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Corresponding author:

Samira Ouazib

Email: s.ouazib@aala.dz

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Educational Terminology in the Algerian educational system in light of specialized dictionaries

Samira Ouazib, Naima Chalghoum*

Research unit in linguistic sciences, Algerian academy of Arabic language, Algeria. *

Laboratory for historical studies and research on heritage and civilization, Martyr Abbas Laghrour University, Khenchela, Algeria.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the educational terminology used in Algerian middle school curricula. It analyzes the clarity, accuracy, and standardization of these terms by comparing a sample from the Arabic language curriculum to their equivalents in Francophone and Anglophone specialized dictionaries. The findings reveal significant discrepancies rooted in their translation sources (French vs. English references), which in turn impacts terminological unity. The research concludes with a set of recommendations for improving curriculum terminology and developing standardized specialized lexicons.

Keywords: educational terminology, educational system, reference, terminology science, specialized dictionaries.

المصطلحات التعليميّة في المنظومة التربويّة الجزائريّة في ضوء المعاجم المتخصّصة

المخلص:

نسعى من خلال معالجتنا لموضوع المقال إلى دراسة المصطلحات التعليمية الموظفة في مناهج التعليم المتوسط وتحليلها، وذلك بالاستعانة بالمعاجم المتخصصة في المجال نفسه (التعليمية؛ اللسانيات التطبيقية...) بهدف الفهم الدقيق لهذه المصطلحات وتحديد مدى وضوحها ودقتها في المناهج الدراسية، بالإضافة إلى تقييم مدى توحيدها في المجال التعليمي، ولهذا قمنا بدراسة عيّنة من المصطلحات التعليمية التي وردت في مناهج اللغة العربيّة في ضوء ما يقابلها من مصطلحات في المعاجم العربيّة التي أخذت عن المدرسة الفرنسية، ومقابلاتها التي وردت في معاجم مرجعيّتها الأولى هي الإنجليزيّة، وخلصنا في الأخير إلى جملة من النتائج أئعنّاها بمجموعة من التوصيات لتحسين استخدام المصطلحات التعليمية في المناهج الدراسية، وتطوير المعاجم المتخصصة.

كلمات مفتاحية: المصطلح التعليمي - التعليم - المنظومة التربوية - المرجعيّة - علم المصطلح.

La terminologie éducative dans le système éducatif algérien à la lumière des dictionnaires spécialisés

Résumé :

Cette étude s'intéresse à la terminologie éducative utilisée dans les programmes des collèges algériens. Elle analyse la clarté, la précision et la normalisation des termes en comparant un échantillon issu du programme de langue arabe avec leurs équivalents dans des dictionnaires spécialisés francophones et anglophones. Les résultats révèlent d'importantes divergences, liées aux sources de traduction (références françaises versus anglaises), ce qui affecte l'unité terminologique. En conclusion, nous proposons un ensemble de recommandations visant à améliorer la terminologie des programmes et à développer des lexiques spécialisés normalisés.

Mots clés : Terminologie didactique- Système éducatif- Référence- Science de la terminologie - Dictionnaires spécialisés.

Introduction

The field of education intersects with various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and speech therapy. This intersection necessitates keeping up with rapid developments in these sciences and providing educators and specialized researchers with precise terminology that can be effectively employed in the educational process. Terminology is the key to sciences and the gateway to accessing them, as knowledge is defined and acquired through its terms. The more precise and direct the terminology, the clearer the intended concept becomes, eliminating ambiguity and ensuring the correct acquisition of knowledge.

It is well known that terminology generation may sometimes lead to consensus, resulting in a single, comprehensive term that precisely encapsulates a concept. However, terminological discrepancies can also arise, leading to multiple terms for the same meaning or concept. This variation stems from the different references and schools from which these terms have been translated or adopted. This issue is particularly evident in education, where each system adopts its terminology based on its closest reference. Consequently, Algerian educational terminology fluctuates between Francophone and Anglophone references, sometimes leading to confusion.

Given its significance, we chose to study this topic. Examining educational terminology as a form of specialized discourse helps to:

- Improve the quality of educational curricula and ensure that teachers accurately understand concepts, enabling them to apply them correctly in pedagogical practice.
- Facilitate communication among teachers, learners, and researchers.
- Develop specialized dictionaries by providing lexicographers with valuable feedback to enhance educational terminology dictionaries.

The goal of this study is not merely to compare, but to examine the scientific references adopted in selecting educational terminology. The ultimate objective is to call for the unification of Arabic educational terminology across the Arab world and to find Arabic equivalents for new terms, thereby mitigating the current terminological confusion.

1. Terminology and Terminology Science

The advancement and flourishing of sciences, along with the global expansion of knowledge, have placed the Arabic language in a race to keep up with developments in various fields, including medicine, technology, media, and education. The need to create terminology for emerging concepts has become an ongoing challenge, especially since Arab societies are primarily recipients of these innovations. In this context, terminology science is considered "the only means to keep up with the latest developments of the era, achieve a true scientific renaissance in various fields, enrich scientific and technological research, and advance the status of Arabic scientific terminology" (Maâtaki & Saïd, 2020).

A term is defined as "a word formulated according to the characteristics of the language to denote the essence of a specific entity and agreed upon by specialists" (Sasi, 2009). A term is not created arbitrarily but follows established methods identified by scholars, including coinage, derivation, metaphor, blending, compound formation, Arabization, and translation.

Terminology science, on the other hand, is the field that studies terminology. It is defined as "the scientific study of concepts and the terms that express them in specialized languages. Its purpose is to produce specialized dictionaries, its goal is to provide precise scientific and technical terms that facilitate information exchange, and its ultimate aim is to disseminate scientific knowledge to build a knowledge-based society capable of achieving comprehensive development for the advancement and well-being of humanity" (Al-Qassami, 2009).

Terminology holds significant importance in the educational field because it intersects with multiple disciplines, such as educational psychology, pedagogy, sociolinguistics, speech therapy, and child psychology. These disciplines often share a common lexicon despite differences in research methods, work mechanisms, and objectives. As a result, dictionaries and glossaries frequently combine educational and psychological terms, as well as educational and pedagogical terminology. While these fields overlap and interact, working with their terminology requires great caution, diligence, and rigorous research to identify precise terms that accurately reflect the intended concepts.

The issue of standardizing terminology in a specific field is widely debated and has been extensively examined by researchers, particularly regarding translation and Arabization. One such study is Jamil Mala'ika's article,

"Methods for Selecting and Establishing Scientific Terminology," which outlines key principles (Mala'ika, 1985). These include:

- A term does not necessarily have to encompass its full scientific meaning. Linguistically, it may not always convey the complete intended meaning, but it should be chosen based on its closest relationship to the scientific concept and specified accordingly.
- The scientific meaning of a foreign term should be considered before its linguistic meaning. Often, the original foreign term may not be entirely appropriate, and blindly translating it may lead to the same inaccuracy in the Arabic equivalent.

Examining the current state of sciences, particularly in the Arab world, reveals a state of terminological chaos and inconsistency. This issue is evident in educational sciences, where the terms used in research, studies, and even official educational documents vary significantly between the Maghreb and Mashreq regions. This discrepancy arises from differences in translation sources: North African countries translate from French studies, while Eastern Arab countries adopt terms from English sources. Additionally, some scholars, such as Abdelrahman Al-Haj Saleh, advocate for deriving terminology from classical Arabic sources. In his research, he emphasized the need for concerted efforts to unify Arabic terminology across all scientific disciplines. He argued that this unification should be achieved through "standardizing research methodologies and terminology creation" and that the focus should not be solely on coining new terms but also on their actual usage, since language is both a system of creation and usage (Al-Haj Saleh, 2007).

Al-Haj Saleh also warned that "relying solely on a single foreign language as a reference and deriving terminology exclusively from it forces Arabic into the confines of one culture" (Al-Haj Saleh, 2007). This approach limits the Arabic language's ability to accommodate diverse scientific disciplines, restricting the scope of research and studies. Consequently, specialized researchers and university students struggle with multiple terms for the same concept, making it difficult to correctly transfer and use appropriate terminology. This, in turn, hinders the precise organization and communication of knowledge.

2. The Role of Specialized Dictionaries in Standardizing Terminology

The inconsistency in terminology-manifested through excessive synonyms, overlapping terms that may carry one or multiple meanings, imprecise usage within a specific field, and a lack of clear distinctions-results in significant communication challenges. The chaos in terminology particularly hampers effective communication in specialized fields, leading to misunderstandings of information and concepts, which in turn may cause serious errors and consequences. Among these consequences are:

- Hindrance to scientific research, as researchers struggle to compare results and unify efforts.
- Wasted time and effort, negatively impacting productivity and efficiency.
- For these reasons, specialized dictionaries have been developed to play a crucial role in standardizing terminology. They serve as the primary reference for defining terms and ensuring their consistent usage. Specialized dictionaries contribute to:
 - Defining precise meanings of terms by providing detailed and context-specific definitions. For example, in the legal field, specialized dictionaries help clarify the exact meanings of legal terms, ensuring their correct application in legal proceedings.
 - Clarifying subtle differences between similar terms, which helps avoid ambiguity and confusion.
 - Providing users with information on the origins of terms and their historical development.
 - Standardizing the use of terminology, ensuring effective communication among specialists. In the medical field, for instance, specialized dictionaries help unify medical terminology, facilitating clear communication between doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.
 - Identifying standard terms for usage while also listing alternative or synonymous terms.
 - Creating a unified language within a field, making knowledge and expertise exchange more accessible.
 - Facilitating translation by providing accurate translations of terms into different languages, thus enhancing cross-border communication among specialists.

- Identifying equivalent terms in other languages and explaining cultural differences that may affect their usage.
- Assisting translators in understanding and accurately translating specialized terms.

Specialised dictionaries are not just collections of words; they are essential tools for combatting terminological chaos. They create a shared linguistic framework that is vital for effective communication and the advancement of knowledge within a specialised field by providing clear definitions, distinguishing between similar terms, and standardising usage.

Building on this understanding of the role of specialised dictionaries, the following section will present an analysis of the educational terminology used in the Algerian middle school curriculum.

3. Analysis of Educational Terminology in Middle School Curricula

In modern pedagogical approaches, the concept of the "curriculum" has replaced that of the "syllabus." As stated in educational research, "The evolution of educational systems and pedagogical thought has highlighted the clear distinction between the terms 'syllabus' and 'curriculum,' with a preference for the latter. However, in practice, we still remain tied to the concept of 'syllabus'" (National Ministry of Education 2009). The syllabus is described as "a model for organizing education based on the knowledge that should be imparted to learners. It typically consists of a list of targeted knowledge areas and subjects" (National Ministry of Education 2009).

According to the General Curriculum Framework, the curriculum is defined as "all structured learning experiences and all influences a student may encounter under the school's responsibility throughout their education. This concept includes the learning activities in which the student participates, the methods and tools used, as well as the assessment strategies implemented" (National Ministry of Education 2009).

It is natural for curricula to be subject to continuous evaluation and revision—adjusted, updated, refined, and corrected, to align with changes and advancements in education. Following the 2003 educational reform, Algeria's education system saw the revision of primary and middle school curricula in 2016. This update introduced new concepts and terminology, prompting an inquiry into their underlying references. To explore this, we selected a set of

terms from the Arabic language curriculum for middle school and analyzed them using a range of specialized dictionaries.

3.1 Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, comparative methodology to analyze the terminological landscape of the Algerian educational system. The primary corpus for analysis is the 2016 Middle School Arabic Language Curriculum, published by the Algerian Ministry of National Education.

The selection of a sample of terms for detailed analysis was based on their centrality to the pedagogical reforms introduced in the 2016 curriculum. The four key terms selected were: "competence," "acquisitions," "comprehension of written text," and "learning segment." These terms were chosen because they represent foundational concepts within the competency-based approach and are essential for understanding the new curriculum's framework.

The analysis involved a three-step process:

- **Corpus-Based Analysis:** Each selected term was first examined within the curriculum itself to determine its contextual usage and the official definition provided by the Ministry of National Education.

- **Comparative Dictionary Analysis:** The curriculum's definition and usage were then compared against a range of specialized dictionaries, including both Francophone and Anglophone references, to identify variations and potential inconsistencies. The dictionnaires used for this comparison were :

- *Pédagogie: Dictionnaire des concepts clés* (Francophone)

- *Al-Manhal Al-Tarbawi* (Francophone-influenced)

- *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics Terms* (Anglophone-influenced)

- *Dictionary of Educational and Psychological Terms* (Anglophone-influenced)

- **Evaluative Synthesis:** The findings from the comparative analysis were synthesized to evaluate the clarity, accuracy, and standardization of the terminology. The aim was to pinpoint discrepancies arising from different translation sources and to assess their impact on terminological unity within the Algerian educational context.

3.2 Study the sample of selected terms

▪ *Competence*

In recent decades, the term "competence" has become widespread in several educational systems, including Algeria, which adopted the competency-based approach following the 2003 educational reform. The French and English equivalent is *compétence*. According to the specialized French dictionary *Pédagogie: Dictionnaire des concepts clés* by Françoise Raynal and Alain Rieuni, the term refers to "the set of possible behaviors (affective, cognitive, and psychomotor) that allow an individual to engage in an activity generally considered complex" (Françoise & Alain, 1997). Thus, competence is a set of abilities that enable an individual to overcome difficulties or solve problematic situations effectively and efficiently.

Abdelkarim Gharib adopted the same meanings in his dictionary, *Al-Manhal Al-Tarbawi*, using the term *Kifaya* without the hamza. He also included several linguistic definitions, such as: "The word *Kifaya* denotes what suffices to fill a gap and achieve the intended purpose in a matter" (Gharib, 2006,). He also distinguished, based on several Francophone dictionaries and studies, between the concept of *Kifaya* and other terms with different meanings, such as ability, proficiency, and skill (Gharib, 2006).

Despite the fact that both the 2003 and 2016 curricula were based on the competency-based approach, we do not find the term "linguistic competence" explicitly stated. Instead, competence is treated as multiple competencies. However, the curriculum does incidentally employ terms such as "linguistic faculty."

The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics Terms uses the terms "linguistic competence," "linguistic ability," and "linguistic faculty" to denote the same concept. It defines linguistic competence as: "Linguistic faculty or linguistic ability, which is the implicit knowledge of the rules and laws of language" (Al-osili, 2023). Here, we find an overlap in the use of terms between linguistic competence/capacity and linguistic faculty in the sense introduced by Chomsky.

On the other hand, the Dictionary of Educational and Psychological Terms uses the term "competence" in a completely different context. It defines competence as "the teacher's possession of a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, concepts, and attitudes... It is a practical performance that can be observed, analyzed, interpreted, and measured" (Shehata, 2011). The authors also provide the term *Kifaya* with the meaning of "capacity, aptitude, ability, which

represents the highest level an individual can potentially reach if given the best training or education" (Shehata, 2011).

Regarding the term competence in the curriculum under study, it uses the term "transversal competence" (from the French *compétence transversale*). Meanwhile, Abdelkarim Gharib uses the term "extended competence" or "cross-cutting competence," which he defines as "the competence whose application and use extend into new contexts. The broader and more varied the fields, contexts, and situations in which the same competence is applied beyond its original domain and situation, the greater its degree of extension" (Gharib, 2006).

The curriculum states a set of transversal competencies using long phrases instead of relying on precise scientific terminology:

- Competences of an intellectual nature
- Competences of a methodological nature
- Competences of a communicative nature
- Competences of a personal and social nature

This formulation violates one of the principles of terminology, as mentioned by linguists: "One must avoid using multiple terms for the same meaning" (Mala'ika, 1985). The curriculum employs other terms that may refer to the same concept, such as using the phrase "competences of a communicative nature" alongside the term "communicative competence," both of which denote the same concept. It would have been preferable to settle on a single, precise scientific term, as this would eliminate the excessive use of terms or lengthy phrases without a clear scientific reference.

▪ *Acquisitions*

The term "acquisitions" appears in the Arabic language curriculum for the intermediate education stage without any additions. For example, on page 30 of the curriculum, it is emphasized that the intermediate education stage serves as "a continuation of the student's acquisitions from primary education" (Ministry of National Education, 2016). The term also appears in conjunction with other terms, such as "linguistic acquisitions" or "prior acquisitions." For instance, the objectives of the Arabic language subject state that it aims to "support and enrich learners' linguistic acquisitions" (Ministry of National Education, 2016). The term "prior acquisitions" is used in the resources for competency development and in discussions regarding curriculum design, which takes into

account learners' prior acquisitions, as well as their cognitive and intellectual abilities (Ministry of National Education, 2016).

Abdelkarim Gharib, in Al-Manhal, uses the term acquisitions (from the French *acquis*) to refer to "the set of knowledge and skills acquired by the learner in previous learning, which forms their record of experiences, prior knowledge, and learning background, playing an active role in acquiring new information" (Gharib, 2006). He further elaborates by introducing additional related terms:

Recognized acquisitions (*Acquis Reconnaissance Des*)

Knowledge acquisition (*Acquisition Des Connaissances*)

Academic acquisition (*Acquisition Scolaire*)

The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics Terms, which has an English-language reference, uses the term acquisition. It defines it as "a linguistic, psychological, and applied term referring to a child's acquisition of their mother tongue... It is also used to distinguish between Second Language Acquisition in a natural environment and Foreign Language Learning in structured classroom settings" (Al-osili, 2023). Meanwhile, the term "knowledge acquisition" refers to "one of the applied fields of computational linguistics, where computers interact with humans using natural language in a specialized domain" (Al-osili, 2023).

It appears that the term acquisitions as used by Abdel Karim Gharib is closer to the one employed in the curriculum, compared to its use in the other two dictionaries.

▪ ***Comprehension of Written Text (Reading)***

The term "comprehension of written text" appears in the Arabic language curriculum as a synonym for "reading," which is placed in parentheses. The accompanying document defines it as: "A set of cognitive processes that translate symbols into readable meanings. It is a mental activity that involves several components: comprehension, reconstruction, use of information, and text evaluation" (Ministry of National Education, 2016). This meaning corresponds to the French term "*compréhension de l'écrit*" and is broader than "reading."

Reading is defined as:

- The process of identifying letters and then assembling them to understand the relationship between the written and the spoken (Galissou & Coste, 1979).

Reading a written text aloud, which requires transitioning from the written system to the phonetic system.

Moving the eyes across a written text to grasp its content.

Abdelkarim Gharib, on the other hand, uses the term "text comprehension," equivalent to the French *compréhension du texte*, which he defines as "an exercise in which the learner reads a text and then answers a set of questions to demonstrate understanding of the message. This process involves multiple skills, employing both objective and interpretative questions, and requires the ability to grasp the message's intent, text structure, and both explicit and implicit main ideas" (Gharib, 2006).

The Dictionary of Educational and Psychological Terms employs the term "reading comprehension" as a translation of the English reading comprehension. It defines it as "a multi-dimensional cognitive process and an interaction between the reader, the text, and the context. Comprehension is a strategic process that enables the reader to extract meaning from a written text" (Shehata, 2011).

These three terms—"comprehension of written text," "text comprehension," and "reading comprehension"—are conceptually similar despite apparent differences, illustrating the inconsistency and multiplicity of terminology in Arab educational systems.

▪ *Learning Segment*

The revised curricula of 2016 adopted the term "learning segment" to introduce a new concept replacing the "unit" or "theme" used in previous educational approaches. The "learning segment" refers to "an organized and interconnected set of activities and tasks—replacing daily lesson planning—that is characterized by the presence of relationships linking its sequential components in a spiral progression" (Ministry of National Education, 2016). This ensures a return to prior learning to diagnose and consolidate it, enabling learners to acquire new resources that contribute to the development of comprehensive competency.

Abdelkarim Gharib uses the term "segment," corresponding to the French term *séquence*, meaning: "A set of interconnected subunits linked by a task or intended objective, forming part of the lesson" (Gharib, 2006). However, this sense of segment does not align with its use in the curriculum. Gharib explains that a lesson consists of three main segments: introductory, middle, and final.

Here, he refers to the structure of the lesson and the actions performed by the teacher and students during a single session.

By contrast, the "learning segment" corresponds to the French terms la séquence d'apprentissage or la séquence pédagogique, which are standard in French educational terminology (Bernard, 2010).

To summarize, the table 1 summarizes the partial findings:

Table 1. Differences between the studied terms

Term	Curriculum Definition	Francophone Dictionaries Equivalent	Anglophone Dictionaries Equivalent	Summary of Discrepancies
Competence	Uses the term "transversal competence" and classifies it into categories (intellectual, methodological, communicative, personal, and social), while incidentally referring to "linguistic faculties."	Defined as "a set of possible behaviors (affective, cognitive, and psychomotor) that allow an individual to engage in an activity generally considered complex."	Defined as "the teacher's possession of a set of knowledge and skills... It is a practical performance that can be observed and measured."	Discrepancy in definition: French sources focus on student behaviors, while English sources focus on teacher performance. The existence of synonymous terms like "competence" and "faculty."
Acquisitions	"A continuation of what the student has acquired in primary education," and "enrichment of linguistic acquisitions" and "prior acquisitions."	Defined as "the set of knowledge and skills acquired by the learner in previous learning, which constitutes their record of experiences and prior knowledge."	Defined as "a linguistic and applied psychological term referring to a child's acquisition of their mother tongue... and used to distinguish between second language acquisition in	Acquisitions Francophone dictionaries align more closely with the curriculum's usage, while Anglophone dictionaries offer a more specific definition related to

			a natural environment and its learning in a structured setting."	language acquisition.
Comprehension of Written Text (Reading)	"A set of mental processes to translate symbols into readable meanings," which includes comprehension, reconstruction, information use, and text evaluation.	Reading is defined as "the process of identifying letters and then assembling them to understand the relationship between the written and the spoken." Another dictionary differentiates between "text comprehension" and "reading."	Defined as "a multi-dimensional cognitive process and an interaction between the reader, the text, and the context."	The three terms (Comprehension of Written Text, Text Comprehension, Reading Comprehension) are conceptually similar but differ in expression, indicating terminological inconsistency.
Learning Segment	"A set of organized and interconnected activities and tasks... characterized by relationships linking its sequential components in a spiral progression."	The term séquence is defined as "a set of interconnected subunits linked by a task or objective, forming part of a lesson." This definition does not align with its use in the curriculum.	There is no direct equivalent of the term in the dictionaries mentioned in the text.	The curriculum uses the term in a way that is inconsistent even with the influential Francophone dictionary in the region, suggesting confusion in terminology usage even within the linguistic references that influence the curriculum.

The analysis of the table data highlights the urgent need for conceptual precision and the development of methodological terminology in Algerian educational discourse. The research demonstrates how linguistic hybridization - the blending of French conceptual frameworks with Arabic terminology - creates fundamental cognitive obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of curricula. Therefore, we propose a set of recommendations to address these gaps, which we will present in the research conclusion.

4. Conclusion

This study examined the reference frameworks adopted by the Algerian education system, focusing on a sample of educational terms used in the Arabic-language curriculum at intermediate level. Our analysis revealed the following key findings:

First, there are significant differences in the use of educational terminology between North African and Middle Eastern scholars, as evidenced by specialised dictionaries and lexicons. This inconsistency hinders the attainment of accurate knowledge.

The Algerian educational system relies on French translations for constructing its curricula and establishing its educational terminology. This suggests that the system's knowledge framework is fundamentally Francophone, as revealed by our analysis of specific terms in the 2016 Arabic language curriculum.

It is an undeniable fact that English has come to dominate all sciences, research and academic studies. Specialists and scholars are therefore increasingly striving to learn English and publish their research in this language to reach a wider audience. Consequently, translating from English and standardising terminology could help to bridge many gaps and address issues related to the educational terminology used in curricula across the Arab world.

Based on these findings, we offer the following recommendations:

- The terminology used in curricula and specialised dictionaries should be improved.
- A concerted effort should be made to unify Arabic educational terminology across the Arab world.
- Based on these findings, we offer the following recommendations:
- The terminology used in curricula and specialised dictionaries should be improved.

- A concerted effort must be made to unify Arabic educational terminology across the Arab world.

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