

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Effective Teacher Characteristics in the Eyes of Pre-service EFL Teachers: Evidence from Turkish Higher Education Context

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## Ethical Statement

Consent forms were distributed.

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## Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is present in the conduction or the reporting of this study.

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the perspectives of pre-service EFL teachers on effective EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher characteristics and explore their opinions regarding effective teacher characteristics in the post-COVID period. Following this aim, 80 participants who were 3rd and 4th-grade prospective teachers at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of a public university participated in the study. For data collection, a questionnaire and interview protocols were used. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, while a thematic analysis was done in order to explore the qualitative data. The findings from both analyses revealed that the participants considered being creative, effective communication with the students, using authentic activities and materials, being fluent, having sufficient content knowledge, and being good at classroom management as the most important and necessary characteristics of an effective EFL teacher. Considering the post-COVID pandemic period, the necessity of the EFL teachers' ability to use the technological tools and platforms and the continuation of this use during the post-COVID period were found to be important. In line with these findings, the study offers several suggestions for EFL teacher education.

**Keywords:** Effective teacher characteristics, EFL teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher perspectives, language teaching.

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## INTRODUCTION

In any classroom environment, the teacher stands as the main character of the teaching process, and the characteristics that the teacher brings into that environment become the key elements in the effective teaching process. However, the definition of an effective teacher can be quite hard and arguable, as the scholars in the field claim that being effective can differ in different educational contexts and groups (Borg, 2006; Ko et al., 2013). In this regard, Good et al. (2009, p.803) define an effective teacher as someone who has the "ability to improve student achievement". On the other hand, Çelik et al. (2013, p. 295) propose that "an effective teacher is always in the process of professional growth; and thus, teacher effectiveness should be perceived as a fluid rather than a fixed phenomenon". Borg (2006) also agrees that the teacher's characteristics are key but broad concepts that can be defined with regard to "personal qualities, pedagogical skills, classroom practices, subject matter and psychological constructs such as knowledge and attitudes" (p.8). Therefore, looking deeper into this phenomenon is a key element in creating better language learning environments.

Research on identifying an effective language teacher dates back to the 1990s. For example, Brosh (1996) conducted a study with foreign language teachers and high-school students to identify the effective characteristics of EFL teachers and found that mastery of the target language, teaching skills such as organizing, explaining, and clarifying, motivating students as well as fairness were considered as the top-ranked qualities. Since then, characteristics of an English teacher have been discussed by gaining popularity due to globalization and internationalization throughout the world. More recently, in Iranian contexts, Mohammaditabar, Bagheri, Yamini, and Rassaei (2019) conducted a mixed-method study to explore the perceptions related to the qualities of good EFL teachers and found that care and enthusiasm were the most common qualities for Iranian EFL teachers. In addition, their study suggested that these perceptions are context-specific. Indeed, in Omani contexts, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) found that even though Omani students and teachers mostly agreed that an effective EFL teacher should be proficient in the target language and must be equal to students, interestingly, the participants also agreed that knowledge of Western culture/s and the use of technology were rather insignificant.

Similar results were revealed by Febriyanti (2018) in her study conducted with Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers and it was found that being proficient with good communication abilities, being prepared well for the lessons, motivating students, as well as using English as a medium of instruction are regarded as the most important qualities of an effective EFL teacher. In addition, by taking the perspectives of both pre-service and in-service EFL teachers into consideration with a mixed method research, Tajeddin and Alemi (2019, p.1) revealed that the Persian-speaking pre- and in-service teachers had similarities and differences in their perspectives of effective EFL teacher as a person. While pre-service teachers tended to emphasize the necessity of personal traits such as "patience, kindness, friendliness, strictness, knowledge, enthusiasm, and fairness"; in-service teachers, on the other hand, considered "teachers' knowledge and energy, sense of humor, and friendliness" as well as the ability to create a warm, equal and positive classroom atmosphere as the most important characteristics. Furthermore, in the Saudi Arabian context, Alzubi (2021) explored students' perspectives and revealed that they gave importance to personality, methodology, and language mastery of EFL teachers, as well as cultural awareness, which was regarded as a must to be an effective teacher. In addition, in the study, no statistically significant difference was found between the male and female participants' perspectives on being an effective teacher.

In the related literature, some studies can be found in the Turkish context exploring student perceptions, especially quantitatively. For example, in a study investigating the characteristics of EFL teachers from the perceptions of students



studying at a preparatory program in a state university in Türkiye, Hismanoglu (2019) revealed the following features perceived to belong to effective EFL teachers: "being enthusiastic and lively, having an interest in his/her job and feeling responsibility for teaching, being creative and spontaneous, being self-confident, having a loud and clear voice" (p. 118). Following the perspectives of students, Baytur and Razi (2015) aimed to investigate the perceptions of young learners in their study and revealed that the learners imagined an effective EFL teacher to be friendly, to have fluent pronunciation, and to have effective classroom management skills. Moreover, they also wanted their EFL teachers to be patient and enthusiastic about technological developments. Furthermore, in the study conducted by Çelik et al. (2013), 998 undergraduate participant students thought that an effective EFL teacher should be fair, good at lowering anxiety in the classroom, enthusiastic, and able to teach pronunciation and speaking skills effectively. These characteristics were the top five items that were given the most importance, followed by having enough vocabulary and grammar knowledge and teaching reading skills. Furthermore, Külekçi (2018) explored prospective English language teachers' perceptions and revealed some perceived effective EFL teacher behaviors and attitudes, such as using real-life examples and situations while teaching, being prepared for the class, and using appropriate teaching materials. In addition, the participants in the study found some features of EFL teachers, such as being authoritative and using the board effectively as the least important ones. More recently, Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2021) investigated teacher professionalism with in-service EFL teachers and revealed that the teachers regarded personal traits as the most important component of their professionalism. Moreover, English language proficiency was seen as the top-needed quality of EFL teachers.

### The Present Study

Although the notion of effective EFL teacher characteristics has been an ongoing topic discussed in the literature for a long time, there has been a paucity of research in the last couple of years, especially after the pandemic period. This observation makes it vital to look deeper into pre-service teacher perceptions as they will soon be teaching in the real classroom environment in this changing world, and they will be the ones to witness being an EFL teacher in post-pandemic years. In this sense, Baytur and Razi (2015) agree that both pedagogical and personal qualities have a big role in being an effective EFL teacher. In addition, Borg (2006) points out the need to define these distinctive characteristics with regard to specific contexts rather than having a global perspective. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers on the effective characteristics of an EFL teacher and reveal their opinions regarding this matter by taking the impacts of the pandemic into consideration in Turkish contexts. Following this purpose, the following research questions are aimed to be answered in this research:

- (1) What are the effective EFL teacher characteristics in the eyes of pre-service EFL teachers in Türkiye?
  - (a) Do these effective teacher characteristics change depending on the perspectives of male and female pre-service EFL teachers?
  - (b) Does the practicum experience affect their perspectives on effective teacher characteristics?
- (2) What are the opinions of pre-service EFL teachers regarding effective teacher characteristics in the post-COVID period in the Turkish context?

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study is a mixed-methods research including both quantitative and qualitative data. The research design of this study is formed through Convergent Parallel Design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were simultaneously collected, and independently analyzed, and the results were mixed and compared in the end by being interpreted together (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this direction, the quantitative data were first put into process in order to start collecting numerical data from all participants, and in parallel with the quantitative data collection, the qualitative data were collected with the participants who volunteered during this process for an in-depth analysis.

### Setting and Participants

In this study, the participants were 80 pre-service EFL teachers (N=80). They were chosen with convenience sampling in that, they were available, ready, and eager to participate (Given, 2008). They were 3rd and 4th-grade students studying at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department of a public university in Türkiye. The two grades were chosen among the four-year study program on purpose to gather as many ideas as possible from the pre-service teachers who were close to graduation. That is, as the ELT students from these two grades had taken more teaching-related courses compared to the other grades and, as a result, had obtained more teaching awareness, they were thought to be perfect fit for this study. Among these participants, 47 were 3rd-grade students, and 33 were 4th-grade students. In addition, 50 were female and 30 were male.

### Instruments

In the quantitative stage, a questionnaire related to effective teacher characteristics was used as the first instrument of this study. A five-point Likert-type questionnaire which was adapted by Çelik et al. (2013) from surveys created before by Yu-Hsin (1999) and Arıkan et al. (2008) was used to collect quantitative data. The first part of the questionnaire included questions about the participants' background information of gender and study year. The rest of the questionnaire included 35 questions requiring participants to rate the given EFL teacher characteristics from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important).

In addition, as the second instrument, an interview protocol was used for an in-depth analysis. The interview included three main questions as well as an additional prompt. The aims of the questions were to reveal the participants' perspectives on the characteristics of effective EFL teachers, their ideas on being effective EFL teachers during the post-COVID period, and their views regarding the future of these characteristics. After the questions were formed, the questions were presented to an expert in the field for revision. The expert confirmed the convenience of the questions with some changes and a recommendation of an additional prompt question to the first question.

### Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

The data were collected during the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The first part of the data was collected through the questionnaire distributed to the participants via Google Forms. A consent form was given at the beginning of the form, and their consents were taken. After the participants completed the questionnaire, the second part of the data was collected via interview protocols, with 10 of the participants randomly chosen among all. The interviewees were 5 males and 5 females, and there was a balanced distribution of 3rd and 4th graders. The interviews



were conducted individually on online meetings, recorded, and each lasted around 15-20 minutes. The informed consent of each participant was taken verbally before the interviews, and they were assured that their information would be kept confidential in the study.

In the data analysis process, after the whole data collection procedure was completed, the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS software. In the analysis, the same three categories created by the developers of the questionnaire (Çelik et al., 2013) were used: "Personal Qualities and Personality Traits", "Content and Pedagogy-Specific Knowledge", and "Professional Skills and Classroom Behavior". In addition, in order to analyze the second part of the research, the interviews were transcribed and translated into English, and the transcripts collected from the interview protocols were analyzed through thematic analysis following Clarke and Braun (2017), who indicated that thematic analysis is very much useful in revealing participants' perspectives and understanding their feelings related to a certain concept being studied. Accordingly, main patterns were identified through the NVIVO application for qualitative data analysis. In order to carry out this process, common patterns in the qualitative data were coded, and the emerging themes were analyzed with frequency analysis. After quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately, the results were interpreted together at the end.

## RESULTS

### Personal Qualities and Personality Traits

In order to answer the first research question regarding the effective teacher characteristics in the eyes of pre-service EFL teachers, the participants were first asked to respond to 12 items to rate the personal qualities and personality traits in the questionnaire. Accordingly, the means and standard deviation scores were calculated, and the summary of the results obtained from descriptive statistics is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics on the personal qualities and personality traits of EFL teachers.

	N	MEAN	SD
1. Fair and just	80	4,56	,653
2. Enthusiastic	80	4,45	,692
3. Friendly	80	4,25	,849
4. Loving	80	4,16	,906
5. Creative	80	4,44	,744
6. Experienced	80	3,54	,980
7. Humorous	80	3,59	,937
8. Turkish, but good in English	80	3,80	1,060
9. Turkish and good in the target culture	80	3,81	1,032
10. Young	80	2,68	1,077
11. Experienced in living in a foreign culture or country	80	2,76	1,172
12. Native speaker of English	80	2,13	1,107

Note. 5 very important, 4 important, 3 neutral, 2 not important, 1 not important at all

The findings revealed that the most prominent characteristics that the participants attached to an EFL teacher were being fair and just (item 1, M=4,56), enthusiastic (item 2, M=4,45), creative (item 5, M=4,44), and friendly (item 3, M=4,25). They strongly agreed on the importance of these qualities with the highest means in this section. In addition, the participants agreed that it is important for an effective EFL teacher to be loving (item 4, M=4,16), Turkish and good in the target culture (item 9, M=3,81), Turkish, but good in English (item 8, M=3,80), humorous (item 7, M=3,59), and

experienced (item 6,  $M=3,54$ ). Following these agreements with high mean scores, the participants appeared to be undecided about whether the experience of living in a foreign culture or country is important or not (item 11,  $M=2,76$ ) and whether an effective EFL teacher should be young or not (item 10,  $M=2,68$ ).

Lastly, the only item that the participants disagreed with a low mean score is related to being a native speaker of English. Accordingly, they disagreed that it is important for an effective EFL teacher to be a native speaker of English (item 12,  $M=2,13$ ).

### Content and Pedagogy-Specific Knowledge

In the second subdimension of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rate the importance of the content and pedagogy-specific knowledge of EFL teachers. Table 2 summarizes the results of the descriptive statistics regarding the participants' opinions.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics on the content and pedagogy-specific knowledge of EFL teachers.

	N	MEAN	SD
1. Teaches pronunciation well	80	4,41	,774
2. Teaches speaking skills adequately	80	4,54	,693
3. Teaches reading skills adequately	80	4,40	,773
4. Teaches writing skills adequately	80	4,39	,787
5. Teaches listening skills adequately	80	4,51	,693
6. Explains grammar rules well	80	4,10	,949
7. Gives real-life examples while teaching	80	4,55	,634
8. Teaches both academic and daily language	80	4,06	,985
9. Teaches the target culture adequately	80	4,33	,776
10. Helps students to learn the language easily	80	4,59	,669
11. Uses literary texts in the classroom	80	3,43	1,10

Note. 5 very important, 4 important, 3 neutral, 2 not important, 1 not important at all

The results related to the content and pedagogy-specific knowledge of EFL teachers show that the participants agreed on the importance of all of the items in this section. Specifically, the highest scores in descending order were attached to helping students to learn the language easily (item 10,  $M=4,59$ ), giving real-life examples (item 7,  $M=4,55$ ), teaching speaking skills (item 2,  $M= 4,54$ ), teaching listening skills (item 5,  $M=4,51$ ), teaching pronunciation (item 1,  $M=4,41$ ), teaching reading skills (item 3,  $M=4,40$ ), teaching writing skills (item 4,  $M=4,39$ ) and teaching the target culture adequately (item 9,  $M=4,33$ ). That is, the results show that the participants strongly agreed on the high importance of these 8 items considering the effective EFL teacher characteristics.

In addition, although their means were not as high as the rest of the 8 items in this section, the participants agreed that explaining grammar rules well (item 6,  $M=4,10$ ), teaching both academic and daily language (item 8,  $M=4,06$ ), and using literary texts (item 11,  $M=3,43$ ) are also important traits of an EFL teacher. The highest standard deviation score belonged to item 11 ( $SD=1,100$ ), which shows that the response points to this item were scattered.

## Professional Skills and Classroom Behavior

In exploring the perspectives of the participants related to professional skills and classroom behavior of EFL teachers, the participants were asked to respond to 12 related items. The descriptive statistics results gathered from the analysis are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics on the professional skills and classroom behavior of EFL teachers.

	N	MEAN	SD
1. Has good knowledge of vocabulary	80	4,59	,741
2. Has good knowledge of grammar	80	4,49	,729
3. Reduces students' anxiety	80	4,74	,497
4. Is good at classroom management	80	4,78	,449
5. Uses technology and visual materials well	80	4,55	,673
6. Takes attendance	80	3,34	1,147
7. Regularly gives tests and quizzes	80	3,19	1,115
8. Plays games during teaching	80	4,19	,797
9. Asks students to check on each other's work	80	3,60	1,165
10. Gives assignments regularly	80	3,30	1,024
11. Acts as the only authority in the classroom	80	2,45	1,282
12. Speaks rather than listening to students	80	1,84	1,049

Note. 5 very important, 4 important, 3 neutral, 2 not important, 1 not important at all

In consideration of professional skills and classroom behavior of EFL teachers, being good at classroom management appears to be the most salient item throughout the whole questionnaire, with the highest mean among all (item 4,  $M=4,78$ ). Following this, with the second highest score in the whole questionnaire, reducing students' anxiety was perceived as a very important characteristic of an EFL teacher (item 3,  $M=4,74$ ). That is, these two items were strongly agreed upon by the participants and were found to be the most important qualities of effective EFL teachers in the eyes of the participants.

Moreover, the participants also strongly agreed on the importance of having good knowledge of vocabulary (item 1,  $M= 4,59$ ), using technology and visual materials well (item 5,  $M= 4,55$ ), and having good knowledge of grammar (item2,  $M=4,49$ ). In addition, they agreed that playing games in the classroom (item 8,  $M=4,19$ ) and asking students to check each other's work (item 9,  $M=3,60$ ) are also important EFL teacher characteristics.

The ideas of the participants appeared to be very scattered, considering taking attendance (item 6,  $M=3,34$ ), giving assignments regularly (item 10,  $M=3,30$ ), and giving tests and quizzes regularly (item 7,  $M=3,19$ ). The SD scores of these items were very high, which means that the participants were neutral and/or could not decide whether an effective EFL teacher must take attendance and regularly give tests, quizzes, and assignments in EFL teaching.

Lastly, the lowest means in this section were ascribed to acting as the only authority in the classroom (item 11,  $M = 2,45$ ) and speaking rather than listening to students (item 12,  $M=1,84$ ), which means that the participants disagreed that an effective EFL teacher should possess these qualities.

## Perspectives According to Gender and Practicum Experience

To answer the sub-research question regarding the gender difference in participants' perspectives on teacher characteristics, an independent-samples t-test was conducted. The results are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4.** T-test results regarding gender.

	N	M	SD	T	DF	P
Female	50	138.96	12.961	1.633	78	.106
Male	30	132.40	23.011			

The findings shown in the table revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the female participants (M= 138.96, SD= 12.961) and male participants (M=132.40, SD=23.011) in terms of their perspectives on effective teacher characteristics (t (78) =1.633 with  $p>0.05$ ). Following these results, it can be concluded from these findings that gender difference does not significantly affect the pre-service teachers' perspectives on the characteristics of a good EFL teacher.

The second sub-question of the research examined whether the practicum experience affects the perspectives of the participants on effective teacher characteristics, and the mean score of the group with a practicum experience (4th grades) and without a practicum experience (3rd grades) were compared. The results of the test are shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** T-test results for the groups with and without practicum experience.

	N	M	SD	T	DF	P
No Practicum Experience	47	133.94	17.193	-1.572	78	.120
Practicum Experience	33	140.15	17.720			

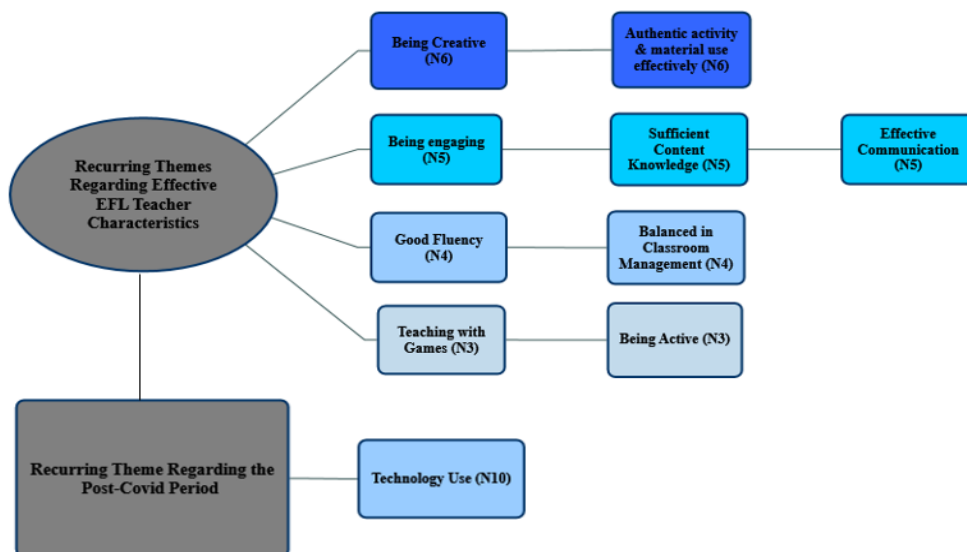
As seen, there is no statistically significant difference between the group without a practicum experience (M= 133.94, SD= 17.193) and the group with a practicum experience (M=140.15, SD= 17.720) in terms of their perspectives on effective EFL teacher characteristics (t (78) =-1.572 with  $p>0.05$ ). It can be drawn from these findings that having practicum experience currently does not affect the pre-service EFL teachers' perspectives significantly.

## Findings From Qualitative Data

In comparison with the quantitative results shown above, the themes that emerged from the interview sessions revealed that both quantitative and qualitative results are largely consistent with each other. That is, most of the items that had received the highest scores in the questionnaire were recurrently stated by the participants during the interview sessions as effective teacher characteristics. On the other hand, the interviews revealed more in-depth ideas of the participants on the traits of effective EFL teachers, especially by taking their own experiences and the post-COVID period into account.

During the sessions, first of all, the participants were asked to talk about the characteristics that a good EFL teacher should have. They all tended to indicate many different characteristics, and the most indicated themes emerged, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The most recurring themes for effective EFL teacher characteristics

*N: Number of the participants recurrently mentioned the related theme*

In total, 10 themes appeared to be recurrently mentioned during the interview sessions. These themes were all found to be mentioned by both 3rd-year and 4th-year participants.

Being creative was one of the most mentioned themes by more than half of the participants in the interview sessions. Accordingly, the participants claimed that in an EFL learning environment, it is not enough to teach by just sticking to one book and one type of activity. The following extract from P10 is an example of this thought: "An EFL teacher should not teach English as a regular lesson or as mathematics. It is not enough to make the students do a matching activity all the time, and thus, the teacher should be very creative in an EFL learning environment". In relation to this, more than half of the participants also gave importance to the use of authentic activity and material use effectively in EFL classrooms. P8, for example, mentioned that "An EFL teacher must create real-life situations". In addition, P4 gave an example from her past, including her primary school English teacher's use of authentic real materials and visuals in the classroom as a good example from her memories. She also indicated that the use of authentic materials in vocabulary teaching and using materials according to learners' age and how it contributed to their learning and motivation very much.

Moreover, being engaging, as P5 indicates, "An EFL teacher should definitely engage the students to keep the lesson alive and going", and having sufficient content knowledge were recurrently mentioned by half of the participants during the interview sessions. Regarding content knowledge, P6, for example, specified as follows: "The EFL teacher should have good content knowledge and be equipped in the field". Effective communication that an EFL teacher builds was another characteristic that was mentioned by half of the participants. In this sense, P3 indicated the following: "The teacher must have good communication with students. The students should feel comfortable asking questions. And, s/he must be close and friendly to students."

Having good fluency and being balanced in classroom management were some other themes recurrently mentioned by the participants. In terms of fluency, the participants pointed out the necessity of sufficient fluency in EFL classrooms,

as can be seen in the following comment of P1: "An EFL teacher should definitely be fluent in teaching along with good pronunciation". Regarding the teacher behaviors in classroom management, they all mentioned that the EFL teacher should be neither too strict nor too lenient in the classroom environment. The following comment is an example of this theme: "The teacher should be relaxed, but this should be limited because authority and discipline are also necessary in the classroom" (P5).

After the first question, the participants were asked to state their thoughts on the characteristics of a good EFL teacher, specifically in the post-COVID period. As Figure 1 also demonstrates, every participant recurrently mentioned the ability to use technology effectively in teaching EFL. They tended to specifically focus on the challenge of returning back to face-to-face education after a long two years of online education and indicated that the use of technology shouldn't stop after the end of this pandemic. For example, P2 pointed out that "In this period, teachers should not just stop using technology by leaving the online process and should improve themselves in this regard. For example, they should integrate applications such as Kahoot into the courses". All in all, each participant mentioned the importance of the discovery of new technological tools and platforms, and the continuation of the integration of these tools and platforms in EFL classrooms during this post-COVID period.

Finally, the third and last question was asked in order to identify whether they thought these characteristics they had mentioned so far would change in the future. The participants mostly did not think that there would be any big changes in the perceived profile of an EFL teacher. They thought that even if any change happened, the personal characteristics of an EFL teacher, such as being engaging, creative, and good at communication, wouldn't and shouldn't change in teaching EFL. However, they mostly mentioned that the characteristics are attached to the era that those particular teachers live in. This is specifically explained by one of the participants in the following extract:

*Teachers used to be known as strict, but now they are more friendly. In other words, their features actually change according to the age and adapt to their time. But it is certain that the EFL teachers won't go back to the old days. (P10)*

Furthermore, there were participants who thought that the profile of EFL teachers might change in the future and pointed out that the advances in technology would determine the ways in which the EFL teachers' characteristics would change. One of the participants added a suggestion for the educators and authorities as in the following extract:

*These features might change in the future as technology is constantly changing. In preparation for this, there should be field courses related to online teaching, and things such as the use of web 2.0 tools should be taught in these courses. It is a high possibility that they will be strongly needed in EFL classrooms in the future (P7).*

All in all, the participants did not think that the characteristics of EFL teachers would change much in the future. Some of them mentioned that even if changes occurred, they would be related to technological advances, although personal characteristics would not change in any way.

## DISCUSSION

It is apparent from the results that pre-service EFL teachers in the current study have a certain EFL teacher profile with various kinds of characteristics in their minds. As many scholars in the field (Borg, 2006; Çelik et al., 2013; Ko et al., 2013) suggest, the definition of an EFL teacher does not appear to be a fixed one as in this study.

According to these results, it can be said that the questionnaire and interview sessions clearly complement each other. For example, considering the personal qualities and personality traits in the questionnaire, the characteristics to which the participants gave the highest importance were being fair and just, enthusiastic, creative, and friendly. Indeed,

these were also mentioned in the interview sessions. Among all, especially being creative and effective communication by being friendly were some of the most recurrent themes attained to a good EFL teacher by the participants. The results are similar to what was revealed in Hungarian context by Borg (2006) and in Indonesian context by Febriyanti (2018). That is, in the former, the participants also frequently mentioned 'creativity' as a distinctive characteristic of EFL teachers; and in the latter, the pre-service teachers counted having effective communication as one of the most important qualities of EFL teachers. These main characteristics are also common in the results of the studies conducted in Turkish context. For example, being creative was also thought to be an important characteristic in teachers' perspectives in the study conducted by Hismanoglu (2019) and being friendly was considered to be a distinctive characteristic of EFL teachers in learners' perspectives by Baytur and Razi (2015)'s study, and in pre-service teacher perspectives in Göksel and Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez (2018)'s study.

Moreover, regarding content and pedagogy-specific knowledge, helping students learn the language easily, giving real-life examples, teaching speaking, listening, pronunciation, reading, and writing skills, as well as teaching the target culture adequately were the characteristics that the participants strongly agreed on. Similarly, the most recurrent themes in the interviews included using authentic activities and materials, having good fluency regarding the ability to teach speaking and pronunciation skills, having sufficient content knowledge, which had also been ranked as one of the top qualities of effective EFL teachers in other studies in the related literature (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Brosh, 1996; Febriyanti, 2018; Korkmazgil & Seferoğlu, 2021; Tajeddin & Alemi, 2019). In addition to the importance of language proficiency, in this sense, the necessity of having and teaching effective pronunciation and speaking skills has also been found important in related studies, especially in Turkish contexts (Baytur & Razi, 2015; Çelik et al., 2013; Göksel & Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez, 2018). Considering the related literature and the current study, it is clear that fluency has been considered a distinctive feature of an EFL teacher, specifically in Turkish contexts. This could be due to the low ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) awareness stemming from cultural biases towards an ideal English learner with perfect speaking abilities. Furthermore, in this study, during the interviews, the participants of this study tended to mention the importance of using authentic materials. Similarly, the participant teachers in the research study conducted by Külekçi (2018) in Turkish context also gave importance to the use of effective materials and using real-life examples and situations, which have also been given importance in this study.

Furthermore, considering the skills of classroom management, being good at managing the classroom was the most salient item throughout the whole questionnaire, and it was among the most recurrent themes of the interview sessions. Similarly, in Omani context, Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) revealed that the participants gave importance to classroom management by recurrently mentioning 'being equal to students' as a distinctive trait of an EFL teacher. In addition, having effective classroom management skills was thought to be very important for EFL teachers regarding learners' perceptions in the study of Baytur and Razi (2015) conducted in Turkish context. Other than this, using technology and visual materials effectively was also given importance both in the questionnaire and the interviews, especially in terms of the characteristics that a good EFL teacher must obtain during the post-COVID period. This was in contradiction with the Omani context in which Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) revealed that the participants found the technology use insignificant for EFL teachers.

In going deeper into the most recent perceptions of the participants regarding the characteristics that a good EFL teacher must have specifically during the post-COVID period, technology use appeared to be the most important and repeatedly mentioned theme. Accordingly, the participants laid emphasis on how smooth the process of returning face-to-face education from online teaching should be. Moreover, each participant mentioned permanent use of new

technological platforms and tools without making a sharp return to the ways in which EFL was being taught in face-to-face scenarios before COVID-19 and integrating these tools and platforms in face-to-face education. They were clearly in favor of the characteristics of a good EFL teacher that they had mentioned as a must in the post-COVID period with the integration of technology they had used during COVID-19 as such kind of disconnection from technology could have a negative effect on their EFL learning. Regardless of COVID-19, this result was also revealed by Baytur and Razi (2015) in Turkish context in which the learners wished their EFL teachers to be enthusiastic about technological developments.

Lastly, in connection with any possibility of further changes in the characteristics of a good EFL teacher in the future, they generally thought that personal characteristics would not lose their importance, but the developments in technology would possibly lead to changes in the characteristics of EFL teachers. The possible changes could be the effects of COVID-19 period which appeared unexpectedly and pushed everyone to online teaching and learning.

All in all, it is clear in this discussion that although there are many commonalities in the results of the studies conducted in different contexts, each context has its own aspects. For example, while Hungarian pre-service teachers included 'flexibility' as their top necessary quality of an EFL teacher in Borg's (2006) study, Turkish pre-service teachers did not mention this quality at all. In addition, In Iranian contexts, for example, Mohammaditabar et al. (2019) found 'care' and 'enthusiasm' as the top distinctive characteristics while these were not again placed as the top qualities mentioned by the participants in this study. Moreover, in the study conducted by Alzubi (2021) in Saudi Arabian context, cultural awareness was recurrently mentioned whereas this was not mentioned in the current study. This proves what Mohammaditabar et al. (2019) suggest in their study that these characteristics are very much context specific.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by following its purpose, this study reveals the perceptions of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers on the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher and brings out a new perspective by analyzing their opinions regarding the post-pandemic period in Turkish context. The commonality of the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses shows that the participants considered being creative, providing effective communication with the students, using authentic activities and materials, having good fluency, having sufficient content knowledge, and being good at classroom management as the most important and necessary characteristics of a good EFL teacher. It is clear that the participants pictured good EFL teachers with many good qualities, as can be seen in the following comment indicated by some of the participants: "The teacher should be everything in class".

In addition, the pre-service teachers put much emphasis on the ability of using technological tools and platforms, and the continuation of this use during the post-COVID period. They strictly rejected the possible tendency of EFL teachers to go back to the times when the technology had not been used often such as before COVID-19 pandemic. As technology is constantly changing, it has been suggested in this study that EFL teachers should be prepared for this change, and in order to do this, there should be trainings related to online teaching and the use of online platforms and tools in order to create more effective teaching and learning environments, especially during the post-COVID period.

Regarding the limitations of the current study, first of all, it has a specific context, and thus, this context-bound nature of the study might limit the generalizability of the results. Therefore, more studies in different EFL contexts in Türkiye and throughout the world should be conducted and compared to reach more diverse results and raise awareness among pre- and in-service EFL teachers. As Baytur and Razi (2015) suggest, it is very important that EFL teachers must be aware of these qualities. This awareness raising can be done by integrating the studies in the field into the EFL teacher education programs for pre-service teachers, which can contribute to their readiness and effectiveness for their future teaching practices.



All in all, together with the findings that are salient to this study and are common with the related literature, this study highlights the importance of defining the distinctive characteristics with regard to specific contexts rather than having a global perspective as Borg (2006) also suggests. This study also displays and aims bringing out a new perspective in the field by revealing the Turkish pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding good EFL teacher characteristics through a mixed-method analysis.

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