

# تعزيز مخرجات التعليم من خلال التدريب العملي: تقييم تحسن الطلاب الكويتيين

Dr. Reem Mohammed Al- AlQenai  
Kuwait Technical College / Kuwait

ريم محمد القناعي  
كلية الكويت التقنية

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## الملخص

هذه الدراسة تفحص كيف يتم استخدام التدريب العملي (CBT) في الفصول الدراسية ومدى أهميته في رفع تحصيل الطلاب بشكل خاص على كيف يمكن المعلمين تقييم تقدم الطلاب بعد تنفيذ أساليب مبنية على التدريب العملي (CBT) بطريقة فعالة من خلال تحديد مواهب كل طالب بشكل فردي، ومراقبة تطورهم، وتقديم ملاحظات مركزة، يمكن للمعلمين تقييم تأثير CBT على أهداف التعلم. تتناول هذه الدراسة أسلوب CBT المستخدم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية على طلاب جامعيين في الكويت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدريب العملي، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تقييم تحسن، الكويت

## Enhancing Educational Outcomes through Competency-Based Training: Evaluating Learners' Improvement among Kuwaiti Students

### Abstract:

This study examines how Competency-Based Training (CBT) is used in the classroom and how important it is for raising learner achievement. It specifically looks into how instructors can assess learners' progress after implementing competency-based methods in an efficient manner. By identifying each learner's unique talents, monitoring their development, and offering focused feedback, educators can evaluate the effect of CBT on learning objectives. This study looks into the CBT method used by educators of English as a foreign language in Kuwait. It makes two arguments. First, that this method is appropriate and workable in the specific context in which it is used; and second, that when learners are exposed to this such techniques within their education, their skills do indeed improve. The study used videotape analysis to examine pre- and post-training performance in order to assess whether or not learners' performance was improved by taking part in the training.

Keywords: Competency Based Training, EFL, Performance Skills, Kuwait.

## Introduction

Students can learn actively using diverse pathways and varying pacing, according to the National Association for Colleges of Liberal Arts (iNACOL, 2019). Their success can also be based on proof of mastery rather than the quantity of time they spend sitting. Put differently, learning can happen at any time and any place. When people are initially introduced to the idea of competences in language instruction, one of the most common questions they have is, how is this different from other approaches? When the phrase "communicative approach" (Abrejo, 2019) is used to characterise a range of distinct educational activities, some of which closely resemble communicative methodologies and others of which fall well short. This question is frequently posed with a certain amount of skepticism. Political and social pressures—more specifically, concerns about insufficient educator preparation, poor academic achievement, and the prohibitively high cost of education—had a substantial influence on the implementation of CBT (McKenna, 1992).

A competency-based approach emphasises the specific language skills and abilities that a learner is expected to possess at a given stage of their learning journey. While this may appear similar to the objectives of a communicative approach, it is actually more precise in its focus. The aforementioned sequence of learning should ideally lead to the development of a framework for desired language proficiency, wherein learners can showcase their learning through tasks that simulate real-life language use in the target population (Sturgis and Pittenger 2011). A competency-based approach seeks to establish and organise explicit goals for learners and offer precise instructions and exercises to facilitate their demonstration of the attainment of each goal. The text commences by providing a clear definition of the language forms and functions that learners are expected to master.

The foundation of CBT is a set of precise, measurable objectives that are closely linked to instructional activities (Brightwell, & Grant, 2013). Trainees are given posttest performance assessments to determine whether they have mastered critical attitudes, skills, and information. Instructors and administrators evaluate these data, make any necessary programme modifications, and offer further training and mentorship to trainees who are still struggling with the content. Although the theoretical foundations of competency-based training (CBT) date back to the early 20th century, the phrase "competency-based" did not become widely used until state ministries of education started to support the idea in the middle of the 1960s (Nodine, 2016).

Many programmes lack explicit learner objectives, both at the macro and micro levels. Rather than focusing on the abilities that language learners will possess once they have completed their studies, it is common to characterise language acquisition in terms of what it looks like in the target language

community. The aforementioned frequently leads to implicit learning as opposed to explicit instruction and learning, according to theories of skill acquisition. This does not imply that learners have not received instructions on how to acquire particular language forms and functions; rather, it is frequently the case that these instructions have not been organised into a lesson plan. Learners might not have truly mastered any of the language's forms and functions by the end of the day, having just studied a jumble of them.

The foundational presumptions about language and the objectives of language teaching and learning must be well understood in order to have an accurate and thorough grasp of any given method or approach to language education (O'Sullivan, & Bruce, 2014). This also holds true for language teaching methods that are competency-based. Subsequently, the discourse centres on the reasoning for adopting a competency-based approach and the ensuing creation of a communicative language use framework. Concerns about competency levels in language instruction are also taken into consideration, as the framework's development aims to assist users in transitioning to a competency-based approach. This research is primarily intended for people creating the materials and curriculum for language teaching and learning programmes, but language instructors and applied linguists may find it useful as well.

In order to create a better alternative technique for teaching languages, this research identifies the advantages and disadvantages of the current educational system. In place of the present pass/fail certification, this is done to emphasise the competency level of a learner. To ascertain the general competency levels necessary for the particular skill levels in any given field of education, academics and education policymakers must come to an agreement. This will make it possible to create an education system that is more standardised and to define requirements that are obvious for both educators and learners'.

## Significance of the study

The influence of competency training on an enhanced learning environment for individuals enrolled in higher education programmes studying English is covered in this research article. The main topic of discussion is competency-based training (CBT), a training instrument created as a component of an ongoing initiative to standardise the method used in secondary, postsecondary, and higher education for teaching English. In an effort to meet the increasing need for proficient English speakers in the present job market, this is an endeavour to raise learners' overall language proficiency. This study will shed light on Kuwait based faculty members' and learners' expectations and opinions. Describe the current educational and learning system in brief, and then provide details regarding how CBT techniques have improved English language proficiency in contrast to the current system.

Kuwait's high school graduates tend to face difficulties when transitioning from high school to college. According to Assaf (2023) report, over half of Kuwait's school graduates lack confidence and communication skills. According to reports, the educational system will face numerous challenges in the twenty-first century. Globalisation, information technology, and the expansion of knowledge-based economies have all contributed to an increase need for a more creative and skilled workforce, as well as lifelong learners. This circumstance necessitates more difficult academic requirements as well as an environment that promotes higher order thinking and information processing skills. Since the Kuwaiti government is aware of this, attempts are being made to move the educational system's focus away from exams towards ability (Diab-Bahman et al, 2023). This has been an ongoing issue not only in Kuwait, but throughout the Arab world. Seeking a more efficient educational system stems from the requirement for people to have greater competency skills. While there have been advantages to this shift, it has not been without its challenges.

## Research objectives

The present study looks at how well competency-based training works at a private university[KAAA1] [RMAQ2] in Kuwait to improve learner outcomes in structural English courses. Among the more precise goals are:

1. To ascertain whether implementing competency-based training for a single semester improves learner performance in the courses that are particularly taught and raises their general comprehension and composition skills in written English.
2. To inquire if learners' overall English proficiency will increase over time as a result of competency-based instruction.
3. To identify the characteristics and actions of learners who are more likely to benefit from competency-based instruction.
4. To determine the perceptions of learners on competency-based training.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Evaluating Learners' Improvement:

The implications suggest that assessments should adopt a more criterion-referenced approach, focusing on gathering information about specific learning targets (Hurtubise & Roman, 2014). The assessment results should clearly indicate the learners' performance and whether they have achieved the required competency. This level of assessment is quite distinct from what takes place in traditional education and will necessitate training for educators.

One of the key factors that greatly influences the nature of assessments in a competency-based approach is the idea of offering learner's various pathways for achieving success. The understanding that time can vary while learning remains constant is a core principle of competency-based education. Due to variations in the pace of learner progress in different

competencies, there is a heightened focus on formative assessment and evaluating developmental skills. Competency-based education aims to eradicate the concept of 'permanent failure' by encouraging learners to persist until they achieve mastery in a particular competency (Evans, 2018). Effective data management of learner performance and the provision of targeted feedback to learners and parents are essential in this role.

Considering that assessment plays a crucial role in driving learning in high-performing systems, it is important for proponents of competency-based education to carefully consider a comprehensive assessment system. This system should be aligned with the desired outcomes and should provide valuable information to enhance learner learning.

In a competency-based education model, performance is of utmost importance. In order for learners to fully embrace the vision of competency-based approaches in schools, it is crucial for educators and others to undergo a significant shift in their understanding of learner learning and performance. An approach to education that prioritises competency is focused on fostering a higher level of learning and developmental skills for learners, encouraging them to think and act in new and innovative ways. To successfully make this transition, it is crucial to prioritise the collection and utilisation of information to enhance and facilitate learner learning. This shift necessitates a heightened focus on the types and standards of information collected, calling for a greater emphasis on assessment quality compared to previous practices.

Evaluating learners' progress in a competency-based framework requires a departure from conventional assessment methods. Educators have a vital role in assessing learners' progress through the use of different evaluation methods that are customised for CBT. Performance tasks, portfolios, rubrics, and self-assessments among others are effective tools that educators can utilise to accurately measure learners' proficiency and skill development. By implementing consistent assessment and feedback methods, educators can pinpoint strengths and areas for growth, allowing learners to make consistent strides forward.

Competency-based training has the potential to transform education by prioritising learners and their active involvement in the learning process. With a focus on expertise, individualised teaching, and precise evaluation, CBT has the ability to greatly improve educational results (Nodine, 2016). Educators have a crucial role in assessing learners' progress within this framework, guiding them towards success and supporting their ongoing growth. As educational institutions worldwide embrace competency-based approaches, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of well-designed assessment strategies in evaluating the impact of CBT on student learning outcomes.

## 2. Learners' Opinion of Competency-Based Training

An important aspect of competency-based training is the active participation of learners in self-assessment and evaluation (Johnstone, & Soares 2014). Individuals take an active role in determining their learning objectives, recognising their areas of expertise and areas for improvement, and monitoring their advancement. Empowering learners to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning journey.

Opinions on competency-based training are divided into two groups: those who value its effectiveness and those who find it to be a demanding and daunting approach. Those who value a method often find it appealing for its emphasis on practical skills and its relevance in professional settings. They believe it equips them with the necessary skills to tackle the demands of their professional lives.

Nevertheless, certain learners may encounter difficulties with competency-based training. Some individuals might feel overwhelmed or uncertain about how to begin the process of self-assessment and evaluation. In addition, the nature of competency-based training may require learners to possess self-motivation and self-discipline, which can be challenging for certain individuals.

In spite of the obstacles, competency-based training provides numerous advantages for individuals and companies alike. This programme empowers learners to build a solid base of skills and knowledge, equipping them to effectively apply what they have learned in practical scenarios. It also encourages flexibility and adaptability, as learners are urged to take charge of their learning and make well-informed choices about their training requirements.

Competency-based training offers organisations a highly effective and efficient approach to training. By ensuring that training is tailored to job requirements, organisations can guarantee that employees are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies to excel in their roles (Nodine, 2016). These factors can contribute to higher levels of productivity, enhanced employee performance, and a more robust workforce in general.

Ultimately, individuals have varying perspectives on competency-based training. While some may find it challenging, others truly value its effectiveness in providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge for their professional endeavours. Regardless of individuals' opinions, competency-based training continues to be widely used in education because of its emphasis on practical skills and real-world application.

## 3. Determining the Impact of Competency-Based Training on Learner Outcomes and English Language Proficiency

There are several reasons why educators find competency-based training appealing in language learning. Firstly, it is an approach to teaching that is highly focused. The goal for both

the educator and the learner is to cultivate language skills. It is expected in today's education industry for providers to prioritise both quality and value in the service they offer. This is typically showcased through public or internal systems of accountability. Competency-based training offers a well-defined language curriculum for educators (Nodine, 2016). CBT is a teaching methodology that incorporates various sources in the field of second language acquisition. Language competencies have been identified through careful observation of accomplished language learners. As a result, there is now a well-defined comprehension of the skills that learners should possess at different levels of language proficiency, known as "Can-Do Statements." (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) These documents outline the expected outcomes of a certain period of learning and are valuable for both educators and learners.

The success of an individual in a particular task or job hinges on their level of competence to effectively complete the task. A competency is described as the amalgamation of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and personal attributes required to effectively perform a job (Esther, 2022). Skills can be acquired and stored in a person's memory or developed through practice. When a task relies on a specific outcome, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the competency required for that outcome. If there is a lack of expertise in relation to the desired result, there is a potential for unsuccessful outcomes. This is relevant for individuals who are learning English as a second language.

Competency-based training has gained significant popularity in the field of education and English language learning over the past decade or so. The idea of competency is based on the research of David McClelland (1965), who discovered three key motivators in human behaviour: the desire for connection, the drive for influence, and the pursuit of success. According to McClelland (1965), individuals who possess a strong desire for accomplishment are described as being focused on their goals. They are dedicated to achieving objectives through their own efforts and excel in tasks that require individual responsibility.

## 4. Benefits of Competency-Based Training for Overall English Ability

CBT provides numerous benefits compared to traditional teaching methods, as it fosters customised learning experiences and caters to individual learning needs (Fan, Wang et.al 2015). By clearly defining desired learning outcomes and competencies, educators can customise instruction to meet the individual needs of learners. This approach promotes a thorough comprehension of the subject matter and encourages learners to actively participate, resulting in improved educational results.

Adults may experience frustration when learning in environments that do not meet their needs or when engaging



in activities they perceive as irrelevant to their daily lives. Through assessment and educator-student rapport, both the educator and learner can establish a clear understanding of the learners' goals and the specific skills that need to be developed during the lessons (Alqenai, et al 2022). This phase requires significant input from the learner's and enables the formulation of a well-defined goal, which is crucial for fostering motivation in learning. This comprehension can also extend to a formal declaration, which ensures that both the learner and educator are responsible for the learning process, making it suitable for private tutoring scenarios.

In the initial stage of competency-based training, the learner's skills are evaluated to determine their proficiency level in a specific language. This can be accomplished in a more formal manner between educator and learner and can be evaluated using various methods. This has a significant benefit when it comes to acquiring another language. Even with minimal knowledge of a specific language, there is no need to start from scratch like a child would.

Competency-based training is an excellent method for enhancing learners' overall proficiency in the English language. Every competency is designed to enhance skills in a specific area, adding greater significance to the learning experience compared to other language training methods. This research discusses the advantages of competency-based training compared to traditional forms of language training. It specifically examines the learning environment, learning methods, and acquisition of language skills. The researcher delves into the potential advantages linked to competency-based training for learners' English skills.

#### • Customised Education

Personalised learning experiences for learners are one of the main benefits of competency-based training. Educators are able to create a curriculum that is specifically targeted at improving certain areas by evaluating the current proficiency levels of their learners and determining their unique language requirements. This guarantees that learners receive education that is pertinent to their needs and customised to meet those goals, allowing them to advance at their own speed and gain self-assurance in their language abilities.

#### • Contextualised Learning

The use of real-world language and circumstances in language instruction is emphasised by competency-based training. Learners can get a deeper comprehension of the language and its usage by giving them opportunities to interact with it in real-world contexts, including real-world texts, discussions, or projects. Learners are engaged in authentic language environments and are able to use their knowledge and skills in meaningful and pertinent ways right away, this contextualised method helps with language acquisition and retention.

#### • Independent Learning

Through competency-based instruction, learners are encouraged to take an active role in their own education.

Learners can take charge of their own education by establishing specific learning goals and creating activities that encourage self-directed learning. Learners are given the chance to evaluate their strengths and areas for growth, create personal objectives, and take charge of their own learning process, this method promotes independence and autonomy.

#### • Progress Monitoring and Feedback

Regular progress monitoring and feedback are standard components of competency-based training programmes. Instructors evaluate learners' work closely and give timely feedback to help them get better. Learners can recognise their progress, set goals, and make appropriate adjustments to their learning practices with the support of this continuous evaluation and feedback system. By ensuring that learners receive appropriate support and intervention when needed, regular progress monitoring helps them to move steadily closer to their language proficiency objectives.

#### • Development of the Whole

Competency-based training acknowledges the significance of a comprehensive strategy for language acquisition (Khanna & Mehrotra, 2019). It stresses speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills development in addition to vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. Learners can build a well-rounded competency that enables them to speak more successfully in a variety of situations by addressing all four language skills. This all-encompassing method guarantees that learners are ready for language use in everyday settings and can confidently handle a variety of linguistic contexts.

To sum up, competency-based instruction has a number of long-term advantages for learners' general English proficiency. Learners can achieve excellence in their English language proficiency and become proficient communicators by offering personalised learning experiences, contextualised instruction, independent learning, progress monitoring and feedback, and a holistic development strategy.

### 5. Attributes and Behaviors of Learners Favorably Disposed to Competency-Based Training

Competency-based training (CBT) has become increasingly popular due to its emphasis on personalised and learner-focused education. Learners who excel in CBT have specific qualities and behaviours that contribute to their success in this type of learning environment. Here are some important qualities and behaviors demonstrated by learners who are well-suited for CBT by combining research-based insights with practical observation and assessment (Evans, 2018):

1. **Motivated and Accountable:** Learners who are inclined towards CBT are driven and take ownership of their learning. They have a strong grasp of the significance of setting goals and actively pursuing them.
2. **Engaged Learning:** Learners who prefer CBT actively participate in their learning materials. They inquire, seek

further understanding, and utilise their expertise in practical situations.

3. Strong Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: Learners who excel in CBT demonstrate a high level of proficiency in critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. They possess the skills for identifying issues, analysing problems, and devising innovative solutions.

4. Being adaptable and flexible is crucial in CBT as it demands learners to adjust their learning approach. Learners who have a strong understanding of CBT can adapt their learning styles and strategies to meet the unique requirements of different tasks or subjects.

5. Efficient Time Management: Learners who excel in CBT demonstrate strong abilities in effectively managing their time. They demonstrate a strong commitment to their studies and effectively manage their time to excel in academics, participate in extracurricular activities, and complete assignments.

6. Clear and concise communication is crucial for achieving success in CBT. Learners who have a strong grasp of CBT demonstrate excellent communication skills, actively engage with others' viewpoints, and offer valuable input.

7. Dedication to Lifelong Learning: Learners who have a positive attitude towards CBT are eager to continually expand their knowledge. They are always on the lookout for chances to enhance their knowledge and skills beyond their academic endeavours.

8. CBT can be a demanding and self-directed learning experience that requires resilience and perseverance. Individuals with a strong commitment to personal growth and a tenacious attitude are more likely to succeed in their educational journey, even in the face of difficulties.

9. Self-Assessment and Reflection: Learners who excel in CBT possess a strong ability to evaluate themselves and engage in thoughtful introspection. They carefully assess their own performance, recognise areas that can be enhanced, and contemplate their learning journey.

10. Working together and cooperating: CBT often involves working together and cooperating. Learners who have a strong inclination towards CBT demonstrate excellent teamwork skills, the ability to share knowledge, and a willingness to learn from their peers.

By acknowledging and nurturing these qualities and actions in learners, educators can establish a supportive and productive learning environment for competency-based training.

#### 6. Competency-based Training's Impact on Learners' Engagement and Motivation

Competency-based training can have a significant impact on learner engagement and motivation in structural English courses. Focusing on particular abilities and information that are directly related to the objectives of the learner and the

requirements of the course is known as competency-based training. This method boosts motivation and engagement among learners by offering precise goals, individualised learning experiences, and quick feedback. By outlining the precise competencies that learners are expected to gain, the programme enables learners to monitor their progress and identify their areas of strength and weakness. With personalised learning, learners can concentrate on their areas of weakness and advance at their own speed. Their learning process becomes more manageable because to this personalisation, which encourages motivation and involvement. Regular evaluations and comments on certain skills also aid in the learning process. By giving them insight into their areas of strength and weakness, this feedback encourages learners to keep trying and get better. The emphasis on competency mastery encourages learners to work hard to absorb and process the information, which boosts motivation and engagement.

Learners' motivation and engagement are further increased when they apply their knowledge and abilities in real-world situations. In structural English classes, competency-based training generally has a favorable effect on learner engagement and motivation because it offers possibilities for real-world application, mastering focus, relevance, clear objectives, personalization, and quick feedback (Lattuca, 2009).

## Conclusion

This study's overarching goal is to investigate how well English classes outcomes are when learners receive competency-based instruction as part of their curriculum. This study shed light on the possibilities of competency-based training as a method of instruction by investigating the effects of this strategy on learners' interest and language competence. Learners in structural English courses may benefit from the study's findings if they are used to improve teaching methods and course outcomes. In order to determine the efficacy of CBT in improving learners' academic performance, this study looks at its implementation in the classroom within a private university in Kuwait. It focuses on how instructors can assess their learners' progress most effectively in light of competency-based approaches. Educators can assess the impact of CBT on learning goals by recognizing learners' individual strengths, tracking their progress, and providing targeted feedback. Learners of English as a foreign language in Kuwait are the focus of this investigation on competency-based training (CBT). It clearly demonstrates that this approach is viable and suitable for the given situation, and second that learners' abilities do in fact improve after receiving this instruction. To determine if the training had any effect on the participants' performance, the study compared their performance before and after the training using videotape analysis.

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