Competency-Based Education in Action: A Benchmark Analysis of Algerian Secondary School English Curriculum in Alignment with Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 Level Standards

التدريس بالكفاءات: مقارنة مرجعية لمنهاج اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية الجزائرية مع الإطار الأوروبي المرجعي مستوى ب1

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Abstract: As English language proficiency becomes increasingly important in the global context, understanding how national curricula correspond to internationally recognised standards is crucial. Through a comprehensive comparative study, this research investigates the congruence of the Algerian Curriculum of English Language (ACEL) with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 level standards, identifying areas of convergence and divergence. The study employs a qualitative methodology including a benchmark analysis of the two curricula documents. Findings revealed that ACEL follows a top-down approach, neglecting needs analysis as the main orienting element to the whole process of designing. Besides, the inclusion of interdisciplinary competence requires more elaborate contextual studies on the part of language researchers and practitioners. Moreover, listening and speaking as core skills in developing communicative competence are radically excluded from ACEL summative assessment. Consequently, some recommendations in this paper offered valuable insights for curriculum designers, policymakers, and language researchers to include these two skills in proficiency exams and to integrate mediation and plurilingual competences to enrich the language practices inside the classroom and in the real world in order to ensure greater alignment with global language proficiency standards.

Keywords: Algerian secondary school curriculum; benchmark analysis; Competency- Based Approach (CBA); Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR); English as a foreign language (EFL); mediation

ملخص: مع تزايد أهمية إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية في السياق العالمي أصبح فهم كيفية توافق المناهج الوطنية مع المعايير المعترف بها دوليًا أمر بالغ الأهمية. و من خلال دراسة مقارنة شاملة، يبحث هذا البحث في مدى تطابق المنهاج الجزائري للغة الإنجليزية (ACEL) مع معايير المستوى B1 للإطار الأوروبي المرجعي المشترك (CEFR) ، وتحديد مجالات التقارب والاختلاف. تستخدم الدراسة منهجية نوعية تتضمن تحليلًا معياريًا لوثيقتي المنهجين. كشفت النتائج أن منهاج ACEL يتبنى مقاربة من أعلى إلى أسفل متجاهلا تحليل الاحتياجات كعنصر توجيهي رئيسي لعملية التصميم بأكملها. إلى جانب ذلك، يتطلب إدراج الكفاءات البينية دراسات سياقية أكثر تفصيلاً من جانب الباحثين والممارسين اللغويين. علاوة على ذلك، يتم استبعاد الاستماع والتحدث كمهارات أساسية في تطوير الكفاءة التواصلية بشكل جذري من التقييم النهائي لـ ACEL ونتيجة لذلك، قدمت بعض التوصيات في هذه الورقة رؤى قيّمة لمصممي المناهج وصانعي السياسات وباحثي اللغة لإدراج هاتين المهارتين في امتحانات الكفاءة ودمج الوساطة والكفاءات متعددة اللغات لإثراء الممارسات اللغوية داخل الفصل الدراسي وفي الحياة الواقعية من أجل ضمان قد أكبر من التوافق مع معايير الكفاءة اللغوية العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنهاج الجزائري للمدارس الثانوية ؛ الإطار المرجعي الأوروبي المشترك للغات CEFR ؛ التحليل المرجعي المقارن ؛ المقاربة بالكفاءاتCBA ;الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبيةEFL; الوساطة.

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1-Introduction

English as an international language is widely required for varied purposes, especially for work and travel. Thus, the Algerian Curriculum of English Language (ACEL) at high schools attempts to meet the international standards in enhancing learners' competencies to communicate independently in English for a purpose. One of the most worldwide recognizable language tests is that of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and specifically level B1, which reflects an intermediate proficiency in English. CEFR provides a set of descriptors that can be used to align language curricula with international standards. Thus, comparing the CEFR level B1 with ACEL, which both target to persuade the learner to be independent in using English, can serve as a benchmark for evaluating the ACEL.

On the one hand, this idea is an outcome of the frequent enquiries of the Algerian learners at high schools about what is required to achieve level B1 in English as an international standard, despite the fact that the ACEL have specified the same level. Besides, after having some discussions with teachers at several Algerian universities in some meetings and conferences, it was confirmed that the majority of the Baccalaureate (BAC) passed learners do not meet the CEFR B1 level standards for English proficiency as far as their test scores are concerned.

On the other hand, some studies tackled the topic of the curricula at both middle and secondary levels and highlighted the drawbacks of their diverse aspects and even recommended revising them (Djerouane & Bensafi, 2022; Slimani, 2016). Another study suggested involving teachers in this revision as a bottom-up process because the curricula and syllabi did not meet their expectations (Bader, 2017; Bellour, 2017; Gherzouli, 2016). What is more, a thorough study revealed that the curricula failed to identify the objectives that reflect the real-life of the learner, especially the exit profile (Boukhentache, 2021). However, no Algerian study has thoroughly compared the ACEL with the CEFR to identify areas for improvement.

Unlike Algeria, many Asian countries have a spate of interest in approaching this topic for the sake of aligning their curricula with the international standards such as: China, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan (Bakar, 2020). In Japan, for instance, a modified version of CEFR called CEFR-J was developed to enhance learning, teaching, and assessment of English (Little & Figueras, 2022). In Malaysia, the implementation of the CEFR began at the primary and secondary levels in 2017 and was generalised at the higher education level (Bakar, 2020). Besides, although Turkish national curricula were influenced by the CEFR, aligning them with the CEFR, even in Europe, proved to be a demanding process that requires complementary actions by various stakeholders reflecting diverse aspects (Fişne et al., 2018; Hazar, 2021). CEFR descriptors play a significant role even beyond Europe in the improvement of language curricula in general.

To this end, the researchers came up with the idea of benchmarking the ACEL with CEFR in order to discover and compare their elements and how they are planned to be realised in classrooms. The main purpose of this study is to discover the areas of improvement in the ACEL to meet the international standards and eventually assist learners to pursue their studies comfortably, wherever and in whatever circumstances and situations. This paper explores in the first section, the concepts frequently used in CEFR, namely plurilingualism, mediation, and an action-oriented approach. Besides, it traces back the reforms that have taken place in the Algerian educational system and how the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) was implemented. In the second section, the researchers highlight the procedure of benchmarking and present the data collected from both CEFR and ACEL using varied types of infographics and tables. In the discussion section, the relationships and comparisons are established between the elements of their curricula in order to have an overall conclusion and tail the paper with a couple of recommendations. Most of the references used in this paper are available on the CEFR and on the Algerian Ministry of Education sites, which all include reliable information as secondary data resources.

2- Literature Review

2.1- Curriculum Design

"There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system" (Machiavelli, 1513 as cited in Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. XV). Similarly, designing a curriculum is a crucial phase in any educational system. Richards (2017) considers the curriculum as the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating language courses. Because of being a process, there lies the difficulty of its realization in education since the elements in this process are interrelated which multiplies the possibilities of success and at the same time failure according to the effectiveness of each in a whole. Richards (2017) shed light on the interaction of these elements in the curriculum development as it:

> Includes the processes that are used to determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program to address those needs, to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods, and materials, and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes." (p. 7)

Thus, these elements as stated above represent the product- based approach in curriculum design as named by Tyler (1949 as cited in Richards, 2017) and Taba (1962 as cited in Richards, 2017) "ends-means" design specifically the backward design starting from determining students' needs and ending by evaluating the whole teaching- learning process.

Product-based approach has another model called forward design. It implies the fixed order of certain stages in the curriculum development, as one decision of each phase leads to the upcoming decision. This model is used when the learner's main need for English is limited to the classroom, and teachers have limited English proficiency. This reflects national curriculum development mostly designed by others rather than teachers (Richards, 2017). However, backwards design is recommended in cases where students have diverse needs to be taken into consideration when designing a curriculum. This reflects the curriculum of private institutions, mostly prepared by skilled teachers. However, the forward and backwards designs may well work concurrently.

Curriculum as a process reflects "in-action" practices in the language classrooms and documents any emergent remarks. That is why it is sometimes named emergent curriculum**.** The latter is advocated by Bruner (1966 as cited in Richards, 2017) and explains that the curriculum design starts from identifying certain processes such as: reflection, critical thinking, decision making, cooperating with others, creativity in solving problems and so on. It is a learner-centred process that persuades the teachers to create their own curriculum. Unlike assessment of learning in the product-based approach, assessment in the process approach is for learning.

When designing a curriculum, two factors can influence the procedure: an internal factor and an external factor. The first is related to the language itself and how it is learned. The second is the practical outcomes that the stakeholders are looking for (Richards, 2017). Thus, to develop efficient curricula, it is required to respond to the external demands which administrators and planners focus on, mainly the practical side of outcomes. Besides, there must be a response to the internal demands which researchers focus on, specifically the means. However, teachers on their part focus on them both.

The curriculum can also take distinct forms. A national curriculum, for instance, includes all levels except the tertiary level. There is also an institutional curriculum designed by a team of experienced teachers at universities or institutions. And it can take the form of a general curriculum which is developed mainly by international bodies or by organisations such as the Council of Europe or the United Nations (Richards, 2017). The best example of this type is CEFR. Although it is not a fully developed curriculum, it is used worldwide as a reliable reference for curriculum planning and developing courses.

2.2- Background about CEFR

CEFR is created by the Council of Europe, which stands for the Common European Framework of Reference. As its name implies, it reflects the convention of 50 European countries to preserve their history and civilisation via a common framework as a reference (Council of Europe, 2020). CEFR for Languages learning, teaching, and assessment was developed in the mid-1990s (Piccardo, 2019) and launched in 2001 (Council of Europe, 2020). Thanks to CEFR, there is a common reference for the creation of language curricula, syllabi, textbooks, and examinations (Council of Europe, 2001). It is divided into nine chapters that all target the integration of the overall communicative competence, including communicative activities, linguistic and general competences, and communication strategies. These chapters also highlight the nature and role of assessment in the whole process of learning. Besides, it covers the cultural context in which a language is set. Most importantly, this framework's main purpose is to provide descriptors that determine the specific level of proficiency for learners (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2019). The CEFR framework highlighted certain terms like: plurilingualism, mediation, and an action-oriented approach.

2.2.1- Plurilingualism

Multilingualism and plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2022) are often misleadingly used interchangeably. Both reflect language diversity. However, the first represents diversity as part of a country's culture in schools and society. The second represents diversity and the presence of multiple languages as part of an individual repertoire (Council of Europe, 2001). Plurilingualism has been discussed widely over the last decade in conferences and literature. It was first referred to as languaging and later developed to plurilanguaging to refer to " A dynamic, never-ending process to make meaning using different linguistic and semiotic resources" (Piccardo, 2022). Plurilingualism revolutionised the concept of cherishing one's diverse linguistic repertoire when introduced in the first CEFR draft (Piccardo et al., 2019). It is an outcome of the widely recognised cultural and linguistic diversity in the era of globalization (Council of Europe, 2020; Piccardo, 2019). It is theoretically based on socioconstructivism and socioculturalism in the sense that they both consider the individual as the centre of the teaching learning process (Piccardo, 2022). Plurilingualism can be attained through mediating meaning in order to feed language use and orient its activity (Council of Europe, 2001).

2.2.2- Mediation

One of the new concepts introduced in CEFR is the notion of mediation. Piccardo (2022) likens it to a prism which turns the invisible visible. It is believed that mediating meaning is firstly practised by society at early stages of acquiring a language, and then comes the inner processes of reflection. Mediation can be the inner speech while attempting to understand something, it can also be a group discussion assisting one another to figure something out, or even through scaffolding. This activity relies on the use of multiple languages the individual has even those which are not formally acknowledged, to communicate meaning within the same language or across modalities, such as from spoken to signed one (Council of Europe, 2001). The ++CEFR revised version extends the notion of mediation and includes extra descriptors to target it through three categories: mediating a text, concepts, or communication (Piccardo, 2022). Mediation permits learners to transform their plurilingual repertoire into action through the implementation of the Action-oriented Approach (AoA) (Council of Europe, 2020).

2.2.3- Action-Oriented Approach

The CEFR framework attempts to move from focusing on knowledge in a linear process to focusing on competence in a recursive process. AoA borrowed some aspects from various learning theories and mostly the socioconstructivism and socioculturalism (Piccardo, 2022; Piccardo & North, 2019; Piccardo et al., 2019). Each theory affected this approach in one way or another. Firstly, behaviourism, for instance, influenced AoA at its low level of

proficiency, like in grammar and pronunciation, as they mostly depend on repetition and controlled practice. Secondly, the cognitive perspective, highlighting the thinking processes behind the visible behaviour has left its impact on the CEFR framework, but in a small portion, especially the linguistic competence introduced by Chomsky and Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives (Piccardo & North, 2019). Nevertheless, Piaget, the father of constructivism, has shed light on the importance of the inner readiness for learning.

However, all these scholars neglected to some extent the crucial role the context plays in scaffolding learning. To this end, CEFR was highly interested in the works of Michael Halliday, Austin and Seale, Dell Hymes, and Lev Vygotsky (Piccardo & North, 2019). Haliday's thoughts about the varied uses of language: interpersonal, informational, and logical, affected the way the communicative activities in CEFR are organised. Austin and Seale's speech act theory sheds light on viewing language as a set of situated cognitions nurtured through communication. Besides considering the language diversity, Dell Hymes stressed the central role of cultural diversity in enriching communication and learning as well. Thanks to Austin and Hymes, the classroom discourse has been polished and revised, namely, the interaction between the teacher and learners and the learners themselves. The AoA approached this aspect especially in varied collaborative communicative tasks. Although Piaget acknowledged the role of society, Vygotsky considered the social dimension as a prominent factor to construct knowledge: "The true development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual" (Vygotsky, 1986, as cited in Piccardo & North, 2019, p. 74). As a result, the need for other people to learn in this respect introduced the concept of mediation (Council of Europe, 2001). The AoA, according to CEFR, is like an umbrella term embracing these diverse learning theories, each with a certain portion.

2.3- Background about Algerian Curricula at High School

The educational system in Algeria is likely to be similar to that in many other countries, where learners start from preparatory schools and basic levels, including primary and middle schools, moving to secondary or vocational schools and eventually passing to higher education after getting their Baccalaureate certificate (BAC) (MERIC-Net, 2019). In 1962, there were only three universities in Algeria: Algiers, Constantine, and Oran, with fewer than 2,000 students. It was only in the 1970s, after the establishment of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, that the number of universities increased to 107, and consequently, the number of students reached 1.5 million in 2015 (MERIC-Net, 2019). Algeria considers educating its young people a priority (UNICEF, 2014).

English is compulsory in both basic and secondary education. It is recently competing with French to be the first foreign language in Algeria, especially after the recent reforms in education. The Ministry of Education has depended on the Competency-Based Approach in teaching since the reforms of 2002, mainly in middle schools (Boukhentache, 2020) and in 2005 in high schools (Riche et al., 2005). English was officially included in the primary curricula at level three in 2022. The following year, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research intends to integrate English in all universities as the primary language of education after Arabic. This obliged most Algerian university teachers to join intensive English summer courses in 2023 to prepare them to switch smoothly to delivering courses in English.

As mentioned earlier, one of the highest priorities in Algeria is to educate the young generation and prepare them for the new phase, which entails openness to international cultures and acquaintance with the recent literature in all fields of study. Thus, English is the main tool to realise these aims. Students should be aware of the level of English they are attempting to achieve at each stage, mainly the secondary phase and the transition from general education to majoring in any speciality.

3- Method and Tools

3.1- Research Questions

This paper attempts to answer threefold questions. The first one is about what elements are included in the CEFR. The second one is about what elements are included in English curricula at Algerian high schools. The last one is how to align the ACEL with CEFR through finding some areas of improvement. These three questions are interrelated and guide the research as landmarks through its main sections for the sake of answering them.

3.2- Research Design

The questions of this study aspire for a detailed descriptive summary of the content of each curriculum and to compare them thoroughly. This resembles a qualitative research method based on document exploration, reflecting an interpretive worldview, believing that there is more than one reality and context that determines the results of research (Adu, 2019).

3.3- Sample

Unlike sampling in statistical studies, sampling in Content Analysis (CA) research deals with units of texts, which are uncountable interrelated chunks and unequally informative (Krippendorff, 2004). For this reason, sampling in this case can follow the same procedure, but take certain criteria into consideration. Whatever these criteria are, the research questions determine them in the first place. Consequently, the research questions attempt to delve into the subtle details of both the ACEL and CEFR curriculum B1 level.

To answer the first question, we need a census sample: "A body of texts that includes all of its kind" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 120). This is because we need to cover all three English curricula (National Commission of Programs, 2005a; National Commission of Programs, 2005b; National Commission of Programs, 2006; National Commission of Programs, 2011) implemented at Algerian high schools from year one to year three and even the revised edition of year three. Another two official documents are included because they are part of the curricula and thoroughly explain two aspects: the approach implemented (Riche et al., 2005) and summative assessment (*English Language BAC Exam Construction Guide*, 2017). This represents the whole population, and we are unlikely to follow any kind of sampling. Because all items are covered, the census inquiry is of great accuracy and reliability (Kothari, 2004). However, concerning the second question, specific information related to the CEFR curriculum level B1 is required. Thus, the appropriate sampling in this case is purposive. The population is the CEFR curriculum first and updated editions (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020), and the purposive sample is all the texts in this curriculum related to the B1 level.

3.4- Content Analysis

To examine and interpret the recorded materials chosen as samples to conclude, Content Analysis (CA) is required (Ary et al., 2014; Crosley, 2021). CA is an approach where "many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories" (Weber as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 475). Thus, the main goal is to reduce the text into manageable categories. In our case, this study depends on relational analysis as one category of CA that takes a more holistic approach and focuses on the relationships between the different concepts and how they are connected.

3.5- Benchmark Analysis

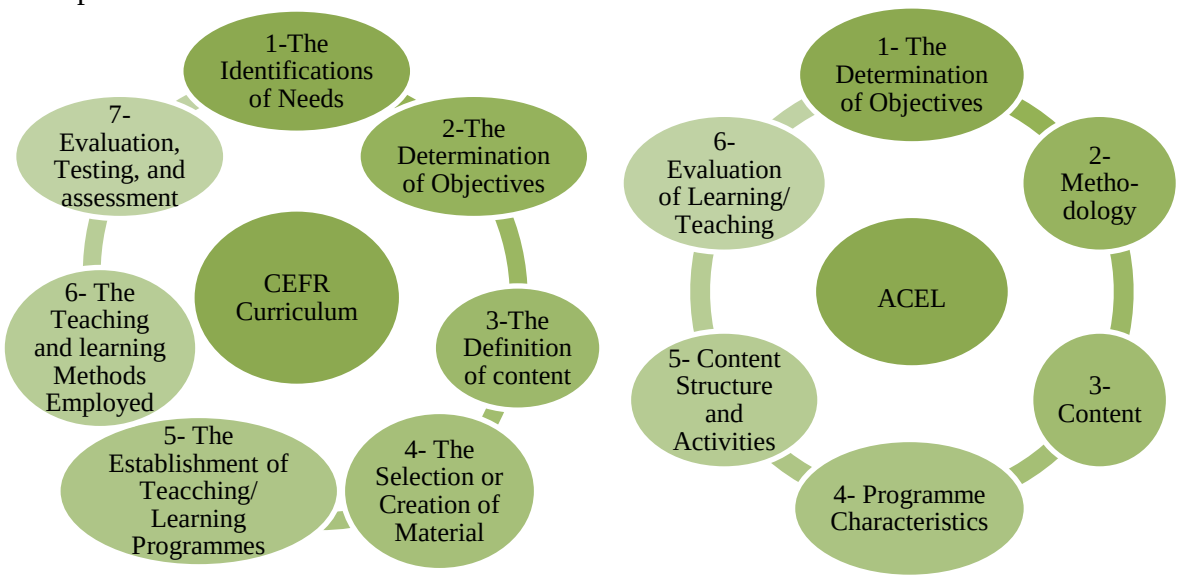
Benchmark analysis is used in marketing and business as a way to compare the data of an organisation to that of its competitors based on previously specified metrics. There are four main types of benchmark analysis, namely: strategic, process, performance, and internal benchmarking. The first aims to develop effective strategies to improve an organisation and drive it to be more competitive. The second aims to discover areas of improvement as the processes of both parties are compared. This type is the one implemented in this study, as the overall aim is to get a deeper understanding of both curricula and discover areas of improvement for ACEL. The third is to learn about the competitor's performance while conducting the analysis. The last one is intended to compare an organisation with its historical data (Business Benefits Group, 2023). The process of benchmarking goes through five stages:

planning, collecting information, data analysis, taking actions, and monitoring the results. In this study, we can accomplish just the first three stages, and the benchmark analysis is provided at the end of each element under study. The last two stages can be included in the recommendations section.

4- Results

4.1- Curricula Elements of both CEFR and ACEL

The illustration displays the varied components of both CEFR and ACEL. Both curricula end with the evaluation procedure as a final phase in the designing process. Besides, they agreed on determining objectives at early stages. However, they differ in two aspects. The first is the inclusion of a needs analysis in CEFR (as a general curriculum), which is absent in ACEL (as a national curriculum, see Appendix). CEFR follows the backwards design (bottom-up), where needs analysis comes first so as to personalise and prioritise learning. In ACEL, the forward design (top-down) is followed, which starts with predefined objectives and content that is uniform for all learners. The second aspect is the order of their components. Unlike the rigid design of ACEL, the nature of CEFR as a flexible and learner-centred framework reflects the order of its components and how students' needs orient the whole process.



The source: Summarized from CEFR and ACEL

Figure (1): Comparing CEFR with ACEL

4.2- The Determination of Objectives

4.2.1- CEFR Objectives

Table (1): List of CEFR Objectives

Finalities
•Aspires for Europe of autonomous and open- minded multilingual citizens. •Provides common reference levels from A1 to C2 to facilitate communication and improve the quality of teaching- learning process. •A shift from a linear syllabuses towards syllabuses based on needs analysis.
Aims
•Promotes and facilitates co-operation among educational institutions in different countries. •Promotes methods of modern language teaching . •As our study is based on the Independent User B1 level (Threshold), CEFR helps to describe the level of proficiency of a learner to provide a mutual recognition of language certificates. It introduced six levels and each level may have a subsequent level (i.e. B1 and B+ for instance). •persuades learners to acquire varied European languages to promote plurilingualism. •covers the diverse aspects of students' personality such as: personal needs, culture exchange, and identity preservation. •helps all the stakeholders to coordinate their efforts for the overall aims.
Objectives
• Can interpret the overall messages of written or spoken input on common matters related to school, work, and others • Can interact successfully in diverse situations while travelling. • Can produce a coherent text about personal interests. •Can describe past experiences and future prospects and argue and explain their opinions and plans.

The Source: Summarised from CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020)

4.2.1- ACEL Objectives

These objectives are summarised from ACEL (National Commission of Programs, 2005a; National Commission of Programs, 2011; National Commission of Programs, 2006; National Commission of Programs, 2011)

Table (2): List of ACEL Objectives

Finalities
•Teaching English in Algeria should aspire to develop not only learners' linguistic or communicative competences, but equally other transverse competences namely: methodological, technological, cultural, and social ones . •highlights certain traits mainly: critical and analytical thinking, attachment to the national values, self- esteem and respecting others, tolerance and openness to the world. •consolidates, deepens and develops the student's knows, knows-how-to-do, knows- how-to- be.
Aims
• Linguistic and communicative aim: provide learners with a linguistic basis (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, mastery of oral and written codes) in order to facilitate communication either for academic or professional purposes. •Methodological and technological aims: activate learners' higher order thinking through relevant activities. They prepare learners for real life through tackling orally or in a written way varied topics: scientific, economic, technical, or literary. Finally, they encourage the learners to use technological tools to search for information either in or outside the class. •Socio- cultural and socio- professional aims: promote interdisciplinarity by addressing themes studied in other school disciplines. They contribute to learners' open- mindedness by exposing them to various cultural contexts.
Objectives
• The Exit Profile: the Final Objective of Integration (FOI) is: In a communicative situation, and on the basis of oral or written support, the student must produce a written message around 20 lines, in a chosen type of written discourse (descriptive, narrative, argumentative, expository, prescriptive) correctly and legibly.

The source: Summarised from ACEL (National Commission of Programs, 2011)

CEFR and ACEL set a list of varied general and specific objectives as a planning phase. The finalities and aims reflect the general intentions of curriculum designers. Both CEFR and ACEL aim at developing more open-minded personalities tolerant of diverse cultures. While CEFR prioritises multilingualism to use language effectively across diverse contexts in Europe, ACEL is more relevant to the local context as it integrates national values and prioritises cultural identity. CEFR is more flexible and tailored according to students' needs. It is feasible and adaptable in the way it outlines scalable progression levels (A1 to C2) for accurate measurable outcomes, which are embedded in the broader scope of ACEL finalities. ACEL stated holistic aims integrating not only linguistic and communicative competences but also methodological and socio-cultural ones. It highlights the importance of soft skills such as critical thinking and interdisciplinary competence. Concerning the specific objectives of both curricula, CEFR targets the four language skills, namely: listening, reading, speaking, and writing across various contexts. Though ACEL aims for holistic growth of learners targeting broader aspects irrelevant to linguistic and communicative competences, its objective as an exit profile is more limited in scope compared to the CEFR, as it emphasises written production over spoken interaction. This makes it less practical in real-world applications compared to CEFR.

4.3- Methodology

4.3.1- The Approaches Adopted for CEFR and ACEL

For the CEFR to be comprehensive, transparent, and coherent, it must relate to a theory that views the learner as a social agent. This latter means that learners are: "members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action" (Council of Europe, 2001). This means that this social agent develops a set of competences, both general competences and communicative language competences, to engage in certain language activities related to specific domains. It is an Action-Oriented Approach. It emphasises the importance of social contexts in giving meaning to language activities and, more specifically, to acts of speech. Therefore, this approach takes into consideration the cognitive, emotional, and volitional resources. Two concepts are integrated through AoA: plurilingualism and mediation, as explained in the first part of this paper. They both promote the use of various languages alongside the target one as a way to communicate and assist others to mingle in a linguistically diverse context. Plurilingualism reflects language diversity in the individual repertoire (Council of Europe, 2001) and how these varied available linguistic resources interact effectively to convey meaning (Piccardo, 2022). It is theoretically based on socio-constructivism and socio-culturalism, as both advocate a learner-centred orientation. It can be achieved through mediating meaning, which is believed to be a crucial activity at the early stages of acquiring a new language. Mediation reflects the plurilingualism of an individual and assists in conveying meaning across languages or even across modalities (e.g. sign language).

On the other hand, ACEL adopted the Competency-Based Approach (CBA). A new conceptual and methodological vision of practice in class is required (National Commission of Programs, 2005b; National Commission of Programs, 2006)**,** following CBA, which integrates students' achievements. The English curricula at high school are based on the pedagogy of integration, which in turn is based on discovery, observation, application, reformulation, and control. This pedagogy is characterised by the following:

a- It is action-oriented: orients language learners to acquire certain competences embedded in functions and skills to be prepared for real-life situations.
b- It is a problem-solving approach: putting learners in problem situations to test their capacity to overcome certain obstacles and to persuade them to word their thinking in English.
c- It is a social constructivist: highlighting the effectiveness and creativity of social interaction in acquiring a foreign language and using it to communicate.

It is a cognitive approach: according to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, all educational objectives can be classified according to: cognitive domain, affective domain, and psychomotor domain. (Riche et al., 2005)

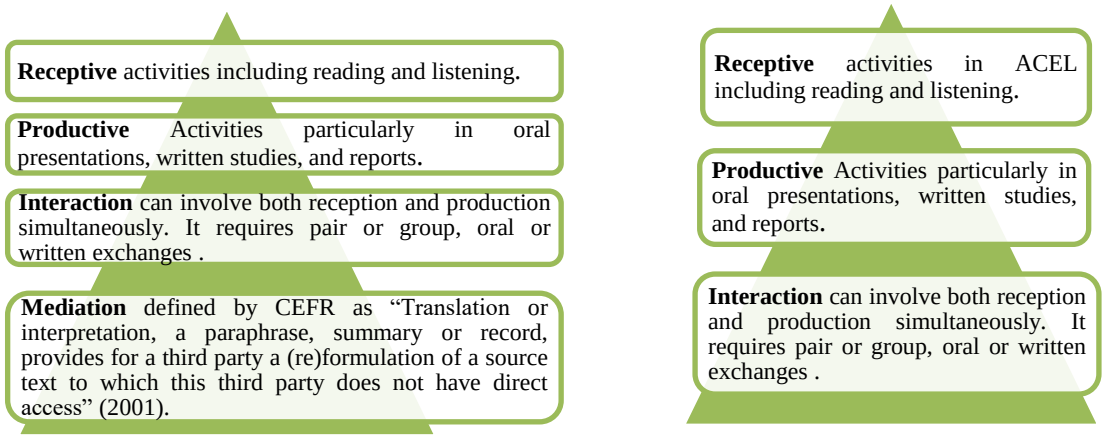
Action-Oriented Approach and Competency-Based Approach converge and diverge in varied aspects. Both are learner-centred approaches which emphasise active participation in practical, real-world situations such as solving problems and interacting socially in learning and assessment. They embrace the integration pedagogy principles in the way they both integrate various competences into a cohesive framework. Though AoA is part of CBA, it is narrower in scope, focusing on communicative competence and language use for real-life interaction, like making a presentation or mediating between speakers. CBA aims to develop a range of transversal competences beyond language, including critical thinking and collaboration.

4.3.2- Competence Resources

4.3.2.1- Language Activities

Comparing CEFR and ACEL language activities, the inclusion of mediation in CEFR stands out. Mediation facilitates communication between two parties despite language or cultural barriers. This reflects the diverse linguistic context of Europe and how multilingual and pluricultural competences are of high priority in CEFR. On the other hand, ACEL focuses on essential communicative abilities but lacks the broader and more integrative skill of mediation.

Figure (2): Language activities: CEFR VS ACEL.



The source: Summarised from both CEFR and ACEL

4.3.2.2- Domains

As stated earlier, context is a significant element in AoA. Language activities are contextualised within domains. These domains reflect the diverse sectors of social life. CEFR classified them into four main categories: "the public domain, the personal domain, the educational domain and the occupational domain" (Council of Europe, 2001). In ACEL, these domains are less prioritised. Because there are two main streams at Algerian high schools, ACEL included two domains, one for the scientific context and the other for the literary one.

4.3.2.3- Competence

Table (3): Competence in CEFR and ACEL

		CEFR	ACEL
Knowledge/ Knows	General Competence	or declarative knowledge, which is the outcome of experience (empirical knowledge) and formal learning (academic knowledge).	Or language outcomes which are: syntax, vocabulary, phonology, oral conventions (pronunciation and intonation), writing conventions (punctuation, capitalisation, cohesion, and coherence), types of oral and written speech, genres, and themes (scientific, technical, economic, social, and so on)
Skills/ Know-		depend more on carrying out	1-Or strategy outcomes focusing on

how	a task in a relaxed way that manifests the mastery and self-confidence of the user of certain aspects of language.	varied functions such as: ask and answer questions, agree/ disagree, request clarification, translating, summarising, reformulation, make inferences, and others. 2-technological and computer skills are highlighted. ICT should be integrated into communicative activities to create an authentic context through using the web, the varied software, and digital portfolios.
Attitudes/ Know-how-to-be	Or existential competence, which is culture-related and reflects the learners' attitudes, personality traits, which are difficult to define but should be included in CEFR. For instance, these attitudes can be targeted to be acquired or modified.	Or intercultural/ social skills outcomes which reflect how the learner behaves in a learning situation, such as: pair and group work, turn-taking, sharing information, listening and learning from others, being flexible and tolerant, being trustworthy and avoiding plagiarism, and others.
The Ability to Learn	Or Know-how-to discover otherness, which is to integrate the three above-mentioned components of the general competence (as being classified by CEFR), namely: knows, know-how, and know-how-to-be. It is the ability to discover another culture, another language, or other people.	
Communicative Language Competence	cconsists of: -linguistic competence: which includes lexical, syntactical, and phonological knowledge and skills and the cognitive organisation, storage, and retrieval of this knowledge. - socio-linguistic competence: since the social conventions (the rules of politeness, classes of social groups, norms governing relationships, and so on) affect language use, learners should be aware of their influence. -pragmatic competence: governs the interactional exchanges and functional use of linguistic competence.	

The source: The data in the table are summarised from CEFR and ACEL

CEFR adopts a holistic approach to language learning. It sees competence as a combination of declarative knowledge, functional skills, existential attitudes, and lifelong learning strategies. It incorporates a wide range of competences, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. The key distinction criterion of CEFR includes mediation and learning-to- learn strategies, which are not as explicitly addressed in ACEL. The Algerian curriculum focuses more on concrete linguistic outcomes.

4.4- The Content and its Structure

4.4.1- CEFR

The 'Threshold Level' or B1 level is characterised by two features (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 34):

1. Interaction maintenance: learners can manage interactions in various contexts, including:

- Following the main points of extended discussions.
- Giving and seeking personal views in informal discussions.
- Expressing the main point clearly, though there may be pauses for grammatical and lexical planning.

- Using simple language flexibly to convey much of what they want.
- Maintaining conversations, though longer free production may show evident pauses and repair efforts.

2. Problem-Solving in Everyday Life: learners can handle everyday life situations, such as:

- Coping with less routine public transport issues.
- Managing travel arrangements or dealing with situations while travelling.
- Entering unprepared conversations on familiar topics and making complaints.
- Initiating new subjects in interviews but still being somewhat reliant on the interviewer.
- Asking for clarification or elaboration when needed. (p. 34)

At the strong 'Threshold Level' (B1+) which bridges B1 and B2 levels, learners are allowed to handle more precise communication and more complex interactions with increasing confidence.

CEFR organises themes based on the communicative needs of learners. However, these themes can be adapted to fit specific contexts such as personal, public, or even educational settings. The classification of content can be through themes, sub-themes, and specific notions.

Table (4): Themes, sub- themes, and specific notions in B1 standard

Themes	Sub- themes of area 4: free time and entertainment	Specific notions related to sub-theme 7: sports
• personal identification • house and home, environment • daily life • free time, entertainment • health and body care • education • shopping • food and drink • services • places • language • weather	• leisure • hobbies and interests • radio and TV • cinema, theatre, concert, etc. • exhibitions, museums, etc. • intellectual and artistic pursuits • sports • press	• locations: field, ground, stadium • institutions and organisations: sport, team, club • persons: player • objects: cards, ball • events: race, game • actions: to watch, to play (+name of sport), to race, to win, to lose, to draw

The source: from Threshold Level 1990 (as cited in Council of Europe, 2001, chapter 7)

The Council of Europe provides some useful materials related to CEFR for both teachers and learners to assist them in the teaching and learning process and assessment. These supports are extra descriptors, videos for performance, and assessment tasks. They are web resources and books (Council of Europe, 2020).

4.4.2- The ACEL

ACEL consists of three curricula, and each has a limited period of time and themes to be taught. The first has five themes to be taught in 104 hours for the literary stream and four of them in 84 hours for the scientific stream (Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 3). The second year has seven themes, six of them to be taught to the foreign languages stream in 130 hours. Five of them should be taught to the literary stream in 104 hours and four of them to the scientific stream in 78 hours (Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022b; National Commission of Programs, 2005). Finally, the third year has six themes. Only four are supposed to be taught for each stream in 78 hours for common streams and in 104 hours for

literary and foreign languages streams (Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022c; National Commission of Programs, 2006). Thus, the hours devoted to the three curricula are as follows: 338 hours for foreign languages, 312 hours for the literary stream, and 240 hours for the scientific stream. The table below shows how the themes are distributed according to the various streams. The white boxes are for common themes, the blue ones are for scientific streams, the grey ones are for literary streams, and the red ones are for the economy and management stream.

Table (5): Themes in ACEL

First Year	Second year	Third year
	Theme / Topic	
Intercultural Exchanges	Diversity/ Lifestyles	Exploring the Past
Famous People	Peace and Conflict resolution	Ethics in Business
Communication –The Press	Poverty and World resources	Advertising, Consumers and Safety
Environment, Pollution and The World of Animals	Technology and innovation	Astronomy and the Solar System
Innovation and Technology	Technology and the Arts	Education in the World
	Disasters and Safety	Feelings and Emotions
	Management and Efficiency	

The source: Summarised from the progressions of ACEL (Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022a; Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022b; Algerian Ministry of Education, 2022c)

The Ministry of Education provided three textbooks where these themes are included as units, which are divided into sequences, then into lessons. It also provided other resources, namely: an exam guide for teachers and accompanying documents for each textbook.

CEFR 'Threshold Level' tailors its content according to learners' needs, which makes it flexible and adaptable to various domains: personal, public, vocational, or educational. B1 level emphasises the importance of interaction and real-life problem-solving abilities, as the content CEFR provides reflects mainly personal and public domains. These latter are more immediate and daily-life related topics. However, ACEL included broader themes related to educational purposes tailored for either scientific or literary streams. These themes have been unchanged since the last update version in 2011, and most of them are time-consuming to be effectively approached.

4.5- Evolvement and Evaluation

Unlike assessment, evaluation is a broader process that covers the overall effectiveness of the curriculum, not only the individual student's learning. CEFR and ACEL consist of varied components, and the evaluation of their curricula requires analysing the effectiveness of those components, mainly the achievement of objectives and the appropriateness of the methods used. The following table compares how CEFR and ACEL evolved and evaluated their curricula and what alterations they made through internal and external comparison. The internal comparison is between the first and the updated versions, and the external is between CEFR and ACEL.

Table (6): The Evolvement and Evaluation of CEFR and ACEL

	CEFR		ACEL	
Editions	2001	2020	2005/2006	2011
Title	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment-Companion Volume	-Programme D'anglais Deuxieme Langue Etrangere	Programme D"Anglais Deuxieme Langue Etrangere Troisieme Annee Secondaire 3 Eme As
Language(s)	40 languages	+ sign language	French	French
Pages	260 pages	274 pages	23 pages	27 pages
Why?	Requests were made for more elaborate scales by some institutions, language teaching practitioners, andCEFR readers		Not mentioned	
Who?	Organisations and different institutions from Europe and from		The same: National Commission of	

	both Americas, Asian, and Africa helped in descriptors' validation, a group of well- recognized researchers working in varied projects (three authors of CEFR and advisory group of eight researchers, and other researchers who assisted in five stages of the updating process), and even eight readers assisted with some insights about restructuring the familiarity of CEFR.	Programs
How?	The process of updating went through five stages and was accomplished gradually spanning six years from 2014 to 2019.	Not mentioned
What?	The new edition: - highlights innovative areas of CEFR namely: mediation, pluriligual/ pluricultural competences, - fully develop + levels like: B1+ -elaborating other communicative activities mainly online interaction. -adapting descriptors to be more gender- neutral and modality-inclusive (applicable to sign language)	The editions are identical.

The source: Summarised from CEFR and ACEL first and revised versions (Council of Europe, 2001; Council of Europe, 2020; National Commission of Programs, 2006; National Commission of Programs, 2011)

As far as language is concerned, CEFR manifested its commitment to inclusivity and accessibility as it is translated to sign language and even adding it as a new chapter with a set of descriptors. In contrast, ACEL's use of French demonstrates the disconnection between the target language and the teaching audience. Besides, CEFR updated version spanned 20 years to be fully revised. Remarkably, it followed the bottom- up approach answering requests received from varied institutions, language practitioners, and even some CEFR readers. The process of revision and updating went through five stages; each stage was a cooperative research project covering a certain innovative area. Some organisations and institutions from Europe and other continents assisted in the broader validation process. The diverse contributors to the CEFR updated edition ensured relevance and applicability, while the ACEL remained within the limited perspectives of the same authors. The CEFR updated edition aligns with recent literature, namely: mediation and plurilingualism. It also focuses on online interaction as a recognition of technology in communication. In contrast, it is noticed the absence of clarity about what has been updated in ACEL reflects the lack of adaptation to current pedagogical trends. Thus, CEFR (2020) reflects a modern, adaptive, and inclusive approach in the revision process, whereas ACEL appears to be a more superficial revision lacking transparency and innovation.

4.6.- Assessment

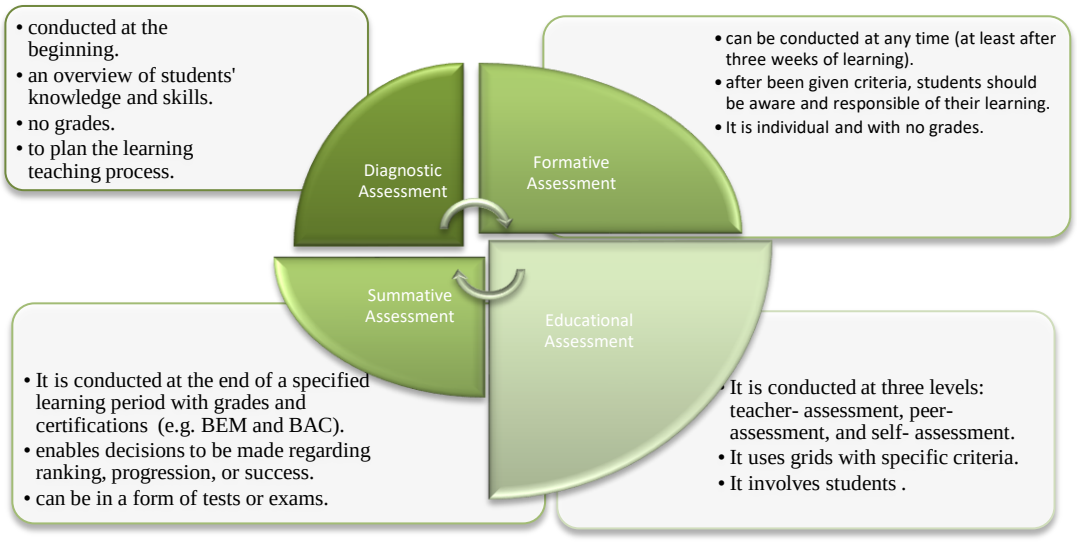
4.6.1.- CEFR

Figure (3): ***Assessment types in CEFR***

1	Achievement assessment	Proficiency assessment
2	Norm-referencing (NR)	Criterion-referencing (CR)
3	Mastery learning CR	Continuum CR
4	Continuous assessment	Fixed assessment points
5	Formative assessment	Summative assessment
6	Direct assessment	Indirect assessment
7	Performance assessment	Knowledge assessment
8	Subjective assessment	Objective assessment
9	Checklist rating	Performance rating
10	Impression	Guided judgement
11	Holistic assessment	Analytic assessment
12	Series assessment	Category assessment
13	Assessment by others	Self-assessment

The source: from CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 183)

4.6.2.- The ACEL

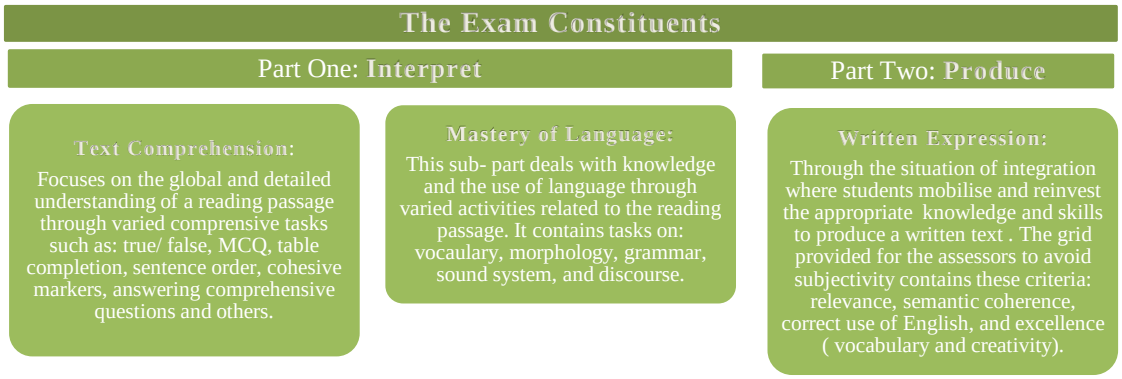


The source: summarised from ACEL (National Commission of Programs, 2011)

Figure (4): Assessment types in ACEL

Although both CEFR and ACEL share the same types of assessment and encourage students to take an active role in assessing their language skills, CEFR incorporates a wider range of assessment types such as achievement assessment, holistic assessment, analytical assessment and others. This allows for more nuanced assessment forms of language proficiency across diverse contexts. The figures below represent aspects of summative assessment covered in CEFR and ACEL as a specific example from the above set of models.

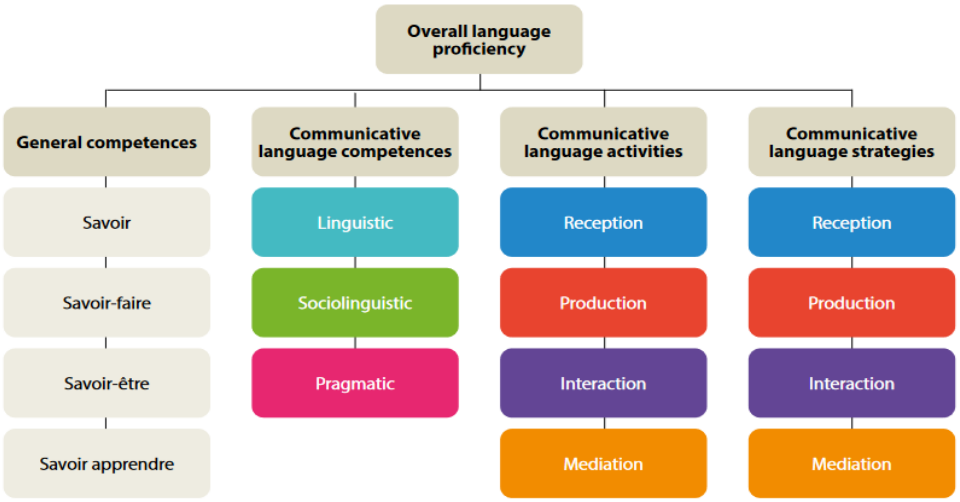
4.6.3.- The ACEL



The source: from the Exam Guide (*English Language BAC Exam Construction Guide*, 2017)

Figure (5): Summative assessment constituents in ACEL

4.6.4.- CEFR



The source: from the revised version of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020)

Figure (6): Summative constituents in CEFR

Summative assessment in both CEFR and ACEL aims to assess language proficiency, but they differ in scope and approach. ACEL focuses only on two competences: interpretation and production. It assesses students' comprehension of written texts through tasks like MCQs and true/ false statements, and it evaluates language mastery in areas such as vocabulary and grammar. In the final phase, students produce written text, applying the knowledge and skills gained. On the other hand, CEFR provides a more holistic framework. It assesses varied aspects, namely: general competences, communicative competences, language activities, and communicative strategies. It also covers a broader spectrum of language use, including cultural and pragmatic competences.

5- Discussion

It is worth mentioning at this initial phase of discussing and analysing the findings that this is a benchmark study comparing the Algerian curriculum of English language at high schools with that of the Common European Framework of Reference at the B1 level. Research has proved that benchmarking can enhance the quality of instruction and curricula design (Chendeb, 2020; Inguva, 2018; Goertler et al., 2016; Moreland et al., 2000). Both follow a product-based approach in their design, prioritising the learners' outcomes. However, the first is a national curriculum designed by others rather than teachers, with a rigidly fixed order of its elements as it reflects a forward design which created dissatisfaction among teachers (Bouhania, 2020; Baghoussi, 2021). The latter is a general curriculum designed cooperatively by international bodies following the backwards design, a design that is flexible, learner-centred, and oriented to the students' needs.

Now, after this short recap of the paper's topic, it is necessary to be reminded of the three interrelated research questions that this part of the study tends to answer:

- What are the elements included in the CEFR?
- What are the elements included in English curricula at Algerian high schools?
- How to align ACEL with CEFR through finding some areas of improvement?

The main elements of both ACEL and CEFR are: objectives, methodology, content and its structure, and evaluation and assessment. These elements will be discussed thoroughly in this part of the study. The crucial difference is the way they are ordered in each curriculum and the inclusion of needs analysis in CEFR as an initial phase to direct the whole process,

which is an important starting point for improving English language curricula to meet learners' needs (Ferrer & Sagun, 2022).

Though the design and type of the two curricula are different, this cannot deny the reality that both forward and backwards designs may well work concurrently for an effective curriculum. Here, we are referring to the role of needs analysis, which is radically excluded from ACEL (Bellour, 2017). As a result, the elements' interaction in ACEL proved to be rigid, fixed, unadaptable to any changes that may occur and above all, they neglect the external factors in developing curricula, which are world needs, society needs, and individual needs.

Due to the absence of needs analysis, the objectives structured in ACEL are likely to be broader in scope. Besides, it stated holistic aims that attempted to integrate interdisciplinary competence in the curriculum. However, its application has certain shortcomings (Guendouzi & Ameziane, 2013). It remarkably neglected spoken interaction, as the exit profile mentioned solely the written production. Thus, this apparently makes it less practical and more to be an exam- centric curriculum (Bemmoussat & Bouyakoub, 2019; Boukhentache, 2021). Unlike CEFR, openness to diverse languages and cultures, ACEL seems to advocate the use of English as the target language in instruction, leaving no space for other diverse languages to spontaneously occur in the class, especially in a multilingual society like the Algerian one. Another noticeable shortcoming of ACEL is the lack of clear performance criteria (Mirza et al., 2023).

Moving to the implemented approaches, the two curricula, ACEL and CEFR, implemented an approach that is based on competency development. One principle of the CBA implemented by ACEL is an action-oriented approach. This implies putting theory into action. Both approaches are learner-centred, assisting learners to integrate various competences to solve real-world problems. CEFR implemented AoA and integrated two crucial concepts: plurilingualism and mediation. Although ACEL states that it encourages learners to be open-minded to diverse cultures, its language activities still lack the mediating aspect as a way of acknowledging others' languages and cultures. ACEL narrowed the domains of the target language to learners' educational streams: science or literature. This widened the gap between what is learnt in the class and what is found in real-life situations, for the public and personal domains are neglected (Bellour, 2017). Moreover, CBA attempts to include transversal competences like strategic and technological competences as a way to put language use in action. Including Information and Communications Technology (ICT) requires providing technological devices at schools and training teachers to use them efficiently, which seems out of reach according to several studies (Djerouane & Bensafi, 2022; Chelli & Khouni, 2013). Furthermore, a remarkable skill included in CEFR called the ability to learn about others' languages or cultures is absent in CBA, which integrated only knows, know-how-to-do, and know-how-to-be. What is missing is know-how-to-learn which persuades learners to develop metacognition and life-long learning skills.

The next crucial element is that of content. What content the curriculum is supposed to provide for learners can affect the whole process positively or negatively. Unlike ACEL, the content provided by CEFR generally reflects personal and public dimensions. This raises some questions about the relationship between the content provided, the motivation of learners, and the objectives to be achieved. All are interrelated and one feeds the other. However, some topics in ACEL (e.g. advertising or astronomy) may feel out of touch with immediate learner needs. This could reduce learner motivation as most of the topics are irrelevant to everyday communication and deviate from the practical application of the target language, especially for young learners who generally need English for personal and public situations. No one can deny the diverse themes provided by ACEL and the ambitious attempt to integrate interdisciplinary competence, but the application of language across disciplines (e.g. science and business) needs to be more explicit (Guendouzi & Ameziane, 2013). Structuring content and delivering it requires numerous and varied materials that can cover the diverse themes and address all the parties concerned. In contrast to the textbook-based

materials of ACEL, materials provided by CEFR for learning, teaching, and assessment are varied and accessible through both web platforms and published documents. For this reason, the Algerian Ministry of Education should rethink the designed materials in a globalisation era for 21st-century learners following the CBA principles.

Finally, the way ACEL and CEFR updated their curricula highlights several key differences in terms of transparency and inclusivity and can assist in discovering some areas of improvement in ACEL. Updating any curriculum requires evaluating and conducting a thorough analysis of almost every related aspect. After receiving several requests from various language institutions, language practitioners, and even readers, CEFR decided to revise the first version of 2001, including sign language in a devoted chapter alongside 40 other languages (Council of Europe, 2020). This bottom-up approach makes the process more democratic and transparent, reflective of the external needs of societal and professional parties. It also adapted the curricula to internal needs of the new trends in teaching foreign languages, which is demonstrated in its commitment to include modern elements like online interaction and gender- neutral language. Besides, because of pushing requests from various stakeholders across different institutions and countries, it further elaborated mediation descriptors. In contrast, the ACEL updating process seems to be less transparent and follows a top-down approach as it was centralised with the same group of authors. This may hinder the responsiveness to educators' and learners' requests to adapt the curricula. Another worth mentioning aspect is that of the disconnect in accessibility. Although the curricula are addressing English language teachers, they are written in French and not all educational institutions provide them to teachers. Thus, ACEL needs to be more transparent and inclusive and cooperate with teachers in the process of curriculum revision.

Moving to assessment, which covers the teaching/ learning process, both CEFR and ACEL share the same types of assessment: diagnostic, formative, educational, and summative. However, CEFR provides a well-rounded and diverse assessment framework with 13 pairs of assessment types focusing on various communicative competences in order to ensure that learners are assessed across a broad range of skills, including reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe, 2020). CEFR manifests its commitment to tracking language proficiency at multiple levels and fosters continuous improvement. In contrast, despite the fact that ACEL acknowledged the importance of listening and speaking skills in its content, it radically neglected these areas in its summative assessment and focused solely on reading and writing skills. This undermines the holistic language assessment approach for communicative competence in real- world contexts which depends heavily on these two skills. Excluding these important skills from ACEL formal assessment limits learners' opportunities to demonstrate their overall language proficiency and demotivates them to improve these integral skills. This gap calls for urgent curricula reforms to align assessment practices with the general objectives. Another neglected competence in ACEL, which proved to play a significant role in real-world communication, is that of mediation. The absence of this competence may hinder learners' development in areas like intercultural communication and problem-solving in diverse linguistic contexts.

To sum up, this benchmark analysis between CEFR and ACEL highlighted some areas in the Algerian curricula that require elaborate revision, including mainly: the structuring of objectives, selection of appropriate and engaging content, and covering a range of integral competences in the assessment framework. These areas of improvement will be summarised thoroughly and written as recommendations to the Algerian curricula designers in an attempt to bottom-up the process of curricula evaluation.

6- Conclusion

This comparative study has undertaken a comprehensive benchmark analysis of the Algerian Curriculum of English at high schools in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference B1 level standards. The study aims to discover some areas of improvement in ACEL in alignment with CEFR's competency-based approach in order to

foster language proficiency among Algerian high school learners and provide some recommendations to all stakeholders involved in the curriculum design and updating.

The analysis revealed some common ground between the two curricula in terms of learner-centredness and the focus on developing communicative competence for real-world uses. However, the results revealed some methodological and assessment gaps. The absence of needs analysis negatively affected the dynamicity of the Algerian curriculum and transformed it into a rigid and unbreakable curriculum that even content failed to reflect learners' immediate needs. Consequently, content themes appear to be less engaging and practical to learners' daily activities. Democracy and bottoming- up the process of curricula designing and updating is highly recommended for a more flexible and adaptable framework. What sets ACEL far apart from even competing with the international standards is the inclusion of the two concepts in CEFR: mediation and plurilingualism. Algerian learners live in a multilingual society and are open to diverse languages and cultures. Thus, including mediation in the Algerian English curricula can enrich learners' English repertoire and foster their ability to solve real problems in multilingual and intercultural contexts at large. Another remarkable gap is the exclusion of two core skills (listening and speaking) from communicative competence in Algerian summative assessment. For this reason, English language proficiency at Algerian high schools lacks validity.

In conclusion, some recommendations are proposed for Algerian curriculum designers. These include conducting a needs analysis as a starting point in the planning phase in order to bottom-up the process and orient the upcoming elements towards practical use of English as a foreign language. Integrating mediation and intercultural competencies into the curriculum requires more elaborate work on the part of Algerian researchers and educators. Finally, the assessment framework should be enhanced to provide a balanced evaluation of all language skills.

7- Recommendations

After discussing the results, and found the gaps between ACEL and CEFR through the different curricula elements. This section is devoted to some recommendations to the ACEL designers based on the results discussed after benchmark analysis between CEFR as a curricula reference and ACEL, which we are focusing on. The recommendations are organised into themes, and each theme reflects an area of improvement in ACEL.

- Adopting a bottom-up approach in curriculum design: this can be achieved through conducting a thorough needs analysis involving its primary users: language institutions, both private and public, all over the country, teachers of English, novice and experienced ones, and learners from both urban and rural areas of all high school levels. The bottom-up approach can work concurrently with the old version of top-down design.
- Incorporation of mediation and plurilingualism: mediation is a key competency in the interconnected world. ACEL should incorporate mediation as a way to foster multilingualism and promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Algeria needs these types of individuals who are open to other languages and cultures and can confidently mediate their own culture to the world.
- Inclusion of a life-long learning skill: this skill is learning how to learn. It is the ability to autonomously discover new languages, cultures and perspectives. This will develop a learner with a kind of continuous language learning mindset.
- Interdisciplinary competence: to integrate tasks that promote language learning across various disciplines requires collaboration among the teachers of the target language and the teachers of other disciplines in a form of common projects for learners. This area needs extra elaboration among researchers.
- Content and materials: themes should resonate with learners' lives and be tailored to address current global trends. This way, learners will engage more with the topics and participate effectively in the international community. The three textbooks used to support the content of ACEL should be revised in terms of their alignment with

methodology. Content can also be presented in a digital way, providing some useful sites and interactive platforms.

- Evaluation and assessment: curricula should be written in English and updated regularly and transparently. They should also include sign language at least in their textbooks to be accessible to all learners. Given that listening and speaking are both neglected in ACEL summative assessment, there is an urgent shift towards incorporating them in formal assessment, mainly BAC exams. Oral communication is critical in our modern world, and language proficiency tests and exams should cover all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

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Appendix: Third Year ACEL

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