Effective EFL University Teachers: Measuring Students' Perceptions[1]

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Abstract

Investigating perceptions of an effective university English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher has been an ongoing topic in the last few years. However, those studies have focused only on teachers' perceptions, not students' perceptions, from the Latin American context and mainly based on Likert scales questionnaires. This study aims to determine university students' perceptions of what they distinguish as effective EFL university teachers. Based on the CEMEDEPU questionnaire, a new instrument called Effective EFL University Teacher (EEFLUT) of 71 items was created and applied to students from an Ecuadorian public university (N=716). A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted using AMOS 21 software to evaluate three models. The third model was chosen as the most accurate amid its great performance. This model has three main dimensions (Personal Qualities, Teaching-Learning Methodology, and Assessment Methodology). The reliability of the instrument was evaluated with the KR-20, which showed that two out of three dimensions presented high reliability of >.900. The findings demonstrate that the students value Personal Qualities (PQ) as the most relevant feature of an effective EFL university teacher above the Teaching-Learning Methodology and Assessment Methodology. These results reflect the importance of the participants attribute to the teacher's personal qualities as one of the components of their satisfaction in learning language.

Resumen

En los últimos años, se han realizado numerosos estudios encaminados a entender qué es un profesor de inglés como lengua extranjera eficaz. Sin embargo, estos estudios se han centrado únicamente en las percepciones de los mismos profesores, no las de los estudiantes, en el contexto latinoamericano y se han realizado principalmente con cuestionarios de escala Likert. Este estudio tiene como objetivo determinar las percepciones de los estudiantes universitarios sobre lo que ellos distinguen como profesores universitarios de EFL eficaces. Con base en el cuestionario CEMEDEPU, se creó un nuevo instrumento llamado Effective EFL University Teacher (EEFLUT) de 71 ítems y se aplicó a estudiantes de una universidad pública ecuatoriana (N=716). Se realizó un análisis factorial confirmatorio utilizando el software AMOS 21 para evaluar tres modelos. El tercer modelo fue elegido como el más preciso en medio de su gran desempeño. Este modelo tiene tres dimensiones principales (Cualidades personales, Metodología de enseñanza-aprendizaje y Metodología de evaluación). La confiabilidad del instrumento se evaluó con el KR-20, que mostró que dos de las tres dimensiones presentaron una confiabilidad alta de >.900. Los resultados demuestran que los estudiantes valoran las Cualidades Personales (CP) como la característica más relevante de un profesor universitario de inglés como lengua extranjera eficaz, por encima de la Metodología de Enseñanza-Aprendizaje y la Metodología de Evaluación. Estos resultados reflejan la importancia que los participantes atribuyen a las cualidades personales del profesor como uno de los componentes de su satisfacción en el aprendizaje de la lengua.

Introduction

The characteristics of an effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher have been a constant topic during the last years amid its complexity. Zamani and Ahangari (2016) highlight the fact that a good teacher is considered one of the main factors for student success or failure. This means that, apart from the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter, the personal characteristics are related to the teaching styles and skills and obviously to the teachers' behaviors in the classroom. These elements will somehow impact on the students' learning perspectives, motivation, and learning outcomes. Accordingly, the teacher's role is relevant and needs a deeper insight. In this context, some articles describe what an effective teacher is by establishing specific features and behaviors that they consider adequate to constitute. Consequently, the focus has typically been on teacher training programs aimed at enhancing teachers' effectiveness and efficiency in the EFL classroom. Consequently, this effectiveness has been usually focused on personal traits and on teacher training pedagogical programs whose aim is to train teachers to be better and more efficient in the EFL classroom. For instance, in Spanish-speaking countries, studies are focused on the educators' professionalization. Therefore, their constant academic update is vital to fulfill effective teacher's role (Dinçer

et al., 2013). There is insufficient information about the effective EFL teacher in Latin America in EFL language instruction.

Some authors addressed the problem years ago. Firstly, they wanted to determine the characteristics of a good English teacher. Allen (1980) said those features focused mainly on personality, but only one item, "competent preparation leading to a degree in English language teaching" (p.429), was related to the area of language teaching. Second, studies that addressed the characteristics of effective or successful English language teachers were carried out in other places outside Latin America. Çelik et al. (2013), Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) and Karim et al. (2020) analyzed those features in non-Western-countries. Finally, in Latin America, authors focused on teachers' performance in their jobs associated with the quality of education in the region (Escribano Hervis, 2018). Some researchers such as Hernández (2021) and Vezub and Cordero Arroyo (2022) have contributed valuable information to the educational community regarding the teacher profile, although there is a lack of profound insight into other important aspects.

Despite the scarce data in Latin America, Escribano Hervis (2018) analyzed teacher performance as a factor associated with educational quality in Latin America. His work argued that the importance and position of the teacher's performance was a factor directly related to the quality of education. He pointed out the limitations that occurred in the Latin American education systems, both in the initial training process (university) and continuing education of teachers in this region. In the same way, he addressed the challenges that teachers had in their role as educators and analyzed the huge demands of a quality education that XXI century and the region require.

Alonso Martín (2019) refers to a university teacher in a Spanish-speaking country. The study was carried out at the University of Huelva in Spain; its objective was to know university students' perceptions of a good teacher. One of the most important results showed that participants valued a respectful, open, and responsible university educator. For them, it was also important that the teacher master the subject, prepare the classes, and be a good communicator. Finally, significant differences were found in the variables grade and gender.

Therefore, studies based on university students' perceptions are insufficient in a South American university context. The scarcity of information regarding this teacher's effectiveness is evident. Consequently, there is no updated information on an effective EFL teacher, the ideal personality, teaching methodology, or assessment criteria according to students' perceptions in this region.

Before the current study there felt to be a need to adapt and validate a questionnaire that adjusted to the Spanish-speaking university context. Thus, there was a solid need to construct a profile and–clear idea of what students believed that an EFL teacher had to include in the role of being an effective EFL instructor. Having limited data meant the students' point of view or perceptions went unnoticed. In addition, inserting other dimensions that would allow the analysis and establishment of a broader profile of this EFL teacher in a university context would not only be essential but enriching. Therefore, this investigation aimed to determine university students' perceptions of what they perceived as effective EFL university teachers. In this sense, two research questions were formulated:

> Q1: What are the reliability and validity of the list of relevant attributes instrument from students' perceptions of an effective EFL teacher?

> Q2: According to university students, what are the most important and the least important characteristics of an effective EFL teacher?

Literature Review

Characteristics of good teachers

Finding the exact definition or characteristics of a good teacher has been subject of ongoing debate since this is a subjective topic and has different perspectives. For example, Douglass (1958) states that one of the characteristics of a good teacher is to get learners to master the learning contents. This ability includes some features such as preparation, confidence, effort, and methodology. Similarly, Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007) claim that teachers whose students show significant learning achievements are good teachers. This concept has several components within this perspective: engaging students in active learning, using different assessment tools, starting from diagnostic results, clearing up doubts and misconceptions, adapting the curriculum to other students' needs, providing constant feedback, designing a well-functioning respectful classroom, and involving parents in the learning process. Besides, they state that there is much more that teachers have to learn to become effective teachers. Dewar (2002) who

concludes that there is no perfect teaching approach, proposes another perspective of the attributes that encompass being a good teacher. An engaged teacher who is eager to continue learning helps foster an effective and enjoyable environment for the teaching-learning process, which contributes to becoming a good teacher.

Generally, most research efforts have concluded that there is not a definite or single concept of what a good teacher is. "There is no one best kind of teaching because there is no one kind of student" (Hamachek, 1969). Nevertheless, research has often highlighted key dimensions that describe teaching efficiency using personality traits, methodology, professional training, and skills (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Hamachek, 1969; Miller, 2012).

As the literature above shows, there is a general agreement as to the characteristics to describe what a good teacher is or should be. These characteristics are important and will be discussed further below

Although most educators have professional training, EFL teachers are required to develop distinctive characteristics that differ from other teachers. There are diverse approaches to the attributes of effective teachers and are exposed by different authors. Thus, a pair of features should be considered since they are natural for EFL teachers; in other words, these features are specific to EFL teaching and are not typically required of teachers in other subjects (Dincer et al., 2013).

Subject-matter knowledge

Borg (2006) points out that subject-matter knowledge is an important feature that EFL teachers possess. Knowledge of the target language, including accuracy, fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation, is essential for teaching EFL. This expertise also helps educators become well-versed in the target culture. Shishavan and Sadeghi (2010) also insist on the importance of this 'field knowledge' of EFL teachers since they are the ones who provide the knowledge in the teaching-learning process. For instance, an EFL teacher who is well-versed in the target culture might incorporate culturally relevant materials, such as traditional literature or current events from the target country, to provide students with a richer cultural experience. In many cases, this exposure might be the students' only opportunity to engage with the target culture. Finally, Arikan et al. (2008) state that effective teachers should have the ability to know how to prepare appropriate lesson plans that include form, use, and meaning. Still, according to the student's language level, the cultural component could vary.

Personality

The other important feature is personality. This characteristic is what is considered to be essential for EFL teachers. The elements often cited are being patient and flexible, caring about the students' needs, having positive attitudes towards the learners, and being intelligent and creative (Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2010). To this list, Werbinska (2009) added other features necessary for an effective EFL teacher, like being tolerant, kind, patient, sensible and open-minded, flexible, optimistic, enthusiastic, and having positive attitudes toward new ideas and caring for students. Likewise, Narváez-Cantos (2022) suggest they should "have a good sense of humor" and "avoid direct criticism of students when they make errors" (p. 12) among the most relevant characteristics from students' perspectives. She concludes that the teacher's personal qualities stand out as part of an effective EFL teacher. Finally, Clark and Walsh (2002) state that when EFL teachers combine all of these features, they can develop a trusting and effective relationship with their students throughout the teaching-learning process they can finish their teaching-learning period with a trusting human relationship with their students.

This current research agrees with the "dual" position of different authors (Arikan et al. 2008; Borg, 2006; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2010; Werbinska, 2009), for they consider that the effective teacher to be the sum of pedagogical knowledge and personal qualities. However, this study adopts a more inclusive and pluralistic position since it proposes a broader approach that includes other dimensions, such as methodology characteristics, explanation characteristics, appropriate methodology and appropriate materials and resources. In short, the effective EFL teacher is a compendium of qualities that make and belong to these dimensions.

Previous studies on effective EFL teachers

It is considered that there are two dimensions essential in teaching: subject-matter knowledge and personality. Subject-matter competence involves knowing and mastering the foreign language, which is crucial for non-native speakers, as well as being able to effectively transmit that knowledge to students

(Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Tsui, 2009). The personality dimension is equally critical, and research highlights its importance in effective teaching (Dörnyei, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2014)

Çelik et al. (2013) studied the profile of the qualities of an effective foreign language teacher. They designed quantitative research in which 998 undergraduate students participated. All of the participants were from a state university in Turkey. An adapted 37-item questionnaire with a Likert-type scale was used to determine the relevant "pedagogy-specific knowledge, personality traits, professional skills, and classroom behavior" (p. 293). The research results showed that students considered a successful teacher to be both fair and just, as well as enthusiastic about teaching. They were also able to reduce students' anxiety, manage the classroom and create a comfortable learning atmosphere.

Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) conducted a study concerning the perceptions of future teachers of English on effective foreign language teaching. The participants (N=400) were part of two different English Departments, English Language Teaching (ELT) and English Language and Literature (ELL), from state universities in Turkey. The authors used a questionnaire, Effective Teacher Questionnaire, developed by Brown (2007). The questionnaire used a Likert scale and covered these dimensions: grammar teaching, error correction, target language use, culture, computer-based technology, communicative language teaching strategies, and assessment. The most relevant results showed that the ELT Department participants perceived an effective foreign language teacher to be someone who had a native-like level of language, teaching, and culture. In contrast, participants from the ELL department preferred teachers who emphasized grammar content. The authors suggested that this difference was due to the content and quantity of credits included in their programs.

Karim et al. (2020) investigated the features of effective EFL instructors perceived by students who wanted to become EFL teachers. The sample was 334 students from state and private universities in Indonesia. An adapted instrument developed by Park and Lee (2006) and Wichadee (2010) with a Likert scale from 1 to 4 was used. This questionnaire had categories such as subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills. The findings showed that student-teachers had positive perceptions about the attributes of effective EFL teacher educators. Nevertheless, some attributes were comparatively more important than others, and this varied from one category to another. Thus, the most relevant features were being friendly to students, making courses enjoyable to attract students' attention, reading English well, and assessing what students have learned rationally. However, effective EFL teachers were highly rated socio-affective skills.

The studies above applied questionnaires that included a Likert Scale. These instruments were generally organized in four or five dimensions, and their results were ordered precisely around them. Therefore, the present study considers a questionnaire that is not based on a Likert scale, but instead it takes a list of attributes that may or may not be relevant to the participants. This questionnaire could clarify some aspects that could have been unnoticed.

While important information related to EFL university teachers has been established in other contexts, studies addressing the EFL teacher in Latin America are lacking. This research aims to contribute information on students' perceptions of effective EFL university teachers and provide a reliable questionnaire for use in different contexts.

Methodology

Participants

This research was conducted with students of the Language Department, University of Cuenca in Cuenca, Ecuador. The participants were recruited based on a voluntary response sample. Some teachers from different levels and programs were asked to share a questionnaire with their students. They were part of an Academic Program of Foreign Language Sufficiency (PASLE in Spanish) and Intensive courses. The students were informed at the beginning of the questionnaire that they were participating in a study about their perceptions of an effective EFL teacher. They were also notified that they were entirely free to answer the questions in a sincere and anonymous form or not. The researchers guaranteed that all the information collected would be confidential and for research purposes only. The date of administration of the instrument was in April and May, 2021. This instrument took an average of seven or nine minutes to complete. The sample of this study consisted of 716 male and female students from 18 to 39 years old.

Instrument

A new instrument was developed based on the questionnaire Evaluation of the Teaching and Evaluation Methodology of University Professors - (CEMEDEPU in Spanish) by Gargallo López et al. (2010). The new instrument, Effective EFL University Teacher (EEFLUT), evaluates students' perceptions of an effective EFL teacher in three aspects:

1. Personal Qualities (PQ),

2. Teaching-Learning Methodology (TL Meth.) with its sub-dimensions: Methodology Characteristics (Meth. Char.), Explanation Characteristics (Expl. Char.), Appropriate Methodology (App. Meth.), and Appropriate Materials and Resources (App. M. & R.).

3. Assessment Methodology (Ass. Meth.) with two sub-dimensions: Assessment Methods (Ass. Methods), and Assessment Characteristics (Ass. Char.).

Each aspect of this self-reported questionnaire has different options that the participants had to select according to their conceptions, experiences, or thoughts on a scale of 0-1.

Construct validity

The CEMEDEPU scale originally contained 100 items grouped into four dimensions. Although this scale was valid and reliable, a literature review of the construct scope (area of the study) led to the need to modify it into the three dimensions above with 71 items (PQ-13 items, TL-39 items, Ass. Meth-19 items).

The PQ dimension (in CEMEDEPU) was not considered in the EEFLUT. This was because all the elements were included in the rest of the dimensions and could cause confusion to the participants. It is important to comment that the removal of certain dimensions was due to the type of activities described and established in the syllabus used as a guide for learning English at the Language Institute. For instance, the CEMEDEPU questionnaire contained the item assessment of carrying out an internship, but the Ecuadorian program required students must take different assessment methods with different kinds of assessment (quizzes, mid-term exams, final exams). Some expressions were also adapted from the original Spanish in the CEMEDEPU to the Ecuadorian context to make them understandable. Based on Hofstede (2011), these changes were made because different cultures value different features and practices. This process is shown in Table 1.

Dimension: Personal Qualities			
Sub-dimension	**Removed dimensions**	**Added Items**	**Removed items**
Professional Qualities	Not considered	Fair Creative	Good person Listening ability Attentive

Dimension: Teaching Learning Methodology			
Sub-dimension	**Removed dimensions**	**Added Items**	**Items removed**
A. Explanation characteristics			With appropriate volume and tone of voice Link theory and practice
B. Methodology that should be used			Socratic-maieutic method (explanation, questions, problem-solving, critically constructing the subject with the participation of the students) Case analysis Discovery learning method Seminars Resolution of doubts in tutoring

Dimension: Assessment Methodology			
Sub-dimension	**Removed dimensions**	**Added Items**	**Items removed**
A. Assessment Methods			The assessment of active participation in class (oral and written production) Assessment of attendance at tutoring sessions Assessment of carrying out internships Recension review
B. Assessment Characteristics		Question bank	That students understand the evaluation criteria and procedures.

Table 1: Modification of the scale of CEMEDEPU

The new scale was subjected to analysis with structural equations to perform a statistical validation of the construct among students learning English as a foreign language.

Statistical analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed with the AMOS 21 program. Construct validity is achieved by generating a causal explanation from latent variables (which are hypothetical), called dimensions, to observed variables, called items. In the SPSS program, it is only possible to develop an exploratory analysis of these relationships when there is no a priori knowledge. In contrast, it is possible to confirm these causal relationships in the AMOS program when there is a theory and empirical evidence to support these relationships, as is the case in this study (Byrne, 2016). In this regard, the use of AMOS was preferred to SPSS. The data properties were evaluated with the Mardia test, whose kurtosis is 774.611 and its critical ratio is 101.79. In addition, an evaluation of the Mahalanobis distances was carried out without finding any novelties to report to eliminate typical data. A bootstrapping of 200 samples was carried out considering the non-normal properties of the data. In this situation, the Maximum Likelihood method was applied. The model fit was conducted using Hair et al. (1998) recommendations for a sample N>250 and the number of observed variables m>30. Hair recommends the use of CMIN/DF (with a value between 2 and 3), CFI (preferred ≥0.900), TLI (preferred ≥0.900), and RMSEA (0.800 or less with a higher CFI ≥ 0.900). We add the Akaike fit to select the best model for our purposes since it best fits considering the low value.

According to Bademci (2011) the Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20), Cronbach's alpha (α), and Hoyt's Anova formulas are equivalent when dichotomous scales (0 and 1) are used to evaluate reliability. However, the result of this value must be attributed to KR-20, a coefficient used to evaluate the reliability of bivalent measurements.

To report the results of the two questions, averages were generated to know the frequency with which participants tended to select one dimension over another. These averages are presented accompanied by the measure of variability (standard deviation). In addition, the results of the dimensions are plotted using an error bar chart. This diagram permits visualization and establishes if there are significant differences among dimensions since the error bars are plotted with 95% interval confidence.

Results

Construct validity

Three models were analyzed to validate the proposed scale. The first corresponded to the seven dimensions without establishing correlations between the covariances. In the second model, this number of dimensions was preserved, but ten covariances between errors were corrected, which implied a better fit of the model judging by the coefficients used. Finally, only three dimensions, were generated grouping four sub-dimensions in TL. Methodology and two in Ass. Meth. The values obtained are similar to the second model, but it is observed that there is a better performance in the Akaike criterion. For this reason, it was decided to validate the construct with this last model based on the theoretical structure. The significant differences among the models were not compared, but the good fit of all of them was presented (Table 2). Based on the best fit, it was decided to keep the third model.

	CMIN/DF	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMSEA LO 90	HI 90	AIC
Model 1	2.223	0.837	0.830	0.041	0.040	0.043	5786.911
Model 2	2.052	0.860	0.854	0.038	0.037	0.040	5377.561
Model 3	2.076	0.856	0.851	0.039	0.037	0.040	5294.453

Table 2: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model fit measures of the CEMEDEPU questionnaire

The regression weights of the three dimensions (1. PQ, 2. TL, and 3. Ass. Meth.) included two dimensions that have sub-dimensions. The first one is TL (a. Meth. Char., b. Expl. Char., c. App. Meth., and d. App. M. & R.). The second is Ass. Meth. (a. Ass. Methods and b. Ass. Char.). For this, 71 items regarding each dimension or sub-dimension are presented in Table 3. The saturation observed in most of the cases is above 0.500. However, two specific items, *demands the basic, and not too much* (67) and *with great difficulty for students* (68), showed factor loadings close to 0.300 corresponding to Ass. Characteristics. Nevertheless, they are not considered a problem since they fully respond to the theory, so they are preserved in the model. Standardized regression weights of the dimensions, sub-dimensions, and items are available in the Appendix.

Part of the evaluation of the model constituted the intercorrelations among dimensions and covariance errors. Table 3 shows that the intercorrelations between the three dimensions are very good, especially between Ass. Meth. and TL and between PQ and TL. The covariations between errors present both direct and indirect correlations that in most cases did not exceed 0.25.

			Estimate
TL		Ass. Meth,	0.904
PQ		TL.	0.906
PQ		Ass. Meth.	0.794
e58		e59	0.243
e54		e62	-0.243
e54		e59	-0.191
e42	<-->	e43	0.278
e27		e28	0.239
e26		e27	0.150
e25		e26	0.237
e15		e50	0.253
e7		e16	0.240
e4		e26	0.246

Note. e=error

Table 3: Inter-correlations of the dimensions

Reliability

Regarding the reliability evaluated with the KR-20 coefficient (Table 4), it is observed that the dimensions of PQ and TL present reliability above 0.900, while the Ass. Meth. dimension is 0.845. Within the sub-dimensions of TL, a saturation is noted acceptable for App. Meth. and App. M. & R., whose coefficients are close to 0.750. In the case of Ass. Meth., Ass. Methods obtained a coefficient of 0.746, while Ass. Char. only reached 0.693.

	KR-20
PQ (13 items)	0.980
TL (39 items)	0.936
Meth. Char. (8 items)	0.739
Expl. Cbar. (12 items)	0.835
App. Meth. (10 items)	0.745
App. Mat. & Res. (9 items)	0.746
ASS. METH. (19 items)	0.845
Ass. Meth. (10 items)	0.746
Ass. Char. (9 items)	0.693
TOTAL	0.963

Table 4: Construct reliability evaluated with KR-20

In response to the first question (What are the reliability and validity of a list of relevant attributes instrument from students' perceptions of an effective EFL teacher?), it can be concluded that the questionnaire was valid and reliable based on the obtained data. Therefore, it was possible to distinguish the characteristics of an effective EFL teacher.

Characteristics of an effective EFL teacher

Table 6 shows the descriptive values of the three dimensions and their sub-dimensions. The dichotomous scale's minimum and maximum are 0 and 1, respectively. We obtained the mean (arithmetic average) by dividing the sum of the items of a dimension by the number of items (k). In addition, the means show how students emphasized each dimension or sub-dimension, and the standard deviation shows how the mean varies and how well they are represented.

	N	Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
PQ	716	13	.00	1.00	0.61	0.33
TL		39			0.49	0.26
Meth. Char.		8			0.53	0.28
Expl. Char.	716	12	.00	1.00	0.49	0.28
App. Meth.		10			0.45	0.26
App. M. & R		9			0.48	0.27
Ass. Meth.		19			0.44	0.24
Ass. Methods	716	10	.00	1.00	0.44	0.25
Ass. Char.		9			0.39	0.25

Table 5: Descriptive statistics

According to the second question, Figure 1 shows that students valued PQ most, which is significantly higher than TL and Ass. Meth. Within TL significant differences can be noted between the Meth. Char. that are significantly higher than the Expl. Char. and App. M. & R. Within this dimension, App. Meth. was the least valued by students.

As can be seen in the Figure below, the students considered that the least important aspect of an effective teacher was Ass. Char. Regarding Ass. Meth., this dimension was significantly lower than TL. Within it, the Ass. Methods were the ones that were considerably above the Ass. Char.
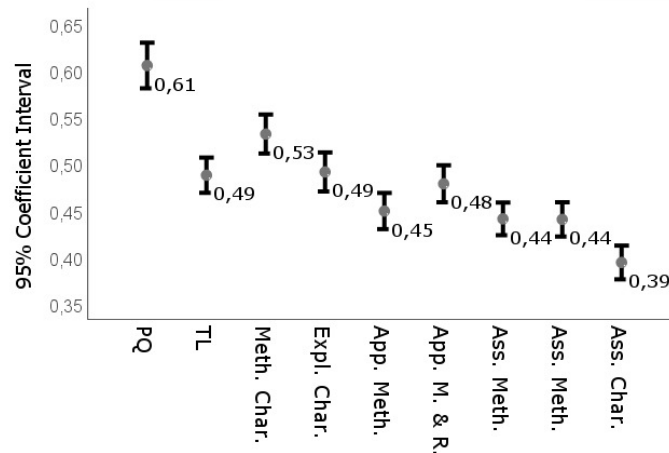

Figure 1: Predominant features of the effective EFL teacher

In respect of the second question (According to university students, what are the most important and the least important characteristic of an effective EFL teacher?), the essential characteristic is PQ, and the least important is Ass. Meth.

Discussion

This study aimed to determine university students' perceptions of effective EFL university teachers. An instrument was created, validated, and applied to a sample of N=716 students. The findings of this study revealed different opinions of what students believed and considered an EFL university teacher should be to be called effective.

This is one of the few current studies that considered a structural equation modeling to show the validity of the three dimensions and their sub-dimensions with their reliability. In fact, our results resemble the related literature, which noticeably specifies that students' perceptions of effective university teachers are multidimensional (Gursoy & Umbreit, 2005; Park & Lee, 2006; Zamani & Ahagari, 2016), while some other studies limited their data collecting instruments to subjective analysis of experts' criteria. Several researchers identified various dimensions to evaluate students' perceptions of an effective EFL teacher. For example, Park and Lee (2006) distinguished three dimensions: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective akills. This study included eight experts and five teachers who specialized in teaching English as second language (TESL) as experts for the instrument validation; however, it was carried out at a secondary level. Even though the English proficiency dimension is not included in our questionnaire, the two others are considered and are consequently in line with those findings. Gurosy and Umbreit (2005) concluded that students' perceptions of effective teaching have four components: learning, organization, instruction, and workload. Here, a process of statistical testing applying exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and a structural modeling approach were used. There were two essential sources in which the assessment criteria were considered. Markley (2004) created an instrument developed using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The findings suggested that effective university teaching should have five components: organization, difficulty, grading, instructor concern, and learning. Finally, Jackson et al. (1999) also utilized confirmatory factor analysis procedures, and they listed six factors: relationship with students, course value, organization, grading, difficulty, and workload. Even though this literature is relevant, the studies were carried out 22 and 23 years ago, respectively, so the scarcity of current literature in which assessment methodology as an independent dimension is considered in the EFL university context is evident.

According to university students, the most important characteristic of an effective EFL teacher is PQ. More than 0.60 points support this dimension as the most crucial component. This result is in line with previous studies. For instance, Chen (2012) found that EFL students in Thailand generally perceived that teachers' personalities and teacher-student interactions were more important than their instructional competence. In their latest study, Karim et al. (2020) identified that students' perceptions of socio-affective skills are generally considered as a significant feature of effective EFL university teachers. Therefore, this aspect should be highly considered by university students and instructors since these views constitute a fundamental characteristic of defining the profile of the effective university teacher. That is why students mention the need to consider these characteristics (Iglesias-Casal, 2016). Finally, Heredia-Arboleda et al. (2021) insisted on emphasizing PQ because it generated a motivating environment for students to use English in in-class activities and elsewhere. It could be argued that PQ should be an aspect to be seriously considered in higher education institutions since their teaching performance constitutes their knowledge of the subject and their methodological performance, but also their way of relating to their students and how students perceive it. This aspect has to be seen as a crucial part of higher education area since it includes not only professional training, but also reflects a vocation.

Secondly, the TL dimension is in the middle of the three general dimensions studied. Four sub-dimensions belong to this dimension (a. Meth. Char.; b. Expl. Char.; c. App. Meth., and d. App. M. & R.). Almost half the participants (49%) agreed that the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning (TL. Meth.) were vital to them. This finding differs from a previous study conducted by Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) since the participants were majoring in ELT. However, the participants in this study belonged to different majors and had to take English as a compulsory graduation requirement.

Within TL, significant differences are noted among its sub-dimensions. Meth. Char. have the highest rate/value (53%). This finding agrees with Metruk's (2020) study in which the top feature relates to TL; the author refers to it as being able to present content in a meaningful way, and it was rated as an essential quality of a good and effective teacher. In this study, the TL dimension is also related to the way teachers start their lessons, the teaching strategies used in class, and the diverse methodology. The Expl. Char. and App. M.& R. are almost at the same level, 49%, and 48%, respectively. In contrast, App. Meth. is the least esteemed by students.

Students considered Ass. Meth. as the least important (44%) feature of an effective EFL teacher. Within this dimension, Ass. Char. were the lowest ranked with 39% and Ass. Meth. were considered a bit more important (44%). These results suggest that the participants did not perceive how they were evaluated as one of the crucial components of an effective teacher. These findings coincided with a study carried out by Işik (2020), who determined that students did not identify assessment as an intrinsic factor in their learning process. This could be due to the university's assessment system, which included mid-term and final exams. So, participants saw the assessment tools, in specific instances, as a final part of the learning process or just as part of getting a grade.

Conclusion

Ultimately, Personal Qualities (PQ) was the most appreciated dimension for the participants in this study, so it is clear that students at the University of Cuenca valued teachers' personal characteristics and attributes more than their methodology and assessment. Given that the classroom environment is dynamic and challenging, and not everything can always be followed, it is important to consider personal traits when adapting actions, making assertive decisions, and involving students in such circumstances. In this framework, using a validated questionnaire grants a deep look inside of students' thoughts on teaching effectiveness in the English as a foreign language (EFL) field. Therefore, it could be a helpful instrument to collect data in tertiary education systems, which can contribute to the current literature.

Some implications suggest that being an effective teacher is a combination of some features where PQ should have important space and attention within university teaching practices. In fact, over 50% of the study's participants acknowledged the significance of teachers' behavior in the teaching and learning process. Consequently, developing these qualities would be ideal in tertiary educational institutions since they play a relevant role in achieving learning outcomes.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that it is not possible to generalize the results of this study because the students' appreciation of what they consider the most important features for an EFL teacher to become effective will depend mainly on the context and the environment in which the teaching-learning process is done. Besides, this study is by no means ample and has its limitation. Even though this study found relevant

data, some details could have been neglected. Thus, it should be meaningful for future investigations to do research to see if the level, major, or social status of the learners could have influenced the results.

In short, this study has proposed a selection instrument for 71 relevant attributes identified by students to assess effective EFL university teachers. This scale has three dimensions, in which PQ (61%) is the highest, followed by Teaching Learning. Methodology (49%) and Assessment. Methodology (44%) in the second and third place respectively. These findings underscore the importance of targeted assessment in enhancing teacher effectiveness. Future research could further refine these dimensions and explore how they impact student outcomes and teacher development.

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Appendix

Standardized Regression Weights of the Dimensions, Sub-dimensions, and Items

Items	Regression Weights	Dimensions
1. Sympathy	0.613	
2. Good-humored	0.599	
3. Good-natured	0.655	
4. Fun	0.588	
5. Open to listen	0.704	
6. Comprehensible	0.683	
7. Honest	0.678	PQ
8. Fair	0.688	
9. Respectful	0.720	
10. Kind	0.658	
11. Empathy	0.626	
12. Trustworthy	0.637	
13. Creative	0.664	
A. Methodology Characteristics	1.054	
B. Explanation Characteristics	1.016	TL
C. Appropriate Methodology	1.066	
D. Appropriate Materials and Resources	1.061	
14. start from a previous diagnostic	0.502	
15. teach strategies to work on the subject and learn (study techniques, exam preparation, public speaking...)	0.563	
16. promote students' participation	0.508	
17. promotes individual work	0.468	
18. use a diverse methodology adapted to the students' characteristics	0.542	Meth. Char.
19. reduce the expository class to what is strictly necessary.	0.322	
20. establish a relationship between theory and practice	0.559	
21. use the necessary support resources (PowerPoint, worksheets, reading materials, videos, etc.)	0.580	
22. be clear	0.605	
23. be simple and with understandable vocabulary	0.558	
24. be precise	0.512	
25. be enjoyable	0.382	
26. be fun	0.427	
27. be engaging	0.508	Expl. Char.
28. be interesting	0.544	
29. use practical and real examples	0.598	
30. emphasized basic concepts	0.578	
31. have a good order	0.548	
32. suit to the students' learning pace	0.553	
33. spend a short time to recall the former contents	0.580	
34. significant learning (not rote, linking the new and the old content)	0.557	
35. charts, and summaries on the board that are explained later	0.447	
36. questions about the content to promote students' participation	0.490	
37. expository class (strictly necessary)	0.384	
38. different ways to explain a content (use a variety of methodologies)	0.500	App. Meth.
39. doubts solving in class	0.573	
40. traditional method: first explanation and then its practice	0.389	
41. topical subjects	0.482	
42. students are required to read in advance	0.454	
43. students are required to present oral expositions	0.369	
44. clear and simple study material	0.631	App. M. & R.
45. precise bibliographical references	0.401	

46. quality notes focused on what is important to learn	0.540	
47. advance notes in class to avoid taking them all the time	0.437	
48. standardized exams	0.419	
49. solved exercises	0.367	
50. technological resources (videos, PowerPoint, graphics, traditional slides, multimedia, digital whiteboard, etc.)	0.587	
51. written resources (newspaper articles, scripts, related reading, etc.)	0.486	
52. use of additional learning material (outlines, summaries, photocopies)	0.567	
A. Assessment Methods	0.967	Ass. Meth.
B. Assessment Characteristics	1.094	
53. final exam only	0.129	
54. partial exams	0.375	
55. tasks assessment	0.687	
56. attendance assessment	0.517	
57. classwork assessment	0.661	
58. students' effort assessment	0.607	Ass. Meth.
59. students' interest assessment	0.531	
60. active class participation assessment (oral and written production)	0.547	
61. portfolios assessment	0.399	
62. the replacement of exams by other methods	0.296	
63. continuous (not only a final exam)	0.462	
64. formative: for the students to know their mistakes and limitations to correct them. It implies providing the students with the necessary information during the course and cannot be limited to giving a single grade for the exam.	0.562	
65. fair and appropriate to what has been worked in class	0.522	
66. flexible (offering several options to pass the subject)	0.501	Ass. Char.
67. that demands the basic, and not too much	0.306	
68. with great difficulty for students	0.299	
69. negotiated between teacher and students	0.365	
70. valued, not only for memorization but also for reasoning and meaningful learning	0.531	
71. based on a questions bank	0.370	