



The effective teacher of English: Perceptions and opinions of Indian teachers

WARWICK
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

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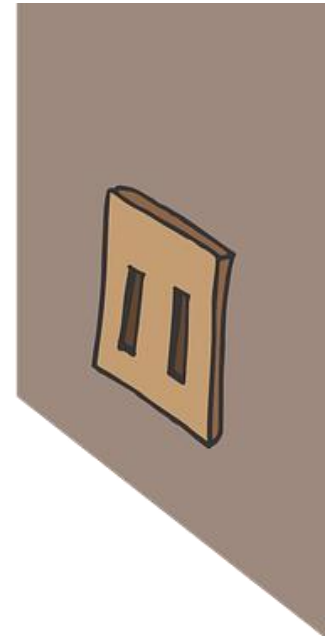
5th AINET International Conference, Hyderabad, India

January 2020

Research for this talk was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK [grant number ES/P000771/1]

The danger of 'importing' ideas about 'best practice' from privileged contexts

Teaching practices in
privileged contexts



Teaching practices in more
challenging contexts

Why study teachers' beliefs on 'effective' teaching?

- Part of my wider PhD research project:
- **A participatory study of teacher expertise in challenging contexts: Effective English language teachers working in India**
- <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=studentship-1912534>
- I'm currently at the data collection stage, working with 8 teachers across India (not the focus of today's talk)

But where to find a professional community
of Indian English language teacher expertise?



Let's explore the study together



how I did the study



discussion: your perception of an effective teacher



the findings



comparison with other studies



critical consideration of the findings



limitations and final thoughts

How I did this study

- I wanted detailed, qualitative ‘understandings’ of effectiveness, but I wanted lots of them. I needed to ask open questions.

Questionnaire or interview?

- I chose questionnaire, but made it wholly qualitative.
- This allowed access to a wider range and number of respondents.
- It also allowed for ‘thick’ descriptions.
- The written format allowed for time and consideration of responses – useful if proficiency in spoken English is weaker.

Why focus on 'government' schools at secondary level?

- I wanted to focus on 'compulsory' state school education, where the majority of India's teachers work¹, so that the findings would be most relevant. I wanted the research to focus specifically on English language teaching.
- Primary teachers are usually not subject specialists. They are more likely to teach all subjects similarly.
- Higher secondary and tertiary teachers (i.e. year 11+) work in non-compulsory education.

1. Anderson & Lightfoot (2019)

A) Imagine an effective teacher's lesson

Imagine we could observe a typical lesson of an effective secondary teacher working in a government school in India together. Tell me what we would see:

A1. Please describe the context you have imagined (e.g. class size; age of learners; resources available; is it rural or urban?):

A2. What happens during the effective teacher's lesson? Describe the activities in the lesson.

The questionnaire, as presented, p.1

A3. What do the students learn in this lesson?

B) Describe an effective teacher

Now imagine the teacher. Tell me all about her/him:

B1. What is the effective teacher like as a person? (e.g. personality, roles, outside school)

B2. What does she/he do that a 'normal' teacher does not do?

The questionnaire, as presented, p.2

B3. How would an effective teacher describe the purpose or goal of her/his job?

Responses and analysis

- 87 responses received – **thank you!**
- 7 were too brief (under 50 words). 5 people did it twice! I had to choose their first response. Thus 75 valid responses.
- 74% had over 10 years' experience.
- 77% were secondary teachers.
- 83% from government/government-aided schools.
- Balance of urban, semi-urban and rural contexts.
- 63% from non-English medium schools.
- Analysed inductively using Thomas's 'general inductive approach' (2006).

Discussion activity: Your perceptions and beliefs

- Work in pairs/small groups. 5 mins.

Imagine an **‘effective teacher’** (you decide what that means) working in a secondary government school in India, and discuss the following:

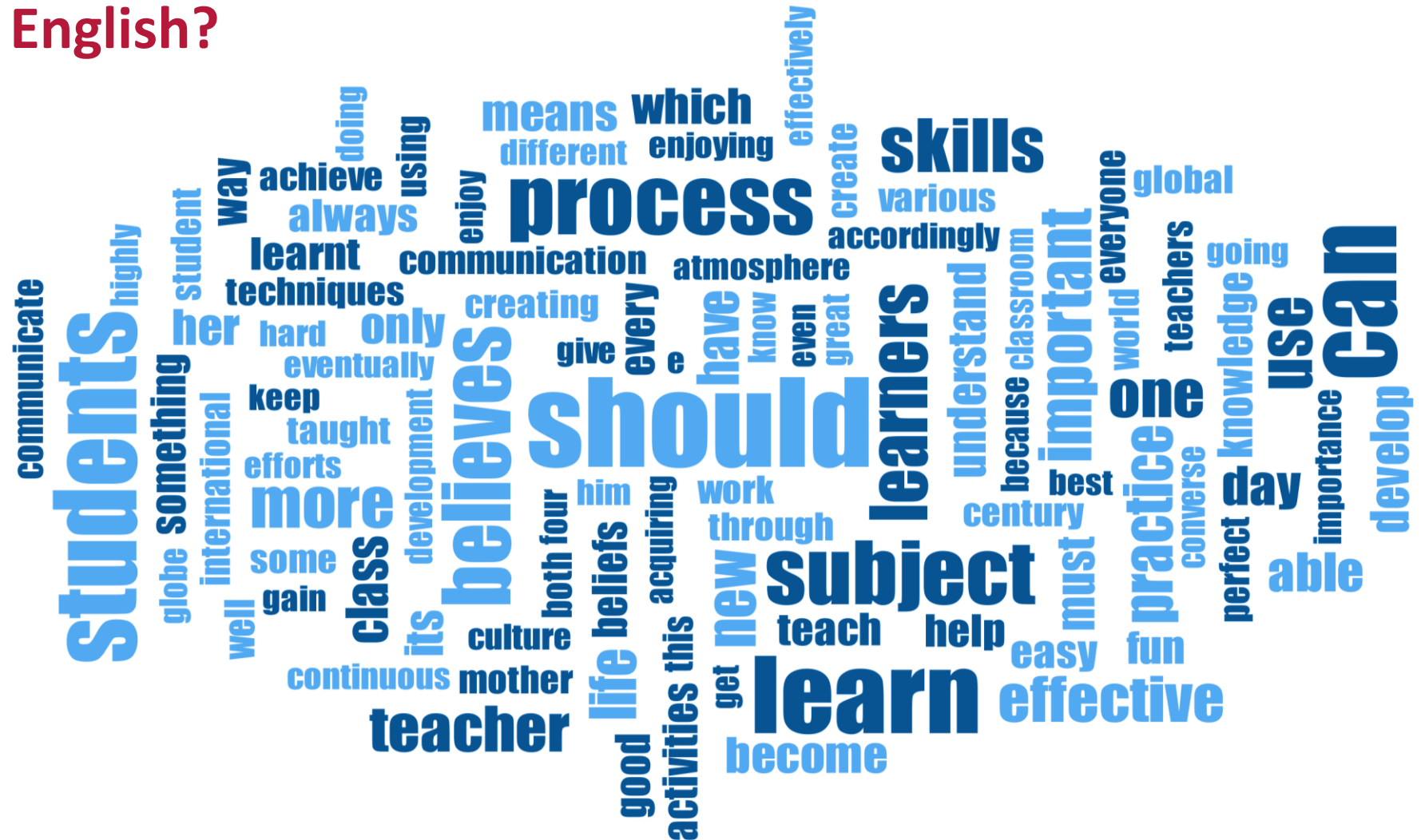
- the teacher’s classroom practices
- the teacher’s personality
- the teacher’s beliefs about teaching / learning

What do the students learn?



High frequency exclusions: student, learning, learn

What are her/his beliefs about teaching and learning English?



High frequency exclusions: teaching, learning, English, language

Role in
community (33)

Attributes
(121)

Professional
practice (155)

Beliefs about
own role (128)

Beliefs about
(language)
learning (118)

Subject
knowledge (18)

Engages with community
Helps Learners outside school

Friendly

Has moral awareness

Resourceful and flexible

Love of work

Role model

Energetic

Keeps learning

Cares for learners

Innovates

Works hard

Reflects

Builds learners' confidence/motivation

Develops learners' transferrable skills

Develop learners' moral awareness

Support every child

Prepare/empower learners for the future

Develop learners' study skills/autonomy

Subject/knowledge acquisition is important

English is a practical tool

Four skills are important

Teach English as language, not as subject

Has good subject knowledge

Plans for teaching

0 20 40 60

Coding summary

Your 'effective teacher' prototype

- Sternberg and Horvath's (1995) "prototype view of expert teaching" draws on the "family resemblance" (similarities between expert teachers as discussed in the literature) through a "central exemplar or prototype" (p. 9).
- The following prototype is not based on classroom descriptions of effective teachers, but on beliefs within this community...
- ... a classroom-based prototype **may be** one of the findings of my broader study.
- Here comes your (AINET's) effective teacher prototype on two slides. Take photos so you can discuss it afterwards.

The effective secondary English teacher prototype (1)

The effective secondary English teacher is **dedicated** both to her learners and her profession. She is a **morally responsible** individual who **cares** for all her learners, and recognises the importance of developing their moral awareness and **building their self-confidence**. She also perceives it important to **develop** the necessary **practical skills** that the learners will need to function in the world, balancing the more **general transferable skills** (specifically, thinking skills and interpersonal skills) with the **subject-specific knowledge** (including vocabulary and grammar knowledge) and **skills** (reading, writing, speaking and listening) required to learn and make use of English in the future. (... continued...)

The effective secondary English teacher prototype (2)

(...continued...) In the classroom she is a **facilitator of learning** more than a transmitter of knowledge, who is **friendly, engages and interacts** with the class, and **encourages collaboration** when possible through the use of pairwork and groupwork. Her **learners value their teacher** and **enjoy their English lessons**. As a professional she has an **“unquenchable thirst” for learning**, is interested in **“updating” her practice** and in **innovating** in her own classroom, especially when context-specific challenges require **resourcefulness or flexibility**. She **works hard, reflects** on her practice, **engages with the local community** around the school, and is often willing to **help learners whenever needed**.

Critical discussion: Over to you

The responses

- Do you think respondents described the teacher they are, or the teacher they want to be? i.e. Does the prototype portray classroom realities accurately, or is it more an idealised perception?
- If you are a respondent, speak for yourself: Which of the features of the prototype were emphasised in your response?

The system

- What does the prototype reveal about the challenges and expectations that Indian teachers of English face in secondary schools today?

The research

- Do you have any concerns or criticisms of the research design? Do you feel it has succeeded in capturing beliefs of AINET members well?

The effective secondary English teacher prototype

“The effective secondary English teacher is **dedicated** both to her learners and her profession. She is a **morally responsible** individual who for all her learners, and recognises the importance of developing their moral awareness and **building their self-confidence**. She also perceives it important to **develop** the necessary **practical skills** that the learners will need to function in the world, balancing the more **general transferable skills** (specifically, thinking skills and interpersonal skills) with the **subject-specific knowledge** (including vocabulary and grammar knowledge) and **skills** (reading, writing, speaking and listening) required to learn and make use of English in the future. In the classroom she is a **facilitator of learning** more than a transmitter of knowledge, who is **friendly, engages** and **interacts** with the class, and **encourages collaboration** when possible through the use of pairwork and groupwork. Her **learners value their teacher** and **enjoy their English lessons**. As a professional she has an “**unquenchable thirst**” for learning, is interested in “**updating**” her **practice** and in **innovating** in her own classroom, especially when context-specific challenges require **resourcefulness** or **flexibility**. She **works hard, reflects** on her practice, **engages with the local community** around the school, and is often willing to **help learners whenever needed**.”

Links to prior research

Research in India

- Strong links to beliefs of Brinkmann's (2015) 'high-LCE' teachers, esp. high moral integrity, developing 'future citizens'.
- Strong links to Sriprakash's (2012) respondents' beliefs (friendliness, engagement, caring role, self-awareness, learning continuously).

International research on teacher beliefs on effective teaching

- Strong links to wider international literature: care for one's learners, consideration of learners' needs, careful planning, engaging lessons, dedication to one's work.¹
- Only noticeable feature shared with international literature on language teachers' beliefs: collaborative learning important.²

1. e.g., Carmel & Badash, 2019; Kyriakides et al., 2002; Meng et al., 2016; Park & Lee, 2006.

2. e.g., Brosh, 1996; Park & Lee, 2006; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009.

Other notable findings

- Communicative language teaching is not prominent in the prototype (“communicative” mentioned only by 2), although skills practice, and collaborative learning are.
- Strong moral imperative may be ‘India specific’ (cf. Brinkmann, 2015; Kumar, 2005; Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2012).
- Need for flexibility and resilience to cope with challenges of context rarely mentioned in other research, but common among respondents: “keep calm”; “be positive”; “be able to camouflage”, “learn the art of resilience”, “think positive”.
- Emphasis on the importance of developing practical, transferable skills is shared only with Brinkmann (2015).

The prototype and James Stronge's (2007) four 'C's of effective teaching

Stronge's effective teacher...	In the prototype?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">cares deeply	Yes. The prototype teacher cares for all her learners, builds their self-confidence and moral awareness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">recognises complexity	Yes. The prototype teacher recognises complexity in learning content and complexity of students' needs, and responds to both.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">communicates clearly	Partially. The prototype teacher develops a climate of support and encouragement. (Subject knowledge was less prominent.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">serves conscientiously	Yes. The prototype teacher is dedicated and engages in continuous learning.

Scope of the study and limitations

- This is a study of “espoused beliefs”, and only within AINET, a professional community, therefore not representative of all English teachers in India.
- We all sometimes express beliefs that do not reflect our own practices, or even our deeper beliefs (social desirability bias).
- The survey instrument used may have influenced the findings.

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Thanks to you, the AINET community!

- Thank you to all respondents, those that piloted the questionnaire, and the AINET committee, esp. Amol Padwad, Krishna Dixit, and also Santosh Mahapatra for critical feedback.
- Slides: <https://tinyurl.com/yek4pkfb> or use the QR code ↓
- Related paper currently under review.
- Any feedback:
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- Research for this talk was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, UK [grant number ES/P000771/1]

