



# TEACHER AND LEARNER PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE EFL TEACHING IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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**RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR COMMUNICATION**



# Contents

Introduction

Literature review

Method

Results

Discussion

Conclusion & Implication



# Introduction

- L2 teachers and their students may have very similar or disparate notions of effective teaching
- Nunan (2000): “many **mismatches** between the beliefs and attitudes of the learners and the practices of their teachers”, including those “important for successful language development such as the extent to which use of the target language in class was encouraged or even permitted”.

# Literature review

**Mismatches** between language learner and teacher perceptions of classroom activity can be usefully analyzed and may have implications for language learning and teaching (Hawkey 2006).



# Literature review

- Nunan (1989) identifies a 'hidden agenda' which may lead learners to concentrate on formal language points rather than the communicative purpose of a lesson.
- “hidden agenda”: preconceived ideas about what students consider important to study, a mental set called “hidden agenda”





# Literature review

- Horwitz (1990), Kern (1995), and Schulz (1996): **mismatches** between FL students' and teachers' expectations can negatively affect the students' satisfaction with the language class and can potentially lead to the discontinuation of L2 study (See Brown 2009).

# Literature review

Williams and Burden (1997): in some cases, students' perceptions of teacher behaviors **do not correspond with** their teachers' intentions (Brown 2009).



# Research question

- Are learners' perceptions of the specific teaching approaches the same as those of the teachers who are initiating them?





## ***BELIEF & ACTION***

- Richardson (1996): attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions as a set of mental constructs that “name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states thought to drive a person’s actions” (Brown 2009)



## ***STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT L2 TEACHING AND LEARNING***

- Recent trends in SLA scholarship: Learners' beliefs and perceptions might be **more central to effective L2 acquisition** than previously thought (Brown 2009).
- While both learners and teachers agreed in general on the virtues of communicative approaches to language teaching, there were **interesting differences in the perceptions of learners and teachers** on the prominence of grammar and pair work in their classes (Hawkey 2006).

## Empirical research

- Horwitz (1981) developed a questionnaire entitled the “**Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory**” (BALLI) and administered it to both preservice language teachers in her methods class and beginning-level language students (1985, 1988).
- Kern (1995) administered the BALLI to students and teachers to compare L2 students’ and teachers’ beliefs about language learning/teaching.





- Horwitz (1988):
  - almost 40% of the students believed that one could become fluent in another language in 2 years or less; and
  - 60% of the Spanish and German students felt that learning was mostly a matter of translating from English.
- Bell's (2005) study of teachers' beliefs about both concrete principles of L2 pedagogy and abstract SLA theory:
  - almost 20% of the items (80 items totally) did not receive a majority agreement or disagreement
  - > controversial areas in L2 acquisition and teaching



- Schulz (1996):
  - students' attitudes toward formal grammar instruction and error correction were considerably more favorable than their teachers' attitudes.
- Peacock (1998):
  - 64% of the learners (compared with only 7% of the teachers) believed that 'learning a language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules'.  
(Hawkey 2006)
- Schulz (1996):
  - "Students whose instructional expectations are not met may consciously or subconsciously question the credibility of the teacher and/or the instructional approach."*



# Method

## *Participants*

- 49 teachers, mostly female, about half aged between 23 & 35;
- 70% of teachers have a MA degree either in TESOL or English language;
- 147 students, mostly in their first and second year at the University of Danang (UD), aged 18-21;
- 27% of students major in English language study, the rest study English as a minor;
- Both teachers and students are from the same univ.,



# Method

## *Instrumentation*

- Bell's (2005) questionnaire consisting of 24 items was used (See Appendix A);
- The focus is on concrete teaching practices rather than on theoretical issues in SLA and L2 pedagogy;
- A four-point Likert scale → forced choice (1: strongly agree; .....  
4: strongly disagree)



# Method

## *Procedure*

- One researcher contacted the volunteer teachers and students and requested them to complete the questionnaire either in the printed form (55%) or online (45%)
- The questionnaire was administered during the last three weeks of the semester



# Results

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (Ss - Ts)	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	P
Q7	not use the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom.	-1.0612	3.3673	2.3061	<.000***
Q6	allow students to respond to test questions in listening and reading via the mother tongue rather than the foreign language.	0.8231	2.1429 ???	2.9660	<.000***
Q15	not use small groups or pair work (predominantly ).	-0.8121	2.7917	1.9796	<.000***
Q10	not grade primarily for grammatical accuracy.	0.5987	2.3061	2.9048	<.000***
Q5	not correct students immediately	0.5103	2.3673	2.8776	<.002***

(a) Strongly agree = 1; strongly disagree = 4;  
(\*), (\*\*), & (\*\*\*) : Significant at .1; .05; and .01

Q = question item.

The items are ranked in descending order from the largest to the smallest mean difference using absolute values

# Results

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (Ss - Ts)	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	<i>P</i>
Q17	ask students to begin speaking the foreign language only when they feel they are ready to.	-0.4762	3.0408	2.5646	<.001***
Q13	address errors with immediately explanations	-0.3946	2.2041	1.8095	<.001***
Q19	speak the foreign language with native-like control of both grammar and accent.	-0.3333	2.0612	1.7279	<.009***
Q22	not simplify or alter how teachers speak so that students can understand easily.	-0.2925	2.7959	2.5034	<.031**
(a) Strongly agree = 1; strongly disagree = 4; (*), (**), & (***) : significant at .1; .05; and .01 Q = question item.					



# Results

## *Differences in teachers' and students perceptions*

- *Categories ranked as follows*

1. Target language use (Q7, Q17, Q19, Q22)
2. Assessment (Q6, Q10)
3. Communicative language teaching strategies (Q15)
4. Error correction (Q5, Q13)

The categories are ranked in descending order of mean difference



# Discussion

- *Compare*

Our survey results (2015) at UD (Vietnam)	Brown's (2009) results at the University of Arizona (the USA)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Target language use (Q7, Q17, Q19, Q22)</li><li>2. Assessment (Q6, Q10)</li><li>3. Communicative language teaching strategies (Q15)</li><li>4. Error correction (Q5, Q13)</li></ol> <p>(9 items) <b>(147 Vnese sts studying English)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Error correction (Q5, Q13)</li><li>2. Grammar teaching (Q16, )</li><li>3. Target language use (Q14)</li><li>4. Communicative language teaching strategies (Q11, Q15, Q4, Q24)</li><li>5. Culture (Q3, Q9)</li><li>6. Assessment (Q2)</li><li>7. Computer-based technology (Q1)</li></ol> <p>(12 items) <b>(1409 American sts studying 9 languages: Spanish, French, German, Japanese, Hebrew, Arabic, Italian, Turkish, and Greek)</b></p>

# Discussion

## *Teachers' and students' perceptions of the role of target language use*

- Schulz's (1996, 2001) studies and Brown's (2009) study:  
Students' opinions about *grammar teaching* were more favorable than teachers' opinions

- In our study: **Target language use (Q7, Q17, Q19, Q22)**

Students want more importance given to *target language use* in the classroom than their teachers do (using less mother tongue in class; their spoken FL to be more native-like; teachers' spoken language to be adapted to the sts' level)

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (Ss - Ts)	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	P
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# Discussion

## *Teachers' and students' perceptions of assessment (Q6, Q10)*

- Generally, sts do not seem to agree much with teachers in terms of assessment
- Sts favor grammar accuracy-based assessment than teachers
  - For communicative purposes, teachers need to negotiate with sts on this point

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (Ss - Ts)	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	P
Q7	not use the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom.	-1.0612	3.3673	2.3061	<.000***
Q6	allow students to respond to test questions in listening and reading via the mother tongue rather than the foreign language.	0.8231	2.1429 ???	2.9660	<.000***
Q15	not use small groups or pair work (predominantly).	-0.8121	2.7917	1.9796	<.000***
Q10	not grade primarily for grammatical accuracy.	0.5987	2.3061	2.9048	<.000***

# Discussion

## *Teachers' and students' perceptions of Communicative language teaching strategies (Q15)*

- Sts seem to want a wider variety of learning activities, not just pair work and group work
  - Teachers' teaching methods should diversify

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (S <sub>s</sub> - T <sub>s</sub> )	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	P
Q15	not use small groups or pair work (predominantly ).	-0.8121	2.7917	1.9796	<.000***

# Discussion

## *Teachers' and students' perceptions of error correction (Q5, Q13)*

- Sts favor quick or immediate error correction more than teachers (although teachers do not have a clear-cut view concerning this point)

→ To facilitate communicative exchanges in the classroom, both teachers and sts should reconsider their views on error correction

	Effective foreign language teachers should	Mean difference (Ss - Ts)	Teachers' mean (a) (n=49)	Students' mean (a) (n=147)	P
Q5	not correct students immediately	0.5103	2.3673	2.8776	<.002***
Q13	address errors with immediately explanations	-0.3946	2.2041	1.8095	<.001***



# Conclusion

- L2 teaching practices is changing over time
- L2 learning setting is specific
- Students may have idiosyncratic perceptions of L2 teaching practices
- Teachers should not only master SLA theories and L2 teaching pedagogy but also negotiate with students on perceptions of L2 teaching practice.
- L2 teachers need to do action research in their individual classroom to identify and understand their sts' perspective on L2 teaching.



## ***Limitation***

- Teachers should be grouped (teaching language major sts, teaching language non-major sts)
- Students should be grouped (language major, language non-major, age groups, etc)
- Individual teacher perspective taken into consideration



# References

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*The Effective Foreign Language Teacher*

Instructions: Please reflect on your personal beliefs regarding what characterizes effective foreign language teaching. Carefully read each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree by circling the statement that best describes your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers, just those that are right for you. Your sincere, personal responses will guarantee the success of the study. Thank you.

Effective foreign language teachers should:

1. frequently use computer-based technologies (Internet, CD-ROM, email) in teaching the language.  
Strongly Agree<sup>†</sup>    Agree    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. base at least some part of students' grades on completion of assigned group tasks.
3. devote as much time to the teaching of culture as to the teaching of language.
4. require students to use the language outside of class with other speakers of the language (e.g., Internet, email, clubs, community events, etc.).
5. not correct students immediately after they make a mistake in speaking.
6. allow students to respond to test questions in listening and reading via English rather than the foreign language.
7. not use English in the foreign language classroom.
8. only correct students indirectly when they produce oral errors instead of directly (e.g., correctly repeating back to them rather than directly stating that they are incorrect).
9. be as knowledgeable about the culture(s) of those who speak the language as the language itself.
10. not grade language production (i.e., speaking and writing) primarily for grammatical accuracy.
11. teach the language primarily by having students complete specific tasks (e.g., finding out prices of rooms and rates at a hotel) rather than grammar-focused exercises.
12. have students respond to commands physically in the foreign language (e.g., "stand up," "pick up your book," etc.).
13. address errors by immediately providing explanations as to why students' responses are incorrect.
14. require students to speak in the foreign language beginning the first day of class.
15. not use predominantly small groups or pair work to complete activities in class.
16. mostly use activities that practice specific grammar points rather than activities whose goal is merely to exchange information.
17. ask students to begin speaking the foreign language only when they feel they are ready to.
18. not present a particular grammar point without illustrating how the structure is used in a specific, real-world context.
19. speak the foreign language with native-like control of both grammar and accent.
20. teach grammar by giving examples of grammatical structures before explaining the grammar rules.
21. use predominantly real-life materials (e.g., music, pictures, foods, clothing) in teaching both the language and the culture rather than the textbook.
22. not simplify or alter how they speak so that students can understand every word being said.
23. base at least some part of students' grades on their ability to interact with classmates successfully in the foreign language.
24. use activities where students have to find out unknown information from classmates using the foreign language.

<sup>†</sup>On the original questionnaire four columns containing bubbles representing each response option appeared to the right of the items but have been removed to save space.



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**  
**Q & A**