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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHERS' VS. STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON EFFECTIVE ENGLISH TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LEARNING. THE CASE OF FOUR SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS IN GURAGHE ZONE

*Seifu Bogale and Fikremariam Yirgu

College of Social Science and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature,
Wolkite University, Wolkite-Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a research finding which aimed to investigate the perceptions held by High School Students and English language teachers on the characteristics of an Effective English teacher and the effects of these perceptions in learning as well as to compare the perceptions held by the two groups in purposely selected four High Schools found in the Guraghe Zone. In this study, 134 students drawn from two grade levels, namely 9 and 11, and 27 English teachers who teach in those schools were involved as sources of data. The data were collected from the subjects through a five point Likert Scale questionnaire consisting of three categories of teacher effectiveness: English Proficiency (8 items), Pedagogical Knowledge (18 items) and Socio-Affective Skills (18 items). Overall, the students in this study perceived significantly different characteristics from the teachers in all the three categories with the students' high endorsement to Pedagogical Knowledge and the teachers' high ranking to English Proficiency. Both the students and the teachers in this study believed that the effective English language teacher should be able to read, write and speak English well, explain things well, provide interesting activities, arouse students' motivation to learn English well, help students develop self-confidence in order to learn English well, encourage students to try to do their best, set high expectations for students, have positive attitude towards his/her career and the learners and assess what the learners have learned reasonably.

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INTRODUCTION

Many studies have investigated the characteristics of effective /good teachers which influence students' learning and achievement (Demon-Berger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et. al., 1993; Witcher et. al., 2001; Liando, 2010; Nuru, 2008 and Darge, 2000). These studies asked students to identify effective/ good teacher characteristics by means of self-reported questionnaires or interviews. Lang et.al (1993), for example, developed a list of 32 characteristics of effective teachers through interviews with college teachers and students, and asked 167 participants to identify and rank three characteristics considered important to teaching. They found that the teachers rated 16 characteristics significantly different from the students and that the overall difference was significant.

The mean ratings for three characteristics including knowledge of world events and knowing students and teaching them in ways which they learn best were higher for student respondents, whereas the remaining 13 characteristics including knowing the subject well and encouraging students to learn independently received higher ratings from teacher respondents. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reported 15 characteristics of effective teachers in two categories: management and instructional techniques and personal characteristics (Demon-Berger, 1986). These characteristics were found among the teachers who tended to be good managers, use systematic instruction techniques, have high expectations of students and themselves, believe in their own efficacy, vary teaching strategies, handle discipline through prevention, are caring, are demographic in their approach, are task oriented, are concerned with perceptual meanings rather than with facts and events, are comfortable interacting with others, have a strong grasp of subject matter, are accessible to students outside of class, tailor teaching to student needs, are flexible and imaginative. In a similar vein, Lowman (1995) found that exemplary teachers excelled in one of the two dimensions: the ability to generate intellectual

*Corresponding author: Seifu Bogale,

College of Social Science and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature, Wolkite University, Wolkite-Ethiopia.

excitement and interpersonal rapport in students. To confirm this study, Lowman (1996) further investigated 500 teaching awards nomination letters from the students at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and found 39 descriptors of effective teacher characteristics. Even though all but six of the 39 descriptors fit into the two dimensional model of effective teachers, Lowman argued that the data better fit when two more dimensions of motivation and commitment were added to the two dimensional model. The four dimensions found in order of weights were *intellectual excitement* (16 items), *interpersonal concern* (10 items), *effective motivation* (7 items), *commitment to teaching* (2 items,) and *others* (4 items). In order to better understand the characteristics of effective teachers, efforts were made to find constructs in a long list of effective characteristics. Witcher *et al.* (2001) examined pre-service teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers by asking the participants to identify, rank, and define three to six characteristics that excellent teachers possessed. They found a total of 125 characteristics which were classified into the following six categories in order of endorsement rate: student-centeredness(79.5%), enthusiasm for teaching(40.2%), ethicalness(38.8%), classroom and behavior management (33.3%), teaching methodology(32.4%), and knowledge of subject(31.5%). Among the demographic variables, gender made the strongest contribution to the participants' responses with females endorsing learner-centeredness and males endorsing classroom and behavior management.

In our country, Nuru Mohammed (2008) conducted a study to explore English teachers' conceptions of the good teacher. Data for the study were obtained from 57 teachers of English drawn from seven high schools in Addis Ababa by means of questionnaires. The study revealed that the teachers were more likely to describe the attributes of the good teacher in behavioral terms. Good teachers were perceived as *task oriented, well organized, well prepared, and punctual for classes*. Definition of the good teacher that emphasized intellectual capacity and professional competence represented the second most frequent kind of description of the effective teacher. Effective teachers were also perceived to be those who know a great deal of the subjects they teach and who constantly strive to learn more about their subject. Similarly, a study conducted by Darge Wole (2000, cited in Nuru, 2008)) has provided valuable information about the perceptions of high school students in Ethiopia. In the study, Darge surveyed the perceptions of students in terms of what they considered desirable characteristics of English and Math teachers. In the study, 43 students drawn from three grade levels, viz., 9, 10 and 11 served as sources of data. Data on students' views were elicited through interview. One major finding was that students held a clear view of what constitutes a good and a bad teacher with the list of characteristics disliked by students being longer than that they liked. Regarding teacher characteristics the students liked, the study revealed the following: *activity-orientedness, responsiveness, expressiveness and supportiveness*. The students were also able to associate bad teachers with one or more of the following characteristics: *derisiveness, incompetence, abuse of class time, poor classroom management, restrictiveness, and bias against female students, wrong pace, punitiveness and non-responsiveness*. In sum, the studies on effective teacher characteristics summarized above revealed that some of the characteristics of teachers are universal and others are group dependent.

However, the studies which focused on this issue are either on perspectives of teachers or learners and there is almost no any particular study has been conducted locally about the characteristics of effective English language teachers from the perspectives of both teachers and students. So far the studies locally undertaken in the area, (e.g. Nuru, 2008 and Darge, 2000), are insufficient and limited in their nature as they were conducted at one point in time and did not involve participants from all parts of the country, and as such could not claim any measure of generalizability. In other words, these studies were conducted at few secondary schools found in Addis Ababa and as a result, they could not represent the views of teachers and/or students of other high schools like that of the Guraghe Zone Secondary Schools, in which the study is going to be undertaken. Keeping all these in view, the purpose of this study was to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of an effective English teacher characteristics and their effects on learning the language in a specific secondary school settings by replicating what previous researches have revealed about the issue and to suggest possible ways on how learning and teaching English as a foreign language can be better in a high school setting.

Statement of the Problem: Teachers in general and English language teachers in particular play a fundamental role in their students' learning and academic achievement. As previous researches have revealed, effective and efficient learning on the part of the students highly depends on teachers and the actions they take in their classes (Markley, 2004). The way teachers behave and the methodologies they exploit in their teaching, to a large extent, depend on their perceptions of effective teaching and their beliefs about teacher efficacy (Ghaith & Shaaban, 1999). It also affects the way they understand and organize instruction (Chacon, 2005). Therefore, the teachers' perceptions of an effective teacher can highly influence their teaching and as a result their students' learning (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Students also bring their own beliefs about learning and their perceptions about effective teachers into classroom and their beliefs seem to have obvious relevance to their expectations of the course (Hurwitz, 1988).

The classroom climate affected by the teacher has a major impact on students' motivation and attitude towards learning, that is to say, for teachers, having been equipped with pedagogical and professional characteristics would not be enough to establish a positive, learnable, and teachable classroom climate. Specifically, the factors that best facilitate student learning are considered to be the ones that are described as being purposeful, task-oriented, relaxed, warm, supportive, and has a sense of order and humor in an integrated sense (Kumaravadivelu, 1992). He also speaks positively of other factors facilitating students' learning in a positive manner such as mutual respect and rapport, etc. all of which stem from conveying to students that you understand, share, and value their feelings as individuals on a whole range of matters and experiences, academic, social and personal. Such a climate fosters learning and motivation of students and their attitudes toward the learning process. In spite of what previous studies have revealed, there is still much we need to know about this issue in some details. Reflecting back to our own experiences as students and/ or teachers, we remember that many of the high school students' performance in the English classroom is very poor or low compared to other school subjects. Besides, many students have low interest for the language and do not

like learning it, and even regard it as a difficult subject. This may possibly be attributed to their perceptions of teacher factors which can be translated in terms of English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills which in turn affect their attitudes, interests and motivations towards the language. But, we are not sure if situations have changed. Neither is it clear whether the relevant perceptions of teachers and students are significantly different or are highly similar. Moreover, for Guraghe Zone high school English language teachers and students, perceptions of this matter have never been assessed before. With these reasons, the researchers would like to sort out what an "effective English teacher" truly is in the respondents' opinions in order to bring about improvements in teaching and learning English as a foreign language and enhance students' achievement in English language.

To this end, the following research questions are formulated to guide this study:

- What are effective English language teachers like in the eyes of Guraghe Zone secondary schools' students?
- How do teachers perceive effective English language teacher characteristics?
- How do teachers' and students' perceptions of effective English teacher characteristics differ from each others?
- What effects do teachers' and students' perceptions of effective English teacher characteristics have on students' learning the language?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective: The main objective of this study was to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions on effective English language teacher characteristics and their effects on students' learning in the Guraghe Zone Secondary Schools.

Specific Objectives

More specifically, the study was intended:

- To examine the teachers' characteristics which the high school English language teachers and students consider important in order to define the effective/ best English language teacher from whom they can learn best; and
- To compare the perceptions of teachers and students about effective English teacher characteristics and the effects of these perceptions on students' learning English.
- To suggest some possible ways, based on the findings of the study, on how teaching and learning English as a foreign language can be better in secondary schools found in the Guraghe Zone.
- To raise teachers' and students' awareness on the desirable characteristics of an effective English language teacher should possess and the effects of their perceptions on teaching and learning English.

Significance of the Study: If this study becomes successful, the findings will have an important significance for teachers, students and researchers:

- Teachers can check the appropriateness of their beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning based on current research and their colleagues' beliefs. In addition,

they can understand what their students expect from them and develop their pedagogical techniques through reflection on teaching, which will in turn enhance the complex process of teaching and learning. It will also help the teachers to improve the quality of their teaching in order to meet their students' various needs.

- Students can understand their teachers' beliefs and change their erroneous (wrong) beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning. In addition, it provides the learners with an opportunity to have their say and express their expectations of an effective teacher from whom they learn best.
- For researchers, the current study will provide some valuable information by contributing its share to the literature that can pave the way for further researches and findings.

Literature Review: In this section of the paper, the related literatures that have connection to the study will be discussed in some details in order to support the study.

Definition of Effective Teachers: An effective teacher has been defined as "the one who conducts effective teaching which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures." (Diamond; 1998 cited in National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2008). Neil (1991) states that defining an effective teacher involves two important components in teaching and learning process called "teacher knowledge of the subject to be taught" and "skill in how to teach that subject." It is intuitively obvious that effective teachers must possess a professional knowledge base and exhibit knowledge of the subject matter. Successful teachers have a lot of instructional strategies and techniques that reflect their knowledge of the subject. He also indicates that because learning is a voluntary activity, the teacher's job to "sell" ideas to the students is very hard if he/she cannot "sell" those ideas in an interesting way. Therefore, when the teacher shows enthusiasm about his/ her topic, he/she persuades the students that the topic is important. Additionally, Kyriakides, Campbell, and Christofidou (2002) point out that effective teachers need to possess adequate quantity of instruction, organize and manage the classroom environment, effectively use instructional time, structure instructional materials, give students practice and application opportunities, provide good classroom climate, and have enough subject knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, teaching beliefs, and teachers' self-efficacy.

From the above definitions, it is understood that an effective teacher displays a wide range of skills and abilities that lead to creating a learning environment where all students feel comfortable and are sure that they can succeed both academically and personally. An effective language teacher is not characterized merely by the factors of knowledge or teaching skills, but also the communication skills and the relationship the teacher has with students.

Characteristics of Successful Teachers: Successful teachers are thought to have high expectations for their students. They also interact with their students in an enthusiastic and optimistic way. They are believed to be realistic about the potential differences between high and low achievers and recognize that teacher who maintain a rigid or stereotyped perception of students are likely to a damaging effect on the performance and self-worth of their students (Ornstein, 1995).

Stronge (2002) also identified the qualities of effective or successful teachers as follows: Effective teachers care for the student first as a person, and second as a student. They continually demonstrate respect and understanding, along with fairness regarding race, cultural background, and gender. Students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness emphasize racial impartiality with equitable treatment of all students. Thus, effective teachers offer all students opportunity to participate and to succeed. Effective teachers use a wide variety of strategies to interact with students. However, the basis for these interactions goes beyond the four walls of the classrooms. Teachers who are aware of their own style of interacting with their students are able to provide a more favorable learning environment for all students. Through social interactions with students, teachers are able to individually, realistically, and successfully challenge each student to succeed. The teacher's enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and for the subject matter has been shown to be an important part of effective teaching, both in supporting positive relationship with students and in encouraging student achievement.

Research indicates that effective teachers have residual positive effects on their students' willingness to work to their potential and beyond. Consequently, less effective teachers may actually extinguish students' interest in the subject. Good teachers realize and deal with the fact that some students prefer to sit quietly on the side; however, they do not stop involving them. Effective teachers truly believe that all students can learn—it is not a slogan. These teachers also believe that they must know their students, their subject, and themselves, while continuing to account for the fact that students learn differently. Through differentiation of interaction, effective teachers reach their students and together enjoy their success. By finding a way to motivate a student to learn, a teacher contributes to a student's evolving attitude toward a particular subject or activity. In other words, the teacher can bring out the best in that student. An effective teacher recognizes that students vary in their motivation levels. An effective teacher knows how to support intrinsically motivated students and seeks ways to provide extrinsic motivation to students who need it. Motivating students consists of making students receptive to and excited about learning, as well as making them aware of the importance of learning itself. By establishing positive attitudes and perceptions about learning, the effective teacher makes the learner feel comfortable in the classroom. As a particular example of establishing positive attitudes, teachers who provide mastery-learning techniques for their students improve the attitudes of their students. They also increase academic self-concept, interest in the subject area, and the desire to learn more about the subject. In line with this fact, Laine (1978), in his study, introduced teacher competence and orientation as new variables when investigating the motivation of secondary and basic school students in Finnish toward English. One of his findings shows that the teacher was among other variables which proved a powerful factor in increasing student motivation. This study shows that the role of teachers in second/ foreign language classroom is important in relation to student motivation. In addition, teachers of second or foreign language could be a good example for students to improve their speaking ability in the target language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) also ascertained that “teachers’ personalities can certainly affect the attitudes and motivation of students”(p.9). Student motivation and teachers' behaviors were indeed related to each other.

Effective teachers invest in their own education. They model to their students that education and learning are valuable by taking classes and participating in professional development, conferences, and in service training. Additionally, they also discuss their participation in these activities with students in a positive manner. Effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to learn and grow. They serve as powerful examples of lifelong learners as they find ways to develop professionally. In sum, effective teachers exude positive attitudes about life and teaching. They do not make excuses for student outcomes; they hold students responsible while also accepting responsibility themselves. Another element of professionalism often cited as part of effective teaching is a teacher's reflective practice, careful review of and thoughtfulness about one's own teaching process. The role of reflection has been described repeatedly in studies of teacher effectiveness. Effective teachers continuously practice self-evaluation and self-critique as learning tools. Reflective teachers portray themselves as students of learning. They are curious about the art and science of teaching and about themselves as effective teachers. They constantly improve lessons, think about how to reach particular children, and seek and try out new approaches in the classroom to better meet the needs of their students.

Qualities of Effective Teachers: Lowman (1997) describes two main dimensions of effective college teaching that come up in his study. According to his model, teaching effectiveness is a product of two distinct dimensions. The first is the instructor's ability to stimulate intellectual excitement in the classroom. Fundamental to this ability is the clarity of lectures and their emotional impact on students, as well as the instructor's knowledge, organization and flexibility. The teacher has to provide students with intellectual excitement (enthusiasm, knowledge, inspiration, humor, interesting viewpoint, clarity, organization). Perhaps equally significant in terms of teacher effectiveness is the use of psychology in the classroom. It is related to interpersonal concern/ effective motivation such as concern, caring, availability, friendliness, accessibility, helpfulness, encouragement, and challenge. An effective teacher is the one who promotes positive student emotions by fostering critical thinking and creativity, showing sensitivity to students' feelings about the course material, and promoting an atmosphere of respect.

In addition to what has been discussed above, Clark (1995) presents many qualities of effective teachers he got from his research using student evaluations, trained observers in classrooms, verbal reports by teachers and students, and the training of teachers in specific teaching skills. First, effective teachers should communicate their own knowledge and appreciation of the subject matter to make students feel that they have learned something valuable, and that the course has contributed to their knowledge, awareness, and intellectual curiosity. Students should also be intellectually challenged and stimulated to think for themselves, and have opportunities to develop competencies characteristic of the discipline. Second, effective teachers should carefully plan and organize the lesson in a coherent manner. The next quality related to cognitive aspects of effective teaching involves techniques that are used to explain concepts and principles clearly, so that students understand the individual thoughts and ideas being presented. Another quality that contributes substantially to the achievement of cognitive learning concerns voice and other characteristics associated with the quality of presentation by a

teacher (e.g. speaking in a clear way, being well-paced, having an expressive manner, and using appropriate teaching aids effectively). Additionally, effective teachers behave in ways that promote agreeable and friendly interpersonal relations between themselves and students, and that convey concern and respect for individual students. To sum up, the factors that contribute to effective teaching in general include; (1) *teaching preparation and procedures*; (2) *classroom management*; (3) *knowledge of subject or academic preparation*, (4) *communication*, and (5) *personal characteristics*.

Characteristics of Effective Language Teachers: Although there seem to be universal general principles of effective teaching used to specify an effective teacher, the foreign and second language teaching presents learning objectives, tasks, and environments that are qualitatively distinct from those of other subjects. So, when defining the term "characteristics of effective language teacher," it is necessary to take this context into consideration. To illustrate this, there is a comparative study conducted by Borg (2006) examining ways in which language teachers are seen to be different to teachers of other subjects. Borg investigates actual classroom practices of language teaching and other subjects and comes up with some factors. The factors that distinguish the experience of foreign language teachers from that of teachers of other subjects include the following: 1) *The nature of the subject matter itself*. 2) *The interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction*. 3) *The challenge for teachers of increasing their knowledge of the subject*. Language teachers teach communication, not facts. 4) *The need for outside support for learning the subject* (Borg, 2006, pp.11-13).

Additionally, Brosh (1996, cited in Borg, 2006) identifies the desirable characteristics of the effective language teachers as perceived by foreign language teachers and students in Israel. The followings are characteristics emerged overall as those felt the most desirable in the study: 1) *knowledge and command of the target language* 2) *ability to recognize, explain, and clarify, as well as to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students* 3) *fairness to students by showing neither favoritism nor prejudice* 4) *availability to students*.

The above stated information is similar to the findings that Thompson (2008) presents in her research paper. She proposes two components of personal characteristics and teaching skills, explaining that good teachers build rapport by caring about their learners, demonstrating patience and respecting the learners. They were well- planned, able to select appropriate frameworks for their lessons and design interesting tasks. The belief that the teacher should be friendly with the students in order to get their commitment to participate in the learning procedure exists in all levels of school. To find the characteristics of the good language teacher, Molina and Nuessel (1997) studied language learner behaviors with the hope that knowledge of the good language learner traits can help the good language teacher create a classroom environment that will facilitate second language learning. They outlined the traits of good language teachers as follows: *professional training* such as professional meetings and instructional techniques; *language proficiency* such as the four language skills and cultural comprehension; *instructional materials* such as visual and audio materials; *evaluation* such as assessment of students and professional testing; and *classroom environment* such as reduction of second language anxiety and maintenance of classroom discipline.

In the studies of foreign language teacher education, researchers have discussed effective teacher characteristics because the goal of teacher education is to produce quality teachers (Bernhardt and Hammadou, 1987; Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Velez- Rendon, 2002). The discussion has been centered on a teacher's knowledge base in terms of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Velez-Rendon (2002, cited in Park and Lee, 2006) defined subject matter knowledge as what teachers know about what they teach and pedagogical knowledge as what teachers know about teaching their subjects. Put another way, subject matter knowledge in foreign language education refers to the target language proficiency in many cases, whereas pedagogical knowledge alludes to second/ foreign language acquisition theories, teaching methods, and testing.

Indeed, foreign language proficiency has been considered a crucial variable important to foreign language teaching (Bachmann, 1984; Lafayette, 1993; Schulz, 2000). Bachmann (1984) argued that teachers' command of foreign language made it possible to use the target language in class, personalize lessons according to students' backgrounds, and facilitate effective lesson planning. More specifically, Lafayette (1993) speculated that the recommended level of teachers' foreign language proficiency was advanced level as determined by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines. Deploring foreign language teacher education based on more opinions than research, Schulz (2000, cited in Park and Lee, 2006), indicated that the adequate linguistic proficiency required for effective foreign language teaching should be determined imminently. Foreign language proficiency cannot be transmitted to learners when teachers are not equipped with germane pedagogical knowledge (Schulman, 1986; Velez-Redon, 2002). Schulman (1986) argued that pedagogical knowledge includes ideas, concepts, analogies, explanations, and demonstrations used to make the subject matter comprehensible to students. Schulman's argument implies that foreign language learning theories and teaching methods are crucial domains of foreign language education. These theories and methods should be studied in-depth and at the core of foreign language education programs for prospective and in-service teachers.

As was discussed in the general teacher education and in the studies by Brosh (1996) and Molina and Nuessel (1997), socio- affective skills are crucial traits defining effective teacher characteristics. Indeed, the importance of these skills have been recognized in many areas in foreign language education such as research in foreign language acquisition theories (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996), motivation (Dornier, 1998), and learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), to name a few. Thus, even though socio-affective skills can be coupled with pedagogical knowledge in a broad sense, these skills are worth being discussed in an independent category rather than discussed under the category of pedagogical knowledge.

Research Concerning Characteristics of Effective Teachers: Suwannee (1994) studied students' perceptions of university instructors' effective teaching characteristics. The purpose of the study was threefold: (1) *to provide university instructors in Thailand with a greater understanding of students' perceptions of what characteristics are important in college and university teaching*, (2) *to identify effective teaching characteristics which promote learning*, and (3) *to identify factors influencing students' perceptions of effective teaching*.

The subjects for the study were 505 science students at the Faculty of Science, Mahidol University. The survey instrument used in this study was developed from 17 studies found in the literature on the area of teaching effectiveness. The questionnaire asked the students to rate 39 teaching characteristics, which made up six teaching components, according to their importance in contributing to effective teaching. This investigation yielded the following results: (1) The teaching characteristics listed in order of importance by students are having a good knowledge of his/her subject, making difficult topics easy to understand, willing to help students in and out of the classroom, being well-prepared for class, explaining things clearly.

The teaching components listed in order of importance by students are *preparation/ organization/ clarity, examination/ grading, enthusiasm/ stimulation, knowledge, instructor-individual student interaction, and instructor-group interaction*. (2) Students' gender significantly affected their perceptions of valued teaching characteristics in two components: *Knowledge and Instructor- Group Interaction*. Male students placed higher importance on Knowledge and Instructor-Group Interaction than female students did. (3) Students' academic status significantly affected their perceptions of valued teaching characteristics in the Instructor-Group Interaction component. Freshmen placed less importance on Knowledge, Instructor-Group Interaction, and Instructor- Individual Student Interaction than senior students did. Koutsoulis (2003, cited in Park & Lee, 2006) investigated the teacher characteristics that students considered important in defining teacher effectiveness, focusing on human characteristics, communication skills, and teaching and production characteristics. Students from 25 high schools in Cyprus completed the Classroom Culture Description questionnaire. Overall, students listed 94 different characteristics of effective teachers. The most commonly listed human characteristic was the ability to show understanding, followed by teacher friendliness. The most frequently noted communication characteristic was the ability to communicate effectively with students and to handle teacher-student relations. This was followed by effective classroom management. Regarding teaching ability, most students wanted lessons to be interesting and motivating. Students at different achievement levels understood teacher effectiveness differently. Students with the lowest achievement level focused more on human characteristics and teaching skills and less on communication skills. High achievers wanted their teachers to be knowledgeable and clever and not to spend time on comments about students' behavior.

Also, there was another study done by Park and Lee, 2006, investigating the characteristics of effective English teachers as perceived by 169 teachers and 339 students in high school in Korea, with a self-report questionnaire consisting of three categories: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills. Overall, the teachers perceived significantly different characteristics than the students in all three categories with the teachers ranking English proficiency the highest in contrast to the students who ranked pedagogical knowledge the highest. The student subgroups also held different perceptions of effective teaching. High achieving students reported different characteristics than low achieving students in pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills, whereas the male students demonstrated different characteristics from female students in socio-affective skills.

The findings have implications for knowledge-based teacher education for current and prospective English teachers.

Characteristics of Good English Instructors: Teachers are the key figures in the English language learning process. Their influence is fundamental to their students' progress or lack thereof. To achieve the desired result in teaching English, that is, guiding students to its successful acquisition, teachers have to be aware of and adhere to certain essentials. They also need to take into account crucial factors such as classroom atmosphere, classroom management, tolerance, patience, passion and other aspects. In line with this, Khalid Al-Seghayer (2004) identified a number of good characteristics that make good English as a second or foreign language instructor as follows. He stressed that these attributes are not inclusive of all characteristics that good English instructors should have, but they seem to be the most important ones.

Language competency and teaching techniques: For English teachers, being good at the language is not sufficient, they must also use appropriate teaching techniques. Yet, many times language skill is the sole criterion used to qualify or disqualify someone for teaching. This observation or affirmation is based on the personal and perhaps controversial belief that there is no significant correlation between a teacher's own language competency and the language achievement of his or her students. On the contrary, English teachers must be familiar with and be able to adapt and employ a variety of teaching techniques in addition to having appropriate knowledge of the language. These techniques are methods of teaching that include classroom behavior or classroom activities and procedures which employ specific strategies selected by teachers to achieve their objectives. Language competency and teaching techniques go hand in hand in enhancing teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

Positive Attitude: The attitude of the teacher also influences student success. English language teachers need to have positive attitude. Teachers need to be confident that their students are capable of learning another language. Therefore, good English teachers are those who remain distinctly conscious of their covert attitudes toward their students' efforts to learn English and the impact of those attitudes upon the success of their learning experience.

Plan: The ability to design an effective lesson plan is essential to successful teaching. English teachers need to educate themselves on how to design a lesson plan that is tailored to the needs and abilities of their students. The educational aims of each lesson must be clear and activities should be selected that contribute to the realization of those aims. Lesson objectives should be stated in terms of student capabilities, that is, in terms of what the student will be able to do because of instruction. These objectives must specify a goal in terms of student learning and skill.

Teaching for Mastery: Teaching for mastery is another vital method that teachers of English need to consider. Teaching for mastery means organizing instruction so that all students are given the opportunity to learn what is being taught. Teaching for mastery therefore implies the creative use of a variety of teaching styles. Since different students learn in different ways, the strategic introduction of new techniques may help students overcome a learning problem. For example, if a teacher expects the entire class to master use of the subjunctive, then

techniques must be utilized to help the eye-minded and the ear-minded students, or those who need explanation as well as those who learn best by developing their own generalizations. Help must also be given to those who are hesitant to express themselves for fear of looking foolish as well as those who are eager to express themselves and are unmindful of errors.

Being Flexible: English instructors need to learn to be flexible. This is because foreign or second language learning and teaching is dynamic and subject to change, as well as there is no only one-way to teach English. This also due to the fact that maintaining a flexible teaching philosophy allows them to accommodate the various learning styles, greater diversity, and varied goals students bring with them to English classroom.

Thus, good English teachers should embrace or at least recognize the constant change that the field is ever going through. Additionally, they should always try different teaching methods, think of a variety of classroom activities, and strive to search out new ideas. In the hope of finding what works best, English teachers should constantly attempt to employ different techniques and approaches and incorporate various methods and techniques that bring more success to students' language learning experiences.

The Manager: Teachers of English need to be aware of classroom management so that they can maximize available class time and maintain discipline. Their routines must be a function of the age of the students, the physical environment, and the purpose of the instruction. For instance, independent work, small group conversations, interest group conversations, and student-led drills can all contribute to the smooth functioning of a class. If the students are actively involved in a class which is set at their linguistic level and which takes into account their interest and backgrounds, they will be so busy learning the language that discipline will, in large measure, take care of itself. Therefore, being able to handle and organize the classroom means a greater probability of success in implementing teaching plans. Classrooms are extremely complex places where teachers have to make moment-by-moment decisions to translate a plan into action while attempting to maintain a friendly, constructive atmosphere. Unlike other classrooms, students learn through the second instead of the primary language. They deal with all aspects of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a language other than their native tongue. This is what makes the English as a second or foreign language classroom so complex, requiring special attention. Knowing that the students' goal in attending English classes is to learn the language requires teachers to create an environment suitable for learning. A friendly atmosphere must be the major characteristic of the classroom. Students need to be shown that the teacher cares about what they are going through and is doing his or her best to help him/her learn effectively while developing their proficiency levels. Learners after all need a rich and safe atmosphere that is exciting, engaging, and allow them to take risk. In such an atmosphere, students become self-motivated, willingly playing an active role in the learning process. Consequently, an attempt should be made to create a friendly atmosphere so students are free to express themselves openly, without fear of being embarrassed in front of their peers when they are corrected. This is all can be summed on the conclusion that suggests learning is best achieved when students are in a caring, welcoming, non-intimidating learning environment.

Tolerance: Another crucial characteristic is tolerance. Students need to feel that the classroom is a place where mistakes are tolerated, where teachers understand that, given the nature of the classes, progress will be slow. Moving from one stage of learning to another takes time, and students should not be upset by mistakes they make. Similarly, teachers should not be discouraged or disheartened when their students do not accurately use what they have been teaching. Students also need a place where they are encouraged to do more and use English all the time. This can be done by means of challenging activities that require students to work hard and/or that provide opportunities for using English. Students, while in the classroom, need to feel encouraged to use whatever they have learned and recognize that their efforts are appreciated.

Attention: Teachers of English should make it clear that each individual member of the class deserves attention, whatever his or her level of achievement. Students should be equal in the eyes of the teacher and receive an equal opportunity to participate and receive adequate feedback on their performance. The advantage of doing so is to show students how they are performing and to increase their motivation through praise. Students need to be taught the elements of language that enable them to take the right action and use the appropriate responses in real situations.

Patience and Passion: Another vital characteristic of good English teachers is patience. This trait entails that English teachers give their students sufficient time to internalize the point in question. A successful teacher must also wholeheartedly enjoy the work and be committed to his/her students. Good English teachers are deliberate in coming to conclusions and strive to look at all aspects of the situation and remain highly fair and objective under most difficult circumstances. Since English teachers have students from different cultural backgrounds, they need to show passion for the various cultures that students represent. In so doing, English teachers will spread the level of passion to their students who in turn will develop, expectedly, a passion to become better English learners. In line with this, Cathy (2011) states that the best teachers are not just interested in their subjects, they are passionate about it. They are also passionate about many other things. They praise good weather and smile when they take a few minutes to discuss last night's episode of a popular TV show. They have an energy that almost makes them glow and that you want to emulate as much as possible. They approach tasks with a sense of challenge rather than routine. They take the universe's curve balls and turn them into fun (if possible). They are human, certainly, but they make you feel that there is always a reason to keep going. Things will get better no matter how much they appear to suck at that moment.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The research design is a logical sequence that connects empirical data to the study's initial research questions (Mertler, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the researchers employed a descriptive survey research method to explore teachers' and students' perceptions on effective English teacher characteristics. It is believed that descriptive research design is suitable to describe or delineate, analyze and specify naturally occurring phenomenon without experimental manipulation (Seilinger and Shohamy, 1989). Since the study is of qualitative and quantitative type in nature, the data to be collected will be analyzed using the qualitative and

quantitative methods of analysis. The rationale behind using these techniques is to provide a better understanding, description and explanation for the stated research problem. The likelihood of these techniques is further confirmed by Creswell and Plano (2008).

Population and Samples: As it was very difficult to manage conducting the study in all the Secondary and/or Preparatory Schools found in Ethiopia due to time and budget constraints, the researchers decided to conduct the study in the Guraghe Zone, SNNPs Regional State since they are working in this zone currently. In this zone, there are 23 Secondary and Preparatory Schools located in different Woredas and out of these, 4 (20%) of the schools were drawn as the study sample through a Simple Random Sampling Technique, knowing that this technique is more or less helpful to get a representative sample of the study population. The schools are Aberus Secondary and Preparatory School, Edegaign Secondary and Preparatory School, Emdibir Secondary and Preparatory School and Butajira Secondary and Preparatory School.

Subjects of the Study and Sampling Technique: The participants of the study were divided into two major groups of teachers and students. The first group consisted of all the English language teachers teaching in those 4 high schools in the Zone. To determine the sample size, availability sampling technique was employed so as to include all of the English teachers as a source of data for the study. The second group consisted of randomly selected two grade levels, viz., 9 and 11 students learning in those 4 high schools in the academic year 2008 E.C. To make the sample size representative of all student population, the number of participants to be involved in the study was determined based on the total number of students enrolled in each schools and grade levels in the academic year. Then, after we knew the total number of the student population of the schools, a Simple Random Sampling Technique was used to draw the sample of the population from whom the data were collected.

Research Instrument: To gather the required data from the participants of the study, a self-reported questionnaire was used as data gathering tool. The questionnaire was developed and used as a major data gathering tool. The content of the questionnaire focused on status (as a teacher and student) and English language proficiency or achievement level. Moreover, the questionnaire consisted of items based on three categories contributing to effective teaching: English Proficiency, Pedagogical Knowledge and Socio-Affective Skills as these items appeared to be the most relevant to all types of educational institutions and levels of schooling. The items included in the questionnaire were adapted from the literature in the area that seemed more appropriate to our context. Accordingly, the development of the questionnaire was passed through the following stages. First, a draft questionnaire which consisted of items based on three categories of effective teaching, namely English Proficiency or Subject Matter Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge and Socio-Affective Skills or personality traits were prepared. Second, the draft questionnaire was revised three times with the help of some colleagues before being used in the pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to investigate how different items function, to check time of administration, to investigate the clarity of the items and to find out whether there was a need to revise, add or drop some items based on the results of the pilot study. Finally, the last version of the questionnaire was developed as per the

recommendations of the colleagues as well as based on the results of the pilot study.

Data Collection Procedures: In order to collect the required data from the respondents in each of the four schools, the researchers had first sent contact letters to the Principals of each school to arrange the time for the administration of the questionnaires. To all student participants of the study, a letter requesting their cooperation was sent prior to the administration. Since the schools in which the study was carried are found in different Woredas, the administration of the questionnaire was made on different days. Accordingly, the questionnaires were administered in the beginning of February month 2008 E. C. In doing so, the researchers and three other colleagues went to each of the schools and administered the questionnaire in collaboration with the schools' Principals and the classroom teachers who were in charge of the classrooms.

Data Analysis Procedures: Since this study was of a quantitative and qualitative descriptive type by its nature, the data collected by means of the questionnaires were statistically analyzed by SPSS/Window program using Independent-Samples T-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). In doing so, the questionnaires collected from the respondents were organized, categorized and tabulated in a manageable form. Then, the following values were assigned to responses provided to the five-point Likert Scale Items: *Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Disagree=3, strongly Disagree=2 and No Idea=1*. Next, the characteristics of the effective English teacher perceived by each group were compared on categorical levels as well as on item levels. In the categorical level analysis, mean scores for each category were computed by assigning 3-1 points since the respondents were asked to choose the three characteristics in order of importance. Similarly, in the item level analysis, frequency, percentage and mean values for each individual items in each category were calculated by assigning 5-1 values because the respondents were asked to rate the items based on the five-point Likert Scale as indicated above.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

There were 44 characteristics of an effective English language teacher listed in the questionnaire and classified into three categories of effective teaching: English Proficiency (8 items), Pedagogical Knowledge (18 items) and Socio-Affective Skills (18 items). Interestingly, the students sub-group rated Pedagogical Knowledge more than English Proficiency and Socio-Affective Skills, whereas the teachers placed more weight on English Proficiency than Pedagogical Knowledge and Socio-Affective Skills. As can be seen from table 1, the endorsement level between the students and the teachers was significantly different from each other, supporting previous studies in which teachers and students held different beliefs about effective teaching (Brosh, 1996; Lang *et al.*, 1993). The students' higher endorsement of Pedagogical Knowledge than English Proficiency might be because they wanted their teachers to transmit their subject matter knowledge effectively, as was found elsewhere (Dittrich, *et al.*, 2000). Another reason for students' low endorsement to English Proficiency could be that they took teachers' high level of proficiency for granted. Contrary to the students, the teachers attached more importance to English Proficiency than Pedagogical Knowledge. The teachers' higher values for English Proficiency than Pedagogical Knowledge might be due to their

beliefs that good English Proficiency made it possible to conduct their lessons confidently without inhibitions and insecurity (Lafayette, 1993). Similarly, Buchman (1984) argued that a sound command of foreign language gave teachers linguistic freedom necessary to personalize lessons according to students' proficiency levels and learning styles. Surprisingly, the teachers in this study gave the lowest weight to Socio-Affective Skills, contradicting previous studies in general teacher education that these skills were considered more important than subject matter knowledge and teaching methodology (Park and Lee, 2006; Minoer *et al.*, 2002; Witcher *et al.*, 2001). In the comparisons between the students' and the teachers' views on the individual items in the English Proficiency, both groups rated reading, writing, speaking and grammar knowledge (proficiency) most highly in the eight items. This result might be due to the importance of communicative ability set by the curricular goals of high school English education in the country and the much emphasis given to these skills in the English textbooks. The largest difference between the students and the teachers was found in vocabulary (word) proficiency. Overall, the students' perceptions on the two items, that is, understanding spoken English well and pronouncing English well, was similar to the teachers' views.

Out of the 18 effective English teacher characteristics listed in the category of Pedagogical Knowledge, both the students and the teachers perceived preparing the lesson well, explaining things well, managing the class time well, teaching English in English, providing interesting activities, providing opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities, teaching particular methods and techniques in teaching, teaching English learning strategies, etc. as the most important characteristics of an effective English language teacher. The importance of interesting activities perceived by both the students and the teachers confirmed previous findings in which exemplary college teachers had the ability to generate intellectual excitement in students through various ways (Lowman, 1996). The students' and the teachers' higher endorsement to the importance of preparation was supported by Thompson *et al.* (2004), suggesting that "the well-prepared teacher is more likely to take time during lessons to notice and attend to behavioral matters and is less likely to miss the beginnings of potentially disruptive activities." If, on the other hand, teachers have not invested sufficient time in planning and preparation, they tend to be so focused on what they are doing that they miss the early signs of misbehavior. This ultimately results in frequent disruption, waste of valuable instructional time, and student frustration. Khalid Al-Seghayer (2004) also suggests that teachers of English need to be aware of classroom management so that they can maximize available class time and maintain classroom discipline. Their routines must be a function of the age of the students, the physical environment and the purpose of instruction. The largest difference between the students and the teachers was found in providing interesting activities and assessing what students have learned reasonably in favor of the students and teaching how to learn English outside the classroom, using particular methods and techniques in teaching, and assessing his/her work regularly in favor of the teachers. As it was discussed above, the students seemed not too pleased if the teacher gave them home work regularly; therefore, giving homework regularly was not considered as characteristics of an effective English language teacher by many students. They also did not like if their teacher use authority in maintaining good

classroom atmosphere. Teachers' responses to these items were overall similar to students' responses. This result showed that the teachers did not like giving homework regularly to their students because giving homework regularly means lots of work to do the checking and correction of the homework. Regarding the students' and the teachers' views on the items in the Socio-Affective Skills, both groups strongly agreed that the effective English teacher should arouse students' motivation for learning English, help students develop their self-confidence to learn English well, not discriminate between students and treat them fairly and equally, be helpful to students in and outside the classroom, have positive attitude towards the language and the learners, set high expectation for students, encourage students to try to do their best, listen to students' opinions and let them express themselves, be polite and nice to students in and outside the classroom, be punctual for class, admit mistakes positively, be interested in his/her career as a teacher and give rewards and offer extra help when the students need it. However, there was some difference between the students and the teachers' opinion on some items. More than the teachers, the students ranked such qualities as paying attention to the personal needs of the students whereas, the teachers endorsed being interested in students more than the students did. The role of motivation has been widely recognized among teachers and researchers in that motivation turned out to be a key to Second Language acquisition as well as general human learning (Dornyei, 1998). In a similar vein, Lowman (1996) argued that students' learning was most influenced by the amount of academic ability students had and how motivated they were to use that ability in a given class. Several researchers saw the significance of confidence or self-efficacy in L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1985), general human learning (Bandura, 1986), and a model of willingness to communicate (Macintyre *et al.*, 1998). According to Mc Dermott and Rothenberg (2000, cited in Thompson *et al.*, 2004), students enjoy teachers with a sense of humor and found those teachers made learning fun. As long as it is not at any individual's expense, good teachers can occasionally enjoy a laugh with the class and they can also laugh at themselves.

Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2003), write that effective teachers are generally positive minded individuals who believe in the success of their students as well as their own ability to help students achieve. Borich (2000) also suggest that effective teachers are those who use "meaningful verbal praise to get and keep students actively participating in the learning process (p.15). When the individual items were combined into a sub-scale of socio-affective skills, all the group comparisons reached a significant level, as seen in Tables 4a and 4b. The largest group differences between the students and the teachers were found in listening to students' opinions, being friendly to students, being polite and nice to students in favor of the students and showing interest in students and their learning, being patient, respect the personality of the students in favor of the teachers. The students' endorsement to the item listening to students' opinions was paralleled with the students' emphasis on learner-centered teaching (Mc Combs and Lauer, 1997 cited in Park and Lee 2006). This result showed that many of the teachers did not like to be friendly and nice to students. Generally, the findings of this study shows that both students and teachers had an agreement on the characteristics of what an effective English language teacher should be. Apart from the variations that occurred, both students and teachers in this study agreed that characteristics of quality teacher should consist of both academic and personal elements.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The present study aimed at investigating the perceptions held by the High School English language teachers and students on the characteristics of Effective English teacher in the Guraghe Zone four schools through a self-reported questionnaire consisting of three categories of effective teaching : English Proficiency (8 items), Pedagogical Knowledge (18 items) and Socio-Affective Skills (18 items). Overall, the students perceived significantly different characteristics from the teachers in all the three categories with the students' high ranking to Pedagogical Knowledge and the teachers' high ranking to English Proficiency. There were common teacher characteristics considered important by each group of respondents, such as reading, writing, speaking well, being fully familiar with English grammar, arousing students' interest and motivation through meaningful tasks and activities to learn English well, helping students develop self-confidence in order to learn English well, explaining things well, providing interesting activities, managing the class time well, being punctual for class, having positive attitude towards the students and the language (English), encourage students to try to do their best, set high expectations for students, being patient, and treat students fairly.

However, other characteristics of effective teachers were group specific. For example, the students and the teachers in this study placed more weights on grammatical knowledge and vocabulary proficiency, respectively. The students also reported that their effective English language teacher is someone who should be friendly to students, fair and nice to students in and outside the classroom whereas, the teachers reported showing interest in students and their learning, assessing what students have learned reasonably and having positive attitude towards students and their profession as important qualities to teaching English. There were items which were considered less important by both students and teachers as the findings of the study revealed. These were giving homework regularly, teaching English in students' mother tongue (Amharic) and knowing English culture well. The findings of the present study have implications for teacher education programs for current and prospective English teachers. First, considering the teachers' higher endorsement to English Proficiency than Pedagogical Knowledge and Socio-Affective Skills, in-service and pre-service teacher education programs should focus on improving English language teachers' proficiency in the language. The importance of English teachers' proficiency cannot be overemphasized because teachers' high proficiency of the target language is necessary to accommodate students' proficiency levels and learning styles in class (Buchman, 1984). Second, the teachers' perceptions about an effective English language teacher were significantly different from those held by the student respondents. The discrepancy of the perceptions held by the two groups can cause the students to resist the teaching methods and strategies used by their teachers and, in turn, lead to ineffectiveness in their learning. For instance, the teachers who consider grammatical proficiency less important and focus on fluency than accuracy in class can be rejected by the students who believe in the grammatical proficiency and want their errors to be corrected. Therefore, the students' wrong perceptions or beliefs about the effective English teacher

should be changed through the discussions of current L2 acquisition theories and teaching and learning methods.

Recommendation

This study is not comprehensive and thorough due to some limitations which may be addressed in future studies. First, since the data were collected and analyzed quantitatively, the conclusions made above are open for further inspection. Second, the data were collected only from four High Schools instead of five schools as proposed in the plan because some constraints such as lack adequate time to address each of the schools fully, and the respondents' gender, achievement levels and experience were not taken into account for similar reasons. For this reason, the following recommendations have been forwarded:

- First, as the nature of research in social settings implies, the views of students and English language teachers on the characteristics of an effective teacher could change over time. Therefore, the quantitative findings of this study should be replicated by others across academic levels and explored further through qualitative analysis.
- Second, the underlying reasons for the different perceptions on effective/good English language teachers held by different groups of respondents should be investigated in depth.
- Third, the relationships between students' perception on characteristics of effective English teachers and their gender as well as their achievement levels need to be explored.
- Fourth, how the perceptions held by students and teachers, at different levels of schooling, affect the overall classroom interactions and/or practices between students and their teachers as well as the students' academic achievement in English language should be studied.

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