EFFECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF PROSPECTIVE AND IN-SERVICE TEACHERS IN TURKEY

İNGİLİZ DİLİ ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARI VE İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNE GÖRE YETERLİ BİR İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENİNİN ÖZELLİKLERİ

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the ideal and actual characteristics of an effective English language teacher are studied from the perspectives of prospective and in-service teachers of English. By using a mixed method design, data were collected through interviews with prospective and in-service teachers of English and a survey distributed to prospective teachers of English. The aim of the study was to find the characteristics of the effective English language teacher from the perspectives of the participants, whether or not in-service teachers are found to be effective from the perspective of prospective teachers, and how in-service teachers evaluate themselves as effective teachers. Apart from unearthing the qualities attached to the effective teacher, findings have shown that majority of the prospective teachers do not regard their mentors (in-service teachers) effective. Similarly, in-service teachers claim that not having proper in-service training programs and an updated curriculum, makes it difficult to be an effective teacher of English in their schools.

Keywords: English, in-service, prospective teacher, ELT, teacher, effective, teacher education

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada etkili bir İngilizce öğretmeninde bulunması gereken nitelikler İngilizce öğretmeni adayları ve İngilizce öğretmenlerinin bakış açılarıyla incelenmekte ve sonuçlar tartışılmaktadır. Niteliksel ve niceliksel yöntemlerin birlikte kullanıldığı bu çalışmada veriler yüz yüze yapılan görüşmeler ve geliştirilmiş bir anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırma soruları etkili bir İngilizce öğretmeninde bulunması gereken niteliklerin ve aday öğretmenlerin halen öğretmenlik yapmakta olan İngilizce öğretmenlerini yeterli buldukları alanların neler olduğudur. Buna ek olarak, öğretmenlerin kendilerini hangi alanlarda yeterli gördükleri de araştırma soruları arasındadır. Araştırmanın sonuçları aday öğretmenlerin öğretmenleri yetersiz gördükleri alanların sayıca çok olduğunu ve öğretmenlerin de hizmet içi eğitim programlarının yetersizliğinden ve çok sık değişen ders programlarının kendilerini olumsuz yönde etkilediğinden şikayetçi olduğunu içermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizce, hizmet içi, aday öğretmen, İDE, öğretmen, yeterli, öğretmen yetiştirme

INTRODUCTION

Teacher effectiveness is one of the most profound factors affecting the quality of the language learning process. Research has shown that there is strong relationship between teachers' effective teaching practices and students' overall success, motivation, and personal beliefs in their teachers' effectiveness (Kurbanoğlu, 2004, p. 143). Qualities of an effective language teacher have been well articulated by various researchers (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Cheung, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2001) who argue that these qualities point at the existence of the "ideal" teacher in the minds of their students. As Cheung (2006) suggests, highly effective teachers;

- stay on the job longer,
- allocate more time to preparation and delivery,
- are willing to educate,
- are responsive to the needs of their students,
- are more tolerant toward students' mistakes,
- are wiling to spend relatively more time with problematic students,
- try hard to contribute to their students' learning experiences (435-436).

In addition to these qualities, Dressel (1987) clarified that a teacher's effectiveness can be evaluated in three main areas which are scholarship and academic expertise, ability to organize the course by delivering the content in a clear manner, and ability in advising (the whole of interactions between the instructor and the student). However, as Arnon & Reichel (2007) state, teacher effectiveness can be categorized in many ways due to the multitude of the studies conducted in the field. Yet, it can be expected that just as the roles associated with teachers evolve in time under the influence of all social, political, geographical, technological, cultural, and educational changes in the world, qualities attached to effective teachers will inevitably evolve.

Research and discussion related to effective teachers have not been new in Turkey although reaching a consensus towards and standardizing the expected qualities of effective teachers is rather new. In 2006, the Turkish Ministry of Education officially accepted the guidelines for general teacher efficacies that were comprised of 6 main efficacies, 31 sub-efficacies and 233 performance skills. This list is prepared in order to be used as a guide for shaping the entire curricular and instructional applications. It is assumed that this guide,

having been prepared by taking the viewpoints of 49 higher educational institutions in Turkey, will guide all English teaching practices in the 21ˢᵗ century.

Effectiveness, as it appears in this document, is composed of possessing professional knowledge, aptitude and having an attitude all of which are accepted to be necessary for the overall quality of teaching (p. 1508). Demirel (1990) demonstrated that there is not any considerable discrepancy between Turkish and foreign teachers of English in terms of effectiveness. However, different from their foreign counterparts, Turkish teachers:

- saw themselves inefficient in listening and speaking skills, could not adequately follow foreign publications and literary texts that were produced in the target language,
- relied heavily on the Structuralist approach to foreign language teaching, prioritizing the teaching of grammar,
- made use of their native language in their classrooms, feeling inefficient when using the target language,
- were reluctant to employ instructional materials, and complained about the scarcity of resources,
- were reluctant to organize and orchestrate group work,
- rarely utilized lyrics and poems as classroom teaching materials,
- gave insufficient amount of feedback to their students,
- knew the importance of knowledge of the target culture but fell short in providing their students with such knowledge (151-152).

Almost two decades after Demirel's (1990) study, researchers in Turkey shed light on the state of the English language teacher effectiveness results of which cannot be considered positive. Okan and Başaran (2007) found that only 39.3% of all English language teachers are graduates of English Language Teaching departments and among all teachers working in Turkish state schools as teachers of English, 36.4% of them can easily be identified as being insufficient in reading, 40.6% in writing, 51.7% in listening, and 52.3% in speaking. In terms of the frequency of the activity types, grammar teaching activities are employed by these teachers the most (79.6%) and writing activities the least (31. 3%). When the case of the pre-service teachers is considered, as Yavuz (2007) found pre-service teachers identified classroom management, materials use, teaching of grammar and pronunciation as the most problematic areas in their practicum teaching. Arikan, Taşer & Saraç-Süzer (2008) found that

preparatory school students describe an effective teacher as the one with good knowledge of English (95.2%), being open to innovations (79.6%), and being friendly rather than authoritative (73%). Similarly, Arikan, Taşer & Saraç-Süzer's (2008) review of the relevant research in Turkey has shown that Turkish students find the following qualities as indicators of being an effective teacher:

- having personal strategies to teach,

- maintaining positive teacher-student interaction,

- creating a positive classroom atmosphere,

- being a model,

- being knowledgeable on target cultures,

- possessing positive personal characteristics such as being friendly to students,

- having correct pronunciation of the English sounds,

- teaching with effective classroom materials and by using technology,

- giving positive reinforcement (pp. 43-44).

It is articulated that if the planning and delivery of teacher education and training programs are realized through taking the proposals and viewpoints of teachers into consideration, such a practice will enhance the level of success and effectiveness in foreign language education (Arikan, 2002; Arikan, 2006; Saraç-Süzer, 2007). Hence, this study aimed to find the characteristics of the effective English language teacher from the perspectives of the participants, whether or not in-service teachers are found to be effective from the perspective of prospective teachers, and how in-service teachers evaluate themselves as effective teachers.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following three research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the perspective of the prospective teachers of English?

2. Are in-service teachers effective from the perspective of prospective teachers?

3. How do in-service teachers evaluate themselves as effective teachers?

METHOD

Participants

Pre-service teachers (1 male and 3 females) who are studying in the last year of their four year education at Hacettepe University's Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Language Teaching, Division of English Language Teaching participated in the qualitative stage of the study. In addition, three in-service teachers currently working at one secondary school in Ankara, Turkey participated in the study (pseudonyms are used in place of the participants' real names to keep their anonymity). In addition to the qualitative part of this study, 50 additional pre-service teachers (38 females and 12 males) who were enrolled in the same program with the same level of education participated in the study. Participants' mean age was 20 and this imbalanced gender distribution was as expected since the great majority of the division's students are females.

Data Collection Tools and Evaluation Method

The raw data obtained from face to face interviews are exposed to repetitive and purposeful reading phases in the course of which the raw data are refined and preserved under sensible and concise categories. Results obtained from the Likert-type survey were processed through transforming the frequencies into percentages. In this study, the following are data collection tools were employed;

- Face to face interviews: In order to find answers to research questions 1 and 3,
- Survey: In order to find answers to the 2nd research question.

FINDINGS

1. What are the characteristics of an effective English language teacher from the perspective of the prospective teachers of English?

Fatih believes that teacher effectiveness is "the ability of transmitting (knowledge) through accurate pedagogical tools that can be simplified and adjusted to the teaching of the subject matter." As Fatih exemplifies, in such a process, "the student should get the impression that the teacher can actually teach something." Passing this feeling onto the student is only possible when "the teacher knows the subject matter well and when he or she can answer questions asked by the students." Also for Fatih, the teacher "should make adaptations while teaching the course book in each class by means of employing special teaching strategies particular to the teaching context."

As for Hülya and Asuman, an effective teacher is a teacher who can serve as model. As Nur states, an effective teacher "can provide the missing information by gathering the required skills to present them in the most comprehensible way. As Asuman further informs

the effective teacher is "an ideal teacher-model combines his or her good heart and personality while transmitting knowledge with the help of most accurate teaching strategies."

Nur's perception of an effective teacher takes the whole-teacher as a model since an effective teacher is "a teacher who can be taken as model." An effective teacher, for her, "must be able to transmit knowledge effectively by focusing on the intended learning outcomes in a way that the students learn as active participants. In addition to this, Asuman believes that the effective teacher is "interested in scientific and cultural developments, and an open-minded person who can bring the outside world into the classroom." As such, he or she is "a creative person who can abstain from egocentric feelings and who values and respects students' judgments." For Asuman, the teacher "can bring the target language and culture to the class and share them properly with students." This, as she argues, is only possible when the teacher "shares technological developments with students by letting them use these devices for educational purposes."

Research question 2: Are in-service teachers effective from the perspective of prospective teachers?

For Fatih, the teacher is somehow effective as a teacher although he is "incompetent in the use of equipment and the board." Similarly, the fact that the mentor "cannot get learners to use the target language although learners have a good command of grammar" is a handicap of the mentor's. However, the mentor "is efficient in subject matter, for instance he can give satisfactory answers to students' questions and he has an accurate knowledge of general culture. The most problematic part of his mentorship is his effectiveness in pedagogical knowledge since the mentor "is not efficient in transmitting the required knowledge." Yet, Fatih argues that the mentor can "easily become an effective teacher with a little effort." Similarly, Hülya claims that [their mentor] "is not efficient, but he gets by." For Hülya, as can be seen in Table 1, the mentor has the following problematic areas that challenge the mentor' teacher effectiveness.

Table 1. Problems of the supervisor teacher for Hülya

Problems	Description
Pronunciation	"He should avoid mispronouncing words."
Over-reliance on the course book	The teacher "must be able to teach outside of the book by his own consent. He must be able to teach without the course book. Since the teacher seems like does not teach without a course book, his teaching capacity cannot be perceived."
Over-reliance on the official curriculum	"A teacher's aim should not be to catch up with the program; rather, it should be to prepare materials and use them properly in the class."
Skills teaching	The teacher "should do more listening activities."
Personality	"The teacher is always complaining. The teacher should come up with new teaching activities rather than saying 'I got tired in the course of time in my profession' or 'I must follow the teacher's book, I cannot prepare my own materials."

Nur looks into the classroom climate the teacher creates when deciding whether or not the teacher is effective. For her, the teacher "was not able to establish rapport with the students. Students continuously talked during the lesson. I even observed a student who was knitting in the back of the classroom." Furthermore, similar to Hülya, Nur argues that her supervisor teacher makes "too many pronunciation mistakes." Also, "he comes to class without a lesson plan. As an excuse, he says that he watched TV all night long, so he couldn't do much for school." As she also articulates, the teacher "does not evaluate student work or give feedback to his students at all."

There are some positive sides of the teacher which, if the teacher continues doing them persistently, can have the potential to make him an effective one. First, as Nur says, the teacher "starts and finishes the lesson on time." Second, he "can turn out to be a student-centered teacher from time to time by motivating them to study in the lesson." As the final decision, Nur confirms, "I can say that he is efficient given the fact that I saw even worse teachers. However, he has too many qualities that make him an incompetent teacher."

Asuman is especially critical of her supervisor teacher's effectiveness on the grounds that the teacher does not use technology in his or her teaching. Worse, she claims the teacher is "not interested in the target culture, cannot use the language properly and cannot provide

accurate language models to his or her students." In short, Asuman claims that the teacher "is by no means effective as a language teacher."

Research question 3: How do in-service teachers evaluate themselves as effective teachers?

The in-service teachers interviewed positioned themselves as efficient teachers whose job, as Lale labeled "can only be understood from within." As Zuhal stated "If you come to my classroom with a checklist to measure my effectiveness, that is not correct because you do not know my situation and unless you are in my shoes, you cannot understand me at all." In fact, their explanations and exemplifications revealed that Zuhal was right because they had been going through many challenges which required a thorough understanding so that their effectiveness is justly studied.

In-service teachers' evaluation of their effectiveness resulted in the emergence of three main themes. These themes showed the challenges they faced in their work towards being an effective teacher. These themes were lacking of knowledge of culture, lacking of adequate in-service training, having curricular problems leading to "back to basics"

Lacking of knowledge

All of the three teachers interviewed found their knowledge of the target culture as the most challenging area of their effectiveness. As soon as our interviews began, Lale, a female teacher of English who had been teaching for over 15 years stated that as teachers of English, they "are not knowledgeable on the culture of the countries whose language [they] are teaching." All three of the teachers articulated that in order to know the target culture, one must spend time in the target culture community at least for some considerable time. One of the most important experiences of hers which showed her the necessity of spending some time in the target culture environment is when one of her students asked her about the Buckingham Palace:

> She asked me about what the Buckingham Palace looked like in reality and if it was different from the Topkapi Palace. I remained silent for a second not knowing what to say. I then suggested that she look it up in an encyclopedia. All of the students laughed. I laughed too. Then I said, I have to look it up as well, you see.

Again, all three agreed on the fact that they are well educated and informed about the teaching of grammar. However, as they also articulated, writing and speaking in English are the most problematic skills for them to develop since, as Zuhal put forth, these teachers "do not really know how writing and speaking can be done in a class of more than 40 students

who are taking an English course for 3 hours a week." Similarly, Lale argues that writing is the most problematic skill because they:

> all know that writing takes time to complete as well as to master, but the teacher must be able to spend time on students' work in progress, which is impossible to accomplish when the situation of the educational system is considered.

Speaking, on the other hand, is difficult not only because there is little time in the coursework separated for this skill and due to jam-packed classes, but also because speaking involves a multitude of sub-skills which cannot be introduced in their classrooms. As Gizem articulated:

> Speaking involves not only speaking but it also involves listening, pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary. You have to be able to cover them all. And I do not think that I can do   that. It requires a lot of planning and consideration in the classroom. I cannot do that due to my course load and the quality of the course book with which we can hardly meet the deadlines. But, I would like to do that. Speaking is fun and students like it although they are not really good at it.

Lacking of adequate in-service training

The teachers interviewed stated the necessity for in-service training seminars or sessions on various topics. However, although they need such support, they claim that the attempts made by the Ministry of Education fall short in providing them with such opportunities. In Gizem's words, the task of training in-service teachers "had been picked up by book publishers who provide in-service training sessions as a way to expand their sales by having teachers use their books:

> Because the commercial course books are not used by us anymore, book companies stopped providing us with training sessions and we are now teaching grammar only, writing "S+V+O" and drilling and drilling for perfection, knowing that with such a book and methodology, it is impossible to teach English for communication.

The teachers interviewed underlined the importance of in-service training programs in a teacher's development as an effective teacher because being an effective teacher required, as Lale called "being knowledgeable on the most current methodology and means of instruction." As Zuhal articulated, useful training sessions provided teachers with useful knowledge and insight that affected their teaching:

Once we were given a training session on converting traditional grammar teaching into communicative activities and that was helpful. Now, there is no support, be it methodological or practical.

Having curricular problems leading to "back to basics"

The Ministry of Education has recently changed the English curriculum for 9th and 10th grades, dropping the required number of hours of English language instruction to 3 hours per week. Students in the 11th and 12th grades are no longer required to take English classes. This change has been met with great frustration by English language teachers, simply because, as Lale says:

The world is using English more and more. Our students tell us that they want to get on-line and do lots of things in English. They often ask us what specific Internet terminology means, as we cut the number of hours in our curriculum. We can only teach grammar nothing … All we have to do is make sure that the students learn the grammatical items mandated in the standard curriculum set by the Ministry of Education. You can be effective, or do your work. It is as simple as that, isn't it?

The curricular changes described by Lale have caused these teachers go "back to basics." In fact, these changes have resulted in going back to "ancient times" as Gizem called it. Such a situation is described by Zuhal as follows:

We have gone back to using a coursebook from the 1970s, which is notorious for following the audio-lingual methodology. This horrible change resulted in forcing us to follow a structural syllabus. Now, we can only adjust our pacing to cover the grammar forms given in the coursebook. Believe me! The world has changed and I am over 40 years old, teaching English with the coursebook I used as a student isn't the best idea. In 1985, when I was an undergraduate student studying to be an English language teacher, our professors had warned us that we could not teach English with this coursebook. Now, almost 25 years after this warning, I am   trying   to   teach English with this coursebook.

As the interviews with these teachers progressed, teacher effectives became the topic under scrutiny and the participants' responses revealed that one teacher's effectiveness cannot be separated from the rest of the segments of the school climate. As these teachers claimed,

their effectiveness was only "a part of the whole system" as Lale called it. Gizem's response well exemplifies their existence in the realm of effectiveness in a critical manner as follows:

> I don't know what you [the researcher] really want to do in your research, but I understand that you are trying to learn whether or not we are effective teachers. Tell me then, in a classroom where books are not effective, class hours are not enough, technology is scarce, training is not provided, and worst of all, teachers are tired of curricular changes that have been going nowhere, how can we be effective teachers?

Quantitative Findings

The results of the questionnaire are given in Table 2. The mentoring teachers are found to be effective in the following areas (percentages mark all "fully agree" and "agree" responses):

1. in establishing rapport and creating a positive classroom atmosphere (90%).
2. in the knowledge of the subject matter (72%).
3. in exploiting the course book effectively (67%).

The answers given to question 10 shows that 74% of the prospective teachers do not regard the mentors as entirely efficient. In addition, the mentors were assessed to be relatively less efficient in the following areas.

1. Having been developed skills related to the usage of the target language (24%)
2. Preparing materials and hand outs (23%),
3. Being familiar with cultural knowledge (10%).

The comparison of the mentor teachers' field, cultural and professional knowledge reveals that the mentors are found to be relatively more effective in field and professional knowledge, but not in knowledge of the target culture.

Table 2. Survey Results

The mentor teacher…	Fully Agree	Agree	Disagree	Fully Disagree
1. creates a warm classroom environment.	78%	12%	2%	8%
2. prepares handouts and materials to be delivered to students.	13%	10%	65%	12%
3. is knowledgeable on the field.	49%	23%	15%	13%
4. is knowledgeable on the pedagogy.	24%	20%	40%	16%
5. is knowledgeable on the knowledge of the target culture.	4%	6%	60%	30%
6. uses the course book in an effective way.	32%	35%	27%	6%
7. has developed individualized teaching strategies.	10%	17%	45%	22%
8. shares his or her knowledge with students and colleagues.	4%	29%	36%	31%
9. has developed skills related to the usage of the target language.	1%	23%	55%	22%
10. is effective from a holistic view point.	1%	25%	64%	10%

DISCUSSION

Analysis of pre-service teachers' responses revealed that they explained teachers' effectiveness differently, in ways that highlighted their variety of expectations. The prospective teachers of English language do not assess the concept of teacher effectiveness from one angle. Rather, each participant has identified an efficient-ideal teacher from his or her own standpoint. The expression "the most obvious way to understand the effectiveness of a teacher is to observe his or her interaction with the pupils" stands out to be the common theme seized by the definitions of the participants in terms of what the findings of this case study reveal. Table 3 summarizes the different standpoints and findings coming from the relevant literature regarding teacher effectiveness.

Table 3. Efficient teachers as described in literature and by the participants in this study

Literature review	For pre-service teachers	For in-service teachers
They must have the ability to organize the course and to explain clearly, and advise well (Dressel,1987)	They must be able to transmit knowledge effectively	They must be sufficient in cultural knowledge
They are wiling to spend relatively more time with problematic students (Cheung, 2006)	They must be interested in scientific and cultural developments

They must be open-minded to bring the outside world into the classroom | They must be backed up with in service training |
| They know the importance of the target culture in language learning (Demirel, 1990) | They must value and respect students' judgments | They must be backed up with an updated and proper curriculum |

As this study found, the characteristics of an inefficient teacher may be articulated as lack of empathizing with the current situation of the pupil, not being able to convey a creative and a discrete case to the class atmosphere and the inability to motivate the pupils to use the language. In terms of the qualitative data gathered from the participants, teacher effectiveness necessitates effective lesson planning and content delivery by using adequate resources as well as providing a positive learning environment that makes the classroom one that is conducive to learning. In regard to both qualitative and quantitative data, the teachers are thought to be efficient in the field knowledge and possess an intermediate level of professional knowledge whereas they are found to be inefficient in cultural knowledge, which is consistent with Demirel's (1990) previous findings.

Another qualitative finding is that prospective teachers attach great importance to knowledge of the language, culture and the whole world. Hence, teacher education and training programs ought to recognize the importance of cultural knowledge and cultivate it by connecting it to the study of language teaching methodology. It should be kept in mind that prospective teachers' educational experiences and all of their cultural, psychological, and

intellectual experiences may affect their classroom performance. Similarly, from the perspectives of the in-service teachers, not having teacher training sessions is a fundamentally handicap that hampers their effectiveness. Although Bahous & Kfouri (2007) claim that service learning has become "a vital component for professional teacher development in nations of developing countries," the in-service teachers who took part in this study complained that the governing authorities do not support their professional development through service learning. This finding is significant in that the teachers who took part in the INSET (In-service training) programs offered by the Ministry of National Education declared that although 62.6% of them were satisfied with the organization of the program, 57.3% did not find the instructors experts on their fields (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2006, p. 368). Hence, these programs should be redesigned and put into use in order to provide in-service teachers with necessary skills and knowledge. While doing that, curricular changes should be well designed and planned and they should not be put into effect unless they are fundamentally important and coherent with the rest of the changes occuring in our educational system.

The Importance and Limitations of the Study

This study is necessary both for registering how the prospective teachers regard the concept of "teacher effectiveness" and providing a source for determining the effectiveness of the mentors. While this study has been effective an indicating teacher effectiveness, it is hard to generalize the results since the participants taking part in the study are limited in number. In addition, due to the fact that the study does not cover any longitudinal observation, the effectiveness of the mentors was based solely on the observations of the prospective teachers surveyed, which means the output of the study is a subjective one.

CONCLUSION

As it was mentioned in the introduction, highly efficient teachers possess many of the qualities Cheung (2006) suggests and these qualities ensure that the teacher stays in the profession by being a fundamentally important part of teaching effectively. Because prospective teachers will be in-service teachers in a short span of time, understanding and evaluating each other while paying special emphasis to the context of teaching seems to be important to educating teachers so that they become effective professionals.

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