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Piloting A Qualitative Interview for Malaysia Primary School Active Learning Needs Analysis Regarding Learner Control Experiences

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Abstract

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Keywords

pilot test, qualitative, semi-structured interview, active learning, learner control, needs analysis, Malaysia primary school

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Piloting A Qualitative Interview for Malaysia Primary School Active Learning Needs Analysis Regarding Learner Control Experiences

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This paper describes a holistic process of a pilot test to determine the trustworthiness of semi-structured interview questions to be used in the qualitative investigation of Malaysia primary school active learning needs analysis, by focusing on the learner control peculiarity in the context. The researchers carried out the pilot test based on a sequential cycle of determining, assessment, adjustment, revisiting, and reflection. The researchers generated semi-structured interview questions mainly based on Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) framework for analysis of learning needs. The researchers tested the semi-structured interview questions on two teacher and two pupil participants mirroring the intended subjects in the field. The pilot test allows the researchers to practice beforehand the semi-structured interview techniques and provides valuable insights for the researchers to modify and improve the interview questions. Finally, this paper reports the modification or refinement made to the interview questions, which proves that the questions are readied to be used in future study. This paper also provides methodological insights for other researchers, who may also undertake qualitative interview methods in active learning studies.

Keywords: pilot test, qualitative, semi-structured interview, active learning, learner control, needs analysis, Malaysia primary school

Introduction

The main study's objective is to collect in-depth data that reflects pupils' genuine active learning needs in experiencing learner control. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods consonantly play a significant role in determining learning needs (Sonmez, 2019). However, Atieno (2009) indicated that if the purpose is to learn from participants' experiences, the researchers need methods that will allow for discovery, and do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations. Aptly, qualitative research approaches explore human factors in particular contexts to gain in-depth insights into how individuals see the world (Given, 2008), especially the meaning that individuals give to the incidents that they have experienced (Merriam, 1998). Specifically, the qualitative research method is useful for determining the "nature" of needs which is appropriate for "interventions" to improve a particular field (Busetto et al., 2020).

There are studies that declared that one challenge of using active learning strategies is ceding "control" to the learners (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Bonwell & Sutherland, 1996; Cook & Hazelwood, 2002; Stephen et al., 2010). In Malaysia primary school context, pupils are less motivated and less disciplined to conduct active learning at their own pace (Lee, 2019). Pupils only learn the things that teachers tell them to learn (Wasriep & Lajium, 2019). Besides, pupils

need teachers to guide them in the right learning direction and to assist them to conduct effective collaborative activities (Hashim & Shaari, 2020). Some pupils even rely on adults' push rather than being self-motivated or self-engaged in active learning (Zakaria & Yunus, 2020).

Hence, learner control is a crucial issue that influences the effectiveness of active learning implementation in Malaysia primary school. The main study attempts to investigate how active learning is implemented in Malaysia primary school, in accordance with investigating how the pupils respond to it, as it is seen via their learner control experiences in the context. The main study that tends to be undertaken in the future intended to consider the whole picture of the learning situation and make decisions conditionally, rather than finalise one aspect of a solution before fully understanding a situation. The researchers believe that the future study must know about learners' objectives, behaviour or attitude, and expectations from the learning and learning habits to enhance current active learning implementation (Kaya, 2008) before doing evaluation or judgement. Moreover, by doing the needs analysis, the researchers may have a general overview of what has been accomplished through a particular learning situation and what the learners want and need in the future (Li, 2014).

According to the intention of the main study, needs analysis refers to the activity involved in gathering information that serves as the basis for developing a programme or curriculum that meets the learning needs of a particular group of learners and establishing priorities among them (Brown, 2001; Iwai et al., 1999; Richards, 1990, 2001; Srijono, 2006). It supports designing tests, compiling materials, designing teaching activities, evaluating strategies, and re-evaluating the precision and accuracy of the original needs analysis for future design (Brown, 2001; Johns, 1991).

Apropos of this, interviews can appropriately collect multiple views or insights from the participants' perspectives in the qualitative method (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). The intended study opts to conduct semi-structured interviews on primary school pupils and teachers to identify pupils' active learning needs, by investigating pupils' learner control experiences in the context. It is because interviewing in qualitative investigations is usually semi-structured and often open-ended (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Merriam, 2009), and encourages individual respondents to respond freely and uniquely (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Esterberg, 2002; Kvale, 1996). Semi-structured interviews are more flexible to follow-up participants' responses extensively (Nurul Imtiaz Abd Gani et al., 2020).

This paper presents a pilot study of the interview questions intended for future study. There are different criteria could be included to test the participants' experiences. In this pilot test, the researchers only emphasised the clarity of instructions, simplicity, answerability of participant questions, and timing and pace control of interview sessions. Devising good interview questions is the heart of interviewing (Majid et al., 2017); piloting the interview is the best way to ensure that the researcher is asking good interview questions (Merriam, 2009). In this regard, the quality of interview questions affects the quality of a research because the outcome of the research is subjected to the information obtained from the interview questions. Hence, the interview piloting is vital to test the interview questions' trustworthiness, in the aspect of credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986). The researchers may make a feasible revision to the interview protocols based on the pilot test results and prepare to launch the main study (Maxwell, 2013).

Credibility is symmetrical to internal validity which refers to the internal consistency, accuracy, and confidence of questions to address the intended focus of a study, especially to ensure a "thick description" of participants' experiences (Geertz, 1973, 1983). Dependability is addressing the issue of reliability to show the stability and repeatability of data collected from the questions asked across time and condition (Gasson, 2004). Conformability is in preference to objectivity, that is to reduce the effect of researchers' biases in terms of beliefs,

preferences, and predispositions when asking interview questions (Gasson, 2004). Transferability refers to external validity or generalisability of questions to be addressed, which Merriam explains that the process and findings “can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Authenticity is looking forward to searching for the fair and faithful voice of participants’ experiences and feelings to show the realities of certain phenomenon (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019).

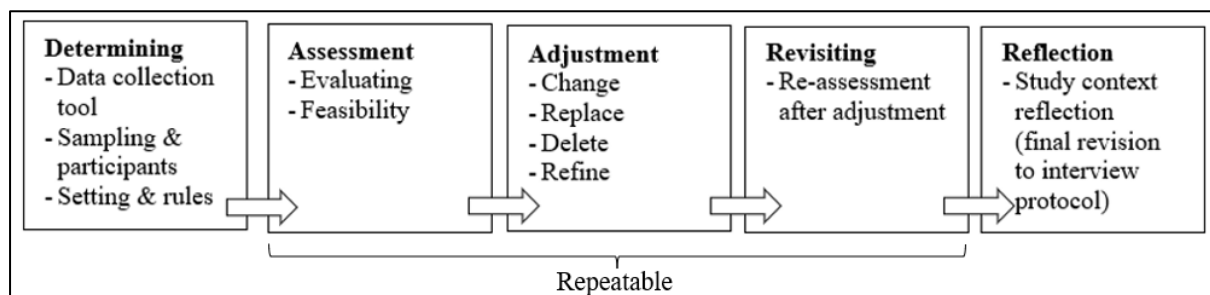
The Steps of Pilot Testing Interview Questions

The Pilot test is a small-scale methodological test that is closely related to a larger study (Eldridge et al., 2016; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001) and it is a useful preparation procedure or previously-developed research plan of a full-scale study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). It is important to gain “a clear definition of the focus of the (main) study” (Frankland & Bloor, 1999, p. 154), to get feedback from others on how they feel or think the questions will work (Maxwell, 2013), to reduce the chance of failure and to identify problems or flaws before beginning the main study (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), and to test the readiness of the interview questions to be used in the field (Lapan, 2004). In other words, piloting interview does not only help the researchers to practice in interviewing (Merriam, 2009), the responses from participants to interview questions can also elucidate whether questions are clear, whether answers are relevant, and whether questions are vague and need to be revised (Fowler, 1995; Hurst et al., 2015; Willis, 2004).

In this pilot study, the researchers conducted interviews simulating rapport, process, consent, space, recording, timing, and pacing to “try out” the interview questions (Baker, 1994). Ismail et al. (2018) suggested pragmatic steps for pilot testing, as shown in Figure 1. Each step assists the researchers to refine and enhance the interview questions throughout the pilot test.

Figure 1

The Steps of Pilot Testing (Ismail et al., 2018)



The “determining” or pre-interview stage includes all the aspects of the applied methodology; “assessment” means evaluation of interview questions based on feasibility after tried-out; “adjustment” is a process to refine the interview questions after the assessment; “revisiting” means re-assessment or re-test the alteration made in the previous stage; lastly, “reflection” is the lessons learn from the entire pilot test which can be applied in the main study (Ismail et al., 2018). The number of the pilot test cycles is depending on the necessity of refining and testing the interview questions; it might impact the number of participants involved as well. The researchers carried out the pilot test in two complete cycles for both teacher and pupil participants, each cycle one participant. At the end of the first cycle pilot test, the time lag between the different interviews helped in obtaining feedback from the participants

on their opinions of the questions asked and provided reflection and preparation for the next cycle.

Determining the Methodological Considerations

Researchers' Positioning

This study was designed in the context of Malaysia primary education with the support of Curriculum and Instructional Technology Department (CITeD) in Faculty of Education at the University of Malaya and Ministry of Education (MOE). The corresponding author, Leow is interested in this project in the context of her Ph.D. dissertation. She had previously taught in primary school, where she has first-hand experience of teaching-learning process. She then realised the need for understanding, sustaining, and improving the current educational circumstance, which gave her the idea to conduct needs analysis. After publishing her first needs analysis paper in 2021, *Pre-design for Primary School Active Learning Module: A Triadic Reciprocal Needs Analysis Framework* in the *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, she has now written the second needs analysis paper on piloting interview questions.

Leow has been working with two dissertation supervisors for around four years, who are also co-authors of this paper. It can be helpful to know that these two researchers hold professional positions in the development and innovations of curricula from primary to tertiary levels of education. Particularly, Siti Hajar enjoys collaborating in this study because of her extensive experience in teaching, training, and enhancing contemporary educational technology; Rafiza is a qualitative research expert who has experience using a variety of qualitative research techniques in studies of learners at different educational levels. The approval of conducting this study was provided by University of Malaya and MOE through the Research and Policy Evaluation Centre. This study was categorised as having low or negligible risk.

The researchers developed preliminary semi-structured interview protocols based on the main study's aim and an acknowledged learning needs analysis framework, which tend to be tested before conducting the actual interview sessions in the main study. The purpose of teacher participants' interview is to obtain a third-person perspective of pupils' active learning needs regarding pupils' learner control demonstration; whereas pupil participants' interview is expected to collect the first-person subjective views on their active learning needs based on their learner control experiences in the context. The results' compatibilities and discrepancies within pupils' and teachers' perspectives of learning needs can provide holistic needs analysis data in the intended study.

Identifying the Prerequisites for Conducting Semi-Structured Interview

When undertaking the semi-structured interview, Berg (2007) suggested the researchers prepare a basic checklist that covers all the relevant areas based on the research questions. It helps to smoothen the transition of interview questions from one area to another (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Corresponding to the aim of the main study, the list of areas that seek for discovering active learning needs are personal, behavioural, environmental, social, and motivational inquiries.

Besides, developing interview guides that include follow-up questions and probes help the researchers to focus on the topic being investigated and to gain further or detailed information from participants (Yin, 2018). There are no strict rules for what and when to follow up or probe, as the decision is made by the interviewer on the spot (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) and it generates naturally from participants' responses which certain points seem to be

significant to explore further (Shaffer & Elkins, 2005). The exact wording and order of open-ended interview questions with follow-up questions and probes to guide the experiences remain clear and flexible to best navigate the interactive experience with each participant (Cohen et al., 2007). As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012), the way of implementing follow-up questions and probes applied during the interview sessions is shown as below:

Table 1
Follow-Up Questions and Probes

Follow up on:	Use probes to:
- Meaning	- Guide the participant to back on track
- Terminology	- Summarise and reflect to obtain better understanding
- Context	- Ask for clarification
- Examples	- Check for confirmation
- Related factors	- Request elaboration
- Cause-effect relationships	- Check for credibility
- Reason	
- Resolving contradiction	
- Ambiguity	
- Alternative perspectives and explanations	
- Personal insights	

Formulating the Preliminary Semi-Structured Interview Protocols

As a preparation to conduct learning needs analysis study in the future, the researchers generated pupils' and teachers' semi-structured interview questions based on Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) framework for analysis of learning needs, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Framework for Analysis of Learning Needs

Main Questions	Supplementary Questions
Why are the learners taking part?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory or optional? • Apparent need or not? • Are status, money, and compensation involved? • What do learners think they will achieve? • What is their attitude towards the programme? • Do they want to improve their learning, or do they resent the time they have to spend on it?
How do the learners learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is their learning background? • What is their concept of learning and teaching? • What methodology will appeal to them?
What sources are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and professional competence of teachers. • Attitude of teachers. • Teachers' knowledge of and attitude to the subject content/materials.
Who are the learners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids and opportunities. • Age/Sex/ Nationality. • What do they already know? • What knowledge do they have? • What are their interests?

- What teaching styles are they used to?
 - What is their attitude?
 - How's the surroundings or environment?
 - Time of day.
 - Every day or once a week?
- Where do they learn?
When will they learn?

Note. Adapted from Hutchinson and Waters (1987)

To formulate appropriate interview questions for pupil participants presented in Table 3, the researchers borrowed some elements from the National Children’s Advocacy Centre Child Forensic Interview Structure (NCAC CFIS; National Children’s Advocacy Centre, 2019). It is because NCAC provides a model for forensic interview of a child which has a semi-structured format that can be adapted to children of different ages or backgrounds. The NCAC CFIS emphasises a flexible, thoughtful, decision-making approach throughout the interview and does not recommend a scripted format.

Table 3
Preliminary Pupils’ Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interview questions	Hutchinson and Waters’s (1987) framework	
	Main	Supplementary
• Why do you take part in this active learning class?	Why are the learners taking part?	Compulsory or optional? Apparent need or not?
• Please describe your happiest learning moment.	Who are the learners?	What are their interests?
• If the teacher says “kids, now you learn by yourself”, what will you do next?	How do the learners learn?	What methodology will appeal to them?
• Based on your experience, the teacher gave you tasks and provided you learning materials, how did you manage your learning?	Where do they learn? How do the learners learn?	How’s the surroundings or environment? What methodology will appeal to them?
• Some people would say that they feel difficult to choose which one they want to learn first. How about you?	Who are the learners?	What is their attitude?
• What did you do when you face problem in your learning?	How do the learners learn?	What is their concept of learning and teaching?
• Tell me what you feel when you have a chance to learn freely?	Why are the learners taking part?	What is their attitude towards the programme?
• When is the time do you think you learn the best?	When will they learn?	Time of day.
• Would you say there is someone affects you to stop or continue learning?	What sources are available?	Aids and opportunities.
• Imagine that you have finished a task, and you can choose to ask or not to ask for rewards from the teacher. Will you ask your teacher for the rewards?	Who are the learners?	What teaching styles are they used to?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you feel like you want to show your works to others after you finished them? Why? 	Who are the learners?	What knowledge do they have? What is their attitude?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there is a total of five stars, how many stars will you give to yourself? 	Why are the learners taking part?	What do learners think they will achieve?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you have magic power, what are the wishes you want to fulfill in your future learning? 	Why are the learners taking part?	Do they want to improve their learning, or do they resent the time they have to spend on it?

Note. The researchers generated interview questions based on the framework for analysis of learning needs, by Hutchinson & Waters, 1987.

The researchers built a preliminary teachers' interview protocol to obtain teachers' insights of pupils' active learning needs based on pupils' learner control demonstration. If related to Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) framework for analysis of learning needs, it echoes the apparent questions, such as "Who are the learners," "How do the learners learn," "What sources are available," "Where do they learn," and "When will they learn," as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Preliminary Teachers' Interview Protocol

	Semi-structured interview questions	Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework	
		Main	Supplementary
1.	What do you expect pupils to do in an active learning classroom?	What sources are available?	Teachers' knowledge of and attitude to the subject content/materials.
2.	In your teaching, what kind of learning environment supports pupils' active learning?	Where do they learn?	How's the surroundings or environment?
3.	Can you please describe your pupils' active learning situation?	How do the learners learn?	What methodology will appeal to them? What is their concept of learning and teaching?
4.	Supposedly, active learning meant to suit different pupils' learning style, what did you notice in your teaching?	Who are the learners?	What teaching styles are they used to?
5.	Do you think pupils fully engaged in using learning materials?	Who are the learners?	What is their attitude?
6.	Would you say pupils manage to control learning pace under active learning environment?	Who are the learners?	What do they already know?
7.	Does peer learning play a certain role in helping pupils manage their learning?	What sources are available?	Aids and opportunities.

8.	How well do you think the pupils performed in an active learning classroom?	Who are the learners?	What do they already know? What knowledge do they have?
9.	In what way are teachers playing their role in pupils' learning?	What sources are available?	Aids and opportunities.
10.	Some people would say that parents' involvement influences pupils' responsibility for learning. Please talk about your experience.	What sources are available?	Aids and opportunities.
11.	How often do your pupils need guidance?	What sources are available? When will they learn?	Aids and opportunities. Time of day.
12.	What are your worries when letting pupils to control their learning?	What sources are available?	Attitude of teachers.
13.	If you could give me one piece of advice to improve active learning, what would it be?	What sources are available?	Attitude of teachers.

Note. The researchers generated interview questions based on the framework for analysis of learning needs, by Hutchinson & Waters, 1987.

Experts Validation

After developing the preliminary semi-structured interview protocols, all the interview questions were reviewed by the panel of experts before trying out with the participants. It is aimed to determine whether the content of the interview protocols is appropriate, are all the questions related to the focus of the intended study, are there questions missing, and are there inappropriate questions (Norland-Tilburg, 1990). Subsequently, one of the experts (expert in the subject matter) reviewed the interview questions pertaining to its language, wording, and relevance. Another interview expert (expert in interviewing) carried out a close reading on the interview protocol and examined the protocol for structure, length, writing style, and comprehension. They reminded the researchers to be aware of the wording, simplicity, and clarity of the language used during the interview. Especially when interviewing children, the language should be easy to be understood by children and try to give direct hint or prompt to let them know what the researchers want to know from them.

Selecting Pilot Test Participants

To conduct a needs analysis, the participants should be the key informants that are able to represent a community and provide rich information (Sava, 2012). To counter a rapid and iterative pilot testing approach, the researchers piloted interview protocols on an initial four participants (two pupils and two teachers) who share as similar criteria as possible to the group of participants for the major study based on how they respond (Hennink et al., 2011; Janghorban et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2013; Table 5). This study chose not to pilot test interviews with the same participants in the main study, to avoid them from losing interest in the coming study.

Table 5
Participant's Selection Criteria

Teacher participant	Pupil participant
- Experiencing education transformation	- Experiencing education transformation throughout learning semesters
- Trained with 21 st century teaching skills	- Targets of active learning training programmes
- Having recognition in practicing active learning	- Having active learning acknowledgement and experience
- More than 3 years of Level 1 English teaching experience	- Ready for changes and challenges
- Volunteer to participate	- Willing to participate

Note. The researchers set up the sampling criterion for pilot test to represent potential respondents mirroring the intended subjects in the main study, as guided in Sava (2012).

The pilot testing sample is nearly always based on a small number of participants (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Referring to Table 6, this pilot test recruited two primary school teacher participants and two Year 3 pupils with TP4 performance level (intermediate level).

Table 6
Pilot Testing Participants' Demographics

Position	Pseudonym	Gender	Education	Description
Primary school teacher	Teacher X	Female	Degree (English)	She has 7 years of Level 1 teaching experience. She is an English teacher.
Primary school teacher	Teacher Y	Female	Degree (English)	She has 10 years of Level 1 teaching experience. She is an English teacher.
Primary school pupil	Zew	Female	Year 3 (English: TP4)	She has her own way of thinking and is able to provide different ideas. She can solve her problem by herself. When she has questions, she will ask for help.
Primary school pupil	Kay	Female	Year 3 (English: TP4)	She doesn't pay attention in the class often. She will forget to do her works. She is passive. She seldom answers questions or speak out opinion. She often absence.

Source. Excerpt from teachers' and pupils' portfolios.

The Setting and Rules for Trying Out Interviews

The researchers implemented the interview pilot test in a quiet environment where participants feel safe to share their opinions or feelings and make it easy to respond without distractions (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). Participants attended one-to-one interviews scheduled for approximately 45 minutes (duration depends on time-paced, semi-structured interview questions, and syllabus). The researchers carried out interviews in participants' mother tongue or their ordinary everyday language (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Rice & Ezzy, 1999; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The researchers adopted a “qualitative attitude” (Roberts, 2020) during the interview piloting session. The researchers asked only one question at a time, listened attentively without interrupting when the participants were speaking, used appropriate probes or prompts that are not intended to lead but to elicit examples and meaning, explored apparent inconsistencies to clarify a misunderstanding, indicated understanding through verbal or non-verbal gestures, and expressed gratitude (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Results and Discussion

Assessing and Adjusting the Interview Questions: First Cycle Pilot Test

After piloting the pupil participants’ interview protocol, the researchers made three modifications to the interview questions (Table 7). The first cycle pilot test had been carried out with one pupil participant, named Zew. Relating to the authenticity factor in gaining the most realistic and faithful voices from pupils, the researchers modified question number 3 into a hypothetical question (Strauss et al., 1981) because the participant was hardly relating the question with her learning experiences out of context. The hypothetical question leads participants to imagine and speculate as to what he or she might do in a particular situation. The modified question that begins with “what if” followed by a briefing of specific learning context encourages pupils to imagine or relate the questions with their learning experiences and elicit spontaneous action. This type of question is like question number 10 in the list.

Concerning the conformability issue of the interview question, the researchers identified that question number 9 is judgemental, scoped, and it is not general enough to obtain multiple answers based on pupils’ social needs and influences in the context. The phrase “affects you to stop or continue learning” displays certain leading intent that reveals a bias or an assumption that the researchers were making (Merriam, 2009). It should be opened for the wider possibility of social influences that would make onto pupils’ learning motive instead of only making pupils “stop” or “continue” learning. Moreover, this question consists of multiple questions such as “affects you to stop learning” and “affects you to continue learning.” It caused confusion in pupils to answer the question one by one (Merriam, 2009) about what they really need to be persistent in demonstrating learner control during active learning. Therefore, the researchers deleted the phrase “affects you to stop or continue learning” and replaced it with “affects your learning” which has the higher potential to obtain wide and general responses. The amendment highlights that the interview questions used to elicit information for needs analysis should be able to stimulate comprehensive thinking and predict the wider possibilities of responses according to pupils’ active learning needs based on their learner control experiences.

The researchers made a language modification on question number 10 to improve the credibility of the interview question in obtaining rich and accurate data. The researchers fine-tuned the question so that it is more explicit and clearer for the pupil participants to understand it, to obtain relevant information to address the objective of the intended study. The preliminary interview question elicited irrelevant responses from the participant. Originally, the question aimed for gaining participants’ spontaneous responses on their needs for internal motive and external stimuli. However, Zew provided answers that are deliberately describing the teacher’s personality and teacher’s instruction rather than answering the question from her personal motivation perspective. For example, “if I ask for reward from teacher, I have to see whether the teacher is fierce or not” (Zew/pilot01/30.40-30.47), “I take the reward because teacher says I can take it after I have finished my work” (Zew/pilot01/31.29-31.34). The researchers amended the question into a simple and specific sentence by adopting the affectional feature

such as “what do you feel”. It could appropriately stimulate pupils’ emotions to express their learning interests, thoughts, and opinions. It might also reveal the spontaneous intrinsic and extrinsic needs of pupils distinctly. The questions used to elicit “learning needs” information from children is necessary to be explicit, simple, clear, and stimulate children’s cognition, affectional and emotional attribution. So that children can authentically link a particular event with their cognitive logic (Piaget, 1962).

Table 7

Summary of the Changes in Pupil Participants’ Interview Questions

Preliminary interview questions	Refined interview questions	Explanation
<p><i>Type of question (Hypothetical):</i> 3. If the teacher says “kids, now you learn by yourself”, what will you do next?</p>	<p>What if the teacher says “kids, now you learn by yourself” after setting up a free learning environment, what will you do next?</p>	<p>The preliminary question does not provide a context to elicit pupils’ spontaneous action. It is difficult for pupils to provide accurate responses align with the requirement of the interview question. However, the hypothetical question helps pupils to imagine and speculate possible action in the context. (Zew/pilot01/08.40-10.50)</p>
<p><i>Judgemental and multiple question:</i> 9. Would you say there is someone affects you to <u>stop or continue learning</u>?</p>	<p>Would you say there is someone affects your learning?</p>	<p>The preliminary question aims to seek multiple answers. The question is judgemental and scoped. It is better to make the question more open and general to actuate pupils’ comprehensive thinking on social needs and to obtain wider possibilities of social influences in pupils’ learner control experiences during active learning. (Zew/pilot01/22.20-22.50)</p>
<p><i>Language issue:</i> 10. Imagine that you have finished a task, and you can choose to ask or not to ask for rewards from the teacher. Will you ask your teacher for the rewards?</p>	<p>Imagine that you have successfully finished a challenging task that nobody can, but there is no approval in terms of praise or rewards, what do you feel?</p>	<p>The preliminary question does not successfully stimulate pupils’ logical thinking on their motivational needs (internal motive and external stimuli). The amendment in terms of the language used makes the question explicit, clear, simple, and suitable with pupils’ cognition understanding. (Zew/pliot01/29.08-32.45)</p>

Source. Researchers’ findings.

After the first cycle pilot test with Teacher X, the researchers made five modifications to the interview questions (Table 8). On the aspect of the interview question's clarity that ensures credibility, the researchers found that the participant hardly understand the answer required for question number 4. She requested the interviewer to repeat the question and make further explanations. Initially, question number 4 represents a hypothetical question (Strauss et al., 1981) that displays a combination of a hypothetical statement ("supposedly") and an inquiry ("what did you notice"). However, the question is too lengthy and complicated. The researchers rephrased the interview question into direct and simple inquiry. Although adults master more advanced cognitive process to resolve complex and abstract inquiries compare to children (Girgis et al., 2018), interview questions that elicit rethinking, relating, and describing activities is better be clear and direct to stimulate participants' immediate attention to the question requirement and obtain plain-spoken responses.

On the aspect of terminology, the participant did not recognise the meaning of "learning pace" stated in question number 6. It is most probably because the term is a scientific name used in certain contexts, yet seldom being used in participant's teaching experience. Sekaran and Bougie (2003) argued that interviewees will bias the data if they do not understand the question asked, which might affect the dependability of the data collected. The researchers replaced the phrase "control learning pace" with "learn by themselves" to fit with participants' prior knowledge and understanding. The term "worries" applied in question number 12 is also too abstract to present the learner control issues encountered by the participants in the active learning context. Therefore, the researchers changed the term "worries" to "problems" such as "what are the problems you faced" instead of "what are your worries." The phrase "learn by themselves" in question number 12 might be easier to be comprehended compared to "control over their learning." The researchers made changes to this phrase as well. Entirely, the terms used in asking interview questions should be in accordance with the interviewees' prior knowledge and common understanding. Scientific terms and words that elicit abstract facets should be avoided.

In view of the measurement factor that was addressed in the interview, the researchers identified that the inquiry of "how well do you think" in question number 8 elicited imprecise measurement of teacher participants' evaluation on pupils' learner control performance in active learning. The researchers altered the way of measurement into scores or marks to make the evaluation more measurable. The measurable responses directly and distinctly help to reveal teachers' points of view on pupils' learning performances and inevitably stimulate teachers' way of looking at pupils' learning needs that decide or affect their learning performances. It displays the current achievement, potential, and constraints of pupils' learner control demonstration in active learning and provides analytical interpretation for further actions.

Based on the teachers' interview flow, the researchers made an adjustment on the order of the questions among questions number 7, 8, 9, and 10. Initially, question number 7 relates to pupils' needs for peer influences in supporting their learner control experiences during active learning; question number 8 is about teachers' evaluation on pupils' overall learner control performance during active learning; question number 9 is a question that guides the teacher participants to reflect on pupils' needs for teachers' intervention in active learning to reinforce pupils' learner control; and question number 10 stimulates the rethink of pupils' needs for parents' involvement in the active learning context that influences pupils' learner control demonstration. Based on the initial question flow listed in Table 3, the interview starts with teachers' descriptions of pupils' interactions with the learning surrounding. It might be ideal if gaining teacher's recapitulative evaluation on pupils' learner control performance straightaway after the comprehensive description of pupils' learner control demonstration in active learning before discussing pupils' needs for peers', teachers', and parents' interventions and influences

in the learning context. As a result, the researchers put the question that evaluating pupils' overall learner control performance (question number 8, Table 4) after question number 6 in the list. The swapping between question 7 and 8 in Table 4 grouped the first seven questions to focus on teachers' discovery on pupils' initiative in demonstrating learner control under active learning environment; questions number 8 to 11 mainly discuss pupils' social needs in the context.

Table 8

Summary of the Changes in Teacher Participants' Interview Questions

Preliminary interview questions	Refined interview questions	Explanation
<p><i>Clarity:</i></p> <p>4. <u>Supposedly, active learning meant to suit different pupils' learning style</u>, what did you notice in your teaching?</p>	Based on your daily teaching, do you think active learning considers pupils' different learning styles?	Initially, the hypothetical statement "active learning meant to suit different pupils' learning style" did not help the interviewee's understanding and failed to catch the interviewee's attention. As this question requires participants to rethink, relate, and describe spontaneously, it is necessary to amend this question into a simple, clear, and direct question. (Teacher X/pilot01/13.12-14.02)
<p><i>Terminology:</i></p> <p>6. Would you say pupils manage to <u>control learning pace</u> under active learning environment?</p>	Would you say pupils are able to learn by themselves under active learning environment?	The participant did not understand the meaning of "learning pace." The researchers suggested avoiding using scientific terms but putting high consideration on the terms that are easier to be understood by participants based on their prior knowledge and common understanding. (Teacher X/pilot01/24.21-24.35)
<p><i>Measurement factor:</i></p> <p>8. <u>How well</u> do you think the pupils performed in an active learning classroom?</p>	If there is a total of ten marks, how many marks will you grade your pupils' performances in an active learning classroom?	"How well" is hard to be measured. Scores or marks make the question measurable, which elicit analytical interpretation. (Teacher X/pilot01/29.29-30.50)

Terminology:

12. What are your worries when letting pupils to control their learning?

What are the problems you faced when letting pupils to learn by themselves?

The term “worries” is too abstract. The researchers replaced it with “problems.” The phrase “learn by themselves” is easier to be comprehended compared to “control over their learning.” The terms and phrases used after the amendment are more explicit and easier to be understood. (Teacher X/pilot01/42.05-42.32)

Sequential arrangement:

Question 7 asks about the needs for peer influences. Question 8 evaluates pupil’s overall learning performance. Questions 9 and 10 ask about the needs for teachers’ and parents’ interventions.

Question 7 evaluates pupil’s overall learning performance. Question 8 asks about the needs for peer influences. Questions 9 and 10 ask about the needs for teachers’ and parents’ interventions.

The discussion of pupils’ overall learner control performance in active learning is put before the discussion of pupils’ needs for peers,’ teachers,’ and parents’ interventions and influences to smoothen the interview flow. (Teacher X/pilot01)

Source. Researchers’ findings.

Re-assess and Reflect the Interview Questions: Second Cycle Pilot Test

The researchers re-tested the refined interview protocol in the second cycle pilot test on another pupil (Kay) and teacher (Teacher Y) participant. The feedback from the participants was positive and need not further adjustment on the interview questions. The second cycle pilot test went smoothly for about 40 to 45 minutes, with consistent and relevant information obtained to address the aim of the intended study. The process of the interviews was sequential and reasonable. After the re-assessment, the results underpinned the trustworthiness of interview questions to align with the objective of the intended study (Patton, 2015) and ensure the capability of the questions to elicit an in-depth response relevant to the topic of investigation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2013).

According to the interview questions matrix that has been finalised in Figure 2, pupils’ interview protocol perfectly covers pupils’ internal characteristics and interaction with external surroundings (DeVore et al., 2017). Pupils’ attitude, cognitive or other personal factors, and environmental events are all operated as interacting determinants of each other (Bandura, 1986) to display personal, behavioural, environmental, social, and motivational needs when experiencing learner control during active learning.

It starts with warm-up questions that allow pupils to share freely about their everyday learning experiences and the initial motive to engage learner control in active learning (questions number 1 & 2). The purpose of these questions is to establish trust and “break the ice” (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013) so that participants feel at ease to voice out their opinion throughout the interview process. Followed by diving into pupils’ personal, environmental, and social needs and concerns that decide their learner control attitude or behavioural needs in active learning (questions number 3 to 9). It later investigates the internal motive and external stimuli features that intimately relate to pupils’ motivational needs in perceiving learner control under active learning environment (questions number 10 & 11). The interview ends up with a

wind-down procedure by encouraging participants' self-evaluation and understanding their learning prospects (questions number 12 & 13).

Figure 2
Pupils' Interview Questions Matrix

1.	Why do you take part in this active learning class?	}	Warm-up
2.	Please describe your happiest learning moment.		
3.	What if the teacher says "kids, now you learn by yourself" after setting up a free learning environment, what will you do next?	}	Personal needs Environmental needs Social needs Attitude/behavioural needs
4.	Based on your experience, the teacher gave you tasks and provided you learning materials, how did you manage your learning?		
5.	Some people would say that they feel difficult to choose which one they want to learn first. How about you?		
6.	What did you do when you face problem in your learning?		
7.	Tell me what do you feel when you have a chance to learn freely?		
8.	When is the time do you think you learn the best?		
9.	Would you say there is someone affects your learning?		
10.	Imagine that you have successfully finished a challenging task that nobody can, but there is no approval in terms of praise or rewards, what do you feel?	}	Motivational needs (intrinsic & extrinsic)
11.	Do you feel like you want to show your works to others after you finished them? Why?		
12.	If there is a total of five stars, how many stars will you give to yourself?	}	Wind-down (self-evaluate & prospect)
13.	If you have magic power, what are the wishes you want to fulfill in your future learning?		

Source. Researchers' findings.

Unlike the pupils' interview, teachers' interview protocol is inclined to addressing pupils' active learning needs from a third-person perspective. Based on the teachers' interview questions matrix that has been finalised in Figure 3, the second cycle pilot test affirmed the connection of interview questions with the objective of the main study. The questions are distinctly related to the discussion of pupils' environmental and social needs, which is also indirectly unfolded the implied personal, behavioural, and motivational needs of pupils in the active learning context regarding their learner control experiences.

Figure 3
Teachers' Interview Questions Matrix

1.	What do you expect pupils to do in an active learning classroom?	}	Warm-up (prior knowledge, understanding, attitude)
2.	In your teaching, what kind of learning environment supports pupils' active learning?		
3.	Can you please describe your pupils' active learning situation?	}	Environmental needs Implied: Personal needs Behavioural needs Motivational needs
4.	Based on your daily teaching, do you think active learning considers pupils' different learning styles?		
5.	Do you think pupils fully engaged in using learning materials?		
6.	Would you say pupils are able to learn by themselves under active learning environment?		
7.	If there is a total of ten marks, how many marks will you grade your pupils' performances in an active learning classroom?		
8.	Does peer learning play a certain role in helping pupils manage their learning?		
9.	In what way are teachers playing their role in pupils' learning?		
10.	Some people would say that parents' involvement influence pupils' responsibility for learning. Please talk about your experience.	}	Social needs
11.	How often do your pupils need guidance?		
12.	What are the problems you faced when letting pupils to learn by themselves?	}	Wind-down (perspective & prospect)
13.	If you could give me one piece of advice to improve active learning, what would it be?		

Source. Researchers' findings.

The first question is a warm-up question that stimulates teachers' prior knowledge, understanding, and attitude to the topic tends to discuss. Questions number 2 to 7 presents the topic areas that concern pupils' direct interaction with the immediate active learning environment and emphasise the environmental factors that play a significant role in pupils' learning situation. Questions number 8 to 11 discuss the social intervention of peers, teachers, and parents during pupils' learner control demonstration in active learning (questions number 8 to 10) and present pupils' spontaneous action in pursuing their social needs in the context

(question number 11). By investigating pupils' reactions to the environmental and social features via questions number 2 to 11, it reveals some contents that relate to pupils' personal, behavioural, and motivational needs as well. As a wind-down procedure, questions number 12 and 13 raise teacher participants' perspectives and prospects on active learning to cope with pupils' current learner control achievement, potential, constraints, and needs in active learning.

This pilot test accords with a full scale of trustworthiness requirement in qualitative method (Table 9), which follows sequentially the determining, assessment, adjustment, revisiting, and reflection steps of interview piloting.

Table 9
Trustworthiness of Interview Questions

Trustworthiness	Interview Questions Piloting		
	<u>Determining</u>	<u>Assessment & Adjustment</u>	<u>Revisiting & Reflection</u>
Credibility (internal consistency, accuracy, and confidence of questions)	Developed interview protocols that are aligned with the main study's aim.	Refined the interview questions to ensure rich and accurate responses.	The interview questions are confirmed to be in line with the intended study's objective and area of focus.
Dependability (stability and repeatability)	-	Participants recruited in the first and second cycle pilot test understand the requirement of the interview questions asked and provide a similar range of responses. The researchers expect a similar range of outcomes if applying the interview protocols to other participants in future studies.	
Conformability (objectivity)	Experts validated the interview questions before try-out.	Amended the bias, scoped, and judgmental questions to open-ended questions.	-
Transferability (external validity or generalisability)	The formulation of the interview protocols is sticking to an acknowledged learning needs analysis framework which can be used in other situations of a similar field.	The interview questions are generally suited to the knowledge and understanding of related groups.	- Rational order and distribution of interview questions to keep the investigation on track in a similar field. - The interview questions are proved to be readied to utilize in the future study.
Authenticity (fair, faithful, and realistic)	- Consider the participants' concerns (space, time, language, etc.).	- Stimulate participants' prior knowledge and experiences in a particular context.	Emphasize the necessity of orienting and debriefing questions to elicit

- Adopted “qualitative attitude”.	- Take note of the affectional feature when asking interview questions.	participants’ “true voices”.
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Source. Researchers’ findings.

This pilot test demonstrated that the semi-structured interview protocols are feasible. The refined interview questions were able to arouse participants’ interest and willingness to share their opinions or experiences. It also provided a better understanding for the researchers of how to conduct interviews appropriately, especially with primary school pupils. The gains of this pilot test proved that it is suitable to recruit participants based on the inclusion criteria of the main study. The data entry was not problematic because relevant and rich information collected from both teacher and pupil participants with corresponding and comparative responses could be further discussed in the future study. The semi-structured interview protocols properly performed the desired job and could adequately be conducted to obtain data on the concepts that the researchers expected to collect in the main study. Most importantly, this paper demonstrated the effectiveness of pilot test in identifying problems or flaws in the semi-structured interviews. After appropriate amendments, the interview questions can be utilised in the main study.

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