

UNIVERSIDAD DON BOSCO  
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS Y HUMANIDADES



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“COMPETENCY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM:  
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES”

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## Summary

Over the years, education has constantly evolved and updated its teaching-learning system. Therefore, in the current context, there are internal and external factors that demand to adapt the curricular approach to the competencies in the institutions. The competency-based approach is included today in the pedagogical model in our country (USAID, 2013) because it involves competencies for life in order to solve problems. However, there are still some doubts about how to work by competencies and, sometimes, it might be a challenge to do so especially when teaching languages.

In El Salvador, there are many people who learn English and many people who teach it as a foreign language. Because of that, it is important to understand the concept of what the competency-based approach is what its characteristics are, and finally, how to put it into practice in a classroom. In 2013, in El Salvador, Don Bosco University decided to adopt this competency-based approach as part of its teaching-learning method at the School of Languages. After almost 6 years of implementation, it is of great importance to conduct a study to analyze the experience of the Language School with this approach.

Objectives were set for their respective analysis. The main objective of this study was to analyze the experience of teachers at Readings and conversations classes (B2 level) who work with the competency-based approach at Don Bosco University. Some classes were observed, students completed a survey, teachers described the strategies they use when teaching by competencies, and at the end they stated the challenges they face in their classes when implementing this method.

Teachers and students in the Reading and Conversation Class were chosen as the object of study in order to achieve the objectives and to answer the research questions. Since it was intended to know the teachers' perspective about working with the competency-based approach, the study was of a qualitative nature with a non-experimental approach because the objects of study were not manipulated. In addition, three research instruments were used for this study. The first instrument was the observation to have a better vision of how teachers are implementing the competency-based approach in their classes. Besides that, an open question instrument was created for teachers. In this instrument, the teachers had the opportunity to answer about whether they know the competency-based approach or not, to mention the strategies they use to develop students' skills, and above all, what challenges they face in their competency-based classes. Finally, a survey was passed to the students. This survey helped to compare the strategies they feel the teachers use more, besides knowing if the topics studied in class are applied to reality and knowing who has more participation in classes, whether the teacher or the student.

The data gathered through the teachers' survey revealed that teachers generally know the meaning of CBLT (Competency-Based Language Teaching) and know how to apply it to reality in their classes. Nevertheless, many of them stated that since they have not received training on this method they still struggle to apply it in class. It was also mentioned that the strategies they use are: projects, role plays, writing paragraphs, and interviewing.

On the other hand, during the observation it is noticed that teachers implement the CBLT approach. However, it is observed that most of the activities are guided by the teacher and the students do not work autonomously. The strategies used in class are significant yet autonomy should be promoted more in the students.

As a conclusion and recommendation, it is important to give teachers more training on how to work under a competency-based approach. Although, it is shown that teachers know the meaning of many terms, according to their responses, five out of six teachers surveyed were able to give an accurate definition of the approach. However, they also expressed that there are still doubts on how to apply it in class. It is vital for instructors to have full understanding of the competency-based approach for it to be completely successful. This research aims to be a stepping stone towards the reinforcement instructors need in this area which will ultimately have an impact on the student's acquisition of the language.



## **Chapter I. Statement of the problem**

### **1.1. Introduction**

In the language teaching community, one of the most popular and an accepted approaches is Competency-based Language Teaching (CBLT). This approach focuses on helping learners acquire the competencies they require to communicate effectively in real situations through the various uses of the language (Madya, 2003). Not only does this approach empower students to take an active role in their learning but it also challenges teachers to design innovative lessons that resemble the real world and that provide learners with the skills they need to strive in it.

In El Salvador, Universidad Don Bosco resolved to adopt this approach. Particularly, in The School of Languages, which implemented CBLT in 2013. After almost six years of its implementation, it becomes of utmost importance to carry out a study to analyze the experience of the School of Languages with CBLT. The study aims to determine areas of success and opportunity for improving CBLT practice. Thus, this research is a case of study that aims to explore the challenges that educators of the Reading and Conversation Class Teachers the School of Languages at Universidad Don Bosco have encountered in the classroom while teaching under CBLT. In addition, the strategies they use to overcome such challenges in order to create an effective CBLT experience in their courses are also described.

## 1.2 Justification

It has been estimated that about 402 million people speak English as their first language. English is currently used by more than 1,000 million non-native speakers (Ortiz, 2013). Indeed, learning English is crucial to succeed in the current society.

Also, it is important to get useful abilities for English learners to practice in daily classes. In addition to "knowing" students must be able to apply the knowledge learned in a real context, understand what has been learned and have the ability to integrate it to deal with authentic scenarios (Alemañy, 2009). Ever since the School of Languages adopted CBLT in 2013, no studies have been carried out to determine if teachers are in fact teaching under this approach or the struggles they have come across which have prevented them from seizing the benefits of CBLT to the fullest.

Under the CBLT approach, the role of the teacher changes from one of being an information-giver to a designer of learning experiences. Both the quality and authenticity of such learning experiences are key for the effective implementation of the approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). However, it is common for educators to believe they are teaching under a CBLT approach when in reality they are still working based on more traditionalist methods (Richards & Rogers, 2001). It is vital for educators to reflect upon how genuine and meaningful their classes are in terms of their use in real life scenarios for students. Precisely, this research is important for professors and authorities of the School of Languages at Universidad Don Bosco because it will help them identify the common challenges teachers face when teaching under this approach and how they overcome those challenges.

### **1.3 General objective**

- To analyze the experience of working with the CBLT approach in the School of Languages of Universidad Don Bosco in the Readings and conversations B2 level classes.

### **1.4 Specific objectives**

- To describe the strategies that teachers use to develop the competencies that students must acquire according to the European Framework.
- To identify the challenges teachers face in the classroom to implement the Competency-Based Language Teaching Approach in their classes.
- To describe the experience with the Competency-Based Language Teaching Approach from the students' perspective.

### **1.5 Research questions**

- What are the teaching strategies that teachers put into practice for the development of the competencies in the B2 level classes?
- What are the challenges educators of the School of Languages face when working with the Competency-Based Language Teaching Approach?
- What are overall areas of success that the School of Languages has achieved in the practice of working with the Competency-Based Language Learning Approach?

## **Chapter II. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Defining Competency-based Language Teaching**

CBLT is a teaching approach which focuses on what students are able to do with the language rather than what they know about it. In other words, The CBLT is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency (Williamson, 2007). Indeed, the mastery of competencies is the key in the CBLT approach. When designing the curricula, instructors are required to think first of the set of competencies students are supposed acquire in each class and those competencies will be significant to operate in the real world.

In addition, Bogoya (2000) point out the CBLT involves performance, aptitude, flexibility, and variability and a concrete task in a meaningful context.. Bogoya points out several components of the CBLT approach. Learners should be able to perform with aptitude and should have the capacity to adapt to different contexts where solving problems autonomously will be necessary. If learners have acquired the competency, they will be able to function in the real world without the teacher's assistance. If learners can only operate in the safety of the classroom under controlled conditions, they have not acquired useful skills. Competencies consist of effective intervention in different areas of life through actions in which attitudinal, procedural and conceptual components are mobilized at the same time and in an interrelated manner (Zabala and Laia, 2007).

## 2.2 Characteristics of CBLT

CBLT has four key aspects that should be taken into account when working under this approach (Williamson, 2007); the first one is performance, the second one is meaningful context, the third one is autonomy learning, and the fourth one is problem-solving skills.

Performance is an action to accomplish a task. Students must be able to incorporate skills, thoughts, knowledge, and values in a comprehensive manner. (Guerra and Berdugo, 2014) Therefore, a student that has already finished the B2 level must be able to perform understanding the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Also, a student must be able to interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Furthermore, a student at this level must be able to produce clear, detailed texts on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (University of Cambridge, 2011)

Moreover, in order for students to perform, teachers need to find out meaningful contexts that help students execute those actions. It is essential for a teacher to provide the type of context where students will use the vocabulary they are learning instead of just learning by heart a vocabulary list without actually understanding its use. For example, students can learn the vocabulary related to the school (places, objects, subjects, actions, etc.). They can make a short school tour where students will talk about the places and the activities they can do there. This example illustrates a meaningful context since they spend a lot of time at school and they can better relate to their environment.

Besides, teachers must create strategies that can help students to develop their own learning. In other words, students are now part of their own learning. According to Crowl et al. (1997) an effective teacher searches strategies so as to perform tasks in real life. In addition, the Organization of American States (2006) mentions that teachers in the actual world have changed from being an information-giver to a facilitator. It means that teachers are no longer just transmitting information; they are looking for activities related to the specific skills to fulfill the competency requirements. And students, on the other hand, are invited to think critically or to know why they are learning certain topics.

Students need to be autonomous in their own learning process. It means they need to be capable of making decisions, to do some tasks, and to be motivated to learn. It is necessary for teachers to create a supportive learning environment, to provide feedback to students all the time, to challenge students with different tasks, and especially to be engaged in the process of learning. (Burchell and Woolhouse (2016)).

Another characteristic of the approach is problem-solving skills. Philippe Perrenoud (2006) mentions that it is essentially linked to a social practice of certain complexity. That means that students must know how to handle situations in life, and how to put into practice what he/she is learning. One of the examples is to understand how to use the past tense in English. It is not only a matter of learning the verbs in the past and to say everything that you have done during the day but it is also to go beyond that specific task.

## **2.3 Common European Framework of Reference**

The Common European Framework (CEFR) of reference is a document that provides a clear description of the skills learners must acquire in order to communicate in a foreign language. CEFR presents a sequence of levels that precisely describe the achieved competence for those learning a language other than their native tongue. There are 6 CEFR levels and are used throughout Europe and on each level there is a description of the global competence that learners must acquire to reach this level:

### **2.3.1 A1 Level (Basic User)**

Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/her and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

### **2.3.2 A2 Level (Basic User)**

Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

### **2.3.3 B1 Level (Independent User)**

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected

text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

#### **2.3.4 B2 Level (Independent User)**

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

#### **2.3.5 C1 Level (Proficient User)**

Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

#### **2.3.6 C1 Level (Proficient User)**

Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.



## **Chapter III. Methodology**

### **3.1 Aim**

This research aims to assess the experience of the School of Languages working with the CBLT approach through the analysis of the challenges that educators of the School of Languages at Universidad Don Bosco have encountered. The strategies they use to overcome such challenges in order to create an effective CBLT experience in their B2 level courses.

### **3.2 Participants**

This research included a sample of 6 out of 10 English teachers that worked with B2 level classes during the semester III – 2019. In addition, it included students from the Readings and conversations class of the School of Languages in Universidad Don Bosco.

### **3.3 Study design**

This research was carried out as a qualitative exploratory case of study. It was described the experience in the implementation of a practice.

### **3.4 Fixed design**

The research is non experimental because it did not involve a manipulation of a situation or circumstances.

### **3.5 Type of instrument**

According to Schensul (1999) the observation identifies a relationship with informants, to learn how people or things are organized and help to answer research questions. Therefore, observation helped to analyze what has been done in the Faculty of

Humanities regarding teaching-learning a second language. The observation is direct because it involves observing without interacting with the class under study. The observation analyzed the four characteristics (Performance, meaningful context, autonomy, problem-solving skills) used to promote a CBLT class.

Also, an open-ended survey was used. According to Lavraskas (2008) “The person (respondent) who is asked an open-ended question formulates the answer and gives the response in his or her own words. The survey is addressing to B2 level English teachers (six teachers in total); the objective was to realize their opinion about the CBLT experience, challenges they have faced and the strategies they have used to develop competencies in their students.

The questions in the survey were the following:

- How would you define Competency-Based Language Teaching?
- How would you define Competency?
- What are some of the teaching strategies that you put into practice in your class for the development of competencies?
- Do you think your students acquired the competencies learning in this semester?

What is your evidence to think so?

- What are some challenges you have faced when working with the Competency-Based Language Teaching Approach?

Finally, a questionnaire was designed for students. Therefore, for this research a sample of students from B2 English level answered some questions about how teachers are working by competencies. In all of the cases, the answers given are anonymous.

## **Chapter IV. Results and Discussions**

First, the observation helped to have a better vision of what is being done during the classes. Three Readings and Conversation classes were observed, in which each teacher used different learning strategies and dynamics that helped students learn vocabulary and develop the reading technique studied in the lessons. In addition, the survey conducted observations by means of performance, meaningful context, autonomy and problem-solving skills. It was observed that each of the teachers included these areas, but there are some characteristics that need improvement.

Richards and Rodgers, (2001) defined “Task- or performance-centered orientation as the focus is on what the students can do with the language and certain behaviors instead of knowledge of the language” (p.146). Besides, Guerra and Berdugo (2014) add that students must be able to join skills, thoughts, knowledge etc. Furthermore, the study found that teachers encouraged learners for acquisition of new vocabulary by placing students as the center focus and thus maintaining teacher guidance in all the classes, teachers planned a class with a lot of activities that students were the focus subject because they were participating and performed all the time with the teacher’s guidance.

During the class these activities could be considered as performance:

Observed Reading and Conversation group 1: At the end of the class, teacher asked students to write a paragraph using vocabulary learned in class. This activity helped students to think about how to use the vocabulary learned during the class. It helped students to put into practice their knowledge and to know if they really got the meaning of the vocabulary.

Observed Reading and Conversation group 2: In this class the instructor directed students to provide statements based on El Salvador’s social context. The activity of giving

an answer applying to El Salvador context helped students to analyze and think about how to use the language in context.

Observed Reading and Conversation group 3: In this class, the facilitator gives a series of questions students would answer base on Salvadorian trivia knowledge. Learners participated actively and expressed meaningful communication about their surrounding environment.

The facilitator allowed students to express what they learned during the class because through a paragraph, teacher could identify if students really learned the meaning of the vocabulary. The performance was shown since the moment teacher guided their learners to write or to talk about a meaningful situation.

Meaningful context is described as real-life scenarios that are planned for language classes to give students tasks similar to those of the real world to give their learning meaning. Tobón (Cited by Guerra and Berdugo, 2014, p120) considers that the context is ideal to develop the knowledge that is essential in competency training. It will be easier for students to remember the vocabulary if they apply it in a context that is meaningful for them. During the class observations some examples of meaningful were identified.

Observed Reading and Conversation group 1: As it was previously described in the observation group 1, at the end of the class, the teachers asked students to write a paragraph using what they learned in class. Some of the students wrote an event or story that meant something for them.

Observed Reading and Conversation group 2: In this class, the teacher gave students questions and students should relate their answers with El Salvador context. Some students answered the questions about the country's most famous festival in El Salvador.

They talked about San Miguel's carnival, others about August's holiday. Those festivals meant special days for some of them.

Observed Reading and Conversation group 3: In this class, the teacher presented a video of Father's Day and some students were very happy talking about how they celebrate that day. The same case happened when the teacher asked them about how they celebrate their birthdays. One of the students was very excited talking about the cake, the food etc. It was very interesting to see how he was using the language in a real-life context.

The examples above reflect that both performance and meaningful context are together. In order to perform, it is necessary create motivational situations. Besides, students need to be capable of making decisions, to do some tasks by themselves. They should be part of their own learning process

However, autonomy was not noticed because the activities were guided by the teacher the whole time. Even though students looked up for meaning of words (because the teacher sometimes asked them to do it) the activities were not promoting autonomy; relied on mechanical responses which lacked genuine utterances were just giving mechanic responses, but not responses that can make students think more.

Also, since they were studying scanning as a reading technique, students must be able to find out information in the internet without reading everything. This technique helps to develop abilities needed in a real-life situation. For example, they should be able to find out a telephone number quickly, words in a dictionary, a specific purpose. However, in class, this technique was just applied in the reading and not in a real-life situation. As a result, students would not know when to put into practice in real life and they would associate the technique in a reading context.

As stated before, the main purpose of this research was to get to know teachers' opinions about the CBLT experience, challenges they have faced and the strategies they have used to develop competences on their students. That is why a survey was ran to identify the opinion teachers had on the approach. The survey helped to have a better perspective of what students are feeling with this approach. Teachers answered five questions; the first one was how they define the CBLT. This question helped to check if teachers know the meaning of the approach teachers are using. According to the answers, almost all of them knew the meaning because they associated the meaning with teaching the language using it in a real-life situation.

A second question that teachers answered was related with the strategies they use in class as part of CBLT. Teachers stated that they use strategies that help them to develop competencies in class. Some of the strategies are writing conversations using grammar, role plays, presentations about topics studied in class, timelines, read newspapers and interviews. Those strategies aid students to think, to show knowledge and to perform using the language.

Even though teachers displayed knowledge on what the definition of CBLT is, they still expressed to have difficulties to apply them in class. On the one hand, some teachers the difficulty rely on the fact that they had never received formal training on CBLT. On the other hand, two teachers pointed out that the students' attitude had a direct impact on the way CBLT was applied. Teachers claimed that students are more interested in getting a passing grade than in actually learning in real-life context.

Another area of improvement is related with the lack of autonomy that was promoted in class. During the observations, it was noticed that the activities are guided by teachers all the time, otherwise, students do not participate if teachers do not ask them to. It

will be good to promote more autonomy in students by developing skills being able to take initiative, manage sources of information, to apply knowledge to new situations. (Martinez, quoted by Pérez, 2014)

Besides, in students' surveys it was found that the strategies that teachers use more are research topic, repetition, taking notes, listening to audiovisual materials, dialogues in pairs, presentations in class, and memorization. CBLT promote situations that simulate real-life situations. (Martinez, quoted by Pérez, 2014) However, considering this statement, memorization of vocabulary and repetition are not exactly strategies that develop competencies because it does not promote autonomy and performance either. However, there is a balance (find a more effective way to contrast the previous idea) in these strategies because these strategies (research topic, dialogues in pair, and presentations in class) help students to search their own information and use the language in situation.

Also, the majority of students agreed that teachers used real-life situations in class. In addition, it can be said that the CBLT has been put into practice in the class. And it matches with what teachers wrote in their surveys since they mentioned that they use projects or role plays in order to improve students' competencies. Also, students are conscious that those activities aid to be able to use the language in order to handle situations in real life.

Finally, as the results showed, students are the ones that participate the most in class. However, a high percentage of students still believe that teachers are the ones that participate more. That is why teachers should plan a class in which the activities are oriented in a way that students participate even more so that this strengthens their competencies.

## **Chapter V. Conclusions and Recommendations**

It can be concluded that the teachers who served as subjects of study in this research had understanding of the theoretical principles of CBLT. In the surveys, teachers were able to define CBLT as well as give concrete examples on how they implement it in class. This was also demonstrated during the observation that was carried out. In the observed classes, teachers promoted meaningful learning through real-life scenarios that prepare students for situations they may encounter in the real world.

However, it was also noticed that autonomy is hardly promoted by teachers in class. Students are constantly told what to do and have very little chances to be creative and autonomous with the language. In CBLT, autonomy is a key element that helps learners be independent users of the language. In the surveys, teachers stated that they have not received formal instruction on CBLT and this may be one of the reasons why they still struggle to perform activities that promote autonomy in class.

Finally, it is recommended that teachers receive formal instruction on CBLT. This will strengthen the areas they already master of CBLT and will help them reinforce those which still represent struggles for them. This will result in more confident teachers that will provide with a better learning environment for their students.



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## ANNEXES

### OBSERVATION

**Table 1.**

*Observation: Reading and Conversation class B2. Notes*

**Universidad Don Bosco**

**Foreign Languages Department**



**Topic:** “Competency-Based Language Teaching In The English Classroom: Challenges and Strategies”

**Class:** English B2

**Class Objective (topic):** To identify four characteristics that the Competency-based Language Teaching has. (Performance, Meaningful context, Autonomy learning, Problem-solving skills.)

**Class 1: Reading and Conversation (Personal Notes about the class).**

The class started with the teacher presenting the topic and the vocabulary that was going to be studied in the class. First of all, the teacher asked students to remember the vocabulary learned last week and some of the students responded.

Later, the activity was to write on the board a letter and students working in pairs wrote 5 verbs using the letter given. Example: the letter F, students wrote focus, fix, etc. The pair that finished first was the winner. What could be seen was that the same couple was answering almost all the time. (They found the verbs quickly).

Then, quizlet presentation, students had some words that they did not know the meaning of. The students discussed the meaning with someone else, trying to guess it. Then, the students gave their ideas and the meaning was shown and pronounced. During that moment of guessing, some of

the students were searching the meaning of the word in their cell phones or dictionaries. Also, one of the couples was not participating, and most of the time students were not encouraged to participate either. At the end, they saw the real meaning and they wrote it down in their notebooks.

The next activity was to pronounce the vocabulary, to say the meaning and to read them out loud. But, not everyone was reading. The next activity was to pass a marker and the one who stayed with it pronounced a word and the class repeated after him/her. Then, students worked on the book on page 122, doing the reading of the day. After ten minutes, they shared the answers.

Then, two groups were made and somebody read the word and one by one wrote a letter of the word whose meaning was mentioned. At the end of the class, students wrote a paragraph using the new words they learned that day.

### **Class 2 : Reading and Conversation (Personal Notes about the class)**

Objective: to answer comprehension questions about the text.

A crowd in harmony. Understanding words from context.

Agenda, warm up

Lesson 7 a

Vocabulary

Reading skills

Understanding words from context

Spelling

Critical thinking

The new vocabulary was presented. Students looked for information in their cellphones and they looked up the meaning of the words in the dictionary. Then, they wrote on the board the

synonym and antonym.

Then, the students who passed to the board read and said the meaning, synonym and antonym. Later, in a Quizlet presentation, the students carefully read the meanings since they needed to guess the word that belonged to the definition. (Many of the students were very attentive).

Another activity was to read the reading assigned for the day. They had 3 to 5 minutes. Later, they played the “the boat is sinking game” in order to make groups. The students that did not get the number of students asked should complete a vocabulary exercise on the board.

After that, in groups, students finished the last activity. Later, the teacher gave them some questions: When and where do you find large crowds gathered in your country? What are these gatherings for? How do people tend to behave in large crowds? How do you behave?

What's your country's most famous festival? Do most people participate in it? How?

The students should apply the questions in a real-life context. Many of them were sharing their answers. Later, they studied the scanning strategy. (Fast reading) 1 minute to perform the exercise. Then, they gave the answer. Then, the text's audio was put on the recorder, they had to listen to it/ not all the students were listening to it. After that, they turned to the book and they did the reading questions and the answers. 1 minute to read.

Then, they took 10 minutes to answer each of the answers in the book. Putting the learned skill to the test.

### **CLASS 3: Reading and Conversation (Personal Notes about the class)**

First of all, students answered questions from the book. Then, they read out loud and the teacher corrected the pronunciation. Later, students answered the question Why we celebrate. Almost only one student answered, but the teacher asked more. A video about Father's Day was

presented. After the video, the teacher asked them a question so they could discuss in pairs. 1 hour talking.

The questions were about the differences between father's day and mother's day and then they talked about how they celebrate their birthdays. Christmas. Valentine's Day. Memorial's day, and other holidays. The teacher wrote on the board the vocabulary they did not know in English. He compared other countries. Then, he introduced the religion, theme of the book. They read it.

Students used the scanning, that's the technique the students were studying. They did the scanning exercise quickly. They gave the answers. Then, they continued doing the other exercises. They answered three questions. They asked the partner they were working with.

Then, they listened to an audio. A reading. Then they changed partners, and put them to discuss the two questions to get ideas about what the text was about. Then, they read the question with their answers. The teacher always compared real life situation.

The teacher introduced the relative clause as a topic. He explained with examples. Later, they played a game: guess the Word 1 minute. Students had to guess. He always gave examples. The students themselves gave their concepts. In teams of two. AFFIX those who have in the book. Extra-letters in the words. First, the teacher explained grammar as such, giving examples of words that they will add the affix *un*, *able*, *ly*, *ful*. They read the examples in the book and completed those that were in the book and on the board.

## STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Don Bosco University

Foreign Languages Department



**Topic:** “COMPETENCY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES”

**Instructions:** Read each question or statement and answer accordingly. In case you cannot answer a question, or in case the question does not make sense to you, please ask the person who administers this questionnaire.

The survey is addressed to students at the Foreign Languages Department, Don Bosco University.

**A.** Number from 1 to 5 the activities that are done most frequently in class.

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least frequent.

- Research topics.

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Repetition.

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least



- Translation

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Taking notes

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Elaboration of own concepts

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Listening to audiovisual materials

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Dialogs in pairs

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Presentations in front of the class

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Memorization of vocabulary lists

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

- Writing texts

1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= Somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least

**B.** Do you think that the teacher creates similar situations to real contexts so that you practice your English?

Yes

No

**C.** Do you consider it is necessary to create situations that are similar to real contexts?

Yes

No

**D.** Do you consider that what you are learning would be useful in a real-life context?

Yes

No

**E.** Why?

**F. Who participates more in your current class:**

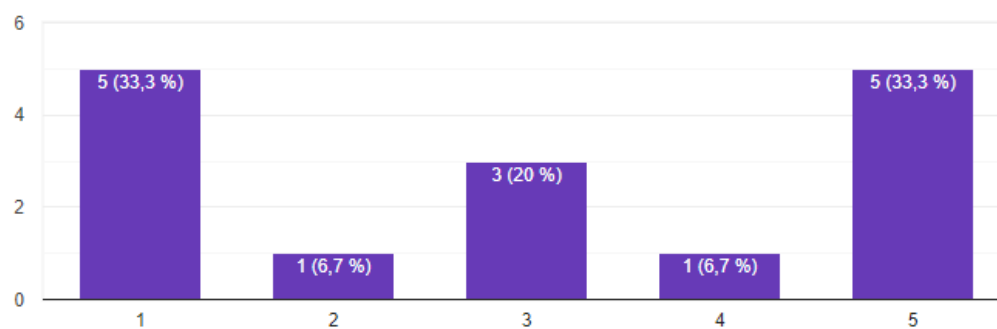
Teacher

Students

## STUDENTS ANSWERS

**Table 2.**

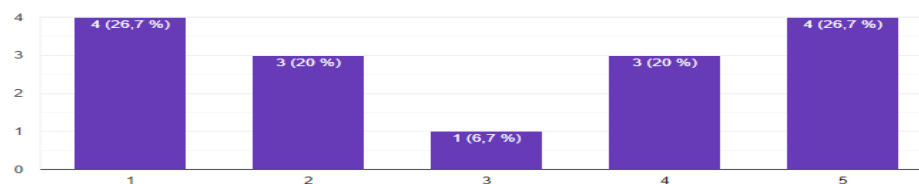
*Research Topics*



The chart above shows how frequent students do research topics in the class. According to the result, 33.3% of students considered that it is very frequent, but it is also shown that another 33.3% considered it is not frequent.

**Table 3.**

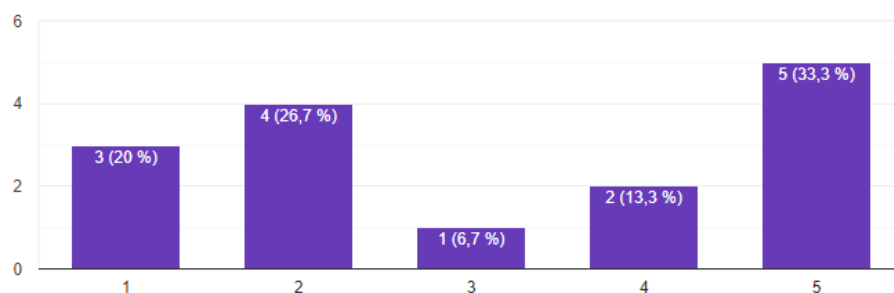
*Repetition*



The chart above shows how frequent students do repetition in the class. According to the result, 26.7% of students considered that it is very frequent, but it is also shown that another 26.7% considered it is not frequent.

**Table 4.**

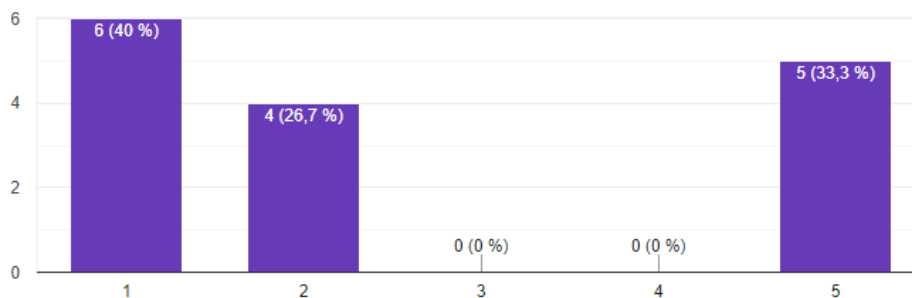
*Translation*



In this graph the 33.3% of students thought that the translation technique is not frequent in the class. While the 26.7% considered that is regularly frequent.

**Table 5.**

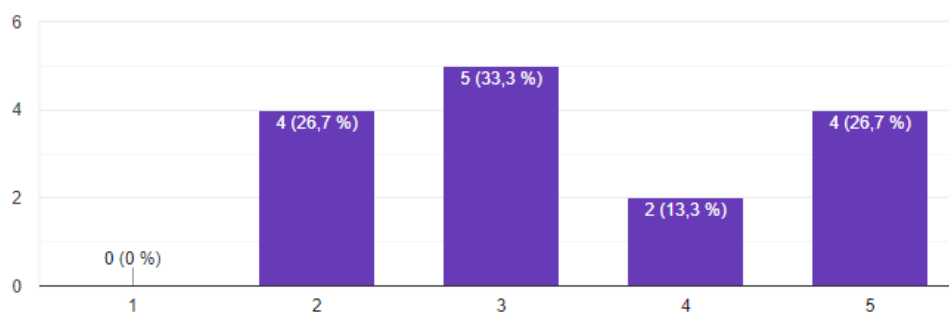
*Taking Notes*



The result reflects that 40% of students take notes in the class. While the 26.7% recognized that in the class the taking notes technique is regularly frequent and finally, the 33.3% said, it is not frequent.

**Table 6.**

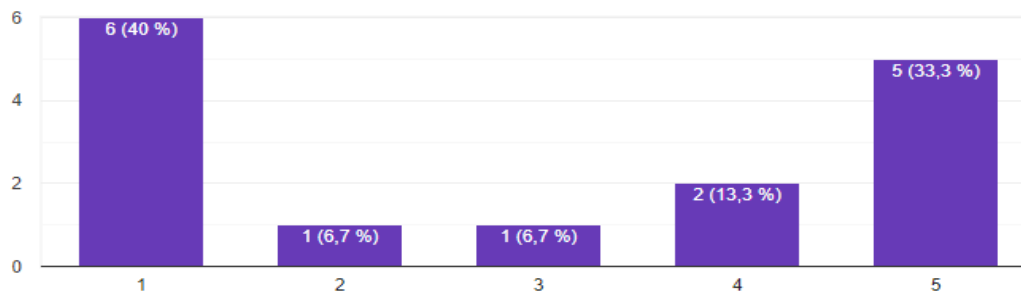
*Elaboration of Own Concepts*



Looking at the graph the 33.3% of students agreed that the elaboration of own concept is somehow used in the class. On the other hand, the 26.7% of students reflected that this technique is still used, but at the same time is not frequent.

**Table 7.**

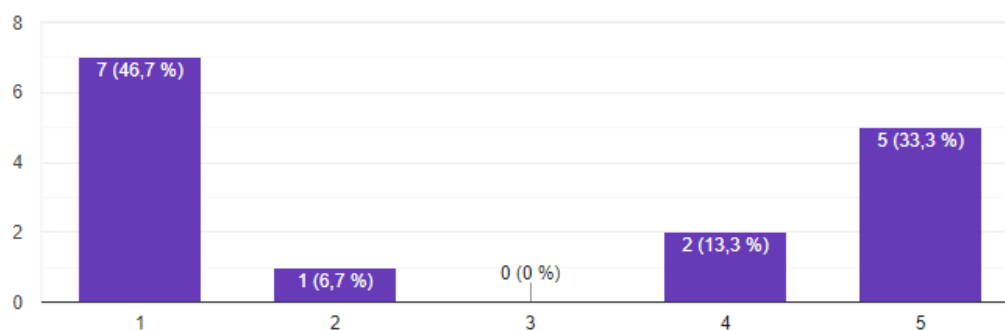
*Listening to Audiovisual Materials*



The 40% of students agreed that listening to audiovisual materials is used frequently. However, the 33.3% did not agree with the fact that this strategy is used in the class.

**Table 8.**

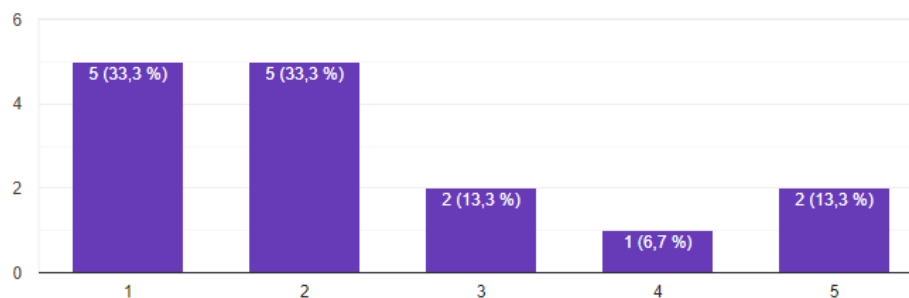
*Dialogues in Pairs*



The 46.7% of students considered that the dialogue in pairs is frequently used in class. On the other hand, the 33.3% of students said it is not frequent.

**Table 9.**

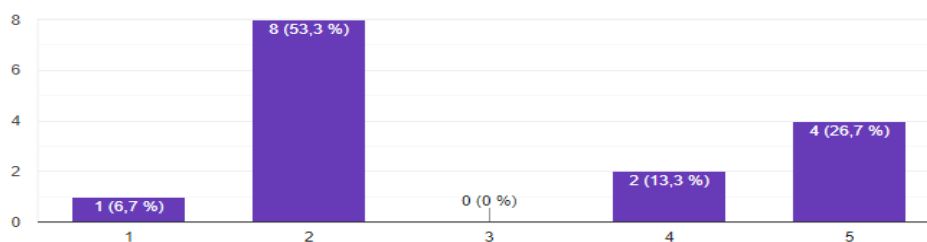
*Presentations in Front of the Class.*



The chart above shows how frequent students do presentations in front of the class. According to the result, 33.3% of students considered that it is very frequent, but a low percent considered that this strategy is not used.

**Table 10.**

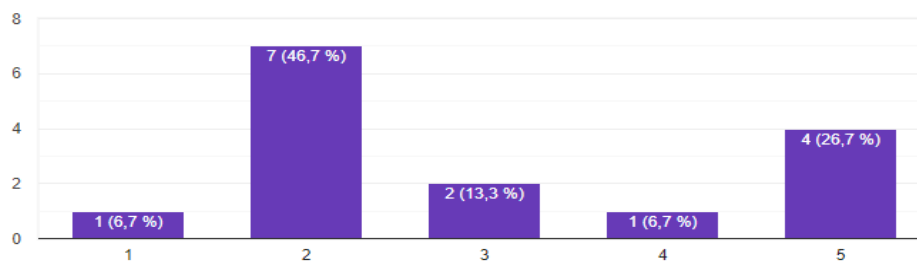
*Memorization of Vocabulary Lists*



The graph shows that the 53.3% of students thought that memorization of vocabulary lists is very frequent in class. While the 26.7% of students agreed that it is not frequent.

**Table 11.**

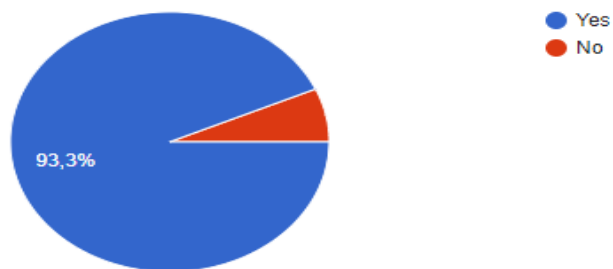
*Writing Texts*



The 46.7% of students considered that the writing technique is very frequently used. While the 26.7% did not agree with the fact that the teacher uses it.

**Table 12.**

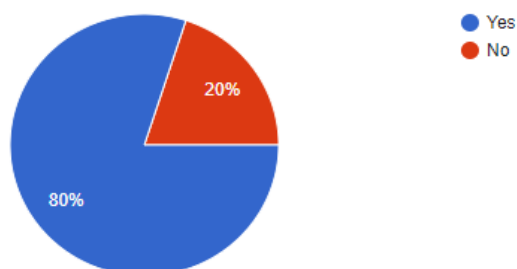
*Simulations to Real Contexts.*



In this pie chart, it is shown that students (almost all of them, 93.3) agreed that teachers in the class create similar situations to real contexts using the language.

**Table 13.**

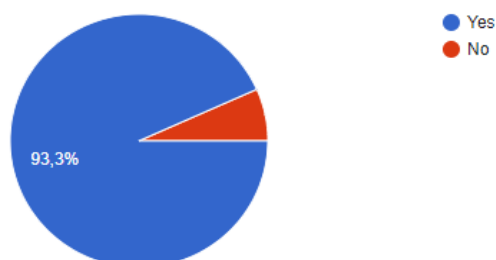
*Necessity of Creating Situations Similar to Real Contexts.*



In this pie chart, it is shown that students (80%) consider necessary to create situations that are similar to real contexts. But, a small percentage of students (20%) do not consider it as a necessity.

**Table 14.**

*Language Useful in a Real-Life Situation.*



This pie chart reflects that the 93.3% of students consider that what they are learning is useful for a real context.

**The following answers were given by students and have been transcribed as they entered them. Students explained why they consider that what they are learning would be useful or not in a real-life context.**

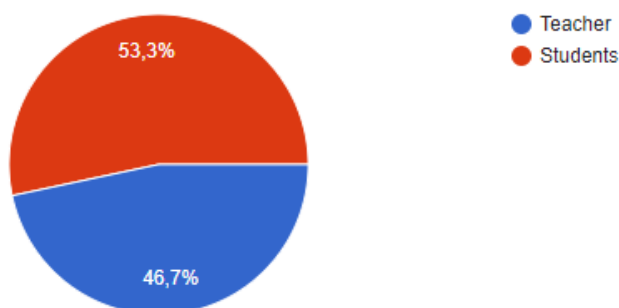
- “Because I can use the language when I go to United States”
- “Because I will be available to talk with someone in ingles more free”
- “Because is important”
- “There are many jobs about tourist”
- “becouse is true”
- “Because, it can help me to develop my abilities in the language.”
- “Because I am going to teach and teaching is the best way to find how to help people.”



- “Because I will be able to use the language to handle any situation and I will have better job opportunities.”
- “Because it will help me to perform better in any task that requires english.”
- “it is important to leard new topics”
- “It's sometimes useful because some of the learning could help me to understand and communicate in real life situations.”
- “To understand a topic”
- “Because is interesting to practice.”
- “I think that situations provided by the teacher are similar to what I can find in my daily life and I feel confident with my knowledge.”
- “Nowadays, English is required everywhere.”

**Table 15.**

*Participation in Class.*



The pie chart shows that students participate more in class than the teacher. The percentages were very close, students (53.3%) and teachers (46.7%).

The students' answers gave a big panorama of what teachers are doing in classes. In the first ten questions they needed to choose one of the options that the scale presented. 1= Most frequent, 2 = frequent, 3= somehow frequent, 4= Not so frequent, 5= Least frequent. According to the result, students could see that the strategies that teachers used the most are, research topic, repetition, taking note, listening to audiovisual materials, dialogues in pairs, presentations in class, and memorization.

**Table 16.**

*Teachers Survey Answers. Questions: One and Two.*

<b>Respondant</b>	<b>How would you define Competency-Based Language Teaching?</b>	<b>How would you define Competency?</b>
Teacher 1	It's student's showing you their capacity to do something. They show you they are capable of performing a task in English.	It's the ability to do something successfully.
Teacher 2	Competency-based language learning is a method in which language is taught for real life scenarios. In this approach, students practice and apply what they learn to demonstrate they are capable of functioning independently in the real world with their English skills.	Competency is the ability of a person to perform a task with success. There are different levels of competence depending on the mastery of the subject.

Teacher 3	CBLT is an approach to teach English in specific scenarios rather than teaching general English. In this approach, the student and teacher focus on specific scenarios where language could be applied.	Competency is to know and apply what you know.
Teacher 4	It refers to how students do something with the language rather than the simple knowledge of rules and vocabulary.	Competency is the ability to do something in an efficient way.
Teacher 5	In this approach students are prepared to use their English skills to perform tasks in the real world.	It's the capacity to do something by applying prior knowledge.
Teacher 6	I don't know.	I believe a competency is when you demonstrate you are able to do something independently.

**Table 17.**

*Teachers Survey Answers. Questions: Three and Four.*

	<b>What are some of the teaching strategies that you put into practice in your class for the development of competencies? Please, explain two examples per competency.</b>	<b>Do you think your students acquired these competences this semester? What is your evidence to think so?</b>
--	--	--

Teacher 1	<p>I ask students to write conversations using the grammar I explained.</p> <p>I ask students to write paragraphs applying the vocabulary we learned.</p>	<p>I think they all did but in different degrees. Some mastered the competency while others hardly got the minimum score to pass the class. My evidence is that some still struggle when it comes to speaking in English.</p>
Teacher 2	<p>I strongly believe in project based on learning. In this approach students learn the language through tasks. I have asked my students to prepare a play based on the book we read for the class. Students prepare and acquire grammar and vocabulary. Also, I have asked them to record videos at home talking about specific topics they care about.</p>	<p>I believe so. They demonstrated to have the competences the CEFR describes for this level.</p>
Teacher 3	<p>I ask my students to role play situations after we have covered the grammar point.</p> <p>I ask my students to do class presentations about the topics we have covered. I sometimes invite other students to listen to them so it can be more interactive.</p>	<p>I believe students do not fully acquire all of the competences for this level. I noticed that even in the last weeks they still had difficulties to convey messages in the target language.</p>
Teacher 4	<p>My students prepare mini projects. For example they make up a travel agency</p>	<p>Most of the students acquire the competences little by little during</p>

	<p>and use the vocabulary and grammar learned.</p> <p>My students make role plays using a certain speaking strategy discussed in class.</p>	<p>the term. They show how efficient they are throw a series of evaluations that include the for macro skills.</p>
Teacher 5	<p>I ask students to write paragraphs using the grammar point and vocabulary we use in class. Sometimes I also ask students to make timelines and talk about past or future experiences using the tenses are studying.</p>	<p>Students do acquire the competencies some at a higher level than others but they all do.</p>
Teacher 6	<p>On the one hand, I ask my students to read the newspaper every day. The first thing we do before we even start with the topic of the class is to talk about the news we all have read, heard or seen. I like my students to acquire vocabulary and to be able to think critically about the events of the world.</p> <p>On the other hand, I ask my students to interview people they admire and hold a conversation with them in English. They show the recording and class and describe they admire this person.</p>	<p>Yes, they did. They all showed growth in their English skills through the development of the semester.</p>

According to the teachers' answers, examples of strategies are:

- Writing conversations using grammar.
- Role plays
- Presentations about topics studied in class.
- Timelines
- Read newspapers
- To interview others

Those are strategies that helped teachers to develop competencies in their classes. To continue with the concept above, teachers must propose activities that create students' autonomy and critical thinking. Write conversations, role plays, presentations, read the newspaper and interview are good examples of how to work by competencies in class. It is necessary to not forget that in teaching languages there are four skills to develop (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) so that the strategies are based on what they are teaching or the skills they are developing.

**Table18.**

*Teachers Survey Answers. Questions: Five and Six.*

	<b>What are some challenges you have faced when working with the Competency-Based Language Teaching Approach?</b>	<b>How have you overcome these challenges?</b>
Teacher 1	Students lose interest and don't show up to class. It's hard to develop competencies when they are no there.	I haven't found a strategy to overcome this. I have thought about implementing more difficult quizzes.

Teacher 2	I believe there is lack of training on this topic and everyone does the best they can to apply this approach.	I myself struggled with this approach at first but got better as I decided to learn about it on my own.
Teacher 3	I think the evaluation system is very flexible and students are not challenged to give their best. Most students get a passing grade easily but do not develop competences.	I assign homework and motivate my students to do their best not because of a grade but because of their own learning.
Teacher 4	Sometimes students do not take the activity seriously. When preparing a role play or mini project, they just think it is an activity to have fun and not to show what they have learned.	I try to monitor those activities as often as I can. I asked them key questions like: how many word have you include? Or I make comments like: How about the structure we studied? Etc.
Teacher 5	One of the main challenges I have found is that this approach is something I never learned in college and sometimes I hesitate when it comes to preparing my class. I would like to have more training on this topic.	I have seen tutorials online on how to work with CBLT.
Teacher 6	Since homework is not graded, students sometimes don't do it. It's difficult to develop competences if they are not eager to go the extra mile.	I motivate students and in the first day of class do reflections exercise to make them think about the importance of homework.