

Effective Foreign Language Teacher

Soror Oumeddour

University of Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela (Algeria), Translation and Discourse analysis
Laboratory

Dr. Baghzou Sabrina

University of Abbes Laghrour, Khenchela (Algeria), Translation and Discourse analysis
Laboratory

Abstract: To explain the language learning process, numerous theories and assumptions have been developed. These theories, normally influenced by developments in the fields of linguistics and psychology, have inspired many approaches to the learning and teaching of foreign languages. Common approaches to language learning in education explain how people learn a given language, and have their direct application to the educational process. Relatively, pedagogues rely on such approaches in order to design suitable instructional systems that guide teachers towards achieving success in their profession. However, education in the twenty-first century is mainly about developing lifelong learning and lifelong skills. Correspondingly, the twenty-first century language learners need to be engaged in highly collaborative and personalized models of learning. Consequently, effective language teachers are those who are able to develop relevant strategies to build the classroom community which provides a safe environment where individual learners can discover, create, collaborate, communicate, and reflect on their own learning goals. Because teachers have a powerful, long-lasting influence on their learners, the question arises as to what is an efficient foreign language teacher. Therefore, the research aims at investigating foreign language teachers' and learners' attitudes towards the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher. The research opts for online questionnaires directed to foreign language teachers and learners to extract non-statistical data with regard to their views and attitudes. The first questionnaire has been administered to forty teachers of English at the department of letters and English language, in the University of 8 Mai 1945-Guelma; Algeria. The second questionnaire has been directed to sixty master one students from the same department. The collected results have shown that both teachers and students believe that an efficient foreign language teacher is empathetic, flexible, technologically capable, updated, pragmatic, linguistically educated, classmate, experimental, open-minded, researcher, doer, and hoper of the best.

Keywords: Foreign language teachers, Linguistics, Lifelong learning, Twenty-first century language learners

Introduction

Research in the field of foreign languages education shows that effective teaching is the most important factor that contributes to learners' achievements inside and outside the classroom. As a matter of fact, teaching is widely believed to be the noblest profession in the world. Yet, being only knowledgeable of the subject matter is not enough in this field. Correspondingly, increasing attention is being given to the quality of the teaching profession across the world, since the picture of an efficient foreign language teacher in the twenty-first century classroom has been changed. Relatively, the current study aims at investigating teachers and students views towards the effective foreign language teacher in the modern era.

I. Literature Review

A. Foreign Language learning

For explaining the learning process in educational settings, numerous approaches and assumptions have been developed in the field of education to help teachers in selecting the

most suitable instructional methods and materials. Common approaches to learning in education generally include behaviourism, constructivism, social constructivism, and humanism. It is important; however, to recognize that such approaches explain how people learn, and have their direct application to education. Skinner (1971) acknowledged that learning is a form of behaviour, and that all behaviours are caused by external stimuli that can be explained without the need to consider the internal mental states of individuals (p. 75-77). Therefore, behaviourists perceive learning as an observable behaviour resulted from the various interactions with the environment; while learners are just passive recipients of information in teacher-centered classrooms where they are all taught in pretty much the same way. Nevertheless, the behaviourist approach received harsh criticism mainly due to its ignorance of the human's mind in the learning process. Consequently, psychologists and neuroscientists put more emphasis on studying how learning occurs in human's mind.

Relatively, Pritchard and Woollard (2010) stated that according to constructivists, learning is individually constructed in the human's mind. Each learner builds an idiosyncratic version of knowledge based on identical experiences, an individual's prior knowledge, comprehension, and experience. Differently put, learning is an individual matter; when two learners are exposed to the same learning experience, they are likely to have different learning outcomes (p. 5). Increasing criticism to constructivists' view gives birth to the social constructivist approach. The latter is strongly influenced by the work of Vygotsky (1978), in which he emphasized that learning is a social process. The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that learning occurs as a result of the social interactions which play a fundamental role in the development of one's cognition (p. 88). However, it must be recognized that teachers are first expected to create an effective environment where learners can construct their own knowledge individually, and with each other collaboratively. Correspondingly, the humanistic approach views learning as a personal act that intends to meet one's goals and potentials. According to Williams and Burden (1997), the humanistic approach is mainly about the individual learner's psychology, and the internal state of being (p. 30). Therefore, teachers are required to value learners' affective and social developments; as well as; their intellectual developments. Lamont (1997) pointed out that the humanistic education aims at contributing to the development of learners' self-respecting by taking care of individual human beings (p. 14). Thus, humanistic teachers are believed to value individual learners in order to make apparent that estimating individual learners' characteristics enriches the educational process for both learners and teachers.

B. Effective Foreign Language Teacher

According to Jarvis (2004), teaching is generally defined as any activity that is performed in order to achieve learning (p. 139). However, McCombs and Pope (1994) insisted that the way by which teachers perform their teaching roles has to be significant for learners with the intention of boosting their motivation (p. 28). Following the same line of thought, Brown (2001) stated that in a learner-centered classroom, teachers have to rely on the teaching techniques that account for learners' styles, needs, and goals. Furthermore, they have to foster learners' creativity, self-esteem, and sense of competence (pp. 46-47). Otherwise stated, teachers need to shift roles depending not only on the nature of the task, but also on learners' diversification in a

learner-focused classroom in order to get them involved in the learning process and engaged in a lifelong learning.

In modern dominant modes of pedagogy, the questions about the criteria of a great teacher are highly asked. According to Stronge (2007), an efficient foreign language teacher is that favourite teacher who cares about his/her learners, and helps them to stretch their abilities. Moreover, effective teachers are knowledgeable and proactive about their learners' diversification. Furthermore, they involve learners in the process of establishing and maintaining rules to construct positive and productive learning environment where teaching and learning can be flourished (p. 40). Moreover, Haynes (2007) perceived the efficient foreign language teacher as the one who lowers learners' anxiety level, and who has a great understanding of their own needs (p. 73). In the same vein, Mortiboys (2005) indicates that teaching with emotional intelligence in the classroom boosts high learning achievements, and leads the learners to perceive their teachers as showing interest and respect towards them as worthwhile individuals; which raises their self-esteem and confidence (p. 9). This indicates that emotions are important as they play a vital role in education. Correspondingly, educationists' emphasis shifts towards prioritizing the emotional wellbeing of teachers and learners, because emotionally intelligent people develop successful social relationships alongside with developing their self-confidence and creativity.

Wragg (2005) asserts that teachers are highly required to be socially intelligent with the intention of recognizing the appropriate methods of interactions with the various individual personalities involved in the classroom, and to develop good relationships of mutual respect with their learners. Indeed, socially intelligent teachers are influential, since they are honest, collaborative, and confident. They know how to govern their social interaction skills and how to play different social roles. According to Stringer et al. (2010), effective foreign language teachers are expected to build relevant body of knowledge and understanding of the multiple dimensions of their learners. They need to conduct ongoing research for accomplishing the rewarding task of facilitating the learning process for their learners (p. 70). This means that effective teachers develop diverse knowledge about their individual learners to fulfill their learning potentials. Likewise, Kyriacou (2007) outlines that efficient teachers develop excellent relationships with their learners for enhancing their personal development, and motivating them to participate in the learning process (p. 8). Furthermore, McLeod et al. (2003) declare that the first and foremost step to create a positive learning climate is based upon mutual respect, care, and trust between teachers and their learners (p. 62). Hence, teachers need to manage their classrooms in ways that maintain their individual learners' attention and focus them on meaningful lifelong learning.

II. Methodology

The current research has been conducted depending on the quantitative descriptive method. To achieve the aims of the study, two online questionnaires have been directed to the teachers and the students. The research is conducted with two samples. The participants of the first sample are forty teachers of English at the department of letters and English language, in the University of 8 Mai 1945-Guelma, who were involved to have reliable results regardless to the modules

they taught. Whereas, the second sample includes sixty master one students from the same department using the random sampling technique to achieve generalization.

The questionnaire that has been administered for the teachers seeks to explore teachers' views about the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher. The questionnaire is organized into two sections and consists of thirteen questions. The first section consists of three questions. In the first question (Q1), teachers are required to identify their gender. Then, teachers are asked to specify the number of their teaching years at the university in the second question (Q2). This question is designed to gain information about teachers' experiences in teaching English. The last question in this section is designed to know teachers' qualifications (Q3). The second section in the teachers' questionnaire includes ten questions (from Q4 to Q13). The respondents are asked about their perceptions concerning their learners in (Q4). Then, they are questioned about the expectations of the twenty first century learners from their teachers in (Q5). Thereafter, the informants are asked to what extent they agree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team in (Q6). In the following question (Q7), the teachers have been questioned to choose among the suggested options to define the efficient foreign teacher. In the two subsequent questions (Q8, Q9), the participants asked about the teachers' need to be socially intelligent with the intention of recognizing the appropriate methods of interactions with the various individual personalities involved in the classroom (Q8, and to describe their abilities to build trusting relationships with their students (Q9). Moreover, (Q10, Q11, Q12) have been designed to gather information about teachers' reliance on technology while teaching (Q10). Then, to check the teachers' frequency of using frequently updated documents to document learner's strengths, weaknesses, and goals (Q11); and the frequency of conducting action researches to improve the teaching learning process (Q12). Finally, the informants are required to express their views about the criteria of an effective foreign language teacher in the twenty-first century according to their own experiences (Q13).

The questionnaire that has been administered for the students seeks to explore students' views about the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher. The questionnaire is organized into two sections and consists of twelve questions. The first section includes two questions and designed to gather general information about the participants. In the first question (Q1), students are asked to identify their gender. Then, they have been required to indicate their main aim of English language learning (Q2). The second section in the teachers' questionnaire includes ten questions (from Q3 to Q12). The informants are asked in (Q3, Q4) if their teachers are interested in knowing their own individual characteristics from the beginning of the academic year to guide them towards setting personalized goals for learning (Q3); and the importance of teachers' care about their emotions (Q4). In the following question (Q5), the students were asked how often their teachers offer a variety of relevant instructional methods, materials, and meaningful learning opportunities that help them as an individual learners to meet their own learning needs and objectives. In subsequent questions (Q6, Q7, Q8), the informants were asked if their teachers build strong relationships of mutual respect with them (Q6); the frequency of their classroom participation (Q7), and the reason behind their participation (Q8). Thereafter, the respondents were asked to identify if they are satisfied with the instructional methods and materials provided by their teachers; and to select from the suggested options their expectations from their teachers; then, if they agree or disagree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team in (Q9, Q10, Q11) successively. The last question

(Q12) is designed to scan the students' personal views about the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher.

III. Results and Discussion

A. Teachers' questionnaire

The results gathered from (Q1) in the teachers' questionnaire indicate that the majority of the teachers (94%) who have responded are females. That is, the gained answers are mainly from a feminist point of view. According to the collected data from (Q2), the majority of the participants (64%) are practicing the teaching profession for more than five years, which implies that they are experienced teachers. The data gathered from (Q3) shows that most of the participants (89%) holding the magister degree. This implies that most of them had their academic formation in the classic system.

Moving to the second section in the teachers' questionnaire, the responses of (Q4, Q5) reveal that all the participants (100%) perceive learners as partners and society members who need teachers' help to be lifelong learners and effective citizens while. And all of them believe that their learners expect them to prepare, inform, and monitor skillful lifelong learners, who are emotionally and socially intelligent to build solid and developed society. This implies that all the participants are aware about their roles as facilitators of the learning process. They aim to develop independent lifelong learners instead of only teaching them. Moreover, it becomes apparent that they are aware of their modern roles as agents of social development. In their response to (Q6), (56.6%) strongly agree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team; while (44.4%) of them opt for the option agree.

Participants' responses of (Q7) show that all the participants (100%) opt for the option "all of the above". That is, all the informants believe that an efficient teacher in 21st-century are more than information providers. They; instead, think that the efficient teacher in the modern era is a confidence builder, social partner, and life trainer.

The gathered data from (Q8, Q9) reveals that all the participants (100%) believe that teachers need to be socially intelligent with the intention of recognizing the appropriate methods of interactions with the various individual personalities involved in the classroom; while (88.8%) of them do build strong relationships of mutual respect with their learners. This implies that most of the teachers perceive the classroom to be a social context where many people from different backgrounds are working together to achieve lifelong learning.

Teachers' answers of (Q10, Q11, Q12) show that (100%) of the respondents use technology in the classroom (Q10). This implies that all the teachers are aware that technological revolution is having a greater change in education. However, most of the participants (82.7%) reveal that they do not use frequently updated documents and conduct action researches to improve the teaching learning process (Q11, Q12) due to time constraints and curriculum stuffing. This indicates that most of the participants design their lessons 'plans depending on intuitive data

about the learners. They do not rely on empirical evidences that are validated by means of the scientific research.

Finally, the collected results from (Q13) show that all of the participants agreed that an efficient foreign language teacher is empathetic, flexible, technologically capable, updated, pragmatic, linguistically educated, classmate, experimental, open-minded, researcher, doer, and hoper of the best.

B. Students' questionnaire

Concerning the students' questionnaire, the collected answers from (Q1) indicate that the majority of the students (73.33%) who have responded are females. This means that the gained answers are mainly from a feminist point of view. Furthermore, the gained results from (Q2) indicate that (26.3%) of the respondents are learning English to boost their employment potentials; while (73.7%) of them declared that they are learning English for immigration benefits. In their responses of (Q3, Q4), most of the informants (73%) reveal that their teachers are not really interested in knowing their own individual characteristics from the beginning of the academic year to guide them towards setting personalized goals for learning (Q3). While (98%) of them consider that teachers' emotional care for the learners is highly important for them (Q4). This implies that emotions are bound up with learning, and teaching with emotional intelligence is highly important for learners.

The analysis of the collected data from (Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8) reveals that most of the participants (52%) agree that their teachers never offer a variety of relevant instructional methods, materials, and meaningful learning opportunities that help them as an individual learners to meet their own learning needs and objectives (Q5). While answering (Q6), most of the participants (90%) reveal that their teachers sometimes try to build strong relationships of mutual respect with them. Concerning the students' views about the frequency of their classroom participation (Q7), the majority of them (54%) replied that they sometimes participate in classroom interactions; while (33%) of them claimed that they never participated, and only (13%) claimed they always participate in the classroom discussions. The reason behind their participation according to most of them is because classroom participation helps them to focus in class, and they enjoy public discussions (Q8). This implies that most the teachers strive for getting their students engaged in classroom interactions. Nevertheless, they are less likely to identify and implement the appropriate strategies which can increase students' classroom participation.

In their responses to (Q9, Q10, Q11), the majority of the respondents (70%) acknowledged that they are unsatisfied with the instructional methods and materials provided by their teachers. Only (30%) of them claimed that they are satisfied (Q9). This implies that teachers' teaching methods and materials are not enough and not helpful for most of the students. By answering (Q10), all the informants (100%) revealed that they expect their teachers to prepare, inform, and monitor skillful lifelong learners, who are emotionally and socially intelligent to build solid and developed society. Thereafter, (97%) of the participants strongly agree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team. This implies that most of the learners are aware of the importance of social intelligence in

the field of education, and that a good teacher for them is the one who provides learners with the paradigm that they can take to other social situations in the democratic societies when they work as a team.

Finally, the answers collected from the last question (Q12) show that almost all the participants (97%) opt for the option “all of the above”. The latter means that they believe the efficient foreign language teacher to think about students' future and is aware of the career opportunities that may arise from them, flexible and open to diversity, knowledgeable about the cognitive, social and emotional development of learners, able to get learners engaged in an effective lifelong learning and technologically capable, able to prepare learners for the challenges of an adult life in the twenty-first century, and information provider.

IV. Implications

In the light of the gained results of the present study, it is evident that most of the students and the teachers are aware of the educational revolution in the twenty-first century. The latter results in creating motivational educational settings, where no room is left for the teachers' monologues. Instead, the learners find themselves in a socially active position and are involved in the classroom interactions as co-thinkers with the teachers. This increases both the level of attention and the level of motivation. Given the fact that the twenty-first education is about giving learners the skills they need to succeed in this new world, and helping them grow the confidence to practice those skills, most of the participants believe the efficient foreign language teacher to be the one who values each person's ideas and opinions, with whom students feel safe to express their feelings and learn to respect and listen to others, and who can create a welcoming learning environment for all students. Moreover, the efficient teacher according to the research participants is able to create a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. Differently put, that talented teacher who provides for the learners a supportive, collaborative environment where there is a room for the learners to freely defend their positions, and to build convictions. Furthermore, successful teachers keen on establishing a classroom culture based on learners' understanding of themselves and understanding of others to create and maintain the culture of collaboration and exploration. Teaching with emotional intelligence is also another important factor in efficient teaching. That is, successful teachers are warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring about their learners' feelings and emotions. By the nature of their role, teachers are lifelong learners and researchers. Thus, efficient teachers are enthusiastic to conduct classroom action research as a good strategy for teachers' professional development. As technology provides different opportunities to make learning motivational for learners, efficient teachers are also believed to be technologically capable. That is, introducing technology into the classroom promotes collaboration and team-building, encourages students to be autonomous learners, and enhances students' lifelong learning. Finally, efficient teachers are those who are able to challenge any obstructions that may hinder them from being successful and professional teachers.

Conclusion

According to the interpretation of the findings, it is clearly shown that it is not an easy task to be an efficient foreign language teacher in Algeria due to many constraints. However, teachers

are invited by the current study to be fighters, researchers, and lifelong learners; so that, they can work under the worst conditions. As a matter of fact, teachers are believed to master a variety of professional development skills to back up their professional years of experience. To foster the effectiveness of their teaching, teachers are expected to provide their learners with quality education. Correspondingly, great teachers perceive themselves as being lifelong learners, they never stop learning. Efficient teachers strongly believe that teachers' professional development is an ongoing process throughout their careers, as it provides them with the opportunity to improve their teaching skills. Consequently the current study urges the teachers who seek effectiveness in their profession to challenge any obstacle that may hinder them from being successful students of teaching.

Appendices

Appendix A

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly invited to respond to this questionnaire, which investigates teachers' views about the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher in the twenty-first century era. Responses are needed for writing a conference paper.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Oumeddour Soror
PHD student, University of

Abbes Laghrour-Khenchela

Section one: General Information

1. Specify your gender: a. Male b. female
2. Specify your teaching experience: a. Less than 5 years b. More than 5 years
3. Specify your qualification: a. Licence b. Master c. Magester d. Phd

Section two: Effective Foreign Language Teacher

4. How do you perceive learners?
 - a. People who need only to have knowledge.
 - b. Partners and society members who need teachers' help to be lifelong learners and effective citizens.
5. According to you, the twenty first century learners expect their teachers to:
 - a. Deliver as much knowledge as it could be.
 - b. Prepare, inform, and monitor skillful lifelong learners, who are emotionally and socially intelligent to build solid and developed society.
6. Do you agree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team?
 - a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly disagree
7. According to you, who is an efficient foreign language teacher?
 - a. Think about students' future and is aware of the career opportunities that may arise from them.
 - b. Flexible and open to diversity, since caring for one individual means caring for the whole society.
 - c. Knowledgeable about the cognitive, social and emotional development of learners.
 - d. Able to get learners engaged in an effective lifelong learning.
 - e. Able to prepare learners for the challenges of an adult life in the twenty-first century
 - f. Information provider
 - g. All of the above

8. Do you believe that teachers need to be socially intelligent with the intention of recognizing the appropriate methods of interactions with the various individual personalities involved in the classroom? Explain
9. How can you describe your ability to build trusting relationships with your students in order to create a safe, positive, and productive learning environment?
a. Low b. Medium c. High
10. Do you use technology in the classroom? a. Yes b. No
11. Do you use frequently updated documents, such as learning profiles and learning plans, to document learner's strengths, weaknesses, and goals so that you make learning meaningful for each one of them? Explain.
12. How often do you conduct an action research to improve the teaching learning process?
a. Always b. Sometimes c. Never
13. According to your own experience, what are the criteria of an effective foreign language teacher in the twenty-first century?

Appendix B

Students' Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to respond to this questionnaire, which investigates Students' views about the criteria of an efficient foreign language teacher in the twenty-first century era.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Oumeddour Soror

University of Abbes Laghrour-Khenchela

Section one: General Information

1. Specify your gender: a. Male b. female
2. What is your main aim of English language learning?
a. To communicate with people from all over the world through English language.
b. To boost your employment potentials.
c. To keep your brain active and challenged through learning a new language.
d. Immigration benefits.

Section two: Effective Foreign Language Teacher

3. Are your teachers interested in knowing your own individual characteristics from the beginning of the academic year to guide you towards setting personalized goals for learning?
a. Yes b. No
4. How important for you when your teachers value your personal characteristics as an individual learner, call you by your name, and care about your emotions?

5. How often do your teacher offer a variety of relevant instructional methods , materials, and meaningful learning opportunities that help you as an individual learner to meet your own learning needs and objectives?
- a. Always b. Sometimes c. Never
6. How often do your teachers build strong relationships of mutual respect with you, and care about your emotions?
- a. Always b. Sometimes c. Never
7. How often do you participate in classroom interactions?
- a. Always b. Sometimes c. Never
8. Why do you participate in classroom interaction?
9. Are you satisfied with the instructional methods and materials provided by your teachers?
- a. Yes b. No
10. What do you expect from your teachers?
- a. Deliver as much knowledge as it could be.
- b. Prepare, inform, and monitor skillful lifelong learners, who are emotionally and socially intelligent to build solid and developed society.
11. Do you agree that an effective 21st-century educator must be able to collaborate and work well within a team?
- a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree d. Strongly disagree
12. According to you, who is an efficient foreign language teacher?
- a. Think about students' future and is aware of the career opportunities that may arise from them.
- b. Flexible and open to diversity, since caring for one individual means caring for the whole society.
- c. Knowledgeable about the cognitive, social and emotional development of learners.
- d. Able to get learners engaged in an effective lifelong learning, and technologically capable
- e. Able to prepare learners for the challenges of an adult life in the twenty-first century
- f. Information provider
- i. All of the above

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