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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Investigating Ecuadorian Students' Perspectives on the Characteristics of the Ideal English Teacher

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**| ABSTRACT**

This descriptive quantitative research aimed to identify Ecuadorian students' perspectives on the characteristics of the ideal English teacher. The sample was composed of 322 (n=322) learners who were taking the A1 English level in a public university. The data were collected by using an online questionnaire composed of 30 Likert scale items, which were divided into 3 categories 1) profile, 2) personality and 3) instructions. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Results demonstrated that regarding the teacher profile, the participants indicated that the ideal teacher must hold a degree in language teaching and be familiar with the social and cultural background of the language. In personality, the ideal teacher motivates, inspires, and promotes students' self-confidence and participation in the classroom. Finally, about teaching instruction, the ideal teacher uses technology and has good communication with students in English in each lesson. We can conclude that identifying these perspectives will be useful in implementing curricular changes based on what students expect to receive in class.

**| KEYWORDS**

Perspectives, Ideal English Teacher, Tertiary, Ecuador.

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### 1. Introduction

The English language has been considered the most spoken dialect across the globe. Kitao (1996) argued that this language has been a mediator amongst governments for important commercial, education, and tourism agreements. Besides, the 21st century has brought the necessity to learn English deeply, so it has initiated an era of speaking this language as a part of our daily life. That is why EFL professors are quite significant since they are "effective and efficient learning on the part of the students highly depends on teachers and their actions in their classes" (Markley, 2004).

Based on the need for communication, Ecuador's public universities have established that learning English is a requirement for all students who are going to get their undergraduate degrees. At the end of their university studies, learners have to achieve the B1 level of English proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR); otherwise, they will not be able to graduate (Consejo de Educación Superior CES, 2019).

Al-Khairi (2015) claimed that being an EFL teacher is a challenging profession since not all students like to learn a new language. For that reason, English teachers have a remarkable role in EFL teaching since they are required to motivate students and highlight the importance of learning English as an international language nowadays. They have to be creative, patient, and friendly. Also, they must be able to create a productive and friendly class environment by applying new strategies, techniques, and methodologies (Markey, 2004).

In the same vein, Chin and Lin (2009) stated that decades ago, generally, good teachers were considered who were knowledge experts; however, currently, an effective or "ideal" teacher is expected to hold many personality characteristics. These characteristics are related to being "approachable, creative and interesting, encouraging, caring, enthusiastic, flexible, open-minded, knowledgeable, fair, respectful, and holding realistic expectations." (Schaeffer et al., 2003, p.133-136).

After a deeper investigation, it was determined that there are no similar studies in Ecuador that validate the topic of this research. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to identify Ecuadorian students' perspectives on the characteristics of the ideal English teacher since their features such as knowledge about the subject, teaching skills, teaching styles, and personality traits have an impact on student learning and motivation (Ahangari & Zamani, 2016). The research question that guides this research is the following: What are the Ecuadorian students' perspectives on the characteristics of the ideal English teacher?

## **2. Literature Review**

Many scholars have investigated the characteristics of the ideal English teacher from the perspective of the students (Brown, 2001; Zamani & Ahangari, 2016; Wichadee, 2010). Chen and Lin (2009) claimed that being: a) systematic, b) organizer, c) reliable, d) confident, e) regular, f) active, and g) intelligent teachers are the main characteristics of an ideal English teacher. Likewise, Brown (2001) proposed that the ideal teacher characteristics are practical knowledge, tutorial skills, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. Horwitz (1987) concluded that when students' learning expectations and the classes methodology do not match, they lose confidence in the learning process. Consequently, it can be influenced. For that reason, Zamani and Ahangari (2016) concluded that during the classes, teachers play an important role in helping students achieve their goals and be motivated to learn.

Kounin (1970) defined ideal teachers as those who "accurately handle inappropriate student behavior, manage competing or developing events, more smoothly through instruction, maintain appropriate pacing, and maintain a group focus" (p.147). According to him, the teacher should give clear instructions, foster a good atmosphere, and handle student misbehavior. Likewise, Diamond (1998, cited in Wichadee 2010) said that the ideal teachers are those "who conduct effective teaching which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures." (p.83). Finally, Anderson (1991) postulated that "an effective teacher is one who quite consistently achieves goals which either directly or indirectly focus on the learning of their students" (p. 18).

Given the importance of identifying students' perceptions of the characteristics of the ideal English teacher, some attempts have been made worldwide to research for the same purpose. Witcher (2003) investigated college students' perspectives and found out that the ideal English teacher should foster student-centered teaching, be competent, and have a good knowledge of their subjects. Singh and Singh (2012) found almost the same results. These authors researched 400 students' perceptions and discovered that the ideal English teacher should be compassionate and interesting while teaching, manage the subject content well, have a large teaching experience, ask questions constantly during class time, and use many tools such as aids to teaching. In the same vein, Chireshe (2011) used a qualitative survey to investigate university students' perspectives on effective and ineffective lecturers. His findings demonstrated that the ideal teacher should be organized, competent, friendly, and readily available.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Setting and participant**

The sample of this descriptive quantitative research encompassed 322 students enrolled in their first year in a public university in the Los Ríos Province, Ecuador. Among the participants, 21.7% were males, and 78.3% were females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 40 years old. The participants were chosen by convenience since the researchers work in the university where the study took place. Therefore, the participants are from different degrees such as Agronomy, Pedagogy, Psychopedagogy, Nursing, Human Talent management, public management, and business management. All of them were attending the A1 English course.

### **3.2 Data collection and analysis**

The data collection instrument employed in this research was an online survey based on some studies conducted around the globe (Al-Khairi, 2015; Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2015; Chen & Chung Lin, 2009). This survey was composed of 30 statements based on a 4-point Likert scale (1- strongly disagree and 4- strongly agree). It was divided into three sections: Perspectives on the ideal English teacher; 1) profile, 2) personality, 3) instructions. The survey was applied during class time, and each participant had 45 minutes to answer the questions. Due to the level of the students, the survey was in Spanish.

After applying the survey, the data was transferred to the Statistical program SPSS 25 to be analyzed. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were measured in order to sum up, the Ecuadorian students' perspectives on the characteristics of their ideal English teacher. The alpha coefficient of reliability was calculated, and the result was 0.938, indicating the high reliability of the instrument.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Perspectives on the English teacher profile

Table 1 illustrates the data analysis provided by SPSS software for four items associated with the profile of the ideal teacher. In this group, 296 students agreed that the ideal English teacher must have studied in the field. Furthermore, 161 participants agreed that the ideal English teacher must be a native speaker. Regarding the item, "can a non-native speaker be an English teacher?" 256 learners answered that all people whose native language is not English can be English teachers. Finally, regarding the age of the teacher, 187 students disagreed that the teacher must be young.

**Table 1.** Perspectives on the English teacher profile

Perspectives	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Dev.
The ideal English teacher must have studied in the field.	15	11	130	166	3,39	,766
The ideal English teacher is a native speaker.	31	129	128	34	2,50	,810
Can a non-native speaker be an English teacher?	26	40	141	115	3,07	,895
The ideal English teacher is young.	67	120	109	26	2,29	,887

### 4.2 Perspectives on the English teacher personality

Table 2 highlights the respondents' perspectives on their ideal English teacher's personality. It is noteworthy that most of the students have expressed their opinions based on their personal experiences during their English learning process. Hence, 305 students agreed that the teacher is responsible for stimulating students' motivation for learning English. Regarding helping students develop self-confidence to learn English well, 304 students agreed with that statement. Moreover, 299 learners agreed that teachers alleviate students' anxiety in English class. In the next item, 302 learners agreed that the ideal teacher should maintain a good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary. Besides, 303 of them approved that the ideal teacher should make an effort to get to know the students. Also, 290 students agreed that their ideal teacher must be patient, as well as flexible in scheduling /rescheduling tests and deadlines".

As shown in table 2, 304 students agreed that the ideal teacher encourages them to participate in the class. 301 participants agreed that the ideal teacher guides them to become independent learners. 298 learners agreed the teacher must create a humorous and exciting class atmosphere. Furthermore, 302 respondents recognized that a greater teacher welcomes students' opinions /suggestions. Lastly, 304 learners indicated that the ideal teacher stimulates interest in the subject.

**Table 2.** Perspectives on the English teacher's personality

Perspectives	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Dev.
The ideal English teacher arouses students' motivation for learning English.	11	6	125	180	3,47	,702
The ideal English teacher helps students to develop self-confidence in order to learn English well.	13	5	126	178	3,46	,723
The ideal English teacher alleviates students' anxiety in English class.	10	13	173	126	3,29	,688
The ideal English teacher maintains a good classroom atmosphere using authority, if necessary.	9	11	179	123	3,29	,666
The ideal English teacher makes an effort to get to know the students.	8	11	153	150	3,38	,674
The ideal English teacher is flexible in scheduling /rescheduling tests and deadlines.	13	19	161	129	3,26	,745
The ideal English teacher encourages student participation.	11	7	142	162	3,41	,702
The ideal English teacher guides students to become independent learners.	9	12	151	150	3,37	,691

The ideal English teacher creates a humorous and exciting class atmosphere	11	13	129	169	3,42	,728
The ideal English teacher welcomes students' opinions /suggestions.	11	9	144	158	3,39	,708
The ideal English teacher stimulates interest in the subject.	10	10	160	142	3,35	,690

**4.3 Perspectives on the English teacher instructions**

Table 3 attempts to report the findings from students' perspectives on the ideal English teacher instructions. 279 students agreed that the ideal teacher must give useful feedback on written work in appropriate ways. Furthermore, 303 participants highlighted that the ideal teacher could communicate well in English. This item received the first highest score; thus, it is paramount since, for effective learning, teachers must communicate fluently in the L2. In the same way, 293 respondents agreed that the teacher must communicate with students in English, and 297 learners agreed that the teacher has to give useful feedback on written work in an appropriate way.

In the same vein, for effective teaching, 305 students agreed that the ideal teachers are those who select appropriate supplementary materials as well as prepare the lesson in an organized way; 303 students agreed. Furthermore, regarding methodologies and techniques applied in the classroom, 302 participants pointed out the importance of providing opportunities to use the language through meaningful tasks and activities. Similarly, 292 scholars agreed that the ideal teacher integrates group activities into class. Finally, in the next item, 301 students agreed that a great teacher prepares and sets teaching objectives for each lesson.

Besides, 329 students approved that if they are learning English, the ideal teacher must teach in English with the purpose that students from the beginning of the learning process start to become familiar with the language. Currently, the internet and technology are essential in the field of teaching languages. Thus, regarding the use of technology in class, 302 participants agreed that the ideal teacher uses the latest technology in teaching.

About the characteristics of the ideal teacher, 278 indicated that their ideal teacher must be tolerant of students' incomprehension since they deal with the same questions and problems repeatedly. Besides, 296 learners agreed that the ideal teacher must be enthusiastic about teaching, and 297 believed that the teacher must be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses. To finish, 298 students agreed that to have a successful teaching and learning teacher, the ideal teacher must have lots of teaching experience.

**Table 3.** *Perspectives on the English teacher instructions*

Perspectives	1	2	3	4	Mean	Std. Dev.
The ideal English teacher is familiar with the social and cultural background of the learners.	12	34	208	68	3,03	,683
The ideal English teacher is able to communicate well in English.	11	8	142	161	3,41	,705
The ideal English teacher communicates with students in English.	9	19	185	109	3,22	,679
The ideal English teacher gives useful feedback on written work in appropriate ways	10	15	155	142	3,33	,709
The ideal English teacher selects appropriate supplementary materials.	10	7	158	147	3,37	,682
The ideal English teacher provides opportunities to use English through meaningful tasks and activities.	14	6	156	146	3,35	,726
The ideal English teacher integrates group activities into class.	14	16	154	138	3,29	,754
The ideal English teacher prepares the lesson well.	13	6	140	163	3,41	,723
The ideal English teacher uses the latest technology in teaching.	12	8	156	146	3,35	,710

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The ideal English teacher uses particular methods and techniques in teaching.	10	15	159	138	3,32	,706
The ideal English teacher implements teaching objectives set for the lesson.	10	11	166	135	3,32	,689
The ideal English teacher is tolerant of students' incomprehension	14	30	159	119	3,19	3,19
The ideal English teacher is enthusiastic about teaching	14	12	151	145	3,33	,746
The ideal English teacher is able to assess learners' strengths and weaknesses.	12	13	157	140	3,32	,724
The ideal English teacher has lots of teaching experience.	13	11	141	157	3,37	,739

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## 5. Discussion

The current research sought to identify Ecuadorian university students' perspectives on the characteristics of the ideal English teacher. Hence, as the above findings in the teacher's profile, the highest two values are for items 1 and 3; ( $M=3.39$ ), ( $M=3.07$ ); *The ideal English teacher must have studied in the field, and can a non-native speaker be an English teacher?* This outcome confirms Babai et al. (2009) that an effective English teacher possesses high knowledge of pedagogy, the use of techniques and methods such as organizing the lesson well, using lesson plans, unbiased assessment of what students have learned, integrating group activities to class, and assigning homework.

On the other hand, based on the response of students about teachers' personality: the highest value of mean has been item one which said that the ideal English teacher must arouse students' motivation for learning English ( $M=3.47$ ), and item two, which said that the ideal English teacher must help students to develop self-confidence in order to learn English well, ( $M=3.46$ ). According to Pintrinch (2008, p.5), "motivation can influence what, when and how we learn," so having a high level of motivation is important for the students. In the language learning field, the lack of motivation can affect students learning, so the teacher should search for methodologies to motivate their students during the class. Otherwise, their learning might be compromised. Another significant factor is the importance of the teacher trying to develop students' self-confidence once it influences language acquisition performance. Hence, self-confidence is vital for learners because it encourages a person to try to learn a new language. A confident person hardly ever gives up, which means they succeed in L2 learning. The lack of self-confidence, usually experienced by shy students, makes learners not express their opinions.

Finally, the highest value about perspectives on the English teacher practices is item two, the ideal English teacher is able to communicate well in English ( $M=3.41$ ). This finding affirms Low et al. (2014) concept when they said that "possessing strong communication skills is essential in contributing to effective teaching" (p. 2).

Besides to Canale et al. (1980), communicative competence refers to a language user or teacher's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology and phonology, and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. Meanwhile, the English teacher prepares the lesson well. Shen et al. (2007) have pointed out that teachers spend considerable time reading and analyzing the textbook and teacher's manual to understand "what the important and difficult points were, which are needed to be stressed in teaching, and where students would likely make mistakes." Then the teacher individually developed a preliminary lesson plan by considering "how to teach it in an active way and by involving students in it." (p. 250). Hence, it means that lesson planning is essential to the process of teaching and learning L2.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study tried to identify the Ecuadorian university students' perspectives on the characteristics of the ideal English teacher. We believe that identifying these perspectives will be useful in implementing curricular changes based on what students expect to receive in class. The results demonstrated that students believe that the ideal English teacher should have studied in the field, stimulate interest in the subject, welcome students' opinions /suggestions, help students to develop self-confidence in order to learn English well, be responsible for stimulating students' motivation for learning English, maintain a good classroom atmosphere using authority, encourage students to participate in the class, use the latest technology in teaching.

The findings of this study will help teachers to deconstruct some paradigms in the class such that the ideal English teacher should be a native speaker. Having in mind this student's perspective, teachers should show students that English teachers teach international English. No accent is better or worse. A nonnative can teach English as well.

The results have been quite positive. However, this study faced two limitations. First, due to the covid pandemic, the researchers could not apply the survey face to face, and it provoked that many students did not participate at the time to answer it. Second, the lack of previous studies related to this topic, mainly in Ecuador, in order to compare the outcomes of this research. Finally, To end up, it is recommended for future research a qualitative study to deeply understand these perspectives. Understanding them clearly will shorten the discrepancy between learners' expectations and experiences.

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