

A STUDENT-ORIENTED TEACHER EDUCATION APPROACH
IN THE TESL METHODS COURSE : STUDENT TEACHER PERCEPTIONS
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

by

LUCILLE SHANTA DASS @ SHANTA DEVI DASS

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my late parents

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PENDEKATAN PENDIDIKAN GURU YANG BERPUSATKAN PELAJAR DALAM
KURSUS KAEDAH TESL: PERSEPSI GURU PELATIH DAN IMPLIKASI
TERHADAP LATIHAN SERTA PERKEMBANGAN PROFESIONALISME

ABSTRAK

Penyediaan guru-guru secara profesional merupakan satu usaha yang amat penting bagi masa hadapan sesebuah negara.

Di Malaysia proses penyediaan guru yang mengajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua (TESL) ke arah sistem pendidikan guru yang lebih inovatif dan berkesan sedang mengalami titik perubahan. Pendidik guru amnya dan pendidik guru Bahasa Inggeris khasnya diseru supaya mengamalkan pendekatan pendidikan guru berpusatkan pelajar. Pendekatan ini berasaskan konsep pembelajaran melalui pengalaman di samping mengambil kira dan mengamalkan metodologi terkini yang sepatutnya diamalkan di sekolah-sekolah.

Kaedah kuliah harus dikurangkan. Sebaliknya kegunaan pelbagai strategi berasaskan konsep pembelajaran melalui pengalaman digalakkan. Tujuannya ialah untuk memberi pendedahan yang sama kepada guru pelatih. Ini bererti bahawa tiada satu kaedah pun yang terunggul dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran.

Sehingga kini didapati tiada maklumat yang bermanfaat diperolehi daripada kajian mengenai proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran berpusatkan pelajar digunakan dalam penyediaan guru di maktab-maktab perguruan di Malaysia. Maklumat sedemikian amat perlu dalam meyakinkan para pendidik guru untuk mempraktikkannya kelak.

Kajian ini bertujuan menyediakan dan sekali gus mengimplimentasikan beberapa sesi penggunaan strategi pengajaran dan pembelajaran dalam pendekatan pendidikan guru berpusatkan pelajar dalam kursus metodologi TESL. Persepsi guru pelatih terhadap metodologi tersebut diperolehi dengan menggunakan laporan-diari yang diubahsuai khas untuk kajian ini. Persampelan terdiri daripada satu kelas berjumlah dua puluh sembilan (29) orang guru pelatih tahun akhir daripada bidang pengkhususan TESL.

Dapatan kajian ini membuktikan bahawa guru pelatih mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap kegunaan metodologi tersebut dari segi membolehkan mereka memperolehi ilmu isi kandungan serta ilmu pedagogi Bahasa Inggeris. Tambahan pula, kegunaan metodologi tersebut dikesan mempunyai potensi dalam membentuk sahsiah diri dan profesionalisme keguruan bagi guru yang akan menceburi profesion keguruan. Dapatan kajian ini juga menyokong hasil kajian lain dalam bidang TESL yang sememangnya menggalakkan kegunaan pelbagai strategi dalam pendekatan pendidikan guru berpusatkan pelajar.

Kajian ini mengusulkan bahawa persepsi guru pelatih terhadap kegunaan pendekatan tersebut mempunyai implikasi penting kepada semua pihak yang terlibat dalam menyediakan guru yang akan menceburi profesion keguruan dalam bidang pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua.

ABSTRACT

The professional preparation of teachers is one of the most important tasks for the future of a nation.

In Malaysia English language teacher education is at a turning point. There have been and continue to be calls for efforts towards more innovative and effective implementation of training procedures. Language teacher educators are being persuaded to use a more student-oriented approach based on the concept of experiential learning and one that is also in keeping with the current language teaching methodology desired in schools. The use of the traditional lecture mode is to be minimized. In its place teacher educators are urged to employ, and thereby expose student teachers to, a variety of language teaching-learning strategies in the absence of a single best method.

There is hardly any useful information arising from a study describing an actual student-oriented process of language teacher education in Malaysian teacher training colleges. Such information is considered necessary if conventional practitioners are to be convinced and converted for the sake of improving language teacher education in our country.

The purpose of this study therefore was to design and implement a series of sessions using a student-oriented teacher education approach (SOTEA) comprising a variety of teaching-learning strategies in the TESL methods course. Student teacher perceptions of this approach were obtained

using an investigator-designed modified diary-report. The sample comprised a class of twenty-nine (29) final year (fourth semester) TESL option student teachers.

Student teacher perceptions communicate a positive and favourable view of the use of SOTEA as it provided them with both language content and its pedagogical know-how. In addition, perceptions intimate the potential in SOTEA for initiating a capacity for self and professional development in the beginning teacher. The findings invariably support educational literature in second language teacher education which calls for the use of a learner-centred approach.

This study suggests that student teacher perceptions of the use of SOTEA in the TESL methods course have important implications for all those involved in the professional preparation of beginning language teachers.

CHAPTER I

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

1.0 Introduction

Of late there has been increasing concern for language teacher education programmes in the country. Efforts to improve the quality of second language teacher education in Malaysian schools have been ongoing since the seventies (SEAMEO Report, 1973; APEID Report, 1979). Changes in the education scene both abroad and at home have necessitated corresponding changes in the English language curriculum and its implementation at both school level and teacher education institutions.

The major concern of teacher education is to enable student teachers to learn about teaching and to learn how to teach. This focus of teacher education is clearly reflected in the general objective of the English methods syllabus of the primary school Language Teacher Education Programme (1991) :

. . . the course will seek to enable the student teachers to acquire the knowledge and the skills to plan and carry out meaningful and effective English lessons.
(p.(x)).

In an effort to produce second language teachers of adequate ability a number of new features have been emphasized in the current language teacher education programme. Chief among these is the orientation towards experiential learning with an emphasis on greater

participation by student teachers. The lecture method is to be minimised and in its place teacher educators are prevailed upon to "use their ingenuity and imagination to make the lessons more interesting and challenging" (English methods syllabus, 1988; p.(iii)) in the teacher preparation classroom. It is also hoped that the strategies employed by the teacher educator will be more learning-oriented rather than teaching-oriented and serve as an example for the student teachers' own future use (ibid., p.(x)).

In view of this it was felt necessary that a student-oriented multiple-strategies approach that would facilitate experiential learning be used in the language teacher preparation classroom. It was further reasoned that since student teachers were the immediate recipients and potential users of such a teaching methodology, it was both significant and relevant to record their perceptions in that dual function.

1.1 Background to the Study

The introduction and implementation of the English Language programmes in The New Primary School Curriculum (KBSR) in 1983 and the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM) in 1988 necessitated a related review of the teacher education English studies syllabus (proficiency and methodology). Accordingly, this syllabus was revised three times in the 80s alone - 1984; 1985 and 1988 followed by some modifications again in 1990; 1991 and with the most recent being in 1993, in an effort to match the requirements of the KBSR and KBSM English Language

programmes already in operation.

Briefly, the rationale for the introduction of KBSR and KBSM English Language programmes is to facilitate the students' overall development as expressed in the National Education Philosophy. The teaching strategies devised by the English Language teacher should cater not only for efficient learning but also provide opportunities for students' personal development and enable them to become independent learners in accordance with the National Education Philosophy which stresses education as a lifelong process (Compendium, 1989). The programmes also emphasise the concept of integration - of knowledge, skills, values and attitude - in the learning process. In the area of teaching strategy the move is towards a communicative approach to language teaching which is student-centred.

Interpreting this in the context of second language teacher preparation programmes in the country the revised English methods syllabus (1988) of the teacher education programme carries the following objectives:

The course is aimed at helping student teachers

- (a) acquire background knowledge of language, language learning/teaching in Malaysia.
- (b) acquire secondlanguage teaching skills which will enable him to operate effectively in the second language classroom.
- (c) understand and interpret the KBSR and KBSM syllabuses.
- (d) apply and practise the principles and guidelines for the teaching of English as a second language effectively.
- (e) plan and teach lessons imaginatively and be capable of self and peer evaluation with regard to the process and product of teaching.

In the 1991 modified version of the English studies syllabus the above are contained in the single general objective stated earlier in the introduction.

The rationale in the syllabus states that the revised English teaching methods programme is now inclined:

. . . towards a more practical-based syllabus as against a theoretical-based one. Nevertheless . . . essential aspects of theory are still retained.
(op. cit. p. (iii)).

Since the programme recommends an orientation towards experiential learning (cf.p.(iii)), the use of experiential and awareness raising practices become immediately relevant in the area of teaching strategy. The assumption that underlies the use of such practices is that student teachers can improve their teaching if they are aware of the various options available to them as well as the principles by which they evaluate the alternatives. This assumption is implicit in the concluding section of the English methods syllabus:

Demonstrations of methodology principles and guidelines should be viewed from the perspective of the type of teacher we want in the English classroom. What we want is the thinking teacher - equipped with the know-how for self-development and self-evaluation.

(op.cit. p.(xi)).

Clearly, the orientation of the language teacher preparation programme is designed to mirror the desired current orientation of language teaching in schools. This implies that the teacher educator employ an approach which inclines increasingly towards the learners (student teachers), the content (subject matter/resource) and the process of language teaching (methodologies/teaching-learning strategies employed). The teacher educator is

called upon to assume varying roles to facilitate student teachers' acquisition of the basic requirements of knowledge, skills/strategies as well as to develop in them teacher attitude and awareness for self-development so as to enable them to operate imaginatively and effectively in the second language classroom. These requirements are exemplified in the five objectives stated earlier. The methodology suggested is both learning and learner-oriented and thereby in keeping with the communicative approach to language teaching required in schools.

It becomes necessary then to examine in some detail the case for the use of a student-oriented approach in the second language teacher preparation classroom.

1.1.1 The Case for a Student-Oriented Teacher Education Approach (SOTEA)

Apart from the explicit objectives of the teacher education programme to provide student teachers with a knowledge base from which to operate, the programme also intends to foster a capacity for learning and thinking for self-development (Teacher Education Division, Circular, March 1991). According to Cropley and Dave (1978), changes in teaching methods, evaluation procedures and relations between instructors and students in a teachers college help to develop this capacity.

The revised English language teacher preparation programme emphasises the new orientation towards experiential learning insofar as teaching strategies for teacher educators are concerned. A headstart in this

direction was made in early 1988 when the Teacher Education Division (TED) of the Ministry of Education launched its campaign for the implementation of a multiple-strategies approach with its concurrent emphasis on experiential learning for students in all the (then) 28 colleges in the country. As a follow up on this, panel members of the 1988 syllabus review committee visited all 28 colleges to explain the rationale, objectives and the new orientation in teaching strategies to be employed by teacher educators with immediate effect. Among the new features to be emphasised are contained in this extract from the English methods syllabus :

In the area of teaching strategy, the orientation is towards experiential learning. The lecture-method has been minimised and greater participation by the trainees is emphasised.

(op.cit., p.(iii) . . .

It is hoped lecturers would use their ingenuity and imagination to make the lessons more interesting and challenging for the trainees. It is envisaged that lessons would be learning oriented rather than teaching oriented. It is hoped that strategies employed by the lecturer will serve as an example for teacher trainees.

(ibid., p.(x)).

In the absence of a prescribed set of strategies for use the teacher educator is encouraged to exercise "ingenuity and imagination" so that the sessions will be both appealing and challenging to the student teachers. A multiple-strategies approach with the potential for optimising student teacher involvement in the teaching-learning process as well as facilitating their professional preparation, among others comprise :

- . project work activities
- . brainstorming activities

- . simulation activities
- . role play activities
- . lecture-linked activities
- . seminars and discussion activities
- . group work and problem solving activities
- . self and peer observation/evaluation activities
- . reflection and awareness raising activities

Implicit in the use of the above approach is the point that flexibility in teaching methodology is an important goal (cf. Pennington, 1990). According to Britten (1988) such activities and experiences help the student teacher to become self-reliant. Jarvis, (1972); Fanselow, (1987); Richards, (1990) argue that providing student teachers with options for experiential learning via the use of a variety of teaching-learning strategies and activities can help the student teacher to make important decisions in relation to classroom instruction.

In supporting a multiple-strategies SOTEA, reference may also be made to Girard (1986), Gebhard, et al.(1990), Prabhu (1990), and Brown (1991) who reiterate that there is no "one method" of teaching that is appropriate for all classroom situations. Wallace (1991) laments the restricted range of teaching and learning modes employed in teacher education courses. The dominant mode being the "lecture" which, the language methods syllabus seeks to minimise. Bork (1993) agrees with Wallace (ibid) who also points out that student teachers are frequently criticized for not having a variety of activities in their lessons. He argues that teacher educators themselves need to demonstrate a

variety of presentations (according to the needs of a lesson) in the training situation to make student teachers aware that a wide-ranging repertoire of knowledge and teaching skills exist for them to choose from or which they could accordingly appropriate for their own use. As such the source is to be necessarily eclectic.

An overriding principle for the use of this student-oriented personal methodology is that the content should emerge "naturally" out of the process (and vice versa) so as to enhance learning. Therefore the teaching area and the topic(s) therein (content) have to be deliberated upon as well as the strategies and/or activities (process) that would effectively engage student teachers in the content and/or its generation thereof. It was reasoned that such a choice of teaching-learning strategies/activities would lend "credibility" to the course (cf. Woodward, 1991) as well as build variety and add interest into each session to enhance student teacher motivation.

The use of a personally conceived student-oriented methodology is not intended to be prescriptive. "Ingenuity" and "imagination" were exercised to make the sessions interesting, relevant, practical and functional in enabling student teachers to learn how to teach by encouraging reflection and analysis through participation as well as observation. It was intended that student teachers be able to see and recognize the parallels between teaching-learning strategies used by the teacher educator in the training classroom and implications for their own use in the ESL classroom.

Another case for the use of SOTEA is that it caters to a wide range of learning styles employed by students in the training situation. (Entwistle, 1981; Wallace, 1991). Wallace (ibid) argues, among others, the following reasons for involving student teachers in a variety of teaching-learning modes :

- . their learning styles vary therefore, this should be reflected in teaching strategies.
- . variety makes teaching more interesting for both student teachers and tutors.
- . the tutor gets to know her students better and is better able to evaluate them fairly by seeing them operate in a variety of learning situations.

(p.29-30).

In addition, the use of a variety of teaching-learning modes that are student-oriented challenges student teachers to become versatile learners.

The use of a wide range of activities and procedures are therefore necessary for in-class teacher preparation. The activities consist of selected materials or tasks that the teacher educator uses in her programme. These materials correspond to materials the teacher may use in classroom language teaching. The procedures used constitute the teacher educator's methodology (teaching strategies) for exploiting the activities in teacher preparation sessions. A teacher needs to prepare a lesson plan for exploiting the teaching materials in the classroom, in much the same way the teacher educator needs to draw up a preparation plan

incorporating appropriate procedures for exploiting a wide range of teacher preparation activities (Ellis, 1990). This is referred to in the syllabus as "strategies" and "demonstrations of methods" which could "serve as an example for teacher trainees" (cf. p.(x)).

The professional preparation of teachers should focus on the development of skills and attitudes necessary for them to become thoughtful practitioners. The use of SOTEA as training methodology would help to shift the emphasis from becoming merely imitative practitioners to more thoughtful practitioners. As recipients of a student-oriented methodology, student teachers reflect, first (as learners), on the approach used in the training classroom, and then (as teachers), on using the approach in their future classroom. The use of such a methodology in the training classroom satisfies Weinstein's and Mayer's (1986) contention that the rationale for good teaching includes helping student teachers develop effective ways to handle information regarding the content and the process of second language learning and teaching. Freeman, (1989) and Woodward (1991), also attest to this.

1.2 Background to the Problem

Research on teacher education reports that problems in the field of teacher education "have been generally well known since the turn of the century" (Lanier, 1986. p. 527). Substantial efforts have been made and continue to be made to address the various problems in the field (cf. Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). Chief among the problems

that persists and has received a lot of criticism both at home and abroad is in the area of programme implementation of pre-service teacher education. Repeated calls have been made locally: (Abraham, 1973; APEID reports 1979 & 1986; Lee, 1979; Lim, 1981; Ling, 1985; TED Bulletin, 1991; TED Report 1992/1993); and abroad: (Denemark, 1972); Lanier and Little, 1986; Tilleman, and Veenman, 1987; Bernhardt and Hammadou, 1987; Freeman, 1989; Graves, 1990; Richards and Nunan, 1990; Wallace, 1991; Johnson, 1992) for a restructuring of methods employed in pre-service teacher education so that they focus on what the prospective teachers need to know and what they should be able to do.

Serious concern has also been expressed about pre-service teacher education programmes abroad. Schutterberg (1983) reports that the teacher education preparatory programme has been faulted for "irrelevancy and incompetency" (p. 14). He quotes Denemark (1972) who criticizes teacher education programmes for failing to provide student teachers with opportunities to experience learning. Schutterberg conceptualizes "A Three-dimensional Model of Teacher education" which comprises academic understanding (content of teaching); instructional understanding (process of teaching); developmental understanding (the understanding of self and others in the teaching-learning interaction) and the need to "foster in each teacher candidate a love of learning" (p.15-16). The Carnegie report (1986) similarly felt that :

Teachers need a command of the subjects they teach, a sound grasp of the techniques of teaching those subjects, information about research on teaching, and an understanding of children's growth and development and of their different needs and learning styles.

(p. 71).

Criticism in the field of language teacher education is that it has become "fragmented" (Freeman, 1989) and lost sight of the essential relationship between language teaching and language teacher education (cf. Bernhardt and Hammadou, 1987; Richards and Nunan, 1990; Johnson, 1992). It is felt that second language teaching as a process should be seen as a content of second language teacher education which is in itself a process (Freeman, 1989). A parallel may be made here to Woodward's (1991) "loop input" model for language teacher training in which she highlights the importance of "content" and "process". She explains:

The content is carried by the process, but the process is also part of the content. That is the loop. . . (p. 12). In loop input, the content is as much in the process of the session as in the handouts, texts or trainer's talk. Deliberately thinking over both content and process to gain consistency between the medium and the message in loop sessions leads to tremendous course credibility.

(p. 43).

According to Freeman (1989) teacher educators should view language teacher education as the learning and teaching of language teaching in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude and awareness - elements meant to help the teacher grow and develop. The local teacher education English language methods syllabus similarly reflects these views.

Ellis (1990) advocates "procedures" such as group/pair discussion, workshops, individual work/assignments,

demonstrations, lectures, etc. to involve student teachers in "experiential and awareness-raising activities in the teacher preparation classroom" (p. 32). This exposes student teachers to a variety of learning experiences. These are among the models suggested for more effective language teacher preparation programmes in response to the recurrent problems in teacher education. Richards and Nunan (1990) categorically state that teacher education programme and teacher educators are regarded as sources of knowledge, experience and resources for student teachers to use in exploring and developing their own approach to teaching (cf. Shulman, 1986; Prabhu, 1987).

On the local scene, two decades ago, Abraham (1973) called for language learning-teaching to be more student oriented. More than a decade ago the APEID (1979) reported that one of the objectives of the Malaysian teacher preparation programme was to improve the instructional strategies as well as to optimise student teachers' independent learning experiences in the colleges (cf. Nik Faizah, 1981). In the same year Lee's (1979) remark fell short of this objective when he commented that the teaching methods of teacher educators appeared to be subject centred rather than learner centred with insufficient emphasis on "the dynamic process of learning". Lim (1981), when presenting a paper on teacher education programme in TESL quotes Moskowitz (1976) in advocating a lot of variety in methods, materials and activities in language teacher preparation. Ling (1985) calls for a more "wholistic context" for the development of teacher effectiveness in

the training programme :

the lesson for training programmes is to pay more attention to performance skills at the implementation stage.

(p. 60).

Comments vis-a-vis second language teaching in Malaysian schools have important implications for second language teacher education in the country. This is because there are "parallels" between students in the classroom and student teachers in the training classroom (cf. Woodward, 1991). When student teachers are actively involved in experiential learning processes, Woodward (ibid., p.7) indicates "they can empathise better with their students". The APEID report (1986) also states that pupil performance is related to what teachers do in the classrooms.

A lot of research has been devoted to studying and describing the teaching-learning process in the classroom. But there is comparatively very little information on what actually happens in the teacher preparation classroom in a natural setting. Also, to date there is no perception data available on the use of a student-oriented approach to language teacher preparation in the Malaysian context. In the light of recent findings which advocate a variety of student-oriented teacher preparation activities and procedures (cf. Weinstein & Mayer, 1986; Freeman, 1989; Ellis, 1990; Gebhard *et al*, 1990; Murdoch, 1990; Wallace, 1991) and in keeping with the educational developments in the country, it is necessary to implement the recommended approach and to obtain student teacher feedback in the form of their perceptions.

1.2.1 Statement of the Problem

The background information evinces that teacher education programmes (in the field of language education or other subjects) face a common and persistent problem in effective implementation procedures. It seems apparent that the various recommendations have not been fully operationalised since repeated calls are still being made for the implementation of an approach that is meaningfully student-oriented, provides opportunities for experiential learning and know-how for self-development. Participants of a National Seminar on TESL in June 1990 concluded that student teachers tend to emulate the teaching methods of their "lecturers" who were felt to be poor models of teaching themselves since they are given to "lecturing". This point is emphasized in the English methods syllabus when it categorically states that the lecture method should be minimized because ". . . teaching strategies employed by the teacher trainer also serve as models for teacher trainees to emulate in their classroom" (p.(x)).

This implies that language teacher educators examine their preparation procedures to see that these match the approach they advocate for the prospective teachers to use with their learners.

A TED bulletin (January/ February 1991) reports that teacher educators have been placing too much emphasis on theory. This finding has been reconfirmed by a nationwide survey conducted between January and October 1992 on the effectiveness of the teacher education programme (KP(BPG)9577/43/Jld 2; p. 8). With reference to the

teaching-learning strategies used in the teacher preparation classroom, student teachers indicated that too much emphasis placed on theory did not adequately prepare them for actual classroom teaching (ibid. pp. 5, 9 & 10). These findings have resulted in a further review of the pre-service teacher education syllabus (1993) with the attendant and repeated call for its implementation using strategies which are clearly student-oriented with the concurrent emphasis on learning what (content) and how (process) to teach.

Although the teaching of English as a second language has been an aspect of major concern nationwide, very little is known about pre-service language teacher education. The focus has always been on the trained language teacher in the classroom. This void of substantial information could be a cause for hesitance or even reluctance on the part of some teacher educators to implement varied methodologies in the language teacher preparation classroom. Even if varied methodologies have been successfully implemented, these have not been examined and so there is hardly any useful related information for the teacher educators. This lack of information may also be responsible in perpetuating the use of the traditional lecture method despite repeated calls to minimize its use.

In its call for a de-emphasis on the often-used traditional lecture mode as a training methodology and an emphasis on experiential learning the TED perceives the former as having been ineffective in its function. Experiential learning, on the other hand, is perceived as a

student-active process with inbuilt potential for professional and self-development. This desired shift in emphasis may disorientate some teacher educators long accustomed to the lecture mode. In using the recommended approach (SOTEA) the "lecturer" is expected to assume varying roles such as facilitator, planner, manager, consultant, stimulator, etc. This is seen as a problem. Some information on the implementation of SOTEA procedures in a natural setting in the local context will provide other teacher educators with an impetus to further develop and improve existing practices and procedures in the language teacher preparation classroom. A start has to be made if a change is to be effected eventually.

It is also not immediately known how as learners, student teachers who have been accustomed to "lectures", perceive this approach in the teacher preparation classroom, and its relational value for their future use in the language classroom. This study therefore seeks to explore the following:

Does SOTEA help student teachers "acquire knowledge, skills and strategies to operate in the designated classroom situation" as required by the syllabus (cf. p. (vii))? Does it facilitate their self-development and self-evaluation (cf. p. (xi)), especially since a majority of them come from a school system that has long encouraged teacher dependence for learning to take place? In short, how do they perceive SOTEA as a whole?

Employing SOTEA in the TESL methods class involves not only a change in procedures of training but also a corresponding change in the use of materials for training purposes. It necessitates a judicious combination of domain specific content with related teaching procedures according to the teacher educator's personal conception. Providing a sample package of SOTEA sessions as implemented and obtaining student teacher perceptions of this implementation might provide useful insights for language teacher educators in the teacher training colleges.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study is both exploratory and confirmatory in nature. The main purpose of undertaking it was to implement a student-oriented teacher education approach (SOTEA) and to explore student teacher perceptions of this implementation in terms of the three research issues specified above. The perceptions obtained would in turn confirm if these were consonant with the rationale perceived by the Teacher Education Division for the use of SOTEA in the TESL methods course. The following objectives therefore became immediately relevant :

- (i) to involve student teachers in experiential teaching-learning activities so as to enhance their view of learner-centred language teaching.
- (ii) to bring about student teacher awareness of the availability of a variety of student-oriented language teaching-learning strategies.
- (iii) to provide student teachers with a pedagogical framework of reference for their future use.
- (iv) to encourage student teachers to become thoughtful practitioners while facilitating the capacity for professional and self-development.

1.4 Research Questions

In view of the problems stated in the preceding section the following research questions became of central concern to the study :

1. What were student teacher perceptions of the use of SOTEA in the TESL methods course in enabling them to acquire new knowledge/information with regard to concepts and principles of second language learning and teaching?
2. What were student teacher perceptions of the use of SOTEA in enabling them to acquire second language learning-teaching skills/strategies?
3. What were student teacher perceptions of suitability of SOTEA in its use to conduct teaching-learning activities?
4. What were student teacher perceptions of the motivating and interesting aspects of SOTEA as it was used?
5. What were student teacher perceptions of their scope of involvement in SOTEA as it was used?
6. Additional comments/perceptions of the sessions.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The undertaking of a study that is both exploratory and confirmatory was felt to be significant and functional. Its significance lies chiefly in the implementation of SOTEA as an interactive process which includes the potential for professional and self-development. This process allows for the exploration of the extent to which student teachers are able to acquire the constituents of

teaching such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and awareness as envisaged by the TED.

The information generated would serve to confirm whether student teacher perceptions are consonant with the rationale of the TED for the implementation of SOTEA. It would also provide useful feedback to the Division to guide them in their decision making process in the area of teaching methodology recommendations in future syllabus review. This is in line with Brumfit's (1982) view that the basic function of research is feedback.

In making a case for the use of SOTEA (*vide* section 1.1.1) followed by the actual incorporation of a variety of student-oriented teaching-learning strategies/activities in the topic content of the sessions implemented, justifies and spells out this significance. The inclusion of an analytical description of the actual implementation of the six sessions (chapter IV) forms the core of the study and could serve as a source of reference for teacher educators intending to use a similar approach. A resultant spillover significance would be the need for teacher educators to understand, recognize and see the relational value in terms of the use of this approach in the training classroom and its pedagogical implications for prospective teachers. The above illustrate the functional significance of this study.

1.6 Definition of Terms in this Study

The following terms are defined according to the context in which they are used in this study. Several references were consulted in drawing up some of these definitions: Combs (1965); Moskowitz & Orgel (1969); Husen, Torston & Postlethwaite (1985); Lanier & Little (1986); English methods syllabus (1988, 1991); Oxford Dictionary (1989); Richards & Nunan (1990); Wallace (1991).

Student teachers

Those students doing an English methods course with a view to becoming teachers of English in Malaysian primary schools.

Teacher educators

Those who teach prospective teachers. It includes those who teach on the TESL methods course.

English Studies (methods) Course

This refers to the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) methods component in the English Studies course in the teacher preparation programme of the teacher training colleges.

Perceptions

These take the form of student teachers' opinions, beliefs, conceptions and insight obtained from the ability and opportunity to see, hear, conceive, distinguish, identify, understand, process and apply information in relation to

the approach used in the English methods course. The response may utilize and integrate information according to student teachers' individual appropriate experience.

Activities

These refer to the teaching-learning experiences in which the teacher educator engages the student teachers in the TESL methods course.

Linkage/Linked activities

This refers to attempts by the teacher educator to use, incorporate or link responses elicited in order to give further clarification or provide related input.

Sequential coherence

This describes the relatedness or link of the input/knowledge received in the beginning of a session or across sessions, with the use of the same during a practical application phase in the later part of the same session or in a different session. The purpose is to enhance understanding of knowledge received, in a practical context.

Approach

A term used to describe an orientation towards the proposed methodology based on the theory that learning is a student-active process. Approach subsumes methods and strategies/activities.

Method

This describes different ways of student-oriented teaching employed by the teacher educator in the TESL methods class.

Strategies

These refer to procedures/activities which are student-oriented, used in the teaching-learning process in the TESL methods class.

Experiential learning

This describes learning by acting (doing) or self-experience of tasks and experiencing the consequences of that action. It is a form of learning which stresses the role of active involvement and feedback.

A Student-Oriented Teaching Strategies Approach

A term used to describe a collection of a range of teaching-learning activities (vide p.6/7) employed in the TESL methods classroom to facilitate experiential learning. It is a two-pronged approach in the sense that it involves two kinds of inter-related activities in the training classroom:

(i) student-oriented teaching strategies

- the teacher educator presents selected material in a certain way to promote experiential learning

(ii) student-oriented learning strategies

- the student teacher is actively engaged in processing the material/information (the encoding process) according to task requirements.

1.7 Outline of Thesis Presentation

As already noted, chapter I traces the nature and scope of the problem and argues for the use of a student-oriented approach in the TESL methods course. Chapter II reviews literature related to the key issues that underlie in this study. Chapter III deals with the methodology perspective. Student teacher perceptions were collected using a modified version of a diary. This document contained specific questions as well as questions seeking general comments regarding the use of SOTEA. The questions were meant to help student teachers focus on the issues to be investigated. Student teacher perceptions were collected in two stages - in-session stage and post-session stage. The perceptions collected were analysed through clustering segments of information under related categories derived from the research questions.

Chapter IV forms the core of this study. It contains a detailed description of the actual implementation of SOTEA sessions. The rest of the information for the study draws from this pivotal chapter. The instructional setting is a naturalistic one comprising a class of final year (fourth semester) TESL student teachers at a local college with the teacher educator-cum-investigator teaching on the course.

Chapter V deals with the analysis and interpretation of student teacher perceptions. Finally, Chapter VI closes with a summary, conclusions, implications for professional development, limitations as well as recommendations for the future.