**Competency-based Education**

**Introduction**

The Competency Based Education (CBE) is an educational movement which emerged in the US in the 1970s. Its main focus in the development of instructional programs is the outcomes of learning. In other words, the CBE addresses what the learners are expected to achieve at the end of a course or program. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 141) explain that the CBE “advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study”.

Learners, in this view, are expected to develop the ability to use what they have learned in real life situations. These abilities (or outcomes of learning) are referred to as competencies. The CompetencyBased Language Teaching (CBLT) is the application of the principles of the CBE in language teaching. This approach to language learning and teaching is based on a “functional and interactional perspective on the nature of language” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 143). That is, language is taught taking into consideration the social context in which it is used and the communicative needs of the learners. In addition, the CBLT emphasizes the notion of competencies. These competencies which are the basis of the competency-based curriculum comprise “the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours” learners need to develop in order to be able to use the target language in real-life situations (ibid., p. 144). The emphasis here changes from what learners know about language to what they can do with it. In this respect, Russell Docking (1994) states that: CBLT by comparison is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 144).

1. **Characteristics of Competency-Based English Language Teaching Approach**
2. **Competencies Needed for Competency-Based English Language Teaching Approach**
   1. **Language and Auxiliary Competencies**
3. **Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence is a notion coined by the linguist Dell Hymes in 1972, it refers to a learner's ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. Communicative competence is made up of four competence parts are:

* 1. **Linguistic competence**

It is the knowledge of the language code, i.e., its grammar and vocabulary, and also of the conventions of its written representation. The grammar component includes the knowledge of the sounds and their pronunciation (i.e., phonetics), the rules that govern sound interactions and patterns (i.e., phonology), the formation of words by means of e.g., inflection and derivation (i.e., morphology), the rules that govern the combination of words and phrases to structure sentences (i.e., syntax), and the way that meaning is conveyed through language (i.e., semantics).

* 1. **Sociolinguistic competence**

It is the knowledge of sociocultural rules of use, i.e., knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately. The appropriateness depends on the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Moreover, being appropriate depends on knowing what the taboos of the other culture are, what politeness indices are used in each case, how a specific attitude (authority, friendliness, courtesy, irony etc.) is expressed etc.

* 1. **Discourse competence**

It is the knowledge of how to produce and comprehend oral or written texts in the modes of speaking/writing and listening/reading respectively. It’s knowing how to interpret the larger context and how to construct longer stretches of language so that the parts make up a coherent whole. Thus, discourse competence deals with organizing words, phrases and sentences in order to create conversations, speeches, poetry, email messages, newspaper articles etc.

* 1. **Strategic competence**

It is the ability to recognize and repair communication breakdowns and how to work around gaps in one’s knowledge of the language. For instance, the speaker may not know a certain word, thus will plan to either paraphrase, or ask what that word is in the target language. During the conversation, background noise or other factors may hinder communication; thus, the speaker must know how to keep the communication channel open. If the communication was unsuccessful due to external factors (such as interruptions), or due to the message being misunderstood, the speaker must know how to restore communication. These strategies may be requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or the usage of gestures, taking turns in conversation etc.

1. **Roles of teachers and learners in Competency-Based Approach**

When we talk about competency-based learning, we automatically target students, and the role of teachers is no longer the same as it was before. Thus, in competency-based learning classrooms, the teacher is just a facilitator, or a monitor that going to control the classroom and organize the activities that take place in the classroom. In addition, the role of teacher lies in giving students the necessary materials for them to create a good atmosphere for them to practice their skills. Therefore, the success of classroom courses is related to the authenticity and the quality of these materials. Griffith, W. I., & Lim, H. Y. (2014).

Concerning students’ performance, the role of the teacher is crucial to determine how they should perform and the standards they should be based upon to achieve good performance. In addition, in any learning process the teacher must assess students’ performance to decide on how well they performed. Thus, in competency-based learning, rubric assessment must be developed for students to assess their performance which is the main role of teachers. Then, in competency-based learning the teacher should force students to practice their skills as much as possible, that is why, the teacher needs to be creative in choosing the appropriate activities for every skill so that to achieve the competency required. Griffith, W. I., & Lim, H. Y. (2014).

In competency-based teaching/learning, students will no longer rely upon their teachers, competency-based learning is a learner centered no longer teacher centered. That is why the focus is on students’ performance, they are required to contribute in their own learning, to do extra searches, extend knowledge and develop their skills. In competency-based learning, students must be committed to working on the development of their own skills and achieve the competency required even with the absence of the teacher then, move to another skill if needed. Griffith, W. I., & Lim, H. Y. (2014). Students may not be very interested in competency-based learning because of the effort it needs, especially if they have no interest in the subject they are studying. Therefore, motivation here is key to get out of the negative attitudes towards this approach and do more effort to excel at the subject they are studying both in classroom and outside the classroom to be an effective citizen. Griffith, W. I., & Lim, H. Y. (2014).