Pulverness, A. (Ed.) (2002). *IATEFL 2002: York Conference Selections*.
      Whitstable, Kent: IATEFL, 75-78.

A slightly revised version, in which the references and bibliography (omitted in this volume) have been restored, is available from:

ERIC:
http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/22/33/37.pdf

and

The *Teacher Trainers and Educators* ITEFL Special Interest Group website:
http://www.dudeney.com/iatefl/ttedsig/resources/articles/31.doc

4.3 The shape of the language teacher

Costas Gabrielatos *Lancaster University, England*

Introduction

There are two broad views on what makes a language teacher effective. One focuses on teachers' language and methodological knowledge/skills, the other on teachers' personality. Here I present a framework which:

- reconciles these views, giving equal weight to all elements
- proposes a way to visualise their interrelations
- takes into account research findings indicating that teachers' practices are mostly influenced by their *interpretation* of methodologies.

Elements

I have expanded Julian Edge's term 'person-who-teaches[1] into 'person-who-teaches-language'. Each word points towards an indispensable element in a language teacher's profile (Fig. 1).

PERSON	TEACHES	LANGUAGE
↓	↓	↓
Personality	Methodology: knowledge and skills	Language: knowledge and use

Fig I
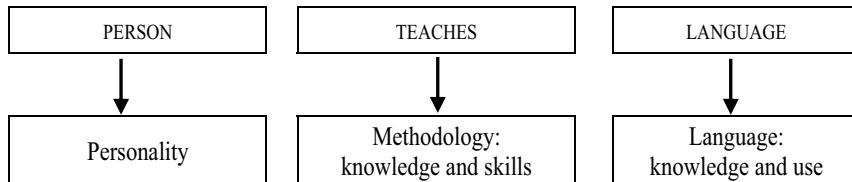
The following tables show the key aspects of each element.

Personality

• Self-awareness • Interpersonal skills • Ability to observe, think critically, use experience • Sensitivity to context	• Attitude towards change, development, diversity, quality, co-operation, authority • Perception of learning, teacher/learner roles, development

Methodology

| *Knowledge*	*Skills*
• Views on methodology • Available materials • Own views on learning/teaching	• Seeing implications of theory • Planning and teaching • Balancing support and challenge • Action research

Language

Knowledge	*Skills*
• Views on language • Awareness of own views on language	• Own language use • Ability to see the implications of language analysis, draw conclusions from own contact with language • Sensitivity to learners' language level

There is some overlap between the elements. For example, teachers' perception/knowledge of language will influence their teaching; their general level of self-awareness will affect their awareness of their beliefs about language/learning.

Interrelations

This framework depicts a teacher's effectiveness as the area of a triangle, with each side representing the degree of development of an element (Fig. 2). The larger the area, the higher the effectiveness.
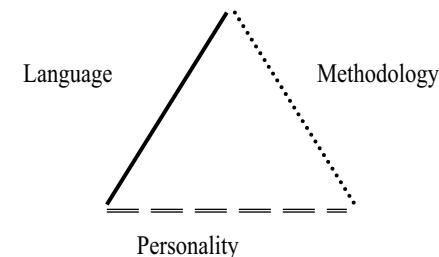
Fig. 2

Apart from comparing different triangles, it Is also helpful to compare the sides of individual triangles, that is, examine the *relative degree of development* of each element.

1 **All elements are *equally* developed.** They are utilised to their full capacity and combined to maximum effect (Fig. 2).

2 **One element is far *less* developed.** The less developed element limits the effect of the others (Fig. 3). This representation can also explain why teachers using different methodologies show comparable success: combinations of different levels of development can produce equal triangles.
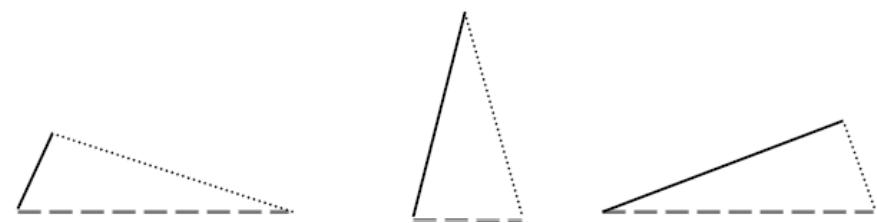
Fig. 3

3 **One element is far *more* developed**. The more developed element cannot be fully utilised (Fig. 4).
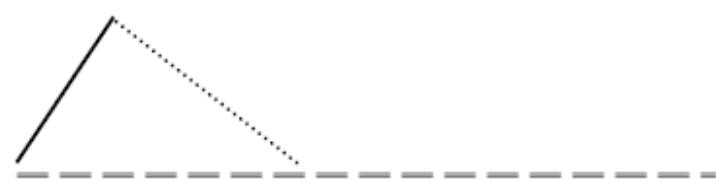
Fig. 4

Some observations

An equilateral triangle will have the largest area of any triangle of the same perimeter. This can be seen as a metaphor for the benefits of well-balanced development.

It is essential that all three elements are above *a* 'threshold of acceptability'. True, such cut-off points are arbitrary, but such thresholds are already used in education and in determining entrance to professions.

Limited/faulty language knowledge will communicate inaccuracies. Inappropriate methodology will make learning too time-consuming and may discourage learners. An uninterested or offensive teacher will offer little support and few opportunities, and may demotivate learners.

Reservations

The triangle framework is a crude representation of the complex interrelations that make up the profile of a language teacher. It is proposed as a point of departure, a way to visualise the interaction of the basic elements contributing to a language teacher's effectiveness.

E-mail: costas@gabrielatos.com
Website: www.gabrielatos.com