

English Language Education in Algeria in the Light of the Test-Oriented Teaching Approach

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Received: June 24, 2018 Accepted: July 2, 2018 Published: August 11, 2018

doi:10.5296/ijl.v10i4.13310

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v10i4.13310>

Abstract

The present paper is concerned with the current situation relating to the English Language Education in the light of the teach-to-the-test approach. As a way of start, it provides a diachronic overview of English Language Education in Algeria. Then, it incorporates an in-depth analysis of the current situation, with a particular focus on the teaching-testing ambivalence. Next, it moves on to a discussion of the newly-imposed role the English language ought to perform within the globalization framework. Finally, the last part of the paper culminates with the provision of a record of the different problems and issues EFL teachers have been encountering and experiencing in the teaching of English as a global language due to the deeply-rooted culture of learning highly characterized by an ever-growing hegemony of the test-oriented teaching; academic achievement *oblige!*

Keywords: English Language Education, globalization, test-oriented teaching, academic achievement

1. Introduction

A leitmotiv has become recurring among most teachers is that ‘Tests are driving our teaching’. This handful of words has become heresy to teachers, regardless of their subjects of specialism. This educational practice has forced teachers, in the name of accountability, to abandon motivating, insightful and fruitful ways of imparting knowledge for boring and repetitive test-preparation materials. Important language items may get overlooked as teachers prepare students for other items that are to be included in the test. Thus, the increasing importance attached to scoring well, in exam performance, has accentuated the rhythm and piled the pace on both teachers and students and driven them to narrow down and to distort the true vision of teaching and their perception of what the term ‘achievement’ actually means. It is clear that testing, in ESL/EFL context, plays a crucial and critical role in the field of education as it is viewed as an asset which contributes to the individual’s personal and social growth.

True, tests are driving the curriculum forcing teachers, at times willingly and, at times reluctantly, to focus their time, to devote their effort and to exploit their energy on preparing learners for tests. Again accountability is important in English language Education¹. EFL teachers must be able to demonstrate that students are learning English that allows them to successfully perform linguistically, socio-linguistically and pragmatically various speech acts in different communicative situations.

2. Defining an Approach

Teaching to the test is a phrase or term used to refer to the implementation of a set of pedagogical practices which focuses on preparing learners for standardized tests² and high-stakes exams³. What is more, in the mind of many applied linguists, educationalists and teachers, ‘item teaching’, ‘curriculum teaching’, ‘curriculum alignment’, ‘test-oriented teaching’ and ‘teaching to the test’ are all too often used interchangeably. Originally, the term can be traced back to the establishment of an association or an incidence of Campbell's Law, which states, as its major underlying principles, that a social indicator, be it a success or a breakthrough, tends to distort the process it is intended to monitor.

The teach-to-test approach draws heavily on the principles underpinning Campbell’s Law. In the opinion of many teachers and language testing experts, drawing an analogy between the cart and the oxen, note that the cart is being put before the oxen. This is another way of saying that the cart of testing is being pulled by the oxen of teaching. This analogy confirms, in one way or another, the idea that truly tests are driving our curriculum. Yet, pedagogically speaking, things ought to work more appropriately the other way round. Needless to recall, a strong linguistic foundation is conducive to preparing learners to perform well.

3. Campbell’s Law

Campbell's law is an adage-like law which was elaborated and put forward by the American psychologist and social scientist Campbell. Essentially, he posits, rightly or wrongly, that “The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social

processes it is intended to monitor” (Campbell, 1985 p. 85). In lines with the teach-to-the-test approach, he clearly states that, “Achievement tests may well be valuable indicators of general school achievement under conditions of normal teaching aimed at general competence. But, when test scores become the goal of the teaching process, they both lose their value as indicators of educational status and distort the educational process in undesirable ways” (Campbell, 1985 p. 123).

By cause and effect relationship, Campbell's law can be seen as an illustrative and clear example of what social scientists would call, the ‘cobra effect’ and/or by extension the ‘rat effect’. The basic social science principle of Campbell's Law has all too often been deliberately used to point out the negative outcomes of high-stakes testing. This may range from form of a test-oriented teaching to outright and downright cheating.

3.1 Cobra Effect

The term ‘cobra effect’ originally comes from a funny event set at the time India was a British colony. During that time the British government was very much concerned by the great number of highly venomous cobra snakes in New Delhi. In an attempt to get rid of these noxious and poisonous reptiles the Indian-British government offered therefore bounty for every caught snake. Initially the strategy proved to be very successful as large numbers of cobras were killed in exchange of the reward. Eventually, however, dishonest people began to breed cobras for the income. When the government got wind of the trick, the reward programme was scrapped and cut off; this caused the cobra breeders to set free the worthless snakes. Consequently, the apparent solution for the problem did not yield the expected results; the situation got even worse. This became known as the ‘cobra effect’.

3.2 Rat Effect

The term ‘rat effect’ originated in a similar incident set at the time of French rule of colonial Vietnam. The colonial authority put in place a bounty programme which offered a reward for every dead rat. To obtain the reward, rat hunters would provide the severed rat tail. Ironically, the French colonial officials, however, began seeing tailless rats in Hanoi. The rat catchers would capture rats, lop off their tails and then free them back in the sewers so that they could procreate and produce more rats, thereby increasing the Vietnamese rat catcher’s income.

3.3 Campbell’s Law: Reflections and Pedagogical Implications

The teacher is not simply a practitioner who is bound up to cover a syllabus in the sense that he is expected to go through it line by line with a serious implication that the syllabus is not completed then there will be some negative consequences on the learning outcomes. This question is another fundamental issue which represents the paradox of education. What we attempt to explain here, is to uncover parallels to Campbell’s Law as we look at the ways in which our deep culture of learning and in-class pedagogical practices have unfolded. Hopefully, this will be of great help to teachers to strike the balance between the goals underlying EFL teaching-learning and the objectives of testing.

Yet, as long as grades and marks are used as signposts to learning and reliable pedagogical indices, our education system needs to go through a radical change and metamorphosis of what an effective teaching is and what the profile of a good EFL teacher ought to be. Grades and marks can be engineered the way the education system is gearing the testing process. Appraising grades and inflated marks are deliberately used to mask the serious deficit in our student's content knowledge. This approach has served to undermine the communicative abilities of the Algerian EFL students. Campbell's Law, metaphorically illustrated through the cobra effect and rat effect, is indeed a concrete example of the 'side-effects' that are likely to result from of a teaching whose primary aim is to focus on test results, hence a test-oriented teaching.

Ethics and morals have to be at the heart of the teaching-testing process too. They should represent the counter weight by exerting an opposed force which is to provide balance, stability and effective teaching to the mechanics that come into play in the education system. Ultimately, over and above, "in any academic accomplishments, the teacher should have a certain moral rectitude". English Language Education should be oriented towards the mastery of real content knowledge and not just towards exam achievement. What is more, focus on a test-oriented teaching would deny our students valuable experiences they actually need to cope with the 21st century requirements.

4. Twenty-First Century Skills

The advent of the third millennium has radically changed the education system at large and by extension research and other related areas. This new twenty-first century vision of education has imposed new learning paradigms, new teaching practices and new testing models requiring a set of skills that are needed to positively cope with the exigencies of the new century. The incorporation of the twenty-first century skills in the Algerian school curricula, in general and in English Language Education in particular, is an important step towards promoting high-quality education⁴ and building up a sustainable knowledge society⁵.

The future prospect of education in Algeria depends directly on how broadly and deeply Algerians reach a high level of literacy – 21st Century Literacy. This intellectual capital of citizens represents the driving force in today's digital age. Stakeholders need to be engaged "to replace the antiquated status quo of factory-style schooling ... to develop young innovators who possess the problem-solving skills, creativity and optimism needed to lead us in the future" (Wagner, 2015 p. 2). Thus, it is important to define in clear terms what these skills are.

The concept of twenty-first century skills can be defined in relation to a set of competencies, including teamwork, leadership, critical thinking and creativity (Mitchell et al. 2010). Additionally, another study defines twenty-first century skills in relation to pedagogy in terms of problem-solving learning and experiential learning (Bell, 2010). However, in both senses, the common core value is the centrality of relevance, applicability and transferability of the knowledge and skills provided to students (Rotherham and Willingham, 2009). In sum, the locus of a twenty-first-century pedagogy is shifting from knowledge accumulation

towards skills acquisition. The skills acquisition pedagogy undeniably will serve as a platform and acts as a springboard for autonomous self-directed and lifelong learning.

4.1 Critical Thinking and Assessment

Critical thinking has been defined as the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. This definition of the term seems somewhat over-simplistic and very down to earth. From a pedagogical standpoint, it is “to ingrain into the individual’s working habits, methods of inquiry and reasoning appropriate to the various problems that present themselves” (John Dewey, 1910). In other words, it is a thinking that is purposeful, reasoned and goal-directed (Halpern, 1992).

Critical thinking is a term used in the field of education and educational psychology to describe forms of learning, thought, and analysis that go beyond the memorization and recall of information and facts. In sum, it is a cover term which may be used to describe many different forms of learning acquisition. Yet, what are the academic life skills of a university graduate? “To be able to think constructively, argue coherently, judge passionately and tackle problems effectively” (Lewis Elton In The Times Higher, July 21 2000).

Critical thinking entails many different kinds of academic skills that are *sine qua non* conditions for success in today’s digital age. As societies pass through changes that cannot go unnoticed, the skills that students need so as to be able to negotiate the complexities of life change too. In the twentieth century, a person who had acquired the 3 R’s, i.e. reading, writing and calculating skills was considered literate. It has only been in recent years that the educational institutions have expected students to learn to read critically, to write persuasively to think and to reason logically. These critical thinking skills can be summarized as follows:

- Developing sound logical, convincing arguments and using the information in meaningful ways.
- Analyzing situations from different angles and perspectives without any form of subjectivity or bias.
- Calling into questions taken-for-granted assumptions to reach new form of evidence.
- Having recourse to practical intelligence or imaginative ways to cope with new complex situations or problems.
- Formulating and structuring penetrating and thought-provoking questions.
- Processing complex information on the basis of logical thinking
- Using comprehensive integrative testing in an appropriate and graded way.

It is worth noting that some researchers tend to use the terms ‘critical thinking’ and ‘higher-order thinking’ interchangeably, while other scholars view ‘critical thinking’ as a form of ‘higher-order thinking’. Stepping further, some use the terms ‘critical thinking’ and ‘problem solving’ synonymously; yet for others, critical thinking is a form of ‘problem

solving'. Regardless of the shades of meaning and nuances associated with the different terms, the core value across the different terms is the centrality of high-quality education. As highlighted by numerous studies, it should be noted that the hegemony of the teach-to-the-test approach highly prevailing in Algerian EFL classrooms and overtly driving the curriculum has negatively affected the quality of English Language Education.

Critical Thinking and the Teach-to-the-Test Approach

Arguably, the main driving force in the twenty-first century is to inculcate in students and equip them with those skills that closely relate to academic life skills, not least critical thinking. Successful communication in English will be reached and made possible only if the communicative potential of Algeria's EFL students is fully developed. It should be no surprise that the way students are taught and tested in English *leaves a lot to be desired*. Exam English has become the hallmark and a distinguishing characteristic of almost all EFL tests, standardized tests and test quizzes.

The urgency for building, on sound communicative basis, the linguistic abilities of EFL students to meet the needs of the communicative skills of the twenty-first century has become a must and a priority. Based on his studies Levin (2017) notes that how well students do on current tests in no way correlates to how productive they will be in the workforce, and by extension to our EFL students, in interactive communication with native speakers of English. Such interactions require knowledge of etiquette or the rules of speaking⁶ often unique to a particular speech event.

It is worth noting that critical thinking calls into question the way educational institutions ought to measure learning acquisition. Illustratively, multiple-choices testing formats have been common and institutionalized in high-stakes exams and standardized tests for many decades now. A heavy reliance on such testing formats emphasizes and eventually places much importance on factual retention and recall over critical thinking and other skills. This is another way of saying that, "If schools largely test and award grades for factual recall, teachers will therefore stress memorization and recall in their teaching, possibly at the expense of skills such as critical thinking that are vitally important for students to possess but far more challenging to measure accurately" (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

4.3 Critical Thinking and Rote Learning

Basically the teach-to-the-test approach favours a form of learning that heavily relies on the memorization of knowledge and the recall of information. However, the memorization-recall process is considered to be the darker side of the teach-to-to-test approach. Thus, the memory versus the intelligence ambivalence is at the core of this part. Critical thinking is an essential skill to knowledge acquisition, or what is called procedural knowledge and almost all educational institutions throughout the world are stressing the importance of teaching critical thinking skills in order to develop this type of knowledge. Students must be able to analyze, evaluate, interpret, or synthesize information and apply creative thought to form arguments, solve problems or reach conclusions (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013).

In sum then, critical thinking is not ‘simply something’ that relates to the accumulation of information; it is, in fact, a reflective process onto oneself to evaluate and improve one’s ideas creatively. However, it should be noted that in many high-stakes tests, regrettably, one must say that learners’ success is highly conditioned and greatly determined by their “abilities to reproduce fixed bodies of knowledge” (Schweisfurth, 2011 p. 423). Transposed to the Algerian educational arena, this pedagogical vision can be translated faithfully yet jocularly into what rote memorization denotes in many students’ and teachers’ minds as, “Your merchandize has been returned to you”. This state of affairs, once again, clearly illustrates the negative learning consequences of the teach-to-test approach and its heavy emphasis on rote learning.

In this very specific context, it should be noted that MENA countries still cling tenaciously to the very traditional-oriented education based on repetition and rote memorization, heavy use of the chalk-and-talk technique, out-dated curricula⁷, a common nation-wide implementation of standardized high-stakes exams and a teacher-centred pedagogy which, in no way, leads to active interaction between teacher and learners. Therefore, education quality poses a serious challenge.

4.4 Teach-to-the-Test Approach and Quality Education

No need to recall, the right to education is one of the human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. Yet, quality education⁸, as put forward by UNESCO experts, is viewed as a *sine qua non* condition to improving and bettering individuals’ welfare and national economic growth. What is more, to take part actively and effectively in today’s globalized world, fundamentally, depends upon the quality of education that is imparted to the learners. However, the focus on access to education all too often overshadows attention to quality in many countries and Algeria is no exception.

The mass education-based policy of the 1970s and 1980s and the quantity-oriented discourse of policy-makers, which negatively impacted economic returns on Algerian education, were doomed from the start. Education, an asset conducive to personal and social growth, was hijacked and manipulated for political purposes. This policy was initiated by Algeria’s second President Houari Boumédiene (1965-1978) in parallel with his ‘populist-schooling policy’ of providing universal, free public education. However, not only is this abundance of ‘literate uneducated’ young human capital⁹ being underutilized, but its productivity is being diminished by an education system that is failing to provide them with even the basic skills needed to respond positively to the demands of today’s world and subsequently behave like full responsible world citizens and contributing members of their society. The admission of a high number of average-ability students with low communicative abilities, as is the case of most EFL students, ineluctably leads to a decline in academic standards.

What is more, it is worth pointing that an education system which is characterized by a high drop-out rate and a great number of repeaters doubtlessly implies that students are not being adequately prepared to advance towards subsequent stages of education (El Nashar, 2012). This social vested benefit consisting in a substantial expansion of access to education has been accomplished at the expense of the quality of education being provided, namely higher

education¹⁰. Yet, the university as a tertiary education institution¹¹, has never been a crèche for adult learners, nor an alignment of lecture halls and tutorials for mediocre dunces.

Since the establishment of Oxbridge in the 11th and 13th centuries respectively the university has since then been considered as the flagship of the educated elite. An elite, so to speak, who has been endowed and imbued with a dialogic pedagogy, including analytical skills a constructivist orientation, much farther away from the principles underpinning a teach-to-the-test-oriented pedagogy and its positivist orientation¹². This another way of saying that a positivist-based English Language Education, with its heavy grammar-test oriented teaching, impedes the achievement of quality education and slows down the development of EFL learners' communicative abilities.

4.5 Grammar and Test-Oriented Teaching

A grammar-oriented teaching and the teach-to-the-test approach make a perfect marriage. The memorization of the grammar rules and the application of the deductive processing to the language tests are illustrations of a harmonious union. In this very specific context, is there another way, but memorization and rote learning, to memorize and learn the past and past participle forms of irregular verbs in the English language? Can effective communication in English be achieved and *get the message across* efficiently without first and foremost a thorough accuracy in the manipulation of irregular verbs? Analogically, can a student perform a multiplication operation without *a priori* the development of one's mental arithmetic ability by learning by heart the times tables? The genius is the exception

There was a time when a good mastery of the grammatical system of a language was seen as the very core of the language teaching and language ability and it was thought unthinkable not to test it. True, it is somehow axiomatic a lack of grammatical ability sets limits and barriers to learners' communicative abilities. An exchange of simple conventionalized sentences about the weather in a context requires a good command of elementary grammatical sentences. The following conversation is an illustrative example of the importance of grammar knowledge in performing daily speech acts:

John: I really want to go to the beach this weekend.

Mary: That sounds like fun. What's the weather going to be like?

John: I heard that it's going to be warm this weekend

Mary: Is it going to be perfect beach weather?

John: I think so.

Mary: Good. I hope it doesn't cool off this weekend.

John: I know. I really want to go to the beach.

Mary: But you know that British weather is really unpredictable.

John: You're right. One minute it's hot, and then the next minute it's cold.

Mary: I really wish the weather would just stay the same.

John: I do too. That way we can have our activities planned ahead of time.

Mary: Yeah, that would make things a lot easier.

In addition to a number of words and phrases that closely relate to conversations about the weather, some knowledge of basic grammar is needed for an EFL learner to successfully perform and take part in such a situation. First, the difference between *this* and *that* as demonstrative adjectives and pronouns is required to construct sentences as: *That sounds like fun, Yeah, that would make things a lot easier* and *That way we can have our activities planned ahead of time*. Secondly, our learner would know that *heard* is the past form of the irregular verb *hear*. Thirdly, the phrase *is going* is used to refer to future events that have been planned before. Lastly, the use of the modal *would* in *I really wish the weather would just stay the same* and *Yeah, that would make things a lot easier* describes the consequences of an imagined event.

A grammar items-oriented teaching may be beneficial in its own right in the sense that it provides a language exercise *per se*. In what ways does it contribute to the development of the language learners' communicative abilities. Yet, "this [type of teaching] does not necessarily determine its place, or even determine that it has a place in a language course" (Halliday, 1964, p. 255). This language teaching vision would lead us to reformulate two fundamental questions: How much of a language a learner ought to know? and How well of a language a learner can perform? Put simply in a very practical way, one may say that one learns to do things and to perform actions by doing and performing them. The teacher's effort should not be directed at informing learners about a language for the sake of passing tests successfully, but at enabling them to use it for successful communication.

A learner's mastery of a language is ultimately tested and assessed by how well he can use it to achieve communicative purposes, not by how much he knows about it for specific set tasks and language tests. In an illustrative way, Alexander (1967) makes use of a comparison between learning a language and learning to play the piano, he comes up with the conclusion that, "A student who has learnt a lot of grammar but who cannot use a language is in the position of a pianist who has learnt a lot about harmony but cannot play the piano. The student's command of a language will therefore be judged not by how much he knows but how well he can perform in public" (Alexander, 1967, p. vii).

4.6 From Grammar to Grammmaring

However, from a more pedagogically-oriented use, Larsen-Freeman (2003) coined the term '*grammmaring*' to denote the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately as the proper goal of grammar instruction. The *ing*-suffixation is deliberately added to refer a dynamic process of grammar using. This means that in order for students to overcome the passive and inert knowledge problem and transfer what they can do in communicative practice to real communication beyond classroom walls; a psychological similarity between the conditions of learning and the conditions of use has to be established (Segalowitz, 2003). This approach bridges, in one way or another, the gap between *usage* and *use* in the sense it was originally put forward by Widdowson (1978). In so doing, it necessitates how grammar, in its comprehensive dimension, ought to function at the discourse level.

Following the teach-to-the-test principles in assessing grammar, the testing of the language items is generally done in a de-contextualized way by means of, "... discrete-point items such

as sentence unscrambling, fill-in-the-blanks, error correction, sentence completion, sentence combining, picture description, elicited imitation, judging grammatical correctness, and modified cloze passages. Such formats test grammar knowledge, but they do not assess whether test takers can use grammar correctly in real-life speaking or writing” (Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 533).

5. Conclusion

However, with the advent of communicative-based language teaching in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a marked orientation from viewing language proficiency in terms of knowledge of structures’ ... to the ability to integrate and use the knowledge in performance, which could best be assessed through the production and comprehension of written texts and through face-to-face interaction under real-time processing conditions¹³ McNamara and Roever, 2006). On the other hand, in line with such a trend, test-oriented teaching tends to discard the socio-communicative value of language clinging to traditional psychometric methods in assessing out-of-context chunks of grammar pieces and vocabulary compilation¹⁴. Thus, measuring test takers’ ability to use language in social contexts has been overlooked (McManara, 2006). In a similar vein, Lantolf and Poehner (2004) advocate a “dynamic assessment”. They argue that higher order thinking emerges from our interactions with others, so dynamic assessment involves testing the examinee before and after an intervention designed to teach the student how to perform better on the test. The student’s final score represents the difference between pre-test (before learning) and post-test (after learning) scores.

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Notes

Note 1. The terms ‘English Language Teaching’ and ‘English Language Education’ might be semantically and didactically equivalent, but we prefer to use English Language Education in an attempt to be truly educative and to give a broader value and meaning to the language learning process. Language teaching can claim to have social significance, and to contribute to the student’s general education by introducing them to cultures other than their own.

Note 2. A standardized test, as its name denotes, is an exam which has been devised from experimentation to check solely its practicality, reliability and validity. It is also a test for which norms have been established and it provides fixed procedures in terms of time limits, response format, and number of questions and for scoring the test. Menken (2008) posits that standardized tests are all too often used by education systems for high-stakes decision making.

Note 3. Many stakeholders hold a very positive attitude towards high-stakes exams; they upgrade them excessively to the extent that their results, as “are seen, rightly or wrongly, by students, teachers, administrators, parents, or the general public, as being used to make important decisions that immediately and directly affect them” (Madaus 1988, p. 87).

Note 4. ‘High-quality education’, as a comprehensive term, has been since its early use in Tomorrow’s schools (1995) the subject of much discussion and heated debates among educators. Any attempt to give a valid definition to ‘high-quality education’ would distort its nature and therefore would be too vague and over-simplistic. It is an elusive term. Green (1980, p. 120) ironically yet illustratively defines it with reference to the “education that the rich provide for their sons”.

Note 5. The notion of “knowledge society” emerged towards the late 1990s and is particularly used as an alternative by some in academic circles to the “information society”. Yet there has been a great deal of reflection on the issue. UNESCO views “information society” as the building block for knowledge societies. Information society is to be linked to the idea of technological innovation; information society to the social, cultural, economic, political, and institutional transformation, and a more pluralistic and developmental perspective.

Note 6. In sociolinguistics, SPEAKING or the SPEAKING model, is a socio-linguistic study put forward by Hymes (1972) as part of his new methodology referred to as the Ethnography of speaking. This communication paradigm helps assist the identification and labeling of the different components of interactional linguistics that was driven by his view that, in order to speak a language correctly, one needs not only to learn its vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used. In essence, the learning the components of the SPEAKING model is essential for linguistic competence in the Chomskyan sense.

Note 7. Experts and specialists in education virtually all argue that the traditional curricula, originally developed for the industrial age, is no longer effective in the information age of the 21st century (Mitchell et al., 2010). Additionally, in many parts of the world the current

curricula are preparing students for jobs that are likely not to exist by the time they graduate Rotherham and Willingham (2009).

Note 8. The Education For All goal of universal education specifies that not only that all children have access to school and complete their education but, and equally importantly, that they receive an education of good quality too (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2014). In Algeria the rate of compulsory education oscillates between 96% and 98% in primary education and more than 95% in middle school education (Office National des Statistiques, 2017).

Note 9. The World Bank (2007) defines *human capital* as the broad and diverse range of knowledge, skills and capabilities necessary for individuals' success in life and work achieved through a high-quality education. This is another way of saying that high-quality education is seen as the most important investment in human capital.

Note 10. The right of access to higher education is mentioned in a number of human rights instruments. The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1996 declares, in Article 13, that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education.

Note 11. The terms *higher education* and *tertiary education* are alternative terms used to refer to programmes offered by universities. In Algeria the term higher education is used more commonly than tertiary education. Actually, the term tertiary education is a relatively recent one. Previously the more common term was higher education, but tertiary education will be used throughout this article in order to reflect the growing diversity and programmes. Today, tertiary education encompasses new types of institutions such as, university colleges or higher institutes and schools.

Note 12. Two antagonistic pedagogical orientations relate to the issue of quality in education: positivism and constructivism. In this very specific context, Leu (2005, p. 26) notes that "Positivist orientations to learning emphasize the acquisition of facts, while constructivist orientations emphasize the interpretation of facts and the construction of knowledge. Until very recently, education systems in most countries have been based firmly on positivist principles, featuring the teacher at the center of the instructional process transmitting information through 'chalk and talk' to students, primarily for the purposes of memorization. Since memorizing information is no longer regarded as adequate learning, and analytical skills are increasingly in demand, many countries have recently adopted reforms or new paradigms of teaching and learning based on constructivist principles".

Note 13. Worth noting in this context that, "By the 1970s, changes in society, educational measurement and theories of language learning resulted in a shift toward the sociolinguistic period.[Canale and Swain (1982) and other refer to this as 'communicative competence' or 'the proficiency approach' (Barnwell, 1996).] During this period, a new shift occurred from discrete-point testing toward tests meant to measure meaningful communication. By the early

1980s, training in various approaches to assessing communicative competence became available to instructors” (Malone, 2008, p. 227).

Note 14. The psychometric-structuralist period, also called the ‘modern’ and ‘scientific’, insisted on the introduction of measuring tools and statistical methods to shift to testing that can be objective, precise, reliable, and therefore, scientific and easily quantifiable. However, one of the main criticisms that can be made to psychometric-methods of testing is the fact that they focus considerably on an atomistic view of language as well as on the idea that, mistakenly, knowledge of the language elements is conducive to knowledge of the language.

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