A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COMPETENCY-BASED LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This paper provides a brief introduction to competency-based education. The competency-based language teaching (CBLT) focuses on competences and outputs. In competence-based language education, teachers are objects rather than subjects in the teaching process. Students must demonstrate that they can use the language to accomplish tasks in the real world. Students must become active learners, and teachers are taking on new roles as facilitators. Materials must be authentic and related to the task. Assessment should focus more on the provision of information about student progress than on the one of a grade for an assignment.*

Keywords: *active learner; authentic materials; competency-based education; competency-based language teaching; facilitators.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Competency-based education (CBE) is a movement of education that began in the United States in the 1970s. This movement presents a pattern that focuses on learning outcomes. It defines objectives that must be achieved to enable students' knowledge, abilities and behaviour to be easily measured. In addition, students develop the ability to apply knowledge to real situations. Furthermore, competency-based language teaching (CBLT) is based on CBE theory and is considered to be as a powerful agent that has a positive effect on teaching, allowing teachers and students to clearly define the direction to be pursued by implementing the standards at the end of the course. According to language learning theory, CBLT is based on language functions and interactions, meaning that language is taught considering social contexts and the needs of students. Moreover, CBLT competence designers are based on behavioural theory, which shares the principle that students can deduce language forms from language functions and strategically place vocabulary and structures in different learning units to ensure that they are exactly the vocabulary and structures found in different situations. Regarding targets and curriculums, CBLT focuses on skills. It provides teachers with the tools and parameters necessary to design the curriculum and its goals and improves students' ability to learn and use languages in a defined time of life. It is also important to note that teachers play an important role because they provide students with appropriate activities and educational materials related to their real life and can effectively communicate in real situations. To achieve this, teachers must be excellent observers of the environment around the students

and take into account the main needs of the design of appropriate programmes. Furthermore, competence approaches have many benefits for learners. Firstly, competence is precise and useful. This means that they are clearly defined and linked to the needs of students and to what attracts them. Secondly, students can constructively criticize them because they can assess whether they are relevant and useful for their learning process. Thirdly, the students need to make friends so that they know what they need to learn and what they will test in the course. Thus, students are aware of their learning process and the goals they need to achieve. Finally, at different stages of the process, learning can progress gradually, enabling students to recognize what they have learned and what they need to learn to acquire the competencies of the course. In summary, CBLT is an educational movement introduced around the world because people need to meet their demands. It provides students with an essential tool to effectively interact with society and improves their ability to use their knowledge to solve various problems. Furthermore, the CBLT is interested in developing various standards for enlarging and guiding the teaching and learning process, in order to ensure that teachers are fully aware of the context, interests, and needs of students, and in ensuring that learners understand exactly what they need to learn in order to communicate.

II. THE CONTENTS

1. Competency-based language teaching BLT syllabus design

The curriculum of the competency-based framework is clearly different from the traditional method of developing the curriculum. Instead of selecting a topic or field of knowledge to be taught (e.g., British history, American literature or poetry), competency-based language teaching is "not designed around a subject, but around a competence concept" Richards & Rodgers, 2001 [1, 144]. Therefore, it is important to focus on the way students use language, not their knowledge of language. Schenck (1978) points out that teachers list the skills required by students in their roles in their lives [2]. The fact that the CBLT is an outcome-based approach also affects the curriculum, especially the type of assessment used. Unlike standard-based assessments, which are used in many other teaching methods, standard-based assessments are essential for CBLT. Students must master specific linguistic skills they have learned during the course (Docking, 1994 [3,16]). The tests "include basic skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for effective execution of tasks and activities in the real world" (Richard & Rodgers. 2001, [1,144]). These performance criteria are the basis for evaluation.

2. Learning activities suggested by Competency-based language teaching

Learning activities in CBLT can be described as activities that are systematically designed to acquire certain skills. These activities are real tasks that "can be associated with any area of life" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001 [1, 144]), but particularly relate to situations that are related to survival and work in a new environment (Richard & Rodgers, 2001 [1 ,144]). Typical are as in which such competency-based activities have been developed, for example, are job applications, job interviews or work schedules (Mrowicki, 1986 [4]). All of these are as can be described as assets of competencies consisting of specific knowledge, thinking processes, attitudes, perception and physical skills (Docking, 1994 [3,11]).

3. The role of teacher in Competency-based language teaching

The role of teachers has changed from information providers to facilitators (Organization of American States, 2006 [5]); Sturgis & Patrick, 2010 [6]). This does not mean that teachers no longer provide information but provide different kinds of information and provide it in different ways. Teachers provide material, activities, and training opportunities for students (Paul, 2008 [7]). The quality and authenticity of these materials are at the heart of class success. Planning is the central part of teaching processes. First, each competence must be identified. Each competence must be divided into relevant competences. Students must then develop a module that provides opportunities to learn and practice these skills. Teachers must precisely determine what students must do and how well to master their competences. From the beginning of the course, students must develop and publish specific standards for each skill (Auerbach, 1986 [8]; Richards & Rogers, 2001 [1]). Teachers should spend a lot of time creating activities with specific skills to meet competence requirements. Assessment of students and provision of specific, guided and personalized feedback will also take considerable time (Richards & Rogers, 2001 [1]).

4. The role of student in Competency-based language teaching

The role of students must also change. Students are no longer able to rely solely on teachers and classrooms as their main sources of information. Instead, students become apprentices. Their role will be to integrate, produce and expand knowledge (Jones et al., 1994 [9]). Students actively participate in their own learning and work towards autonomous learning. They learn to think critically, adapt and transfer knowledge in different environments. Because the expectations and standards are clear, students must commit to continuing to study and master each skill and then move to the next (Richards & Rogers, 2001 [1]). Students may initially refuse to use this method, especially if they do not believe there is a real need to learn the language. The success of classroom interactions depends on the participation of students. Students must find ways to motivate themselves, apply information to their lives and integrate it into classrooms. Students should be prepared to challenge, ask questions, and start in CBLT classrooms (Marcellino, 2005 [10]).

5. Materials suggested by Competency-based language teaching

The most effective materials are genuine samples of a specific competence (e.g., completed employment applications, complaints about services). This material helps students acquire the basic skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours needed to meet competence standards.

6. Teaching procedures in Competency-based language teaching

At the beginning of the course, students must carry out an initial assessment to determine their current level of competence. Then, the students are grouped according to the "current English skills, learning speed, needs and social objectives of English learning" (Richards & Rogers, 2001 [1,147]). In addition, CBLT-based courses are divided into three stages, and students must successfully complete the courses. In the first and second stages, students learn twelve basic language development competencies. In phase three, students are divided according to their learning objectives, and "competing is defined according to three lines of the curriculum: academic, vocational and community access".

Example of competency-based teaching in the classroom

Topic: At the restaurant

1. Task: Role-play Scenario

  - Students are divided into pairs or small groups.

  - Each group is assigned roles such as customer and waiter/waitress.

  - They must engage in a simulated restaurant scenario where they take orders, ask for recommendations, and handle payment.

  - This task assesses their ability to use language competently in a real-world setting.

2. Project: Design a Menu

  - Students work individually or in groups to design a menu for a restaurant.

  - They must include food and drink items, prices, and descriptions.

  - Additionally, they can incorporate cultural elements or dietary considerations.

  - This project encourages creativity and requires students to demonstrate their understanding of restaurant vocabulary and language functions.

3. Task: Restaurant Review

  - Students visit a local restaurant or use online resources to gather information about a specific restaurant.

  - They write a review highlighting the atmosphere, service, and quality of food.

  - The review should be written in a persuasive and informative style.

  - This task assesses their ability to express opinions, provide detailed descriptions, and use persuasive language.

4. Role-play Scenario: Dealing with Complaints

  - Students role-play scenarios where they must handle customer complaints in a restaurant setting.

  - They practice using polite language, offering solutions, and resolving conflicts.

  - This activity helps develop their interpersonal communication skills and ability to navigate challenging situations.

5. Task: Create a Dialogue

  - Students work in pairs to create a dialogue between a customer and a waiter/waitress.

  - The dialogue should include ordering food, asking for recommendations, and dealing with special requests.

  - This task assesses their ability to use appropriate language structures and vocabulary in a conversational context.

7. Reasons of using Competency-based language teaching

     The advantages of the CBE from a student's point of view are: 1) students can assess whether their skills are relevant and useful; 2) they can judge whether their skills are

specific and useful; 3) they can learn individually so that students can see what they have learned and what they still must learn.

7.1. Competency-based language teaching keeps you on your toes with active learning

The biggest claim to CBLT's reputation is that it focuses on active learning rather than passive learning. Here is an example that can be elaborated on. In the last year, you have been taking the bus to work every day. You can enjoy the ride and watch the scenery pass. One day the bus does not appear, and you are forced to take a car. You don't have problems driving until you're stuck on the road, but you don't know where exactly to go. You didn't know how to work until you tried. Your knowledge of the road is passive and not active, because you are never a driver. If a student asks if he knows how to order coffee in another language, the answer is probably an automatic "yes". Only when they try to do so can they realize the areas that need to be improved. Sometimes it is difficult to judge what we know and what we don't. Therefore, real-world role play is a common practice in the CBLT classroom. If you already use them, you'll be surprised! – You already have an area where competence-based learning is easier.

The CBLT exercises are as follows: (1) Systemic. It has a specific purpose (i.e., it teaches students when they use "them" rather than "them" when describing people or things); (2) Repeat. Students learn by doing, not memorizing rules, so repetition is essential; (3) Measurable. The success of exercises is easy to measure. If the student understands the lesson and applies new skills, he will succeed and can move on to the next practice. CBLT works in partnership with the "mosaic" teaching method, which means that language can be divided and taught as a sub-component. These pieces can be ordered by priority, taught separately, and later assembled. Each exercise has a purpose and teaches skills. The teacher does not move onto the next exercise until the student master's the skills. In this method, teachers promote active learning. Since they are not based on grammar knowledge, species can be taught in any order. The program is easy to adapt when you do not focus on successive components of basic grammar. One of the great advantages of using CBLT is that you don't need to worry about whether your students understand what you're teaching. This can be seen in black and white by actively showing new skills.

7.2. Competency-based language teaching keeps it real

CBLT teachers' goal is to give students the form of words and languages needed to function in life. Language is never taught alone. Again, adopting 100% CBLT may not be realistic for the classroom environment, but you can still add some strategies to the book. Language teachers often use newspapers and other material in the real world in class. The CBLT will take you further and introduce texts related to the real world of the life of students. Say you have students who have learned languages applying for hospitality jobs. You could write articles about the opening of a new hotel in Paris. After understanding the article, compare the hotels in which he worked before to those mentioned in the article. Ask him what kind of hotel he wants to work in and why. Subsequently, you converted this conversation into an interview and asked him similar questions in a more realistic environment.

Remember to follow the list of boxes mentioned above: (1) It is systematic. The goal is to teach new vocabulary of hospitality and encourage students to discuss their previous

work experience. Repeated. As a teacher, you introduce a new vocabulary to students who have had difficulty in their first several months. When interviewing for work, you must use these new words; (2) It can be measured. Before the interview, students can discuss their experience in the context of an interview using new vocabulary. By encouraging students to talk and try to perform tasks, you prevent them from learning a language in the vacuum. This is not abstract. It is a chance to make friends, find a job, connect and be heard. They use the words they have learned, speak fluently but not completely, and most of the language is acquired through foreign language conversations with new friends. In the case of CBLT, teachers remember that language is essentially the teacher's tool. Because there is no prescribed curriculum, only students know what they need to learn. The students' language skills are often checked to ensure that they are not lacked and need them immediately. Students can do exercises on the first day of school to define language goals for the course and year. After discussing and comparing these goals, you will have a clearer idea of how to design your course.

7.3. Competency-based language teaching is in it for the Long Haul

In the back drawer of the desk, I found a paper signed by my university professor who said that I spoke fluent Spanish. In fact, if I assume I do not really need to speak Spanish, I should assume that my Spanish is good. I'm not alone. The CBLT tries to avoid this phenomenon by focusing on emotions rather than memories. Tests and scripts have their place, but it is good to avoid a course that is completely based on memory. It is important for students to use language, not memorize rules. Like native speakers, learners can understand whether a sentence is correct or not without knowing the basic concept. According to Atlantic, memory is "learning facts through conscious effort" and tends to "pass through real conceptual learning". Memorization is not bad. It can be useful. The difference here is the intention. According to CBLT, memory must be a by-product of the application, not the reverse. CBLT is successful in long-term learning because it is concerned only about competence. It is claimed that a student should take the time he needs to master a skill before moving on to the next one. I think we agree that this is ideal, but that it is not realistic for those of us who must adhere to the prescribed timelines. When we have 15 students per class, it is also difficult to adapt the syllabus to individual needs.

Some tricks for applying CBLT to these constraints: 70-30. Reduce teacher discussion time. Try to aim for 70% of students and 30% of students. This will give them more time to master the practice of speech. You do not need more than 30 per cent to present the basic framework and grammar points of the exercises. Strategic grouping. Partition of classes into groups based on interests, occupation or desired occupation. The theme can be business, IT, human resources and hospitality, depending on the student. This helps them learn new vocabulary in the fields that are relevant to them. Review day. Before the end of the course, always save a day or two to examine areas where students are not completely comfortable. This class is conducted quickly, with a lot of repetition and speech. As many problem areas as possible are addressed. Teachers without unlimited time and resources can keep students busy with the curriculum and use CBLT tricks to give students a customized experience.

7.4. CBLT challenges tradition

The CBLT is concerned about what students can do with languages, not what they know about them. Although CBLT is widely recognized as an effective methodology, some still regard it as a flowering lovechild of the hippie generation, which focuses on equality and individuality. Today's education system is a huge one in evaluating and measuring. When learning underlines the importance of graded written tests, it must raise suspicion. CBLT is seen as a threat to this system because it is less concerned about pencil and paper tests than about how students use their new skills in the real world. It considers that the test results are irrelevant and says that competence is all that matters. Instead of traditional written tests, CBLT assessments usually require students to demonstrate their ability to achieve performance-based objectives, i.e., negotiate a polite salary or explain to someone how to drive to their home. This method does not have to be adopted exclusively to be effective. Many teachers incorporate a demonstration section without abandoning the pen and paper part. Others have the flexibility to teach classes entirely through CBLT. Whatever your preferences or constraints, consider flirting with the CBLT testing method and then moving on from there. Even if you cannot officially use the results, you can incorporate the many ways to receive valuable feedback on your teaching. There is a misconception that CBLT and traditional assessments are mutually exclusive. Both assessments can be combined from different schools of thought. The assessment of the progress of a class through tests does not undermine the CBLT approach, although for a CBLT classroom, the results are not all end times.

7.5. CBLT has a bright future

Views on CBLT change slowly but surely. More than 350 universities currently offer or are expected to soon offer professional degrees. The lovechild lives forever. One of the arguments is that by measuring knowledge rather than studying time, school systems become more efficient and ultimately save money. Excelsior is one of the institutions that follows this approach, claiming that without proving its ability to demonstrate its knowledge in the most effective situation, it is impossible to determine whether someone is competent. If this trend continues in the academic community, it will undoubtedly shape the way language is taught. The most important selling point of CBLT is its efficiency a deficiency, which is essential in a world where time and money are of paramount importance. With the eroding of technology and the growth of the global migrant population community, the need for rapid language learning will increase. Keep an eye on the CBLT as it evolves further from the Upstream Rebellion to the mainstream player. I hope that you enjoy reading about this flourishing school of thought and can find some tips to bring it back to the classroom.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

Evaluation may take either of two forms: (1) Formal evaluation is used to determine the progress of students on the way to competence. Formative assessments must be frequent and precise. Since their purpose is to assess progress and provide information on strengths and weaknesses, they are rarely ranked. In the CBE, most assessments are formative; and (2) Summative assessments are designed to determine whether students have mastered

skills. As a result, summary assessments are generally performed at the end of each module as a final test. Students who do not pass a summary assessment cannot move on to the next qualification. Instead, students repeat the unit until they achieve mastery. The summative assessment is based on performance and can include various measurement tools.

Paper and pencil tests are not used to evaluate competence, except when assessing writing competence. The actual false, blank, and multiple-choice tests are forever banned from CBLT classrooms as final competence assessments. Evaluation, like activities, must be authentic, the evaluation must consider tasks, contexts, and evaluation criteria. Real tasks require knowledge and skills to perform tasks. Similarly, genuine assessments require measurement of real-world tasks. For example, in math classes, giving students a series of mathematical problems to solve in tests is not a good real-world activity. The measurement of how many correct answers a student gets is not an authentic assessment. In the real world, who randomly receives a sheet of a series of mathematics problems that cannot be solved except for a grade? It would be good if students were asked to find out how much paint is required to paint a house.

A test to determine whether the student has purchased the appropriate amount of paint for the job is an authentic test that measures the ability to complete the job. For example, in language classes, drawing posters and diagrams describing the human body, identifying important systems (such as the nervous system and the digestive system), would not be a good choice for real-world assessment. Very few people around the world are required to draw such a chart just to draw it.

Students describing medical problems would be better. People are often asked in their daily lives to explain the pain, the place where it hurts, what causes it, etc. It is clear that linguistic knowledge (such as parts of the human body, present tense) is necessary to complete specific competences (i.e., to explain medical problems to doctors), but the assessment measures the ability to use this knowledge in context.

3.2. Discussion

A comparison between traditional classrooms and competency-based classrooms

Traditional classroom	Competency-based classroom
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.

IV. CONLUSION

In a curriculum based on competence, students are only rewarded for successfully carrying out authentic tasks. In ideal cases, at the beginning of the course, each student receives an initial assessment that determines the level of competence. Students then learn material at their own pace and receive much information feedback from teachers. Students at all levels know where they are and what they need to do to meet competence standards. Some critics criticized this approach, arguing that it was difficult or impossible to determine all thence essay competences in specific circumstances (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Tollefson, 1986). However, supporters argue that students who have clear tasks and useful feedback are more likely to learn to use the language in practice (Docking, 1994).

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LƯỢC KHẢO NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ GIÁO DỤC NGÔN NGỮ DỰA TRÊN NĂNG LỰC

Tóm tắt: *Bài viết này là những khảo cứu ban đầu về giáo dục dựa trên năng lực. Việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ dựa trên năng lực (CBLT) tập trung vào năng lực và kết quả đầu ra. Trong giáo dục ngôn ngữ dựa trên năng lực, giáo viên là đối tượng chứ không phải là chủ thể trong quá trình giảng dạy. Học sinh phải chứng minh rằng các em có thể sử dụng ngôn ngữ để hoàn thành nhiệm vụ trong thế giới thực. Học sinh phải trở thành những người học tích cực và giáo viên đang đảm nhận vai trò mới là người hỗ trợ. Tài liệu phải xác thực và liên quan đến nhiệm vụ. Việc đánh giá nên tập trung nhiều hơn vào việc cung cấp thông tin về sự tiến bộ của học sinh hơn là vào điểm của bài.*

Từ khóa: *người học tích cực; tài liệu gốc; giáo dục dựa trên năng lực; dạy học ngoại ngữ dựa trên năng lực; người hỗ trợ.*