

An Introduction to Competency-Based Language Teaching to Undergraduate Students in Universities

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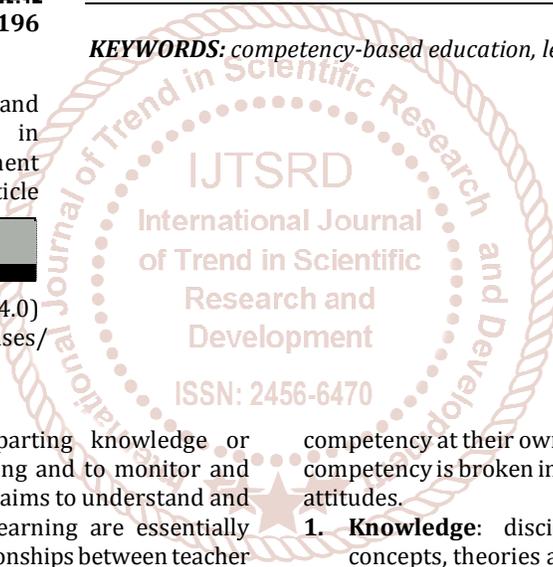
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ABSTRACT

Unlike a traditional way, competency-based language learning and teaching become influential in the education sector. This paper focuses on introduction to competency-based language teaching to undergraduate students in universities. To reflect the subject matter, the definition of competency and characteristics of competency are presented. It is followed by course goals and learning objectives and instructional outcomes which are the foundation of Blended course design. Also, the teacher roles in competency-based education and instructional strategies for undergraduate students to achieve the learning objectives are also discussed. Methods of assessing student learning are also presented to gain evidence that the students are able to meet their learning goals.

KEYWORDS: *competency-based education, learning objectives*

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1. Introduction

Teaching is the process of imparting knowledge or instructing students to do something and to monitor and change in behaviour while learning aims to understand and apply knowledge. Teaching and learning are essentially social activities, implying role relationships between teacher and learner, learner and learner. These relationships are established, maintained, and evaluated through communication. In order to have an effective communication, teachers use many different approaches such as communicative approach, integrated approach, eclectic approach and task-based learning. Each approach has its own role and special qualities. But in today's education sector, competency-based approach also becomes influential. Unlike a traditional way, it is a learner-centered and it also gives students a particular minimum level of knowledge and skills as the major educational outcome. Under a well-constructed instructional objectives or behavioural objectives, the acquiring knowledge and skills of students can be assessed and evaluated individually. This paper discusses a brief introduction of competency-based language teaching and learning to undergraduate students in universities.

2. What Is Competency-Based Education

According to educational experts, competency-based education is defined as approach that allows students to advance based on their ability to master a skill or

competency at their own pace regardless of environment. A competency is broken into three categories: knowledge, skill, attitudes.

- 1. Knowledge:** discipline specific content including concepts, theories and foundation information. Involve low-demand thinking skills
- 2. Skill:** the application of theory, hands-on practical task. Repeated practice & repetition create permanent connections in the brain that allows us to do things automatically. Involve mid-demand thinking skill
- 3. Attitudes, values:** personal perspective, influenced by society, peers families, educators. These are different for each learner based on motivations, goals, and self-concept.

KSA	Description
Knowledge	Condition of being aware of something (facts or concepts)
Skill	Abilities based on measured in time and precision
Attitudes	Feeling, emotion, beliefs, or values about something

Example:

KSA	Example of learning
Knowledge	The prior knowledge of reading strategies
Attitude	Appreciate the reading skill

4. Characteristics of Competency

Competency-based learning starts with well-defined outcomes. The structure for competency-based learning comes from creating and aligning sets of competencies to learning resources, assessment, and rubrics, with analytics to track performance. Focusing on outcomes empowers faculty and academic leaders to:

- Develop robust sets of learning outcomes and competencies
- Reorient curricular design to start with learning outcomes rather than starting with time/term structure
- Build high-quality sharable resources, assessments and rubrics designed to support designed to support learning outcomes
- Foster authentic assessment that includes demonstrated mastery of competencies
- Effectively identify risk in students' progress towards learning achievements and provide appropriate interventions
- Support transparent analysis of learning outcomes at every level of the institution
- Achieve short-term and long-term academic performance improvement focused on outcomes rather than inputs

5. Course Goal and Learning Objectives

A course goal indicates a broad learning outcome students will acquire at the end of the course. The goal aims at providing a good overview about the course. However, the goal must be realistic and achievable (Steere & Domenico, 2002), is not usually measurable. It is also teacher-focused.

For example, Students will build their language skills and knowledge.

Learning objectives are clear and concise statement that describe what the teacher intends students to learn by the end of the course. It is also teacher-focused.

For example, Students will build their language skills and knowledge through target activities to become a better communicator.

4.1 Instructional objectives

An instructional objective is a statement that will describes what the learner will be able to do after completing the instruction.(Kibler Kegia, Baker, Miles, 1974)

Robert Mager (1984) states that instructional objectives are specific, measurable, short-term, observable student behaviours. They indicate that the desirable knowledge, skills, or attitudes to be gained.

In order to write instructional objectives, it is necessary to study three domains of learning, Bloom's of taxonomy.

1. Cognitive Domain (knowledge)

Learning Level	Associated action verbs
Knowledge	Define, describe, states, write, match, recall, name
Comprehension	Comprehend, name, explain, select, represent, identify
Application	Predict, select, choose, construct, use, find
Analysis	Analyse, identify, conclude, select, compare, contract
Synthesis	Combine, discuss, select, conclude
Evaluation	Evaluate, determine, select, recognize, identify

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills (Bloom, 1956). There are six major categories of cognitive processes starting from the simplest to the most complex. The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulties. The first ones must be mastered before the nest one can take place.

2. Psychomotor domain (skill)

Learning Level	Associated action verbs
Imitation	Copy, follow, repeat, replicate, reproduce
Manipulation	Act, build, perform
Precision	Calibrate, demonstrate, master
Articulation	Adapt, construct, combine, create, modifies, formulate
Naturalization	Create, design, develop, invent, manage

The psychomotor domain includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedure, or technique in execution.

3. Affective Domain (attitude)

Learning Level	Associated action verbs
Receiving phenomena	ask, attentive, listen, follow
respond to phenomenon	Answer, assist, aid, help, tell, discuss, perform
Valuing	Appreciate, treasure, join, initiate, share
Organization	Compare, relate, synthesize
Internalizes valuing	Act, discriminate, display, question, revise, solve

The effective domain includes the manner in which we deal with emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. The five major categories are listed from the simplest behavior to the most complex.

4.2 Constructing instructional objectives or learning objectives

Well-constructed learning objectives describe an intended learning outcome. Writing instructional objectives depends on the objective. An objective is the description of what the learner will be able to do after successfully completing the learning experience.

Four fundamentals of good objectives are:

1. Audience

The learner must be defined clearly in the statement.

2. Behaviour

Behaviour of the learning objectives is an action verb that connotes observable student behaviour.

3. Conditions

Conditions of the learning objectives are the tools, data that will be provided to the students, as in "Given a set of

4. Degree or criterion

It specifies how well the student must perform the behaviour.

Example:

After the completion of first semester, B.E fourth year students will be able to

- Write the technical report properly given the instructions in the printed text.

In this statement,

Audience: B.E fourth year students

Behavior: write

Condition: given the instructions

Degree: properly

5. Instructional Strategies or Learning Strategies

After learning objectives are constructed, instructional strategies and tools are considered to accomplish the task. It also determines the approach for achieving the learning objectives. For selecting the learning strategy, the instructional strategy selection chart is used which is based on Bloom's Taxonomy. It is a passive learning method (top rows) to the more active participation methods (bottom rows).

Instructional Strategy Selection Chart

Instructional strategy	Cognitive Domain	Psychomotor Domain	Affective Domain
Lecture, reading, audio, question and answer period	1. knowledge	1. Imitation 2. Manipulation	1. Receiving phenomena
Discussion, activities	2. comprehension 3. application	3. Precision 4. Articulation	2. responding
Job-training, practicing	4. analysis	5. Naturalization	3. valuing
Use in real situation	5. Synthesis		4. Organization
Normally developed on own through self-study through mistakes	6. Evaluation		5. internalizing

In this paper, the target student is undergraduate students. According to this chart, it is expected that the performance level of students will reach to *Application* in Cognitive Domain, and in Psychomotor Domain, the performance of students will reach to *Precision*.

6. Teacher Role

The role of the teacher changes from an information giver to a facilitator (Organization of America States, 2006; Sturgis & Patrick, 2010). Teachers provide the materials, the activities to their students (Paul, 2008).

Teachers are moving between groups of learners, facilitating discussion and explorations, helping students set goals or even engaged in more instruction. Students may be working independently or grouped based on what they are working on.

7. Methods of Assessing Student Learning

Assessment is a collection of information about learning. It gives teacher a better awareness of what pupils know and understand, what their learning enable them to do and what their skills and personal capabilities are.

According to this definition, two types of assessment are used:

1. Formative assessment (Assessment for learning): a range of formal and informal assessment procedures used by teachers during the learning process to know the students' understanding level.

2. Summative assessment (Assessment of learning): comes at the end of a learning sequence and is used to acknowledge record and report on pupils' over all achievement.

8. Constructing Course Goal for Undergraduates Students Based On Competency

By using information presented above, a well-defined course goal and learning objectives are constructed for Fourth Year undergraduate students in universities.

Course goal: to apply language skills and knowledge based on speaking, listening, reading, and writing, grammar, and vocabulary activities in the printed text.

Instructional objectives:

On the completion of the course, students will be able to

1. Build actively a model of explore writing including a dramatic story, a letter recommendation places to see, a complaint about service and a proposal letter from print sources and non-print sources given the instructions of writing activities and practices
2. Explain confidentially the course of reading with an awareness of for other viewpoints
3. Construct grammatical structure appropriately given the instruction
4. Use acceptable vocabulary accurately and comprehend how to put words together and use language to communicate meaning
5. Perform better communicators through speaking, listening, reading and writing
6. Appreciate the importance of language skills

8.1 Correlating Learning Objectives and Learning Methods

	Outcome No.	Learning Method
1	2,3,4	Lecture, discussion group individual Student grouping activity, cooperative learning Interactive learning
2	1,5	Scaffolding strategies Oral presentation Classroom debate
3	6	Interactive with essay competition, impromptu talk

8.2 Learning outcome Assessment

The last step is assessing students learning. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching as both respond to the information it provides. Assessment for learning is an ongoing process that arises out of the interaction between teaching and learning.

Types of assessment are:

Formative Assessment (Assessment for learning) – Formative assessment is the use of day-to-day, often informal, assessments to explore pupils' understanding. It enables the teacher to decide how best to help pupils develop that understanding.

Summative Assessment (Assessment of learning)– Summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.

In our university, students have to conduct both formative assessment and summative assessment.

Assessment on reading, vocabulary, and grammar are conducted as a formative assessment and writing assignment is also carried out as a practice. Apart from them, students have to take the tutorials to supply the information to complete students' wants and needs. It also a method of transferring knowledge and may be used as a part of a learning process.

Mid-term and final examinations deal with summative assessment (assessment of learning)

According to the educational system, 20% of tutorial marks and 10% of assessment marks are considered for the performance of students in the academic year. Then, students have to take 70% of final exam for total assessment.

9. Findings

This paper is aimed to an introduction to competency-based language teaching and learning to undergraduate students in universities. Using competency-based approached to language teaching and learning make students involved in the classroom.

Especially, they become participated in the reading passage. Students are assigned to discuss the reading passage individually or in group. The rest has to pay attention to the volunteer and if the reader message is not relevant with their ideas, they discuss together. After discussing, the teacher asks questions about the passage and facilitate the reading passage again. For the speaking skill, students are let speak based on the topic in the printed text. They show interest in this practice.

10. Problems

Regarding this approach, a problem can be encountered. That is the listening activities. All students have to conduct

the listing practice with real-life listening situations based on the prescribed text. But time constraint does not give enough exposure to the real world communication. Thanks to the English Club, those who would like to improve their language skills come and join actively.

11. Summery

Competency-based language teaching and learning is functional and reliable approach compared to the traditional way. In today's educational world, not only teachers but also students need to be competent in their respective fields. To be competent, it needs knowledge, skill, and attitude. In order to change the behaviour of the student, the teacher should not impart knowledge alone. This competency-based approach can give these three ingredients with a well-constructed course goal, and a well-defined learning objectives or instructional outcomes. Then, teaching and learning strategies need to be consistent with instructional outcomes to accomplish the task. Students' achievement can be accessed with assessment methods. But, the teacher needs to prepare course goal and students' learning outcome with learning strategies in advance in daily lesson plan.

In conclusion, competency-based language teaching and learning is beneficial because it gives students a particular minimum level of knowledge and skills as the major educational outcomes.

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