



# English Language Teacher's Competencies

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## 1. Introduction

According to Rabindra Nath Tagore, "A teacher can never truly teach unless he is not learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame". It is clear by the given definition that teaching is very complex process and teacher is a person who tries to get that process done. The present paper is about teacher, and what they require to be an effective teacher, the paper also focuses specially on English language teaching.

Though it is a difficult task; let us try to define "Teacher":

## 2. Teacher as a person who...

● **Is Thoughtful** - you would say that this student teacher's behavior is thoughtful. they act out of having considered alternatives; their choices for action are reasoned choices; their actions are appropriate to expressed goals. These student teachers seem to have a built-in monitoring system which aids them in analyzing their actions and this analysis is based upon objective criteria rather than on personal bias. You would be apt to conclude about these student teachers that they are "in touch" with what they are doing and what they do seems to have been considered and reflected upon with respect to their goals.

● **Is Self-initiating** - you would say that these student teachers consistently take the initiative. They don't sit around and wait to be told; they don't need help at every step of the way. They are not afraid to take risks, to try things on their own. When their actions result in less than desirable ends, they are able to examine what has happened rationally, rather than considering it a personal defeat. When things don't work out well, they do not use it as an excuse to keep from trying again. Even in situations where resources are limited, they use what is available to make a start; they don't rationalize their inaction by saying that there aren't enough materials, or that the materials are of the wrong type. You might say of these student teachers, "I can count on this person to take the initiative. He/she gets things done!"

● **Possesses clear beliefs** - At the highest level, you would find student teachers who have clear ideas of what they believe and whose classroom practices are consistent with those beliefs. In speaking with you, they give you the impression that they have thought a lot about their ideas; that the beliefs have been chosen after reflection. You can see that what they do is a reflection of those beliefs. There is clarity about their purposes, about what they stand for. They come across as classroom practitioners with clear values, knowing where they are going and why. They know what they believe, and they believe in what they do.

● **Is Problem-solver** - you would see teachers who, in the face of a difficult problem, would be able to identify the problem, suggest alternative courses of action, examine underlying assumptions and propose workable strategies. In the face of conflicting data, these student teachers would "open their minds" to them and examine them with objectivity. You might say of them that in the presence of some new and complex problem, "they take the lead in planning the strategy." They are seen as inquiring, open-minded persons, able to function effectively in the face of new and complex problems.

●**Put new ideas to practice** - Teachers can take a new idea and put it into practice. They are able to make assessments of group needs, come up with an idea that is appropriate to those needs and create a scheme for implementing the idea. They are not thwarted by limited resources; they seem to be able to do a lot with a little. They generate excitement about what they are doing. What they do is new and fresh and there is a sense of life and vitality in their work.

●**Has Positive outlook** - you would find a teacher who has a cheerful, positive outlook on life. When things go wrong, they are not apt to attribute it to some manifest destiny. They take things in their stride. They smile and laugh a lot and seem genuinely to enjoy what they are doing. They have the capacity of looking at “the brighter side of life” and communicating this positive attitude to those who come in contact with them.

●**Is Reflective practitioner** - Teachers are thoughtful, intelligent observers of what goes on in the classroom. In situations of uncertainty, in situations where children behave in ways that are not immediately understood, they do not resort to simplistic explanations or judgmental labeling (e.g. “He’s doing that because he’s just lazy.”). Rather they are able to size up and make sense of complex situations and risk self-initiated actions that seem appropriate to the situation. Their actions are thoughtfully and intelligently conceived -- often representing new and original interventions that clearly fit. These student teachers’ actions demonstrate a marriage of problem identification and problem solving. In their problem-solving actions, they are able to watch themselves and watch the impact of their actions on the problem situation. This they do non-defensively--with an open attitude that allows for assessing the effect of their actions on the situation. They do not see their actions as ways to solve the problem once and for all. These student teachers understand that while others may help them, they are ultimately responsible for educating themselves through this process. For these student teachers, teaching is an “examined act,” and in their ability to take risks to deal with problems creatively they elevate teaching to an art.

### 3. Competency

Teaching competence refers to the proper way of providing units of knowledge, application and skills to students. It also deals with the particular setting and environment of that place. It includes the innumerable teacher and student characteristics along with the classroom context. A teacher who is competent enough has abilities to create classroom conditions and climate, which facilitate students learning. There are some dimensions of teaching competency such as content knowledge, instructional planning, student motivation, presentation and communication skills, evaluation competencies and classroom management skills. Teacher require competency in all these dimensions in an integrated manner to make productive teaching-learning process.

There are two divergent approaches to define “competencies”. In one of them, “competencies” denote a set of conscious, trainable skills and abilities which make a teacher effective. In the other, “competencies” are addressed in the context of changeability and uniqueness of each and every educational situation and mean a repertoire of knowledge, personal features and educational techniques (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 1997; Gołębiak, 1998). This approach conceptualizes “competencies” as developing in the space of reflective practice. Besides these definitions there can be variety of meanings of the term “competency”, it can be: to be effective, interconnectedness of thought and action, detached understanding, etc.

R. Kwaśnica, in turn, distinguishes two basic groups of competencies: practical-moral competencies and technical competencies. He subdivides **practical-moral competencies** into:

- Interpretation competencies,
- Moral competencies,
- Communication competencies.

The other group of teacher competencies distinguished by Kwaśnica (1994) includes **technical competencies**. He subdivides them into:

- Postulatory competencies,
- Methodological competencies,
- Execution competencies.
- Communication competencies.
- Co-operation competencies.
- Creative competencies.
- IT competencies.
- Moral competencies.

### 3. The Common Teaching Competencies

By looking at the various types of competencies listed above, there are some general competencies that should be possessed by all Teachers, which are as below:

#### •Competency I: Subject Matter Knowledge

The effective early childhood, elementary, middle/secondary school teacher demonstrates knowledge of:

- a) the subject matter of Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle, or Secondary School education, including literature and the language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, health and physical education
- b) the physical, social emotional, intellectual and moral development of adolescents, both with and without special needs;
- c) multidisciplinary structures, teaming and interdisciplinary planning;
- d) the relationships among the disciplines taught in the middle/secondary school.

#### •Competency II: Communication Skills. The effective teacher

- e) communicates sensitively with language appropriate to students' ages, levels of development, gender, race, and ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as individual learning styles and needs;
- f) interacts with students, families, and colleagues.

#### •Competency III: Instructional Practice. The effective teacher

- g) understands typical and atypical human development and is familiar with principles of curriculum and instruction, including strategies for integrating special education students into regular classroom settings and developing and implementing individualized Educational Plans (IEPs);
- h) teaches through diverse modes, including new technologies, reading and language arts as appropriate to age, learning style and developmental stage of the learner;
- i) makes curricular content relevant to the experiences of students from diverse racial, socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds;
- j) organizes and manages a classroom to support the growth and learning of diverse students;
- k) uses methods that develop students' academic and social skills;
- l) works effectively with families and community sources.

#### •Competency IV: Evaluation. The effective teacher

- m) designs and uses various evaluative procedures to assess student learning;
- n) evaluates his or her own teaching behavior, and uses the results to improve student learning.

#### •Competency V: Problem Solving. The effective teacher

- o) thinks critically about teaching and learning;
- p) fosters students' creative and analytical thinking skills.

•**Competency VI: Equity. The effective teacher**

- q) deals equitably and responsibly with all learners;
- r) understands the impact of western and non-western civilizations on contemporary American culture and uses this knowledge to develop appropriate strategies.

•**Competency VII: Professionalism. The effective teacher**

- s) understands his or her legal and moral responsibilities;
- t) learns from experience and supervision;
- u) understands the impact of societal problems that can affect student learning negatively and uses appropriate strategies to address such issues.

#### 4. English Teaching Competencies

Most of the world's English teachers are not native speakers of English, and it is not necessary to have a native like command of a language in order to teach it well (Canagarajah 1999). This new century requires teachers according to the needs of this century's students. The challenge we face is not only to teach content but, to help students to exploit their amazing potential in order to apply their skills in problem solving and, at the same time, being a citizen of the world. It is not only to know; our students need to do something with their knowledge, share ideas to help solving situations in their communities, cities, countries, and the world itself by having confidence in themselves and respecting society, nature, different opinions, races, etc. Our students need to learn to learn by themselves and keep learning through their lives and, school is the place where they have to develop their abilities to face, in the better ways, the problems of this new and complex reality.

#### 5. Competencies for English Language Teaching

•**creating daily life situations in classroom** – teacher has to prepare our students to face real situations where language will help them to solve such problems; learning is not storing those ingredients, if we think on competent students, situations in class have to be strongly related to common daily life. The challenge here for teachers is to be competent in creating these situations in class and, for students, to be competent in solving problems with the language; if the teacher cannot encourage and organize learning situations, students will not have the opportunity to use real language (Amador, F.).

- To comprehend texts accurately
- To provide good language models
- To maintain use of the target language in the classroom
- To maintain fluent use of the target
- To give explanations and instructions in the target language
- To provide examples of words and grammatical structures and give accurate explanations (e.g., of vocabulary and language points)
- To use appropriate classroom language
- To select target-language resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, the Internet)
- To monitor his or her own speech and writing for accuracy
- To give correct feedback on learner language
- To provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty
- To provide language-enrichment experiences for learners

By having the knowledge of competencies required by a language teacher, it would be essential to focus on one of the newer approach in teaching of language. This approach is called Competency Based Language Teaching (CBLT).

#### 6. Competency-Based Language Teaching

Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) focuses on what “learners are expected to do with the language”. This approach emerged in the United States in the 1970s and can be described as

“defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course of study” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

• This approach has eight key features, which are as below:

According to Auerbach (1986) there are eight key features which are essential for Competency-Based Language Teaching:

- a. A focus on successful functioning in society which means that language is taught in order to prepare the students for the different demands of the world.
- b. A focus on life skills to determine that language is always taught as a medium of communication in concrete tasks in which specific language forms/skills are required.
- c. Task- or performance-centered orientation. The focus is on what the students can do with the language and certain behaviors instead of knowledge of the language.
- d. Modularized instruction emphasizes that the competencies which are taught have to be systematically separated into manageable parts so that both the teacher and students can handle the content and realize their progress.
- e. Outcomes that are made explicit a priori. “Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher”. Therefore, the students clearly know what behaviors and skills are expected of them.
- f. Continuous and ongoing assessment which means that the students are tested before the course to determine which skills they lack and after they have had instructions in that skill they are tested again to ascertain whether they have achieved the necessary skills or not.
- g. Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives. The assessment is based on the students’ performance of specific behaviors instead of traditional paper-and-pencil-tests.
- h. Individualized, student-centered instruction. The instructions given by the teacher are not time-based but the focus is on the progress the individual students make at their own rate. Therefore, the teacher has to concentrate on each individual students in order to support them in those areas in which they lack competence.

Giving a look on the key features of CBLT approach, it is clearly seen that this approach could be helpful for students for learning English language, because it would provide them a better atmosphere for learning and would help them in gaining thorough proficiency in English language.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, in trying to describe the competencies required in language teaching, we have attempted to realize a somewhat ambitious agenda. And any attempt in doing so is liable to the charge of different kinds of bias, since an attempt is bound to reflect understandings that are shaped by culture, by context, by individual belief and preference, as well as by limitations in our present state of knowledge. These limitations, however, should not prevent us from reflecting on the beliefs and assumptions that shape the way we understand the nature of teacher knowledge and teacher development for language teachers. For when we do so we are in a better position to assess goals of language teacher education, as well as the means by which we seek to achieve them.

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