

What's an Effective Language Teacher?

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Kohtla-Järve, Estonia, November 2017

To bear in mind...

- Are teachers born?
- Or can they be made?

Overview

- ‘Good’ teacher? Who says?
- The role of the teacher in successful learning
- Characteristics of the effective teacher
- Are there differences in regional perceptions of effective teaching?
- Are effective language teachers different from other teachers?

Who has an opinion about education?

- Teachers
- Academics
- Students & ex-students
- Administrators / managers
- Gov't ministers and officials, local and national
- Parents
- Media
- And ... everyone else

Bad teachers – what a UK government advisor thinks (BBC website)

- Sir Cyril Taylor said there were about 17,000 "poor" teachers in England.
- “We've got 400,000 of our children attending low-attaining schools; 75,000 leave schools at 16 with hardly any qualifications at all; five million adults are functionally illiterate.”

Bad teachers: the gov't advisor's view

- “...if you have weak heads of department you ask them to move on, and you go out and recruit fantastic teachers.”

What makes a bad teacher; general public's view?

- unable to control classes
- does not know 'enough' about the subject

Bad teachers: head teachers' view

- “It's better to have anyone in front of a class than no-one, simply because we have a responsibility to have that class taught by a qualified teacher.”
- “In terms of quality of that person, hopefully they will be able to do it, but there is no guarantee.”
- “It is sometimes difficult to recruit good staff.”

Bad teachers: teachers' view

- the job is becoming more difficult & stressful,
- parents unwilling to accept the disciplining of their child,
- government paperwork,
- head teachers do not back them up.
- “Our experience at the union is that people who are beginning to feel burned out, leave.”
- “We have the best teaching force we've had for years and years.”

Bad teachers: what do people remember from their schooldays?

- tests, assignments, homework
- grades, feedback
- punishment
- sadism & sarcasm (“deep sarcasm in the classroom”)
- feeling of victimisation

- NOT “lack of knowledge” or “lazy”
- need to be a really terrible teacher to do actual damage
- ‘good’ teacher characteristics not mirror image of ‘bad’ teacher characteristics
- “In the old days, teachers were respected.”

Historical Perspective on the Changing Role of the Teacher

- When exactly was “the golden age”?
- 18th Century
 - teachers had no training
- 19th Century
 - training for teachers was not important
 - teachers needed to be of good moral character and conduct
- 20th Century
 - teacher training in subject matter and teaching methodology
- 21st Century
 - new definitions of what it means to teach well and be an effective teacher

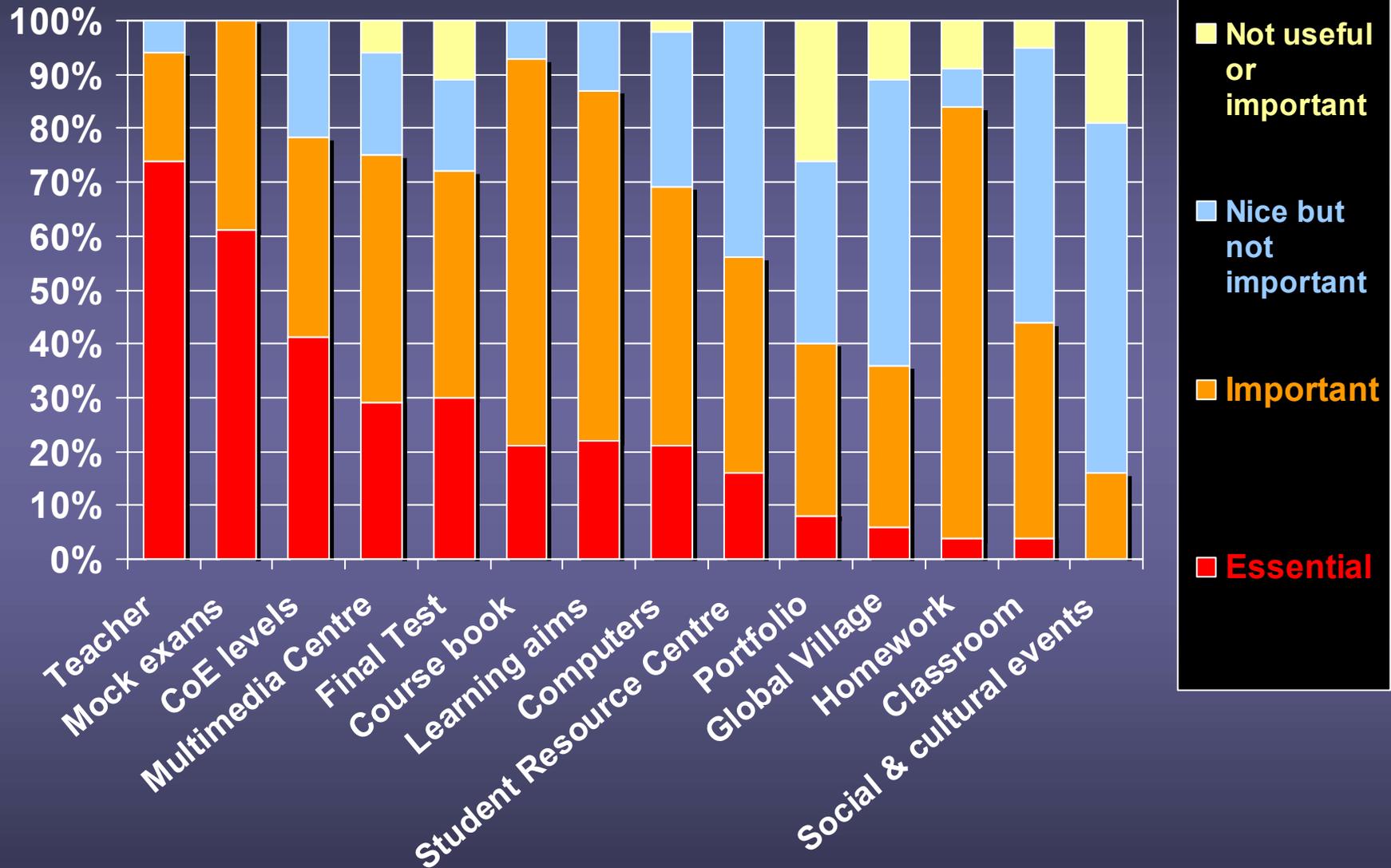
Good teachers

- Effect on learning
- Characteristics

British Council Teaching Centre, Milan, Italy

- Questionnaire survey of its English language students
- Pupils:
 - *Scuola Media Inferiore* level
 - Aged 11-14
 - *Scuola Superiore* level
 - Aged 14-18
- Purpose:
 - Which course features made the difference?

Italy: What Milan teenage students think is important

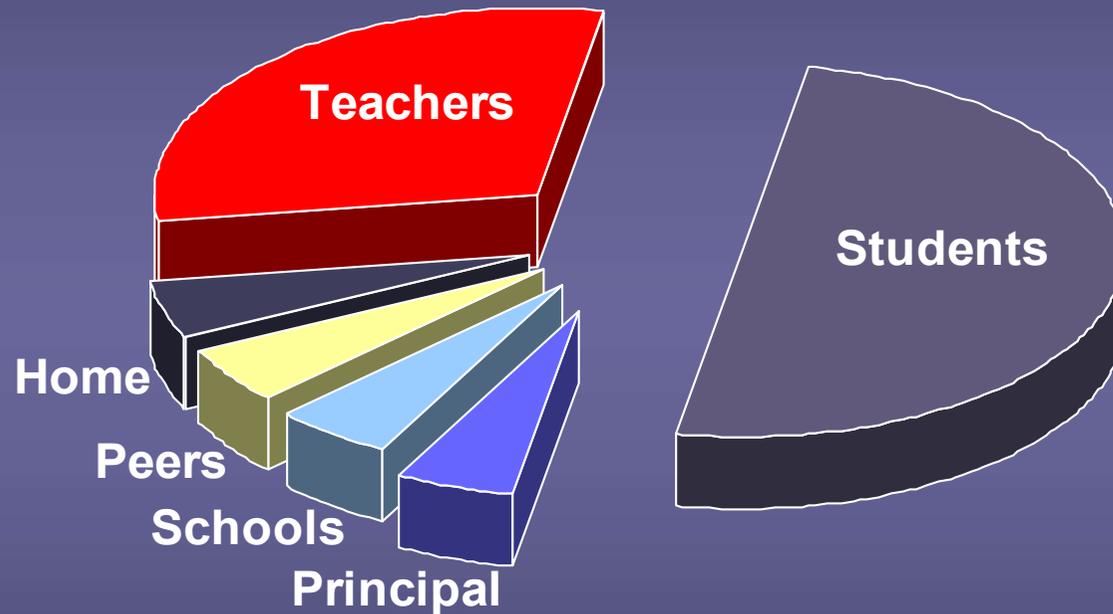


John Hattie, University of Auckland
Australian Council for Educational Research

Teachers Make a Difference: What is the research evidence?

- Synthesised 500,000 studies of influences on learning
- Purpose: to find the major sources of variance in pupils' achievement

Hattie: Percentage of achievement variance



Making the difference...

“... lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act – the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with the students during their 15,000 hours of schooling.”

What makes a good teacher?

- A good teacher...

is kind

is generous

listens to you

encourages you

has faith in you

keeps confidences

likes teaching children

likes teaching their subject

takes time to explain things

helps you when you're stuck

tells you how you are doing

allows you to have your say

doesn't give up on you

cares for your opinion

makes you feel clever

treats people equally

stands up for you

makes allowances

tells the truth

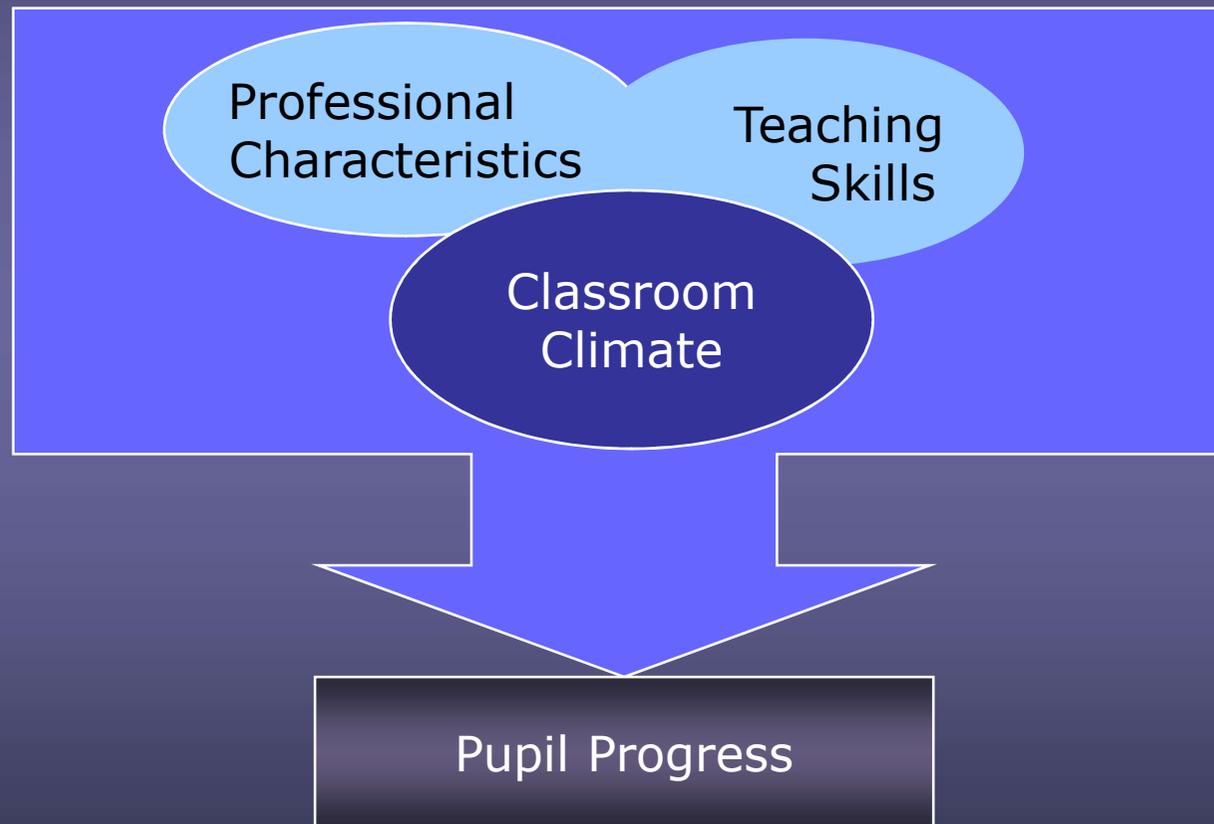
is forgiving.

Children aged 12-13

Research into Teacher Effectiveness

- A model of teacher effectiveness
- Report by Hay McBer to the UK Department for Education and Employment, 10 month study
 - 1,200 teachers

The measures of teacher effectiveness



- Students' estimation of their own abilities and prior achievements are the most important influence.
- Hattie 2009

The model of professional characteristics

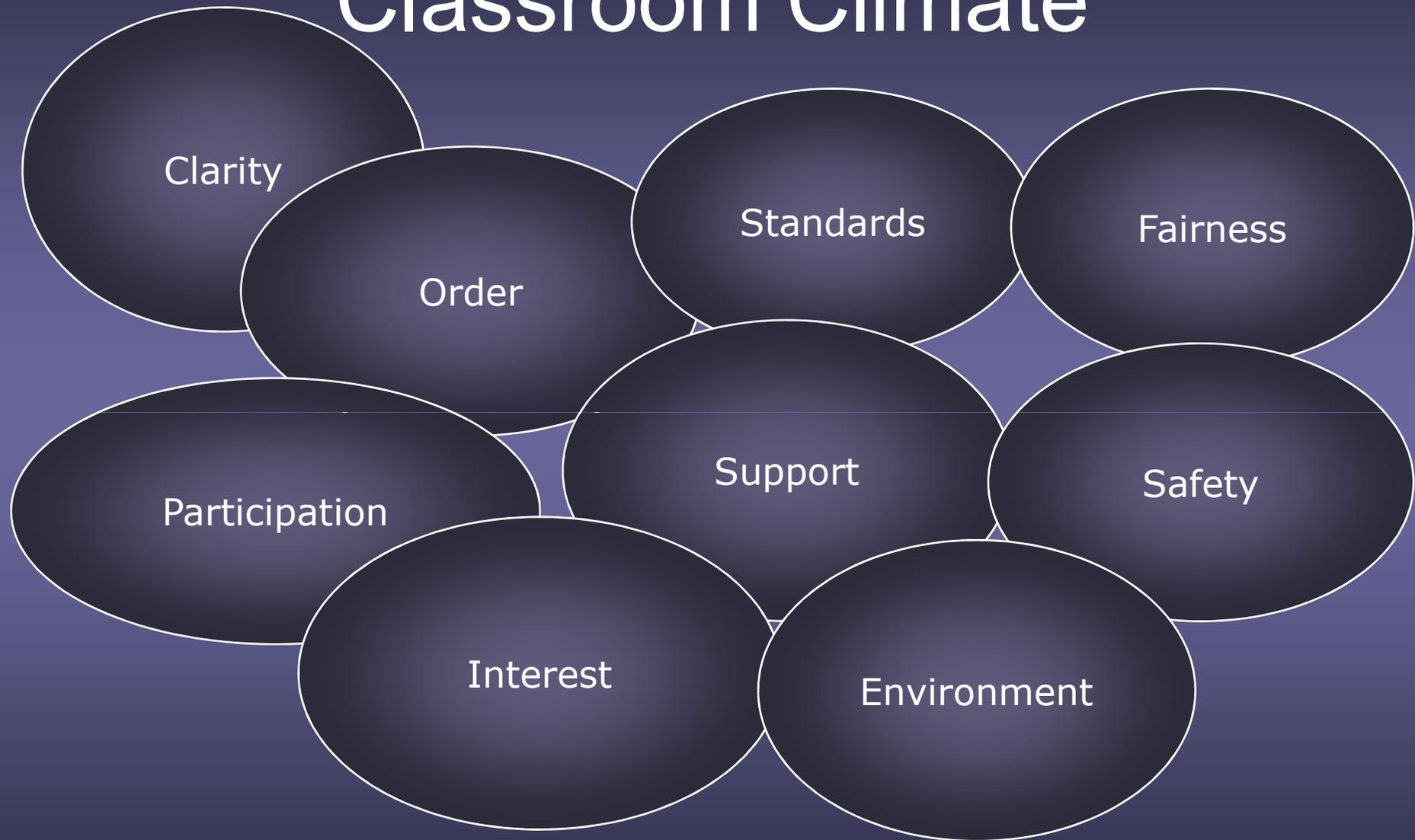


The teaching skills



- “It soon became clear that **feedback** was among the most powerful influences on achievement [...] The mistake I was making was seeing feedback as something *teachers provided to students* – they typically did not, although they make claims that they did it all the time [...] It was only when I discovered that feedback was most powerful when it is from the *student to the teacher* that I started to understand it better. When teachers seek, or at least are open to, feedback from students as to what students know, what they understand, where they make errors, when they have misconceptions, when they are not engaged – then teaching and learning can be synchronised and powerful”
- Hattie, 2009.

Classroom Climate



“Teachers really do make a difference. Within their classrooms, effective teachers **create learning environments** which foster pupil progress by **deploying their teaching skills** as well as a **wide range of professional characteristics.**”

Hay McBer, para 1.1.9

Around the world...

A selection of studies

Iran

- Kaboodvand: (L & G)
 - good accent,
 - uses teaching aids,
 - sometimes serious,
 - elegant,
 - creative,
 - friendly

France

- Girard: (L)
 - makes course interesting,
 - good pronunciation,
 - **explains** clearly,
 - speaks good English,
 - shows same **interest** in all pupils,
 - shows **sympathy**,
 - is **fair**,
 - is **close** to pupils

Australia/Asia

- Mullock:
 - good pedagogic knowledge and skills,
 - **positive relationships** with students,
 - sense of **humour**,
 - **patient**

Hungary

- Borg:
 - creative,
 - sense of **humour**,
 - flexible,
 - motivating,
 - **enthusiastic**

USA

- Walls, *et al*: (G)
 - **cares** about students,
 - creates good learning environment,
 - **enthusiastic**

Taiwan

- Shen: (L)
 - patience,
 - skills,
 - experience,
 - knowledge,
 - good planning,
 - good personality

China

- Mullock quoting a Cortazzi & Jin study of Chinese students: (L)
 - knowledge of subject (grammar & vocabulary),
 - is **patient**,
 - [but skill in teaching not significant]

Estonia

- Knowledgeable
- **Enthusiastic** about Teaching
- Provides Constructive Feedback
- **Approachable/Personable**
- **Creative/Interesting**
- Professional
- Realistic Expectations / **Fair**

- MA thesis: Joemaa, 2013

But...

- Tertiary level only
- No data for language teachers specifically

Are there regional differences?

Basically, I have not found significant differences to date.

- Except ...
- ...in China, for LTs there seemed to be more emphasis on grammatical knowledge, and...
- “Good accent” or “good pronunciation” is important for LTs

Conversely,

- Teaching skills important for LTs, except China

Not often mentioned...

- Knowledge of subject (except tertiary)
- Use of written lesson plans
- High marks
- Covering the course / material

Are Language Teachers Different?

- According to academics
 - LTs distinctive in many ways (Borg)
 - Nature of subject (T uses medium ss not know)
 - Content of teaching (teach communication)
 - Methodology
 - T-S **relationships**
 - NS-NNS contrasts (focus on teaching ability)
 - Isolated
 - But need to compare 'insider' vs 'outsider' views

More 'desirable' Language Teacher characteristics

- **Friendly**
- 'Actor' type
- Played games
- **Creative**
- Told jokes
- Does not push weak learners
- **Communicates freely**
- Gives **positive feelings**

- Knowledge & command of the language
- Organises, **explains** & clarifies well
- Has no favourites, **fair** to all
- **Available** to students

General characteristics of good language teacher

- **Personal characteristics, personal interaction**
- Knowledge & good communication
- Skills (more 'progressive' methodology)
- **Attitudes to students** (mistakes more acceptable, LT needs more personal relationship with ss to communicate, BUT does not use their L1)
- Should be able to deal with students from primary level to adults
- A sense that the LT embodies his or her subject

I am what I teach
I teach what I am

So...?

- Level-dependent?
- Region / country dependent?
- Subject area dependent?

- Born?

- Made?



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