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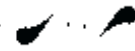
Educational Research Association
The International Journal of
Educational Researchers 2019,
10(1): 15-27
ISSN: 1308-9501



<http://ijer.eab.org.tr>

Moroccan English Foreign Language Students' Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective Teachers

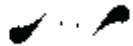
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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate Moroccan English language learners' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. It also aims to examine the extent to which these characteristics are related to the learners' demographic variables (e.g., gender, age group, and instructional level). Moreover, the study seeks to find out if other characteristics may emerge from participants' stories about qualities of effective teachers. 130 EFL learners following their studies at Sultan Moulay Slimane University in Beni Mellal, Morocco were requested to fill out a questionnaire asking them to rank twenty-eight items describing seven well-documented characteristics that they believed effective teachers possess or demonstrate. Moreover, a follow-up interview of eighteen students was carried out. The results revealed that the study sample endorsed the teacher characteristics of student-centredness, enthusiasm about teaching and ethicalness higher than subject knowledge, teaching method, classroom management and humor. The male students rated teaching method more highly than the female students, whereas the younger students rated pedagogical knowledge or instructional competence characteristics higher than did the older students. The findings of the present study suggest some useful implications for language teachers.

Keywords: teacher effectiveness, characteristic, perception, academic achievement.



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Introduction

Before focusing on the characteristics of effective language teachers, it is worthwhile to shed some light on the definitions of terms “effective” and “good” teachers. Defining the effective teacher and effective teaching can be a contentious issue because, in the literature, education practitioners have different perceptions of what effective teacher and teaching entail. However, by definition “effective” means “producing a desired result; efficient” (Merriam-Webster, 1993, p. 445). The adjective “good” is defined as “producing favourable results and effective; efficient” (Merriam-Webster, 1993, p. 602). So, “effective” and “good” seem to have the same meaning. Moreover, in the literature there is no clear distinction between the attributes “good” teacher and “effective” teacher as they were used interchangeably (cf. Askoy, 1998; Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004). Therefore, in this study these terms are used interchangeably. Other adjectives, which are also used to refer to effective teachers, include “expert” and “experienced” teachers (Hattie, 2003) and “ideal teacher” (Aksoy, 1998; Arnon & Reichel, 2007).

Literature on teaching effectiveness indicates that an effective and good teacher has an important role in students' performances and their success (Seidel & Shavelson, 2010). Decades of research have confirmed that teachers are the most important in-school factor influencing student achievement (Hattie, 2003; Tennessee Department of Education, 2016). The teachers account for about 30% of the variance in achievement, which is second only to the students themselves as they account for 50% of the variance (Hattie, 2003, pp. 1-2). Good and qualified teachers are essential for effective implementation of educational programs and for the success of the teaching and learning enterprise. Therefore, it is important that all students have effective teachers especially at early stages. The rest of this paper will deal with characteristics of effective teachers.

Literature Review

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

Although the definition of a good teacher may not be clear, several characteristics of effective teachers are well documented in the literature. A quick perusal of the literature reveals that certain characteristics and types of behaviour matter most in teaching, in terms of student achievement and success. Although an examination of the existing studies yields some inconsistencies in defining features and demarcation of the quality of effectiveness, careful exploration of the research, nevertheless, helps to confirm commonly held perspectives on which practices are most important (Strong, 2007).

Many researchers have conducted studies to investigate the characteristics of effective teachers (cf. Aksoy, 1998; Arnon & Reichel, 2007, Borg, 2006; Brosh, 1996, Cotton, 2000; Feldman, 1976; Good & Brophy, 2003; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001). It should be emphasized that the list of categories and characteristics of effective teachers examined are not comprehensive since a thorough review of characteristics of effective teachers is beyond the scope of this study. However, the main qualities of effective teachers germane to the objective of the study are referred to and discussed. The teacher characteristics to be discussed in this study are subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge or teaching method, teacher personality and teacher-student relationship.

There is a plethora of research examining teacher knowledge and its role in effective teaching (cf. Driel, et al., 1998; Hattie, 2003; Okpala and Ellis, 2005; Shulman, 1986, 1987). It is taken for granted that some expertise in the subject matter is a pre-requisite for teaching. For instance, Pettis (1997) noted that professionally competent English teachers are profoundly knowledgeable in language. Hattie (2003) argued that content knowledge is necessary for both experienced and expert teachers. Park and Lee (2006) in their study in Korea found out that teachers endorsed English proficiency higher over pedagogical knowledge. In an investigation of the characteristics of good language teachers, Brosh (1996) found various desirable characteristics of effective English language teachers, such as the teacher's command of the target language; his or her capability to organize, explain, and clarify; and the teacher's ability to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students.

Shulman (1987) made a distinction among competency in content knowledge, (general) pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge as attributes of effective teaching. According to Shulman (1987), content knowledge refers to knowledge of the subject and its organizing structures, whereas pedagogical knowledge includes the skills necessary for guiding, managing, assessing, and communicating with students (p. 8). However, to properly combine the two aspects of a teacher's capabilities necessitates that teachers be cognizant of the content aspects of teaching as well as the elements of teaching process. Indeed, according to Shulman (1987), among those types of knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge is of special interest because it identifies the distinctive bodies of knowledge relevant for teaching. The knowledgeable teacher who is also skilful in applying this knowledge is a powerful instructor as Pettis (1997, p. 68) argues. Arends, (2001, 20) believes that effective teachers command a repertoire of teaching practices known to stimulate student motivation and enhance student achievement of basic study skills. Doyle (1985) found that effective teachers match their teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners and also to the demands of various standards, topics, and methods (as cited in Slate, Capraron, & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 54). In line with this, Hamachek (1969) argued that successful teachers tended to "personalize" their teaching and use a variety of teaching strategies rather than one rigid approach (p. 342).

Effective language teachers have been described in the literature as having not only a profound competence in the subject matter or pedagogical knowledge but a set of personal qualities like warmth, communicating interest and caring to students (Cotton, 2000; Pavelka, 2016; Vadillio, 1999). Effective teachers care about their students and let their students know they care (Slate et al., 2007, p.54). Researchers have demonstrated the importance of this ethic of care in the perceptions that students have of a good teacher (Cotton, 2000; Good & Brophy, 2003; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001). Murphy, Delli, & Edwards (2004, p. 87) described in a qualitative study with elementary school students as well as pre-service and in-service teachers that being caring, patient, polite, and friendly are the characteristics of good teachers. Chen and Lin (2009) found in their study that students generally perceived the personality of the teacher and teacher-student relationship as more important characteristics than those of instructional competence.

Another important element in effective teaching, which is related to the ethic of care, is the teacher-student relationship (cf. Arends, 2001; Davis, 2001; Slate, Capraron, & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Walker, 2010). In his longitudinal study of students' perceptions of qualities of good teachers, Walker (2010) came to the conclusion that if teachers are to properly educate children, they must first build a relationship with them. In this context, there is a high association in the literature between the teacher's personality and establishing teacher-student relationship. According to Arends (2001, p. 20), "effective teachers have personal qualities that allow them to develop authentic relationships with their students." Arends (2001, p. 19) argued that some researchers have defined an effective teacher as one who can establish rapport with students and who can create a nurturing, caring classroom environment. Davis (2001, p. 342) emphasized on the relationship between students and teachers and claimed that this kind of social motivation can promote students' learning and achievement. In line with this, Chen and Lin (2009, p. 219) found out that students generally perceived teachers' personality and teacher-student relationship as more important characteristics than those of instructional competence.

Motivation, or enthusiasm for teaching, is another effective characteristic of a good teacher. Researchers such as Bloom (1984) and Darling-Hammond (2000) sought to investigate what constitutes this characteristic and found that enthusiasm for subject matter, teaching, and learning are important components (Cited in Slate, Capraron, & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p. 73). In line with this, effective teachers have been described as active teachers who make maximum use of instruction time, present material in ways to meet student needs, monitor programs and progress, and plan opportunities for students to apply newly acquired concepts and skills (Witcher, et al., 2001). Chen and Lin (2009) discovered that being enthusiastic, friendly, and open-minded, respecting students, and caring about students were the most important characteristics of effective English teachers.

Another key teacher effectiveness characteristic is critical thinking (Author, 2012). Although only a few of the interviewees in the study were aware of the attribute of critical thinking as a quality of good

teachers, being a critical thinker is at the heart of being an effective teacher. The quality of being a critical thinker is inherent in many characteristics of effective teachers. For instance, only a teacher who is a critical thinker can manage the classroom and time, identify the learners' needs, master the subject matter and simplify it for the learners, and be creative and vary the teaching strategies. Therefore, critical thinking could be considered an overarching attribute that is tantamount to effective teaching.

Relevant Studies

Many other studies have sought to compile a list of characteristics that describe a good teacher. For instance, Witcher & Onwuegbuzie (1999) found out that the following six themes emerged as the most common characteristics: (1) student-centeredness, (2) enthusiasm for teaching, (3) ethicalness, (4) classroom and behavior management, (5) teaching methodology, and (6) knowledge of subject.

The author (2012) explored Moroccan EFL pre-service teachers' views about characteristics of effective teachers. In order of rating by the students, ethicalness ($M= 4.76$; $SD= .40$) and student centeredness ($M= 4.52$; $SD=.43$) emerged as the two most highly rated characteristics. Teaching methodology ($M= 4.38$; $SD=.46$), motivation for teaching ($M= 4.29$; $SD=.45$), and classroom management ($M= 4.04$; $SD=.57$) were also highly rated, while subject knowledge was the lowest rated teacher characteristic ($M= 3.71$; $SD=.55$). In this study females were found to place more weight on student-centeredness, while males tended to endorse classroom management skills highly as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Meng and Onwuegbuzie (2015) replicated the study by Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, Collins, Filer and Moore (2007) by investigating Chinese students' perceptions of qualities of effective teachers. The most frequently occurring responses were ethical and expert. In contrast, the least frequently occurring responses were responsive, patriotic, and examination. The other choices, professional, director, and humorous, received modest endorsements. The U.S. and Chinese college students' endorsements of the nine characteristics were different. For instance, student-centered received the highest endorsements by the U.S. students, in contrast to ethical by the Chinese counterparts.

Research Questions

The aim of this study is to explore Moroccan EFL students' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers by investigating how they rate seven well-documented characteristics of effective teachers on a five-point Likerte scale. So the present study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers?
2. To what extent students' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers differ as a function of gender, age group, and instruction level?
3. What other teacher characteristics emerge from students' descriptions of qualities of effective teachers?

Method

This study adopted a mixed-method approach (Cresswell, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) in that it used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, it involved the use of a survey questionnaire requesting the students' demographic information and degree of agreement with a well-documented set of effective English teachers' characteristics. In addition, follow up interviews were also conducted to elicit the students' personal perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. Combining quantitative and qualitative techniques is a form of triangulation that enhances the validity and reliability of one's study, as Merriam (1988) argues.

Participants

A criterion-sampling scheme (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007) was used in this study. Specifically, the criteria used was that the participants be either semester two undergraduate students (first year) or semester six undergraduate students (third and final year). The Sample selection was based on the researcher's knowledge of and experience with the groups to be sampled. The participants include 130

EFL undergraduate students from Beni Mellal Faculty of Arts. The students sample consisted of 61 (46.9%) males and 69 (53.1%) females. 57 (43.8%) students study in semester 2 and 73 (56.2%) study in semester 6. The students belonged to three ages groups: 94 (72.3%) of the students' age ranged between 18 and 22 years of age, 30 (23.1%) were between 23 and 27 years of age, and 5 were 28 years old or older.

Instrument

All participants were administered a questionnaire during class sessions asking them to identify and to rank seven characteristics that they believed effective college instructors should possess or demonstrate. This instrument also extracted the following demographic information: gender, age group, and instructional level. The questionnaire was adapted from the language teacher characteristic questionnaires used in the studies conducted by Witcher & Onwuegbuzie (1999), Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James (2002), and Slate, Capraro, & Onwuegbuzie (2007). So, in addition to demographic information questions, the questionnaire contained 28 items organized according to seven characteristics that are well documented in the literature. The seven characteristics, which were introduced in the form of four items each, included a) student-centered, b) motivation, c) fairness, d) teaching method (pedagogical knowledge), e) classroom management, f) subject knowledge, and g) sense of humour. Participants were requested to disclose their perception about the characteristics of effective English teachers on a five-point Likert scale, by indicating the degree of agreement they accord to each teacher characteristics statement using the following answer possibilities: 1 = "not at all like me", 2 = "not very much like me", 3 = "somewhat like me", 4 = "like me", 5 = "very much like me." The items that received scores higher than 3 would represent that the characteristics were ranked as important regarding being an effective teacher.

In addition, follow up semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen students. The use of semi-structured interviews makes it possible to obtain more information about the characteristics of effective teachers from the participants while exploring and probing their responses to gather more in-depth data about their experiences and feelings (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2006). Note taking during and after the interview (Guy et al., 2012) were used to collect data, as some students did not feel comfortable being recorded. First, the researcher tried to establish a rapport with the interviewees and explained to them the nature of the research topic and the importance of their answers in conducting this scientific study. The students were queried about and asked to describe the characteristics or qualities of effective or best teachers. Paraphrasing was resorted to when the students did not seem to understand what was requested from them. The interview time was about five minutes.

A pilot study was conducted with ten male and female students to check the validity of the data gathering instruments before the actual administration. The questionnaire statements and interview questions were pilot tested in order to make sure the statements and questions are clear. All questionnaire items and interview questions were found to be clear and intelligible.

Data Analysis

The data compiled by the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS 19.0 software to answer the three research questions. A descriptive analysis was conducted to report the mean scores and standard deviation in order to investigate the students' overall perceptions of the characteristics of effective English teachers. An independent t-test was conducted to determine the gender and instructional level difference among the sample concerning their perceptions of qualities of effective teachers. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the difference in perceptions among the three age groups.

To analyse the interview data, a thematic analysis was conducted to code data and generate categories and subsequent themes from the answers given by the respondents (Gibbs, 2007) concerning their narratives about the qualities of their best teachers. This technique of data analysis, referred to as Constant Comparison Analysis, was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967)—the founders of 'grounded theory.' The goal of constant comparison analysis is to generate a theory or a set of themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008: 594) in order to better understand a phenomenon.

Results

Students Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective English Teachers

The first objective of this study was to explore the Moroccan EFL learners' perception of characteristic of effective teachers. The descriptive statistics in table 1 summarizes the learners' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics analysis for the teacher characteristics

	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Student-centered	130	1.00	5.00	4.07	.63
Teacher motivation	30	2.00	5.00	4.06	.57
Ethicalness	130	1.00	5.00	4.06	.76
Teaching method	130	1.00	5.00	3.83	.72
Classroom management	130	1.00	5.00	3.83	.72
Subject knowledge	130	2.00	5.00	3.92	.69
Humour	130	2.00	5.00	3.83	.71
Valid N (listwise)	130				

Table 1 shows that three effective teacher characteristics received the highest mean scores. The highest scores are attached to student-centered (M= 4.07; SD= .63), as well as to teacher motivation (M= 4.06; SD= .57) and ethicalness (M= 4.06; SD= .57). These characteristics are followed by subject knowledge (M= 3.92; SD=.69), teaching method (M= 3.83; SD= .72), classroom management (M= 3.83; SD= .72), and humour (M= 3.83; SD= .71). These results seem to indicate that Moroccan EFL learner appreciate the teachers characteristics of being caring about students, enthusiastic about teaching, and fair more highly than their subject knowledge, teaching method, classroom management or humour.

Gender and Students Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective Teacher

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate whether participants' mean scores differed based on gender at statistically significant levels.

Table 2. A comparison of male and female students' perceptions

	Gender	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig
Studentd centered	Male	61	4.06	.72	.08	.99
	Female	69	4.06	.55		
Teacher motivation	Male	61	4.18	.59	2.36	.02
	Female	69	3.95	.54		
Ethicalness	Male	61	4.16	.80	1.35	.17
	Female	69	3.98	.72		
Teaching method	Female	61	3.84	.70	.20	.84
	Male	69	3.82	.74		
Classroom management	Female	61	3.84	.70	.20	.84
	Male	69	3.82	.74		
Subject knowledge	Female	61	3.98	.73	.93	.34
	Male	69	3.87	.65		
Humour	Female	61	3.91	.69	1.20	.23
	Male	69	3.76	.72		

The t-test results in Table 2 indicates that there is not a significant difference between females and males with regard to the mean scores of almost all the investigated teacher characteristics except for the teacher motivation variable with a p value of less than .05 ($P < .05$). There is a statistically significant variance between male students (M = 4.18, SD = .59) and female students' (M = 3.95, SD = .54), ($t = 2.36$, $p = .02$) ratings of teacher motivation as characteristic of effective teachers. In other words, male students perceived teacher motivation as a more important characteristic for effective teachers than female students.

Instructional level and student perceptions of characteristics of effective teacher

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether participants' mean scores differed across the two investigated instructional levels at statistically significant levels.

Table 3. A comparison of S2 and S6 students' perceptions

	Instructional level	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig
Studentd centered	S2	57	4.04	.56	-.39	.69
	S6	73	4.09	.69	-.40	
Teacher motivation	S2	57	4.08	.58	.42	.67
	S6	73	4.04	.57	.42	
Ethicalness	S2	57	4.06	.71	-.07	.93
	S6	73	4.07	.81	-.08	
Teaching method	S2	57	3.93	.65	1.43	.15
	S6	73	3.75	.76	1.46	
Classroom management	S2	57	3.93	.65	1.43	.15
	S6	73	3.75	.76	1.46	
Subject knowledge	S2	57	3.83	.72	-1.42	.15
	S6	73	4.00	.66	-1.40	
Humour	S2	57	3.87	.74	.54	.58
	S6	73	3.80	.68	.54	

To investigate the possibility of any difference in learners' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers based on their instructional level an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted. As shown in Table 3, the analysis by the independent *t*-tests on the investigated characteristics between S2 and S6 students yielded no statistically significant difference, as the *p* value is more than .05. This is to say that there was no impact of the instructional level on the sample's perception of characteristics of effective teachers.

Age Groups and Student Perceptions of Qualities of Effective Teachers

To assess whether participants' mean scores differed across the three investigated age groups at statistically significant levels a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted.

Table 4: Comparison among three age group students' perceptions

	Age group	Number	Mean	Std Deviation	F	Sig
Studentd-centered	18-22	94	4.08	.66	.10	.90
	23-27	30	4.03	.62		
	28 & beyond	5	4.00	.30		
Teacher motivation	18-22	94	4.10	.59	.98	.37
	23-27	30	3.93	.55		
	28 & beyond	5	4.05	.27		
Ethicalness	18-22	94	4.11	.72	1.55	.21
	23-27	30	3.90	.79		
	28 & beyond	5	4.45	.73		
Teaching method	18-22	94	4.01	.65	12.15	.00
	23-27	30	3.36	.76		
	28 & beyond	5	3.33	.00		
Classroom management	18-22	94	4.01	.65	12.15	.00
	23-27	30	3.36	.76		
	28 & beyond	5	3.33	.00		
Subject knowledge	18-22	94	3.98	.71	1.95	.14
	23-27	30	3.85	.57		
	28 & beyond	5	3.40	.79		
Humour	18-22	94	3.92	.72	2.33	.10
	23-27	30	3.68	.56		

One-way ANOVA analysis on the seven investigated qualities of effective teachers among the three age groups yielded only two significant variations at the .05 level of significance: teaching method and classroom management ($F = 12.15$, $P = .00 < .05$). The learners means scores differed significantly with respect to their perceptions about teaching methodology and classroom management based on their age group: the age group 18 to 22 ($M = 4.01$) scored higher than the age group 23 to 27 ($M = 3.36$), and more than the age group 28 and beyond ($M = 3.33$). This result seems to indicate that the older the students are, the less importance they accord to teacher characteristics of teaching methodology and classroom management.

The results of the study show that the EFL learners seem to esteem student-centered, teacher motivation, and ethicalness as characteristics of effective teachers higher than subject knowledge, teaching method, classroom management, and humour. The results also show that male students perceive teacher motivation as a more important characteristic for effective teachers than female students. While the t-test results show that the instructional level has no impact on the sample's perception of the characteristics of effective teachers, the one-way ANOVA results show that there is a significant difference among the three investigated age groups with regard to their rating of the teacher characteristics of teaching methodology and classroom management. Younger students assign more value to their teachers' teaching method and classroom management skill than older students.

EFL Learners' own Perceptions of Characteristics of Effective Teachers: Identified Themes

The interviews were mainly meant to gather data on the characteristics of effective English language teachers as perceived by the English language learner. Additionally they served to elicit qualitative data to assist in elaborating the characteristics surveyed in the questionnaire and in triangulating the quantitative data. In the interview, the learners were queried about their instructional level and mainly about the characteristics that they think effective teachers should possess or the qualities of their best teachers. Paraphrasing is resorted to in order to help some students better understand the question.

The effective English teacher characteristics that emerged from the interviews and the students' testimonies are as follows:

- a- Teaching method or pedagogical knowledge: e.g., "The best teacher for me is the one who tries new methods of teaching."; "He has got a fantastic way of teaching."
- b- Subject knowledge: e.g., "The best teacher is the one who masters his subject."; "He is concerned about his subject and has a lot of information about it."
- c- Student-centered: e.g., "My best teacher is the teacher who cares about his students."; "He has good relations with all students."
- d- Ethicalness: e.g., "He treats males and females equally."; "He treats students fairly."
- e- Enthusiastic about teaching: e.g., "My best teacher is enthusiastic about his subject and loves his students."; "He must show interest in his subject."
- f- Classroom management: e.g., "The best teacher is the one who controls the classroom."; "He is capable of controlling the class when it turns out to be chaotic."
- g- Humour: e.g., "He has a sense of humour which breaks the lesson's stress."; "He is funny."
- h- Punctuality: e.g., "The teacher should attend all the sessions and not skip any one." "The best teacher is the one who comes on time."
- i- Modesty: e.g., "My best teacher I ever had is a teacher who is so kind and modest."; "The good teachers are the modest ones."
- j- Hardworking: e.g., "A good teacher is the one who works hard and gives all the information that students need."; "He is hardworking and active."
- k- Sociable: e.g., "He was a great brother and friend outside class."; "He was like a friend who advised us."

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l- Cheerful: e.g., "He is always smiling."; "He always giggled and modest."

m- Helpful: e.g., "At the end of the year he was helping us in everything: writing, grammar, etc."; "She was always there to help without getting angry."

n- Considerate: e.g., "The good teachers are the modest and the understanding teachers."; "She understood all my classmates' behaviour."

o- Knowledge of learners: e.g., "A good teacher who knows the levels of all students."; "He talks to everyone and gives opportunity to everyone," and

p- Respectful: e.g., "I had a best teacher who is respectable."; "A best teacher is who respects his students."

The analysis of the students' narratives about the characteristics of their effective or best teachers yielded several qualities that they consider to be prevalent in their best and most memorable teachers. It is worth noting that the teacher characteristics that emerged from the data include the seven investigated variables, namely teaching method, subject knowledge, student-centered, ethicalness, enthusiastic about teaching, classroom management, and humour. In addition to these widely cited effective teacher characteristics, the sample of the study seems to appreciate English teachers who are punctual, modest, hardworking, sociable, cheerful, helpful, considerate, respectful, and with knowledge of the learners.

Discussion

The present study attempts to bring into focus the Moroccan EFL learners' perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. It also examines the extent to which the set of the investigated characteristics relates to the learners' demographic variables such as gender, age group, and instructional level. Moreover, the study seeks to determine if other characteristics would emerge from the learners' testimonies about qualities of effective teachers in follow up interviews.

According to ranking of students' rating, the top three characteristics of effective English teachers were student-centered, teacher motivation, and ethicalness. These results are highly consistent with the results of the study by Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, and Minor (2001) in terms of the order of endorsement level of the same characteristics: (a) student centeredness, (b) enthusiasm for teaching, (c) ethicalness.

It should be noted that, in line with most teacher characteristics studies, especially American ones, student-centeredness, which falls under teacher-student relationship, is the teacher characteristic which received the highest rating (Minor et al., 2002; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007; Okpala & Ellis, 2005; Witcher & Onwuegbuzie 1999; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie & Minor, 2001). This suggests that the current sample, in general, rates student-centeredness as being the most common characteristic of effective English teachers. In other words, Moroccan and American students consider interpersonal connection to be the most important indicator of effective instructors. On the other hand, in this study, as well as in the previously cited ones in the American context, the characteristic of ethicalness comes in third place in terms of students' ratings unlike in Meng and Onwuegbuzie's (2015) study in the Chinese context where this characteristic received the highest endorsements by students.

The results show that the study sample also endorses to some extent the characteristics of subject knowledge, teaching method, and classroom management. The sample in this study assigned more importance to mastery of the subject than to teaching methodology or classroom management. This result is consistent with previous study results such as Brosh (1996), Pettis (1997), and Park and Lee (2006). For instance, this result agrees with the findings by Park and Lee (2006) and Brosh (1996) who found that most of the students perceived knowledge of language to be a crucial factor in characterizing an effective English language teacher.

The other issue that should be touched on is the use of some humor in classroom. Humor is also a moderately rated characteristic of effective teachers. It is worth mentioning that humor received the same rating as teaching method by Moroccan students. This result shows the importance of the use of humour in class while teaching. In fact, many researchers stressed the importance of this characteristic in language teaching (Cotton, 2000; Walker, 2010). For instance, Cotton (2000) stressed the role of

humour as one of the main teacher characteristics in building rapport with students among other school practices that are productive of a supportive classroom climate.

With respect to the impact of the demographic variables of gender and instructional level on the learners' perception of the characteristics of effective teachers, the study reveals significant results. The study results show that male students tend to place statistically significant weight on teaching method as a measure of instructional effectiveness than did female students and not on teacher's personality or the relationship between the teacher and students as Chen and Lin (2009) found in their study. Moreover, the study reveals that the instructional level had no impact on the learners' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. However, the study shows a significant impact of age group on learner perceptions of the qualities of effective teachers, namely instructional competence (teaching method and classroom management). The age group 18 to 22 scored higher on teaching method and classroom management than the age group 23 to 27, and the age group 28 and beyond. This result seems to indicate that the older the students are the less importance they attached to the teacher characteristics of teaching methodology and classroom management. This result could be explained by the fact that older students, due to accumulated learning experiences, learn to become more autonomous language learners.

Another finding of the study is that the interviewed students added more attributes of effective teachers to the ones included in the survey. So, apart from the seven investigated teacher characteristics cited above, the interviewed learners regarded the following as desirable characteristics of effective English language teachers: being punctual, modest, sociable, cheerful, helpful, considerate, respectful, hardworking, tolerant of difference, and having knowledge of learners.

To the extent that perceptions and views drive actions, the findings from this study have implications for teachers.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study serve as a good source for language teachers for getting informed about the teacher characteristics that their students value most. Thus, teachers can compare their own perceptions and views about effective teaching with those of their students. Once language teachers are aware of their students' perceptions, they can adjust their behaviour and teaching activities to meet the needs and expectations of their learners with the aim of getting them involved more in the English language learning process.

One of the main implications of this study is that teachers should adopt a student-centred teaching approach. In other words, teachers should put their learner squarely at the heart of their teaching by caring about and catering for their needs. Teachers need to show enthusiasm for and exhibit interest in the subject matter that they are teaching. Their level of enthusiasm and interest can serve to motivate the students to learn the language. Teachers also need to be fair towards their students and give equal opportunity to all their students. Teachers need to help their students become autonomous learners and hence lifelong learners. Finally, teachers should be masters of the subject matter that they are teaching and seek way to develop their content and pedagogical knowledge.

Conclusions

This study investigated the characteristics of effective English teachers as perceived by Moroccan students through a self-report questionnaire consisting of seven characteristics of effective teachers supplemented by interviews. Overall, the students endorsed the teacher characteristics of student-centred, enthusiasm for teaching and ethicalness higher than subject knowledge, teaching method, classroom management and humour. The study results seem to imply that English teachers should keep their learners' interest at the heart of their teaching practices. Moreover, teachers should be enthusiastic about their jobs and master the subjects they teach in order to promote the students' motivation and learning.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof. Margaret Rausch for proof reading first drafts of this article. I also would thank the students who participated in this study.

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