The Native Speaker Programme – The Coin has Two Sides

FATIHA SENOM
Department of Language & Literacy Education
Faculty of Education
University of Malaya
Malaysia
fatihasenom@um.edu.my

JULIANA OTHMAN
Department of Language & Literacy Education
Faculty of Education
University of Malaya
Malaysia

SAEDAH SIRAJ
Department of Curriculum & Instructional Technology
Faculty of Education
University of Malaya
Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to gain an insight into novice ESL teachers' diverse experiences as mentees in a mentoring programme, the Native Speaker Programme. Employing a multiple case study, the study was conducted among four novice primary school ESL teachers in Malaysia through in-depth interviews and observations. The findings indicated that there are two sides of the coin of being the mentees in the Native Speaker Programme, positive as well as less positive experiences. While some of the novice teachers had the opportunity to work with mentors with positive personal qualities who played constructive roles in facilitating their professional development through effective mentoring strategies, some experienced the opposite. The two contradictory experiences represent two sides of the same coin.

Keywords: Native Speaker Programme; novice ESL teacher; mentoring; native speaker mentor; second language teacher professional development

INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that quality professional development is able to positively transform teachers' practices and affect student learning (Burns & Richards 2009, Borko 2004, Darling-Hammond 2000). In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher education, due to booming demand for ESL education in developing countries, there is an increasing need for effective approaches to ESL teachers' professional development.

Having a strong workforce that is competent in English is prerequisite for Malaysia to participate actively in the global economy (Wong, Lee, Lee & Azizah Yaacob 2012, Fariza Puteh-Behak, Ramiaida Darmi & Yuslina Mohamed 2015). Central to this enterprise are ESL teaching and ESL teachers. Hence, in enhancing the professionalism of ESL teachers in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education had introduced and implemented a mentoring programme – the Native Speaker Programme, from early 2011 to the end of 2013. This three year programme aimed at enhancing the capacity of ESL teachers by placing native English speaking (NES) mentors to train local ESL teachers in selected primary schools. In the programme, the NES mentors were expected to assist participating teachers to improve their quality of teaching through activities such as Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

workshop, observation of teachers' classroom teaching and learning activities, interaction and discussion, collaboration with colleagues as well as co-teaching.

Mentoring is the core essence of the Native Speaker Programme. It offers a bridge between preservice teachers' education and the remainder of their career as educators. Mentoring assists novice teachers to adjust to the challenges of teaching and to develop into quality educators. Research suggested that mentoring is an important and effective form of support for novice teachers' professional development (Evertson & Smithey 2001, Smith & Ingersoll 2004, Brock & Grady 2007, Hobson et. al 2009). There are vast literature on the benefits of mentoring particularly for the novice teachers. However, there is scarce literature that examines closely the novice teachers' learning experience that takes place during mentoring (Kissau & King 2014, Delaney 2012, Kardos & Johnson 2007, Mann & Tang 2012). Hence, this study seeks to fill in the gap in the existing literature by exploring the learning experience of novice ESL teachers who participated in the Native Speaker Programme. This study also aims to incorporate the voice of novice teachers and derive their insight and understanding from their experiences to inform policymakers, administrators and other major stakeholders in education.

BACKGROUND

THE NOVICE TEACHERS

Novice teachers are usually defined as teachers who have completed their teacher education programme and have just started teaching in an educational institution within 3 years of completing their teacher education programme (Farrell 2012). In their first years of teaching, novice teachers are involved in the process of learning how to teach. Their previous schooling experiences, the nature of the teacher-education programme from which they have graduated, and their socialization experiences into the educational culture are the three major influences that mediate the novice teachers' experience. Literature on the first year of teaching has been well documented in general education research, and it also has been recently established by language teacher educators as having a huge influence on the future development of language teachers. Nevertheless, not many thorough studies illustrating the experiences of language teachers in their first year of teaching have been documented in the TESOL education literature (Borg 2010, Farrell 2008).

Novice teachers often do not feel adequately prepared for the challenges they face in their first years in the classroom. Smith and Ingersoll (2004, p. 682) note that 'critics have long assailed teaching as an occupation that 'cannibalizes its young' and in which the initiation of new teachers is akin to a 'sink or swim,' 'trial by fire,' or 'boot camp' experience". The transition from the teacher education institution to life in a real classroom has been characterized as a type of reality shock in which beginning teachers realize that the ideals they formed while training may not be appropriate for the realism they face during their first year of teaching (Farrell 2003). Marshall et. al (1990) suggest that it is not until they have survived the initial shock of the first year that novices are able to begin to concentrate on the important areas of long-term planning, overall student goals, and individual students' needs.

The present study highlights novice ESL teachers' learning experience in the Native Speaker Programme. This is because, although novice teachers experience an intricate transition from the teacher education institution to life in a real classroom, this concern is not fully addressed in schools in Malaysia as beginning teachers have the same responsibility as a teacher with many years of service (Mohd Sofi Ali 2002, 2008). Novice teachers in Malaysia

do not receive adequate support, as there is no specific new teacher induction programmes to prepare them for the transition. Yet, novice teachers assume the complete duties of a veteran teacher including the role as the head of subject panel. With inadequate support, it is more likely that the experiences novices encounter upon their transition will result in creative and talented teachers finding their work frustrating, unrewarding and intolerably difficult which ultimately increases their risk of becoming a casualty of the profession (Fantilli & McDougall 2009). Additionally, while the literature on newly qualified teachers is growing, we do not yet know enough about the experience of ESL novice teachers in Malaysian context since research on novice teachers is scarce in Malaysia (Mohd Sani Ibrahim et. al 2008). Therefore, it is valuable to explore the novice ESL teachers' learning experience that take place while participating in the Native Speaker Programme as this understanding is relevant as a structure that informs future professional development programmes for beginning teachers.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA

In the context of second language teacher education (SLTE), Leung (2009) coins the term *sponsored professionalism* to refer to institutionally endorsed and / or publicly heralded definition of professionalism whereas *independent professionalism* for more individual oriented notion of professionalism. He argues that it is important for SLTE to find a balance between these two forms of professionalism. *Sponsored professionalism* refers to a form of professionalism that is arranged and defined by regulatory bodies and professional associations to promote professional action and education improvement. On the other hand, *independent professionalism* encourages practitioners to make inquisitive and critical analysis on mandated requirements and to consider the emerging developments in the world into their professional practice via engaging in reflexive examination of their own beliefs and action and compare it with the handed-down requirements. Leung (2009) stresses the importance of teachers' engagement in reflexive examination, which is to turn their thinking or action on itself hence making it an object available for self-examination, as the core element in independent professionalism. It involves a careful and critical examination of the assumptions and practices entrenched in sponsored professionalism by juxtaposing it with discipline based knowledge and wider social values, and to make appropriate change and action for improvement.

Sponsored professionalism forms only one part of professionalism. Leung (2009, p. 55) argues that it is crucial for teachers to be more than just 'mechanical operators of pedagogic procedures' by reflecting critically on their practice based on broader educational and social issues, and to alter their values and practices by taking suitable actions. However, in Malaysia, teacher professional development programmes centre on *sponsored professionalism* through centralised professional programmes such as seminars, courses and workshops conducted by the Ministry of Education. On the other hand, there is little evidence on the existence of *independent professionalism*, which should be developed through socially and politically sensitive awareness of professionalism on the part of teacher themselves. In fact, in a case study on ESL teachers professional development in three primary schools in Malaysia, Mohd Sofi Ali (2008) argues that the prevalent form of professional development in the schools was unstructured and restricted in scope thus, unable to provide teachers with the relevant required professional skills and practice. This is because, ESL teachers developed their teaching skills and competence merely through their initial education at teacher training colleges, an informal apprenticeship and years of teaching experience in the school. Also, they relied on their past experience as students and by emulating their former teachers as role models. In addition, they learned about their professional roles and related skills intuitively by talking to colleagues and working with other teachers.

In Malaysia, a period of seven days or 56 hours of professional development is allocated for every teacher per year. In comparison, teachers in countries such as the Netherlands, Singapore and Sweden are provided with the most opportunities to attend teacher professional development programme, which is a minimum of 100 hours per year (Lim, Abas & Mansor 2010). The predominant forms of teacher professional development programmes in Malaysia include workshops, seminars, conferences and courses. However, Lim et. al (2010, p. 4025) argues that these forms of teacher professional development activities have been known to be as "pull out programmes, one-shot programmes, superficial, fragmented, quick fix, disconnected, episodic and lacking in follow-through". Additionally, they have also been argued to be inflexible, do not cater to teachers' needs, are time consuming and do not promote collaborative activities or supplementary support after the programmes.

All these are perhaps due to the employment of the traditional definition of teachers professional development which considers development as something that is done by others for or to teachers and consequently, workshops, seminars, courses and conferences become predominant forms of professional development practices available in Malaysia. In contrast, recent trends of teacher professional development in other countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and Japan highlight on alternative professional development structures that provide teachers with the platform for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers' classrooms which recognizes teachers' informal social and professional networks, including their own classroom as powerful sites for professional learning (Johnson 2009, p. 25). These alternative structures include teacher inquiry seminars, peer coaching, cooperative development, teacher study groups, narrative inquiry, lesson study groups, and critical friends groups. Such alternative structures encourage teachers to engage in ongoing, in-depth, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and their students' learning by recognizing the critical role that context plays in teacher learning and L2 teaching (Rogers 2002) while embracing the processes of teacher socialization that occurs in classrooms, schools, and the wider professional communities where teachers work.

Therefore, in order to ensure ESL teaching in Malaysia benefits from the alternative structures of teacher professional development, there is a need for the educational environment in Malaysia to pursue this current trend as well. Besides, the adoption of these alternative structures will address the importance of independent professionalism as a crucial part to the prevailing forms of teacher professional development programmes in Malaysia, which generally pivot around sponsored professionalism. In the context of the present study, the newly implemented professional development programme, Native Speaker Programme can be considered as a combination of sponsored professionalism and independent professionalism. This is because, while the programme required the participants to attend workshops, to be monitored and observed by their NES mentors and to be examined for their performance, the programme aimed to encourage teachers to engage in reflective examination of their practice. However, the understanding of teachers' learning experience in this programme is essential as this knowledge is prerequisite for any teacher professional development programmes to be effective (Johnson 2009).

THE NATIVE SPEAKER PROGRAMME

The core essence of the Native Speaker Programme is mentoring. In this mentoring programme, participating ESL teachers received 75 hours of professional input through individual mentoring at least once a fortnight as well as in situ mentoring and training. In addition, the participating ESL teachers received cluster and zone level training, which is

known as Teacher Professional Development (TPD) workshops. The TPD workshops were usually conducted by the NES mentors at the district education offices where all the participating teachers in the district gathered to attend this lecture-based session and collaborated among themselves to develop lesson plans and teaching resources.

Additionally, the NES mentors would visit the participants twice a week in their schools. During the visit, NES mentors would observe teachers' teaching and learning activities. The observation centres on teachers' effective use of teaching-learning resources, level and quality of pupil engagement in a lesson and teachers' assessment and evaluation technique. Also, NES mentors provided teachers with feedback on how to enhance the quality of teaching besides facilitating the teachers' teaching and learning activities through co-teaching. At the end of the year, the participating ESL teachers are expected to show improvement in the quality of their classroom teaching and learning. The participating teachers were also expected to exhibit improvement in their English language proficiency and to develop a reasonable amount of quality and suitable English teaching resources at the end of the year.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Native Speaker Programme has triggered concerns among the Malaysian English language teaching community. In a report on the forum *To Go or Not To Go Native: The Role of Native Speaker Teachers and Trainers in Second and Foreign Language Teaching* held at the 19th MELTA Conference in 2010, several issues pertaining to the implementation of the programme were thoroughly discussed. Among the debated issues include; native speakers with no formal training in ESL teaching, the lack of empathy among the monolingual native speakers' on the ESL learner, limited knowledge and awareness of local cultures, ideologies and beliefs among the native speakers, their short-term commitment, the dangers of educator-cum-entrepreneurs strategy adopted by the programme, as well as rejection of expertise and legitimacy of home-grown talent.

Despite of public concerns on the negative impacts that the Native Speaker Programme brings to the country, mentoring, which is the core essence of the programme, enjoys widespread support in the teaching profession, is generally regarded as beneficial or at least benign, and is not generally subject to critical analysis (Devos 2010). Moreover, Colley (2002, p.272) describes a "rose-tinted aura of celebration" that usually surrounds abstract discussions of mentoring and argues for the need to get beyond this and find out what actually happens. Hence, it is valuable to discover teachers' learning experience in this programme and, understanding the impacts of the implementation of this new programme must include the voice of those for whom the programme is being implemented.

THE STUDY

THE PARTICIPANTS

To explore the novice ESL teacher learning experience in the Native Speaker Programme, four ESL novice primary schools teachers who participate in the programme were selected as participants of the study based on convenience sampling. The summary of demographic information of the selected participants based on the oral information given to the researcher is illustrated in Table 1. All names of individuals in this study are pseudonyms.

TABLE 1. Novice ESL Teachers Demographic Information

Name	Years of Teaching Experience	Qualifications	Location of the School	Mentor(s)
Farhan	2 years 6 months	B.Ed TESL (Primary Education)	Rural	Sally
Nadya	2 years	B.Ed TESL (Primary Education)	Sub-urban	Victoria and Mark
Hafiz	Less than 1 year	B.Ed TESL (Primary Education)	Rural	Nate, Patrick, and Deborah
Suzanna	2 years 6 months	B.Ed TESL (Primary Education)	Rural	John and Stella

METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

In this qualitative multiple case study design (Yin 2009), the methods of data collection included: (a) in-depth interviews, (b) classroom observations, and (c) TPD workshops observations. Thus, the researcher used a variety of data sources as a means of triangulation (Merriam 1998).

For in-depth interviews, an interview protocol was developed based on the existing literature (Farrell 2003, 2008, 2012, Kiely & Askham 2012, Miller 2009) to encourage the participants to describe and evaluate their own learning experiences thoroughly and freely from their own perspectives. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face and audiotaped for transcription purposes. The interviews were conducted in the participants' school or at a place of their choice. The interviews were transcribed immediately and the researcher reviewed each transcription with written notes from the interview while listening to the corresponding tape.

Two kinds of observations were carried out for this study. In the first kind of observation, the researcher observed the interaction between NES mentors and the participating novice ESL teacher in their Teacher Professional Development (TPD) workshops. In the second kind of observation, the researcher observed the novice teachers' teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. This observation allowed the researcher to examine the novice teachers' practice as ESL primary school teachers. In these observations, the researcher played a role of a non-participating observer. The data from the observations were recorded using an audio recorder to assist researcher in generating a "thick description" (Carspecken 1996, p. 54). Additionally, field notes were written. Then, the researcher reviewed the recorded audios of observations with the field notes taken during the observations.

The data collection was completed within one-year period or until data saturation as a prolonged engagement to ensure trustworthiness. To synthesize the data, the researcher identified some major patterns or themes that are linked together, either similarly or differently, that collectively describe or analyse the novice ESL teachers' learning experience. Then, within categories, patterns were compared and contrasted and this was followed by patterns across categories. Finally, the researcher tried to situate the findings with respect to prior research on teacher learning and professional development, and compare and contrast them with issues that have been discussed in the broader literature on novice teacher learning.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings of the study will be discussed according to three categories which include novice teachers' positive and less positive experience pertaining to mentors' personal qualities, mentors' role, and mentoring strategies.

MENTORS' PERSONAL QUALITIES

Empathetic versus inconsiderate. Nadya considered her mentor, Victoria, as a mentor who is very considerate with a lot of empathy towards her mentees. As a working mother with a five-year-old daughter, Nadya found it challenging to attend the TPD workshops which were conducted in the morning outside of school hours. This was because, it interrupted her daily routine as a mother who has to look after her daughter before she sent her daughter to kindergarten and went to school to teach in the afternoon session afterward. To make things easier for Nadya and other participating teachers, Victoria allowed her mentees to bring along their children to the TPD workshops. Additionally, she would arrange some activities for the kids so that their parents could pay attention on the activities during the TPD workshops. In the observation carried out by the researcher, Victoria presented the teachers' children with colouring pages for them to pass the time while waiting for their parents to finish their TPD workshop. Furthermore, she prepared some refreshments for the kids as well as their parents during the workshop.

Nadya believed that Victoria's understanding and empathy reduced her stress and enabled her to gain knowledge comfortably from the programme. Recalling her brief experience working with Mark, her previous mentor, she felt being in the programme was draining for her as she considered Mark to have little empathy for his mentees. This is because, participating teachers were often given daunting remark for minor mistakes such as answering important calls from family members during the workshop, leaving the workshop early to fetch their children from school and talking during his lecture in the workshop. As a result, Nadya felt demotivated to participate in the programme and she felt the programme uninteresting and distressing. On the other hand, having a considerate mentor such as Victoria allowed Nadya to experience learning in a more conducive environment where she felt respected and motivated to learn. She added;

> I think this programme depends very much on the mentors. If you have a good mentor, then it is gonna be a fun programme. If you have someone like Victoria, then it is very good, if you have someone like Mark, you will find that the programme is very boring, stressful, although the content of workshop is similar.

Approachable versus intimidating. Hafiz regarded his mentor, Nate, as a serious person who always keeps things professional between himself and his mentees. Nevertheless, Hafiz still considered Nate as an approachable mentor who is unintimidating. This is because, Hafiz found it was easy to talk to Nate as he never demoralized him in any way. Hafiz believed that Nate's mentoring style that was approachable and not intimidating allowed him to learn from him comfortably. In fact, Hafiz felt very thankful for having mentor without any anger management issue. On the other hand, Hafiz had different perception about Patrick, another mentor. Recalling his unpleasant experience witnessing Patrick losing his temper during TPD workshop, Hafiz narrated;

> Patrick, he is like a dictator. He doesn't like us to make noise. He assigned us a group work, but when we discussed, he scold us because he said we made noise… Well, he once threw a plate on the floor! You know we Malaysians are very hospitable, we love serving guests food. We were not informed that he is a vegetarian, so when we served him a plate of noodle with beef, he threw the plate on the floor! He was very angry, everyone was speechless and shocked! I'm so glad Nate is not like that.

Unlike Patrick, Nate is accommodating in his mentoring style. Although sometimes Hafiz made mistakes during mentoring activities such as presenting an activity that was not suitable for the students, Nate "will not scold... and will just give suggestions" for improvement. Hence Hafiz was willing to try and not afraid of making mistake. According to

Hafiz, this enabled him to gain knowledge from his mentor comfortably thus assisting him to develop as an effective ESL teacher.

Motivating. Suzanna believed the motivation instilled by her mentors, John and Stella, encouraged her to maximize her learning throughout the programme. One of the efforts made by John in motivating his mentees was by rewarding them with gifts for coming early to the TPD workshop and for full attendance. During the observations conducted by the researcher, John was seen to reward teachers with stationaries and storybooks. Although Suzanna was initially sceptical about the effectiveness of John's strategy on adult learners like her and other participating teachers, she later realized that John's effort was worthwhile as she found herself to be more motivated to attend the TPD workshop. She said,

> Our mentors really encourage us to come to the TPDs. Like John, he even gives us extrinsic motivation. He will give presents to the earliest person to arrive in the TPD workshop. Wonderful presents like stamps, stickers, and books. Those presents are very useful for teachers. I think it is good because their efforts really win our hearts, making us feel comfortable to come to the TPD.

Furthermore, words of encouragement from John and Stella played a significant role in motivating Suzanna to maximize the learning opportunity provided by the programme in gaining valuable input presented by her mentors. This is because, words of encouragement from her mentors remind her about her hope and aspiration, which is to be an effective ESL teacher. At the same time, Suzanna felt appreciated, knowing that someone was acknowledging the effort that she has made in trying to improve herself as a teacher. Hence, those encouraging words from her mentors lifted her spirit and motivated her to learn and gain knowledge and skills throughout the Native Speaker Programme. Suzanna explained;

> John always encourages us to be good English teachers. When I submitted my work to him, he said – thank you, you have done a good job, I hope you will be a good English teacher. So he would encourage us verbally. He makes us feel appreciated. He understands that we are new English teachers, facing struggles and challenges and we need support and motivation.

In many studies (Delaney 2012; Malderez & Bodoczky 1999) personal qualities that describe effective mentor include responsible, supportive and having non-confrontational style. In addition, the establishment of academic and emotional support has been regarded as the fundamental elements of mentoring in numerous studies (Beck & Kosnik 2002, Ferrier-Kerr 2009, Jacobi 1991). Similarly, the findings of the study concluded several positive traits of ESL mentors that serve as an important condition for effective mentoring which include; empathetic, dedicated, unintimidating, and motivating.

In addition, studies (Feiman Nemser 2001, Rippon & Martin 2006) show that the establishments of emotional and psychological support are essential in ensuring effective mentoring so that the mentees feel welcome, accepted and included. In this present study, the emotional and psychological supports were provided by the mentors particularly for Nadya and Suzanna. Nadya considered her Victoria as a very considerate mentor as she allows her mentees to bring along their kids and toddlers to the TPD workshop as well as arranged for some activities and refreshment for the children. As a result, Nadya felt motivated to participate actively in the programme. Similarly, Suzanna's mentors provided her with adequate emotional support by motivating her extrinsically as well as through words of encouragement. Pitton (2006) asserted that novice teachers feel tremendously stressed just because they are encountering new experience. Hence, it is important for mentors to address novices' reaction to the new experience and provide them with adequate emotional support.

Additionally, strong emotional connection between mentors and mentees is essential as a condition for effective mentoring since it promotes scholastic competence and boosts self-esteem among the mentees (Deutsch & Spencer 2009). On the other hand, distant relationships between mentor and mentees hinder such positive outcomes (Izadinia 2015, Beck & Kosnik 2000). In the present study, this scenario was reflected through Nadya's brief experience working with Mark as well as Hafiz's unpleasant experience witnessing Patrick losing his temper during TPD workshop. For Nadya, the daunting remarks given by Mark for her minor mistakes made her felt demotivated to participate in the programme. As for Hafiz, although he felt thankful that his mentor, Nate, was not as intimidating as Patrick, he felt there was a barrier between him and his mentor. This is because, Hafiz considered Nate as a serious person, who always keep things too professional and too formal between himself and his mentees. As a result, Nate's attitude impedes Hafiz's attempt to seek for his advice regarding the struggles that he face as a novice teacher.

MENTORS' ROLES

Speaking partner. Farhan believed that his mentor, Sally, played an important role in assisting him to benefit from the Native Speaker Programme by providing him the opportunity to engage in authentic social conversation using English language. Since Farhan's school environment does not offer him adequate opportunity to maximize the use of English language in daily conversation, he felt "thankful for having a mentor because, it is through her I can at least maintain my level of English". In fact, when asked on the most valuable aspect about working with his mentor, Farhan had the following to say:

> For me, the most valuable aspect is having someone you can talk to in English and then, someone to check your speaking skills. Because for me, language is something that you have to practice, if you don't practice it, you will definitely lose it. That's why I value her (Sally) presence and the fact that we can at least communicate in English, to have a speaking partner, something like that, to practice my speaking skills, and she also checks on my grammar, my use of language.

The source of reference. Nadya viewed her mentor, Victoria, as her ultimate source of reference. This is because, whenever she encountered problems related to teaching, she would ask for Victoria's help. Nadya believed that Victoria's suggestions were the best solutions for her classroom problems her as Victoria had adequate understanding and familiarity with her students and her school. In addition, Victoria had an extensive experience as an ESL teacher in private schools and universities in countries like the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Hence, Nadya always trust her judgement. Additionally, Nadya would always consult Victoria if she had questions on English language. She believed that as a native speaker of English language, Victoria's answers to her question on English language were 'accurate'. In addition, Victoria's willingness to guide her in improving her English language encouraged her to learn more about the language. According to Nadya, having Victoria as her mentor was like "...having a living dictionary and a living grammar book."

Moreover, Victoria assisted Nadya in coping with change in her work environment. This is because, as a lower primary teacher, Nadya was entrusted to carry out a newly implemented LINUS (Literacy and Numeracy Screening) Programme for her students. LINUS is an intervention programme aimed to promote equality in education for lower primary school students. Students were required to undergo screening test at the early stage of schooling so that teachers were able to identify their strength and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy skills. Subsequently, weaker students will be given extra attention and assistance so that they will be able to keep up in mainstream classes. Since LINUS

programme required Nadya to employ different materials, techniques and approaches than what she normally used for her lesson to prepare the lower proficiency students for the screening test, Nadya found herself struggling in delivering LINUS programme. In order to facilitate Nadya in executing the LINUS programme, Victoria trained Nadya in preparing suitable teacher aids and materials to identify weaker students. In addition, Victoria demonstrated suitable teaching and learning activities for the weaker students so as to enable the weaker to students to exit the LINUS class and to keep up in mainstream class. Nadya explained,

> …the mentor helps us by giving teaching aids, on how to teach LINUS kids who are having problem, and also how to identify LINUS kids and also helps us on teaching the kids so that they exit the LINUS programme and join the mainstream students. So the mentor helps us in producing things, materials to differentiate these kids. And also, how to identify more suitable materials for them.

Lack understanding on ESL learners. On the contrary, although Hafiz considered his mentors as good models of English language, he believed that Nate and the other two mentors had little knowledge on challenges faced by ESL learners in learning English. According to Hafiz, he found that certain activities suggested by the mentors were not appropriate to be carried out in his classrooms. This is because, he felt that sometimes the mentors provided them with teaching materials that were not localised with language level that was too difficult for ESL learners who had low level of English proficiency. Sometimes the activities suggested are simply complicated to be carried out for his young primary school students.

It was evident that the three mentors had minimal understanding about ESL students, as observed by the researcher during the TPD workshop. In the first TPD workshop observed by the researcher for instance, Deborah conducted a session on example of ways to integrate the use of technology in teaching English. However, the session was rather frustrating for Hafiz as Deborah merely showed simple PowerPoint Presentation slides with black background of few multiple choice questions. For Hafiz, the session was not appropriate as the black background was definitely unappealing for young learners. He criticised Deborah's lack of effort in preparing a useful lesson for him and other participating teachers since he felt that the knowledge of using PowerPoint Presentation slides was obsolete and too simple for him and his colleagues since they had advanced ICT knowledge as some of them have even learnt about web development. In addition, all the multiple choice questions included in Deborah's presentation were not related to the current curriculum as well as not localised. For instance, one question was on an American television show, *The Simpsons,* which was unfamiliar for Malaysian primary school students – *"Who is Bart Simpson? Answers: A) a politician B) A singer C) A cartoon character"*

In her overview of related scholarships on mentoring over the past decade, Delaney (2012, p. 187) argued that, "a clear understanding of mentors' roles in this new language teacher education paradigm is key to successful mentoring." Additionally, there is a need for research on ESL mentoring to provide a better understanding on the effective roles of ESL mentors (Brown 2001, Kissau & King 2014). The present study postulated several effective roles of ESL mentors which include as a speaking partner and as a source of reference.

Maldarez (2009) asserted that, there is a need for literature on ESL mentoring to discuss the impact on the kind of language (mother tongue or target language) used in mentoring activities on proficiency development and maintenance for both mentor and mentee. In the present study, one of the participants, Farhan denoted the important role of his native mentors as his speaking partner who assisted him in maintaining his English proficiency. This finding supports existing research (Foster 1999, Hobson et. al 2009) that emphasis the role of mentors as the experts who are able to model excellent professional

practice. Moreover, the findings of the study support Abell et al. (1995) who asserted that, effective mentoring demands mentors to have adequate subject matter knowledge to allow mentees to have 'professional respect' for their mentors.

Another effective role of ESL mentors as indicated by the findings in the present study is as the source of reference. One of the participants, Nadya, regarded her mentor, Victoria, as her ultimate source of reference who provided her with effective solutions and suggestions whenever she encountered difficulties related to teaching. Similarly, Delaney (2012) stresses that it is important for second language mentors to possess excellent knowledge on second language acquisition and language teaching methods in ensuring effective mentoring. On the other hand, mentors without such knowledge would adversely affect the novice teachers' professional development (Weasmer & Woods 2003). This supported the findings of the present research as the mentor's lack of understanding on ESL learners' impeded Hafiz's professional development.

MENTORING STRATEGIES

Team-teaching. Farhan considered team-teaching as a valuable mentoring activity used by Sally as he learnt to conduct suitable teaching activities for his students more effectively. This is because, during team teaching, Farhan and Sally would make decision together from planning the teaching and learning activities, to conducting the activities in the classroom and finally to assessing the effectiveness of the activity. Indirectly, Farhan was able to understand how an expert like Sally made decisions pertaining to teaching. At the same time, he was able to learn how to justify the teaching decision that he had made through his observation on Sally's way of justifying her decision. In addition, Farhan gained useful input when he made comparison between Sally's methods with his. Hence, through team-teaching, Farhan gained better understanding about carrying out effective teaching activities for the students and this insight allowed him to emulate his mentors' teaching methods and strategies. Farhan explained,

> Team-teaching let me experience the process of conducting good lessons with my mentor. We will look at the topic together, and we will discuss about the content in the activity in the textbook and see if it is really suitable to be carried out or we should adjust to cater the need of the students. From there, I learnt how to conduct great lessons.

Underrating reflective practice. As a participant of the programme, Hafiz was required to fill out a reflective journal to evaluate his own capacity as an ESL teacher. Every month, his mentor would collect the reflective journals from his mentees, so that he could examine them and take necessary action requested by the teachers. In the journal, Hafiz recorded the strengths and weaknesses of his lessons and he included teaching aspects that he felt essential for his mentor to provide him with extra guidance. Most of the time, he requested more input on classroom management and teaching ideas for extremely weak students. In the beginning, Hafiz was very motivated to write critical reflective entries on his teaching activities, expecting that Nate would read the entries and give him necessary feedback. However, after a few entries, he began to lose the enthusiasm to write critical reflection as he realized that Nate did not give him the adequate support that he needed when he was struggling with classroom management and extremely weak students.

> When we fill in the reflective journal, they ask us what when want to improve on, and sometimes I just write down, they never respond to our reflective journal. Because I always ask them how to control class… issues with weak students… But they never do activities that cater to my need…that I require. Maybe because they have yearly plan, so they just follow. Maybe the reflective journal is just for them to see. For documentation...

Aside from the reflective journal, Hafiz was required to complete a questionnaire about his performance as an ESL teacher at the beginning of the year. The questionnaire enabled him to evaluate his language abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as his level of motivation as a teacher. At the end of the year, Hafiz would answer the same questionnaire and submit it to his mentor. Although the questionnaire enlightened him about the improvements that he had made throughout a year of participating in the programme, he was frustrated with the way the questionnaire was administered by his mentor. This was because, his mentor insisted that the participants must indicate their improvement in all the aspects listed in the questionnaire. Hence, despite of his actual performance, Hafiz must give higher scores for the year-end questionnaire. Perhaps, this was important for the mentors, as it would serve as evidence that the mentors have done their job and learning has taken place throughout the programme. However, this dishonest practice gave teachers the impression that reflective practice is insignificant thus underrating the true value of reflective practice.

Therefore, although the reflective activities were practiced throughout the programme, Hafiz and other participating teachers did not gain much benefit from it. This is because; reflective practice was not done correctly and only carried out for documentation purposes. As a result, there would be a high possibility for Hafiz and other participating teachers to discontinue writing reflection once the programme ends since they did not understand the valuable impact that reflective practice has on their lifelong professional development.

Hands-on input. The Native Speaker Programme contributed to Suzanna's professional knowledge construction by providing her hands-on inputs that were applicable to her classroom. This is because, all of the knowledge and skills presented by her mentors were aligned with the new KSSR curriculum and suitable for her low proficiency students. According to Suzanna, the inputs given by her mentors "follow closely the KSSR curriculum, do not mess up with curriculum... as if they were extracted from the curriculum, the mentors took them out and gave them to us". In addition, the John and Sarah would use the KSSR textbook as their main reference in suggesting suitable teaching and learning activities for Suzanna's low proficiency student. Hence, this gave Suzanna a peace of mind, knowing that the suggested teaching and learning activities that she used in the classroom did not contradict with the KSSR curriculum. Moreover, Suzanna found that the input presented by her mentor was appropriate to be used with her low proficiency learners as the mentors considered learners' background and interest when designing teaching and learning activities for Suzanna's students. Since her mentors use the KSSR textbook as their main reference, this helped Suzanna in navigating the new KSSR textbook that she considered as unsystematic. She explained;

> The mentors would focus on KSSR. They would use the KSSR textbook. No matter what activities they introduce, they must be based on the KSSR and textbook. So, I feel I am in the right tract. And they never teach us anything that was not in the KSSR curriculum – foreign stories, high-level grammar or songs that are not familiar to Malaysian context. Never. So, I think it is good because it doesn't contradict with the KSSR curriculum. What they teach are suitable for Malaysian context, related to KSSR and meet the requirement.

Richter and Kunter et al.'s (2013) study have found that the effectiveness of mentoring programme in creating successful beginning for novice teachers lies on the quality of mentoring strategies rather than its frequency. In addition, mentoring strategies that employ constructivist approach are superior in producing novice teacher who are effective, enthusiastic, satisfied, and contented, as compared to mentoring strategies that employed transmissive approach (Richter & Kunter et al. 2013). The present study confirms this finding

since the participants identified constructivist mentoring strategies that promote collaboration, communicative environment, demonstration, exchange of ideas, motivation, learning by doing, hands-on input, and peer teaching to be effective in assisting their professional development.

Moreover, the findings of the present study indicated that mentoring is most effective when it provides mentees with hands-on inputs. In Suzanna's case for example, she found the inputs presented by her mentors were hands-on since they were aligned with the new KSSR curriculum and suitable for her students. Hence, this enabled her to apply the hands-on inputs that she gained from her mentors directly into her lessons. Similarly, Devos (2010) stated that, mentoring needs to address the contextual aspects of mentees so that it could produce effective new teachers who manifest specific teaching qualities that meet the aspiration of a particular context.

Furthermore, the present study has identified peer teaching as another effective ESL mentoring strategy that contributes to novice teachers' professional knowledge construction. Farhan asserted that, through peer teaching, he was able to gain better understanding on the correct ways to conduct certain teaching and learning activities as he and his mentor would together plan, carry out, and reflect on the lessons. Hence, this finding adds support to several studies (Foster 1999, Hobson 2002) which consider the novice teachers' experience in analysing the procedure involved in conducting effective lesson as the most valuable aspect in mentoring strategies. In addition, research (Martin & Rippon 2003, Schmidt 2008) show that, valuable mentoring activities include the collaboration of both mentor and mentee in the process of teaching. This collaboration requires them to work together to reach a consensus when planning a lesson as well as to reflect on the conducted activities in positive and constructive ways in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning activities and ways to improve the lessons.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have shown that mentors have the tendency to place too much emphasis on their role in transmitting knowledge on teaching and learning to their mentees thus, neglecting their potential in promoting reflective practice which is important for their lifelong professional development (Hobson et al. 2009). In Hafiz's case, his mentor disregarded the actual benefit of reflective practice by carrying out reflective activities only for the sake of documentation. Hence, this mentoring strategy gave Hafiz and other teachers' the impression that reflective practice is unimportant thus, underrating its true value.

CONCLUSION

The findings of present study suggest that there are two sides of the coin of being the mentees in the Native Speaker Programme. The two sides of the same coin are represented by novice teachers' contradictory experiences, both positive and less positive, pertaining to mentors' personal qualities, mentors' role, and mentoring strategies. While some of the novice teachers had the opportunity to work with mentors with positive personal qualities who played constructive roles in facilitating their professional development through effective mentoring strategies, some experienced the opposite. Hence, the present research implies that mentors should be well prepared for their role as mentoring will not positively affect the novice teachers if the mentors are not well prepared for their role (He 2009). It is important for teacher education programmes to screen and prepare mentors particularly pertaining to their attitude and characters, professional competence, and communication skills in order to maximize the benefits of mentoring programmes. Therefore, it is crucial for teacher education to provide an avenue to empower mentors in developing their mentoring skills as well as their awareness about their accountability as ESL mentors to ensure the conditions of effective mentoring.

REFERENCES

Abell, S. K., Dillon, D. R., Hopkins, C. J., McInerney, W. D. & O'Brien, D. G. (1995). Somebody to Count on: Mentor/intern Relationships in a Beginning Teacher Internship Program. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 11*(2), 173-188.

Beck, C. & Kosnik, C. (2000). Associate teachers in pre-service education: clarifying and enhancing their role. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy. Vol. 26*(3), 207-224.

Borg, S. (2010). Contemporary themes in language teacher education. Foreign Languages in China, 7(4), 84–89. Brock, B., & Grady, M. (2007). From first-year to first rate: Principals guiding beginning teachers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. *Educational Researcher. Vol. 3*(8), 3-15.

Burns, A. & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carspecken, P. F. (1999). *Four Scenes for Posing the Question of Meaning and Other Explorations in Critical Philosophy And Critical Methodology.* New York/Berlin: Peter Lang.

Colley, H. (2002). A ''rough guide'' to the history of mentoring from a Marxist feminist perspective. Journal of Education for Teaching. *Vol. 28*(3), 257–273.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives. Vol. 8*(1), 7-13.

Delaney, Y. A. (2012). Research on mentoring language teachers: Its role in language education. *Foreign Language Annals. Vol. 45*(S1), S184-S202.

Deutsch, N. L. & Spencer, R. (2009). Capturing the magic: assessing the quality of youth mentoring relationships. *New Directions for Youth Developmen. Vol. 121*, 47-70.

Devos, A. (2010). New teachers, mentoring and the discursive formation of professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 26*(5), 1219-1223.

Evertson, C. & Smithey, M. (2000). Mentoring effects on protege's classroom practice: An experimental field study. *Journal of Educational Research. Vol.93,* 294-304.

Fantilli, R. D. & McDougall, D. E. (2009). A study of novice teachers: challenges and supports in the first years. Teaching and Teacher Education. *Vol. 25*(6), 814-825.

Fariza Puteh-Behak, Ramiaida Darmi & Yuslina Mohamed. (2015). Implementation of a Western-based Multiliteracies Pedagogy in Malaysia: A Socio-cultural Perspective. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies. Vol. 15*(1), 1-24.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2003). Learning to teach English language during the first year: personal influences and challenges. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 19,*95-111.

Farrell, T. S. C. (Ed.). (2008). *Novice Language Teachers: Insights and Perspectives for the First Year*. London, England: Equinox.

Farrell, T. S. C. (2012). Novice-Service language teacher development: Bridging the gap between preservice and in-service education and development. *TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 43*(3), 435-449.

Feiman Nemser, S. (2001). Helping novices learn to teach: lessons from an exemplary support teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education. Vol. 52*(1), 17–30.

Foster, R. (1999). School-based initial teacher training in England and France: trainee teachers' perspectives compared. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning. Vol. 7*(2), 131–143.

He, Y. (2009). Strength-based mentoring in pre-service teacher education: a literature review. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning. Vol. 17*(3), 263-275.

Hobson, A. J. (2002). Student teachers' perceptions of school-based mentoring in initial teacher training (ITT). *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning. Vol. 10*(1), 5–20.

Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A. & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't*. Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 25,* 207–216.

Izadinia, M. (2015). A closer look at the role of mentor teachers in shaping preservice teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 52,* 1-10.

Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: a literature review. *Review of Educational Research. Vol. 61*(4), 505-532.

Johnson, K.E. (2009). Trends in second language teacher education. In Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kardos, S. M., & Johnson, S.M. (2007). On their own and presumed expert: New teachers' experience with their colleagues. *Teachers College Record. Vol. 109*(9), 2083-2106.

Kiely, R., & Askham, J. (2012). Furnished imagination: The impact of pre-service teacher training on early career work in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 46*(3), 496-518.

Kissau, S. P. & King, E. T. (2014). Peer mentoring second language teachers: a mutually beneficial experience? *Foreign Language Annals. Vol. 48*(1), 143-160.

Leung, C. (2009). Second language teacher professionalism. In A. Burns & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. (pp. 49-58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lim, T., Abas, Z.W. & Mansor, N. (2010). Online In-service Teacher Professional Development in Malaysia: A New Possibility? In Z. Abas et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Global Learn Asia Pacific 2010* (pp. 4025-4034). AACE. Retrieved from http://www.editlib.org/p/34494.

Malaysia English Language Teaching Association. (2010) *A report on the forum "To Go or Not To Go Native: The Role of Native Speaker Teachers and Trainers in Second and Foreign Language Teaching" held at the 19th MELTA Conference.* Retrieved from *w*ww.melta.org.my

Malderez, A. (2009). Mentoring. In J. Richards & A. Burns (Eds.). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education* (pp. 259-268). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Malderez, A. & Bodoczky, C. (1999). *Mentor Courses: A Resource Book for Trainee and Trainers.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mann, S. & Tang, E.H.H. (2012) The role of mentoring in supporting novice English language teachers in Hong Kong. *TESOL Quarterly. Vol. 46*(3), 472-495.

Marshall, P., Fittinghoff, S. & Cheney, C. (1990). Beginning teacher developmental stages: implications for creating collaborative internship programs. *Teacher Education Quarterly.* 25–35.

Martin, M. & Rippon, J. (2003). Teacher induction: personal intelligence and the mentoring relationship. *Journal of In-Service Education. Vol. 29*(1), 141–162.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. (2nd ed) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miller, J. (2009). Teacher Identity. In Burns, A., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Teacher Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mohammed Sani Ibrahim, Zamri Mohamod & Norasmah Hj Othman. (2008). *Profesional Guru Novis: Model Latihan. Terbitan Fakulti Pendidikan*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Mohd Sofi Ali. (2002). Professional development of ESL teachers in primary schools. *TIGA ENF Jurnal Pendidikan IPBA. Vol. 2*(5), 43-62.

Mohd Sofi Ali. (2008). *A Case for a Case: A Qualitative Research Experience.* Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya Press.

Pitton, D. E. (2006). *Mentoring Novice Teachers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Richter, D., Kunter, M., Lüdtke, O., Klusmann, U., Anders, Y. & Baumert, J. (2013). How different mentoring approaches affect beginning teachers' development in the first years of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 36*, 166-177.

Rippon, J. H. & Martin, M. (2006). What makes a good induction supporter? *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 22*, 84–99.

Rogers, C. (2002). Seeing student learning: teacher change and the role of reflection. *Harvard Educational Review. Vol. 72,* 230-253.

Schmidt, M. (2008). Mentoring and being mentored: the story of a novice music teacher's success. *Teaching and Teacher Education. Vol. 24,*635–648.

Smith, T. M. & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal. Vol. 41*(3), 681-714.

Weasmer, J. & Woods, A. M. (2003). The role of the host teacher in the student teaching experience. *The Clearing House. Vol. 76*(4), 174-177.

Wong, F.F, Lee, K. S., Lee, S. K. & Azizah Yaacob. (2012). English use as an identity marker among Malaysian undergraduates. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies. Vol. 18*(1), 145-155.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods, 4th Edition.* Sage.