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**“Exploring Students’ and Teachers’ Perceptions on  
Characteristics of Best EFL Teachers: Bedessa Secondary and  
Preparatory School (Grades 11 and 12 in Focus)”**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a research finding that aimed to explore the perceptions held by students and teachers about the characteristics of best EFL teachers and to compare the perceptions held by the two groups on the characteristics of best English language teachers in Bedessa town (Western Hararge Zone). In this study, 35 preparatory students and 20 English language teachers were involved. The data were collected through a five-point rating scale questionnaire consisting of three categories of effective teaching: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills (personal attributes). Overall, the students perceived significantly different characteristics from the teachers in all the three categories with the students' high ranking to pedagogical knowledge and the teachers' high ranking to English proficiency. Both students and teachers believed that a best English teacher should read, write and speak English well, prepare the lesson well, be able to explain things well, use lesson plans properly, provide interesting activities, arouse students' motivation for learning English, build students' self-confidence in order to learn English well, and positive attitude, be punctual, encourage students to achieve better, and be helpful to students in and outside the classroom.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. Background of the Study

Many studies have investigated the characteristics of effective/ good teachers which influence students' learning and achievement (Demmon- Berger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et.al, 1993; Witcher et. al, 2001; Liando, 2010; Nuru, 2008; Darge, 2000). These studies asked students to identify effective/ good teacher characteristics by means of self-report questionnaires or interviews.

Lang et. al. (1993) developed a list of 32 characteristics of effective teachers through interviews with college teachers, and asked 167 participants (administrators, chairpersons, college teachers and students) to identify and rank three characteristics considered important to teaching. They found that the teachers rated 16 characteristics significantly different from the students and that the overall difference was significant. The mean ratings for three characteristics including knowledge of world events and knowing students and teaching them in ways which they learn best were higher for student respondents, whereas the remaining 13 characteristics including knowing the subject well and encouraging students to learn independently received higher ratings from teacher respondents.

In order to better understand the characteristics of effective teacher, efforts were made to find constructs in a long list of effective characteristics. Witcher et. al. (2001) for example, examined pre-service teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers by asking the participants to identify, rank and define 3-6 characteristics that excellent teachers possessed. They found a total of 125 characteristics which were classified into the following 6 categories in order of endorsement rate: student-centeredness (79.5%), enthusiasm for teaching (40.2%), ethicalness (38.8%), classroom and behavior management (33.3%), teaching methodology (32.4%) and knowledge of subject (31.5%).

Koutsoulis (2003) also identified 94 characteristics of effective teachers by 25 high school students in Cyprus and found that the 94 characteristics were classified into three

categories: human characteristics such as the ability to show understanding and teacher friendliness; communication characteristics such as the ability to communicate with students and to handle teacher- student relations; and teaching and production characteristics such as lessons to be interesting and motivating and teacher's subject matter knowledge. Another finding of this study was that students at different achievement levels understood teacher effectiveness differently. The low achievement students endorsed more human and communication characteristics than the high achievement students, whereas the high achievement students acknowledged more teaching and production characteristics than their counterparts did.

More recently, Liando (2010) identified 14 characteristics of best English teachers by 126 university students and 28 teachers in Indonesia. Both teachers and students agreed that the best English teacher should be friendly, intelligent and be able to explain things well, nice, able to make the course more interesting and like humor, patient, enthusiastic and like to give extra help, give rewards, give lots of homework, challenge students academically, fair or strict in order of importance. The results showed that characteristics of teachers who displayed more personal attitudes received higher votes than academic elements.

In our context, Ethiopia, Nuru (2008) conducted a study to explore English teachers' conceptions of the good teacher. Data for the study were obtained from 57 teachers of English drawn from seven high schools in Addis Ababa by means of questionnaires. The study revealed that the teachers were more likely to describe the attributes of the good teacher in behavioral terms. Good teachers were perceived as task oriented, well organized, well prepared, and punctual for classes. Furthermore, the data suggested that successful teachers are those who manage to develop a relationship with students that is not stressful and that is family like in the sense that they help, encourage and motivate students to achieve better. Definition of the good teacher that emphasized intellectual capacity and professional competence represented the second most frequent kind of description of the effective teacher. Effective teachers were also perceived to be those that know a great deal about the subjects they teach and who constantly strive to learn more about their subject.

Similarly, a study conducted by Darge (2000) has provided valuable information about the perceptions of high school students in Ethiopia. In the study, Darge surveyed the perceptions of students in terms of what they considered desirable and undesirable characteristics of English and Maths teachers. In the study, 43 students drawn from three grade levels, namely, 9, 10 and 11 served as sources of data. Data on students' views were elicited through interview. One major finding was that students hold a clear view of what constitutes a good and a bad teacher with the list of characteristics disliked by students being longer than that they liked. As regards teacher characteristics the students liked, the study revealed the following: activity-orientedness, responsiveness, expressiveness and supportiveness. The students were also able to associate bad teachers with one or more of the following characteristics: derisiveness, incompetence, abuse of class time, poor classroom management, restrictiveness, bias against female students, wrong pace, punitiveness and non-responsiveness.

As the teacher factor matters to students' learning and achievement, a number of researchers examined the characteristics of effective or good teachers either from the perspectives of teachers or students, and there is almost no particular study conducted locally focusing on this issue from the perspectives of both students and teachers. The present study is important for some reasons. First, studies so far conducted locally in the area are insufficient in making us fully aware of how a best English language teacher is perceived by both students and teachers in many secondary schools found in the country, and as such could not claim any measure of generalizability. Studies conducted by Darge, 2000; and Nuru, 2008 are a case in point. Second, the literature suggests the possibility of variations in desirable teacher characteristics; i.e. perceptions of the best or good teacher may vary from place to place according to the unique cultural and contextual settings in which students learn and/or teachers work. Moreover, for Bedassa secondary and preparatory students and teachers, perceptions of this matter have never been assessed before. Reasoning in this way, the researcher would like to find out what a "best teacher" truly is in their opinions or views in order to bring about improvements in the teaching and learning process in the English language classroom.

In short, the purpose of this study is to fill the gap and contribute towards our understanding of the attributes of best EFL teachers in terms of subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills from the perspectives of both students and teachers as well as to compare those characteristics perceived by the two groups.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Teachers in general and English language teachers in particular play a fundamental role in their students' learning and academic achievement. Several studies have been able to identify teachers' significant roles in learning second or foreign languages. As previous research has revealed, effective and efficient learning on the part of students highly depends on teachers and the actions they take in their classes (Markley, 2004). The way teachers behave and the methodologies they exploit in their teaching, to a large extent, depend on their perceptions of effective teaching and their beliefs about teacher efficacy (Ghaith and Shaaban, 1999). It also affects the way they understand and organize instruction (Chacon, 2005). Therefore, the teachers' perceptions of an effective teacher can highly influence their teaching and as a result their learners (Dembo and Gibson, 1985; Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy, 2000, cited in Babai Shishavan, 2010). Students also bring their own beliefs about learning and their perceptions of effective teachers into classroom and their beliefs seem to have obvious relevance to their expectations of the course (Horwitz, 1988).

According to Wichadee (2009), the teacher is one of the factors that has a lot of influence on student achievement. An ineffective teacher places students at an extreme disadvantage due to poor instruction. According to Adams and Pierce (1999), having many years of experience does not guarantee expert teaching; experience is useful only when the teacher continually engages in self-reflection and modifies classroom techniques to better serve the needs of students. Teachers must prepare to teach a wide range of students in terms of interest, motivation and ability, some of whom may need additional assistance and these behavioral characteristics are said to have effects on the students learning English. However, apart from good teaching skills that teachers need to

have, personal traits are also equally important because they also play a vital role in the success of learning as stated by Thompson (2008) that building and maintaining relationships in classrooms is necessary. And to build relationships, teachers need to be able to build rapport and foster an environment that encourages questions, negotiations and processing, and ultimately, autonomy, rather than an over-dependence on teachers. In order for this to occur, teachers should be well-planned, creative and patient with the learners they are working (Wuchadee, 2009).

In connection to this, Ahmad and Aziz (2009) stated:-

*Throughout the learning process of developing students' ability to learn English, teachers have a very important role to play. It is in their capacity as teachers that they play an important role in cultivating and fostering the love and interest for the language in students. Through their effective teaching methodologies and through their personal interest in teaching as well as their love for the particular subject, teachers can make the students like or dislike the subject.*

They also argued that an effective teaching process and a very conducive learning environment of the classroom are undeniably teachers' responsibility. This means that the enthusiasm of the teachers, which is generally translated in their actions and decisions, is a salient determinant of students' interest.

However, there is still much we need to know about this issue. Reflecting back to my own experience as a high school student and teacher, I remember that many of high school students' performance in English was poor compared to other school subjects. They also disliked learning English and regarded it as a difficult subject; possibly because teachers' characteristics and attitudes might have influenced their motivation and attitude towards the language. I am not sure if situations have changed. Neither is it clear whether the relevant perceptions of teachers and students significantly differ or are highly similar. Therefore, the need to conduct this study arose from this assumption.

So, investigating the characteristics of English language teachers from the perspectives of students and teachers is beneficial to teachers and students. On the part of teachers, they can check the appropriateness of their beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning based on current research and their colleagues' beliefs. In addition, teachers can understand what their students expect from them and develop their pedagogical techniques through reflection on teaching, which will in turn enhance the complex process of teaching and learning. For students, they can understand their teachers' beliefs and change their own erroneous beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning.

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

- 1) How do preparatory students and English language teachers perceive the best EFL teacher?
- 2) What are the characteristics of Best English Teachers perceived by preparatory students and English teachers?
- 3) Do the perceptions held by the preparatory students about the characteristics of best EFL teachers different from those held by the English language teachers?

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

This study attempted to address the following general and specific objectives.

#### **3.1 General Objective**

The main purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of best English language teachers from the perspectives of high school students and English language teachers.

#### **3.2 Specific Objectives**

More specifically, the study was intended;

1. To explore English language teachers' and preparatory students' perceptions on characteristics of best EFL teachers.

2. To identify the characteristics of teachers which students and teachers consider important in order to define the best language teacher in a specific cultural setting.
3. To compare the perceptions held by preparatory students and English language teachers about the characteristics of best EFL teachers.

### **3.3 Significance of the study**

The finding of this study is expected to:-

- help teachers use the information or comments to be gathered from students to polish their behaviors and personalities as well as their style of teaching and look for ways of future improvement;
- give understanding of how teaching and learning English in a foreign language context can be better;
- provide students with an opportunity to have their say and express their expectations of the best teacher as well as help the teachers improve the quality of their teaching to meet their students' needs;
- help in –service and pre- service teacher education programs to get informed about the opinions of learners so that they will be able to provide the trainees with relevant lessons (e.g. Ethical Education) to enable those trainees possess the desirable qualities of best teachers;
- pave the way for future researchers who want to conduct further study in the area.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Characteristics of Successful Teachers

There has been a longstanding research tradition in the field of education which is characterized by the search for the qualities of an effective teacher. Work along this line is based on the assumption that there is a 'best' way to teach, and a solid understanding of this would then lead to a situation where teachers know how to be effective. Medley (1979, cited in Nuru, 2008) identified four phases in the history of empirical research on teacher effectiveness. The phases appear to represent a continuous shift in the measures and definitions of effective teaching. The first phase viewed effectiveness in teaching as an outcome of certain personality traits or characteristics of the teacher. The second phase assumed effectiveness to be a consequence of the teaching methods employed, while in the third phase, research was aimed at establishing the relationship between what the teacher does in the classroom and pupil learning. The last phase of research was based on the conception of effectiveness as a function of the ability of the teacher to master and use a repertoire of competencies. A more recent review of research on effective teaching focused on five basic aspects of teachers: teacher styles, teacher interactions, teacher characteristics, teacher competencies and teacher effects (Ornstein, 1995). Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2003) define effective teaching:

*Most people would agree that good teachers are caring, supportive, concerned about the welfare of students, knowledgeable about their subject matter, able to get along with parents... and genuinely excited about the work that they do. ... Effective teachers are able to help students learn (p. 329).*

The greatest amount of the literature on teaching effectiveness reflects research efforts aimed at establishing teacher characteristics that constitutes successful teaching. In fact, work along this line has led to the identification of a range of teacher behaviors and attitudes which are thought to lead to increased student academic achievement. For

instance, review of research on teacher characteristics by Ornstein (1995) suggests that researchers have used literally thousands of descriptors to define the good teacher over the years. Attempts to organize the numerous teacher behaviors deemed desirable by researchers into manageable lists have produced a variety of categories of characteristics that deal with the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills involved in teaching. After reviewing and synthesizing some 50 years of research, Barr (1958) listed 12 characteristics of successful teachers. The following list, despite its age, continues to be regarded as the most comprehensive and useful definition of the characteristics of effective teachers:

1. Resourcefulness: Originality, creativeness, initiative, imagination, adventurousness, progressiveness.
2. Intelligence: Foresight, intellectual acuity, understanding, mental ability, intellectual capacity, common sense.
3. Emotional stability: Poise, self-control, steadfastness, sobriety, dignity, neuroticism, emotional maturity, adjustment, constancy, loyalty, easy-going realism in facing life, not excitable, stable, integrated character.
4. Considerateness: Appreciativeness, kindness, friendliness, courteousness, sympathy, tact, good naturedness, helpfulness, patience, politeness, thoughtfulness, tolerance.
5. Buoyancy: Optimism, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, gregariousness, fluency, talkativeness, sense of humor, pleasantness, carefreeness, vivaciousness, alertness, animation, idealism, articulateness, expensiveness, wit.
6. Objectivity: Fairness, impartiality, open mindedness, freedom from prejudice, sense of evidence.
7. Drive: Physical vigor, energy, perseverance, ambition, industriousness, endurance, motivation, purposefulness, speediness, zealousness, quickness.
8. Dominance: Self-confidence, forcefulness, decisiveness, courageousness, independence, insensitiveness to social approval, self-sufficiency, determination, thick-skinnedness, self-reliance, self-assertiveness.

9. Attractiveness: Dress, physique, freedom from physical defects, personal magnetism, neatness, cleanliness, posture, personal charm, appearance.
10. Refinement: Good taste, modesty, morality, conventionality, culture, polish, well-readiness.
11. Cooperativeness: Friendliness, easy-goingness, geniality, generosity, adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness, trustfulness, warm-heartedness, unselfishness, charitableness.
12. Reliability: Accuracy, dependability, honesty, punctuality, responsibility, conscientiousness, painstakingness, trustworthiness, consistency, sincerity.

Other researchers have examined teaching effectiveness in terms of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Research along this line suggests that effective teaching is associated with a democratic style as opposed to an authoritarian one (Flanders, 1965, cited in Nuru, 2008). Another strand of research on interaction focused on how teachers treat students for whom they hold different expectations. Research on teacher expectations is based on the assumption that teachers communicate their expectations of students through verbal and non-verbal cues. These expectations affect their interactions with students which in turn affects the performance of students (Brouphy and Good, 1974). Successful teachers are thought to have high expectations for their students. They also interact with their students in an enthusiastic and optimistic way. They are believed to be realistic about the potential differences between high and low achievers and recognize that teachers who maintain a rigid or stereotyped perception of students are likely to have a damaging effect on the performance and self – worth of their students (Ornstein, 1995).

Research that focused on measures of student outcomes or achievements has revealed several variables associated with effective teaching. According to Rosenshine and Furst (1971 cited in Nuru, 2008), the following five teacher processes are likely to lead to positive outcomes or student gains:

1. Clarity of teacher's presentation and ability to organize classroom activities;

2. Variability of media, materials, and activities used by the teacher;
3. Enthusiasm, defined in terms of the teacher's movement, voice inflection, etc ...;
4. Task orientation or business like teacher behaviors, structured routines, and an academic focus;
5. Student opportunity to learn, that is, the teacher's coverage of the material or content in class on which students are later tested.

## **2.2 Definition of Effective Teachers**

An effective teacher has been defined as the one who conducts effective teaching which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures (Diamond, 1998 cited in National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2008).

Additionally, Kyriakides, Campbell, and Christofidou (2002) point out that effective teachers need to possess adequate quantity of instruction, organize and manage the classroom environment, effectively use instructional time, structure instructional materials, give students practice and application opportunities, provide good classroom climate, and have enough subject knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, teaching beliefs, and teachers' self-efficacy.

Neil (1991, cited in Wichadee, 2009) states that defining an effective teacher involves two important components in teaching and learning process called "teacher knowledge of the subject to be taught" and "skill in how to teach that subject." It is intuitively obvious that effective teachers must possess a professional knowledge base and exhibit knowledge of the subject matter. Successful teachers have a lot of instructional strategies and techniques that reflect their knowledge of the subject. He also indicates that because learning is a voluntary activity, the teacher's job to "sell" ideas to the students is very hard if he or she cannot "sell" those ideas in an interesting way. Therefore, when the teacher shows enthusiasm about her/ his topic, she/ he persuades the students that the topic is important

From the above definition, we can understand that an effective teacher displays a wide range of skills and abilities that lead to creating a learning environment where all students feel comfortable and are sure that they can succeed both academically and personally.

### 2.3 Qualities of Effective Teachers

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

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

achievement of cognitive learning concerns voice and other characteristics associated with the quality of presentation by a teacher (e.g. speaking in a clear way, being well-paced, having an expressive manner, and using appropriate teaching aids effectively). Additionally, effective teachers behave in ways that promote agreeable and friendly interpersonal relations between themselves and students, and that convey concern and respect for individual students.

In addition to that, Sronge (2002) identified the qualities of effective teachers in terms of caring, listening, understanding, knowing students, fairness and respect, social interaction with students, promotion of enthusiasm and motivation for learning, attitude towards the teaching profession and reflective practice. More specifically, effective teachers care about students and demonstrate that they care in such a way that their students are aware of it. Effective, caring, teachers know students both formally and informally. They use every opportunity at school and in the community to keep the line of communication open. Effective teachers care for the student first as a person, and second as a student.

Effective teachers continually demonstrate respect and understanding, along with fairness regarding race, cultural background, and gender. Students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness emphasize racial impartiality with equitable treatment of all students. Thus, effective teachers offer all students opportunity to participate and to succeed.

Effective teachers use a wide variety of strategies to interact with students. However, the basis for these interactions goes beyond the four walls of the classrooms. Teachers who are aware of their own style of interacting with their students are able to provide a more favorable learning environment for all students. Through social interactions with students, effective teachers are able to individually, realistically, and successfully challenge each student to succeed. The teacher's enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and for the subject matter has been shown to be an important part of effective teaching, both in supporting positive relationships with students and in encouraging student achievement.

Research indicates that effective teachers have residual positive effects on their students' willingness to work to their potential and beyond. Consequently, less effective teachers

may actually extinguish students' interest in the subject. Good teachers realize and deal with the fact that some students prefer to sit quietly on the sideline; however, they do not stop involving them.

By finding a way to motivate a student to learn, a teacher contributes to a student's evolving attitude toward a particular subject or activity. In other words, the teacher can bring out the best in that student. An effective teacher recognizes that students vary in their motivation levels. An effective teacher knows how to support intrinsically motivated students and seeks ways to provide extrinsic motivation to students who needs it. Motivating students consists of making students receptive to and excited about learning, as well as making them aware of the importance and value of learning itself. By establishing positive attitudes and perceptions about learning, the effective teacher makes the learner feel comfortable in the classroom. As a particular example of establishing positive attitudes, teachers who provide mastery-learning techniques for their students improve the attitudes of their students. They also increase academic self- concept, interest in the subject area, and the desire to learn more about the subject.

The effective teachers truly believe that all students can learn- it is not a slogan. These teachers also belief that they must know their students, their subject, and themselves, while continuing to account for the fact that students learn differently. Through differentiation of instruction, effective teachers reach their students and together they enjoy their successes.

Effective teachers also work collaboratively with other staff members. They are willing to share their ideas and assist other teachers with difficulties. Collaborative environments create positive working relationships and help retain teachers. Additionally, effective teachers volunteer to lead work teams and to be mentors to new teachers. Effective teachers are informal leaders on the cutting edge of reform and are not afraid to take risks to improve education for all students. These informal leaders are the ones administrators typically call on for opinions and help in effecting change.

Effective teachers invest in their own education. They model to their students that education and learning are valuable by taking classes and participating in professional

development, conferences, and in service training. Additionally, they also discuss their participation in these activities with students in a positive manner. Effective teachers learn and grow as they expect their students to learn and grow. They serve as powerful examples of lifelong learners as they find ways to develop professionally. In sum, effective teachers exude positive attitudes about life and teaching. They do not make excuses for student outcomes; they hold students responsible while also accepting responsibility themselves.

Another element of professionalism often cited as part of effective teaching is a teacher's reflective practice, or careful review of and thoughtfulness about one's own teaching process. The role of reflection has been described repeatedly in studies of teacher effectiveness. Effective teachers continuously practice self-evaluation and self-critique as learning tools. Reflective teachers portray themselves as students of learning. They are curious about the art and science of teaching and about themselves as effective teachers. They constantly improve lessons, think about how to reach particular children, and seek and try out new approaches in the classroom to better meet the needs of their learners.

## **2.4 Characteristics of an Effective Foreign Language Teacher (EFLT)**

Although there seem to be universal general principles of effective teaching used to specify an effective teacher, the foreign and second language teaching presents learning objectives, tasks and environments that are qualitatively distinct from those of other subjects. Therefore, when defining the term "characteristics of effective language teacher," it is necessary to consider this context. To illustrate this, there is a comparative study conducted by Borg (2006) examining ways in which language teachers are seen to be different to teachers of other subjects. Borg's study investigated actual classroom practices of language teaching and other subjects and came up with some factors. The factors that distinguish the experiences of foreign language teachers from that of teachers of other subjects include the following: 1) The nature of the subject matter itself 2) The interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction 3) The challenge for teachers of increasing their knowledge of the subject 4) The need for outside support for learning the subject. (Borg, 2006, PP. 11-13).

Additionally, Brosh (1996, cited in Borg, 2006) identified the characteristics of EFLT perceived by the high school teachers and students in Israel with interviews and a questionnaire consisting of 20 items of teacher characteristics. The followings are the characteristics that emerged overall as those felt to be the most desirable in the study. 1) knowledge and command of the target language 2) ability to recognize, explain and clarify, as well as to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students, 3) fairness to students by showing neither favoritism nor prejudice 4) availability to students.

To find the characteristics of the good language teacher, Molica and Nuessel (1997) studied language learner behaviors with the hope that knowledge of the good language learner traits can help the good language teacher create a classroom environment that will facilitate second language learning. They outlined the traits of good language teachers as follows: professional training such as professional meetings and instructional techniques; language proficiency such as four skills and cultural comprehension; instructional materials such as visual and audio materials; evaluation such as assessment of students and professional testing; and classroom environment such as reduction of second language anxiety and maintenance of classroom discipline.

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

Indeed, foreign language proficiency has been considered a crucial variable important to foreign language teaching (Buchmann, 1984; Lafayette, 1993; Schulz, 2002). Buchmann

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

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

Also, there was another study conducted by Park and Lee (2006) investigating the characteristics of effective English teachers as perceived by 169 high school teachers and 339 students in Korea with a self-report questionnaire consisting of 27 items of teacher characteristics classified into three categories: English Proficiency, Pedagogical Knowledge, and Socio- Affective skills. Overall, the teachers perceived significantly

different characteristics than students in all three categories with the teachers ranking English proficiency the highest in contrast to the students who ranked pedagogical knowledge the highest. The student subgroups also held different perceptions of effective teaching. High achieving students reported different characteristics than low achieving students in pedagogical knowledge and socio- affective skills, whereas the male students demonstrated different characteristics from the female students in socio- affective skills. The findings have implications for knowledge- based teacher education for current and prospective English teachers.

## **2.5 Characteristics of Good English Instructors**

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

### **Language competency and teaching techniques**

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

strategies selected by teachers to achieve their objectives. Language competency and teaching techniques go hand in hand in enhancing teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

### **Positive Attitude**

The attitude of the teacher also influences student success. A positive attitude is essential. Teachers need to be confident that their students are capable of learning another language. If, for example, a teacher assumes that half of the class is incapable of acquiring the passive voice, then many of the students will never learn this grammatical form. On the other hand, if a teacher is convinced that all of the students can produce the /l/, eventually they will all be able to say it. Therefore, good English teachers are those who remain distinctly conscious of their covert attitudes toward their students' efforts to learn English and the impact of those attitudes upon the success of their learning experience.

### **Plan**

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

### **Teaching for Mastery**

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

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

### **Remain Flexible**

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

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

### **The Manager**

Teachers of English need to be aware of classroom management so that they can maximize available class time and maintain discipline. Their routines must be a function of the age of the students, the physical environment, and the purpose of the instruction. For instance, independent work, small group conversations, interest group conversations, and student-led drills can all contribute to the smooth functioning of a class. If the students are actively involved in a class which is set at their linguistic level and which takes into account their interest and backgrounds, they will be so busy learning the language that discipline will, in large measure, take care of itself. Therefore, being able to handle and organize the classroom means a greater probability of success in implementing teaching plans.

Classrooms are extremely complex places where teachers have to make moment-by-moment decisions to translate a plan into action while attempting to maintain a friendly, constructive atmosphere. Unlike other classrooms, students learn through the second instead of the primary language. They deal with all aspects of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a language other than their native tongue. This is what makes the English as a second or foreign language classroom so complex, requiring special attention. Knowing that the students' goal in attending English classes is to learn the language requires teachers to create an environment suitable for learning. A friendly atmosphere must be the major characteristic of the classroom. Students need to be shown that the teacher cares about what they are going through and is doing his or her best to help them learn effectively while developing their proficiency levels. Learners after all need a rich and safe learning environment that is exciting, engaging, and allow learners to take risk. In such an atmosphere, students become self-motivated, willingly playing an active role in the learning process. Consequently, an attempt should be made to create a friendly atmosphere so students are free to express themselves openly, without fear of being embarrassed in front of their peers when they are corrected. This is all can be summed on the conclusion that suggests learning is best achieved when students are in a caring, welcoming, non-intimidating learning environment.

### **Tolerance**

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

### **Attention span**

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

### **Patience and Passion**

Another vital characteristic of good English teachers is patience. This trait entails that English teachers give their students sufficient time to internalize the point in question. A successful teacher must also wholeheartedly enjoy the work and be committed to his/her students. Good English teachers are deliberate in coming to conclusions and strive to look at all aspects of the situation and remain highly fair and objective under most difficult circumstances. Since English teachers usually have students from different cultural backgrounds, teachers need to show passion for the various cultures that students represent. In so doing, English teachers will spread the level of passion to their students who in turn will develop, expectedly, a passion to become better English learners.

### **Being Informed**

In order to understand the underpinnings of their own teaching philosophy and to be a more effective instructors, English teachers should continuously seek all sources that inform them of issues confronting the realm of second language acquisition. Through these constant updating efforts, they are able to employ the most recent teaching methods supported by current research in the field.

### **Dynamism**

Another important characteristic is to maintain classroom dynamics, excitement, and a sense of fun. The philosophy behind calling to adopt such character is that students can

see the passion of their instructor toward the presented materials, which gives them a reason to become motivated. In implementing such attribute, teachers should assume particular role and employ engaging and fun activities. They can engage students by making them responsible for their own learning, create opportunities, where they take active role in their class activities, and maximize each individual participation and contribution. While doing so, they should act as a guide, a facilitator, and a resource, not an authoritative figure.

## **2.6 The Good Language Teacher**

Research on the good language teacher is relevant in highlighting ways in which language teachers' characteristics have been conceptualized. I will therefore comment briefly on this work here under. Girard (1977, cited in Borg, 2006), for example, presented a list of teacher characteristics based on the views of language learners, which included items such as makes his course interesting, teaches good pronunciation, explains clearly, speaks good English, shows the same interest in all the pupils, makes the pupils participate and shows great patience. Prodromou (1991) presented a much longer list of characteristics valued by learners; examples cited were friendly, gave good notes, played games, told jokes, did not push weak learners, and was more like a comedian.

Ogden et al. (1994, cited in Babai Shishavan, 2010) conducted a study to investigate characteristics of good/effective teachers as viewed by students. They found that some behaviors and characteristics that the learners expected from their teachers depended on their gender. Females more than males believed that effective teachers were understanding, enthusiastic, organized and creative. However, males more than females regarded characteristics like being responsible and humorous as well as communicating well with students as making a good teacher.

Investigation of the views of teachers themselves about the attributes of an effective teacher represented another strand of research in the area. Tomlinson (2003), for instance, asked a group of 30 Malaysian teachers and teacher trainers about their views of the good language teacher. The procedure used to generate data on their perceptions involved two activities. The first one required participants to say what they think are main

characteristics of the good language teacher. This procedure revealed the following list of traits: being adaptable, knowledgeable about the target language, innovative, positive, motivating, proficient in the target language, enthusiastic, enjoyable, and creative.

The second method involved asking respondents to rate the characteristics of a good teacher on a scale of 1-5. The data showed that the subjects considered traits such as having positive self-esteem, being able to take initiative and base teaching on the needs, wants and responses of their learners as characterizing the good teacher. Attributes such as “has authority” and “is able to cover the textbook in the time allocated” were, however, rated low by the teachers. The pattern that emerged from the data suggested that many of the attributes defining the good teacher were related to personal attitudes and characteristics rather than to expertise in theory and practice in language teaching.

Adediwura and Tayo (2007) also investigated the relationship/ effect of students’ perception of teachers’ knowledge of subject matter, attitude to work and teaching skills on student’s academic performance in Nigerian Secondary Schools. A questionnaire with four sections was developed and administered on a sample consisted of 1600 purposively selected SSSIII students from 15 selected secondary schools. The result shows that students’ perception of teachers’ knowledge of subject matter, attitude to work and teaching skills has a significant effect on students’ academic performance.

## **2.7 Qualities of A Good Teacher**

### **What Makes a Good Teacher?**

We all know good teachers when we see them and bad teachers too. Many scholars in the field made a great effort to seek answer to the question “What makes a good teacher?” by listing several attributes that are associated with good teacher.

In line with this, Cathy (January 2011), listed the following top ten qualities of a good teacher along with explanations.

- 1. Confidence.** Teachers encounter situations all the time that could be considered setbacks. Where some teachers are flustered, the good teachers shrugged and

went on about the lesson, sometimes even joking about the mess up. These teachers know they are human and know mistakes happen. They do not take things personally and let problems get them upset.

2. **Patience.** The best teachers can help students through a mental breakdown. Not that they have to, but that they are so patient, they could have gone the distance. The best teachers are those who are willing to keep explaining, knowing that eventually it would make sense. They are willing to wait until a distraction calmed students down, or abandon a lesson entirely if it was clear material needed to be revisited. The best teachers just stick with it, willing to do what it takes, no matter how long it takes.
3. **True compassion for their students.** The best teachers care about their students as individuals and want to help them. They have a sixth sense when a student needs extra attention and give it gladly. They do not expect students to leave thoughts of the outside world at the door to the classroom. They take the time to discuss subjects outside their teaching, knowing that sometimes lessons can still be taught without following the text book. Good teachers are willing to speak up for their students to other teachers, if need be. They care about their students beyond the walls of their classroom.
4. **Understanding.** Good teachers have understanding-not only the sixth sense mentioned above, but true understanding of how to teach. They do not have a rigid technique that they insisted on using even if it does not help learners learn. They are flexible in their teaching style, adapting daily if need be. They understand the little things that affect students' ability to learn; the weather, the temperature in the classroom, the time of the day. They have an understanding of human nature and the maturity (or lack thereof) of teenagers. They treat students as real people, not just "students".
5. **The ability to look at life in a different way and to explain a topic in a different way.** There are many different learning styles. Not everyone gets a subject as taught by every teacher. Bad teachers only look a subject matter one way. They teach based on how they learn. This works for some people, but fails

for others. The good teachers are ones that are able to teach to different learning styles. If students do not understand a subject, they teach it a different way.

6. **Dedication to excellence.** Good teachers want the best from their students and themselves. They do not settle for poor grades, knowing it reflects upon their ability to teach just as much upon a student's ability to excel. The best teachers encourage the sharing of ideas and offer incentives (like not having to do homework for a day) to get students to think outside the box. They do not tolerate students' badmouthing other teachers, doing their best to point out that other teachers are human too. They encourage students to be good people, not just good memorizers of text. They want students to learn and be able to apply what they learned, not just be able to pass tests.
7. **Unwavering support.** The best teachers know that everyone is able to do well if they have the right teacher. They do not accept that a student is a lost cause. They encourage if you are frustrated and provide true belief that you can get the material. They stand up for individuals against other students, not allowing for in class taunting. Sometimes, they even extend this outside the classroom, although taunts in the hallways are very hard for teachers to combat. The best teachers are there if you need extra help and even encourage it.
8. **Willingness to help students achieve.** The best teachers are those that do not stop teaching when the bell rings. They know that some need extra attention or assistance, and they do not act as if it is not their job. They take that job seriously and know they are not just employed to get students to be able to do their math, but do well in life. They realize that achievement is not just a good grade on a test, but a feeling of accomplishment with mastering a subject; they are willing to work with a student for that feeling.
9. **Pride in student's accomplishment.** The best teachers let you know they are glad you got a good grade or made the honor's society. They smile and tell you that you did a good job. They tell other teachers about how you did as well. Outside you may feel embarrassed, but inside you are glowing. The best teachers do not single out the best students either. They celebrate the accomplishments of everyone, knowing that everyone is capable to doing well. They are upbeat and

positive, focusing on how a student did well, not how well they taught. They may know that it was the strength of their teaching that helped a student to achieve, but they act as if the student is completely responsible.

- 10. Passion for life.** The best teachers are not just interested in their subject, they are passionate about it. They are also passionate about many other things. They praise good weather and smile when they take a few minutes to discuss last night's episode of a popular TV show. They have an energy that almost makes them glow and that you want to emulate as much as possible. They approach tasks with a sense of challenge rather than routine. They take the universe's curve balls and turn them into fun (if possible). They are human, certainly, but they make you feel that there is always a reason to keep going. Things will get better no matter how much they appear to suck at that moment.

Hassett (2000) also wrote certain characteristics that make a good teacher based on students' descriptions as follows:

Good teachers:

- Have a sense of purpose;
- Have expectations of success for all students;
- Tolerate ambiguity;
- Demonstrate a willingness to adapt and change to meet student needs;
- Are comfortable with not knowing;
- Reflect on their work;
- Learn from a variety of models;
- Enjoy their work and their students.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants of this study constituted two different groups. The first group consisted of 35 preparatory (grade 11 and 12) students drawn from Bedessa Secondary & Preparatory School in Western Hararghe Zone. From the total population of 350 preparatory students found in the school, 35 were selected through simple random sampling technique to serve as sources of data for the study.

The second group consisted of 20 English language teachers drawn from Bedessa Secondary and Preparatory School – 9 teachers and Bedessa Primary and Junior School – 11 Teachers.

#### 3.2 Instrument

A self-report questionnaire was used as a major tool for the purpose of data collection in this study. The questionnaire (appendix A) which was administered along with a covering letter, was adapted from Babai Shishavan (2010) and Park and Lee (2006). There were 52 items in the first draft of the questionnaire classified into 3 categories: English proficiency (8 items), pedagogical knowledge (20 items) and socio/affective skills (24 items). After reviewing the items several times with the help of colleagues and peers, some items which are culture bound and not relevant to the context in which the study was going to be conducted were deleted from each category. Then, the questionnaire consisted of 46 items was piloted by administering to a small group of 15 students (other than the target respondents). The purpose of the pilot study was to check the time of administration, to investigate the clarity of the items in terms of comprehensibility and language use and to find out whether there was a need to add or drop some items. It took about 20 minutes to administer the questionnaire to the students in the pilot study. After dropping some more items from each category based on comments received from pilot testing, the questionnaire comprised of 38 statements about the characteristics of best teachers classified into three categories: English proficiency (7 items), pedagogical knowledge (14 items) and socio-affective skills (17 items) that the participants were

asked to express their agreement or disagreement to them based on a five-point (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, no idea) Likert Scale.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Procedure**

The English language teachers teaching at Bedessa Primary school as well as Secondary school were individually contacted by the researcher in order to administer the questionnaires. Some of the teachers took the questionnaires home and returned them on the next day after completing well. All the papers distributed among the teachers came back with a response rate of 100%.

Regarding the data about the students, the researcher administered the questionnaires and collected the data in class with the cooperation of the English teachers who were in charge of the classes. The researcher explained briefly the nature of this study to the students and asked their cooperation in responding to the questionnaires sincerely and honestly. They were also assured that their responses to the questionnaires would be kept confidential and not be used for other purposes. After assuring their cooperation, the researcher explained how to answer the questionnaire which had no correct or incorrect answers. The students were also encouraged to ask questions if the meaning of the items were not clear to them and informed that they could respond to the questionnaires, taking as much time as they wanted. It took about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

### **3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation Methods**

The questionnaires coming from the participants were organized, categorized and tabulated in a manageable form. Then, the following values were assigned to responses provided for Likert Scale items: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Disagree = 3, Strongly Disagree = 2, No Idea = 1. Then, the characteristics of the best English language teachers perceived by each group were compared on categorical levels as well as on item levels. In the categorical level analysis, mean scores for each category were computed by assigning 3-1 points because the participants were asked to choose three characteristics in order of importance. Similarly, in the item level analysis, frequency, percentage and mean values for the individual items in each category were calculated by assigning 5-1 points because the participants were asked to rate the items based on the five-point Likert Scale as mentioned above.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. Data Presentation and Discussion

#### 4.1 Results

The results of this study were described with the focus on group comparisons of best (most effective) teacher characteristics contributing to students' learning between and within the three categories: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills (personal attributes).

The mean scores for the three categories were computed to find the relative importance of the categories, as seen in Table 1. Interestingly, the students endorsed pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency and socio- affective skills in order of importance, whereas the teachers endorsed English proficiency, Pedagogical Knowledge and Socio-Affective Skills.

**Table 1**

**Mean scores for the three categories**

Categories	Students		Teachers	
	Mean	Rank order	Mean	Rank order
English proficiency	12 (0.18)	2	9 (1.35)	1
Pedagogical knowledge	13 (1.11)	1	7 (0.7)	2
Socio- Affective skills	10 (0.28)	3	4 (0.2)	3

The frequency, percentage and mean scores for the items were computed to investigate the relative importance of each item within the categories perceived by each group. It is worth to note that the students' and the teachers' data for each category were presented separately under different tables for a space reason.

In the comparison between the students' and the teachers' views on the items in English proficiency, both groups rated reading, writing and speaking proficiency most highly in the seven items, as seen in Tables 2a and 2b respectively. The largest difference between the two groups was found in grammatical competence and word knowledge, where the students endorsed grammatical importance and the teachers endorsed word proficiency. Both the students and the teachers placed more weights on the remaining two items next to reading, writing and speaking proficiency as depicted in Tables 2a and 2b below.

**Table 2a**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Students' Perceptions on the Items in English Proficiency**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn Score NI		
1	understand spoken English well	19 (54)	14 (40)	2 (6)	-	-	4.31	H
2	read English well	29 (83)	5 (14)	1 (3)	-	-	4.71	VH
3	know English vocabulary well	20 (57)	10 (29)	4 (11)	1 (3)	-	2.77	L
4	write English well	23 (66)	12 (34)	-	-	-	4.65	VH
5	pronounce English well	14 (40)	18 (51)	3 (9)	-	-	4.05	H
6	speak English well	23 (66)	10 (28)	2 (6)	-	-	4.42	H
7	know English grammar well	24 (68)	8 (23)	1 (3)	-	2 (6)	4.34	H

Note: H – High, VH – Very High, L – Low, VL – Very Low, M – Moderate

**Table 2b**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Teachers' Perceptions on  
the Items in English Proficiency**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn Score NI		
1	understand spoken English well	13 (65)	6 (30)	1 (5)	-	-	4.45	H
2	read English well	16 (80)	4 (20)	-	-	-	4.8	VH
3	know English vocabulary well	9 (45)	6 (30)	3 (15)	2 (10)	-	3.4	M
4	write English well	13 (65)	7 (35)	-	-	-	4.65	VH
5	pronounce English well	12 (60)	5 (25)	3 (15)	-	-	4.0	H
6	speak English well	10 (50)	10 (50)	-	-	-	4.5	H
7	know English grammar well	8 (40)	7 (35)	3 (15)	2 (10)	-	3.4	M

Tables 3a and 3b show the frequency, percentage and mean scores of students' and teachers' views on the 14 items (characteristics) in the category of pedagogical knowledge respectively. As can be seen from the tables, both groups perceived preparing the lesson well, explaining things well, managing the class time well, using lesson plans, providing students with opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities and providing interesting activities as the most important characteristics of a best English teacher.

The characteristics of teachers such as giving lots of homework or assignments, challenging students academically, teaching English in English and maintaining good classroom atmosphere using authority were considered as less important by both the students and the teachers. There was only one item that received the lowest score. This was teaching English in students' mother tongue, which was rated 1.62 and 1.4 by the two groups, respectively. Although the overall difference between the two groups was not

significant, the largest difference was found in providing interesting activities in favor of the students and using particular methods and techniques in teaching, assessing what students have learned rationally and teaching how to learn English outside the classroom in favor of the teachers. The discrepancy of the perceptions might be due to the students' misunderstanding of the importance of these items for effective teaching.

**Table 3a**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Students' Perceptions on the Items in Pedagogical Knowledge**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn Score NI		
1	prepare the lesson well	23 (66)	8 (23)	4 (11)	-	-	4.2	H
2	use particular methods and techniques in teaching	18 (52)	8 (23)	3 (8)	1 (3)	5 (14)	3.48	M
3	manage the class time well	22 (63)	9 (10)	4 (11)	-	-	4.17	H
4	give lots of homework/assignment	7 (20)	11 (31)	12 (34)	3 (9)	2 (6)	2.25	L
5	teach how to learn English outside the classroom	10 (28)	13 (37)	4 (12)	6 (17)	2 (6)	2.91	L
6	use lesson plans properly	20 (57)	13 (37)	2 (6)	-	-	4.34	H
7	teach English in English	16 (46)	13 (37)	2 (6)	3 (8)	2 (6)	3.77	M
8	teach English in Affan Oromo or Amharic (students' mother tongue)	5 (15)	8 (23)	11 (31)	11 (31)	-	1.62	VL
9	assess what students have learned rationally	19 (54)	11 (31)	2 (6)	3 (9)	-	3.97	M
10	provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities	19 (54)	12 (34)	2 (6)	2 (6)	-	4.08	H
11	provide activities that arouse students' interest in learning English	25 (71)	9 (26)	-	1 (3)	-	4.6	VH
12	challenge students academically	12 (34)	13 (37)	6 (17)	-	4 (12)	3.2	M
13	be able to explain things well	20 (57)	13 (37)	1 (3)	1 (3)	-	4.34	H
14	maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary	5 (14)	13 (37)	8 (23)	4 (12)	5 (14)	2.2	L

**Table 3b**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Teachers' Perceptions on  
the Items in Pedagogical Knowledge**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn score NI		
1	A best English teacher is someone who should: prepare the lesson well	16 (80)	4 (20)	-	-	-	4.8	VH
2	use particular methods and techniques in teaching	9 (45)	9 (45)	2 (10)	-	-	4.05	H
3	manage the class time well	14 (70)	4 (20)	2 (10)	-	-	4.3	H
4	give lots of homework/assignment	1 (5)	11 (55)	6 (30)	2 (10)	-	2.45	L
5	teach how to learn English outside the classroom	10 (50)	9 (45)	1 (5)	-	-	4.3	H
6	use lesson plans properly	12 (60)	7 (35)	1 (5)	-	1 (5)	4.4	M
7	teach English in English	5 (25)	11 (55)	3 (15)	-	1 (5)	3.45	M
8	teach English in Afan Oromo or Amharic (students' mother tongue)	-	1 (5)	8 (40)	11 (55)	-	1.4	VL
9	assess what students have learned rationally	11 (55)	8 (40)	1 (5)	-	-	4.35	H
10	provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities	8 (40)	10 (50)	2 (10)	-	-	4.0	H
11	provide activities that arouse students' interest in learning English	7 (35)	13 (65)	-	-	-	4.35	H
12	challenge students academically	9 (45)	8 (40)	2 (10)	1 (5)	-	3.85	M
13	be able to explain things well	15 (75)	5 (25)	-	-	-	4.75	VH
14	maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary	6 (30)	9 (45)	4 (20)	-	1 (5)	3.3	M

Tables 4a and 4b show the frequency, percentage and mean scores for the individual items in the category of socio- affective skills perceived by each group respectively. It is interesting to note that both groups perceived arousing students' motivation and self – confidence, treating students fairly, being punctual, having positive attitude, and being helpful to students in and outside the classroom and encouraging students to try to do their best as the most important characteristics of best teachers. Both the students and the teachers gave the lowest rank to paying attention to the personal needs of the students, giving rewards and offering extra help willingly, and holding high expectations for students. The largest difference between the two groups was found in listening to students' opinions, being friendly and nice to students in favor of the students and having a good sense of humor, showing interest in students and their learning, being patient as well as being polite and respect the personality of the students in favor of the teachers.

**Table 4a**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Students' Perceptions on the  
Items in Socio-Affective Skills**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn score NI		
1	A best English teacher is someone who should: be helpful to students in and outside the classroom	21 (60)	12 (34)	-	2 (6)	-	4.37	H
2	listen to students' opinions and let them express themselves	22 (63)	9 (25)	1 (3)	1 (3)	2 (6)	4.17	H
3	help students develop self-confidence in order to learn English well	20 (57)	11 (31)	3 (9)	1 (3)	-	4.11	H
4	be friendly to students	24 (68)	9 (26)	2 (6)	-	-	4.42	H
5	have a good sense of humor	11 (31)	12 (34)	2 (6)	3 (9)	7 (20)	2.94	L
6	not discriminate students and treat them fairly	21 (60)	13 (37)	1 (3)	-	-	4.48	H
7	arouse students' motivation for learning English	23 (66)	9 (26)	3 (8)	-	-	4.31	H
8	show interest in students (by remembering students' names) and their learning	12 (34)	16 (46)	4 (11)	2 (6)	1 (3)	3.54	M
9	pay attention to the personal needs of students	8 (23)	20 (57)	4 (11)	1 (3)	2 (6)	3.42	M
10	be polite and respect the personality of the students	19 (54)	15 (43)	-	-	1 (3)	4.42	H
11	be punctual	22 (63)	8 (23)	2 (6)	3 (8)	-	4.05	H
12	be patient	18 (52)	12 (34)	5 (14)	-	-	3.94	M
13	be nice to students	25 (71)	6 (17)	3 (9)	1 (3)	-	4.25	H
14	have positive attitude	20 (57)	12 (34)	-	-	3 (9)	4.22	
15	give rewards and offer extra help	11 (31)	14 (40)	4 (11)	3 (9)	3 (9)	3.17	M
16	set high expectations for students	12 (34)	15 (43)	3 (9)	2 (6)	3 (8)	3.42	M
17	encourage students to try to do their best	25 (71)	6 (17)	-	3 (9)	2 (3)	4.2	H

**Table 4b**

**Frequency, Percentage and Mean Scores of Teachers' Perceptions on the  
Items in Socio-Affective Skills**

No	Items	Frequency and percentage					Mn	Level
		Mn score SA	Mn score A	Mn score D	Mn score SD	Mn score NI		
1	be helpful to students in and out side the classroom	12 (60)	7 (35)	1 (5)	-	-	4.4	H
2	listen to students' opinions and let them express themselves	9 (45)	8 (40)	3 (15)	-	-	3.85	M
3	help students develop self confidence in order to learn English well	14 (70)	4 (20)	2 (10)	-	-	4.3	H
4	be friendly to students	9 (45)	5 (25)	6 (30)	-	-	3.25	M
5	have a good sense of humor	12 (60)	7 (35)	1 (5)	-	-	4.4	H
6	not discriminate students and treat them fairly	15 (75)	3 (15)	-	2 (10)	-	4.35	H
7	arouse students' motivation for learning English	16 (80)	4 (20)	-	-	-	4.8	VH
8	show interest in students (by remembering students' names) and their learning	12 (60)	6 (30)	2 (10)	-	-	4.2	H
9	pay attention to the personal needs of students	8 (40)	9 (45)	3 (15)	-	-	3.8	M
10	be polite and respect the personality of the students	11 (55)	6 (30)	3 (15)	-	-	3.95	M
11	be punctual	18 (90)	2 (10)	-	-	-	4.9	VH
12	be patient	14 (70)	5 (25)	1 (5)	-	-	4.5	H
13	be nice to students	13 (65)	4 (20)	3 (15)	-	-	4.05	H
14	have positive attitude	15 (75)	5 (25)	-	-	-	4.75	VH
15	give rewards and offer extra help willingly	7 (35)	11 (55)	2 (10)	-	-	3.95	M
16	get high expectations for students	6 (30)	13 (65)	1 (5)	-	-	4.1	H
17	encourage students to try to do their best	15 (75)	5 (25)	-	-	-	4.75	H

## 4.2 Discussion

There were 38 characteristics of best English language teacher listed in the questionnaire and classified into three categories of effective teaching: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills (personal attributes). Interestingly, the students rated pedagogical knowledge more than English proficiency and socio-affective skills, whereas the teachers placed more weight on English proficiency than pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills. As can be seen from Table 1, the endorsement level between the students and the teachers was different from each other, supporting previous studies in which teachers and students held different beliefs about effective teaching (Brosh, 1996; Lang et al, 1993). The students' higher endorsement of pedagogical knowledge than English proficiency might be because they wanted their teachers to transmit their subject matter knowledge effectively, as was found elsewhere (Dittrich, et al., 2000). Another reason for the students' low endorsement to English proficiency might be that they took teachers' high level of English proficiency for granted. Contrary to the students, the teachers attached more importance to English proficiency than pedagogical knowledge. The teachers' higher values for English proficiency than pedagogical knowledge might be due to their beliefs that good English proficiency made it possible to conduct their lessons confidently without inhibitions and insecurity (Lafayette, 1993). Similarly, Buchmann (1984) argued that a sound command of foreign languages gave teachers linguistic freedom necessary to personalize lessons according to students' proficiency levels and learning styles. Surprisingly, the students and the teachers in this study gave the lowest weight to socio-affective skills, contradicting previous studies in general teacher education that these skills were considered more important than subject matter knowledge and teaching methodology (Minor et al.; 2002; Witcher et al; 2001).

In the comparison between the students' and the teachers' views on individual items in the category of English proficiency, both groups rated reading, writing and speaking proficiency most highly in the seven items. This result might be due to the importance of communicative ability set by the curricular goals of high school English education in the country and the much emphasis given to these skills in the English textbooks.

The largest difference between the students and the teachers was found in grammatical competence and word proficiency, where the students endorsed grammatical importance and the teachers endorsed word proficiency. Overall, the students' perceptions on the two items, that is, understanding spoken English well and pronouncing English well, was similar to the teachers' views.

Out of the 14 best teacher characteristics in the category of pedagogical knowledge, both the students and the teachers perceived preparing the lesson well, explaining things well, managing the class time well, using lesson plans properly and providing interesting activities as the most important characteristics of the best English teachers. The importance of interesting activities perceived by both the students and the teachers confirmed previous findings in which exemplary college teachers had the ability to generate intellectual excitement in students through various ways (Lowman, 1996). According to Thompson et al. (2004) the well – prepared teacher is more likely to be able to take time during lessons to notice and attend to behavioral matters and is less likely to miss the beginnings of potentially disruptive activity. If, on the other hand, teachers have not invested sufficient time in planning and preparation, they tend to be so focused on what they are doing that they miss the early signs of misbehavior. This ultimately results in frequent disruption, waste of valuable instructional time, and student frustration. Khalid Al- Seghayer (2004) also suggests that teachers of English need to be aware of classroom management so that they can maximize available class time and maintain discipline. Their routines must be a function of the age of the students, the physical environment and the purpose of instruction. The largest difference between the students and the teachers was found in providing interesting activities in favor of the students and teaching how to learn English outside the classroom, using particular methods and techniques in teaching, and assessing what students have learned rationally in favor of the teachers.

As it was discussed so far, the students seemed not too pleased if their teacher gave them too much homework/assignment, therefore 'giving lots of homework/assignment' was not considered as best characteristics of teacher by many students. They also did not like if their teacher used authority in maintaining good classroom atmosphere and challenged

them academically. Teachers' responses to these items were overall similar to students' responses. This result showed that the teachers did not like giving too much homework/assignment to their students because lots of homework means lots of work to do the checking and correction of the homework. Both students and teachers perceived teaching English in English in the same way. The only item that both students and teachers considered less important characteristics of a best teacher was teaching English in Affan Oromo or Amharic (students mother tongue).

Regarding students' and teachers' opinions on the items in the socio-affective skills, both groups strongly agreed that the best teacher should arouse students' motivation, build students' self-confidence in order to learn English well, treat students fairly, be helpful to students in and outside the classroom, have positive attitude, and encourage students to try to do their best. The role of motivation has been widely recognized among teachers and researchers in that motivation turned out to be a key to L2 acquisition as well as general human learning (Dornyei, 1998). In a similar vein, Lowman (1996) argued that students' learning was most influenced by the amount of academic ability students had and how motivated they were to use that ability in a given class. Several researchers saw the significance of confidence or self-efficacy in L2 acquisition (Krashen, 1985), general human learning (Bandura, 1986), and a model of willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998). According to Mc Dermott and Rothenberg (2000) students enjoy teachers with a sense of humor and found those teachers made learning fun. As long as it is not at any individual's expense, good teachers can occasionally enjoy a laugh with the class and they can also laugh at themselves.

Cruickshank, Jenkins and Metcalf (2003) write that effective teachers are generally positive minded individuals who believe in the success of their students as well as their own ability to help students achieve. Borich (2000) also suggests that effective teachers are those who use "meaningful verbal praise to get and keep students actively participating in the learning process' (P. 15).

When the individual items were combined into a subscale of socio- affective skills, all the group comparisons reached a significant level, as seen in Tables 4a and 4b. The largest

group differences between the students and the teachers were found in listening to students' opinions, being friendly, fair and nice to students in favor of the students and showing interest in students and their learning, being patient, polite and respect the personality of the students in favor of the teachers. The students' endorsement to listening to students' opinions was paralleled with the students' emphasis on learner – centered teaching (Mc Combs and Lauer, 1997). This result showed that many of the teachers did not like to be friendly and nice to students. Generally, the result shows that both students and teachers had an agreement on the characteristics of what best teacher should be. Apart from the variation that occurred, both students and teachers in this study agreed that characteristics of quality teacher should consist of both academic and personal elements.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 5.1 Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions held by the English language teachers and the preparatory students on the characteristics of best EFL teachers in Bedessa town through a self-report questionnaire consisting of three categories of effective teaching: English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio – affective skills. Overall, the students perceived significantly different characteristics from the teachers in all the three categories with the students' high ranking to pedagogical knowledge and the teachers' high ranking to English proficiency.

Based on responses of the characteristics of best teachers, students agreed that the best English teacher should display academic qualities like reading, writing and speaking proficiency, preparing the lesson well, explaining things well, managing the class time well, providing interesting activities, providing opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities, and using lesson plans properly as well as personal attributes such as being friendly, nice and fair to students, arousing students' motivation for learning English, building students self-confidence in order to learn English well, listening to students' opinions, being helpful to students in and outside the classroom, having positive attitude and encouraging students to try to do their best. Although the teachers were aware and in fact, were in agreement with students regarding these best characteristics, they have to be reminded of the importance of practicing those desirable attributes in their teaching activities. Every teacher who has a good intention to teach and educate the students should certainly make efforts to fit into these characteristics. Both students and teachers in this study considered giving lots of homework/assignment, challenging students academically, teaching English in students' mother tongue and teaching language learning strategies (how to learn English outside the classroom) as less important characteristics of best teachers.

These findings provide the following implications to teacher education programs for current and prospective English teachers. First, considering the teachers' higher endorsement to English proficiency than pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective skills, in service and pre-service teacher education programs should focus on improving teachers' English proficiency. The importance of English teachers' proficiency cannot be overemphasized because teachers' high proficiency of a target language is necessary to accommodate students' proficiency levels and learning styles in class (Buchmann, 1984).

Second, the teachers' perceptions about best English teachers were significantly different from those held by the students. The discrepancy of the perceptions held by the two parties can cause the students to resist the teaching methods and approaches used by their teachers and, in turn, lead to ineffectiveness in their learning. For instance, the teachers who consider grammatical proficiency less important and focus on more fluency than accuracy in class can be rejected by the students who believe in the grammatical proficiency and want their errors to be corrected. Thus, the students' ill-founded perceptions or beliefs about best English teachers should be changed through the discussions of current L2 acquisition theories and teaching methods.

## **5.2 Recommendation**

This study is by no means comprehensive and there are some limitations which may be addressed in future studies. First, since the data were collected at one point in time in specific school setting (Bedessa) and analyzed quantitatively, the conclusions made above are speculative, and as such difficult to make strong generalizations about the results of the study. Second, the participants' gender, achievement levels and experience were not taken into account due to time constraint. For this reason, the following recommendations could be forwarded.

1. First, as the nature of research in social settings implies, the views of students and English language teachers toward the characteristics of best English teachers could change over time. Therefore, the quantitative findings of this study should be replicated by other participants across academic levels and investigated further through in-depth qualitative analysis.

2. Second, the underlying reasons for different perceptions about best English teachers held by different groups should be investigated.
3. Third, the relationship between students' perceptions about best English teachers and their gender as well as achievement levels need to be explored.
4. Fourth, how the perceptions and beliefs of learners and English language teachers affect their classroom practice should be investigated. It is hoped that the findings of this and future studies will contribute toward a more complete understanding of how teaching and learning English in a foreign language context can be better.

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## Appendix A

### A questionnaire on characteristics of a best (most effective) English language teacher

This questionnaire is going to be used to explore your perceptions on characteristics of best EFL teachers in Bedessa town. The data or information to be collected by means of this questionnaire will be used as a primary data for my **Thesis**, which I am conducting as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts** in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Addis Ababa University. Your cooperation in responding to the questionnaire is of great help to the success of my study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to respond to the questionnaire sincerely and honestly. Your support will be greatly appreciated and your opinions will be highly valued. Make sure that your responses to this questionnaire will be kept confidential and not be used for other purposes.

**Thank you for your cooperation in Advance!**

#### Part One: Background Information

##### Fill in with appropriate information

1. Student

2. Teacher

Grade: 11

Grade level you teach \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: 12

Name of school where you teach \_\_\_\_\_

2. Stream:

Social science

Natural science

**Part two: Instruction**

Please read the following list carefully. Then indicate how much important you think each traits to be in relation to best language teachers. For each statement, select the response that best represent your Agreement or Disagreement, **SA, A, NI, D and SD** stand for strongly Agree, Agree, No Idea, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. Put a tick (✓) mark in the boxes to show your responses.

<b>A Best English teacher is someone who should:</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>NI</b>
1	understand spoken English well					
2	read English well					
3	have a high level of proficiency with English vocabulary					
4	write English well					
5	pronounce English well					
6	speak English well					
7	be fully familiar with English grammar					
8	prepare the lesson well					
9	use particular methods and techniques in teaching					
10	manage the class time well					
11	give lots of homework and assignments					
12	teach how to learn English outside the classroom (teach language learning strategies)					
13	use lesson plans properly					
14	teach English in English					
15	teach English in Afan Oromo or Amharic (Students' mother tongue)					
16	assess what students have learned reasonably and rationally					
17	provide opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities					
18	provide activities that arouse student's interest in learning English.					
19	challenge students academically					
20	be able to explain things well					
21	maintain good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary					
22	be helpful to students in and outside the classroom					
23	listen to student's opinions and let them express themselves					
24	help students to develop self- confidence in order to learn English well					
25	be friendly to students					
26	have a good sense of humor					
27	not discriminate between students and treat them fairly					
28	arouse students' motivation for learning English					
29	show interest in students (e.g. by remembering students' name) and their learning					
30	pay attention to the personal needs of students.					
31	be polite and respect the personality of the students					
32	be punctual					
33	be patient					
34	be nice to students					
35	have positive attitude.					
36	give rewards and offer extra help willingly					
37	set high expectations for students.					
38	encourage students to try to do their best.					

## Declaration

I, the undersigned graduate student, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, and that all sources of the materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

**Name:** Seifu Bogale

**Signature** 

**Date** 14/6/2021