

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER COMPETENCES IN UZBEKISTAN

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ANNOTATION

This article considers competences of the English language teacher in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Despite the clear classification of English language teacher competences on a first level, which was developed within the TEMPUS project, no reliable instrument has yet been constructed to account for those competences. The purpose of my research was to investigate the metric characteristics of an instrument which could be useful for determining English language teacher competences in the Republic of Uzbekistan. And also to redefine the standard role of the teacher: s/he not plays the role of an individual who not only possesses and transmits knowledge, but also has to possess and create positive interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships within the classroom. The quality of the teaching process therefore depends entirely on the teacher's professional competences furthermore as on his/her personal characteristics. In this article work we will discuss the teaching process depends on not only teachers competences (both subject-specific and educational), but also learner's characteristics (motivation, knowledge, attitudes, etc.). In study a questionnaire was applied to 100 study members (bachelor students of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages). The last version of the questionnaire consisted of 18 items and 4 factors, which were extracted using the analysis of exploratory factors. The results have shown that the developed instrument is not fully applicable to the Uzbek English language acquisition context. Still, a number of its aspects might be utilized in future instrument construction.

Keywords: competences, English language teacher, interpersonal, intrapersonal

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the subject that is taught, the method of teaching and learning is influenced by many interrelated contextual factors within which learning takes place. When it involves English instruction and learning, the role of context plays a really important, if not the most important role. Consequently, it influences learning results. English language pedagogy and learning most frequently occur in a formal context within the academic system. Thus, the learner's contact with the target language and culture is not direct. In such a context, a teacher (most often) represents the only source of English language and culture so his/her role is of significant supremacy.

The simultaneously understanding of the academic process redefines the standard role of the teacher: s/he not plays the role of an individual who not only possesses and transmits knowledge, but also has to possess and create positive interpersonal and intrapersonal

relationships within the classroom. The quality of the teaching process therefore depends entirely on the teacher's professional competences furthermore as on his/her personal characteristics.

Dunkin and Biddle's model of teaching [4] presents some essential relationships operating in teaching. In conformity with the authors, teachers' competences (both subject-specific and educational), likewise as their formative experience and properties, act on the process variables, which, in turn, effects to immediate and long run variables. Other factors having an effect on the quality of output are context variables. These include student characteristics moreover community and classroom contexts which 'surround' the formal learning classroom. Dunkin and Biddle indicate the importance of both characteristics of teachers and learners, and their influence on the classroom atmosphere which, consequently, determines the quality of interaction and output. Although we stress the importance of the holistic point of view, our interest within this article is directed towards the teacher's competences.

Since English language acquisition takes place in afore-mentioned formal classroom settings, it is assumed that every learner is exposed to the identical amount and quality of input. However, we have witnessed that not all students acquire language at the identical speed, which ends up in their different levels of achievement. The former, of course, partially depends on a learner's characteristics (motivation, knowledge, attitudes, etc.), but learning is not a one-way process, therefore the differences referred to cannot be only ascribed solely to the learner's differences. American psychologist William Huitt [6] made an effort to clarify differences in achievement by his transactional model of the teaching-learning process. He developed a four-category classification: context, input, classroom processes and output, all of which have distinct variables within themselves. Since Huitt's primary interest was differences in academic achievement, it seems logical that he put emphasis on the output category because the variables within the other of the categories are accustomed to predict or relate to the variables measured in this one. Nevertheless, Huitt's transactional model once again points out the importance of the teacher's characteristics in learning and teaching.

The Competences of English Language Teacher

In a review of literature (devoted to teacher characteristic features), we have come upon a specific amount of terminological inconsistency which we feel necessary to clarify. Namely, there are several terms that solve the (more or less) same issue: teacher characteristic features, teacher qualities and teacher competences. Our contention is that both characteristic features and /or qualities belong to a wider set of teacher competences, since they describe knowledge, characteristic features, skills and talent that the competent teacher should have. However, it has to be noted that the term teacher characteristic features also refers to personal/individual characteristic features of a teacher. During this sense, they may be viewed both as competences (which is learned and improved) and as personality traits (characterized by a specific amount of stability).

The necessity for understanding the difference between 'universal' or general teachers characteristic features or competences and people related to specific subjects has been emphasized by many researchers [5, 2]. In his 2006 investigation, Borg examined over 200 practicing and prospective English teachers, also teachers of other subjects, and identified the

whole of 11 key distinctive characteristics in which English language teachers were diverse from teachers of other subjects.

When it comes to defining 'good' or 'effective' language teachers, the literature on the subject, aside from legitimate, academic exploration-based competencies, moreover reports on good language teachers as seen by learners. It is interesting to notice that the aspect of learners' subjective perception of a teacher's qualities was not acknowledged until the middle of the 20th century. A lot of present-time studies have demonstrated that learners' subjective perception of teacher characteristic features has an influence on the quality of teacher-learner interaction and, in consequence, affects both cognitive and affective aspects of foreign language acquisition. Young [10] emphasizes that an English teacher may influence the classroom atmosphere in both a positive and negative way, and underscores the significance of defining the activities and interactions that can guide to negative experiences in English language studying and teaching. Effective English language teachers are described in the literature by means of amount range of characteristics that refer to both their professional competencies and their 'desirable' personal characteristics. A perfect English language teacher is anticipated to get knowledge in the target language and culture also as knowledge in educational science (pedagogy, psychology), which enables him/her to prepare the classroom well, to motivate, present, explain and clarify the material within an understandable way. With the exception of subject-specific competencies, the discussed literature also determines a collection of desirable personal characteristics which most frequently include warmth, tolerance, fairness and a nice sense of humor [2, 8].

English Language Teacher Competences in the Republic of Uzbekistan

In an effort to define the most relevant set of English language teacher competencies, the document Competences of elementary school English languages Teachers in the Republic of Uzbekistan was drawn up. This project focused on the beginning and continuing professional development of English language teachers functioning at the first level. One among of its main outcomes was a draft of Primary Language Teachers' training competencies.

According to the document, there are two basic areas of competencies: subject-specific and academic competencies. Subject-specific competencies include competencies associated with language and culture, whereas educational competences relate to English language teaching. The primary subgroup refers to the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic level of the desired knowledge, in addition to knowledge and skills necessary for teaching the cultural elements of the English language. The latter refers to glottodidactical and methodical knowledge and skills necessary for qualitative English language pedagogy.

The second area of educational competences is comprised of competences associated with educational science and those associated with lifelong learning. The primary one refers to the possession of general pedagogy and psychology knowledge furthermore to intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. This subgroup also includes personal (cognitive and emotional) characteristics and skills of an English language teacher. Finally, lifelong education competences relate to the knowledge of educational system(s) additionally competences associated with the development of both pedagogy and language skills.

The document has a great huge value in the field of English language learning in Uzbekistan since it is not the primary document that systematically defines the areas of competencies within which English language teachers should professionally evolve. It serves as a recommendation to English language teachers, university professors and other experts who educate and prepare prospective teachers for all of their demanding professions.

However, in Uzbekistan there is yet no instrument to evaluate those competences.

METHODOLOGY

1. Aim

This study sought to search out answers to many questions. First, we wanted to analyze whether some questionnaires on students' images of 'good' English teachers would be relevant in the Uzbek context.

Second, we intended to seek out which of these competencies are considered relevant by prospective English teachers.

2. Participants

In total, the study included 100 Students of Samarkand State Institute Foreign Languages (F=21%, M=79%). Some master students were included.

3. Questionnaire

The investigation made utilization of a questionnaire. In Japanese and the questionnaire only later was translated into English by Sakurai [8]. In our investigation we used the English version of the questionnaire, but we also had to introduce one small change, since the English version had been prepared for an investigation of 'good' Japanese language teachers. Thus, instead of the term Japanese we replaced the term English. The questionnaire consisted of 41 items. These items included questions about the students' images of 'good' English language teachers. The investigation members rated each item on a four point 25 (totally disagree) to 100 (totally agree), 50 (partially agree), 75 (agree).

RESULTS

The first factor analysis, conducted on all items, distinguished thirteen items in keeping with the 'universal' or general teachers characteristics or competences. This factor solution indicated many problems connected with the fact that several items had low values, whereas some items had high value with relation to just one factor.

Our next step was an effort to repeat Sakurai's factor analysis by incorporating three factors and eighteen selected items into analysis. Again, the results were not satisfactory and displayed a number of the issues mentioned above. For these reasons, the exploratory procedure was conducted on a six-factor structure with the omission of items that had a) low value b) high value with relation to over one factor and c) low communalities. After the extraction, the last factor analysis was conducted on eighteen items. The results are following: the highest percentage is 88% in factor 1; the lowest percentage is 51% in factor 4.

Table 2. Factor model of a good English language teacher for bachelor students

Items	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: Competences related to classroom instruction				
28. Have a good patience	75%			
41. Make students maintain discipline in class	77%			
37. Make class friendly and comfortable	65%			
31. Make class interesting and fun	68%			
25. Be able to explain in student's mother tongue	88%			
1. Be optimistic about self, others and life	80%			
Factor 2: Intercultural competences				
35. Have ample knowledge about classical English literature		60%		
27. Have a broad knowledge about English culture		65%		
8. Have a broad knowledge of international economy and concerns		73%		
Factor 3: Communicative language competences				
4. Be able to speak in standard English			65%	
33. Use English accurately and fluently			71%	
13. Able to give straightforward explanation when students have difficulty			76%	
Factor 4: Intrapersonal and interpersonal competences				
3. Be enthusiastic about teaching.				61%
9. Enjoy teaching				68%
15. Be hard working teacher				77%
21. Be warm, kind, understanding				78%
16. Be happy and able to answer students' questions				61%
40. Accept students' emotions				51%

DISCUSSION

The factor analysis demonstrated four factors that may be attributed to a nice English language teacher as seen from the students' perspective. Competencies associated with classroom instruction (Factor 1) are shown through qualities like optimism and patience. They also indicate the teacher's ability to form a friendly and comfortable studying environment in addition to an interesting and fun teaching environment but with a particular amount of discipline also. It is interesting to notice that the items be able to explain in student's first language (25) was not retained, albeit their content referred to pedagogical-psychological competencies in Factor 1. The most plausible explanation for this might be found in the item's frequency and mean value (Item 25 – 88%). Item's frequency values show that students recognized the pedagogical importance of Intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. English language teacher intercultural competence (Factor 2) or knowledge about social, cultural and political particularities of the target community was also recognized as important. It has to be registered that, in comparison to other items, items comprised in this factor had

significantly lower mean values also the factor itself. In other words, intercultural competences seem to be the least important in comparison to other three competences included in this factor model.

In order to be a good English language teacher, one should also, in line with the study participants, get and develop communication language competences (Factor 3). Competences associated with this factor in the primary place concerned the knowledge to communicate accurately and fluently in Standard English. This factor was rated because the most significant of all four factors, which is not surprising because a communicative curriculum of the twenty-first century proclaims a goal of communicative competence.

Items with the top saturations formed the last, fourth factor. This factor described Intra and interpersonal English language competencies. These competencies mostly mentioned those personal qualities of the teacher, like warmth, kindness, an enthusiastic approach, empathy, that are considered to be a prerequisite for creating a healthy and positive classroom interaction.

If we compare the results of our study with those presented in Sakurai's paper, we are able to indicate differences, because we have radically changed the evaluation system. Sakurai's factor analysis yielded three factors: Interaction with learners, Knowledge about Japan and the Japanese language and experience and qualification. Although the names of the factors are somewhat different (we followed the TEMPUS competence classification), it might be observed that they both, to an excellent extent, talk to identical competencies. One exception is Sakurai's third factor (Experience and education), which was not extracted in our factor analysis. Items representing each factor, however, differ in these two studies. This could be explained by the aforementioned discrimination indices that were (for many items) normal. Another possible explanation is that there is a cultural discrepancy between Japan and Uzbekistan. Borg [1], furthermore many other authors, states that English language teacher characteristic features do not represent universal phenomena. Rather, they need to be viewed in the context of cultural background in what learning takes place.

CONCLUSION

When designing a twenty-first century curriculum in English language teaching, it is necessary to take into consideration the opinion of both teachers and students. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to investigate what competences are considered the significant feature of English language teachers. The results of the study have shown that teachers' competence (both subject-specific and educational) and student's characteristics (motivation, knowledge, attitudes, etc.) play a great role in acquisition of English language. The study also provided a valuable data on the significance of English language teacher competences as seen from bachelor students' perspective. Communicative language competence was seen as the most important, followed by competences related to classroom instruction, intrapersonal and interpersonal competences and, in the end, intercultural competences. It is our opinion that the conclusions arrived at are important for any future discussion of the English language teacher competences and it is our hope that this article will be a helpful manual for English language teachers and learners.

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