

Five Characteristics of Highly Effective Spanish Teachers: Empirical Findings

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What does it mean to be an Effective Teacher ?



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Posted at 12:49 PM ET, 07/15/2011

More than 200 D.C. teachers fired

By [Bill Turque](#)

UPDATE 4:05 p.m. This item has been updated to reflect a new count of the total number of teachers fired for poor ratings--206, not 227. Also, the tally of teachers fired in 2010 for poor ratings is now given as 75, not 126.

The District fired 206 teachers for poor performance Friday, the second year in a row it has dismissed significant numbers of educators for

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Highly Qualified and Highly Effective

Highly Qualified speaks to how well teachers understand their content and is often measured by an individual's completed coursework.

Highly Effective, however, is different way of thinking as it moves toward the focus of a teacher's performance with students (Stumbo & McWalters, 2010).

Clearly, it is their work with students that makes the difference, but how is their work measured?

Research suggests...

- Traditionally, researchers posit that highly effective teachers have the necessary certification, content area knowledge and strong verbal and cognitive abilities (Goodwin, 2010).
- Effective teachers demonstrate (1) passion about children and teaching, (2) perseverance, (3) risk taking, (4) pragmatism, (5) patience, (6) flexibility, (7) respect, (8) creativity, (9) authenticity, (10) love of learning, (11) high energy, and (12) sense of humor (Colker, 2008)

Still Others Suggest that Effective Teachers...

- have a strong sense of efficacy in teaching their content
(Woolfolk Hoy, 2000)
- match learning styles to instruction (Kolb, 1981)
- self-reflect on their practice (Adams & Pierce, 1992)

What tangible factors of teachers are important to study?

- Teacher credentials
 - level of degrees, type of certification, years of experience, completion, specific coursework, quality of preparation program, and teachers' own test scores on various examinations.
- However, little effect has been shown (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004; Rice, 2003; Wayne & Youngs, 2003).
- Collectively, such characteristics = 3% of differences
- For example, in years 1-3 differences are found between novices and veterans. After year 5, differences are not distinguishable (Rice, 2003; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005)

What about Intangible Factors?

These qualities focus on the positive personality traits.

- Caring, respect, motivation, perseverance, enthusiasm, leadership and dedication (Brown, Morehead, & Smith, 2008; Farr, 2010; Goldhaber, 2002; Goodwin, 2010)
- Grit – one's perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth, 2007)
- Optimistic Disposition
- Career Satisfaction (Swanson, 2008, 2012)
- Leadership style

Five Characteristics

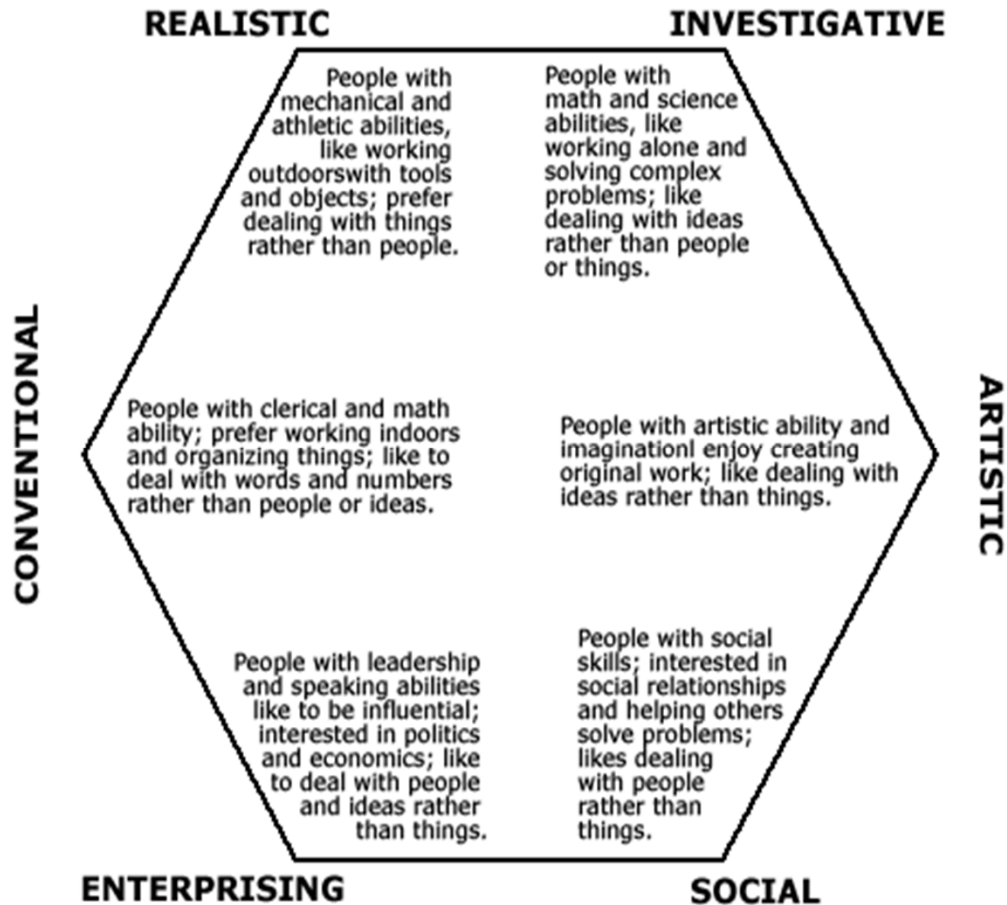


Person / Environment Fit

In our culture, most person are one of six personality types: **Realistic**, **Investigative**, **Artistic**, **Social**, **Enterprising**, and **Conventional**.

2. People of the same personality tend to "flock together." For example, Artistic people are attracted to making friends and working with Artistic people.
3. People of the same personality type working together in a job create a work environment that fits their type. For example, when Artistic persons are together on a job, they create a work environment that rewards creative thinking and behavior - an Artistic environment.
4. There are six basic types of work environments: **Realistic**, **Investigative**, **Artistic**, **Social**, **Enterprising**, and **Conventional**.
5. People who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be satisfied and successful
6. How you act and feel at work depends to a large extent on your workplace environment.

Holland Hexagon



Person / Workplace Environment Fit



Person



Workplace

Social

- Careful
- Conforming
- Orderly
- Obedient
- Persistent
- Thrifty
- Practical

Artistic

- Complicated
- Emotional
- Expressive
- Independent
- Intuitive
- Original

Social

- Careful
- Conforming
- Orderly
- Obedient
- Persistent
- Thrifty
- Practical

Realistic

- Genuine
- Inflexible
- Natural
- Realistic
- Robust
- Reserved
- Practical

Investigative

- Analytical
- Cautious
- Curious
- Precise
- Rational
- Reserved
- Unassuming

Enterprising

- Acquisitive
- Adventurous
- Assertive
- Extroverted
- Forceful
- Self-confident
- Resourceful

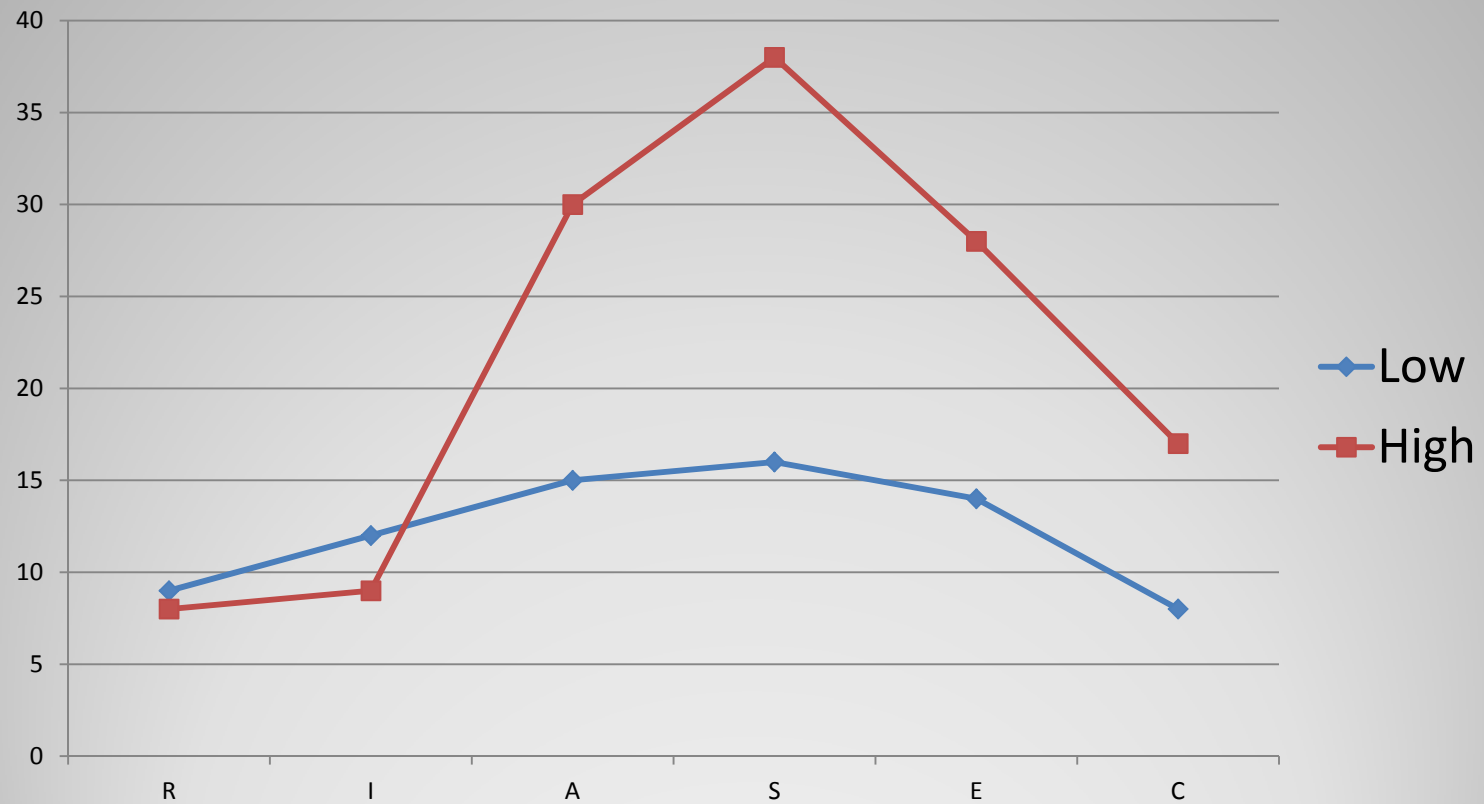
Self-Directed Search Inventory

- Three sections:
 - Activities (like/dislike)
 - Competencies (have/do not have)
 - self-rating of different skills.
- To determine the interest profile (a.k.a Holland code), an individual totals the number of items for each of the six domains.
- An individual's interest profile is determined by rank ordering the totals for the six subscales from the highest (50 points maximum) to the lowest (0 points minimum).
- **Holland (1997) recommends** working only with the **first three highest-ranked domains** for smaller studies because extremely large samples are needed for empirical studies using all six classifications.

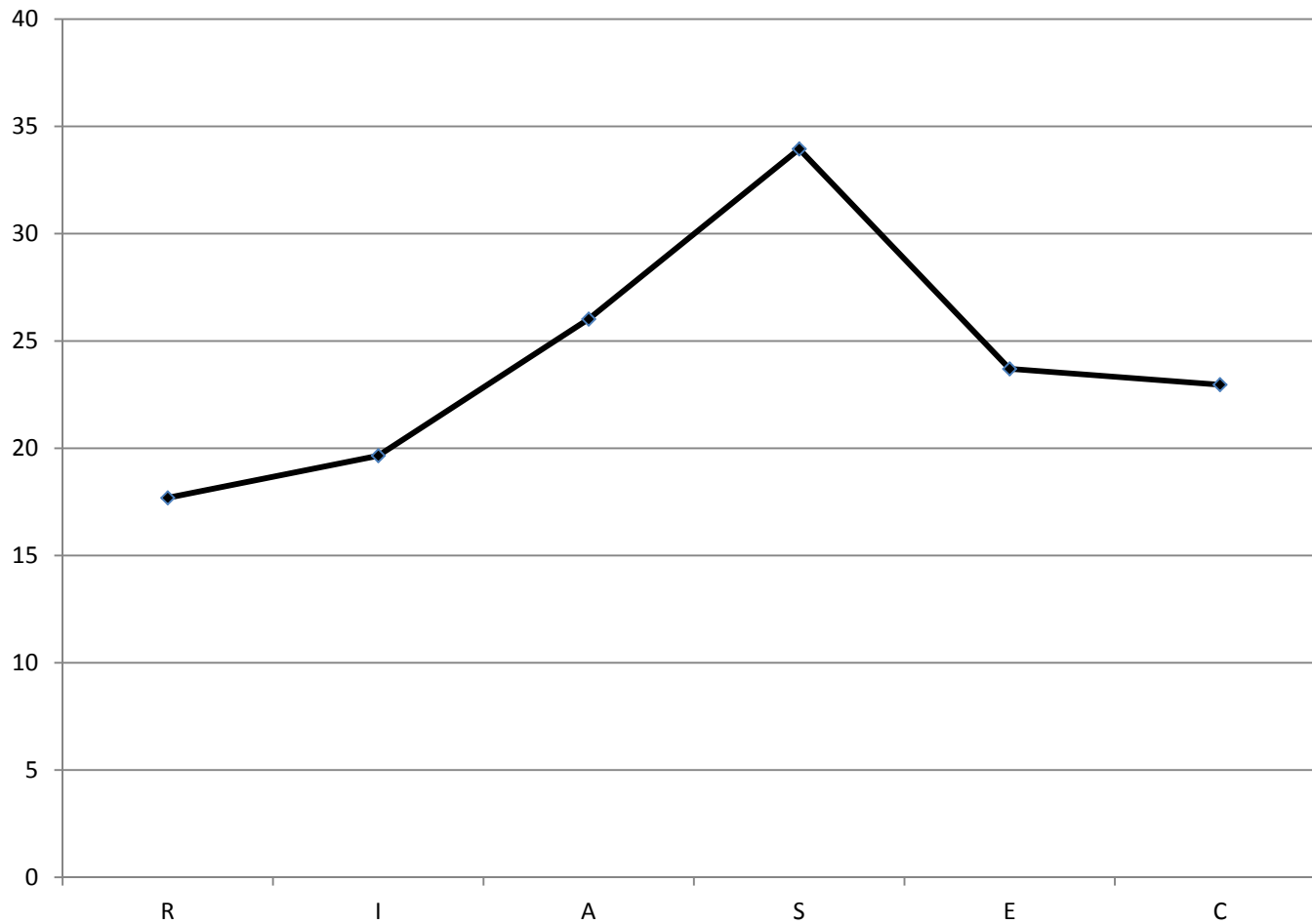
Moving toward a Personality Pattern

1. Consistency
 - Adjacent points on the hexagon are deemed most consistent. That is, some pairs are more closely related than others.
2. Congruency
 - the hexagon defines the degrees of congruence between person and environment.
3. Differentiation – the variance of interests

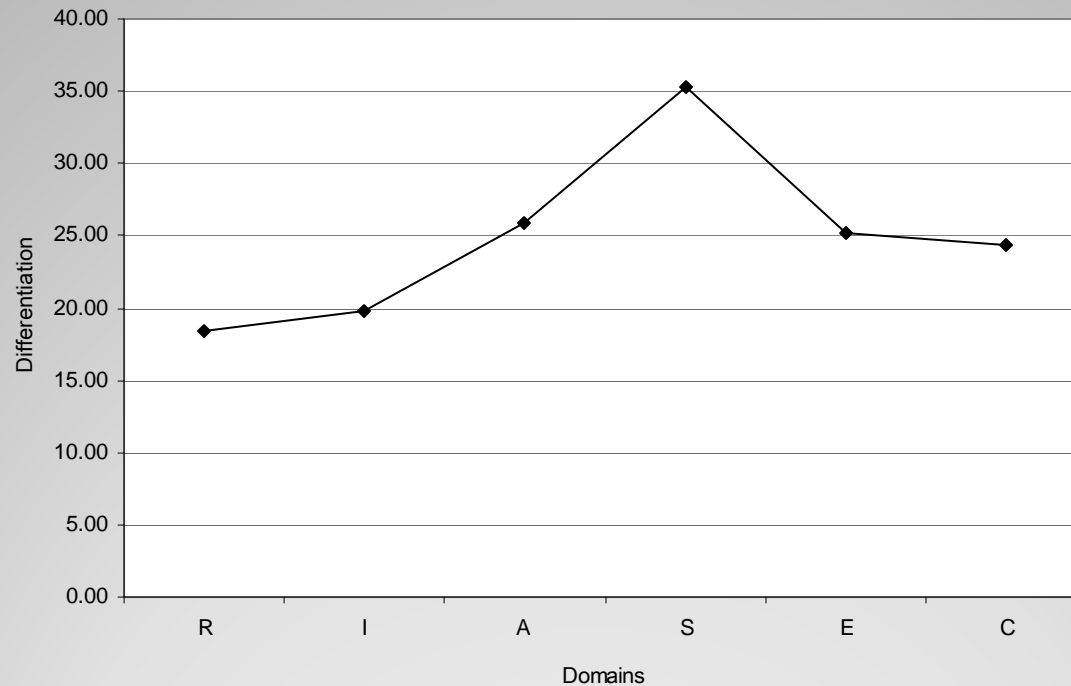
Differentiation Example



US and Canadian S/FL Teachers



Wyoming Language Teachers



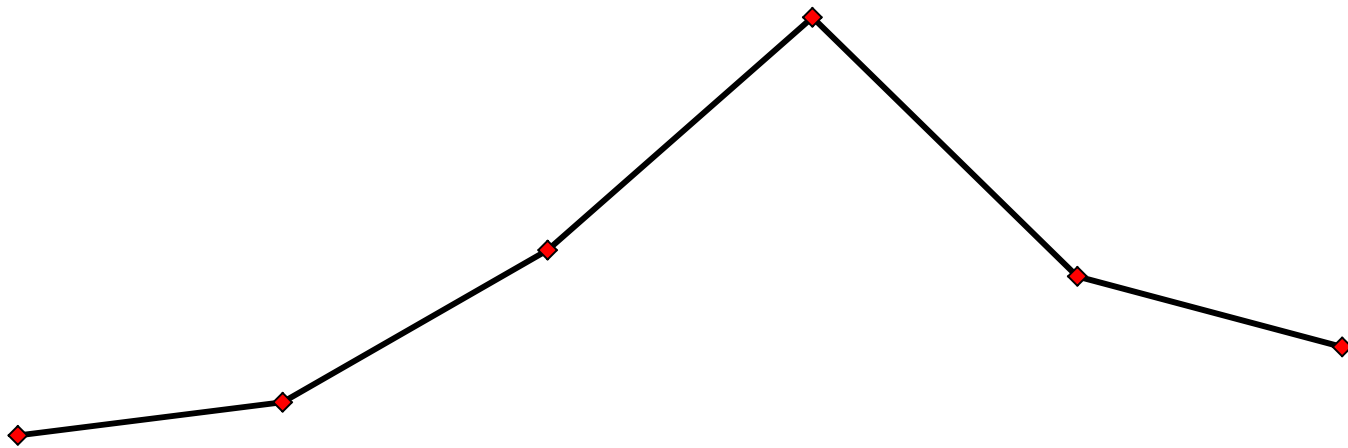
N = 82 Females 78%

Caucasian (71%) Latino (24%) African American (5%)

Swanson (2008)

Virginia

—◆— Series1



R

I

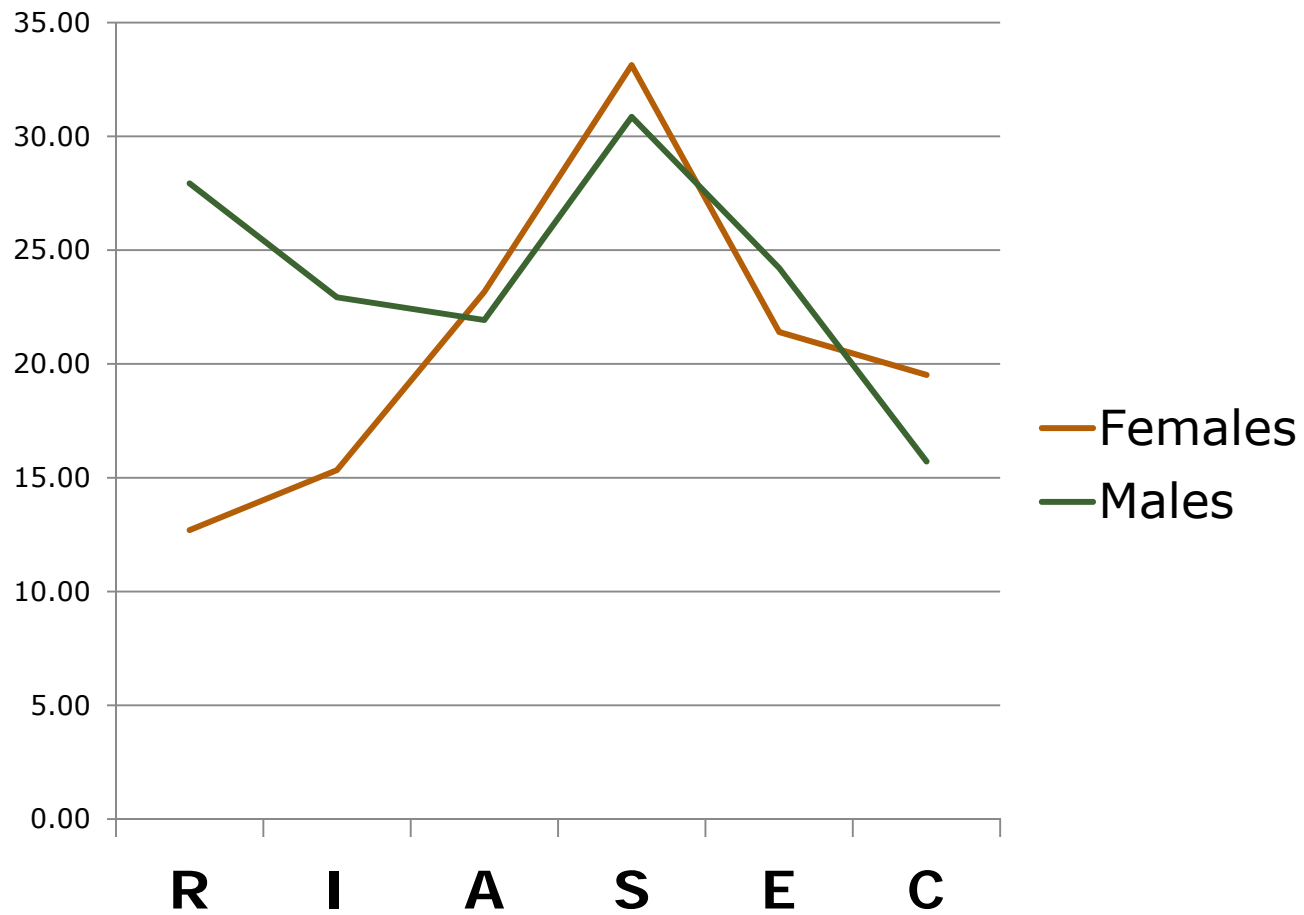
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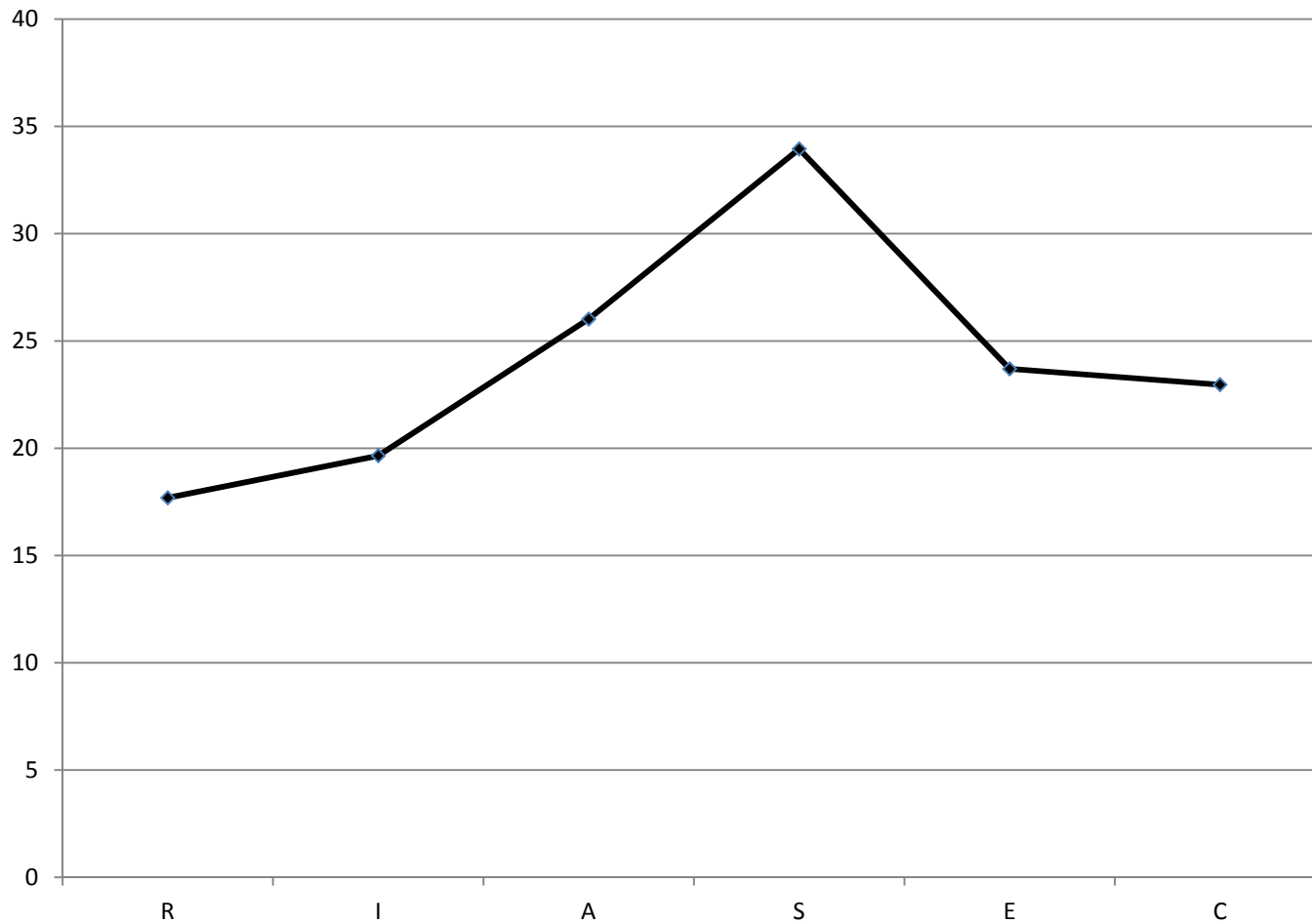
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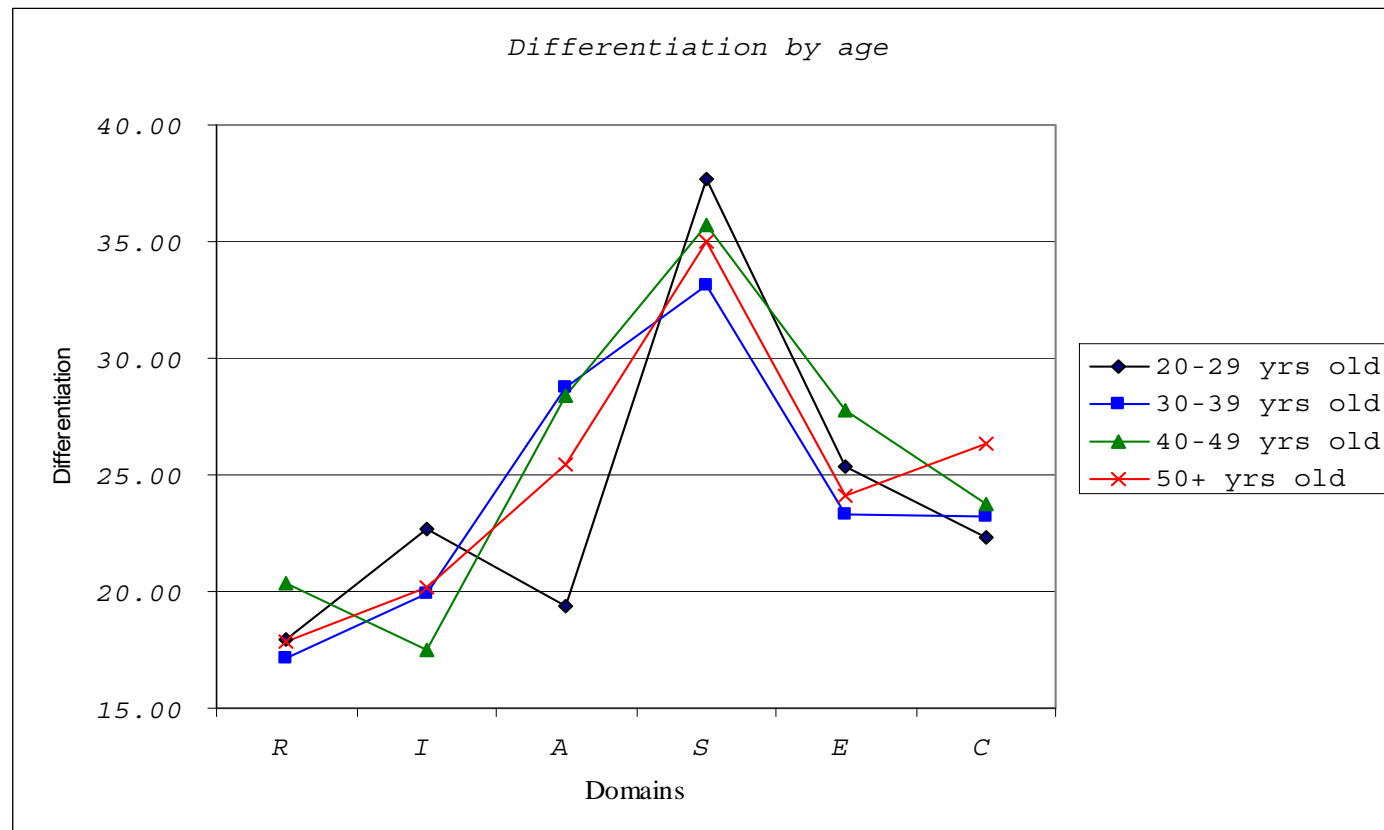
Language Teachers in Georgia



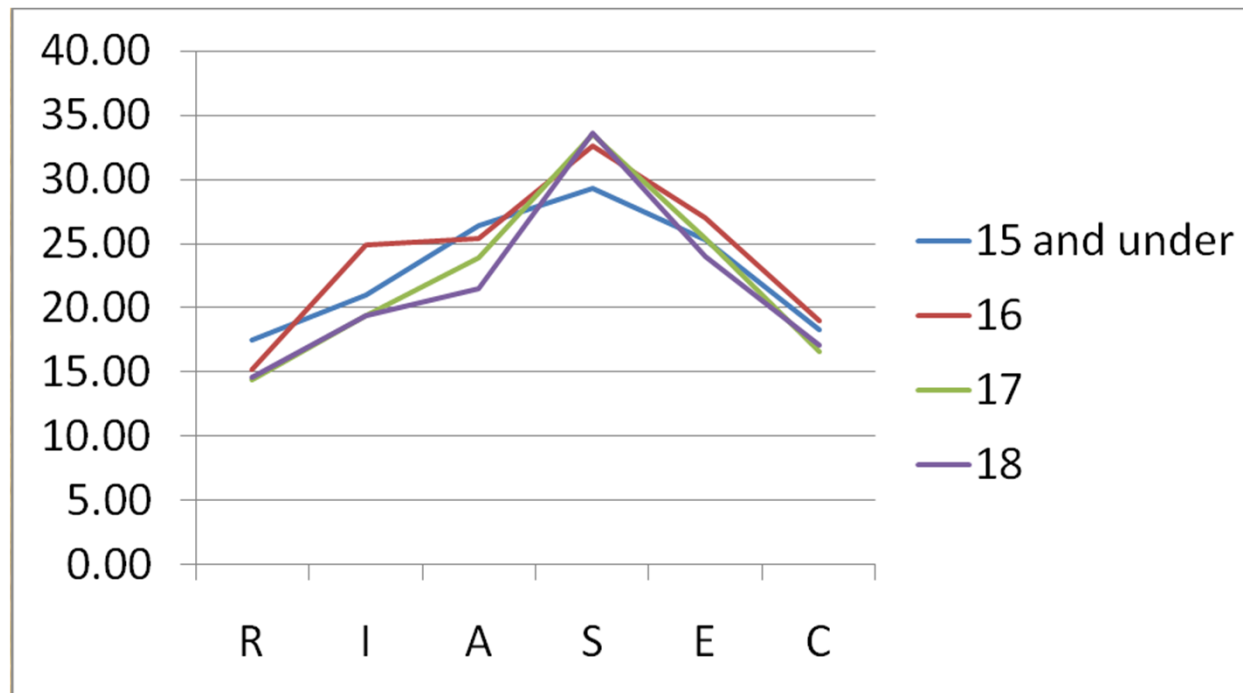
US and Canadian S/FL Teachers



Age Group Personality Differences



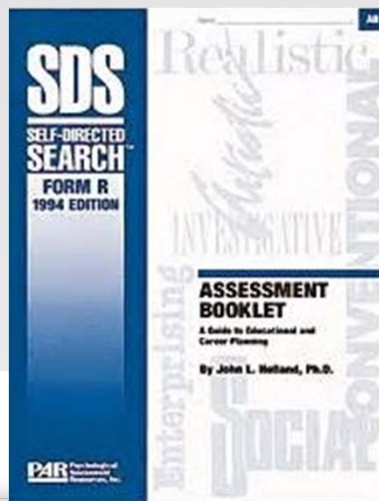
Adolescents



Study 2

How are people's vocational interests related to the sense of efficacy?

1. Self-Directed Search interest inventory (Holland, 1986)
2. The Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran, 2001)



Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Teachers' beliefs partly determine how they structure academic activities and shape students' evaluations of their intellectual capabilities (Bandura, 1997)

Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe that difficult students are teachable and that they can overcome environmental challenges.

Teachers with a low sense of efficacy believe that there is little they can do if students are unmotivated and that environmental forces are beyond their control.

An Increased Sense of Self-Efficacy is associated with:

- **Teachers' willingness to implement innovations** (Guskey, 1988; Rangel, 1997; Smylie, 1988)
- **Classroom management strategies** (Ashton & Webb, 1986)
- **Teachers' persistence when things are not going well and their resilience in the face of setbacks** (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001)
- **Teachers' capacity to be less critical of students when they err** (Ashton & Webb, 1986)
- **Teachers with a greater sense of efficacy demonstrate greater commitment to and enthusiasm for teaching** (Coladarci, 1992; Hall, Burley, Villeme, & Brockmeier, 1992)
- **Teachers embracing communicative language teaching** (Swanson, 2014)
- **Teacher satisfaction and longevity in the profession** (Swanson, 2010, 2012)



Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

Teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning (Woolfolk Hoy, 2000)

Four Sources:

- Mastery Experiences
- Vicarious Learning
- Verbal Persuasion
- Physiological Responses



Teachers' Sense of Efficacy

General Education

Instructional Strategy
Classroom Management
Student Engagement

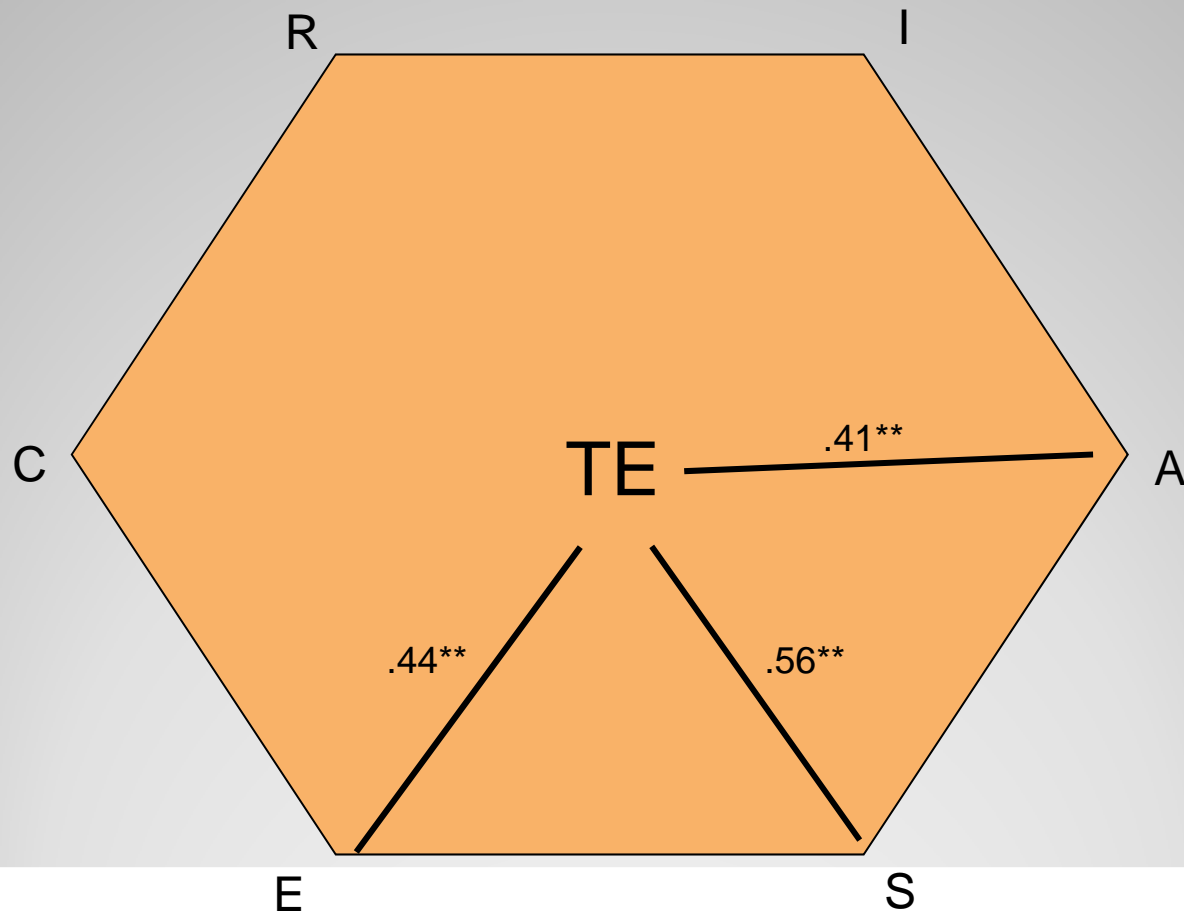
(Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001)

Language Teachers

Content Knowledge
Teacher as Facilitator
Cultural Instruction

(Swanson, 2012)

Language Teachers' Interests as they Relate to Sense of Efficacy



** $p < .01$

Study 3

Teachers' Sense of Humor

- humor as a pedagogical tool can enhance self-esteem, increase self-motivation, reduce classroom anxiety, and promote higher level thinking skills, which are factors that can facilitate learning (Berk, 1996; Evans-Palmer, 2010)
- teacher enthusiasm shows a strong relationship to student success (Cabello & Terrell, 1994) and that using and/or having a sense of humor is associated with long-term retention of course material and better information recall (Glenn, 2002; Hill, 1988)
- teacher use of humor has been found to improve classroom climate, increase student-teacher rapport and student motivation, and reduce tension (Aboudan, 2009; Fisher, 1997; Kher, Molstad, & Donahue, 1999; Loomax & Moosavi, 1998; Provine, 2002)

Teachers with a Sense of Humor can...

- ease nervousness, particularly concerning difficult topics or in situations that are commonly perceived by students to be anxiety-producing (e.g., exams)
(Berk, 1996; Kher et al., 1999)
- have a humanizing effect to the image of the teacher (Torok, McMorris,&Lin, 2004)
- facilitate student motivation, attention, and even comprehension of the course material (Torok, McMorris,&Lin, 2004)
- allow students' brains to take an educational break so that students can process and internalize information (Kher et al., 1999)

Hill (1988) noted that “one of the most important functions of humor is to create a positive learning environment” (p. 20)

Factors Associated with Humor

1. Recognition of oneself as humorous
2. Recognition of others' humor
3. Appreciation of humor
4. Coping humor (Thorson & Powell, 1993a)



2013 Empirical Findings

- How do the teachers who choose to administer the NSEs to their students rate their level of efficacy in teaching Spanish / **sense of humor**?
- What is the relationship between the teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching Spanish / **sense of humor** and their students' scores on the NSEs?
- What is the relationship between the teachers' level of efficacy in teaching Spanish / **sense of humor** and their choice to remain or leave the profession?

Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale

- 24 items (reliability = 0.92)
- 5-point Likert format (0= Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree)
- Four subscales:
 - Humor Production and Social Uses of Humor
 - Adaptive/ Coping humor
 - Humor Appreciation
 - Attitudes toward Humor

Item no.

- Q1 Sometimes I think up jokes or funny stories.
- Q2 Uses of wit or humour help me master difficult situations.
- Q3 I'm confident that I can make other people laugh.
- Q4 I dislike comics.
- Q5 Other people tell me that I say funny things.
- Q6 I can use wit to help adapt to many situations.
- Q7 I can ease a tense situation by saying something funny.
- Q8 People who tell jokes are a pain in the neck.
- Q9 I can often crack people up with the things I say.
- Q10 I like a good joke.
- Q11 Calling somebody a 'comedian' is a real insult.
- Q12 I can say things in such a way as to make people laugh.
- Q13 Humour is a lousy coping mechanism.
- Q14 I appreciate those who generate humour.
- Q15 People look to me to say amusing things.
- Q16 Humour helps me cope.
- Q17 I'm uncomfortable when everyone is cracking jokes.
- Q18 I'm regarded as something of a wit by my friends.
- Q19 Coping by using humour is an elegant way of adapting.
- Q20 Trying to master situations through uses of humour is really dumb.
- Q21 I can actually have some control over a group by my uses of humour.
- Q22 Uses of humour help to put me at ease.
- Q23 I can use humour to entertain my friends.
- Q24 My clever sayings amuse others.

S/FL Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

- 14 items (reliability = .91)
- 0 (no confidence) to 100 (absolute confidence)
- Three subscales:
 - Content Knowledge
 - Teacher as Facilitator
 - Cultural Instruction

1. How confident are you that you can:	Rating 0 - 100
a. help your students learn at the first year of Spanish?	
b. help your students learn at highest levels of Spanish?	
2. How confident are you in your own knowledge of Spanish that you can accomplish the following:	
a. lower your student's anxiety about learning Spanish?	
b. motivate your students to learn about Spanish?	
c. foster your students' interest about learning Spanish?	
d. increase student achievement in your Spanish classes?	
3. How much confidence do you have in your ability to:	
a. have a conversation with a native speaker in Spanish?	
b. read and understand a newspaper printed in Spanish?	
c. write a personal letter to a pen pal in Spanish?	
d. fully understand a movie that only uses Spanish?	
4. How confident are you that you can demonstrate to your students an understanding of ...	
a. the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied (Spanish and Latin America)?	
b. the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied (Spanish and Latin America)?	



National Spanish Examinations

- Mission of the NSE is "to recognize student achievement and to promote language proficiency in the study of Spanish"
- Online standardized assessments (grades 6-12, seven levels) that are the most widely used tests of Spanish in the United States
- NSEs are inexpensive (\$3/student)
- Measure Achievement (vocabulary and grammar = 200 pts) and Proficiency (reading and listening = 200 pts)
- **Total = 400 points**

Teacher Efficacy Sample

- Spanish Teachers filled out surveys ($n = 182$)
- 90% female
- Caucasian (79%) and Latino/a(13%)
- Graduate degrees (78% master's degree 2% doctorate)
- 89% studied abroad for average 7 months
- 90% taught Spanish, 10% Spanish & French
- Taught public in schools (58%)
- 95 teachers gave NSEs to all students ($N = 4831$) instead of best or those willing to take it.

Humor Sample

- Spanish Teachers filled out surveys ($N = 102$)
- Teachers gave NSEs to all students ($N = 5419$) instead of best or those willing to take it.

MANOVA

Compared Students' Scores for Teachers in **Low**
and **High** Quartiles

Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale

S/FL Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

Low

Moderately Low

Moderately High

High

Students' Scores on National Spanish Exams

Findings

- Both surveys had strong reliability coefficients. NSEs too!
- Overall, teachers expressed strongest sense of efficacy in:
 - writing a personal letter in the target language(s)
 - reading and understanding a newspaper printed in another country in the target language(s) taught.
- The two lowest ratings were found for two cultural instruction items:
 - the ability to teach about the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied
 - the ability to teach how people from different countries and cultures perceive the world around them.

Table 2

Mean Differences between Students' Scores on the NSEs and Spanish Teachers' Sense of Efficacy in Teaching Spanish.

	S/FLTES	Teacher as Facilitator	Content Knowledge	Cultural Instruction	TSES	Student Engagement	Classroom Management	Instructional Strategy
Achievement	7.90 ^{***}	8.69 ^{***}	13.00 ^{***}	10.20 ^{***}	3.09 [*]	.13	9.07 ^{***}	1.87
Proficiency	5.36 ^{***}	18.22 ^{***}	6.86 ^{***}	4.28 ^{***}	5.03 ^{***}	8.07 ^{***}	16.96 ^{***}	8.17 ^{***}
Total Exam	13.26 ^{***}	26.91 ^{***}	19.86 ^{***}	14.48 ^{***}	1.94	7.93 [*]	26.03 ^{***}	6.29

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Gains of: 7%

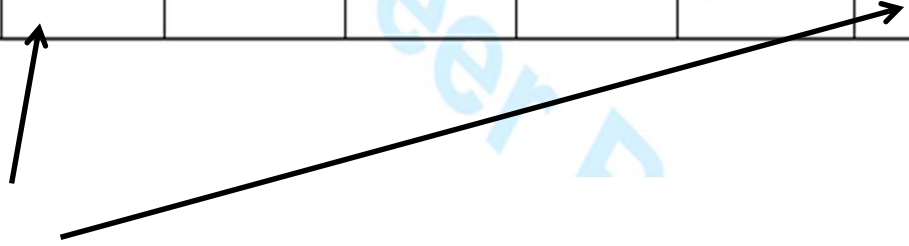


Table 2: Perceived Sense of Humor Sub-scores and Students' Scores on the NSEs

	Humor Production and Social Uses of Humor			Adaptive/Coping Humor			Humor Appreciation			Attitudes toward Humor		
	Q ₁	Q ₄	Mean Difference	Q ₁	Q ₄	Mean Difference	Q ₁	Q ₄	Mean Difference	Q ₁	Q ₄	Mean Difference
Achievement	103.24 (35.86)	133.95 (41.87)	30.71*	104.10 (36.44)	112.05 (46.04)	7.95*	112.05 (46.04)	106.44 (38.72)	19.64*	106.59 (34.75)	125.66 (34.95)	19.08*
Proficiency	128.18 (37.66)	133.36 (32.41)	5.18	117.71 (38.76)	130.18 (41.01)	12.47*	130.18 (41.01)	121.75 (39.26)	15.28*	128.35 (31.06)	137.67 (31.06)	9.32*
Total Exam	231.42 (66.87)	267.32 (66.68)	35.89*	221.81 (66.26)	242.23 (81.66)	20.43*	242.23 (81.66)	228.19 (69.28)	34.92*	234.93 (62.98)	263.34 (60.79)	28.40*

*p<.05

Gains of: 5-9%

Study 4

Socio-Communicative Orientation

Effective teachers must be Competent Communicators. To do so, teachers must:

- develop a bond and familiarity between themselves and their students;
- Create a common identity between teacher and students;
- Gain and maintain student attention by combining verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

The creation of such an interpersonal relationship fosters a two-way process in which teachers must be able to perceive and respond to the students' reaction to his or her communication.

Socio-Communicative Orientation

The literature shows that researchers have studied communication in terms of:

- **instructors' use of the students' first language and exclusive use of the target language** (Auerbach, 1993; Duff & Polio, 1990; Macaro, 2001; Phillipson, 1992; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 1999; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002)
- **code switching** (Ellis, 1984; Gearon, 1998; Wong-Fillmore, 1985)
- **teacher talk** (Hall, 1995; Nunan, 1991; Wong-Fillmore, 1985)
- **rates of speech and teachers pauses** (Griffiths, 1990; Hakansson, 1986; Wesche & Ready, 1985)
- **teachers' difficulties using the target language for instruction** (Morris, 1998)
- **language teachers' beliefs about fundamental concepts underlying the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning** (Allen, 2002)

However, what about teacher effectiveness as it relates to teacher communication?

Three Elements of Communication Competence

1. **Assertiveness** – a person's general tendency to be interpersonally dominant, ascendant, and forceful (Thompson & Klopf, 1991)

It manifests in requests, active disagreement, expression of feelings, initiation and maintenance of conversations, standing up for oneself, and statements of opinion with conviction.

2. **Responsiveness** - a person's capacity and willingness to be sensitive to the communication of other people by recognizing the others' needs and wishes (Thompson & Klopf, 1991)

Seen as having good listening skills, making others comfortable in speaking situations, mindful of the needs of other people, and have the willingness to be open to ideas of others.

3. Cognitive Flexibility - one's...

- *awareness* that in any given situation there are options and alternatives available
- *willingness* to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and
- *self-efficacy* or belief that one has the ability to be flexible (Martin & Anderson, 1998)

While balancing Assertiveness and Responsiveness in order to initiate and sustain effective interpersonal communication, competent communicators must have a high degree of flexibility.

Low Responsiveness

Low Assertiveness	Non-Competent	Aggressive	High Assertiveness
	Submissive	Competent	

High Responsiveness

<i>Socio-Communicative Orientation</i>	M	SD
(1) Helpful (R)	4.58	.83
(12) Sincere (R)	4.50	.70
(17) Friendly (R)	4.44	.64
(8) Compassionate (R)	4.43	.67
(4) Responsive to others (R)	4.41	.64
(3) Independent (A)	4.39	.71
(10) Sensitive to the needs of others (R)	4.35	.67
(7) Sympathetic (R)	4.33	.71
(18) Acts as a leader (A)	4.18	.72
(14) Willing to take a stand (A)	4.15	.73
(2) Defends own beliefs (A)	4.12	.76
(15) Warm (R)	4.09	.84
(9) Assertive (A)	3.91	.85
(6) Has Strong Personality (A)	3.73	1.04
(13) Gentle (R)	3.61	.91
(16) Tender (R)	3.57	.98
(20) Competitive (A)	3.50	1.12
(5) Forceful (A)	3.13	1.04
(11) Dominant (A)	2.94	1.12
(19) Aggressive (A)	2.49	1.10

R – Responsive subscale item, A – Assertiveness subscale item

Socio-Communicative Orientation

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Socio-Communicative Orientation and Cognitive Flexibility Scales and Student Performance on the NSEs.

Socio-Communicative Orientation	Total Exam		Achievement Subtest		Proficiency Subtest	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Competent (<i>n</i> = 3440)	243.32*	63.33	114.82*	37.85	128.50*	31.89
Aggressive (<i>n</i> = 2957)	229.51	62.87	107.60	37.63	121.91	31.71
Submissive (<i>n</i> = 2961)	231.71	62.76	108.64	37.33	123.07	31.59
Non-Competent (<i>n</i> = 1885)	220.73	64.06	103.61	38.53	117.12	32.54

Cognitive Flexibility	Total Exam		Achievement Subtest		Proficiency Subtest	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Competent (<i>n</i> = 3440)	237.84*	63.66	108.91*	37.99	128.93*	32.04
Aggressive (<i>n</i> = 2957)	232.56	63.47	107.24	37.93	125.32	31.91
Submissive (<i>n</i> = 2961)	230.46	63.11	107.89	37.47	122.57	31.80
Non-Competent (<i>n</i> = 1885)	224.70	64.58	103.58	37.56	121.12	32.73

p < .001

5.6%

11%

10%

Motivational Orientation

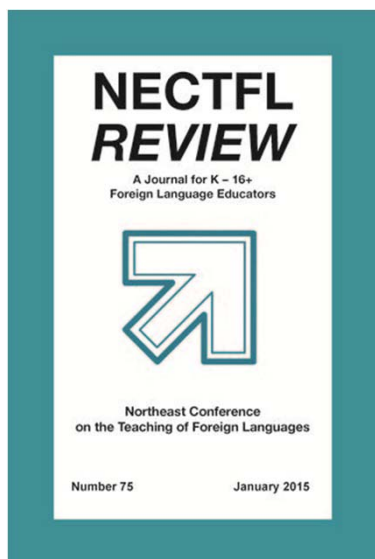
- **The Problems in Schools Questionnaire (PIS)** assesses whether teachers tend to be controlling versus autonomy supportive with their students.
- The PIS measures are composed of 8 vignettes, followed by four different behavioral options for dealing with the problem that is posed in the vignette:
 - Highly Autonomy Supportive
 - Moderately Autonomy Supportive
 - Moderately Controlling
 - Highly Controlling
- Respondents rate the degree of appropriateness of each of the four options (on a seven-point scale) for each of the eight situations. Thus, there are a total of 32 ratings.

**4% Difference between Controlling
and Autonomy Supporting Teaching**

Discussion



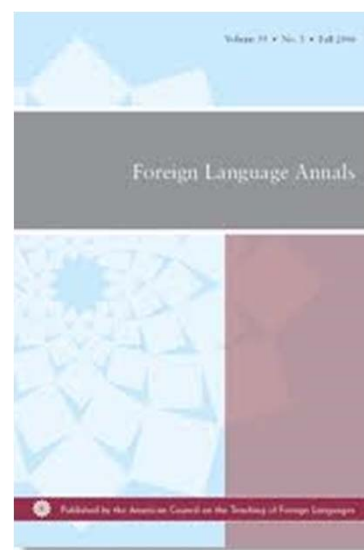
More Detailed Information



2008



2012



2013



2014



Electronic Journal of
Foreign Language Teaching

2015

USAFA STUDY

Using Grit and Coping Skills to determine L2
Success

Five Characteristics of Highly Effective Spanish Teachers: Empirical Findings

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