A FOUR-STAGE ASSESSMENT OF AUL (AZERBAIJAN UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES) TEACHERS' ABILITIES TO ADAPT INNOVATIVE TEACHING APPROACHES

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the best teacher evaluation method that can reveal English language teachers' abilities to adapt to modern teaching approaches under the conditions of innovative and progressive language teaching trends. It is also extremely important to find out the general problems that prevent some of the teachers from using innovative ELT approaches and techniques. Thus, within the general area of teachers' assessment, twenty teachers from Azerbaijan University of Languages with the work experience of over fifteen years have been selected for a four-stage evaluation process that consisted of general English language knowledge testing, class management observation, teachers' self-evaluation, and evaluation of the selected teachers done by their students. The analysis of the completed assessment demonstrates that the best method of teachers' evaluation is class management observation, since three other assessment methods seem to be subjective and often groundless. When it comes to the problems preventing the use of innovative approaches, the most outstanding reasons are the inability of teachers to use technology, and their unwillingness to adapt to innovations, considering old methods to be the most prominent ones.

Key words: assessment, English language teaching, evaluation, innovations, teachers, testing

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es encontrar un método de evaluación del profesorado adecuado que permita identificar las habilidades de los docentes de inglés para adaptarse a enfoques de enseñanza modernos de acuerdo con las tendencias más innovadoras y progresistas de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. También es muy importante conocer los problemas generales que impiden a algunos profesores utilizar enfoques y técnicas innovadoras de enseñanza del inglés. Los datos aquí estudiados se obtuvieron mediante un proceso de evaluación realizado en cuatro fases en la Universidad de Lenguas de Azerbaiyán. Este proceso incluyó la evaluación de conocimientos generales de inglés, la observación de aula, la auto-evaluación y la evaluación de la gestión de las clases por parte del alumnado. El análisis de la evaluación realizada demuestra que el mejor método de evaluación de los profesores es la observación de la clase, ya que los otros tres métodos de la evaluación resultan subjetivos y, con frecuencia, sin base científica. En cuanto a los problemas que previenen el uso de enfoques innovadores, los motivos principales son la incapacidad de los profesores para el uso de la tecnología y su falta de interés para adaptarse a la innovación y el cambio, considerando los métodos tradicionales como los más adecuados..

Palabras clave: valoración, enseñanza de inglés, evaluación, innovación, profesorado, testing

1. Introduction

There has been a recent interest in the question of evaluation in second language teaching (SLT). The interest has also been evoked in the Post Soviet Union Countries as there was a considerable need to move from the Soviet system of language teaching where the most predominant way of presenting the language was the grammar-translation method to Western orientated (Richards, 2010) methodology with the hegemony of a communicative approach to language teaching as well. If we turn back to the English language classes thirty

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or even twenty years before, we will see that the lessons were all very similar. They mainly consisted of a reading text to be translated, several grammar exercises, and presumably finished by the teacher presenting grammar from the textbook that was given in the form of tables, exercises or written explanations in mother tongue. The teachers looked like robots whose mission was to skip from one exercise to another until the textbook was completely finished. The program itself is that:

teaching should aim at giving the students a thorough theoretical knowledge of the language rather than helping him simply to memorize it through repeated practice. Tremendous emphasis is put on the necessity of the students' understanding and being able to explain clearly the particularities of the foreign language whether of vocabulary, grammar, or phonetics. (Marcelle, 1959:77)

Today, new methods of teaching have come into being. Medgyes (1990:104) places emphasis on the communicative approach and introduces the notion 'Communicative Teachers'. According to him, "Communicative Teachers" must pay attention to meaning and form simultaneously. With past methods, teachers were not expected to listen closely to what the learners had to say as to how they said it, i.e. by what linguistic means the message manifested itself. (Medgyes, 1990:105) However, in this work, talking about present day teachers and their teaching and methodological approaches, I would not use such a specific term as "Communicative Teachers" but "Present day Teachers".

In the recent literature, it is common to find attempts to emphasize the teachers' indisputable role in providing innovative teaching method alongside with other technological, methodological and integration advance (Richards, 2001; Nunan, 1989; Romain 1992). Unfortunately, "when we are exposed to new methodological proposals, our first reaction is often a feeling that what is being suggested would not work in our teaching situation" (Nolasco, 1990:189). Such a pessimistic approach to innovations brings fossilization to teaching. That is why the need for integration to innovative teaching methodology brings us to the evaluation of teachers. Thus Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1992:5) write that "evaluation is an intrinsic part of teaching and learning" and they emphasize one of the two reasons about innovation and change.

Different scholars propose various techniques of teacher evaluation (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Alderson, 1995; Lynch, 1996). The most frequent are questionnaires, observation sheets, checklists/inventories, interviews and diaries (Rea-Dickins & Kevin Germaine, 1992:89). In any case, all of them have two main perspectives: i.e. associated with evaluation of teachers, primarily for the purpose of appraisal where evaluation is used as a means to examine teachers, and the formative nature of evaluation where evaluation is used as a means to develop teachers' skills. (Rea-Dickins & Kevin Germaine, 1992:91) In this work I will use both perspectives considering the second one as a consequence of the results of the first one.

The objective of this paper is to present the comparative results of four evaluation methods (general English language testing, class management observation, teacher self-evaluation and class management evaluation done by students) obtained at Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) during the academic year 2011-2012 and to find the most reliable one that can reveal the present day teachers' shortcomings in order to later find the ways of their further development to achieve innovative approaches in teaching. The first part of this work starts by considering the importance of innovation with an emphasis on present-day language teaching which is followed by the main reasons for teacher evaluation revealing the purposes of evaluation of this work. It then gives an account of the survey which passes four stages each giving the

results on different aspects of English language teaching. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results and suggestions on further investigations in this direction.

2. On the importance of innovation

As we live in a rapidly changing world, the notion of innovation surrounds us every single minute. Innovation generally refers to renewing, changing or creating more effective processes, products or ways of doing things. However, being innovative does not mean inventing something, it will simple urge you to adapt to changes. Thus, innovations in teaching a foreign language means to be in pace with the present-day demands of the learner, i.e. to be able to provide him/her with fresh information by using modern technology, or merely, by finding a new teaching approach which will allow you to accelerate the steps of language learning. Rea-Dickins (1992:63) touches upon the lack of clarity in innovations pointing out its two forms: *false clarity* and *painful unclarity* noting that the first one happens when people think that they have changed but they have only assimilated the superficial trapping of the new practice, whereas *unclarity* is a form of non-change whereby teachers are completely confused and unclear about the principles and practical implications of the innovation and eventually reject or misimplement the innovations.

Talking about language teachers it should be admitted that most of them in Azerbaijan are people of the generation when the dominant approach to language teaching was the grammar-translation method, where the teacher had nothing to do but deal with translation of the written texts. Apart from that, teachers of older generations are often reluctant to make an effective use of technological devices. So, it would be hard for many of them to easily adapt to such interactive innovations like on-line classes, virtual boards, video lessons, and for some of them, even, to rewind the listening CD track. That is to say, even if the institution will do its best to pass to innovative methods of teaching English as a Foreign Language, "not all the members of organization will immediately adopt the innovation and some of them may never do so" (Anderson 1998:159) However, whether the teachers appreciate it or not, innovations are inevitable, and sooner or later teachers will have to adapt to these changes.

As previously stated, this work is based on the research conducted at Azerbaijan University of Languages. However, before talking about the situation in the language teaching domain in general, and particularly the reasons for this research, it would be more valuable to highlight the present day importance of English language and its teaching in the country itself.

Under the condition of its existence in the structure of the former Soviet Union, the subject of English language in Azerbaijan was seen as one of the technical subjects such as mathematics, physics or even chemistry, i.e. English language looked as a set of grammatical formulae and the only case that it was supposed to be used for was for translation of the written texts that frequently appeared in the old EFL textbooks. For this reason, there was very little need for learning and teaching English and particularly for applying any other teaching approach but grammar-translation. However, today, due to the fact that Azerbaijan has acquired its independence and has been strengthening its partnership in many fields worldwide, the need for English speaking specialists has greatly increased. More and more people consider English language as the main means to obtain a good job and even to have the opportunity to study at the

best Universities of the world. However, in order to reach these goals, it is not sufficient to learn the structure and vocabulary of the language but to be able to use it in communication as well. Hence, the deficiency of communicative approach to language teaching comes into being.

Concerning this, Huseynzadeh (2001:5) writes:

It is pity to say that today we feel lack of those language teachers who possess high language qualification and abilities to create the atmosphere that prompts the development of speaking skills in students. However, many teachers feel safer while using old methods and even outdated materials for language teaching… All in all, the existing system of foreign language teaching does not fit the present day demands the main factor of which is lack of communicative approach to English language teaching which gives way to written drillings, text reading, etc.

Unfortunately, the statement is very correct, as we really lack those teachers who can easily adapt to new teaching trends, changing their old teaching views into the new ones where communicative language teaching approach, i.e. communication in general, plays a crucial role for present day language presentation.

Thus, old language teaching methods have taken such deep roots that it requires considerable efforts to direct EFL teachers to new and more innovative methods of language teaching, which not only presume the use of communication abilities, but also the ability to use technology, fresh EFL materials and other means used for interactive language teaching.

Thus, being one of the country's biggest universities that trains English language specialists both for secondary and high schools, Azerbaijan University of Languages was not randomly chosen for this research.

3. Common reasons for teachers' evaluation

Evaluations are requested for a variety of reasons, and the most important question that has to be addressed at this stage is: Why is this evaluation required? (Alderson, 1992:275) Depending on what we are going to evaluate, the scope of reasons may vary from several to dozens. One reason may be explaining and confirming existing procedures (Rea-Dickins, 1998:8), where the purpose of the evaluator is to learn why something is working well, or another reason may be obtaining the information that can bring to innovation or change.

Legutke and Thomas (1991) propose three reasons for evaluation in EFL teaching: 1) an educational reason linking capacity to communicate in the target language with growth in self-confidence and self-determination, 2) an experimental learning reason, linking reflection on experience to enhanced learning capacity and 3) a language acquisition reason – developing the classroom as a context for real communication. Brown and Rodgers (2002:247) consider that one of the reasons of doing evaluation is of general importance in education studies in terms of money and energy invested on them over the years. Based on Duke and Stiggin's ideas concerning the adaptation of a similar view of professionally developing teachers as producers and users of evaluative information (Darling-Hammond, 1990), several important reasons can give impetus to present day teacher evaluation:

1. Instructional development emphasizes the development of skills involving instructional technology, microteaching, media, courses and curricula

2. Professional development emphasizes growth of individual faculty in the professional roles

3. Organizational development emphasizes the needs, priorities and organization of the institution

4. Career development emphasizes preparation for career advancement

5. Personal development emphasizes life planning, interpersonal skills and the growth of faculty as individuals (Darling-Hammond, 1990)

Meanwhile, other researchers point out some other reasons for teacher evaluation such as:

a) Accountability – to ensure that the only effective teachers continue in the class room (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Iwanicki 1990; Rea-Dickins & Kevin Germaine, 1992)

b) Professional growth or self-development to foster the professional growth of new continuing teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1990)

c) School improvement or curriculum development and betterment (Iwanicki 1990; Rea-Dickins & Kevin Germaine, 1992)

d) Selection- to ensure that the best qualified teachers are hired. (Darling-Hammond, 1990)

In this work, as we deal with the matter of innovative teaching methods and new approaches to language teaching in general, only 3 of the abovementioned reasons are considered as the most appropriate ones. See figure 1:

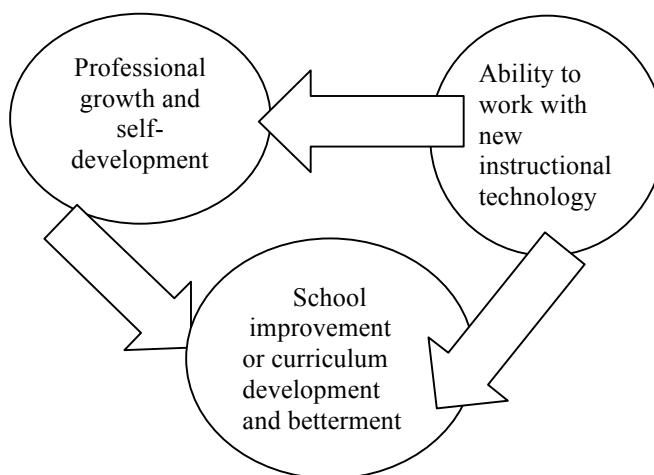Figure 1: Three interrelated reasons for teacher evaluation

Figure 1 shows that professional growth and self-evaluation are the key components that first bring the ability to work with new technology which consequently contributes to curriculum development and improvement as well. Thus, these 3 reasons will be taken as the principle ones.

Moreover, today, many specialists agree that apart from teaching skills that teachers should possess, the importance of life skills is gaining more and more recognition in the field of education. For this reason, a degree and qualification alone are not sufficient to enable a teacher to be effective in class. Hence, the evaluation should elicit teachers' strong and weak points, and later on to find the ways to eliminate those weaknesses that impede the process of contemporary language teaching.

Huseynzadeh (2001:163) states that one of the main reasons for not being able to bring innovations into language teaching is inherent in teachers themselves. According to her, the unwillingness of teachers to adapt to new teaching methods, and also teachers' fears of changes in curriculum and in new teaching approaches

as well, normally paralyze the whole process of English language teaching in general. Thus, Huseynzadeh suggests that teachers in Azerbaijan should first of all be given some training courses which will enable them to change their views concerning the modifications needed in their language teaching. However, there cannot be any 'cure' unless we know the 'diagnoses. Thus, before starting any training session with teachers, we should know for sure their strengths and weaknesses in language teaching in general. Due to this reason, the research firstly suggests teachers' evaluation and only after the final results can we further think about appropriate trainings for teachers.

4. The study

4.1 Objectives

Even today, when there have been so many changes in the curriculum of Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL), alongside with other majors, the subject of general English language still plays a tremendous role. As was previously mentioned, during the last decades, the teaching methodology and especially English language teaching (ELT) has changed greatly. Old textbooks were substituted by new ones and consequently, the objectives and the targets of ELT acquired a new frame. However, after some analysis of students' exam results, the suspicions about teachers' capability to catch up with those changes came into being. General language testing happened to be compulsory for teachers, but the results obtained were very vague and unclear in the function of reveling teachers' strengths and weaknesses in classroom management. Consequently, the disclosure of a reasonable method of evaluation of teachers' skills and knowledge that could be used in further research such as the modes of teacher training, teacher qualification increase, etc. became the main purpose of this work.

4.2 Method

4.2.1. Participants

In 2011, in order to find out the most objective type of evaluation that could reveal the ability of teachers to keep their teaching up-to-date, using a qualitative method of investigation, twenty teachers with an experience of over fifteen years were asked to undergo a four-stage assessment program. All these twenty EFL teachers were of different age and of both sexes; generally teaching the students of first, second and third years. Darling-Hammond (1990:17) writes that: 'until recently, less attention has been paid to combined outcomes of their interaction as a total system of evaluation'); i.e. it was for the first time when teachers were assessed according to stages that presumed not only the revealing of teachers' language competence but their ability to use new language teaching approaches, technology and new EFL materials as well. Thus, such a multi-stage evaluation process seemed to be the most rational way to compare the results.

4.2.2. Materials

Apart from the General IELTS test which included academic reading, writing, listening and speaking sections, three main instruments were used: a classroom observation checklist (see table 3 in appendix), teachers self-rating form (see table 4 in appendix), and student's questionnaire (see table 5 in appendix). The points in the classroom observation checklist cover such important aspects as general teaching skills, the

ability of teacher to use classroom technology, a correct selection and use of teaching materials and students' participation in the class. Teacher self-rating form targeted the same aspects as a classroom observation checklist but from the perspective of teachers themselves, i.e. to see how they evaluate their class performance. Finally, student questionnaire covered such aspects as the process of the lesson, the behavior of the teacher during the lesson, the possibility to use the mother tongue in class, and their general feeling about the lesson.

4.2.3 Procedures

Being non-native teachers, the first target was to check their general English language knowledge and the ability to react in the four main language skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking in a short period of time. Not less important was teachers' classroom management observation with the special assessment list that contained the most general and important questions that revealed the ability of flexible adaptation to new teaching trends. Teachers' self-evaluation was the third step that shed light on teachers' beliefs and their understanding of the fact that nowadays language teaching approach differs from what they used in their early career development. Barber (1990) defines self-assessment as an increased instructional improvement that results from a greater insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses. Finally, students that were taught by this group of teachers put their assessment marks on a class management evaluation checklist. The main goal was to classify the teachers according to the level of English language knowledge and then, compare the results obtained from other evaluation steps. It should be pointed out that the students were not told about the reasons and targets of the evaluation and were kindly asked to assess the checklist according to the five scale band regarding 5 points as the strongest one and 1 point as a weakest one. The research was explained to be the general desire of the university to evaluate the level of education in order to provide better teaching facilities to students. If the real target of the research had been revealed to the students, it would have reflected on teachers' reputation, which could later tell on the lessons and also on the students' attitude towards the teachers. In contrast, the teachers were totally aware of the fact of being researched upon; however, the exact goals of the investigation were not unveiled since it could bring to indignation of the teachers and at the same time make them perform unusual.
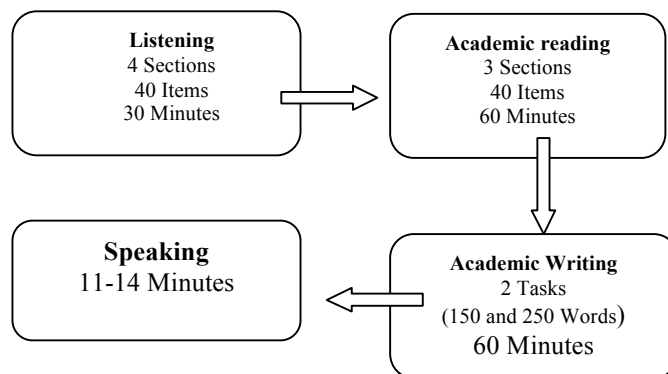
International English Language Testing System

The first step of the teachers' assessment was to test 'only one component of the evaluation process'. (Rea-Dickins & Kevin Germaine, 1992:27) As we dealt with non-native teachers of English, it made more sense to follow the principle of measuring the amount of language possessed by them. Thus, putting forward the question like 'how much of the language does one need to know to be able to teach effectively', Richards (2001:46) and some other scholars (Bailey, 2006; Kamhi-Stin, 2009, etc.) suggest that a teacher's confidence also depends on his/her own level of language proficiency. Consequently, it is obvious that the less language knowledge the teachers possess, the more they depend on old and weary materials and the more they ignore any kinds of innovations.

Conducting a pilot study as a starting point to come up with the general results of English Language competence evaluation, the teachers were assessed according to the International Language Testing System

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(IELTS). The academic version of the test was proposed during 2 hours and 45 minutes to get the results on *reading*, *listening*, *speaking* and *writing* models.

Figure 2: General structure of IELTS exam

Listening
4 Sections
40 Items
30 Minutes

Academic reading
3 Sections
40 Items
60 Minutes

Speaking
11-14 Minutes

Academic Writing
2 Tasks
(150 and 250 Words)
60 Minutes

The results are presented in the form of nine band scores, on a scale of 0-9 (See table 1 in appendix). The test was administered without any previous preparation to the IELTS program which provoked some agitation in teachers. The most exciting point was *speaking* section which was an uncommon way of teacher evaluation that brought nervousness and anxiety. The final grading was done according to the provisionally divided points, i.e. in IELTS, points from 4 to 6 were considered as a low grade, from 6 to 7 as an average grade, and the points from 7.5 to 9 were taken as high grade points. Regarding the rest of the assessment steps, the points were also divided into three grades (low, average and high) initially calculated from the point of view of the percentage. That means that the teachers who obtained high grade should have obtained 80 percent and more from the total 100%; teachers who obtained average grade should have obtained more than 60 percent from the total 100%; and low-graded teachers scored under 60 percent of total 100. Later on, the percentage was conversed into points that can be observed on table 2 in appendix.

Examination results were intended to reveal general language proficiency without any detailed information on particular knowledge.

Classroom Observation

According to Dickens and Germaine (1992:34), testing knowledge of theory is not enough to judge effective teaching. We need to observe teachers in action using their knowledge in the real setting of the classroom. So, 'if one wants to know how a teacher behaves with a group of youngsters during the lesson, observation may be a very good way to gather information.' (Stodolsky, 1990:180) However, even if observation plays a central role in practice teaching (Richards, 2005), we should not forget about its nature and limitations (Richards: 2005; Stodolsky, 1990; Darling-Hammond 1990). For this reason, as our main purpose in this work was finding out the teachers' classroom attitude towards implementation of innovative teaching approach, we used a checklist with the following questions that were initially prepared: (See Table 3). Normally, after an observation session, the observer wants to meet the teacher to provide feed-back. However, in our case, the observation checklist was simply completed in order to compare the results got from testing and other evaluation checklists.

The purpose of observation was not disclosed to the teachers, so everything went naturally and unstaged, as Slimani (1992:212) says, the observation of the language classes shows that the discourse is not something prepared beforehand by the teacher and simply implemented by the student.

Teachers' self-assessment

As mentioned above, observation is useful for looking at the teacher's behavior or actions; however it would be quite an inadequate approach to know how a person felt about the lesson while it was in progress, or when it was completed. (Stodolsky, 1990:180) Here, self-evaluation is of greater value for understanding and instructional improvement (Carroll, 198:183). In order to know the direction in which to develop teachers must engage in the evaluation of their own performance (Anderson, 1995:161). For this reason, the teachers were given a ten minute self-evaluation rating form where they could assess themselves according to a five-scaled band. Due to this written instrument (Barber, 1990:219) each teacher could rank himself/herself on a variety of teaching skills listed in the form. The objective was to determine the feasibility of implementing the system for the evaluation of teaching qualities. As Dickens and Germaine (1992) define it, self-evaluation is simply the practice of teachers reflecting on what has taken place in the lesson with a view to improving their self-performance. In our case, alongside with self-improvement, we wanted to learn the teachers' views and beliefs concerning their ability to progress in order to compare these results with others. (see Table 4)

Evaluation of classroom management done by students

Classroom management evaluation done by students was the last stage in this research. The students were given the main questions that could give a clue to the process that took place from lesson to lesson. The questions in this checklist are nearly of the same origin as those given in the observation checklist and the teacher evaluation checklist. This is done in order to compare the course of the class from three different perspectives, i.e. evaluator, teacher and the students. Table 4 (see appendix) contains the questions that were given to students for ten minutes, which mostly evaluates the teacher's classroom management and the facilities he/she uses during the lesson.

4.3 Analysis and discussion of results

The main intention in this work was to compare the results obtained from the four stage teacher evaluation. Firstly, the teachers took a test; later on, the researchers were observing the class performance of the same teachers grading them according to the main questions enlightened in the classroom observation checklist. At the same time, the teachers had to undertake the teacher self-rating form and finally, the students taught by the very teachers were to complete a checklist on a 1 to 5 point scale. The three checklists were deliberately designed in the way that they contained nearly the same questions. This was done in order to see how three parties, i.e. teachers, students and the observers, look at one and the same process. Thus, the actual data collection was divided into 2 main aspects, i.e. the first one is to see the attitude of the parties to the given questions basing on the results obtained, and second, taking the results of the IELTS test, and to compare the general English language knowledge of the teachers with the general points got from each checklist. Hence, the recently appeared principle of triangulation was applied to the research work which does not treat

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evaluation as a one-sided process, but a mutually depended one, where everyone's opinion (teacher's, students, observer's) is taken into account.

As already mentioned, the first checklist was completed by the researcher and covered such important issues as the teachers' personal teaching skills, their ability to use classroom technology, their ability to choose correct materials and teaching methodology that can be applied to lesson. According to the results, out of 20 teachers 13 had shown the result higher than 60 points from the maximum 75. Only 3 teachers were lowly-evaluated. It was very interesting to learn what teachers themselves thought on this matter and it happened that many of them probably wanted to appear objective, by this neither underestimating nor overestimating themselves which, however, seemed somewhat unnatural and preplanned. According to the students' opinions, none of the teachers obtained the highest results, which shows that students are not satisfied with teachers' class performance (for further details see table 6).

Table 6: General results of the 4-stage assessment

Teachers		IELTS	Class observation	Teachers' Self-Assessment	Class Evaluation by Students
a		7	64	52	33
b		6,5	60	58	38
c		5,5	29	54	18
d		8	60	63	49
e		8,5	58	49	50
f		8,5	60	57	32
g		6	59	61	42
h		6,5	63	60	39
i		7,5	68	65	34
j		7	66	53	36
k		8	73	58	43
l		8,5	61	74	41
m		5,5	43	59	29
n		4	19	46	12
o		7	61	54	46
p		7	72	62	30
q		6,5	62	60	34
r		8,5	49	52	44
s		8,5	58	57	39
t		8	60	64	46

Taking IELTS as the key test that determines teachers' level of general English language knowledge the teachers with the low grade of English language knowledge were marked in dark grey color; with average English language knowledge in white; and with high grade knowledge of English in grey. Even if the table

does not give the highest results, it is important to point out that the number of teachers with high grade exceeds the number of teachers with low and average grades.

It should also be pointed out that, speaking about teachers' class performance, we do not go into particular details but take into account their common peculiarities to successfully teach a class.

The most important step in this work was to obtain the general language test results and then to compare them to three other results obtained from the three already mentioned parties. Here, we wanted to see if the general English language knowledge level could give an indication of the success of teaching performance. For this purpose, we made some general calculations to present the results in the figures, by this making the results more comprehensible. Consequently, in order to obtain equivalent numbers for further comparison of the results, each point previously presented in Table 6 was calculated in percentage. Analysing each grade, we came to unexpected results that are demonstrated by three different graphs. (See appendix 2). The figures express the relativity among 4 stages and are divided according to three grades, i.e. high, average and low, taking the IELTS grading as the main one.

Three grades by IELTS

The study of the first graph (see figure 1 in appendix 2) has shown that teachers with high level of English language knowledge (which was determined by IELTS test), have an average grade in class observation. This shows that excellent language knowledge is not enough for competent teaching. An interesting fact is that these teachers themselves do not highly asses their own teaching abilities, by this demonstrating that they still have aspiration for further development. Meanwhile, students give high rates to these teachers. Teachers with average English language knowledge (see figure 2) seem to be fairly competent in classroom management, however, they do not overestimate themselves. It is also important to point out that in this case the students do not seem to be very objective by grading the teachers according to their teaching abilities, but by their language level. Finally, those teachers who have a very low knowledge of English seem to be unsuccessful in classroom management. Consequently, based on the previous comments that students estimate the teachers mostly by their English language knowledge but not by their teaching skills, these teachers did not get positive feedback from their students and were negatively evaluated by them. The most surprising point to us was that these teachers themselves give the highest grade in the teacher self-assessment checklist. (see figure 3)

5. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

In this section I will present several considerations for further study.

-First of all, a project like this might be considered a comprehensive way of determining the most important teaching skills such as language competence, innovation approaches, material selection, method selection, and also general teaching abilities which are so important in present-day language teaching.

-It is also very important to survey the students' attitudes and views on teachers' performance and teaching practice in general. This does not mean that teachers should be directed by students' views and opinions but we cannot totally exclude the students' views either. Students' class participation, their

interest to lesson and motivation should normally increase the involvement and responsibility of the teachers; and since the teaching and learning processes are mutually depended, the students' voice is as important as the teachers' voice in education process. Hence, in such a triangular research the voice of the students cannot be excluded under any conditions.

-A survey like this may be considered an important attempt to try out different methods of teacher evaluation. It gives ground to try different evaluation approaches in particular to see which one may be more reliable in future surveys.

-Further on, the research like this may reveal some possible weaknesses in EFL teaching that some teachers did not pay attention on. Thus, in this way, some English language teachers should ones again analyse their teaching methodology and try to eliminate all possible drawbacks from their teaching experience.

The results obtained in this research should be regarded as tentative and preliminary as the number of teachers evaluated was small. It is also possible that the questions in the questionnaires were very superficial and brief and touched upon just general parameters of present-day language teaching. However, these questionnaires could be regarded as a spring board in future checklist- compiling.

Although this research cannot be considered sufficient for drawing any definite conclusions, it does provide some insights about teacher and student perceptions in particular and could serve to promote further investigation drawing variably on these four types of evaluation in different combinations in order to determine teachers' shortcomings in present day English language teaching and to enable them to think about self-improvement and training needs.

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Tamilla Mammadova obtained her MA in Linguistics at Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL) in 2007 after which she successfully completed a training course for teachers and instructors of TOEFL and IELTS in London. In 2008 she started her work as EFL instructor and lecturer on English language lexicology at the department of translation in AUL. In 2011, Tamilla became a PhD student at AUL, after which she got her 2-year PhD Erasmus Mundus Scholarship in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Currently, Tamilla Mammadova is an EFL instructor at Baku Higher Oil School. She is a co-author of a *Modern Course of English Language Lexicology*, an editor of International University Catalogue for AUL and an active presenter at different international conferences.

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Appendix:

Table 1

Bandscore	Skill level	Description
Band 9	Expert user	You have a full operational command of the language. Your use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and you show complete understanding.
Band 8	Very good user	You have a fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. You may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. You handle complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7	Good user	You have an operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally you handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
Band 6	Competent user	Generally you have an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. You can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
Band 5	Modest user	You have a partial command of the language, and cope with overall meaning in most situations, although you are likely to make many mistakes. You should be able to handle basic communication in your own field.
Band 4	Limited user	Your basic competence is limited to familiar situations. You frequently show problems in understanding and expression. You are not able to use complex language
Band 3	Extremely limited user	You convey and understand only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
Band 2	Intermittent user	You have great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1	Non-user	You have no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
Band 0	Did not attempt the test	You did not answer the questions.

Table 2

Evaluation Type	Low grade	Average grade	High grade
IELTS	4-6 points	6-7 points	7,5-9 points
Class observation	0-45 points	46-60 points	61-75 points
Self-assessment	0-45 points	46-60 points	61-75 points
Students assessment of the class	0-30 points	31-40 points	41-50 points

Table 3

Classroom observation checklist Name .... Date: .... Department ……………………………………….. I have taught English for .... year(s) in					
Mark the point taking 5 as a maximum grade	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. The teacher clearly states session objective and significance of the objective with class.					
2. Language is understandable according to the students' level.					
3. The teacher is confident and enthusiastic.					
4. The students are interested and enthusiastic. Students are actively involved in all the activities and take an active part in class discussions.					
5. The teacher uses class time effectively.					
6. The teacher appears well-prepared for the class.					
7. Films, websites and other audiovisual materials have a clear purpose.					
8. The teacher incorporates various instructional supports like slides, films, handouts, etc.					
9. The teacher selects teaching methods appropriate for the content by using textbooks and authentic materials as well.					
10. Students' questions are responded to as individuals.					
11. The teacher integrates text materials into class presentation.					
12. The teacher relates current course content to students' general education and their real world.					
13. The teacher presents up-to-day development in the field.					
14. The target language only is used in the class.					
15. The teacher seems totally aware of the present day technological devices.					

Table 4

Teacher Self-Rating Form Name .... Date: .... Department ……………………………………….. I have taught English for .... year(s) in					
Put a check according to the most suitable point	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

1. I understand program mission and try to direct my class to the goal.					
2. I design activities to encourage my students' skills.					
3. I use different teaching approaches to avoid monotonousness.					
4. During the class, I prefer my students to speak more and participate actively in discussions.					
5. I identify and respond to learners' individual and group needs and interests.					
6. I try to use more authentic materials than I used to.					
7. Alongside with the textbooks, I employ a variety of strategies, resources and materials to facilitate and promote learner interaction.					
8. In case of lack of interest to a coursebook material, I substitute it with the materials taken from learning internet sites.					
9. I try to use the newest technology to keep the class up-to-date.					
10. I often make use of laboratory work to provide my students direct contact with computer software.					
11. I always incorporate new skills and knowledge gained through professional development to enhance the quality of instructions.					
12. I continuously re-examine my beliefs about my job.					
13. I keep pace with new knowledge and technological development.					
14. It is very important to develop four main skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in students.					
15. I frequently attend teacher training courses.					

Table 5

Student Questionnaire					
Name.. Date: .... Group № …………………………………….. Academic Year					
	1	2	3	4	5
Put a check according to the most suitable point					
1. During the class, alongside with the main coursebook we use different supplementary material.					
2. The teacher often takes us to laboratory room to work on computers.					
3. During the class, we speak English as much as possible and actively take part in all discussions.					
4. A lot of authentic materials are often used in the lesson.					
5. Alongside reading and writing skills, speaking and listening skills are developing as well.					
6. The teacher tries to find an individual approach to all students in the class.					

| 7. It seems that the teacher does not stop evolving her/his teaching and language skills all the time.					
8. During the class, we are not allowed to speak any other language but English.					
9. The teacher tries to use newest technology in the class.					
10. We never feel bored in the class because the teacher always tries to motivate us by giving useful and interesting activities.					

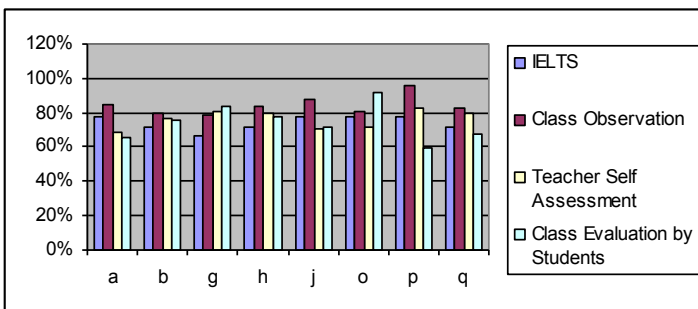Figure 1: High Grade IELTS results
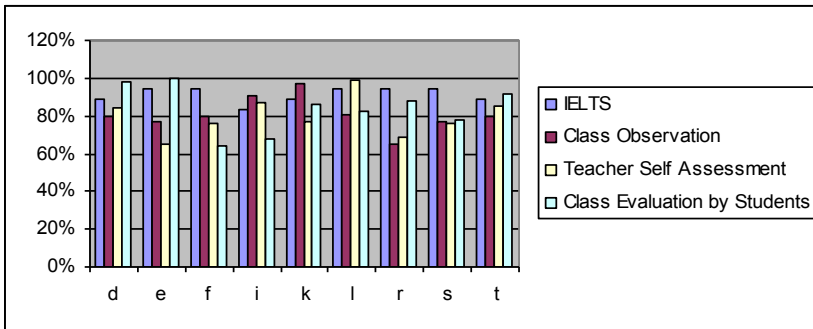
Figure 2: Average Grade

Figure 3: Low Grade