CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to determine whether there are any differences between TESL teacher trainees and in-service teachers in terms of the quantity and quality of instructional language used in the language classroom.

The researcher analyzed and classified the data using the set of categories as stipulated by the Teacher Training Division in their English Language Syllabus for TESL KP(BPG) / 9577 / 119, June 1993 in order to find answers for the four research questions.

The findings of this study seem to indicate that experience is a relevant variable influencing the kind of instructional language used among the language teachers. The TESL teacher trainees obviously lacked the experience and this gave them little confidence when using the instructional language to help them carry out a lesson. The in-service teachers on the other hand had an average of five years of experience and this gave them the edge over the teacher trainees. They appeared
to be a highly motivated group of teachers with experience who try their best to put into practice whatever skills or knowledge they have learnt from their course.

To sum up, given below is the researcher’s findings relating to his four research questions.

1. For Research Question 1, there is a difference in the overall number of utterance between TESL teacher trainees and in-service teachers in the use of instructional language. TESL teacher trainees used a total number of 569 utterances while for the in-service teachers the total number of utterances was 690.

2. For Research Question 2, there is a difference in the mean number of utterances between TESL teacher trainees and in-service teachers in each of the categories of instructional language. The mean number of utterances for the TESL trainees was higher than the in-service teachers in three of the five categories of instructional language namely;

   - To direct learning’( Mean number 44.3 and 32.6 respectively)
   - To encourage / praise pupils’( Mean number 8.1 and 7.1 respectively)
   - To indicate disapproval / misbehaviour’( Mean number 2.2 and 1.1 respectively)

In the other two categories the mean number of utterances for the TESL trainees was lower than the in-service teachers, namely;
'To ask questions' (Mean number 15.0 and 33.6 respectively)
'To rephrase and respond to questions' (Mean number 1.5 and 11.8 respectively)

It was found that TESL trainees used significantly more imperatives, more statements and fewer questions. On the other hand, the in-service teachers tend to use fewer imperatives and to ask more questions than the TESL trainees.

3. For Research Question 3, there is a big difference in the overall number of utterances, with errors between TESL trainees and in-service teachers. TESL trainees committed a total number of 208 utterances with errors as compared to the in-service teachers who had only 37 utterances with errors. There could be a number of inter related reasons for this situation.

Firstly, the TESL teacher trainees themselves might have a low English proficiency level to begin with. They could have entered the teacher training colleges with the barest minimum qualification namely SPM with a few credits; English language being one of them. It appears that a credit in English at SPM level does not reflect a good or average proficiency level.

Secondly, although their teacher training programme is a three year programme, they do not get much opportunity to improve their language. The teacher training syllabus for English for a semester allows for a total of 135 hours of interaction.
This total has to be divided between the two components of proficiency and methodology. According to the syllabus, the teacher trainees have 60 hours for proficiency in one semester. Naturally this allocation is not enough to upgrade the accuracy of their spoken English.

Lastly, the low proficiency of the TESL trainees could be related to their attitude towards English. It has come to the knowledge of the researcher thorough informal discussions that many of the TESL teacher trainees did not want to be English language teachers in the first place. They would have applied for other options but in the end they were placed in the TESL option where they were uncomfortable and unhappy.

In a nutshell it shows that TESL trainees might have a low English proficiency level at the entry point into the college. While in college following the teacher training course, there does not seem to be a significant improvement in their proficiency level.

4. For Research Question 4, there is a big difference in the mean number of utterances with errors between TESL trainees and in-service teachers in four of the categories of instructional language. The mean number of utterances with errors for the TESL trainees was higher than the in-service teachers in four of the five categories of instructional language, namely;

1. 'To direct learning' (Mean Error Number: 8.8 and 2.5 respectively)
2. ‘To encourage / praise pupils’ (Mean Error Number: 1.6 and 0.0 respectively)

3. ‘To ask questions’ (Mean Error Number: 14.6 and 2.1 respectively)

4. ‘To replace and respond to questions’ (Mean Error Number: 1.0 and 0 respectively)

However there were no utterances with errors in the category ‘To indicate disapproval / misbehaviour for both the TESL trainees and in-service teachers.

### 5.2 Implication of findings

Teacher talk in the classroom has always been an area of concern for a long time. Nunan (1991), has pointed out that teacher talk in the classroom sometimes totals up to 80% of the time.

Taking a holistic look at the data obtained in this study there seems to be distinct patterns of instructional language used by the TESL trainees and in-service teachers. It was found that 62.3% of the total utterances of teacher trainees consisted of the category of instructional language, namely ‘To direct learning’ (Table 4.8). This high percentage of classroom language when compared to the in-service teachers could indicate that they have a more limited repertoire of interactional classroom language such as questioning strategies. They also made a considerably higher number of errors than in-service teachers (Overall total
number = 208). Being weak in grammar and not proficient in the language, they tend to concentrate on one or two categories of instructional language, using mainly imperatives and statements which are much easier to formulate than the structure of questions. In comparison, in-service teachers, as they are more versatile in language usage tend to make use of all five categories of utterances and are more balanced in their teacher language. For instance, data analysis revealed that the percentage of utterance for the category ‘To direct learning’ was 37.8%, ‘To ask questions’ was 39.0% and ‘To rephrase / respond to questions’ was 13.7% (See Table 4.9). This could be attributed to their relatively greater experience in handling meta language to facilitate classroom activities as evidenced by a very small mean number of errors. (Table 4.5 : Overall mean number = 4.6).

The distinctive patterns in the use of instructional language by TESL trainees and in-service teachers are closely related to the competency level of the two groups of teachers. The TESL trainees who are less competent tend to stick to the category ‘To direct learning’, using mainly imperatives and statements. The in-service teachers whose competency is relatively higher tend to have an even distribution of utterances.

Another implication derived from the study is the different perceived roles of teachers’ trainees and in-service teachers in classroom interaction. Teacher trainees tend to use assertive instructional language as evidenced by the high
number of utterances in the category, 'To direct learning' (62.3%). This seems to suggest that they placed a higher priority on language for classroom management than language facilitating learning. In-service teachers, however seem to perceive themselves more as facilitators of learning activities and seem to place less emphasis on classroom management. They tend to use less of the utterances in the category 'To direct learning' (37.8%) but more of the utterances in the category 'To ask questions' (39%).

The researcher sees a link between the categories of instructional language used, errors and the manner of teaching. Teacher trainees who are not confident with language, uses mainly imperatives and statements to conduct their lessons. The outcome is probably a more teacher-centered class with the teacher playing the role of a disciplinarian. The in-service teachers on the other hand who are more versatile in the usage of instructional language use more categories of instructional language including 'To ask questions'. Their teaching is of an interactive nature with their roles mainly as facilitators.

5.3 Recommendations.

The following suggestions have been deemed necessary after studying the findings and implications of the research:
1. Among the categories of instructional language the category 'To ask questions' should be dealt with more seriously and systematically both by the lecturers and trainees. By doing so, the use of classroom language in teaching would then shift the teaching approach from being teacher-centered to pupil-centered. The skill in formulating questions is of utmost importance. An emphasis on the teaching/learning of this topic in terms of its contents, number of hours and method of teaching can equip teacher trainees with the necessary knowledge in framing a whole range of error free questions to train students to organize and learn knowledge and questioning strategies.

2. The proficiency section of the TESL syllabus should address the general weakness of the trainees in English Language. Thus greater emphasis should be given to the allocation of more teaching hours for this section.

3. Lecturers can also use audio-taped data for discussion purposes, especially during lectures in English language proficiency. Such data can also be used by them for post-observation conferences during clinical supervision.
5.4 Suggestions for further Research

The findings of this study have revealed certain areas which can be explored for purposes of further research.

5.4.1 Self and Peer Evaluation

TESL teacher trainees should be familiarized with techniques of self and peer evaluation, through the use of audio-taping during teaching practice. Peer evaluation at the moment is not done in schools. This study has shown that audio-taping can be an effective way of recording one’s instructional language during a lesson. They should be taught to evaluate their own instructional language and those of their peers using the classification criteria identified in the study.

5.4.2 Instructional Language

There is a need for in-depth studies on the use of the following types of instructional language in the TESL classroom. ‘To direct learning’ and ‘To ask questions’ as the two types frequently used by teachers in the classroom. Further research needs to be conducted, focusing on the efficacy of these two types of instructional language, and how they can be adapted to suit the needs of pupils of different proficiency levels.
5.4.3 Teacher Errors

There is also a need for research on the analysis of errors committed especially by the TESL trainees in their use of instructional language. The researcher observed that the TESL teacher trainees made an alarming number of grammar errors than in-service teachers. This can portray that the TESL trainees to be poor role models of the target language. The researcher feels that errors made by the TESL trainees constitute a possible area for further research.

5.4.4 Teacher Evaluation

The findings of this research may also indicate that a greater percentage should be allocated for the evaluation of instructional language during teaching practice, where language teachers are concerned. At present, language teachers are evaluated along the same lines as other subject teachers using a common form to evaluate their teaching in the classroom. Furthermore there is currently no fixed allocation for the evaluation of teacher's classroom language. Hence a study should be conducted on the feasibility of this proposal.

5.4.5 Peer Evaluation as Action Research

Through action research these teachers can conduct peer evaluation by audio-taping their colleagues and jointly analyzing the tapes, using the categories
suggested by the researcher. A project on this research can be carried out along these lines whereby all the language teachers in a school work in pairs to evaluate each other's performance using the categories of instructional language discussed in this study.

5.5 Conclusion

Devikamani (1991) states:

*The categories of meta language should be highlighted by teacher educators especially when preparing the teachers for teaching practice.*

The use of appropriate instructional language is as important as the teaching itself because of its facilitative value in learning. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted to gain a better understanding of the role of instructional language in classroom teaching and learning. Further in depth study of this area by making use of a bigger sample size should be done so that valid generalizations can be made on the findings of this study.

The present study only focuses on the competence of TESL teacher trainees and in-service teachers on the use of instructional language in classroom teaching. It is therefore a status study. Future research could attempt to explore the different
strategies in improving the competence of the TESL trainees and in-service teachers in using instructional language. This necessarily calls for the use of experimental designs in the future research.