

**STUDENT VOICE CONTRIBUTION
IN DETERMINING THE
EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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**SUMBANGAN PANDANGAN PELAJAR DALAM MENENTUKAN
GURU BAHASA INGGERIS BERKESAN:
SATU KAJIAN KES KOLEKTIF**

ABSTRAK

Kualiti mengajar dan kualiti keperibadian guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan yang telah diterangkan secara panjang lebar oleh pakar-pakar Bahasa Inggeris masih menghairankan dengan penghasilan penguasaan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris yang sederhana dalam kalangan majoriti para pelajar Malaysia daripada yang sepatutnya cemerlang. Maka, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejauhmanakah pandangan pelajar: sependapat dengan kenyataan pendapat pakar tentang kualiti mengajar dan kualiti keperibadian guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan, serta sependapat dengan pendapat pakar yang menyarankan bagaimana guru/pensyarah Bahasa Inggeris dapat menjadi seorang guru/pensyarah yang lebih berkesan. Oleh itu, 28 soalan temuduga berbentuk separa-struktur yang diolah daripada isu-isu yang telah disebut secara menyeluruh oleh pakar mengenai kualiti mengajar dan kualiti keperibadian guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan dalam kajian literasi telah dijadikan sebagai alat kajian, dengan bantuan pita rakaman untuk kajian kes kolektif ini yang dilaksanakan menerusi mod kualitatif. Seterusnya pengkaji telah menyelami maklumbalas tiga orang murid sekolah rendah, tiga orang pelajar sekolah menengah dan tiga orang guru pelatih mahasiswa yang mewakili tahap penguasaan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris yang baik, sederhana dan yang lemah, dan yang belajar di lokasi geografi yang berlainan, dalam bagaimana setiap individu tersebut menggambarkan guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan. Dalam pada itu, pandangan pelajar telah dianalisa mengikut tema melalui triangulasi sebagai satu strategi berdasarkan topik-topik serupa yang telah

dibincangkan, di samping pandangan pelajar diletak selari dengan dapatan-dapatan dalam kajian literasi. Apa yang menarik, hasil dapatan mencadangkan bahawa tidak kira sejauhmanakah pandangan pelajar sependapat dengan pendapat pakar mengenai semua bahagian kajian yang telah dibincangkan, namun, didapati secara psikologi pandangan pelajar mampu memberi sumbangan *tambahan* dalam penentuan guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan dalam kedua-dua aspek kualiti mengajar dan kualiti keperibadian yang telah disebutkan, dengan satu sentuhan ironis serta kritikan yang membina tentang bagaimana para guru/pesyarah Bahasa Inggeris masih berupaya memperbaiki diri supaya kelihatan lebih berkesan pada kaca mata pelajar. Satu lagi dapatan yang luarbiasa ialah maklumbalas murid, pelajar dan guru mahasiswa memperlihatkan persamaan, tidak kira umur, tahap penguasaan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris mahupun lokasi belajar, sekaligus membayangkan bahawa psikologi kanak-kanak, remaja dan orang dewasa melangkau sempadan usia, penguasaan kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris dan lokasi kawasan. Pendek kata, pandangan pelajar dalam kajian ini adalah tidak ternilai sebagai tambahan pada gudang pengetahuan pakar sedia ada mengenai apa yang perlu untuk menjadi guru Bahasa Inggeris berkesan yang sepatutnya.

**STUDENT VOICE CONTRIBUTION IN DETERMINING
THE EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER:
A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY**

ABSTRACT

Instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher expounded by English language experts still surprisingly produced average English language proficiency (ELP) in a majority of Malaysian students, instead of the targeted excellent. Therefore, this study aimed to find out the extent to which student voice: agreed with expert opinion in its description of both the instructional qualities and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher, and tallied with expert opinion when suggesting how the English language teacher/lecturer could have been a more effective teacher/lecturer in its description of how it deemed the English language teacher/lecturer effective, in terms of instructional and personal qualities, as well as suggestions for further improvement. In this regard, 28 semi-structured interview questions derived from issues elucidated by expert opinion on instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher in the literature review were utilised as a research instrument, with the aid of a tape recorder for this collective case study in qualitative mode. Thus, the responses of three primary school pupils, three secondary school students and three undergraduate trainee teachers representative of above average, average and below average English language proficiency, and who are studying at different geographical locations were extensively explored on how each of them described the effective English language teacher. In this respect, student voice was analysed thematically using triangulation as a strategy to validate the responses among all nine research participants responses

on what they expected of the instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher. Interestingly, the summary of the findings revealed that no matter how much student voice concurred with expert opinion on all areas of the study touched upon, the psychology of student voice still had something *extra* to contribute in determining the effective English language teacher in terms of both the aforementioned instructional and personal qualities, with a touch of irony and constructive criticism on how English language teachers/lecturers could still further improve so as to appear more effective in the eyes of learners. Another unconventional discovery was that the responses of pupils, students and undergraduate trainee teachers alike often tallied with one another, irrespective of learner age group nor ELP command nor geographical study location. Hence, this implies that the psychology of children, adolescents and adults transcend such age, as well as both ELP command and geographical boundaries. In short, student voice in this study proved invaluable as an add-on to the current store of expert knowledge of what it takes to be a truly effective English language teacher.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

What actually qualifies the effective English language teacher? Logically, no individual can become an effective English language teacher overnight. In fact, the very process of becoming an effective English language teacher, as discovered by Flores and Day (2006) is not only long and complex, but which also demands maximised emotional labour as well as emotional work of the teacher so as to manage students of varied motivations, individual backgrounds, as well as learning abilities. As described by Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006), emotional labour is how teachers, for the purpose of reflecting the caring nature of a teacher, have to induce, neutralise or inhibit their own feelings; while emotional work would require the said teachers to empathise with students.

Moreover, the English language teacher will have to undergo experiences in teaching to get a more complete feel of the occupation. In this regard, each beginning English language teacher would to a certain extent experience feel very conscious about how their students regard or even understand them as teachers; for as Dixie (2003) stated, the importance of making an early positive impression on students cannot be denied. However, the positive attitude of such teachers can just as easily diminish when they are faced with difficulties; such as, students who refuse to do their homework and parents who are defensive of their children's offensive behaviour (Scherer, 2008).

Therefore, teaching comes with experience (Merseth, 2003; Mestre 1996) as a result of lessons learnt from mistakes made in the past which all contribute to the building of self-confidence and unchanging belief in oneself as a teacher (Cowley, 2003), as well as the building up of various skills which are applied to different children accordingly (Merseth, 2003). Furthermore, effective teaching and learning methods of a language like English is never static; and as mentioned by Cullingford (1995), both the teacher's knowledge and experience need be constantly updated. In addition, the characteristics of the English language teacher considered effective is not only being good at learning and able to teach well, but also displaying care, humour and an understanding of others (Shoffner, 2009).

Interestingly, what defines the effective English language teacher has been heavily expounded on by English language experts, namely English language teachers and English language lecturers well-versed in the language who are assumed to know the ins and outs of the qualities that befit the role model English language teacher. Yet, the contribution of student voice, particularly in Malaysia, which actually speak their minds on this matter, pales in comparison to the voice of expert opinion. In this respect, could it be that student voice has simply been presumed to be too immature or too insignificant to be able to determine the effectiveness of English language teachers in Malaysia? Or perhaps it is due to the possibility that student voice itself has not been courageous enough, nor has been given ample opportunity to openly describe the effective English language teacher, for fear of antagonising expert view? Or, could it also possibly be perhaps because the experts of the English language teaching community themselves choose not to hear what they might not want to hear from student voice regarding the effective English language teacher?

Whatever the reasons for the lack of past research in Malaysia to investigate how student voice would define the effective English language teacher from students' hearts and minds themselves, the researcher believes it is vital that the illustration for such a teacher should equally include valuable descriptive feedback from student voice too, lest the aforementioned characterisation be far too inclined towards expert opinion alone. In other words, what the experts of the English language have outlined as effective may be based on their own interpretation of what they think students in general should know or best ought to receive from them as experts; but what the researcher is interested to investigate is, how far student voice has agreed with the description of instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher as outlined by expert opinion in the literature. In this way, the researcher is convinced that newer insights on how students would describe the English language teacher as effective can contribute as beneficial supplementary input to the pool of existing expert portrayal of the effective English language teacher, because after all, it is only when the English language teacher is actually able to cater to the learning needs as outlined by student voice itself that the above-mentioned teacher's effectiveness can be duly acknowledged.

On the same note, Erikson believed in *mutuality* which is the interaction of generations, where if Sigmund Freud had defined how parents greatly influenced a child's development, Erikson also added that children too influenced parental development (as cited in Boeree, 1997, 2006). Hence, such reciprocal influence propagated by Erikson is exactly what the researcher is trying to examine through student voice on the effective English language teacher, so that such student voice

could also aid English language teachers in improving towards becoming in the actual sense, truly effective.

1.1 Contemporary Issues Regarding English in Malaysia

Even though the term “effective” may be used to describe teachers of any academic subject, the effective English language teacher is highlighted by this study as a result of the escalating importance of the need for English mastery among Malaysian students. In this regard, the following discussion on contemporary issues regarding English in Malaysia takes into account: (1) the contribution of English towards nation building, (2) the impact of English through ETeMS, (3) the place of English in education, (4) English as an international language, (5) English mastery and job prospects, and (6) how students may master English.

1.1.1 The Contribution of English Towards Nation Building

The mandatory use of the Malay language as the national language has been Malaysia’s policy all along to unify its citizens of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, this language alone is not enough to enable Malaysians to fit in easily into the borderless world where English has an edge, especially for national progress and development towards achieving the status of a developed nation by the year 2020.

Thus, good English which gives Malaysians a competitive edge (Anita, 2008; Shirini, 2008) is needed for nation building not only within but

also beyond its national boundaries, especially when it involves dealing with foreign traders and economists. This is because Malaysians who master English have been the country's assets which attract foreign investors ("Ongoing Assessment," 2008) as English is the undisputed language of business in international circles (Mustapa, 2007). Besides, by focussing on how to develop good English communication skills amongst its citizens ("Learning English," 2008) that enables Malaysia to not only find its spot in the global economy (Lee, 2009) but to also compete in the global market ("Ong," 2006; "Speak English," 2007), Malaysia would then be able to help the Asian region economy develop (Chapman, 2007a).

At the same time, English language teachers must remember that students of the present day are more exposed to the English language, by which Too (2006) conceived that this phenomenon is due to the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), besides the proliferation of the media.

Therefore, student voice representing Malaysia's future workforce, when given the opportunity to help determine the qualities of the effective English language teacher, would also have more inclination to be geared towards mastering the language needed to help their nation grow through the help of such effective teachers. In this respect, what needs to be avoided here is, Malaysian children deprived of a good foundation of English being neither able to compete, nor make any impact in the world (Mohd. Yu Kooi, 2008).

1.1.2 The Impact of English Through ETeMS

English regained importance in the Malaysian education since 2003 through the propagation of the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (ETeMS), which is actually the government's strategy to keep abreast with the developments of ICT of the twenty-first century. Pertaining to this, a majority of publications on ICT are not only mostly in English (Leong, 2005; "Mukhriz," 2007), but English is also needed to access the latest information available online ("Master English," 2002; "Mastering," 2005; May, 2002).

In this regard, even though ETeMS, due to a Malaysian government policy change would only last till 2015 for students who started the programme in 2003 (The Star Online, 2011), it was encouraging to note the increase of Malaysian candidates for the 2006 and 2007 *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* or *STPM* (The Malaysian High School Certificate) examination who chose to answer both the Science and Mathematics papers in English instead of in the Malay language (Chapman, 2007c; Chapman, 2008), although they had been given a choice of both language options (Chapman, 2007b). Similarly, there was a notable increase in pupils who chose to answer the said papers purely in English for the *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* or *UPSR* (Primary School Achievement Test) (Chapman & McIntyre, 2008).

Furthermore, it is even more encouraging that the need to surmount the mastery of English in the wake of lesser top scorers has been addressed, as a result of the implementation of ETeMS, ("Drop," 2008); making it a chance

for students to progress (Foong, 2008). This is because, it is pertinent for Malaysians to quickly assimilate into the fast altering world of technology dominated by the English language (Frieda, 2008) for the purpose of producing knowledge workers (Awang, 2003), so as to achieve Malaysia's Vision 2020 objectives ("Minister," 2008) in order to secure developed nation status.

Therefore, student voice that helps describe the effective English language teacher is equally important; for enough effective English language teachers are needed ("Down to Earth Parents," 2008) to effectively help out any of their Science and Mathematics counterparts who may encounter difficulties in the English language when switching from Malay, Mandarin or Tamil to English in their teaching of both those subjects.

Following the previous argument, even though ETeMS uses "contextualised English" for the teaching of Mathematics and Science (Tan & Tan, 2007, p. E2), it also indirectly instils in school-going Malaysian students the necessity to have a good grasp of English (Ahamad, 2007) which is the national agenda ("National Education," 2007). Thus, students would then be exposed to listening, reading and following instructions in English through ETeMS, exposed to speaking and writing in English, besides performing tasks in English that indirectly help them build their competence and confidence in the language as well (Tomlinson, 2007). However, this would only be possible if the teachers of both the aforementioned subjects refrain from giving explanations in the national language (i.e. the Malay language) when teaching ("Use English," 2007).

In this respect, the researcher foresees that students who have been exposed to English during their Science and Mathematics lessons will indirectly obtain some form of English learning, and would then tend to expect more of their English language teachers, whose effectiveness would then be also tested. Therefore, should student voice be allowed to equally outline the type of English language teacher deemed effective, the teaching and learning of the English language is hoped to become less stressful for both teacher and student when actual learning expectations of students are met by the teacher.

1.1.3 The Place of English in Education

World universities are ranked as elite when its academicians master English. In this regard, should renowned Malaysian universities be excluded from this elite list, it would have been a pity if both the lack of fluency in the English language and the dire lack of English publications by its academics be held responsible (Elita, 2007), when it is a known fact that English permeates academic writing (Merican, 2008) in the form of research publications through the years (Woo, 2010). Thus, in order to really become a centre of education, the lack of good English among Malaysians ought to be viewed seriously (Veera, 2008). Indeed, it is such a loss when Malaysian researchers, due to their poor English command are unable to deliver themselves comprehensibly at international forums (Baradan, 2011), when they may actually promote their country internationally through their eloquent delivery in international political forums and negotiations where English is the more popular language choice (Bernama, 2000; "Mastering," 2005).

In this respect, should student voice be able to help identify the kind of English language teacher deemed effective, future academics among students will be propelled by such a teacher to likewise be well versed in English. With good English, be it in academic writing, or when conducting presentations at seminars and conferences, or even in international forums, students then would be able to help Malaysia edge up in global educational circles.

1.1.4 English as an International Language

It is an uncontested fact that English is an international language of massive popularity, through choice or need. In this regard, more than 3 hundred million people around the globe are native speakers of English; while within a decade, 2 billion more people will be able to speak English as a second language, thus making English the world's most spoken language (Wong, 2006) and one day, perhaps a necessary need (Tan & Tan, 2007), which would then prove disadvantageous if not mastered ("English Entering," 2007). Interestingly, East Asian educators and governments are aware of the necessity to increase the number of effective English speakers in their respective countries (Littlewood, 2006), and what would be a better way than through the role of the effective English language teacher whom student voice should help construe as well, so that all learners from those excellent to those weak in the language can identically be made aware of the need to master English - an international language.

1.1.5 English Mastery and Job Prospects

Mastering English is a timely realisation for all Malaysians (Chin, 2008) as some jobs require letters of application as well as resumès in English (Abu Bakar & Megawati, 2010), whereby good jobs elude Malaysian graduates who fare badly during job interviews as a result of their poor English (“No English,” 2005; Yam, 2005) and vice-versa (“Learn English,” 2007). This is because, professional jobs as a whole would require of its applicants to possess English communication skills (AFP, 2007; Nair, 2006) not only in Malaysia, but also in Western countries (Yin, 2005), else they find moving up an organisation hierarchy difficult (“English Skills,” 2005).

Moreover, besides possessing entrepreneurship skills, job seekers would also have to be aware that they may need to deal with data on any kind of information which uses English worldwide (“Minister,” 2006), where one such example is, the mastery of English needed in the handling of hi-tech devices that guard Malaysian airspace (Sira, 2008). Additionally, good English nowadays enables job seekers better prospects for English related jobs such as communication skills trainers, consultants, corporate communications executives, English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors, interpreters or translators, journalists, public relations executives (“Mastering,” 2005) - as well as finance professionals (“English Matters,” 2007).

Unfortunately though, it is a rarity finding those who are perfect speakers of the language (“No English,” 2005). One reason for this phenomenon is, the graduate majority lacking in confidence to deliver good English (“Poor Command,” 2007), for they memorise English to the book or spot examination questions, thus scoring ‘A’s for the English written examination but fail to speak it just as perfectly (“Helping Out,” 2006; Looi, 2005). Another reason is the attitude of university undergraduates themselves in not trying hard enough to master this international language which would be expected of them not only in the private sector, but in the government service as well, even though their very future could well depend on it (Chin, 2005).

Thus, having highlighted English as a vital academic subject for Malaysian students to master correspondingly underlines the dire need to provide them with effective English language teachers as well, for it is only through such teachers that societies trained to be well-versed in English are capable of being churned out. In this respect, a good command of English is especially crucial for any player in the job market, because when English is an asset to the individual, the individual too becomes an asset to any organisation, be it corporate or governmental.

Therefore, the effective English language teacher who is equally determined by student voice will then be able to convince students themselves of the dire need to take English seriously enough in order to communicate well in it, if not master it, especially for the purpose of becoming more marketable in the highly selective job market.

1.1.6 How Students May Master English

The need to instil the mastery of English in students from young without overshadowing the Malay language as the national language, so as to benefit them in future, should also be emphasised (Chris, 2007). Even then, students themselves too should assume responsibility for their own learning of English, as the university is not the place to start teaching anyone the basics of English (“Grasp English,” 2006) that cannot be speedily learnt (“Master,” 2007).

Furthermore, students could emulate school heads proficient in English (Gomez, 2005) as in the example shown by Perlis school heads speaking English during assemblies (“Speak English,” 2005). Yet, these students can also learn English better from English newspapers written by journalists who are expected to be proficient in English (“Brush Up,” 2005).

Moreover, listening to good models of the English language such as the *British Broadcasting Corporation* or even *Cable News Network*, besides analysing the language used by native speakers may also help students advance their own language development (Haja Mohideen, 1995). Other ways for students to master English would be through computer games, writing into newspapers that can be uploaded into *YouTube*, as well as learning correct pronunciation through the International Phonetic Alphabet taught (Tan, 2011).

Thus, all the above-mentioned suggestions above may, or may not come from any English language teacher. Nonetheless, should student voice help to delineate the effective English language teacher, then students themselves will be more inclined to accept whatever suggestions made by the English language teacher whom they regard as effective in order for them to improve their English, rather than they remain as individuals indifferent towards mastering this useful language.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The English language proficiency of a majority of tertiary Malaysian students is still very much on the average, instead of the targeted excellent. This phenomenon is depicted in Table 1.1 on the following page, where only four out of 116 undergraduate trainee teachers of Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) Y had outshone their counterparts with marks within the A category, despite being under the expertise of five English language lecturers who have been stringently selected from schools to serve in the said institute. Interestingly, these undergraduate trainee teachers were among the best selected post-*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* students throughout the country to follow the newly introduced degree programme in ITEs nationwide. Moreover, as English cannot be mastered overnight, there lies a possibility that the English language grasp of these undergraduate trainee teachers may equally not have been as excellent as their skill in their other academic subjects. Thus, this phenomenon could have very well begun from their primary school years, and progressed into their secondary school life, despite they having studied English for at least 10 to 11 years.

Table 1.1

The Comparison of English Language Proficiency II Grades Among First Year Undergraduate Trainee Teachers in Their Second Semester of Institute of Teacher Education Y in Kedah

English language lecturer	Year 1 Sem 2 Class	No. of undergraduate trainee teachers	English Language Proficiency II Grades								
			D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A
			Weak			Average			Good		Very Good
Lecturer 1	A	19	1	2	4	4	1	5	2	0	0
Lecturer 2	B	20	0	0	2	6	8	4	0	0	0
Lecturer 3	C	21	0	1	8	6	6	0	0	0	0
Lecturer 4	D	20	0	3	1	4	6	6	0	0	0
Lecturer 5	E	18	0	0	0	0	2	11	5	0	0
Lecturer 4	F	18	1	0	2	3	4	2	2	3	1
Total no. of undergraduate trainee teachers		116	2	6	17	23	27	28	9	3	1

Note. Extracted from ITE Y's Examinations Unit (November 2008).

Moreover, a case study of three Malaysian primary schools in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia by Mohd Sofi Ali (2003) on pupil problems in mastering the English language despite having been taught it for six years revealed a few interesting findings. As it is, English was not at all utilised by pupils beyond the English language lessons in school, and was rarely used by them at home as it was mostly frowned upon. Furthermore, pupils only had English Day organised by the school for them, and they lacked opportunities to imitate their English language teachers in the language as the latter employed the local dialect more than English itself when teaching or communicating with the former (Mohd Sofi Ali, 2003).

Similarly, a survey by Tan (2007) on four non-premier secondary schools in the northern state of Peninsular Malaysia, believed to "be able to reflect the situation in most secondary schools," found that students considered their English proficiency

levels gained from studying English throughout their primary school years inadequate for secondary school learning. In this respect, these students felt that they had at the very most only attained “basic interpersonal communicative skills.”

Correspondingly, instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher have been prior explicated by experts of the English language as an excellent reference for teachers of the English language in general, in order for them to equally become effective English language teachers. Such teachers are then hoped to in turn help every child somewhat master the English language, from primary education to secondary education right up till the tertiary years. Indeed, there is always the undeniable possibility of some of the earlier mentioned undergraduate trainee teachers being naturally weak in the English language, besides the obvious lack of English mastery seen both in the case study and survey mentioned.

Yet, the lack of English excellence among the majority of the undergraduate trainee teachers concerned in ITE Y, primary school pupils and secondary school students at large could have also been due to student voice not being heard, on the both the instructional and personal qualities befitting its particular idea of how it considers the English language teacher, effective. Therefore, any mismatch between the silent student voice and the advocations by expert opinion on the aforementioned qualities of the effective English language teacher, could then finally result in *short of ideal* English mastery by students, as in the example of the English language proficiency scores in ITE Y, in the case of pupils from the three primary schools as well as from the perceptions of students from the four aforesaid secondary schools.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Due to the fact that all the training, expert advice and tips on how to become an effective English language teacher have still yet to produce masses of students who excel in English, the researcher is keen to look into student voice from the primary school, the secondary school and the institute of teacher education in Malaysia on how it would actually help ascertain the effective English language teacher. This is because the researcher is certain that such contribution is equally precious in helping to determine English language teachers who can effectively help students to master English, rather than teachers who merely help them pass or perform averagely in the subject.

Similarly, students who are individuals in their own right would definitely have their own set of hopes and ideals on what to expect of the effective English language teacher; and being clients of the Malaysian Education Ministry, their voice on the matter ought to be granted parallel importance. After all, they are the ones who hope to profit as much as possible from the instruction of their English language teachers. In this respect, research by Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) had recommended how a company uses *Customer Experience* as a way of interacting with its customers, where the customers will decide whether to remain loyal to the said company, or not to purchase from it. In the same way, if English language teachers were to deliver according to student hopes, the teaching and learning of English will be successful for both teacher and student. Similarly, should student voice expectations on the effective English language teacher fail to tally with the description by expert opinion

of the same, adverse effects on both student learning of the English language as well as on their English language results may be unavoidable.

Therefore, the researcher hopes that student voice from the present study equally heard can ensure a broader and fairer description of what constitutes the qualities of the effective English language teacher. In this respect, Wang, Gibson and Slate (2007) postulated that since students are the ones most influenced by the effectiveness of teachers, student voice on the matter would likewise be vital. Hence, Rodgers (2006) posited that teachers need to trust their students enough for the latter to give honest feedback on the extent of their learning under the former's instruction, besides the students themselves contributing ideas on how the teacher could enable them to learn better, where which the central concern is not on how the teacher has taught but rather, on how the students have learnt. In that way, student voice heard will also be an opportunity for teachers to be able to tailor their teaching techniques through reflective teaching, as proposed by Park and Lee (2006). Besides, research by Fast (2003) also suggested that the planning of programmes and their implementation should permit more student voice contribution, for knowledge and ideas on effective teaching could actually be built through communication between teachers and students, as believed by Berlin (2005).

Thus, if the English language teacher manages to influence students to successfully become keen learners of English, then the teacher's effectiveness will have been proven. In this regard, Johnson (2008) advocated that "... leader affect may have the potential to influence organisational effectiveness, through its impact on follower affect" (p. 15), where the effective English language teacher here can be

compared to the *leader* just as the student represents the *follower*. Furthermore, Golden and Veiga (2008) argued that the higher the quality of relationships between individuals and their supervisors, the higher the job satisfaction of those individuals who can be compared to students, while the supervisors - the effective English language teacher.

Therefore, Garcia, Agbemakplido, Hanan, Lopez Jr., and Rashida (2006) in their research had strongly asserted that if teacher quality is the main component which improves the academic performance for all students, then educators and policymakers alike must also listen to student voice that has been historically stifled whenever decisions regarding students' educational needs were identified. Similarly, the ultimate question the researcher poses is, are the instructional and personal qualities of the effective English language teacher outlined by the experts of English language teaching and learning in previous literature, an exact fit of student voice in Malaysia on the same matter, or has student voice unique feedback and recommendations on the issue to equally contribute too? This is because, no matter how effective experts of the English language have determined the English language teacher to be, based on their own exclusive research and observations, this same English language teacher may or may not be regarded as equally effective by students, depending on how far the aforementioned teacher has succeeded in fully catering to the exact demands of students in their continuous struggle to master English.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) To investigate the extent to which student voice agrees with how expert opinion has described the instructional qualities befitting the effective English language teacher.
- (2) To examine the limit to which student voice concurs with how expert opinion has depicted the personal qualities of the effective English language teacher.
- (3) To explore how else student voice, through its observations, suggests that the English language teacher could have been more effective.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned objectives, the researcher in this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What is the extent to which student voice agrees with how expert opinion has described the instructional qualities befitting the effective English language teacher?
- (2) What is the limit to which student voice concurs with how expert opinion has depicted the personal qualities of the effective English language teacher?

- (3) How else does student voice, through its observations, suggest that the English language teacher could have been more effective?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is apt that student voice in this study is represented by primary school pupils, secondary school students, and undergraduate trainee teachers of an institute of teacher education as mass formal interaction between teachers of the English language and students begins at primary school, proceeding to secondary school before touching tertiary levels.

In this regard, the researcher has faith that student voice then would be able to serve as a very important link towards creating a more wholesome description of the effective English language teacher. Therefore, this fully qualitative study was conducted with the researcher's intention to investigate how far English language teachers/lecturers in Malaysia have lived up to student expectation in terms of instructional as well as personal qualities deemed effective by expert opinion, whereby all new information gained from the study is meant for open-minded scrutiny by all quarters concerned. In this regard, the ultimate aim of the study is none other than to further suggest ways for the English language teacher/lecturer to improve for the better at instruction and in personality, solely for the purpose of creating a win-win situation which enables both the teacher/lecturer and learner to fully benefit from the teaching and learning of English.

Nevertheless, the research findings still prove invaluable for three reasons. Firstly, Malaysians are given full liberty through student voice in this study to boldly state what is in their hearts and minds pertaining to the topic of the effective English language teacher since this study empowers them to. Comparatively, the silent majority of the rest of Malaysian learners not included in this study are assumed to keep their views of English language teachers to themselves, either out of not much opportunity created for them to do so or perhaps out of fear of offending their English language teachers/lecturers which comes with expected teacher/lecturer retribution, detrimental to them. Secondly, too little research on student voice that helps determine the effective English language teacher has ever been contributed to educational research in Malaysia. Hence, although *nine* may not be a hefty figure for student voice as a whole, the wealth in the depth of each response from all nine study participants in this study itself constitutes an enormous contribution to the Malaysian educational scenario as an insight towards the kind of effective English language teacher student voice yearns for. Lastly, although expert opinion of such a teacher in this study may not be exhaustive, it is wide enough coverage to seek the extent to which student voice may compare to it, in order for any new discoveries from such comparison made to be an addition to the ever-increasing world of research knowledge on the said topic.

In other words, when the qualities of the effective English language teacher that student voice wishes to see are disclosed through this study, the researcher intends to strike new awareness in existing English language teachers of primary and secondary schools (both public and private), as well as in English language lecturers of institute of teacher educations and universities - on what student voice tends to see

as its idea of the effective English language teacher. This is so that the above-mentioned English language teachers and lecturers may also be able to tailor their instructional and personal qualities to match what student voice actually seeks, so as to cultivate the atmosphere of truly effective teaching and learning of the English language. In that way, the researcher has no doubt that such teaching and learning will as a result also become more enjoyable, if not more meaningful for both teacher and student, because the English language teacher still is the very source from where the mastery of English on the part of the student, begins.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This collective case study involves three primary school pupils from a primary school, three secondary students from a secondary school, and three undergraduate trainee teachers who major in English in an institute of teacher education. In this respect, all nine study participants also originate from different cultural backgrounds and are subjected to different levels of exposure to the English language at home and away from home. These factors in turn may lend a certain amount of influence on the responses of each research participant towards the study questions. As a consequence, certain inclinations in student voice would then tend to lessen a clear cut description of the qualities of the effective English language teacher.

In addition, student voice from the one particular chosen primary school as well as the other particular chosen secondary school may equally not be representative of what all national and national type, urban and rural primary school pupils as well as secondary school students may have to say about the research topic

discussed. Similarly, student voice from the one particular chosen institute of teacher education may differ from student feedback across the remaining 26 institutes of teacher education in Malaysia.

Moreover, expert opinion on the characterisation of the effective English language teacher in which student voice triangulates with is not exhaustive, in that whatever expert opinion mentioned in this study is limited to only what has been covered in the literature review, and is therefore not representative of expert opinion beyond the literature.

1.8 Operational Definitions

This study utilises certain terminologies which are defined in their respective contexts as follows:

1.8.1 The English Language Teacher/Lecturer

A *teacher* defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2000) is “a person whose job is teaching,” (p. 1333), while a *lecturer* is “a person who teaches at a university or college” (p. 732). Within the context of this study however, *the English language teacher/lecturer* applies to both the individual who teaches English at a primary or secondary school, as well as to the individual who teaches English at an institute of teacher education.

1.8.2 The Effective English Language Teacher

Hattie (2003) defined the effective teacher to be an individual who has very result-producing influences on how students learn. Meanwhile, Haberman (2004) averred that the teacher who has powerful curiosities, who adores knowledge and who is all the time engaged in keenly reading something of interest, will effectively become a student role model.

Nevertheless, in the context of this study, the effective English language teacher refers to any English language teacher of a preschool, primary school or secondary school, as well as to any English language lecturer of an institute of teacher education, other tertiary level college/institute or a university who is effective. This means that the effective English language teacher has the ability to enable the successful learning of English among learners of various abilities and temperaments.

1.8.3 Undergraduate Trainee Teachers

The *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2002) defined a *trainee* as “someone who is training for a particular profession or a job” (p. 1527). Therefore, *trainee teachers* are individuals in institutes of teacher education or universities who are in training to gain some prior skill at teaching. In this particular study however, *undergraduate trainee teachers* refer specifically to learners undergoing training to become first degree English