Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher (EELT) as Perceived by Learners of English

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Abstract

Literature review indicates that an effective and good teacher has an important role in students' performances and their success. Pivotal roles of teachers may affect students' attitudes and motivations to language learning. Improving the field of foreign language teaching and learning without improving the qualities of EFL teachers seems impossible. This attempt, at first hand, requires recognizing and identifying the qualities of effective EFL teachers. The purpose of this study was to characterize and investigate qualities of an effective English language teacher (EELT) as perceived by Iranian English language learners. A questionnaire which was based on four categories including English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills was administered to 60 foreign language learners at Azad University of Tabriz. The collected data were statistically analyzed. The results showed that students expect a good English teacher to have the ability to develop proper relationships with students, ability to build students' confidence, ability to maintain discipline in the classroom as the most important points. The findings of the present study have some useful implications for language teachers to know more about the perceptions and opinion of the students about themselves. They can plan and implement behaviors and activities that would encourage learners to get involved more in the English language learning process.

Keywords: English language teaching (ELT), Effective teacher, Perception, Pedagogy

Introduction

The issue of the ideal teacher is an ongoing topic. It has been addressed and talked about in the teaching/learning field for long .The teacher is one of the main factors that has a lot of influence on students' achievement, performance and their success (Zainab Al Balushy, 2011 cited in Melek Koc, 2012). In addition to the teacher's knowledge about the subject matters, other characteristics of the teacher such as teaching skills, teaching styles and personal traits will also impact the students' learning attitudes, motivation and the learning outcomes to some extent.

The teacher seems to take the key role in facilitating the students' learning and the characteristics of the teacher may influence the students' learning process to some extents well (Murray, 1991). Prabhu (1990) pointed out that the characteristics of EFL teachers with positive attitudes and enthusiasm strongly correlated with increasing rapport between students and teachers, and appeared to promote productive learning. This indicates that the teacher's characteristics can both encourage and discourage the students' learning. In respect to the classroom atmosphere, this matter may be influenced by the teacher's characteristics as well.

According to Adams and Pierce (1999) having many years of experience doesn't guarantee expert teaching; experience is useful only when the teacher continually engages in self-reflection and modifies classroom techniques to better serve the needs of students. Apart from

good teaching skills that teachers need to have, personal traits are also equally important because they also play a vital role in the success of learning. It is important to study the perceptions of learners about learning and teaching. Their beliefs about language learning seem to have obvious relevance to understanding their expectations of the course, their commitment to the class as well as providing them with the opportunity to be successful and satisfied with their language learning program (Horwitz, 1988).

Moreover, investigation of the student beliefs about different behaviors in the language classroom is useful in informing teachers about different types of learners that need to be catered for (Cotterall, 1999). Good teaching is clearly important to raising student achievement, if teacher is not aware of the learner's expectation and needs related to the course, it will have negative outcomes regarding the students' performance.

According to Noora (2008), the culture of teaching in Iran is primarily teacher-centered; and accordingly, there are limited opportunities for learners to have their say about their expectations of a good and effective teacher. Studying characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the learners' point of view in such a context is worthwhile in that it is in fact a kind of needs analysis intended to help teachers improve the quality of their teaching in an attempt to meet their students' needs. Despite the importance of knowledge about students' perceptions as an informant to effective lecturing, there is dearth of literature in this area in Iran.

The outcomes of teacher's inefficiency may promote poor motivation, unfavorable attitudes toward the teacher and the target language on the part of the learners. So teachers and administrators are in a better position to ensure that all students have appropriate learning opportunities. Improving teacher quality will help ensure that more students reach their potential because they benefited from effective teachers every year (June C. Rivers & William L. Sanders, 2012).

As teacher quality is a crucial factor in promoting effective learning, it would be truly beneficial if teachers could know what students perceive as the characteristics of effective teachers. Moreover, knowing the students' needs and perceptions about an effective teacher might help create an emotionally positive and academically productive atmosphere in the classroom. These perceptions will help the teachers to understand what the students expect from them and enable them to develop themselves accordingly. So the purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions towards the characteristics of EFL teachers and highlight these features.

Review of the Related Literature

Theoretical Background to the Study

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) we should know the nature of language teaching and how it is conceptualized. As with teaching in general, language teaching can be conceived in many different ways – for example, as a science, a technology, a craft, or an art. One approach to develop a theory of teaching is to derive teaching principles from studies of the practices of effective teachers.

This involves identifying effective teachers and then studying their teaching practices. Effective teachers are typically defined as those whose students perform better on standardized achievement tests. One of the main problems of educational systems is the failure to reach the predetermined educational goals. Educational goals generally must be exalted, ideal and useful, as an educational system tries to train individuals with suitable personal, social and academic growth as well as essential skills necessary for playing their future roles in the society.

Characteristics of Good Teachers in General

The question of what makes a good teacher is hardly a new subject. A quick glance at the literature reveals that the result of almost any study has been a list of characteristics which should be possessed by teachers in order to be called "effective". For example, Raymont and Welton (cited in Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson, 2004), were probably the first who tried to develop propositions regarding effective teaching. They introduced five propositions: planning, teacher-pupil interaction, lesson structure, core teaching skills, and the power of the individual teacher to teach. These five propositions are interdependent and really make sense when only considered as a unit.

Thompson, Greer, and Greer (2004) explored the reflections of university students regarding the characteristics of their favorite teachers from whom they were able to learn. Data collected from the students indicated that there are twelve common characteristics that emerged as central to what students conceptualize as good teaching. Those twelve characteristics were displaying fairness, having a positive outlook, being prepared, using a personal touch, possessing a sense of humor, possessing creativity, admitting mistakes, being forgiving, respecting students, maintaining high expectations, showing compassion, and developing a sense of belonging for students. They suggested that all those characteristics center on the theme of caring. If lecturers are to be responsive to student needs and improve the effectiveness of student outcomes, they must first understand what students define as effective lecturing.

Horwitz (1987) warned of the dangers of ignoring student beliefs about language learning: "When language classes fail to meet student expectations, students can lose confidence in the instructional approach and their ultimate achievement can be limited" (p. 119). It seems that the concept of effectiveness is not following a generic pattern and different subjects may demand different patterns of effectiveness in the perceptions of the teachers of these subjects. English as a foreign language is no exception.

Characteristics of 'Effective' EFL Instructors

Effective teachers have been described as 'active' teachers who make maximum use of instruction time, present material in ways to meet student needs, monitor programs and progress and plan opportunities for students to apply newly acquired concepts and skills (Brophy & Good, 1986; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001). Diamond defined an effective teacher as "the one who conducts effective teaching which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures." (Diamond; 1998, cited in Stricland,1998, p.83).

Recently, attempts have been made in different parts of the world in search for learners' perceptions of characteristics of effective EFL instructors to meet their expectations regarding ideal instructors and to implement curricular changes based on what they really expect to receive in class. The fact of the matter is that in EFL environments English class is the prominent, if not the only, true opportunity to 'learn' and 'use' English. This fact highlights the importance of the EFL teacher as the prominent 'source of input' for the learners. Therefore having an *'effective'* teacher is the fundamental need of an EFL class for efficient functioning of educational systems and for enhancing the quality of learning' (Babai Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009).

Different views of language teaching lead to different views as to what the essential skills of teaching are, and to different approaches to the preparation of teachers. Students do know how teachers feel about them. If they think you don't care for them, you have already lost them. "The aim of teaching is simple: it is to make students' learning possible...To teach is to make an assumption about what and how the student learns; therefore, to teach well implies learning about students' learning" (Ramsden, 1992, p. 124).

Kounin (1970) defines 'effective teachers' as those who "accurately handle inappropriate student behavior, manage competing or developing events, more smoothly through instruction, maintain appropriate pacing, and maintain a group focus"(p.147).

According to Kounin (1970) the abilities accepted from an effective teacher are the ability to handle student misbehavior appropriately, to create and manage a stimulating competitive environment, to give clear instruction to pace and maintain a focused group work. He also points out that the most specific feature of an effective teacher is to keep students focused on learning and to reduce classroom disruption. Many studies have investigated the characteristics of effective teachers which most strongly influence students' learning and achievement (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et al., 1993; Lowman, 1997; Witcher et al., 2001). These studies asked students to identify effective teacher characteristics by means of self-report questionnaires or interviews.

Stricland (1998) rather than defining ' the characteristics of an effective teacher ', has described 'bad teachers ' and referred to them as teachers who lack field knowledge and good classroom control, who cannot discover the learning problems of learners, who have obsessions on teaching and do not have certain goals. An effective teacher should also motivate the learners. In Walter (2000, cited in Melek Koc , 2012), it is indicated that giving students more control over the learning process increases motivation. Similarly, Dickinson (1987) comments as follows: "If the learner is prevented from using the favoured techniques, this is likely to seem to her to reduce her learning effectiveness and so be demotivating"(p.193).

A great teacher is the one a student remembers and cherishes forever. Teachers have long-lasting impacts on the lives of their students, and the greatest teachers inspire students toward greatness. Students often rely on their university professors as a source of advice on their education and careers. Pettis (1997) identified three main characteristics for a professionally competent teacher. According to her, an effective teacher must firstly be principled and knowledgeable in addition to being skillful. Secondly, professional needs and interests of an effective language teacher must change over time and develop during his/her teaching. Thirdly, a teacher must be personally committed to his/her professional development. If you ask a student what makes him or her successful in school, you probably won't hear about some fantastic new book or video lecture series. Most likely you will hear something like, it was all Mr. X. He just never gave up on me.

What students take away from a successful education usually centers on a personal connection with a teacher who instilled passion and inspiration for their subject. It's difficult to measure success, and in the world of academia, educators are continually re-evaluating how to quantify learning (Park, G. & Lee, H, 2006).

Paths Teachers Can Follow to Grow and Improve

Good teachers know that by listening to and working with colleagues, parents, other professionals and community members, they can inspire students and improve their learning. Everybody wants to have an ideal teacher while studying somewhere. However, when it comes to a definition of a perfect teacher it appears to be not so easy to give it, because different teachers are successful in different ways. For example, some are easy-going and charismatic, while others are quiet and not very sociable but in spite of the difference in personalities, all good teachers have some common qualities that help them to become the best ones (Radmacher & Martin, 2001).

First of all, perfect teachers must be knowledgeable. They must know a lot about the subject they are teaching and be able to help students understand, by explaining concepts

thoroughly and being able to answer all questions accurately. This characteristic is very important and seems to be a vital element contributing to the development of students. One of the best-known conceptualizations of what teachers know is that of Shulman (1987) who defines teachers' knowledge as:

►Content knowledge

►Pedagogic content knowledge (the ability to contextualise, situate, and personalise the content for the learners)

►General pedagogic knowledge (principles and strategies of classroom management and organization regardless of content matter)

►Curriculum knowledge (materials and programs that are the 'tools of trade' for teachers)

►Knowledge of learners and their characteristics

►Knowledge of educational contexts, and contexts (the group, the classroom, the district, the community)

►Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values

Then, good teachers should be motivating. Good teachers always succeed in inspiring their students both in class and out of class. Teachers have the power to inspire, through their attitudes, actions, and even through the lessons or activities they engage students in. Patience is also one of the most important qualities.

Teachers should remember that every student is different. For instance, some are different in backgrounds, cultures, and believes. Even children from the same culture still differ in personalities, which will reflect their learning abilities. So good teachers must understand that and take it into consideration. Being a teacher is a hard job, but being a dedicated teacher requires more outstanding personalities. Without being knowledgeable, motivating, and patient, one can't be a good teacher (Kumaravadivelu, 1992). The teacher should be gentle and fair in dealing with all students. As Wichadee (2010) stated teacher should be a strong role-model who would instill a lifelong impression in the minds of students both in pedagogy and demeanor. Henry (1985) cited in Crawford (2004), noted that "A good teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." (p. 172).

Empirical Background to the Study

Many studies have been conducted about teacher characteristics. The related literature is based on a number of studies that address the related issue intensively as follows:

In a study Chen (2012) aimed to investigate the favorable and unfavorable characteristics of the EFL teachers perceived by Thai university students. The characteristics were grouped into personal trait-related and classroom teaching-related characteristics. The personal trait-related characteristics included emotion, kindness, fairness, lenience and responsibility and the classroom teaching-related characteristics were concerned with aspects of lesson delivery, language used in teaching, classroom activity organization and classroom atmosphere creation. An interesting finding, according to Chen (2012) was to discover that some students liked to study with the teachers who spoke English and Thai in the classroom. Some students preferred to study with the foreign teachers who could speak Thai. According to them, if the teacher spoke English and Thai while teaching, they could understand the teaching better and would have higher motivation to learn.

Witcher (2003) studied students' perceptions of characteristics of effective college teachers. Participants were 912 undergraduate and graduate students from various academic majors enrolled at a university in a midsouthern state. Results of the analysis revealed the following nine characteristics that students considered to reflect effective college teaching: 1)

student-centered (58.88%), 2) knowledgeable about subject matter (44.08%), 3) professional (40.79%), 4) enthusiastic about teaching (29.82%), 5) effective at communication (23.46%), 6) accessible (23.25%), 7) competent at instruction (21.82%), 8) fair and respectful (21.60%), 9) provider of adequate performance feedback (5.04%).Barnes (2010) examined the students' beliefs about the attributes of effective EFL teachers. 105 first year Korean university students taking EFL classes at a women's university in Korea were asked to write the attributes of effective EFL teachers in their own language. The results of the study were framed under five categories including rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. Students considered rapport and delivery as very important characteristics of an EFL teacher. Particularly, rapport attributes were viewed as the most important in Korean university contexts where students had anxiety in English language learning.

Chireshe (2011) investigated university students' perspective on effective and ineffective lecturers using the design of qualitative survey. A questionnaire was used to collect the data from 77 students. The study revealed that effective lecturers were well organized, competent, always involved students, friendly and readily available. It was also found that effective lecturers were necessarily fair in their marking. On the other hand, it was also found that ineffective lecturers did not plan their lectures, came late for lectures, were not knowledgeable, were not contributing to students' seminar presentations, were intimidating students, were not involving students, were boasting about their qualifications and families and were biased in their marking. Moreover, ineffective lecturers' did not highlight strengths and weaknesses of students.

A quite recent study by Whichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012) compared the characteristics of effective language teachers on the basis of four categories: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills and socio-affective skills. This was so as these characteristics were viewed by low and high proficiency students at Bangkok University. Two tools were used to gather data, a questionnaire and an interview. The results showed that both low and high proficiency rated 'effective language teachers' in order of importance as follows: organization and communication skills, socio- affective skills, pedagogical knowledge, and English proficiency.

Research Questions

Q1: What are the qualities of an Effective English Language Teacher (EELT) from students'   point   of   view?

Q2: Does the level of the students play a role in their perceptions of these qualities?

Hypothesis

H1: Students with different levels (B.A and M.A) perceive characteristics of effective teachers differently.

Methodology

Participants

The sample population in this study was a combination of 60 EFL students majoring in teaching English Language and translation, within the age range of 20 to 34 years old at M.A and B.A levels selected from among a population of 120 students. So the participants consisted of two groups, the first group was30 students at B.A level and the second group was30 students at the M.A level .Their first language was Azari. They were studying English language teaching at Islamic Azad University of Tabriz and were randomly selected including both males and females.

Instruments

In this study, the researcher intended to find out what qualities of teachers for students are more important and who is a good and effective language teacher from students' point of view. One instrument was used in this study including two sections: first section was a questionnaire and second section was open-ended questions. The questionnaire was developed in English and was revised 2 times with the help of colleagues and peers before being used in a pilot study to investigate how different items functioned and to find out whether there was a need to revise, add or drop any item. With comments received after pilot testing, three items were added to each section and some items were removed from each section.

The final version of the questionnaire which was administered along with a covering letter was made up of two sections. The first part of the instrument was the questionnaire included 60 statements about the characteristics of an EELT (the internal consistency index of which was calculated to be using Cronbach's Alpha was 0.945), and the participants were asked to express their comments based on a four-point (very important, important, somehow important and not very important) Likert Scale. They were asked to select the choice which would best represent their reactions to the statements.

There were four categories of characteristics including 1) English proficiency, 2)Pedagogical knowledge, 3) Organization and communication skills, and 4) Socio-affective skills shown in the form of a four-point rating scale ranging from 'the most important' to 'not very important'. We piloted the questionnaire in order to examine its reliability and validity, at this stage the researcher eliminated and changed some parts of the questionnaire to improve its quality.(for example question N.12 (organization and communication skills): present the content in a well-organized way was replaced by this question: using the students' native language when necessary and question N.4 (pedagogical knowledge):create and maintain a good classroom atmosphere was replaced by this one: are flexible with grading).

The second part consisted of eight open-ended questions to be answered by the participants. The questionnaire appears in full in appendix A. So the questionnaire including 60 items was administered to the participants. They were supposed to check the related statement of their idea. The questionnaire was adapted from an existing literacy survey (Park & Lee's, 2006) in accordance with the needs of students. The items on the questionnaire intended to sample students' beliefs and their self-reported ideas towards their attitude to teachers, learning and being in a classroom as direct participants.

Procedure

The data were collected from 60 students at BA and MA levels majoring in teaching English Language and translation (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at English language department of Azad University of Tabriz, by means of a questionnaire and open-ended questions which was designed based on Park and Lee's concepts (2006).

After piloting stage, the questionnaire was administered to the main participants. The questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the spring semester of academic year 2015-2016 and it took about20 minutes to complete. The participants started answering the questionnaires; the researcher gave a brief instruction on how to respond them. They were told that there were no right or wrong answers and they just answered the questions according to what they really thought. And also they could ask the researchers immediately if they had any questions. The respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought a particular characteristic is in relation to effective teachers. They were asked to categorize the degree of the importance of each item as very important, important, somehow important or of not very important.

The questionnaire was marked and answered by two types of group, the first group was the students at the B.A level and the second group was the students at the M.A level to compare their results of two groups including male and female. The data was analyzed by using percentage, frequency and Mann-Whitney U-Test.

Moreover, open-ended questions were used as the second part of instrument for data collection. The learners were asked to write and provide their own opinions and constructive feedback about each question regarding their expectation from a qualified teacher. Useful information about EFL teachers' personal trait-related characteristics and classroom teaching-related characteristics emerged from the data.

Data Analysis and results

The first research question intended to examine the characteristics of effective English language teachers. To answer this question the researcher used tables of frequency distribution and mean. Table 1 shows the mean of the statements in descending form (From the most important points to the least important points).

Table 1. *The mean of the statements in the questionnaire in descending form*

Statements	Mean	Statements	Mean
Ability to develop proper relationships with students	3.6833	Ability to make courses interesting and motivate students	3.5333
Ability to build students' confidence	3.6500	Be neat and tidy in appearance	3.5333
Ability to maintain discipline in the classroom	3.6333	Alleviate students' anxiety in class	3.5167
Ability to create an entertaining atmosphere to carry out the class activities	3.6167	Motivate students by supporting their self-efficacy	3.5167
Listen to students' points of view and opinions and let them express themselves	3.6000	Focus on learning outcomes and growth, not content taught	3.5167
Promote communicative language learning through activities & discussion	3.5833	encourage students to use the English language ALL THE TIME in class	3.5167
Ability to make courses interesting and being smart to deviate attention of students from everything else to the topic	3.5833	Ability to guide and train students towards independent learning	3.5167

Statements	Mean	Statements	Mean
Be approachable and friendly	3.5667	Have correct accent and pronunciation	3.5000
Possess extensive culture comprehension and provide cultural information about the target language's culture	3.5667	Have good knowledge of English grammar	3.5000
Ability to explain vocabulary and grammar and use relevant real world examples in lessons	3.5500	Read, write, speak, and understand spoken English well	3.4833
Provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities	3.5500	Provide constant feedback	3.4833
Statements	**Mean**	**Statements**	**Mean**
Use easy language to aid student understanding	3.5333	Have a good sense of humor	3.4833
Know English vocabulary well	3.4833	Ability to have pair work and group work activities in the classroom	3.4167
Assess what students have learned rationally	3.4833	Ability to assess students' performance with the help of suitable evaluation instruments	3.4167
Stress the most important points and providing detailed explanations while reading/listening	3.4833	Teach subject matter in ways that are accessible to all learners and vary his/her delivery methods if **necessary**	3.4000
Ability to help the learners become autonomous learners	3.4667	Using the students` native language when necessary	3.4000
Be polite and respect the personality of the students	3.4667	Have an interest in students, for example, address individual students by name	3.4000
Be punctual	3.4667	Ability to set tasks with clear outcomes	3.3833
Let students have some control over the learning process	3.4500	Be helpful to students in and outside the classroom	3.3833
Develop students' language skill through working in pairs or groups	3.4500	Praise students for good ideas or for their effort	3.3500

Ability to make/stimulate students to interact/communicate with each other	3.4500	Prepare the lesson well and using class time wisely	3.3500
Ability to analyze students` needs	3.4500	Treat students fairly and equally	3.3500
Be flexible with grading	3.4500	Emphasis error correction	3.3333
Ability to plan the lessons clearly and also state the objectives of the lesson clearly	3.4500	Avoid direct criticism of students when they make errors	3.2667
Ability to make the subject of the lesson interesting to learners	3.4333	Ability to prepare appropriate material	3.2667
Be flexible and open to criticism	3.4333	Be patient	3.2667
Not lose temper and get angry	3.4333	Ability to be flexible and vary techniques according to students' level and the teaching/learning situations	3.2333
Ability to use audio-visual aids when teaching	3.4333	Encourage the students to learn English outside the classroom	3.1167
Give the learners some control and decision-making over what they do	3.4167	Good communication skills	3.1167

As the results show the statement: *Ability to develop proper relationships with students ($\overline{X}$=3.6833)* obtains the highest mean and the statements: *Encourage the students to learn English outside the classroom* and *Good communication skills ($\overline{X}$=3.1167)* obtain the lowest mean.

According to the perceptions of the participants of this research, the first and most important point in teaching English language and for English language teachers is the *Ability to develop proper relationships with students,* the next important characteristic of an effective teacher is *the Ability to build students' confidence. The Ability to maintain discipline in the classroom* is the third important feature of an effective teacher according to students' perceptions.

As the results show some of the least important characteristics of an effective teacher as perceived by students are *the Ability to be flexible and vary techniques according to students' level and the teaching/learning situations($\overline{X}$=3.2333),* then *Encourage the students to learn English outside the classroom($\overline{X}$=3.1167)* and *Good communication skills($\overline{X}$=3.1167)* accordingly.

To answer question number two related to the role of the level of the students in their perceptions, the researcher collected data from B.A and M.A students then compared their answers.

For conducting of the parametric statistics such as T-test first, some assumptions like the normality of the data should be considered. So first the researcher ran a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test in order to test the normality of the data, and decided whether a T-test

can be used for answering the following questions (the second and third question of the research) or not. The results of these tests are given in the table 2.

Table 2. *Tests of Normality*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Organization and communication skills	.130	60	**.014**	.929	60	**.002**
Pedagogical knowledge	.147	60	**.003**	.927	60	**.001**
Socio_affective_skills	.135	60	**.009**	.918	60	**.001**
English proficiency	.105	60	**.099**	.937	60	**.004**
Total score	.128	60	**.016**	.910	60	**.000**

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test as given in table 2.indicate that the data for all of the variables doesn't meet the normality condition (sig <0.05). So for comparing of the answers of B.A and M.A students as well as the comparison of male and female students, we could not use T-test. But some non-parametric tests such as Mann-Whitney U-test could be used. So to analyze and answer the second question the researcher used Mann-Whitney U-test instead of T-test, because the distribution of the variables was not normal. The results are shown in table below.

Table 3. *Ranks and Test Statistics for the Comparison of B.A and M.A Students' Perceptions*

Variable	Course	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Rank	Z	Sig
Organization and Communication skills	M.A	30	39.20	1176.00	- 3.878	0.000
	B.A	30	21.80	654.00		
	Total	60				
Pedagogical knowledge	M.A	30	39.13	1174.00	- 3.847	0.000
	B.A	30	21.87	656.00		
	Total	60				
Socio-affective skills	M.A	30	37.70	1131.00	- 4.242	0.000
	B.A	30	23.30	699.00		
	Total	60				
English proficiency	M.A	30	40.03	1201.00	- 4.242	0.000
	B.A	30	20.97	629.00		

	Total	60				
Total score	M.A	30	39.07	1172.00	-	0.000
	B.A	30	21.93	658.00	3.805	
	Total	60				

As the results of table 3.show, in all of the five categories of teacher characteristics, the *p* values are less than 0.05 ($P< 0.05$). So it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between the perceptions of M.A and B.A students regarding the characteristics of an effective teacher. Therefore, the answer of second question is positive. In other words the M.A students consider the effects of these points and statements more important than the B.A students.

So our research hypothesis indicating that students with different levels (B.A and M.A) perceive characteristics of effective teachers differently was accepted, because as the results show students' level of study (M.A & B.A) affected their perceptions regarding the characteristics of an effective teacher.

Discussion

The present study investigated the effective characteristics of EFL teachers as perceived by the university students of Tabriz. As the above findings show learners of English hold different views toward some characteristics of an effective English language teacher. As Pettis (1997) notes, professionally competent English teachers are profoundly knowledgeable in language, and in line with the findings of Park and Lee (2006), Brosh (1996), and Kalabic (2005), most of the teachers in this investigation perceived knowledge of language to be a crucial factor in characterizing an effective English language teacher. This also confirms the findings of Calabria (1960), Feldman (1976) and Feldman (1988) who had found mastery of subject matter as a characteristic of an effective teacher.

On the whole, the learners assigned more weight to characteristics relating to a teachers' personality and the way he behaves his students. Moreover, students considering these features such as: ability to develop proper relationships with students, ability to build students' confidence, ability to maintain discipline in the classroom, listen to students' points of view and opinions and let them express themselves, promote communicative language learning through activities and discussion, ability to make courses interesting and being smart to deviate attention of students from everything else to the topic, be approachable and friendly, as the important characteristics of an effective teacher, besides these they focused also on the other characteristics that may affect a teacher's efficacy like, being up-to-date, having positive attitudes towards the learners and being smart and creative, being to the point and not speaking a lot about his/her personal experiences.

All these observations indicate that the students' perspectives also seem very realistic and the fact that they consider both strong and weak points of their teachers can help teachers to reflect on their own behaviors in the classroom and try to overcome the possible problems resulting in deficiency.

The other issue that should be touched here is the level of target language used in the classroom. Besides students' weaknesses, the teachers' lack of attention to gearing the target language to the appropriate level of the learners might be one further reason for such preference on the part of the learners, i.e. the desire to receive instruction in L1. Learners indicated that the most important factor to distinguish English language teachers was their familiarity with a foreign language and culture.

From the learners' point of view (without considering their gender), neither male nor female teachers were perceived to be more effective than the other, and gender of a teacher was regarded as a factor having little or almost no effect on his/her efficacy. However, male students more than the female students perceived female English language teachers as more effective and reversely more female students than male students acknowledged male English teachers to be more effective.

Based on the findings of the present study the following points can be concluded from students' viewpoints. According to the perceptions of the participants of this research, the most important points in teaching English language and for English language teachers are accordingly:

(1) Ability to develop proper relationships with students

(2) Ability to build students' confidence

(3) Ability to maintain discipline in the classroom

(4) Ability to create an entertaining atmosphere to carry out the class activities

(5) Listen to students' points of view and opinions and let them express themselves

(6) Promote communicative language learning through activities & discussion

(7) Ability to make courses interesting and being smart to deviate attention of students from everything else to the topic

The least important features according to participants of this study are:

(1) Good communication skills

(2) Encourage the students to learn English outside the classroom

(3) Ability to be flexible and vary techniques according to students' level and the teaching/learning situations

(4) Be patient

(5) Ability to prepare appropriate material

(6) Avoid direct criticism of students when they make errors

(7) Emphasis error correction

To make their teaching activities more effective for learners, caring and responsible language teachers should therefore feel a need for discovering what their students' needs are. Conducting such research to define an effective EFL instructor' characteristics would pave the way for both language institutions and instructors themselves to make the distance between learner's expectations and experiences in EFL classes as shorter as possible.

Emphasizing *learner*'s expectations arises from the fact that CLT is a learner centered approach. If the teacher should manage the class, he or she should not fail to take the learners expectations into consideration.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

IN GOD WE TRUST

A Questionnaire on Qualities of an Effective English Language Teacher

This questionnaire is going to be used to investigate the qualities of an effective English language teacher from the perspective of Iranian English language learners. Findings of this study are hopped to be beneficial to both Iranian English language teachers and learners. It is worth mentioning that your participation in this research is voluntary and the data collected by means of this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Should you wish to contact the researcher during the process of research, please feel free to contact her through the following e-mail address:

roya4c@gmail.com

Thank you for your participation

QUESTIONNAIRE: Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher (EELT)	
Name (Optional): **Age :** **Course :** **Date:**	
Sex: Male☐Female☐ **Email:**	

Instruction: With reference to each statement, please tick *ONLY ONE BOX* (according to how important they are) that reflects your perceptions and views regarding some qualities of a good English language teacher.

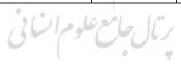**Direction:** listed below are the means of each statement in questionnaire:
4= Very important
3= Important
2=Somehow
1= Not very important

After reading each statement checks the number (1, 2, 3, 4,) that applies to you. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to the statements. (See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire, Appendix B for a list of open-ended questions).

Table 1. Percentage scores of students' perceptions on characteristics of effective English

No of Items	Organization and communication skills	Very important 4	Important 3	Somehow important 2	Not Very important 1
1	Ability to guide and train students towards independent learning				
2	Use easy language to aid student understanding				
3	Ability to make courses interesting and being smart to deviate attention of students from everything else to the topic				
4	Ability to plan the lessons clearly and also state the objectives of the lesson clearly				

5	Encourage students to use the English language ALL THE TIME in class				
6	Stress the most important points and providing detailed explanations while reading/listening (e.g,checking ALL the new vocabularies)				
7	Ability to analyze students' needs				
8	Ability to make/ stimulate students to interact/communicate with each other				
9	Good communication skills				
10	Ability to prepare appropriate material				
11	Prepare the lesson well and using class time wisely				
12	Using the students' native language when necessary				
13	Maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary				
14	Provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities				
15	Be helpful to students in and outside the classroom				

Table 2.Percentage scores of students' perceptions on characteristics of effective English language teachers in terms of pedagogical knowledge

No of items	Pedagogical knowledge	Very important 4	Important 3	Somehow important 2	Not Very important 1
1	**Focus on learning outcomes and growth, not content taught**				
2	**Use various materials including video, audio, and multimedia**				
3	**Promote communicative language learning through activities & discussion**				
4	**Be flexible with grading**				
5	**Motivate students by supporting their self-efficacy**				
6	**Assess what students have learned rationally**				
7	**Develop students' language skill through working in pairs or groups**				
8	**Let students have some control over the learning process**				
9	**Encourage the students to learn English outside the classroom**				
10	**Avoid direct criticism of students when they make errors**				
11	**Praise students for good ideas or for their effort**				
12	**Teach subject matter in ways that are accessible to all learners and vary his/her delivery methods if necessary**				
13	**Provide constant feedback**				
14	**Ability to explain vocabulary and grammar and use relevant real world examples in lessons**				
15	**Ability to set tasks with clear outcomes**				

Table3. Percentage scores of students' perceptions on characteristics of effective English language teachers in terms of socio-affective skills

No of items	socio-affective skills	Very important 4	Important 3	Somehow important 2	Not Very important 1
1	Have an interest in students, for example, address individual students by name				
2	Be neat and tidy in appearance				
3	Ability to make courses interesting and motivate students				
4	Alleviate students' anxiety in class				
5	Listen to students' points of view and opinions and let them express themselves				
6	Be approachable and friendly				
7	Be patient				
8	Treat students fairly and equally				
9	Be punctual				
10	Have a good sense of humor				
11	Ability to develop proper relationships with students				
12	Ability to build students' confidence				
13	Not lose temper and get angry				
14	Be flexible and open to criticism				
15	Be polite and respect the personality of the students				

*Table 4.*Percentage scores of students' perceptions on characteristics of effective English

No of Items	English proficiency	Very important 4	Important 3	Somehow important 2	Not Very important 1
1	Read, write, speak, and understand spoken English well				
2	Know English vocabulary well				
3	Have good knowledge of English grammar				
4	Possess extensive culture Comprehension and provide cultural information about the target language's culture				
5	Have correct accent and pronunciation				
6	Ability to be flexible and vary techniques according to students' level and the teaching/learning situations				
7	Emphasis error correction				
8	Ability to assess students' performance with the help of suitable evaluation instruments				
9	Ability to use audio-visual aids when teaching				
10	Ability to create an entertaining atmosphere to carry out the class activities				
11	Ability to maintain discipline in the classroom				
12	Ability to have pair work and group work activities in the classroom				
13	Ability to make the subject of the lesson interesting to learners				
14	Ability to help the learners become autonomous learners				
15	Give the learners some control and decision-making over what they do				