



## ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM IN MOZAMBIQUE

**Gregório Jorge Gonçalves<sup>i</sup>**

English Language Lecturer, PhD,  
English Division,  
Universidade Licungo,  
Mozambique

### **Abstract:**

Becoming a professional English language teacher is a challenge in Mozambique, as it moves beyond a simple teacher training process and acquisition of language tools for teaching. In Mozambique, English language teachers are trained in universities to attain Honour's Degrees in English language teaching. Indeed, this is happening in all the provinces with less control and intervention of the National Council for Quality Evaluation. Achieving academic levels, obtaining certificates for contracts, and access to employment in the education sector are the main goals for many English language teachers. Thus, this paper is a critical analysis of the English language teacher professionalism in Mozambique, considering English as a foreign language used in several contexts, such as: universities, secondary schools, embassies, public and private institutions. Therefore, professional English language teachers play an essential role in the teaching and learning process and communication through the English language. The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) in India and the Commonwealth of Learning in Canada (COL) Document (2007) and review of the professionalism of the English language teachers from Richards' perspectives (2003, 2011, 2021) constitute the framework for the development of critical analysis of the current English language teacher professionalism in Mozambique. This study's qualitative approach was chosen based on discussions and reviews of several authors who have written about the professionalism of language teachers and English language teachers specifically. Practical examples and current praxis of professionalism are contextualised and brought out for solid suggestions and further improvements on the English language teacher competences and praxis. The discussions found out that a clear benchmarking and English language teacher training framework can help the teacher trainees to perform professionally and competently during and when they start teaching in the schools and become professionals not only in Mozambique but in countries where English is learnt as a foreign language.

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [gregoriojorge@ymail.com](mailto:gregoriojorge@ymail.com)

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**Resumo:**

Tornar-se um professor profissional de língua inglesa é um desafio em Moçambique, porque a profissionalização vai além de um simples processo de formação de professores e de aquisição de ferramentas para o ensino da língua. Em Moçambique, os professores de língua inglesa são formados em universidades para obterem o grau de licenciatura. Esta prática é evidenciada em todas as províncias com menos controlo e intervenção do Conselho Nacional de Avaliação da Qualidade. O alcance de níveis académicos e obtenção de certificados para contrato e acesso ao emprego no sector da educação é o principal objectivo de muitos professores de língua inglesa formados nas universidades públicas. Portanto, este artigo faz uma análise crítica do profissionalismo dos professores de língua inglesa em Moçambique, considerando o inglês como língua estrangeira utilizada em diversos contextos, tais como: universidades, escolas secundárias, embaixadas, instituições públicas e privadas. Por conseguinte, os professores de língua inglesa desempenham um papel essencial no processo de ensino e aprendizagem e na comunicação no dia-a-dia. O Quadro do Conselho Nacional de Acreditação e Avaliação (NAAC) na Índia e do *Commonwealth of Learning* em Canada (COL) (2007), e a revisão do profissionalismo dos professores de língua inglesa a partir das perspectivas de Richards (2003, 2011, 2021) constituem a estrutura para o desenvolvimento de análise crítica da actual profissionalização dos professores de língua inglesa em Moçambique. A abordagem qualitativa foi escolhida para este estudo com base em discussões e revisão de vários autores que escreveram sobre o profissionalismo dos professores de línguas e especificamente dos professores de língua inglesa. Exemplos práticos e a práxis actual do profissionalismo são contextualizados e trazidos para sugestões sólidas e melhorias da prática e competências do professor de língua inglesa. Sobre as competências e práxis do professor de língua inglesa. As discussões conduzem à uma avaliação comparativa clara e que um quadro orientador de formação de professores de língua inglesa podem ajudar os professores estagiários a ter um desempenho profissional e competente durante o exercício docente nas escolas e a tornarem-se profissionais não só em Moçambique, mas em outras partes do mundo onde o Inglês aprende-se como língua estrangeira.

**Palavras-chave:** Inglês, língua, professor, profissionalismo

## 1. Introduction

Professionalism by English language teachers can be manifested by more profound responsibility for actions undertaken in one's work, whether at the workplace or outside. More than responsibility, there are additional elements such as positive attitudes, good practices, good communication, and openness to colleagues, clients and the public in general. Nevertheless, professionalism may have further interpretation. By analysing the professionalism of English language teachers in Mozambique, I seek to relate the value that is given to theory translated into practice. Therefore, one must ask what kind of

English language teacher the country wants to have. It is my position that a good English language professional needs to have knowledge of the subject matter, which is the English language shaped in all dimensions, the skills to use during the teaching and learning process for the benefit of the students or learners, and the competence to cope with different situations, where the students might need help. A professional teacher is someone who is concerned with his or her performance and is viewed as an ideal person for a given post, position, job or profession. More importantly, an English language professional, as any other professional, should relate to their profession the issue of ethics and responsibility. Thus, professionalism can be manifested by deeper responsibility for actions undertaken in one's work, whether at the workplace or outside.

## 2. Professionalism of the English Language Teacher

Many authors discuss the concept of professionalism. While there may be different larger dimensions that fit different professions, it must also be clear that there are specific elements that overly help each teacher achieve and demonstrate professionalism in the training area. To Estrela (2002), *"the concept of professionalism is in constant development, and it should be made on the basis of the concrete historical moment and social reality that school knowledge aims to legitimize,"* (p. 65). However, Wallace (2001) considers as professional a person as possessing the following qualities: *"scientific knowledge; a period of rigorous study which is formally assessed; a sense of public service; high standards of professional conduct and the ability to perform some specified demanding and socially tasks in a demonstrably competent manner"* (p. 5). In addition, Cháu (1996, p.186) states that *"classroom observations in different countries show that certain teachers have insufficient mastery of the subject matter they teach"*. At this stage, it is necessary to highlight the language education policy situation that exists in Mozambique. A professional English language teacher needs to show and demonstrate knowledge of the English language as a subject, and the required skills and competences for English language teaching in different contexts of English language teaching for students or teacher trainees to feel comfortable and confident about what they are learning. In addition to that, English language teachers, in general, should behave and have positive attitudes towards their daily life and teaching styles. The aforementioned elements help good professionals in general, and English language teacher trainers and teachers are no exception. It is also necessary to understand education policy as the goal that each government intends to achieve in each historical moment.

A Mozambican researcher, Passos (2009) points out that *"the fact that teachers have low levels of qualification without professional training tends to contribute to pupil's weak performance"* (p. 32). Therefore, it is expected that professional English language teachers should be able to gradually meet the school's requirements based on the students' intrinsic and extrinsic needs. In this context, the English language teacher trainees should be aware of what they will teach, how they will teach it, and when they will teach it while respecting students' convictions. In line with Carter & Nunan (2001), in teacher development, content generally stems from the teacher-learner who generates it from

their experience. Thus, the process engages teachers in some form of sense-making or construction of understandings out of what they already know and can do. By analysing the professionalism of English language teachers, I seek to relate the value that is given to theory translated into practice not only during in-service periods. Therefore, one must ask what kind of English language teacher the country wants to have and what one wants to be.

The English language teacher training in universities lasts for four years and aims to give the teacher trainees knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to act safely in teaching the English language in a context where English is more practised and produced in the classroom with few opportunities outside the classroom settings. The issue of absenteeism and less worry about the students' personal capacity and knowledge generation in universities seem to be growing among lecturers as students come to universities with little of knowledge of the subject matter. Looking at this perspective, one wonders whether teacher training colleges are prepared enough to make the teaching and learning process a mechanism for personal growth. Many English language teachers have positive feelings, hopes, desires, and dreams and are keen to improve aspects of their professional practice and discover new teaching ideas. Saldanha (2008, p. 18) states that *"when someone learns a new profession, he or she starts with his or her conventions, difficulties, requirements, limitations, specific knowledge and languages, value systems, knowledge of typical cases, thought and action schemes"*. Imagined and ideal professionalism are configured for a number of aspects related to social values, curricula content, methodological practices and evaluation. Several aspects of the practical knowledge of professional teachers are the result of its practical domain in terms of technical and didactic procedures in use. Knowledge in action is enshrined in the know-how practical to the same teacher in the context of the classroom. Therefore, the professional English language teacher who has this feature is endowed with spontaneous capabilities in their action. During the initial training of English language teachers, teacher trainers should devise and arrange several activities such as remedial tasks, small assignments, and short projects with appropriate strategies for their implementation. Therefore, it is important to have these aspects as positive challenges for effective training of future teachers. The effectiveness required of the English language teacher is, as a matter of fact, based on the daily profession faced day to day. Perrenoud (2000) mentions that: *"the real challenge in the domain of the total training of a learning cycle is, if possible, basic education, not so much to be able to teach indifferently at any level or cycle, but to enter each learning on a long-term continuity, whose primary logic is allocated for the construction of skills targeted at the end of the cycle or training"* (p. 46).

English language teacher training must be relevant to the education. The teacher trainees, after completing their course, must have developed the ability to reflect and criticise some practices of the teaching-learning process. Self-assessment requires knowledge and mastery of methods and teaching techniques that are in line with the real situation in the classroom. Perrenoud (2000) further comments that *"teacher training nowadays is capable of inventing activities, ... depends more on personal imagination or creativity of the new school movement than vocational training or formal education resources"* (p. 49).

However, it must also be acknowledged that *“there is no reason to reinvent each alone, or search for originality; each teacher is able to constantly think for himself or herself.”* Perrenoud (p. 49). Therefore, professional English language teachers must first analyse the type of student whom they interact with, that is they must take into account that the same student is, first and foremost, an individual who is in constant relationships with the other members of his or her society. The English language teacher should be prepared to deal with global valences, social values, and current reality. However, it is clear that the future English language teacher must be professionally prepared to match the actual situation of the teacher trainee and the classroom. A competent professional is one who knows how to do well what is needed and desired within their professional sphere. Competence should not be defined as static, as a model to be followed, but as something that is built by professionals in their praxis. According to the Education Curriculum reviewed in Mozambique, *“it is up to basic education to prepare a student who is able to reflect, to be creative, and to question the reality in order to act on it for their own benefit and their community”* (INDE/MINED, 1999, p. 23). Thus, the basic education teacher training curriculum takes on the challenge of training a know-how professional who is able to mobilise and make use of knowledge in their daily lives, to think, discuss, argue and question the world around them, to generate knowledge to learn to do, how to be and to know how to be in the profession. Above all, this is a professional who bets all the time in the ongoing training. The secondary school English language teacher in the Mozambican context is required, therefore, the know-how to apply the art and technique of teaching English lessons with skill, enthusiasm and dedication. This is the role that needs to be analysed in the teacher training process as part of the quality of education. However, it is important that well-professional English language teachers are prepared to make use of their technical and scientific knowledge in order for them to experience the teaching and learning process progressively. However, the fact that English language teachers are trained within eight semesters in colleges or universities only helps graduate teachers get employment after finishing the courses instead of seriously imparting to them knowledge and skills of their profession. Imagined and ideal professionalism are configured for a number of aspects related to social values, curricula content, methodological practices and evaluation. Torres-Rocha (2019, p. 156) argues that *“global perspectives have influenced dramatically ELT local perspectives and have impacted EFL teacher professional identities. The field of ELT has become a global phenomenon”*. The English language teacher should be prepared in relation to social values and their current reality. However, it is clear that the teacher must be professionally prepared to match the actual situation of the teacher trainee and the classroom. A competent professional is one who knows how to do well what is needed and desired within their speciality. Competence should not be defined as static, as a model to be followed, but as something that is built by professionals in their praxis. I hold the position that a good English language professional needs to have knowledge of the subject matter, which is the English language shaped in all dimensions, the skills to use during the teaching and learning process for the benefit of the students or learners, and the competence to cope with different situations, where the students might need help. A professional is someone who is concerned with his or

her performance and is viewed as an ideal person for a given post, position, job or profession. More importantly, an English language professional, as any other professional, should relate to their profession the issue of ethics and responsibility.

### **2.1 The English Language Trainees' Motivation Concerning the Teaching Profession**

Motivation is a factor that should be underlined for the English language teacher trainees. Harmer (2007, p. 20) explains that *"the kind of motivation which comes from the classroom may be influenced by a number of external factors such as the attitude of society, family and peers to the subject in question is often referred to as extrinsic motivation"*. A study conducted by Henriksen (2010) in Mozambique concludes that *"English language is positively viewed by Mozambicans, because it is seen as the language of opportunities, mainly for social, academic, professional and economic opportunities"* (p. 181). Hence, English is also regarded as an important language because it facilitates the country's development, considering there are many foreigners in Mozambique who do not speak Portuguese. However, to achieve the level of professional English language teacher and its excellence, much has to be done in terms of school infrastructure, teacher trainers' on-going development of training programmes, effective implementation of the contents, and teacher trainees' dedication and motivation. Richards (2021) elucidates that during a teacher education course, a student teacher's ideal self reflects how they view teaching as a profession, their view of their own future potential as a language teacher, and their level of commitment to achieving excellence as a language teacher once they commence their teaching. In the same perspective, Richards (2021) further emphasises that:

*"It can provide a motivation for their participation in the teacher education course and influence the extent of their active participation in the course and the degree to which they engage in critical reflection, goal setting and independent thinking, as well as how they manage their own learning, both within and outside of the course."* (p. 12)

While that has been put, other English language teachers may be influenced by the fact that the English language plays an important role in several domains of Mozambican society, in education, in political issues, in business and in daily contact and interaction with foreigners who speak the language. These may aspire to be translators or professional English language teachers, both of which may result in prestige and are hence related to inner concerns that are part of intrinsic motivation. Harmer (2007, p. 20) defines intrinsic motivation as what is *"generated by what happens inside the classroom"*. This could be the teacher's methods, the activities that students take part in or their perception of their success. Some English language teacher trainee candidates may be influenced by foreign English language teachers and Christian missionaries preaching in Mozambique, and hence, their willingness to combine the language culture of the foreigners with their personal interest in becoming language teachers to teach English and be able to communicate with others. In line with Harmer, Torres-Rocha, J. C. (2019) refers that:

*“Nowadays, a globally-minded identity of professional ELT practitioners is necessary due to political, economic, cultural and market factors that have positioned Western epistemologies in ELT rather than those of EFL local communities. Global perspectives have influenced dramatically ELT local perspectives and have impacted EFL teachers’ professional identities. The field of ELT has become a global phenomenon.”* (p. 156)

This could be the teacher trainer’s methods and the activities that teacher trainees take part in or their perception of their success in the English Language Teaching profession as a foreign language. Some English language teachers may be influenced by foreign English language teachers, Christian missionaries preaching in Mozambique, and hence, their willingness to combine the language culture of the foreigners with their personal interest in becoming language teachers to teach English and be able to communicate with others. Others may be moulded by the training process.

## **2.2 Lack of Continued Professional Development for English Language Teacher Trainers**

First of all, it would be very good if teachers had specific workshops where they could meet different English language teachers from different universities as a mechanism to overcome some of their weaknesses. The faculties and colleges should provide training courses and workshops related to the issues of specific teaching methodologies, mainly with the fast advancement of new technologies in the world. Richards (2021) contends that:

*“An important process in teacher education is the opportunity for teachers and student teachers to reflect on how they understand their professional identities and the sources of their identities, if and how they think their identities have changed over time, and how their identity influences their approach to teaching, professional development, and interaction with their colleagues.”* (p. 4).

In this regard, it is crucial to mention that if one is teaching study skills or literature courses, he or she should meet at least once or twice a year with colleagues teaching the same courses in the other two teacher training colleges. In this case, a discussion cannot be fruitful if one shares the challenges or gaps in given courses with one who has not embarked on the same issues. Thus, it becomes a limitation for the teacher trainers’ discussion. However, this is not the current situation in our universities nowadays. From the document analysis based on the last Mozambican Strategic Plan, it becomes clear that the Mozambican Government is aware of some of the challenges that the teacher training colleges and the teacher trainees face in the colleges, as underlined in the Mozambican Strategic Plan by the Ministry of Education 2012-2016:

*“Improving the quality of education is a complex matter. The outcome of the educational process does not depend solely on the resources made available, but rather on a set of internal factors, including physical, psychological and socio-cultural factors, in which*

*education plays...It also includes external factors such as families' socioeconomic conditions, home/ school distance, and commitment of parents and guardians, among others."* (p. 35)

The concern regarding the quality of education in general is not recent at all; the last but one Education Strategic Plan for Mozambique, 2006 to 2011, recognized that there was a need to reflect on the quality of teacher education in Mozambique. Seventeen years now, the quality of the English language teachers trained in Mozambican universities is still a challenge linked to the lower competence in interaction with foreigners and lack of fluency and accuracy. In addition, the MEC/INDE Teacher Training Programme (2006, p. 10) roughly focuses on research and innovation; thus, it stresses that *"training teachers for innovation does not simply mean providing them with knowledge... training means preparing them so that they are able to take their own initiatives in the local contexts in which the professional praxis will take place"*. Therefore, the question that can be raised concerns how one can make innovations in teaching without having teaching experiences and enough period of professional preparation. My point is that the fact that some English language teachers cannot handle the target language fluently may not help them make reliable innovations in teaching that anyone can trust.

Furthermore, having enough developmental training courses, like English language teachers' workshops, would provide the teacher trainers with the opportunity to innovate their trainees' daily teaching practices. Adekola (2007) maintains that teacher preparation needs to be improved or overhauled, particularly at the primary school level, so as to help children learn effectively and that teachers should be given more opportunities for additional in-service training or incentives to improve their teaching performance (p. 17). That being the case, Craig, Kraft & Du Plessis 1998 (as cited in a UNICEF study, 2000) argue that:

*"Professional development can help overcome shortcomings that may have been part of teachers' pre-service education and keep teachers abreast of new knowledge and practices in the field. This ongoing training for teachers can have a direct impact on student achievement. Case studies from Bangladesh, Botswana, Guatemala, Namibia and Pakistan have provided evidence that ongoing professional development, especially in the early years after initial preparation and then continuing throughout a career, contribute significantly to student learning and retention."* (p. 14)

With due attention to the graduate teacher profile, the MEC/INDE Teacher Training Programme (2006) acknowledges that *"three domains are defined for the teacher trainee at the end of the training course namely; personal and social, scientific knowledge, and professional abilities"* (p. 12), as to fill some gaps from teacher trainers in colleges, attention to continued professional development for teacher trainers in training colleges is also shared by Rani (2016) who explains that:



*“A professional culture of collaboration and mobility has yet to become widely implemented in Teacher Education, and there is an associated need to advance the development of quality cultures based on career-long perspective on teacher development, which include initial teacher education, induction and continuing professional development.” (p. 136).*

Therefore, the English language teacher trainers and teacher trainees in the teacher training faculties and colleges seem to be forgotten by the Ministry of Science and Technology at intermediate and top levels. My focus is on the Provincial Directorate and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, who should support them with the training process. Furthermore, Adekola (2007, p. 21) suggests that *“staff in colleges of education needs professional support and professional development programmes that enable them to train.... for the kind of teaching situations they will find themselves in”*. That notwithstanding, Koç (2016, p. 461) observes that *“the application of more effective models for in-service English language teacher training will both improve the quality of the teachers and increase the achievements of foreign language students”*. The need to implement workshops or developmental training programme is a must for the colleges. The advice is teacher trainers should meet at least once or twice a year to discuss issues regarding the training programme to improve teacher trainer’s performance and develop professional English language teaching competences. This suggestion is in order to put into practice some elements of the English language teacher training framework, namely teacher trainers’ performance and professional development programmes. Therefore, former teacher trainers and university lecturers from the English language teacher training programmes should be invited by the college managers to help innovate and refresh the teacher trainers’ knowledge on different matters of English language courses, teaching methodologies and related issues.

### **3. Factors Affecting the Quality of the English Language Teacher Professionalism**

In the education and language teacher training process, there are always factors which influence teaching and learning, positively or negatively. Heyworth (2013) notes that *“there is a need to introduce standards for the quality of teaching methods, staff, the quality of providers, and course delivery”* (p. 305). The author also explains that:

*“There are a number of descriptions of quality requirements both for teachers in general, and for teachers of languages specifically. Typically, they are based on a competence model, with competence defined generally as a combination of values (or attitudes), knowledge and understanding and skills”* (Heyworth, 2013, p.298)

In line with Heyworth’s viewpoint, I shield that, apart from possessing knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences, professional English language teachers in Mozambique should have the following five attributes: high motivation for English language teaching, excellent knowledge of the subject matter, including the four major language skills, strong skills for English language teaching, competence for English

language teaching, and positive attitudes of the English language teacher. Additionally, three factors need to be stressed to achieve professionalism and competence of the English language teachers, namely well-structured content and syllabus, good and well-equipped school infrastructure, and competent teacher trainers. Richards (2021, p. 5) postulates that *“non-native English-speaking teachers have often been encouraged to work towards an advanced or even native-like level of proficiency in English in order to strengthen their identity and image as competent language-teaching professionals”*. It is my view that a school English language teacher’s possession of these elements can guarantee their teaching and communicative competence. Furthermore, teacher trainee’s motivation, knowledge of the subject matter, language learning and teaching skills, competence and professionalism in English language teaching are five tools that I stress and should be applied to the field of English language teacher education. These elements embedded in quality refer to the totality of features and characteristics of professional English language teachers acquired following the teachers’ education programme.

Feigenbaum (1961) claims that if the expectations of the schools, students, parents and society are met, that indicates that the right type of teachers has been prepared by the teacher education institutions. While this has been argued, Torres-Rocha (2019) reinforces that in this century, for EFL teachers, expert knowledge of the subject, of pedagogy and students or compliance with general professional standards is not enough; developing a solid professional identity as an English language practitioner by raising a thorough awareness of the socio-political factor of ELT at internal and external levels is also necessary.

Therefore, if English language teacher trainees demonstrate desired knowledge and abilities in what they are learning while teacher trainers make continuous teaching improvements through trainers’ interactions among themselves and commit themselves to their work, teacher trainees will have positive outcomes. This is a fundamental point that makes the education and teaching process valuable. Thus, it is not only necessary that the computer facilities and other learning resources are available in the institution for its academic and administrative purposes but also that they are accessible to staff and students who are keen to use them.

### **3.1 Knowledge of English and English Language Teaching**

Under no circumstances one can be successful in the English language teaching profession without more profound knowledge of the language, the teaching methodologies, and related generic matters and being able to translate into practice. It is my position that a good English language professional needs to have knowledge of the subject matter, which is the English language shaped in all dimensions, the skills to use during the teaching and learning process for the benefit of the students or learners, and the competence to cope with different situations, where the students might need help. A professional English language teacher is someone who is concerned with his or her performance and is viewed as an ideal person for a given post, position, job or profession. More importantly, an English language professional, as any other professional, should relate to their profession the issue of ethics and responsibility.

Koç (2016) contends that *“the purpose of an in-service teacher training programme is to enable teachers to develop their knowledge, apply this knowledge in the classroom and achieve the projected behavioural changes”* (p. 459). At the end of their training course, English language teacher trainees should possess, as one of the expectations, consolidated knowledge of the English language teaching and teaching model pedagogies, which may include knowledge of English language grammar, phonology, morphology, discourse and vocabulary, adequate mastery of the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, and teaching methodologies. As highlighted by Fenner and Kuhlman (2012):

*“Teachers also need to be fluent in social and academic English so that they can serve as role models for students. The same way, they point out that not only do ESL teachers need to be highly knowledgeable about the content they are teaching, the English language, they also must be able to apply theories and research on the process of acquiring English in order to support ELLs as these students learn academic English and content simultaneously.”* (p. 78)

Furthermore, Fenner and Kuhlman (2012, p. 83) explain that *“if teachers do not have knowledge of language structure, then they cannot teach ELLs<sup>ii</sup> academic English.”* If a significant number of English language teachers are not knowledgeable in the area of language structure, they need to be oriented regarding the basic concepts of phonology, morphology, semantics and discourse. Similarly, Darling-Hammond 1998 (as cited in Howard, Sugarman, Christian, Lindholm and Rogers, 2007) emphasises that:

*“Teachers in language education programme like those in mainstream classrooms, should possess high levels of knowledge relating to the subject matter, curriculum and technology, instructional strategies, and assessment: they must also have the ability to reflect on their own teaching.”* (p.18)

Owing to the relevance of English language teaching in Mozambique, the issue of subject matter has also been discussed by famous and renowned English language scholars all over the world. Richards (2003) states that *“subject matter knowledge refers to what second language teachers need to know about their subjects - the specialised concepts, theories, and disciplinary knowledge that constitutes the theoretical basis for the field of second language teaching”* (p. 8). Thus, appropriate subject matter for second language teachers constitutes phonetics and phonology, English syntax, second language acquisition, discourse analysis analysis of TESOL methods, knowledge of sociolinguistics, and testing and evaluating.

The items presented in the previous paragraph are part of necessary knowledge acquisition and are really paramount to the English language teacher trainee's background. English language teacher trainees attend the course as their initial training with the purpose of learning how to teach English in secondary schools. Furthermore, for

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<sup>ii</sup> ELLs stands for English Language Learners.

the sake of revamping the English language teachers' background in the English language, it would be ideal to deepen the contents of curriculum and syllabus design and Sociolinguistics as disciplines or subjects in their teaching language course; at this time, the trainees are prepared to discuss such content and the content will, eventually, translate into practice in classrooms.

### 3.2 Skills for Language and English Language Teaching

Whoever is trained in a specific field must be equipped with abilities to perform positively in that specific area, which justifies the reason for the training. For Malderez & Bodóczy (2004):

*“When you ask any group of people to brainstorm the qualities of the ‘good teacher’ there will be categories relating to ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’, but invariably, the biggest group of factors can be found under a category one can label ‘person qualities’.” (p. 12)*

My interest in developing this section is to focus attention on what English language teacher trainees in Mozambique should have by the end of the programme that is skills which encompass the following: oral and teaching skills, ability to speak the English language fluently and accurately, ability to interact with different educationists, ability to interact with foreigners and other English language professionals, and, above all, ability to teach English successfully in secondary schools and universities. Hornby (1995) defines skill as *“the ability to do something well ... in order to acquire a skill; there has to be an initial desire to achieve proficiency”* (p. 1109). Skills require practice, and this takes time. In the English language, there are two major categories of skills: receptive skills and productive ones. The receptive skills are listening and reading, whereas the productive skills are speaking and writing. Each of these categories is important and should be mastered by English language teacher trainees either for communication reasons or for teaching reasons. Delahunty and Garvey (2010) hold the view that:

*“Learning to read and write is partly a matter of linguistic development, that is, the growth in a student’s ability to communicate appropriately in an increasingly broad range of circumstances. Teachers who concern themselves with the linguistic development of their students typically view their role as twofold: (a) to promote their students’ ability to speak, read, and write in their disciplines, and (b) to develop their students’ ability to write in standard English, the variety of English generally expected in formal communication in various disciplines.” (p. 11)*

Similarly, for teaching reasons, English language teacher trainees, as future professionals, need to learn and know how to translate these skills when they teach or deliver lessons in the classroom. The stages of a reading and listening lesson differ significantly from those of a speaking and writing one. Concerning the reading practice, Kern (2000) explains that:

*“The goal of reading a foreign language text is not to achieve a ‘native like’, fully informed culturally-appropriate interpretation. What is important for learners to understand, however, is how the interpretations they do come up with are influenced by their beliefs, attitudes, values and experiences—in other words, by their ‘world’ as constituted and constructed by cultural model.” (p. 314)*

While listening and reading often require lead-in, pre-reading/listening, while-reading/listening, post-reading/listening and follow-up exercises, speaking lessons may not need such sequencing. Obviously, when thinking about the stages, the presentation or introduction stage, as well as the review stage, can be considered as the first stage of the speaking lesson. The stages that follow can be practised, and in them, one may have controlled and or free writing, or one of the four main skills to be practised during the lesson as a stage, and finish with a follow-up, production or consolidation stage. The other issue of paramount importance is the diverse application and well-contextualised teachers’, such as: motivator, engager, monitor, resource, instructor, feedback provider, supervisor, helper, guider and prompter, plus positive and rapport and classroom atmosphere.

A global study of primary English teachers’ qualifications, training and career development conducted by Emery (2012) from the University of Essex tried to find out what makes a good primary English language teacher, and the largest number of participants identified *good English language skills* as most important. Other qualities deemed important were teaching experience, teaching knowledge, a kind, and understanding personality. Thus, the teacher in class should be creative in organising groups, pairs or when working as a whole class, they should ensure that everyone participates or at least says something during a lesson or discussion. Overall, professional English language teachers need to learn and know that the teacher’s personality, adaptability, flexibility, rapport with learners or students and different teacher roles contribute positively to the learning process and describe positive teacher’s skills in and outside the classroom.

### **3.3 Competences for English Language Teaching**

As far as I am concerned, competence is notable only when one has strong skills that can be applied in different contexts of work or a lesson. According to Tomlinson (1995) *“competence or skill signifies a more or less consistent ability to realise particular sorts of purposes to achieve desired outcomes”* (p. 181). The concept of competence, explained by Westera 2001 (as cited in Tomlinson, 1995, p. 181) is strongly associated with the ability to master complex situations, and it goes beyond the levels of knowledge and skills to include an explanation of how knowledge and skills are applied in an effective way. Likewise, Passos (2009) remarks that:

*“In a much broader sense, competence is a highly valued quality that accounts for the effective use of knowledge and skills in specific and concrete contexts. The mastery of*

*relevant knowledge and skills alone is no guarantee of successful performance in complex environments.” (p. 41)*

Thus, individuals should be able to utilise their available knowledge and skills in such a way that efficient and effective behaviour occurs, which requires special “abilities” that take into account characteristics of a specific context (Westera, 2001). Carter and Nunan (2002), based on their personal experiences, have a different view regarding English language teachers entering Teacher Training Colleges for the first time. They observe that:

*“It is clear that at different stages in their careers, teachers have different professional interests and concerns, novice teachers (defined as those with less than three years classroom experience) tend to be concerned with carrying out their images of teaching by managing the classroom and controlling students.” (p. 79)*

In general, competence is regarded when looking at the two first concepts within the conceptual framework, namely knowledge and skills. These two concepts alone cannot bring positive results; teachers also need to be equipped with positive attitudes accounting for their professionalism, which demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the learners’ social context, background, and reality.

### **3.4 Quality of School Infrastructure**

The National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) in India and Commonwealth of Learning in Canada (COL)<sup>iii</sup> Document (2007) explains that facilities such as the library are the actual learning locations and so it is essential that they have adequate volumes in terms of books, journals, other learning materials and facilities for technology aided learning which enable students to acquire information, knowledge and skills required for their study. It must be concluded that infrastructure is a factor that affects the teaching and learning process in schools, training colleges, and universities. Infrastructure does not simply mean the physical buildings; they include all that we can find inside such buildings. Well-equipped schools or colleges can contribute significantly to the quality of the students or trainees. Colleges need to have classrooms that can accommodate a reasonable number of students, obviously not more than 30 students per class. The desks should be rowed at a distance so that each teacher trainee may feel comfortable. Thus, it is crucial that the English language teacher training programme at the colleges have English dictionaries, grammar books, plays, a computer room with access to the internet. Good professional English language teachers must necessarily be concerned with the organisation of the classroom and maintenance of an enjoyable classroom atmosphere.

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<sup>iii</sup> NAAC is an acronym from India which stands for National Assessment and Accreditation Council. Whereas COL stands for: Commonwealth of Learning in Canada.

### 3.5 Quality of Teacher Training Curriculum and Contents

The quality of the curriculum is vital for the teaching and learning process. One way to create expectations concerning the quality of the English language teachers is to have a curriculum and content that help the training process reach the teacher training objectives. Eventually, as it has been argued, the context in which education programmes take place are complex and unique, consisting of a variety of factors, including: the sponsors, the teacher, the availability of the resources, the structure of the programme, the number of training courses along the semester and the incentives for teacher participation (James, 2001, p. 10). Thus, the number of subjects in the curriculum, the training period, the content of each and every subject, the teacher trainers assigned to teach in the training colleges, the target language used in the subjects, the training management, and a valid and reliable entrance examination play a significant role for the quality of teacher training curriculum.

The quality of the curriculum and its contents might contribute successfully if they are well structured. It is, therefore, essential for English language teachers to follow the contents provided in the curriculum and also look at the students' difficulties so that by the end of the programme, the teacher trainees master not only the content which is contained in the curriculum but also other aspects which do not appear in the curriculum but are relevant for their knowledge, skills and competences.

### 3.6 Teacher Trainers' Competence and Performance

A teacher trainer's competence and performance are essential for the development of skills and praxis. Incompetent teacher trainers and those without good performance cannot engage teacher trainees critically in the development of communicative and teaching competences, mainly as a in the teaching of English as a foreign language. According to Calabrese and Dawes (2008, p. 39):

*"The term 'performance' in the (Performance and Language Integrated Syllabus) we have coined, acquires a twofold meaning: one referring to the trainees' learning aim to perform the foreign language according to the 'can do' statements in a range of communicative situations, the other one referring to their teaching 'performances' as future language teachers to young learners."* (p. 39)

English language teachers must be creative, flexible, and dynamic in attending to the teacher trainees' sociolinguistic needs, teaching abilities, language competences, and professional attitudes towards English language teaching. If English language teacher trainers are not committed to their work, if they lack ability to train teachers' and if they do not have experience in teaching, they may not help their future English language teachers. In the training process, competence is measured by the performance of the people involved, such as teacher trainers and trainees.

Preparing English language teacher trainees through initial training becomes very demanding to teacher trainers if the trainees lack relevant abilities, display content-related weaknesses, or have many language problems. As emphasised by Malderez &

Bodóczyk (2004, p. 15), *“initially, many student-teachers are not equipped with the ability to draw on all levels of the iceberg in order to construct a personal understanding of teaching”*. Indeed, this may be due to personality factors affecting the person or due to the majority fearing about the course. Introversion and inhibition are some of the personality factors that affect individuals in learning or working actively. People with such characteristics tend to be passive, and sometimes too passive, to avoid committing mistakes or errors.

#### 4. Final Remarks

Generally, English language teacher trainees get into training colleges and universities without professional competences. The induction to the professional competences occurs within the training institutions. Thus, completing an English language teacher training programme successfully implies doubled efforts by teacher trainees' commitment, and teacher trainers' clear efforts to help the trainees reach their goals, that is, professional and trained English language teachers. Malderez & Bodóczyk (2004, p.16) explain that *“in the teacher education institution, trainers tend to teach theory and explore theories, linking them with their students' own experiences and beliefs. The focus is on knowing about teaching.”* According to Richards (2011):

*“Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices but one with a self-critical view of his or her own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role.”* (p. 29)

It is important to underline that teacher trainees and English language students, in general, cannot become successful and professional English language teachers and speakers unless all subjects and contents delivered to them during the training process are presented in English so that knowledge is enhanced in practice. Thus, a clear benchmarking and English language teacher training framework can help the teacher trainees to perform professionally and competently during and when they start teaching in the schools and become professionals not only in Mozambique but in countries where English is learnt as a foreign language. A number of issues have been discussed in this paper for the effective fulfilment of the English language teacher profession, which include knowledge of English, teaching methodology, literature and linguistics; skills for language teaching, English language teaching competences, positive attitudes and aptitude, very good or excellent school infrastructure and teacher trainers' competence and performance in the classroom. In addition, professional, creative and adaptable English language teacher trainers can greatly help foster their quality of teacher training, thereby creating competent English speakers and language teachers. Therefore, the English language students and teacher trainees have an understanding of what teaching is through the process of socialisation within an educational community, which comprises a classroom setting, school environment, and educational system.



### Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### About the Author

Gregório Jorge Gonçalves is an English Language Lecturer in the English Division at the Department of Education at Universidade Licungo. He is also the Head of Department of Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation in the same university in Mozambique. He holds Bachelor and Honours in English Language Teaching, a Master in Management and Educational Administration and PhD in English Language Education. His main research interests focus on English language learning and teaching, linguistics, quality management applied to educational institutions, and teacher professionalism. He has participated in several international and national conferences. He has also published papers related to English language learning and teaching, linguistics with regards to communicative competence, and educational processes.

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