Male and female tertiary-level students' evaluations of the efficacy of English Language teachers

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ABSTRACT
Teaching styles that do not match learners' needs can limit the effectiveness of even the most experienced and knowledgeable teachers. Students' assessments of teachers' teaching styles are therefore critical if we are to get a clear picture of how effective teaching is. There are other ways to gauge how well a teacher is doing her job, but this is an unavoidable concept where the perspectives of both male and female students must be taken into account. As a general rule, each person is unique in his or her thinking, but he or she may also share some commonalities with others. This is true for language learners, too. For the purpose of this study, the researchers surveyed Bangladeshi English language learners at the tertiary level to see if there were any differences or similarities between male and female students' perceptions of teachers' competencies. All 99 students of Bangladesh Agricultural University's Faculty of Fisheries who took part in the survey to evaluate the quality of their current English language teachers were included in this study.

KEYWORDS
Male learners; female learners; English teachers; teacher evaluation

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Introduction
Students' learning and intellectual development is heavily influenced by their teachers, so teachers-educators should put a high priority on course evaluation and teacher evaluation in order to ensure academic excellence. A successful Bangladesh English Language teacher is typically defined by a number of factors, such as a strong command of English, a thorough training program, and the ability to motivate students to learn and use the target language. For example, Chassemi and Hashemi (2011) found that teachers who have "arouse students' interest in learning English, and build students' self-confidence and motivation" (p. 414) were recognized as the basic qualities of a teacher by all of the study groups in their research on teaching English as a foreign language.

Even the weakest student is aware of the qualities of an effective teacher in the field of teaching and learning. Even though a learner may have differing learning abilities, he/she has an uncanny ability to discern the quality of a teacher's teaching abilities, such as whether or not the teacher is on time and able to teach effectively. Although students' evaluations are not the only way to determine a teacher's effectiveness, they still play a significant role in the teacher-learning process and must be taken into account. A teacher who is constantly striving to improve is eager to learn from their peers, seniors, and even their students, and they are not afraid to be evaluated by all of these groups. There are times when setting up the mentality of being evaluated by the students is difficult, but it is an excellent way to gain a clear understanding of the learners' perspectives. In addition, it provides a wider range of options for ensuring the quality of teaching in order to meet the needs of students.

The number of female students in Bangladesh's tertiary education system is steadily rising, and they're doing just as well academically and professionally as their male counterparts. There is no gender bias in the teaching and learning fields, and both male and female students are achieving their goals and being met equally by their teachers. Rather than receiving the same academic facilities, male and female students (as distinct entities and individuals) think and contribute on the basis of their reasoning power, individual preferences, and other related issues. This is universally observed. As a result, differences and similarities can be found around the world in the thought processes and conceptualizations of male and female students when it comes to personal and academic matters. In the teacher evaluation process, male and female students in different English language contexts have been found to have varying and resembling assessments of teachers' qualities. That's why we're here, trying to figure out if male and female students in Bangladesh tertiary institutions view their professors' skills differently or in parallel.

Literature review
Language teaching differs from teaching other subject matters, especially in terms of the nature of the process where the desirable characteristics of effective language teachers are categorized by Brosh (1996): "knowledge and
command of the target language”; “ability to organize, explain, and clarify, as well as to arouse and sustain interest and motivation among students”; “fairness to students”; and “availability to students” (p. 133). Santiago and Benavídez (2009) have found that besides knowing the aspects of teaching efficiencies it is also important to practice teacher evaluation for the purpose of “the effectiveness of teaching and learning and raise educational standards” (p. 3).

Among different types of teacher evaluations (evaluation by the peer teachers, evaluation by the institution, by the learners) remarkable studies have been done on the importance of teacher evaluation by learners. According to Moreno-Murcia, Torregrosa and Pedreno (2015) in order to ensure quality education at University levels all over the world different steps have been taken to evaluate teachers’ performance on the basis of learners’ opinions (p. 59). Whereas, Stronge (2012) have noticed that the information collected through students’ survey can help teachers to “reflect on their practice (i.e., for formative evaluation)” and this process dynamically serves “to provide feedback directly to the teacher for growth and development” (p. 9). Like other English teaching contexts EFL contexts also feel the necessity of this strategy. According to Kassing (2011), for being effective in their practices EFL teachers need to improvise dynamic teaching practices considering their classroom settings. At the same time they “should not only consider their own views of prevailing methodologies and theories in second/foreign language teaching but also determine their student-teachers’ feelings about their teaching strategies” (p. 124).

Some researchers have more specifically put their attention on students’ gender issues in the eacah evaluation process. Some researchers have found the differences between male and female students’ ratings where some have revealed the least or no difference in their ratings. For example, in their study Korte, Lavin and Davies (2013) unveiled the differences “… there are specific traits which appear to be more important to females and other specific traits which appear to be more important to males” (p. 177). At the same time in the research of Ghasemi and Hashemi (2011), the female learners have considered the attributes “pronunciation proficiency, teaching how to learn English, and treating students fairly” as the basic parts of teachers’ efficiency and the male learners have considered “good sense of humor as important to teaching more than the female students did” (p. 414). On the other hand in the study of Wachadee (2010), no significant dissimilarities between male and female groups have been noticed in the result of t-test regarding the overall perception of teachers’ qualities. More clearly it has been shown that “male and female students were not different in their opinions towards characteristics of effective teachers” (p. 34).

The study of literature reveals the fact that though in most cases there are differences in male and female learners’ ratings, the similarities between their concepts about effective teachers are also common in different teaching-learning contexts. As such research has still been taken in Bangladeshi context on this issue so, this study intends to give some focus on it.

Methods

Both male and female students of two sections of the Faculty of Fisheries, BAU provided their observation on the same day in two different English language classes. In total 99 students (excluding three scrips that were found incomplete) of level-1, semester-1 participated in the study. Among them 16 male and 27 female students were from section (Sec.) A; and 23 male and 33 female students were from Sec. B. The learners were provided with a checklist of specific teachers’ characteristics which is known as 7Cs model of effective teaching (2010). The checklist was slightly modified and reorganized by Likert five scale options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) for smooth collection of data. Before conducting the survey the necessary clarification was provided by the teacher. For ensuring spontaneous participation, learners were guided to mention only their genders without names or identity numbers. After collecting data the sheets were divided according to the genders of the participants (total four groups: one male and one female from Sec. A and one male and one female from Sec. B) and they were analyzed for the purpose of the study. The main target of the study was to find out the perceptions of male and female learners in evaluating their teachers’ teaching qualities keeping some questions in mind:

a. Do the male and female learners differ in rating their teachers’ efficiency?

b. Do the male and female learners keep similarities in evaluating teachers’ performance?

c. Do only the genders of the learners affect the evaluation process or some other aspects also play role in the evaluation process?

Findings and Discussion

In the methodology part it has already been mentioned that this study has used 7Cs model of effective teaching which consists of seven specific effective teaching attributes. For more comprehensible and smooth discussion purpose it seems necessary to have some clear conception on these specific attributes before turning to the discussion part on the findings of this study.

General Discussion on Teachers’ Attributes

The first attribute of the checklist (Appendix- A) is “Care”. This attribute is considered important by Ng, (2003) who finds that “genuine caring for all students” is undoubtedly important for successful language learning (p. 117). Teachers’ supportive attitude and tolerance power are also felt important by Gurung and Abdullah (2007).

The second attribute is “Control”. The necessity of this aspect for effective teaching strategy has been discussed by Choudhury (2005) in this way: for ensuring interactive classroom teachers have to avoid the mode of
teacher-centred teaching styles and exercise learner-centred activities. And during interactive classroom sessions, the teachers need to play the role of "a controller and a facilitator rather than of an authoritarian". The fact is that without letting learners totally on their own practices there must have some control from teachers" corner who can guide them in completing language tasks (p. 78).

The third attribute of the checklist is "Clarify" which puts focus on teachers" clear explanation of the subject matter. It is the responsibility of good teachers to prepare the lessons on the basis of learners" preference and necessity. To be effective in teaching strategy, teachers should teach the lessons rationally by understanding learners" needs and thus support learners with diverse mode of learning techniques which can help them to understand the subjects through grasping teachers" explanation properly (1996). In the study of Delaney, Johnson, Johnson and Treslan (2010) the student participants expected their teachers to be very apt in delivering lectures with meaningful and clear presentation skills (p.13).

The fourth aspect is "Challenge" which aims to know whether the learners get the scope to learn through correcting their mistakes in every class or not. Though effective EFL teachers should not always keep busy in finding mistakes of learners, sometimes it is also necessary to deal with the mistakes carefully. To effectively manage the mistakes of learners teachers can consider "errors as indicators of active participation in the learning process, and decide how serious an error is" i.e. instead of taking silly mistakes more seriously teachers should put emphasis on correcting learners" basic mistakes that can hamper the development of learning the target language. So, teachers need to apply different error correction techniques on the basis of learners" levels and learning contexts very cautiously (2007).

The fifth attribute is "Captivate" which intends to check whether the students like teachers teaching processes or not i.e. how interesting are the lessons. In the study of Rasyid (2014), the participants expected an interesting and less stressful learning environment where they can comfortably learn the language and they also mentioned that it is the task of the teachers to offer such environments (p. 81). Ng (2003) feels that teachers should apply different games and fun-based language activities where these activities need to be designed in such a way that makes each and every student (including the less enthusiastic ones) active in doing the tasks (p. 45).

The sixth aspect of the model is "Confer" which intends to examine whether teachers value students" ideas or not. Teachers who are good listeners to students" problems are also considered effective teachers. When students find that teachers listen to their problems and take matters seriously, these work as motivational factors for them. Through regular teacher-student interaction, the classroom gets the real reflection of a communicative classroom (2012). At the same time, students also feel confident when they find their problems and concepts are importantly taken by the teachers and thus they gradually become responsible in shaping their own learning stages with active participation in classroom practices (2013).

The seventh (and the last) aspect is "Consolidate". Besides being co-operative in learners" needs, teachers also need to be sure about whether their lessons are perceived properly by the learners or not as well as whether the teaching techniques can help learners for further improvement or not. Ng (2003) believes that in addition to increasing knowledge on effective measures of teaching, teachers must be aware of the issues which create obstacles before learners for stepping forward. He also feels that language teachers should have the capability and mentality "to step inside a student's shoes" with an aim to realize "what the student is going through learning a language. That means teachers can use their experiences of being a language learner to better understand how their students are experiencing their classroom practices" (p. 114-115).

Main Discussion on the Findings

Students of two sections have evaluated their existing three English language teachers” (two male and one female) in two different classes on the same day. As the study aims to take care of the gender issue of the students for evaluating teachers’ performance so, the contribution of the participants have been analyzed using teacher-specific tables and charts. Only qualities of each teacher which were mentioned by most of the male and female students of these two sections have been taken into consideration here for the discussion.

Teacher-1

The findings revealed that among all four groups of male and female learners, the attribute “Confer” was marked by the three groups (Male-Sec. A, B and Female- Sec. A) as the top quality of the first teacher. In total 94% of male students of Sec. A, 100% male students of Sec. B and 100% female students of Sec. A agreed that the teacher had this specific attribute. Whereas, 100% of female students of Sec. B chose "Control" as the best attribute of teacher-1.
Table 1. Top most quality of teacher-1 addressed by the students (on the basis of their gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of the Students</th>
<th>Section (Sec)</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Attribute that was marked positively highest time</th>
<th>Agreed be the number of students</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>15 (14-SA, 1-A)</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>23 (18-SA, 5-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>27 (23-SA, 4-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>33 (26-SA, 7-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, instead of dissimilarities between male and female students, mostly the similarities between their thinking while evaluating the first teacher have been revealed as both sections of male and one section of female strongly agreed upon the same attribute.

Teacher-2

Here, the attribute “Care” was chosen by the majority of the two groups of male and female students (Male- Sec B, Female- Sec A) while agreed upon the best quality of second teacher. In total 96% males of Sec. B and 100% females of Sec. A agreed that this quality was more apparent in teacher-2. Whereas, 100% males of Sec. A found the attribute “Confer” and 100% females of Sec. B found the attribute “Consolidate” more prominent in the same teacher.

Table 2. Top most quality of teacher-2 addressed by the male and female students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of the Students</th>
<th>Section (Sec)</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Attribute that was marked positively highest time</th>
<th>Agreed be the number of students</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>16 (15-SA, 1-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>22 (20-SA, 2-A)</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>27 (26-SA, 1-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Consolidate</td>
<td>33 (29-SA, 4-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above findings denote that among all four groups of male and female students, one group of male and one group of female found the same quality as the best one for teacher-2 and rest of the two groups of male and female students brought out different individual attributes. At this point, some related questions naturally arise: Does only gender difference affect teacher effectiveness? Or, are there some other considerations that also affect the evaluation process like teachers’ genders, their teaching styles, class time, students’ learning styles etc.?

Teacher-3

Among all four groups of male and female learners, the aspect “Clarify” was defined as the top most quality of the 3rd teacher by 160% male students of Sec. A and 91% of Sec. B and 85% female students of Sec. B whereas 93% female students of Sec. A agreed upon the attribute “Captivate” as the best quality of teacher-3.

Table 3. Top most quality of teacher-3 addressed by two sections of male and female students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of the Students</th>
<th>Section (Sec)</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Attribute that was marked positively highest time</th>
<th>Agreed be the number of students</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>16 (15-SA, 1-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>21 (17-SA, 4-A)</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Confer</td>
<td>25 (20-SA, 5-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Consolidate</td>
<td>28 (24-SA, 4-A)</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coming to this part, (along with some differences) again mostly similarities between male and female students’ ratings have been noticed. As well as, the difference is not limited between male and female students, dissimilarities between two groups of females have also been found clear (like the teacher-1).

Summary of the Discussion

In this study differences as well as similarities between tertiary level male and female learners in rating their teachers’ effectiveness have been revealed. The study has also exposed that these differences exist not only between male and female; but also among male to male and female to female depending on sections/groups of the students. At the same time though some distinct differences between male and female students’ rating styles (especially in percentage form) are clearly noticeable, still in bringing out their existing language teachers’ efficiency, they have shared more or less some common ground where they have put emphasis on the teachers’ common attributes like care, clarify, confer etc. Here, in addition to their genders other issues like the genders of the teachers, their teaching styles, time of teaching etc. also put affect on the process of students’ ratings. This finding is very similar with the finding of Young, Rush and Shaw (2000). They have found that "student ratings differ according to instructor characteristics, student characteristics, and course characteristics" (p. 2). Besides in this study, learners’ individual preference regardless of their gender is clearly observable where they have judged their teachers through their every single mind. As a result every individual teacher gets specific positions from the corner of the students’ satisfaction levels. Another important observation is that in most cases female students are more moderate than the male students in discovering the efficiency of their teachers. For that reason, the combined result of both sections discovers that
among three teachers two of them (Teacher-1 and Teacher-2) have got the highest ratings/percentage from their female students in comparison to the male students. This matches the idea, "females in general tend to rate teachers higher in terms of contributions to teaching effectiveness" (Korte et al., 2013). So, by considering the qualities preferred by both male and female learners, teachers can also modify their teaching styles. But while considering students’ ratings for designing lesson plans, teachers should be very cautious as there are different dynamic variations in their perceptions of effective teaching (Zare-e-e et al., 2016).

Limitations and Recommendations

Inclusion of large number of students was necessary to take into account for more reliable findings. At the same time, the qualities of the teachers which were marked lowest also needed to be analyzed for further clarification as it might be concluded that students can identify with some consistency the positive traits they appreciate in an instructor but are not as certain of the traits that are less effective for good teaching" (Lavin et al., 2012). Thus further studies are expected to get more in-depth result on this issue as well as on how students' ratings can be utilized in designing effective course curriculum.

Conclusion

Teachers’ positive qualities are always accepted and honored by learners regardless of their gender. However, as universally male and female students are distinct in nature so, usually in most cases they evaluate their teachers in different ways. The study has also explored the similar finding in their judgments on teachers’ efficiencies. This study has also revealed that there exist not only differences but also some similarities in the evaluation process and there are some other related teaching-learning practices that influence the rating strategies. For this “when designing lessons or when providing instructions, effective English teachers should take students’ gender as well as academic achievement into consideration” (Chen and Lin, 2009). If this can be ensured (broadening the mentality of accepting students’ ratings on the basis of their genders and other connected issues avoiding the traditional mindset) by the teachers of Bangladesh, expected outcomes of effective teaching will be achieved successfully.

References


