

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND TEACHING

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Teaching is a dynamic process involving teachers and students in meaningful, collaborative efforts. According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992:4), “teaching should arouse and maintain the interest of all students so that they are motivated to become successful, self-directed learners”.

Dreyer (1998:125) states that:

If we are going to properly train our students for the new South African Curriculum 2005, which emphasises learner autonomy, individualisation and learner responsibility, we must give high priority to students and to their interests and needs. By putting students first we will eventually be putting teachers first.

Scarcella and Oxford (1992:4) emphasise two main characteristics of good teachers, namely caring and professionalism. Caring for students requires the teacher to step out of his/her personal frame of reference and to consider the students' needs and expectations. However, good teachers are more than caring; they are above all professional. Good teachers are flexible and willing to alter plans depending on the kind of language assistance individual students need. According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992:4-5):

a good language teacher also fulfils a diverse variety of roles in the English Second Language (ESL) classroom: needs analyst, decision-

maker, motivator, facilitator of group dynamics, provider of large quantities of authentic English input and opportunities to use this input, counsellor and friend, provider of feedback and promoter of a multicultural perspective.

McCombs and Whisler (1997) discuss several studies about teacher effectiveness, namely, the Purdue studies (1920s-1960s) and the Michigan studies (1950s). For example, good teachers should demonstrate interest and enthusiasm about the subject, explain it in clear and interesting ways, stimulate curiosity, and provide obvious structure and organisation of the material. The studies also suggest that teachers should be sympathetic, fair, observant, friendly, available, helpful, concerned, and humorous. Good teachers also speak expressively, move around, repeat difficult material, call students by name, and ask questions (cf. McCombs & Whisler, 1997). To summarise, good language teachers are caring professionals, who understand second language development, know effective teaching techniques, and make appropriate use of curriculum and materials.

In addition to what a review of the literature on the “good language teacher” indicates, students seem to have their own perceptions about the characteristics of ESL teachers and what their role should be in the ESL classroom. Some of these perceptions are related to their learning styles and beliefs about ESL teaching and about teachers’ roles in the ESL classroom. Students’ perceptions may not be the same as teachers’ perceptions, thus creating a conflict for students and teachers in the English classroom. For example, students from some cultures may expect to be passive recipients of information (i.e. extraversion vs. introversion), and others would like the teacher to use transparencies or the blackboard (i.e. visual sensory preference) to highlight main points instead of giving them aurally.

It is, therefore, essential that teachers be aware of their students' views. Brookfield (1995:93) states that:

Knowing something of how students experience learning helps us build convincing connections between what we want them to do and their own concerns and expectations. Researching students' perceptions of our actions and words alert us to problems that our behaviour is causing and to mistakes that we might otherwise miss. This, in turn, means that we can make more appropriate decisions about how and what to teach.

According to some researchers (cf. McCombs & Whisler, 1997), this is an important step in understanding the process of teaching and learning. By listening to students we can help foster motivation, learning and achievement. Therefore, being willing and able to understand students' view of what good teaching consists of, is one of the many aspects of good teaching (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998).

The following research questions need to be addressed:

- What are the characteristics of good teaching in the ESL classroom?
- What personality-related characteristics of ESL teachers do students regard as being important for their ESL learning?
- What do students believe the role of the ESL teacher should be in the ESL classroom?
- What are the implications of the students' perceptions of the characteristics and role of the ESL teacher/teaching for the ESL teaching-learning process?

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine what:

- the characteristics of good teaching in the ESL classroom are;
- personality-related characteristics of ESL teachers students regard as being important for their ESL learning;
- students believe the role of the ESL teacher should be in the ESL classroom; and
- the implications of the students' perceptions of the characteristics and role of the ESL teacher/teaching are for the ESL teaching-learning process.

1.3 Central theoretical statement

An awareness of students' perceptions of the characteristics and role of the ESL teacher/teaching can help prevent "conflicts" between students and teachers in the ESL classroom as well as help foster motivation and improve the effectiveness of the English teaching-learning process.

1.4 Method of research

A one-shot cross-sectional survey design was used. The accessible target population constituted one school in the Gauteng province. All students in Grade 8 to Grade 12 (n=1000) participated in the study. The population included 604 females and 396 males. Students were asked to write paragraphs about the positive and negative aspects of their English teachers' personality characteristics. They were also asked to list what they regarded as elements of good teaching, and what they thought the teachers' role was in the ESL classroom. The following suggestions were given to the students before they

wrote the paragraphs: They were not required to mention their teacher's name. They were asked to focus on a positive characteristic (e.g. friendliness) or a problem (e.g. lack of explanation and structure) they have with the way the teacher teaches. They had to tell what the teacher did or failed to do that confused or frustrated them. They also had to explain what caused anxious moments in the English classroom (if any).

The respective teachers collected the data during English periods. The data was collected during the second semester of 1999. The permission of the teachers and the headmaster was obtained before the data was collected. The data analysis was based on the principles of naturalistic data processing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each paragraph was unitised according to chunks of meaning. These units were then entered into index cards and similar units were grouped together into one category (e.g. teacher as structure giver) (i.e. post-hoc categories). Following this, each card in the category was reviewed to determine anomalies and conflicts. Finally, all categories were reviewed for possible relationships among them.

1.5 Chapter division

In chapter 2 the characteristics of good teaching and the personality characteristics and role of good ESL teachers are reviewed and discussed.

In chapter 3 the method of research is presented and discussed.

In chapter 4 the data is presented and the results are discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion, the implications of the students' perceptions of the characteristics and role of the ESL teacher/teaching for the ESL teaching-learning process, and the recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Good teaching and good teachers

2.1 Introduction

What is “good” ESL teaching? What is a “good” or “effective” ESL teacher? How does one learn to recognise the difference between good ESL teachers/teaching and bad/ineffective ESL teachers/teaching? The answers to these questions have sparked considerable debate in the past and undoubtedly will continue to do so in the future (Pellicer, 1984:53). According to Palmer (1990:11):

good teachers dwell in the mystery of good teaching until it dwells in them. As they explore it alone and with others, the insight and energy of the mystery begins to inform and animate their work. They discover and develop methods of teaching that emerge from their own integrity – but they never reduce their teaching to technique.

Pellicer (1984:53) states that “excellent teaching involves certain elements of artistry - elements beyond our ability to identify, understand, or perhaps even to recognise”. However, much of what we do recognise as good teaching is of a scientific or technical nature and can be readily identified, understood and even systematically replicated. Many of the studies (e.g. Airasian, 1994; Forbes, 1996; Levin & Long, 1981) undertaken to discern the common characteristics of good ESL teaching and the characteristics of good ESL teachers have produced results that are similar. This parallelism of results allows one to predict with reasonable certainty a number of teaching behaviours that when practised

correctly, appear to enhance the effectiveness of ESL teaching and ESL teachers. Research (e.g. Bainer et al., 1995; Brown, 1994; Clark, 1995; Pigge et al., 1987; Pellicer, 1984) has demonstrated that teachers' perceptions and understanding of their students' needs and of the classroom events may affect the teachers' classroom behaviour as well as affect students' behaviour and achievement in the classroom (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998; Brookfield, 1995; McCombs et al., 1997). These differences in behaviour may, in turn, cause conflict between teacher and students due to the different perspectives on how teaching should be conducted in the classroom. It is, therefore, important that teachers should take cognizance of their students' perceptions of how teaching should be conducted in the ESL classroom as there may be various similarities and differences of opinion concerning ESL teaching (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998; Bailey & Nunan, 1996). If these similarities and differences are taken into consideration it may enhance learning in the ESL classroom.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the characteristics of good ESL teaching, the personality-related characteristics of good ESL teachers, and the role of the teachers in the ESL classroom. A review of the literature (Barcelos et al., 1998; Bainer et al., 1995; Du Plessis, 1993) indicates that good ESL teaching is characterised by certain aspects such as lesson planning, lesson presentation and lesson evaluation. These aspects are furthermore compared and contrasted with the students' perceptions of good teaching and good teachers. In this mini-dissertation the following terms are used for the sake of consistency, namely "students", "good", and "teachers". It is, however, acknowledged that with the implementation of OBE more acceptable terms are emerging, namely "learners", "effective", and "educators".

2.2 Characteristics of good teaching within the ESL classroom

According to Du Plessis (1993:29), "teaching is not a goal in itself; the goal of all teaching is to effect learning". Teaching can assume many forms and have different objectives, but the end is always the same: a learning gain by the student. Good teaching is that which effects maximum learning by students. According to Barcelos et al. (1998:5), good teaching is a difficult concept to define as it comes in different shapes and sizes and is related to teachers' personalities, styles, and philosophy of teaching. A review of the literature (e.g. Bainer et al., 1995; Levin & Long, 1981; Bloom, 1980) indicates that the following aspects are important characteristics of good teaching:

- Lesson planning;
- Lesson presentation; and
- Lesson evaluation.

The students' perceptions of each of these characteristics are discussed at the end of each major characteristic.

2.2.1 Lesson planning

Davis (1993:1) states that a sizeable portion of the work involved in teaching takes place well before any teaching is conducted. The teacher spends a good deal of time trying to determine which way to go - they plan student seating arrangements, transitions between classroom activities and classroom rules. Decisions that teachers make while planning instruction have a profound influence on their classroom behaviour and on the nature and outcomes of the education their students receive. Thorough instructional planning enables the

teacher to enjoy greater confidence, security and enthusiasm for putting the plan into action.

According to Bainer et al. (1995:127), lesson planning “is the process by which teachers decide how best to select and organise a learning experience to maximise both teacher and student achievement and satisfaction”. In order for this to happen, the teacher needs to be aware of the various aspects of lesson planning as well as how to incorporate these aspects. A review of the literature (e.g. Davis, 1993; Bainer et al., 1995; Bloom, 1980) suggests that the following aspects are important in planning a lesson effectively.

2.2.1.1 The nature and needs of the students

Gunter et al. (1990:3) state that “concern for students must be the foundation of all planning”. The student at school is seen as an active participant in the didactic situation, someone who can learn through self-activity and experience. The focus when planning a lesson is on the student, not as a receptacle for information, but as a “whole” person (Van der Walt, 1990:192). The ESL teacher, therefore, needs to take into account the students’ experiential and cultural backgrounds, their developmental levels (i.e. their emotional, social, physical and intellectual development), interests and their preferred way of doing things (i.e. learning styles) (Bainer et al., 1995:133). However, the students’ needs or goals will depend on their age and the context of their second language instruction. As second language instruction in secondary schools has in recent years moved away from a focus on form to a focus on meaning (Van der Walt, 1990:192), the needs of the students have changed. The ability to negotiate meaning rather than form has become a focus in second language learning. This means that the teacher needs to allow more extended discourse, more meaning-focused interactions, and student participation. The student, therefore, needs to participate in classroom events that are beyond their current proficiency

levels. The needs of second language students are characterised as including goal-orientated needs (i.e. these focus on academic achievement or requirements that are expected at the end of the year), individual-orientated needs (i.e. what students wish to gain from the instruction), and process-orientated needs (i.e. these reflect what students need to do in order to actually acquire the language).

The student, as stated earlier, has become the central figure of ESL teaching and once the teacher has determined the nature and needs of the students, he or she must plan the learning objectives (outcomes) of the lesson (Van der Walt, 1990:193).

2.2.1.1.1 Learning outcomes

In the past, the terms aims and objectives were used when planning a lesson, but due to the implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) these terms have changed to outcomes (e.g. critical cross field outcomes, specific outcomes, learning outcomes, etc.). For purposes of specificity the term *objectives* will still be used where appropriate. Learning outcomes are the ends of instruction, that is, the specific knowledge, skills, or attitudes teachers want students to gain and be able to demonstrate as a result of their instruction (Bainier et al., 1995:134). Gunter et al. (1990:19-20) state that a learning objective (i.e. learning outcome) is a "statement of the measurable learning that is intended to take place as a result of instruction". Stating outcomes for learning helps the teacher and students to focus on what is important in a learning experience, and it furthermore, helps the ESL teacher to identify the type of instruction needed to achieve the learning outcome and evaluate the success of the instruction. The South African Government Gazette (South Africa, 1997) provides a basic outline of specific outcomes for the language literacy and communication learning area.

These outcomes are divided into seven sub-divisions or categories and these categories are now discussed.

(i) Learners make and negotiate meaning and understanding

Meaning is central to communication and this specific outcome aims at the development of a learner's ability to understand, create and negotiate meaning in various contexts by using appropriate communication strategies and by using listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. These strategies and skills are developed and refined by constantly being exposed to a variety of situations which afford language users opportunities to interact in different ways (South Africa, 1997).

(ii) Learners show critical awareness of language usage

This outcome aims at developing a learner's understanding of the way in which language is used as a powerful instrument to reflect, shape and manipulate people's beliefs, actions and relationships. It furthermore requires the development of a learner's skills to interpret and consciously reflect on language usage. For this reason, the development of the decoding skills - reading and listening - is emphasised (South Africa, 1997).

(iii) Learners respond to aesthetic, affective, cultural and social values in texts

According to the South African Government Gazette (South Africa, 1997), the aim of this outcome is to develop a learner's appreciation, use and creation of a text as an artistic expression of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and values through exposure to a wide variety of genres. The development of the ESL learner's

listening, reading and viewing skills to recognise and use literary devices, enriches the quality of their own language use and their lives.

(iv) Learners access, process and use information from a variety of sources and situations

This outcome aims to develop the capacity of learners to function fully in modern society by finding, evaluating and using information. The development of information skills is vital for the attainment of quality lifelong learning. This is achieved by using information from a variety of sources such as factual articles, reports, magazines, etc. The information obtained is presented in various formats such as an essay, posters, drawings, speeches, etc. The emphasis is on the production of integrated projects, non-fictional writing and structured debates (South Africa, 1997). These formats should show selection, assimilation and comparison of information.

(v) Learners understand, know and apply language structures and conventions in context

This outcome aims to develop a language user's understanding of grammar. The development of this grammatical competence empowers the learner to communicate clearly and confidently by using grammatical structures, for example, by using word order correctly. The clarity of communication is improved through the development of a learner's editing skills which includes a conscious awareness of the learner's own language usage (South Africa, 1997). In the secondary school, this implies that the learners study and apply a range of literary texts. Incorrect language usage can then be corrected by the ESL learner himself and by the other learners in the classroom.

(vi) Learners use language for learning

This outcome aims at developing the learner's ability to use language as a tool for learning in all learning areas. Learning is mediated through language as the learner interacts with the new knowledge, materials, peers, teachers and other people. The intrinsic value of language as a tool for problem-solving, decision-making, and creative, critical and evaluative thinking should be developed across the curriculum (South Africa, 1997). These learning strategies include memorisation, the transfer of information from one text to another, synthesising, summarising, skimming, etc. The learning strategies are evaluated and adapted according to the demands of the task.

(vii) Learners use appropriate communication strategies for specific purposes and situations

This specific outcome aims at development of the learner's ability to apply "communication skills and strategies appropriately to a specific purpose and a defined situation" (South Africa, 1997). The learners, therefore, define the communicative situation and then apply the correct register and tone in the specific communication strategy.

2.2.1.1.2 Lesson objectives

Gunter et al. (1990:21) state that there is no magic formula for writing out objectives, but when instructional objectives are clear, it is possible to select effective strategies to bring about the learning desired. A vital aspect of a good objective is that students must act on the material they are learning and connect that material in some way to something else. According to Gunter et al. (1990:21), the teacher should write objectives that "will enable students to learn

by acting on and manipulating ideas". Lesson objectives are, therefore, concerned with the instructional behaviour of the students. These objectives are classified according to type and level of complexity. Bloom's (1980) taxonomy of educational objectives classifies lesson objectives into three types: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. These objectives are now discussed.

2.2.1.1.2.1 Cognitive objectives

Bainer et al. (1995:135) define the cognitive domain as "containing objectives that emphasise remembering or reproducing something which has presumably been learned or using new and previously learned material to solve various kinds of problems". Cognitive objectives, therefore, specify what students will be able to do intellectually as a result of instruction. Bloom (1980) furthermore classifies cognitive objectives into six subdivisions. They run from lower-to-higher order types of learning (cf. Table 1):

TABLE 1: SAMPLE VERBS OF THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

1. Knowledge	<i>to recall, to repeat, to recollect, to memorise</i>
2. Comprehension	<i>to identify, to recognise, to select</i>
3. Application	<i>to use, to solve, to practice, to reproduce</i>
4. Analysis	<i>to investigate, to separate, to study</i>
5. Synthesis	<i>to combine, to formulate, to deduce</i>
6. Evaluation	<i>to appraise, to judge, to assess, to accept</i>

(Gunter et al., 1990:23).

It is important that the ESL teacher compiles the basic and easier knowledge first, as this is an essential foundation for higher levels of thinking. It is essential that the teacher develops objectives and prepares lessons that challenge students at all levels of cognitive ability.

2.2.1.1.2.2 Affective objectives

The affective domain deals with attitudinal, emotional and valuing goals of learners (Bainier et al., 1995:135). According to Oxford (1990), the affective side of the learner probably has one of the biggest influences on language learning success or failure. Good ESL language students are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. The objectives in this domain concern feelings and attitudes that students are expected to develop as a result of instruction. Gunter et al. (1990:27) state that “affective learning is not completely separable from cognitive learning: students often think about their attitudes and feelings, and they will have attitudes and feelings about what they think”. If the ESL teacher wants the students to care about the subject they are learning, he or she will write affective objectives that stimulate and interest them. These objectives should make the students more understanding, compassionate, and tolerant. Gunter et al. (1990:27) provide sample verbs in the affective domain (cf. Table 2):

TABLE 2: SAMPLE VERBS IN THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN

1. Receiving	<i>to take in, to listen to, to encounter</i>
2. Responding	<i>to react, to reply, to answer, to comply</i>
3. Valuing	<i>to accept, to reject, to esteem, to regard</i>
4. Organisation	<i>to compare, to order, to prioritise</i>
5. Characterisation	<i>to internalise, to personalise, to demonstrate</i>

The affective domain should, therefore, not be overlooked as this takes into consideration how students perceive and feel about the knowledge presented to them as well as **how** it is presented.

2.2.1.1.2.3 Psychomotor objectives

Psychomotor objectives that are written by the ESL teacher depends on the mastery of physical skill. In the teaching of English, it may involve doing a mimic for an oral lesson, pronouncing words, writing a composition, etc. (Bainer et al., 1995:135). It may also involve verbs such as “pronounce clearly, show an aptitude for, etc.”. Psychomotor objectives are the least difficult of all the objectives, but should not be overlooked by the ESL teacher as it is the actual undertaking of the cognitive and affective objectives.

Lesson planning is not only vital to the ESL teacher, but research (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998; NeSmith, 1999; Van Rossum et al., 1985) has shown that lesson planning is also an important aspect to the ESL student.

2.2.1.2 The students' perceptions of lesson planning

Students feel that lesson planning is a vital part of good teaching (Van Rossum et al., 1985). One student explained that: "I feel it as important to know along which scheme the teacher works. There should be a clear cut package where the parts are drawn out and illuminated one by one..." (Van Rossum et al., 1985:625). As stated earlier, lesson planning refers to the process by which teachers decide how best to select and organise a learning experience so that both the teacher and student are satisfied with their achievement. Kyriacou (1991:18) states that when a lesson is well prepared, it can have a "marked rousing effect on pupils' self-esteem, enthusiasm and sense of purpose for the next part of the lesson". According to Bainer et al. (1995:129), thoughtful planning promotes learning because it takes into account the diverse backgrounds, interests, and abilities of students in the class. A thoughtful plan is likely to keep the students interested as well as facilitate good teaching and learning. According to Van Rossum et al. (1985:625), students often express the wish for good preparation, good structuring and control by the teacher. One student stated that: "It would be very nice if we could receive an overall view of the subject-matter to be treated and also of when which part will be treated and how much it is" (Van Rossum et al., 1985:628). The same student felt that the subject matter should be structured as logically and orderly as possible (Van Rossum et al., 1985:628). Therefore, in order to structure the lesson as logically and orderly as possible, the teacher needs to be aware of the needs of the learners and plan the lesson objectives and learning outcomes accordingly.

Forbes (1996) found that students need to be taught to operate independently in order to regulate themselves to achieve their desires and the goals that are set before them. Lesson planning is, therefore, vital to the student as it gives structure and meaning to the work conveyed by the teacher as well as to what is

expected of them as ESL students. The manner in which the lesson is conveyed is also very important.

2.2.2 Lesson presentation

According to Du Plessis (1993), the choice of a teaching or learning method cannot be done in isolation, and should be closely linked to the situation analysis, the learning content and the aims of the lesson. A review of the literature (cf. Du Plessis, 1993; Brown, 1994) indicates that lesson presentation has a specific format that consists of an introduction, introducing new learning content, and a conclusion.

2.2.2.1 The introduction

The introduction of the lesson consists of the ESL teacher stating the aims and the objectives of the lesson (i.e. the learning outcomes) clearly to the students, as it is vital that they know what the teacher is aiming at in the lesson. The teacher does not need to announce these aims formally, but it should be clear to the students what the aims of the lesson are. Du Plessis (1993:75) states that the aims of the lesson should be structured in terms of what the objectives of the lesson are. It is also important that the content of a lesson should not be seen in isolation, and it is for this reason that the teacher has to recapture the students' knowledge of the previous lessons. This can be done by asking questions about the work that was done in preceding periods and about preparation that the students had to do independently. By testing the pre-knowledge of the students, the teacher can adjust his or her lesson in order to fulfil the needs of the learners, as it will not be wise to continue with new work if the students are not ready and receptive for it (Du Plessis, 1993:75).

Another important factor is that a successful lesson promotes two basic conditions for learning and remembering, namely meaning and motivation. Motivation is a precondition for effective learning (Brown, 1994:152), and a good lesson should, therefore, stimulate interest, and sustain curiosity. Intrinsic motivation is very important, as the learner becomes motivated to engage in the activities and this brings about internally rewarding consequences such as feelings of competence and self-determination (Brown, 1994:156). It is important that the teacher should know that not all the students have a strong need to learn the subject matter at hand and that the motivation of the class rests on a large variety of factors. Some of these factors are external which are within the teacher's control and some are internal factors which are the learner's own motives for studying the subject matter. According to Du Plessis (1993:76), enthusiasm and good planning by teacher can enhance effective teaching in the ESL classroom.

2.2.2.2 New learning content

The larger part of the lecture is devoted to opening up the new learning content to the students. It is vital that the learning content be structured logically and in sequence (Davis, 1993:5). The teacher must make sure that he/she finishes off one point before going on to the next one. Hadley (1993:489) states that the teacher should execute transitions that either make each activity a logical continuation of the one before it or make it clear that there will be a shift in focus. It is important that the ESL teacher provides a variety of classroom tasks. Variety gives the impression of a faster pace, which tends to invigorate instruction for most students. These activities should be learner-centred rather than teacher-centred. The ESL teacher, therefore, needs to involve all students actively during the class period. The communicative approach to language teaching provides a framework for involving students actively in the language learning process.

2.2.2.2.1 The communicative approach to language teaching

The communicative approach to language teaching has in recent years become an important part of language teaching in the ESL classroom (cf. Richards et al., 1986; Galloway, 1993). According to Richards and Rodgers (1986:69), the communicative approach to language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. Galloway (1993:1) states that communicative language teaching make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real-life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986:76), the range of exercise types and activities compatible with a communicative approach is unlimited, provided that such exercises enable students to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage students in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction. Littlewood (1981) distinguishes between “functional communicative activities” and “social interaction activities” as major activity types in communicative language teaching. Functional communication activities include such tasks as students comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences; working out a likely sequence of events in a set of pictures; discovering missing features in a map, picture, etc. Social interaction activities include conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role-plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:76).

The teacher, when introducing new content, makes use of authentic materials in the classroom. These might include language-based materials such as signs, magazines, advertisements and newspapers, or graphic and visual sources around which communicative activities can be built. Communicative activities

based on these materials can, for example, take the form of group activities, language games and role plays (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:81).

2.2.2.3 Conclusion

According to Du Plessis (1993:76), the conclusion to a lesson consists of three phases. The first phase consists of recapitulation and application, which entails that whatever has been discussed and explained, should be recapitulated and application should be sought for it. In this way comprehension will be promoted and the work will be remembered better. The second phase consists of the teacher evaluating whether the students have grasped what was taught. This can be done through asking questions to see whether the lesson objectives/outcomes have been achieved. This method of assessment is very effective if used throughout the lesson. The third and last aspect is giving the students homework. This gives the ESL learner the opportunity to practise what has been done in the class.

Lesson presentation is a vital aspect of good teaching and benefits the learning process. Learners of English as a second language have various perceptions of how a lesson should be conducted and these perceptions are now addressed.

2.2.2.4 Students' perceptions of lesson presentation

Students enjoy having the opportunity to participate creatively and actively in the classroom and not just listening to a lecture. Kyriacou (1991:42) states that "active learning refers to any activities where pupils are given a marked degree of autonomy and control over the organisation, conduct and direction of the learning activity". According to NeSmith (1999:2), if a student is encouraged to share his or her perspective, there is a greater likelihood of the student feeling that the degree of control needed to foster self-regulation is less. Research

(Forbes, 1996; Goodlad, 1984) has shown that students tend to do better in classes where they perceive a great deal of decision making. In a study conducted by Van Rossum et al. (1985), a student stated that she enjoyed doing projects. She, furthermore, felt that she, as a student, could develop her own activities with regard to the subject matter to be studied (Van Rossum et al., 1985:631). This means that students want to be actively involved in the teaching process and not just be passively involved by listening to a lecture. Kyriacou (1991:42) states that active learning has a number of educational benefits. The first benefit is that such activities are intellectually more stimulating and, therefore, enhance pupil motivation and interest in activities. It also encourages interaction and communication skills.

2.2.3 Lesson Evaluation

According to Dreyer and Van der Walt (forthcoming), there has been growing criticism of traditional testing methods. The root of the problem is confusion about the purposes of assessment and the failure to recognise that assessment can serve different purposes. In the following section the purposes of traditional testing methods are contrasted with new forms of assessment and their purposes are discussed.

2.2.3.1 Traditional testing and new assessment methods

The framework of curriculum development and instruction practices in the ESL classroom has undergone significant modification during the last fifteen years (Moya & O'Malley, 1994:1). This shift in pedagogical theory has resulted in the increased use of student-centred communicative approaches in the classroom. These approaches are distinguished from prior practices, which focused on language function and meaning and the process of learning. Moya and O'Malley

(1994:1) state that traditional testing methods are seen as particularly antithetical to process learning and is, therefore, incongruent with current ESL classroom practices. Milner and Milner (1993:377) state that traditional testing methods are largely teacher controlled and that students have little or no choice when it comes to assessment. Traditional testing tends to compartmentalise, label, rate and rank the learner. End of the term/year examinations have tended to focus on factual knowledge and the marks that are allocated have only been norm-referenced. According to Fischer and King (1995), French (1992) and Hughes (1996), competitiveness and the once-off nature of the final examination have led to students experiencing stress and frustration. Current tests and student evaluation procedures do not measure what all students actually know and are able to do (Dreyer & Van der Walt, forthcoming).

According to Tannenbaum (1996:1), new assessment methods refer to “procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom”. Dreyer and Van der Walt (forthcoming) enhance this notion by stating that new assessment methods are an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgements about the student’s progress in language using non-conventional strategies. Assessment is more learner-centred and looks at the relationship of students’ performance to their earlier efforts and their future possibilities. Assessment tends to engage students in a lifelong process of self-assessment and growth (Dreyer & Van der Walt, forthcoming). According to Tannenbaum (1996:1), new assessment methods generally meet the following criteria:

- Focus is on documenting individual student growth over time, rather than comparing students with one another;
- Emphasis is on students’ strengths (what they know) rather than weaknesses (what they don’t know); and

- Consideration is given to the learning styles, language proficiencies, cultural and educational backgrounds, and grade level of students.

Assessment should include the full range of information teachers gather in their classrooms (Airasian, 1994:5). This information that is gathered helps them to understand their pupils, monitor their instruction and establish a viable classroom culture. This means that the teacher moves away from summative assessment where a summary of a learner's achievement is made at the end of a course, to formative assessment, which concerns assessing throughout the learning process. According to Dreyer and Van der Walt (forthcoming), new assessment practices, including portfolios, self-assessment, and peer-assessment, can provide new and often better information about student performance and development than has previously been available. Assessment, furthermore, is required to achieve a wide range of purposes - it has to support teaching and learning, provide information about students, teachers and schools, act as a selection and certification device, as an accountability procedure, and drive curriculum and teaching (Dreyer & Van der Walt, forthcoming).

These new assessment methods have three main purposes. Firstly, new assessment methods individualise assessment, mimic good teaching practices and involve teachers and learners more deeply in the assessment process. Active learner involvement in assessment strengthens a student's cognitive and metacognitive awareness of the learning process. Secondly, a student's sense of control over the learning process may be increased through shared responsibility and participation in assessment (Moya & O'Malley, 1994:10). Thirdly, active involvement in the assessment process may encourage a student's self-determination in learning and may decrease assessment anxiety. New assessment techniques capitalise on learners' natural tendency to save work and can become effective to get students to take a second look and think about how they could improve future work, for example, portfolios and self-

assessment techniques. New assessment techniques, therefore, move away from the old write, hand in and forget mentality (Sweet, 1993:1).

2.2.3.2 Students' perceptions of evaluation

The assigning of marks to aspects such as projects, term tests and final examinations is a simple way to summarise a student's performance or learning over time and across a variety of experiences. However, it can be intimidating and cause a lot of anxiety for students (Bainer et al., 1995:286). Parents, students and teachers who overemphasise the importance thereof cause some of this anxiety. One student stated that, "even if I study for those tests I felt so nervous that I failed anyway. That made me feel dumb and stupid". Krumboltz and Yeh (1997:324) state that competitive assigning of marks "can redefine and distort the underlying purpose of education, which is to help every student learn". If the judging of the relative merit of students' performances takes precedence over improving their skills, few students can feel good about their accomplishments as only one student can be the best and the rest will then be less able. Constructive evaluation encourages students to apply maximum effort by emphasising their strengths, identifying concrete ways for them to improve, and providing them with positive reinforcement for progress.

2.2.4 Personality-related characteristics/traits

According to Grossman (1999:3), outstanding teachers are not governed by techniques, but by their respect for the students they teach and by a desire to see them succeed. Although teachers express this attitude differently, their motives are the same: to bring out the best in the students for whom they are responsible. With this objective in mind, the techniques and tools they apply are extensions of their emotions and are not separate from them. A review of the

literature (Barcelos et al.,1998; Grossman, 1999; Palmer, 1990) indicates that the following personality-related characteristics of teachers are perceived to be important.

2.2.4.1 Caring

Gulette (1984:8) states that, “the heart of good teaching is how teachers feel about their students”. She states that if teachers can teach for their students’ sakes, as well as for the sake of their own intellectual journey, then the teaching profession can become what it should be: generous, life-enhancing and immortal. According to Palmer (1990:11), good teaching comes from the integrity of the teacher as well as from his or her relation to the subject or students. If the ESL teacher cares about the students and is concerned about their needs, it could create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, which will enhance the learning process. Gulette (1984:10) states that there are too many teachers who don’t value students, who in some sense don’t even **see** their students. Weinstein (1989:53) believes that teachers must understand their students and should adapt instruction to students’ needs. An aspect that links closely with understanding is caring for students. This entails the ability of the teacher to be understanding, compassionate, empathetic, friendly, concerned and warm (Weinstein, 1989:57). Over an extended period devotion, or caring, is shown by consistency, which expresses itself in persistence under favourable conditions and a willingness to overcome difficulties.

Oxford and Scarcella (1992) state that ESL teachers are caring and that their act of caring has certain distinguishing features. They enhance this notion by stating that “caring grows out of a concern for the welfare, protection or enhancement of the students (Oxford & Scarcella, 1992:4). According to Gulette (1984), the most important principle of successful teaching is to have a deep respect for the students. She states that “the teacher’s obligation, in short, is to value students

enough to value everything done for them" (Gulette, 1984:48). The good ESL teacher, therefore, tries to encourage every learner by caring for him or her, and by facilitating their learning.

2.2.4.2 Enthusiasm and interest

Demonstrating enthusiasm and interest concerning the subject matter, is another vital characteristic of the good ESL teacher. Enthusiastic teachers convey to students that they are confident and enjoy what they are doing. According to Bainer et al. (1995:316), teacher enthusiasm helps students to persist at tasks, motivates them and leads to increased learning and satisfaction. Research (Bettencourt et al., 1983; Larkins et al., 1982) has shown that teachers who are perceived as teaching enthusiastically are described as stimulating, energetic, mobile and animated, as well as straightforwardly enthusiastic. In some studies, teachers are perceived as enthusiastic because they appear interested and excited by, and involved in the subject matter. Enthusiasm can be conveyed in various ways such as variety in speech, gestures, and facial expressions. An enthusiastic teacher will move around whilst teaching and will gesture with his or her hands, arms, head and shoulders to reinforce or emphasise points (Bainer et al., 1995:316). He or she furthermore maintains eye contact with all students, encourages participation by all students and uses the input given by the students. Teacher's attitudes must be based on flexibility and creativity and should not be confined to the traditional classroom mentality of "you are the students and I am the teacher so I call the shots". The way in which a teacher uses his or her voice and facial expression to promote interest in the subject matter can enhance enthusiasm. From studies on the effects of enthusiasm (cf. McKinney & Larkins, 1982), it is clear that a majority of students prefer teachers who display high levels of enthusiasm. The ESL teacher, therefore, can enhance learner interest and subject enjoyment, if he or she teaches enthusiastically.

2.2.4.3 Other related characteristics

There are various other teacher personality characteristics/traits that enhance good ESL teaching. Research (Goodman, 1986; Pigge & Marso, 1987; Van Rossum et al., 1985; Weinstein, 1989) has shown that the following personality traits also need to be taken into consideration. Teachers displaying a good sense of humour, and who enjoy teaching is an important personality trait. Teachers who are fair, that do not have favourites in the class, and assign marks in a fair way are perceived to be important to students. Teacher flexibility is another important trait. This entails that the teacher can depart from fixed schedules and plans and can deal with the unexpected. Teachers need to be open-minded and must be able to see things from a student's perspective and this enhances an atmosphere of openness. Another important personality trait is patience with the students and with the learning material.

How do students perceive the personalities of ESL teachers in the classroom? A review of the literature (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998; Clark, 1995; Bainer et al., 1995) indicates that students perceive the following characteristics to be important.

2.2.4.4. Students' perceptions of teacher personality characteristics/traits

The personality traits of the ESL teacher and, therefore, of a good ESL teacher are vital in the teacher-student relationship. Students tend to first relate to these personality traits before becoming interested in the subject area. These aspects are now discussed.

2.2.4.4.1 Caring

According to Barcelos et al. (1998:10), compassion and patience are interrelated elements. Children's thoughts and stories about good teachers and teaching concern many aspects of which caring and thoughtful teaching seem to carry the most weight. In the language of children, according to Clark (1995:15), their good teachers nurture and care for them by treating them as intelligent people who can become even more intelligent, by taking time to learn who they are and what they love, and treating them fairly by treating them differently. Thoughtful teaching is empathetic and should respond to the student in ways that comfort, reassure and encourage.

2.2.4.4.2 Humour

Teachers need to be humorous and serious. This means that both teacher and learner can laugh together and this may encourage companionship and mutual trust. Students frequently note an appropriate sense of humour as an important characteristic of teachers they enjoy. These teachers make learning fun. According to Bainer et al. (1995:317), humour can defuse tension, communicate the teacher's security and confidence, promote trust and reduce discipline problems. In a study conducted by Clark (1995), one student stated that the good teacher is "both funny and serious. We can laugh together, and this makes me feel happy and close". Humour can be used to create a positive classroom climate. It is necessary that the humour used by the teacher should enhance the self-esteem of the learner, and should not be used to degrade the learner in any way.

It is of utmost importance that students know that the teacher is the authority in the classroom. Kyriacou (1991:73) states that "frequent use of humour,

particularly being 'jokey', and trying to act as a friend of equal status, tends to undermine your authority because it does not accord with the ritual of school life..." (Kyriacou, 1991:73). Humour and friendship in the classroom are perceived as being important characteristics, but should be used and conducted with a lot of wisdom by the teacher.

2.2.4.4.3 Enthusiasm and creativity

Teacher enthusiasm is an integral part of good teaching as this creates interest or disinterest in students concerning the subject matter. Franklin et al. (1995) found, in a study they compiled to determine quality in education, that students rated teacher enthusiasm as the most important aspect of good teaching. The creative, innovative and enthusiastic teacher will be the one who reaches students (Franklin et al., 1995:2). It is necessary for students to be constantly stimulated in order to develop their own natural creativity and to stimulate their enthusiasm in the subject area. This can be achieved by letting students take control of their own learning. Students are, therefore, given the opportunity to use skills they have acquired and be recognised for excellence, and this in turn, can enhance their enthusiasm for the subject.

2.2.5 The role of the teacher in the ESL classroom

Since teachers range from pre-school through post secondary levels and are unique people, no two teachers will have the same combination nor will all of them be present in every excellent teacher. No two ESL teachers will, therefore, have the same qualities, nor will two of them fulfil their role in the same way. However, the role of the ESL teacher is an extremely important one and should not be overlooked. A review of the literature (Cook, 1996; Pellicer, 1984; Van

Rossum et al., 1985) indicates that the following are the most important roles of the ESL teacher.

2.2.5.1 Imparting subject knowledge

It is important that teachers realise that students don't just know the subject matter, but that they, as teachers, must present the knowledge in a clear, concise and interesting way so that students stay interested and motivated to study the subject matter. Pellicer (1984:54) states that effective teachers appear to have an in-depth knowledge of the subject area, and the ability to recognise differences between students in terms of study preferences, cognitive ability and levels of previous learning. Knowledge is important but not sufficient for good or effective teaching. What seems to be more important is the teacher's ability to combine knowledge of the subject, knowledge of teaching, and knowledge of students in order to implement effective teaching.

2.2.5.2 The teacher as motivator

According to Cook (1996:96), some L2 students do better than others because they are better motivated. The usual meaning of motivation for the ESL teacher is probably the interest that something generates in students. Brown (1987:114) states that motivation is commonly thought of as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to particular action". Motivation can be an inner drive or stimulus, which can, like self-esteem, be global, situational, or task orientated.

Oxford and Scarcella (1992:57) state that motivation decides the extent of active, personal engagement in learning. They state that "the degree of motivation is the most powerful influence on how and when students use language learning strategies, the techniques students employ to take charge of and improve their

own progress" (Oxford & Scarcella, 1992:52). Motivation in L2 learning has been used to refer to the long-term fairly stable attitudes in the students' minds. Two types of favourable motivation have been identified: integrative and instrumental motivation (Cook, 1996:97).

Instrumental motivation means learning the language for an ulterior motive unrelated to its use by native speakers such as passing an examination, etc. Integrative motivation reflects whether the students identify with the target culture and people in some sense or rejects them. The ESL teacher needs to know that these are not the only two types of motivation, but that they are very important. Cook (1996:98) states that students will find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have neither instrumental nor integrative motivation. The teacher, therefore, needs to be a motivator in order to enhance the L2 learning process. In practice, teachers have to be aware of the reservations and preconceptions of their students— (i.e. what they think of the teacher and what they think of the subject), as this heavily affects their success. According to Cook (1996:99), high motivation is one factor that causes successful learning, and successful learning may cause high motivation and it is the latter part that is under the teacher's control. The ESL teacher's choice of teaching materials and the information content of the lesson, should correspond with the motivations of the students as this will enhance the teaching process and the motivation of the students.

2.2.5.3 The teacher as maintainer of discipline

Order is needed in the classroom if the activities that take place are to facilitate effective learning. According to Kyriacou (1991:81), discipline refers to the order which is necessary in the classroom for student learning to occur effectively. It is vital that discipline needs to be conveyed to the student in a positive way. If it is done negatively, the classroom atmosphere may become negative and the

motivation and enthusiasm of the students may deteriorate. Discipline is solely in the hands of the teacher and can, therefore, become a positive or negative form of power and control. Barcelos et al. (1998:7) state that "power by itself has no value structure. The use of power, however, gives it a good [or] poor...image". Disciplining students and creating order in the classroom needs to be positive and enhance teaching. This manner of discipline can only occur if the students find themselves comfortable with the teacher. The teacher is the sole determiner of this, as the emotional output he or she gives in the class can determine how students will react to him or her, the lesson presented, as well as to discipline.

2.2.5.4 Various other roles

The effective or good teacher must be a leader who can inspire and influence students through expert and referent power. He or she knows his subject well and is kind and respectful towards the students. The effective teacher has high standards and expectations coexisting with encouragement, support and flexibility. In order for the ESL teacher to lead, he needs to be a planner. According to Van der Walt (1990:193), planning involves an interpretation of the syllabus which will be influenced by the teacher's views of language and language learning. The good ESL teacher is also an innovator who changes strategies, techniques, texts and materials when better one's are found and/or when existing ones no longer provide substantive learning experience for the students. This role uses teacher values and uses students' ideas about how to enhance their own learning. The ESL teacher also fulfils the role of facilitator who helps students to improve their skills and insight. By neither letting them flounder nor prematurely offering assistance, the good ESL teacher enables students to become successful by working on their own as well as to learn from their own mistakes. Van der Walt (1990:195) states that the facilitating teacher has to "monitor and guide the progress of the learners". Richards and Rodgers

(1986:24) state that the role of the teacher will ultimately reflect both the objectives of the method that is used in the teaching process and the learning theory on which the method is predicated. The teacher, therefore, is not just an instructor but fulfils a variety of roles.

2.3 Conclusion

Good teaching comes in different shapes and sizes and is related to teachers' personalities, styles, and philosophy of teaching. Ornstein (1991:72) states that "teacher style is a matter of choice and comfort, and what works for one teacher with one set of students may not work for another". Research (e.g. Bainer et al., 1995; Pellicer, 1984) has shown that teachers' perceptions and understanding of their students' needs and of the classroom events may affect teachers' classroom behaviour (cf. Brown, 1994; Clark, 1995; Ornstein, 1991; Pigge & Marso, 1987) as well as affect students' behaviour and achievement in the classroom (cf. Barcelos et al., 1998; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Brookfield, 1995). These aspects include lesson planning, lesson presentation and lesson evaluation. The concept of good ESL teachers/teaching is furthermore enhanced by the idea that there are various similarities and differences between the perceptions of the teacher and the perceptions of the students concerning the characteristics of good teaching, the personality-related characteristics of the teacher as well as the roles of the teacher. As stated earlier, these differences in opinion may cause conflict in the classroom and it is, therefore, necessary that both the teacher and the student be aware of them as this, in turn, may enhance the learning process.

This chapter explored the various characteristics of good ESL teaching. It also looked at the personality related characteristics of good ESL teachers and the role of the good teacher in the ESL classroom. A review of the literature

indicated that both teachers and students deemed many of the aspects such as good planning, teacher enthusiasm, caring, humour, and the teacher maintaining discipline as important.

CHAPTER 3

Method of research

3.1 Introduction

The methodology employed in this study is discussed under five main headings:

- Design
- Subjects
- Instruments/Materials
- Data collection procedure
- Data analysis

3.2 Method of research

3.2.1 Design

A one-shot cross-sectional survey design was used.

3.2.2 Subjects

The accessible target population constituted one school in the Gauteng province. All the students are English Second Language students in Grade 8 to Grade 12 (N=1000). For ease of analysis, Grades 8-10 and Grades 11-12 were grouped together. The students are fairly homogeneous in that they come from fairly similar backgrounds. The population included 604 females and 396 males. All

students agreed to participate in the study and gave permission for the teacher to quote them and use their narratives. The students would remain anonymous.

3.2.3 Instrumentation/Materials

In research on education and applied linguistics, as in other areas of the behavioural and social sciences, personal viewpoints are frequently expressed in narrative form and are understood to reflect the voices of individuals (Bailey & Nunan, 1996). Students were asked to write paragraphs about the positive and negative aspects of their English teachers' personality characteristics. They were also asked to list what they regarded as elements of good teaching, and what they thought the teacher's role was in the ESL classroom. The following instructions were given to students before they wrote the paragraphs: They were not required to mention their teacher's name. They were told to focus on a positive characteristic (e.g. friendliness) or a problem (e.g. lack of explanation or structure) they have with the way the teacher teaches. They had to tell what the teacher did or failed to do that confused or frustrated them. They also had to explain what caused anxious moments in the English classroom (if any).

3.2.4 Data collection procedure

The respective English teachers collected the data during English class periods. The data was collected during the second semester of 1999. The permission of the teachers and the headmaster was obtained before the data was collected. The students received uniform instructions on how to write and what to include in the paragraphs.

3.2.5 Analysis

Data analysis was based on the principles of naturalistic data processing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each paragraph was unitised according to chunks of meaning. These units were entered into index cards and similar units were grouped together into one category (e.g. teacher as structure giver) (i.e. post-hoc categories). Following this, each card in the category was reviewed to determine anomalies and conflicts. Finally, all categories were reviewed for possible relationships among them. Checking the categorisation of themes with the teacher of these students, who has a very good rapport with them, also ensured credibility and validity.

3.3 Conclusion

According to researchers (cf. Abraham & Vann, 1987; Bachman, 1990) the methodology of a study is very important, because many studies have “failed” as a result of methodological failure. In this chapter a complete outline of the steps involved in the study was given in order to enable future researchers to replicate similar studies.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation and discussion of results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the analysed data. The aim of this chapter is to attempt to answer the research questions posed in chapter 1:

- What are the characteristics of good teaching in the ESL classroom?
- What personality-related characteristics of ESL teachers do students regard as being important for their ESL learning?
- What do students believe the role of the ESL teacher should be in the ESL classroom?
- What are the implications of the students' perceptions of the characteristics and role of the ESL teacher/teaching for the ESL teaching-learning process?

Question four is addressed in chapter 5.

In order to facilitate the discussion of the results, the following headings are used:

- Characteristics of good teaching;
- Personality-related characteristics; and
- The role of teachers in the ESL classroom.

4.2 Characteristics of good teaching

The following characteristics are discussed:

- Lesson planning;
- Lesson presentation; and
- Lesson evaluation.

4.2.1 Lesson planning

The narratives clearly indicated that students had certain ideas about what teachers should or should not do in terms of teaching in the ESL classroom. These ideas emerged as themes such as being prepared, being organised etc. These themes are now discussed (cf. Table 3).

TABLE 3: Lesson planning

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
Grade 8-10	<p>“She is always doing her best to make the work interesting for us”.</p> <p>“This teacher never enters the class without being well prepared for the days’ work”.</p> <p>“She always gave the very best of herself and she was always prepared in all the work she had to do with us”.</p>
Grade 11-12	<p>“Isn’t it just wonderful to walk into a class where a well organised, well prepared and friendly teacher waits you in”.</p> <p>“I liked her the most because she was always well-prepared”.</p> <p>“Everything she did was so organised”.</p> <p>“She had an awesome amount of insight which always shone through when a poem was discussed”.</p> <p>“Sometimes you get teachers that teach from the study guide, but she never did. She was always well prepared and we could ask her any question at any time”.</p>
Negative comments	<p>“He didn’t know how to prepare for class and he never smiled”.</p>

The findings indicated that there was no difference between the Grade 8 -10 and the Grade 11-12 students in terms of their perceptions of a well-prepared teacher. The themes that emerged from the narratives of both groups included the teacher being well-prepared for the class, friendly and well-organised, and that the teacher should make the work interesting for them. The findings also indicated that these students had a high esteem for a teacher who knew the

subject matter at hand and did not just read from the prescribed text. They, furthermore, felt that the teacher should structure the work in an organised manner. Teachers should, therefore, take cognisance of the work that they prepare. The content of the subject that they prepare should be interesting and stimulating for the students. The content of the work should be organised in such a manner that the students feel that it is worthwhile doing it.

4.2.2 Lesson presentation

Lesson presentation enjoyed a lot of attention in the narratives. The way in which a teacher teaches can create conflict when the teacher’s way of explanation and level of explanation does not always satisfy the students (Barcelos et al., 1998:12). There were various themes that emerged from the narratives such as the teacher explaining the work, making the work fun, doing things practically, etc. These themes are now addressed (cf. Table 4).

TABLE 4: Lesson presentation

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
Grade 8-10	<p>“We didn’t sit in class and just write in our books the whole day. <i>We did things practically</i>”.</p> <p>“When we leave the class we always understand the work because she <i>explains</i> it in such a way that everybody can understand it”.</p> <p>“He would let us cut out pictures out of a newspaper and write a story about it. He taught all of the lessons out of his head and not out of a textbook like most other teachers”.</p> <p>“She <i>explains the work</i> over and over again and tells me to do my best. With this positive motivation I try to</p>

	<p>concentrate very hard while I'm working".</p> <p>"When he teaches English, he makes it interesting by using facts of former English poets. He explains everything that we ask and gives us reasons for the explanations".</p> <p>"Everyone in her class felt part of the class and so the teacher and the class communicated with each other in a good manner".</p> <p>"She was so patient and taught us new words and spelling, making it all feel like a game and not learning".</p> <p>"When we had poetry and there's a song about the poem, she would play us the song."</p> <p>"If we had to do poetry, or reading, he always did it with us". "He would ask the questions, ask opinions in the class and then write down the correct answer on the board".</p>
<p>Negative Comments</p>	<p>"Reading classes went as follows: she would read the first two pages, lose interest and throw the book across her shoulder saying: "You go and read the rest!"".</p>
<p>Grade 11-12</p>	<p>"If she explains something, she explains it until you understand".</p> <p>"Being in her class was a lot of fun. Trying to understand verbs and tenses did not seem like a huge mountain anymore".</p> <p>"We had fun by playing games with vowels and the silent e".</p> <p>"Something about her presentation and enthusiasm in doing so, just lightened up the whole classroom".</p> <p>"She always had us in stitches as she, lively and</p>

enthusiastically, portrayed Macbeth to us”.

“His classes were fun and educational”.

“He made English easy to understand, fun to be in and he made English a period to look forward to”.

“This teacher taught me how to like the subject. It wasn’t the usual and boring kind of class – everyday you learned something new because the **presentation was so unique and colourful**”.

“She could read a poem with so much passion it gave you goose bumps, even if you didn’t understand a word of the poem”.

“She loved teaching and was very **positive towards the subject**. Because of her positive influence, we also became positive and that helped a great deal in changing the mood of the lessons into fun”.

“When we did the poem she would “perform” the poem, not only read it”.

“Usually poetry is a nightmare, but she made it **fun** for us to do and encouraged our creativity”.

“She was an intelligent and spirited teacher, always trying to teach us how to use the English language”.

“She had an **interesting** way of teaching. She displayed everything on the blackboard with colour. This way we learned our tenses”.

“She always gave us the necessary information and sometimes more. Before the exams she **reviewed all the work with us** and really put an effort into helping us do well”.

“She was young, **enthusiastic** and dedicated to her work.

	<i>She did things in a very different way</i> and the fact that her English language usage and knowledge was perfectly up to standard, motivated us to speak English as perfectly as she did”.
Negative Comments	“The teacher just gave the work, sat at her desk and we had to go on”.

The findings indicated that the Grade 8 -10 students valued the fact that they were allowed to apply the language in a practical way. These students often referred to “playing games” and doing things “practically”. Another theme that enjoyed a lot of attention was the teacher explaining the work. One student stated that the teacher “explained it [the work] in such a way that everybody can understand it”. Barcelos et al. (1998:12) state that if teachers assume that students have the same knowledge about certain subjects just because they are in the same class or have reached a certain age, it could create problems for the students. Another theme that emerged among the Grade 8-10 students’ narratives was the teacher making the work interesting for them. One student stated that, “he makes it interesting by using facts of former English poets”. This student felt that the teacher, by providing more information, made the poetry lesson more interesting.

The grade 11 and 12 students also enjoyed being involved in the lesson, for example, the use of games. They highlighted this by stating that it was “fun” being involved in the lesson. One student stated that “being in her class was a lot of fun. Trying to understand verbs and tenses did not seem like a huge mountain anymore”. They highlighted the fact that the teacher that enthusiastically portrayed the literature in a lively way motivated them to study the subject. Explanation was another recurring theme in these students’ narratives. Students need details before starting an activity and if this is not

given properly it can lead to the students being frustrated. This finding is similar to that found by Barcelos et al. (1998). The students were positive about their teachers' explanations. One student stated that "she always gave us the necessary information and sometimes more".

4.2.3 Lesson evaluation

In recent years there has been a growing criticism of traditional testing methods (cf. Chapter 2), and the narratives indicated that the students emphasised this by criticising the way in which the testing was done. However, there are aspects that are positive and enhance the teaching-learning process. These aspects are now discussed (cf. Table 5).

TABLE 5: Lesson evaluation

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
Grade 8-10	<p>"We don't get a lot of homework, but we get homework regularly. I like that very much".</p> <p>"When she gave us homework it was always nice things to do".</p> <p>"Sometimes she would let us do our homework in the form of a game, and that was fun".</p> <p>"She was also very strict when she marked our tests and that's great, because that's the only way we will learn from our mistakes".</p> <p>"No matter what our marks for a test looked like, she always had a positive comment, unless she knew you could have done better".</p>
Negative	<p>"Although I got good marks in my tests and books, my marks were far below that. When I asked her the reason</p>

<p>comments</p>	<p>for this she said that <i>you have to be able to speak English like someone from England to get an A+</i>. That is ridiculous considering English is my second language".</p> <p>"I am not against high standards in evaluation. All I want is <i>consistency</i>".</p> <p>"She always <i>gave us poor marks</i>. Sometimes she marked words wrong that were right".</p>
<p>Grade 11-12</p>	<p>"She will always give you a good mark if she sees you really tried your best".</p> <p>"I always did my homework, not because I was scared of being punished, but because <i>I enjoyed it</i>".</p> <p>"Doing English <i>homework was fulfilling</i> and no struggle".</p> <p>"She was very concerned about our results and had a goal for every student in her class".</p>
<p>Negative comments</p>	<p>"We couldn't discuss any answers with anybody else, <i>we had to guess our way through all the questions</i>".</p> <p>"He <i>gave us lots and lots of homework</i> and he carefully <i>selected the most difficult questions</i>".</p> <p>"She said that <i>our behaviour in the class was to blame for the marks we got</i>".</p> <p>"Even when I learned for those tests <i>I felt so nervous</i> that I failed anyway. That made me feel dumb and stupid".</p> <p>"She <i>asked for my opinion and then the answer was her opinion</i>".</p> <p>"The thing that I hated most about English are the <i>orals...They are a false measure of how we talk,</i></p>

	<i>understand and read English.</i> Most people are not confident enough in front of a crowd, although they might be excellent readers and speakers of English”.
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The findings indicated that the grade 8 to 10 students found lesson evaluation both positive and negative. One student stated that he enjoyed getting a fair amount of homework regularly. These students enjoyed having “fun” whilst doing homework because it was given in the form of a game. The teacher who was positive and motivated his/her students to do their best was liked and respected by the students. One student stated that, “no matter what our marks for a test looked like, she always had a positive comment”. The narratives, however, indicated that there were a few negative aspects about lesson evaluation that the students commented on.

The inconsistency of teachers when involved in any form of evaluation or assessment created frustration for the students. One student stated that: “I am not against high standards in evaluation. All I want is consistency”. Another theme or problem that was highlighted was the assessment or evaluation of orals. Students felt that teachers compared their proficiency to English first language speakers and that made them feel anxious and frustrated, as this resulted in their marks being much lower than their own perceived proficiency level.

The grade 11 and 12 students were more negative about lesson evaluation and various themes were identified. The findings indicated that they were interested in group discussions during evaluation, and they felt their answers should be taken into consideration. Many students complained that their teachers were not open-minded and did not pay attention to them as individuals. One student stated that, “she asked for my opinion and then the answer was her opinion”.

Anxiety during evaluation seemed to play an important role especially during oral assessment. One student stated that: “Most people are not confident enough in front of a crowd, although they might be excellent readers and speakers of English”. These students, just as the Grade 8-10 students, felt that the oral assessment was not a true reflection of their proficiency as second language speakers. One student stated that, “they [orals] are a false measure of how we talk, understand or read English”. The findings indicated that students blame the teacher’s evaluation or assessment tests for making them feel dumb, stupid and nervous.

4.3 Personality-related characteristics

Teachers portray various personality characteristics or traits while they are teaching, and the students relate to several of these characteristics (cf. Chapter 2). The following characteristics, which were extracted from the narratives, were perceived to be important to the students (cf. Tables 6-9).

4.3.1 Caring

In Table 6 the student narratives relating to caring are presented.

TABLE 6: Caring

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
Grade 8-10	<p>“She was <i>a mother</i> to all of the children”.</p> <p>“She was a <i>friendly, loving</i> and <i>caring teacher</i>”.</p> <p>“She is always very <i>considerate</i> and <i>understanding</i>”.</p> <p>“Children feel free to talk to her and ask her advice whenever they have problems”.</p>

	<p>“The teacher was kind, understanding and helpful. She always helped us with our English work”.</p> <p>“She had a nice and caring personality. She was always willing to help you when you had a problem”.</p> <p>“The best teacher I had was a teacher with loving eyes, always friendly and always willing to help”.</p> <p>“She is a caring and loving person. She is always there for us. She loves children”.</p> <p>“She always made me feel so important”.</p> <p>“I liked her because she is a loving teacher”.</p> <p>“She was a friend to all the children”.</p> <p>“She makes us all feel very comfortable, as if we have known each other for years”.</p> <p>“My teacher is soft-hearted, understanding and she can tell if something is wrong”.</p> <p>“We all do well in her class and subject because she lets us feel that we are important”.</p> <p>“What I liked most was that smile on her face when we entered her classroom”.</p> <p>“I could trust her with all my problems and she made everyone feel special and important”.</p>
<p>GRADE 11-12</p>	<p>“She was the most friendly, caring and understanding teacher I have ever known”.</p> <p>“What made her special was the way she worked with and handled us...she really cared. When you were having a bad day, she would take you by the hand and ask what was wrong and try to make you feel better”.</p> <p>“She became a friend, a mother, and a role model. She helped me when I did wrong, gave me thumbs-up</p>

	<p>when I did good”.</p> <p>“She made the sad ones happy, she gave the shy ones confidence and she made all of us poets, writers, talkers and artists”.</p> <p>“My English teacher gave me something that, sometimes, your best friend couldn’t give you. An understanding ear, loving heart, and smiles that cheered up the day”.</p> <p>“He is kind and cares about us. He helps you when you have a wrong answer or problem. He doesn’t shout at you and he talks to you like a friend”.</p> <p>“I had a teacher who understood me, cared about me and taught me great many lessons about life as well as on an educational level”.</p> <p>“She nurtured us and fussed over us like a hen over chicks. Under her guidance and teaching, even some of the underachievers’ marks in English improved”.</p> <p>“She was always smiling, so whenever we went to her class, she made a bad day seem not so bad”.</p> <p>“Her class was also always warm and homelike. You had a feeling of belonging”.</p>
<p>Negative Comments</p>	<p>“You had to be extra-careful when you entered her classroom. She was very unpredictable and you never knew whether it was going to be your turn to be picked on that day”.</p> <p>“She was mean, nasty and vindictive and she liked to put others down”.</p> <p>“She was one of those who said: “I am in charge and will only work with my best students”.</p>

The findings indicated that both the grade 8 to 10 and grade 11 and 12 students valued a caring teacher the most. Various themes emerged in the narratives, and these themes were very similar in the narratives of both the groups. The themes that emerged were that the students perceived their teachers as being a mother and a role model to them. They observed that these teachers were considerate, kind, willing to help, understanding, loving and caring, and that these traits had an impact on them as students. One student stated that, “the best teacher I had was a teacher with loving eyes, always friendly and always willing to help”. The students, furthermore, highlighted the fact that the caring teacher made them feel important and this inspired them to do well in the subject. One student stated: “We all do well in her class and subject because she lets us feel that we are important”.

Negative aspects that emerged were teachers being unpredictable, mean, nasty, vindictive, and “picking” on students. One student stated that: “You had to be extra-careful when you entered her classroom. She was unpredictable and you never knew whether it was going to be your turn to be picked on that day”.

4.3.2 Enthusiasm and interest

In Table 7 the student narratives relating to teacher enthusiasm and interest are presented.

TABLE 7: Enthusiasm and interest

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
GRADE 8-10	<p>“My English teacher <i>inspired</i> so many children to work hard for what they want in future”.</p> <p>“She’s always friendly, always on time an she <i>gives enough attention</i> to each and every child in the class”.</p>

	<p>“<i>She loves teaching English</i> and because she does it so well, I love to learn from her. She’s never too busy to help, and always makes double sure that we understand the day’s work”.</p> <p>“It was <i>always fun</i> to go to her class”.</p> <p>“She made life so wonderful and <i>interesting</i>”.</p> <p>“I loved being in her class because it is fun and interesting all the time”.</p> <p>“His love for and <i>knowledge</i> of English rubbed off on all of us. It was fun attending his classes because he knew what he was talking about”.</p>
<p>GRADE 11-12</p>	<p>“I once had this amazing teacher, her classes were <i>fun</i> and you felt free to take part in it all. She was friendly and fair in it all”.</p> <p>“She never neglected any of her pupils, but gave them all the <i>same amount of attention</i>, even if she didn’t like the person”.</p> <p>“This <i>teacher was so filled with a zest for life</i> that it was rather contagious”.</p> <p>“She made the subject very <i>interesting</i> and always encouraged us to do our best”.</p> <p>“Because of her positive and <i>enthusiastic</i> input into the lessons, I started to like the subject and spend more time on it”.</p> <p>“<i>She inspired me</i> to do better in English”.</p> <p>“She had the ability to inspire every single pupil in her class to do the best that he or she can, by always encouraging and helping every single one of them”.</p> <p>“My English teacher was quite the interesting type,</p>

	<p>always making sure that attending her class was worthwhile”.</p> <p>“What I enjoyed most was her friendliness and enthusiasm. It clearly showed that she loved English and loved teaching it”.</p>
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Both the grade 8-10 and grade 11-12 students indicated that aspects such as the teacher inspiring them to work harder at the subject, making the work fun, giving enough attention to every student, being friendly, being enthusiastic about the work, and the teacher showing that he/she loves the subject enhanced the learning process. As stated in chapter 2, teacher enthusiasm helps students to persist in tasks, motivates them and leads to increased learning and satisfaction. One student stated that: “His love for and knowledge of English rubbed off on all of us. It was fun attending his classes because he knew what he was talking about”.

Barcelos et al. (1998:22) state that when teachers lack imagination, by not adding variety, excitement, and surprise to the learning activities, it can demonstrate a lack of authoritative commitment to students’ learning. The narratives revealed that this was not the case, as one student stated:

Because of her positive and enthusiastic input into the lessons, I started to like the subject and spend more time on it.

Most of the students, grades 8-12, perceived their English teachers to be enthusiastic and positive about the subject, and stated that this characteristic inspired them to work harder.

4.3.3 Humour

In Table 8 the student narratives relating to humour are presented.

TABLE 8: Humour

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
GRADE 8-10	<p>“She always <i>made you smile</i>”.</p> <p>“There was always a nice atmosphere in her classroom and <i>she made us laugh</i>”.</p> <p>“When you felt sad <i>she cheered you up</i> and made you laugh”.</p> <p>“She is <i>funny</i>, smart and she is a good teacher”.</p> <p>“She is always <i>making jokes</i> and making us laugh”.</p>
GRADE 11-12	<p>“She was <i>funny, always smiling</i> and generous”.</p> <p>“She has a <i>great sense of humour</i>”.</p> <p>“What I also liked about her classes was that we sometimes did plays in the class. That was <i>fun</i> and <i>we laughed a lot</i>”.</p> <p>“She had <i>a very good sense of humour</i> and <i>made jokes</i> while she was teaching. I felt at ease in her class”.</p> <p>“He is always full of jokes and makes you feel comfortable in his classroom”.</p> <p>“This teacher had a sense of humour that uplifted one’s spirit when you felt sad or tired”.</p> <p>“He mixed his lecturing with a bit of humour. He made it <i>enjoyable</i> to come to his class everyday”.</p> <p>“She had a way of making the class laugh in such a way that you wished that the bell wouldn’t ring”.</p> <p>“He is a very humouristic person who always makes jokes in the class and he makes it fun for us to be there”.</p>

The findings indicated that humour was another important personality trait of a good teacher. Both the grade 8 to 10 and grade 11 to 12 students indicated that a teacher who used humour during the lecture made the class fun to be in, enjoyable, and that humour enhanced the learning process. These students used terms such as: “she was funny”, “she made you smile” and the teacher “had a sense of humour”. The students often stated that the teacher was full of jokes and that their classes were a fun place to be in. One student stated that:

She had a way of making the class laugh in such a way that you wished that the bell wouldn't ring.

As stated in chapter 2, the teacher and student can laugh together and this may encourage companionship and mutual trust. One student stated:

She had a very good sense of humour and made jokes while she was teaching. I felt at ease in her class.

Humour, therefore, is perceived by most of the students as being positive, and the narratives indicated that students wanted to be in a class where humour was used by the teacher as they perceived these classes enjoyable.

4.3.4 Other related characteristics

In Table 9 the student narratives relating to other related characteristics are presented.

TABLE 9: Other related characteristics

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
GRADE 8-10	<p>“She made us feel comfortable in her class and she always helped us when we couldn’t go on”.</p> <p>“I always feel comfortable when she is teaching”.</p> <p>“She said things that made us feel welcome in her class”.</p> <p>“When I entered her classroom I felt relaxed because there was discipline and it didn’t take five minutes to become quiet”.</p> <p>“She is always kind but very strict”.</p> <p>“She motivated us and helped us if we had a problem”</p> <p>“She makes work fun and we are always comfortable around her”.</p> <p>“Her classroom was decorated with bright colours that made us feel welcome”.</p> <p>“Teachers should be a step higher than the pupils. They must guide us and be of such character that we look up to them for guidance”.</p> <p>“She was willing to give everything for us and that is why we wanted to work hard and achieve higher grades for her”.</p> <p>“Everyone respects her”.</p>

GRADE 11-12

"I liked doing my best for her because she was a comfortable person to be around".

"She didn't have any favourites among us. She treated all of us the same and that was a great key to her success with us".

"She respected us and we respected her".

"She **created a homely atmosphere** where you could study and like to do it".

"She was **always friendly** and made **everyone feel welcome in her class.** She **gave extra attention to people in her class who were struggling with English,** but she did it in a way that you felt comfortable".

"She was **friendly, open-minded to opinions** and she **had every class under control"**.

"I think that because everyone was so at ease in her company, it wasn't difficult for her to teach us".

"He was stern, yet **understood the needs of all his students.** He **was never too busy to help** you when one did not understand or could not do something".

"She knew every pupil in her class and made everyone feel comfortable because of the friendly academic atmosphere she had created".

"We were all very comfortable with her as **she treated us as mature students and not first graders"**.

"She had the power to change your environment so that it was nice to work in".

"She was always smiling and helping other people. She liked to listen to our problems".

<p>Negative Comments</p>	<p>“Simply because my desk wasn’t in a straight line with all the others, I don’t mean meters, I mean centimetres; she would stop in the middle of a lesson and say: “Get these desks in a straight line”. She really took this whole desk thing too serious. People are in a classroom to study”.</p> <p>“She never, or almost never, smiled. The only time she smiled was when it was parent day, then she was the goodness herself”.</p> <p>“I felt uncomfortable with this teacher. I was terrified and I felt tense every time I walked into her class”.</p>
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Various themes emerged concerning other related characteristics of teachers: Both the grade 8-10 and grade 11 and 12 students perpetually mentioned that being comfortable with the teacher was important to them and that it lessened anxiety, and enhanced the learning process.

One student stated that:

I liked doing my best for her because she was such a comfortable person to be around”

Another student stated that:

I think that it was because everyone was so at ease in her company, she didn’t have a difficult job at teaching us.

The negative aspect that emerged from not being comfortable with the teacher was that students became terrified of the teacher and the subject matter at hand.

Most of the narratives proved that the students found their teachers comfortable people to be around.

Another theme or characteristic that emerged was, that there should be discipline or order. According to Barcelos et al. (1998:23), discipline or order requires teachers to provide an adequate learning environment where students can feel safe. Students need to know they can trust the teacher to do whatever is possible for the classroom to be a protected place for them to learn. The narratives proved, in both the lower and higher grades, that the teachers made them feel safe and created a relaxed environment to work in. One student stated:

When I entered her classroom I felt relaxed because there was discipline and it didn't take five minutes to become quiet.

Another characteristic that proved to be of importance to especially the grade 11 and 12 students was that the teacher respected them. This aspect seemed to surface in almost every narrative and the importance thereof needs to be stressed. Many of the students felt that the teacher who respected them for who they were and treated them likewise, was in return respected. One student stated:

She respected us and we respected her.

Another student stated that:

We were all very comfortable with her as she treated us as mature students and not first graders.

Finally, themes such as the teacher motivating them, knowing the students and their needs, and giving extra attention to people in the class who were struggling with English, were deemed as being important.

4.4 The role of teachers in the ESL classroom

In Table 10 the student narratives relating to the role of the teacher are presented.

Table 10: The role of the teacher in the ESL classroom

GRADE LEVEL	QUOTES
Grade 8-10	<p>“She <i>explains everything</i> so that you can understand it”.</p> <p>“She will always be there to help you if you do not understand and she will <i>explain the work</i> until you understand”.</p> <p>“She knew how to teach English and how to teach it well”.</p> <p>“She <i>explained the work very carefully</i> and she made double sure that we understood the work before we left the classroom. If we didn’t understand what she said, she explained the work until we did”.</p> <p>“She would <i>never punish a child if it wasn’t necessary</i>”.</p> <p>“She was <i>very serious about discipline</i>. Nobody dared to even whisper, but at least we got the work done”.</p> <p>“This teacher <i>never screamed at us</i>, but punished us in calm and fair way”.</p> <p>“She <i>built a wonderful team spirit</i> in our class, and that</p>

	made all the difference”.
Negative comments	<p>“She always screamed at the children if they were naughty. I know you can’t ignore them, but sometimes speaking to them in a nice manner, does the job better”.</p> <p>“Other classes would get to her class and make her angry and then she was grumpy and rude. She would then shout at us and give us a lot of homework”.</p> <p>“Sometimes she screams at me and if I want to ask her a question she tells me to shut up”.</p>
Grade 11-12 Positive comments	<p>“She explains the work well and she will keep on explaining it until you understand”.</p> <p>“She always thanked us for doing our homework and so motivated me to keep on doing it”.</p> <p>“She made us say all the tenses aloud and concentrated a lot on spelling to such an extent that my tenses are excellent and spelling even more so”.</p> <p>“We were never looked down upon and equality was his motto”.</p> <p>“We weren’t judged by past mistakes and were not treated unworthily”.</p> <p>“I remembered every poem we did that year. He taught us on the horrors of war and the way he taught it influenced my life tremendously”.</p>
Negative comments	<p>“She grabbed my ear and pulled my head down and then she said: “No, no, no never say it that way!” I was horrified!”</p> <p>“She made me hate English because I don’t think that screaming at us is the solution to a problem”.</p>

Various themes emerged concerning the students' perceptions concerning the role of the teacher in the ESL classroom. The themes that emerged in the narratives of both the grade 8 to 10 and grade 11 and 12 students were that the teacher explained the work in a clear and concise way, she never shouted at them, and that she/he motivated them. These themes are now discussed.

As stated in chapter 2, it is important that teachers realise that students don't just know the subject matter, but that the subject matter must be presented in a clear and concise way so that the students stay interested and motivated to study the subject matter. One student stated that:

She explained the work carefully and she made double sure that we understood the work before we left the classroom. If we didn't understand what she said, she explained the work until we did.

Another student stated that, "she explains the work well and she will keep on explaining until you understand". The teacher explaining the work in a clear and concise way as well as persisting in explaining until the students understood the work, proved to be an important aspect to the students (i.e. teacher as provider of knowledge).

Another aspect that was deemed important by the students was that the teacher, when disciplining them, shouldn't shout or "scream" at them. Discipline in the classroom needs to be positive and should enhance the learning process. If it is done negatively, the classroom atmosphere may become negative and the motivation and enthusiasm of the students may deteriorate (cf. chapter 2). Discipline in the classroom proved to be perceived by the students as both positive and negative. One student stated that, "this teacher never screamed at us, but punished us in a calm and fair way". Another student stated that, "we

weren't judged by past mistakes and were not treated unworthily". However, some students complained about being "screamed" at. One student stated:

She always screamed at the children if they were naughty. I know you can't ignore them, but sometimes speaking to them in a nice manner, does the job better.

Another student who felt negative about the discipline he received from his teacher stated that, "she made me hate English because I don't think that screaming at us is the solution to a problem". The narratives, therefore, indicated that the students enjoyed discipline in a calm and fair way, but they did not like being shouted at (i.e. teacher as maintainer of discipline).

The last role that was highlighted by the students was that if the teacher motivated them, they were more eager to learn his/her subject. As stated in chapter 2, some students do better than others because they are better motivated. One student stated that the teacher always thanked them for doing their homework and that that motivated him to keep on doing it.

4.5 Conclusion

In the above discussion an attempt was made to answer the research questions posed in chapter one. The results indicated that there are various characteristics and aspects of ESL teachers/teaching perceived by students as being important to them as individuals and to their learning: a well-prepared teacher, the way in which the lesson is presented, the teacher maintaining discipline, the teacher motivating them and certain personality traits of a teacher, for example, the caring teacher, the enthusiastic teacher, the teacher portraying a sense of humour, etc. When teachers and researchers take cognisance of students' perceptions about teachers/teaching it can prevent the "silent battles" that occur

in the ESL classroom, thereby providing an atmosphere conducive to the teaching-learning process.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion and recommendations for future research

5.1 Conclusion

This study focused on the perceptions students have of the characteristics of good teachers and good teaching in the ESL classroom. The results of the analysis have shown that students have very specific ideas about what they want ESL teaching to be like, and what characteristics they believe good ESL teachers should have.

The following personality-related characteristics of ESL teachers were perceived to be important to the students: The results of this study indicated that grade 8 to 10 students valued a caring teacher the most. One of the students stated that, “she (the teacher) is always very considerate and understanding. Children feel free to talk to her or ask her advice whenever they have problems”. These students want a teacher that will listen and understand when they have problems. The *caring* theme or characteristic is also extremely important to the grade 11 and 12 students. The narratives often referred to a teacher that was “friendly, caring and understanding”. They often referred to their English teacher being a mother or a role model to them, and that she cared for them as individuals. Although these students were very positive towards their teachers, they bemoaned the fact that some of the teachers were vindictive and tried to embarrass them in front of the class. According to one student his English teacher stated that: “I am in charge and I will only work with my best students”. These students felt that teachers should treat them equally and not have any

favourite students. Teachers should, therefore, avoid “attacking” the self-esteem of the students, they should avoid having favourite students as well as treating students unequally.

The students perceived teacher enthusiasm as another important characteristic of a good teacher. The students felt that the enthusiastic teacher made the classes fun to be in and to participate in. One student stated that, “this teacher taught me how to like the subject. It wasn’t the usual and boring kind of class - everyday you learned something new because the presentation was so unique and colourful”. According to Barcelos et al. (1998:22), teachers who lack imagination, by not adding variety, excitement, and surprise to the learning activities are perceived by the students as lacking competence.

Both the lower grades and the higher grades stated that feeling comfortable with the teacher was very important to them, and that if they did not feel comfortable with the teacher it caused a certain amount of anxiety. One student stated that, “I felt uncomfortable with this teacher. I was terrified and felt tense every time I walked into her class”. Another student stated that: “I think that because everyone was so at ease in her company, she didn’t have a difficult job at teaching us”. It is clear that the student felt that feeling comfortable with the teacher enhanced the teaching-learning process.

The following characteristics of good teaching were perceived to be important to the students. Lesson presentation enjoyed a lot of attention in the narratives. The fact that the teacher explained the work to them proved to be extremely important. One student stated that her teacher “explained the work over and over again”. Another student stated that, “when we leave the class everyone understands the work because she explains it in such a way that everyone understands it”. According to Barcelos et al.(1998:21), teachers should strive to convey the belief that knowledge and learning are worthwhile and that they

believe in what they are doing. The teacher should strive to convey this belief by providing authoritative clear explanations about the subject, making sure the students understand it, and should try to provide variety in their teaching. According to Barcelos et al. (1998:21-22), by not providing enough explanations to the students, the teacher shows no academic authority. The students indicated that the teacher portraying and explaining the work in a positive way enhanced the learning process, and teacher enthusiasm seemed to play a role in the students' attitudes concerning the subject matter.

The one aspect that seemed to create problems for the students was the way in which assessment was executed. Many of the students bemoaned the fact that lesson evaluation is not executed in a fair and consistent way. They especially felt that the oral assessment was not fairly assessed. One student stated that:

Although I got good marks in my tests and books, my marks were far below that. When I asked her the reason for this she said that you have to be able to speak English like someone from England to get an A+. This is ridiculous considering English is my second language.

Testing, furthermore, caused anxiety for many students. One of the students stated that, "even when I learned for those tests I felt so nervous that I failed anyway. That made me feel dumb and stupid". Students feel that their opinions need to be taken into consideration when lesson evaluation is performed. One student stated that, "she asked for my opinion and the answer was her opinion". Barcelos et al. (1998:24) state that a compassionate and patient teacher has knowledge, respect, and concern for students' beliefs, styles, and views. An ethical teacher, therefore, is open to students' different viewpoints.

The analysis of students' narratives showed how students perceived good ESL teachers/teaching. Their perceptions indicated that good ESL teachers/teaching

is related to caring for them as individuals, the variety included in the presentation of the lesson, the teacher being well prepared for class, the consistency of assessment, teacher enthusiasm and humour and respect for them as individuals. This study is a reminder that students' voices can help the teacher improve teaching, the school, as well as their students.

5.2 Implications for the ESL teaching-learning process

Each year teachers are faced with the challenge of creating an atmosphere, environment, circumstances and lessons that will allow students to succeed. Most teachers find this endeavour exciting, fun and fulfilling. Laughter, smiles and humour are natural ingredients for those who experience joy while serving as a teacher. Finding and capturing that joy is the essence of a long fulfilling career as a teacher. The results of this study, therefore, can have implications for the ESL teaching-learning process:

(i) Improving teaching

It is usually stressed that teachers need to know their students in order to teach better. Listening to students will make us better teachers because it will make us reflect about our roles and our practice. Brookfield (1995:11) suggests that, "critically reflective teachers will make sure that they find some way of regularly seeing what they do through students' eyes". He stresses the fact that listening to students will help us to become better teachers as we strive to adjust our actions to their expectations. According to Brookfield (1995:11):

Knowing something of how students experience learning helps us build convincing connections between what we want them to do and their own concerns and expectation. Researching students' perceptions of our actions and words alert us to problems that our behavior is causing and to

mistakes that we might otherwise miss. This, in turn, means that we can make more appropriate decisions about how and what to teach.

Wink (1997) stresses the fact that the regular practice of listening to our students will help us initiate a dialogue with our students. This dialogue is the basis of critical pedagogy and will help teachers articulate their own contradictions and “unlearn” their assumptions about learning and teaching. It is in this sense that students’ voices can help teachers to constantly monitor their own practice, their beliefs and bring them closer to their students and make the dialectic dialogue part of the daily routine.

(ii) Educational reform

According to Nieto (1994:81), schools need to be transformed, not just reformed. This transformation requires “the inclusion of the voices of students, among others, in the dialogue”, although, she adds, students are rarely asked about what they think about teaching and learning. Rudduck, et al (1997:75-76) also stress the importance of listening to students and suggest that the process of school improvement should start by “inviting students to talk about what makes learning a positive or disappointing experience for them...”

(iii) Understanding students

Students have the right to evaluate *anonymously*, at regular intervals, their teachers, the method used, and the materials. This can help students feel that their voice is respected and thus, they may feel more motivated. Some researchers have recently reminded us of this important step in understanding the process of teaching and learning. For instance, McCombs and Whisler (1997) cite research suggesting that listening to our students’ voices can help foster motivation, learning and achievement.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

The topic needs further research. The various provinces in South Africa can prove to be fertile research ground concerning the characteristics of good ESL teachers and good ESL teaching, and may differ in terms of the various characteristics of teachers that students deem important. In order to broaden the research, more schools can be incorporated, as well as colleges and universities. Teachers need to be made aware of students' opinions concerning how teaching is conducted in the ESL classroom so that teaching can accommodate students' needs. Liebmann and Colella (1997:178-179) state that teachers, "must begin to open the doors to students' inner voices. The insights will act as guides to help students develop the process needed to be lifelong learners".

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Summary

Keywords: good teaching; English; perceptions; beliefs; good teacher; characteristics; learning; students.

Teaching is a dynamic process involving teachers and students in meaningful, collaborative efforts. Listening to students' perceptions or beliefs of what good ESL teaching and good ESL teachers are, is vital to the teacher in order to enhance the teaching-learning process. The purpose of this research is to determine what selected ESL students from grade 8-12, in the Gauteng province, believe good ESL teaching and a good ESL teacher is.

The results indicated that there were various aspects that were important to the students. The results can be divided into three sections:

- Characteristics of good teaching
- Personality-related characteristics; and
- The role of teachers in the ESL classroom.

The results indicated that a well-prepared teacher was important to the students. They, furthermore, felt that the way in which the teacher presents the lesson made them excited and motivated concerning the subject matter. Humour, the teacher portraying the lesson in an enthusiastic way, and a caring teacher proved to enhance the learning process. Students, both lower and upper grades, enjoyed being in a class where they felt comfortable with their environment and the teacher. The role of the teacher was identified by the students as imparting knowledge in a clear and concise way, the teacher being a motivator, and the teacher fulfilling the role of maintainer of discipline.

It is, therefore, essential that the teacher takes cognisance of the students' perceptions of ESL teaching/teachers in order to enhance the teaching-learning process in the ESL classroom.

Opsomming

Sleuteltermes: good teaching (goeie onderrig); language (taal); perceptions (persepsies); beliefs (oortuiging); good teacher (goeie onderwyser); characteristics (eienskappe); learning (onderrig); students (leerlinge).

Onderrig is 'n dinamies proses wat onderwysers en studente betrek in 'n belangrike interafhanklike proses. Dit is van onskatbare waarde dat die onderwyser ag slaan op die mening van die leerlinge met betrekking tot goeie Engelse tweede taal onderrig en 'n goeie Engelse tweede taal onderwyser, sodat die onderrig-leer proses verbeter kan word. Die doel van hierdie studie is om deur middel van 'n seleksie van Engelse tweede taal leerlinge, van graad 8-12 in die Gauteng provinsie, vas te stel wat goeie Engelse tweede taal onderrig en 'n goeie Engelse tweede taal onderwyser is. Verder het die studie ten doel om te probeer bepaal watter eienskappe van goeie Engelse tweede taal onderrig en die goeie Engelse tweede taal onderwyser belangrik is vir die leerlinge.

Die resultate het aangedui dat daar verskeie aspekte of eienskappe is wat belangrik is vir die leerlinge. Hierdie resultate kan in drie afdelings verdeel word nl:

- Die faktore van goeie onderrig;
- Persoonlikheids eienskappe van onderwysers; en
- Die rol van die onderwyser in die tweede taal Engelse klas.

Die leerlinge het aangedui dat 'n goed voorbereide onderwyser vir hulle, as leerlinge, van waarde was. Die resultate het onder meer aangedui dat die bepaalde wyse waarop die onderwyser die les aanbied, vir die leerlinge belangrik is. Die resultate het verder aangedui dat humor, die onderwyser

wat die les op 'n entoesiastiese wyse aanbied en die werk vir hulle verduidelik, vir hulle van belang was. Die leerlinge sien die onderwyser as 'n bron van kennis en kennisoordrag. Verder is die onderwyser gesien as 'n motiveerder en iemand wat dissipline in die klaskamer inisieer.

Dit is dus essensieël dat die onderwyser bewus is van die leerlinge se persepsies ten opsigte van 'n goeie Engelse tweede taal onderwyser en goeie Engelse tweede taal onderrig sodat die onderrig-leerproses in die Engelse tweede taal klas vergemaklik en verbeter kan word.