

## TEACHERS' THOUGHT PROCESSES IN TEACHING LITERATURE: GOOD LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION IN TEACHING

Fauziah Ahmad, Ph.D.  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

*The premise of this research is on the theoretical assumptions that teachers' mental constructs can have significant pedagogical consequences (Clark and Peterson 1986). It is necessary to describe the thinking and planning strategies so that one can fully understand classroom processes. National Institute of Education or NIE (1975a) cited in Clark and Peterson (1986) proposed a rationale for a program of research on teachers' thoughts and processes. They assert that innovation in the contexts, practices and technology of teaching be mediated through the minds and motives of teachers, not forgetting the role of school principals as administrators that lead teachers in schools. Thus the power of good leadership and administration in schools are crucial to create conducive teaching atmosphere for teachers. As teachers are able to understand and observe (thought processes) classroom behavior, student's cognitive processes, students' level of capability and ability and students' inert interest and motivation, they can steer and adjust the classroom learning process according to the needs of the students. The success of any learning and teaching situation will depend a great deal on the teachers (Safiah Osman 1992). Improving the ability of students to understand what they read is a never-ending process. Based on the theoretical premise and the consensus of views of other researchers, teachers' thought processes have significant pedagogical consequences. The purpose of this research is to investigate systematically and empirically the teachers' level of belief, background knowledge, attitude and perception towards literature and literature teaching, the extent of the influence of student factor and evaluation factor on literature teaching, the forms of teaching; student centered or teacher centered and to understand the positive working minds and motives of excellent school teachers and principals.*

## INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1980s, there was little discussion about the relationship between language and literature teaching and about the role of literature teaching in an ESL setting. Carter and Long (1991) stated that the importance of literature was only fully realized sometime in the mid 1980s where extensive debates and discussions took place. Since then, the situation for learning and teaching has changed radically and literature is presently being reconsidered within the language teaching profession (Carter and Long 1991). This changed attitude towards literature and its importance has also affected the Malaysian national curriculum. In 1992, Literature in English was first introduced to Form Four students. Subsequently, this has led to the re-introduction of literature into language classrooms in the year 2000, and is now an integrated element of the English language component. The year 2003 saw the introduction of the use of the English language as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science subjects for Form One and Primary One students. These moves and developments are positive efforts on the part of the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of students' English language proficiency (The Star May 2nd 2005).

The rationale offered for incorporating literature into language classrooms among others includes the inculcation of the reading habit and in particular, to promote the acquisition of English (Hall 1994). Students are expected to not only read, understand and to master the language, but to also gain interest and appreciation towards literary texts. Literature in English has the main aim of fostering in students the 'love for reading literary works and to develop attitudes and linguistic abilities that will enable them to respond effectively to these literary works' (KBSM 1991).

With the emergence of 2020, Malaysia is hoped to achieve its developed status country focusing on advanced information technology. To support the nation's interest, in line with this effort, the Ministry of Education has made a positive stride to include positive thinking and knowledge as part of their working culture. This paradigm shift in the national education system hopes to produce graduates who are creative and innovative, able to generate new ideas and inventions to develop industries based on added value products and services. In line with this, the role of school principals and teachers are ever as important to ensure the desired graduates are produced.

The roles of school principals are multi-diverse. According to Drake and Roe (1994) the role of principals are seen as functionally-dualistic. In the first dimension the principals are seen to administer and manage schools. The second dimension sees the principals in the teaching administration where they lead, influence and support teachers and students mentally, physically and morally to ensure a conducive and motivating teaching and learning process. Principals who are teaching leaders are referred to principals who are able to move schools effectively in teaching and learning. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) assert that teaching leadership are actions executed by principals who are capable to elevate the teaching and learning process which include the quality of the teaching process that involve teachers, students, parents, school management and plans, resource facilities and the school culture.

Formal education is obtained through the teaching and learning process in schools. Therefore everyone in schools is responsible to ensure the teaching and learning process are executed effectively. Ananda (1999) says that even though everyone can give suggestions and ideas, only principals decide their implementations. Thus the role of principals in schools is important to ensure teachers' effort and diligence is directed towards achieving effective education programs and to create a favorable environment for teachers, students and support staff to highlight their potentials. With excellent school principals, teachers will feel motivated to endorse their responsibilities as educators. Foo and Tang (2000) concur that teaching leadership practiced by principles not only can determine the aims of schools but it can also affect the performance of the individuals working under the organisation. Their leadership can strengthen teachers' belief, attitude, perception and background knowledge in executing the teaching and learning process. Thus these presage contexts will form part of the variables to be investigated in this research.

Any serious attempts to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning of literature in schools must start from an understanding of what people in classrooms do at present (Whitehead 1968). There needs to be an attempt to picture or imagine what happens in classrooms between teachers and learners. The learning process is no longer a 'one way street' whereby the teachers' role is merely to provide knowledge to students. As classrooms are for learners, teaching should be more learner-centered than teacher-centered (Nunan 1989). A two-way communication is crucial for teachers and learners to participate

interactively to create a harmonious learning environment. This will encourage learners to negotiate in an interactive learning process within the conventions of the teacher's teaching methods. According to Nunan (1989) there is lack of evidence about what happens in classrooms: how and what teachers teach and how and what students learn and the extent to which the English language is actually used. A review of the literature reveals that research on this situation is scarce in the Malaysian ESL context. Thus this study aimed at describing how teachers teach literature in Malaysian classrooms.

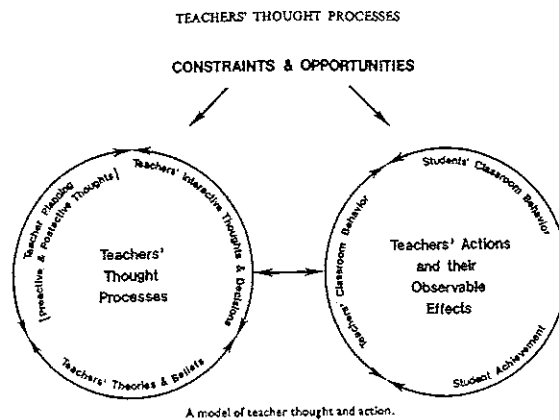
### **A Model of Teachers' Thought and Action**

It is beneficial to look at teacher's thought processes as it could increase our understanding of how and why the process of teaching looks and works as it does. Teacher thought processes complements the larger body of research on teaching effectiveness: this is because how teachers think, act and react determine effective teaching (Clark and Peterson 1986).

Teachers' actions and their observable effects are important as what is inside the teachers' head is translated here. Therefore this model depicts two important domains that involves the teaching process. Each domain is represented by a circle. The first domain is the teachers' thought processes comprising teachers interactive thoughts and decisions, teacher planning (preactive and postactive thoughts) and teachers' theories and beliefs. Teachers' thought processes occur "inside teachers' heads" and therefore they are unobservable and they are measurable. The second domain contains teachers' actions and their observable effects comprising teachers' classroom behaviour, students' classroom behaviour and student achievement. The phenomena involved in the teacher action domain are more easily measured and are more easily subjected to empirically research methods than are the phenomena involved in the teacher thought domain. Thus the variables for this particular research contained in both domains

The relationship between teacher classroom behaviour, student classroom behaviour and student achievement are reciprocal and therefore it is represented as cyclical or circular. This is because teacher behaviour affects student behaviour which in turn affects student achievement and ultimately student achievement. Alternatively, students' achievement may cause teachers to behave differently toward the student, which then affects student behaviour and subsequent student achievement.

Teacher's interactive thoughts and decisions and their preactive thoughts and decisions are important because they determine teachers' interactive teaching. Teachers think differently during interactive teaching compared to their thinking while not interacting with students. Teacher planning includes the thought processes that teachers engaged in prior to and after classroom interaction. Teachers' theories and beliefs represents the rich store of background knowledge teachers have that affects their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions.



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Any curriculum is interpreted and acted upon in the psychological context of teaching (Clark and Peterson 1986). In turn, this constitutes a large part of teacher's thinking, planning and decision-making, which naturally leads to teachers' instruction. The conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1) is aimed at enhancing the understanding on how and why the process of teaching occurs as it is and works as it does. This framework was adapted and built from Dunkin and Biddle (1974) bearing in mind the teaching and learning context/situation of the teaching of literature component in an ESL situation in Malaysia. It primarily looks into the teaching of literature in the English language component and examines how teacher's perception, teacher's background knowledge, teacher's beliefs and teachers' attitudes and the challenges and constraints imposed by the authorities and the nature of the students determine the teacher's teaching methods and the teaching of literature in school. It also examines students' perception of the way teachers teach.

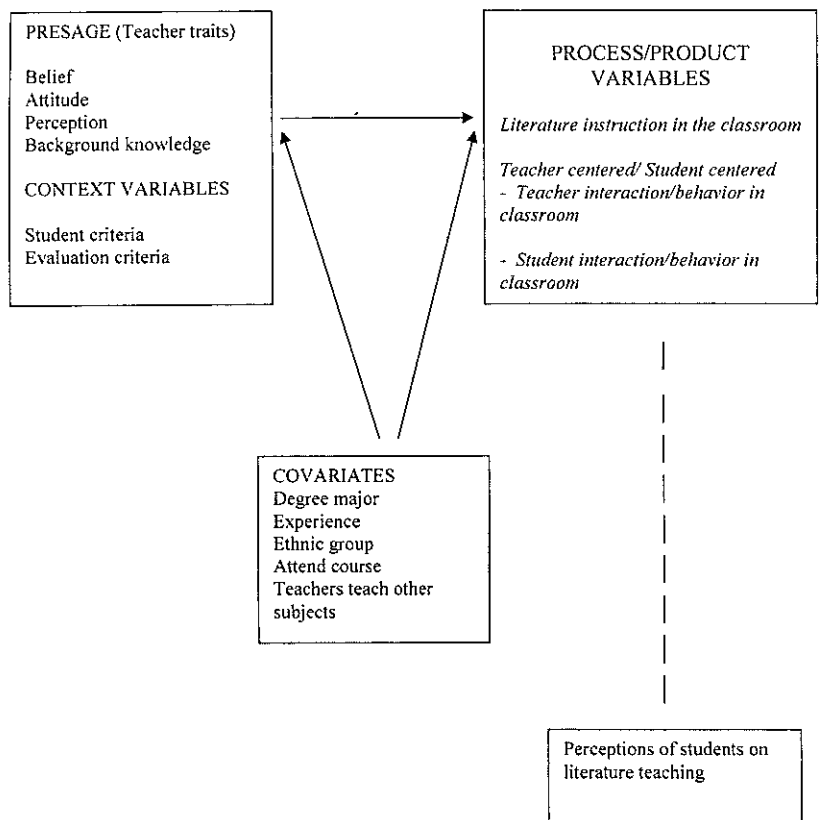


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study  
Source: Michael J. & Biddle, Bruce J. (1974) The Study of Teaching.  
New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.

## VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The independent variables of this research study are the teachers' thought processes; the variables belief, background knowledge, attitude, perception, student factor and evaluation factor while the dependent variables are student-centered teaching and teacher-centered teaching.

### i. Presage variables

Presage variables concern traits that teachers have that affect the teaching process (Dunkin and Biddle 1974; Clark and Peterson 1986). They further clarified that presage variables consist of teacher formative experiences, their training experiences and their personal attributes. Teacher formative experiences are inclusive of all the incidences and situations that teachers go through that can mold and shape their behavior and mental reactions. For instance, teacher's race, religion, culture and family background that has led their classification into ascribed positions in society. Their training experiences include the events that they went through while attending college or university. These events include the undergraduate courses taken, post-graduate education, teaching practice experience, in-service and all evidence that have the possibilities of shaping their beliefs in the teaching profession. Teacher attributes include their beliefs, attitude, perception and background knowledge toward the whole teaching/learning process. These properties are presumed to characterize the individual teachers because they carry these traits within themselves (Dunkin and Biddle 1974). They are embedded deep within themselves that they serve to explain the teachers' behavior in response to a variety of situations.

An attitude is a state of readiness, a tendency to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with a certain stimuli (Oppenheim 1973). Attitude is reinforced by beliefs (the cognitive component) and often attracts strong feelings (the emotional component) that will lead to particular forms of behavior (the action tendency component). Gardner (1985) defines individual attitude as 'an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude/object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinion about the referent'. According to Frankfort, Noachian and Nachmias (1996) as cited from Parilah Shah (1999), attitude is referred to as a person's inclinations, prejudices, ideas, fears and convictions about any specific topic. It is further described by their context (what the attitude is about), their direction (positive, neutral or negative feelings

about the object issue in question) and their intensity (an attitude may be held with greater and lesser vehemence).

Background knowledge in this research refers to the knowledge that teachers have that they bring to class and relates them to students. It consists of the related curriculum and literature components as prescribed by the Ministry of Education. It also describes the teachers' familiarity with and awareness of 'what' to teach. Shulman (1986) defines pedagogical content knowledge as subject matter knowledge for teaching. He sees it as an important way to understand the knowledge base of teaching. He further adds that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge influences teachers' classroom practices, which in turn influences students' learning and achievement. Strong pedagogical content knowledge are found to be positively linked to students' achievement (Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chiang & Loef 1989).

Teachers' perception is considered important variables in this research and forms part of teachers' presage variables. Klazky (1984) as cited in Woolfolk (1999) defined perception as the processes of determining the meaning of what are sensed. Perception occurs when teachers interpret a given meaning to stimuli in their classroom environment or in the students' classroom behavior. Perception is important in a teaching and learning situation as it reinforces teachers' decision- making on how to handle classroom situations. Past research have shown that thinking (perception) plays an important part in teaching.

Borg (2001) generally defines belief as a proposition, which is consciously or unconsciously held and accepted true by the individual holding it and which serves as a guide to thought and behavior. It also helps to frame our understanding of events. But in reference to teachers' beliefs, Borg specifically defines it as teachers' pedagogic beliefs that are relevant to their teaching. Richardson (1996) believes that teachers' beliefs come from three different stages of their educational career: personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction (pedagogical knowledge) and experience with formal knowledge.



## ii. Context Variables

Context variables consist of student factor and evaluation factor. Student factor and evaluation factor concern conditions to which teachers have to make personal adjustments. Context variables consist of the nature of the pupils and the physical or instructional situation or setting in which the educational process is taking place. With these two factors combined, maximum input learning could be achieved (Dunkin and Biddle 1974)

Student factor comprises the nature of the social background of the students- their attitude, motivation, interest and proficiency level that determine the nature of the classroom the teachers have to face. Their prior knowledge, goals, beliefs and dispositions they bring into class with them have a great impact on their learning. Like the teachers' early formative experiences, the students' social status and family background can determine classroom interaction (Dunkin and Biddle 1974). They further say that it is advantageous if teachers could observe and identify the nature of their students: their background and disposition they bring into class to reciprocate with teaching methods suitable for them to attain maximum learning.

The evaluation factor concerns the teaching hours available for literature teaching, preparation for examinations and choice of text. Given the nature of the evaluation factor, the researcher postulates that this would be a contributing factor in informing teachers' literature teaching behavior in the English language classroom. O'Sullivan (1991) asserts that evaluation is a strong driving force that pushes teachers to organize their teaching practices so that students will obtain maximum benefit. It is believed that teachers' performance is reflected in the students' achievement making teachers' work difficult with the little teaching hours available to achieve the desired results.

## iii. Process Variables

Process variables examine the actual activities that take place in classrooms. They comprise the observable behaviors of both pupils and teachers. As often assumed, the success of teaching is in the teachers' hands. Therefore, how and why the teachers behave in class matters. Process/product variables concern the actual activities of classroom teaching- what teachers and students do in class.

The methods employed are either teacher-centered or student-centered learning. This refers to all the observable activities that take place between teachers and students in class; how teachers teach, how students respond and so forth. Fung and Chow's (2002) review on pedagogy and classroom practices revealed that the teacher-centered and student-centered teaching methods are basic to most theoretical and teaching propositions. It is believed that much of the success in teaching in classrooms lies in the teachers' hands because they are responsible in stimulating students' interest and in gearing the mood and flow of the class. This is the final phase where the outcome of what and how teachers have performed in classrooms are shown. This outcome depends to a large extent on the nature of the teacher's instruction and on the students' reception. It is the observable changes that come about in students as a result of their involvement in classroom activities with their teachers and other students. The teacher-centered teaching method is inclined to be more traditional where the teacher leads the class most of the time, while the student-centered teaching method takes on the more progressive channel that allows for students maximum participation.

### **RESEARCH PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is:

1. To look at the level of teachers' (i) belief in (ii) attitude towards (iii) background knowledge about and (iv) perception of literature and literature teaching (prose).
2. To look at the extent of the evaluation factor influence on literature and literature teaching (prose).
3. To look at the extent of the student factor influence on literature and literature teaching (prose).
4. To look at the preferred literature teaching (prose) method in teaching prose: teacher-centered or student-centered teaching.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The participants for this study were the English language teachers teaching non-residential day schools in WPKL. The student population comprised Form One pupils from non-residential day schools in WPKL. Based on information from *Unit Data dan Maklumat, Jabatan Pendidikan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur*, as of 31st January 2003, there were as a whole, 969 teachers who were teaching the English language. Out of 969, the number of teachers whose major option was English was 817 and the number for the non-major option was 120. The number of Form One students attending the non-residential secondary schools was 21,966. There were 83 non-residential schools in WPKL. The major instrument used to collect relevant data was questionnaire. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency, percentage and mean were used to present and to summarize the data. To interpret the level of the mean scores, the researcher looked at the frequency, percentage and mean scores directly from the 5 point Likert scale. The researcher also looked at the mean score and level of very low, low, moderate, high and very high to look at the level of the teachers' and students' variables. The level and interpretation of mean scores are described in Table 1 below:

**TABLE 1: Interpretation of Mean Scores of Variables**

1.0 - 1.80	very low
1.81 - 2.60	low
2.61 - 3.40	moderate
3.41 - 4.20	high
4.21 - 5.0	very high

*Source: Score category breakdown adopted from Siti Rahaya and Salbiah (1996).*

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis – Teachers' Survey Questionnaire

Table 2 shows a summary of the descriptive statistical analysis for the teachers' survey questionnaire. The demarcation of the mean score was set as seen from Table 1. The overall mean scores of the variables ranged from a moderate level of 3.30 with a standard deviation of 0.32 to a high of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.4. As reflected from these scores, it showed that teachers had very positive attitude towards literature and literature teaching. This seems to be a clear sign that teachers were aware of what was expected of them and how they should gear their teaching. Challenges that they have to confront did not seem to deter their spirit. Their positive outlook and concrete personally held views they hold gave them strength and courage to accomplish their responsibilities.

Background knowledge had a mean score of 3.60 with respondents believing that teachers should have a fair amount of knowledge to teach students and kept them well inform on literature teaching materials. Having a substantial amount of background knowledge is crucial as it is the foundation for both content and pedagogical, as it is the foundation to the teaching profession. Teachers' belief had a moderate mean score of 3.30. Though at moderate level, this did not suggest that they did not perform well in their teaching. Results detail show that some aspects of their teaching produced high percentage input, an indication that they were aware of what was expected of them.

Student factor had a mean score of 3.54. Being aware of the nature of students bound by culture and traditions that had molded their attitude and behavior to a certain extent, teachers had a clear idea of how to approach students. In general, teachers were aware of their students' capability: to what extent they were proficient, responsive, motivated or interested. Consequently, they tailored their teaching to meet the students' requirements as reflected in the high scores of the student factor variable.

Evaluation had a moderate mean score of 3.38. As the criteria of evaluation was originally derived from the higher authorities; examination, teaching hours, nature of textbooks, etc, things were not within their means to change. As such, teachers had to perform task under limited circumstances. They had to adapt to situations to the best of their abilities.

Student factor and evaluation factor were important determinants how teachers could gear and focus on their teaching. The nature of the students and the nature of the implementation of the evaluation criteria provided a good platform for teachers to determine the best way to choose a teaching method. The level of background knowledge in the urban area of Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur was statistically high. This was expected as almost 86.0% of the teachers were TESL graduates acquiring all the content and pedagogical during their training and university years.

**TABLE 2: Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores Of Teachers' Variables**

Variables	Frequency	And	Percentage	Mean		Standard Deviation	Level
	Mean Score 4.21-5.0 (Very High)	Mean Score 3.41-4.20 (High)	Mean Score 2.61-3.40 (Medium)	Mean score 2.61-3.40 (Low)	Mean score 1-1.80 (Very Low)		
Teachers' Belief on literature and literature teaching	4 (1.4%)	84 (29.9%)	192 (68.1%)	2 (6.7%)	-	3.301	Moderate
Teachers' Background Knowledge on literature and literature teaching	30 (10.6%)	171 (60.6%)	75 (26.7%)	6 (2.1%)	-	3.609	High
Ts' Attitude on literature and literature teaching	121 (4.29%)	155 (55%)	6 (21.8%)	-	-	4.198	High (positive)
Teachers' Perception on literature and literature teaching	129 (45.7%)	148 (52.5%)	5 (1.8%)	-	-	4.202	High (Positive)
Student Factor	12 (4.3%)	168 (19.5%)	98 (34.8%)	4 (1.4%)	-	3.547	High
Evaluation Factor	8 (2.8%)	23 (8.2%)	138 (48.9%)	13 (4.6%)	-	3.382	Moderate
Teacher-Centered approach	79 (28.0%)	173 (61.3%)	29 (10.3%)	1 (0.4%)	-	3.926	High
Student-centered approach	41 (14.5%)	117 (41.5%)	111 (39.4%)	12 (4.2%)	1 (0.4%)	3.537	High

Teacher-centered teaching method has a high mean score of 3.92. Some teachers were aware of the benefits and importance of delivering through teacher-centered, as they believed students could gain maximum learning. Student-centered teaching is also at the high range score of 3.53. This method offered students a more diversified kind of learning where students are given the opportunity to maximise learning – students' involvement was optimal. The difference in means scores between teacher-centered and student-centered was 0.38. This suggests that teachers preferred to employ teacher-centered teaching method.

Ideally, it is best to have a combination of both teacher and student-centered teaching method (Carter and Long 1991) in literature classroom teaching. However, contrary to people's expectation and to the generalisation of the urban population, these research findings revealed that teachers more often employed teacher-centered teaching. This was not without a cause. Generally teachers will conduct student-centered teaching only with the good classes (the first or two good classes), as students from these classes were generally quite proficient and were quite interested and motivated. These students would normally attempt to participate in classroom activities creating a two-way involvement, stimulating both teachers and students to interact.

On the other hand, with the weak classes, teachers had to conduct teacher-centered teaching because of the nature of the students: passive, insufficient proficiency and unmotivated. This is evident in the high level range of the student factor variable with a mean score of 3.54 and a standard deviation 0.38 where teachers had to consider the nature of the students before taking a stance on which method to employ. Students in the weaker classes would not participate voluntarily having been aware of their own incapability. This is a drawback for some students as they were proven to be good in other subjects except the English language.

### **Summary of Descriptive Statistical Analysis – Students' Survey Questionnaire**

Generally set against the demarcation points for mean rating scores determined from Table 1, the overall mean scores for each of the variable varied from a moderate 4.22 (attitude) to 3.29 (teacher-centered teaching method). Students were able to perceive that teachers' attitude were very positive towards literature and literature teaching. This evidence was

apparent with the variable attitude having a very high level mean score of 4.22. The variable teaching atmosphere was also at the high level with an overall mean score of 3.77. As the teachers' attitude was positive, and the teaching atmosphere was very conducive, the impact of the classroom teachers' teaching was very strong. The overall mean score for this variable was at a high 3.79 as such students felt comfortable learning in a very conducive and a non-threatening situation.

Results also shows that students noted teachers using student-centered literature teaching method more often compared to teacher-centered. This was apparent as shown in the high level mean score of 3.70 for student-centered teaching compared to 3.29 for teacher-centered teaching method.

**TABLE 3 Frequency, Percentage And Mean Scores Of Students' Variables**

Variable	Frequency And Percentage					Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Level (Interpretation)
	Mean Score (Very High)	Mean Score (High)	Mean Score (Moderate)	Mean Score (Low)	Mean Score (Very Low)			
Teachers Attitude	202 (53.6%)	146 (38.7%)	28 (7.4%)	1 (0.3%)	-	4.22	0.52	Very high
Teaching Atmosphere	55 (14.6%)	257 (68.2%)	63 (16.7%)	2 (0.5%)	-	3.79	0.65	High
Impact on Students	148 (39.3%)	163 (43.2%)	57 (15.1%)	7 (1.9%)	2 (0.5%)	3.98	0.65	High
Teacher Centered	39 (10.3%)	126 (33.4%)	14 (37.5%)	62 (16.4%)	1 (2.4%)	3.29	0.70	Moderate
Student-Centered	69 (18.4%)	209 (55.4%)	91 (24.1%)	8 (2.1%)	-	3.70	0.50	High

## FINDINGS ON THE VARIABLES

Clark and Peterson (1986) and Dunkin and Biddle (1973) developed their own respective model of teachers' thought processes and they complemented the mental models into research teaching. The Clark and Peterson (1986) model depicts the two domains that are significantly involved in the teaching process. They are the thought processes domains and the other one is the teachers' action and their observable effects. The domains differ in the extent to which the processes are observable or non-observable. Teachers' thought processes occur in the teachers' head and mind and therefore they are unobservable. While teachers' actions and their behavior and students' behavior and their achievement performance are all observable and unobservable phenomena.

Dunkin and Biddle (1974), developed teachers' mental processes through presage, context, process and product variables. His model is similar to the model by Clark and Peterson (1986) as both focused on teachers' mental processes that affect teachers' behavior towards students and how they shape the teachers' teaching. Teachers behave in a certain way in classrooms and these behaviors have certain effects on students. Dunkin and Biddle (1974) believed that teachers' classroom behavior might affect students' classroom behavior and in turn affect students' behavior and achievement. Teachers' thought processes are encompassed within the cognitive domain. They consist of teachers' planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions and their theories and beliefs. Teachers' planning includes thought processes that they engaged in before and after classroom interaction. Teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions are engaged during classroom interaction and this is an important factor because whatever thoughts and decisions the teachers have will determine the classroom atmosphere.

Thus the variables involved in this research involved teachers' thought processes (teaching) and the context factors (student's learning) closely related to the teaching and learning process. The variables, which will be discussed below are the teachers' belief, attitude, background knowledge and perception. The other two variables are student factor and evaluation factor.

The dependent variables involved in this research were belief, background knowledge, attitude, perception, student factor and



evaluation factor while the independent variables were student-centered teaching and teacher-centered teaching. The dependent variables were called presage/context variables while the independent variables process/product variables. The positions of the variables, as they complement each other in this research, are illustrated in the Research Conceptual Framework in Figure 1.

Banos and Elia (2003) see attitude as the individual prevailing tendency to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object (persons or group of people, institutions or events) where it can be positive (values) or negative (prejudice). They believe that three components shape teachers' attitude; cognitive component, the knowledge about an attitude object, whether accurate or not; affective component, feelings towards the object; behavioral component, the action taken towards the object. Object here refers to the student in class. Thus teachers' attitude build up from the three-component play an important role in shaping teachers' classroom postures towards students. Sparks (1988) showed that improving teachers have a positive attitude towards classroom teaching. They are more than ever willing to experiment with recommended practices learned during in-service training and seminars compared to the non-improving ones.

The research results revealed that teachers have a very positive (mean=4.19) attitude towards literature and literature teaching. They have a concrete personally held views that could not deter their spirit to accomplish their responsibilities. They have positive attitude with a strong perception that what they are doing is correct, driving classroom actions and influencing the teacher change process. Richardson (1996) posits that attitude and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions. Thus the attitudes they possess drive much of the literature teaching method in classrooms. These teachers who possess these criteria, are able to process new information and react to the possibilities of change and teach.

Teachers with strong pedagogical background knowledge were found to represent content more accurately and to focus on children's understanding and respond with appropriate explanations. This research revealed that literature teachers in urban Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur have a high level of background knowledge. Demographic data showed that more than half of the respondents were TESL graduates. The

non-graduate ones comprised teachers who were very experienced, with at least six years minimum and 20 years maximum. Having had enough background knowledge exposure on literature teaching, teachers were comfortable with the exposure they received. They felt that they had adequate knowledge to teach the subject effectively, thus teaching with utmost confidence.

Povel (1992) asserted that prior experience and knowledge of pre-service teachers are crucial in determining their teaching performance. He noted that in-service teachers felt insecure about their level of subject-matter knowledge and indicated that they needed to know more subject matter before entering the classroom. Having had enough background knowledge, the teachers maintained confidence to teach literature effectively. This is because they know exactly what to teach the students and how to do that. This research revealed that teachers in WPKL have a high level (mean=3.60) of background knowledge. This showed that the teachers received their background knowledge from various sources indicating that they bring in this knowledge through from past experience as well. Teachers were aware of the various teaching methods available indicating that they are well informed on current issues.

Zitlow (1990) as cited from McLure and Zitlow (1991) finds that perception affects the teaching approach and the learning environment. They said that teachers' perception on aesthetic education emphasized on what is most important and what is basic. The teachers believe that students should be allowed to be co-readers and co-creators of meaning, having the opportunity to select, explore and connect ideas they respond to text. Eisner (1978) stands on the belief that when reading literature text, there must be a human contribution of the synthesis of past and present, an interaction of all the knowledge system we have that are appropriate to the expressive form we attempt to read. This idea is relevant to Rosenblatt (1980) whose belief in aesthetic reading, sound and rhythm and association and sense are perceived together, blended into an experienced meaning.

This research results revealed that teachers' perception towards literature teaching is at the high level (4.19). They were aware that literature is seen as a vehicle towards understanding life because prose offered in texts most of the time taught them to be critical thinkers and subsequently to be more 'human'. They must have a well-defined and clear perception of the literature texts that they were teaching to enhance their teaching process.

How teachers think and believe is crucial as it determines the nature of the on-going classroom of their actual behavior towards students. Teachers' beliefs towards literature and literature teaching decided how their behavior could influence students' motivation and interest. Pajares (1992) noted that teachers' beliefs are central to determining their actual behavior towards students. If teachers can identify the level of students' capabilities, they will try to select and adjust their behavior and instructional choice accordingly. Research conducted by Flowerday and Shraw (2000) confirmed Pajares's (1992) findings related to instructional choices and assert that instructional choices ranged from function of content areas, topic of study, reading materials, methods of assessment, activities, social agreements to procedural choices. From the researchers' literature research reading, all of the variables mentioned above were consistent with the recommendations for students' choice made by educational researchers.

The results of this research indicate that teachers possessed a substantial amount of beliefs, though at moderate level (mean=3.30), towards literature and literature teaching and about the use of teaching choice in classrooms. Results also show that respondents are aware of their duty and responsibility to teach literature. They believed that literature is important for their students' development, having been aware that a variety of teaching techniques would benefit for students' learning. Like attitude, beliefs were thought to drive actions and to improve students' learning.

Borg (2001) says that teachers who possess knowledge of subject matter have a significant effect on their beliefs on instructional choices. Teachers who possess strong background knowledge are confident to deliver their presentation as they accept the realistic awareness about their teaching task. Their instructional choices are clear and specific having a wide repertoire of teaching methodologies to suit the variety of learning styles within any classroom. Shulman (1987) cited in Borg (2001) conducted a study on teachers' background knowledge and instructional choices. The study revealed that a teacher who possess a well developed understanding of literature but who was uncertain of her understanding of English grammar displayed strikingly different teaching behaviors during literature and grammar lessons; in the former she was interactive and learner-centered while in the latter she was deductive and teacher-centered.

Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989:28) cited in Borg (2001) also reported in their study that the English teachers who were uncertain of their own knowledge of grammar tried to avoid teaching wherever possible. They say that teachers' lack of content knowledge can also affect the teaching style of instructions. In teaching material they are uncertain of, teachers may choose to lecture rather than soliciting questions from students for fear of not being able to give the correct responses. In teaching grammar, a teacher raced through a review of the homework avoiding eye contact with the students she thought might ask difficult questions.

Evaluation factor in this research are the teaching hours allocated for literature classes, the anxiety teachers faced to teach in preparation for examinations, and the resource materials/texts provided and recommended by the Ministry of Education. These were the elements that determined and confined teachers' teaching to a certain extent. Research results revealed that evaluation factor had a moderate influence on literature teaching. Though moderately driven, teachers still showed emphasis and concern for these aspects as they had a strong influence on how teachers accomplished their teaching tasks.

Examination is a curriculum evaluation often regarded as a test of attainment. Roles of examination are wide. They informed students' progress to the students themselves, to the parents and to the teachers. They assist students to reflect and evaluate their general level of attainment. They assist teachers for the purposes of diagnosis for individual students so that appropriate action can be taken. They assist the authorities and curriculum implementers to evaluate the success of curricula and to find out if it has achieved its aims.

In this research context, teachers were urged, naturally within themselves that they were teaching for examination purposes aside from sharing their knowledge with students. Thus the feelings of tense towards examination was apparent to ensure that students did well in their subjects, in which, if students did well or not, would reflect the nature of their teaching. Expectations from various quarters: students, parents and head of schools could burden teachers. Subsequently, when teachers and students were concerned about marks and performance, the pleasure of enjoying teaching and learning literature were lost to the pressure of trying to pass examination.

The number of teaching hour allocated for teaching literature was, more often than not, insufficient. When teachers had to rush through a text, naturally they omitted some points, in which connections might be lost on the way. Research results revealed that in the midst of enjoying a simulation or role-play or while engrossed in a heated discussion, the bell rang and they had to stop. It could be more meaningful if more time were given where students could enjoy learning without interruption, which could leave behind a pleasant learning experience.

The texts allocated for literature could be made more diversified having themes values and culture closer to home which allowed them to understand better. The authorities could consider prescribing reading materials relevant to students' life experiences. Otherwise, when students were not familiar with text, it could stumble their interest and motivation to go further. Currently, the texts allocated for Form One students seemed relevant having local culture and setting. The only imperfection is that the variety of texts is limited. The Ministry of Education (MOE) could have catered a wider range of texts for teachers to choose for their students accordingly. Research revealed that not only texts were catered from a limited range, resource materials were also insufficient for students to make revision. Subsequently, they have to buy workbooks from bookstores.

Student criteria in this research included aspects of students' interest, disposition, and motivation towards the learning of literature. The researcher was interested in these aspects considering the nature of students that we have in Malaysian classrooms. Jassem and Jassem (1997) from International Islamic University Malaysia conducted a research to find out why Malaysians were rather passive in class. They said that generally, Malaysian students tend to be silent in class as a mark of politeness. While Arab students were talkers, Malaysians were silent in class. In their research, they found that a good number of Malay students adopted to be silent as a mark of politeness and deference.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers' acceptance and their interpretations of recent major policy changes in the English literature component nationwide were basically positive but with mixed feelings despite the fact that they had to admit they struggled through the process. They shared their struggles, confusions, worries, and hopes with other teachers along with the attempt to level with outcomes, proficiencies, indicators, criteria and standard. Their relative success or failure carries consequential evidences visible to parents and public, which proved to be a formidable task. This research revealed that teachers possess a high level of background knowledge and hold positive attitude and perception on literature and literature teaching. They demonstrated a sense of responsibility towards their students. The high level of student factor was an evident that they were concern about them. This implied that they were generally optimistic towards the success of the running of this program. This finding is consistent with local research conducted by Ganakumaran et al (2003).

Teachers' positive attitude and perception towards literature and literature teaching seemed to drive much of the literature curriculum gearing on teaching strategies that they adapted sensitively to the needs of our non-native tongue students of literature in English. Their level of background knowledge was high suggesting that they possessed a greater sensitivity and sense of awareness indicating a relative greater understanding of the world. Subsequently, these teachers were capable of stimulating a greater interest and involvement among subjects. Being one of the covariates, teachers' experience impacted classroom-teaching practices deserving the term wise and learned teacher who can create a clear avenue for literature learning among learners. Student factor had a strong influence upon teachers' teaching agenda: their choice of text and teaching methods especially. Understanding the nature of our students socially and culturally is crucial to gauge into appropriate teaching perspectives. The high level of teacher-centered and student-centered teaching method proved that teachers take on the pro-active role to cater students according to their capability level and their students' receptiveness.

The preferred choice of teaching methods, teacher-centered or student-centered employed in selected urban secondary schools in WPKL was determined by the students' proficiency level and their readiness and willingness to participate despite their language deficiency. Students from

these classes were more willing to participate, possessing a substantial amount of proficiency to communicate. Teachers teaching the first 2-3 classes holding more proficient students most often practiced student-centered teaching method. Even this fact depends on the location of the school and the socio-economic status of the students. Students who come from homes that have maximum exposure to the language and students who come from an English speaking background will be able to communicate better and are more fluent with their teachers. Some such schools are located in strategic areas of central urban parallel with the high income of the occupants.

The student-centered teaching methodology is practiced through the adoption of the personal response and reader response approach, that is, group work, whole discussion and role-play. Before students get into their respective groups, teachers will brief students about the text they are going to discuss. After that they will give topics related to text for the different groups to discuss.

Teacher-centered approach is emphasized and extremely practiced with the students in the weaker classes. Students in these classes do not participate willingly unless called. It should be a rare case, if any at all, students initiate interaction process with teachers. Most of the time teachers conduct the class, teaching and giving instructions while students listened and followed. In general, teacher-centered instructional method took place through the adoption of the recitation method. It has been mentioned before that the recitation method generally focused on the 'Wh' questions of what, why, when, who, whose, where and how, likening it to the traditional transmission method.

In this context, the role of school principals cannot be put to the periphery. Schools are complex social institutions that encompass, among others, challenging teaching tasks to produce future bearers of the country. These challenging tasks need forceful school principals that possess leadership criteria that is dynamic and flexible and who are sensitive to their surroundings and situations and to the needs of teachers especially. The tasks of school principals are no doubt tedious and taxing. They carry a load of responsibilities to plan and lead the daily operations of schools: the implementation of teaching activities and the administration of various forms of management under their authorities. As such they should be able to implement all responsibilities within the atmosphere of various policies, rules and regulation stated. According to Sergiovanni (1995:83):

*In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school...it is his leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morale of teacher and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become...if a school is a vibrant, innovative, child centered place; if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching; if students are performing to the best of their ability one can almost always point to the principals' leadership as the key to success.*

Schools with successful teachers and students possess excellent school principals that are able to sail and anchor the whole school organization to their desired destinations.

The power of good leadership and administration in schools is crucial in determining the success of students, namely, the minds and motives of school principals and teachers (teachers' thoughts and actions). Many studies, Bennis (1985), Rosso (1990), Robiah (1998a), Mohd Salleh (2000), Zulkifli et al (2000), Abas and Balasandran (2002), Gabriel (2005) among others, have concluded that variables that often come with effective teaching are: high expectations, safe and organized environment, clear mission and vision, strong leadership qualities, monitoring of students, and staff development in making decisions. In its emphasis on academic achievements, principals are responsible in determining the level of academic excellence of students. In this case, school principals can act as motivators in school curriculums; help teachers determine the objectives and aims of specific subjects; determine the appropriate teaching climate and evaluate teachers' teaching. They could always monitor teaching and learning programs to be at par with currents trends.

School principals, especially, and teachers are responsible to move schools to achieve what has been planned. Thus the biggest challenge for school principles is to ensure school organizations are working on smoothly and efficiently. Al Ramaiah (1999) concurs that the leadership of school principals has significant effects towards innovative education. The success and failure of a school system depends highly on the ability of the principals to lead their staffs. Therefore principals should have good knowledge, excel training and ample wisdom to implement their role as leaders so as to influence, to lead and to move the whole school organization towards achieving its desired aims.



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