

**AN INTRODUCTION TO COMPETENCY-BASED LANGUAGE
TEACHING INTO EDUCATION**

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Abstract: Language education is a dynamic field that constantly evolves to meet the diverse needs of learners. In recent years, Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) has emerged as a transformative approach, shifting the focus from rote memorization to the acquisition of practical language skills. This article delves into the principles, benefits, and challenges of CBLT, shedding light on its impact on language learners worldwide. In Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), outcomes are paramount of importance. Competency-Based Language Teaching demonstrates that students should illustrate that they can use linguistic competence in a real-life tasks. In CBLT students play significant role as active learners and the teacher's role is a facilitator. Teaching materials and activities must be authentic and task-related. Assessment in this approach focuses on more students ability to communicate than on providing a grade for an assignment. At the end, what matters is that each student in the class will be able to master a competency before being able to move on to the next.

Key words: Competency-Based teaching, Teacher, Student, Education
Understanding Competency-Based Language Teaching

At its core, CBLT is an instructional strategy that centers on the development of learners' practical language competencies. Unlike traditional methods that prioritize grammar rules and vocabulary memorization, CBLT emphasizes real-world language use. The approach is rooted in the belief that language learners should not only grasp linguistic structures but also be able to apply them effectively in various contexts.

Key Principles of CBLT

1. Task-Based Learning:

CBLT often involves engaging learners in meaningful tasks that mimic real-life language use. These tasks can range from problem-solving activities to collaborative projects, fostering communication skills and contextual understanding.

2. Individualized Learning Paths:

Recognizing that learners progress at different rates, CBLT tailors instruction to individual needs. This personalized approach allows students to advance at their own pace, ensuring a deeper understanding of language concepts.

3. Assessment of Performance:

Assessment in CBLT goes beyond traditional exams. It focuses on evaluating learners' ability to use language in authentic situations, emphasizing practical application rather than theoretical knowledge.

Benefits of Competency-Based Language Teaching

Real-World Relevance: CBLT equips learners with language skills applicable to real-life scenarios, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively in diverse situations.

Increased Motivation: By incorporating tasks that mimic real-world challenges, CBLT boosts learner motivation. Students see the immediate practical value of their language skills, leading to a more engaged and enthusiastic learning experience.

Holistic Development: Beyond linguistic proficiency, CBLT promotes the development of other essential competencies, such as cultural awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Challenges and Considerations: While CBLT offers numerous advantages, challenges do exist. Adapting traditional curricula to a competency-based framework can be a complex process, requiring teacher training and institutional support. Additionally, assessing competency effectively demands innovative evaluation methods that go beyond traditional testing.

The Future of Language Education: Competency-Based Language Teaching is a promising paradigm shift in language education. As educators and institutions continue to explore its implementation, it holds the potential to produce language learners who are not only fluent in theory but adept at navigating the intricacies of language in real-world contexts. The journey towards linguistic competence has never been more dynamic, with CBLT paving the way for a future where language learners thrive as effective communicators in an ever-changing global landscape. Instruction takes different forms depending on its goals and objectives. Some emphasize input, while others focus on output. Some take objectives as behaviors whereas others take them as performance. After a brief history, competency-based language teaching is introduced. Then it will be followed by how it will be evaluated. Finally the pros and cons of this kind of instruction is elaborated in details. (Bader Bataineh and Tasnimi, 2014).

Competency-based education can be traced back to the philosophy of experimentalism and to the work of John Dewey in the early 1900's. Its antecedents include vocational education and progressive education (Flowers 1990; Stoffle & Pryor 1980).

According to Richards & Rodgers (2001, p.141) “Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) is an application of the principles of Competency-Based Education to language teaching.” In Competency-Based Education (CBE) the focus is on the “outcomes or outputs of learning.” By the end of the 1970s Competency-Based Language Teaching was mostly used in “work-related and survival-oriented language teaching programs for adults” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.141). Since the 1990s, CBLT has been seen as “the state-of-the-art approach to adult ESL” (Auerbach, 1986, p.411) so that any refugee in the United States who wished to receive federal assistance had to attend a competency-based program (Auerbach, 1986, p.412) in which they learned a set of language skills “that are necessary for individuals to function proficiently in the society in which they live”(Grognet& Crandall, 1982, p.3).

The major basis of CBLT is the “functional and interactional perspective on the nature of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 143) which means that language learning always needs to be connected to the social context it is used in. Thus, language has been seen like “a medium of interaction and communication between people” who want to achieve “specific goals and purposes” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). This particularly applies to situations in which the learner has to fulfill a particular role with language skills which can be predicted or determined for the relevant context (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). In connection to this Competency-Based Language Teaching shares the behaviorist view of learning that “certain life encounters call for certain kinds of language” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). Another key aspect of both language and learning theory is the so called “mosaic approach to language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143), which assumes that language can be divided into appropriate parts and subparts. Communicative competence is then constructed from these subparts put together in the correct order (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143). All these aspects together show that CBLT is in some respects similar to Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.143).

Teachers role:

The role of the teacher in a competency-based framework is not defined by specific terms. The teacher has to provide positive and constructive feedback in order to help the students to improve their skills. She/he needs to be aware of the learners’ needs so that everybody feels welcome in class (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.146). The different competencies dealt with in class require specific instructions for the various learning activities. Thus the teacher has to give clear orders and explanations to make sure that every student understands the task they are going to deal with. But the teacher does not push the students because the instructions are not time-based; instead the student’s progress is most important (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.146). Another task of the teacher in CBLT is to select learning activities and to design a syllabus according to the competency the students are going to acquire.

Students role:

The role of the learner in a competency-based framework is to decide whether the competencies are useful and relevant for him/her (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.146). This shows that the learner has an active role in the classroom which is underlined by the fact that the students are expected to perform the skills learned (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.146). The competencies the students will learn are clearly defined and present in the public so that “the learner knows exactly what needs to be learned” and for which purpose he/she has to use the competencies (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.147). In this regard it is vital that every competency is mastered one at a time because this makes sure that the learners know what they have already learned and what the next steps will look like (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p.147). Moreover, the students have to stay in the actual program until they improve. After they mastered their skills, they move into a more proficient group of students. The main goal of the learner in Competency-Based Language Teaching is to be able to adapt and transfer knowledge from one setting to another.

The table below, based on the work of O’Connor (2002), concludes the differences between assessments and grades in traditional in competency-based classes:

Traditional Classrooms	Competency-Based Classrooms
One grade is given per assignment. An assignment may be a quiz, a test, homework, project, or anything the student must complete.	One grade is given for each specific competency. Students may be assessed throughout the process but these formative assessments will not typically be considered in the final evaluation.
Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.	Standards are criterion or proficiency-based. Specific criteria and standards are made available to students ahead of time.
Traditional grades may rely on a mix of assessment, achievement, effort and behavior to determine the final grade and may include late penalties and extra credit.	Grades measure only achievement. Information about effort and behavior may be reported but it is not part of the competency assessment. There are no penalties or extra credit given.
Everything goes in the grade book regardless of purpose. Every assessment score is included in determining the final grade no matter when it was collected during the module. The final grade determines whether the student advances to the next level.	Students advance only upon mastery of the competency.

To sum up, what is clear is that, Competency-Based Language Teaching is much more popular than it was before and to make it more successful both learners and teachers should step out of their comfort zones. . In the short term, this unfamiliarity may create uncertainty and discomfort but as classes progress the benefits should become clear. If, however, students and teachers try to adopt a competency-based approach without making the necessary changes in their own behavior, the results are likely to be unsuccessful. On the other hand, if both embrace their new roles, they are likely to find learning becomes more effective and useful.

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