

Effectiveness in the Teaching-Learning Process

Dr. Craig L. Dicker
U.S. Embassy, Ankara
DickerCL@state.gov

What does a teacher need
to **KNOW** in order to be an
“effective” teacher?



Some commonly taught subjects at US graduate programs in TESOL

- the content of the curriculum (including textbooks)
- Second language Acquisition
- The literatures of L1 communities
- The culture and social institutions of L1 communities
- Language teaching methods (the four skills)
- Language learning materials
- The uses of technology in teaching languages (ICT and TEFL)
- Language learning styles and strategies
- Sociolinguistics
- Psycholinguistics
- Semantics and Morphology
- Pragmatics
- Stylistic analysis
- Language Assessment
- Error Analysis and Correction
- Classroom observation and action research
- Discourse/Interaction Analysis
- Textbook adaptation
- Educational research and research methods

Shulman (1986) on Teacher Knowledge I

- General pedagogical knowledge- skills and principles of teaching that apply across contexts and disciplines
- Knowledge of educational goals and purposes
- Knowledge of learners, including personal and cognitive characteristics
- Knowledge of other content beyond the subject being taught (life learner)

Shulman (1986) on Teacher Knowledge II

- Subject matter content knowledge- facts and concepts of the discipline
- Pedagogical content knowledge- representation of a subject via examples, illustrations, analogies, explanations, etc. to make it comprehensible to the learners
- Curricular knowledge- programs and materials available to teach

What does a teacher
need to BE in order to
be considered
“effective”?

A teacher needs to be..... (pick 5)

- A psychologist
- A friend
- An expert
- A counselor
- A cheerleader
- A coach
- A leader
- A spectator
- A bureaucrat
- An artist
- An evaluator
- A philosopher
- An actor/actress
- An orator
- A technician
- A revolutionary
- A disciplinarian
- A spiritual guide
- An organizer
- An administrator

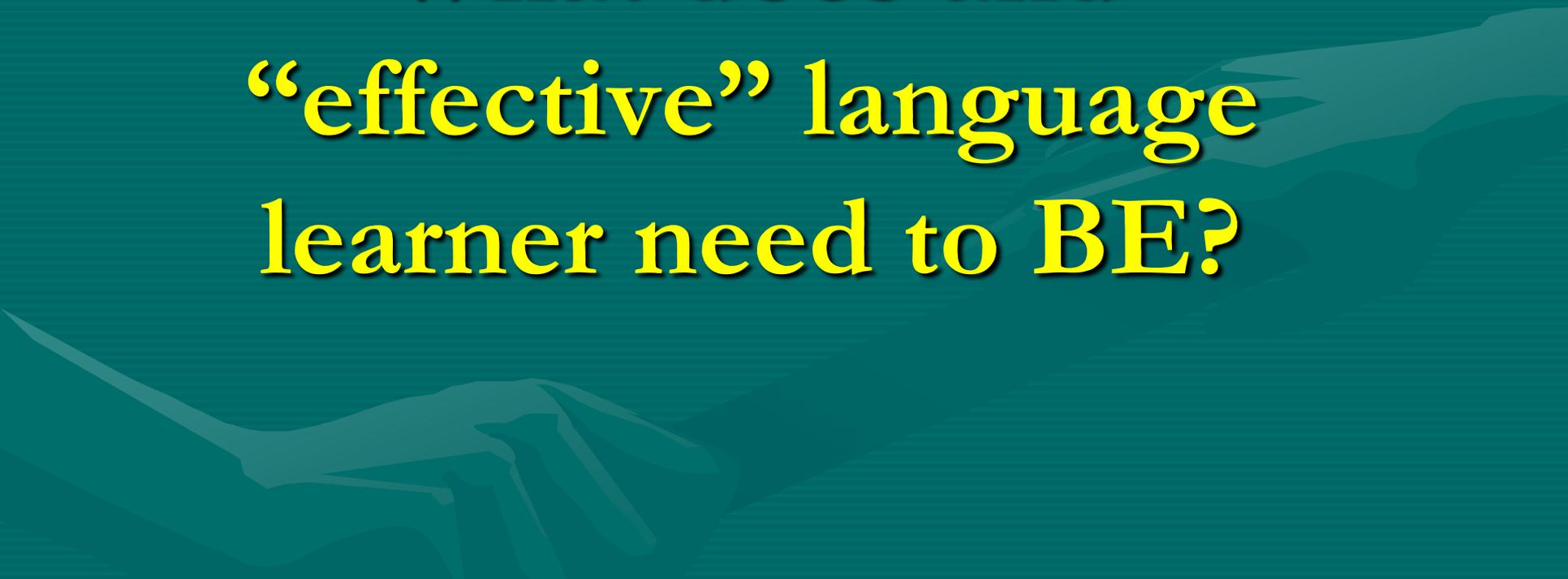
Flexible and Opportunistic (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1993)

- Effective teachers have a well-thought out classroom script they naturally follow, they are very flexible in following it, varying the script based on what learners actually do.
- Improvisation is key, but not at the expense of stated learning goals and priorities
- Effective teachers recognize and quickly exploit teachable moments

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) on “Effective Teachers”

- Effective teacher behavior is more dependent on “knowing how” than on “knowing that” (e.g. like the intuition-based rather than rule-based decisions made by drivers)
- Effectiveness is marked by an ability to focus on “the most important” (e.g. how chess champions focus in on the most promising moves and tests them whereas a computer tests out all possible moves)

**What does and
“effective” language
learner need to BE?**



Characteristics of an “Effective” Learner

- Risk Taking: High vs. Low
- Tolerance for Ambiguity (high vs. low)
- Field Dependence vs. Field Independence
- Right Brain Dominant vs. Left Brain Dominant

High vs. Low Tolerance for Ambiguity

- Tolerate ideas that run counter to their own ideas and beliefs
- More comfortable with unfamiliar and foreign situations
- More willing to engage in learning situations in which much of what's happening is beyond their comprehension
- Sometimes fail to relate the new with previously acquired knowledge and experience
- Reject ideas that run counter to their own ideas and beliefs
- Seek familiar situations or familiar characteristics in new, different situations
- Prefer learning situations which are within their grasp and dislike feeling overwhelmed by too much new information
- Sometimes fail to assimilate new grammatical patterns and words that don't make sense in their L1s

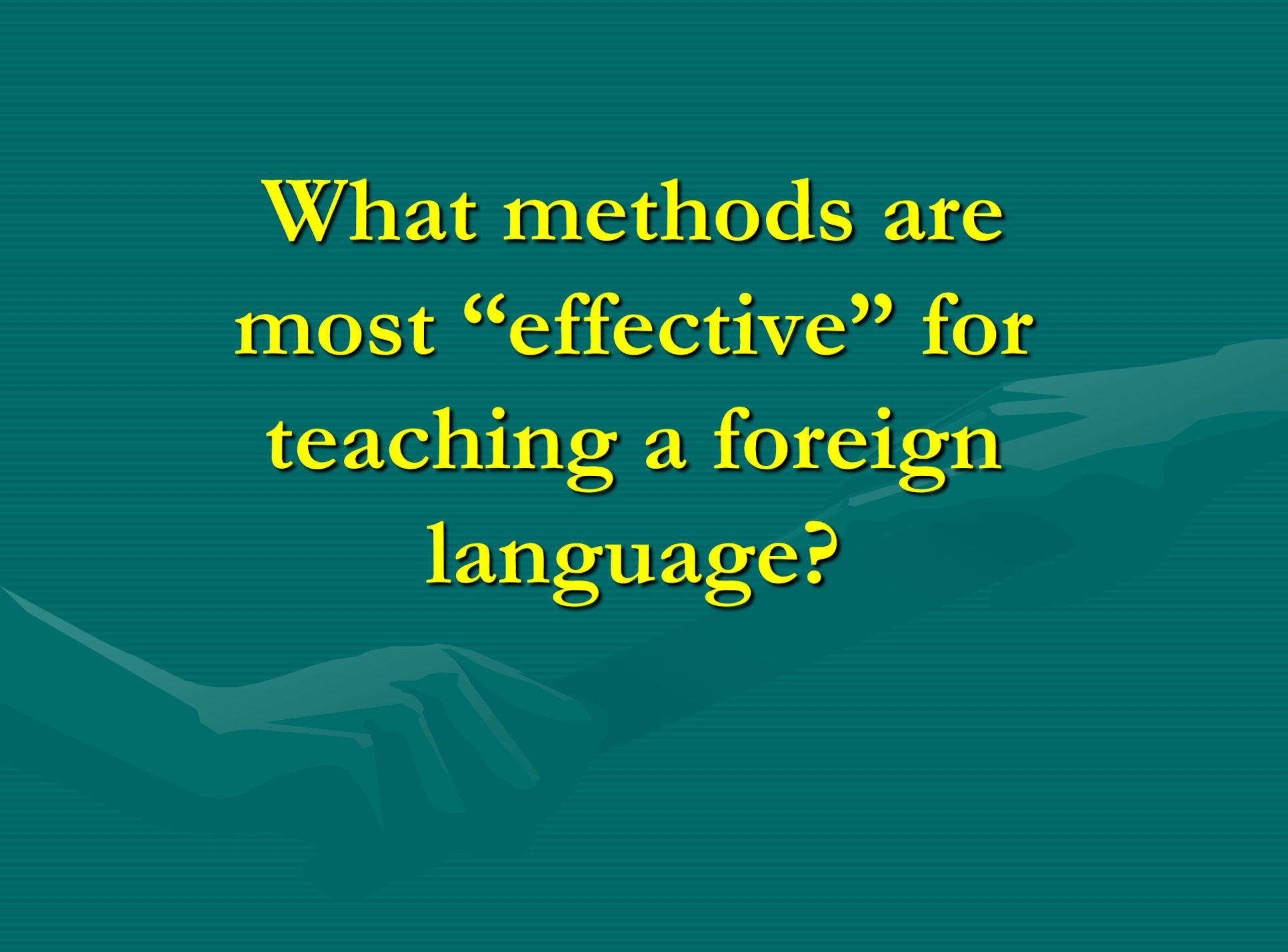
Field Independence-Field Dependence

- Ability to distinguish parts from wholes
- Can concentrate on things regardless of what's going on around them
- Can analyze individual parts without being distracted by other variables
- Do well in “traditional” classrooms
- Tend to see the whole picture
- Focus on how parts fit together and the relationships among parts
- Generally more social-dependent and less competitive
- Prefer to learn via communicative, interactive methods

Left-Brain Dominance Right-Brain Dominance

- Intellectual
 - Respond to verbal instructions, explanations
 - Make objective judgments
 - Patterned and structured
 - Analytical readers
 - Prefer talking and writing
 - Prefer multiple choice tests
 - Not sensitive to body language
 - Like logical problem solving activities
 - Rarely use metaphors
- Intuitive
 - Respond to demonstrated, illustrated, symbolic instructions
 - Make subjective judgments
 - Fluid and spontaneous
 - Synthesizing readers
 - Prefer drawing and manipulating objects
 - Prefer open-ended questions
 - Sensitive to body language
 - Favor intuitive problem solving
 - Frequently use metaphors

**What methods are
most “effective” for
teaching a foreign
language?**

The background of the slide is a dark teal color. In the lower half, there is a faint, semi-transparent image of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or partnership. The text is centered and written in a bold, yellow, serif font with a slight drop shadow.

The Saga of ever-changing Fads and Standards in Language learning (aka what does it mean to know a language?)

- Grammar Translation (focus on accuracy and comparing/contrasting characteristics of 2 or more languages)
- Audiolingualism (focus on developing language habits)
- Task-Based Learning (focus on carrying out meaningful tasks)
- Communicative Language Teaching (focus on interaction)
- English for Specific/Academic Purposes (focus on language needed for a particular job or discipline)
- Psychological Approaches (Suggestopedia, Counseling-Learning)
- Holistic Approaches (focus on learners' overall cognitive growth and well being, part of which is language based)
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (focus on teaching language while learning new concepts/skills in a particular field of study and visa versa)

**What are the characteristics
of an
“effective” language
learning lesson and
Classroom?**

Is an orderly, well-structured, focused and well-planned lesson a good lesson?

- What does it mean “to be on task”
- How do we know that students are on the same tasks as we think they are on? (King story)
- Is it possible to avoid a gap between “teacher intended meaning” and “student perceived meaning”?
- Is conformity necessary? (i.e. all learners on the same tasks at the same time?)
- Is chaos always counterproductive?

Effective Classrooms were marked by.....

- A clearly established set of “routines” that all participants recognized and used to effectively get to the business at hand (i.e. learning)
- The gradual introduction of materials and tasks presented in a hierarchal order, the later building on and incorporating what was previously learned/taught
- The incorporation of student backgrounds and experiences to learn/acquire new skills and understandings.
- An emphasis on practice and application throughout the learning process. (Tsui, 2003)

Is there a “universal” definition of “effectiveness” (both for teaching and learning) that transcends borders, cultures, ages, learning purposes, learning styles, etc.?

What else do you need to know **BEFORE** beginning to address this issue? Case Study 1:

It's the third week of a secondary school English class that you are teaching. You meet with the students daily for 45 minutes. It's a relatively large class with 37 students. There are three students, all boys, who are consistently making trouble. They are rarely "on task" and constantly trying to lead the others off task as well. They generally succeed. The others are impressed by the antics and appear to be increasingly willing to follow their lead.

Effectiveness is context-bound (Berliner, 1994)

- Effectiveness does not transcend contexts- expertise is contingent on a well-defined domain and in particular contexts
- Effective teachers and learners work to create contexts marked by efficient routines, high expectations, maximal use of allocated time
- Effective teachers know their contexts well, including
 - The cognitive abilities of their learners
 - The personal attributes of their learners (learning styles, interests backgrounds, etc.)

Sensitive to task demands and social situations in problem solving

- Effective teachers need information about the students they are to teach before they can practice their profession (**the student context**)
- Effective teachers need information on the **social context** (curricular and examination demands, societal view of education, employment situation) before they can practice their profession.
- Effective teachers read into the social cues and task-related demands of a **classroom context** and tailor their instructional techniques accordingly

References

- * Bereiter, C. and Scardamalia, M. (1993). *Surpassing Ourselves- An Inquiry into the Nature and Implications of Expertise*. Illinois: Open Court
- Berliner, D. (1994). The Wonder of Exemplary Performances in J.N Bangieri and C.C. Block, *Creating Powerful Thinking in Teachers and Students*, NY, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Naiman et al. (1978). *The Good Language Learner*, NY, Holt Rinehart and Winston
- Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand knowledge *and growth in teaching*. Educational Researcher, 15 (2), 4-14.
- Tsui, A.B.M. (2003). *Understanding Expertise in Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press