

A Comparative Investigation of Perceived Characteristics of Effective Teachers in Saudi EFL Context

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Abstract

The study in hand is a comparative investigation of the characteristics of effective EFL teachers as perceived by Saudi EFL students majoring in English and Sciences. The participants of the study comprised of two groups drawn from two academic programmes, i.e., English major (EM) and Non-English major (NEM). The researchers used a self-developed 29-item Likert-scale questionnaire to elicit responses of 645 participants of the study. Standard procedure was adopted to achieve reliability and validity of the instrument. Independent-samples T-test was run to calculate the descriptive analyses as well as to identify whether any statistically significant differences exist in the perceptions of EM and NEM participants. The results have revealed that both groups exhibited similarities in their perception towards the personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers; thus, partially rejecting the hypotheses set for this study. The result also indicated that the participants showed preference for personality characteristics as compared to ability characteristics as indicated by higher mean values assigned by both groups.

Keywords: *Effective teacher; ability characteristics; personality characteristics*

1. Introduction

Efforts of defining the characteristics that make an effective teacher have been a point of focus for educationists started from exploring Plato's Socratic dialogue (Beishuizen, Hof, Putten, Bouwmeester, & Asscher, 2001) to other educational and psychology literature (Day, 2004; Borich, 2000; Kyriacou, 1998; Robertson, 1996) but there remained a controversy on determining these characteristics (Raymond, 2008; Strong, 2002). Numerous research studies have been undertaken to find the answer to this knotty question of identifying the characteristics of an effective teacher from students' as well as faculty members' perspectives (Zughoul, 2003; Walls, Nardi, von Minden, & Hoffman, 2002; Raymond, 2001). It has been reported that an effective teacher is skilled, knowledgeable and experienced (Beishuizen et al., 2001), and knows how to create an effective learning environment by being organized, prepared, and clear (Walls et al., 2002). Theories of behaviorism and cognitivism also contributed significantly towards evolving definitions of an effective teacher (Raymond, 2007; Shulman, 2004; Calserhead, 1996). Research suggested that the students and faculty from different parts of the world identified slightly different characteristics of effective teachers because regional and cultural differences affected their preferences in this regard (Walls et al., 2002; Raymond, 2001).

2. Literature Review

Teachers are central to teaching/learning process and this centrality has encouraged a lot of researchers to explore and exhaust this important ESL/EFL area to identify the characteristics associated with effective teachers. Though a lot of research has been conducted in this field, yet the term 'effective teacher' still contains a lot of controversies (Strong, 2002). Research reported

that effective teachers have been defined differently especially during the second half of the 20th century. It was reported that:

"effective teachers were viewed as 'ideal teachers' in the 1950s, 'analytic teachers' in the 1960s, 'effective teachers,' 'dutiful teachers,' and 'competent teachers' in the 1970s, 'expert teachers,' and 'reflective teachers' in the 1980s, and 'satisfying teachers' and 'diversity responsive teachers' in the 1990s" (Cruikshank & Haefele, as cited in Wang et al., 2007, pp. 22-23).

In an attempt to reach a comprehensive and valid definition of an effective teacher, Leu (2005) reviewed relevant research studies and concluded that little agreement was found for this term. He has gone rather further and suggested that a universally accepted list of characteristics of an effective teacher is not possible and the researchers need to conduct research studies in their organizations and regions to define it locally "at the school and community level, not just at the district and national level" (Leu, 2005, p. iii). He has admitted that different regions have specific teaching objectives due to the factors like cultural diversity, but "teachers and classroom process are now front and center, and they are generally agreed to be key to education quality" (Leu, 2005, p. 2).

Various researchers attempted to find out the answer to this knotty question by investigating faculty members, students or both of them. It is reported that students' perception is of paramount importance because they are directly and significantly affected by teacher effectiveness (Wang, Gibson, & Slate, 2007). Several other comparative studies attempted to highlight the similarities/differences in the perceptions of students with that of the administration's related to effective teachers' characteristics (Krueger, 1997). Whitefield (1976) stated that due to the students' direct and consistent relationship with their teachers, they "form very clear perceptions of their teachers, and that the students can report those perceptions of their teachers by identifying observable behaviours" (p. 350). Horwitz (1987) emphasized the importance of considering students' perceptions in identifying the characteristics of effective teachers because if language classes do not cater for the needs and expectations of the students, they may get disillusioned about the learning process that will limit their academic achievement.

Anderson (2004) stated that "effective teachers are those who achieve the goals which they set for themselves or which they have set for them by others ministries of education, legislators and other government officials, school administrators" (p. 22). This seems to suggest that effective teachers are the ones who are able to exploit the knowledge and skills effectively to achieve the set goals and objectives. Thus effectiveness of teaching depends on student learning: the main goal. Tyler (1949) reported that students learn through what they do suggesting that the main responsibility of an effective teacher is to create learning-conducive atmosphere in the classroom to increase likelihood of optimum learning. McBer (2000) conducted a large-scale study in the UK to identify the characteristics of effective teachers and he organized the effective teacher characteristics into four clusters: professionalism (commitment, confidence, trustworthiness, respect), thinking/reasoning (analytical thinking, conceptual thinking), expectations (drive for improvement, information seeking, intuitive), and leadership (flexibility, accountability, passion for learning).

Hunt (2009) has stated that effective teachers are the ones who concentrate to achieve learning outcomes set for their students by skillfully exploiting their knowledge, academic attitude and performance. Believers of behaviorism and cognitivism attempted to identify the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of their language learning philosophies (Raymond, 2008). The behaviorists concentrated on the actions and behaviors of effective teachers from the ones exhibited by less effective teachers. This list of actions and behaviors has been considered important to be followed to become effective teachers. Shulman (2004) enumerated four 'interrelated dimensions' of effective teachers: 'support, interaction, goal emphasis & facilitation'. The cognitivists, on the other hand, focused on "how meaning is created and was born in reaction to behaviouristic principles of effectiveness" (Raymond, 2008, p. 23). Bandura (as cited in Raymond, 2008) suggested that teaching effectiveness demands that attention should be focused on the cognitive development of the learners. This approach has made the researchers discuss effective teachers' traits through personality and ability perspective. Research has offered valuable insights into the fact that the characteristics of effective teachers can be summed up under their personal and professional skills.

3. Personality Characteristics

It has been reported that effective teaching depends on certain personal traits exhibited by the teachers that play an important role in their students' achievement and learning. Teachers' positive personality traits help them develop cooperative relationship with their students and enhances learning as Yoder, Shaw, Siyakwazi, and Kaarina (1993) stated that "the working premise here is that the teacher as a person and the relationship she or he develops with the students is a critical component of effectiveness" (p. 4). It is argued that students' personalities are central to learning process and to ensure positive results it is imperative to "give them individual attention and develop productive relationships with their students" (Rubio, 2010, p. 39) He further stated that it is not sufficient to understand the students in formal settings only and effective learning is not possible if the teachers do not understand their students' personalities (Sizer, 1999). Kohn (1996) has further explained the dynamics of this relationship and suggested that effective teachers not only develop teacher-student relationship in classroom setting but also need to interact outside this formal setting. Research has suggested that qualities such as 'warmth, enthusiasm and extroversion' are the characteristics appreciated by the students, thus, increase the learning possibilities (Radmacher & Martin, 2001; Basow, 2000; Best & Addison, 2000). This view is supported by Gurney (2007) who called learning process an emotional exercise: the productivity increases if the learners are emotionally involved in the process.

4. Professional/Ability Characteristics

Along with the above-mentioned personality characteristics, effective teaching depends on several ability characteristics that help the teachers contribute to their students' learning and success. McBer (2000) conducted a research regarding effective teaching and concluded that students' learning is directly related to teachers' professional skills. Teachers' command of content knowledge has been singled out as the most important professional characteristic that enhances learning and improves students' confidence (Reynolds & Muijis, 1999; Ferguson & Womackl, 1993). Good content knowledge may become useless if it is not accompanied with proper planning. Well-planned lessons are the ones that provide the students with ample opportunities to interact with each other and with their teachers, ensure lesson feedback and utilize class time effectively and efficiently (Gurney, 2007; Craig & Dickenson, 2003). Anderson (2004) stated that

classroom management and organization is another very important professional skill of EFL teachers that help them perform successfully in their classes. It has been emphasized that this should be practiced by new as well as experienced teachers.

The learning needs of EFL learners are diverse and varied that require the teachers to employ a range of teaching activities and techniques instead of following a stereo-typed teaching approach. Day (2004) reported that "... the passionate teacher will not only recognize the need for, but will also want to employ a range of approaches that take account of the most up-to-date knowledge of teaching and learning" (p. 82). Research has offered deep insights into the fact that effective EFL teaching mainly depends on actively involving learners in classroom proceeding by allowing them to ask questions, encourage their participation, appreciate their views, ideas and contributions, listening to their answers etc. (Day, 2004; Borich, 2000; McBer, 2000; Robertson, 1996). This active involvement of learners into class activities also help achieve another important factor, i.e., to maintain classroom discipline, instead of being strict disciplinarian as mentioned by Wong and Wong (2005) that ineffective teachers ensure classroom discipline through punishments and threats.

5. Research Questions

This research project has the following research questions:

- a. What are the English-major students' perceptions of the personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers?
- b. What are the Non-English major students' perceptions of the personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers?
- c. Are there any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of both sample groups regarding the personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers?
- d. Are there any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of both sample groups regarding the ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers?

Hypotheses

- Ho1. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of both groups regarding different personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers.
- Ho2. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of both groups regarding different ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Development and Administration of the Questionnaire

The researchers developed a 34-item Likert-scale questionnaire mainly based on Raymond (2008) to generate data from both the sample groups. The initial version of the questionnaire was given to three professors of linguistics to comment on the clarity, choice of vocabulary and overall cohesion of the questionnaire. Their comments were acknowledged and recommended changes were made to achieve the face validity. They were given the questionnaire after the changes and they all approved the final shape of the questionnaire.

This English version of the questionnaire was translated into Arabic. The Arabic translation was given to a professor of translation to re-translate it into English to achieve gold standard. Both versions did not carry any significant differences that showed that Arabic translation was correct.

Internal consistency reliability of the tool was computed and Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied to determine the reliability. Item analysis was performed on the initial version of 34-item questionnaire and coefficient alpha was calculated as .89. Five items with less than .89 correlation (6, 10, 17, 22 & 30) were deleted and coefficient alpha was performed again on the final 29-item questionnaire and the value for coefficient alpha reached .90 that is a high standard of reliability for any tool.

6.2 Sample Size

The participants of this study were solicited from two different programmes: English-major (EM) and non-English major (NEM). The questionnaire was administered to the whole population of the students (male and female) enrolled at the department of foreign languages (EM) and randomly selected 300 male and female students of medicine and information technology (NEM) were identified as the sample of this study.

- a. All EM students, both male and female, enrolled at Foreign Languages Department, Taif University.
- b. 1. Randomly selected 150 students, both male female, enrolled at the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Taif University.
2. Randomly selected 150 students, both male female, enrolled at the College of Information Technology, Taif University.

6.3 Statistical Analysis

- a. The researcher used the descriptive statistics namely the means, medians, standard deviations and percentages of the participants' responses to identify their preferences for the personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers.
- b. Independent samples t-test was applied to identify any significant differences in the perceptions of both the sample groups (EM & NEM) and to test the hypotheses of this study.

6.4 Results and Discussion

The researchers manually coded all the participants' responses and version 10 of SPSS was used to analyse the data generated through the questionnaire. In this Likert-scale questionnaire, five points were assigned to "strongly agree" and one point to "strongly disagree". Higher values means that the samples preferred those items more as compared to the ones with lower values.

This study is an effort in which similarities have been made and comparisons have been drawn from the perspective of the participants of this empirical study (EM & NEM) to identify the characteristics of effective EFL teachers in a Saudi context. Much research has highlighted the differences in students' opinions and perceptions regarding effective teachers, nevertheless the conceptual framework of using ability versus personality characteristics to categorise the effective EFL teachers' characteristics is recommended (Saafin, 2005; Walls et al., 2002; Beishuizen et al., 2001). In the following table the above-mentioned opinions are substantiated through empirical evidences.

Table 1: Analyses for effective teachers' personality characteristics

An effective teacher		Ggroup	n	M	SD	T	df	p value	
3	stimulates interest in the course/subject.	EM	354	4.5480	.7014	2.957	643	.003	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3711	.8177	2.913	574.30	.004	
5	is available to help students.	EM	354	4.5367	.7750	-1.488	643	.137	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.6186	.5833	-1.529	638.22	.127	
10	makes classes interesting.	EM	354	4.5706	.7836	3.316	643	.001	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3265	1.0828	3.216	515.02	.001	
11	is dedicated and committed.	EM	354	4.3898	.6903	1.379	643	.168	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3093	.7926	1.361	579.36	.174	
15	makes an effort to get to know the students.	EM	354	4.2232	.8703	2.220	643	.027	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.0619	.9736	2.196	587.76	.029	
16	encourages students to answer other students' questions.	EM	354	3.9689	1.0330	-1.211	643	.226	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.0653	.9716	-1.218	631.43	.224	
18	serves as a role model.	EM	354	4.5960	.7881	1.618	643	.106	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4948	.7938	1.616	617.35	.107	
19	is flexible in scheduling /rescheduling tests and deadlines.	EM	354	4.5000	.7423	.877	643	.381	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4467	.7964	.871	600.50	.384	
20	encourages student participation.	EM	354	4.3870	.7061	1.561	643	.119	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.2955	.7803	1.546	591.57	.123	
21	treats students as equal.	EM	354	4.6554	.6857	2.862	643	.004	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4605	1.0344	2.755	485.30	.006	
25	willing to repeat explanations.	EM	354	4.5028	.6701	-1.760	643	.079	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.5945	.6437	-1.767	627.63	.078	
26	communicates with students in English.	EM	354	4.1667	.8893	5.357	643	.000	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	3.7320	1.1702	5.218	532.18	.000	
29	welcome students' opinions /suggestions.	EM	354	4.6045	.6704	.440	643	.660	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.5808	.6969	.438	609.32	.661	

Table 1 contains the data generated through the analyses of the thirteen items of the questionnaire to record the samples' responses for the personality characteristics of effective teachers: means, standard deviations as well as the statistical significance, if any, were presented for each item. EM assigned a high mean value of 4.5 or above to 8 items whereas the same higher value was reported for only 3 items by NEM. The results indicated considerable similarities in the perception of both samples groups but EM seems to prefer personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers more as compared to the other sample group. High mean values were assigned by the both sample groups to the following items which indicated their preferences for them: An effective teacher "treats students as equal." (EM- 4.65; NEM- 4.46), "welcomes students' opinions /suggestions." (NEM- 4.60; EM- 4.58), "serves as a model." (NEM- 4.59; EM- 4.49), "is available to help students." (NEM- 4.53; EM- 4.61). EM allocated the highest value to the characteristic of treating students as equal whereas NEM assigned 5th highest to this item. The result is partially in accordance with the findings of Rubio (2009) who declared fairness as an important characteristic along with the mutual respect. Fairness is highly appreciated by the students and it is recommended that effective teachers should treat their students equally in all situations, such as assessment results, positive/negative feedback, misbehaviours, religion, ethnic background etc.

(Stronge et al., 2004; Peart & Campbell, 1999). Both sample groups were consistent in their liking of EFL teachers who welcome students' opinion and suggestions. This seems an extension of the previous item that Saudi students like their teachers to treat them equally and respect their opinions and suggestions. This result is in agreement with the previous research (Author et al., 2012; Rammal, 2006; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Desai, Damewood, & Jones, 2001). Saudi undergraduates represented by the participants of this study tend to share the general trend of students' high expectation of their teachers. Close affinity was found among both sample groups (NEM & EM) of this study as demonstrated by the high mean values assigned to the personality characteristics that effective EFL teachers should serve as a role model. Crowl, Kaminsky, and Podell (1997) stated that effective teachers' responsibility is not confined to only imparting content subject knowledge but they serve as role models for their students and influence their students' attitudes and beliefs. Rubio (2009) suggested that teachers should justify this high position by even taking risks to innovate and improve education. "An effective teacher is available to help students" is the item where both sample groups exhibited difference. NEM declared it the most important characteristic whereas EM assigned it 6th position in their ranking of personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers. This important personality trait is reported frequently in effective teacher research and the finding obtained in this study confirmed the previous studies (Rubio, 2005; Stronge et al., 2004; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Cruickshank & Haeefe, 2001; Sizer, 1999). Eisner (2002) stated that teaching is a caring exercise and teachers should make themselves available inside as well as outside the classroom to help and facilitate their students.

Although the above-mentioned four items seem fairly consistent between both sample groups, yet several other characteristics have reported significant variations in this regard. For example "... making classes interesting." (EM- 4.57; NEM- 4.32) and "... stimulating interest in course/subject." (EM- 4.54; NEM- 4.37) are not perceived as important by NEM as are reported by EM. One probable reason for this difference in their perception is that EM by virtue of the language-majors prefers the teachers to provide lively atmosphere in the classrooms so that they may be able to sustain their motivation during their academic career. On the other hand, NEM did not report it very important factor because their main objective is to qualify English courses to continue their content-subject studies in their respective departments. High ranking of these closely related teaching characteristics by EM in particular and NEM in general are in the same directed as revealed by numerous research studies conducted worldwide (Day, 2004; Walls et al., 2002; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Miller, Dzindolet, Weinstein, Xie, & Stones, 2001; Raymond, 2001; McBer, 2000; Donaldson & Flannery, 1993). NEM ranked the following item the 2nd highest whereas EM reported it the 7th highest: "... is willing to repeat explanations" (NEM- 4.59; EM- 4.5). This finding also supports the fact that NEM sample's main purpose is utilitarian and they want to get better marks to qualify for their content-subject studies. An in-depth analysis of the personality characteristics of effective teachers seems to suggest that English-major Saudi undergraduates represented by the EM sample group of this study are more interested in the process of language learning whereas Saudi undergraduates of other specialties represented by the NEM sample group concentrate more on the end product of English language learning, i.e., the final score.

Table 2: Analyses for effective teachers' ability characteristics

An effective EFL teacher		Ggroup	n	M	SD	T	df	p value	
1	is always well- prepared and organized.	EM	354	4.6045	.5846	3.450	643	.001	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4158	.8023	3.348	517.38	.001	
2	has expert, up-to-date knowledge of the subject.	EM	354	4.5932	.6462	-.237	643	.812	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.6048	.5800	-.240	638.03	.811	
4	explains using simple language.	EM	354	4.6638	.6497	2.372	643	.018	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.5223	.8642	2.308	528.34	.021	
6	uses relevant course materials.	EM	354	3.9887	3.1846	2.126	643	.034	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	3.5739	1.0654	2.299	445.61	.022	
7	provide frequent, prompt, and useful feedback.	EM	354	3.9944	.8969	1.410	643	.159	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	3.8935	.9129	1.408	614.80	.160	
8	uses appropriate teaching aids.	EM	354	4.4011	.7509	1.239	643	.216	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3265	.7746	1.235	611.39	.217	
9	answers questions accurately.	EM	354	4.4972	.7031	1.555	643	.121	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4021	.8509	1.526	561.55	.128	
12	gives clear instructions.	EM	354	4.5254	.6696	1.746	643	.081	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.4296	.7223	1.733	598.90	.084	
13	clearly defines evaluation methods.	EM	354	4.4350	.7041	2.310	643	.021	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3024	.7506	2.296	602.35	.022	
14	provides many examples.	EM	354	4.4181	.7492	3.200	643	.001	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	4.2165	.8497	3.161	583.37	.002	
17	uses a variety of teaching techniques.	EM	354	4.1695	.8998	-1.716	643	.087	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.2852	.7907	-1.738	640.12	.083	
22	does group / pair work.	EM	354	4.0621	.8788	.416	643	.677	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.0309	1.0251	.410	574.12	.682	
23	gives lots of tests.	EM	354	3.2373	1.1854	-4.065	643	.000	p < 0.05
		NEM	291	3.6082	1.1132	-4.090	631.71	.000	
24	has lots of teaching experience.	EM	354	4.1497	.8731	-1.621	643	.105	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.2612	.8633	-1.623	621.62	.105	
27	lectures for the entire class period.	EM	354	3.2373	1.2885	1.408	643	.160	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	3.0962	1.2392	1.413	627.41	.158	
28	guides students to become independent learners.	EM	354	4.3362	.7695	.478	643	.633	p > 0.05
		NEM	291	4.3058	.8383	.474	595.96	.636	

Independent-samples t test results for the sixteen questionnaire items eliciting samples' responses regarding the ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers are reported in table 2. The data reported in this table presents the means, standard deviations as well as the statistical significance, if any, in the perception of both sample groups: NEM & EM. The overall ranking of EM sample is

higher for the ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers as compared to NEM maintaining the same trend witnessed in the personality characteristics results: EM gave higher value of 4.4 or above to 8 items (1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13 & 14) whereas NEM assigned this value to 5 items (1, 2, 4, 9 & 12). Both groups showed comparatively more harmony in their perception towards the ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers. The following five items have been reported as the five most important ability characteristics by both sample groups (EM & NEM) with minor variations in their ranking: An effective EFL teacher "explains using simple language" (EM- 4.66; NEM- 4.52), "is always well-prepared and organized" (EM- 4.6; NEM- 4.41), "has expert, up-to-date knowledge of the subject" (EM- 4.59; EM- 4.6), "gives clear instructions" (EM- 4.52; NEM- 4.42), and "answers questions accurately" (EM- 4.49; NEM- 4.4). Higher values were assigned by EM to the following three other items: "... clearly defines evaluation methods" (EM- 4.4.43), "... provides many examples" (EM- 4.41), and "... using appropriate teaching aids" (EM- 4.4). The highest value, ranked 1st in EM and 2nd in NEM perception, was given out to the item that declared that the effective teachers are the ones who explain their content subject in simple language. This findings is consistent with views of several other researchers who conducted their studies in the Gulf region and else where. Raymond (2008) reported that four population groups of the Arab participants of his study identified this as the third most important characteristic of effective teachers. This characteristic of making their subjects easy to learn has been widely reported as important in the literature (Saafin, 2005; Walls et al., 2002; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Dunne & Wragg, 1994; Donaldson & Flannery, 1993; Fernandez & Mateo, 1992; Donaldson, 1991; Ross-Gordon, 1991; Feldman, 1988). The ability of being well-prepared and organised has been given 2nd highest ranking by EM group and 4th highest by NEM. This result confirms the high ranking widely assigned to this characteristic in several studies (Rubio, 2009; Raymond, 2008; Anderson, 2004; Walls et al., 2002; Cruickshenk & Haefele, 2001; Beishuizen et al., 2001; McBer, 2000; Borich, 2000; Robertson, 1996) and as Feldman (1988) stated that "...it is clear that students and faculty were similar in placing high importance on teachers being prepared and organized ..." (p. 321). The expert teachers with up-to-date knowledge of their subjects were ranked high by both sample groups (NEM- 1st& EM- 3rd) confirming the previous research conducted in the Arab world in this regard (Author, 2011; Raymond, 2001, 2008). The remaining two items, i.e., "An effective teacher gives clear instructions" and "...answers questions correctly", among the five most favoured ability characteristics reported by the population of this study (EM & NEM) seem an extension of the previous item. Both groups perceived those EFL teachers as least effective who give lots of tests and lectures for the entire class period.

Table 3: Comparative analysis of personality and ability characteristics of EFL teachers

Sample	Minimum	maximum	m	SD
Personality Characteristics (both groups)	3.7320	4.6554	4.3848	.2308
Ability Characteristics (both groups)	3.0962	4.6638	4.1746	.4162
Personality Characteristics (EM)	3.9689	4.6554	4.4345	.2024
Personality Characteristics (NEM)	3.7320	4.6186	4.3351	.2543
Ability Characteristics (EM)	3.2373	4.6638	4.2070	.4360
Ability Characteristics (NEM)	3.0962	4.6048	4.1421	.4071

Table 3 details the collective means and standard deviations for personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers for the whole group as well as for EM and NEM separately. Collective factor analysis reported that the participants assigned higher mean value to

the personality characteristics (4.38) as compared to the collective mean assigned to the ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers (4.17). It transpires that Saudi undergraduates prefer the humanistic tradition in EFL teaching demonstrated by the high ranking they assigned to the personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers. The findings confirm the humanistic trend explained by Yorder et al. (1993) that "... the teacher as a person and the relationship she or he develops with the students is a critical component of effectiveness" (p. 4). This finding reflects that Saudi undergraduates value the personal relationships the teachers develop with their students. English-major sample assigned higher values to both characteristics as compared to the non-English major group: personality (EM: 4.43; NEM: 4.33) and ability (EM: 4.2; NEM: 4.14). This preference might be because of the fact that majority of English-major students want to become English language teachers in future and they consider various characteristics of effective EFL teachers in a more positive manner. Standard deviation values offer significant insights into the fact that all the participants showed wide similarities in responding to the items eliciting their responses regarding the personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers whereas higher SD values reported less similarities towards the items meant to identify their perception of various ability characteristics.

7. Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the participants (both EM and NEM) rated the following personality characteristics as important for effective EFL teachers: "An effective teacher a) "...treats students as equal", b) "... welcomes students' opinions /suggestions", c) "...serves as a model", d) "...is available to help students" whereas the teachers who "...communicate with students in English", "...encourage the students to answer other students questions", and "...make an effort to get to know the students" are identified as the least effective teachers in this regard. Despite obvious similarities, the participants exhibited differences in their perceptions regarding the personality characteristics and EM participants reported that the EFL teachers who make classes interesting and stimulate interest in the course/subject are effective EFL teachers whereas NEM assigned lower values to these characteristics. The teachers who are willing to repeat explanations have been preferred by NEM as compared to EM participants of the study. With minor variation in the ranking, the following ability characteristics have been identified as the five most preferred characteristics by both sample groups: "An effective EFL teacher a) "... explains using simple language", b) "... is always well-prepared and organized", c) "... has expert, up-to-date knowledge of the subject", d) "... gives clear instructions" and "... answers questions accurately". The teachers who "...lecture for the entire class period", "...give lots of tests", "...use relevant course materials", and "...provide frequent, prompt, and useful feedback" have been regarded as the least effective teachers.

The findings of this study also seem in line with the results of previous studies on effective teachers which indicated that many characteristics are common as reported by the various populations. Descriptive analysis reported a reasonable level of similarities in the perception of both populations towards personality and ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers but some differences existed based upon their major area of study. Both populations exhibited a clear preference for the humanistic perspective represented by the personality characteristics of effective EFL teachers. EM participants of this study assigned higher values to the personality as well as ability characteristics of effective EFL teachers. The findings suggested that Arab

undergraduates represented by the participants of this study consider those EFL teachers as effective who possess a blend of both personality and ability characteristics.

To test the null hypotheses regarding the raters, independent samples t-test was applied on EM and NEM responses. The results reported statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in 5 out of 13 personality characteristics (See table 1) and 6 out of 16 ability characteristics (See table 2) of effective EFL teachers. The findings partially confirmed the 1st and 2nd hypotheses of this study. It is worth mentioning here that the results of Independent-Samples T Test that permitted us to confirm the two hypotheses were of limited value: their significance was limited to predict the differences in the participants' perceptions and they were not meant for understanding or explaining the findings.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

I- PERSONAL (optional)

Name / ID:

College:

Age:

GPA:

II- Circle the most appropriate choice.

The researchers want to find out the qualities of an effective teacher. Read the statements carefully and circle the most appropriate answer according to the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree**2 = disagree****3 = neutral****4 = agree****5 = strongly agree**

An effective teacher		tronly disagree	isagree	eutral	agree	strongly agree
1	<i>is always well- prepared and organized.</i>					
2	<i>has expert, up-to-date knowledge of the subject.</i>					
3	<i>stimulates interest in the course/subject.</i>					
4	<i>explains using simple language.</i>					
5	<i>is available to help students.</i>					
6	<i>uses relevant course materials.</i>					
7	<i>provide frequent, prompt, and useful feedback.</i>					
8	<i>uses appropriate teaching aids.</i>					
9	<i>answers questions accurately.</i>					
10	<i>makes classes interesting.</i>					
11	<i>is dedicated and committed.</i>					
12	<i>gives clear instructions.</i>					
13	<i>clearly defines evaluation methods.</i>					
14	<i>provides many examples.</i>					
15	<i>makes an effort to get to know the students.</i>					
16	<i>encourages students to answer other students' questions.</i>					
17	<i>uses a variety of teaching techniques.</i>					
18	<i>serves as a role model.</i>					
19	<i>is flexible in scheduling /rescheduling tests and deadlines.</i>					
20	<i>encourages student participation.</i>					
21	<i>treats students as equal.</i>					

22	<i>does group / pair work.</i>					
23	<i>gives lots of tests.</i>					
24	<i>has lots of teaching experience.</i>					
25	<i>willing to repeat explanations.</i>					
26	<i>communicates with students in English.</i>					
27	<i>lectures for the entire class period.</i>					
28	<i>guides students to become independent learners.</i>					
29	<i>welcome students' opinions /suggestions.</i>					