Competency-Based Teaching in French as a Foreign Language Classrooms. A Case Study in Algerian Third-Year Secondary Education

Leila BOUCHEBCHEB

ENS Assia Djebar Constantine, Algeria

bouchebcheb.leila@ensc.dz
iD https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9618-2352

ABSTRACT: This study examines the teaching and learning of competencies in third-year secondary education. We focus on the experiences of our pre-service teachers during their fieldwork to assess the role of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in official documents and student textbooks, to identify instructional strategies employed for its implementation, and to determine whether students effectively develop the competencies outlined in ministerial guidelines. To achieve this, we worked closely with our pre-service teachers and analyzed the various methods adopted by educators within the CBA framework. We developed three evaluation grids to compare the competencies featured in the official curriculum with those actually taught in FLE classrooms. This methodology allowed us to observe how teachers adapt their instructional practices to reconcile program requirements with real-world classroom constraints.
KEYWORDS: Competencies; Student; Teaching; Official Curriculum, French as a Foreign Language (FLE).

TITLU: „Predarea bazată pe competențe în cadrul orelor de Franceză ca Limbă Străină (FLE). Studiu de caz în învățământul secundar din Algeria, clasa a III-a"
REZUMAT: Acest studiu analizează predarea și învățarea competențelor în clasa a III-a. Ne concentrăm pe experiențele profesorilor noștri în formare în timpul practicii pedagogice, pentru a evalua rolul Abordării Bazate pe Competențe (ABC) în documentele oficiale și manualele școlare, pentru a identifica strategiile didactice utilizate în implementarea acesteia și pentru a determina dacă elevii își dezvoltă eficient competențele prevăzute în orientările ministeriale. Pentru a realiza acest lucru, am lucrat îndeaproape cu profesorii în formare și am analizat diferitele metode adoptate de educatori în cadrul ABC. Am elaborat trei grile de evaluare pentru a compara competențele prevăzute în programa oficială cu cele predate efectiv în orele de FLE (Franceză ca Limbă Străină). Această metodologie ne-a permis să observăm cum adaptează profesorii practicile didactice pentru a reconcilia cerințele programei cu constrângerile reale din clasă.
CUVINTE-CHEIE: competențe; elev; predare; programă școlară oficială; Franceză ca Limbă Străină (FLE).

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of French as a Foreign Language (FLE) in Algeria have undergone significant transformations following the 2003 educational reform. At the heart of this reform, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) has emerged as the central axis of the new curricula. According to the *Program Framework* (p.17), this approach prioritizes a learning model centered on the student, emphasizing their actions and responses to real-world problem-solving situations rather than the mere transmission of knowledge. Students are thus trained to act—search for information, negotiate learning processes, organize, analyze, formulate hypotheses, and evaluate solutions—in contexts inspired by real-life situations.

This approach is rooted in constructivist and action-oriented theories, which advocate that learners must actively construct knowledge by mobilizing all their resources. Language is no longer perceived as inert content but as an intellectual process requiring the student's active

involvement. As Scallon (2004, 10) points out, the fundamental objective of education is to cultivate autonomous and responsible individuals while enabling them to fully develop their potential. The new curricula align with this perspective by promoting competency development through the integration of knowledge and skills, thereby allowing learners to engage effectively in both oral and written communication.

Within this framework, our study falls under the didactics of active pedagogy, with a particular focus on teaching and learning competencies in third-year secondary education (3AS). This academic year is especially crucial as it precedes the French language exam in the *baccalauréat*, where students must demonstrate their ability to read, comprehend, write, and summarize texts.

Our choice of topic is justified by the necessity of preparing students to become autonomous and responsible when approaching their final exam. The targeted competencies, most of which are transversal, play a key role in subject-specific learning. Moreover, these competencies will be essential in university studies, where they serve as learning strategies to enhance efficiency and focus on core concepts. Beyond academia, such competencies are also valuable in various professional and personal domains.

Our research problem explores the role of different competencies in official documents, the instructional strategies adopted by educators to develop these skills, and the challenges students face in acquiring them. Accordingly, we formulate the following hypotheses:

⮞ The teaching and learning of oral and written competencies hold a significant place in official documents, reflecting an approach focused on skill acquisition rather than content-based instruction.

⮞ Educators employ specific strategies to foster competency development; however, they may encounter obstacles in implementing these methods due to material constraints (lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms), time limitations (dense curricula), or gaps in their professional training (lack of familiarity with certain pedagogical approaches). These difficulties may be further exacerbated by linguistic and cultural disparities within classrooms, as well as by the limited exposure of non-native students to diverse communication situations.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the presence of competencies in official documents, the teaching practices adopted by educators, and the challenges students encounter in acquiring these competencies. By analyzing these aspects, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the Competency-Based Approach in FLE classrooms and to propose recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness within the Algerian educational context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The application of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) to teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL) in Algeria, following the 2003 education reform, is a significant change in pedagogical practice. This learner-centered approach emphasizes the acquisition of competencies rather than mere knowledge transfer (Program Framework, 17). As stressed in the Program Framework, the students are ready to act: looking for data, negotiating learning processes, planning, analyzing, formulating hypothesis, and evaluating solutions in real-world-based contexts. Such an approach prepares students to resolve complicated problems and react to various situations by utilizing all internal and external resources.

CBA is supported by a theoretical basis in the constructivist theories of Piaget (1967) and Vygotsky and Cole (1978), which emphasize the active involvement of the learner in the construction of their knowledge. Meziani (2022) claims that active pedagogy, derived from these theories, allows learners to construct knowledge through participating in challenging

tasks, thus facilitating deep learning. Learner autonomy, the ability to take responsibility for learning oneself (Holec 1981), is central to this approach. Little (1991) emphasizes that this autonomy depends on the learner's ability to reflect on learning practice, developing metacognitive abilities such as task planning and self-monitoring. Tardif (2017) cites the fact that active approaches such as project work and teamwork affirm such autonomy because students are permitted to make their own decisions. Khelifi (2019) particularly draws attention to this requirement in the third year of secondary school, specifically for the study of the baccalaureate examination.

In the Algerian context, the application of CBA aims to gain transversal and disciplinary skills among third-year secondary students with a view to qualifying them for the baccalaureate examination. Skills focused on are reading and listening comprehension, written and oral production, and transversal skills such as critical thought, documentary research, and independent and group work (Supporting Document for Third-Year Secondary Education 2003). The third-year secondary curriculum thus seeks to shape independent and participatory citizens with independent minds and educated decision-making abilities. Learning French as a civic education mechanism is viewed as a means of inducing active learning so that the students can be more independent. The Third-Year Secondary Education Supporting Document (2003) conceptualizes transversal competencies as "general abilities that enable students to adapt to new situations and solve complex problems," e.g., critical thinking, creativity, commitment, teamwork, and good communication.

The method adopted by teachers in implementing CBA is usually one of grouping contents around projects beginning with a first diagnostic test designed to uncover students' prior knowledge and skills. For example, the school head organizes the teaching materials into four projects. Students, working in groups, must undertake a group activity according to the learning objectives stipulated at the end of each project (see article). Such formative assessment facilitates successful targeting of the teaching approaches and recommended activities. The pedagogical process therefore emphasizes the organized development of linguistic skills through an interactive and dynamic methodology, in which competence is seen as a mixture of theoretical expertise, practical knowledge, and behavioral tendencies to learn, to allow learners to apply their acquisition in various and real situations.

However, the application of CBA in Algeria is faced with certain challenges, e.g., poor material resources, high numbers of students per classroom, and the constraint of packed curricula in terms of time. Additionally, language and cultural differences in classrooms can make the one-size-fits-all application of this strategy difficult. Facilitating instead of conveying knowledge must be undertaken by teachers (Boukhalfa 2023), necessitating ongoing training in order to get a grasp of pedagogical methods adjusted for CBA. As Boukhalfa (2023) recommends, it is important that teachers create a motivating learning space where students are able to experiment, explore, and interact, thereby stimulating both linguistic and cognitive capacities.

In an effort to make this approach more efficient, it is vital to strengthen teacher training, guarantee adequate resources, and consider the specificities of the Algerian context. Moreover, the development of assessment tools that encourage student autonomy and imagination is a prime motivator in optimizing CBA outcomes. Upcoming research will assess the impact of continuous teacher training, establish the most effective pedagogical methods, and analyze the impediments to the acquisition of focused skills by students. The third-year secondary curriculum study focuses on a well-structured time schedule according to study routes, content rooted in civic engagement, and pedagogy that leads to the development of critical and complex competencies, thus rendering the students autonomous and reflective communicators.

ACTIVE PEDAGOGY: A PATH TOWARD LEARNER AUTONOMY

According to Meziani (2022), active pedagogy, which is rooted in the constructivist theories of Piaget (1967) and Vygotsky and Cole (1978) , enables learners to build knowledge by actively engaging in complex tasks that promote meaningful learning. In the context of FLE, this translates into activities that encourage interaction, reflection, and the mobilization of both linguistic and cognitive resources.

Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a central objective of active pedagogy. This concept refers to the learner's ability to take charge of their own learning by setting goals and selecting appropriate strategies, as defined by Holec (1981). This perspective on autonomy is further reinforced by Benson (2011), who emphasizes the importance of self-direction in learning, particularly through the management of learning processes.

According to Little (1991), autonomy is built upon the learner's capacity to reflect on their own learning practices, primarily to develop metacognitive skills such as task planning. Tardif (2017) highlights that active approaches, such as project-based learning and collaborative work, foster autonomy by allowing students to make independent decisions. Khelifi (2019) stresses that autonomy is especially crucial in the third year of secondary education, as students must prepare for the *baccalauréat* exam. This pivotal stage requires students to take greater responsibility for their learning, particularly in mastering linguistic and methodological competencies.

Ouvrard et al. (2021) further argue that teachers play a key role in fostering learner autonomy by guiding students toward reflective practices and equipping them with tools to monitor their progress.

The Role of the Teacher in Active Pedagogy

In active pedagogy, the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator rather than a mere transmitter of knowledge. According to Boukhalfa (2023), teachers must create a stimulating learning environment where students can explore, experiment, and interact, thereby enabling them to mobilize linguistic and cognitive competencies. This shift from traditional teaching methods encourages greater student engagement and critical thinking.

Targeted Competencies in Third-Year Secondary Education

In the context of secondary education in Algeria, a competency is defined as the ability of a student to mobilize a set of resources (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to solve complex and diverse problem situations, particularly within the framework of learning French as a Foreign Language. This definition aligns with the competency-based approach introduced by the 2003 educational reform, which aimed to modernize teaching practices and equip students with the skills necessary to meet contemporary challenges.

According to the *Program Framework* (2003), a competency is defined as "the ability to act effectively in a given situation by mobilizing internal resources (knowledge, skills) and external resources (information, tools)." This approach places a strong emphasis on action and interaction in learning.

The *Supporting Document for Third-Year Secondary Education* (2003) defines transversal competencies as "general abilities that enable students to adapt to new situations and solve complex problems." These competencies include critical thinking, creativity, engagement, collaboration, and effective communication, all of which are considered essential for academic and professional success.

Bouhdiba emphasizes that these competencies are crucial not only for passing the *baccalauréat* but also for pursuing higher education. Mastering learning strategies and

focusing on essential knowledge and skills allows students to enhance their academic performance and prepare for future professional challenges.

METHODOLOGY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pedagogical Approach and Learning Process

To effectively implement the competencies outlined in the curriculum, the supervising teacher, who mentors pre-service teachers during a four-month field experience, structures the instructional content around four projects. At the end of each project, students, working in groups, are required to complete a collective task aligned with the project's learning objectives.

For example, the first project involves conducting documentary research on a historical narrative and making it available to students in the school library.

Throughout each project, the teacher follows a structured process:

- **Initial diagnostic assessment**: The teacher begins with a diagnostic evaluation to identify students' prior knowledge and skills, which helps in planning and structuring the learning process.
- **Selection of teaching methods and activities**: Based on students' needs, the teacher selects and organizes instructional methods and activities into sequenced lessons, each targeting specific competencies and concluding with an evaluation.
- **Definition of the teaching/learning context**: This includes the **integration task**, where students must mobilize their knowledge and skills to solve a problem autonomously. For instance, in the first project, titled *"Documents and Historical Texts,"* the objective is to develop competencies that enable students to interpret and analyze historical documents rigorously and critically.

Research Corpus

During the four-month practicum, to ensure the credibility of our evaluation framework, pre-service teachers from the École Normale Supérieure de Constantine conducted field observations at Lycée Touati in El-Khroub (Constantine). Their goal was to examine how the supervising teacher translated the curriculum—particularly the competency-based aspects—into concrete teaching practices and to what extent students acquired these competencies.

We observed the teacher in two different classrooms, covering two academic tracks: **Natural and Life Sciences** and **Foreign Languages**. Analyzing the French curriculum and student textbooks allowed us to outline the key components of the three evaluation grids corresponding to the three projects implemented by the FLE teacher.

Analysis of the Third-Year Secondary Curriculum

The third-year secondary curriculum aims to develop autonomous and engaged citizens capable of independent thought and informed decision-making. French language learning is positioned as a tool for civic education, prioritizing learning over teaching to foster student autonomy. The curriculum emphasizes effective language acquisition, incorporating cultural dimensions and promoting competency development (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) through the Competency-Based Approach (CBA).

Additionally, the curriculum seeks to equip students with linguistic, intercultural, and communicative competencies while fostering awareness of diversity. By the end of secondary education, students are expected to master oral and written communication skills, including comprehension, production, and analysis of various types of texts.

Instructional Time Allocation and Curriculum Content

Instructional time for French varies depending on the academic track, reflecting the subject's relative importance:

Literature and Foreign Languages Track: 4 hours per week
Natural and Life Sciences Track: 3 hours per week

Curriculum Content and Pedagogical Objectives

The third-year secondary French curriculum aims to develop a complex and critical communicative competence, focusing on discourse practices and communicative intentions. Students learn to:
Present information,
Argue and debate,
Engage in dialogue,
Narrate events,
Express individuality through oral and written expressions.

The curriculum themes situate language learning within a humanistic and civic framework, with the overarching goal of shaping students into speakers who can master linguistic codes while cultivating an autonomous, critical, and globally aware mindset.

Pedagogical Approach

The instructional approach emphasizes the systematic development of linguistic competencies through a dynamic and integrative methodology. Competency is understood as a synergy between theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and behavioral attitudes, allowing students to apply their learning in diverse, real-world contexts.

The project-based learning method is prioritized, fostering an engaging learning environment where varied activities give meaning to learning. This approach transforms knowledge into practical and operational skills, positioning students as autonomous learners capable of reinvesting their knowledge flexibly and creatively in various situations.

Our analysis of the third-year secondary curriculum highlights a well-structured time allocation based on academic tracks, content anchored in civic engagement, and a pedagogical approach focused on the development of critical and complex competencies. This framework prepares students to become independent and reflective communicators.

Targeted Competencies in the Third-Year Secondary French Curriculum

Reading Comprehension
Analyze literary and non-literary texts (*novels, short stories, poems, articles, essays*) by identifying themes, main ideas, arguments, and rhetorical techniques.
Understand nuances, implicit meanings, and the author's perspective.
Summarize and reformulate information clearly.

Written Production
Write argumentative, narrative, and descriptive texts, adhering to grammatical, spelling, and syntactic rules.
Structure ideas coherently and logically.
Use precise vocabulary and master various writing techniques (*description, narration, argumentation, dialogue*).

Oral Expression
Speak clearly and accurately in various situations.
Participate in debates and discussions, articulating well-reasoned arguments.

Deliver structured and relevant oral presentations.

Listening Comprehension
Understand diverse spoken discourse (*interviews, debates, conferences*), identifying main ideas and arguments.
Recognize nuances and implicit messages in conversations.

Transversal Competencies
Master linguistic structures (*vocabulary, grammar, spelling, conjugation*).
Conduct documentary research and critically evaluate information.
Develop critical thinking and analytical abilities.
Work both autonomously and collaboratively.

The communicative competency framework integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, along with grammatical and lexical mastery. Students are encouraged to develop self-awareness in their linguistic productions through self-evaluation and continuous improvement.
Beyond technical mastery, the ultimate goal is to cultivate independent communicators capable of:

Deciphering complex discourse,
Constructing nuanced arguments,
Exercising critical thinking.
Grammar and vocabulary are viewed not as isolated knowledge but as tools for structured and precise thought.

Assessment is continuous and formative, emphasizing individual progress, creativity, and effort. The aim is to prepare students to become reflective citizens, capable of effective communication in various social and professional contexts, where linguistic mastery serves as a vehicle for cognitive and social empowerment.

The Textbook: Structure and Content

The French textbook for third-year secondary education, designed by a pedagogical team composed of Fethi Mahboubi, Mohamed Rekkab, Azzedine Allaoui, Keltoum Djilali, and Mohamed Zebbar, was published in 2009 by ONPS. It is a comprehensive educational tool intended for students aged 17–18 years. The textbook serves as both a guide for teachers in lesson planning and classroom instruction and as a self-learning support for students, facilitating the acquisition of linguistic and cognitive competencies.
Structured around four didactic projects, the textbook aims to develop global communicative competence through the following tasks:

- Conducting documentary research and writing a synthesis,
- Organizing a debate and drafting a report,
- Launching a humanitarian appeal,
- Writing a fantasy short story.

Each project is designed as a linguistic journey, allowing students to apply their skills in authentic contexts while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and discursive autonomy. The pedagogical approach prioritizes the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and integrates various forms of assessment (diagnostic, formative, and summative).
Additionally, the textbook includes learning roadmaps to guide students in their progress. The cover features multicolored illustrations and diagrams, symbolizing different fields of learning. The central objective is to transform French language learning into a process

of developing effective and personal communication skills, positioning the student as the main actor in their own learning journey.

Proposal for an Evaluation Grid of Communicative Competencies

Objective This research aims to determine whether the competencies outlined in the official third-year secondary curriculum in Algeria are effectively implemented in FLE classrooms and to identify the pedagogical techniques used. Additionally, it seeks to analyze gaps between the theoretical curriculum and real classroom practices.

To achieve this, we developed an evaluation grid for communicative competencies, allowing for an objective and structured assessment of students' competency levels. In collaboration with our pre-service teachers, we followed a systematic approach to design and implement this tool.

Defining Criteria and Indicators

Competencies: We identified the key competencies expected for each project based on curriculum guidelines and textbook content. The primary competencies include:

Critical analysis,
Expressing opinions,
Defending a point of view,
Comparing and contrasting ideas,
Developing arguments,
Narrating events.

Indicators and Evaluation Scale: We applied a 0 to 10 evaluation scale:

0–3: Competency underdeveloped or not present
4–6: Competency in progress
7–9: Competency mastered
10: Competency excellently demonstrated

Project 1: Conducting Documentary Research and Writing a Synthesis

Sequence 1: Reporting a Historical Event
Sequence 2: Incorporating Testimonies in Historical Accounts
Sequence 3: Analyzing and Commenting on Historical Events

The objective of this project is to evaluate students' communicative competencies through these three sequences, using the evaluation grid to quantify results and determine whether students have mastered the competencies expected for the project.

Competency: Critical Presentation of Information

Ability to present objective information
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students demonstrate some ability to present objective information, but some struggle to differentiate facts from opinions.

Engagement in analytical thinking
Achievement Level: ☒ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students tend to remain superficial in their analysis and do not explore topics in depth.

Use of diverse sources
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students use a variety of sources, though they are often limited to traditional materials (textbooks, online articles).

Formulating reasoned judgments

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students struggle to construct well-supported arguments, often taking overly rigid positions without nuanced reasoning.

Project 2: Organizing a Debate and Writing a Report

Sequence 1: Engaging in a Debate – Convincing or Persuading
Sequence 2: Taking a Position in a Debate – Conceding and Refuting
Competency: Dialogue and Confrontation

Active Listening to Different Perspectives

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students demonstrate an ability to listen to others' opinions, but some struggle to integrate opposing viewpoints into their own arguments.

Ability to Formulate Arguments

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students can articulate arguments; however, these arguments tend to be underdeveloped or lack depth.

Respect for Contradiction

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students generally respect divergent viewpoints, but some struggle to respond constructively to counterarguments.

Construction of a Dialectical Argument

Achievement Level: ☒ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students face challenges in building a logical and coherent argument, often remaining at a superficial level of reasoning.

Competency: Argumentation

Selection of Appropriate Argumentative Strategies

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students use basic argumentative strategies but fail to diversify their expressions of opinion.

Logical Progression of Argumentation

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: While students structure their arguments logically, their progression is sometimes inconsistent.

Mobilization of Emotions and Reasoning

Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students combine rational and emotional arguments, but the balance is often uneven.

Persuasive Ability

Achievement Level: ☒ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students struggle to persuade their audience, often due to poorly developed or weakly structured arguments.

Project 3: Launching an Appeal to Mobilize Support for a Humanitarian Cause

Sequence 1: Understanding the Purpose of the Appeal and Structuring It
Sequence 2: Encouraging the Audience to Take Action

Competency: Critical Presentation of Information

Understanding the Purpose of the Appeal
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High
Commentary: Students have a clear understanding of the purpose of the appeal and can present it effectively.

Structuring the Appeal
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students structure their appeal coherently, but some lack precision in organizing ideas**.**

Use of Diverse Sources
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students utilize a variety of sources, though they tend to rely mainly on conventional materials (articles, testimonies).

Formulation of Nuanced Judgments
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students formulate judgments, but these often lack nuance and depth.

Competency: Argumentation

Selection of Appropriate Rhetorical Strategies
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students employ basic rhetorical strategies, but these are not always adapted to their audience.

Mobilization of Emotions and Reasoning
Achievement Level: ☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students combine logical and emotional appeals, but the balance is often inconsistent.

Persuasive Ability
Achievement Level: ☒ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
Commentary: Students struggle to persuade their audience, often due to underdeveloped or poorly structured arguments.

Analysis of the Three Evaluation Grids for the Three Projects

The first project, *"Conducting Documentary Research and Writing a Synthesis of Information,"* demonstrates a strong alignment between the targeted competencies and the pedagogical objectives outlined in the Algerian secondary-level FLE curriculum. However, the evaluation grid also highlights significant challenges encountered by students in effectively mobilizing these competencies, particularly in continuous oral production. The project's primary objective—developing the ability to construct a historical narrative—is assessed through four evaluation criteria: the ability to present objective information, engagement in analytical thinking, use of diverse sources, and formulation of nuanced judgments. These criteria fully align with the expectations of the FLE curriculum, which aims to train students to process information critically and objectively. However, the observed competency levels and

the accompanying qualitative comments highlight obstacles faced by non-native students, particularly in producing a structured and continuous oral discourse. While students demonstrate an average level in presenting objective information and using diverse sources, their analytical thinking skills and ability to formulate nuanced judgments remain underdeveloped. This finding underscores the difficulty students face in expressing themselves fluently and coherently in oral discourse, integrating all the targeted competencies. Furthermore, the superficial nature of their analyses and the lack of depth in their reasoning suggest a struggle to develop complex and structured oral argumentation. The observation that judgments are not properly formulated indicates a dual challenge: a lack of depth in information analysis and difficulties in translating this analysis into appropriate oral expression.

The analysis of the evaluation grid for **Project 2,** *"Organizing a Debate and Writing a Report,"* confirms the coherence between classroom competencies, textbook content, and the curriculum framework. However, the indicators reveal specific challenges faced by secondary school students when transitioning between different instructional sequences. One key issue stems from the limited instructional time, as students are simultaneously studying eight other subjects. This time constraint often results in knowledge retention difficulties, requiring teachers to constantly review key concepts before moving on to the final phase of the project. The project is structured around two main sequences: *"Engaging in a Debate: Convincing or Persuading"* and *"Taking a Position in a Debate: Conceding and Refuting."* These sequences aim to develop both dialogue and confrontation skills alongside argumentative competency, in accordance with the FLE curriculum objectives, which emphasize interactive speaking and structured argumentation. Regarding the competency of dialogue and confrontation, students demonstrate an average level in listening to different viewpoints and formulating arguments. However, their ability to integrate opposing opinions into their own arguments and respond constructively to objections remains underdeveloped. A more concerning finding is that the construction of a dialectical argument is weak, highlighting students' difficulty in structuring arguments logically and coherently. Instead of deepening discussions, students tend to remain on the surface of ideas, failing to engage in a meaningful debate.

The analysis of argumentative competency confirms these observations. While the choice of argumentative strategies and logical progression of arguments are rated at an average level, a lack of variety in opinion verbs and incoherencies in argument progression suggest a need for reinforcement. Additionally, although students incorporate emotional and rational arguments, their use of emotional appeals remains unbalanced, and their persuasive ability is weak. The difficulty in persuading an audience largely stems from underdeveloped and poorly structured arguments.

The analysis of the evaluation grid for **Project 3**, *"Launching an Appeal to Mobilize Support for a Humanitarian Cause,"* reveals overall alignment with the FLE curriculum objectives while also identifying persistent difficulties among third-year secondary students. This project focuses on developing students' ability to persuade, dissuade, and convince, which are essential competencies for training engaged citizens who can express themselves clearly and with conviction. The project's objectives align well with the curriculum's emphasis on argumentative speaking and civic engagement. Findings from the evaluation grid indicate a high level of competency in understanding the purpose of the appeal, confirming students' ability to grasp humanitarian issues. A moderate level of competency is observed in structuring the appeal, suggesting a general understanding of discourse organization. However, the analysis also highlights two notable weaknesses: a lack of precision in organizing ideas, likely influenced by the curriculum structure, and a reliance on conventional sources, as students often limit their research to textbooks and online articles.

Regarding argumentative competency, students show moderate proficiency in mobilizing emotional and rational appeals. However, their ability to adapt rhetorical strategies to their audience and maintain a balance between emotional and logical arguments requires further reinforcement. The most notable weakness remains their persuasive ability, which is

rated low. The difficulty in convincing an audience stems from underdeveloped arguments and poor structural coherence in their discourse.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The evaluation grids for communicative competencies provide a detailed and structured assessment of students' FLE skills. Across the three projects, the results indicate that students have a solid foundation in presenting objective information, engaging in active listening, and structuring a narrative or an appeal. However, their analytical thinking skills, dialectical reasoning, and persuasive abilities require further reinforcement.

The difficulty in fully mobilizing the targeted competencies can be partially attributed to limited instructional time, which restricts opportunities to explore all dimensions of the curriculum and textbook. This constraint significantly limits practice and in-depth learning, particularly in oral expression and argumentation. Additionally, as observed in previous projects, students struggle to express themselves fluently and continuously while simultaneously activating all the required competencies.

To improve student performance, it is crucial to optimize classroom time by prioritizing targeted and engaging activities. Implementing oral practice workshops, exercises on reformulation and argument nuance, and simulated mobilization appeals could significantly enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore, integrating a variety of digital resources and authentic materials would enrich students' learning experiences and boost their motivation.

Finally, particular attention should be given to developing strategies for managing speaking time and structuring discourse effectively, enabling students to communicate with greater confidence and conviction.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the French curriculum, the study of the third-year secondary textbook, and classroom observations—based on evaluation grids designed in accordance with program requirements—confirm our initial hypotheses: the teaching of communicative competencies, both oral and written, holds a central place in official documents, emphasizing a competency-based approach. However, classroom realities reveal a gap between programmatic ambitions and students' actual skills.

While students demonstrate undeniable potential in comprehension—particularly in understanding and summarizing objective information—significant gaps remain in oral and written production. Skills such as analytical thinking, narrative construction, argumentation, reasoning, and persuasion still require consolidation. This issue is particularly concerning, as mastering these competencies is essential for academic success and social integration.

These challenges are further exacerbated by contextual constraints, including a lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, dense curricula, insufficient teacher training in modern pedagogical approaches, heterogeneous student levels, and limited exposure to diverse communicative situations.

Given these challenges, it is imperative to promote innovative and engaging pedagogical practices centered on interaction, critical analysis, and argumentation. Activities such as analyzing diverse sources, structured debates, writing workshops, and group discussions fostering active listening and respect for differing opinions are key strategies to help students fully develop their communicative potential and prepare them for the demands of contemporary society.

We fully align with C. Reinhardt (2009), who asserts that competency development occurs when linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects are integrated into real-world problem-solving contexts.

References:

Benson, P. 2011. *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833767

Bouhadiba, F. 2020. "Educational reform in Algeria: Between ambitions and realities." *Revue des Sciences de l'Éducation* 45 (2) :78–95.

Boukhalfa, S. 2023. "Towards an improvement of FLE teaching in Algeria: Avenues for reflection." *Revue des Langues Étrangères* 22(4):156–172.

Holec, H. 1981. *Autonomy and foreign language learning.* Council of Europe.

Khelifi, H. 2019*. Learner autonomy in third-year secondary education: Issues and challenges*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ed192557

Khelifi, M. 2019. "Obstacles to the implementation of the competency-based approach in Algeria." *Revue des Sciences Humaines et Sociales* 34(1) : 45–60.

Little, D. 1991. *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues, and problems.* Authentik.

Ministry of National Education, Algeria. 2003. *General program framework.*

Ministry of National Education, Algeria. 2003. *Supporting document for third-year secondary education.*

Ministry of National Education, Algeria. 2024. *Third-year secondary student textbook.*

Meziani, A. (2022). Active pedagogy in FLE teaching: Challenges and perspectives. *Revue de Didactique des Langues*, 18(2) : 89–104.

Narcy-Combes, M.-F. 2020. *Language learning and technology: Autonomy and personalization.* Hachette FLE.

Ouvrard, S. et al. 2021. *Promoting learner autonomy.* Hachette FLE.

Piaget, J. 1967. *The psychology of the child.* Presses Universitaires de France.

Reinhardt, C. 2009. Applying the three competencies of the CEFR in the classroom: A pragmatic synthesis of project-based and task-based teaching approaches. *Le français dans le monde*, Special Issue, January 2009: The action-oriented approach in language classrooms (p. 45–53). Éditions Hachette.

Scallon, G. 2004. *L'évaluation des apprentissages dans une approche par compétences.* De Boeck.

Tardif, J. (2017). *Competency-based assessment: Documenting the developmental pathway.* Les Éditions Logiques.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. 1978. *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Harvard University Press. https://shorturl.at/ntCP9

BIONOTE:

LEILA BOUCHEBCHEB works as a teacher-researcher (Associate Professor, Class A) at the Assia-Djebar Higher Normal School in Constantine, where she provides high-level training for future educators. A specialist in didactics and the learning sciences of French, she has distinguished herself through the publication of numerous scientific works on key topics such as reading instruction and learning, teaching methodologies, and pedagogical approaches in didactics. Holding a UTICEF Pro diploma from the University of Paris in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Education (ICTE), she is also interested in issues related to the integration of innovative technologies into teaching practices, as well as the contribution of digital tools to teaching French as a Foreign Language (FFL), areas in which she has also made significant contributions.