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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PROFILE AND THEIR TEACHING STYLES

MUHAMMAD KAMARUL KABILAN BIN ABDULLAH

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MASTER OF SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY PUTRA OF MALAYSIA

2000

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By

MUHAMMAD KAMARUL KABILAN BIN ABDULLAH

Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in the
Faculty of Educational Studies
University Putra Malaysia

January 2000

UPM

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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MUHAMMAD KAMARUL KABILAN BIN ABDULLAH

January 2000

Chairman: Dr. Malachi Edwin Vethamani

Faculty: Educational Studies

English language teachers' teaching style(s) preferences are often the realization of the teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the English language. These beliefs and attitudes of teachers will directly and indirectly influence the way students learn the language and, their success in learning it. Therefore, it is important to know who are the English language teachers, what are their teaching styles and, what perception do they have of other English language teachers and English language teaching.

Relating to the above questions, this research describes the demographic variables of English language teachers and their perception of issues and trends in English language teaching in Malaysia. It also describes the teachers' teaching styles, and examines the relationships between teachers' teaching experience and teaching styles. The study was carried out in 14 secondary government schools in Sungai Petani, Kedah (n=108). Two sets of questionnaires were used: Language Teachers' Profile, developed by the researcher, based on Protherough & Atkinson (1992) and, Style Analysis Survey (Oxford 1993).

It was found that the number of new English language teachers in the profession of teaching was dwindling very fast by the years. Schools lack qualified and trained English language teachers. In addition, teachers face students who show negative attitudes towards English language learning, and this was a serious problem for them.

Teachers in this study display significant teaching styles i.e. visual, global, extroverted and closure-oriented. The study also found negative relationship between teachers' teaching experience and teaching styles (how teachers approach tasks).

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat University Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PROFILE AND THEIR TEACHING STYLES

Oleh

MUHAMMAD KAMARUL KABILAN BIN ABDULLAH

Januari 2000

Pengerusi: **Dr. Malachi Edwin Vethamani**

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Stail Pengajaran Guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris sebenarnya mencerminkan sikap dan pandangan mereka terhadap Bahasa Inggeris. Sikap dan pandangan guru secara langsung dan tidak langsung akan mempengaruhi cara murid belajar serta, kejayaan mereka mempelajari serta menguasai bahasa tersebut. Justeru itu, adalah penting untuk mengetahui siapakah guru Bahasa Inggeris , apakah stail pengajaran mereka dan apakah persepsi mereka terhadap guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris dan pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

Merujuk kepada persoalan di atas, kajian ini memperihalkan pembolehubah demografik guru Bahasa Inggeris serta persepsi mereka terhadap isu dan trend di dalam pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga memperihalkan stail pengajaran guru Bahasa Inggeris, serta mengkaji korelasi antara pengalaman mengajar dan stail pengajaran. Kajian ini dijalankan di 14 buah sekolah menengah kebangsaan di Sungai Petani, Kedah (n=108). Dua set soal selidik telah digunakan iaitu "Language Teachers' Profile", dihasilkan oleh penyelidik berdasarkan kepada Protherough & Atkinson (1992), dan "Style Analysis Survey" (Oxford, 1993).

Didapati bahawa bilangan guru Bahasa Inggeris yang baru semakin berkurangan. Sekolah juga menghadapi kekurangan guru Bahasa Inggeris yang terlatih dan berkelayakan. Tambahan pula guru berhadapan dengan pelajar yang mempunyai sikap negatif terhadap Bahasa Inggeris dan ini merupakan suatu masalah yang serius bagi mereka.

Guru di dalam kajian ini mempunyai stail pengajaran yang signifikan iaitu "visual", "global", "extroverted" dan "closure". Kajian ini juga mendapati wujudnya hubungan negatif antara pengalaman mengajar dengan stail pengajarn (bagaimana guru mendekati tugasan).

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 4 January 2000 to conduct the final examination of Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan Bin Abdullah on his Master of Science thesis entitled "English Language Teachers' Profile and Their Teaching Styles" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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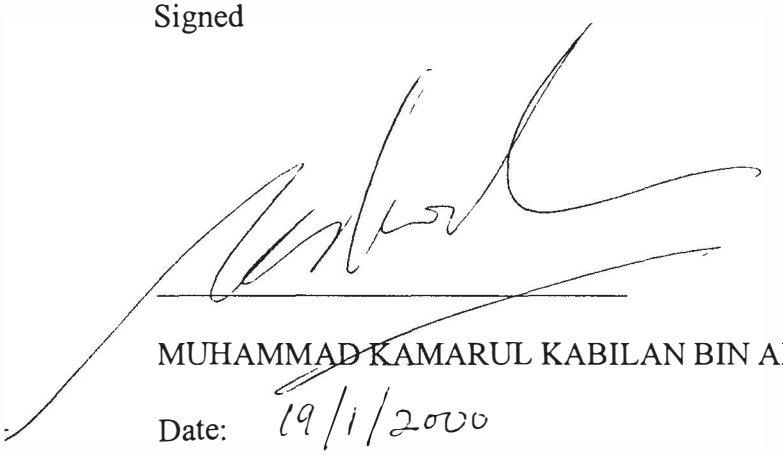
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that this thesis has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or any other institutions

Signed



MUHAMMAD KAMARUL KABILAN BIN ABDULLAH

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
LLE	Language Learning Experience
MELTA	Malaysian English Language Teaching Association
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
NEA	National Education Center
PALS	Principles of Adult Learning Scale
PMR	Penilaian Menengah Rendah
SAS	Style Analysis Survey
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
SRP	Sijil Rendah Pelajaran
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
LTP	Language Teachers' Profile

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

In the 1950's, the trends of language teaching began to change dramatically, and some of them were very important and fundamental in nature (Webb, 1974). A noticeable trend was the rise of the Communicative Approach to language teaching and the fall of many other approaches to language teaching, specifically the Systematic Approach (Johnson, 1983). According to Johnson (1983), many approaches to language teaching began life as reaction to old approaches and their starting point is often a belief in how languages should not be taught, and how the old approaches have failed.

The rise of the Communicative Approach to language teaching began as a reaction to the Systematic Approach to language teaching. In the Systematic Approach, if students are to be proficient in the language, they must master the mechanism by which the language works and learn the language systems (Johnson, 1983).

In contrast, the Communicative Approach emphasizes the use of the language, meaning and language as communication rather than language as a system of grammatical and phonological rules (Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 1996). According to Widdowson (1992), in the Systematic Approach, meaning was defined as language intrinsic, a semantic matter and a function of form. However, in the Communicative Approach, meaning was defined as language extrinsic, a pragmatic matter and a form of function. Therefore, in the Communicative Approach, it is hypothesized that students become proficient by using the language, and not just learning about the language

In teaching methods derived from the Communicative Approach to language teaching, the stress has always been on the students. Questions like "What is happening to learners in language classes?" and "Why is it that some are successful and others fail?" (Naiman, et.al 1996 and Stevick, 1986) are just two instances, which place the importance of students/learners in the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Thus, in the Communicative Approach to language teaching, language teachers are no longer seen exclusively as individuals who hold and transmit language, but as people who assist the learner to develop a natural capacity to communicate in another language (Yalden, 1987). Jakobovits and Gordon (1974), cited in Stevick (1986), explained that, while we know "learning" has taken place, and that people can do it, we are much less sure about "teaching". The reason being, there can be "learning" without "teaching", but one cannot claim to have "taught" unless someone else has learned. Furthermore, the role of the learner is being steadily

upgraded, and that of the teacher is moving in the opposite direction. More and more attention is given to the learners, and the reason being simply because of the "learner/student-centered model" in and outside the classroom. Due to this, the teachers have found themselves under considerable pressure since they have to abandon the " long standing teacher-centered model" (Yalden, 1987).

Even though the focus is on the learner, teachers are expected to be linguistically and pragmatically (i.e. sociolinguistically and culturally) competent, and to be equally competent on the discourse (strategic) level (Basanta, 1996). Celce-Murcia (1991) highlighted that the teacher should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately because a language teacher's primary role is to facilitate communication. Thus, the language of English language teachers has to be taken into salient consideration since teachers with a variety of qualifications become English language teachers (Vethamani, 1997). Professional training and the competence of the teachers in the English language should also be given serious thought because teachers are important agents in bringing about success in English language learning (Vethamani, 1997). For instance, they are the ones who select the activities and materials, which are relevant and interesting to the learners. Furthermore, the personality, attitude and teaching styles of a teacher can increase or diminish learner's interest in the learning of English (Chitravelu, Sithamparam and Teh, 1996).

Background of the Problem

McKey (1965) points out the relevance of language teaching theory to the analysis of language teaching. He says that language–teaching methods and the teaching of language depend ultimately on what the teacher or method maker thinks a language is. He explains in detail that, if a method is based on the assumption that a language is a collection of words, it will differ considerably from the one based on the assumption that a language is a system. Therefore, language considered as traditional grammar will be taught differently from language as current usage. Girad (1972:133) acknowledges McKey's work (1965) by saying that it has, "increased our knowledge and control of methodology of language teaching". As such, how language teachers teach a language depend on how they perceive that language, their beliefs of that language and the attitudes and behaviours towards it.

A teacher's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards language are very important to language teaching and language learning in an ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom. Wright (1987) expresses that a teacher actually employs his collection of attitudes and behaviours, which he calls teaching styles, to create the best possible condition under which learning could take place. Wright (1987) adds that the teachers' attitudes and beliefs influence the teachers' teaching styles. Those attitudes and beliefs include cultural and social beliefs and attitudes about how to behave in social groups, beliefs about the role of knowledge in teaching and learning, beliefs about the nature of learning and, beliefs about the nature of language (Wright, 1987).

The 4 elements of attitudes and beliefs above (Wright, 1987) are part of a language teacher's profile. The language teacher's profile or background, in many ways, influences the teacher's teaching styles. For instance, if the teacher views language as a tool to get meaning-content across to the learners, then he/she controls the complexity of his/her language (in the classroom) in more or less the same way as an adult does in speaking to a child. This include avoiding or paraphrasing what he/she feels might be too difficult, repeating statements and speaking slowly when there seems to be difficulties of understanding (Prabhu, 1987).

Previously, Widdowson (1972) also stressed that in the teaching of language, one has continually to make compromise and to adjust one's approach to the requirements of the students and the exigencies of the teaching situation. This certainly involves some decision-making and teachers are constantly making decisions in their classrooms. Those decisions are based upon the fine judgements of capabilities of individual children, determination of their needs and evaluation of their achievements. One of the decisions that has to be made is the suitable teaching style(s) to be used in the classrooms (Eggleston, 1979)

As indicated earlier, a language teacher's profile could determine his/her choice of teaching styles and selection of materials to be used in the classroom. The suitable teaching styles(s) preferred by the teacher determines many aspects of the language teaching-learning process in the ESL classroom. One of the more important and obvious aspects is the way a lesson is planned and carried out (Wright, 1987). The

way a lesson is planned and carried out will then determine the success of the students in learning English as a second language.

Statement of the Problem

One of the means by which teachers convey their attitudes about the "teaching-learning transaction" is through style (Conti, 1985a). Thus, teaching style(s) preference is often the realization of the teacher's beliefs, attitudes (i.e. part of his/her language teaching profile) towards the target language. These beliefs and attitudes towards the target language and its culture will influence the way the learners learn a second language and, their success in that language (Bailey, 1996; and Titone, 1981).

Clearly, English language teachers bring about successful or unsuccessful language leaning environment in classrooms; they guide and steer the language learners according to their beliefs and perceptions of how language should be learnt and taught. This would then influence their choice of activities to be used and also, the contents and aspects to be taught. This scenario illuminates the power possessed by an English language teacher in his/her classroom. To ensure that the power is used wisely, positively and constructively according to the aspirations and needs of English language teaching, English teachers ought to understand their roles, and make the changes to facilitate effective English language learning environment.

In order to make those necessary changes, teachers need to know who they are, what are their teaching styles, and what are their roles. They also need to know what

are their beliefs and perceptions of themselves as teachers and of issues in English language teaching. Without this information, we would not be able to pinpoint the changes needed, and the suitable remedy or assistance for the changes to take place. Therefore, this study seeks to find the information required so that teachers could, in general, improve themselves as teachers, and facilitate an effective English language learning environment, specifically in Malaysia.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify and describe, and determine the English language teachers' profiles. It also aims to identify the teachers' teaching styles and its relationships with teaching experience. Therefore, the objectives of this study are:

1. to identify the language teachers' profile,
2. to describe language teachers' profile,
3. to identify the language teachers' teaching styles,
4. to describe the language teachers' teaching styles,
5. to determine the language teachers' purpose of teaching English,
6. to determine the language teachers' urgent problems,
7. to determine the language teachers' perception of effective ESL teachers,
8. to determine the language teachers' perception of teacher education,
9. to determine the language teachers' perception of teacher development, and,
10. to examine the relationships between the language teachers' teaching experience and their teaching styles.