For example, the school had more pupils and did not have a music room in 2015, so I asked the school principal to provide necessary instruments and materials to conduct music classes in the school. Additionally, many of pupils at my current school come from an urban area as compared to my previous school, which was in a regional town. The significant increase in the number of the pupils in this school was mainly due to the new housing estates in the area.

In 2015, the Chinese primary school in Rawang (which was established in 2012) consisted of 520 pupils at the beginning of the school year. For Year One pupils, there were 32 to 33 pupils in every classroom, however, there were only five classes of Primary Year One. In this school, there were only 50 teachers and 3 staff. Due to the newly established school, there were many facilities, especially for Music Education, that were not well equipped. I had the chance to convince the headmaster to convert one of the empty classrooms into a music room. We also successfully acquired a piano that was donated by the community.

### Teaching Sequence Emerging from Practice and Experience of Teaching Instrumental Music

When teaching musical instruments such as the violin, I found that certain books contained chronologically sorted materials which are beneficial for very young children. They tend to choose books which are not too hard or too easy. If the book was too easy, they would not learn new skills and would be bored. Similarly, if it was too difficult, their motivation to practice and learn went down. Ultimately, pupils were not

progressing any better with this mode of teaching. I also discovered that the Suzuki method book for violin consists of many mother tongue children songs. Additionally, Suzuki method books have various versions for use in the different regions. For this reason, in Malaysia, only the Suzuki method book for the Asia region was used. Violin teaching led me to the wonder why the usage of folk songs has been emphasized over various other music educators.

Besides teaching, I also work as a piano instructor. While teaching piano lessons to young children, I discovered that my pupils' learning curve depended on learning motivation, positive encouragement, and self-esteem. I could teach the contents from any song book, however the most progress made was on pieces which the pupils had either listened to before or that were easier for them to play. Once they managed to play the pieces in tune and correct rhythmically, we would move on to other work such as the form and phrasing of the piece, chords involved, as well as a picture of what the piece was going to tell us and how we need to make it more interesting.

Teaching violin and piano led me to another insight which widened my knowledge of selecting appropriate repertoire and helped me to determine the difficulties in every given piece. It also gave me the idea of trying a few songs before deciding whether they are "hard" or "easy", and whether it would suit my pupils' needs.

### **Critique on the Kodály Method Itself**

There are some questions as to whether the Kodály method is insufficient to use as the main teaching method in the classroom. I would like to highlight that Kodály himself did not develop the method, however, his philosophy enables music educators to work with teaching strategies which incorporate his philosophy of teaching music to young children.

The second question would be about the limitations of the learning scope in singing if pupils are too exposed to learning songs which are in pentatonic scales. I would like to highlight that Kodály noticed the usage of pentatonic scales in teaching does not come from his discovery, but from teachers who taught music. The first exercise which was written by Kodály consists of diatonic scales at first which is then reviewed and simplified to pentatonic scales in exercises which slowly expand to full diatonic scale learning. The process of building pupils' achievement from simplifying music is highly rewarding for a pupil's learning. The positive achievement will then allow pupils to move toward learning pieces with a higher difficulty.

The third is about the use of folk songs. The nature of singing and basic of language learning does require young children to sing and process. Although pupils can be taught by using advanced music as much as we can as an educator, Kodály's philosophy and belief that learning the basic foundations which contribute to the creation of advanced music structure through the natural sounding system is the best tool that teachers can start with. Without having a start and end point in teaching is ineffective. Additionally, teaching output is based on what the teacher has taught. For example, if the teacher is going to teach about the foundations of the workings in music, he/she should start from teaching the foundation of how to process the sound and deliver



it through expressive singing. Teaching the foundations through how the sound can be constructed is the most prevailing process in education.

The sequence of teaching, in writings, contributed by teachers who teach with the Kodály philosophy in mind such as Katinka Scipiades Daniel, Lois Choksy, Mícheál Houlahan & Tacka, Anne Laskey, and Zheng Fang Jing, would put sequential teaching and learning as the foundation to successful teaching of music. The importance of consciously knowing about the teaching sequences which are occupied in teaching would contribute careful and insightful planning for the teacher to identify the teaching objectives for every lesson and a long-term achievement for pupils.

### **Decided List of Chinese Children's Folk Songs**

The final decision to use Chinese children's folk songs as opposed to the Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs became evident as much more research was required to explore the collecting of Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs. Due to the lack of documented materials for Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs, they were not used as the primary source of my research. To overcome the problem, the Chinese children's music (in the Mandarin language) that were known by Chinese pupils in Malaysia were used as the primary source of teaching materials in this research. The main list of Chinese children's folk songs includes 31 carefully selected songs for sequencing of teaching materials (see Appendix A).





### 3. Journal Report 2016

#### The Beginning of Action Research

In 2016, I put in a request to teach all primary Year One pupils. I reasoned to the administrator about the research that I was going to do, and they assigned me to teach all Year One pupils in 2016. Through the careful study and observation of my Year One pupils, I noticed that the teaching of Year One pupils was much more challenging than others in terms of the pupils' psychology and emotional states.

The planned action research was successfully carried out during the year (2016). There was a music room for conducting the music class, and a piano was available. During the year, I had the chance to conduct more cycles with pupils from Year One to identify the sequence that I designed. I verified and used the planned teaching sequence to teach and to determine the output and characteristics from the designed teaching sequence.

#### 4th January 2016 (Monday)

The following year, I collected three pages of music which were suitable for young children in the limited range which were in pentatonic scales music. I also retyped the collected Chinese music on my computer for usage as selected materials and sequence out for use in a classroom of young beginners. Through the study of children's developmental stages in learning, I selected songs which were short and consisted of small, melodic interval leaps, as well as songs in which the text was easily understood by my pupils. Through my ongoing research, I found that it was important to limit the selected list of songs used in the teaching sequence for my research.

In the previous teaching year of 2015, I only had one music class to teach and it made me more mature as a teacher. Compared to the music class that I taught in Tanjong Malim, I found that I had to face big changes to the teaching environment and the audience background. The lessons were basically the same content, but the way of teaching was no longer the same as the pupils' background in my current school which was nearer to the town centre compared to the previous school. The first day of going into my Year One music classroom, I planned to carry out the duty as a music teacher and arrange the teaching subject throughout the whole year. From an administrative perspective, there were requests for the music teacher to teach Year One pupils to sing the national anthem, state anthem and learn to sing the school song. This is the real situation that is happening in every school. The administration expected that the music teacher would teach the pupils to sing formal songs and they expect that the Year One pupil can sing them well in every assembly.





### **5th January 2016 (Tuesday)**

Today was the second day of my teaching and I am currently teaching the entire Year One music by myself. I was very happy to have an administrator trust me to teach the Year One pupils music. Although I was teaching Year One music, I considered this responsibility a serious matter in my duty. It was important to have a clear vision regarding what to teach and where to start teaching from in the music itself. In the school's planned activities for Year One pupils, they had orientation period for about three weeks where they were made familiar with the school environment and learned how to work with their peers. I decided to start with teaching singing greeting songs in "So", "Mi", and "La" to them as I had found that it was very effective through my past teaching experiences in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, I tried to teach singing greetings songs in all my music classrooms and the pupils were required to echo back with the same tune but with different words toward greetings back the teacher. I liked to make this their routine of singing until everyone started to become aware of his or her own singing voice.

### **6th January 2016 (Wednesday)**

I had the chance to teach all the Year One pupils music and I started to draft the yearly teaching plan. This yearly teaching plan would be the main core for teaching singing, rhythmic/beat learning, musical reading of high and low notes, and musical literacy related to the subject. In my classroom teaching, I found that there are slightly different teaching modes through the five different classes that I taught. Additionally, there were three to four pupils from the class who were slightly more active. They were very playful during my teaching sessions. So as a part of my research, I will report this in detail in my reflective journal.

### **7th January 2016 (Thursday)**

Throughout the lessons, I found that in my first week of teaching of music classes, pupils were required to explicitly be taught how they should behave in their classrooms and get used to their learning environment. This included things like how to greet teacher and how to maintain discipline in or outside the classroom.

### **8th January 2016 (Friday)**

The first week just ended and the music lessons did not go smoothly as a few of the pupils feared their new friends. They also showed serious, tense responses in the classroom which made the teaching environment uneasy. When I approached my pupils who were fearful and shy, they gave no response when singing in the classroom. Generally, however, most of the children in Year One got to enjoy singing as their routine in the music classroom.

### **11th January 2016 (Monday)**

This week, I enforced my pupils' singing of greeting toward the teacher, and the main teaching had not started. In my opinion and experience in teaching, regarding the Year One pupils, I needed to create a safe environment to let them feel secure before I started





my teaching. The teaching needs to build upon a teacher-pupil relationship. So, I started to encourage the pupils to sing and positively asked them to listen to the beautiful singing sounds. I believed that, from the start of the music class, all pupils must be exposed to a beautiful singing voice which is soft and comes naturally. Personally, I am still struggling to sing with my falsetto to get the children used to the singing range without any trouble. Given that I am a man, my voice is an octave lower compared to children's singing voice, so that is why I need to sing in falsetto.

### 12th January 2016 (Tuesday)

Today, I had accumulated to start to identify the singing range of my pupils. I usually start every singing session with a secured F key to let them sing accurately on the "So", "Mi", "La" basis for daily singing. I would like them to have the idea of singing accurate pitches every time they started singing. Secure singing of intervals by using solfège and the ability to recognise the beautiful singing voice is part of my main goal in every lesson. Teaching music is a huge burden, but for young children, by recognising their singing voice and realising the beauty of their singing voice could lead them toward an appreciation of the music discipline.

### 13th January 2016 (Wednesday)

On this day, I continued to teach the formal songs which are the national anthem, the state anthem, and school songs. The school songs are composed by Tzu Ji, who, as I found out, is an experienced music composer who recognises the singing range of young children as well as the intervals of the capabilities of young pupils. The songs were well accepted based on response of all the Year One pupils. Further, whenever they sing the school songs, they shown a very secure singing, and they got the key and sounding correct as well as the words. A part of the school songs is in the mother tongue which is the Chinese language.

### 14th January 2016 (Thursday)

The teaching, in the beginning, did not show any drastic development as the pupils still were picking up the new learning style from me. I had tried my best to encourage my pupils to sing in solfège in every lesson and to play with the sequence from "So", "Mi", and "La" perspective to see the outcome from this lesson. The "So", "Mi", "La" sequence is far more powerful than I thought. The outcome showed when we sang the funny "So", "Mi", "La" action with young children. Some of the pupils I had taught were the children of my fellow teachers who had given feedback to me by telling me that their children were enjoying their music class and that they repeatedly sang to their parents in the funny "So", "Mi", "La" teasing style. I was both happy and hesitant when I tried to answer regarding the reason behind this kind of teaching. It was well that the children are capable of positively driven by their voice and singing in an accurate way. The usage of a tuning fork to give the sound of "Mi" was very important as the children could match and mapped the frequencies in their mind on the same sound every time they sing. I believe that this could drive them to learn pitch more accurately in future.



### **8th- 12th February 2016 (Monday – Friday)**

It was Chinese New Year celebration, therefore, none of the classes were held during the week. There were no lessons being carried out through this week. I was still eager to carry on with my classroom teaching although all of us were busy with preparing for the performance for the Chinese New Year Celebration. I had used the Year One textbook as my main material to teach for this week, and none of my research materials used.

### **15th February 2016 (Monday)**

Today, I have gone into Year One and Year Two classes for music. I found that the selection of songs in the textbook were difficult for pupils to grasp within the given time frame which was 30 minutes each session. Additionally, the music provided was long and very difficult for pupils to get all the words correct while singing. Most of them just mumble around and did not get the words in singing when trying to learn phrase by phrase. It was difficult for them, and they could not enjoy the singing except for doing for actions. The songs used were related to action where pupils stand in a circle and move around with action. It was like more toward doing actions than singing. I agreed on some part of the activities as only in music class we have a chance to interact interpersonally compared to the usual sitting environment in the classroom. Therefore, I concluded that in every lesson, the music that I used needed to have movement as well as provide the minimum number of sounds or words used. It was for the benefits of achieving the teaching objectives in the given timeframe. It would be such a fun and enjoyable lesson where pupils could sing well and do well. Furthermore, I would need to remind myself that doing actions is a partial requirement in the classroom to achieving musical literacy. Singing with the concentration on the hearing and listening should be given more emphasis. We should not doubt that singing in a lighter way and soft voice by reducing of the volume gain attention of the pupils and provide more secure learning pathway to the pupils.

### **29th February 2016 (Monday)**

As this week is exam week, so there was no music class again this week. I had to postpone the research again. Let's talk about Kodály. Kodály had stressed “inner hearing” and quality repertoire in his teachings. I agree with it after teaching my children with Kodály philosophical guidelines. Usually, I will teach singing with piano at first, then followed by teaching solfège and rhythm with rhythm syllables by using Chev  system. I found that teaching with a piano is another crucial part where, as a teacher, I felt that I could control the time and space whenever my children sing. I could turn a singing into a different mood where children were always wondering why they feel differently whenever they listened and sang with different modes played along with the piano. Not only had I realised that the presence of a piano and having a quality teacher who could control the pace of learning (time) would affect the learning environment or space, but also that changing the mood by playing with different tonalities or style caught the pupils’ attention. They were exploring different emotions through seeing their facial messages and by wandering around what they felt in the classroom. I had used electronic recordings before the school had a piano, and it did not work this way. Many if not all pupils nowadays are used to listening to all sorts of a

digital players such as CD players, computers, smart phones, radio, TV, or an even streaming sites like YouTube. In this era, getting “nice” or even “bad” music around us is easier than ever. Music educators play an important role in selecting the appropriate materials for use in educational purposes. As a music educator, I had to create my own repertoire as the provided materials in the teacher resource book are lacking in proper music sorted in melodic and rhythmic sequence suggested by Kodály philosophy. My collection of songs also poses difficult sequence as they are more complex and could only be introduced after any of the proper sequence were introduced. Therefore, I had figured out that I needed to keep making and creating tunes with *So - Mi* intervals in my children’s own mother tongue. This meant that I did not include English even though there is a lot of it out there. Rather, I started it in Chinese and plan to (perhaps) introduce some English later.

Malaysia is a multilingual country. In Chinese schools, children learn mainly in Chinese, but still speak and write fluently in Malay and English. Logically, a big proportion of the music should also be sung in Chinese language and followed by Malay and English. *So*, this is what I need to do now, start with writing simple melody from scratch with *So, Mi* dropping intervals for children to sing. I would also expand it with drone singing, part singing in groups and “*So*” on to help strengthen the intervals of a minor third of my young children.

### 1st March 2016 (Tuesday)

As this week is an exam week, the music classes are not being carried out as usual meaning that it was postponed. So, I did some internet research on the music teaching sequence. While searching, I found an interesting site to learn about the teaching sequence by another teacher. It was from Nick (2009) and argued about ways to teach pupils about the correct sequence. One could not jump into very difficult lessons like teaching chords after the pupils only began to learn a few notes or tunes. The instructor’s way of answering the pupils’ questions on how to accompany songs with chords also made a big difference. The author of the site also showed a recommended approach where we could get answers such as, “That is a good question and it is great that you already want to write your songs, to understand how chords fit together we will have to do a bit more basic music theory work first. I’ll be happy to get you started on that today if you like,” or, “We’ve already covered the note names of each open string. We need to cover three more steps to get to the subject of chord sequence construction.” The way that the author mapped out the size of the task for his/her pupil could make a big difference. According to the author again, the idea is to harness their enthusiasm by putting the goal that they are interested in attaining (ability to write songs) is achievable. It means that they could apply themselves to learn a logical sequence of contributory subjects along the way. We had known that we could not understand chord sequence unless understanding harmonisation. We must understand a major scale first before understanding a chord sequence. We also could not understand a major scale before understanding the chromatic scale. That is what a correct sequence comes in. As quoted in the article, “Teach the chromatic scale first, then the major scale, then you can begin to talk about key signatures, chord construction, and harmonisation.”

### 2nd March 2016 (Wednesday)

It is still exam week, so today, I browsed through another website, Deborah (2014) which focuses about the falling intervals of the minor third where I had used in my teaching. It was the first intervals to bring the pupils into the singing classroom. We had fun because pupils were enjoying the *So, Mi* singing. The site also mentions that his/her pupils had exhibited a tremendous increase in musicality when he/she uses the Kodály's sequenced applications. In my research, I would need time to investigate the application based on teaching sequence based on the Kodály's suggested teaching sequence. My pupils were performing beautifully due to very easy materials where the focus is on only "So – Mi". I taught them how to produce beautiful singing voices through just singing "*So*" and "*Mi*" which could then be extended to group singing where two groups are singing different or one group singing in drone singing. It had strengthened the pupils' listening skills and analysis of the moving intervals across time. I believed that this way, we could build more music pitches slowly and by adding more and more pitches into it to perform more complex melody.

Let's again rephrase the musical objectives of Kodály musical training where the site cited that:

The musical objectives of Kodály Musical training may be listed as to develop the ability of all children to (1) Sing, play, and move from memory, a large number of traditional folk songs of the mother tongue; (2) Perform, listen to and analyse the great art music of the world; (3) Achieve mastery of musical skills, such as musical reading and writing, singing and part-singing; (4) Improvise and compose, using their known musical vocabulary at each developmental level; (5) The melodic sequence mention, "The first interval taught using the Kodály Method, is the falling minor third (derivative from many children's songs, such as "tattle-tail", and "Rain, rain, go away") (MusicStaff.com, n.d.).

Here's one of the interesting links to many of the folks songs throughout the world (Beth, 2016). However, I could not find any of the Malaysian Chinese children's folk songs.

### 3rd March 2016 (Thursday)

Today, I taught as usual for the Year One class although it is still exam week. I found that I should teach my pupils to have solid singing with "*So*" and "*Mi*". It seems that a few pupils in my classroom were not using their ears as they are not able to listen well or sing well although I had repeatedly sung for few times.

My class control for today's lesson was less than satisfactory as the Year One class was slightly hard to control. This leads me to believe that I had not given proper instructions when we started the lessons. Usually, the children that I teach will have fun when they are enjoying the class, the class control will be getting slowly in control. It was unusual to say that my music class seems to be little out of control comparable to other classes. My pupils were very active, and they are physically energetic. I knew that I must teach them to control themselves. It will be more proper if they could be walk into the music



room slowly and quietly. Whenever they walk, they must also pay attention to the floor and to the front “*So*” that they are aware of any hazards.

We did sing solfège, but I found that not every pupil got the correct pitch by rote. Following this, I repeated a few times until they were used to the singing voice and balance it with their singing voice. They were being asked to sing out loud together, and I could control them by using the light singing voice of mine. After few rounds of singing random dropping *So, Mi*, I add it with more pattern like crotchet quaver and semiquaver. We had fun, and they all enjoy singing it. Two of my pupils are singing in talking voice, and I had corrected them by singing it again to them and then they sing back to the class. This slightly increased the awareness of my pupils who were not singing in perfect, true singing voices to sing nicely and beautifully.

### 5th March 2016 (Saturday)

Today is Saturday and I do not have any classes. Instead, I only have choir and band practices as a part of the music club programme. We have choir practice sessions which start at seven a.m. and end at nine a.m., and the band practice session goes from nine a.m. to eleven a.m. The main objectives of the choir and band sessions are to strengthen the basics foundation of the school children in musical aspects. In this choir session, we sang some folk songs which were a part of my collection. We sang three songs which consist of pentatonic scales and through the practice session, I had observed the outcomes and output of my music club members (choir) on the learning process of singing the three songs. One of the songs, it has an interval range of an octave poses some difficulties when they try to sing and learn the song. We had fun singing although the octave singing was not very well performed in secured singing. It reminded me on the literature that young children do not have a singing range of more than an octave.

### 6th March 2016 (Sunday)

I taught some of my interesting collection of music that I have collected and edited for teaching purposes. Through watching of Brilliant of the 'The unanswered question 1973 Musical Phonology Bernstein with sound' from YouTube (Bernstein, n.d.). I noticed that the sounding system for a language for musical learning. As before this, I knew that answering in singing and music requires deep knowledge of language related to music. As I said, I need to keep my focus on only the intervals and the direction of sounds that affected my knowledge of studies which is on designing sequence. I would suggest that I put this into my own chapter 2. In the video, the author says the *So, Mi-la* is universal and he showed that there is research about those of human sound pitch. He also shown about the harmonics musical phonology and showed about the vibration of anybody and called as energy and vibratory motion. It is beaten, bow, or struck. Interestingly, it also argued about the overtones of the key of C and showed the overtones of the perfect fifth that formed followed by the third. It is then being called the Western tonic culture, the Chords. After watching the video, it brought me to another question about the pentatonic tonic centre which I have collected in my songs/ Chinese music.





### 8th March 2016 (Tuesday)

I read through the music guideline downloaded from the Government of Ireland website. The documents discussed the importance of learning music, explaining that it is a non-verbal form of communication that can convey ideas, images and feelings through selected sounds and symbols. Music is an indispensable part of the child-centered curriculum as one of the ranges of intelligence. Its activities challenge the child to act in unique ways to listen discerningly to his or her own music. They are then able to sing, play or read on music sensitively, accurately and to evaluate critically. What was more important in the aspect of music in the curriculum is that the way it contributes to the personal, social, mental and physical development of the child. Coordination of mind and body is achieved through singing; singing action songs, playing singing games, tapping rhythms, moving to music and playing in time while simultaneously listening to others. They also learnt about gaining literacy from reading notation. Speech development is fostered through working with vocal sounds, chanting, singing nursery rhymes and songs. Every child can experiment with vowels and consonant sounds and learn to control breathing through singing. Additionally, language development is enhanced through practice singing in a variety of songs which containing new words, idioms and phrases.





## APPENDIX D

### TEACHING REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

#### 1. Reflective Journal 2014

When I started teaching, I encountered various difficulties, especially in training my students to become musically literate. I attempted to gather my students' learning background and tried my best to align my teaching units with all the musical elements, but all doesn't seem to be right. Although my pupils learnt about different musical concepts and even understood it well, their musicality was lacking. In response, I presented an exciting lesson in the classroom according to the given teacher's resource book, and all the pupils were enjoying learning every topic that I taught. At the end of the lesson, I could not find them learning any of the music correctly. They seem to be enjoying my classroom teaching style but without building any of their musical vocabularies. They seem unable to expand their singing with many types of music. So, despite my personal observations and experience over the years, my pupils are singing the given songs while enjoying it but without the capability of gradually building any of the musical vocabularies. Whenever they are asked to sing without accompaniment, they (pupils) seems to sing out of tune. They are constantly singing but without understanding the pitch or rhythm accuracy. These lack of qualities have been a lull in my own daily routine and teaching.



Besides the weak singing qualities of my pupils, I discovered that my pupils are just attending my music class for fun. They were enjoying their learning through a fun and interesting way, but I felt guilty as I knew that there is room for improvement in my teaching. I need to give out the best I could in improving their musicality and singing. I knew that the provided materials for my teaching from the teacher resource book provided by the KSSR Music Education Year One module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010) teacher's guidebook for primary schools in Malaysia are insufficient for my classroom teaching. I have also noticed that there were songs composed in a vast variety of styles, complex rhythm used, and large intervals in the given songs. By restricting myself to only using the provided materials, my pupils could not further their learning. This meant that their potential could be expanded further, and hence allows them (pupils) to expand their knowledge to many difficult and challenging concepts later.

Teaching music triggered me about what I should teach in every lesson. I asked myself about the teaching strategies that I have employed and challenged my own practice in classroom teaching. Questions that I raised about my own teaching include a) My final objectives were to enable my students to achieve what? b) What were the end results from teaching music to all my students? c) Why are my pupils unable to sing accurately in tune without accompaniment? d) Are my teaching strategies causing the lack of attention from pupils which resulted in lesser achievement? By following the framework provided by the Ministry of Education and the syllabus, I found that I could not get close to achieve my teaching objectives. Knowing that I am a Music Education graduate, I need to identify the focus point of my teaching quickly. I do not need to provide a general singing activity or fun classroom teaching but to design a



framework that closely gives guidelines for the teacher in the classroom to teach. I need to carry out the current research to provide feedback into the teaching system as a guideline for music educators. They would also be able to refer to this research on how they can sequence their teaching materials and enhance their teaching focus in classroom.

Teaching becomes part of the research, and I started to observe through my own teaching while generating ideas and trying to find materials that work best in my classroom teaching. Through an exploration of action studies in my classroom practice, the various aspects of teaching process could be explored and identified. The key to the failure of pupils singing independently of music accompaniment could be identified.

早安曲 (Selamat Pagi)

早上到学校, 向老师请安。见到同学  
zhao shang dao xue xiao, xiang lao shi qing an. jian dao tong xue

们, 微笑说早安。 la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu  
men, wei xiao shuo zhao an. la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu

la la la. la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la li lu la la la.

Figure 9.17 Composed music, “Selamat Pagi” from the KSSR Music Education level 1 module (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2010).

When I attempted to teach the Year One pupils in my class to sing at the beginning of the music class by using the song, “Selamat Pagi” (Morning Song) (Figure 9.1), most could not sing on the correct pitch well, especially from the intervals of “Re” – “Fa”. The ascending makes it more difficult for the pupils to grasp the minor third intervals. Then it could be followed by an interval of a major second which is “Fa” - “Mi”. The semitone step singing for beginning made it harder for them to sing. This was confirmed in the literature about beginning singing accuracy related to intervals (Cavitt, 2006; Choksy, 1974; Jones, 1971; Young, 1971).

The above material (Figure 9.1) is less appropriate to be used in a classroom as I am teaching Year One pupils. Why did it happen? This was due to several reasons such as a) I only use the teaching materials provided by Ministry of Education, b) the composed music doesn’t fit to the natural sounding of Chinese language itself as it is translated, and c) The range of intervals is too complex for a beginner to sing accurately.

It was to find out that only the second part starting from bar nine onwards which contains repetitive pattern helped the pupils sing better. Another aspect of the given songs is in the key of C major. When I use C major key in my teaching of this song, I found that my pupils were not able to sing it in their natural singing voice. The lovely untrained voices should be clearly and explicitly taught in the first lesson of music class. All young children need to be taught the ways in which singing is compared to speaking.

## 2. Reflective Journal 2015

### Reflective Journal Quarter 1 of 2015

*11 Feb 2015 (Wednesday)*

Today is the first day of my teaching in the 1D classroom in my new school. It contained a larger number of pupils compared to my previous school. The number of pupils doubled from the average 18 pupils in my previous school to the 35 pupils in the current school classroom settings. The space in the classroom seems to be creating barriers for doing physical activity as the classroom tables, chairs and bags are all over the classroom hindering especially locomotor movements. I started my class with warmth greetings by singing "Good morning to my pupils" in the Mandarin language and guided my pupils to respond with "Good morning to Mr. Lim" in Mandarin. The singing greetings consist of 3 foundation pitches with major second and minor third intervals which are "La", "So" and "Mi" pitches. The pupils seemed to pay more attention to the sound of my voice, and their smiling faces and responses reflected that they are starting to enjoy singing. The classroom was conducted by using my five years of experiences in the previous school which I like to start with the "So-So-Mi-La-So-So-Mi" where they are closer to the children's natural singing voice. I wanted to create a link between the singing syllables with the accurate pitch by practising singing routines. Of course, the singing routines will then help to shape the discovery of the teaching sequence for Year One. Although the lesson plan was prepared according to the yearly teaching plan, I had to put it aside to get familiar with my pupils' names. I also needed to get their attention and needed to try my best to understand each of their needs. I paid attention to all 35 pupils in the classroom when teaching by identifying their different learning styles. At first, the singing of "La", "So", and "Mi" was slightly passive, so I incorporate a non-locomotor total physical response activity to help every pupil to be involve with spatial and pitch relation and then help to link the pitch with physical awareness through high, medium and low for every single pitch of "La", "So" and "Mi". Everyone seemed to be engaged in the classroom teaching after we (pupils and I) started to sing and put our hands in the high, medium, and low positions. It was great to see the pupils get the idea of the high, medium and low pitch as well as getting familiar with the solfège pitch. At the end of the lesson, I then greeted "bye bye all pupils" to the pupils by using the "La", "So", and "Mi" pitches and then the pupils

responded with, “bye bye, Mr. Lim” in Mandarin. Why is it important to use Mandarin? It was due to the Kodály’s philosophy emphasises in learning music. The natural language syntax and sounding system enables pupils to sing accurately and learn better especially in the melodically movement of songs. They sing the first songs in their book which is 向前走 ‘Walk forward’ where the music tells about walking to the school and greet with friends and walking home and greet with parents and siblings after school as revision. It was important for me to identify the pupils’ level and their learning style *So* that I could do a better planning for my next lesson. I leveraged the different simple rhythm in this melody and put much of the emphasis on the accuracy of the pitch by singing in the ‘comfortable’ zone of the pupils’ range. The singing for young children in the literature review showed that they have very minimum range singing intervals.

The next plan was to look for songs that are in the range of “*La*”, “*So*” and “*Mi*” in Chinese children’s folk songs, prepare two of them, and then select one for teaching in the classroom. I also needed to identify where the music room was located. As my music class is during the first period on Wednesday, moving forward, I will have some time to move to the music classroom for the next planned activities. I needed to figure out on placing a simple sequence of pitch teaching and take down every aspect of the response at first, and I might also be able to discuss with another teacher who also teaches music to try out some of my plan in their classrooms. At the same time, I need to get my research approval from the Research and Development Division for Adoption, Ministry of Education.

**24 Feb 2015 (Tuesday)**

One week of the Chinese New Year school break just came to an end and tomorrow, I must start teaching my music class. However, there are more preparations to done before the class starts. For tomorrow, I have laid out a plan to teach a simple song titled “Three Little Tigers”. I would be interested to observe the pupils in the class on how their responses on these songs and to understand if there are any changes required to the future planning after the lessons. I read again a book titled “Learning Sequences and Music Learning” by Beall, G. (1991) to refresh my mind on the teaching focus that I need to accomplish tomorrow. I had realised that the learning sequences consists of a clear structure, relationship of parts, understanding of some basics structures, and how they evolve. In my research, I needed to have clear structures of what to teach by focusing on rhythm aspects and melodic (tonal) aspects. I also needed to have a clear idea of what is the structure of the teaching sequence, the relationship between the achievements of my pupils as well as to be able to tell how this sequence evolves. Three learning sequences highlighted by Beall, G. (1991) which is (1) the skill learning sequence, (2) the tonal content learning sequence and (3) rhythm content learning sequence. Firstly, all my pupils have already been introduced with the *So* and *Mi* singing through greetings (*So-So-Mi-So-Mi*) in every session. They had great enforcement every time they greeted with the teacher through singing. The teacher will greet with Good Morning to all the pupils, and the pupils will respond with Good Morning to Mr Lim in their mother tongue, Chinese. Naturally, Chinese language usually in speaking sounds rougher compared to Malay and English language. The natural sound is so bright, and a simple search on Wikipedia shows that Malaysian Mandarin can clearly be distinguished by its relatively tonal, “flat” sound. Wikipedia also mentioned that the use of glottal stops and ‘rushing’ in the speaking language itself



results in a distinct ‘clipped’ sound compared to other forms of Mandarin. As before this, I would like to remind myself about the source and knowledge that I gained from attending talks by one of the former linguistics lecturer from Universiti Malaysia that majority of Chinese in Malaysia were Hokkien speakers (Min Nan), Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew and Hainanese. It was interesting that the Malaysian Chinese like to mix some words with Malay. Due to the limited movement in the classroom and time constraints, starting off with singing could be the only best solution. Other than that, non-locomotor movement might help, for an example, walking while singing at the basketball court might be another good solution.

### ***27 February 2015 (Friday)***

Every child has access to music education. Through watching the videos from YouTube, it gave me ideas about the importance of music education. It also reminded me about the main objective of music education, its purposes, and some important points that contribute to the knowledge of study.

### ***8 March 2015 (Tuesday)***

While browsing through Deborah (2014), I found that it mentioned about the musical intervals that we usually hear in English songs and the music intervals that are universally known.



As usual, today I taught the class of 1D, and I am still looking for materials that are suitable for designing teaching sequence. We had a wonderful class today as my pupils have the chance in learning how to sing solfège. Today, I taught the same song that they had learnt previously which is “left hand and right hand”. The reason behind this teaching is to get all my pupils to be familiar with the singing of solfège and my teaching style. More than half of the pupils starts to gain clearer singing pitch of “La”, “So” and “Mi”. The singing that accompanied with Curwen hand signs helped my pupils to sing in tune. After 15 minutes of the lesson when all my pupils gain a clearer picture on the songs and could sing it repeatedly, I had encouraged them to do with the body gestures and then followed with hand signs. After that, I played the accompaniment where they could then sing along with the music. All of them shown interests with the songs, and I started to explain the meaning of songs.

### ***16 March 2015 (Monday)***

Today is the first day of the school’s term break. I got the chance to read a book entitled, “Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice” edited by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2001). It was just another book that covered what is action research for my references and studies. I must make sure I could work clearly and distinctively on the action research to make it as solid as possible.



## Reflective Journal Quarter 2 of 2016

*1 April 2015 (Wednesday)*

It has been a long time since the last time I did a reflection in this journal. My class has been shifted to Tuesday, and while I was able to carry out my research as usual in the classroom, it was my health condition that prevented me to properly handle the classroom. As discussed with my supervisor, we had agreed that every class must be recorded to be analysed and use in the research. The overlook of participants or impromptu activities will also be discussed and reflected in this journal throughout the playback of the recorded videos.

Today, I read a book entitled, "Neuroscience in Music Pedagogy" by Wilfried and Frances (2008). In this book, it shows that there are recent studies addressing the level of music cognition that has been explored the possibility of connections between music and language processing as cited in Koelsch et al., 2003; Koelsch et al., 2004; Levitin and Menon, 2003; Saffran, 2003; Schon, Magne, and Besson, 2004. The neuroimaging studies of the temporal process such as rhythm perception often involved the activation of regions in the left hemisphere (Bengtsson et al. 2005; Di Pietro et al., 2004; Schneider et al., 2005; Vuust et al., 2005). The book also states that this was suspected even before neuroimaging was available based on observations that it is easier for more people to tap a complex, syncopated rhythm with the right hand than with the left, even when left-handed subjects are observed as well (Ibbotson & Morton, 1981). The perception of rhythm according to the author has frequently implicated neural regions in the left hemisphere, metric grouping processes (i.e., beat perception).

*15 May 2015 (Friday)*

Until now, I have been working hard on finding materials for my teaching research. I went up and down with the books that I had surfed the Internet for materials that are suitable for my lessons. I knew about the sequence that I was going to carry on, but the collected materials seem to be not aligned with my teaching sequence that I want to try in my classroom. As it is never easy, I must work harder to try to get the nearest Chinese children's folk songs that consists of many and a dozen of pentatonic and it must have the starting intervals of minor third in the song. The minor third is the first sequence that I need to test out with my school children. Singing other intervals other than a minor third is fine, but I must get the minor third intervals secured whenever my class children sing. I have listed and collected some of the Chinese children's folk songs, but the intervals seem far more complex for my pupils to use. I need to work out with some of the tunes that can be adapted in the Chinese language while following the natural sounding system of Chinese language. It must be like some simple melodies as like the songs Kodály collected. Short, precise and yet focuses on the tunes, intervals and musical literature like part singing or similar. It is getting harder and there is more work to do now.



### *15 June 2015 (Monday)*

As usual, I taught my Year One pupils about singing, movement with rhythm, and the expressive side of music. I did not teach much on the music theory, but instead focused on lots of applications of musical elements into the teaching and learning session. One example is to sing and build body movement coordination with the sound. Singing along and do simple movements and body gestures to help shape the beauty of singing voice and appreciation toward the song itself. However, by teaching a class, it would not be able to satisfy the need of understanding the core ground basics that I need to develop. I need more classes of Year One children and make triangulation and conduct comparisons and contrasts between the application of the same song and their output to help me generate a better grasp on what is happening behind the scenes. I carried out my duty as usual and request for teaching more classes of Year One pupils and to clarify my research once more.

### **Reflective Journal Quarter 3 of 2015**

#### *17 August 2015 (Monday)*

Today, I had taught my pupils how to sing the songs found in the textbook provided by the Textbook Division. We sang the high and low pitches as well as the jumping intervals of an octave which clearly showed the pupils about high and low pitch distinctively. However, it was tough for my pupils to sing accurately especially singing in the high pitch. I would suggest that to show high and low pitches; we do not necessarily to require a piece that consists of high and low pitches which have intervals of an octave. The descending of pitches intervals was easier for my pupils to sing, and I found that the intervals for my Year One children needs to be near and it must not be smaller than major second of intervals. Therefore, I need to search for more suitable materials which are not over an octave or use the materials that are not in the argued criteria to be used on at a later stage.

### **Reflective Journal Quarter 4 of 2015**

#### *15 October 2015 (Thursday)*

I did some research on the learning skill of singing intervals; there was a website that mentioned of the “*So-So-Mi-La-So-So-Mi*” universal tunes.

Singing the fifth, major third, and minor third partials of the harmonic series is a universal among humans all over the world (Ken of Sarum, 2009).

Through the discussion in the forum, Ken of Sarum has highlight important points such as watching “The Unanswered Question” by Harvard Norton Lecture Series of Leonard Bernstein where he explained how humanity developed melody and



harmony. He also commented on the universal children taunt in which Kodály found children could sing it easily due to the natural development of children. He also highlighted that children could hear the fifth, major third, and minor third of intervals in their natural development and progressively move toward expansion of fundamental of diatonic scales followed lastly by the octave.

This idea has helped me to develop the core foundation to my research and dissertation in sequencing of the teaching materials.

### *16 November 2015 (Monday)*

I came across a website about intervals while searching and preparing materials of songs and collection of songs. I noted that pupils learnt best with the selected range of singing which their singing voice placed around of the key of E4 to F4. Thus, I have selected to fix with F4 for doing for every song that I taught. I will be starting to move the movable do to nearby keys such as E or G after they successfully sing correctly in tune and being secured with all the intervals of solfège on the key of F. I came across with a website listing familiar tunes and familiar melodic intervals of music. As argued from the previous studies, the melodic intervals work naturally for everyone, and especially young children were the Minor third, Major third and Perfect fifth. Perfect fifth will be developed at a much later stage while the Minor third was the first intervals that come in naturally for every young kid. With this information, I could properly sequence my music materials accordingly to the young children. Not only could the singing music or materials potentially work well with the natural development of young children, but they could also positively learn sequentially, and it could build larger vocabulary for the children once they started with the better-sequenced materials.

## **3. Reflective Journal 2016**

### **Preliminary Action Research Cycle**

Cycle: 1.  
Date: 17/8/2016  
Class: 1D  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 大白鵝 (White Swans)

In this teaching session, I used the song, “White Swan” with pentatonic scales of doing, “Re”, “Mi”, “So”, and “La”. This song (refer to Appendix B) was carefully chosen for teaching with the accurate singing of solfège while learning of the basic rhythm (ta, ti and ta-a). The original songs are using semiquaver toward the end, and I had made

an adjustment So that the pupils can get a clearer picture of the rhythm concepts. The adjustment that I have made here refer to the alteration of pitch and rhythm on the original songs to fit with child-centered based teaching. At the same time, I had also altered the “So – Re” (perfect four downward directions into minor third downward direction) for teaching. This is due to the perfect four singing from my pupil were not as easy and sound natural to them. Perfect four are required to be introduced later as my pupil poses weaker singing from So - Re solfège.

By singing slowly and securely can be reinforced at this class after I had altered the semiquavers from the original song. The pupils also have the chance to use Curwen hand signs while singing the songs. Through the response from class, I had found that singing slowly and securely had enabled the pupils to feel the songs deeply. The active movements from children were well controlled, and they were showing through their attentive listening that they are thinking about the sound and try to imitate my sound and to discriminate from their friends’ sound. I also had discovered that this singing and activities had enabled the pupils to listen carefully and not just busy doing their own activities.

It was magnificent that the overly active and wild behaviours were controlled when they (my pupils) were listening attentively to the environmental sounds. They could also identify where the sound comes from and trying their best to achieve secure intonation by imitation.

In the next class, I will try other songs with the aim of identifying the sequence of teaching solfège by their intervals as well as basic rhythmic patterns that were suitable for Year One pupils.

### Action Research Main Cycle

Cycle: 1.  
Date: 9/2/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 月亮婆婆出来了 (Grandmother Moon is Coming)

Today, I taught the song, “Grandmother Moon is Coming” to my Year One pupils. They were learning it through rote learning. I sang phrase by phrase and my pupils follow singing phrase by phrase. During the process of teaching, I was singing while making movements representing the words and meaning of the text to help pupils to get a clearer picture of what are they singing. I found that the physical movements along with singing enhance my pupils’ understanding of what they sing. They could also be busy with the movements and paid attention attentively as they were worried that they were not doing the same actions with their peers. Although seeing it working well with pupils, I would like to try to teach them aurally by rote. I would like to train them to pay more attention to their listening and hearing skills. During the teaching and learning session, I was playing the piano while singing part by part followed by the pupils. My pupils sang



phrase by phrase after I finish singing. They then had to repeat exactly what I sang. To match my voice and phrases, they were required to sing with their facial gestures and body gestures which mimic the high and low sounds. Pupils who mimic the facial expression such as by moving their eyebrows higher when they were to sing a higher pitch could produce much accurate singing compared to those who were not ready to sing with their face and body gestures. Gestures in my classroom do play an important part of strategies to allow my pupils to sing accurately.

The ascending intervals of “Do”, “Re” and “Mi” were objectively achieved. Although the singing of stepwise ascending intervals was slightly harder than singing of descending intervals for “Mi”, “Re” and “Do” however, my pupils managed to sing it without any major pitching error. This was guided through showing of the hand and body gesture going up where they can sing it accurately.

Cycle: 2.  
Date: 10/2/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 9:00-10:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 客人来(Guest Song)

Today, I was teaching again the 1B class pupils on singing guest songs, 客人来. They enjoyed singing the song, and it reminded me about teaching our own culture through the folk songs. It was because the song used in the lesson uses folk songs and the tunes are very natural to the Chinese language itself. It reminded me that teaching music is not only to make my pupils literary knowledgeable but to be able understand and apply the Chinese culture in our children’s daily lives. Although we are living in the 21st century with the diverse genres of music, as a teacher, music reflects one’s own identity and so-called lullabies of own culture must not be forgotten. Children should have to be able to understand their own culture before being exposed to the current contemporary music such as K-pop or Chinese pop. Taste of the modes and scales from the Chinese culture were rooted very long ago since the origin of the natural speaking language.

Cycle: 3.  
Date: 11/2/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 客人来(Guest Song)

Today, I had taught again ‘Ke Ren Lai’ which is a ‘guest is coming’ song. It explains how we should act whenever we find any guests that are coming to our house when our parents are not at home. It is a folk tune and music that most of the Chinese children sing when they are at a very young age. It consists of only five different pitches, and it is in pentatonic. The pentatonic consists of ‘do, re, mi, So’ in the song. I had started



teaching of this song with the *So - mi* introductory singing and followed with a route where children sing after the teacher had sung the song. I had sung and played the piano. My children then followed with my singing. Even if they know this song, they were gradually performing in a better grasp of pitch. To be able to learn to sing in soft and the correct tones requires patient training and routines that are to be repeated.

Cycle: 4.  
Date: 12/2/2016  
Class: 1C  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 客人来(Guest Song)

Today, in the 1C classroom, we sung a Guest Song (客人来). There were two pupils who cannot sing in tune and clap their hands by following the proper rhythm when performing singing and movement. Most of the pupils performed well with singing in tune and move according to the right beats. The pupil was Yu Hang, and he showed various patterns through his body gesture and movement which is unique to other pupils. He could understand the words said, and he cannot do what was being taught. I suspected that he has some special needs that I need to pay attention to. I will need to find out his background and his behaviour in the classroom or at home before I make any of the conclusions. I had guided him with beat walking, and he seems not showing any of the steady patterns, and this area was worth investigating. Another one is the teacher's kid who was good at listening to orders, but his voice was rough and not well managed. When he sings, he tends to sing in very low voice; at first I suspected that based on his family education, and his family might not possess some of the natural voice which explain this phenomenon.

Overall the class was conducted well, and most of the pupil had fun with singing on the guest songs. From my personal observation throughout the class teaching, I found that my pupils were not familiar with doing, re-pitches yet. They showed their insecure in singing and are not very brilliant on the singing yet although they knew about the guest songs. This is a very familiar song that every child could sing since they were young. I found that even singing this song did not show that they have very good experience in the previous lessons. There were some gaps in between introducing this song from the *la, So mi* pitches that I had introduced beforehand. Therefore, the need of teaching singing materials which started with toneset of *la, So, mi* and perhaps *la, So, mi, and high do'* might work better. I will have to try it again in my next session with this class.

My pupils were passive during my lesson. I had started to arrange them in a big circle in the classroom. By doing this, I found that they could learn and model their peers by mirroring each other are very beneficial for the young children. While they were doing it in the circle, I was busy on the piano playing with chords patterns and improvisation to keep the good pace of singing going. The pupils showed positive learning expression and singing when they sing along with the accompaniment. I totally agreed that pupils must sing independently to achieve a great solid base of pitches and intervals, but as a starter for young children, they are more driven by the cache sounds around them and being more and more active in their learning through the live playing of chords and improvisation on the piano itself. It reminded me of the Dalcroze teaching

method which allows pupils to move, and the teacher plays a role in improvising the rhythm and melodic pattern to match with the pupils' listening style. It truly amazed me on the ideas that Dalcroze showed. It must be because due to experiences of a teacher to know about the teaching pedagogy and must be carried out by a practitioner to understand and know how to apply them in the classroom well.

Cycle: 5.  
Date: 10/3/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160310\_003 1E.mp3  
Song: Children's Taunt

Today my class started with teaching a children's taunt. The children's taunt has been widely known and familiar with my pupils. The rationale of using children taunt is because it contains only 'La', 'So' and 'Mi' pitches. I found that this teaching material could help pupils to make connection between the basic concepts of high and low sounds with practical singing. I was starting my lesson with children's taunt to make a meaningful connection between the solfège pitch 'So', 'Mi' and 'La' and with the tunes that my pupils were familiar with. They were learning with different high and low pitches. They were exposed with high, low, middle pitch along with the solfège names. The repetitive practice on the three distinct pitches strengthen the pupils' perception and discriminate of three pitches. The focus in my lesson was to enable accurate singing. Pupils were introduced to the singing voice. Children were singing in soft pitch. Some pupils were exploring their own voice. Piano was used for tone reference so that every lesson was sung with the same starting point.

The pupils were enjoying the exploring session although the learning consists only very short and simple tunes. However, when playing with piano, pupils were first unable to sing in the same pitch with what they listened. The accompaniment of piano allowed pupils to identify the pitch difference and how would they sing independently without being affected by different accompaniment rhythms. This enforces the pupils' perception on pitches especially the 'So', 'Mi' and 'La' pitches.

During this session, pupils were also given a chance to explore the other pitches such 'Do', 'Re' and 'Mi'. I was trying to identify if the 'Mi', 'Re' and 'Do' pitches will also be easy for my pupils to sing in tune.

Besides of pitch training, I have also taught my pupils on with 放学歌(After school) song. I had started teaching phrase by phrase followed by my pupils. The pupils were singing the song slowly and carefully. When my pupils were singing slowly and carefully, they were showing attentive listening towards my singing. Although more than half of my pupils were paying attentive listening, there were few pupils who could not stop talking with their friends and keep their hands on other things such as touching the pencil, flipping the books and playing with their pencil box. This could be improved by designing a lesson with minimise movements on next session to keep pupils' attention and concentration on the singing.

After singing phrase by phrase, I sang the whole song before the pupils tried to follow. I sang while showing the shape of melody contour in order to teach pupils to practically sing out the high and low contour by keeping the tone sung in one phrase. The pupils were given a chance to explore the meaning of lyrics and trying to understand while singing the song. I asked my pupils to stand up while singing.

At the end of their singing, pupils were given positive motivation for their achievement on active and accurate singing. They could sing the song in a different way than their normal practice. They were introduced to quiet singing rather than harsh and loud singing. I was trying to experiment with quiet and soft singing in order to teach my pupils to pay detailed attention to the sound. Not only my pupils were showing their positive singing and learning through attentive listening. Their singing was becoming more beautiful and confirmed. What was confirmed here is referring to the secure singing of the given pitches 'So, mi and la'.

Cycle: 6.  
Date: 21/3/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160321\_001 1B da bai er.mp3  
Song: 大白鹅 (White Swans)

My pupils were showing weak voice without clear dictation of words when I started teaching the song phrase by phrase. In the lesson, I tried to add in accompaniment to make it interesting to motivate my pupils to sing out loud. The original White Swan song has been simplified so that the pupils can learn easily. The original song comes with semi quaver towards the end.



Figure 9.18 Last two bars of 大白鹅 (White Swans) original music.



Figure 9.19 Last two bars of 大白鹅 (White Swans) altered music.

Figure 9.2 and 9.3 showed that the different version of original and altered 2 bars of the song. The pupils were singing the altered version of music as in Figure 9.3

during this lesson. However, I found that the singing of last two bars towards the end did not produce better effects in my teaching. The pupils were unable to join the last phrase to produce an ending in their singing. I was starting to doubt about the altered piece of notes whether it can produce better results in teaching. I am yet to be convinced, so I tried it again on next cycle with other classes to double check if this could be the best-altered materials for teaching singing.

In the future, I will need to try with physical movements to describe this song to teach how to sing this song. The body movements could assist my pupils to sing better with this song. When my pupils sing this song with a faster pace, the singing sounds were much better. Could this song need to be sung in faster pace? I asked myself and planned to carry on with faster singing on next cycle of my action research.

When the pupils were singing the high D pitch (la pitch) towards the end, my pupils showed slightly difficult in hitting the pitch accurately. They tend to squeeze their vocal cord and push forward with the singing which makes it sound harsh. The piece is posting slightly larger leaps (Figure 9.4). The singing of the leaps was slightly difficult for my pupils to sing.



Figure 9.20 'Mi' to 'La' melodic intervals (perfect 4<sup>th</sup>).

This material also poses slightly higher difficulty for my pupils of this class. This material should be then sequenced towards a later learning.

Cycle: 7.  
Date: 21/3/2016  
Class: 1A  
Time: 9:30-10:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160323\_001 1A da bai er.mp3  
Song: 大白鵝 (White Swans)

At the beginning of my lesson, I had some difficulties in controlling a few pupils in my class. However, by giving a warning to the pupils, I was able to gain back the control of my pupils. I had started by teaching the pupils singing part by part. The piece was broken down into the parts by the song's phrasing.



Cycle: 8.  
Date: 21/3/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160324\_001 1E da bai er.mp3  
Song: 大白鵝 (White Swans)

The lesson had started with phrase by phrase singing. I sung a phrase followed by my pupils. Most of my pupils in this class were not able to sing in tune for the second phrase. Most of the pupils were playing during their singing. They could not sing in tune for most of the notes in the song. The readiness of pupils in this classroom were affected by recess. The class was after their recess. They probably need some other activities such as movement activities to help focus their concentration before I start my lesson in the future.

The classroom instructions were not as successful as other classes. Although I am teaching with the same song, this class seems to perform weaker than the rest of other Year One classes. At the end of my class, I had failed to teach this song. As identified in the recording, there were many pupils who could not get the single pitch right. I need to try with the simple melody rather than single pitch singing. In the hope that my pupils could get the singing matching before I continue. If the pupils could not get the basic pitching to match my singing, it will be harder to teach my pupils singing accurately.



Another way of planning for future lessons was to try to use Curwen hand signs to help them singing with the correct pitch. Through the recording, my pupils were not able to sing the song accurately. They also could not get the words spelt correctly when singing. The attention towards sound and singing were not as effective as other Year One classes.

Cycle: 9.  
Date: 25/3/2016  
Class: 1C  
Time: 8:30-9:00 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160325\_001 1C da bai er.mp3  
Song: 大白鵝 (White Swans)

Today, I had started my lesson as usual. I brought my pupils to the music class from their classroom. They had lined up and take off their shoes. They put their shoes on the shoe racks and line up before entering the music room. I took a few minutes to get the class controlled. As there were pupils, who could not sit properly when entering the music class. After everything is under control and pupils were ready to start their music class. I started playing the first note of the music. I need my pupils to pay attention to the first single pitch which is 'Mi' pitch.

After my pupils getting the first pitch accurately. They were introduced with the phrase by phrase of this song. I started playing and singing and asked my pupils to followed singing after me. Most of my pupils could sing in a soft voice.





I have guided my pupils to sing with my body gestures. When the shape of music is getting higher, I raise my body to show pupils to sing much higher pitch. I have also raised my eyebrows to show higher pitch when going from 'Mi' to 'So'.

The same problem that I am facing here is my pupils were unable to get the second phrase to sing it accurately. The second phrase consists of 'Re' pitch at the end of the phrase where most of my pupils were having difficulty in singing it accurately.

The singing of two bars near to the end becomes much more natural with the semiquaver. I accepted that there must not be any alteration made to the semiquaver found in the original song. Their performance in singing the semiquaver notes did not cause any difficulty when the song was singing slowly.

Cycle: 10.  
Date: 28/3/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160328\_001 1B pai pai zhuo.mp3  
Song: 排排坐 'Pai Pai Zhuo' (Sitting Song)

Today, I had taught a song called 'Pai Pai Zhuo' to my pupils. As usual, I will be recording their voice clip for analysis purposes. This is a folk song which does not actually originated in Malaysia. I found that the tunes can help my pupils to learn better and I had to try it today. The pitch range in these songs is pentatonic with la, do, re, mi, So scales. I had wanted to try out with the do, re and mi pitches which come in handy and keen to know about my pupils' responses towards singing these songs.

The class began with the singing of solfège which they had learnt previously. We sang So, mi and la. I find that the pupils could not actually sing in very accurate therefore I repeated with the singing of children's taunt tune where they sing So-So mi la So mi. I had to repeated for few times to enforce and to refresh back of what my pupils learnt previously.

I started with singing phrase by phrase and my pupils repeated the singing right after I finish my singing. While I was singing, I asked the class monitor to point the words on the whiteboard for the whole class. In this class, we have 33 pupils, I found that it was necessary to have a very clear instruction for the young children to follow whenever any lesson or class takes place.

There are some pupils who are still using their speaking voice to sing. I find that for this class, there will be more work and effort to put in for all of them to get used to the singing voice. My first assumption when I find the pupils who can't sing well is that they are a lack of singing at their home or either never really listened to the singing voice of their parents or mother. To help the pupils to develop well in their singing and great personal skills, they require to learn how to sing out deeply from what they felt in their daily life. It was very beneficial for pupils to listen and critically generate a picture in their mind whenever they listened to any of the sounds around them. They should be able to picture the music well although they are able to picture very simple pitches or





chords. This pattern recognition and also working with music will then enhance their learning towards language competency.

During I was teaching this song, I found that my pupils were interested and through their singing, they were listening to it attentively. Compared to the other songs that I had taught after this lesson, which was on the page 9 of their provided textbook, the very long and difficult songs made it very difficult for my pupils to follow. Not only the 30 minutes' period is not enough to completely sing the songs; the pupils get bored easily due to the complex running pitches and language that used in the songs. There were 'hanging', or unstable use of the progression of chords in the middle of the song where my pupils could not actually 'picture' the moving sound or pitches and hence make them start to lose attention in the classroom.

This ('Pai Pai Zhuo' song) is a much more complex song for my pupils to learn as the song consists of major second intervals and in the middle of the song, it consists of starting from *re* pitch and *mi* pitch. I found that this part requires much attention and repetition in enforcing my pupils to learn about the running pattern of pitches and intervals.

Cycle: 11.

Date: 30/03/2016

Class: 1A

Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.

Recorded audio: 160330\_001 1A pai pai zhuo.mp3

Song: 排排坐 'Pai Pai Zhuo' – Sitting Song

The teaching session starts with greetings songs where 'So' and 'Mi' pitches were the basic construction of this song. Pupils were enjoying the two pitches of the greeting song in every music lesson. The reason behind of singing the greeting song was to foster the high and low pitch discrimination and accurate singing among the pupils.

In a classroom with many pupils, I need to instruct the pupils to get ready and prepare for class before we begin as the class control is crucial in helping pupils pay attention to what was being taught. As usual, I had introduced the new song with singing through phrase by phrase. My pupils had repeated my singing after I finish singing a phrase. The lesson had continued as usual. Pupils have shown that they understood the singing voice where they use the soft and natural singing voice while singing the songs.



Cycle: 12.  
Date: 31/03/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160331\_006 1E pai pai zhuo.mp3  
Song: 排排坐 'Pai Pai Zhuo' – Sitting Song

The pupils came to my classroom, and they started singing the greetings song with me. I was surprised that the pupils were started to gain the norm of singing in the music classroom. The class monitor had started to sing the greetings before the class starts. However, the singing of greetings song from the class is not yet as perfect or nearly accurate. So, I guided them again with greetings song and which was followed by them. This could reinforce their learning towards the greeting song and allowed them to sing it independently and accurately at the beginning of every music class.

I had started my teaching with the phrase by phrase singing. The pupils were asked to follow my singing. They were required to sing it beautifully rather than singing with their talking voice. Most of the pupils from this class were still singing with their speaking voice. So, I had reinforced them by repeatedly correcting their singing. This process of enforcement had enabled them to practice a habit of singing melodiously. I had found that majority of pupils from this class either sing in a monotonous tone or sing in a style where they were reading the text. From the output of my teaching to my pupils, and my background survey on my pupils who could not sing accurately, I had noticed that most of the pupils who could not sing in a singing tune and singing voice was due to their exposure of singing was less. They were also not encouraged by their family members on their singing. The work on teaching was important and urgent.

After a few repetitions of singing phrase by phrase, my pupils were getting the most of the pitch correct. They were asked to sing the whole song and then being reinforced again with the phrase by phrase singing. However, at the end of the session, I noticed that my pupils were singing with the word with less joining (legato). They were yet to understand that singing is through joining from one pitch to another.

In my teachings, melodious and teaching of melody came to be priority if compared to rhythmic ones. This was due to the outcome from my teaching; I had noticed that my pupils could sing it rhythmically correct. However, the appreciation of beautiful sound through joining between words to words were not yet developed.

Towards the end of my lesson, I had started to get my pupils to sing from words to words with one breath. This could enable my pupils to extend their singing by joining the words to words with legato style. This is the crucial foundation where the pupils need to understand that making music is largely rely on the melody and rhythm. By mastering the melody singing, the singing of folk music in their mother tongue will come alive.

I also had added some humour in my lesson which successfully attracted the pupils' attention. They were enjoying their class without any physical movement. In a demonstration for the singing, I had made my accompaniment a 'detached' one where they were required to join the melody melodically to hold the 'detached'

accompaniment. I ended my lesson with enforcing their singing of solfège with Curwen hand signs.

Cycle: 13.  
Date: 31/03/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160331\_007 1E line up back to class.mp3  
Song: -

When my pupils were lined up and getting ready to walk back to their classroom, I strengthened their singing with solfège singing, using only 'So' and 'Mi' as an exercise. This was intended to encourage their singing routine in school and at home. Variations were added in the singing session to help to re-enforce the different pitches and their distinctive high and low pitch. Not only that this activity could be fully utilise the time, but my pupils were also able to learn to sing quietly and softly during their walk back to their classroom.

Cycle: 14.  
Date: 31/03/2016  
Class: 1E  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160331\_008 1E bye by students.mp3  
Song: Goodbye song

This is a song that represents goodbye greetings from pupils. It is not a Chinese children's folk songs, but it is composed out of the 'So', and 'Mi' pitches with the addition of 'Do' pitches at the end to mark an ending of a response from the teacher. Pupils were taught with this song which was similar to the greetings song where pupils were required to sing and repeat for all their music lessons. Whenever they enter the classroom, they were required to sing the greetings song to greet teacher. In Chinese schools, the pupils would generally greet the teacher in all subjects by speaking words of greetings. For the music class, they had to do the same too. I had this idea of strengthening their 'So' and 'Mi' pitches singing through a routine where they were taught to use singing in music class differ than other subject classes. In this case, the singing could work as warm up and cool down for my pupils. I found that this singing is effective in terms of getting my pupils ready for music class. Generally, we know that in classroom based teaching, pupils were expected to sing most of their learnings and singing consisted about 60% of music learning in general primary school syllabus. The pupils were enjoying with this greeting style, and whenever they saw me, they will just sing out loud the greetings and goodbye song to me. It was rewarding as a music teacher to hear the pupils sang out independently and with a great level of confidence.



Cycle: 15.  
 Date: 30/03/2016  
 Class: 1C  
 Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
 Recorded audio: 160401\_001 1C gong ke wan bi.mp3  
 Song: 放学歌(After school)

Today's class started with the singing of greetings songs. As usual, the pupils sang the greeting song, and I as their teacher responded to them by singing the same pitches. My lesson started with singing phrase by phrase. The pupils followed my singing along with the piano accompaniment. By singing a short phrase, it was effective in reinforcing the words, pitch and rhythm correctly, and slowly for my pupils. The large chunk of information which is broken down by using phrases made my pupils sing without focusing too much on looking at the lyrics. In the sense of learning, I prefer to use rote teaching for the young beginners. The lessons were enforced through memory skills as well as paying full attention to their own singing and friends' sounds.

Singing softly without accompaniment makes the singing much clearer to my pupils. I could also pay much of the attention to the details from my pupils singing. This was effective to get attention from many pupils. Still, some of my pupils were singing with near accurate pitch on the second and third phrase. The introduction of low 'La' in this song and slur singing becomes the skills required to be mastered. It could be better if there are more other songs with more of the slur and low 'La' found. Then it could be sequenced as the lessons could be enforced further.



We sang in variation such as staccato to make the happy feeling of going home after school. My pupils got much more excited when they were challenged with much more faster singing. By singing slow and fast and followed by slow singing. The enforcement method worked well where my pupils could memorise the text without looking on the lyrics again. Of course, the explanation followed help them to join the singing in a much meaningful way.





Cycle: 17.  
Date: 30/03/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 10:00-10:30 a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160401\_005 1B gong ke wan bi.mp3  
Song: 放学歌 (After School)

The lesson had started with greeting song as usual. The pupils were singing good morning in *So* and *mi* fashion. It took a few sessions of singing before the pupils were able to sing the greeting song much more accurate than the previous lesson.

I had started my lesson by singing phrase by phrase. My pupils were required to repeat my singing after me. I sung the phrase in clear voice without accompaniment and then followed by my pupils singing. When my pupils sing, I played the piano to accompanied singing of the pupils.

My pupils were excited and driven by the next phrase; they were trying to figure out what is the next phrase and how can it be sung. I then continued with my teaching as a phrase by phrase teaching.

After I noticed that my pupils could sing most of the pitch accurately, I started to introduce them with minor singing where this song was sung in minor keys. We played singing in minor keys and tried different modes of the song. The pupils were enjoying it and it was shown through their laughing and smiling faces. They were singing happily.

I had repeated the enforcement by singing the song with my pupils. They were singing better through my observation and audio analysis. Even my accompaniment changes, their singing was persistence and they were singing accurately from phrase to phrase.

I was happy with their performance, and I tried to teach another song (White Swans) to them to identify if they could sing much more accurate this time. I have taught them previously in my lesson (Appendix D: Action research main cycle 6) in which I have failed to teach them singing accurately in the previous lesson as they were shown in my recording where they could not be able to sing this song accurately even after I sung and re-enforced their singing.

Of the whole song, my pupils were unable to sing accurately without accompaniment. They could only sing certain parts accurately such as the first bar and fourth bar and the tonic note of the ending of this song.

I had ended my lesson with solfège enforcement of *So* and *mi* pitches. After a few singings, we sung the goodbye song which contains only *So* and *mi* pitches. This strengthen their singing accuracy on the *So* and *mi* pitches. Then, they lined up and walked back to their classroom after that.



Cycle: 18.  
Date: 06/4/2016  
Class: 1A  
Time: 8:00-8:30a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160406\_002 1A xiao zhu.mp3  
Song: 小猪 (Little Pigs)

This is a song that is known by most of my pupils, but they were not singing in a correct way. I had realised that they must be taught to sing accurately and musically. I had started my lesson with the phrase by phrase singing. They were taught to sing with the accurate dictation of the wording while maintaining the high and low pitches correctly. I had started all my teachings of the song in only a fixed key which is the F key. Although it sounds higher and difficult for my own singing range, I had kept on with this key as it is the range which my pupils were comfortable at. They could easily sing a song in this key.

Through my teaching and recording analysis, my pupils could only sing the first and second part almost accurately. The rest of the bars they sang in uncertainty and unclear dictation. I also had noticed that when singing the first and second bar, some pupils were singing in a chanting style. There was a lack of bright singing voice, and the urge to train the pupils to sing with a singing voice to this class is urgent and crucial.

This song has a higher level of difficulty for my pupils. I had needed to fine tune their singing on the next lesson. The arrangement of this song should also be sequenced at a later stage of teaching. The pupils were required to learn other much easier songs before moving on with this song. I had noticed that when the more upward step in singing which employs the major second in a piece, my pupils were unable to sing it accurately during this time.

Cycle: 19.  
Date: 08/04/2016  
Class: 1C  
Time: 8:00-8:30a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160408\_002 1C xiao zhu.mp3  
Song: 小猪 (Little Pigs)

I had started my lesson as usual today. Since I had tried this song with the other class (See Appendix D: Action research main cycle 19), I am going to explore whether the current class have the same reaction towards this song as the previous class. I had started my lesson with phrase singing where I sing a phrase followed by my pupils. When I started the first phrase of singing, my pupils were excited and happy. They were smiling, and they started their singing after me.

I had found that this class generally sings better than my previous class. However, they were having some difficulties on singing bar six and the last two bar towards ending. They were singing less accurate when they were singing the major second melodic intervals in bar six. They were also having a less accurate singing at the re, *So* and do melodic intervals sing towards the end.



I had discovered that singing melodic intervals which are too near (major second) or melodic intervals which are too far apart (perfect fifth followed by perfect fourth) is difficult for my pupils.

Cycle: 20.  
Date: 08/04/2016  
Class: 1D  
Time: 8:00-8:30a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160408\_003 1D xiao zhu.mp3  
Song: 小猪 (Little Pigs)

As usual, my pupils line up to the music class where they will be learning to sing a song called 'Little Pigs'. I had started my lesson with mirror singing where I sing once followed by repetition from my pupils. My pupils were excited and they were making all sorts of funny expressions when singing this song. After 'rote' singing once, my pupils could sing the whole song. I had observed carefully on their singing in pitch, word and the rhythm. I found that they could secure the steady beat of crotchet well. However, they were unable to sing much accurate towards the end of the song. The pitch that they sing towards the end flattened and require much more of the enforcement. They also had difficulties in sustaining the long notes. Sustaining long notes should be introduced after teaching the shorter notes which were Crotchet.

After singing the Little Pigs, I had started to teach my pupils to sing the 'coconut' tree songs where the song was not listed in my selection of songs due to the difficulty level which was beyond my pupils' capabilities. However, I would like this song to be taught to see their achievement. It was true that my pupils could not sing accurately especially at the wide range of singing intervals. I had tried by repeating the singing phrase by phrase with my pupils to confirm if they could achieve better singing of pitch with movement and the result was prevailing that my pupils were unable to sing the songs securely. They tend to sing the pitch slightly lower especially when singing the ascending leaping. The melodic leaps in this song were far beyond their capabilities, and this should be introduced slightly later. Other much easier songs which have smaller melodic leaps (intervals of not more than perfect 5th) should be sequence before this song.

Cycle: 21.  
Date: 11/04/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 8:00-8:30a.m.  
Recorded audio: 160411\_001 1B zhe shi wo de jia.mp3  
Song: 这是我家(This is My House)

As usual, the class had started with singing the greetings song. I had started singing first and followed by my pupils' greetings. They were singing much more natural by this time. Even though enforcing the correct way of singing over three months, their foundation of singing 'So' 'Mi' pitch is getting more concrete, my pupils could not



sing the high pitch of 'So' at the end accurately. I had noticed that when 'Mi' and lastly 'So' intervals were very difficult for my pupils to sing. My pupils' performance in singing this song had demonstrated that they need to master a certain skill prior singing this song to enable them to learn to sing the intervals accurately.

I had noticed that some of my pupils began to be less motivated to sing. A student sang with a different voice to make the song much more interesting for himself.

Cycle: 22.  
Date: 11/04/2016  
Class: 1B  
Time: 8:00-8:30a.m.  
Recorded audio: -  
Song: 我们一同瞧瞧 (Let Us See)

Today, I had introduced my pupils to a song entitled 'Let Us See', which my pupils showed interest in. They liked the action of singing 'aeroplane is coming' while doing with the flying wings with both of their hands. We then replaced the word "aeroplane" with a train, car, lorry and ship, to vary the lyrics, while staying on the theme of transportation. This song could be sung easily by my pupils. Only certain part of the singing intervals poses difficulties such as leaping of perfect fifth.



## APPENDIX E DIFFERENCE OF SUGGESTED TEACHING SEQUENCE IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

Examining the various perspectives of the collected literature over sequencing for teaching music from different places could help in identifying the variables for sequencing the teaching materials by focusing on melodic and rhythmic characteristics.

Table 10.2  
Suggested teaching sequences in various countries

| Country   | Melodic  | Rhythmic   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>United States</b><br>Reported by Choksy (1999) on North American School    | 1. <i>So-Mi</i> (high and low pitches.<br>2. <i>La-So-Mi</i><br>3. <i>So-Mi-So-Mi</i><br>4. <i>So-Mi-SoSo-Mi</i><br>5. <i>So-La-So-Mi</i><br>6. <i>SoSo-LaLa-SoSo-MiMi</i><br>7. <i>So-MiLa-So-Mi</i><br>8. <i>SoSo-MiLa-SoSo-Mi</i><br>9. prepare for <i>Do</i> and <i>Re</i> | 1.        <br>2.     □  <br>3.   □    <br>4. □ □    <br>5. □ □ □  <br>6. □      <br>7. □ □ □ □<br>8.   }   }<br>9. |
| Anne Laskey's (Holy Names University Kodály Center for Music Education, n.d.) | 1. <i>So-Mi</i><br>2. <i>La</i><br>3. <i>Do</i><br>* 2-meter song;<br>* form: repeat   | 1.   □ (icon)<br>2. }  |
| Wichita State University (Wichita State University, n.d.)                     | 1. <i>So-Mi</i> (high and low)<br>2. <i>La</i><br>(combination with 'So' and 'Mi')   | 1. beat<br>2. beat as ta (   )<br>3. Divided beat ( □ )<br>4. Beat of rest( } )<br>5. 2 beat meter $\frac{2}{4}$   |

(Continue)



| Country   | Melodic  | Rhythmic  |
|---|--|---|
|   | 5. <i>Re' Mi'</i> (year 5)   | 4. ♩     ♩<br>      ,      (year 4)<br>5.       (year 5)  |
| <b>Taiwan</b><br><b>(Incorporated local folk songs)</b><br>Reported by Zheng (2003, p. 166 & 170) | 1. <i>So,La</i><br>2. <i>Mi (Mi-La,Mi-So, So-Mi-So)</i><br>3. <i>La, -Do-Re</i><br>4. <i>Mi</i><br>5. <i>So,</i> | 1.       <br>2. }<br>3.       <br>4.      <br>5. ♩<br>6.      ,      <br>7.                 <br>8.       <br>9.         <br>10. |

The melodic sequence should be introduced in accordance with child-developmental patterns such as singing in minor thirds '*So-Mi*' and then followed by '*La*', '*Do*', '*Re*' and until the children are comfortable with singing all the given tones and intervals, then '*Fa*' and '*Ti*' could be introduced. It was evident through the reports from Gordon (2012, p. 169) that children struggled to sing half steps in tune and Kodály revised his exercises which carefully tailored with child-development patterns of learning that start with learning intervals of a minor third. Bennett (2005) has highlighted the importance of sequencing for teaching and the pedagogy of teaching singing starting with the '*So-Mi*' intervals.

In United States, the rhythm sequence such as  $\frac{6}{8}$  is common time signature found in most English songs, and therefore it can be introduced first compared to other time signature. This is similar to how other Kodály practitioner sequence their teaching materials such as reported in Choksy (1974); Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia (2015); Wichita State University (n.d.) and Zheng (2002). In Malaysia's Chinese primary school context, the rhythm sequence found mostly in the teaching materials were  $\frac{2}{4}$  followed by  $\frac{4}{4}$ . Therefore, the time signature for starting teaching children should be start from  $\frac{2}{4}$  instead of  $\frac{6}{8}$ .



| Sequence | 2010-2016   |   | 2017-Now   |                                    |
|----------|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
|          | KSSR Music Education  | Composer  | KSSR (Revised) Arts Education  | Composer                           |
| 3        | 欢乐曲<br><b>Happy Song</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So Do'</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br><br><br>Others:<br>Pickup note  | Lee Chai Huat,<br>Lee Chong Yern<br>Zaliza Bakhri<br><br>Lirik Bahasa Cina.<br>Lee Huon Tee | 听听<br><b>Listen</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La</i>                | 陈琪慧<br>[Chan Kee Wai]              |
| 4        | 谁在作弄我<br><b>Who is Making Fun of Me</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>So, Ti, Do Re Mi Fa So</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br><br><br>Others:<br>Pickup note;<br> | Lee Chai Huat,<br>Lee Chong Yern<br>Zaliza Bakhri<br><br>Lirik Bahasa Cina.<br>Lee Huon Tee | 玩游戏<br><b>Play Games</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Ri Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i> | 陈琪慧<br>[Chan Kee Wai]              |
| 5        | 声音<br><b>Sound</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br>   | Lee Chai Huat,<br>Lee Chong Yern<br>Zaliza Bakhri<br><br>Lirik Bahasa Cina.<br>Kong Mee Yan | <b>Counting Fingers</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>So, Ti, Do Re Mi Fa So</i>       | United States Children's folk song |

(Continue)

| Sequence | 2010-2016   |  | 2017-Now  |                        |
|----------|---|--|---|------------------------|
|          | KSSR Music Education  | Composer   | KSSR (Revised) Arts Education   | Composer               |
| 6        | 大象和老鼠<br><b>Elephants and Rats</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br><br><br>Others:<br> | Hamid Baharuddin<br>Lirik B. Cina: Lee Huon Tee  | 储蓄歌<br><b>Savings Song</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So</i>         | 卢芳盈                    |
| 7        | 我的心在跳<br><b>My Heart is Jumping</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>La, Do Re Mi Fa So La</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br>  | Khalijah Mohamed<br>8Norshamsuri Shafie<br>Tan Chee Keong<br>Lirik B. Cina: Lee Huon Tee | 做早操<br><b>Morning Exercise</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So Do'</i> | 黄君伊<br>[Wong Kwan Yie] |

(Continue)

| Sequence | 2010-2016                                      |                             | 2017-Now                                   |          |
|----------|--|-----------------------------|--|----------|
|          | KSSR Music Education                           | Composer                    | KSSR (Revised) Arts Education              | Composer |
| 8        | <b>I'm Tall I'm Small</b>                      | Traditional Children's Song | 我的朋友在哪里<br><b>Where is My Friend</b>       | -        |
|          | Pitch set:<br><i>Re Mi Fa So Do' Re'</i>       |                             | Pitch set:<br><i>Ti, Do Re Mi Fa So La</i> |          |
|          | Notes value set:<br>♪♪                         |                             |  |          |
|          | Others:<br>Pickup note;<br>Pulse (↷)           |                             |  |          |
| 9        | <b>Nenek Si Bongkok Tiga</b>                   | Traditional Children's Song | 我爱动物园<br><b>I Love the Zoo</b>             | 卢芳盈      |
|          | Pitch set:<br><i>Ti, Do Mi Fa So La Li Do'</i> |                             | Pitch set:<br><i>Do Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i> |          |
|          | Notes value set:<br>♪♪♪                        |                             |  |          |

(Continue)

| Sequence | 2010-2016   |   | 2017-Now   |          |
|----------|---|---|--|----------|
|          | KSSR Music Education  | Composer  | KSSR (Revised) Arts Education  | Composer |
| 10       | 早晨景象<br><b>Morning Scene</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br><br><br>Others:<br>Pickup notes | Zt. Zaiton<br>M. Fazil<br>Muzaful<br>Lirik B. Cina: Lee<br>Huon Tee | <b>Bunyi Binatang [Animals' Sound]</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i> | -        |

|    |  |                   |   |     |
|----|--|-------------------|---|-----|
| 11 | 红彩妹妹<br><b>“Hong Chai Mei Mei”</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi So La Do'</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br> | Chinese Folk Song | 放风筝<br><b>Fly a Kite</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i> | 邱明莹 |
|----|--|-------------------|---|-----|

(Continue)

| Sequence | 2010-2016  |   | 2017-Now   |                   |
|----------|--|---|--|-------------------|
|          | KSSR Music Education   | Composer  | KSSR (Revised) Arts Education  | Composer          |
| 12       | 来计算<br><b>Come and Count</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Ti, Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do'</i><br><br>Notes value set:<br> | Zt. Zaiton<br>M. Fazil Rodzi<br>A. Halim<br>Lirik B. Cina: Lee Huon Tee           | <b>Wau Bulan</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi So</i>                   | Malay Traditional |
| 13       | 跟随节奏<br><b>Follow the Rhythm</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi Fa So La</i>   | Lee Chai Huat<br>Lee Chong Yern<br>Ridzlina Riduan<br>Lirik B. Cina: Kong Mee Yet | 小乐队<br><b>Small Band</b><br><br>Pitch set:<br><i>Do Re Mi So La Ti Do'</i> | -                 |

(Continue)

