Globalization Demands Standardized Competence Framework for Teachers Using English for Academic Purposes

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Abstract

After globalization, there is a need for expansion of teacher competence requirement for teaching any subjects. Globalization demands the teachers to be competence in using English for academic purposes, irrespective of the subject they teach. There are certain global standards available for general learners such as Common European Framework of References (CEF), Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB), and American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). These standards lack appropriate competencies that are necessary for teachers using English for academic purposes. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a standardized global competency framework for teachers using English for academic purposes. This paper attempts to explain various elements associated with teacher competences including academic language skills. It further elaborates on the need for including those elements while developing the competency framework for teachers using English for academic purposes.

Keywords: EAP, EFL, Globalization, Standardization, Student education, Teacher competence.

Globalization in Education

In recent years, the impact of globalization is visible in not only commerce, business, science and technology but in education as well. Globalization has increased the standards of education. Refinement of courses or programmes from elementary to higher education becomes necessary to reach these increased educational standards. This move towards accomplishing global standards in education may reduce the educational inequality that exists among the nations. Law (2004) advocates that global requirements emphasis on promoting lifelong

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learning, developing broad knowledge in core subjects, improving critical thinking and innovative ideas among pupils, fostering global awareness and increasing levels of professionalism among teachers.

The English language is the medium of instruction in most countries and it is the connecting language of the global market. Many countries teach the English language from primary school through higher education. In addition, teachers of various subjects teach their lessons through English. In this case, both the English teachers as well as other subject teachers must be proficient in using English language in classroom. There is a misconception that the teachers of English are solely responsible for educating the students in English as a Second Language (ESL). To a certain extent, the statement is true. However, the reality is that the teachers who teach their subjects in the medium of English are also responsible for educating the students in English, in order to understand their teaching subject appropriately.

Teachers Using English for Academic purposes

In the era of global education, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has a significant role to play. Although EAP as a branch evolved from English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it has established a prominent role in academic sectors. As mentioned by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in the 'Tree of ELT' the branch ESP is divided into various sub-branches like English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE) and English for Social Studies (ESS). Each of these branches is further divided into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). In this context, EAP refers to the English language proficiency, which is acquired during the study environment, and EOP means the use of academic discourse with basic interpersonal skills in Job atmosphere. (Hutchinson & waters, 1987)

These two branches EAP and EOP co-exist interestingly, with teachers using English for teaching their subjects. The Teachers as an EAP learner study their subjects in an academic

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environment to acquire the academic discourse in English. This acquired academic English proficiency is professionally used for teaching the students of their branch of study. At this interjection of leaner becoming teacher, perhaps, EAP becomes EOP. Thus, the teachers who use English as a medium of instruction experience both EAP and EOP. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ESP professionals to concentrate on this issue involving not only English teachers but also other subject teachers using English for Academic purposes.

Thus, it is necessary to design a distinct competence framework for teachers using English in EAP and EOP context. The objective of these competence framework must address to the issues concerning to various elements of teacher competencies and skills, which are required for efficient teaching and use of English in the classrooms. The Standards in setting a competence framework for teachers must bridge the gap that exists among the other standardized English language frameworks for learners. In specific, it should concentrate on setting standards for equipping and reinforcing teacher's English language proficiency. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the experts in the field of English language teaching (ELT) and the teacher education to design a competence framework for teachers using English in their classrooms.

Need a Competence framework for Teacher's Using English

The student's requirement in education is drastically expanding to meet the 21st century demands. Teachers of the 21st century ought to be competent to supply the demands of the students through education. According to Sonoma State University Academic Senate (2003), "the responsibilities of the teachers fall into five main areas: (1) to their subject; (2) to their students; (3) to the institution of which s/he is a part; (4) to their profession; and (5) to the community at large" (Iqbal, 2011).

It is obvious that every teacher adhere to these responsibilities while teaching in order to have expertise in their profession, but to train themselves in these items the teacher must have clear ideas of the key skills associated with these items. Each item mentioned above needs to be

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classified further and sub- skills associated to these has to be framed. Therefore, the problems regarding the vagueness of teacher responsibility could be resolved.

Although countries like Canada and the US and some countries in Europe have developed English language proficiency levels for learners, the objective of preparing the proficiency framework is different. The famous and widely used global proficiency standards in English such as Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB), ACTFL, CEFR are designed for general/common learners. These standards do not focus on teacher education and performance. Instead, Canadian language benchmarks (2002) focus on the immigrant's English language learning needs. It has set Canadian National Standards for describing, measuring and identifying English language proficiency of adult immigrants for living and working in Canada. It has distributed English language proficiency levels into twelve divisions from B1 level to B12 level for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening skills. These twelve levels are arranged in a sequence, in which less difficult skills occupy the lower levels and skills that are more difficult occupy higher levels. Largely, CLB explains on the Essential skills required for immigrants entering Canada for various Occupations. It gives a list of specific skills that are necessary for performing well in the chosen work and community. However, CLB in general concentrates on testing and improving immigrants survival English language proficiency. It also focuses on comfortable mobility of the immigrants, in a particular work place and society.

The American Council of Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) researches the developmental process of teaching and learning languages at various levels of proficiency. This framework concentrates on the learning aspects of languages such as research, testing, teaching and curriculum development projects. ACTFL proficiency guidelines (2012) focus on effective teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to students and their learning levels of proficiency. The ACTFL's standard for Language proficiency levels has Novice, Intermediate, Advanced and Superior levels. The students are educated based on the descriptors available in the benchmarks; however, it lacks focus on the professional development of language teachers and benchmark for teacher performance. Common European frameworks focus on the testing of

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individuals' levels of proficiency in English at every level of proficiency. CEFR researches testing and assessment of language proficiency from beginning level through mastery level, in which there are six stages to attain mastery in English language. All together, these standards fine-tune the language competence in to various levels of proficiency. However, these standards do not have specific descriptors for language teacher competencies. These standards are framed for every individual, who wants to learn language from beginning through mastery levels. As Manby (2001) points out, research on teacher knowledge and training is two decades old and in the beginning stages, due to lack of awareness on varied competence requirements on the part of teachers (Zakeri, 2011). Therefore, separate focus on English teaching skills and descriptors associated with English teaching levels of proficiency has to be identified to clarify the queries regarding evaluation of teacher competencies and performance.

Teacher Competence Evaluation

None of the mentioned frameworks concentrates on the assessment of teacher competence and performance in using English in classrooms. Review of literature reveals certain methods of teacher assessment. In general, teachers' performance is judged through students' performance. That is, if most of the students in a class performed well on exams and scored high percentage of marks in their subject, the teacher is appreciated as best teacher (Zhao, 2009) . This idea of evaluating the teacher performance has many drawbacks. For example, a student who memorised subject notes without understanding the subject can score high marks in the test. Moreover, the scoring of marks in the test also depends on the difficulty level of the question paper that is set for testing the students. If the questions do not demand testing of student's deeper understanding of the subject, then, the superficial reading of the subject text is enough for scoring higher marks on exams.

Otherwise, the popular methods used for teacher assessment are few in number. Widodo (2004) explains, "Self-evaluation checklist is used by language teachers to reflect upon their teaching performance." He also explains that these self-evaluation checklist allows modification

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and inclusion of items based on the teacher's preference.   He states that the "teachers may also ignore the unnecessary items in the questionnaire and add other necessary items or modify the self-evaluation checklists". These arguments prove that there is no standardized checklist for evaluation of the teachers. This self- evaluation checklist lacks in-depth skills sets that are essential for teacher evaluation and so it allows changes in the formulation of the descriptors. Therefore, the quality and reliability of the self-evaluation questionnaire is questionable. Otherwise, the teacher who intends to make changes in the items must be expert in the field to overcome errors in the self- evaluation checklist. Therefore, a standardized evaluation framework for assessing the teacher competence will avoid alteration and error in the evaluation.

Widodo (2004) justifies his statement contemplating that "this portfolio for language teacher will raise awareness of becoming self-reflective teachers. It allows the teacher to work independently to become self-directive learner and teacher and so the teacher will achieve high teaching performance" This argument is good for development of the novice teacher as they are young and inexperienced, self-directive notions will help them to establish   high profile in their future. However, learning through self-reflective teaching occupies much time. Once the teachers are provided with a standardized global framework, which comprises the list of necessary descriptors, then without any digression they can concentrate on their professional growth. In fact, to resolve the issues regarding life-long learning on part of the teachers both self-directive and global framework must be paid dual consideration.

Standards for teacher of English language and literacy in Australia (STELLA) have listed "advanced skills" for teachers to improve and evaluate individual teacher competencies. Doecke (2011) demonstrates that "these STELLA standards reject the narrow focus on individual career advancement and the construction of teachers as competing with one other for professional recognition" Therefore, to improve the education for global requirements, students require proficient teachers to educate them. For that, the teachers using English must have global perspective, appropriate professional development, and advanced skills to meet student requirement. To serve all these purposes, we need a standardized framework for teacher

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competence in English, so that it could be useful for teachers around the world. If the framework has international scope of application for the teachers, then it could reach the international audience. This will ensure less quality difference in teaching and learning process around the world. Also by generalizing these global competencies, teachers could identify inadequacies that exist in their academic language skills. Thus, they can work on those inadequacies to achieve global skills and can attain global professionalism.

Teachers are the facilitators of students. Not all the students have the same understanding capacity. The learning pace of each student may vary depending upon the understanding capacity of the students. Analysis of students' abilities is one of the most important teachers' competencies. If teachers lack an understanding of their students, structuring the course plan for teaching English is difficult. Teacher competence includes the evaluation of a student's understanding of the subject taught in the classroom. As Feryal Cubukcu explains in '*Students Teachers' Perception of Teacher Competence and their Attributions for Success and Failure in Learning'*, a student's understanding is influenced by their background conditions such as earlier schooling, the facilities available at school, English teachers' proficiency, medium of instruction, social position of the parents etc. So the teacher must have a positive attitude towards the student in teaching English with due consideration to their background. Initially, the teacher must be aware of these background conditions of the students. Unless the teachers are informed regarding their students' requirements, changes in the lesson plan and the method of teaching English may not be possible. Hence, teacher competencies are related to the knowledge of teacher on their subjects, students' background, teaching and learning strategies associated with it.

Teacher Performance Evaluation

The first competence that teachers using English must be evaluated on is teacher performance. Cubukcu (2011) illustrates teacher performance as a separate component in the professional development of the teachers. Although teacher performance concentrates on subject knowledge of the teacher, the term performance actually refers to the teacher's conduct in the

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process of teaching. Cubukcu (2011) argues that teacher performance has enough scope to evolve as a separate entity from teacher competencies. Teacher competence includes the depth of knowledge in the subject, but the demand for teacher performance involves more than just knowledge of the subject. A teacher's capacity to deliver their subject knowledge in a well-planned and structured manner using standardized English validates their performance. Most of the research on teacher competence reveals that teachers lack awareness of the teaching skills that are required for performing well in the classroom. (Zakeri, 2011)

In many cases, experienced teachers guide the novice teachers in their performance in the classrooms. Zhao (2009) explains in his article that the experienced and qualified teachers at many schools train the new teachers. The mechanisms of teaching students at particular levels are learnt from their colleagues and peers. The problem of learning teaching techniques from peers is that each experienced teacher might follow different sets of teaching techniques. The demands for teaching science subjects through English may vary from teaching other subjects. Ken Heyland (2002) explains in the article 'EAP: Issues and Directions' that every discipline has specific academic contexts which could be researched and branched under EAP. Thus, it is clear that learning from peers will not provide complete knowledge for teachers' teaching various subjects. Evolving a standard set of teacher competence framework for English will facilitate teachers in learning and evaluating their skills at various levels. Moreover, neither experienced teacher nor beginner may be aware of the above specified teacher competencies that are necessary for educating 21st century students. However, not all teachers master all the competencies required. Some teachers are able to master all the competencies and some may lack certain competencies. Therefore, it is necessary to assess teacher competencies in order to identify the areas in which teachers using English fail.

Teacher competence is an umbrella term that includes teachers' subject knowledge, attitude, understanding of students' needs, and evaluation of student and teacher performance. Zakeri (2011) describes in a survey that teachers' in-depth knowledge in competencies increases teacher efficiency. This finding provides an assumption that there is a strong relationship

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between teacher competence and teacher efficiency. However, less research focuses on the teacher performance. Teacher performance is the ultimate product of the teaching, which, as mentioned above, influences students' learning. Excellent teacher performance evolves out of a combination of attitude, efficiency and competence of the teachers. A teacher has to inspire students through their teaching performance to kindle the curiosity of the students to learn the subject. Experts in the education field must provide attention to these dimensions of teaching performance.

Excellent teacher performance evolves out of a combination of attitude, efficiency and competence of the teachers in using appropriate English to express their ideas. A teacher has to inspire students through their teaching performance to kindle the curiosity of the students to learn the subject. Language is the medium for expressing one's own ideas, so the teachers must be confident in using English to express their subject knowledge in order to attract the students. As English for Specific Purposes (ESP) explains, every discipline has its own academic language, which is defined through EAP. (Allison, 1996) Experts in the education field must provide attention on these dimensions of teaching performance.

Suggestions

This paper identifies several issues and deliberations that are taking place around the world in enhancing the teacher competence in using English for Academic Purposes. All these issues can be sort out with the help of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) elements. The EAP experts and Teacher educator's can conduct needs analysis on the teacher's requirement for using English in their classrooms. First, the Needs analysis can focus on the specific academic skills required for a teacher using English to teach their subjects. Second, a survey can focus on the student's expectations and views regarding their teachers in using English inside classrooms. Third, a survey among the peers can be conducted to identify the adequacy and inadequacy that exist among teachers in using English language skills. Analysing these collected data with

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appropriate survey techniques, may result in a perceptible framework for teacher competence in using English.

Therefore, the EAP professional and experts in teacher education can necessarily undergo collaborative effort in evolving the teacher competence framework for English. It is mandatory to combine the various skills, which embrace the teacher competencies such as teacher efficiency, performance, back ground knowledge of the students, pedagogic tools, Self-assessment and so on, to structure a complete framework for evaluating teachers of English and those who teach their subject through English.

Conclusion

Experts in EAP and Teacher educators hold the responsibility to develop a standardized global teacher competence framework for English. Through this standardized competence framework, teachers can recognise and meet global demands. The framework would provide a platform for teachers to test themselves and to find out the inadequacies in their Academic Language competence. Once the teacher is aware of the competencies that are necessary for teaching a global audience, it may be less difficult for them to excel in teaching their subjects. Regardless of time and experience, all the teachers of English as well as other subjects should be able to study and improve their competence based on a global teacher competence framework for English. Therefore, it will aid the teachers to meet the global requirement of twenty first century students.

The use of these frameworks may increase the teacher's standards in teaching. Even educational institutions could assess the proficiency levels of a teacher at the time of interview. Furthermore, experienced teachers could assess their teaching performances before appearing for promotion and if necessary could train themselves for an applied post. Thus, a standardized teacher competence framework for English would lead to quality educators in the field of English and to better job opportunities for the educators themselves.

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