

The role of a TBLT language teacher: basic skills and didactic knowledge

1. What is **the role of the instructor** in the learning experience as a facilitator? In TBLT, the instructor is not the “know-it-all instructor” but instead has a secondary role. The instructor becomes responsible for creating the proper learning environment and gives the tools to the learners to develop themselves both as learners and as people. Only during the post-task, the instructor again returns to a more teacher-like role and explains the mistakes or difficulties that the class has encountered during the task cycle.

2. As a facilitator while using the TBLT methodology you often: Act as a language consultant; you step back and let the learners be more active, without interrupting them, in order not to disrupt the learning dynamic, the teacher does not intervene during the time that students work together to make the story; they might answer students’ questions about certain words or usage, and make notes about the common mistakes, in order to address them in the post task); Interact with and react to the learners’ behaviour and needs, keeping them engaged and helping them to understand the concepts; Empower the students to learn and be engaged and motivated; for example using multimedia resources like images, songs, movies, and games; Motivate the learners to speak, focusing on authentic situations rather than the grammar; you will follow the topics that interest the learners; Create a safe atmosphere in which students feel good and are ready to take risks (for example using their existing language skills to talk and solve a problem); Guide, advise, and support when learners ask for it; Provide indirect feedback: meaning that you indicate the mistake without correcting it, but allowing them to fix it on their own.

3. In spite of being a non-conventional teacher, there are some **basic skills** that are common to many teachers that you should develop (1) Communication skills are the most important skills for a language teacher because language IS communication, and you need to be able to communicate the material to your students in an accessible and interesting way. Specifically, you will need to have good written and oral communication skills, as well as listening skills that will allow you to recognize the needs of your students and adapt the material to them. (2) Critical thinking is also necessary, especially to select your resources and adapt the material to the needs of your students, but also to answer their questions and solve any conflicts that might arise (we will discuss choosing your materials for class in the next section) (3) Organizational skills are needed for teachers to plan the classes, the syllabus of your course, assess the progress of your students and perform all these tasks in a timely and efficient manner. (4) Creativity and passion are key when teaching a language to keep your students engaged and stimulate them to keep up with the learning activities (5) Finally, patience is a very important skill to practice when dealing with students’ difficulties: you might have to repeat concepts and draw your student’s attention multiple times as well as responding to stressful challenges presenting themselves in the moment.

4. You should also have **language awareness**. What do we mean by this? Language awareness is about being proficient in that language's grammar (morphology, syntax) and vocabulary (including orthography, pronunciation, register, meaning/connotations), other than developing foreign language skills (listening, comprehending audio-visual texts, reading, writing and speaking as well as the ability of language mediation). In fact, although you might speak a language fluently or even be a native speaker, if you have never learned that language in a school setting, if no one ever taught you the grammar, or if you have studied the language structures a long time ago, you might not be proficient in the language didactics. TBLT language teachers, as we have often repeated so far, focus much less on the "rules" of the language and much more on the skills. Yet, you are still required, in the post-tasks, to explain those rules to your students in order to help them orient their language production in the future, as well as being able to respond to questions of students. Our suggestion, therefore, is that besides mastering the TBLT methodology, you spend some time reviewing the grammar and vocabulary rules of the language you want to teach.