

1. Introduction

Algerian teachers have been called upon to teach through competency-based approach (CBA) since the school reform of 2002; they have mostly relied on the guidelines outlined in the textbooks and syllabuses to apply the principles of this new pedagogy, but they seem mostly unfamiliar with the practical side of this instructional model, that is, how the teaching framework of CBA is applied. For example, the teachers seem unfamiliar with the practical application of this approach to the teaching of the language skills. Even the literature of competency-teaching does not specify how to proceed with the teaching of the language skills or the vocabulary.

Usually, the advocates of this approach (such as Savage, 1993; Auerbach, 1986; and Roegiers, 2000) do not explicitly provide practical guidelines to explain how the language skills are practically taught. This is due to the fact that, firstly CBA focuses on life skills, and thereby considers the language skills as means to achieve survival competencies; and, secondly, CBA is an approach rather than a teaching method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), that is, it sets a series of broad teaching guidelines to guide teaching, without detailing the moment-to-moment teaching steps that should be taken to teach a given language skill or language component.

The review of the previous literature on the topic of the teaching of the language basics in CBA shows that most of the scholars (e.g., Chelli & Khouni, 2014; Mostefaoui, 2019; Adjeroud & Belouahem, 2020) have focused mainly on the problems that the Algerian students meet in learning language skills under competency-based teaching. To the researcher's current knowledge, no previous study has illustrated the teaching of the language skills in the competency system.

In the light of the above background and given the fact that the Algerian middle and secondary school English language textbooks focus on the teaching of the basic language competencies of interpretation (listening/reading), interaction (speaking), and production (writing and speaking), this study attempts to explain to competency-based English foreign language (EFL) teachers how to apply the principles of CBA for teaching the language skills.

3. Competency-Based Language Teaching

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CBLT is the application of the principles of competency-based education to language teaching. As discussed earlier, CBA evolved in mainstream education, that is, in teaching technical subjects mainly in the world of machinery. Because of the limitations of the objective-based approach that focused only on the teaching of separate objectives derived from task analysis, competency-based teaching extended this system of instruction by giving the learner the opportunity to solve complex tasks in the classroom. CBLT equally analyses the language tasks needed for teaching and teaches them separately, but it gives a chance to the learner to solve that analyzed task in the classroom right after the mastery of the elements/skills of the task.

4. Definition of competency

Basically, a language competency consists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge refers to information and facts; skills refer to the ability to do certain activities; and attitudes refer to positive manners that an individual should observe while carrying out a task (Scallon, 2004). Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined the concept competency as follows: “competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for effective performance of real-world task or activity” (p. 144). Implied in this definition is that competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform a given real life task.

For example, in teaching making a phone call, the teacher/syllabus designer needs first to identify and teach the knowledge needed such words *cell phones*, *hold a call*, *put someone through*, and *hold on*. Then, he/she determines the necessary skills of this task such as *reading correctly phone numbers*, *greeting people on the phone*, and *redirecting calls*. Finally, the course designer decides on the positive attitudes for performing this communicative task such as *being polite*, *using a friendly tone*, and *asking the caller if he/she further needs something else*. After teaching and mastering these elements of the competency of phone calls, the students are invited to apply them in an integrative way in a complex task, in which they make genuine phone calls.

5. Competency in Algerian English Language Syllabuses

The definition of competency depends on the type of competency-based approach adopted for teaching, organizing the curriculum, and evaluation. The Algerian first-year secondary school English language syllabus (2005) defines competency as follows:

La compétence est un savoir agir qui intègre un ensemble de savoirs (connaissances), savoir-faire (capacités) et savoir-être (attitudes) mobilisables pour résoudre une catégorie de situations problème. (SE1, p.7)

This definition suggests that competency is mainly composed of knowledge (savoir), know-how (savoir-faire), and know-how to behave (savoir-être). Accordingly, the concept of competency in the secondary school syllabus means the ability to demonstrate in an integrated way the knowledge of language (savoir) and language skills (savoir-faire) together with the social skills (savoir-être) in order to use English appropriately in different situations.

These components of competency are embedded in the following basic language abilities targeted in the Algerian EFL syllabuses.

- *interacting orally in English*
- *interpreting oral and written texts*
- *producing oral and written texts. (SE1 Syllabus, 2005)*

In other words, the life skills which constitute the major drive of CBA are integrated within the teaching of language competencies or, simply said, language skills.

6. Teaching the Four skills In Competency-Based Approach

One way to teach language skills in competency-based language teaching is through embedding them in life skills. Naturally, CBA is focused on teaching real life skills, not interested in teaching skills for general purposes. Consequently, the language skills are taught with the life skills that the students will need for the here and now. If we want learners to write letters, the language skills will be embedded in this topic. Below, an outline of the teaching of language skills is provided.