

Phonetics and Phonology: Narrowing the Gap between Received and Experiential Knowledge Through the Creative Project

BAHIYAH BT DATO' HJ. ABDUL HAMID

ABSTRACT

It is the opinion of the writer that project work is underutilized in pre-service language teacher education especially in content courses and therefore, much of what project work can offer to empower trainees in their own learning is relatively under-explored. This paper will discuss the benefits of the creative project assignment based on the findings of a study carried out at the Language Centre, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM henceforth) in the 1990/91 and 1991/92 sessions of the programme to investigate two groups of pre-service teacher trainees' perception regarding the creative project assignment. The main emphasis of this paper will be on describing a project work (or "creative project" as the writer has called it) assignment incorporated in a content course entitled "English Phonetics and Phonology" in the Bachelor of Education Teaching English as a Second Language, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia/Institut Teknologi MARA Programme (B.ED TESL UKM/ITM Programme, henceforth) that gave trainees the opportunity to apply what was learned (received knowledge) and put to practise what was learned into the creative project (experiential knowledge) to come up with "trainee-produced" end-products. This paper will as its conclusion propose that the creative project assignment can and should be included in content courses in pre-service English language teacher education because it can add alternative choices to teaching methods to develop knowledgeable, independent, creative, thinking, imaginative and interesting English language teachers.

ABSTRAK

Pada hemat penulis, projek kreatif merupakan satu tugas yang belum lagi digunakan dengan sepenuhnya terutama sekali dalam kursus-kursus kandungan program latihan pra-perkhidmatan perguruan dan oleh kerana ini, manafaat sepenuhnya projek kreatif kepada guru-guru pelatih untuk mengambil tanggungjawab ke atas pembelajaran mereka sendiri kurang mencapai potensi sepenuhnya. Kertas kerja ini membincangkan keberkesanan tugas projek kreatif berdasarkan dapatan penyelidikan yang

dijalankan di Pusat Bahasa, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (selepas ini disebut UKM) dalam sesi 1990/91 dan sesi 1991/92 untuk mengkaji persepsi Dua kumpulan pelatih-pelatih guru akan tugas projek kreatif. Penekanan utama kertas kerja ini ialah untuk menghuraikan satu kerja projek (atau apa yang dipanggil projek kreatif oleh penulis) sebagai satu tugas yang telah dimasukkan ke dalam kursus kandungan bertajuk "English Phonetics & Phonology" salah satu kursus yang terdapat di dalam Program Sarjana Muda Pendidikan Pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia/Institut Teknologi MARA (selepas ini disebut Program B.BD. TESL UKM/ITM) yang telah memberi peluang guru-guru pelatih untuk menggunakan apa yang dipelajari (ilmu melalui pengalaman) untuk mendapatkan bahan-bahan pengajaran yang tulen dan boleh digunakan hasil guru-guru pelatih sendiri. Sebagai kesimpulan, cadangan boleh dibuat supaya tugas projek kreatif boleh dan harus dimasukkan ke dalam kursus-kursus kandungan program latihan praperkhidmatan perguruan Bahasa Inggeris untuk menambahkan pilihan-pilihan kepada kaedah pengajaran supaya dapat membina guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris yang berilmu serta berdikari, kreatif, berfikir, imaginatif dan menarik.

INTRODUCTION

The researcher's self-consciousness about her own teaching and trainees' learning procedures in a content area (subject matter) course entitled "English Phonetics and Phonology" in the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM Program, a pre-service teacher training program in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, led to a trainer initiated research. Through this trainer initiated research, the researcher was encouraged to plan, implement and evaluate specific aspects of her own teaching and trainees' learning in two semesters of two sessions specifically Semester I, 1990/91 Session and Semester I, 1991/92 session. Feedback through observations and trainees' feedback through the administration of questionnaires of the researcher's own teaching as well as feedback through observation of researcher's teaching from two other colleagues who shared the teaching of the course with the researcher for the above stated time period were taken into account of not only to improve the researcher's teaching, to improve the course, but also to test the researcher's own introspections about the development of trainees' autonomy and trainees' learning.

The findings this paper seeks to present are the result of the researcher's introspection regarding pre-service teacher trainees- that they can be empowered to reach their "maximum potential" by taking charge of their own learning. As Brundage and Mac-Kesacher (1980:21-

31 cited in Nunan 1988:22–23) put it, trainees learn best “when they are involved in developing learning objectives for themselves which are congruent with their current and idealised self concept.” Teaching experiences, intuitions, shared knowledge and other available nonquantifiable classroom evidence have made it known that extrinsic motivation in the form of instrumental motivation played an important part in language learning and language teacher training especially in higher levels of education more so in the content area courses and this is no exception in the present B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program as evident by the statement that “adults learn best when the content is personally relevant to past experience or present conditions” (Brundage and MacKesacher, 1980:21–31 cited in Nunan 1988:22–23). However, it was observed that instrumental motivation in this context was largely influenced by what trainees perceived to be personal and meaningful in their learning experience. Instrumental motivation in relation to the creative project meant relating the use of the creative project to the world of work and higher level education. In principle, this also meant that trainees wanted to be responsible for the shaping of their own learning relying on such resources as their own personal experiences, their innate abilities, acquired skills, prior knowledge and their own points-of-view (Brundage and MacKesacher 1980:21–31 cited in Nunan 1988:22–23). The creative project assignment introduced in this course facilitated this first and foremost by placing the responsibility for the shaping of the learning process on the trainees themselves. Further, it combined the above aspects simultaneously to lead to active and cooperative learning in group interactions providing the ground for the application of what was learned in the content area to be put into immediate practise into the creative project in order to produce authentic and usable “trainee made” end products.

BACKGROUND

The running of the six year (two years matriculation and four years degree program) B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program commenced in July 1989 with three fairly distinct teaching units contributing to the degree program – The Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM, hereafter), the Language Centre, UKM and the College of Preparatory Studies, MARA Institute of Technology, Shah Alam, Selangor (PPP/ITM, hereafter). The B.ED TESL degree is conferred by the Faculty of Education, UKM and the program aims to train Education Ministry of Malaysia sponsored students after the Secondary Form-5

SPM-level to grow in maturity, confidence and competence to become skillful and professional English teachers.

Potential undergraduates of this program are directed first to the Matriculation Program for two years for proficiency type courses at PPP/ITM, Shah Alam, Selangor before proceeding to the first year of the degree program also in the said institution. The potential undergraduates of this program then continue their training for the second, third and final years of the degree program in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor.

Courses offered in this program comprise of three different components within the program. They are compulsory University courses, Education courses, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL, hereafter) courses such as Language Skills, TESL, Literature, Linguistics and related courses. In the second year of the program (14 weeks per semester) trainees register for the linguistics content area course entitled "English Phonetics and Phonology" after completing "Introduction to Language and Linguistics" also a linguistics component content area course in the first semester of year one in PPP/ITM. "English Phonetics and Phonology" is not a "train-them-to" course in order to develop trainees' own competence in pronunciation. Rather, it is a course aimed at equipping trainees to be practising English language teachers with some basic knowledge in English phonetics and phonology. Individual speech sounds, combination of speech sounds, linkage of speech sounds, word stress, rhythm, weak forms, sentence stress, juncture, intonation, the notions of appropriacy and intelligibility were some topics covered in this course. Varieties of pronunciation and accent, practical techniques for teaching in the classroom were also discussed in the course taking into consideration the inclusion of the above factors in the English language syllabus specification for secondary schools (known by its Bahasa Malaysia acronym KBSM).

THE PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Trainees are expected by the second semester of the third year to partake in an academic exercise by writing a dissertation or completing a creative project as part fulfilment for the B.ED TESL degree but upon personal observation through consultation and informal interviews with individual trainers responsible for the planning and teaching of the linguistics component content area courses as well as Education courses, also informal interviews with trainees, trainees in this program have not been given much opportunity to shape their own learning or to learn on their own in order to be ready for the academic exercise or the teaching

practicum although trainers in the program are in agreement that English language teachers need to be not only knowledgeable but also imaginative, creative, independent, interesting, thinking and interested in a wide range of topics. As far as the researcher is concerned, nowhere in the early part of this program are trainees given the chance to be actively involved in shaping their own learning and certainly it is clear that most trainees do not know how to relate what has been learned, (received knowledge or information input in content area courses to the world of work, i.e. to English language teaching and higher level education) or even why they have to relate what has been learned to the world of work. This neglect in the involvement of trainees in their own learning process often comes with the age old excuse by trainers who are proponents of "theory-first-practise-later" approach that "it (theory and practice) cannot be done all at the same time." Because of this the application of what has been learned is left to the trainees or left too often to take care of itself. It is the researcher's opinion that often what teacher trainers teach in the content area courses do not reach the minds of trainees. When this happens trainers often complain of the lack of motivation, indifference or even utter stupidity of their trainees. From the researcher's personal observation, the truth of the matter is not so much the trainees but with the teacher training content area curriculum especially in the Linguistics component. So much of it is passive. Within this context the creative project introduced in "English Phonetics and Phonology" in the early part of the program seemed to offer the best hope of converting what was passive learning as mentioned earlier into active meaningful and personal learning opportunities.

THE STUDY

The creative project assignment introduced in the said course seemed to be able to pave the way for the kind of learning opportunities for trainees that best matched the assumption stated earlier in this paper. The creative project was first introduced and incorporated by the researcher as a component into a newly planned course in the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program in semester I, 1990/91 session. At the end of semester I, 1990/91 session, a questionnaire was administered in order to investigate trainees' perceptions regarding the inclusion of the creative project and whether trainees gained from participating in the creative project; if so, what were the gains. In semester I of the following session, the 1991/92 session, having analysed trainees' feedback obtained from the earlier questionnaire survey administered to a population of 145 trainees, the researcher made relevant changes to the procedures involved in the creative project

and increased the evaluation of the creative project to 30% from 20% previously for the overall course evaluation. A second questionnaire, contents identical to the first, was administered to a different population of 106 trainees at the end of semester 1, 1991/92 session for the same purpose as the earlier survey. This paper presents findings of two survey studies that provide a profile of trainees' perceptions regarding the inclusion of the creative project in a content area pre-service teacher training course. It also hopes to make a case for the inclusion of the creative project assignment as part and parcel of every content area course in language teacher education especially in the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program to develop not only knowledgeable but also independent, creative, thinking, imaginative and interesting English language teachers.

THE SUBJECTS

The subjects of this study were two groups of second year B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program teacher trainees who registered for the "English Phonetics and Phonology" course and who participated in the creative project as part fulfilment for the said course. The questionnaires were administered first to a group of trainees numbering 145 in total and registered for the course in semester I of the 1990/91 session (Group A, hereafter) and later the questionnaires were administered to a second group of trainees numbering 106 in total and this group registered for the course in Semester I of the 1991/92 session (Group B, hereafter).

THE CREATIVE PROJECT IN THIS STUDY

Specifically, the objectives of the creative project for "English Phonetics and Phonology" are to enable trainees to:

1. bridge the gap between what has been learned – information input/received knowledge and the application of this knowledge-information output/experiential knowledge for real-life situation namely for the work place-classroom environment.
2. be aware of the reality that they as future teachers can themselves and on their own apply the linguistic discoveries of others to pedagogic problems of their own.
3. self-develop especially in their mental and perceptual capacity through thinking about planning and actualizing the "who, what, where, why, how" of the whole project and new ways of presenting information in the form of the end-product and project report.

4. relate to the subject matter/content area through their own experiences inside and outside of their own classroom experience. This includes to help trainees use skills and link knowledge already developed prior the course towards the creation of the end-product and the writing of the project report.

5. actively, meaningfully and personally involve themselves in the subject matter/content area and work with the subject matter/content area from their own standpoint and their own points-of-view to increase motivation and interest.

6. work in a co-operative and supportive manner on activities that are equal in importance that may be subject matter/content area or otherwise in nature.

7. organize information input/received knowledge through the development of the end product and project report through group discussions, negotiations, verifications and so on thus making the English language (written or spoken) the take-off point for effective communication to work.

In the context of the content area course entitled “English Phonetics and Phonology” within the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program, trainees in group A and B were divided into groups of three yielding 48 creative projects for group A and 35 creative projects for group B. Trainees were divided so that they could concentrate their efforts and attention on reaching an agreed goal – the creation of authentic, usable and tested end-products and a three page project report. The creative project in this course was an extended 14 weeks multi-skilled activity focussing on topics of group choice within the study of English phonetics and phonology. Trainees act autonomously. They play a crucial part in all major decision making related to the project especially those related to their choice of group members; appropriate working methods/action plans; the “scheme of work”/project timetable within the stipulated framework of 14 weeks; “rules and regulations” of working together in a group; and the nature of the “end-product” as well as the writing of the three page project report that should accompany the end-product.

On the part of the trainees the creative project involved research into the subject matter/content area as well as research into real classroom problems and needs; information of which are discussed in the project report. Trainees were actively involved in group discussions, negotiations, verifications and so on using the English language as the take-off point for effective communications towards the development of the end-product and the project report. The end-product which may be in many different forms for example, a set of OHP transparencies, charts, handouts, worksheets, board games, video tapes, audio cassettes and

so on may be created (some may be adaptation, reformulation or supplementation of existing English language teaching/learning materials) in an attempt to answer classroom problem(s) or meet some classroom need(s) within the English language teaching-learning situation in Malaysia. Trainees through the creative project are made aware that in the English language syllabus for secondary schools (or KBSM), the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and the language content namely, grammar, the sound system and vocabulary are listed in the respective yearly (forms 1 – 5) syllabus specification as the minimum content to be taught.

The types of creative projects undertaken by trainees in Group A and B in this course can be divided into two main types: a) Information and research type creative projects, e.g. the phonological process of deletion and addition of velar nasals in Terengganu dialect. The end-product was a teachers' manual to suggest a few teaching techniques on overcoming these problems; and b) Materials production creative projects, e.g. end-product in the form of a board game in which students of lower and secondary levels are exposed to the problems that the English spelling system often fails to represent in an unambiguous way some of the consonant sounds of English words, or a board game in which students review the stress patterns of English and stress patterns of nouns and verbs. Of the two types of projects discussed earlier, the materials production creative projects made up more than half of the type of creative projects most undertaken by trainees perhaps because this type of creative project were seen by trainees as being of immediate use in the classroom as well as an activity to provide more space to practise their creativity.

On the part of the teacher trainers it was possible for the trainers involved to assume the roles of facilitator, coordinator, strategist and resource person/consultant when trainees were involved in the creative project assignment. Based on the project report and the end-product, the creative project made up 20% of the overall course evaluation for group A and 30% of the overall course evaluation for group B. Trainees were evaluated on a group basis and evaluation was based on originality, creativity, practicality, effectiveness and overall impression of end-product as well as language and organization of the content in the project report.

DESIGN

Two questionnaire surveys were carried out and questionnaires were administered to two groups of trainees – Groups A and Group B numbering 145 and 106 respectively at two different points in time. Out of the 145 questionnaires administered to trainees in Group A only 131

trainees responded making the percentage of respondents 90.3% of the total population and out of 106 questionnaires administered to trainees in Group B only 82 trainees responded making the percentage of respondents 77.4% of the total population. The first and second sets of questionnaires were identical in content and consisted of a total of 28 questions of both open and close form types to elicit trainees' opinions of the course, the procedures of the course and trainees' opinions about the trainer teaching the course. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section of 24 questions dealt with trainees' perception to determine on a 6 point scale ranging from 1 – not at all descriptive to 6 – very descriptive of the trainer's teaching procedures. The second section of four questions were of both open and close form types to gauge trainees' responses to the aspects of the course they found most valuable. The first question invited trainees to assess the course on a six point scale ranging from 1 – not at all worthwhile to 6 – very worthwhile. The second question invited trainees to respond to aspects of the course they found most valuable. They were to choose from topic coverage, project, assignments, test/quizzes and others. Trainees were asked to define the "others" category if they so choose to respond to this. The third question was a free form comment so that trainees could fill in their own perceptions regarding the most valuable aspect of the course they responded to in the previous question. The last question asked trainees to give further suggestions to improve the course. This paper is concerned with the findings of trainees' feedback of part two of the questionnaires only for both of the survey studies.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study first and foremost acknowledges the fact that trainees as "clients" of a course and "clients" of a program can be excellent judges of the quality of instruction given, their own progress, the learning arrangement made and the materials needed and so on (Nunan 1988:134; see also Brindly 1984: 15 cited in Nunan 1988:24) and can therefore be of assistance to suggest what they want out of a course or a program and can be motivated on that basis. This study also acknowledges trainees' perception as valid and important sources of information for the improvement of the course with regards to their learning process and as clients of a course trainees are easily accessible and have "self investment" in the course and the program (Nunan 1989:71).

This study found that there were consistent positive orientations towards the course in both surveys as can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Assessment of the course by groups

Group	Not at all Worthwhile					Very Worthwhile
	1	2	3	4	5	
Rating						
Group A (N = 131)	0%	1.53%	6.87%	22.90%	47.32%	21.37%
Group B (N = 82)	0%	0%	8.54%	31.70%	47.56%	12.20%

Clearly 91.59% of the respondents in Group A rate the course as worthwhile while 91.46% of the respondents in Group B rated the same for the course. Tables 2 and 3 present the rank orders according to percentage of the aspects of the course trainees perceived as valuable for Groups A and B respectively.

It can be seen from both Tables 2 and 3 that trainees in both groups A and B have consistently high positive orientations towards the creative project either on its own (41.98% and 53.43% respectively) or combined with other aspects of the course such as topic coverage, assignments, and so on (40.46% and 36.57% respectively). Though it can be interpreted that trainees did value the creative project above other aspects of the course, it should not be concluded with complete confidence that the creative project assignment was the only valuable aspect of the course. Trainees' responses to the value of the creative project together with a combination of aspects such as topic coverage, assignments and so on must also be taken together as valuable aspects of the course. While both groups showed positive orientations to the creative project, in comparing data in Tables 2 and 3, it can be seen that trainees in Group B show a higher orientation towards the creative project than Group A – 52.43% compared to 41.98% respectively. This seems fair because trainees in Group B had at the beginning of the course been exposed to examples of the previous group's creative projects and they had a better idea of what the creative project entailed from discussions with their "seniors" (Group A trainees). As the researcher sees it trainees from Group A started with what literally can be termed as "from nothing" as evident from a response by a Group A trainee quoted from the administered questionnaire, "The creative project was very new to us".

Related to the question which aspect of the course trainees perceived as most valuable, a free form comment/response was also added to the questionnaires to allow trainees to give their perceptions regarding the most valuable aspect of the course. Responses regarding only the creative

TABLE 2. Group A: Rank ordering according to percentage aspect (s) of course perceived as most valuable

ASPECT(S)	%
Creative Project	55
	41.98%
Others: Creative Project and Assignments	23
	17.56%
Others: Creative Project and Topic Coverage	19
	14.50%
Assignments	10
	7.63%
Topic Coverage	6
	4.58%
Others: Creative Project, Topic Coverage and Assignments	4
	3.05%
Test/Quizzes	3
	2.29%
Others: Creative Project, Topic Coverage, Assignments and Test/Quizzes	3
	2.29%
Others: Topic coverage and Assignments	2
	1.53%
Others: Topic Coverage, Assignment and Conferencing with Tutor	2
	1.53%
Others: Creative Project and Test/Quizzes	2
	1.53%
No Response	2
	1.53%
Others: Creative Project and Conferencing with Tutor	0
	0%
Others: Creative Project, Topic Coverage and Test/Quizzes	0
	0%

project were coded into three main categories in Tables 4 and 5 and further divided into subcategories, a subcategory being created whenever there was more than one response which could fit that subcategory. Sample comments from each subcategory are provided. The contribution of the creative project can be divided and discussed into 3 categories : 1. Personal development 2. Academic development, and 3. Affective/emotional development.

TABLE 3. Group B: Rank ordering according to percentage aspect(s) of course perceived as most valuable

ASPECT(S)	%
Creative Project	43 52.43%
Others: Creative Project and Topic Coverage	18 21.95%
Others: Creative Project and Assignments	5 6.09%
Assignments	4 4.88%
Others: Project, Topic Coverage and Assignments	3 3.65%
Topic Coverage	2 2.44%
Others: Creative Project, and Conferencing with Tutor	2 2.44%
No Response	2 2.44%
Test/Quizzes	1 1.22%
Others: Creative Project, Topic Coverage, Assignments and Test/Quizzes	1 1.22%
Others: Creative Project, Topic Coverage, and Test/Quizzes	1 1.22%
Others: Topic Coverage and Assignments	0 0%
Others: Topic Coverage, Assignments and Conferencing with Tutor	0 0%
Others: Creative Project and Test/Quizzes	0 0%

It can be concluded from trainees' responses for the two groups of trainees the inclusion of the creative project did pave the way for meaningful and personal learning experiences in the content course "English Phonetics and Phonology" especially in three broad areas of personal development, academic development and affective/emotional development. As trainees' responses in Tables 4 and 5 are the proof, the creative project as perceived by both groups of trainees helped in their personal development in two ways: First, trainees gained from group work (see subcategory 1a and responses i-iv in Table 4 for trainees in

TABLE 4. Group A: Compilation of free-form contents/responses given for why creative project is perceived as the most valuable aspect of the course

1. The creative project contributes to personal development:

a) Trainees gained from group work.

The creative project:

- i) helped me understand the subject better through group discussions.
- ii) created co-operation in group members.
- iii) taught me time management and co-operation in a group.
- iv) helps in better planning.

b) Trainees were able to be creative in the learning process which can be applied when they teach.

The creative project:

- i) developed in me many creative ideas.
- ii) helped me to be creative and imaginative.
- iii) helped me with the creation of something new.
- iv) helped me realize that I have to be creative to help my future students with their pronunciation so that it can be interesting for them the same time.
- vi) helped me develop thinking strategies.
- vii) allowed us to use our creative minds.
- viii) made me feel confident to create.
- ix) provoked thinking.
- x) helped to promote creativity and sufficient research as well as promoted self-awareness of what I learned.

2. Creative project contributes to academic development:

a) Trainees were able to apply what they understand from the content area of phonetics and phonology in the creative project to produce an end product.

The creative project:

- i) helped us to apply theories that we have learned.
 - ii) helped me link this course to English teaching.
 - iii) helped me sum up everything in the course to give a better picture of why this course is offered.
 - iv) can help me transmit insights from the subject into teaching.
 - v) can help me apply what I've understood about phonetics and phonology.
 - vi) can help us digest what we have learned to come up with something creative and challenging.
 - vii) helped me see the relevance of phonetics and phonology in my future undertakings.
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TABLE 4 (continued)

b)	<p>Trainees were able to increase understanding and knowledge of the content area.</p> <p>The creative project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) allowed me to practise and therefore to understand the subject better. ii) helped me understand topics covered in the course. iii) helped me look for more knowledge about the subject because in order to create we must know about the subject. iv) helped me expand my knowledge and understanding of phonetics and phonology. v) made me read textbooks, articles, journal articles, etc. a lot.
c)	<p>Trainees were able to practise researching and analyzing skills.</p> <p>The creative project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) helped me in my researching skills as well as analyzing skills. ii) made me do a lot of researching on my own.
d)	<p>Trainees were able to learn from experience.</p> <p>The creative project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) showed me that learning from experience is better than learning from lectures alone. ii) made me aware that learning by doing is good.
3.	<p>The creative project contributes to affective/emotional development:</p>
a)	<p>Trainees found the creative project interesting.</p> <p>The creative project was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) interesting for me. ii) interesting as well as challenging for me.
b)	<p>Trainees found the creative project fun.</p> <p>The creative project was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) fun and worthwhile. ii) tedious but fun.

Group A and subcategory 1a and responses i-viii in Table 4 for trainees in Group B). Secondly, trainees were able to be creative in the learning process which can later be applied once they teach (subcategory 1b and responses i-x in Table 4 for trainees in Group A and subcategory 1b and responses i-viii in Table 5 for trainees in Group B). For academic

TABLE 5. Group B: Compilation of free-form comments/responses given for why creative project is perceived the most valuable aspect of the course

1. The creative project contributes to personal development:

a) Trainees gained from groupwork:

The creative project:

- i) taught me to co-operate in a group.
- ii) helped me learn a lot through groupwork.
- iii) taught me how to cope with difficulties when working in a group.
- iv) helped me to understand my own attitudes and my group mates' attitudes.
- v) could lead to frustration and misunderstanding in and among group members and I learned to keep the "downs" away.
- vi) made members of the group work things out, ate together, had fun, quarreled and helped us to really know each other.
- vii) helped me learn from discussion with group members and discussion in the class about the project.
- viii) helped me be more responsible to the whole group.

b) Trainees were able to be creative in the learning process which can be applied when they teach.

The creative project:

- i) taught me to be more creative in order to produce an end-product.
- ii) taught me to be creative and innovative.
- iii) promoted critical thinking in creating materials.
- iv) has opened a window to us showing how to create teaching materials.
- v) made me think and applied gathered knowledge to the project at hand.
- vi) taught me to be alert of my own weaknesses and encouraged me to improve my weaknesses.
- vii) had helped me think and be rational in making decisions.
- viii) helped me think and applied creatively the knowledge gained from this subject for the end-product.

2. The creative project contributes to academic development:

a) Trainees were able to apply what they understand from the content area of phonetics and phonology in the creative project to produce an end-product:

The creative project:

- i) made me aware how interesting and worthwhile this subject is.
- ii) could help me apply what we had learned to my future classroom.

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TABLE 5 (continued)

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- iii) taught me how important it was to come up with something that could motivate/encourage my future students to study/learn.
 - iv) gave me ideas about what supplementary materials can be created from the subject. I could apply these materials to my students.
 - v) applied to teaching and implications in the classroom.
 - vi) prepared me for my future undertakings.
 - vii) not only allowed us to apply the knowledge gained from the course but also gave me the chance to share and discuss the subject with others.
 - viii) made me aware of the problem students faced in the classroom and in producing the end-product, this could be used in my own classroom.
 - ix) helped us to deal with the practical and theoretical part of the course.
 - x) was an expansion of what we had learned previously and can connect. I don't have to rely on textbooks alone.
 - xi) helped me recall information that sometimes have been forgotten.
 - xii) helped me to apply for my future teaching all the learned techniques for teaching pronunciation.
 - xiii) helped me be aware that I had to relate all knowledge learned before coming up with ideas for the project.
- b) Trainees were able to increase understanding and knowledge of the content area.

The creative project:

- i) enhanced my knowledge on the subject.
 - ii) helped me polish up/improve existing knowledge of the subject and gave me the chance to improve and gain knowledge.
 - iii) helped me understand that formal learning was useful when it comes to application. I know what I've learned.
 - iv) exposed me to the teaching environment, while producing teaching aids in the project.
- c) Trainees were able to practise researching and analyzing skills.
- The creative project:
- i) taught me to analyze all topics covered in the course in order to come up with an end-product.
 - ii) taught me to work independently to do my own research.
 - iii) made me aware of how to gather information and do research.
 - iv) helped me to become an independent learner.
 - v) taught me the proper way to write a proposal.
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(continued next page)

TABLE 5 (*continued*)

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3. The creative project contributes to affective/emotional development:
- a) Trainees found the creative project interesting.
- The creative project:
- i) was interesting and enjoyable.
- ii) was interesting, enjoyable but we also learned a lot.
- b) Trainees found the creative project satisfying:
- The creative project:
- i) was valuable and I was satisfied doing it after putting effort into it.
- ii) was challenging but also satisfying.
- c) Trainees found the creative project contributed to some gains.
- The creative project:
- i) made me gain experiences.
- ii) made me gain new experiences.
-

development, trainees' responses proved that the creative project helped them in many ways. For Group A and B trainees, the creative project helped them in three different ways (Tables 4 and 5 category 2 and subcategory a, b, and c) with the exception of trainees in Group A who responded that the creative project helped them in one added way: They were able to learn from experience (Table 4, category 2, subcategory d, responses i – ii). First, trainees' perception proved to the researcher that the creative project attempted to bridge a gap between what has been learned and the application of this knowledge for real-life situations namely for the work place, and for the trainees the classroom environment (Tables 4 and 5 category 2, subcategory a, responses i – vii and i – xiii respectively). Secondly, the creative project helped trainees to increase their understanding and knowledge of the content area (Tables 4 and 5 category 2, subcategory b, responses i – v and i – iv respectively). Thirdly, the creative project helped trainees to practise their researching and analyzing skills which are not only used in the creative project but may also be used in other content area courses in the execution of assignments, term-papers, research papers and so forth (Tables 4 and 5 category 2, subcategory c, responses i – ii and i – v respectively). Finally, the creative project as perceived by trainees in group A only, allowed them to learn from experience as seen by responses in Table 4 category 2, subcategory d, responses i – ii. This was not a subcategory for group B trainees. Most trainees in group B realized the importance of the process that they went through in order to come up

with an end-product that can be used in their own future classrooms and thus it can be concluded that they too value learning from experience (Table 5 category 2, subcategory a, responses i, iii, v, vi and xii). From the data gathered, it is evident for trainees in both groups, that the creative project proved to be a source for intrinsic motivation because the project helped developed interest in the activities, helped give satisfaction in learning, and helped to give a sense of accomplishment (Table 4 category 3, subcategory a and b also responses i – ii respectively as well as Table 5 category 3, sub-category a, b and c also responses i – ii respectively).

Trainees were also asked to make suggestions for the improvement of the course and a free form comment response was also added to the questionnaires to elicit trainees' responses. Responses to this question were coded, see Tables 6 and 7. For this paper, only those comments/responses that concern the creative project assignment are discussed.

TABLE 6. Group A – Suggestions for improvement of the course
(Creative project only)

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1. We should have more projects that will help us to understand more concepts learned and try to use them in the creation of end products.
 2. The course should give more time to the creative project.
 3. The course should allocate more marks for the creative project.
 4. The course should allow us to do a phonetics project for the first half of the semester and a phonology project the second half of the semester.
 5. There should be more students participating in one project so that the job can be handled better and easier.
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TABLE 7. Group B – Suggestions for improvement of the course
(Creative project only)

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1. All courses should have this kind of project.
 2. There should be more projects (simple ones), more presentation of projects so that we can apply our knowledge. This will be very useful for future teachers.
 3. Continue to have students do the creative project because it is beneficial for them now and later and it's fun.
 4. Have more group projects in the course.
 5. The creative project should be presented in class.
 6. There should be more than one creative project in the class; (the time provided for this project is too long).
-

Based on the responses of trainees in both groups, it is evident that trainees gained from the creative project and through the questionnaires administered trainees have indicated their preferences for more creative projects in the course not only in the number of creative projects per course but by types as evident through responses one and four in Table 6 and responses one and four in Table 7. Time, groupings, what should be done with the end products, allocation of marks, and costs incurred in the process of creating the end product for the creative project were factors that also needed the trainer's (researcher's) consideration. Trainees also gave positive responses to why the creative project should be part and parcel of the content course as evident in response one in Table 6 and responses one, two and three in Table 7, the response, "All courses should have this kind of project" answers the question raised by the researcher earlier: Where else in the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM curriculum, apart from this course can trainees be given practice in all skills; skills which have been indicated by trainees in Tables 4 and 5 of this paper which are perceived vital for effective operation in the teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study (from two survey studies) show that the creative project fulfilled its obvious potential as a teaching and more so learning activity and is seen as both purposeful by trainer (researcher) and more so by trainees themselves. The findings of the study not only showed the trainer (researcher) that the creative project was a very valuable activity but it also proved that it was worthwhile attempting to improve it based on trainees' wants and needs and the trainer's awareness that the course does not aim to produce linguists or educational theorists but English language teachers. It can be concluded from the findings that the creative project was not only a source of extrinsic motivation (instrumental motivation) for trainees it above all showed that it was a source of intrinsic motivation for them proving that in this content area course entitled "English Phonetics and Phonology", it is possible to foster instrumental motivation and intrinsic motivation together so that not only do trainees learn they also enjoy learning at the same time. It is the researcher's opinion based on the findings that the creative project if included in other content courses can foster instrumental as well as intrinsic motivation and at the same time provide trainees with enjoyment in learning.

The findings proved that trainees were able to be empowered to learn on their own through interesting, challenging but achievable activities that the creative project afforded them and that they were able to

organize self-motivated activities while participating in the creative project to achieve a desired co-operative goal (Johnson and Johnson 1975, 1978 cited in Woolfolk 1980:326). This is in keeping with the researcher's rationale that if the program is to prepare future English language teachers, it must surely follow that trainees must be prepared for the autonomy that they will be expected to operate when they leave the program. The findings also substantiated the assumptions made about learners/trainees that they learn best when they felt that they were in charge of shaping their learning themselves, bringing into the learning process their views of the world, their already acquired skills, their innate abilities, opinions, creativity and emotions.

Most importantly, the study revealed that through participating in the creative project, trainees were able to bridge the gap between what has been learned and the application of this knowledge for real-life situations namely for the work place – the classroom environment. Instead of asking "How can phonetics and phonology be used in my own future classroom?" or saying, "I don't know what use it is to study phonetics and phonology", the findings of the study revealed that the creative project helped trainees to be aware of the benefits and worth of the subject matter for their future profession-English language teaching to be able to say at the end of the course such things as: "Through the creative project I succeeded in seeing the practical advantage of the subject and the course taken and that will help in my teaching"; "Insights from the creative project and subject can be transmitted into teaching. This will allow me to practise and understand the subject better"; "Doing the project made me aware how interesting and worthwhile the subject is" and so on (Tables 4 and 5).

Based on the findings of the study it can be proposed that for the current content curriculum for the training of future teachers in pre-service training for the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program, there should be inclusion of an alternate method (to the already existing methods) of developing knowledge in content areas through the meaningful context of creative project work. First and foremost because trainees want it (as articulated in their responses) and can gain greatly from it as proven by responses by trainees, "All courses should have this kind of a project"; "We should have more projects that will help us to understand more concepts learned and try to use the concepts in the creation of end products" and so on. Unlike Das (1984:329) who says, "The time is not ripe for process-oriented teaching - but we can begin to anticipate it and prepare for it through adjustments which will make existing pedagogy more sensitive to process" and "...our systems of teacher-training, have responded rather slowly to the new trends in learner-participation and involvement" it is evident from the findings of the study that the time for meaningful adjustments in the

content curriculum is now and the system must acknowledge learner/trainee participation and involvement as part and parcel of meaningful and purposeful learning. Now is the time for all trainers teaching content area courses in the B.ED TESL UKM/ITM program to examine not only the set of prescriptive statements about what will happen in the classroom but they must also examine what does happen and what should happen in the classroom based on trainees' perceptions. In accordance with Nunan (1988:172), "curriculum practice should thus be derived as much from successful practice as from statements of intent." It should be stressed that the findings of the study (from the two survey studies) reported in this paper does not claim to offer the answer to all problems related to development of knowledge in content area courses but rather the findings offer a consideration of the underlying issues which it is hoped will act as a starting point for individuals and trainers in pre-service teacher-training programs to consider the place of the creative project within their teaching situations. It is the opinion of the researcher that the creative project based on the findings of the study should be part and parcel of the trainees' learning process so that trainers may remember and put to work the Chinese saying below for the benefit and well being of their trainees:

Tell me and I forget,
Teach me and I remember,
Involve me and I learn.

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Language Centre
University Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 UKM Bangi
Selangor D.E.