AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM: INSTRUCTORS' SUCCESS

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Abstract

Educating for a more sustainable future in its broadest sense includes improving quality basic education, reorienting education to address sustainability, improving public awareness and providing training to many sectors of society. In order to reorient teacher education to address sustainability, we need to examine the major tenets of sustainable development and apply them to education and teacher education. This study reports on an exploratory study into the distinctive characteristics of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) instructors. Six IELTS instruction institutes in Iran were selected. Totally, there were 122 students studying IELTS, distributed in 18 classes available in these institutes, and 15 teachers were teaching IELTS preparation courses there. All 18 classes were videotaped to be used and analysed in more detail. In addition, three questionnaires were developed for the purpose of identifying the most frequently occurring practices and strategies. The questionnaires were filled in by researchers, students and the teachers themselves. The results of the study demonstrated that knowledge and command of the target language, an ability to organize, explain, clarify, arouse, sustain interest and motivation among students, fairness to students by showing neither favouritism nor prejudice and availability to students were among the most significant characteristics and qualities of a successful IELTS instructor.

Key words: *International English Language Testing System instructors, International English Language Testing System candidates, teacher development, learners' perspectives, reflective teaching*

Background

Education increases human welfare, and is a decisive factor in enabling people to become productive and responsible members of society. A fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development is an adequately financed and effective educational system at all levels, particularly the primary and secondary levels, that is accessible to all and that augments both

human capacity and well being. The core themes of education for sustainability include lifelong learning, interdisciplinary education, partnerships, multicultural education and empowerment. Priority should be given to ensuring women's and girls' full and equal access to all levels of education and training. Special attention should also be paid to the training of teachers, youth leaders and other educators. Education should also be seen as a means of empowering youth and vulnerable and marginalized groups, including those in rural areas, through intergenerational partnerships and peer education. Even in countries with strong education systems, there is a need to reorient education, awareness and training so as to promote widespread public understanding, critical analysis and support for sustainable development.

This paper reports on an exploratory investigation into the distinctive characteristics of IELTS instructors. There seems no shortage of ideas regarding what defines a "good" teacher in the context of IELTS instruction. Teachers and teaching have become subjects of conversations by an extensive range of interested specialists. The literature contains a gigantic range of ideas, preconceptions and interests, each with a point of view to develop. One difficulty encountered in reviewing the literature is the way in which "good teacher," "good teaching," and "effective teaching" are often used almost interchangeably. They are not the same thing. "Good teaching practices" can be employed by nearly any individual. Employing such practices does not make one a "high-quality" teacher. The problem with "effective teaching" as a measure is that it is generally related to some measure of "student achievement," most often some sort of standardized test. Are such scores a valid measure of teacher "goodness"? A "good" teacher should definitely be efficient, and use those methods that seem to him or her most suited to the task at hand. However, there is another dimension to all this which distinguishes a "good" teacher from a skilful technician.

The definitions of teacher "goodness" are not commonly applicable. The concern of the teacher must be to determine what "goodness" means within his/her own teaching context (Palmer, 1990).

Language teachers' characteristics

Two areas of literature informed the research in the field of teacher's effectiveness and elements of teachers' success: (a) work on disciplinary characteristics and (b) studies of the good language teacher. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

Disciplinary characteristics

The study of the characteristics of academic disciplines is a recognized field of enquiry in education and psychology (Biglan, 1973; Hativa & Marincovich, 1995; Becher & Trowler, 2001). Most of these works have been conducted in university settings, and, as Neumann (2001) points out in her review, there is evidence of a variety of ways in which teaching practices at university level may vary across disciplines. Work on disciplinary characteris-

tics outside university settings has focused principally on learners rather than teachers (Langer, 1994).

The same is true in the field of language teaching (Mori, 1999), although one exception is Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987), who explore what they call the unique talent of being a foreign language teacher. Five factors that differentiate the experience of foreign language (FL) teachers from that of teachers of other subjects are offered by these authors. These factors are as follows:

1. The nature of the subject matter itself. FL teaching is the only subject in which successful instruction requires the teacher to use a medium the students do not yet understand.
2. The interaction patterns necessary to provide instruction. Effective FL instruction needs interaction patterns such as group/pair work which are desirable, but not obligatory for effective instruction in other subjects.
3. The challenge for teachers of increasing their knowledge of the subject. Language teachers teach communication, not facts. In other disciplines, teachers can enhance their subject matter knowledge through books, but it is harder for FL teachers to sustain and boost their knowledge of the FL because doing so requires regular opportunities for them to engage in FL communication.
4. Isolation. FL teachers experience more than teachers of other subjects feelings of isolation resulting from the lack of colleagues teaching the same subject.
5. The need for outside support for learning the subject. For effectual instruction, FL teachers must search for ways of providing extracurricular activities through which naturalistic learning environments can be formed. Such activities are not very essential in other subjects. No empirical evidence is provided for the above claims, and we emphasize them here not to argue for their validity but as an example of the approach within which language teachers' distinctive characteristics have been conceptualized.

The good language teacher

Girard (1977) presented a list based on the viewpoints of language learners and which included items such as *teaches good pronunciation, speaks good English, shows the same interest in all the students, makes the learners participate and shows great patience*. Prodromou (1991) presented a much longer list of characteristics judged by learners: gives good notes, plays games, tells jokes, does not push weak learners and is more like a comedian. Brosh (1996) identified the pleasing characteristics of the effective language teacher as perceived by foreign language teachers and students in Israel (Hay McBer, 2000; Walls et al., 2002).

This is not particularly surprising as language teachers are after all teachers and will consequently represent characteristics of the teaching profession more generally. Also, the purpose of these studies was not so much to define what was distinctive about language teachers but to identify what learners and teachers felt were effective or desirable characteristics.

Successful teachers

Ur (1996) believes that good teachers know how to challenge students. They know their students thoroughly and understand each student's leaning styles, thus they teach in a way that students will not only learn but also be intrigued by the information provided to them. Quality teachers understand students and have the capability to reach them, and know them on a personal level, to help and mentor them. Although it is difficult for a teacher to be able to reach all of his/her students on a personal level, successful teachers try their best because they need to have the students' attention and respect in order to teach them. There are many different ways to assess teachers' success. Final exam scores, class observations, students' judgments and so on.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, teachers are one of the key factors in the process of language teaching and learning. They can have a fundamental role in their students' progress or lack thereof. According to King Rice (2003), teaching is a complex activity that is influenced by the many elements of teacher quality, and teacher quality is a powerful predictor of student performance. Sanders and Rivers (1996) argue that the teacher is the single most important factor influencing student achievement. Suwantee (1995) assumed teaching as a two-way interaction between teachers and students and stated that what students learn, to a great extent, depends on the teacher's commitment to the teaching task.

Haskvitz (2007) considered eleven traits for successful IELTS instructors. These characteristics are as follows:

1. *Be unsatisfied.* The first trait of a high-quality teacher is that he or she is a good learner. They are always eager and ready to learn new things, increase their knowledge base and experiment with better ways to achieve success. They are lifelong learners and produce lifelong learners. So, the first trait is to be unsatisfied with what is. In other words, the best teacher is always a student who wants to know more, and it is completely true for the IELTS teachers who like to expand their knowledge on how to improve the techniques and strategies they teach to the IELTS candidates. In fact, they are voracious to new ideas regarding the ways they can help the IELTS candidate obtain better results.
2. *High expectations.* High expectations are the second trait of excellent teachers. Setting high standards causes students to do their best. As a result, it brings out the best in students. It also creates a feeling of accomplishment in them. In other words, good teachers encourage risk taking and accept errors.
3. *Create independence.* Highly effective teachers are skilful at monitoring student problems and progress. Their classes are not teacher-centred. They encourage students to look for help and answers on their own. They are passionate about not teaching, but facilitating learning. The same as a fine manager who has a team in place that can operate well without him or her, a good teacher creates a sense of self in students that lasts a lifetime. In other words, they create independence.
4. *Knowledgeable.* Good teachers have a deep knowledge of the subject matter. Because they are masters of the subject matter, they are able to manipulate, simplify and individualize the data more easily. Besides possessing thorough knowledge of the subject matter, they have a passion for the subject. They are able to under-

- stand students who might not like the subject and to compensate for the lack of enthusiasm; they present the facts from a different angle.
5. *Humour*. The fifth trait of the first-class teachers is to possess a good sense of humour. They make jokes and accept jokes. They tell stories, mention silly things, make difficult situations joyful, and are not afraid of laughter. They use humour to create a good connection with their students. In other words, excellent teachers try to keep the students' attention without fear.
 6. *Insightful*. The sixth characteristic is to obtain quick and accurate assessment of the students' work. Good teachers evaluate tests and other projects in a timely manner and through suitable feedback, they improve students' achievements. At all times, the qualified teachers are looking for the student's reasoning, rather than the answer. In other words, for the insightful teacher, students' assessment evaluates the teacher's performance. Moreover, the results provide the ideas of what changes both teachers and learners need to improve their success.
 7. *Flexible*. The best teachers use the community as their resource. For them, education is seen as more than what is done in the classroom. They participate in organizations and use their contacts to enhance student learning. They utilize newspapers and current events to open the students' minds to what is happening in the world and at all times they search for a teachable moment (any instance where a learner expresses an interest in something that could be used to stimulate his/her learning). Excellent teachers use the community to make for more strengthening teaching. In other words, a quality instructor is a master of flexibility. It is completely proven for the foreign language teachers. They use the community and in particular mass media to teach the EFL learners how, when and to whom to speak appropriately. This fact can be directly seen in the maxims of quality and quantity introduced by Halliday (1984).
 8. *Diverse*. First-rate teachers provide various techniques for learners to learn. They use several subjects to present the lessons; they use research papers, artwork, poetry and even physical education as part of the learning process. For example, when a learner is studying an explorer, the teacher talks about how many miles per hour he or she walks, how to create a graph of the calories he/she would need, make a map of the trip with legend, write a journal of what he/she saw, draw pictures of the flora and fauna, and make a presentation of what the student felt was the best and worst part of the discovery. A perfect EFL teacher also uses various techniques to enhance the students' learning by different tools, such as writing journals and logs, keeping a dairy, portfolios, discussion and problem-solving tasks.
 9. *Unaccepting*. Quality teachers are unaccepting. They do not accept pat answers, first drafts and false excuses. This point can be controversial in the case of EFL learners as they should make a lot of errors during the process of learning. Anyway, here the advanced and/or higher intermediate learners are meant since they are not expected to produce pat answers or false excuses. Because of this trait, they are not the easiest teachers. In essence, education is the disciplining of the

mind. A student who knows the rules knows what to expect and what is right. The best teachers are those that have suitable criteria and build good habits.

10. *Uncomforting*. The tenth and perhaps most interesting quality of a teacher is keeping students off balance. The students whose teachers have such a trait are not bored in the class; they are motivated because they cannot expect what their teacher asks them to do each session. When they come home, they talk about what they did in the class. Skilful teachers have different methods for teaching. They show a video, take students to the library, and have them work on a project, create lessons for one another, work on a computer, proofread a classmate's work and invent a game to play at recess, all before noon. Each day is different from the next, but there is continuity in teaching.
11. *A communicator*. There is not any research paper which outlines good teachers with their tidy rooms, easy marks, ability to write neatly or dress well. All these are important for a qualified teacher. But good teachers deal with the ability to trigger learning, thus the ability to communicate is the most important trait.

Classroom management

Classroom management is repeatedly conceptualized as a matter of control rather than as an aspect of curriculum, instruction and overall classroom climate (Borophy, 1988). As the authors' utmost concern has been to try to avoid prescriptive behaviour within classrooms, there is, in fact, a certain degree of tension between flexibility of control and prescriptive attitudes in the classroom atmosphere. Therefore, we have to persuade ourselves that not everyone will articulate things in the same words or identify them in the same way, and that not everyone will move at the same speed or in the same direction. Based on the findings of the research carried out by Borophy (1988), it is highly feasible that teachers who approach classroom management, as a process of establishing and sustaining effective learning environments tend to be more successful than others who put more emphasis on their roles as authority figures since classrooms are composed of enormously various personal views, characteristics, ethics and values.

In order to find a concrete foundation for relationships, Buddhist psychology suggests that we need to consider what we most value in our connection with someone we care about (Beck, 1993). Improvement would not come into being, especially when learners are aware of the particular ways of "wearing a mask" so as to avoid being hurt again (Craig, 1994). For instance, in a language class, those students whom we call introverts are aware of special ways of protecting their self and try not to participate in any class discussion in order not to be laughed at. The best solution is for the teachers to establish a rapport with their students and make them sure that they will not be punished if they make a mistake.

The classroom atmosphere influenced by the teacher has the main impact on students' motivation and attitude towards learning. That is to say, for teachers, being equipped with academic and professional characteristics would not be sufficient to set up a positive, learnable and teachable classroom climate. Particularly, the factors that best assist student learning are being purposeful, task-oriented, relaxed, warm, supportive and having a sense of

order and humor in an integrated sense (Kumaravadivelu, 1992). He (Kumaravadivelu, 1992) also considers positively other factors facilitating learners learning in a positive way, such as mutual respect and rapport, etc., all of which stem from conveying to students that you understand, share and value their feelings as individuals on a complete range of matters and experiences, academic, social and personal. IELTS teachers especially can connect with their students as they explain how difficult it was for them to learn the new language. Such a climate enhances learning and motivation of students and their attitudes towards learning process. Moreover, research indicates that certain personality features impact student evaluations of teachers. From the students' points of view, teacher-expressive characteristics such as warmth, enthusiasm, and extroversion, in fact, separate effective from ineffective teachers (Bousfield, 1940; Feldman, 1986; Basow & Silberg, 1987; Cravens, 1996; Marsh & Roche, 1997; Guerrero & Miller, 1998; Basow, 2000; Best & Addison, 2000; Radmacher & Martin, 2001). Reasoning in this way, out of three commonly accepted characteristics of teachers, namely, professional, pedagogical, and personal, the last one of the three will illuminate the ways of getting a better learning atmosphere and will provide self-confident students.

Disproportionality and classroom management

Instituting classroom management principles has implications for the learning progress of all students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially low-performing, poor, special education and racial/ethnic minority EFL students (Saphier & Gower, 1997). Definitions and expectations of appropriate behaviour and ethics are culturally influenced, and conflicts are likely to occur when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). As Voltz, Brazil and Scott (2003) stated, misunderstanding behaviours or communication patterns of culturally and linguistically diverse students can lead teachers who are unprepared to meet the educational needs of these students to see them as having a disability and request a referral to special education (Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003). The combination of interpreting behaviours through a cultural lens and instructional quality contributes to disproportionality in special education (Harry & Klingner, 2006; Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Duran, & Riley, 2005).

Culturally responsive classroom management

Culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) is a trend to running classrooms with all students in a culturally responsive manner. CRCM is a pedagogical approach that directs the management decisions that teachers make. It is a natural extension of culturally responsive teaching which uses EFL students' backgrounds, depicting of social experiences, prior knowledge and learning styles in everyday lessons. Teachers recognize their biases and values and reflect on how these influence their expectations for behaviour and their interactions with EFL students as well as what learning looks like. They decide that

the goal of classroom management is not to achieve fulfilment or control but to provide all EFL students with impartial opportunities for learning, and they understand that CRCM is “classroom management in the service of social justice” (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran 2004, p. 27).

There is extensive research on traditional classroom management and countless resources available on how to deal with behaviour and ethical issues. On the other hand, there is little research on CRCM, despite the fact that teachers who lack cultural competence often experience problems in this area. Management texts may give some attention to students who are culturally different, sometimes in a separate chapter on students with special needs (Weinstein et al., 2004).

Essential fundamentals of CRCM

Weinstein et al. (2004) developed a five-part concept of CRCM derived from the literature on culturally responsible pedagogy, multicultural counselling and caring: recognition of one’s own cultural lens and biases, knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds, awareness of the broader social, economic and political context, ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies, and commitment to building caring classroom communities. Consecutively, the goal of classroom management is to create an environment in which students behave appropriately from a sense of personal responsibility, not from a fear of punishment or desire for a reward. As such, the environment must acknowledge and be responsive to who the students are and create a safety net that equitably responds to what teachers know about their students.

Introduction to teaching IELTS

Teaching IELTS is a combination of English language training and the IELTS examination requirements and procedures in order to produce the best results when students take this exam (Griffiths, 2009). There is no magic solution for getting a high band score in the exam. Students will have to have a good proficiency in English to achieve a band score that will make them eligible to enter a university abroad. By taking an IELTS preparation course, students are much better prepared for questions types, exam format and good time keeping. Most significantly, students should still take part in the process of English language practice and, possibly, most important is oral fluency coupled with the knowledge of what is essential to do their very best in the IELTS exam.

It is very important to give students an IELTS sample test before giving them IELTS training, and students should be no less than intermediate level or approximately band 4.5 and above, after all they are trying to achieve band six in IELTS, and it is a worthless exercise to permit them to train for IELTS when they cannot possibly achieve it. Most students are very enthusiastic to participate in an IELTS course and eagerly work at any material that has an IELTS label. It is a good idea to test the students on admission to a course and give them a taste of the real exam format and timing. In addition, retest them after a few

weeks to check their progress and give them coaching and encouragement on their weaknesses. A rich diet of test material can sometimes discourage students when they see little or no progress, thus making their learning more difficult. Most IELTS candidates are being hard-pressed along with their families' desire and are encouraged to accomplish the impossible in a very short time. It may be because of the urgent needs they feel to be successful in this exam.

It is highly recommended that any person who is involved in teaching IELTS experiences some of the stress and strains students endure in taking of the IELTS test. Actually sitting the IELTS exam can give teachers great insight into what a test day is like and is a good investment in their future career. Being able to share firsthand knowledge is of great benefit in the teaching process. As Griffiths (2009) states, when teaching IELTS, the teacher has to be enormously well-prepared with the resources; principally, when proving answers, it is not sufficient just to provide an answer, but it is critical to be able to show why and where and give detailed reasoning which relates to the answer. A good way to do so this is for an IELTS instructor to take each of the practice tests before using and teaching them and thus better realize where students might have problems, and of course no peeking at the answers beforehand!

Teachers' sustainability

Sustainability is not just a concept; it is a practice that inspires us to continually adapt and evolve in our work to support young students. During a classroom setting, the teacher assesses and adapts to the situation; follows tested and proven programming; uses a variety of tools for a dynamic experience; works in any setting to meet real-life demands; evaluates results and integrates learning.

These elements of adaptability, fidelity, creativity, flexibility and accountability converge for a stronger organization. Sustainability is achieved when these elements are brought together intentionally, resulting in a more responsive, resilient organization – just like the strong parent-student relationships parent educators work so hard to build every day.

Teachers' sustainability turns its strategic focus to sustainability. Each area of operation is evolving to meet the changing demands of today's families and today's environment. The groundwork for reenergized programming and evaluation first started being laid in 2000; the details outlined on the following pages of this issue reflect a tighter implementation of an established approach.

Just as sustainability can be understood through looking inside the home visit, parent educators across the country share a common focus on encouraging the positive parenting practices of routine and observation.

When a routine is established for a student, it gives him/her a foundation of stability and confidence so that he/she can then use her energy to learn, grow and develop. It ensures that the core strengths of the proven national teachers' sustainability programming are embedded, so that each local programme can then grow and adapt to meet the demands of its unique environment.

Accurate observation is a critical part of every classroom setting. Both parents and teachers develop and use their observation skills to ensure that students learn, grow and develop to realize their full potential. At a strategic level, observation is parallel to the assessment and evaluation of outcomes – the quantifiable measurement of impact within local programmes.

Procedure

This study seeks to find out what the features and characteristics of good and successful IELTS instructors are from both qualitative and quantitative viewpoint. Similar to almost all empirical studies, the utilized range of sample population was large. The researchers selected six IELTS instruction institutes across Iran which are quite well-known for their successful teachers and their candidates who have passed the IELTS examination with highly accepted scores. There were totally 18 IELTS classes in these six institutes, and generally 15 teachers were teaching IELTS there. The age range of students was from 18 to 27. All 18 classes were videotaped to be used and analysed in more detail later. All IELTS candidates who were studying in 18 classes were homogenized based on their scores in an IELTS sample test administered by the institutes. These samples included the previous real IELTS exams administered during previous months and were collected from various IELTS books. Totally, there were 122 candidates distributed randomly among these 18 classes, but there were at least eight students in each class. All teachers had passed a teacher training course (TTC) programme specifically designed for IELTS instructors before commencing their teaching in the mentioned institutes, and all participated in the IELTS exam at least once and obtained the overall band score of 7 whether in General or Academic module; therefore, they can be considered as highly qualified teachers.

At the beginning of the study, the researchers developed the three questionnaires. One was filled in by the researchers based on watching the videotapes recorded. This questionnaire aims to find out the most common types of teaching strategies and practices employed by teachers during their instructions. The second questionnaire was given to all subjects to judge about their teachers' teaching. This questionnaire includes some selected items from the first questionnaire and some other personal questions which reflect the students' viewpoints and attitudes towards their teachers' method of instruction, way of behaving and respecting students, presenting the content, of course, covering the whole syllabus specified by the institute, etc. Finally, the last questionnaire was given to all the 15 teachers considered for this study. Through this questionnaire, teachers could reflect upon their own teaching, i.e. they were supposed to read the questionnaire and check the item that best describes their methods, skills, strategies and ethics of their instruction.

All three questionnaires were analysed for the purpose of identifying the most repeated, occurred and recognized elements or factors based on which the results of the study were supposed to be figured out.

Discussion

The most frequent practices and strategies applied by the IELTS instructors are numerous: cooperative learning, small group discussion, class discussion, feedback enhancement, presentation and problem modelling strategies and practices, as extracted from the video tapes.

As articulated by the students, the types of practices and strategies used by the teachers are varied: demonstrating or modelling how to solve a new problem, writing individually on worksheets, journal entries, or other writing assignments, or combined with small group discussion and many others. Also, most students believed that their teachers summarized the main points, provided situations for presentations and student-to-student talk in full class setting, gave directions for the activity, used positive intervention and, most importantly, respected all students.

The third questionnaire, as mentioned before, was distributed among the teachers to reflect upon and evaluate their own teaching. The responses obtained from the third questionnaire include social-interactive classrooms, making each student feel loved and secure. In addition, most teachers reported that the class activities should fit the level of learners' development. The teachers should manage the consequences and be consistent.

The further findings of this study focused on the types of practices teachers employed to develop speaking, listening, writing and reading skills. The researchers found what kinds of practices and/or strategies were the most successful practices related to each skill.

Getting students to become familiar with the test as early as possible, getting students to be aware of the exact procedure for the test and getting students to use their study time efficiently were mostly reported on and observed in IELTS speaking classes.

Providing students with a lot of samples, giving students materials that are within their reach and are learnable, choosing the most appropriate manner for the specified writing area were the most occurred practices and strategies teachers employed while teaching writing skills. The teacher must choose the most appropriate manner for the specified writing area.

Considering the IELTS reading classes and the data collected through the questionnaires, surveying, scanning, skimming, guessing and predicting from context and pre-viewing before reading the text were most frequently reported on while teachers were teaching reading skills.

Finally, the results obtained from the questionnaires suggested that teachers mostly employed such strategies as recording today's news bulletin, asking students to listen for some specific information, teaching bottom up listening skills and top down processing while they were teaching listening skills.

On the basis of the data collected from over 15 IELTS instructors in a range of contexts, specific ways in which they and their work are perceived to be unique were identified. The key arguments emerging here were the dynamic nature of language, the scope and complexity of the content of language teaching, the range of materials, methods and activities available to IELTS instructors and, especially, close relationships between instructors and learners.

It was argued that, while these themes provide direction for future research, the specific ways in which IELTS instructors are seen to be distinct may vary in different contexts.

As witnessed in this study, the most frequent practices and strategies employed by IELTS instructors while teaching in IELTS classes, based on the researchers observation of recorded videos, were the following: providing feedback and reinforcement, asking and answering questions, working in small groups.

In addition, based on the results obtained from the second questionnaire, students judged their instructors' practices and actions as having the following features: summarizing main points, reviewing and reemphasizing main points, pulling information together, asking students to give the main points, providing student presentation.

Also, IELTS instructors were provided with a questionnaire to reflect upon their own teaching and evaluate their teaching practices. The results of this questionnaire proved that almost all of the IELTS instructors agreed that activities should fit the developmental level of the learners. They should make each student feel loved and secure, and they should be able to manage the consequences and be consistent. Social-interactive classrooms are of great significance to them.

Further findings of the present study focused on the types of strategies and practices IELTS instructors used in various language skills. As indicated, most IELTS instructors in speaking skill classes helped students become familiar with the test as early as possible, had students become aware of the exact procedure for the test and encouraged students to use their study time efficiently.

In writing classes, most instructors believed that they should provide the learners with a lot of samples and have students work in groups thereby learning from each other. They also maintained that students need to first learn thousands and thousands of phrases and be competent in using all of them. Teachers believe it is important that they give the students materials that are within their reach and are learnable.

As predicted by the researchers, all the IELTS instructors agreed that teaching scanning, skimming and surveying skills, guessing and predicting from context are of great importance to the IELTS candidates' success in reading skills. They also felt that once students have been taught about previewing and predicting, it is important to give them as many chances as possible to practice these skills.

Interestingly enough, in teaching listening skills, nearly all instructors believed in practicing out of the classroom context, i.e. recording today's news bulletin, for instance, was highly recommended for the learners. Teaching bottom-up and top-down listening skills and asking students to listen for some specific information and not to concentrate on details until they have understood the main ideas were also found among the strategies recommended by the instructors to learners in listening classes.

A great number of teachers also believed that translating creates a barrier between students and the person who is speaking on the recording; therefore, it was highly ignored and seldom suggested by the instructors.

Conclusion

Having combined and analysed the data obtained from the three questionnaires in more details, the results of the study recommended the following: knowledge and command of the target language, an ability to organize, explain and clarify, provoke and maintain interest and motivation among students, fairness to students by showing neither favouritism nor prejudice and availability to students. These are among the most significant characteristics and qualities of successful IELTS instructors.

Methodologically, the analyses of both beliefs and classroom practices are two measures which this work suggests can enhance future investigations of what is it that makes IELTS instructors different. Finally, to complement a socially constructed perspective on the study of what being an IELTS instructors means continued epistemological analyses of the nature of language as a subject are also desirable.

This study is explicitly linked with the field of teacher education and teacher development. Also it is specifically related to the success factors of IELTS instructors who EFL teachers are. The students found the programme meaningful and valuable. They commented that approaching teachers' practices in terms of sustainable development deepened their understanding and extended their knowledge of global and local issues. They also spoke about how the questionnaires gave them an opportunity to express negative feelings in a safe place. The students felt that approaching teachers' practices from a sustainability angle also emphasized their connection between different aspects of life between theory and practice. The teachers saw their students as having an opportunity to explore sustainability issues globally as well as locally. Having introduced this study, many IELTS instructors became more aware of the concept of an education that enables students to focus on sustainability issues creating a better future for society.

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