

# Identifying the Perceptions of Prospective English Language Teachers on Characteristics of Effective Teachers: Who is the Ideal Teacher?

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## Article information

Submission	20/11/2017
Revision received	13/01/2018
Acceptance	05/03/2018

## Keywords

Characteristic, effective teacher, prospective English language teachers, teacher education

**Abstract:** This paper reports on a study of prospective English language teachers' perceptions concerning teaching behaviors and attitudes that contribute to effective foreign language teaching and learning. It was designed to identify teacher effectiveness factors according to the perceptions of prospective English language teachers at a university in İzmir, Turkey in the 2016-2017 academic terms. In this descriptive study, the data were collected by means of a questionnaire to which 165 male and female prospective English language teachers responded. Based on current research on foreign language teaching, various teaching behaviors and attitudes of effective foreign language teachers were identified for inclusion on the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight prospective teachers to find out what they think or how they feel specifically about the items which were marked as the least important by them. The results indicate an emerging professional consensus regarding a number of teacher behaviors and attitudes related to foreign language teaching. Various characteristics associated with ELT were identified, such as giving examples related with the real life situations, being prepared for the lesson and developing themselves continually. The more we know about ELT characteristics, the more likely we are to develop language teacher preparation models that incorporate aspects of relevant language teaching.

## Anahtar sözcükler

Nitelik, etkili öğretmen, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, öğretmen eğitimi

## İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Etkili Öğretmen Nitelikleri ile İlgili Algılarının Belirlenmesi: İdeal Öğretmen Kimdir?

**Öz:** Bu çalışmanın amacı etkili yabancı dil öğretme ve öğrenmeye katkısı olan öğretmen davranış ve tutumlarının, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının algıları açısından incelenmesidir. 2016-2017 öğretim yılında Türkiye'de İzmir'de bir üniversitede yapılan çalışma, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının etkili öğretmen nitelikleri ile ilgili algılarını ölçmek için planlanmıştır. Bu betimsel çalışmada 165 İngilizce öğretmen adayına içerisinde farklı etkili öğretmen niteliklerinin yer aldığı Likert tipi bir anket uygulanmıştır. Daha sonra, ortaya çıkan bulguları desteklemek amacıyla çalışmaya nitel bir bölüm eklenmiş ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle üç İngilizce öğretmen adayına ankette en düşük puan alan etkili öğretmen nitelikleri ile ilgili görüşleri sorulmuştur. Elde edilen sonuçlar yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin sahip olması gereken etkili öğretmen niteliklerinin alandaki diğer çalışmalarla birçok açıdan benzerlikler ve bazı açılardan farklılar gösterdiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır.

## 1. Introduction

In the last 30 years, many researchers investigating teacher development and evaluation have studied hard to set up criteria for evaluating effective teaching. Although there is little agreement regarding which specific qualities constitute effective teaching, researchers have reached a general consensus at least on some criteria that define effective teaching in general, regardless of discipline. The foreign language teaching profession also has made some progress over the past few years to create guidelines that describe a qualified foreign language teacher (Bell, 2005). Hunt (2009, p. 1) suggested a comprehensive definition of teacher effectiveness as:

The collection of characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of teachers at all educational levels that enable students to reach desired outcomes, which may include the attainment of specific learning objectives as well as broader goals such as being able to solve problems, think critically, work collaboratively, and become effective citizens.

To identify the characteristics of a good language teacher, researchers have searched for effective teacher characteristics since the aim of teacher education is to produce qualified and effective teachers (Bernhardt & Jammadou, 1987; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Vélez-Rendón, 2002; Borg, 2006). Therefore, insight into the distinctive characteristics of language teachers is central to the domain of language teacher educators. The central characteristics of successful ESL/EFL teachers have been discussed by a number of professionals (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Cheung, 2006; Korkmaz & Yavuz, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2001) who assert that these identifiable qualities place teachers as the key figures in the language learning process and make their influence fundamental to students' progress. As Cheung (2006) suggests, highly effective teachers give more time to the organization of their teaching and curricular planning, have enthusiasm to teach, are sensitive to the needs of their students and do their best to commit themselves to their students' learning experiences.

Current trends in the way foreign languages are taught provide insight into teaching behaviors and attitudes that foreign language teachers and researchers accept as being effective. During the past two decades, a gradual shift in foreign language teaching from traditional grammar-based approaches to more communicative and interactive approaches has brought new measurements in the ways foreign languages are presented to the learners. Recent trends in foreign language teaching that reflect these changes include communicative language teaching (Lee & VanPatten, 2003), teaching culture (Kramsch, 1993a), content-based instruction (Bragger & Rice, 1998; Genessee, 1998), languages for specific purposes (Douglas, 1999) and computer-assisted language learning (Bush & Terry, 1997; Lafford & Lafford, 1997). In a similar vein, Doyle (1997) examined the impact of education programs on pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Doyle found that pre-service teachers' beliefs shifted from viewing teaching and learning as passive acts of teachers giving information to students to a belief that teaching and learning are active and progressive processes in which teachers should function as facilitators.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) declared 15 characteristics of effective teachers in two main categories: management and instructional techniques and personal characteristics (Demmon-Berger, 1986). These characteristics were seen among the teachers who are likely to be good managers, use systematic instruction techniques, have high expectations of students and themselves, believe in their own efficacy, change teaching strategies, handle discipline through prevention, are caring, are task oriented, are comfortable

interacting with others, have a strong capacity of subject matter, spend time with students outside of class, tailor teaching to student needs, are flexible and imaginative.

In order to understand the characteristics of effective teachers in a better way, great efforts were made to find out and prepare a list of effective characteristics. Witcher et al. (2001) investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers by asking the participants to identify, rank, and define three to six characteristics that ideal teachers possessed. They figured out a sum of 125 characteristics which were classified into the following six categories in order of endorsement rate: being student-centered (79.5%), willingness to teach (40.2%), ethicalness (38.8%), effective classroom and behavior management (33.3%), teaching methodology (32.4%), and knowledge of subject matter (31.5%). Furthermore, effective teachers are creative, give relevant assignments, promote critical and creative thinking and use wait time when seeking student response. In addition, they have strong interpersonal skills and create a classroom climate of respect and rapport that reflects their commitment to students and their learning (Minor et al., 2002). Brosh (1996) outlined the desirable characteristics of the effective language teacher as follows:

- knowledge and command of the target language
- ability to organize, explain and clarify as well as to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students
- fairness to students by showing neither favoritism nor prejudice
- availability to students

Schaeffer, Epting and others (2003) conducted a study on students' perceptions of qualified teachers and effective teaching. The study revealed the following characteristics for teachers: caring, encouraging, approachable, enthusiastic, respectful, knowledgeable, empathetic, passionate, and having a sense of humor. Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) point out the importance of field knowledge of teachers as they convey knowledge in the process. Their study demonstrated that one of the prerequisites of being an effective teacher is to have the mastery of the subject matter knowledge in their specific field. The more teachers have the subject-matter knowledge, the more effectively they teach and the more successful results will be obtained. Arıkan, Taşer and Saraç-Süzer (2008) also investigated this issue. They gathered data from Turkish preparatory school students and the results showed that an effective English teacher should have a good knowledge of English (95.2%), be innovative (79.6%), and be friendly rather than authoritative (73%). Baytur and Razi (2015) suggested that an effective EFL teacher should master good English pronunciation, should provide his/her students with a friendly classroom atmosphere, be enthusiastic and patient and integrate technology and visual materials into his/her classes.

Socio-affective skills, as underlined in the general teacher education and in the studies by Brosh (1996) and Molica and Nuessel (1997), are a distinguishing quality defining effective teacher characteristics. Indeed, the significance of these skills has been emphasized in many domains in foreign language education such as research in foreign language acquisition theories (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996), motivation (Dörnyei, 1998), and learning strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Shulman (1986) claimed that foreign language learning theories and teaching methods are the essential fields of foreign language education. These theories and methods should be examined critically and at the center of foreign language education programs for prospective and in-service teachers. Compared with many studies done on the characteristics of effective teachers in general education, there is a scarcity of studies on the characteristics of EFLT.

This is dreadful because foreign language education has been tackled with more intuitive than scientific approaches so far. Moreover; foreign language education lags far behind general education in effective teacher education.

As stated above, the research literature suggests that there is no single agreed upon definition of effective foreign language teaching. Foreign language teaching is a complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic process that conveys different meanings to different people. Recently, the characteristics of effective teachers have been attracting attention in Turkey; however, articulating a principles-based framework concerning the characteristics of effective teachers has not been achieved yet. In 2006, the Turkish Ministry of National Education officially announced the guidelines for general teacher efficacies that were made up of 6 main efficacies, 31 sub efficacies and 233 performance skills. These guidelines are designed in order to be used as a guide for building the entire curricular applications. It is considered that these guidelines will shape all English language learning and teaching practices in the near future (Arıkan, 2010).

Very little research has been carried out concerning discipline-specific teaching behaviors and attitudes of teachers (Brosh, 1996; Schulz, 2000). Because every teaching and learning situation is context specific and because disciplines differ significantly, some teaching behaviors and attitudes are given more importance in one discipline than in another (Murray & Renaud, 1995). Most of the investigations undertaken in the area of teacher effectiveness have examined the existing characteristics of effective teachers or have asked in-service teachers about their beliefs regarding effective teaching; that is, a small number of researchers have studied the perceptions of pre-service teachers concerning the characteristics of effective teachers. The purpose of this study was to investigate what prospective teachers view as important characteristics of effective teachers with the intent of comparing their responses to descriptions provided in the literature. Also of interest was to investigate some variables (e.g., gender and teaching experience such as giving private courses) that may have influenced their responses. It is hoped that this study will encourage researchers to explore new research avenues.

## 2. Method

In this study, quantitative research methodology is conducted.. It is a descriptive study and is designed as a survey model. It determines prospective English language teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers and investigates factors that may have influenced their responses. According to Büyüköztürk (2014) descriptive statistics enables us to present the data in a more meaningful way, which allows simpler interpretation of the data. Participants were 165 senior prospective (122 female, 43 male) English language teachers determined by convenience sampling method, attending a large western university in Turkey. The participants were a group of individuals who were available for the study. The students who were volunteer for the study completed a questionnaire in English developed by Çakmak (2009) asking them to identify, rank and define between one to five characteristics that they believed effective teachers possess or demonstrate. A 5-point Likert type was used in the scale: (5=very important, 4=quite important, 3=relatively important, 2= a little important, 1=not important). The 65 items on the questionnaire appeared in random order, not according to any category. The reliability study on the 65 items by Çakmak (2009) showed a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alfa= 0.947) above the lowest limit value of 0.70, with this result the scale was decided to be reliable. This questionnaire also extracted the following demographic information: gender, type of high school attended by respondent and teaching experience. Here, the variable 'teaching experience' asks whether they had any teaching experience such

as giving private lessons as a student teacher or not. The type of high school attended by the respondents was almost the same. They attended Anatolian Teacher High School except for a few of them. For this reason, this variable was excluded later on. Respondents were assured in the introduction to the questionnaire that their responses would be kept confidential. In the analysis of the findings, no significant difference was found in relation with the variables of gender and teaching experience. Therefore, in order to enrich data source and further enhance trustworthiness of findings, a qualitative component was added to the current research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 (3 male and 5 female) prospective teachers to get more details about some of the items that crop up or make allowances for unexpected responses (Burns, 2010). The interview was created to elaborate on the data retrieved from the questionnaire. Prospective English language teachers were asked what they thought or how they felt specifically about the items which were marked as the least important by them. The participants, who used pseudonyms, were chosen among the ones who marked certain items as the least important as effective teacher characteristics.

## 2. 1. Analysis of Data

All statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS 20.0 software package program. The results of the analysis are given in the form of tables and then are interpreted by the researcher. In order to understand whether prospective teachers' views about the characteristics of effective teachers show any difference depending on the variable of gender, Independent t Test was used. Then, One-Way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was implemented to understand whether prospective teachers' views about the characteristics of effective teachers show any difference depending on the variable of teaching experience. Furthermore, the items which had the lowest scores were asked to the prospective teachers in the form of semi-structured interviews to elicit specific answers from them. This was necessary to support the statistical findings of the study. Descriptive analysis was conducted for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Quantitative Data

**Table 1**

*The distribution of prospective teachers' views regarding effective teacher characteristics and behaviors*

The characteristics of an effective teacher	Level of Importance					$\bar{x}$	SD
	5 %	4 %	3 %	2 %	1 %		
1. States the aim of the lesson	81.8	13.9	4.2	-	-	4.78	.51
2. Informing students about the requirements of the lesson	41.8	50.9	6.1	1.2		4.33	.65
3. Using appropriate teaching methods based on lesson content	84.8	13.9	.6	.6	-	4.83	.44
4. Using appropriate teaching aids and materials	84.2	15.2	.6	-	-	4.84	.39
5. Using the new educational technologies	20.6	60.6	18.2	.6		4.01	.64
6. Keeps students active in the lesson	75.8	23	1.2	-	-	4.75	.46
7. Gets students to do presentations (projects, etc.) in lessons	11.5	57	28.5	3	-	3.77	.69

8. Using subject matter and pedagogical knowledge effectively	80.6	17	2.4	-	-	4.78	.47
9. Using various teaching resources	77	19.4	3.6	-	-	4.73	.52
10. Suggests a source material list to students to follow in the lessons	14.5	54.5	27.9	3	-	3.81	.71
11. Using practical activities	81.2	16.4	2.4	-	-	4.79	.47
12. Using various evaluation methods	71.5	21.8	6.1	.6	-	4.64	.62
13. Teaches with consideration of students' interests and talents	83	15.2	1.8	-	-	4.81	.44
14. Guiding students towards research	20	63.6	15.8	.6	-	4.03	.62
15. Developing themselves continually	89.1	10.9	-	-	-	4.89	.31
16. Being open to criticism	77.6	16.4	6.1	-	-	4.72	.57
17. Using body language effectively	26.7	58.8	14.5	-	-	4.12	.63
18. Establishes good rapport with students	28.5	61.2	10.3	-	-	4.18	.60
19. Makes jokes	11.5	37.6	45.5	5.5	-	3.55	.77
20. Providing effective class management	52.7	42.4	4.8	-	-	4.48	.59
21. Being dynamic during the lesson	35.8	21.8	41.8	.6	-	3.93	.89
22. Motivating the students	43.6	55.2	1.2	-	-	4.42	.52
23. Using voice effectively	33.3	60.6	6.1	-	-	4.27	.57
24. Likes his/her job	82.4	15.8	1.8	-	-	4.81	.44
25. Establishing a good classroom environment	78.8	20.6	.6	-	-	4.78	.43
26. Using time effectively	37.6	58.2	4.2	-	-	4.33	.56
27. Using group work	10.3	55.8	30.9	3	-	3.73	.68
28. Utilizes various seating arrangements (group, etc.) in the teaching process	9.1	63.6	25.5	1.8	-	3.80	.62
29. Take the advantage of new teaching approaches	67.3	23.6	7.3	1.8	-	4.56	.71
30. Relating the subject with the real life	80	18.2	1.2	.6	-	4.78	.49
31. Giving feedback to the students	53.9	43	3	-	-	4.51	.56
32. Spending time with students out of the lesson	9.1	17	62.4	9.7	1.8	3.22	.81
33. Being careful about his/her appearance	9.7	18.8	64.2	6.7	-	3.51	2.57
34. Not reflecting personal problems to students	77.6	14.5	6.1	1.2	.6	4.67	.70
35. Giving chance to the student to express themselves effectively	85.5	12.7	1.8	-	-	4.84	.42
36. Is authoritative	10.9	18.2	52.1	15.8	2.4	3.51	4.14
37. Making students take notes	6.1	52.7	27.3	12.7	1.2	3.50	.84
38. Handing out teaching materials	18.8	62.4	16.4	1.8	.6	3.97	.69
39. Presenting lesson effectively	75.2	20.6	4.2	-	-	4.71	.54
40. Giving examples related with the real-life situations	80.6	17	1.8	-	-	5.10	3.93
41. Being clear and understandable	89.1	10.9	-	-	-	4.89	.31
42. Making students be prepared for the class	67.3	24.8	7.9	-	-	4.59	.63
43. Renewing teaching materials regularly	70.9	26.7	1.8	.6	-	4.68	.54
44. Being model for the students	79.4	18.2	2.4	-	-	4.77	.48
45. Being prepared for the lesson	90.3	9.1	.6	-	-	4.90	.32
46. Using a wide range of examples	34.5	61.2	4.2	-	-	4.30	.55
47. Using suitable terminology for the lesson	17.6	73.9	8.5	-	-	4.09	.50
48. Speaking effectively	23.6	73.3	3	-	-	4.21	.47
49. Lecturing with enthusiasm	33.9	63	3	-	-	4.31	.53
50. Arousing students' interest towards the class	83.6	15.8	.6	-	-	4.83	.39
51. Being open towards students' critics	19.4	66.7	12.7	1.2	-	4.04	.61
52. Providing interaction in the classroom	30.9	65.5	3.6	-	-	4.27	.52
53. Being guide	78.8	20	1.2	-	-	4.78	.45
54. Allocating time for student problems	22.4	66.1	11.5	-	-	4.11	.57
55. Using appropriate terminology for the students' level	35.2	57	7.9	-	-	4.27	.60
56. Using appropriate reinforcements	74.5	24.8	.6	-	-	4.74	.45
57. Being understandable and patient	26.1	24.2	47.3	2.4	-	3.74	.88

							Külekçi
58. Being competent in his/her subject area	34.5	55.8	7.3	2.4	-	4.22	.68
59. Being consistent	28.5	24.2	43	3.6		3.76	.93
60. Making students participate	38.2	53.3	6.7	1.8		4.28	.67
61. Using board as a teaching aid effectively	15.2	26.1	56.4	2.4		3.54	.78
62. Using class time efficiently	33.9	59.4	6.7	-		4.27	.58
63. Making the class enjoyable for the students	9.7	35.8	51.5	3		3.52	.71
64. Giving concrete examples related with the subject	18.8	78.2	3	-		4.16	.44
65. Being objective	21.8	69.1	9.1	-		4.13	.54

As seen in Table 1, the arithmetic means showed in the study that “giving examples related with the real-life situations” characteristic in item 40 had the highest mean ( $M= 5.10$ ,  $SD= 3.93$ ) and “spending time with students out of the lesson” characteristic in item 32 had the lowest mean ( $M= 3.22$ ,  $SD=,81$ ).

**Table 2**

*Independent samples t-test results of gender variable*

Gender	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Female	122	281,90	12,90	163	1,22	0,3
Male	43	279,16	12,12			

As a result of the Independent T-Test according to gender variable, it was found that there was no significant difference between the two groups ( $t (-) = 1,22$ ,  $p=0,3$ ). This result implicates gender as being not important in forming the perceptions of prospective teachers. The arithmetic means show that the female prospective English teachers' mean ( $\bar{x} = 281,90$ ) is a bit higher than male prospective English teachers' mean ( $\bar{x} = 279,16$ ).

**Table 3**

*One way Anova results of teaching experience variable*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	523,867	1	523,867	3,28	0,072
Within Groups	26017,309	163	159,615		
Total	26541,176	164			

As a result of the One Way Anova to understand whether prospective teachers' views about the characteristics of effective teachers show any difference depending on the variable of teaching experience, it was found that there was no significant difference between groups ( $F (3,28)$ ;  $p=0,072$ ) although some of the junior students have some teaching experience since they work in language schools or give private lessons. These findings indicate that participants of the present sample were relatively homogeneous with respect to their perceptions.

**Table 4**

*Effective teacher characteristics that are marked as the most important by prospective English language teachers*

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1. Giving examples related with the real-life situations (Item 40)
2. Being prepared for the lesson (Item 45)
3. Being clear and understandable (Item 41)
4. Developing themselves continually (Item 15)
5. Using appropriate teaching aids and materials (Item 4)

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The results in Table 4 show consistent results with those presented in Table 1. Prospective teachers listed the following as the most important five characteristics of an effective teacher: ‘giving examples related with the real life situations’, ‘being prepared for the lesson’, ‘being clear and understandable’, ‘developing themselves continually’ and ‘using appropriate teaching aids and materials’. It can be inferred from this result that the participants will have an inclination to give their students examples related with real life situations when they become teachers, which is a fundamental characteristic of language learning and teaching. Other items such as being prepared for the lesson, being clear and understandable, developing themselves continually and using appropriate teaching aids and materials in language teaching had higher means in comparison with the other items in the questionnaire which show that prospective English language teachers give importance to pedagogical knowledge (items 1-2-3), disciplinary knowledge (item 4) and technological pedagogical knowledge (item 5) in language teaching and thus the prospective teachers expect effective language teachers to internalize these characteristics in their teaching careers.

**Table 5**

*Effective teacher characteristics that are marked as the least important by prospective English language teachers*

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1. Spending time with students out of the lesson (Item 32)
2. Being careful about his/her appearance (Item 33)
3. Is authoritative (Item 36)
4. Making the class enjoyable for the students (Item 63)
5. Using board as a teaching aid effectively (Item 61)

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As seen from the table above, the least important five characteristics of an effective teacher are: ‘spending time with students out of the lesson’, ‘being careful about his/her appearance’, ‘being authoritative’, ‘making the class enjoyable for the students’ and ‘using board as a teaching aid effectively’. These characteristics are irrelevant in the definition of the ideal teacher by the prospective English language teachers. Possessing certain socio-affective skills and some personality traits seem to be not so important for the prospective teachers.



As for the findings of Table 4 and Table 5, it is possible to say that there is a clear cut between the effective teacher characteristics that are marked as the most important and the ones that are marked as the least important by prospective English teachers. In general, the favorable characteristics of ideal teachers as defined by prospective teachers focus mostly on pedagogical knowledge, disciplinary knowledge and technological pedagogical knowledge whereas certain socio-affective skills and some personality traits are given less weight.

### 3.2. Qualitative Data

Effective teacher characteristics that are marked as the most important by prospective English teachers are the expected results since in most of the studies mentioned in the literature view part, the findings are almost the same. For this reason, the least important effective teacher characteristics, that is, the items which had the lowest scores were asked to the prospective teachers to elicit specific answers from them. The interviews were conducted in English and it took approximately 10 minutes for each prospective teacher to answer the questions. Some specific questions have been developed but allowed for some flexibility according to how the interviewee responded. The advantage of the semi-structured interviews was that deeper and richer information was obtained from the participants (Burns, 2010). All interviews were transcribed verbatim and corresponding written texts were created. During the semi-structured interviews, the following three questions were directed to the participants:

1. Why do you think it is not necessary for effective teachers to spend time with their students out of the lesson? Does it have something to do with the teacher's authority?
2. As a socio-affective skill do you believe that making the class enjoyable is not important as an effective characteristic?
3. Why do you think that being careful about his/her appearance is listed as one of the least important item?

The semi-structured interview intended to cross-check the written information given by the participants as well as to gain verbal insight into prospective English language teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers. Prospective English language teachers (3 male and 5 female) who were studying in the last year of their four-year education (senior students) participated in the qualitative stage of the study. Pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' real names to keep their anonymity.

**Question 1:** *Why do you think it is not necessary for effective teachers to spend time with their students out of the lesson? Does it have something to do with the teacher's authority?*

**Emir:** "In my opinion an effective teacher is responsible for his/her learners within the boundaries of the classroom. Having communication with them as they are doing the tasks assigned to them and paying attention to their needs are of course important. But being accessible to students outside of class is something optional."

**Serap:** "It is not necessary for effective teachers to spend time with their students out of the lesson. By the way, it has nothing to do with the teacher's authority. Personally, I don't like authoritative teachers. An effective teacher can socialize with the students in the class as well. Being friendly and having exchanges with them."

**Özge:** "I believe that the dynamics of the classroom is important. I mean what's happening inside the class. Establishing rapport with the students should be achieved as the course is going on... as they are doing something in the class collaboratively working with the teacher. Of course, the authority of the teacher is not ruined by spending time with them out of the class, but it is not a must for me."

**Question 2: As a socio-affective skill do you believe that making the class enjoyable is not important as an effective characteristic?**

**Merve:** “Well, when the teacher uses effective teaching methods and materials according to their level or age in the class, the students will not need extra and enjoyable things to motivate themselves. Your choices in the class, giving real life examples related to the learners’ life, using technological aids rather than just the board are already enjoyable. No extra effort to enjoy them.”

**Serap:** “If the teacher is not clear and understandable in his/her teaching and comes to the class without any preparation, the students feel it and lose interest in the lesson. I mean, pedagogical knowledge of the teacher has the priority over the socio-affective skills. I don’t deny its vitality, but it is not the priority.”

**Question 3: Why do you think that being careful about his/her appearance is listed as one of the least important item?**

**Serap:** “To tell the truth, I do not pay much attention to my clothes, hair or make up. An effective teacher should be a good model for the student with his/her disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge. Things related to appearance may distract the learners.”

**Emir:** “An effective teacher should be evaluated by his/her developing knowledge on teaching profession, allocating more time to preparation, having good knowledge of methodology and also technology. A teacher with old-fashioned clothes can teach well.”

**Elif:** “We should not judge a teacher’s effectiveness by appearance. There are more serious things to consider such as pedagogical and content knowledge. Having sense of humor and being a good model for the students. So, who cares for physical appearance.”

In fact, all eight prospective English teachers’ explanations and exemplifications from the semi-structured interviews revealed that the least important effective teacher characteristics are related to socio-affective skills and personality traits of the teachers. In addition, their responses provided additional insight to understand the findings of the quantitative data and to focus on the other high scored items in the questionnaire as the characteristics of effective teachers.

#### **4. Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to determine prospective teachers’ perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers as well as to investigate factors that may have influenced their responses. The desirable characteristics of the effective language teachers, as they emerge from this study are:

1. Giving examples related with the real-life situations
2. Being prepared for the lesson
3. Being clear and understandable
4. Developing themselves continually
5. Using appropriate teaching aids and materials

The above characteristics could well provide a basis for re-thinking various aspects of pre-service teacher education. These characteristics demonstrate the importance of disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and technological pedagogical knowledge. Effective teachers should link the learning content to real life and teach beyond the textbook. Being

prepared for the lesson and being clear and understandable are the other most important pedagogical factors that prospective teachers attach importance. Effective teachers are good at clarifying the goals of each lesson and preparing classroom activities before they come to the class. Also, developing themselves continually, which means that successful ESL/EFL teachers should familiarize themselves with new trends, has a high score. Pettis (1997) offered that an effective teacher must be dedicated to his/her professional development. As noted by Al-Seghayer (2017) by remaining up-to-date in their field, teachers can carry out the most recent teaching methods and thus become even more successful, productive and beneficial to their students. Moreover, effective teachers choose and implement materials and equipment required beforehand. This highlights the role of technological pedagogical knowledge. Koçoğlu (2009) and Chai, Chin, Koh, and Tan (2013) found that qualified ESL/EFL teachers are informed about various teaching aids and materials and are able to incorporate technological applications into their classroom setting. All these findings are in parallel with the findings of the present study.

Prospective teachers attach great importance to using appropriate teaching methods based on lesson content and being prepared for the lesson which are again similar with Brosh's (1996) and Shishavan and Sadeghi's (2009) findings. This finding is also similar to Meksophawannagul's study (2015) which states that effective teachers should prepare well and be organized and should provide all core materials and supplementary materials. The teacher's ability to use relevant real world examples in the lessons, clearly understanding the course content and organizing and preparing materials are the most important characteristics perceived by the prospective teachers in this study. Similarly, in Richards' (2002) view, implementing educational materials and being aware of planning their lesson and classroom exemplify an effective teacher's professional commitments.

Another finding of this study revealed that using subject matter and pedagogical knowledge effectively are very important in stimulating and motivating students to continue studying English, and this finding is in accordance with Brosh's (1996) findings which stated that without the teacher's exact knowledge and clear goals, it is very demanding for the students to understand what is being presented in the classroom.

In fact, many researchers note that establishing a good relationship with students is important for effective teaching atmosphere and is a prerequisite for teaching and learning (Al-Seghayer, 2017; Ghasemi and Hashemi, 2011). However; the current study revealed that pre-service English language teachers think that teachers do not have to spend time with their students out of the class or they do not have to make the class enjoyable for the students. It seems that prospective teachers do not regard these characteristics as important to their teaching since they do not appear to contribute directly to the development of their career as foreign language teachers.

In another study conducted by Pozo-Munoz et al. (2000) adjectives related to the teacher's physical appearance are unrelated to the definition of the 'ideal teacher'. A similar finding was found in this study since 'being careful about his/her appearance' was the item that received the second lowest endorsement from the pre-service English teachers. Another interesting qualitative finding is that the characteristic 'being authoritative' was perceived as the third least important item for the effective language teacher. Little emphasis was placed on the teacher's authority in the classroom. This result is consistent with Arkan, Taşer and Saraç-Süzer's (2008) finding which reveals that prospective English language teachers place little emphasis on this personal trait of teachers. In other words, the extra attributes of effective teachers such as spending time with students out of the lesson, being careful about

their physical appearance, being authoritative and making the lesson enjoyable for the students are less important for the participants. Prospective teachers do not attach great importance to such attributes. The semi-structured interviews with these prospective teachers revealed that one teacher's effectiveness cannot be evaluated by socio-affective skills or personality traits.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The results of this study, identifying the perceptions of prospective English Language teachers on characteristics of effective teachers, are quite appealing to various people: foreign language teachers, prospective teachers who are preparing to teach in the future and those who train prospective teachers. The results of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews shed light on foreign language teaching profession because they provide a glimpse of increasing consensus on those behaviors and beliefs which are considered to be effective in foreign language teaching. There is an agreement in the relevant literature that teachers should develop methods and find styles that match with their personality and their teaching context. Further, the results strengthen the idea that teaching is "a job that can be learned; one need not be 'born' a teacher in order to teach effectively" (Reynolds 1995, 200). By being made aware of these behaviors before starting their teaching career, student teachers and novice teachers who are inexperienced in their teaching profession will have the chance to reflect critically on their own beliefs and teaching behaviors.

There are some limitations in the present study. First of all, although this study has enhanced, to some extent, our understanding of effective teacher characteristics as seen by prospective English language teachers, it is difficult to generalize the results beyond the scope of the study since the participants taking part in the study are limited in number. Secondly, the study was limited by the homogeneity of the sample. All of the participants were from the department of English language teaching at the same university and had similar views; therefore, it is difficult to make generalizations. The prospective teachers in this study were all from a large state university in western Turkey. In future research, it would be advantageous to conduct a research with prospective teachers from other universities in different regions of Turkey. A further study could also explore the same issue countrywide, with the participation of both state and private university students. This would broaden the scope and external validity of the study. Systematic investigation on effective language teaching and effective teacher characteristics should continue with the hope that we can better acknowledge the basic principles underlying it, and thus reform the educational processes.

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