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PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF TEACHERS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Evangelina Priscilla B

Vellore Institute of Technology (Vellore, India)

evangelina.b@vit.ac.in

Alexey V. Konobeiev

Moscow Pedagogical State University (Moscow, Russia)

alexeyvk@titul.ru

Abstract: The article considers the changes that have been taking place in the world in recent years, including a growing demand for soft skills, and the impact these changes may have on the professional competencies of teachers of the English language worldwide. The authors explore professional standards and requirements for teachers in a number of countries, including Canada, the EU, Russia, and India in order to see whether these changes are reflected, and describe the teaching context in India to see what teachers are concerned with. The article shows that although digital competencies are included in the teachers' competencies in many countries, certain expectations of learners and their potential employers are not reflected in frameworks of teacher competencies and requirements. The authors believe that current frameworks of teachers' competencies in general and English language teachers' competencies, in particular, need a partial revision to accommodate the expectations of learners and their potential employers, which may lead to a more interdisciplinary approach to teacher training.

Keywords: Academic language teacher, higher education, professional communicative competence, foreign languages, Second language acquisition, motivation, effective strategy, propagate interest, teacher education, teacher development, soft skills

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In recent years the world has undergone significant changes. The teacher's profession has been no exception, changing together with the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have had to master distance teaching techniques. The development of neural networks is presenting new opportunities as well as new challenges by the sheer amount of new features. Apart from the technicalities of teaching, the expectations of learners and the needs of students' future employers are changing as well. According to a body of research, many employers now expect not only hard skills from their potential employees, but soft skills as well. Soft skills are regarded as very important in many countries, as recent research demonstrates. In the USA a survey, carried out in 2016 by the HR company Adecco Staffing, showed that 44% of executives (out of 500 senior executives surveyed) said that a lack of soft skills was the biggest proficiency gap they saw in the workforce. A report by Bloomberg in 2018 reveals that: If recent graduates are not well-prepared for their new jobs, it is not because their hard skills are deficient. Some 90 percent of corporate respondents and 88 percent of academics surveyed said new recruits have the hard skills, such as computer literacy and written communication, to do their jobs successfully. But both groups, however, were far less satisfied with new employees' soft skills. Nearly four in 10 corporations and almost half of academic institutions said new hires lack the soft skills they need to perform at a high level [Bloomberg BNA. Bloomberg Next, 2018, p.2]. The survey included 200 senior-level respondents, 100 from businesses, and 100 from academia, and showed that 34% of corporate respondents and 44% of respondents from academic institutions believe that new recruits are prepared with hard skills but lack soft skills to be effective. The Global Trends Report-2019 by LinkedIn involved 5165 businesses in 35 countries, and 92% of respondents said that soft skills were as important as hard skills, while 30% of employers stated that it is more important to employ people based on their soft skills than hard skills. What's more, 89% of unsuccessful employees lack soft skills. It would appear that soft skills are becoming a key factor in employability and success at work. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its 2019 Review of Australian Qualifications Framework Submission to the AQF Expert Panel states that soft skills should be a requirement for every qualification. This strongly correlates with the statement that "In the next ten years, soft-skill intensive occupations are expected to account for 63% of all jobs in Australia" made by AIM Business School CEO Ben Foote in Sky News business programme "The Ladder" in 2018. This demand makes soft skills an important part of learning content in professional education [Myers, 2021]. Because of the rising importance of educational soft skills, the necessity to teach soft skills has become a major concern for educators and employers worldwide (Crowley, 2019). As soft skills are becoming an important part of education, it would appear that teachers in General - and teachers of English as well - should be able if not to teach, then to consider them while teaching [Instefjord & Munthe, 2017].

Therefore, the question arises as to what competencies the teachers of English as a Second language or English as a Foreign language should have to address these changes and needs [Mouza et al., 2014].

Therefore, it is important to explore the existing views on the professional competencies of teachers of English as a foreign language to see what is expected of them and what the nearest needs in their professional development may be. For this purpose, the authors of this paper provide an overview of expectations and requirements in several countries and look in detail at the competencies of the English language teacher in India.

Cambridge English Teaching Framework [2018] contains a list of competence statements in the following areas: Learning and the learner, Teaching, learning and assessment, Language ability, Language knowledge and awareness, and Professional development and values. The framework

categorises teacher's levels into «foundation», «developing», «proficient» and «expert» and states some of the features that became important the next year after the introduction of the framework, like «understanding of key concepts of digital teaching/learning», but provides no details, and otherwise provides a very traditional breakdown of teachers' competencies, limiting itself to very general descriptors like «Has a sophisticated understanding of principles and techniques for teaching reading. Lesson plans and classroom practice demonstrate a wide range of techniques, used consistently, for developing reading skills using different stages in a principled way according to learner needs, frequently integrating with other skills». In other words, it would appear that this framework follows a very traditional approach to teachers' competencies and provides no precise tools for their evaluation.

Kateryna Binytska et al. [2020] list requirements for the system of professional competencies in EU countries. The authors provide a brief overview of several research articles and national standards across EU countries and conclude that «In European countries, there are different social needs and requirements for an English teacher, that is why it is impossible to define one 'deal set of requirements' for the professional competencies of an English teacher». The authors suggest using the 7 characteristics of foreign language teachers put together as a result of a survey conducted by the British Council: the teacher should 1. know the official duties and requirements for the process of education, 2. take into account the needs of students, 3. be sympathetic, 4. be creative, 5. be able to listen, 6. be patient and 7. be able to encourage learning outside the classroom. The listed qualities would seem to be non-specific for teachers of foreign languages, but rather have a very general character. Moreover, these qualities seem very difficult to measure, even though the authors end their article with the recommendation that «it is advisable for our state (Ukraine) to take these requirements into consideration for developing national professional standards for foreign language teachers». Even though it is very hard to name the listed qualities «requirements», they contain an important point, namely that to encourage learning outside the classroom a teacher should be able to recommend students to use free internet resources - something that thousands of teachers have been doing for years.

Canadian «Reference Framework for Professional Competencies for Teachers» published in Quebec [2021] describes the «main changes that have occurred over the last two decades which have a direct or indirect influence on the work done by teachers», «sets out three fundamental principles of teaching which guide the professional activities of teachers by basing teaching on the current state of knowledge in order to support students' learning» (act to further student learning and education, know how to exercise professional autonomy in different situations, base one's teaching on current knowledge), «outlines a number of guidelines and details the professional knowledge that underpins a teacher's competencies», and «describes each of the 13 competencies that make up the reference framework together with the key elements that indicate how they are applied in teachers' work». This framework has been developed for teachers in general, including teachers of foreign languages, and is therefore of interest to us. Among changes in life as reasons for changes in teacher's competencies, the Framework lists, besides social changes, increased use of digital technologies: «Digital education—intended as a tool but also as a form of literacy and social practice - is now one of the major responsibilities of the school and teachers, as is described in the Digital Competency Framework. This responsibility requires teachers to continually develop new competencies and keep them up to date». The Framework also states, that «research has also shown that children are born with skills in processing visual, physical, linguistic and social information. These are the skills upon which future learning, including learning at school, will

build”, which means that teachers need to be able to adapt their teaching to these skills in students. The Framework includes the following competencies, applicable to foreign language teachers:

TWO FUNDAMENTAL COMPETENCIES

Competency 1 Act as a cultural facilitator when carrying out duties

Competency 2 Master the language of instruction

AREA 1: Six specialized competencies central to working with and for students

Competency 3 Plan teaching and learning situations

Competency 4 Implement teaching and learning situations

Competency 5 Evaluate learning

Competency 6 Manage how the class operates

Competency 7 Take into account student diversity

Competency 8 Support students’ love of learning

AREA 2: Two competencies underlying collaborative professionalism

Competency 9 Be actively involved as a member of the school team

Competency 10 Co-operate with the family and education partners in the community

AREA 3: One competency inherent in teachers’ professionalism

Competency 11 Commit to own professional development and to the profession

TWO CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Competency 12 **Mobilize digital technologies**

Competency 13 Act in accordance with the ethical principles of the profession [Reference Framework for Professional Competencies for Teachers, 2021, p.43].

As can be seen, competency 12 also states that teachers should be able to mobilize digital technologies. It is described as follows: The scope of this competency goes beyond the technical skills needed to use digital tools for pedagogical purposes in the classroom. Teachers must be aware of the impact of these changes on the nature and value of learning, taking into account not only the digital tools that support them but also the cultural context in which they are shared.

In this sense, the use of digital technologies is woven into all of our cultural practices and productions. It integrates other forms of intelligence into a network and, by extension, other models of knowledge, other models for accessing knowledge, and other models of education that will increasingly influence student learning and student relationships with knowledge” [Reference Framework for Professional Competencies for Teachers, 2021, p. 78] and includes the following key elements:

- Exercises ethical citizenship in the digital age.
- Develops and mobilizes technological skills.
- Harnesses the potential of digital resources for learning.
- Develops and mobilizes **information literacy**.
- **Collaborates** via digital technology.
- **Communicates** via digital technology.
- Produces content via digital technology.
- Uses digital tools to foster inclusion and address diverse needs.
- Mobilizes digital technology for personal and professional empowerment.
- **Solves diverse problems** via digital technology.
- Develops **critical thinking** with regard to the use of digital technology.
- Adopts an innovative and **creative approach** to the use of digital technology [Reference Framework for Professional Competencies for Teachers, 2021, p. 79].

In bold are the elements that clearly correspond to soft skills.

It is evident that the Framework lists a cross-curricular competence that reflects the recent development in the world and the general use of distance teaching tools.

This idea corresponds with Unesco's Common Digital Competence Framework for Teachers (CDCFT) [2017] developed in Spain in 2017. The CDCFT illustrates 21 digital competencies that were deemed essential for teaching practitioners in the 21st century, centred around 5 key competence areas of (1) Information and Data Literacy, (2) Communication and Collaboration, (3) Digital Content Creation, (4) Safety and (5) Problem Solving, which were defined in the levels of foundation, intermediate and advanced.

Barno Toshboeva in her paper "Professional Competence Of English Language Teachers In Uzbekistan" [Toshboeva, 2015] states that "the competence of a teacher means a synthesis of professionalism (special, methodical, psychological and pedagogical training), work (work relations, the learning process itself, the optimal use of resources, techniques, and training methods) and arts (acting and oratory.)" and that «Key indicators of professional competence of teachers of foreign languages include the necessity to develop skills in students' communicative and interpersonal communication, components of which are linguistic, thematic, socio-cultural, educational and cognitive competence». The author makes it clear that the teacher should be concerned not only with the development of students' knowledge of the English language but also with the development of their cognitive abilities which, once again, may include the ability to develop critical thinking skills in students.

Karpova et al. [2018] following previous research, list Cultural and linguistic, Linguistic and didactic, Social and educational, and Professional and educational competences of English language teachers. Among others, the authors describe such components of the aforementioned competencies as "the skill to logically explain and effectively defend one's point of view during a discussion in the classroom showing respect to opponents".

The analysis shows that views on teacher competences vary across borders. While in many countries a rather traditional view, focused primarily on the ability to teach language content and communication skills, is adopted, in some other countries, like Canada, the view has been shifting to include some soft skills both as teacher's skills and the content of teaching. This may mean the inclusion of soft skills in teacher education as a way to foresee further changes in the job market. Certainly, countries also have their peculiarities in a teaching context, which also influences views on teachers' competencies.

This may also mean that an interdisciplinary approach to teacher education may be necessary, as described further. This approach to language education aims at producing teachers with declarative knowledge and research tools on the one hand and the ability to cope with a heterogeneous classroom in a multicultural society on the other.

Professional Competencies of Teachers of Foreign Languages in India

The challenges that prerequisite to be addressed in foreign language teaching and literary acquisition. The doggedness of the problem raised in this paper is explained by the increasing demand flagging up the complexity of foreign language teacher education like challenges in foreign language teaching and understandings of literacy, theory versus practice, new perceptions of literacy, teaching reading proficiency, the brain, and language learning. However, proficiency concerns more work needed to promote the students who are future teachers of English. In their research Mandasari and Oktaviani [2018] mention that students from the management program learned English better when their feelings were involved in learning English. Keeping this concept

as the backdrop role of a teacher takes varied shifts to keep the interest of learners high and make them feel involved in learning. In this regard, the teacher has to swap roles and assume himself to be a learner first to empathize with their students and stay updated, then a facilitator who does not only act as a sage on the stage but also as a 'guide by the side' and finally an evaluator who assesses more for the areas of enhancing competence instead of looking for the weaknesses.

The English language enjoys the prestige and status of a global language. It is the language of communication, technology, trade, science, advertisement, international conferences, banking global branch, entertainment, interview, and many other sectors. Though many approaches and methods are being introduced, the learning process seems to be less effective and less interesting. Teaching and learning English as a second language is a challenge both to the teachers and the learners. A deeper understanding of classroom issues is necessary for the Teacher to make the learners excel in the target language. A teacher plays diverse roles in the process of language learning. If all these above roles are performed aptly by a teacher, she becomes an ideal model and guide in shaping the future of the learners. «Aspiring Minds», an education, employment, and training assessment company, finds that 25% of engineering students do not have English comprehension skills. 55,000 Engineering Graduates were examined and it was found that more than 25% of Engineers do not possess the English comprehension skills to understand the engineering school curriculum. English is currently the language of worldwide communication. At the same time, certain changes in the world may affect the competencies that a teacher needs to have to be able to develop in students alongside developing communication skills.

An overview of English language teacher competencies in India

While the core English language teacher's competencies seem to be uniform in most countries, let us consider the views, expectations, and problems prevalent in India, as well as some basic concepts prevalent among English-language teachers.

Remedial Measures

Predominantly, most of the Indian classrooms have inadequate facilities, insufficient teachers, with extreme classroom strength that are in no way a semblance of a language-teaching classroom. Most of the learners are first-generation learners and are completely new to any sort of the English language. This in turn evidences the impracticality of implementing the tools and methods. There are possibilities with the language Teachers. Language Teachers should avoid preferring lectures in the classroom, a language demands interaction. Communication is the basis of effective L2 learning to attain the targeted efficiency in a second language. The learners and Teachers combine themselves interestingly in the process.

The Strategies that affect L2 Proficiency

The Strategies that affect L2 proficiency are

Lack of exposure

Family background

Cultural and social-economic issues

Less L2 communication

Mother tongue influence and interference

Peer group influence

Concentrated on grammar and methods
Pronunciation
Fear for fluency and hesitation.

The Complex System of the Second Language Learning in India

English Language Learning in the present scenario has increased widely and the scope for the language is also plenty. Today the command of the English language is the direct hope for the candidates' employability. Generally, a learner learns his mother tongue by listening, speaking, reading, and writing from simple to complex in a natural way, but any second language like English starts from writing and then moves to reading, speaking, and listening. Thus this complex process effectively stimulates the learner to use the target language. Motivate the learners even if they commit mistakes at their initial stage. Language learning cannot be restricted to curriculum planning and evaluation. To overcome the difficulties, the learner could be motivated to use English. Only when the teachers avoid the mother tongue usage in an L2 classroom, the learner would avoid it. If the teacher uses both L1 and L2 equally in the language classroom, the learning program would be a washout. The teacher should provide the learners with situations that promote L2 eloquently, and effectively emphasise equal importance to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is necessary to eradicate the learners' hatred towards the second language. Identifying the learners' problems and offering effective strategies are the main concern. The learners' participation with interaction is the prime factor for speech emergence. Their mistakes should be welcomed by the teacher for the amendment.

Use of target Language

The Teacher must use the target language in their teaching, Curtain [2000] examines the relationship between teachers' target language use and pupils' proficiency in L2 the findings of the research supported the hypothesis the greater uses of the target language by the Teacher results in higher L2 proficiency levels in the pupils. The role of the Teacher is equal to that of the language learner. The teacher must propagate opportunities to interact successfully.

Propagate interest

Learners need opportunities to listen to comprehend natural spoken language. To attract the attention of the learners, the teacher should ask about the topic to which they listen to make effective listening, the teacher could provide, difficult vocabulary with meaning, relate the topic to some appealing situations or stories, be attentive to answer the question that follows after a lecture, ask learners the general ideas after listening.

Opportunities and interaction

A teacher should enable the learners to participate actively in their language learning process. This helps them to experience success in their learning and interesting engagement in the learning process. This helps to experience success in their learning and an interesting engagement in the learning process. Learners should be facilitated to set targets for their learning which promotes autonomous learning and provides opportunities to communicate meaningfully. It is a necessity to create tasks where learners communicate ideas and feelings and L2 and the topics of their interest. The teacher should be able to monitor the learners during their activity-based learning.

Motivation from the beginning stage

At the beginning of the learning stage, the teacher may play word games like finding out the missing letters to make them come across new vocabulary. Learners who come out of answers would be provided the chance to develop the answers in a short paragraph. By which the teacher promotes a platform for the learners to perform the language without much effort. The teacher may also provide the learners with some interesting topics to discuss in the group. And then they are motivated to present their ideas on that topic to their friends. Through this kind of task, the learner may not find much difficulty in demonstrating themselves. They find the chance to enhance themselves in their learning process.

Topics	Find Missing Letters	Elaborate into a Paragraph
ELT	m-t-a—ui-ti-n	Methods in ELT are...
Domestic	-t-n-i-s-oo-	Utensils help to
Classroom	-ust—t-d-n-	A student is one who...
Technology	m- -ia, m- - em	Media is a vast area

Language as the Uniting Bond

Language is the code used to express human ideas. It is a system of communication consisting of sounds, words and grammar are the systems of communication used by students in a particular country. A classroom consists of different social groups of students. A first language (native language, father tongue/mother tongue, arterial tongue, or LI) is a language that a person has been exposed to since his / her birth.

Learning a language is an exemplar-based

Human language production and understanding are based on a store of concrete ‘exemplars’ from regularities that are abstracted rather than linguistic rules. Practice makes language examples readily available for the speakers. Knowledge of a language is knowledge of the construction in the language. A second language is a non-native language, especially as a resident of an area where it is in general use officially recognized and adopted in a multilingual society. The art of the process of achieving mastery of a language or a linguistic rule is called acquisition. The term acquisition was originally used to emphasize the non-conscious nature of the learning process.

Learning Enhancements

The learners could be fascinated to enjoy the second language usage through PPT-based presentations and seminars. Using social networks for exchanging ideas is another attractive pathway to L2 acquisition. Learners can use social media for sharing views, ideas and studies. It helps the learners expose their multifaceted talents in the open world where they get instant feedback from their friends’ circle including Teachers. Learners could share useful language learning applications to facilitate language learning easily available in their hands like, offline dictionaries, idioms and phrases, daily quotes, thesaurus, talk English, and famous speech Through this, the learner could be stimulated with interesting enhancement. In the global age, survival or existence is based on communication in the global language.

Tips for Enhancement

1. A good listener is a good speaker
2. Try to speak clearly, making sure the message is conveyed effectively.
3. Be confident
4. Associate good pronunciation and intonation
5. Keep up timing while speaking
6. Often get feedback for betterment.

To be able to use these principles to full advantage, teachers should have such competencies as cross-cultural communication skills, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and teamwork skills in addition to language skills and knowledge of teaching methods. These competencies may be described as additional to the core competencies of language knowledge and use of basic language teaching principles [Demidova, 2018]

As we see, due to the multicultural and multilingual situation in India, the set of English language teacher competencies has its specific features, while its core competencies are very much like those in other countries considered in this paper. Further research may be instrumental in determining how needs in teaching competences will change across the globe and how these changes should be reflected in teacher training and professional development. These changes require an interdisciplinary approach to teacher training in order to develop new competencies.

General conclusion

The changes in the world, including the world of teaching and learning, have led to a gap between the situations that teachers need to deal with and prepare students for, and the competencies listed in the documents reviewed. Teachers' competencies should include knowing how to develop soft skills in students through teaching foreign languages to prepare the students for future careers.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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About the authors:

Evangelina Priscilla B, PhD is Professor in the Department of English at Vellore Institute of Technology (Vellore, India).

Alexey V. Konobeiev, Cand. Sci. (Pedagogy) is Academic Director at Umschool Academy and Associate Professor in the Department of Linguodidactics and Modern Technologies in Teaching English at Moscow Pedagogical State University (Moscow, Russia).

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