

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANT
PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS IN
ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING
PROFICIENCY: A DESCRIPTIVE
STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the mentor teachers' perceptions on the presence of English Teaching Assistant Programme (ETA) at their schools. Previous studies have indicated the learning of English as a second language especially in speaking can be difficult without help from teachers and a conducive environment. Factors such as of low self confidence and lack of exposure to the target language contributed to the problem. The implementation of ETA Programme in Terengganu is carried out as one of the ways to increase students' English spoken proficiency. Therefore this study sought to investigate the mentor teachers' perceptions towards overall ETA acceptance and management, the roles of ETAs, their relationship with the ETAs and the contribution of the programme towards enhancing students' English speaking proficiency. The study was conducted in Terengganu involving 17 mentor teachers and 17 ETAs. 15 ETAs and 15 mentor teachers responded to the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 4 respondents to triangulate the results of this study. Quantitative findings displayed favourable and positive responses towards the programme. It revealed that the respondents viewed the programme as a positive step to improve students' speaking proficiency especially in their interest to speak in English. Qualitative findings supported the results and positive opinions were gathered. In addition, this study suggests further research can be conducted with a larger sample. It is hoped that further studies on these issues can improve and enhance the programme in line with the mentor teachers, ETAs and students' interest and benefits.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 Introduction

Learning English as a second language or a third language for Malaysian students is no longer an optional matter as English language is established as a compulsory subject for them to learn not only to pass the examination but also for daily use. Much emphasis is given to teach students to pass and excel in the subject. However, whether the students can use the language outside of the classroom is not given much consideration. One of the main reasons given is that ultimately, the school, parents and learners want good grades. Everybody and all schools compete for better grades each year. According to Lewey (1977), the Malaysian education system is very examination-oriented. Even if there is a change in teachers' attitude and they accept any changes in the curriculum used, they are still compelled by the examination and will teach according to what will be tested.

English language learning and teaching in Malaysian schools has been one of the hottest topics in the country for years especially with the reversal of the teaching of Mathematics and Science from Bahasa Malaysia to English and back to Bahasa Malaysia. Gaudart (1987) states that the Malaysian society is constantly regaled with opinions about the falling standards of English but falling where and in what way is