

## Developing of Sets of Competencies in English Required for Teacher Trainees of English Studying at Teachers Colleges in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

The teacher trainees of English following two years in-service of professional development at Teachers Colleges in Sri Lanka are faced with many difficulties in following their studies in the colleges because of their lack of competencies in English. These trainees are expected to study and understand several subjects in English. Moreover, they have to perform a number of duties as teachers at schools. They need to teach their students English, they have to do need analysis about the level of their students, they have to design syllabus for additional classes and prepare materials for their students after ret after their training in the college. The purpose of the study to design a set of competency framework for the teachers of English studying in Teachers' Colleges. A sample of 50 trainees were selected for this study. The tools of content analysis, lecturer questionnaire, and interview were used to design the competencies for the trainees. These competencies are recommended to be used to the teachers trainees who are poor at their language in English.

**Keywords:** Design; Set of Competencies; Training College.

### Introduction

Industrialization and technological innovation are a major aspect of national development in many countries in Southeast Asia today, and educators are increasingly faced with the problem of how English teaching programmes can most effectively meet the challenge created by these changes. This has meant not only the planning of new courses and the preparation of materials suited to the particular language requirements of those engaged in Science

and Technology, but also a re-examination of English Language Teaching at all levels to ensure that language teaching objectives meet the demands of the society.

The recent boom in the Teachers' education in Sri Lanka has led to acute issues and concerns for the teachers' colleges. They struggle to hire adequately qualified teachers. Studies conducted in the past reveals that there is a mismatch between the skills the teachers have in English with and the skills required by the schools.

In this context, the English teachers have a very crucial role to play. They need to improve a set of competencies for mastering skills to be competent teachers. Further, though there is formal In-service training programmes designed and conducted to promote the competency levels of these teachers in Sri Lanka, they are not considered effective and catering to the need of the clients.

### ***Need for the study***

A review of related literature shows that teacher trainees of English have plenty of scope for development. We need to place more emphasis on the training and development of English language in teachers' colleges. There is a wide gap between the existing system of language teaching and the desired language skills of the students of teacher trainees. The trainee teachers in teachers' college need better language skills to be a model competent teacher to his students and to survive in the field as teacher of English. Due to expansion of teacher education, especially in teaching of English in developed and developing countries, experts call for intense research into teaching English among teacher trainees.

A large number of teacher trainees of English are found to be poor in their language, especially in English. As a result they find a number of difficulties in completing their training successfully. Even though, English is taught for them as their curriculum, they were found to be not suiting the need of them in terms of the requirement of the trainees. It is also found to be that there is lack of study in the area of developing necessary competencies for teacher trainees.

In this context, the investigator of this study has attempted to identify a set of competencies required of the English teachers studying at teachers' colleges to fill this gap.

### **Objectives of the study**

#### ***The objectives of the study are***

- To identify the competencies required for the teacher trainees of English studying in teachers' colleges.
- To validate the identified set of competencies with the opinions of practicing teachers and experts in English
- To suggest appropriate teacher training programmes to the teachers based on the competencies identified.

### **Methodology**

A method of survey was employed in this study. A sample of 50 teacher trainees who were poor at English from Addalaichenai teachers college was selected using purposive sampling technique. For developing the set of competencies, the following tools were adopted. The tools were developed by the investigator and validated with the opinions of the experts in curriculum development in English for teacher educators

#### ***Content Analysis***

A content analysis was made on available literature in order to evolve a set of competencies for teacher trainees. An analysis of teachers' college syllabus was also made. Informal interactions and interviews were conducted with the lecturers in the teachers' colleges. By all these and based on the experience of the investigator in teaching English in teachers' colleges for nearly a decades, a set of competencies were evolved which were collated to arrive at a final list.

#### ***Needs Analysis Questionnaire to Teacher Trainees of English***

The investigator developed a Needs Analysis Questionnaire to the trainees consisting of ten items to identify their English language needs. The questionnaire also contained five other close-ended questions pertaining to the competency requirement of English teachers. The questionnaire was content validated by Dr. P. Prema and Dr. AR. Saravanakumar of Alagappa University.

The survey was conducted on 30 teacher trainees in Batticaloa teachers college. The students' responses to this tool not only revealed their English language needs require a 'special set' of competencies.

#### ***Lecturer Questionnaire***

The lecturer questionnaire was containing 73 competencies, grouped under various domains with three-point rating scale was administered to the teachers. There were nine other close-ended and open-ended questions very relevant to the study.

#### ***Interview Guide***

An Interview Guide was developed subjected to content validation. The schedule consisted of seven items. The findings of the interviews helped the investigator in cross validating the identified set of competencies. The interview was conducted among the lecturers in English working at the teachers college, Addalaichenai

### **Analysis of data**

The data obtained through the Lecturer Questionnaire and the Teacher Trainees Needs Analysis Questionnaire was subjected to Percentage Analysis, and Factor Analysis

### **Major findings**

The identified competencies are given below under 04 domains

#### **Listening skills**

1. Identify the purpose and scope of a teaching
2. Identify the topic of the subject of teaching and follow topic development
3. Recognize the role of discourse markers
4. Recognize the key lexical items related to subject/topic
5. Deduce the meanings of words from context
6. Recognize the function of intonation to signal information structure (for example: pitch, volume, pace)
7. Listen to short and long conversations and discuss on the topic of conversations with others
8. Listen and take notes

#### **Speaking skills**

1. Conduct task-based activities, group work and so on to generate discussion and provide learners with practice
2. Make the learners concentrate on structuring discourse, visuals, voice and signposts as well as language, for effective oral presentation
3. Conduct discussions in pairs on scientific and technical topics
4. Conduct discussions in groups followed by reporting
5. Teach how to describe/explain/define/classify objects
6. Teach structures related to giving instructions
7. Conduct role-playing activities like interviewing and being interviewed, explaining and convincing on Science and Technology topics and so on

#### **Reading skills**

1. Extract information accurately and quickly from Scientific and Technical texts and understand their macrostructures
2. Select what is relevant for the current purpose

3. Skim for identifying main ideas, supporting ideas and examples
4. Scan for specifics
5. Identify organizational patterns
6. Understand and explain relations within a sentence and between sentences
7. Predict, infer and guess the meaning
8. Process and evaluate the information during reading
9. Transfer or use the information while or after reading
10. Read and interpret graphic information
11. Identify discourse markers which are predominant in the text.

#### **Writing skills**

1. Write brief and extended definition of technical terms
2. Write using narration, description, enumeration, process, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, argument and so on
3. Transcode the information
4. Write paragraphs meaningfully
5. Summarize the main points in paragraphs

### **Conclusion**

This study has identified a series of competencies a teacher of English needed for the trainees of English learning English at teachers colleges focusing teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. These competencies are of vital important for them even to teach their own students after their teacher training. These competencies are rarely taught in the teachers colleges and that this study will be an eye opener for the curriculum developers in National Institute of Education to pay attention on the competencies identified in drafting syllabus for teachers of English

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