FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS: THE PERCEPTION OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN OUR SOCIETY

Enes Kemal Kosar[i]
Istanbul Medipol University,
Turkey

Abstract:

The main goal of this study is to observe the role of English high school teachers in a society from the perspective of EFL students. This study investigated the role of English high school teachers in a society as perceived by ninety nine (99) students studying high school in Turkey, with a questionnaire consisting of one open ended question. Overall, the answers which were conducted from the participant students were significantly different from each other. High school students had quite different perceptions when the age factor was considered, but mostly the answers were astounding similar to each other. The main logic behind this study is definitely not an intent to dig down the importance of teachers; however feedback is not an easy attempt in the process of education, so considering the opinions of the other important actors, which is students and teachers as the other, is a critical step in the field on behalf of the students perspective as the 'educated' ones. The findings have implications for knowledge-based teachers and the ones who see being a teacher as a job. The outcome of our research indicates that; high school English teachers needs to upgrade their role in our society by integrating with the youth and the innovative era itself in order to stay connected with the fresh generations in class, and also just knowledge based mindsets closed to upgrading itself, and lacking of presenting English in many ways of accessibility in today's daily life does not have an effective role for the new coming society.

Keywords: high school EFL students, high school English teachers, high school in Turkey

1. Introduction

In Turkey, students are learning English since grade four as a foreign language. For EFL students in Turkey the journey of English starts at grade four and ends at grade twelve,

---
[i] Correspondence: email kosarenes@outlook.com

moreover it is a mandatory course for every student during this great amount of time. But for students, when it comes to putting their knowledge into action, immediately English turns out to be a problem.

When we look at these problems, we can clearly see; not being able to talk, not being able to speak or understand and so on. Furthermore, when we examine the reasons of these problems we come across a great variety of answers. But, even though some slight changes occurs the general mindset as in every education, teachers are based on the main fundamental when it comes to learning and teachers are one of the main fundamentals on student's performance and success (Koç, M. 2012). So for this reason, examining the role of a teacher via students is another way to understand if these problems are being caused by teachers or not, or even giving the 'educated' ones a consideration to reflect rightly on behalf of their role in the process. Obviously to get a clear answer we need to do a brief research about this subject, but students deciding or even being able to describe their teacher's role and being able to speak up in the society from their perspective and outlook towards life, which is fed by the generation they live and will shape, is important on naming the teacher's performance to fulfill the expected. As stated in Khajastehmhr and Takrimi's study (2009) which is based on English language teachers' perceptions; teachers' educational goals are generally on academic growth, as well as essential skills necessary for playing their future roles in the society. A teacher's role in the society will be in a good position or will be perceived effective if it is benefiting the society, on the contrary it will be seen as an ineffective position in the society if the teacher is not coherent with the needs and thoughts which are constructed together with the era, its actors and with its needs. In addition to, effective teaching in domain of general education, the domain of L2 acquisition should be taken with more care and cautiously (Park and Lee, 2006, p.241).

2. Review of Literature

When we go over the academic literature, teacher effectiveness has been an ongoing topic of interest in educational studies, in addition; studies which contain the term 'perception' from the teacher or students' outlook are actually quite new and are pretty narrow studied in the field. Furthermore, the studies that have been conducted in the field of educational sciences, which are based on Teacher evaluation or reflection, are either widely generally or specifically covered; such as the ones done for English language teacher instruction Büyükkantarcıoğlu N. (2004), Çelik (2013), Doğançay-Aktuna, S. and Kızıltepe, Z. (2005), Kızıldağ, A. (2009). Moreover, the stated studies are pretty much handled on the logic of teacher behavior or their specific characteristics (Korkmaz, Ş.Ç. and Yavuz, A. 2011) (Zamani and Ahangari, p.80-81, 2016). They are also taken into consideration together, characterizing EFLT teachers characteristics in three different categories consisting of socio-affective skill knowledge, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge alongside declaring a teacher effective if he or she demonstrates the stated three (Park & Lee, 2006, p. 239). Also for effective English

teacher characteristics, mostly the studies show a similarity of evaluation in categorization; for instance, English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills and socio-cultural skills (Whichadee and Orawiwatnakul 2012). Moreover, some draw personality traits for teachers within positive self-regard for self and others (Feldman, K. A. 1986) alongside teacher personalities during class period with statements as knowledge on target culture, pronunciation and positive personal change (Demirel, Ö. 1990) (Saraç-Süzer, S. H. 2007). And again, covering teacher behaviors and their characteristics might be a guide for teachers or for faculty of education students, but will always maintain in that point of view. As stated, the term 'effective' is changeable; teacher who make maximum use of time in class, present needed materials and most importantly plan opportunities for students to apply newly acquired concepts are observed in 'active' teachers which are also described as effective teachers (Brophy, J. E., and Good, T. L. 1986). In other words, conducting molds for teachers under the solutions of 'effective teacher' will not always be the right cure since the aim is for a changing behavior or character rather than the process itself.

Hativa, Barak, and Simhi (2001) point out that teacher effectiveness is not merely about fitting a particular teacher type or conforming to a set of external or internal criteria; rather, it involves understanding what good teacher really means and incorporating classroom practices for the wider social context. Shaping behaviors and characteristics need a long term duration, and in the fast growing, constructing era we do not have that much of a time to fix or to see a failure at the end. So further and rapid cure for the teachers of tomorrow will be giving them a chance and a 'heads up' to observe and understand what they will be facing in classrooms, and what kinds of new generation comers will they be together with. Being stated (Park & Lee, 2006, p. 237) for teachers; knowledge for world events and knowing the student as well as teaching them in ways which they learn the best is another perspective. As stated, educational process is not one sided, it's a building process of constructing with your students, no need for the understanding of seeing teachers as the meta knowledge keeper. Well with the changes in societies, jobs, technologies and mindsets, we need to build todays and tomorrows with care and with science united with the daily lives. Student perspectives towards a situation, or even towards knowledge might differ from teachers, for instance students focusing on the importance of pedagogical knowledge rather than English proficiency (Dittrich, 2000) in a teacher might not meet the habits of a well speaking native speaker. Also, in Japan it is observed that Japanese students perceive teachers who teach outside the syllabus as effective teachers (Hoon, L. S. and Tomiko, K. 2008). Especially in an era in which student perception is playing an important role as the future of Earth, we need to give them a chance to share their opinions and thoughts about the system and process that they are mostly obligated to go through. Lastly, to leave an open door for new ideas, as with teaching in general, language teaching can be done in many ways (Khajastehmhr and Takrimi, 2009). With all the stated studies above we can pretty much come up with a criteria of an effective teacher, in addition, to show the fundamental in teacher criteria; one of the best known conceptualizations of what

teachers know is that of Shulman (1987) who defines teachers' knowledge and perception as:

- Content knowledge;
- Pedagogic content knowledge (the ability to contextualize and personalise the content for the learners);
- General pedagogic knowledge (principles and strategies of classroom management and organization regardless of content matter);
- Curriculum knowledge (materials and programs that are the 'tools of trade' for teachers);
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics;
- Knowledge of educational contexts, and contexts (the group, the classroom, the district, the community);
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.

The concepts stated in 1987 by Shulman may still be active and correct, however for todays and tomorrows these concepts are not and will not be enough for teachers to just internalize as teacher criteria, because the best answer will be from twenty first century and on just 'knowledge' is not enough to help and raise a society. Our study truly projects it with high school student's perspectives.

3. Purpose of the Study

In every society there are roles which play a factor in every position of life, it can be a role of a person or a job. The term 'role' derives from contribution or even just existence in a society where humankind gathers to live alongside giving consent to each other. The term role plays active when a person or a job depends on fulfilling its needs to the society, in other words, based on needs and human beings acceptance to fulfill or provide that need, brings an output to the society as for the given input of labor and effort. Moreover, it is indeed needed to state that society feds up upon the environment it lives on, so this can mean with the changing innovations and mindsets or new coming life styles, the efficiency of roles can or might go through a certain change in order to fulfill its effect. With a specific field example, Badawood (p.33, 2015) draws the picture of Saudi society's teachers' higher endorsements of socio-affective traits over English proficiency might be due to the shifting beliefs among Saudi society; so we can observe a direct interaction between a society and an English teacher. Furthermore, with Brophy, J. E., and Good, T. L.'s 'active teacher' describing (1986), we can come across a description of a teacher who plans opportunities for students to apply newly acquired concepts and skills. At this point, sharing newly acquired needs and providing opportunities for skill building is just the point of real life construction; and this real life construction changes actively when years and era's change, so the term 'new' here can be referred to changes. So in this way, our research will observe if teachers are fulfilling what the society needs from them in a non-direct way. Since not only professional, as well as personal, growth and development is both a standard itself and an outcome

after other standards are accomplished and outputted to the society (Celik, 2011, p.85). The purpose of this study is to define the role of high school English teachers in our society from the perspective of demanders, ones which are going to be the output, briefly 'educated' ones. Students, the 'educated' ones, can pretty much not benefit from the teachers knowledge while the teacher believes in its quality of knowledge, so this societal benefiting is a process which having many years of experience does not guarantee good level of teaching (Adams, C. and Pierce, R. 1999). Furthermore, the study observes the outlook of students towards English high school teachers. This research will benefit us to define the role of high school English teachers in our society via students that are taking education from them. Also, the dual relations between teachers and students will also be observed, most importantly forming positive relations with students are seen as an essential quality of effective teachers (Clark, J. C., and Walsh, J. 2002) (Cheung, H. 2006). To remind again; logic behind this study is definitely not an intent to dig down the importance of teachers; but to consider the opinions of the other important actors, which is students, as a critical step in the field on behalf of the students perspective as the 'educated' ones. To cover up with The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) defines teaching for teachers with concepts of good managing, systematic instruction techniques and also tailor teaching to student's needs; using tailoring and the perspective of student needs is exactly the innovated mindset of teaching, English language teachers in high schools should construct up on tailoring and needs of the era, students united with English content to be presented. Khajastehmhr and Takrimi do state that language teaching can be done in many ways with general teaching (2009), especially in this era in which connection and accessibility is much easier.

3.1 Research Question
- What is the role of a high school English teacher in our society?

4. Methodology

For our research, the participants were high school students which are studying in Turkey, at a number of ninety nine. Being able to give a chance to express its opinion as a student from each grade and age was our priority throughout the process. Also, being able to reach different high schools from different cities was an important factor to underline the difference of probable teacher or district differentiation. While conducting our research we used one questionnaire which included personal questions such as gender, age and grade; also placed one open-ended question. While answering the questionnaire, the participants did not have any time limits, they were allowed to answer the question in Turkish (the participants firs language) if they wanted and also they were allowed to ask about the question in order to get a probable distinction.

Conducting the research; procedure of participants answering was done during the school time or after school, student had a choice to pick since the research did not

give any time limits of answering. The questionnaire was in electronic format, comprising as Google Form, and was reached to the students via cell phone. So in this case, the students had answered the questionnaire on their phone. With the ease of technology, the finished questionnaire reached the researchers box right away. All of the forms were read one by one with categorization of sentences and thoughts that were mostly used in a positive or in a negative way. After examining, each answer with each sentence next step came up with categorization and numbering the sentences in general which were used to define high school English teachers.

After this procedure, we were able to get a brief look of ideas and opinions ranging from negative used sentences to positively stated sentences. Also to add, because of an open-ended format students had got the opportunity to draw the picture of a high school English teacher from multi ways with multi-dimensional answers.

4.1 Participants

The participants of our research were high school students from various schools located in three different cities Istanbul, Izmit and Sakarya. In total, we had 99 students participating in our study which is clustered from seventy (70) Female and twenty eight (28) Male students. The age ratio of the participants is in between fourteen (14) and nineteen (19). In this case, we can observe that the grade and age level of the participants are constructed in an outspreaded way from high schools.
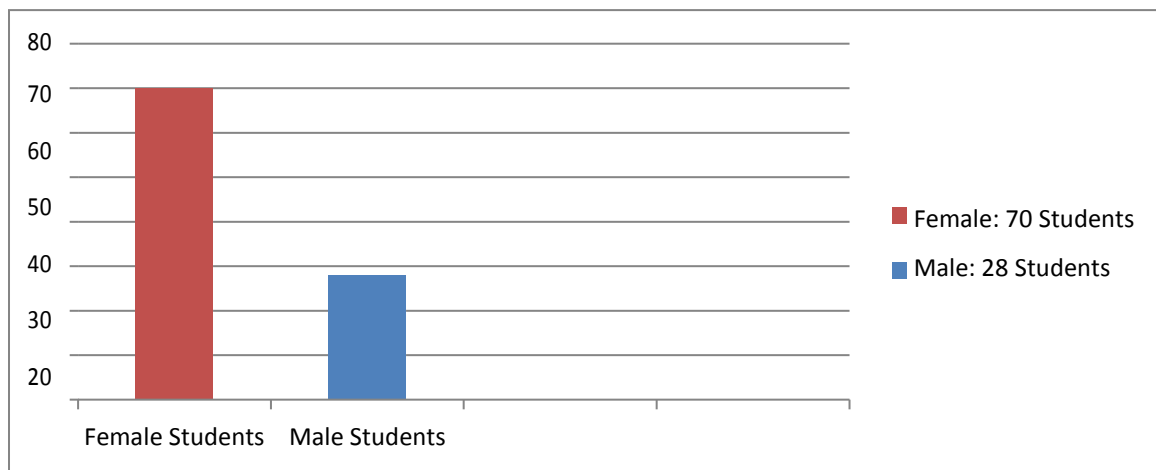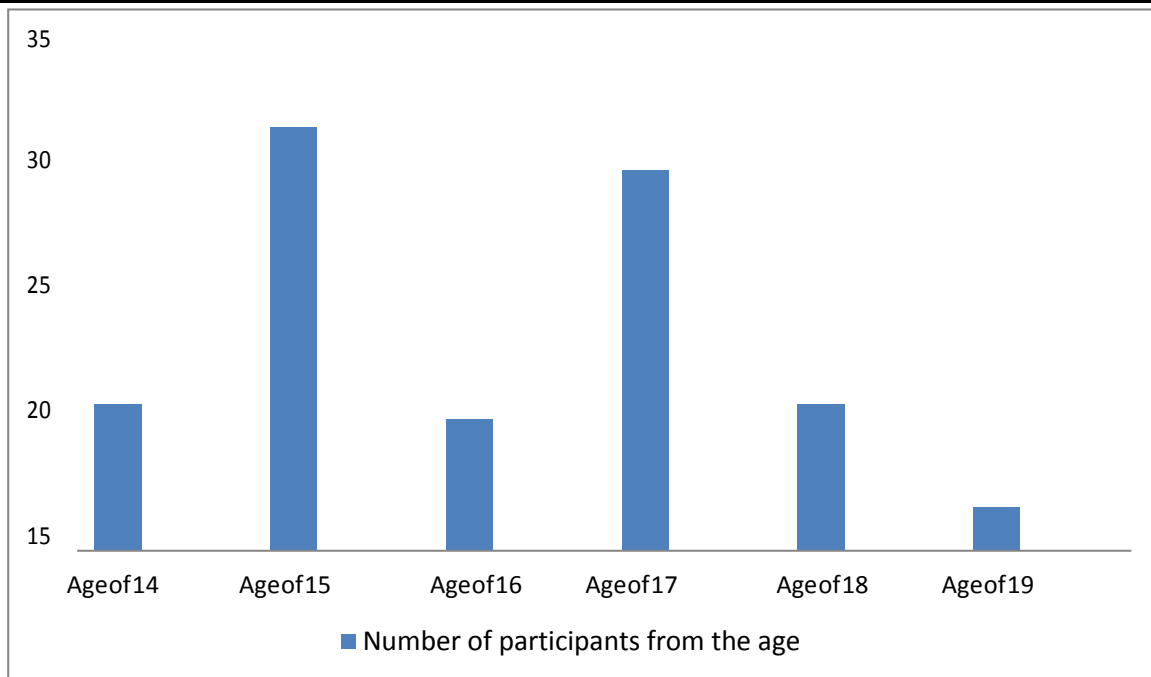
4.2 Data Collection Tools

In our research, we used one tool to collect the data; one questionnaire in an electronic format, which was designed by the researchers on Google Forms. Our questionnaire included one main open -ended question and 4 personal questions which were designed to gain personal information such as gender, age, grade and previously English studies years in order to control the process and come out with a right statement. Before moving on with the questions our questionnaire included a briefly description base in order to clear up the process. Participants answering our questionnaire did not have any time limits, they were allowed to write whatever they wanted, the language used to answer the question was the participant's choice, so they were allowed to answer it in Turkish, and also the participants had the right to ask the parts which needed clarification. As the researchers, if needed, we gave them brief information about the society and the roles in it in a very basic way. Logic behind giving just brief information about the societies and roles is that we did not want to mix up their previous thoughts about a possible misunderstanding and trying to categorize their teacher in a role.

Since we had one open ended question, the participants took their time to answer the open ended question. Answering the questionnaire did not exceed one day of a time.

4.3 Data Analysis

When the answering procedure was done by the participants, the forms were read one by one. The sentences in the answers which were defining the role of a high school English teacher from the perspective of students were with categorization of sentences and thoughts that were mostly used in a positive or in a negative way. After examining each answer with each sentence, categorization and numbering the sentences were done

in general, which were stated to define a high school English teacher. The most repeated thoughts by the participants to define an English teacher were counted and according to the numbers of the answers being categorized. Because of an open-ended format, students had got the opportunity to draw the picture of a high school English teacher from multi ways with multi-dimensional answers. So in this case, we can claim that the answers given were stating to draw the roles not in molds but in reasoning factors which drew not only the negative but also the positive side with specific reasoning.
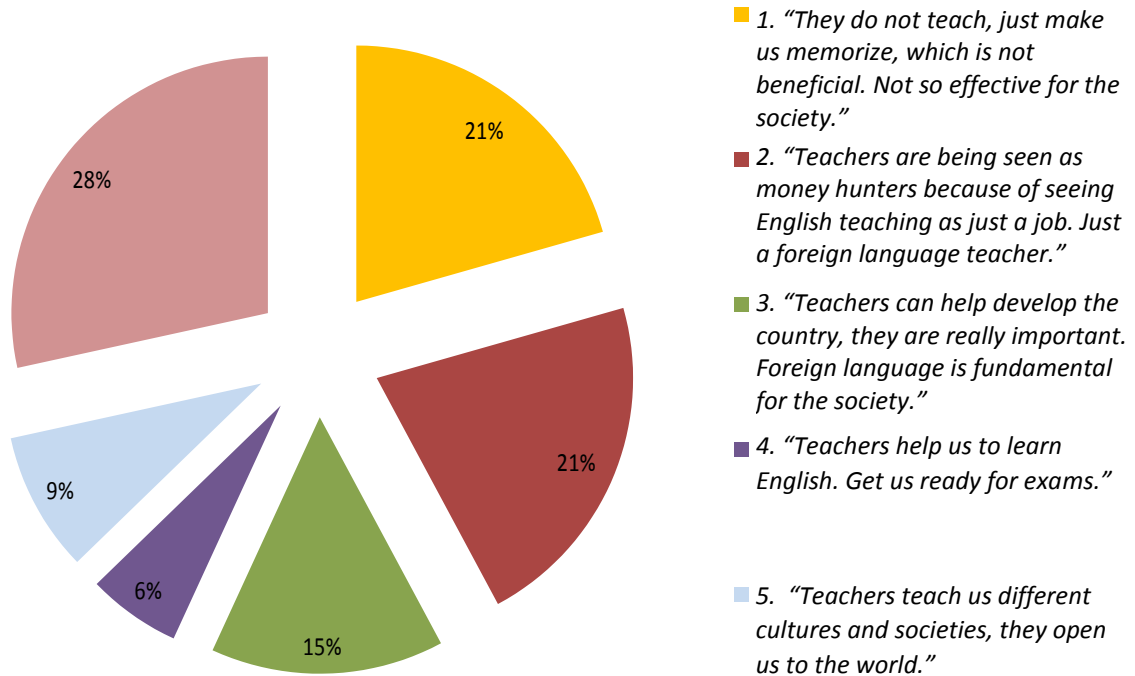
5. Findings

With a previously conducted study, Turkish students view teachers who use real life situations in the classroom as effective, but do not prefer teachers with high teacher talking time. They perceive foreign language teachers who are heavily depended on their lesson plans, who do not employ a variety of methods, who disregard the needs of the learners as ineffective teachers (Arikan oth. p.48, 2008).

However, in our study the data which we have collected from the participants have actually astonished us. Despite the current education level or the age difference, the answers are quite similar to each other. Even for the negative and for the positive answers. Participants are really close to each other when it comes to defining their outlook towards high school English teachers, slightly just the reasoning behind it changes. Some participants gave two or more facts while some gave just one fact. Furthermore, with the answers stated we can observe that some actually mostly participants have an idea and opinion about how the role can be effective, for this reason the usage of the word 'but' is pretty often. However, when it comes to categorizing the answers at the end, the sentences were just completing each other like a puzzle. As a result of our data's, there are five main sentences which were used mostly and two of these sentences are positive while the three are negative. The following are the main sentences used in our research by the participants.

1. *"They do not teach, just make us memorize, which is not beneficial. Not so effective for the society."*
2. *"Teachers are being seen as money hunters because of seeing English teaching as just a job. Just a foreign language teacher."*
3. *"Teachers can help develop the country, they are really important. Foreign language is fundamental for the society."*
4. *"Teachers help us to learn English. Get us ready for exams."*
5. *"Teachers teach us different cultures and societies, they open us to the world."*
6. *"Teachers are really important for the society; however, but…"*

Note: *The word 'teachers' is representing high school English teachers.

Thoughts about Teachers Role in Our Society

1. *"They do not teach, just make us memorize, which is not beneficial. Not so effective for the society."*

2. *"Teachers are being seen as money hunters because of seeing English teaching as just a job. Just a foreign language teacher."*

3. *"Teachers can help develop the country, they are really important. Foreign language is fundamental for the society."*

4. *"Teachers help us to learn English. Get us ready for exams."*

5. *"Teachers teach us different cultures and societies, they open us to the world."*

Briefly the Satisfaction of Students for

Their Teachers' Commitment for Demand

More than students expect

Students expect more from teachers
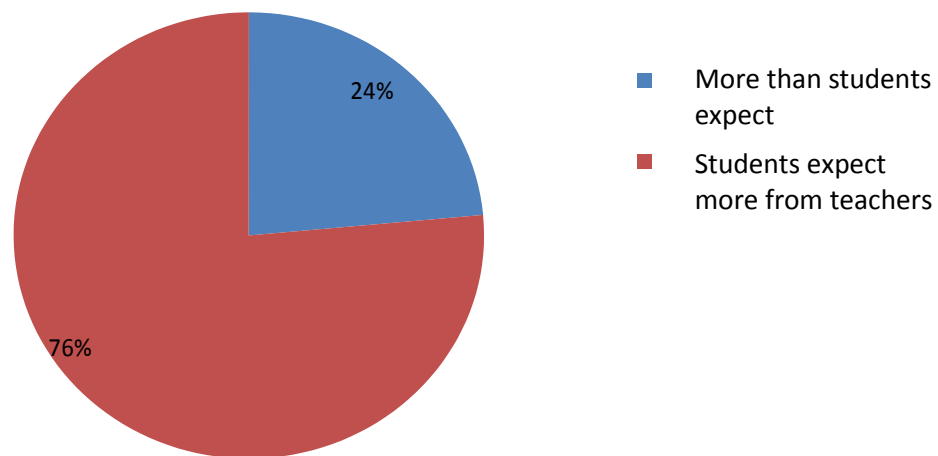
6. Summary of the Study

Lastly, after analyzing the thoughts and the answers of our participants we can clearly observe that most of our participants think that high school English teachers are not sufficiently innovative enough for the expected demands or are beneath the expected position from them. At this point we can see that there is a lack of understanding each other and interaction; however with Brosh (p. 126, 1996) we get the message of teacher and student interaction is significant in determining whether or not the teacher has the support of his or her students to what extent he or she will affect their economic growth and also interest and attention in class is important at an extend of without interest hardly communication will not take place in class (p.127, 1996). With the findings of our study, and with Brosh's arguments; we can clearly state that teachers need to be upgraded not only with their knowledge but also with their interaction to the students, which will be feed up on their interest and communication within the era. The important part of our research is that it is students defining the role of their own English teachers, so the study reflects the opinions of the students. When we look at the participant's answers, we can see that they are pretty logical statements where today's mindset and demands are taken into consideration and most importantly this part cannot be ignored since societies and roles are built upon today's and tomorrow's worlds alongside its generations.

For example, the most used sentence was saying that teachers are not showing the English that a person needs in real life and just teaching knowledge based memorizing education. According to this sentence, we can say that high school English teachers are not mostly being seen as a person effective for life for the reason of not providing what a person demands, and also we can infer from this sentence that students are not looking towards the teachers as a life helper when it comes to English. Especially, in an era where English is easily reached via watching movies or getting in touch with foreign speakers to chat, or even speak online. In addition, some students see teachers as money hunters because of perceiving English teaching just as a job; well this statement also gives the message of teachers not taking the knowledge process serious as a multi-functional process and as usual this sentence indicates the understanding of teachers not having an effective role in our society for the young ones of today and big ones of tomorrow. From these two answers of our student participants we can say that teachers just being effective in class, and always trying to send knowledge to students in a one way process from books or from own knowledge do not impress students. Students, especially in their school days, are going after something beneficial for them; even if they are not, your position of importance to them builds upon the 'beneficial' scale, especially in an era in which receiving an information or fact is pretty ease. Briefly, if you benefit them you have a good role for them, can read more on generation studies for more information. Obviously passing on knowledge is important, but always the same knowledge transaction without trying to do new things or brighten up other facts about life via English, does not help students any more or

with the words of our participants; does not operate in their personal life. To have a desirable role for tomorrows and for students, our participants want more than expected from our high school English teachers such as being open to upgrade oneself. On the other hand, some of the students state that high school English teachers are really important for our society and can do great things for its constructing to tomorrows. For example, the sentence "*Teachers can help develop the country by raising students which are effective in English in many fields*" is a really strong outlook towards teachers. This point of view is remarkable with students having the perception of being able to read tomorrows with the effects of world accepted English is another factor to be taken into consideration. An English teacher can guide students to open up and grow into greater positions in planet Earth thanks to English. Obviously being successful in many international fields and connecting your country with the world is something great and a must in today's world; an English teacher has this power to give to its students claim the participants. To summarize the perception on our high school English teachers; they need to be more effective and need to start touching things out of the class and be effective in normal life with the multidisciplinary impact of English. Agee (1998) believes that the attitudes and beliefs teachers bring to a classroom determine how they perceive their students, what their goals are, and how they make decisions about curriculum in the classroom; and coherent with our findings we can say that updated teachers with updated goals and perceptions will be the milestone of teacher and student interaction in the world of tomorrow with tomorrow's human beings. Also, not only the academia but also professional organizations state on teacher efficiency; for example The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) conducts the Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers as endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, and their National Professional Standards outline seven key elements for effective teacher educators (identified as "lead teachers"), some elements such as 'Know the students and how they learn' and 'Engage professionally with community' is pretty much close to our idea, opinion on trying to embrace upgraded, leading teachers for tomorrows generation in high schools which are coherent with global English innovatively. In conclusion, with the reflection of our participants; teachers not insisting on knowledge based process too much, constructing English in a multi-functional way with daily usage and stop seeing English teaching just as a job rather than a real factor of life itself will make high school English teachers gain a more better innovative, upgraded perception in our society and teachers associated with students will prove that not only teachers but also the whole EFL processes are beyond the expectation of today's world.

References

1. Adams, C. & Pierce, R. (1999). Characteristics of effective teaching.
2. Agee, J. (1998). How experienced teachers assess the effectiveness of their literature instruction.
3. Arıkan A., Taşer D., Saraç-Süzer S., (2008). Effective English Language Teacher from the Perspectives of Turkish Preparatory School Students P.48, Education and Science 2008, Vol. 33, No 150
4. Australian Institute for Training and School Leadership. (2011). National Professional Standards for Teachers. Retrieved March 25, 2011
5. Badawood O. (2015). The Features of Effective English Teachers as Viewed by English Language Teachers and High School Students in Saudi Arabia, International Journal of English Language and Linguistics Research 2015 p.33
6. Brophy, J. E., & Good, T. L. (1986). Teacher behavior and student achievement. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching. New York: Macmillan
7. Büyükkantarcıoğlu, N. (2004). "A sociolinguistic analysis of the present dimension of English as a foreign language in Turkey", in International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 165: 33-58.
8. Cheung, H. Y. (2006). The measurement of teacher efficacy: Hong Kong primary in-service teachers. Journal of Education for Teaching, 32(4), 435–451.
9. Clark, J. C., & Walsh, J. (2002). "Elements of a model of effective teachers." AARE 2002 Conference papers. [Online]: Retrieved on April 4, 2007 from http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/wal02220.htm
10. Çelik, S. (2011). Characteristics and Competencies for Teacher Educators: Addressing the Need for Improved Professional Standards in Turkey, p.85 Australian Journal of Teacher Education
11. Çelik, S. (2013). In the Eyes of Turkish EFL Learners: What Makes an Effective Foreign Language Teacher? Porta Linguarum 20, 287-297.
12. Demirel, Ö. (1990). Yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin yeterlikleri. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 5, 133-165.
13. Dittrich, J., Shrum, J., & Stewart, C. (2001). Pedagogical knowledge: The perspective of classroom teachers. In R. Terry (Ed.), Agents of change in a changing age (pp. 4778). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.
14. Doğançay-Aktuna, S. and Kızıltepe, Z. (2005). "English in Turkey", in World Englishes, 24, 2: 263-265
15. Feldman, K. A. (1986). The perceived instructional effectiveness of college teachers as related to their personality and attitudinal characteristics: A review and synthesis. Journal of Higher Education, 24, 139- 213.
16. Hativa, N., Barak, R. and Simhi, E. (2001). "Exemplary university teachers: Knowledge and beliefs regarding effective teacher dimensions and strategies", in Journal of Higher Education, 72, 6: 699-729.

17. Hoon, L. S., & Tomiko, K. (2008). Intercultural Communication in the Japanese Language Classroom in Singapore: A Comparison of Students' and Teachers' Perceptions. Journal of Intercultural Communication, 16

18. Khajastehmhr R. & Takrimi A., (2009). Characteristics of Effective Teachers: Perceptions of the English Teachers. Journal of Education & Psychology Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer, 2009, pp. 53-66

19. Kızıldağ, A. (2009). "Teaching English in Turkey: Dialogues with teachers about the challenges in public primary schools", in International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 1, 3: 188-201.

20. Koç, M. E. (2012). Affective characteristics and teaching skills of English language teachers: Comparing perceptions of elementary, secondary and high school students. Creative Education, 4(2):117-123.

21. Korkmaz, Ş.Ç. and Yavuz, A. (2011). "ELT student teachers' perspectives of an effective English teacher", in Eğitimde Kuram ve Uygulama [Theory and Practice in Education], 7, 2: 207-229.

22. Saraç-Süzer, S. H. (2007). Examining methodological issues through pedagogical and practical knowledge of experienced teachers: A case study. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Hacettepe University: Ankara.

23. Shulman, L.S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. Harvard Educational Review, 57(3): 1-22.

24. Wichadee, S. (2010). Defining the effective English language teacher: Students' and teachers' perspectives. In Stoke, A.M (Ed.), JALT 2009 Conference Proceedings. Tokyo: JALT

25. Zamani R. & Ahangari S. (2016). Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher (EELT) as Perceived by Learners of English. International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching & Research – Volume 4, Issue 14, Summer 2016.