Comparison Between the Students’ Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers*

XIANG Maoying & JIA Aiwu
Zhejiang Gongshang University

Abstract

Based on research concerning teachers’ behavior, this study attempts to find out about the discrepancies between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of College English teachers and the origins of those discrepancies. A total of 855 non-English majors from four colleges and universities in Zhejiang Province participated in the study. The research methodology consists of a survey and semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers and 40 students. Results showed that there exist significant discrepancies in the mind of college students between their perceived and expected behavior of College English teachers at all eight subscales, and these discrepancies could be attributed to three main reasons: different goals and understanding between teachers and students, lack of students’ feedback, and teachers’ prior learning experiences as students.

Key words: behavior; perception; expectation; discrepancies

1. Introduction

The 21st century, as compared to the previous century, is witnessing unprecedented changes characterized by multiculturalism and an explosion of knowledge and high technology. These great changes are having a strong impact on higher education in China. Policy makers and educators in Chinese higher education are making tremendous efforts to combine various universities and to invest much more money through different resources.

* This study is funded by the research project for Humanities and Social Science, granted by Ministry of Education, PRC, 2009. The project order: 09YJAZH091.
Teachers with different educational background and training experience have been employed in colleges and universities in order to meet the increasing enrollment of students. They adopt different teaching methodologies and play different roles in classrooms. Because of the increase of the numbers of university students, noticeable changes are occurring in these larger class sizes, with students more diverse in their experiences, ages and socioeconomic status. So, how to strive for “quality” higher education has become a hot topic in tertiary education in China. This study attempts to find out what roles a College English teacher (CET) should play from the perspective of their students by making a comparison between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs.

Some studies have been conducted on teachers’ behavior in classrooms (Barnes, 1976; Richards & Lockhart, 2000; Wright, 1987). Wright (1987: 12) has identified two groups of factors that are likely to affect teachers’ behavior: interpersonal factors and task-related factors. Interpersonal factors refer to social and psychological factors, which include views about status and position, attitudes and values held by individuals and groups and individuals’ personalities. Task-related factors refer to teachers’ and learners’ expectations about the nature of learning tasks and the way in which individuals and groups deal with learning tasks. Richards and Lockhart (2000: 98) emphasize the influence of institutional factors on teachers’ behavior in classrooms. Some researchers study teachers’ behavior from a pedagogical approach (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Hyland, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Tudor, 1993; Widdowson, 1987). Richards and Rodgers (1986) have made a comparison of the roles teachers adopt when using different teaching methods. For example, in the Audiolingual Method, the teacher is regarded as the primary source of language and of language learning, while in the Communicative Language Teaching Method, the teacher assumes the roles of facilitator, participant, needs analyst, counselor, group process manager, etc. Widdowson (1987: 87) stresses the great demands on the teacher in a learner-centered approach when stating that the increase in learner-centered activity and collaborative work in the classroom does not mean that the teacher becomes less authoritative. He or she still has to contrive the required enabling conditions for learning, still has to monitor and guide progress.

Some studies on teachers’ behavior were conducted from the perspective of teacher belief (Borg, 2001, 2003; Breen et al., 2001; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Meighan & Meighan, 1990; Nunan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 2000; Williams & Burden, 1997; Woods, 1996). While many teachers may have been taught to use a specific method or asked to teach within a framework or philosophy established by their institutions, the way they teach is often a personal interpretation of what they think works best in a given situation. Meighan and Meighan (1990) suggest teachers with different beliefs about learners are likely to use different approaches and take different roles in the classroom. Borg (2003: 81) has underlined that “teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs”. A number of studies...
Comparison Between the Students' Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers

Comparison Between the Students’ Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers (Johnson, 1996; Lou & Liao, 2005; Woods, 1991; Zhou, 2005) have sought to investigate the extent to which teachers’ beliefs influence their classroom practices.

Teaching is an activity which is embedded within a set of culturally bound assumptions about teachers, teaching, and learners. These assumptions reflect what the teacher’s responsibility is believed to be, how learning is understood, and how students are expected to interact in the classroom (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Holmes, 2005; Pratt, 1991; Speece, 2002; Watkins & Biggs, 2001; Zhang, 2006). For example, teachers in eastern cultures are usually perceived as the authority and transmitter of knowledge. In terms of pedagogy, eastern education usually prefers a more authoritarian, antisocial, and dialectic approach, which is often examination-oriented, information-packed, and holism-based, stressing memorization, verbatim, and conformity. In western culture, teachers are usually deemed as facilitator, organizer, and friendly critic. Western education generally favors a more humanistic, pro-social and dialogic approach, which is often experiential, inquiry-based, and interaction-oriented, emphasizing learning-by-doing, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

However, little research on teachers’ behavior has been conducted from students’ perspective. The present study was motivated by three reasons. First, the majority of previous studies on teacher behavior have been carried out from a theoretical point of view. This research will explore CETs’ behavior from an empirical approach. Second, most previous studies have taken a linguistic approach to second language learning and teaching. The instructional aspect of the teacher’s behavior has been the main focus of researchers’ attention. However, it is arguable that an understanding of the psychological background of learning and teaching is at least as important as understanding the linguistic dimension. The learning process is often considerably hindered by a lack of understanding of how dysfunctional classroom interactions between teachers and students can divert energy and attention away from the learning task (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998: 2). Furthermore, in the Chinese context, the moral aspect of a teacher’s behavior is always emphasized. It can be argued that the three aspects of a teacher’s behavior (instructional, interpersonal, and moral) are closely interconnected. The present study, in order to give a relatively fuller picture of CETs’ behavior in the classroom, covers the instructional, interpersonal, and moral aspects of teacher behavior. Third, few studies have been conducted using comparison between students’ perceptions and expectations of teacher behavior. The present study attempts to answer the following two questions.

RQ1: Are there discrepancies between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs?

RQ2: If there exist discrepancies between the students’ perceptions and expectations, what are the origins of those discrepancies?

2. Rationale

According to Wright (1987), there are two sides of the teacher’s behavior in the classroom: the managerial side and the instructional side. The former is related to the use of
interpersonal behavior to create the best possible conditions under which learning can take place. The latter refers to the appropriate use of instructional strategies in the classroom. Similarly, Wubbels and Levy (1993) divide teachers’ behavior into two categories: the instructional aspect and the interpersonal aspect of teacher behavior. The former refers to the plethora of technical strategies such as choice and organization of teaching materials, instructional methods, motivational strategies and forms of assessment. The latter is social and emotional, which concerns the creation and maintenance of a positive and warm classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. So there are basically two aspects of teacher behavior: instructional and interpersonal.

In Chinese classrooms, stress is also given to a third aspect of teacher behavior, that is, the moral aspect. Under the influence of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese teachers refer to their role as “cultivating” not only cognitive development but also promoting positive attitudes to society and responsible moral behavior. As a result, teachers are required not only to promote students’ intellectual or academic development, but also to enhance their conduct or moral behavior. Thus, teaching in China involves educating the whole person cognitively, affectively, and morally (Shim, 2008; Watkins & Biggs, 2001; Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). For example, Confucius, a master and thinker in ancient China, has claimed that the role of teachers is not so much as to explain or discuss what is good or right but as to show it directly in their lives so that learners can try to emulate. Han Yu, one of the most celebrated litterateurs and educationists in the Tang Dynasty, wrote in his book Shi Shuo (On Teachers): “What is a teacher? A teacher is the one who shows you the way of being human, teaches you knowledge and enlightens you while you are confused” (Liu, 1973, cited in Gao & Watkins, 2001: 461). In the opinion of Han Yu, good teachers should not only promote students’ intellectual or academic development, but also enhance their conduct or moral behavior.

Through teachers’ and students’ open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews, eight aspects of teacher behavior in College English classrooms have been identified (Xiang, 2010): learning guidance, knowledge delivery, creation of classroom climate, conduct guidance, moral guidance, classroom management, teacher-student relationship (T-S relationship) and classroom organization. These eight aspects of behavior can be grouped into three higher categories: instructional, interpersonal and moral. A general framework is proposed for describing the categories of teacher behavior and the relationship among these behaviors (see Figure 1).

At the lower level of this framework are the eight first-order teacher behavior. The three higher-order categories stand at the upper level of the framework. Learning Guidance, Knowledge Delivery and Classroom Organization are covered by the Instructional category. The Interpersonal category covers three first order teacher behavior: Creation of Classroom Climate, Classroom Management and T-S Relationship. The last two first-order teacher behavior, i.e., Conduct Guidance and Moral Guidance, are grouped into Moral category. The overlap between teacher behavior under the same level implies a strong relationship. The dotted line between the three higher-order categories suggests a relatively weak relationship.
Comparison Between the Students’ Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers

These eight categories of teacher behavior are not separate from each other or irrelevant to each other. A teacher may need to adopt the above behavior in class separately or simultaneously. The behavior of the teacher changes following the aims of the class. What’s more, an act a teacher performs in the classroom may not belong to a single role. For example, the teacher may function as source of knowledge, organizer, or creator of classroom climate at the same time. The teacher is an organizer when giving instructions about the task and initiating the activity. Then, he or she becomes the source of knowledge when the students need help in the process of discussion. At the same time, the teacher takes on the role of creator of classroom climate when he or she tries to create an atmosphere where the students like to take risks while feeling safe and at ease when speaking English in front of the whole class.

3. Methods

In order to find reliable answers to the research questions, data collection for the present study involved both quantitative and qualitative sources. Through the Questionnaire of College English Teacher Behavior, the answer was sought to the first research question. Naturally, a questionnaire survey has the disadvantage of imposing the researcher’s framework onto the subjects. To cope with this problem and answer the second research question, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students were conducted respectively.

3.1 Questionnaire of college English teacher behavior

Since most previous studies were conducted theoretically, there is a lack of reliable and valid measures for empirical study of teacher behavior in classrooms. In order to find the discrepancies between a teacher’s actual and expected behavior, a College English Teacher Behavior Scale (CETBS) has been constructed and validated (Xiang, 2010).

The CETBS has eight subscales which are used to measure eight kinds of teacher behavior: learning guidance, knowledge delivery, creation of classroom climate, conduct guidance, moral guidance, classroom management, teacher-student relationship and classroom organization. Each subscale ranges from 3 to 7 items and the questionnaire contains 43 items altogether. Items such as “The teacher explains new words and phrases”, “The teacher helps students with difficulties in English learning”, “The teacher is humorous”, “The teacher knows students’ interests and hobbies”, “The teacher utilizes
multiple activities”, etc. are included in the questionnaire. The response provision in the CETBS is a five-point Likert type scale which is scored from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The higher the subscale score, the more a teacher would exhibit the behavior relating to that subscale. In the survey the student respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their teachers’ behavior was consistent with the behavior items listed in the questionnaire. At the same time, they were also solicited to rate their expectations of teachers’ behavior. Table 1 provides the name of each subscale, its description, number of items and the reliability coefficient of each subscale.

Table 1. Description, number of items and reliability coefficient for each subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>N. of Items</th>
<th>Reliability Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning guidance</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher gives students support and help in English learning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge delivery</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher delivers knowledge to students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of classroom climate</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher creates conducive learning environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct guidance</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher models appropriate conduct</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral guidance</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher gives guidance to students’ personal growth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher keeps classroom discipline</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relationship</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher develops friendly and parental relationships with students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom organization</td>
<td>Behaviors through which the teacher organizes students to do class activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Teacher and student interviews

Naturally, questionnaires have some disadvantages. According to Denscombe (2004: 106), pre-coded questions can be frustrating for respondents, especially when the questionnaire is time-consuming, thus putting people off from cooperating with the research. Besides, postal questionnaires offer little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of the answer given by the respondents. To cope with these problems and test the information obtained through the questionnaire, teacher and student semi-structured interviews were conducted. In the interview, teachers and students were asked to choose the most important role an CET should play in the classroom from a list of eight roles. At the same time, they were also asked to list the most important qualities an effective CET should have and explain the reason why. For teachers, they were further solicited to talk about students’ feedback and describe the main factors that influence their classroom behavior. The data collected using different methodologies complemented each other and together they formed a more complete and coherent picture of teacher behavior in the classroom. Altogether 20 teachers and 40 students participated in the semi-structured interviews.
3.3 Participants
The student samples were drawn from four universities in Zhejiang Province: Zhejiang University (a prestigious university in China), Zhejiang Gongshang University (a university specializing in liberal arts), Hangzhou University of Electronic Science and Technology (a university specializing in science and technology), and Zhejiang Wanli College (a college with a “learners pay model”). Altogether 855 students were solicited for the survey, of whom 40.6% were males and 59.4% were females, and 57.4% were freshmen and 42.6% were sophomores. They were from 34 different majors.

In the interviews, a sample of 20 full-time CETs and 40 corresponding students from the above-mentioned colleges and universities were solicited for participation.

3.4 Procedures
The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 855 students in the four universities and colleges, which took about 15 minutes to complete. All of them were informed of the purpose of the study and then were solicited to complete the questionnaire. Appreciation was expressed to them, but no reward was given for participation. Finally 749 valid questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 87.6%.

At the beginning of the semi-structured interview, each teacher was asked to give some demographic information, including years of teaching experience, professional title, educational background, weekly workload, etc. During the interviews, the teachers and the students were asked to give answers or make comments on some questions built upon the closed questionnaire items. Both the teachers’ and students’ semi-structured interviews were conducted on line with MSN or QQ. The teacher and student online interview data were transcribed for analysis.

Both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were conducted in Chinese for convenience and efficiency. Paired samples t-tests were conducted to investigate on what dimensions there exist significant differences between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Discrepancies between students’ perceived and expected teacher behavior
Paired samples t-tests discovered that generally there were dramatic discrepancies between the students’ perception and expectation of teacher behavior. The scores of the expected behavior were much higher than those of the perceived behavior in the classroom (see Table 2).

Table 2. Paired-sample’s statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Behavior Dimensions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning guidance Expected</td>
<td>4.3914</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4.09516</td>
<td>.14963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>3.8821</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4.92810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows that the discrepancies were significant at all eight subscales \( (p = .000) \), especially at the subscales of teacher-student relationship \( (MD = 2.90387, t = 26.672, p = .000) \), creation of classroom climate \( (MD = 4.51802, t = 23.186, p = .000) \), knowledge delivery \( (MD = 2.66889, t = 21.457, p = .000) \), and learning guidance \( (MD = 3.56475, t = 20.474, p = .000) \).

Table 3. Paired samples tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pairs</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Perceived-Expected (learning guidance)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>3.56475</td>
<td>4.76508</td>
<td>20.474</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2 Perceived-Expected (knowledge delivery)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>2.66889</td>
<td>3.40413</td>
<td>21.457</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3 Perceived-Expected (creation of classroom climate)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>4.51802</td>
<td>5.33290</td>
<td>23.186</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4 Perceived-Expected (conduct guidance)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>1.64219</td>
<td>3.11974</td>
<td>14.467</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5 Perceived-Expected (moral guidance)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>1.58879</td>
<td>2.27029</td>
<td>19.152</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6 Perceived-Expected (classroom management)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>1.33244</td>
<td>3.36744</td>
<td>10.829</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7 Perceived-Expected (teacher-student relationship)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>2.90387</td>
<td>2.97967</td>
<td>26.672</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8 Perceived-Expected (classroom organization)</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>1.66222</td>
<td>2.95364</td>
<td>15.402</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison Between the Students’ Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers

Table 4 offers the statistical results of some selected items showing discrepancies between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs. It was surprising to detect that the greatest discrepancy between the two was found on the subscale of teacher-student relationship ($t = 26.672$, see Table 3). The statistical result of the item that the teacher knows students’ interests and hobbies shows that students’ rating on what the teacher did was significantly lower than that on what was expected ($p = .000$). The same result was obtained with another item that the teacher cares for students’ personal development ($p = .000$). It seemed that teachers were not as caring as their students expected. However, teachers should focus on their students—their lives, needs, interests, and experiences—more than the subjects they teach (Buber, 1965, cited in Shim, 2008). In the Chinese context, teachers are required to be strongly committed to not just teaching, but also to the overall development of the student (Walkins & Biggs, 2001). A good teacher is someone who has an affinity with the students that they are teaching. Successful teachers are those who can identify with the hopes, aspirations and difficulties of their students.

The second greatest discrepancy between the students’ perceived and expected teacher behavior was on the subscale of creation of classroom climate ($t = 23.186$). The students hope that their teachers are humorous and can make English learning interesting and funny. However, this does not seem to be the case in a lot of classes. A dramatic difference existed between the students’ rating on what their teacher did and on what they expected the teacher to do, and the differences were significant ($p = .000$). The establishment of a positive and non-threatening classroom climate is a crucial element of the language classroom in which students’ anxiety levels are low and comfort levels are high (Williams & Burden, 1997). It has been shown (Provine, 2000) that humor enables the teacher to create an affective or positive environment. Humorous situations allow students to express themselves without fear of ridicule and criticism. At the same time, humor reduces the authoritarian position of the teacher, allowing the teacher to be a facilitator of the learning process. It is also possible for students to suffer from boredom in class, especially when they have studied in the same kind of class for a long time. Students may respond well to lessons that are entertaining and which use enjoyable activities to facilitate language learning, such as games, songs, videos, etc. A good teacher is an entertainer and students enjoy being entertained.

Table 4. Selected items showing discrepancies between students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Behavior Dimensions</th>
<th>Selected Items</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-student relationship</td>
<td>The teacher knows students’ interests and hobbies.</td>
<td>.97864</td>
<td>24.076</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher cares for students’ personal development.</td>
<td>.83311</td>
<td>22.269</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of class climate</td>
<td>The teacher is humorous.</td>
<td>.92523</td>
<td>24.336</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher makes English class interesting and funny.</td>
<td>.80882</td>
<td>9.672</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge delivery</td>
<td>The teacher introduces English learning methods.</td>
<td>.58211</td>
<td>18.643</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher delivers extra knowledge related to content.</td>
<td>.46328</td>
<td>14.864</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge delivery is another subscale on which greater differences were found between the expected and perceived teacher behavior ($t = 21.457$). The students expected that the teacher delivers extra knowledge related to content. However, the score on what teachers did was significantly lower than that on what the students expected ($p = .000$). Language teachers differ from those of other subjects in that they do not just tell students facts. Language teaching extends beyond teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills and includes a wide range of other issues such as “the culture behind the language” and knowledge related to “all spheres of life”. Students also wish that the teacher introduces English learning methods. However, it seems that teachers failed to meet their students’ expectations in this regard. English learning in university is quite different from that in middle school. It is widely acknowledged that Chinese students have a solid knowledge of grammar, but they lack the development of certain skills such as speaking and listening comprehension and academic writing (Ye, 2006: 22). Such unbalanced ability in using English is mainly due to the traditional English teaching/learning methods from secondary school onwards, which rely heavily, even exclusively, on grammar translation, vocabulary work, sentence analysis, intensive reading, memorization and recitation. College students come to lessons with a long history of learning experiences, which have helped them to form strong opinions as to how English teaching and learning should be carried out. The teacher’s duty is not only to teach them English but also to help them form good learning habits, thus enabling students to discover their own ways of learning and to work independently.

Greater discrepancies between the expected and perceived teacher behavior were also discovered on the subscale of learning guidance ($t = 20.474$). According to Brown (2002: 7), “teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning”. Teacher guidance is especially important for those students with difficulties in English learning. The students hoped that the teacher helps students with difficulties in English learning. However, the discrepancies between what teachers did and what their students expected them to do was significant ($p = .000$). One of the biggest problems College English teachers face is a lesson where the students are at different levels. College students come from all parts of the country, and those from coastal areas generally have a higher English level than those from the inner or remote areas. Students’ language aptitudes also vary from each other. It is the teacher’s responsibility to help and motivate those “poor” students. The students also hoped that the teacher involves students in classroom assessment. However, in the College English classroom, teacher-dominant feedback remains prevalent. In fact students can and should be full partners in the assessment process and alternative feedback should be recommended, such as self-assessment and peer assessment, which encourage critical and independent thinking.
Melograno (1997) argues that peer assessment can facilitate student interaction, help them develop their communication skills, enhance problem-solving and self-confidence, and promote active student involvement in the learning process. Of course, the teacher should give students some guidance on how to make peer feedback meaningful and productive.

4.2 Origins of discrepancies

As we know, teachers and students perceive what is happening in the classroom in their own particular ways. They also have an image of how they would like things to be. According to Williams and Burden (1997: 198),

The greater the degree of concordance between one’s expected classroom and the actual classroom within which one finds oneself, the greater the degree of satisfaction there is likely to be. This sense of satisfaction is thereby likely also to increase one’s liking for a subject, and by association, one’s success at it. Alternatively, dissatisfaction and friction are likely to arise when there is a mismatch between how one would like things to be and how they actually appear to be.

Table 3 demonstrates that there is a dramatic discrepancy between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs which may stem from a combination of factors.

Different goals and understandings between teachers and students

Teachers and students may have different goals and different understandings of a situation and teachers’ beliefs may differ significantly from those of the students, thus leading to misperceptions of various dimensions of teaching. When asked about the important qualities for an effective CET in the interviews, a sharp difference was found between teachers’ answers and those of students. About 80% of the 20 teachers listed “professional” as the most important quality, while, to our surprise, only 11 out of the 40 students held the same opinion. Although both teachers and students placed great importance on teachers’ personal knowledge base and subject knowledge, it was found that, compared to their teachers, the students were more concerned about their teachers’ manners, personality, and attitudes toward students in addition to teachers’ knowledge base and instructional competence. In their responses, the students liked to use such words or phrases to describe a good English teacher as “humorous, a good moral example, a close friend, a strict father, caring and helpful, warm-hearted and understanding”. The following are some responses from students:

A good College English teacher should have charisma over the students through his or her expertise in English language, have respectable conduct, a deep love of students, and an attractive personality. (Student B, SIR, 2-3)

As a College English teacher, he or she should attach importance to the self-cultivation of morality and his or her comprehension of living and life is worthy for reference. The teacher should care for students’ all-round growth as a person and give them some guidance about how to be a person of character who has strong social consciousness. (Student H, STR, 8-2)
We are far away from home. We are young, inexperienced, and we have too many puzzles. Sometimes guidance and advice is badly needed. Teachers are the best choice to take the place of our parents. (Student D, SIR, 4-3)

In comparison with students, teachers are more concerned with their knowledge base, organizational skills, coordination ability and instructional creativity. The following are excerpts from two teachers:

The nature of teaching, or say, the role of a teacher, is to deliver knowledge as well as methods and skills. No matter how many things are involved in the teaching process, it is still a delivery process. (Teacher M, SIR, 13-4)

To be a qualified English teacher, you should enrich and update your own knowledge endlessly, and keep yourself well-informed of the latest domestic and foreign affairs. What’s more, it is of great importance to bring something novel to your class from time to time in order to attract your students. (Teacher F, SIR, 4-5)

Another example is the difference between the teachers’ and students’ understanding of the most important role CETs should play in classrooms. In the interviews, both teachers and students were asked to choose the most important role a College English teacher should play in the classroom. Table 5 sums up a comparison between the teachers’ and students’ responses.

**Table 5. Comparison on the most important role of CETs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Response</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
<th>Students’ Response</th>
<th>Frequency/Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom organizer</td>
<td>8/40%</td>
<td>Source of knowledge</td>
<td>17/42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of knowledge</td>
<td>5/25%</td>
<td>Creator of classroom climate</td>
<td>10/25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning guide</td>
<td>4/20%</td>
<td>Learning guide</td>
<td>3/7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct and moral guide</td>
<td>1/5%</td>
<td>Conduct and moral guide</td>
<td>3/7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom manager</td>
<td>1/5%</td>
<td>Parental friend</td>
<td>3/7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator of classroom climate</td>
<td>1/5%</td>
<td>Classroom organizer</td>
<td>2/5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental friend</td>
<td>0/0%</td>
<td>Classroom manager</td>
<td>2/5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two noticeable findings can be yielded from the table. First, 40% of the interviewed teachers chose “classroom organizer” as the most important role a teacher should play in class, while only 5% of the student participants made the same choice. By contrast, 42.5% of them held that the most important role a teacher should play is “source of knowledge”. Second, the teachers were more preoccupied with task-related functions than with interpersonal roles. Altogether, 85% of the teachers chose instructional aspects of roles (classroom organizer, 40%; source of knowledge, 25%; and learning guide, 20%) as the most important role of a teacher, while only 15% of them considered interpersonal
Comparison Between the Students’ Perceived and Expected Behavior of College English Teachers

and moral aspect of roles as the most important (conduct and moral guide, 5%; classroom manager, 5%; creator of classroom atmosphere, 5%; and parental friend, 0%). Most of the student respondents (55%) also emphasized the importance of instructional aspect of a teacher’s roles; however, about 45% of them emphasized the interpersonal and moral aspects of a teacher’s role, and this is three times the percentage of the teachers (15%) with the same choices. It can be concluded in some sense students place more emphasis on interpersonal and moral aspects of teachers’ roles in comparison with the teachers. Therefore, emphases on different teaching aspects unavoidably result in a discrepancy between the actual teacher behavior and the expected teacher behavior. The responsibility of teachers is to keep informed of their students’ conceptions about English teaching and learning. They should either meet their students’ expectations or change their students’ conceptions if necessary.

Lack of students’ feedback
Lack of students’ feedback is another factor that leads to the discrepancy. In order to find out how much CETs know about their students’ perceptions of their behavior in classrooms, the question “How often do you attempt to get some feedback from students about your teaching behavior in the classroom?” was asked during the interviews with the teachers. Surprisingly, of the 20 interviewed teachers, only 6 tried to get some feedback from their students on a regular basis, while the others responded “seldom” or “just sometimes”. Obviously, it is unlikely for teachers to learn what their students are thinking about or what they expect their teachers to do in classrooms.

Brookfield (1995: xii) regards “the views of teachers’ own students” as one of the three alternatives by which teachers can become reflective. Hoban and Hastings (2006) have developed four different forms of student feedback to enhance teacher reflection: interviews by a teacher educator with students, learning logs written by students, observation schedules completed by students, and survey completed by students and teachers. So it is of great importance and necessity for teachers to get to know the profile of their behavior through different forms of feedback from students. If there is any mismatch between the students’ perceived and expected teacher behavior, based on the information provided by the students the teacher can make better decisions on how to improve his or her behavior so as to manage the class more effectively.

Teachers’ prior learning experiences as students
Research on teachers’ professional growth has identified a number of possible factors and sources of influence that shape teachers’ developmental path. Tsui (2007: 1054) regards “the apprenticeship of observation” as one of the factors. It refers to the experience of being taught as a student, which provides teachers with an image of what teaching is and should be like. This source of influence is particularly strong for teachers who join the profession without much training.

In Chinese classrooms, language teaching generally means a heavy emphasis on textbooks and examination preparation, an expectation of teacher control (Tsui, 1995). Of course, it should be admitted that these cultural characteristics are not stable over time.
and will change as people are exposed to other cultures through media and information technology. Dramatic changes have been observed in the way some teachers interact with their students. They are active in trying to change the educational approach from teacher-centered, examination-oriented to more student-centered. However, while new ideas and practices are being introduced, old cultural values and practices still exist side by side at the same time. In spite of innovations in education, the influence of traditional cultural values can still be observed in Chinese classrooms. When asked about the main factors that influence their classroom behavior, 12 teachers (60%) chose “prior experiences as an English learner” as the most important factor that influences their classroom work. So because of the strong influences of traditional culture and of their prior experiences as students, teacher-centered and examination-oriented approaches are still dominant in some English classrooms. It is unlikely for some teachers to live up to their students’ expectations with such approaches to English teaching.

5. Limitations and implications

The present research is subject to some limitations. The first involves the selection of the participants. All the participants were from four universities in Zhejiang Province, which might not well represent the situation in China. The results of this study need to be interpreted with caution. The second limitation lies in the measurement of teachers’ behavior. In this study, only two research methods are used, questionnaires and interviews, both of which carry certain disadvantages (Denscombe, 2004). For instance, in questionnaires the “ticking box” routine encourages people to respond but might put people off from cooperating with the research. Interviews are time-consuming and the data from interviews are generally based on what people say rather than what they do. Therefore, a more objective and complete picture of teacher behavior would be obtained if more research methods are used. For example, documentary data in the form of letters or diaries from students recording their teachers’ behavior is an effective way to get to know how their teachers behave and how they expect their teachers to behave in class from the students’ eyes. The third limitation is the use of CETBS. Although the CETBS is grounded in quantitative and qualitative data and demonstrates good validity and reliability in this study, more empirical studies should be conducted to determine if it has consistent reliability and validity.

However, bearing these limitations in mind, it should be noted that this study offers some implications to EFL teaching and EFL teacher education in China. The findings of the present study reveal that there exist great discrepancies between the students’ perceived and expected behavior of CETs. In order to narrow the discrepancies and improve their behavior, teachers should become lifelong learners and reflective practitioners. They should promote their own professional development through self-awareness enhancement, peer observation, and reflective thinking. The findings of the present study also pose a great challenge to teacher education in China as to how to prepare effective EFL teachers. In the 21st century, teacher development is no longer a transmission model of simple “by-the-
textbook training”. Rather, becoming an effective teacher is a highly interactive, reflective, constructive, experiential process of developing one’s own competencies, beliefs and skills. Teachers need opportunities to observe excellent models of teaching that illustrate current “best practices” and to apply theory to practice in their own teaching with assistance and feedback from experienced teachers and peers. Meanwhile, teacher educators should recognize that teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills. They are individuals who enter teacher education programs as language learners, with prior experiences, personal values and beliefs. As two important aspects of foreign language teaching in the Chinese context, greater emphasis should be placed on teachers’ interpersonal and moral behaviors of teaching, to which enough attention has not been given in teacher education in China. It is vital to reinforce some established values in Chinese traditional education such as open-mindedness, sense of responsibility, and wholeheartedness which are believed to be three key attitudes necessary for teachers to be reflective (Dewey, 1933, cited in Bailey; Curtis & Nunan et al., 2004). At the same time some preconceptions about teaching and learning should be changed if necessary. For example, teachers used to be believed as source of knowledge and students as passive listeners. Teacher educators should make teachers aware that modern teacher-student relationships need to be built on the basis of democracy, equality, understanding and trusting, and such a relationship cannot be built without right educational notions or without knowing the psychology of students. While the instructional aspect of teaching remains an important underpinning of language teacher education, also needed is due attention to the interpersonal and moral aspects of teaching.

As the empirical research of teachers’ behavior is a relatively new field of research in China, it is hoped that the present study will pave the way for more such studies.

Note

1. SIR refers to the Aelections of Interview Records. The number 2-3 is the serial number of that quotation.

References


(eds.), *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, 669-680. Springer Science
Business Media, LLC.
Perspectives*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Center.
University Press.
22(2), 1-19.
Xiang, M. Y. 2010. A multidimensional study on College English teachers’ roles in the classroom.
Press.
Zhou, Y. 2005. 高校英语教师发展需求调查与研究 [Needs analysis of EFL teacher development in

(Copy editing: David TEICH)