

PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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They are only and only the teachers who save nations.
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Abstract

This study aims to determine the personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of foreign language teachers. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to prep-school students at Hacettepe University. According to the views of the students who participated in the study, a percentage study was used in order to analyze the point of views of students. It was reported that having-self esteem, having a good diction, behaving in accordance with the professional moral principles, attending classes regularly, being fluent and accurate in speaking, and being planned and programmed were the most favored characteristics by the students. Finally, some recommendations for foreign language teachers were made.

Key words: *Personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics, teacher, student, foreign language teaching*

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN KİŞİSEL, MESLEKİ ve PEDOGOJİK ÖZELLİKLERİ

Özet

Bu çalışma yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin kişisel, mesleki ve pedagojik özelliklerini belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla Hacettepe Üniversitesi Hazırlık Okulundaki 145 öğrenciye (60 erkek + 85 kız) geliştirdiği ve alan uzmanlarının değerlendirip yorumladığı bir anket verilmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan öğrencilerin görüşlerini analiz etmek üzere yüzdelerle çalışması uygulanmıştır. Çalışmada kendine güven, iyi bir diksiyon, meslek ahlakı kurallarına göre davranmak, düzenli derslere girmek, akıcı ve anlaşılır konuşmak ve planlı ve programlı olarak öğrencinin en beğendiği konular olarak bildirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonunda bu konular ile ilgili olarak yabancı dil öğretmenleri için bazı öneriler getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Kişisel, mesleki ve pedagojik özellikler, öğretmen, öğrenci, yabancı dil öğretimi.*

Introduction

The most striking feature of the history of foreign language instruction, especially English, in our country appears to vary in terms of the methods and approaches used by the teachers in a totally different context of situation. That is English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Therefore, the proponents of each have tended to deny this fact. Should I use the mother tongue in my classes or ban it? Or Should I totally ignore or barely tolerate it even if my students do not understand the instructions? The ability to speak the foreign language was once regarded irrelevant according to the proponents of GTM. Then as a reaction to this view the Direct Method made speaking its primary aim. Should reading have been ignored then? Of course, not. If so, the reading approach gained importance. However, we all know that a language does not only contain speaking and reading. What about the basics of the language acquisition process? Listening is the primary skill to be developed. And later the triumphant Aural-Oral or Audio-lingual Approach once again insisted on the primacy of speech (Celce-Murcia & McIntosh, 1989). If this is the case, then should we ignore writing? As a reaction to the behaviorist features of the Audio-lingual Approach, Cognitive Approach emerged by putting emphasis on communication and equal importance on written language skills (reading and writing) and the spoken skills (listening and speaking)

As these changing needs become clear to the teachers and teacher trainers, there raises the question: What reason is there to believe that the current trends in pedagogy have really brought an end (solution) to this problematic area of language teaching? What is the best way? Or is there really the best one? Who will discover and use it? What is it? Therefore, all the responsibility has been placed on the real classroom researchers: the teachers. Then, who are they? Are they qualified enough? Do they know their own strengths and weaknesses?

Of late the art of foreign language teaching has been increasingly included in the professional development programs throughout the world. However, very little is known about the attitudes of both teachers and students towards this art not only in terms of professional and personal but also of pedagogical applications in the real classroom climate in foreign language education in our country. Açıkgöz (2005) once again points out the fact that "the classroom climate influenced by the teacher has a major impact on pupil's motivation and attitude towards learning...." In addition to this other scholars he cited in his article like Basow, 2000; Basow and Silberg, 1987; Best and Addison, 2000; Bousfield, 1940; Cravens, 1996; Feldman, 1986; Guerrero and Miller, 1998; Marsch and Roche, 1997; and Radmacher and Martin, 2001 attach importance on teacher-expressive characteristics such as warmth, enthusiasm, and extroversion that clearly distinguishes effective teachers from ineffective ones. According to the implications drawn from the study conducted by Oreck (2004), teachers use these characteristics rarely in primary schools. Oreck's study indicated that teachers are hindered by a lack of professional development and by intense pressure to teach the mandated curriculum 'and/or the syllabus.' On this issue Kumaravadivelu (1993) suggests considering such factors that

best facilitate student learning as being purposeful, task-oriented, relaxed, warm, supportive, and humor (cited in Açıkgoz, 2005).

Many different factors are believed to influence the personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of teachers. An appreciation of these factors is essential if we are to understand these three dimensions in foreign language education. Then we should begin our investigation right in the classroom and see what evidence there is concerning the issue because it is underpinned by teacher/learner relationship.

Purpose

As is known the most important element of the education system is the teacher himself. The teacher has an important part in the learning process in which the knowledge is passed onto the learner and there is no other alternative way to transform this knowledge into the learners (Gedikoğlu, 1993). He is the one who (a) improves and directs the educational process b) draws his students' attention towards the lesson, (c) motivates his students, (d) a good guide, (e) a good leader, (f) a good organizer (g) a good monitor, (h) a facilitator and so on (Sarıçoban, 1999 and Sarıçoban, 2001). As Armstrong (1981:247) asserts, teachers should be experienced in psychology, sociology, and pedagogy. Therefore, we can claim that a teacher with professional knowledge, pedagogy and sound personality is the main part of in-classroom members who lead to the effective ways of learning and teaching. Within this context, the purpose of the study is to focus on the importance of the professional, personal and pedagogical characteristics of teachers in teaching a foreign language.

Problem

This study only aims to find answers to the following research questions;

1. What are students' views about personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of their foreign language teachers?
2. What are the most favored top 10 characteristics the students expect to see about personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of their foreign language teachers?

Method

Subjects

This study was conducted to determine the desired personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of foreign language teachers. To do this a representative sample of the preparatory school students at Hacettepe University participated in the study. They were 145, 60 of whom were male and 85 of whom were female. They ranged in age from 18 to 28. Surprisingly enough only three of them were over 21:23, 26, 28 respectively.

Data Collection (The Instrument) and Analysis

For this purpose a questionnaire was developed and designed by the researcher relying on the literature. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, three of which were on (a) Personal Characteristics (36 items), (b) Professional Characteristics (26 items), (c) Pedagogical Characteristics (22 items) and the other section on the most favored 10 items by the students for each of the above characteristics. After the researcher designed the questionnaire, he consulted some of the ELT experts, a few of whom were his colleagues at the department. Upon the agreement of these experts, he composed the final version of his questionnaire into three parts: personal, professional and pedagogical..

A five-point likert-scale was prepared to determine the expected personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics of foreign language teachers by the students. As for the data analysis the expected characteristics' frequency and percentages were evaluated during a statistical process according to the views of the students. The researcher analyzed the findings obtained from study and interpreted them as is given below.

Results and Discussion

The participants (n=145) of the study were asked to mark the options including their teachers' personal, professional and pedagogical characteristics.

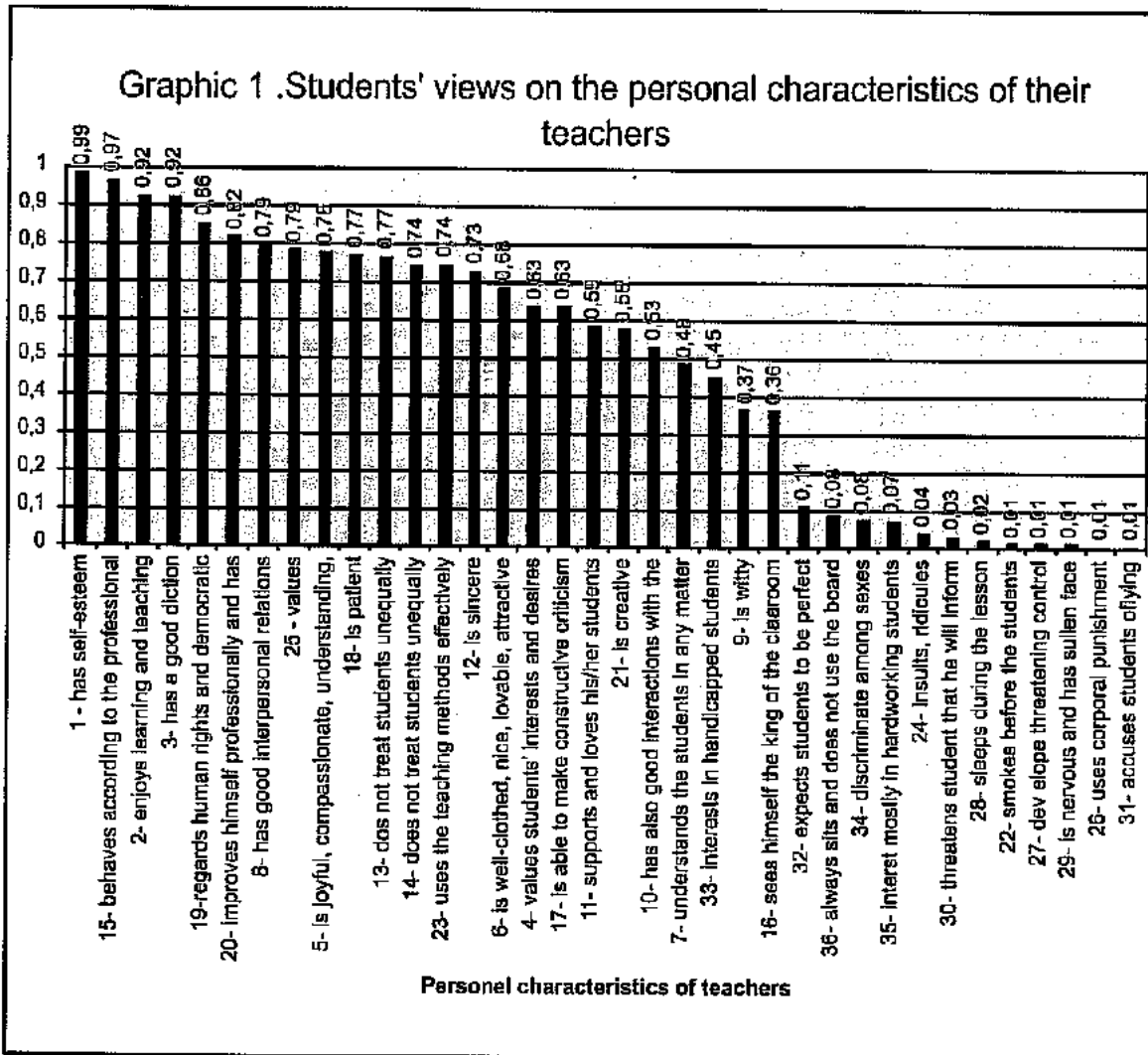
Below are the three graphics for each main heading. While the first graphic shows the frequency of the characteristics their teachers have, the second one reports the most favored 10 characteristics by the students which they believe that their teachers should have. The last one shows the relationship between students' views about these three features and the most favored 10 characteristics of these three categories respectively.

A. Personal Characteristics Of Teachers

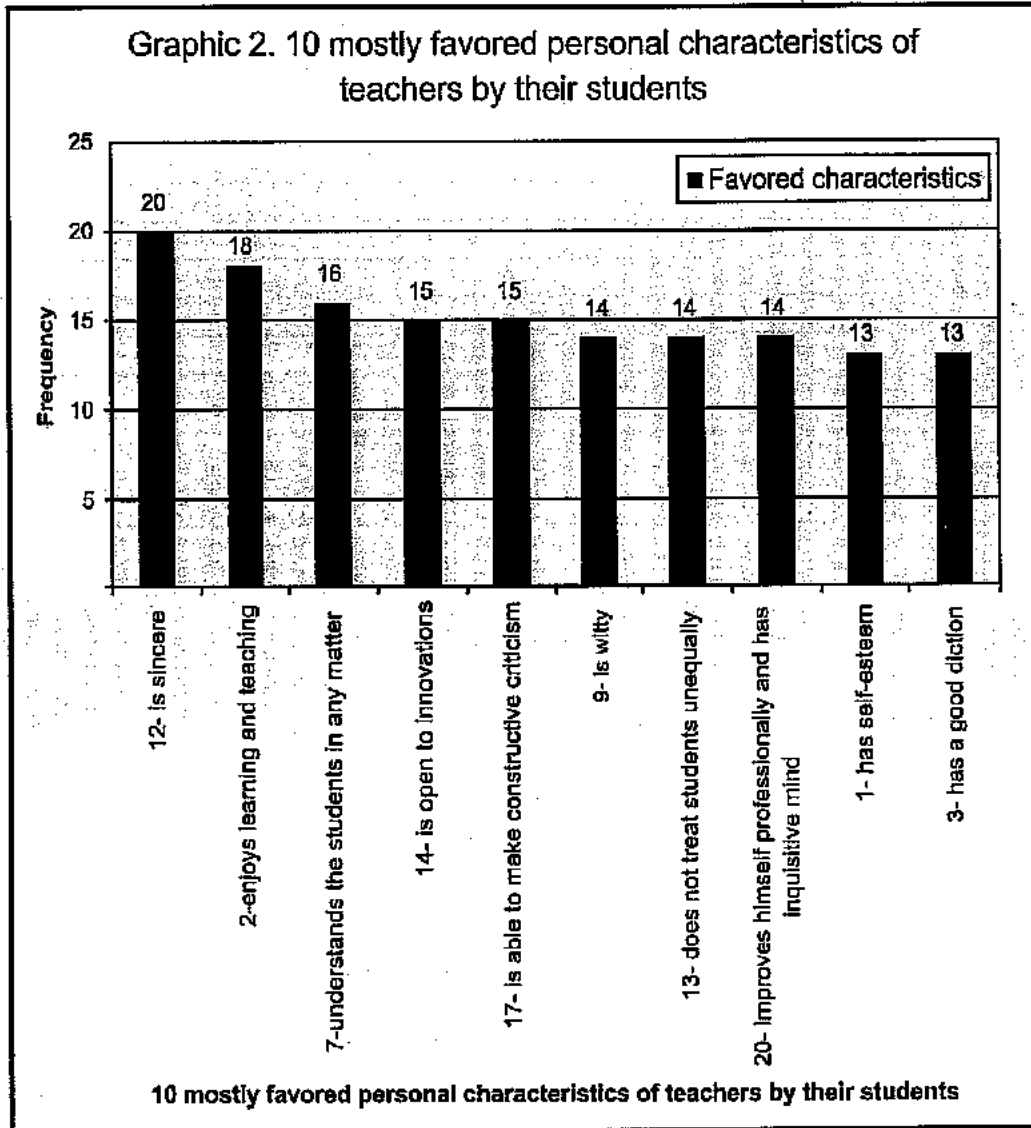
These are;

My foreign language teacher

| |
|--|
| 1- has self-esteem |
| 2- enjoys learning and teaching |
| 3- has a good diction |
| 4- values students' interests and desires while studying |
| 5- is joyful, compassionate, understanding, sensitive, honest |
| 6- is well-clothed, nice, lovable, attractive |
| 7- understands the students in any matter |
| 8- has good interpersonal relations |
| 9- is witty |
| 10- has also good interactions with the students outside the class |
| 11- supports and loves his/her students |
| 12- is sincere |
| 13- does not treat students unequally |
| 14- is open to innovations |
| 15- behaves according to the professional moral principles |
| 16- sees himself the king of the classroom |
| 17- is able to make constructive criticism |
| 18- is patient |
| 19- regards human rights and democratic principles |
| 20- improves himself professionally and has inquisitive mind |
| 21- is creative |
| 22- smokes before the students |
| 23- uses the teaching methods effectively |
| 24- insults, ridicules |
| 25- values |
| 26- uses corporal punishment |
| 27- develops threatening control systems/methods |
| 28- sleeps during the lesson |
| 29- is nervous and has sullen face |
| 30- threatens students that he will inform the administration |
| 31- accuses students of lying |
| 32- expects students to be perfect |
| 33- interests in handicapped students |
| 34- discriminate among sexes |
| 35- intersts mostly in hardworking students |
| 36- always sits and does not use the board |



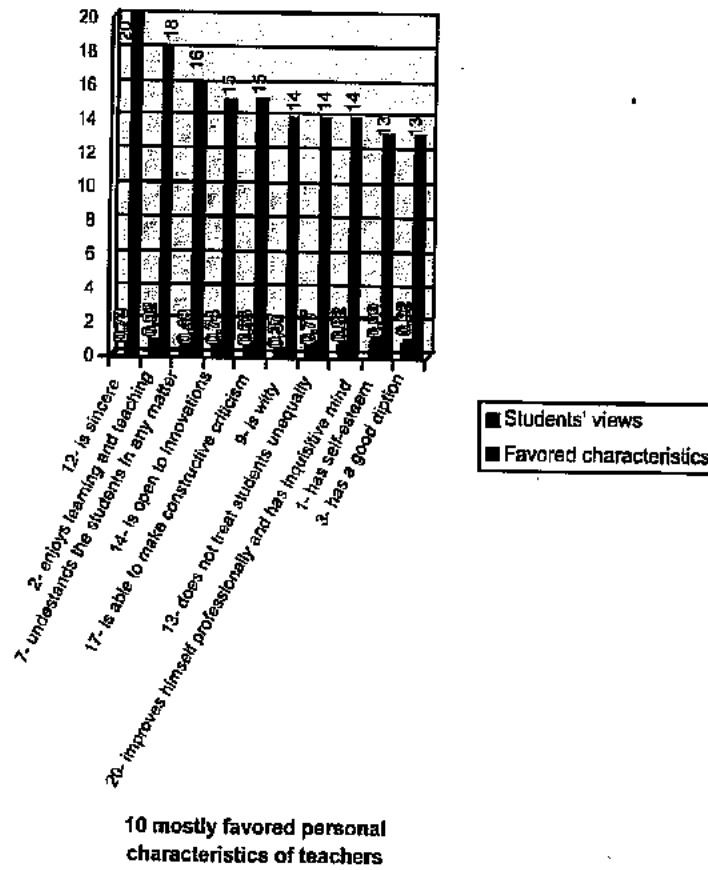
Graphic 1 shows that the options with the highest percentage for the personal characteristics of teachers are respectively self-esteem (99 %), the professional moral principles (97 %), enjoys learning and teaching (92 %) good diction (92 %). Regarding human rights and democratic principles (86 %), improving himself professionally and having inquisitive mind (82 %), having good interpersonal relations (79 %), having values (79 %), being joyful, compassionate, understanding, sensitive, honest (78 %), being patient (77 %), and not treating students unequally (77 %) follow these.



As a result of the analysis of Graphic 2, the followings are the most favored 10 personal characteristics by the students;

- (a) being sincere,
- (b) enjoying learning and teaching,
- (c) understanding students in any matter,
- (d) being open to innovations,
- (e) doing constructive criticism,
- (f) being witty,
- (g) not treating students unequally,
- (h) improving himself professionally and having inquisitive mind,
- (i) self-esteem, and
- (j) having good diction.

Graphic 3. Relationship between 10 mostly favored personal characteristics of teachers and students' views on them



In the above graph the relationship between students' views about their teachers' personality traits and the students' expectations about the issue (10 main qualifications of "teacher's personality" which are considered important for students) is obviously seen. It is observed that the students want their teachers to

1. have self-esteem (99 %)
2. have a good diction (92 %)
3. get pleasure from learning and teaching (92 %)
4. be eager to develop himself in professional manner (82 %)
5. make no discrimination among students (77 %)
6. welcome new developments (74 %)
7. be sincere and intimate (73 %)
8. be able to make constructive criticism (63 %)
9. understand students in all subjects (48 %)
10. have sense of humor (37 %)

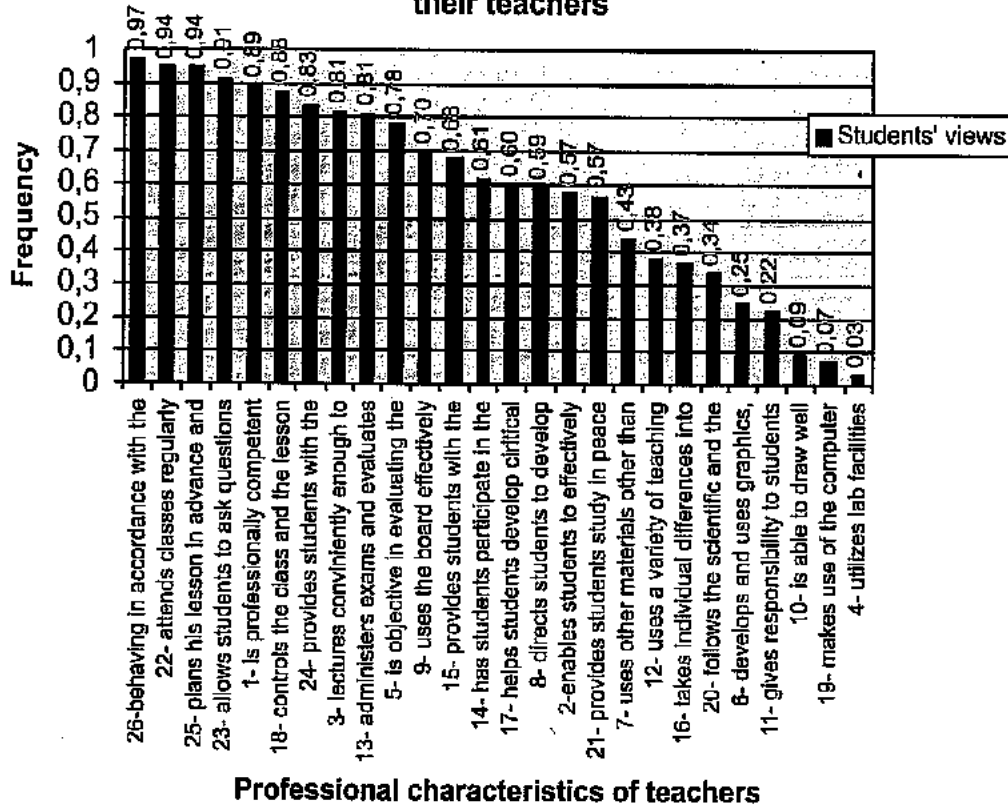
B. Professional Characteristics Of Teachers

These are;

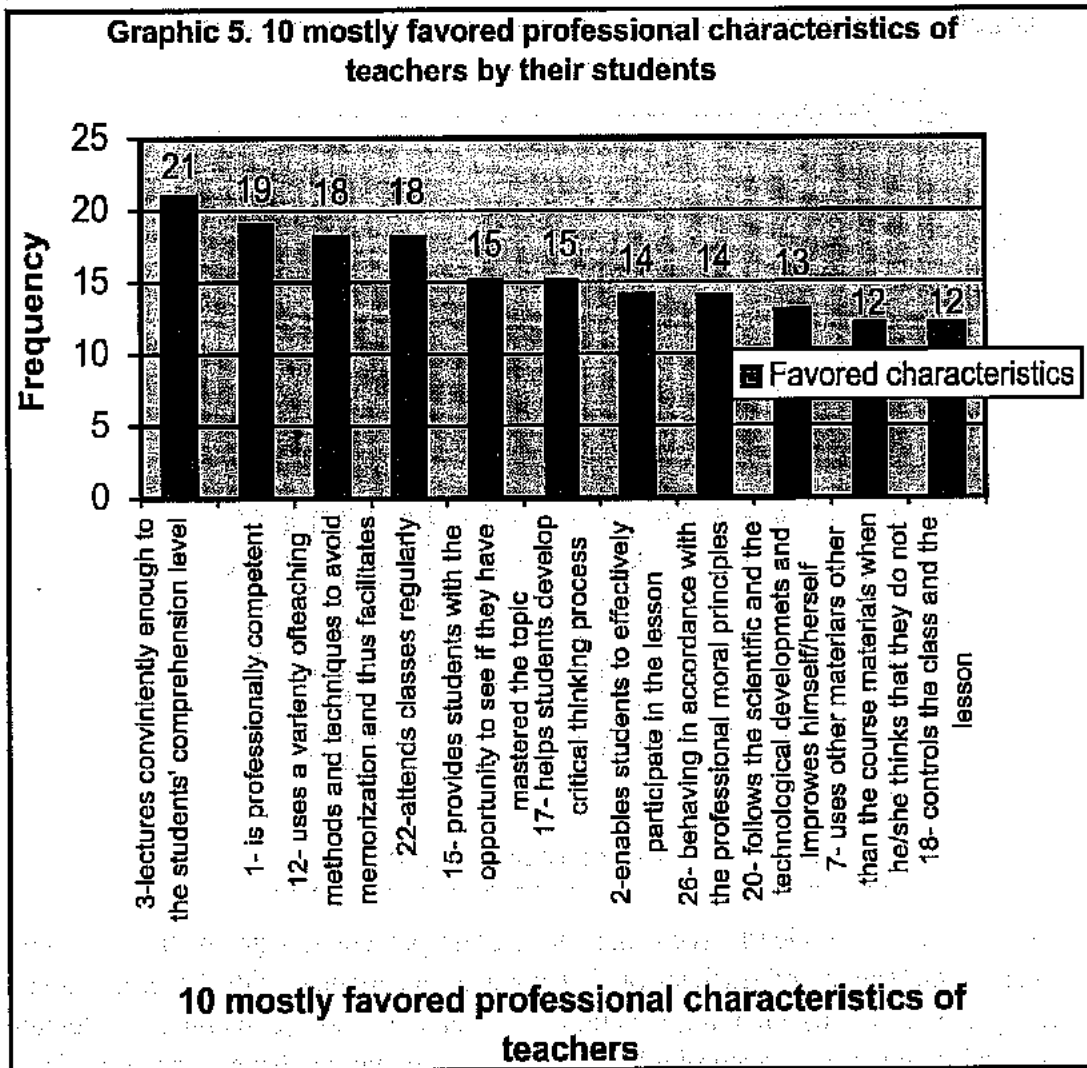
My foreign language teacher

| |
|--|
| 1- is professionally competent |
| 2- enables students to effectively participate in the lesson |
| 3- lectures conveniently enough to the students' comprehension level |
| 4- utilize lab facilities |
| 5- is objective in evaluating the students' performances |
| 6- develops and uses graphics, figures, models, charts, etc. when necessary |
| 7- uses other materials other than the course materials when he/she thinks that they do not meet students' needs |
| 8- directs students to develop interpersonal communication and interaction |
| 9- uses the board effectively |
| 10- is able to draw well |
| 11- gives responsibility to students for using the instructional materials |
| 12- uses a variety of teaching methods and techniques to avoid memorization and thus facilitates learning |
| 13- administers exams and evaluates them objectively |
| 14- has students participate in the lessons by giving them homework and projects |
| 15- provides students with the opportunity to see if they have mastered the topic |
| 16- takes individual differences into account |
| 17- helps students develop critical thinking process |
| 18- controls the class and the lesson |
| 19- makes use of the computer effectively |
| 20- follows the scientific and the technological developments and improves himself/herself |
| 21- provides students study in peace in the classroom |
| 22- attends classes regularly |
| 23- allows students to ask questions |
| 24- provides students with the opportunity to work in groups |
| 25- plans his lesson in advance and conducting it accordingly |
| 26- behaving in accordance with the professional moral principles |

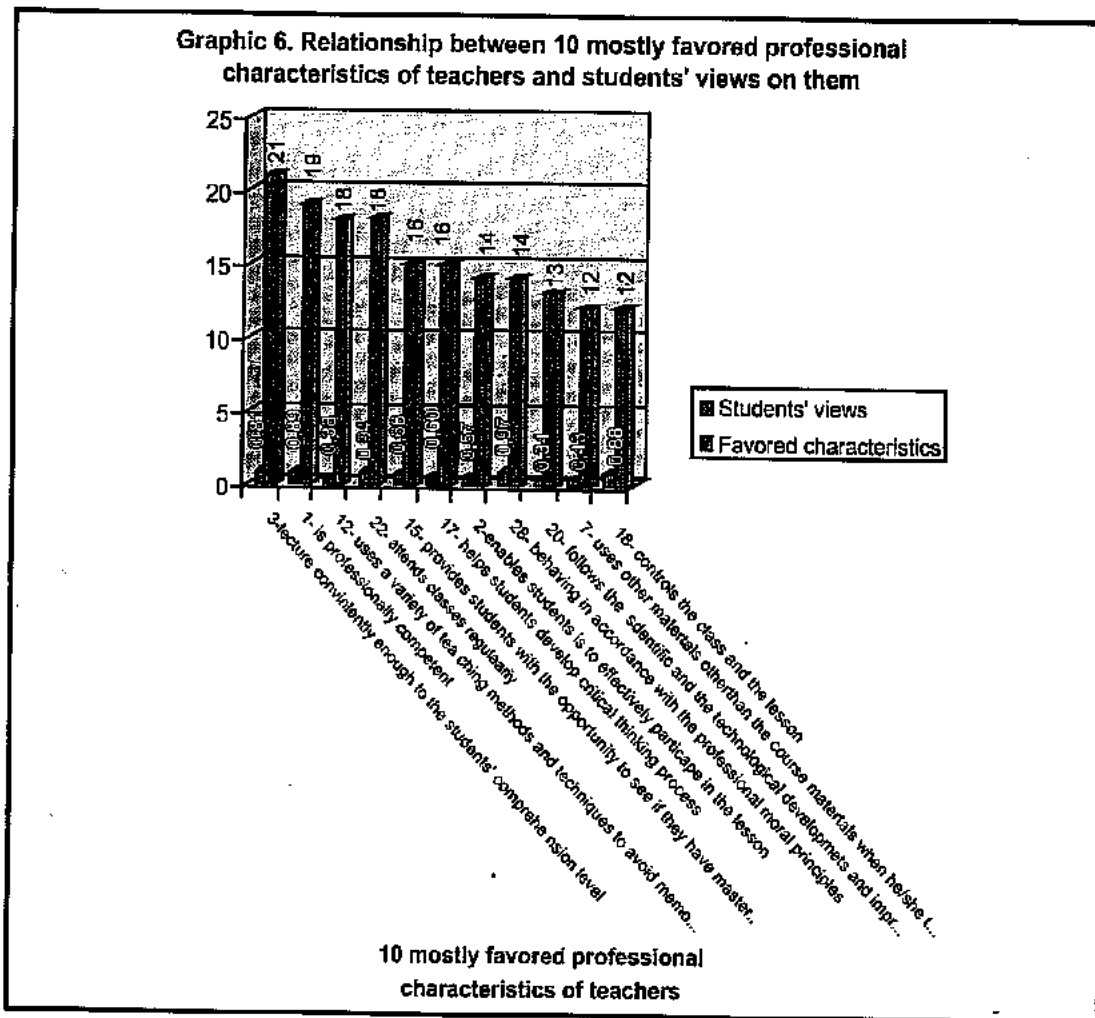
Graphic 4. Students' views on the professional characteristics of their teachers



As to Graphic 4 it is clearly seen that the highest percentages go to the following professional characteristics of teachers (a) behaving in accordance with the professional moral principles (97 %), (b) attending the classes regularly (94 %), (c) planning his lesson in advance and conducting it accordingly (94 %), (d) allowing students to ask questions (91 %). Being professionally competent (89 %), controlling the class and the lesson (88 %), providing students with the opportunity to work in groups (83 %), lecturing convincingly enough to the students' comprehension level (81 %), administering exams and evaluating them objectively (81 %) and being objective in evaluating the students' performances (78 %) follow these.



Graphic 5 reports the frequency of the most favored 10 professional characteristics of teachers by the students. While students favor Item 3 (lecturing conveniently enough to the students' comprehension level) and Item 1 (being professionally competent) the best, these characteristics are followed by Item 12 (using a variety of teaching methods and techniques to avoid memorization and thus facilitating learning), Item 22 (attending classes regularly), Item 15 (providing students with the opportunity to see if they have mastered the topic), Item 17 (helping students develop critical thinking process), Item 2 (enabling students to effectively participate in the lesson), Item 26 (behaving in accordance with the professional moral principles), Item 20 (following the scientific and the technological developments and improves himself/herself), Item 7 (using other materials other than the course materials when he/she thinks that they do not meet students' needs) and Item 18 (controlling the class and the lesson).



Graph 6 shows the correlation between the most 10 favored professional characteristics of teachers and their students views on this issue. According to the responses of the subjects who participated in this study a rank of importance can be made as in the following.

1. Behaving in accordance with the professional moral principles (97 %)
2. Attending classes regularly (94 %)
3. Being professionally competent (89 %)
4. Controlling the class and the lesson (88 %)
5. Lecturing conveniently enough to the students' comprehension level and lecturing conveniently enough to the students' comprehension level (81 %)
6. Provides students with the opportunity to see if they have mastered the topic (68 %)
7. Helping students develop critical thinking process (60 %)
8. Enabling students to effectively participate in the lesson (57 %)
9. Using other materials other than the course materials when he/she thinks that they do not meet students' needs (43 %)
10. Using a variety of teaching methods and techniques to avoid memorization and thus facilitating learning (38 %).

11. Following the scientific and the technological developmets and improving himself/herself (34 %)

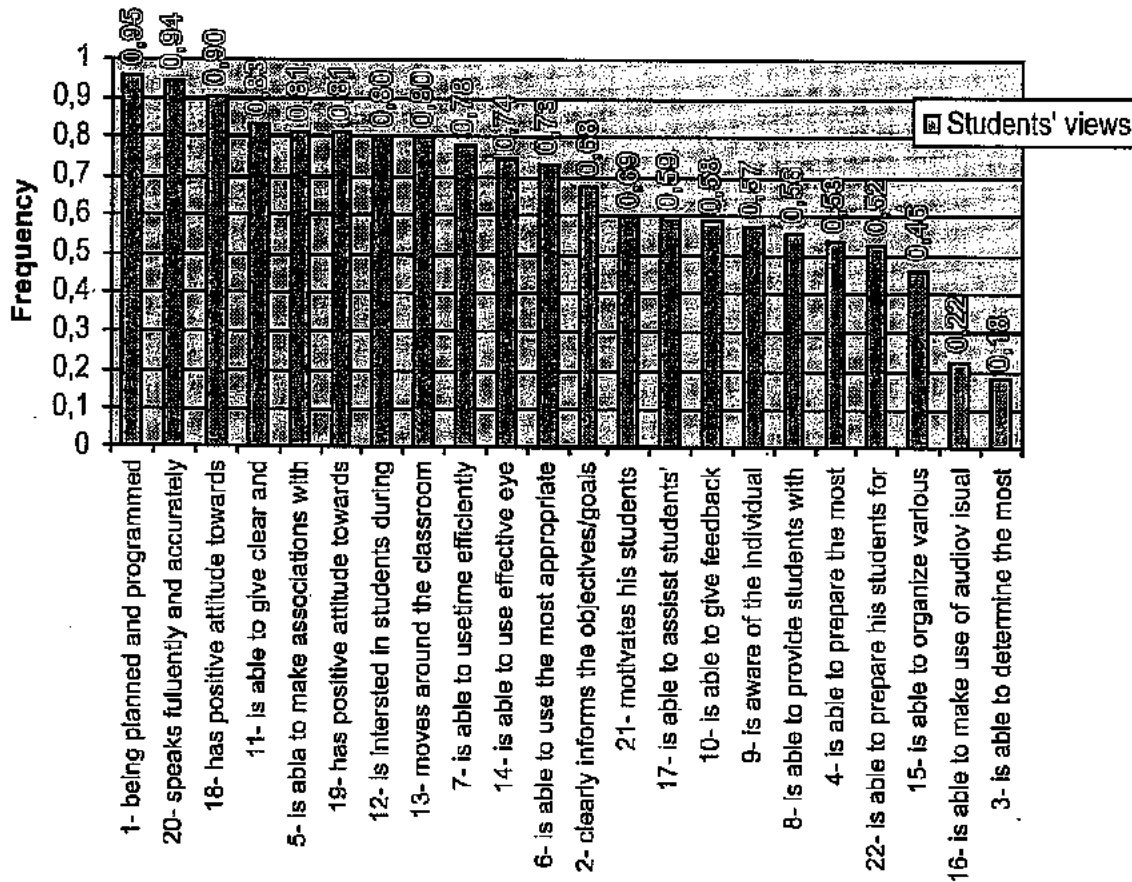
C. Pedagogical Characteristics Of Teachers

These are;

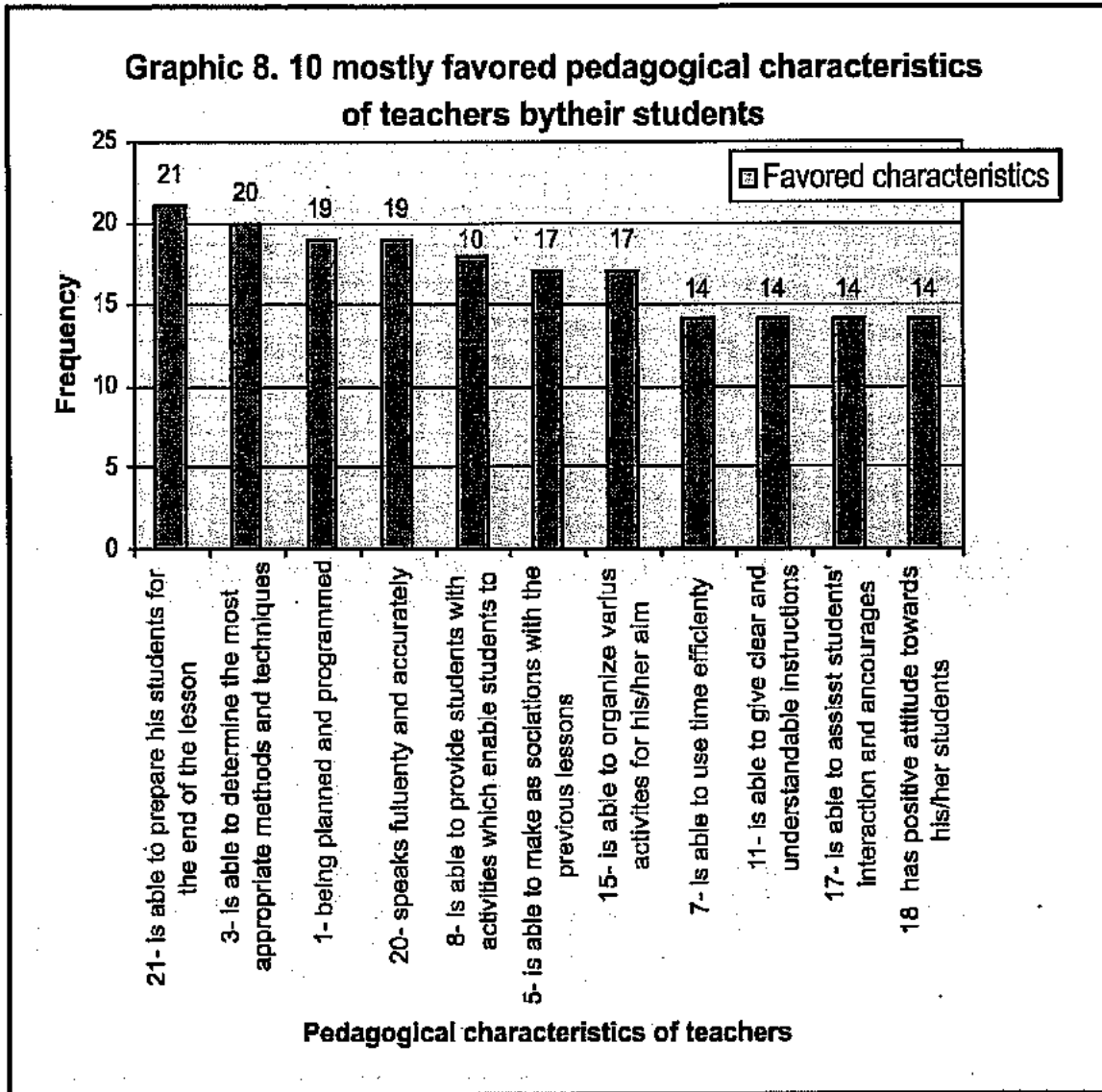
My foreign language teacher

| |
|---|
| 1- is planned and programmed |
| 2- clearly informs the objectives/goals of the lesson in advance |
| 3- is able to determine the most appropriate methods and techniques |
| 4- is able to prepare the most appropriate materials and use them |
| 5- is able to make associations with the previous lessons |
| 6- is able to use the most appropriate measurements |
| 7- is able to use time efficiently |
| 8- is able to provide students with activities which enable students to participate |
| 9- is aware of the individual differences during the instructional period |
| 10- is able to give feedback |
| 11- is able to give clear and understandable instructions |
| 12- is interested in students during lessons |
| 13- moves around the classroom when necessary |
| 14- is able to use effective eye contact |
| 15- is able to organize various activities for his/her aim |
| 16- is able to make use of audiovisual (technical) materials |
| 17- is able to assisst students' interaction and encourages communication |
| 18- has positive attitude towards his/her students |
| 19- has positive attitude towards his/her course books and materials |
| 20- speaks fuluently and accurately |
| 21- motivates his students |
| 22- is able to prepare his students for the end of the lesson |

Graphic 7. Students' views on the pedagogical characteristics of their teachers

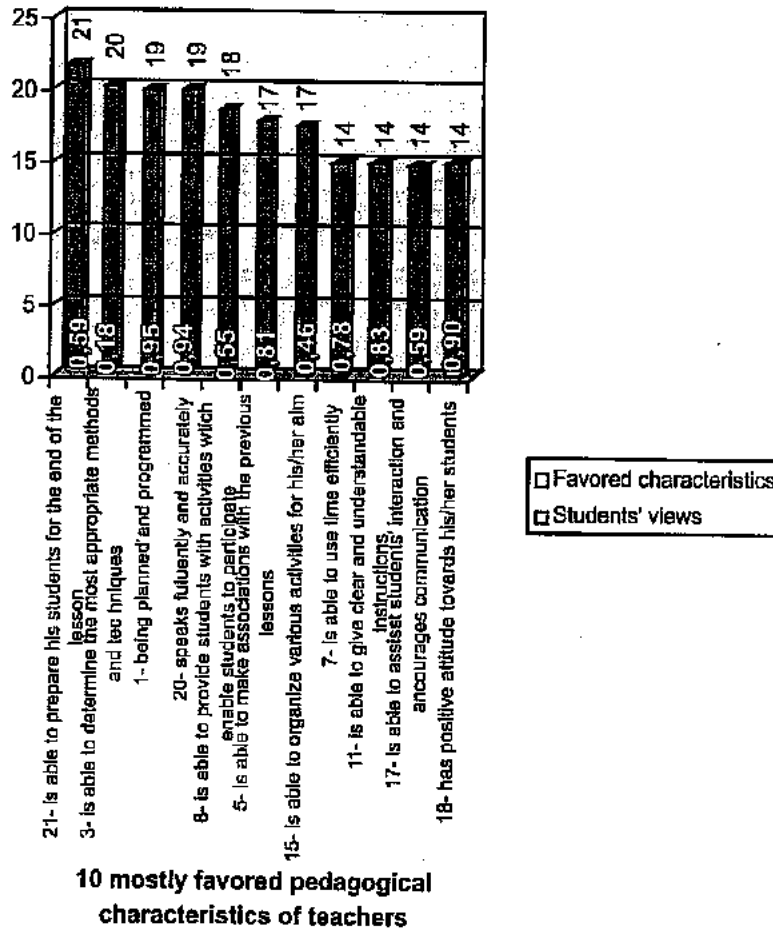


As for the Graphic 7 above it has been observed that being planned and programmed (95 %), speaking fluently and accurately (94 %), having positive attitude towards his/her students (90 %) have the highest percentages. Similarly, being able to give clear and understandable instructions (83 %), being able to make associations with the previous lessons (81) and having positive attitude towards his/her course books and materials (81 %), being interested in students during lessons, moves around the classroom when necessary (80 %) and being able to use time efficiently (80 %) are among the mostly observed professional characteristics of teachers by the students.



As is seen in Graphic 8 above, it can be said that the students who participated in this study regard the following professional characteristics the best. These are (a) motivating his students (b) being able to determine the most appropriate methods and techniques, (c) being planned and programmed, (d) speaking fluently and accurately, (e) being able to provide students with activities which enable students to participate, (f) being able to make associations with the previous lessons, (g) being able to organize various activities for his/her aim, (h) being able to use time efficiently, (i) being able to give clear and understandable instructions, (j) being able to assist students' interaction and encourages communication and (k) having positive attitude towards his/her students.

Graphic 9. Relationship between 10 mostly favored pedagogical characteristics of teachers and students' views on them



The students' views on pedagogical characteristics of EFL teachers and their students' expectations about the matter are given in Graph 9. As to the rank of the most important pedagogical characteristics of the teachers the subjects of this study have ranked them as below.

1. Being planned and programmed (95 %)
2. Being fluent and accurate in speaking (94 %)
3. Having positive attitudes towards their students (90 %)
4. Being able to give clear and understandable instructions (83 %)
5. Being able to make associations with the previous lessons (81 %)
6. Being able to use time efficiently (78 %)
7. Motivating their students and is able to assist students' interaction and encourages communication (59 %)
8. Being able to organize various activities for his/her aim (46 %)
9. Being able to determine the most appropriate methods and techniques (18 %)

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is an inevitable fact for all of us that there have been many teachers under whose influence we have been over the years. Then we can naturally admit that we have been attracted by their personality, attitudes towards us and instructional behaviors in our classrooms. When exposed to the question "Who is a good language teacher? we generally think of the above qualities.

An effective EFL teacher can be prescribed as the one who helps learners learn how to learn in line with the program goals. Therefore, the educators should determine the characteristics effective EFL teachers should have and/or develop and try to train the prospective foreign language teachers of our country.

During the performance of teaching profession the three characteristics of EFL teachers gain importance. Relying on the findings obtained from this study, following recommendations have been made for both the EFL teacher trainers and the teachers of this profession.

According to the findings obtained from the study an effective EFL teacher should;

A. Personal Characteristics

1. have self-esteem,
2. have a good diction,
3. get pleasure from learning and teaching,
4. be eager to develop himself in professional manner,
5. make no discrimination among students,
6. welcome new developments,
7. be sincere and intimate,
8. be able to make constructive criticism,
9. understand students in all subjects, and
10. have sense of humor.

B. Professional Characteristics

1. behave in accordance with the professional moral principles,
2. attend classes regularly,
3. be professionally competent,
4. control the class and the lesson,
5. lecture conveniently enough to the students' comprehension level,
6. provide students with the opportunity to see if they have mastered the topic,
7. help students develop critical thinking process,
8. enable students to effectively participate in the lesson,
9. use other materials other than the course materials when he/she thinks that they do not meet students' needs,
10. follow the scientific and the technological developments and improve himself,

11. plan students' learning experiences based on previous learning,
12. serve as a professional resource personnel in their educational communities,
13. engage in collaborative teaching, and the last but not the least,
14. model academic proficiency in the foreign language, and
15. use resources effectively in language instruction.

C. Pedagogical Characteristics

1. be planned and programmed. He should plan standards-based language instruction.

To do this, he should create environments that promote standards-based language learning in supportive and accepting classes,

1. be fluent and accurate in speaking,
2. have positive attitudes towards their students,
3. be able to give clear and understandable instructions,
4. be able to make associations with the previous lessons,
5. be able to use time efficiently,
6. motivate their students and is able to assist students' interaction and encourage communication,
7. be able to organize various activities for his/her aim,
8. be able to determine the most appropriate methods and techniques,
9. organize learning around foreign language learning objectives,
10. use a variety of teaching methods and techniques to avoid memorization and thus facilitating learning,
11. incorporate activities, tasks, and assignments that develop authentic use of language,
12. select, adapt, and use culturally responsive, age appropriate and linguistically accessible materials which are appropriate to students' language development such as books, visual aids, realia, and technical resources like computers and others,
13. develop and use effective assessment criteria such as performance-based assessment tools and tasks that measure students' progress toward curriculum goals, and
14. prepare students to self- and peer-assessment techniques when appropriate and needed.

To sum up all these three characteristics naturally affect our students' learning process in the classroom situation. Whatever we should do in the classroom should contribute to the establishment of an effective learning environment free from emotional barriers our students bring into the classroom. As a result, our students become better when there is as much as exposure to the foreign language use and of course without much resistance to a foreign language.

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THE EFFECT OF THE KEYWORD-SEMANTIC METHOD ON THE EFL VOCABULARY LEARNING OF TURKISH STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate whether the keyword-semantic method had any effect on teaching English vocabulary to Turkish students. During the initial experiments, the sample size was 864 students. In the subsequent year, it was 99 (thirty-one 7th graders and sixty-eight university students). The study was conducted in the intact classrooms of the 6th and 7th graders of five primary schools, the preparatory and first year students of four high schools and the students of Atatürk University Faculty of Education, Erzurum, Turkey. The pre-posttest interval in the initial experiments was one week. It was four weeks in the subsequent year. The control groups received a traditional instruction, which included oral/written rehearsals with word lists, use of words in sentences and arranging words based on semantic features. The treatment groups combined the semantic method with the keyword method. Each class was taught by their own teachers. The researcher, who taught university classes, briefed the other teachers about the experimented method. A 2X2 mixed design ANOVA used to compare the test results indicated that experimental groups retained significantly higher vocabulary words than the control groups highlighting the noteworthy contribution of the keyword-semantic method to vocabulary teaching.