

## English Language Education in Algeria: Hostage of an Exam-Centric Education System

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### Abstract

The present research paper is a plea for a reform policy of English Language Education in Algerian secondary-school education. It attempts to redraw the boundaries of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from a teaching-testing perspective based on two fundamental questions: the 'what-to-teach' and the 'what-to-test', which represent the rationale of Algerian EFL classrooms. It also expands into a discussion of the discrepancies existing between stated objectives and classroom practice. This deviation from the prescribed syllabus is dictated by the Baccalaureate exam, a standardized test *par excellence* and the 'entry visa' to university. The study was carried out with a sample population composed of twenty-eight male and female students from the English Department of the University of Tlemcen, Algeria during the first term of the academic year 2018-2019. The data collected tools employed in this pilot experimental study, a pre-unit test (a pre-test), remedial activities, and a post-test, were conducted on the sample at the end of the experiment. The research paper culminates with a formulation of initial pedagogical steps that are likely to develop students' communicative abilities within an exam-centric education system characterized by a grammar-focused and vocabulary-building test-oriented teaching. Hence, to negotiate a balanced approach that would accommodate both effective teaching and efficient testing.

*Keywords:* Communicative abilities, English Language Education, high-stakes exam, teach-to-the-test pedagogy

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