

Voices from National University of Bangladesh: Students' perception of the value of linguistics and ELT courses in providing pre-service EFL teacher education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide an insight into student-cum-supposed teachers' perceptions about the value of linguistics and ELT courses (LELTC) in imparting pre-service teacher education (PTE) for the undergraduate English students of National University (NU) affiliated colleges in Bangladesh. This is based on the postulation that students' perception has a critical function in executing the goals and objectives of particular course(s). Through a self-explorative semi-structured questionnaire this study piloted a survey on one hundred five English students studying in their final year of Honours at three higher education colleges purposively selected from a divisional metropolitan city of Bangladesh. Findings revealed varied perceptions in students regarding value of the LELTC. Three separate perceptions of the students participating in the survey could be noticed regarding the value issue: positive, negative and ambivalent. Positive perceptions were perceptible among one-third of students; yet again almost the same quantity of students exhibited negative perceptions. Furthermore, the ambivalent perceptions exposed by a large number of students might designate their lack of awareness and their irresolution about the importance of the said courses in developing student-cum-prospective teachers' teaching expertise. Lastly, this study offered a few recommendations for exterminating the prevailing wrong perceptions of students about the significance of the discussed courses in cultivating students' teaching expertise. Thus, this study will deepen our understanding of students' internal thought processes regarding the value of the LELTC as a part of a typical pre-service teacher education programme, and thus help us remove the challenges of misconceptions about the necessity of the courses from student psyche which can ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of the said courses in the NU context.

Key Words: National University; Pre-service teacher education; Student-cum-supposed teacher; Students' perception; Linguistics and ELT courses; Value

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

Perceptions and views of teachers and students who are appertained to pre-service teacher education in EFL context have been receiving cumulative research attention for the past few decades, "language teacher beliefs have received increasing research attention for the past few decades" [1]. Nevertheless, little is known about teachers' and students' perceptions of four emerging themes of LELTC such as value, adequacy, effectiveness and challenges of the pre-service teacher education in the contexts of the world in general and Bangladesh in particular. That is why, though not encompassing teachers for the limited scope of the paper, this quali-quantitative study extends the line of inquiry by investigating students' trajectory of perceptions apropos the erstwhile issue of LELTC as mainstay courses of a typical

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PTE programme in the NU context. Accordingly, the key aim of this study is to pinpoint any barriers and loopholes in the effectiveness of LELTC. As a part of this, this study aims to discover if there are any perceptual misconceptions of the students about the value and necessity of LELTC so that those misconceptions can be well handled and the effectiveness of the courses can be boost up.

In all, through the perception study of the students this study aims to study the internal thought processes of the students which can help reach the depth of the trajectories of their awareness, emotions, thoughts, feelings, views, beliefs, attitudes, decisions, and behaviours in a certain way regarding the LELTC, and also we can understand the nature of their commitment and collaboration towards the courses, because “what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” [2]

As the sole lingua franca for global communication in the 21st century, the inexorableness of English in the national life of Bangladesh is incontrovertible. Therefore, to adapt to the changing linguistic know-how, the development of essential level of appropriate English language proficiency was accentuated in virtually all the education policies of post-independent Bangladesh including the latest education policy of 2010 [3]. Finally, “College Education Development Project, CEDP” under the supervision of the NU, the UGC and the Ministry of Education is working for improving the quality of college teachers to produce the ‘market-oriented skilled graduates’ [4]. Besides, the “Sustainable Development Goals (SDG: Goal-4)” to which Bangladesh is committed, also underlines the development of language skills as one of the premeditated mechanisms of quality education taking into account both the global and the local needs of English. Overall, the new information technology and borderless market economy demand the renewal and up gradation of linguistic skills in Bangladesh, which requires a cohort of teachers with the know-how to effectively develop the language proficiency of the learners. Hence, not only various domestic and foreign organisations at the public and private levels undertook training programmes under various projects but also major modifications were made at tertiary level English curriculum for pre-service ELT teacher education in Bangladesh.

Towards the eighties of the last century the issue of LELTC came to focus as a paradigm of pre-service teacher education in the tertiary level English education of Bangladesh. LELTC were gradually incorporated in the English literature core curriculum of the entire tertiary level English education of Bangladesh aiming at developing teaching expertise of the students supposing them as the would-be-ELT teachers in Bangladesh. Though at present, besides many of the language institutes, majority of the public and notable private universities in Bangladesh at their postgraduate level, even now at BA (Honours) final year in some universities have two separate disciplines called the 'Linguistics and ELT' stream and the 'Literature' stream. As part of this continuum, in the session 2009-2010, the NU incorporated the LELT courses in its undergraduate level literature core programme as a foundation for pre-service and future in-service training of current student-cum-would-be ELT teachers as part of a full fledged 'Linguistics and ELT' programme.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perception Concepts

Perception is the awareness of something through the senses. In other words it is the ability to see, hear, understand or become aware of something. Perception study is important because it is a physiological process through which everything in this world is interpreted and understood. To understand a person’s actual position about an issue there is no alternative of the person’s psychology study. Through perception study we get the internal thought processes, the opinion, the attitude, the aptitude, the biases, the feelings and the implied belief of a person regarding an issue.

Perceptions help in shaping up a person's goal and his/her outlook on an issue. Regarding this as offered by Peacock, “I propose that it is important to work on any mistaken trainee beliefs because they could influence their teaching and their future students' language learning for decades” [5]

2.2. Teacher Education and Relevance of Linguistics and ELT Courses in Bangladesh

Despite the increasing importance of English in international business and cultural exchanges, teacher shortage and attrition have remained a serious issue in language teaching and teacher education [6]. It is very difficult to accomplish the challenging task of teaching by placing a newly hired inexperienced teacher in the classroom without any training. Especially in many English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) settings new teachers continue to leaving the classroom with harmful effects on students' linguistic progress and academic learning. In order to address the problem of teacher attrition and promote the quality of language teaching and learning, educational policy makers, curriculum designers, and teacher educators have emphasised the critical role of pre-service teacher education programmes in developing and sustaining student teachers' motivations towards teaching, which can influence “how they approach the

complexities, challenges, disappointments, and rewards of teaching” [7] in their current learning and future work. That is why it is necessary to prepare quality teachers first through teacher education.

Knowledge development, pedagogical skills development and professional skills development– the collective name of these three types of teacher development processes is teacher education. Generally, teacher education programmes are those programmes through which a student or an employee develops knowledge, skills and abilities so that he can present himself as an effective teacher in the classroom through his work, activities and performance. Teacher education is a programme of training designed to equip prospective and practicing teachers with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they will require to effectively teach from elementary to higher education levels [8]. Misra terms teacher education as ‘formal teacher training’ dividing it into two types– pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training [9]. According to Ferry et al., teacher education basically means pre-service teacher education [10]. According to Presadã and Badea , (pre-service) teacher education prepares students for the teaching profession through specific ‘theoretical courses’ and ‘practical activities’ [11].

Comparing the above characteristics of teacher education and the nature and stated objectives of LELTC, the said courses appear to be compatible with pre-service ELT teacher education. As the course outline states about their purpose: "...the purpose of the course is to prepare those who wish to enter teaching as professions in the future in such a way that they understand their teaching context and can effectively help students improve their English language skills” [12]. Hence, the courses are tailor-made for fresh graduates to gather direct experience in the field of teaching from their classroom activities under the guidance of their practicing teachers, the focus of which is to prepare the prospective teachers to give out quality English language proficiency whether primary, secondary or tertiary level through their theoretical knowledge and practical skills. So, in the context of the NU, LELTC are teacher preparation courses that can be considered a simple and easy introduction to a very complex discipline known as English Language Teaching Methodology. So the core object of these courses is to initiate the students into ELT discipline.

Linguistics scientifically studies language and its structure on phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic level under a series of its subfields. The linguistic theories provide an ELT practitioner with the insight to adequately understand the characteristics and structure of human languages and the basic principles underlying those structures. They also effectively help an ELT teacher to comprehend the characteristics of language and the characteristics of the human brain and the nature of the relationship between the two, relationship between language and society, relationship between language and culture and finally contribute to explain different processes of first language acquisition of the children and the second language development of the learners. Knowledge of linguistic theories sharpens a teacher's insight into language teaching. Proper knowledge of approaches and methods of language teaching makes him adept at understanding the context and applying the most effective method/approach accordingly and increases his ability to discover which teaching style best suits him and his topic area.

Therefore, the inclusion of ELT programmes in the tertiary level English curriculum in Bangladesh and the inclusion of LELTC in the undergraduate English curriculum of the NU as part of this programme has immense importance and relevance, because it is considered as a complement to the preparation of skilled future English teachers and their professional development programmes and action plans of the Government of Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

For the purpose of investigating student-cum-prospective teachers’ perceptions about the LELTC, data has been collected through a semi-structured self-exploratory questionnaire. Participants are 105 senior students of honours final year studying the LELTC, among other courses. As this research is based on mixed-method the questionnaire includes both quantitative (close ended questions) and qualitative questions (open ended question). Basically the quantitative part of the questionnaire followed the five point likert scale research design. In this case, 18 items under the 'value' theme were presented to the participating students and asked to tick the designated box of their most preferred option. On the other hand, in the case of open ended questions that is, in the qualitative part of the questionnaire, an open ended question was presented to the participating students which helped us to get a more precise and accurate understanding of the perceptions of the students on the related theme. Data collected in such manner, was analysed in accordance with the objective of the study. Some measurements of descriptive statistics were done. For necessary parts MS Excel was used.

3.1. Selection of Study Area

Following the college ranking procedure of the NU, a total of three colleges– one from each of the A, B and C category, situated in a divisional metropolitan city of Bangladesh, were purposively selected for the survey.

Table 1 Colleges under Survey

| Categories of Colleges | Status of the Colleges under Survey | Selected Number |
|--|---|-----------------|
| A Category College | Postgraduate government college | 01 |
| B Category College | Postgraduate government women's college | 01 |
| C Category College | Graduate (Honours) non-government college | 01 |
| Total number of colleges selected for survey | | 03 |

3.2. Procedure of Sampling

Of the samples, 105 student respondents were college category-wise grouped into three slots in the study: A category slot, B category slot, and C category slot. In this study, the ratio of sample size of the three slots was determined based on different number of seats as allotted by the NU at the BA Honours final year in three categories of colleges. The sample was stratified to facilitate the survey activities. However, since almost all the colleges of Bangladesh are run under the same authority (affiliated to the NU) and get almost the same facilities, and as the system of admission of students is also identical, moreover, since category wise participation of the colleges was ensured, and thus the representativeness of the sample was ensured.

Table 2 Procedure of Sampling

| Slots | Categories of colleges | Total students | Selected respondents | Gender | | Total sample |
|--------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------|--------|--------------|
| | | | | Male | Female | |
| Slot-1 | A category | 240 | 60 | 41 | 19 | 105 |
| Slot-2 | B category | 120 | 30 | 0 | 30 | |
| Slot-3 | C category | 60 | 15 | 11 | 4 | |
| Total | | 420 | 105 | 52 | 53 | |

3.3. Execution of Questionnaire Survey

The researcher visited English Honours final year classes in person in all the selected colleges, keeping in view the purpose of data collection. With consent of the 'Heads' of English departments of the selected colleges as per predetermined schedule, the researcher physically met the target students for data collection purpose. As previously the researcher himself was a teacher of colleges affiliated to the NU, based on the previous acquaintances, he had, in the mean time, contacted some teachers and students by mail and over cell phone and requested their help in collecting data. Their sincere cooperation greatly facilitated the researcher's task of conducting the survey. In each of the colleges, the researcher was able to reach the students in the classroom with the cooperation of the teacher(s), and then the teacher introduced the researcher to the students and requested them to extend necessary cooperation. After that the teacher left the classroom and students felt free to interact with the researcher. Now, rapport was built up over a short period of cordial and friendly conversation. Then the researcher distributed the questionnaires among the randomly selected students in cooperation with the volunteers whom he had already prepared to act as helping hands. Mainly 'close-ended' questions were set in the questionnaire on five-point likert scale basis, besides that, an open ended question was also set in order to keep linkages with students' scopes of providing opinions. At first the researcher explained the objective of the survey and need of sincerity to the students to make them answer frankly, honestly and seriously. At one point, the researcher read out every question with Bangla translation for better understanding of the students. Students listened to the questions and answered one by one without being influenced by anyone else. In case of any query, they were given clear answers. Students, who were not taken as sample, kept silent at the request of the researcher. At the request of the students and with the approval of the authorities, some photographs and videos were taken of the entire proceedings.

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of Close-ended Questionnaire

Table 3 Perception of Value of LELTC

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Uncertain | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|--|----------------|----|----------|----|-----------|----|----------|----|-------------------|----|
| | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % | <i>f</i> | % |
| I think one of the major problems to EFL teaching and learning in Bangladesh is the lack of skilled teachers | 11 | 10 | 37 | 35 | 26 | 25 | 20 | 20 | 11 | 11 |
| I believe that if we want to achieve the desired success in English language teaching in Bangladesh, then first of all we need to produce competent ELT teachers | 10 | 9 | 37 | 35 | 27 | 26 | 23 | 22 | 8 | 8 |
| I believe pre-service teacher education (PTE) can play a major role in creating skilled EFL teachers in Bangladesh | 12 | 11 | 23 | 22 | 37 | 35 | 26 | 24 | 8 | 8 |
| I believe PTE can increase students' interest in teaching profession in the context of Bangladesh | 6 | 6 | 21 | 20 | 31 | 29 | 30 | 29 | 17 | 16 |
| I believe PTE lays the foundation for in-service teacher training | 11 | 10 | 26 | 25 | 32 | 30 | 29 | 27 | 8 | 8 |
| I believe without PTE nobody can become an effective English teacher | 10 | 9 | 28 | 27 | 30 | 29 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 14 |
| I believe LELTC play an important role in developing students' linguistic skills at NU | 12 | 11 | 35 | 34 | 21 | 20 | 25 | 24 | 12 | 11 |
| I believe LELTC play an important role in developing students' pedagogical skills at NU | 6 | 6 | 21 | 20 | 22 | 21 | 35 | 33 | 21 | 20 |
| I feel without the knowledge of approaches and methods of language teaching an EFL teacher cannot be effective | 16 | 15 | 33 | 36 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 11 | 10 |
| I believe an English student can not be a quality teacher without the knowledge of phonetics and phonology | 12 | 11 | 41 | 39 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 20 | 12 | 11 |
| I think without the knowledge of psycholinguistics an English teacher cannot be effective | 10 | 9 | 25 | 24 | 38 | 33 | 20 | 19 | 12 | 12 |
| I think without the knowledge of sociolinguistics an EFL teacher cannot be effective | 10 | 9 | 25 | 23 | 38 | 37 | 20 | 19 | 12 | 12 |
| I believe all the students should opt for AMLT course rather than CL course in Honours final year | 11 | 10 | 37 | 35 | 6 | 6 | 33 | 31 | 19 | 18 |
| I think AMLT course should be made compulsory on par with ITL course | 18 | 17 | 32 | 31 | 8 | 7 | 29 | 27 | 18 | 17 |
| I believe in honours final year an option of ELT stream should be offered at the NU | 11 | 10 | 25 | 24 | 6 | 6 | 37 | 35 | 26 | 25 |
| I feel at MA level an option of regular ELT/TESOL/TEFL programme should be introduced at the NU | 20 | 19 | 51 | 49 | 5 | 4 | 18 | 17 | 12 | 12 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| I believe at least one compulsory ELT course should be introduced at MA level | 11 | 10 | 25 | 24 | 6 | 6 | 37 | 35 | 26 | 25 |
| I believe at least one optional ELT course should be introduced at MA level | 18 | 17 | 53 | 50 | 5 | 4 | 18 | 17 | 12 | 12 |
| I believe minimum PTE is essential for all the students pursuing higher study in English in Bangladesh | 10 | 9 | 25 | 24 | 38 | 33 | 20 | 19 | 12 | 12 |

Table 1 showed that in reaction to the very first proposition, 45% (taking together strongly agree and agree) of the student-participants believed that one of the main problems of English language teaching in Bangladesh is the lack of skilled teachers while 31% (taking together strongly disagree and disagree) of the repliers do not agree to this proposition. It is particularly noteworthy that 25% of the respondents chose the 'uncertain' option which is indicative of their ambivalent perception on the respective issue. The feedback of the 2nd item revealed that 44% of the answerers believed that the most important thing in achieving the desired success of English language teaching in Bangladesh is, first of all, to produce competent ELT teachers, though 30% respondents did not believe in this proposition. Here again it is noticeable that a significant proportion of the participants (26%) refrained from expressing their clear perception by selecting the neutral option. In reply to the 3rd item of the series majority of the respondents (35%) gave neutral perception regarding whether pre-service teacher education (PTE) can play a major role in creating skilled EFL teachers in Bangladesh, whereas only 33% of the respondents believed that PTE can play a major role in creating skilled EFL teachers in Bangladesh as against 32% believed PTE cannot. The feedback of the 4th item discovered that only 26% of student-participants believed that PTE can increase students' interest in teaching profession in the context of Bangladesh while 45% felt that PTE cannot. Finally, it is noticeable that 29% of the respondents expressed neutral perspective which showed their uncertain perception regarding the issue. In answer to the 5th item of the series 35% of the respondents believed that PTE lays the foundation for in-service teacher training while another 35% did not believe in the proposition. On this issue 30% of the respondents also gave their indecisive thoughts. As feedback to the 6th offer, only 36% partakers exposed that they believed without PTE a person cannot become a good English teacher as against 35% did not believe in the proposition.

In retaliation to the 7th item of the series 45% of the respondents considered that the LELTC were playing an important role in developing students' linguistic skills in the NU as against 35% did not believe in the proposition. In this case 20% of the respondents gave unsure feedback. In reaction to the proposition number 8, 53% of the participants of which 20% strongly disagreed that the LELTC were not playing an important role in developing students' pedagogical skills in the NU while only 26% of the respondents expressed that they believed the LELTC were playing an important role in developing students' pedagogical skills in the NU context, whereas 21% participants were uncertain in their perception on this issue. In reprisal for offer number 9, 51% of the respondents felt that without the knowledge of approaches and methods of language teaching an EFL teacher cannot be effective while 29% of the participants felt that even without the knowledge of approaches and methods of language teaching an EFL teacher can be effective, whereas 20% participants were uncertain in their perception on this issue. With reference to the statement number 10, 50% of the respondents considered that an English student can not be a quality EFL teacher without the knowledge of phonetics and phonology whereas 31% of the participants thought that an English student could be a quality EFL teacher even without the knowledge of phonetics and phonology. In this regard, 19% respondents gave undecided perception. In respect to proposition number 11, 31% of the answerers deliberated that without the knowledge of psycholinguistics an English teacher cannot be effective while 31% of the responders perceived that an English teacher can be a quality EFL teacher even without the knowledge of psycholinguistics. The most striking aspect of this issue is that the maximum number of respondents (33%) selected the 'neither agree nor disagree' option, indicating their ambivalent perception on the issue. Responding to the proposition number 12, only 32% of the repliers expressed the thought that without the knowledge of sociolinguistics an EFL teacher cannot be effective while 31% of the repliers expressed the thought that even without the knowledge of sociolinguistics an EFL teacher can be effective. The most unusual facet of this issue is that the maximum number of respondents (37%) selected the 'neither agree nor disagree' option, representing their ambivalent perception on the issue.

In responding to the offer number 13, 49% of the student-participants felt that all the students should have opted for CL courses while 45% respondents believed that all the students should have opted for AMLT course in Honours final year. In return for offer number 14, 48% participants thought that AMLT course should have been made compulsory on par with ITL course while 44% thought that it was appropriate decision to leave it in its current status i.e. optional. Responding to the proposition number 15, 60% of the respondents did not support the introduction of an option of ELT stream at the NU honours final year whereas 34% supported it. Concerning the offer number 16, 68% answerers agreed

of which 19% strongly agreed that at MA level an option of regular ELT/TESOL/TEFL programme should have been introduced at the NU, on the other hand, 29% did not agree to this offer. Based on the proposition number 17, only 34% respondents agreed that at least one compulsory ELT course should be introduced at MA level, but 60% of the respondents disagreed to the offer. In response to offer number 18, 67% respondents agreed that at least one optional ELT course should be introduced at MA level, though 29% of the respondents disagreed to the offer. Regarding the last item, 33% of the respondents believed that minimum PTE is essential for all the students pursuing higher study in English in Bangladesh whereas 31% of the respondents believed that even minimum PTE is not essential for all the students pursuing higher study in English in Bangladesh, whereas 33% participants were neutral about the issue.

Based on the data analysis in Table 1, it is observed that although the highest number of participating students (45%) believe that one of the major obstacles in teaching English in Bangladesh is the shortage of skilled teachers, 31% of the student-participants think the main problem of English language teaching in Bangladesh is not the lack of teacher education or teacher training, but the problem is otherwise. Besides, a large number of students are neutral about the language teacher expertise issue. Overall, the negative and ambivalent attitude of the largest section of students on the issue of teacher competence suggests that they are not fully aware of the need for teacher education and training, and consequently may lack the desired level of attention to the need and importance of the LELTC. Similarly data analysis shows that most of the respondents have no clear idea about the role of PTE. Because only 33% of the respondents had a clear idea about the positive role of PTE, while the highest number (35%) expressed a neutral attitude, whereas 32% expressed a negative attitude. That is, maximum number of respondents does not have adequate understanding about the role of PTE. From these it can be assumed that they may have apathy towards the LELTC. However, a significant number of respondents (48%) supported making the AMLT course compulsory in permutation with the ITL course and an equally significant number of respondents (68%) supported the introduction of an ELT programme at the MA level, which proved their rational attitude towards the LELTC courses.

It is noticeable that although most of the respondents agrees the introduction of separate regular ELT programme or at least one optional ELT course at the MA level, they do not favour the introduction of ELT programme in Honours fourth year or the introduction of a compulsory ELT course at the MA level. That is, they value the PTE, but do not support making it compulsory for all the students. Similarly, they do not want the ELT programme to be at the detriment of the literature programme in any way. To conclude, we observe varied perceptions in students in terms of value and necessity of the LELTC. Three separate perceptions of the students participating in the survey can be noticed for each item in the value issue of LELT: positive, negative and ambivalent. Positive perceptions are noticeable in slightly more than one-third of students on an average (Table 1); again almost equal number of students has negative perception towards the LELTC; also neutral perception may indicate students' lack of awareness and decidedness about the importance of the LELTC in developing student-cum-prospective teachers' teaching expertise.

4.2. Analysis of Open-ended Question

In this phase of the chapter, value of the courses refers to the necessity, essentiality, and importance, role and relevance of the LELTC from students' perspective in order to evaluate their views, awareness and appreciation of the courses. Thus, the core objective of this theme was to examine the understanding of the students participating in the survey regarding the significance of pre-service teacher education programme in the broadest sense and the LELTC in the context of the NU in the narrower sense. In this case, we put a question to the students in the open-ended part of the survey questionnaire, through the answers of which we tried to understand in depth the opinions, observations and experiences of the students regarding the value of the LELTC. The open-ended question was: How do you rate the LELTC in the NU Undergraduate English Curriculum?

The survey findings revealed that students' perceptions of the value and role of the LELTC differ. In this case, the participants were basically divided into several groups. Their perceptions can be categorised into three groups such as: positive perception, negative perception and ambivalent perception.

4.3. Positive Perceptions Regarding LELTC

A portion of the students (35%) had a positive view of the importance of LELTC as mainstay courses of pre-service teacher education. They feel that the existing teacher skills crisis in English teaching in Bangladesh can be addressed by preparing competent future ELT teachers through pre-service teacher education. They believe that LELTC have three main advantages: first, it introduces a large number of English students at the NU to pre-service teacher education; second, it implicitly encourages students to take up teaching as a future career; third, it lays the groundwork for future in-service training. In this case, the positive feelings expressed by one student participant towards the LELTC are representative of the attitudes of many others:

I perceive that lack of adequately trained teachers is one of the major challenges for the failure of quality English skills development of the students in Bangladesh. So, I feel teacher preparation and teacher development are essential in ensuring the quality teaching of English in Bangladesh context. The LELTC as part of a full-fledged pre-service teacher education programme can provide introductory knowledge to the students regarding teacher education which can encourage the students to take teaching as their profession and can act as grounding for future in-service training (Respondent student 77).

The students who have a positive perception of the LELTC feel that these courses are highly relevant and indispensable in developing the elementary level linguistic and pedagogical skills of the upcoming teachers in the NU context. They believe it is almost impossible for an ELT teacher to be effective without knowledge of approaches, methods, phonetics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. According to them, the AMLT course provides teachers with pedagogical and content knowledge through which teachers understand the context and apply the appropriate approach or method and are able to manage the classroom appropriately and thereby make their teaching effective:

Correct pronunciation is an important factor in language. Be it a practicing teacher or a prospective teacher, everyone expects phonological accuracy from a teacher. Moreover, there is an inevitable relationship between language and psychology that a teacher needs to know. In this case, psycholinguistic theories are helpful in language teaching and learning. Linguistic theories are the basis of approaches and methods and explain their underlying principles. Overall, the ITL course makes a significant contribution to language teaching and learning through a deep dive into the fundamentals of language (Respondent student 76).

Since pre-service teacher education prepares teachers before they enter the teaching profession, a newly hired inexperienced teacher with an ELT background has an easier time teaching from day one. But an untrained newly recruited teacher coming from a non-ELT background may not have an easy time teaching from day one. In this case, the introductory knowledge of the LELTC can be at least helpful for him. A students' observation in this regard is noteworthy: "I believe that no newly appointed teacher without minimum pre-service teacher education can make the class adequately effective. LELTC can contribute effectively to a minimum level in this regard especially to those coming from a non-ELT background" (Respondent student 21).

"Today's student is tomorrow's teacher." So every student should have minimum knowledge of teaching. And that is why it is appropriate to include at least two courses of ELT along with AMLT course for all students studying English in higher education. A student's assessment in this regard is as such: "In fact, I think it prudent to make at least two ELT courses compulsory including the AMLT course for all the students pursuing higher study in English in Bangladesh, because today's students are tomorrow's teacher" (Respondent student 11).

4.4. Negative/Ambivalent Perceptions about LELTC

A significant number of students (38%) expressed negative perceptions about the importance of teacher education and the LELTC. In fact, their understanding of the aims and philosophy of the LELTC is not sufficient. Basically they have confused the ELT programme with the literature programme. These students, though capable of understanding the linguistic importance of the LELTC, obviously maladroit to grasp the pedagogical mission of the courses, thereby jumbled the LELTC as equivalent to the literature courses in terms of objectives:

I believe literature courses and LELTC equally play a role in developing students' linguistic expertise. We develop our linguistic skills subconsciously in our literature classes even better than the linguistics classes where linguistic skills are taught consciously. In fact, literature serves two folds purposes simultaneously– firstly, helps exercise mental faculties and thus develop artistic/literary mind, and secondly, helps develop linguistic proficiency. Teaching language through literature' is a celebrated academic paradigm in the global academic world. So, literature takes precedence over ELT in language teaching. I, therefore, request a pure literature curriculum in the NU without any ELT courses (Respondent student 88).

One participant expressed ambivalent feelings in the comments below. While she does not basically rebuff the significance of the LELTC, she does not feel their requisite in NU's literature core curriculum either. Provision for this reflection was also found in the perceptions of some other participants:

I think there is no need to include the LELTC in the literary curriculum as a part of teacher education, because there are enough individual arrangements in various institutions in Bangladesh for the education and training of ELT teachers. Though it is undeniable that linguistics and ELT are useful in the literature classroom, sometimes, its prominence may be

hyperbolic. Obviously, separate stream for ELT programme can be created as we find it in many public and notable private universities in Bangladesh (Respondent student 44).

The observation that most of the students in Bangladesh do not want to become teachers, raises doubts about the relevance of the LELTC, thereby pre-service teacher education in the following perception. Moreover, the ubiquitous in-service teacher education programmes have also been pointed out in the comments as downplaying the inevitability of pre-service teacher education:

I feel EFL pre-service teacher education programme is a very idealistic mission allowing for the socio-economic context of Bangladesh, because generally students are not fascinated in teaching profession in our country. Hence, capitalising in such programmes is somewhat of a leftover. Furthermore, I believe in-service teacher training can be an effective substitute for pre-service teacher education (Respondent student 67).

The following commenter believes that an experienced teacher can make his class effective without any training or teacher education. Besides, the concept of 'Global English' or 'World Englishes' has also reduced the importance of phonetics and phonology as one of the stakeholders of LELTC:

LELT may have some role to play in literature classes, but it does not mean that without lot of in LELTC nobody can become a good English teacher. I do not believe teachers who receive pre-service teacher education are of higher quality than those who do not. Even without any knowledge of AMLT an English teacher can make the class effective. Besides, with the emergence of the concept of 'Global English' or 'World Englishes' the importance of phonetics and phonology has declined (Respondent student 18).

5. Summary of Findings

The drive of this paper is to know how students view the LELTC overall, which helps us to understand how they feel in teaching-learning of these courses. And we sought to know this through investigating students' perceptions. This is because perception corroboration can measure a person's attitudes, beliefs and feelings on a specific issue; furthermore, it can provide an actual idea about the overall (un)awareness, position and decision of the individuals regarding that issue. Accordingly, through this perception study, this article explores the attitudes, opinions, feelings, beliefs and experiences of students as the key stakeholder of the LELTC and as our most direct source of information regarding the theme on the value of the courses mentioned. In fact, through this perception exploration, it was possible to get an idea about the actual position and the activities of the surveyed students towards the implementation of the goals and objectives of the courses.

First, the findings revealed a significant number of positive perceptions about the value of the courses. An average of about one-third (34%) of students expressed positive perceptions on the theme. These students are aware of the issue of teacher competence crisis in teaching of English language in Bangladesh in general, and they believe that the PTE can play an effective role in asphyxiating this crisis along with the multi-dimensional training programmes currently undertaken by the authorities. They also believe that the LELTC as a part of a PTE programme can enhance EFL teaching expertise by providing students with basic knowledge of ELT pre-service teacher education in the context of the NU undergraduate English programme. They think that the basic knowledge of approaches and methods of language teaching, phonetics and phonology, psycholinguistic theories and sociolinguistics etc. can develop students' linguistic and pedagogical skills, which can play a role as a basis for future in-service teacher training. They also believe that such pedagogical courses advantage students gravitate towards choosing teaching as their future career. They also believe that such pedagogical courses, though preliminary, can make a significant contribution as a minimum investment for a newly recruited inexperienced teacher.

Conversely, on an average, about one-third (32%) of students articulated negative perceptions of the value, necessity, and role of the LELTC as part of the PTE programme. They believe that NU's curriculum is largely literature-centric. Additionally, the NU has no preparation to run an ELT programme or any of its courses for its various restrictions including the extreme lack of ELT teachers. So, according to these students, considering the context, the LELTC in the NU context are irrelevant, because it is almost impossible to implement them here. However, an average of about one-third (34%) of students enunciated ambivalent perception about the value of the LELTC, which signposts their lack of interest, irresolution or insufficient knowledge of the related issues. In the total analysis, it can be observed that, in some cases, there is an error in the perceptions of some of the students or a difference between their perceptual reality and the actual reality regarding the value of the LELET courses. Among other reasons, the main reason behind this could be that, firstly, these students are basically literature students. Secondly, they are admitted to affiliated colleges in large numbers without any merit check. As a result, there are intellectual differences among the students. They also face

different challenges regarding LELTC in different colleges. Hence, it is natural to have differences of opinion based on their different experiences.

6. Conclusion

Overall, misconceptions and lack of awareness, willingness and indecisiveness of a significant part of students regarding the aims and objectives of the LELTC can be identified as one of the hindrances to the implementation of the courses. So, there is a need for further investigation with a view to locating the areas that demand improvement or the components that require revision for enhancing students' awareness regarding the actual value and need of LELTC by removing their wrong perceptions. In exploring more about student teachers' opinions and experiences of teaching and learning of the LELTC, this research may also have implications for teacher training and development as teacher expertise and performance are one of the significant factors that affect student perceptions. The study also suggests exploring how all of such negative perceptions are actually affecting students' motivation in teaching-learning of LELTC. Similarly, it is necessary to observe the classroom activities of these students in order to deepen our understanding of how the overall wrong perceptions, weaknesses and disorientation of the students regarding the value of LELTC identified in this study are affecting the classroom behaviour of these students. To end, it is recommended to admit students through merit verification, besides it requires deepening the awareness at all levels about the necessity and identity of LELTC through meetings, workshops, and/or small discussion sessions among all the stakeholders.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interests related to this research and publication.

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