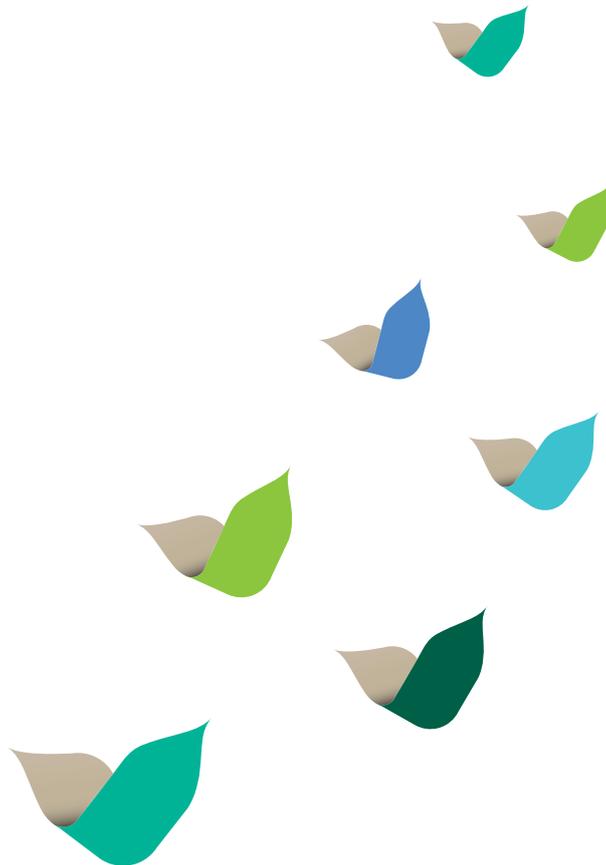




Cambridge English Trainer Framework



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Developed in collaboration with NILE (Norwich Institute for Language Education)

Introduction

The Cambridge English Trainer Framework, developed in collaboration with NILE (Norwich Institute for Language Education), has been created to support trainer training and trainer development. It has been designed to complement the Cambridge English Teaching Framework and assumes that potential trainers and trainers have the full range of teaching competencies of a Proficient teacher as a starting point. The Trainer Framework encapsulates the key knowledge and skills needed for effective training at a variety of stages and in different contexts. It aims to:

- help trainers to identify where they are in their professional career
- help trainers and their employers to plan professional development pathways
- stimulate research into and discussion of what constitutes trainer development.

The framework describes trainer competencies across three stages and five aspects of trainer knowledge and skill (categories), and, as with the Teaching Framework, is a profiling grid rather than a performance assessment tool (see North 2009). It is intended to show stages of a trainer's development at any one point in time, rather than provide a description of 'a good trainer'. This approach recognises that trainers' development over time is not predictable or defined by years of experience only, and that most trainers' development will be 'jagged' (Rossner 2013:5), in that, across the categories, trainers will be at different stages at any one time. As their professional needs change, the profile will help them to identify their development priorities.

The approach

Unlike the Teaching Framework, the Trainer Framework is experience based rather than research based. This is largely because there is an absence of research into English language teacher training. There are also very few standards to work with. Cambridge English has extensive experience of developing and evaluating train the trainer programmes for trainers involved in delivering its teacher qualifications in a wide range of contexts.

NILE, having worked with many hundreds of trainers, as an employer and as an organisation that trains trainers on a regular basis, has a unique perspective on how trainers develop and what indicators signal different development stages. Relevant literature was taken into account including the writings of Rod Bolitho and Tony Wright (2007), Tessa Woodward (1991) and Michael Wallace (1991). However, the main approach informing the framework was a consideration of the skills demonstrated by individuals in different trainer roles across the globe. These are exemplified by the trainer profiles described below. This experiential model is, of course, open to future development based on emerging research evidence.

The framework has five main categories, with each of these categories broken down further, making a total of 42 framework components. The framework is also organised according to three stages of trainer competency: *From Teacher to Trainer; Autonomous Trainer; Lead Trainer*.

The stages

Deciding on the number and labels for the stages generated a great deal of discussion. For example, a trainer can have many years of experience but not have had the opportunity to develop their role. Similarly, a teacher who is assigned by a ministry of education to train teachers on an occasional basis, because they are a Proficient classroom teacher, may do this for a number of years in succession, and become Autonomous quite quickly with appropriate support and guidance. For this reason, although there is an acknowledgement that the development process takes time, no specific timeframes are given to each development stage. It cannot be assumed that seniority equates to trainer quality, which is one reason the word 'senior' trainer is not used. It is important that anyone interpreting this framework realises that it does not represent a linear progression; in trainer development, there is constant backtracking, expanding of experience, recalibrating of expectations and adjustment of practice based on multiple factors. The three stages are more snapshots along an idealised development journey.

The first stage uses the term *From Teacher to Trainer* to indicate the transition as a learning process acquiring basic skills. The second stage, *Autonomous Trainer*, does not equate with 'independent'. It signifies the development of a trainer to the point where they have become proficient in basic training skills and are taking steps to extend their practical skills, including adapting training materials to better suit trainee needs. The third stage, *Lead Trainer*, indicates the leadership role that Expert teachers involved in training often take on. In writing the descriptors, criteria were referenced against trainers in such roles that NILE consultants and trainers had met in different contexts around the world.

Progression

In terms of progression through the framework, it would not be expected that all trainers will eventually be able to meet all the criteria in the Lead Trainer stage. However, neither would it be expected that a trainer with From Teacher to Trainer competencies be given Autonomous Trainer or Lead Trainer responsibilities. It is imperative to match people with appropriate competencies to appropriate roles within institutional or education system development projects. Each category has a range of descriptors at each stage, and each of the stages assumes competency built at previous stages and often adds extra qualities.

Trainer roles

The trainer roles represented in the categories are practical training skills rather than administrative tasks often assigned to trainers. There is no mention in the framework of report writing, record keeping, recruitment, or personnel management as these tend to be job specific and vary considerably across situations. In some situations they may even be totally devolved to inspectorates.

In some situations, trainers may not be called trainers, but there may be a training element to their job role. In others there will be an expected set of tasks that trainers may have to perform, such as demonstration lessons, or assisted lesson planning. Details on these particular activities are not included in the Training Framework but may be added to a localised version. This makes the framework highly adaptable to different contexts and any organisation with trainers can add to the framework any additional skill sets required.

It is important that the framework be relevant across a broad range of training contexts and to full-time, part-time and occasional trainers, as well as roles that incorporate training as a component. The core skill set identified here defines areas of key importance to all trainers. The framework takes two forms: firstly a summary table, followed by detailed descriptors for each category. The order of the categories follows a logical progression: from context, through knowledge to skills (interaction with context),

and ending in professional development and personal values. This 'outer' to 'inner' journey reflects the process by which our contexts build and affects our values systems through interaction with others and repeated practice.

One important omission is the mention of IT skills. The Trainer Framework has been constructed to apply equally to online and face-to-face trainers. We see no difference in the core training competencies required with the difference being merely in the level of access to technology, the mode of delivery and the technical prowess of the online trainer. These would be better described as a set of context-specific technical skills depending on the nature of the online training.

Core and non-core teaching principles and practice

Core and non-core teaching principles and practice will also vary in specifics depending on the situation. In some situations Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has become a core practice. In others it has not even registered as a possible approach. In many situations, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) are new ideas while in others, they are embedded practice. Many teachers need to deal on a daily basis with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). What is core and non-core should be defined based on local practice. The framework acknowledges that a trainer should be aware of other methodologies available to language teachers-in-training and that recommended principles and practice constantly change. As relevant new trends emerge, trainers need to be aware of them, and preferably master them, to be able to train others in how to put them into practice, if appropriate.

The categories

Understanding of individuals and situations

The two sub-categories here, *Analysing teacher needs* and *Dealing with individual differences* emphasise the importance of the context within which the teacher is situated. Training situations can be as diverse within a country, region or local education authority as they can across international borders. It is this local variation and ability to discover what needs and desires there are within the training situation that is important here.

Knowledge of teaching, training and teacher development

The three defined areas of knowledge: *Teaching*, *Training* and *Teacher development* overlap considerably but do constitute discrete core areas of expertise. This category intentionally acknowledges that knowledge is important in building skill. A high level of knowledge in these areas does not make a Lead Trainer, but Lead Trainer status should not be considered without it.

Planning, conducting and evaluating training activities

This is the largest of the categories because it describes what we should see in training activities conducted at each of these stages. We use the term *activities* to indicate that this is not restricted to workshops, sessions and courses but could include, where appropriate, the whole range of development activities available to trainers including, but not limited to demonstrations, conferences, assisted planning, sharing sessions and teacher development workshops. The *Planning* for a training activity should be visible to trainees and evaluators in clearly articulated aims, activity structure and development path. In *Conducting* training activities there are a number of indicators of good practice

described here at different stages. Specific strategies for enabling them are described elsewhere. Finally, *Evaluating* training, whether self- or other-initiated, is an important step in measuring whether the training is having or has had any impact on the trainees (Kirkpatrick 1998).

Supporting, observing, feeding back on and assessing teaching

Supporting teachers is an ongoing process that relies on discussion, planned or impromptu, about how to plan, conduct and evaluate training activities. *Observing* may be a part of this process but *Supporting* is more clearly defined as counselling and encouraging. *Observing* should be an integral part of any trainer's role. How to appropriately set up, conduct and follow up on observations is a skill that even the most experienced trainers can find difficult. The most difficult part can be conducting *Feedback* sessions where teachers might become defensive or even antagonistic. Defusing over-heated situations is a high-level skill that is acquired often through long, hard journeys. In some contexts formal teacher assessment is part of the trainer's role. This descriptor looks at the ability to do this consistently, accurately and with tact.

Professional development and values

As stated earlier, even highly experienced trainers can continue to develop professionally. There are always new innovations in the field, new specialisms to explore and new contexts to meet. The *Professional development* category exemplifies a journey many might see as typical, given a local professional teaching organisation and a supportive administration.

Trainers' experience informs their *Values*. The framework does not set out what those values should and should not be, but suggests different stages in the ways in which those values are formed. It also acknowledges the difficulty in bringing values and practices into alignment. There may be mismatch between a trainer's intentions and their practice. Ensuring that through self-reflection and assessment, peer, trainee and external feedback trainers are constantly monitoring whether their practices actually do express their values is essential to becoming a fully self-aware trainer.

How to use this framework

The Cambridge English Trainer Framework is recommended for use by individuals and institutions as a self-assessment tool. Reading across each category, trainers should decide where they are on the framework according to the descriptor that best matches their current practice. A higher rating indicates a professional strength, a lower rating indicates a development priority. Looking at the next higher descriptor will give the trainer an indication of how they could strengthen that area, and future documents will give more concrete advice on how to go about doing this.

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