Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING SITUATIONS:

Overseas Students in Their First Year Of Teacher Education in New Zealand

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Second Language Teaching at Massey University

Penelope Anne Haworth

1996
This study investigates the perceptions of four overseas student teachers, based on teaching practice observations in their first year of teacher education in a New Zealand College of Education. Data was collected by means of questionnaires, interviews, a semantic differential scale and a stimulated recall procedure. Perceptions of New Zealand learning situations were examined at three points during the year, as the subjects participated in teaching practices. Results from the study relate to the nature, focus, orientation and shifts in the students' perceptions of the target culture. It was found that perceptions were variably focussed on three broad zones of perception, notably teacher/learner roles, the nature of learning and the contextual features of the target learning culture. A number of perception indicators were generated from the data. These included positive perception indicators such as clear conceptualization, strategy formulation, surface assimilation, positive uptake and avoidance of closure, and negative perception indicators relating to partial conceptualization, self doubts, rejection and closure, overlaying, and the lack of effective models. The major outcomes of this study point to the influence of prior beliefs and expectations on perceptions of the target learning culture, as well as the developmental nature of perceptions. In addition, findings reveal the importance of perceptions in the process of acculturation. The study concludes with a number of suggestions for the development of more effective programmes for overseas student teachers.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the support of all those who have helped in me in the process of developing the germ of an idea into a thesis. I have greatly appreciated the professional input of my supervisors Dr Cynthia White, Associate Professor Noel Watts, and Margaret Franken. I am sincerely grateful for all the time which was so freely given, and the continued interest shown in my work. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Cynthia White, for her on-going encouragement, expert counsel and guidance. Her continued confidence in me and her generously shared wisdom has been invaluable in helping me to maintain my motivation, and to focus and clarify my ideas.

I would also like to acknowledge the Massey University College of Education who have provided research grants in support of this research. Their assistance with travel, tapes and audio-visual equipment in 1995, and provision of funding for assistant tutors in 1996, has enabled this project to be completed.

I am especially indebted to the many schools and teachers who generously allowed me to video tape classes, and to the four student teachers who took time to share their perceptions in the midst of a busy year of study. Without the participation of these people, this research would not have been possible. I hope that, in return, the findings from this study will contribute to a more informed approach to the teacher education of overseas students, which will have lasting benefits in the education of all of their future students.

In closing, I am truly grateful to my family who have supported my academic efforts over many years. My very special thanks to my husband Geoffrey, for his constant support and willingness to allow me the freedom to pursue my own learning pathways. My thanks also to my daughter Jillaine for her patience and understanding, and to my Mum for always having time to listen to me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................... 1

2 THE NATURE OF PERCEPTION ............................................ 5
2.1 Key themes ............................................................ 5
  2.1.1 Perception ..................................................... 5
  2.1.2 Cultural Perception ........................................... 8
  2.1.3 Socialization, Beliefs and Role Expectations ............... 8
  2.1.4 Acculturation .................................................. 10
  2.1.5 Teacher Education ............................................ 10
2.2 Cultural Perceptions in the Educational Setting ............... 11
  2.2.1 Perception, Learning and Teaching ......................... 11
  2.2.2 Cultural Perception: Influences on Learning and Teaching Styles.. 14
  2.2.3 Cultural Perception: Influences on Learning and Teaching Roles .. 17
2.3 Shifts in Perceptions ................................................ 19
  2.3.1 Culture Shock ............................................... 19
  2.3.2 Interaction and Context .................................... 21
  2.3.3 Teacher Education and Teacher Beliefs .................... 22
2.4 Summary ............................................................ 26

3 METHODOLOGY ............................................................ 27
3.1 Population and Setting ............................................. 27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Perception Indicators</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Data Display Matrix</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RESULTS: CASE STUDIES</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Subject A</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1</td>
<td>Teacher/Learner Roles</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2</td>
<td>The Nature of Learning</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3</td>
<td>Contextual Features</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4</td>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Subject B</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Teacher/Learner Roles</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2</td>
<td>The Nature of Learning</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3</td>
<td>Contextual Features</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4</td>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Subject C</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1</td>
<td>Teacher/Learner Roles</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2</td>
<td>The Nature of Learning</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3</td>
<td>Contextual Features</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.4</td>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Subject D</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1</td>
<td>Teacher/Learner Roles</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2</td>
<td>The Nature of Learning</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3</td>
<td>Contextual Features</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF APPENDICES

1.1 Introductory Letter to Subjects ......................................................... 137
1.2 Subject Consent Form ................................................................. 138
2 Characteristics of the Subjects ....................................................... 139
3 The Questionnaire ........................................................................... 140
4 The Initial Interview Schedule ....................................................... 142
5 Final Version of the Semantic Differential Scale ............................. 143
6 Time Line for the Research ............................................................ 146
7.1 Introductory Letter to Schools ..................................................... 147
7.2 School Consent Form .................................................................... 148
8 The Pilot Semantic Differential Scale ............................................. 149
9.1 The Practice Exercise .................................................................... 151
9.2 Visual Stimulus Used for Practice Exercise ................................ 152
10 The Final Interview Schedule .......................................................... 153
LIST OF FIGURES

2.1 Hayes (1991) Model of the Perceptual Cycle, as Adapted from Neiser (1976) ................................................................. 6

2.2 Entwistle and Tait's (1990) Heuristic Model of the Teaching Learning Process ................................................................. 12

3.1 The Stimulated Recall Procedure ................................................................................................................................. 44

4.1 Results: Zones of Perception ........................................................................................................................................... 52

4.2 Results: Positive (+) Perception Indicators ......................................................................................................................... 54

4.3 Results: Negative (-) Perception Indicators ......................................................................................................................... 59

4.4 Data Display Matrix ............................................................................................................................................................. 64

5.1 Subject A: Data Matrix ......................................................................................................................................................... 66

5.1.1 Subject A: TLR Shifts ....................................................................................................................................................... 67

5.1.2 Subject A: NL Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 69

5.1.3 Subject A: CF Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 70

5.2 Subject B: Data Matrix ......................................................................................................................................................... 73

5.2.1 Subject B: TLR Shifts ....................................................................................................................................................... 74

5.2.2 Subject B: NL Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 76

5.2.3 Subject B: CF Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 78

5.3 Subject C: Data Matrix ......................................................................................................................................................... 81

5.3.1 Subject C: TLR Shifts ....................................................................................................................................................... 83

5.3.2 Subject C: NL Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 85

5.3.3 Subject C: CF Shifts ......................................................................................................................................................... 86

5.4 Subject D: Data Matrix ......................................................................................................................................................... 89
5.4.1 Subject D: TLR Shifts ......................................................... 91
5.4.2 Subject D: NL Shifts ......................................................... 92
5.4.3 Subject D: CF Shifts ......................................................... 94
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1  Number of Overseas Students in Tertiary Education at 
31 July, 1995 ........................................................................ 27

Table 3.2  Characteristics of the Subjects .................................. 139