Exploring the Characteristics of Effective Iranian EFL Teachers from Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

This study investigated the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers from students' and teachers' perspectives. To this end, 376 junior secondary school students and 32 EFL teachers teaching at various Iranian junior secondary schools participated in the study. A validated open-ended questionnaire was distributed among the student and teacher participants to inquire about their opinions on key characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. A semi-structured interview was also conducted with the teacher participants to investigate why they deemed those characteristics important. The results of the content analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire and the interview indicated that students and teachers were approximately of the same opinion, both highlighting teachers' professional qualities (e.g., knowledge of the subject matter, ability to impart knowledge properly, etc.), classroom management-related qualities (e.g., involving all students by assigning pair work/group work activities, assessing their learning progress regularly, etc.), and interpersonal relationships as being of crucial importance for effective EFL teaching. However, they differed in the degree to which they perceived these qualities to be important.

Keywords: Effective EFL Teachers, Iranian EFL Teachers, Iranian EFL Students, Teacher Characteristics, Teacher and Teaching Effectiveness

1. Introduction

Traditionally, the teacher was considered the only source of knowledge and power in classroom to whom students had to listen attentively and whose knowledge they were supposed to absorb. However, according to Cooper and McIntyre (1996), this viewpoint has been rigorously criticized in the past few decades by educational psychologists, classroom researchers, and teacher educators. In fact, they have increasingly become aware of the complexities of classroom life and the shortcomings of prescriptions for education by realizing that effective teachers could be distinguished not according to a set of prescribed standardized methods but in terms of what actually occurs in their classrooms (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). Education is now considered a highly intricate process involving such complex and intriguingly-intertwined factors as learners' age, native language, personality, learning environment, motivation, as well as teachers' personality, experience, motivation, and attitudes, among several other factors. Hence, a successful teacher is "one who understands the complexities of the teaching-learning process and can draw upon this knowledge to act in ways which empower learners both within and beyond the classroom situation" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 5).

The literature abounds with research conducted on effective teaching (e.g., Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Roseshine, 1971; Roseshine & Furst, 1973) and effective teacher characteristics (e.g., Vialle & Tischler, 2009). Furthermore, a number of studies have recently focused on effective language teacher characteristics (e.g., Borg, 2006; Chen, 2012; Xuerong, 2012), the summaries of which are presented in the following section.

1.1. The Literature on Effective Teaching and Teachers

The dominant model of teaching effectiveness in the early 1970s was *process-product* model in which various teacher behaviors were correlated with measurable learning outcomes (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). Roseshine (1971) and Roseshine and Furst (1973, as cited in Williams & Burden, 1997), reviewed a number of studies conducted based on the *process-product* model and identified some important factors contributing to effective teaching which included clarity of presentations, teacher enthusiasm, variety of activities during lesson, achievement-oriented behaviors in the class, opportunity to learn criterion material, acknowledgement and simulation of student ideas, comments at the beginning and during lessons, and guiding student answers. However, Williams and Burden (1997) regarded such guidelines ineffective and unhelpful because of the factors being open to various interpretations and the differences existing between teachers concerning their background, culture, personality, and teaching context.

Another model of teaching effectiveness proposed in the late 1970s, according to the review made by Cooper and McIntyre (1996), was *professional craft knowledge* view in which teaching was viewed as the craft of analyzing specific situations and applying craft knowledge in various contexts. Brown and McIntyre (1993, as cited in Williams & Burden, 1997) investigated individual teachers' professional craft knowledge and identified ten representative elements of good teaching: creating a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the classroom, retaining control in the classroom, presenting work in an interesting and motivating way, making clear what pupils are to do and achieve, judging what can be expected of a pupil, helping pupils with difficulties, encouraging pupils to raise their expectations of themselves, developing personal, mature relationships with pupils, and demonstrating personal talents or knowledge.

However, as Brown and McIntyre's (1993) study was conducted in a single secondary school and its feeder primary school in Scotland in which only 16 practicing teachers were sampled, Cooper and McIntyre (1996) raised serious doubts regarding the generalizability of Brown and McIntyre's results. Moreover, since Brown and McIntyre (1993) investigated the professional craft knowledge of teachers teaching various subjects, Cooper and McIntyre (1996) questioned the dependability of their results by arguing that the similarities and differences among teachers in their study might have been due to either the nature of the subject matter they taught or their personal beliefs about the subject.

Williams and Burden (1997) also reviewed the constructivist approach to teaching effectiveness as a radical alternative in which teachers rely on their own beliefs and world views to make sense of the situations where they find themselves. In this view, every teacher is considered as unique with his/her own system of beliefs about and understanding of teaching, eventually becoming a reflective teacher. Reflection is a critical examination of experiences which lead to a better understanding of one's teaching practices and routines (Richards & Farrell, 2005), and reflective teaching entails "a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 20). Thus, according to the constructivist approach, reflection is one of the key characteristics of effective teachers which help teachers improve their teaching by reflecting on what they actually do in the classroom (i.e., reflection *in* action) and/or what they have done (i.e., reflection *on* action) and how they might improve it.

Woolfolk, Winne, and Perry (2003) focus on the characteristics of expert teachers, asserting that expert teachers have elaborate systems of knowledge which allow them to be successful. They list some areas of expert teachers' professional knowledge identified in a study conducted by Shulman (1987) including the knowledge of the academic subject they teach, general teaching strategies such as classroom management and evaluation techniques, appropriate materials for their subject, characteristics and cultural background of learners, and the goals and purposes of teaching. Woolfolk et al. (2003) believe that expert teachers are reflective; that is, they consistently analyze what they do in the classroom and reflect on how they can improve teaching practice in order for more effective learning to occur. They regard teachers as both scientists and artists. In its scientific sense, "effective teaching requires an understanding of research findings on learning and instruction and knowledge of effective techniques and routines" (p. 18). In its artistic sense, teaching "calls for the creativity, talent, and judgment of an artist" (p. 18).

Similarly, Vialle and Tischler (2009) empirically investigated the characteristics of effective teachers from secondary school gifted students' perspective in Australia, Austria, and the USA, using the Preferred Instructor Characteristics Scale developed by Krumboltz and Farquhar (1957). The questionnaire requires students to select between personal-social attributes and cognitive-intellectual attributes of their teachers. The findings suggested that although gifted secondary school students considered both qualities important, they had a preference for the personal-social characteristics of their teachers such as being kind, friendly, understanding, and dedicated, treating them equally, giving power to students, adapting to the level of students, and having a passion for teaching and helping others.

1.2. Literature on Effective Language Teaching and Teachers

Language teaching methodology has gone through major changes in theory, direction, and practice throughout its history. However, according to Jacobs and Farrell (2003), a paradigm shift in education started in the 1980s, gradually moving from positivism to post-positivism. Introducing the notion of paradigm shift in second language education (SLE), they argued that this shift "involved a move away from the tenets of behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics and toward cognitive, and later, socio-cognitive psychology and more contextualized, meaning-based views of language" (p. 8). According to this paradigm shift, Jacobs and Farrell (2003) maintain greater attention was paid to the role of learners, the learning process, the social nature of learning, and individual differences among learners. Also, the paradigm shift highlighted meaning-based learning, holistic learning, whole-to-part learning, understanding the purpose of learning and developing one's own purposes, and finally, viewed learning as a life-long process (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). Furthermore, they referred to the eight major changes associated with the paradigm shift as implications for second language classroom: learner autonomy, social nature of learning, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners.

In addition, a number of empirical studies have focused on effective English teachers' characteristics and classroom strategies. For one, based on the commonly held belief that language teachers are different from teachers of other subjects, Borg (2006) investigated the distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers by having over 200 practicing and prospective language teachers define language teachers' distinctiveness. He also included opinions of experts in other subjects on the degree to which characteristics claimed to be distinctive of language teachers applied to other subjects as well. The results of

Borg's (2006) study indicated that language was a complex and dynamic system, the learning or teaching of which involved learning or teaching a wide range of skills and subskills as well as a variety of non-linguistic issues such as culture and communication strategies. Moreover, he found that language learning and teaching required more interaction between the teacher and students and among students themselves.

Utilizing an observation checklist, a questionnaire, and an interview guide, Xuerong (2012) conducted a case study on excellent English teachers' classroom strategies focusing on teachers' classroom strategies in four aspects: interaction management, questioning, teacher's feedback and error treatment. Xuerong concluded that excellent English teachers involved the students in class activities by encouraging them to talk and express their ideas in order to promote classroom interaction.

Chen (2012) also investigated the characteristics of Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers from university students' perspective using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Participants reported a number of personal-trait characteristics such as emotion, kindness, fairness, lenience and responsibility. They also mentioned some classroom teaching-related characteristics such as lesson delivery (e.g., ways of presentation, techniques to make things comprehensible, and error corrections), the language used in teaching (e.g., the use of mother tongue in the classroom as an effective teaching tool and having a native-like pronunciation), classroom activity organization (e.g., playing games, reading stories, singing songs, and doing some competition activities), and classroom atmosphere creation (e.g., studying in an entertaining, comfortable, relaxing, and pleasant atmosphere).

1.3. Significance of the Study

As the literature suggests, the majority of the studies on the characteristics of effective EFL teachers have addressed the issue from teachers' perspective. However, to get a clearer picture, it seems essential that it be addressed from different angles and viewpoints. This study is thus significant in that it aims at describing the characteristics of EFL teachers from both students' and teachers' perspectives.

   Furthermore, although literature abounds with research on teacher effectiveness, little research has been conducted on the characteristics of EFL teachers, especially in the context of the present study (i.e., Iran). Hence, it is deemed necessary to probe into the characteristics of English teachers in foreign language contexts like Iran with the purpose of providing suggestions and implications for both pre-service and practicing EFL teachers as well as teacher trainers and curriculum designers. To this end, the following research questions were raised.

1. What are the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers from students' perspective?
2. What are the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers from teachers' perspective?
3. Is there any significant difference between students and teachers regarding their perception of the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The present study was conducted in 26 Iranian junior secondary schools sampling 376 students (181 males and 195 females aging between 13 and 15) and 32 EFL teachers (15 males and 17 females). The teacher participants, whose length of service in the education system ranged from 4 to 26 years, aged between 27 and 52. All the teachers had a university degree in English language teaching. 23 of the teachers held a bachelor's degree, 7 of them held a master's degree, and 2 of them were Ph.D. candidates.

2.2. Instrumentation

In order to investigate the characteristics of effective EFL teachers from students' and teachers' perspective, an open-ended questionnaire was designed by the researchers in which the participants were required to provide as many details as they could think of regarding what made an EFL teacher effective in terms of their professional qualities, classroom management-related qualities, and interpersonal behaviors. The content and structure of the questionnaire were judged by two university professors specializing in educational psychology and a few minor changes were accordingly made to the questionnaire (See Appendix 1). It was, then, distributed among the participants who were required to mention the key factors contributing to effective language teaching based on their personal beliefs and experiences.

Furthermore, in order to delve more deeply into the issue under question and for the sake of triangulation, a semi-structured interview was also conducted with the teacher participants of the study (See Appendix 2 for interview questions).

2.3. Data Collection Procedure and Data Analysis

Before any sort of data collection, students and teachers were fully informed of the purpose of the study and were assured that the data collected would be kept confidential. Afterwards, the open-ended questionnaire was distributed among the participants and they were required to mention the key characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. As mentioned earlier, a semi-structured interview was also conducted with the teacher participants. The teachers were required to explain why they thought the characteristics they had mentioned on the questionnaire were important.

In order to analyze the qualitative data, participants' responses to the questionnaire were thoroughly examined through content analysis. Afterwards, the common patterns and the recurring themes were extracted and coded in order to be "quantitized" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 269), frequency analyzed, and tabulated. Moreover, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, content analyzed, coded, and were subjected to frequency analysis. Finally, chi-square analysis was conducted to compare students and teachers' responses regarding characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers.

3. Results

As mentioned earlier, the students and teachers' responses to the open-ended questionnaire were subjected to content analysis. To answer the first question of the study, the results of the content analysis of the student participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.*Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers from Students' Perspective*

Rank	Characteristics	Frequency (out of 376)	Percentage
1	Having a very good command of English in general	268	71.27%
2	Speaking English with a standard accent (e.g., British or American)	243	64.62%
3	Being able to impart their knowledge effectively	231	61.43%
4	Being friendly and understanding	212	56.38%
5	Having a good sense of humor	203	53.98%
6	Making use of movies and cartoons with educational values	195	51.86%
7	Making use of language games (e.g., to reinforce their vocabulary and grammar knowledge)	187	49.73%
8	Having a good relationship with students	181	48.13%
9	Emphasizing all language skills	169	44.94%
10	Choosing interesting topics to be discussed in pairs and groups	152	40.42%
11	Involving all the students in the process of learning and in class activities	133	35.37%
12	Respecting students' opinions	128	34.04%
13	Being open to criticism	117	31.11%
14	Administering several examinations to check student progress regularly	106	28.19%
15	Administering oral examinations as well as written ones	92	24.46%
16	Being a good leader	84	22.34%
17	Being enthusiastic, energetic, and smiling	57	15.15%
18	Being lenient	44	11.70%
19	Being patient	31	8.24%
20	Trusting students	17	4.52%

As indicated in Table 1, students were mostly concerned with their teachers' professional qualities such as knowledge of the subject matter (i.e., perfect knowledge of the language skills and subskills), and having a standard accent, and being able to impart knowledge properly. They regarded such classroom management-related qualities as involving all students by assigning pair work/group work activities, assessing their learning progress regularly, and being a good leader as being important in effective EFL teaching. Finally, they considered such interpersonal qualities as being friendly and understanding, having a good sense of humor, having a good relationship with students, trusting them and respecting their opinions, and being lenient and patient crucial for an EFL teacher to be successful.

The results of the content analysis of the teacher participants' responses to the questionnaire are presented in Table 2 to answer the second research question of the study.

Table 2. Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers from Teachers' Perspective

Rank	Characteristics	Frequency (out of 32)	Percentage
1	Having sufficient knowledge of the subject	32	100.00%
2	Having an up-to-date pedagogical knowledge	31	96.85%
3	Seeking professional development opportunities	30	93.75%
4	Being a good leader	28	87.50%
5	Encouraging participation and interaction in the classroom	27	84.37%
6	Employing a variety of techniques to address individual differences	25	78.12%
7	Using pair work/group work activities	24	75.00%
8	Integrating language skills	22	68.75%
9	Motivating and encouraging students	21	65.62%
10	Paying equal attention to all the students	19	59.37%
11	Noticing students' language errors and dealing with them effectively	18	56.25%
12	Checking student progress regularly through formative assessment	16	50.00%
13	Using technology in the classroom	15	46.87%
14	Having a good sense of humor	13	40.62%
15	Being enthusiastic and energetic	12	37.50%
16	Establishing a good rapport with students	11	34.37%
17	Speaking English with a standard accent (e.g., British or American)	9	28.12%
18	Being creative	8	25.00%
19	Being patient	6	18.75%
20	Being friendly and understanding	5	15.62%

As indicated in Table 2, the most important requirements for an effective EFL teacher reported by teacher participants were associated with teachers' professional qualities and classroom management-related qualities as well as interpersonal qualities.

To answer the third research question of the study (i.e., Is there any significant difference between students and teachers regarding their perception of the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers?), the common responses of both groups were identified, coded, and were subjected to frequency analysis and chi-square analysis, the results of which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. *Chi-Square Analysis Comparing Students and Teachers Regarding Their Perception of the Characteristics of Effective EFL Teachers*

Characteristics mentioned by both teachers and students	Percentage		Chi-Square test			
			Chi-Square Value	df	Asmp. Sig. (2-sided)	Cramer's V (effect size)
	Students	Teachers				
1- Having sufficient knowledge of the subject	71.27%	100.00%	33.91	1	.00	.41
2- Speaking English with a standard accent (e.g., British or American)	64.62%	28.12%	27.51	1	.00	.37
3- Having an up-to-date pedagogical knowledge to impart knowledge effectively	61.43%	96.85%	39.06	1	.00	.44
4- Being friendly and understanding	56.38%	15.62%	34.72	1	.00	.41
5- Having a good sense of humor	53.98%	40.62%	3.38	1	.04	.13
6- Using technology in the classroom	51.86%	46.87%	00.50	1	.28	.05
7- Establishing a good rapport with students	48.13%	34.37%	04.05	1	.03	.14
8- Integrating language skills	44.94%	68.75%	11.75	1	.00	.24
9- Using pair work/group work activities	40.42%	75.00%	25.06	1	.00	.35
10- Paying equal attention to all the students and involving them all	35.37%	59.37%	11.56	1	.00	.24
11-Making use of formative assessment and checking student progress regularly	28.19%	50.00%	10.17	1	.00	.22
12- Being a good leader	22.34%	87.50%	85.19	1	.00	.65
13-Being enthusiastic and energetic	15.15%	37.50%	12.57	1	.00	.25
14- Being patient	8.24%	18.75%	05.18	1	.03	.16

As Table 3 indicates, the chi-square analysis revealed significant differences for all items except for item 6. However, taking the effect size (i.e., Cramer's V) into account, the value for item 12 was large in size; the values for items 3, 4, 1, 2, and 9 were almost large; the values for items 13, 8, 10, 14, 7, and 5 were moderate; and the value for item 6 was small. This indicates that the teacher participants significantly differed from student participants regarding their perception of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers. That is, students seemed to be more concerned with their teachers' interpersonal behavior, whereas teachers paid more attention to professional and classroom management related characteristics.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the characteristics of effective Iranian junior secondary school EFL teachers from students' and teachers' perspectives. The results indicated that both students and teachers were approximately of the same opinion referring to teachers' professional qualities, classroom-related qualities, and interpersonal qualities. However, they significantly differed in the degree to which they perceived those qualities to be important. It seemed that teacher participants were much more concerned with EFL teachers' professional qualities compared with their student counterparts. For instance, teachers considered pedagogical knowledge almost as important as knowledge of the subject matter. As one of the teachers interviewed asserted, "To effectively present the materials to students, a teacher requires not only a perfect knowledge of the subject matter but also an updated knowledge of pedagogy such as being aware of new trends in language teaching". This finding seems to be in line with the conceptualization of Shulman (1986) who

emphasized the importance of integrating subject matter knowledge with pedagogical knowledge to produce successful teaching outcomes.

The teacher participants in this study also emphasized the need for EFL teachers to seek professional development opportunities, a quality not mentioned by the student participants. The literature abounds with research on teachers' professional development which has been viewed differently by various scholars. Wallace (1994), for instance, introduced three models of professional development for EFL teachers: *craft model* in which experienced teachers model and guide novices, the *transmission model* in which empirical research findings are transmitted to teachers who are required to implement them in their classrooms, and the *reflective model* in which teachers reflect on what they do in the classroom, think about why they do it, think about its effectiveness, adjust practice, reflect again, and so on. It seems that the tenets of all these three models are needed by EFL teachers if they wish to develop professionally, something which was also echoed by the teachers interviewed in the study. One of the teachers interviewed maintained, "Teachers need to update their knowledge of the subject matter they teach as well as their knowledge about teaching techniques and strategies required to effectively transfer their knowledge to students". Another teacher asserted that an effective EFL teacher is expected to have "adequate knowledge about lesson planning, organizing classroom activities, classroom management skills, and assessment of student learning progress".

One subcategory of teacher's classroom management-related qualities emphasized by both teachers and students was encouraging participation and involving students in the process of learning. As one teacher participant asserted, "it is essential that all students be encouraged to participate in classroom activities and be given equal attention and equal opportunity to

talk". This finding is in accordance with those obtained by Shepherd (2014) who examined detailed video transcriptions of eight reading and math lessons recorded in three third-grade classes at a diverse Southern California public elementary school and concluded, "given the established relationship between student participation and learning, promoting an equitable distribution of turns at talk is of critical importance" (p. 88). The teacher participants in this study also emphasized the importance of assigning students into groups and incorporating sufficient amount of pair work and group work in the curriculum. Likewise, the student participants referred to the importance of being involved in classroom activities and discussing interesting topics in pairs or groups. These findings are in line with Jacobs and Farrell's (2003) paradigm shift in SLE that emphasized the importance of learner autonomy and the social nature of learning as mentioned earlier. The findings of the study in this respect are also consistent with those obtained by Xuerong (2012) who found that good English teachers involved the students in class activities and encouraged them to talk in order to improve classroom interaction. Another aspect of effective EFL teaching advocated by both teacher and student participants of this study concerned the integration of language skills. As one teacher stated during the interview, "It is essential that listening and speaking skills be emphasized besides those of reading and writing by EFL teachers". Another teacher argued,

> Various language skills and subskills could be addressed simultaneously by an effective language teacher. For example, while dealing with a reading passage, besides focusing on reading skills, the teacher can use the text as a means to develop students' vocabulary and reinforce their grammar knowledge. In addition, pre-reading and post-reading

activities can be designed in such a way to address and improve students' listening and speaking skills.

This idea of skills integration lies at the crux of communicative approaches to foreign/second language learning and teaching and is also in accordance with the implications of Jacobs and Farrell's (2003) paradigm shift in SLE.

Making use of technology (e.g., to show movies and cartoons with educational values) and engaging students in classroom language games were other factors characterizing effective language teaching mentioned by many students in the study. In fact, the role of technology in the classroom has been emphasized by several educators and researchers in the field of language teaching (e.g., Sherman, 2003; Stempleski, 2002). The use of video material, for example, has been referred to by Sherman (2003) as an authentic resource to be used in language classrooms. In this regard, Stempleski (2002) asserts that any video material offers "chances of achieving important goals of motivating students' interest, providing realistic listening practice, stimulating language use, highlighting students' awareness of particular language points or other aspects of communication..." (p. 364). Hence, taking these features into account, we might be able to argue that games are most likely to be stimulating and effective teaching tools that can be utilized by language teachers to involve all the students in interactive activities enabling them to practice and experiment with language in a cooperative and motivating manner. That might be the reason why almost half of the student participants in the study expected their EFL teachers to involve them in some language games to help them learn the language in an enjoyable and stimulating way.

Teachers' interpersonal behaviors were emphasized by both teacher and student participants in the study as being important in effective EFL teaching. Effective EFL teachers are expected to be friendly and understanding, establish

good rapport with students, respect students' opinions and trust them. Pennings, van Tartwijk, Wubbels, Claessens, van der Want, and Brekelmans (2014) reviewed recent research on teacher-student interactions and reported that students' motivation, their academic achievement, and teachers' well-being are directly influenced by student-teacher interpersonal relationship. The results of Falout, Elwood, and Hood's (2009) study on student demotivation indicated that the main causes of demotivation among American and Japanese students were unfavorable teacher behaviors and personalities. As mentioned earlier, although student participants in this study considered teachers' professional qualities and classroom management qualities important, they showed more preference for teachers' interpersonal behaviors such as establishing good rapport with students and being friendly and understanding. That is, we firmly believe "an effective EFL teacher should first govern the land of the hearts of the students before governing their minds", a sentence first uttered by the first author of the present study in reaction to the keynote speech of a prominent figure in the field on characteristics of effective EFL teachers in an international conference in 2014, which was warmly welcomed by the keynote speaker and the audience. This finding is in accordance with that of Vialle and Tischler (2009) who found that although students considered both teachers' personal-social attributes and their cognitive-intellectual attributes important, they had a preference for the former (e.g., being kind, friendly, and understanding). In an attempt to describe the characteristics of an ideal Turkish teacher from an interpersonal perspective, Telli, den Brok, and Cakiroglu (2008) interviewed a number of secondary school teachers and students and found that an ideal teacher, from Turkish students' and teachers' perspective, was a person who motivated and encouraged students, gave them confidence, tended to promote a positive interpersonal relationship with the

students, and strived to gain the respect of students. Finally, another teacher interpersonal quality emphasized by the majority of student and teacher participants in this study was teachers' sense of humor, which has also been found in other studies to be an important teacher quality. One of the teacher participants interviewed maintained,

> Effective language teaching requires a good sense of humor on the part of the teacher. Language learning must be fun, and teachers are expected to create a pleasant and fun environment in their classrooms if they want their students to be motivated and pay all their attention to classroom activities. Humor helps reticent students not to feel intimidated and influences their willingness to participate.

A good and sensible sense of humor has been regarded by many as a highly desirable social quality (Cann & Matson, 2014). Likewise, a sense of humor is a characteristic of a good teacher which can be used as an effective tool for reducing students' psychological barriers and establishing rapport among students and the teacher (Miller, 1987).

4.1. Practical Implications and Future Research Directions

The results obtained from the study which addressed EFL teacher effectiveness from students' and teachers' perspectives, combined with the insights gained from theories proposed by scholars in the field of education, can be utilized by language teacher trainers in teacher training programs to familiarize pre-service teachers with the characteristics of effective EFL teachers. Teacher training programs can provide pre-service teachers with the attitudes and practices of effective teachers as well as the attitudes and expectations of language learners and help them be successful language teachers in the future.

The results of the study could also be used by practicing language teachers in their professional development careers. The results suggest that teachers' professional qualities seem to be more important in students' and teachers' perceptions of an effective EFL teacher. Thus, as a part of their professional development career, teachers need to be committed to improving the quality of their teaching by regularly updating and improving their knowledge and skills. They need to know that not only their subject matter knowledge but also their pedagogical knowledge require to be updated and improved. However, improving professional qualities is not the only requirement for teaching effectiveness. Teachers must also bear in mind that even a highly educated teacher without possessing adequate knowledge of classroom management skills (e.g., being a good leader, encouraging participation, organizing group-work activities, and addressing individual differences) cannot be a really effective teacher. Besides, the importance of interpersonal qualities such as enthusiasm, friendliness, and patience must not be overlooked. That is probably the reason why Gourneau (2005) maintains that teachers could create either a long and boring school year or an exciting and challenging year for their students.

Another implication of this study might be directed to educational policy makers and curriculum designers, particularly the ones in the Middle East who still seem to be relying on the traditional approaches and trends in language teaching and learning. They need to realize that the tenets of the paradigm shift in SLE have even been recognized by language students. The results of this study might be indicative of students' awareness of such matters emphasized by the new paradigm as learner autonomy, social nature of learning, and integration of skills. These are also the changes that teachers as professionals in education are expected to observe in the educational system wherein they

work. Hence, as the first step to make fundamental changes and improvements in the educational systems in countries which still follow traditional approaches to foreign language teaching and learning, it is deemed essential that a needs analysis be conducted by educational policy makers and curriculum designers with teachers as implementers of the syllabi and students as the recipients.

No research study is without limitations and this study is no exception. Future research is needed to replicate the study using classroom observations and focus-group interviews in addition to survey methodology involving a questionnaire and semi-structured interview as employed in this study. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research is recommended to include participants from various countries where English is studied and taught as a foreign language in order to make certain the results would apply to EFL teachers worldwide. Future quantitative research can also focus on the statistical differences between students' and teachers' perspectives of effective EFL teachers using a Likert-scale questionnaire.

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Appendix 1. Effective Iranian EFL Teacher Open-ended Questionnaire

The purpose of this survey is to identify the characteristics of effective Iranian EFL teachers. This questionnaire mainly focuses on the key factors contributing to effective language teaching based on your personal beliefs and experiences. There will be no risks or negative consequences associated with participation in this research. The data obtained from this questionnaire will be treated as strictly confidential and no one, except the researchers, will have access to them. You do not need to write your name on the questionnaire. You are requested to provide as much detail as you can for each item.

1- What do you think makes an EFL teacher effective in terms of his/her professional qualities?

2- What do you think makes an EFL teacher effective in terms of his/her classroom management-related qualities?

3- What do you think makes an EFL teacher effective in terms of his/her interpersonal qualities (i.e. teacher-student relationship)?

4- What other factors can you think of regarding effective language teaching?

Appendix 2. Semi-structured Interview with the Teachers on the Characteristics of Effective Iranian EFL Teachers

1- Which one do think is more important in effective language teaching, sufficient knowledge of the subject matter or updated knowledge of pedagogy? Why?

2- What do you think is necessary for an EFL teacher to do to develop professionally?

3- How should an effective EFL teacher manage the turn-taking procedures and student participation in classroom activities?

4- How can an effective EFL teacher integrate language skills and subskills successfully? Give examples.

5- How can a sense of humor be an effective tool used by EFL teachers?

6- What do you think is the ideal pattern of teacher-student relationship?