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**Subject:**

**To what extent Do the activities of the Algerian Middle School  
Textbook of English On the Move Respond to the Aims and  
Principles of CBA?**

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*To our parents.*

*To our sisters and brothers.*

*To our friends.*

*To our teachers.*

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Last, we wish to express particular thanks to the board of examiners who accepted to examine our research paper. Special thanks to our families who encouraged us all along the way. Appreciations go to our teachers at Mouloud MAMMERRI University of Tizi Ouzou, and our friends.

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## **Abstract**

Education reforms, especially in Algeria, have adopted the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) to improve the level of efficiency of the educational and pedagogical systems in which “competency” constitutes the central objective. CBA is intensely incorporated in the Algerian syllabus design since the early 2000s in order to suggest an effective language teaching tool as well as a competency-based teaching/learning material. Based on that, the work at hand deals with an evaluation of the activities suggested in the Algerian Middle school English textbook On the Move in relation to the principles of CBA. In addition to the activities, this research aims also to find out whether the training programmes in this instructional material, issued within the recent educational reform, reflect the principles of CBA. In order to address this issue and answer our research questions, we have conducted an examination of the activities suggested in the textbook in use, which is the linchpin of our investigation, along with relying on the theoretical guidelines suggested for teachers by the Algerian educational authorities which determine the learning objectives. Moreover, we have adopted a questionnaire which has been submitted to teachers of English in different middle schools around the region of Draa El Mizan in Tizi-Ouzou. The data gathered from the questionnaire has helped us in eliciting a base of knowledge regarding the content of the textbook and the nature of the activities. Despite some shortcomings, the attained results disclose that On the Move's activities perfectly reflect the principles of CBA.

## **List of Abbreviations**

- CBA : Competency-Based Approach
- QEP : Quebec Education Programme
- CBE : Competency-Based Education
- EFL : English as a Foreign Language

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# **1. General Introduction**

## **1.1 Statement of the problem**

The Algerian students' school curriculum from primary to secondary school is based on specific period of time based on trimesters. Prior to the reform in education undertaken in the early 2000s, that is, at the time when time-based teaching has dominated the learning process, no much consideration was paid for students' abilities and competencies. In a time-based teaching model, for instance, all students start and end their course at the same time. During a term of study, few students, who are generally high achievers, will master most of the materials. The average students, master less of the material and get lower grades, and the remaining ones, who are the low achievers, do master only half of the material and fail the grade. Although these failing students know a considerable part of the material, the only option is to take the entire class over again. This is discouraging to students, and some may give up the whole education experience. Competency-Based Approach (CBA) as a novelty in education in our country, on the other hand, strives the rate of failure. Instruction is highly individualized and all learners are expected to attain the minimal level of performance needed to master a given skill. As a result, the question of educational contents corresponding to future demands has become a crucial issue in educational reforms throughout the world. It is also the case of the educational system in Algeria, which adopted CBA as a part of the reform.

In Algeria, the CBA was initially introduced in 2001 and implemented in 2003 as a result of the educational reform in the primary, middle, and secondary school; new textbooks have been published at all levels for this purpose. Moreover, CBA has been adopted in teaching English as a foreign language in order to prepare the learners to be competent in communication and in their real life tasks.

Even though the English language teaching process in Algeria has witnessed a radical change, the problem, however, is that despite recent developments in the pedagogical aspects of instructional materials for education, in numerous cases, students are still unable to manifest and apply their abilities in real life experiences. So, is it a problem that lies within the approach per se, or is it a teacher-induced problem, or is it a defect within the teaching materials?

## **1.2 Aims of the study**

The activities provided in English textbooks have been a vital issue among the designers of activities (According to CBA's requirements) for their major role in the progress and the regress (In case of misuse) of the English students' skills. On that basis, this paper first takes an in-depth look at this approach including the definitions of such concepts "competence" and "competency" and then goes on to critically discuss and evaluate the activities provided in the Algerian Middle School English textbook On the Move (Fourth year) in relation to the aims and principles of CBA and to find out the extent to which these activities comply with this approach?

## **1.3 Research questions and Hypothesis**

The research work is directed by the following research questions:

- a. Do the activities provided in the Algerian Middle School English textbook On the Move meet the aims of CBA and comply with its principles?
- b. Do the activities play a major role in the quality of the learning outcomes, and do they suit the needs, interests, and the levels of the students?

The questions asked above need to be answered within the framework of the following hypothesis:

Competencies are attained after various carefully planned activities to reach excellence in doing specific skills enabling young people to adapt to the changing world. Therefore, if the learning activities included in the fourth year Middle School English textbook On the Move are based on CBA principles, then the pupils at the end of the course syllabus should have developed robust sets of learning outcomes and competencies, including the ability to be communicatively competent in real situations. And we also hypothesize that textbook activities when designed pursuant to CBA's objectives can contribute too much to students' learning and the development of their skills.

#### **1.4 Research tools and Methodology**

The focus of our thesis is to review the CBA which has been a feature of the Algerian educational system over the last 12 years, and to consider the implementation of the aspects of CBA in the activities encompassed in the Algerian Middle School English Textbook On the Move. The research design uses the qualitative case study research approach. In this respect, the study is conducted by collecting and examining relevant literature pertaining to CBA programmes in addition to the collected data provided by participants who supplied written answers in the form of questionnaires that were supplied to them. In brief, our research tools can be outlined in the following list:

- a. The fourth year English textbook entitled On the Move.
- b. Data analysis of some of the activities and projects included in it.
- c. A questionnaire presented to experienced Middle School English teachers (These participants were chosen for their experience in teaching and lecturing according to the objectives traced by CBA)

## **1.5 Organization of the dissertation**

The following research contains six main sections. The first one is a General Introduction to the topic. The second is theoretical where the researcher reviews the literature relevant to the topic. This section is also split into a variety of points: origins of CBA, definitions of CBA, objectives of CBA, principles and characteristics of CBA, the notion of competency vs competence, the teachers' and students' role in CBA, and the advantages and drawbacks of CBA. The third section includes the Study Design where the researchers give a detailed description of the guiding methodology throughout the research work as well as a presentation of the research tools and participants. As regards the fourth section, "Results" it includes the attained findings. The fifth section "Discussions" is empirical, as it covers the findings sorted out from the investigation of the activities of On the Move textbook in relation to CBA's principles along with analyzing, discussing, and interpreting them. Finally, the work ends with a General Conclusion recapitulating the most important results as well as presenting some suggestions and recommendations for future research.

## **2. Review of the Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The CBA is perceived by some as the ultimate answer to the improvement of education and training in our developed world. The interest in competence and competency has been the backbone of this approach. For over 30 years, educational systems have resorted to the utilization of competency models to provide a means “knowledge, skills, abilities” for students to be effective individuals functioning and performing at expected standards. For this purpose, there are different models of curriculum development that have been set forth; some focusing on knowledge transmission and assessment of such knowledge and others more on skills and personal development. So, an in depth analysis of CBA can be an enriching experience. In the light of this, we will break down the issues in order to give each of them the thought that they fully deserve.

### **2.2 A brief History of Competency-Based Approach**

It is worth pointing out that the differences in values and trends found in different systems of educations are what is worth exploring and examining rather than historical descriptions. However, more importantly, this section attempts to trace the origins of CBA and how it has evolved throughout time.

In recent years, Competency-Based Education (CBE), an educational approach which centers learning around competencies that are seen as basic elements for successful performance, has gained large acceptance in all the aspects of educational systems . Although CBE is considered as a new approach, it has different roots which go back to the late nineteenth century, including those for efficiency in education, vocational education, progressive education, and instructional technology.

The concept of CBA has a long history and it is linked with the philosophical foundations and approaches in educational and learning theories. One of the most important learning theories is Behaviourism. In fact, the notion of CBA goes back to the late 1960s and still an evolving idea, details of which are still being worked out. The concept of CBA was initially introduced in the USA and implemented in professional education programmes. It has also evolved via applications in vocational training programmes in the UK and in Germany in 1980s as well as in the professional skills in Australia in the late 1990s.

It is important to mention that CBA's theoretical roots have emanated from the behaviourist approaches in human psychology which go back to 1950s In the United States. It has been argued that the first experimental test in professional training to show the effectiveness of the educational reforms conducted by Frederick Taylor (1947), who is among the founders of industrial psychology. The behavioural objectives movement, as traced by Taylor, has sought to focus attention on the intended outcomes of learning programmes and, in particular, to encourage teachers to express their instructional objectives as changes in observable student behaviours. This attempt is due to the poor learning in vocational education and it is the reason for applying new principles to teacher education. At that early era, the behavioural attempts have been seen to be a powerful and influential key element to the structure of education training. However, some commentators, in seeking for the origins of CBA, give credit to other contributors. In addition to the Taylor's works, CBA has its origins found in the works of the behavioural educators such as Benjamin Bloom, as it can be clearly noticed through his saying:

The behavioural objective movements sought to focus attention on the intended outcomes of learning programmes and, in particular, to encourage teachers to express their instructional objectives as changes in observable student behaviours.

(Bloom et al. 1971, P.28)

Proponents of the Behavioural movement advocated the specification of objectives as “*directly observable behaviours which can be reliably recorded as either present or absent*” (Bloom et al. 1971, P.28) and an emphasis on the specification and assessment of outcomes.

Having said that, the behavioural movement has given birth to many other approaches including The CBA. Bowden and Master (1993) argued that four developments related to the behavioural movement have come into existence around 1970s, these are: mastery learning (Bloom 1974); criterion-referenced testing (Popham 1978); minimum competency testing (Jaeger and Tittle 1980); and competency-based education (Burke et al. 1975).

Ultimately, since the first appearance of CBA to nowadays, the reasons behind its implementation have differed from one country to another at different times. And the ways in which this concept is operationalized have changed over time. However, the basic principles and objectives of CBA have remained unchanged since 1975. Some of these principles are:

- a. An emphasis on outcomes.
- b. Students have the capacity to learn at a different pace and are supported in their learning.
- c. Presenting learning contexts in relation to the needs of the learner.
- d. Developing “Know-how” processes.

### **2.3 What is Competency-Based Approach?**

CBA is seen to have the potential not only to influence the ways in which students’ learning processes are assessed, but also to influence the structure and delivery of formal education and training programmes. As a result, it has become a prevailing topic in different circles and more popular as different schools search for ways to improve the students’ performance. So, it seems worth defining the concept of CBA and how different scholars

view it. In addition to that, a small part of this section is dedicated for the definition of CBA as set by the Algerian Ministry of Education.

CBA is a very popular approach to teaching and learning often used in learning concrete skills rather than abstract learning. It has come as an attempt to fill the gap between school atmospheres and real life, by relating school acquisitions to relevant contexts inside as well as outside of school. In more proper words, In CBA, students are supposed to gain the basic skills they need to overcome the difficult daily life situations they encounter. Furthermore, CBA is a pedagogy that serves to control the students' course of life with all that it includes of as complexities in their relationships with others, and then make them successful in their life by seeking to improve school environments favourable for use in students' various life aspects. On the same token, CBA's basic concept is founded on a new understanding of the pedagogic and learning processes, whereby a competency-based education in the era of modernization and globalization turns out to be the only path to investment in human resources. For this reason, CBA has bypassed the traditional approach based on transmitting knowledge to adopt the modern approach based on forming independent individuals able to exploit their ingrained competencies in any incidental situation. According to Quebec Education Programme (QEP, 2001 P.11),

CBA consists of arranging the content of a curriculum in terms of the development of competencies by means of specific pedagogical practices that correspond to the main orientations, and hinges on the development of competencies by students, with the goal of using knowledge effectively in carrying out tasks and real-life activities. CBA enables schools to help students deal with social change and participate actively in their learning.

That is to say, this process, according to CBA, has a twofold strategy. First, it relates to building a project-work which has to be accomplished in its environment by clarifying the bigger purpose, providing clear feedback, providing challenging assignments, and help students to develop themselves. In addition to that, it takes into consideration the whole

overlapping factors such as: teachers' mastery of the discussed topics, number of students in class, class size, time allotment, social dimensions, and students' interests and capacities. All these factors play a major role in fulfilling an effective performance and an appropriate result or outcome for the learners. Second, it constitutes a good strategy for preparing lessons and educational tutorials whereby both the teacher and his/her learners can fit in.

According to Roegiers Xavier (2007), CBA consists of making the learning process more valuable and significant in the sight of the student, and it is a must to make him take advantage of different knowledge sources and make him successfully addressing his daily challenges.

CBA, as viewed by Richards and Rodgers, is a complete focus on outcomes of learning and what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about. It refers to an educational movement that promotes determining educational aims in terms of precise assessable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviours that students should possess at the end of classroom activities (2001). Furthermore, CBA is viewed by the U.S. Office of Education as a performance-based process leading to demonstrate mastery of basic skills required for the individual to function professionally in society (To Savage U.S. Office of Education, 1993).

Since the context in which we are conducting our research is Algerian, then it is of an extreme value to briefly present a definition of CBA as set by the Algerian Ministry of Education.

In spite of all the attempts that had been undertaken to fix the Algerian traditional education according to the Objective-Based Approach and give it more significance in order to provide students with various learning acquisitions, many are the negative aspects encountered while implementing this approach. For instance, the difficulty of dealing with

objectives on the basis of their roles and significance in forming the student not to mention the hardships found in integrating these various and scattered objectives with a precise correct assessment. Furthermore, reaching those objectives does not necessarily render the students able to invest them in situations and contexts relevant to their daily life. Consequently, these negative aspects have led specialists and the individuals of expertise to think of another approach to the methods of teaching and learning known as CBA, and refer to it when building curriculums and different pedagogic techniques.

In fact, the Algerian Educational System has pursued a new approach aiming to enhance the Algerian schools' performance and effectiveness in order to keep up with the modern changes. On the Basis of CBA, the role of the school has changed from the mission of filling the learners' memory with knowledge to forming an individual who interacts with this knowledge: An individual who owns competencies which enable him to produce, since he is dissatisfied with consuming different sorts of knowledge, rather it goes beyond that to reach the degree of innovation and production. Additionally, this approach is basically focusing on the renewal of a set of competencies at every level as well as it enables the learner to put into practice his acquaintances in different situations to resolve his daily life challenges such as delivering a speech or realizing a project of significance. (Ministry of Education: Curriculums of the third year high school education, 2006/2007,P.2). More importantly, CBA is defined by the Ministry of National Education in the national programme of English as a Second Foreign Language in the First Year Middle School Teachers' Guide as follows:

... a know how to act a process which interacts and mobilizes a set of capacities, skills and an amount of knowledge that will be used effectively in various problem-situations or in circumstances that have never occurred before. (2003, P.4).

In the light of what has been stated, we conclude that CBA is an outcome-based teaching and learning approach, and this approach is variable according to the needs of learners,

instructors, and society. Moreover, CBA aims to equip the learner with competencies thanks to which he can overcome the new encountered situations and difficulties in everyday life.

## **2.4 Objectives of Competency-Based Approach**

In many countries, particularly Algeria, educational experiences have shown that among the efficient ways to improve the educational contents in order to reach fruitful learning outcomes is to orientate the training programmes towards the requirements of CBA. The latter, as being a system seeking to control the process of education, works to realize a set of objectives. In this section we will present an overview of the general objectives of CBA and then we will go through the objectives of CBA in English language teaching/learning.

The main objective behind CBA is to achieve an outcome by creating a clear expectation of what needs to be accomplished by the end of the course. In more proper words, at the end of any education experience (lesson, unit, course) the learner is supposed to have achieved the determined objective and acquired the necessary knowledge and skills intended to be reached during the course (Watson, 1990).

Making the school obtainment workable is another crucial objective that CBA aims to accomplish i.e. Schools help the learner to give more value to knowledge obtained in class, as well as teach him/her how to take advantage of it, because his/her knowledge is not only data stored in memory, but it needs to be reinvested in different situations of language use both inside as well as outside of schools (Programmes de la Deuxieme Anne Moyenne, 2003, P. 43).

Another important objective of CBA is to improve the learning contents aligned with the learners' needs and abilities. The school programmes should be designed according to the basic skills that the learners will have to master at the end of the course, but charging and tasking students with more than it is required will certainly culminate in failure because this is

too demanding if their young age and limited English language proficiency are taken into consideration.(Voorhees, 2001).

CBA has given significance to the development of the thinking process of the learners. So, to achieve this objective, it is necessary to reinforce the cognitive function by relating the process of acquiring knowledge to the ability to think critically, for example, the student is given a chance to raise vital questions and problems within the course, formulating them clearly and precisely as well as individually gathering and assessing information, and using ideas to interpret that information insightfully. (Conrad & Haworth, 1990, PP.250-253).

This approach also aims at the development of the know-how-to-do process in learners by incorporating it in functions and skills, which will allow the learners to become effective competent users who plan their actions and choose the best ways and the most appropriate means for solving their problems and deal with their daily life situations (Cross Road textbook, 2005, P.14).

As regards the objectives of CBA in language learning/teaching, it is important to know that CBA views language as a functional and interactional means of communication. On that basis, CBA seeks to develop social skills and language functions to help students to act effectively in real life contexts and to develop communicative skills in learners, and make them able to use the language to meaningfully express themselves along with making themselves understood(Richards & Rodgers, 2001, P.143). In addition to that, CBA further seeks to enable students interact orally, interpret oral or written texts, and produce oral or written messages.(Paul, 2008, Richards& Rodgers, 2001, Wong, 2008).

In conclusion, Weddel (2006) put forth an outline of the components of CBA in order to reach those objectives, and said that this approach consists of the following:

- . An assessment of the learners' needs

- .The selection of the competencies
- . The target instruction
- .An evaluation of competency attainment

## **2.5 Principles and characteristics of Competency-Based Approach**

CBA is an ideal system which can keep up school life with the modern changes and challenges by looking to the teaching and learning process from a new perspective based on the fact that education is not only a matter of theoretical acquisitions stored in learners' brains, rather it is to put them into practice and reinvest them in different situations (Richards 2001). It is also one of the current approaches that most public institutions use because it encourages the learners to bring to the fore their competencies and autonomy. This, of course, can be achieved by training in class and preparing sufficient learning strategies. So, Successful models demonstrate that CBA can fit into school structures, if certain principles and characteristics are followed. This section presents the principles and characteristics underlying CBA according to different scholars such as: Foyster (1990), Delker (1990) and Norton (1997).

CBA is a learner-centered approach in the sense that the learner is at the center of the learning process. This implies that he/she should play an active role in the classroom and must feel responsible for his own learning. Therefore, the learning atmosphere must encourage, support engage and welcome him/her. While in CBA the learner's role is maximized to allow him/her to be active and autonomous, the teacher's one is minimized and reduced to the one of a facilitator and guide, who helps reach the learning objectives.

Moreover, CBA advocates the fact that learning is self-paced rather than time-based. This means that a CBA programme should allow students to progress through the curriculum

at an individual pace. For instance, the learner proceeds from one topic or segment to the next at his/her own speed. It is also a task-based and a competence oriented approach in which learning activities and classroom training are intended to assign learners professional tasks. These tasks are formulated to develop competencies that are needed to be reinvested by learners in the future working environment. This ensures active learning instead of passive learning. In CBA, Educational goals are defined by a set of competencies i.e. what the learners must be able to do and the conditions under which these competencies must be demonstrated by the end of training. Since competencies are the core of the training programmes, methods of teaching and instructing must be designed to support the whole learning process and competencies to be achieved are carefully identified, verified and made public in advance. (Norton 1997).

Norton also believes that participants in CBA should learn in an environment that simulates the workplace .i.e. The CBA programmes should have been designed to reflect the real life situations that students generally engage in by using classroom material such as: realia. It is therefore a training programme which ensures that learners gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be successful in the working environment (1990).

More importantly, CBA is a social constructivist approach. According to Schulman, Constructivism is based on the fact that humans build their own perceptions and knowledge of the world by combining both the previous and ongoing individual experiences and contexts (1996). On that basis, CBA views learning as happening in society by interacting with other people and constructing new knowledge rather than reproducing and transmitting the pre-determined knowledge. For, example, the teacher poses questions and problems, then guides students to help them find their own answers by listening to everyone's response, discussing them, and showing the point of weaknesses.

Furthermore, CBA is a cognitive approach. According to Bode (1993), the memory system is an active organized processor of information and that prior knowledge plays an important role in learning. For example, the learner might have been instructed how to log into a specific computer, but he might not be able to log into a computer other than that. So, in CBA, the student is expected to have the ability to deal with new situations by selecting appropriate strategies based on a previous different situation yet, at the same time, similar experience.

According to Riche et al (2005), One of the most important principles that makes CBA distinctive from the antecedent approaches is its integration of project work. In fact, it is through project work that CBA principles are put into operation, and thus, the determined goals can be attained. In other words, the best way for the teachers to observe their students' development and success in achieving competencies is through assigning projects to them. They further note: "It is only through carrying out project work that we and our learners can live up to basic principles of the Competency-Based Approach" (2005, P.17).

In a nutshell, as CBA receives greater attention and optimism in different fields, particularly in education, among specialists and curriculum designers work continuously to recondition and update CBA principles pursuant to the up-to-date needs and requirements.

## **2.6 The notion of Competency vs Competence vs Skill**

Since the term "Competency" is a key element in our research, which will be retained in the different sections of our study, it is important to present its different definitions in comparison to "Competence" and "skill" for a better understanding of CBA. The term "competency" has various significances depending on which field it is applied, and it is a concept subjected to controversies as stated by Perrenoud (*Développer des Compétences Dés*

l'Ecole, 2001). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines "Competence" as the ability to do something well, and "Competency" as an important skill needed to do a job (2000, P.246).

According to Hedge "competency" is a skill or a quality of an individual which enables him/her to do specific actions at a superior level of performance (1996, P.4). Furthermore, Le Bortef views competence as a mobilization of a person's cognitive resources to successfully deal with complex situations (1994, P.21).

In the field of education, QEP (Quebec Education Programme, P.4) defines "competency" as a set of capacities based on the use of a range of resources; these resources can be both external and internal. The concept of resources refers to any experience, skill, interests, documentation, teacher... that a student can rely on. Whereas, a competence, In Programmes de La Deuxième Année Moyenne, it is defined as a know-how-to-act process which integrates a set of capacities, skills, and knowledge mobilized to face problem-situations" (2003, P.44).

In the previous paragraphs, we have seen some general definitions of "competency" and "Competence", but it is not sufficient, for we are more concerned with English teaching/learning competencies. Therefore, it is worth overviewing those concepts pursuant to English language teaching/learning.

According to Ameziane, H., Hami, H, and Louadji, K, "competency" is defined as a system of abstract and methodical parts of knowledge arranged into courses that help describe a problem and its solutions via an effective action in different situations(2005, P.12). In other words, it is the ability of the learner to deal with different tasks in an effective manner and to manage to find solutions when he/she encounters new unexpected situations. In language learning, the term "competency" refers to communicative competence which includes a set of competencies that a learner develops to be proficient. According to De Se Co (2002; quoted in

Labanova and Shunin, 2008, PP.54-75), the learner's communicative competence encompasses six key elements:

**-Autonomous competence:** It is related to the ability to process and to transfer knowledge as well as the ability to construct knowledge and judgments.

**-Interactive competence:** It involves the ability to use communicative tools and personal resources in an effective way in order to keep up with the modern requirements of the society.

**-Social competence:** it is the ability of the learner to integrate and to function effectively and independently within complex socially heterogeneous groups.

**-Linguistic competence:** It includes grammatical, lexical, semantic, phonological, and orthographic competences.

**-Strategic competence:** It is a system of knowledge and skills that help the learner to solve unexpected situations (communicative problems).

**-Pragmatic competence:** It involves the knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language's linguistic resources.

On the other hand, the term "skill" refers to the fundamental activities/performances that are required to demonstrate competencies. Skills can be distinguished but not separated from competencies (Frederik Daniel, 2007, P.16). Burke maintains that skills are the performance component aspect of competencies. Skills are thus smaller components of competencies and involve activities, techniques and processes to execute competencies (1995, P.335).

## **2.7 The teacher's role in CBA**

In traditional language teaching, the teacher plays more important roles than the student in education is considered as an unquestionable knowledge-giver who dominates the

class from the outset to the end. In this section, we will explore the role of the teacher in CBA as being a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning.

The teacher is an important source which supplies the learner with positive and constructive feedback that helps him/her in the development of his/her skills and strategies. The teacher has to be aware of the learner's needs and points of weakness in order to make everybody feels comfortable in class (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, P.146). For instance, the teacher should take time to know his/her learners' names and to encourage them to respect each other and have the culture of sharing in class.

Another important role of teacher, as stated by Richards and Rodgers, is to give clear instructions and orders which must be in accordance with the specific competencies dealt with in class. Thus, the teacher has to be reassured that the learners understand the task that they are dealing with. At the same time, the teacher shouldn't push his students to proceed with the following units or tasks while they still didn't master the current one since the instructions are not time-based, yet the student's progress is the most important element that should be taken into consideration (2001, P.146).

Finally, and more importantly, Richards and Rodgers state that the teacher is considered as a facilitator of the process of learning, a manager and an organizer as well as a counselor (1986, P.77). On that basis, the teacher as a facilitator implies the following points: motivating the learners, raising their awareness about what is to be done, and helping the learners to plan and carry out their learning such as guiding them to resource. The teacher as a manager and organizer involves his/her responsibility of organizing various activities relevant to the learner's needs and expectations. Ultimately, the teacher as a consoler is to give help, support, and advice for learners at any time and at any point in their learning process in order to efficiently achieve their goals.

## **2.8 The learners' role in CBA**

In traditional approaches as we have previously pointed out, the teacher is allocated the dominance from the beginning to the end of the classroom activities; whereas, the learner is given minor roles which make him more and more passive. So, in this section we will have a look at the learner's role as the learner is being the center of learning.

In CBA, the learner is seen as an active agent who performs skills being taught and who adapts and transforms knowledge from one situation to another (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, PP.146-147). In addition to that, Richards states that the learner must become self-motivated and it is up to him/her to decide on whether the competencies are useful and relevant for him/her or not (2001, P.146). According to Forest & Kinser the learner has to demonstrate effective performance and competency for the sake of fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum, he cannot be regarded only as a receiver of data (2002, P.127).

As CBA is founded on Constructivism, which is basically a theory-based on observation and scientific study- about how people learn. It says that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences, the learner needs to assess his acquisitions based on his personal criteria by revising his prior knowledge and assesses it in relation to his peers and classmates. Another quality of Constructivism is its interactive aspect in both society and classroom environment, where the learner is given an opportunity to interact either with the peers or the teacher via dialogue in order to construct knowledge (Ashton & Pillay, 2010, P.343). These interactions certainly play a major role in fostering the use of the newly acquired skills to build meaning and understanding. It is through interaction that learner can develop awareness, experience, self-reflection, and more importantly critical thinking which is essential for learner when challenging new ideas or concepts presented to them.

## 2.9 Drawbacks of Competency-Based Approach

The concept of CBE has often brought about controversy and confusion. Jansen (1998, P.3) states that the terminology associated with CBA and CBE is too confusing, complex and, sometimes, contradictory. However, the point at issue is not about terminology, it is all about the understanding of the nature of education, and how educational objectives are attained with no or the minimum of obstacles. CBA like all the educational approaches has advantages and disadvantages. The following is a discussion of some of the CBA drawbacks, and how different scholars criticize it.

According to Jacobus (2007), CBA ignores the educational processes and gives greater emphasis on measurable and practical outcomes (PP.74-78). This view is also supported by Penington who states that "...education is a process of development and growth. The process, not merely the result, is important" (1994, P.70). On that basis, education as being a complex phenomenon cannot be fully based on outcomes, but it must have a planned guiding programme. Therefore, if CBA gives more significance to both the process and the outcomes, it will be appropriate for education.

From a theoretical perspective, Hyland (1994) criticizes the adoption of CBA for the behaviouristic objectives that immensely focus on observable phenomena and desert the mental activities. That is to say, the competency approach neglects the human capacities of thinking and reflecting since competencies are seen as mechanical responses ( P.50).

Apart from the theoretical criticism against CBA there are practical issues that should be considered. Grant, et al. suggest that the programmes that are based on self-pacing, as it is the case with CBA, receive lower acceptance by students since they are unable or unwilling to pace themselves. In more proper words, students are often not ready for this independent management of their study. (1979, P.252). As a result, a further challenge related to self-

spacing is that teachers must repeat the course or the explanation of a specific point within the course many times for many individuals. This will certainly culminate a high workload.

CBA's emphasis on learner support and expanded learning opportunities necessitates adequate learning/teaching resources such as computer laboratories, workplace opportunities, videos, PowerPoint presentations, and Internet daily access. In addition to that, these resources must be available at any time the learner and the teacher need them. But, in many schools where CBA is applied many of these resources are missing. As a result, the process of learning/teaching meets daily hindrances (Hauck and Jackson, 2005, P.5).

### **3. Research Design and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

A scientific research must include three main aspects: the selection of a question or a problem, the use of reliable and valid methods of collection and interpretation of data, and the adherence to ethical standards (Leedy, 1997, P.5). In this chapter we are concerned with the second aspect “Methods of collection”, which is the way and the manner of doing a research. Furthermore, Howell argues that Methodology is the general research strategy that outlines the way in which a research project is to be carried out. It identifies the methods and tools to be used in it. These Methods, described in the methodology, refer to the means or modes of data collection and how a specific result is to be calculated (2013, P.20).

Mouton and Marais (1988, PP.38-39) maintain that in order to get an accurate explanation of the nature of the problem or the unit of analysis, the researcher must first seek to understand whether the problem relates to individuals, groups, ideas, ideologies, attitudes and opinions, verification and evaluation, structures and processes, methods and practices, and causes and effects of social events. According to the above classification, this research basically involves an evaluation of the design and the structure of the activities and training models included in the Algerian Middle School English language textbook entitled On the Move in relation to CBA, and whether these activities respond to the principles and aims set by this approach.

This chapter explains the research approach, the type of research methodology that has been selected to address the research problem (qualitative or quantitative) as well as the tools that have been adopted for the collection of the data.

First, the research methodology basically revolves around two methods: quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative method is descriptive and naturalistic. It includes an open-

ended, subjective, explanatory and inductive approach. On the other hand, quantitative research underlies an objective, inferential, deductive approach which deals with numerical data and uses standard assessment techniques. (Creswell 1994, P.145).

As concerns our research, it is qualified as a qualitative research because it demonstrates qualitative features such as describing a reality, investigating holistic details of a given case, evaluating and verifying facts and cases, and more importantly, it employs an inductive approach, and it focuses on personal accounts, observations, descriptions, and individual insights.

According to Sarantakos (1998, P.16), there are three types of qualitative research, namely ethnographic research, case study, and evaluation research. Since our research is mainly concerned with the evaluation of activities included in a textbook, therefore, a brief description of evaluation research seems to be of great significance.

Evaluation research is a form of applied research, which aims to find solutions to problems, assess the importance of policies and practices and the need for new approaches and programmes. The goals of evaluation research are:

- a. To assess the quality and effectiveness of a programme
- b. To identify ways of improving the effectiveness of an existing programme
- c. To predict whether a planned programme is successful
- d. to discover gaps

(Sarantakos, 1998, P.16; Fleischman and Williams, 1996, PP.3-5)

Second, tools refer to the different data collecting materials which constitute the corpus of our study, namely The Algerian Middle School On the Move textbook, and a questionnaire

submitted to teachers at Harchaoui, Krim Rabah, and Base7 Middle Schools in the region of Draa El Mizan, in Tizi Ouzou

### **3.2 Sampling**

Since it is impossible and unfeasible to involve the whole population in the research, we have decided to adopt a sample. According to Dornyei, a sample is a group of participants whom the researcher examines in an empirical investigation. He further maintains that: "... the main goal of sampling is to find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximize what we can learn" (2007, P.96).

According to the above description, the crucial concern is to reassure that the selected sample is highly representative of the relevant population. Therefore, the most effective way of doing so is by selecting a sample which has a relation with the subjects and the events being investigated, and it should be compatible with the objectives of the research.

The sample frame that will be used in our research is a group of teachers of English who teach fourth year students in middle schools. The sample comprises twenty(20) teachers who have taught at least English for three (3) years using On the Move textbook.

### **3.3 Data gathering tools**

When carrying out investigations, we resorted to different types of data collection procedures in order to collect information. Therefore, this research relies on the collection of data from the Middle School fourth year English language textbook entitled On the Move as well as from teachers of English teaching fourth year students in middle schools. These participants will co-operate to determine:

- a. The extent to which the activities suggested in On the Move respond to the aims and principles of CBA.

b. The opinion of the teachers as regards the efficiency of those activities in forming competent learners and users of English in school and out of school.

### **3.3.1 Description of the Questionnaire**

Brown argues that questionnaires are “any written tools that present respondents with a series of questions to which they have to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from existing answers” (Brown, 2001, P.6, cited in Dornyei, 2007, P.102). Moreover, building valid and reliable questionnaires necessitates some techniques and procedures which the researcher should go through. According to Nunan, each item included in the questionnaire should only focus on one aspect, and the question should be as explicit as possible. Additionally, the question should never expose the attitude of the researcher so that the answers will be fair and not biased. The use of a simple and a well-structured language helps the respondents to understand the questions (1992, P.143).

The questionnaire used in this research consists of both open and close questions. It is simple, concise, and straightforward so that it could be easily handled by everybody. Because of the fear to have a counterproductive questionnaire, we have decided to avoid the long one, working with Dornyei’s statement that any data gathering tool that necessitates more than half an hour to be completed by the respondents is not suitable and useful for carrying out a research. He further states that the questionnaire should not exceed four to six (4-6) pages, for the fear that some parts of it will be left unanswered (2003, P.18).

Our questionnaire comprises three main sections:

**Section one:** we have devoted this section to gather general information about the teachers involved in our research. It encompasses one question about their gender, age, and English teaching experience.

**Section two:** this section comprises eleven questions, which aim to grab the teacher's attitude regarding On the Move textbook, and the activities involved therein. More importantly, these questions go deeper to grab the teacher's opinion about the conformity that lies between those activities and the principles of CBA.

**Section three:** it involves questions related to teachers' background, and how they received their training for teaching.

### **3.3.2 General overview of On the Move textbook**

A textbook is an important element in any educational programme for the major role it plays especially in ELT programmes. Hutchinson and Torres argue that a textbook is the most reliable element in conducting any ELT programme. They further argue that: "no teaching-learning situation is complete until it has its relevant textbook" (1994, P. 315). This instructional tool is given great importance and reliance especially in the Algerian EFL settings because it displays and reflects the learning objectives, techniques, and the syllabus content set by the educational authorities of the country as well as by textbook authors.

Since our research investigates whether the CBA principles are reflected in the activities of On the Move and since we have adopted the latter as our primary data source, it is of great significance to provide a brief description of it.

On the Move is an official textbook for teaching/learning English as a second foreign language in the Algerian Middle School. It is intended for fourth year students. Moreover, this textbook is the work and the collaboration of five designers, including S.A. Arab and B. Riche who are the heads of the project. The design and layout are undertaken by Ch. Azouaoui. T. Beghdad has dealt with the illustrations. The graphic editing is done by Y. Kaci Ouali. Apart from that, the textbook consists of six (6) units and each unit comprises six (6) sections. The units are: "Its My Treat", "You Can Do It", "Great Expectations", Then And

Now”, Dreams, Dreams”, and “Facts and Fictions”. The sections are: Language Learning, Take a Break, Skills building, Project Round Up, Where Do We Stand Now? And “Time For”.

The first section “Language Learning” includes oral and written activities which aim at getting the student to discover and practice English grammar. The second one “Take a Break” includes activities, pictures, idiom explanation that help the student to learn cultural aspects of foreign countries. The third one “Skills building” gives the student a chance to carry out writing activities individually, in pair, or in group. As regards the fourth one “Project Round UP”, it includes a bunch of project-works that stand as a sample for the student in order to compare his own projects. The fifth one “Where Do We Stand Now” relates to the assessment of the student’s achievements. The sixth one “Time For” is a step where the student takes a rest. It includes words of wisdom, proverbs, and cartoons.

### **3.4 Data analysis and theories**

Data gathered from On the Move textbook, Literature Review, and the questionnaire will be arranged, analyzed, and interpreted with the aim to discover the conformity of the activities proposed in the textbook in use to the principles of CBA. Ary and Razavieh state that the analysis of data requires three important steps, which must be fulfilled alternately. These steps are: arranging and organizing of the data, analyzing and summarizing of the data, interpreting of the data (2002, P.465). The first step “Organizing of the data” revolves around the different ways and techniques that help the researcher to make the data easy to access and retrievable whenever needed. For instance, the researcher manages the data according to dates, times, places, importance, relevance, irrelevance. Nowadays, thanks to the development of the technological means, this process seems to be easier. The data can be entered into one of the several software programmes designed for the management of the qualitative data. Secondly, “Summarizing of the data” involves the conversion of the data into a process of coding. In

our research, we shall use percentages presented in tables (see Chapter 4 “Results”). As regards the last step “Interpreting of the data”, it involves the extraction of the meaning from the results, and the discussion of the plausibility of the conclusions as well as the explanation of the findings (see Chapter5 “Discussion”).

It is important to mention that a scientific research is built upon two important bases, namely a theory and a verification of the theory by means of empirical verification. The relation between the two is that the latter verifies the former. In more proper words, Schlick argues that: “the criterion of verifiability should incorporate basic theories or propositions that are capable of serving as the basis for the process of empirical observation” (1979). Therefore, the researcher collects data to show how the theory does or does not apply to the phenomenon under study. Based on that, we have relied on three theories to guide our work. The reason we have chosen these specific theories is that because they relate to the fact that they have been used in different texts especially those which relate to the Algerian settings. Moreover, these theories have tight relations with our work.

1. Learning in the Algerian English Curriculum aims at the development of competencies. Learning outcomes are described in terms of competencies. There are three types of competencies for language learning, interactive, interpretive and productive:

.Interactive competency-the ability to participate in spoken interactions

.Interpretive competency- the ability to understand and interpret what one reads and hears

.Productive competency-the ability to express meaning and knowledge in

speaking and writing

(Guidelines to the Algerian English Curriculum for Middle School 4<sup>th</sup> year, 2008, P.4).

2. The pupil has completed the whole school year in which he is asked to develop three competencies:

.To interact orally in English

.To interpret authentic oral or written documents

.To produce simple messages orally and in writing

(Algerian Guidelines for teachers of English 2<sup>nd</sup> year Middle School classes, 2003, P.6).

3. Training students to develop the know-how-to-do skill is essential. According to Auerbach (1986, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2002, P.146) the essential features that need to be included in implementing the CBA syllabus are:

. A focus on successful functioning in society. It aims to give students a chance of learning with themselves to encounter problems in society.

. A focus on life skills. The CBA's interest is not only on teaching knowledge but also teaching a function of communication in real life.

### **3.5 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and methodology of the study, explain the sample selection, describe the procedure used in designing the instrument and data collection, and provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data.

In the Following section, the results of the data analysis are presented. The data will be collected and then processed in response to the problems posed in chapter1 of this dissertation along with relying on the guiding theories suggested above.

## **4. Results obtained from the textbook evaluation and the questionnaire**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As the above heading suggests, this chapter presents the attained results. It comprises two parts: the first part “An evaluation of some of On the Move activities” displays the findings and the outcomes of our evaluation of these activities. On the other hand, the second part presents the responses we obtained from the questionnaire submitted to the teachers of English (Middle school/fourth year). Having said that, these results will be discussed and analyzed alternately under the titles “**Discussion A, Discussion B**” in relation to the suggested theoretical frameworks (see Chapter3, section 3.3).

The questionnaires were submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2015 to twenty (20) teachers in TiziOuzou. We come to an agreement that the questionnaires were to be given back one week after the date of submission. However, three (3) teachers among twenty (20) didn't give back their questionnaires, and one (1) of them left most of the questions unanswered. The sixteen (16) remaining teachers answered all the questions.

### **4.2 Evaluation of some of On the Move activities**

In this part, we shall present the results of our evaluation and examination of some of the activities implemented in the textbook, without overlooking that this evaluation is a general one (i.e. Since the activities follow the same organizational pattern, it is better to avoid repetition. Therefore, we have taken samples to be evaluated). These results will be discussed and elaborated in the following Chapter under “**Discussion A**”.

After having gone through some of the activities of On the Move textbook, we came to the result that a variety of activities is proposed; these activities include grammatical

activities, communicative activities, listening/speaking, reading/writing activities, group work, projects, and socio-cultural activities.

A. Teaching grammatical points is highly stressed throughout the textbook. In fact, each file of the textbook starts with a rubric “Language Learning” which focuses on teaching grammar through listening and reading. The following activities illustrate the point:

**2 Listen to your teacher as she/he reads the sentences on the next page and show with an arrow ( ↗ ↘ ) whether the information goes up or down at the end of each of the questions.**

- a. You didn't know that, **did you?**
- b. You know what food we can eat everywhere in the world today, **don't you?**
- c. It's a hamburger, **isn't it?**
- d. You know the number of McDonald's restaurants open in the world today, **don't you?**
- e. You are happy now, **aren't you?**
- f. let's have a walk first, **shall we?** (Illustration1: On the Move, P.18)

**1 Write tag questions for the following sentences.**

- a. She knows the recipe for Shorba, \_\_\_\_ ?
- b. This restaurant can sit thirty people, \_\_\_\_ ?
- c. They drink tea in Tamanrasset, \_\_\_\_ ?
- d. They eat pudding in England, \_\_\_\_?
- e. (It's) a lovely evening for the party, \_\_\_\_?
- f. You don't know how to make English tea, \_\_\_\_ ?(Illustration2: On the Move, P.20)

These activities are purely grammatical. They help the students to get exposed to a grammatical point “**Tag Questions**”. Yet, they are immediately followed by another activity which aims to apply this grammatical point in real situation through peer to peer dialogues in order to achieve certain daily life tasks. It also helps the student to develop social skills and be

more popular to his peers. It is, in fact, represented in the one's ability to form relationships with others. In this case: Asking for information and agreement.

**2. Pair work. Act out short dialogue using sentences with tag questions, once to ask for agreement and another time to ask for information.** (Illustration3: On the Move, P.20)

**B.** Every unit of the textbook includes an activity that is supposed to be carried out collectively (pair or group work). Below is a sample.

**1. Use the information in the box on the next page to express surprise at the news which your partner reports about a friend of yours.**

*Example*

**You:** Have you heard, Said reads Shakespeare nowadays?

**Your partner:** Really? He **used to** hate English. (Illustration4: On the Move, P. 93)

These activities deal with the functional aspect of language (communication) by creating interactional oral opportunities that aim to develop efficient conversational ability.

**C.** The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) represent the backbone of the textbook. Activities dealing with the development of these skills are of high rate. We shall illustrate with one activity each of the four above-mentioned skills.

**2. Listen to script 2 and make notes about what Becky and Paul will do during the summer vacations. Follow this model.**

*When school finishes,*

. Becky will .....

.....

. Paul will .....

.....

(Illustration5: On the Move, P.67)

→ Write it up

Write a short dialogue about your likes and dislikes using so and neither.

Draw inspiration from listening script 2 (Jack and Jill). And then act it out.

(Illustration6: On the Move, P.56)

→ Your turn to speak

1. Imagine you are a taxi driver, and a tourist passenger asks you to advise him/her and recommend things to do in your town. What would you say?

*Example*

**Passenger:** Can you recommend me places to visit in your town?

**Taxi driver:** I would really recommend.../ Er...Um ... Well, I wouldn't recommend...

(Illustration7: On the Move, P.131)

2. Read the rest of the report and check your answer to question 2 above.

Preparation for the test is a very important and it starts at home. Perhaps I should explain the meaning of the term preparation. By preparation I mean the work that pupils do before the test. "But just how do you go about it? You may ask. Well, the majority of pupils revise for exams alone. This method may be suitable for some children, but on the other hand it may well be the cause of failure of many others.

(Illustration8: On the Move, P.47)

2 Fill in the invitation card below. Then write a letter of invitation to classmate of yours.

You're invited

**Occasion:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Time:** .....

**Place:** .....

**Directions:** .....

(Illustration9: On the Move, P.34)

The four skills activities mentioned above provide the student with a purpose to speak, read, write or listen. In the case of speaking, simple contextualized tasks are included. Moreover, the listening skill is meant to be a complement of a speaking. As a result, not a great deal is given for the listening comprehension. As regards writing activities, they are built upon mechanical operations and seem to be completely de-contextualized. Yet, they help the students to show their mastery of language through the integration of different language skills including grammar, lexis, spelling and forming their own ideas. On the other hand, reading activities are more appropriate for developing communicative competence, for they emphasize the discourse features and involve the use of inference.

**D. On the Move** textbook includes a project at the end of each file. This type of activities includes an aspect of authenticity and autonomy which help the students to build their own knowledge and apply the prior acquisitions. By nature, these projects are essentially communicative and raise the student's awareness about the different cultural aspects. Here is an illustration.

## **PROJECT ROUND-UP**

### **→ Making a Poster about Differences (Illustration10: On the Move, P.111)**

In this project, the student is asked to make a differences poster through interviewing his grandfather and drawing a picture which displays old life style. Afterwards, he is asked to observe how people live around him and find out in what ways their life style differs to his grandparents one.

## **4.3 Findings obtained from the Questionnaire**

Before we proceed with the presentation of the results obtained from the questionnaires, it is worth starting with a general overview concerning the way it is going to be done. We have

obtained sixteen (16) fully answered questionnaires out of twenty (20). The number sixteen represents the percentage (100%). Therefore, the answers are going to be presented in charts along with the percentage they match. Moreover, these results will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapter under the title “**Discussion B**”.

**SECTION ONE: General Information about the informants**

**Question1:** Gender a. Male      b. Female

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Male</b>	Five (5)	31.25 %
<b>Female</b>	Eleven (11)	68.75 %

**Table 1: Gender distribution among Teachers**

The table above displays the gender of the teachers that have been involved in our research. Eleven (11) of them are females. The remaining are male teachers. We notice that the number of female teachers in Middle schools is higher than male teachers.

**Question2:** Teachers’ age

<b>Age rate</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>25 - 35</b>	Six (6)	37.5%
<b>36 - 45</b>	Eight (8)	50 %
<b>46 - 55</b>	Two (2)	12.5 %
<b>56+</b>	Zero (0)	0 %

**Table 2: Teachers’ age**

As the above table shows, the majority of teachers are aged between 36 and 45. Six (6) among them are aged between 25 and 36. The two (2) remaining teachers are between 46 and 55.

**Question3:** Teaching experience

<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>3 - 9</b>	Nine (9)	56.25 %
<b>10 – 15</b>	Two (2)	12.5 %
<b>+16</b>	Five (5)	31.25 %

**Table 3: Teaching experience**

All the participants have more than three (03) years of teaching experience; this indicates that they fulfill our requirement (three years of teaching experience at least). We can presume that they are familiar with the textbook and the activities provided in it. Thus, all of them can provide us with the necessary data needed for our research work.

**SECTION TWO: Teachers’ attitudes towards the textbook and their evaluation of the activities provided therein.**

**Question1:** Is On the Move textbook well organized in terms of its content?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Sixteen (16)	100 %
<b>No</b>	Zero (0)	0 %
<b>Not really</b>	Zero (0)	0 %

**Table 4: Rate of the organization of the textbook content**

The above table shows that all the informants agree on the fact that the textbook's content is well organized. This indicates that the teachers do not encounter any difficulties when teaching its content.

**Question2:** How do you consider the textbook in terms of building the necessary skills in your students?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Ineffectual</b>	Zero (0)	0 %
<b>Restricting</b>	One (1)	6.25 %
<b>Supporting</b>	Two (2)	12.5 %
<b>Indispensable</b>	Thirteen (13)	81.25 %

**Table 5: The importance of the textbook in building skills**

These results show the teachers' viewpoint regarding the importance of On the Move in building the four skills in students which are listening/speaking, reading/writing.

**Question3:** What would be the prime objective of using On the Move textbook?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Having sufficient knowledge about grammar</b>	Two (2)	12.5 %
<b>Developing the learners' traditional skills of speaking/writing</b>	One (1)	6.25 %
<b>Being able to use language in unexpected situations</b>	Three (3)	18.75 %
<b>Becoming confident users of English language</b>	Ten (10)	62.5 %

**Table 6: The prime objective of using On the Move textbook**

The question above has been forwarded to the teachers so that to grasp a base of knowledge regarding the prime objective behind using On the Move textbook.

**Question4:** How far is On the Move textbook motivating for students? And why?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>To high extent</b>	Fifteen (15)	93.75 %
<b>To some extent</b>	One (1)	6.25 %
<b>Not at all</b>	Zero (0)	0 %

**Table 7: The role of On the Move in motivating students**

The results above show the teachers' attitudes regarding how far are On the Move activities motivating students.

**Question5:** Do the activities provided in the textbook facilitate the learning process (for both the teacher and the learner) and why?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>No</b>	Two (2)	12.5 %
<b>To some extent</b>	One (1)	6.25 %
<b>Yes</b>	Thirteen (13)	81.25 %

**Table 8: suitability of the activities for facilitating the learning process**

The table above highlights the teachers' opinion as regards the importance of the activities provided in the textbook in facilitating the teaching/learning process. In fact, the majority of the teachers displayed a positive attitude, while two (02) among them have given less score to the textbook's activities.

**Question6:**What type of activities included in the textbook do you find most useful in developing learners' intercultural communicative competence and social skills?

<b>Options</b>	<b>teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Using tasks like “Fill in the gap”</b>	Zero (0)	0 %
<b>Sentence completion</b>	Zero (0)	0 %
<b>Using group discussion</b>	Nine (9)	56.25 %
<b>Using project works</b>	Five (5)	31.25 %
Assigning roles	Two (2)	12.5 %
All of them	Zero (0)	0 %

**Table 9: The most favourable types of activities that foster communicative competence**

**Any others:** mention them

.....

The table above highlights the teachers’ attitudes concerning the most important activities in developing learners’ intercultural communicative competence and social skills.

**Question7:** Does the textbook incorporate individual, pair and group works?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Many</b>	Sixteen (16)	100%
<b>A few</b>	Zero (0)	0 %
<b>None</b>	Zero (0)	0 %

**Table 10: The textbook’s inclusion of individual, pair, and group work**

According to these results, the teachers have displayed a very positive viewpoint about the diversity of the activities. This shows that the textbook includes various sections and activities carried out either individually, in pair or collectively.

**Question8:**Do the language and the activities of On the Move suit the level of the learners and meet their needs?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Absolutely</b>	Eight (8)	50 %
<b>Probably</b>	Three (3)	18.75 %
<b>Not at All</b>	Five (5)	31.25 %

**Table 11: The suitability of the textbook’s language and activities for the learners**

The findings highlight the teachers’ viewpoint about the suitability of both the language and activities provided in On the Move with the learners’ needs and levels.

**Question9:**Do you think that these activities encourage learners to be critical thinkers?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Certainly</b>	Four (4)	25 %
<b>Probably</b>	Three (3)	18.75 %
<b>Not at all</b>	Nine (9)	56.25%

**Table 12: The role of the activities in encouraging learners to be critical thinkers**

The above table displays the teachers' point of view regarding the role of On the Move activities in encouraging the learners to be critical thinkers.

**Question10:** Through your experience in using this textbook, do you think that it helps the learners to construct their own knowledge?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	Twelve (12)	75 %
No	Four (4)	25 %

**Table 13: The textbook's role in helping the learners to build their own knowledge**

In this item, we have asked the informants about whether the activities provided in the textbook are effective to make the students able to construct their own knowledge. Almost all the informants (75 %) adopted a positive attitude while the remaining teachers (25 %) disagreed on that.

**Question11:** What kind of teacher do you consider yourself when using the activities suggested in the textbook?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Information-provider</b>	Six (6)	37.5 %
<b>Facilitator</b>	Ten (10)	62.5 %

**Table 14: Teacher's role**

**Others**.....

The table above highlights the teachers' opinion about their role while using the activities provided in the textbook.

**SECTION THREE: Teachers’ practices and training in CBA**

**Question1:** Research shows that assigning teachers to teach courses that they are not trained to teach has a negative effect on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). So, have you been trained for teaching under CBA’s environment?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	Seven (7)	43.75 %
<b>No</b>	Nine (9)	56.25 %

**Table 15: Teachers’ ability to teach under CBA**

If no, what is your approach to teaching?

.....

These findings show that the majority (56.25 %) of the teachers are unfamiliar with CBA. Some of them have stated that they are trained under the communicative approach while others have preferred to teach using the process approach. On the other side, 43.75 % of the teachers replied that they have been trained to teach under CBA’s environment.

## **5. Discussion of the Findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The collected data will be analyzed and interpreted in response to the questions raised in chapter1 of this dissertation in order to elicit a base of knowledge about the learning activities suggested in On the Move i.e. these activities are analyzed and evaluated to determine their consistency with the goals and principles of CBA. With this in mind, these results also aim to demonstrate the potential of merging the theoretical frameworks pointed out to in chapter3 and our empirical investigation. These theories represent the learning objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of Education as well as Auerbach (1986) and can be recapitulated in the following:

1. Communicative interaction
2. The ability to solve real life problems (Know-how-to-do)
3. The ability to construct individual knowledge when it comes to unexpected situations

As we have previously pointed out, the main purpose of this study was to comprehensively examine the activities suggested in On the Move textbook in relation to the principles of CBA. The research has attempted to find answers to the following questions:

- a. Do the activities provided in the Algerian Middle School English textbook On the Move meet the aims of CBA and comply with its guiding principles?
- b. As their contents suggest, do the activities play a major role in the quality of the learning outcomes, and do they suit the needs, interests, and the levels of the students?

### **5.2 Discussion A: Analysis of On the Move activities**

#### **5.2.1 Grammatical activities**

Our analysis of some of the activities included in On the Move textbook displays that a great emphasis is allotted to teaching grammar more than the other language items. In fact, these activities perfectly fit the learning objectives of mastering the grammatical rules, yet they do not expose the students to authentic language except in some cases when the grammatical items are taught through listening. In this connection, the textbook utilizes a deductive approach where the grammatical aspects are taught by illustrations in the form of separated and isolated sentences. Furthermore, the activity illustrated above (see Illustration1: chapter 4.2) focuses on accurate sentences which are thoroughly concerned with form. To put it in simple words, learners, in this activity, are requested to listen to a track then complete the activity. Afterwards, they are asked to find out whether the intonation goes up or down (tag questions) within similar de-contextualized sentences. Besides, teaching pronunciation and affixes follows the same pattern. For instance, learners are given a bunch of words in a table, then they are asked to add affixes to form different adjectives, adverbs and past participles (On the Move, P.24). So, this type of activities stresses greatly the language structures and pays little attention to the meaning of language itself.

In this respect, explaining a rule doesn't necessarily lead to a full understanding of language. It is more favourable to let the students grasp the rules by themselves which will make them active thinkers who can find out for themselves how the grammar works.

Moreover, focusing on language forms presentation, and explaining the grammar rules through drilling is deemed a traditional view of language teaching which forms bored, dissatisfied students who can produce correct forms on exercises and tests, yet they continuously fall in errors while they use the language in contextualized situations. In a nutshell, this category of activities are purely grammatical, they do not serve the objectives set by Algerian Ministry of education which mainly focus on communication and the ability to solve real life issues.

Nonetheless, through our analysis, we have come to understand that learners are given an opportunity for practice (after each grammar lesson) in the form of activities requiring to utilize their previously learned grammatical structures with their peers. For instance, the learner (as in Illustration3: chapter 4.2) is requested to act out a short dialogue with his peer using tag questions in order to ask for agreement and information. This type of activities is, by nature, communicative in the sense that even if the lesson is focused on developing a grammatical skill (tag questions, affixes) the student is also engaged in a dynamic communicative environment with his peer. Thus, peer (tasks carried out in pairs) activities provide efficient opportunities for learners to use the language with one another in classroom and with people in the community.

## **5.2.2 The four skills activities (Listening/Reading, Speaking/Writing)**

### **A. Listening activities**

Listening is the most important part of communication, because if learners fail to understand the message being expressed to them, they will certainly fail in providing meaningful response. This is the major cause of many arguments, misunderstandings, whether at home, school, or work. Therefore, being able to take control of the listening process will turn the student into a better communicator.

There are some weaknesses in the listening tasks. For instance, the activity presented above (see Illustration5: 4.2) requires the learners to listen to a script and then make notes about what she/he will do during the summer. Learners should first be enlightened about how to listen to a script following clear guidelines and examples and then come to know if they have really mastered the point or not. In fact, most of the listening tasks involved in On the Move fail at this point. Consequently, the learners' know-how-to-do related to listening skill

(understand and read what one hears and reads) might show a great failure and their communicative competence is a fortiori.

Additionally, most of the activities do not assess the comprehension abilities and do not encourage analytical abilities of the learners. At best, the learners are asked to find words or phrases in order to complete sentences or check their work. Therefore, the interpretive-competence objective (the ability to understand and interpret oral documents) set by the Ministry of Education cannot be attained, because the students cannot know how to apply suitable strategies to each kind of listening text in order to get the best result.

On the other hand, On the Move listening activities incorporate a contextualized dimension which is considered one of the strongest points which helps the learners to master the listening skill as well as be real life communicators. In fact, other activities and processes are integrated within the listening activity. In more proper words, learners are not only asked to listen to what the script says, they are simultaneously required to read a text or look at visual aids such as: pictures. These processes are deemed to be preparatory, and they greatly assist and facilitate the listening process. More importantly, On the Move listening tasks comprise a social aspect, where learners are encouraged to chat and work in pairs and then share the information they have collected about the football player they hear in the script.

## **B. Reading activities**

The reading activities suggested in On the Move spotlight some weaknesses. Above all, they do not provide learners with opportunities to practice the different reading strategies such as: reading overviews, vocabulary previews, and author consideration. Actually, they only serve to provide learners with intensive reading (or example, the learner may be answering comprehension questions, learning new vocabulary, studying the grammar and expressions in the text). For instance, the activity illustrated above (see illustration8: chapter

4.2) requires learners to read the text and then check their answers in relation to a given question. The focus is only on the content of the text. The learners read for interpretation and details (focusing mostly on the vocabulary of the text). Most of On the Move's reading tasks have straightforward questions which require learners to elicit explicit information included in the text. Consequently, the students who lack the reading skills and strategies may fail to develop reading comprehension strategies which will certainly effect their later academic skills. In addition, reading for the sake of reading (reading without aims) cannot stimulate the learners' creativity, and creativity is an essential component in solving problems.

Nevertheless, some reading tasks seem to be realistic in the sense that learners are required to interact in pairs about a given picture and then guess the appropriate answer. Afterwards, they are asked to read a dialogue based on the same picture then carry out a grammatical task (On the Move, P.95). In fact, activities of this kind help learners to acquire better communication skills because when learners spend time reading and interacting with their peers about a given issue, they are likely going to gain valuable communicative skills.

The diversity of topics and themes imbedded in the reading tasks like history, science, geography, and culture plays a major role in helping learners to acclimate new experiences. For instance, leaners are requested to read a text which deals with exam preparation and anxiety (On the Move, P.47). So, as anxiety before the exams is a common real life phenomenon, sharing a relevant story (text) is an efficient way to help ease the transition and show learners that anxiety is normal, or prescribe them methods of avoiding it.

In short, generally the reading activities only require students to check for answers from a given text, and not utilize any analytical or cognitive skills. Based on what we have already stated in this section, reading comprehension is not given enough significance, as a result, fostering the interpretive competence, which is represented in the ability to understand

what one reads, goes against the claims made by the authors of On the Move, and is inconsistent with the objectives set by the Algerian education authorities.

### **C. Speaking activities**

According to Chaney, speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts” (1998, P.13). Speaking is a crucial aspect of second language teaching and learning. However, for many decades, teachers have continued to teach speaking just through a repetition of drills and memorization of dialogues. Since the introduction of CBA, the goal of teaching speaking is to improve students’ communicative skills, because, only in that way, students will express themselves and learn how to use the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best possible way, On the Move includes some of the best speaking activities that can be applied in EFL classroom settings.

In our textbook evaluation, we have come to understand that On the Move’s speaking tasks fall into 3 categories:

- . Group and class discussions
- . Picture narrating and describing
- . Speaking through playing roles and simulations

The main objective of these activities is to provide opportunities for the learners to understand others’ opinions, share viewpoints, and encourage students to develop skills for undertaking real life speaking tasks. For instance, students are asked to speak to each other about their capabilities, then choose to agree or disagree with their partners (On the Move,

P.55). In this type of discussions, students can foster critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify their opinions in polite ways while disagreeing with others.

Secondly, another way of fostering communication is the use of picture narrating and describing. For instance, students are requested to focus on a geography picture, then answer given questions. Students discuss the picture with their groups, then a spokesman (taking the role of the teacher) describes the picture to the whole class. (On the Move, P.105). This activity encourages the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

Thirdly, another important way of getting students to speak is role-playing. In fact, On the Move highly stresses tasks of this kind. By way of illustration, the student is requested to play the role of a taxi driver, and a tourist asks him/her about some advice and recommendations. Thereupon, the student will pretend to be in real social context, and have a variety of social roles. In a nutshell, role plays and simulations not only give students opportunities to act and communicate using English language, they also improve students' listening, speaking, and understanding. Additionally, students learn to use language in more realistic and practical way, and overcome their new unexpected atmospheres in their real life. More importantly, role plays, as Harmer suggests (1984), "greatly increase the self-confidence of hesitant students".

In this respect, the objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of education and the diagram suggested by Auerbach are highly reflected in speaking tasks included in On the Move; the ability to interact orally in English, and a successful functioning in society. With this aim, various speaking tasks such as those listed above can contribute a great deal in developing students' interactive skills necessary for life.

However, it must be pointed out that On the Move has some shortcomings which are related to the pronunciation activities. Generally, phonological activities seem to be artificial and based on drills. For instance, students are given a bunch of sentences, then asked to repeat them using the right intonation which conveys a specific function (On the Move, P.73). Furthermore, some pronunciation activities are put out of context, their basic purpose is supply students with knowledge about phonological rules such as: clusters, diphthongs, vowels, and consonants. To illustrate, after the teacher reads a set of words, students are asked to find which among them does not contain a vowel (On the Move, P.74). Above all, in most of the pronunciation activities, the teacher is the pattern to be followed. So, these exercises require teachers of English with excellent pronunciation and a deep knowledge of phonetics. But, in the Algerian educational settings, we could say finding teachers with such characteristics is scarce.

Conclusively, pronunciation improves only when students have regular exposure to the spoken form of the language (Listening to native speakers), because practicing pronunciation of words in isolation does not help much. As the CBA suggests, context is a vital component in all aspects of learning. Thus, pronunciation should be related to listening tasks where students can hear real English speakers (TV reports, real native dialogues), and then deduce the different ways of pronunciation. To some extent, On the Move pronunciation tasks follow the Audio-lingual model which is characterized by drills and repetitions.

#### **D. Writing Activities**

The Algerian Ministry of Education considers producing and understanding written documents for communicative purposes as one of the primordial objectives. In fact, CBA views establishing communication via writing as a necessary component for education, and a basic functionality in our society which involves three constituents: a subject, an audience,

and a process writing. According to Silva, “writing is purposeful and contextualized communicative interaction, which involves both the construction and transmission of knowledge” (1990, P.18).

As far as On the Move writing tasks are concerned, there is practically no focus on process writing. In fact, we come to understand that these activities are introduced for two purposes; either as an after-thought or as post-reading tasks. By way of illustration, students are requested to write a letter of invitation to a classmate (On the Move, P.34). This task is the first of its kind to be introduced in On the Move, thus students have no background regarding how to write a coherent invitation following the academic standards. In fact, students should first be exposed and taught the different guidelines and examples of writing a letter of invitation before they are asked to write it. Despite its failure in the aspect of process writing, the above activity is of a great importance in students’ daily life. Actually, it is directly clung to the social skills, which highly help students in the process of communication, exchanging ideas and viewpoints.

Except in some cases, most of the writing tasks are de-contextualized, they have no mention of the audience. As a matter of fact, when students are not given opportunities which expose them to realistic audiences, they will face many difficulties while addressing real people in their daily life, especially nowadays, where most of communication is held through E-mails, and short SMSs. For instance, the workout asking the learners to write a note in a diary where they list the possible things that will happen at the end of school year using may/may not, might/might not (On the Move, P.49). Clear and grammatically correct writing is not enough to make a message get clearly across the reader. It must not be overlooked that what makes a writing clearer varies, and ultimately depends on the audience the message is addressed to. To illustrate this, writing a letter to a friend in the college is quite different from

writing it to someone's grandmother or a lay man. It varies in terms of grammar, content, and style.

Besides, many writing tasks such as activities that deal with multiple-choice answers lack creativity because they are generally introduced as post-reading tasks, or for the purpose of testing students' passive knowledge. By way of illustrations, students are given a letter with blanks, then asked to fill in them using was able to/ .....could/couldn't. Consequently, the utilization of multiple-choice exercises based on rigid sentence patterns brings about a number of problems: students select a response rather than construct their own, students can easily guess the answer, only assesses recognition of language, the absence of students' autonomy, and most importantly it is non-authentic to real language use. In short, multiple-choice activities do not give opportunities for students to develop their intelligence and creativity as well as they are quite far from helping students to keep up with the changing world where effective oral and written interactions are the main goal.

Conclusively, the above descriptions clearly demonstrate that, in many cases, the writing tasks fail in the most important aspects. The fact that the process writing, and the context (audience) are missing in many writing tasks could result in students' failure to develop writing competence. Throughout our observation, we come to understand that the writing activities are primarily designed to integrate the language skills such as: grammar, vocabulary, and spelling forms. Consequently, the learning objectives(Productive competence, and the know-how-to-do) set by the Algerian educational authorities do not go hand in hand with the organizational pattern and the design of the writing activities.

### **5.2.3 Group works**

One of the greatest advantages of On the Move textbook is related to the fact that it gives students an opportunity to work in pairs or groups. In fact, group works can be an

effective device to motivate students, encourage active learning, develop critical-thinking, communication, decision-making skills, and problem solving. Tasks of this kind are highly stressed in On the Move, and seem to be recurrent in almost every unit.

On the Move textbook provides a wide range of activities that are supposed to be carried out in pairs or in groups. For instance, students are divided into groups and given a dialogue with blanks, then asked to complete it using some grammatical items such as: neither, either, will, shall. This activity is immediately followed by another task which requires students to form groups and close the textbook, then act out the previous dialogue using different auxiliaries (On the Move, P.56). Through such exercises, students use language in a practical way, agree and disagree with each other, share opinions, as well as participate actively in both written and oral discussions. Besides, they are likely to develop valuable social skills. Above all, these characteristics participate a great deal in the increasing of the students' awareness to find possible solutions for their problems both in and outside school environment.

Additionally, the social skills learners gain throughout group works play a major role in the development of the "know-how-to-do, and know-how-to-be". By way of illustration, students are required to use information taken from a previous exercise, then quiz each other. One plays the role of a TV presenter, the others play the role of hosts (On the Move, P.102). Through this activity, students can learn how to present themselves and how to manage themselves if one day they encounter a similar situation. Therefore, this type of activities functions as a preparation for real life social and employment situations.

More importantly, group works can help students to become critical thinkers in their learning. For example, in the activity referred to above, students who play the role of a TV presenter can disagree with the response of the hosts, suggest their own ideas, and questions

the ambiguities. Therefore, when working with peers in groups, students are encouraged to articulate their ideas and question the ideas of others, which in return, will lead to deep learning.

Despite the advantages pointed out above, group work activities when used in solving learning problems might manifest numerous shortcomings, consequently, the learning outcomes may be difficult to attain, or can be ineffective. In fact, in collaborative learning, students may go at different speeds depending on their ability to understand and absorb the information. Secondly, some students may dominate the group, while others are not given a chance to share their knowledge, because they might be shy, and uncomfortable or even weak students. More importantly, student are certainly going to spend a great deal of time chatting about irrelevant subjects.

Conclusively, if the above disadvantages are coped with, verified, and thoroughly controlled by the teacher, group works are the most effective workouts that are likely to reflect the requirements of CBA since the latter highly favours group works as pointed out by several advocators. Prabhu argues that “group works generate spontaneous interaction between students, creating opportunities for the deployment of their emerging internal systems” (1987, P.81). From a holistic and a theoretical perspective, the collaborative activities suggested in On the Move are in consistency with the objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of education.

#### **5.2.4 Project works**

The authors of the Algerian Middle School Course books consider project works a backbone around which all the previously conducted lessons revolve. Bouhadiba argues that “the project is not only limited to being the target of every file, but it is also the linchpin of

teaching-learning process” (2004, P.3). Based on that, a project seeks to make the attainment of objectives visible and measurable.

As we came across the tasks included in On the Move, we noticed that the course book presents the projects on unit-by-unit basis. Moreover, On the Move project works have four in common: communication, authenticity, creativity, and autonomy. However, they differ in terms of content and objectives. For instance, at the end of the unit “Then and Now”, students are assigned the project of making a poster about differences. This project includes information grasped from an interview with grandfathers, drawings and pictures (Taken from book or via the Internet), observing the contemporary lifestyle. Ultimately, students are asked to make a written output by combining all the data gathered from the different sources mentioned above (On the Move, P.111).

The authenticity of this project is represented in the fact that the learner deals with a real life situation by observing people’s lifestyle, and interviewing his grandfather. Furthermore, it reflects an element of autonomy in the sense that the student is conducting the project outside the classroom environment; there is no intervention of the teacher. More importantly, the element of creativity can be seen in the fact that such projects challenge students to apply skills, knowledge, and strategies from different areas as they conduct their research. So, with this combination of skills, students are the directors and managers of their learning process. It is worth mentioning that this project encourages students to build their work following their own interests. In turn, students will present different works comprising different visions, thoughts and viewpoints. It must not be overlooked that this task does not include any mention of how it should be carried out; whether collaboratively or at an individual level. Finally, this project is presented as a written document, which will be assessed through writing criteria.

On the other hand, a slight significance is allotted to oral communication in this task. Apart from the inclusion of one interview, there is no other phase which points out to oral interaction. In fact, from the very outset to the end, this project is a writing process. It must not be overlooked that the textbook puts much emphasis on text projects which requires students to elicit information from texts available on the Internet. Therefore, it would be of a great importance if the students draw their competencies on oral interaction, interpret oral messages, such as interview and surveys, and present their final work to their classmates in an oral way. In this connection, we advocate that the inclusion of projects in On the Move textbook has not been for the aim of acquiring the target language, yet they are included so that students can reinvest the different learned skills.

Despite the importance of project works, there is a very serious shortcoming that should be taken into account whenever the teacher assigns a project to his/her students. It is common among the Algerian educational settings that whenever there is a homework or a project, students just search the information on Google and copy and paste the content and submit the homework (i.e. students bring the ready-made assignments from Cybers) . In fact, lecturers often do not re-consider the phenomenon for different reasons. Therefore, the project works might not take effect in developing students' skills if this phenomenon is not being coped with.

Conclusively, all the projects figured in On the Move are production projects. The final work is presented in written documents. Therefore, these projects as a whole reflect the production competence (the ability to express knowledge in writing) set by the Algerian Ministry of education as well as the diagram set by Auerbach which states that: "CBA aims to give students a chance of learning with themselves to encounter problems in real life".

## 5.2.5 Representation of culture

It is commonly approved that language is culture and vice versa. Therefore, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which it occurs. In any case, in order for communication to be successful, language use must be associated with other culturally appropriate behaviour, not only linguistic rules in the narrow sense.

One of the main features of CBA is that it applies classroom activities in which students use authentic material and carry out specific tasks in order to meet real life language objectives including cross-cultural communication. In this connection, On the Move textbook involves the direct use and handling of the products of culture in which the English language occurs whether American, British or universal culture. These cultural products are represented in all the aspects and lifestyles of the native speakers such as: postcards, photographs, symbols, images, songs, religious beliefs, daily transactions, TV broadcasts, news reports, daily magazines, types of foods, and different ways of greetings. As Kramsch suggests,

“To become fluent in a second language requires communicative Competence, and a significant portion of communicative competence encompasses a cultural understanding of things such as conversational routines and discourse nuances as well as the target society's norms, values, and etiquettes”(1994, P.45).

In fact, the first suggested activity in On the Move is culture-based. Students are given three (3) pictures which portray different foods, then asked to identify in which country each of them is eaten most. This activity is followed by a question which requires students to identify the most popular dish in the world today and what restaurant has made it famous. (On the Move, P.18). These different foods are, actually, belonging to the target culture (British, and American).

Secondly, Most of On the Move reading texts are culture-based. As an example, students are required to read a short paragraph which deals with the Pancake Day (On the Move, P.22). It is also known as Shrove Tuesday where people in some countries, especially Britain and America, celebrate by preparing and eating pancakes.

Thirdly, On the Move resorts to one of the most effective authentic sources in portraying the cultural aspects of the target language which is taking extractions from well-known newspapers and magazines. For instance, students, in pair work, are asked to quiz each other about a picture extracted from the Sydney Sun newspapers which reports how Australian people spend their day at the beach (On the Move, P.143).

Besides, On the Move activities make the use of the names, songs, proverbs, words of wisdom which represent the English native traditions such as: Ronald, Bill, Mary, Cathy....

As we have previously stated, if students fail to cope with the socio-cultural aspects in which the target language occurs, this may certainly lead to miscommunication. Thus, we shall present a case to demonstrate how the lack of cultural awareness brings about misconceptions between the speaker and his/her interlocutor.

Take notice on how different people all around the world beckon (Move your head or hand to ask a person to come nearby). For example, in Western and Northern Europe, people do it by raising the palm of their hands, whereas in Southern Europe, they do it by the palm of their hands downwards. Contrarily, Canadian people feel embarrassed when someone beckons them likewise, they prefer using a clear statement such as: "Please, can you approach?" Therefore, if language users are not aware about the differences in cultural backgrounds, this may lead to a great miscommunication when people use different manners of beckoning. Conclusively, the integration of the target culture in On the Move activities participates a great deal in the development of students' cultural awareness as well as

communicative skills in the sense that activities of this kind bring real world context into the classroom and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, effective and communicative way. From this point of view, we advocate that On the Move cultural-based tasks are in consistent with the objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of education which are represented in the ability to participate in spoken interactions, and the ability to understand the interlocutor's message.

### **5.3 Discussion B: Analysis of the information gathered from the questionnaire**

#### **5.3.1 Question1: the organization of On the Move content**

The content and the design of a textbook generally refers to its organization and presentation of the different language items, pedagogic tasks, and the sequencing of the material. In this respect, the responses of the informants disclose that all (100%) the Middle School teachers to whom the questionnaire was submitted have developed a very positive attitude towards the organization of the textbook content (see: table 4). It may be the case that On the Move course components are effectively and clearly organized on specific topics such as: science, travel, foods, and stories. And they are divided up into six major units, each unit makes reference to of the learning objectives, and an overview of the skills which can be found in the introductory table of the contents. Moreover, On the Move linguistic content and skills are presented in a systematic way starting from the simplest to the most complex.

In short, the implications of the findings indicate that the teachers do not find any ambiguity while teaching its content in the classroom. This can also reflect the fact that the more organized a textbook is the more it facilitates the learning process and makes the learning objectives set by Algerian educational authorities visible and attainable.

### **5.3.2 Question2: Teachers' attitude towards On the Move role in building the necessary skills for students.**

It is very important to mention that when talking about the four skills in English classes, these are divided into two categories: receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills are the ways in which students extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear, for example when students watch TV, read a story or a magazine, or listen to the news. On the other hand, the productive skills focus on speaking and writing, because the students need to produce the language and communicate the ideas with their classmates.

This question aimed at eliciting a base of knowledge regarding the direct effect of On the Move textbook in building the necessary skills (listening/reading, speaking/writing) for students. In this connection, the provided data highlights that most (81.25 %) of the participants have displayed a positive attitude. In fact, the teachers affirm that On the Move is an indispensable material in building the four skills for students. Additionally, 12.5 % of the teachers say that the textbook is only supporting, we cannot be totally relied on it. One (1) among the respondents believes that the textbook is restricting because it focuses on unfamiliar topics (see: table 5). In fact, according to the results above, the four skills (listening/ reading, speaking/writing) are well covered by the textbook activities. Based on the statistics, the teachers' responses highlight that On the Move activities are consistent with the objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of Education which are represented in the receptive skills (the ability to understand what the other says), and the productive skills (the ability to produce both oral and written messages).

### **5.3.3 Question3: The prime objective of using On the Move textbook**

The Algerian Ministry of Education has set up specific objectives that should be attained at the end of the learning process including to interact orally in English. These

objectives are selected according to the training needs. In fact, certain training models focus primarily on the transmission of knowledge, others give more importance to the development of cognitive process. In this connection, this question has been forwarded to the teachers in order to find out what is to be the prime objective of using On the Move.

The attained results show that most teachers (62.5 %) advocate that becoming confident users of English language should be the prime objective of using On the Move textbook. On the other hand, a small number (18.75 %) of respondents consider using language in unexpected situations very important, while two (12.5 %) among the respondents stressed the fact that On the Move has more detailed focus on grammar. Moreover, one (6.25 %) teacher believes that On the Move textbook aims to develop the traditional skills of speaking/writing (see: table 6). Most of the teachers, in fact, agree that the textbook is designed to develop learners' ability to use language orally and in different situations.

#### **5.3.4 Question4: the role of On the Move textbook in motivating students**

Motivation is a key factor in the success of students at all stages of their education. In fact, textbooks activities can play a major role in providing and encouraging that motivation in students. Balduf argues that two major factors that contribute to poor motivation are inability of students to see the relevance of classroom activities and lack of sense of autonomy (2009, P.274).

In this respect, from the results we can notice that the majority (93.75 %) of the respondents displayed positive attitudes towards the importance of On the Move activities in motivating students, while one (6.25 %) respondent says that On the Move activities are not very effective in motivating students because they are boring and lengthy (see: table 7)

In short, Motivation is a critical component of learning. It is important in getting students to engage in academic activities. It is also important in determining how much

students will learn from the activities they perform or the information to which they will be exposed to. Students who are motivated to learn something use higher cognitive processes in learning about it. Actually, the theoretical diagram suggested by Auerbach which focuses on motivating students and give them a chance to learn with themselves is consistent with the responses of the teachers.

### **5.3.5 Question5:suitability of the activities for facilitating the learning process**

One of the main roles textbooks' activities should fulfill is to facilitate learning. In other words, the learning activities should make the process of learning easier for students to accomplish. There are three important aspects that should be included in the activities in order for the learning process to be easier: the language, the content, and the level.

Actually, a substantial number of teachers (81.25 %) finds the activities facilitating the teaching/learning process. Some of the teachers have stated that the activities present the English language elements within a context. As a result, they make the teaching/learning process smooth and enjoyable. They have further stated that the textbook uses short dialogues, authentic texts, communicative activities which foster communication between learners. Hence, the acquisition of the language is easier. Nevertheless, a small number of teachers (12.5 %) has disagreed with that. These teachers believe that the language of the textbook is difficult and does not meet the level of the learners (see: table 8).

### **5.3.6 Question6:The most favourable types of activities that foster communicative competence**

Communicative activities include any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners, as well as with people in the programme and

community. Communicative activities have real purposes: to find out information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture. Even when a lesson is focused on developing reading or writing skills, communicative activities should be integrated into the lesson.

In this respect, the findings clearly show that most of the instructors (56.25 %) prefer using group discussions. We notice that the two initial options are completely overlooked, this indicates that “Fill in the gap” and “Sentence completion” cannot develop students’ communicative competence. Moreover, five (5) informants have favoured activities other than those included in the questionnaire such as: extensive listening/speaking tasks, picture stories. Additionally, (31.25%) of the informants believe that project works are important in developing students’ communicative competence and social skills (see: table 9).

### **5.3.7 Question7:The textbook’s inclusion of individual, pair, and group work**

Learners process and comprehend information in a variety of ways, and varying the teaching strategies and classroom activities to respond to different learning styles will allow for more student engagement.

According to these results, the teachers (100 %) have displayed a very positive viewpoint about the diversity of the activities. This shows that the textbook includes various sections and activities carried out either individually, in pair or collectively (see: table10).

### **5.3.8 Question8:The suitability of On the Move language and activities for the learners**

In order for a textbook to be efficient, its content should be selected pursuant to the learners’ needs and level. In this connection, this question aims to highlight the teachers’

viewpoint about the suitability of both the language and the activities used in On the Move for the students' needs. Starting with the strongest points, Eight (8) teachers hold the view that the language and the activities utilized in the textbook are compatible with the students' linguistic capabilities and needs. Contrarily, three (3) among them have selected the second option "probably" which implies that it all depends on the students' determination and background. Moreover, a substantial number (5) of teachers believe that both the language and the activities do not go in conformity with the students' needs (see: table11).

### **5.3.9 Question9: The role of the activities in encouraging learners to be critical thinkers**

Modern society is becoming more complex, information is becoming available and changing more rapidly prompting users to constantly rethink, switch directions, and change problem-solving strategies. Thus, it is increasingly important to prompt critical thinking during learning to help learners develop strategies to apply new knowledge to the complex situations in their day-to-day activities. Reflective thinking helps learners develop higher-order thinking skills and relate new knowledge to prior understanding.

In this respect, the findings display that most of the informants hold a negative attitude towards whether the activities foster learners to be critical thinkers. The majority (56.25 %) of them believe that the textbook provides few or no opportunities for developing the students' critical thinking and ability. On the other hand, four (4) informants hold the opinion that the activities encourage the development of critical thinking, while others have preferred to stay neutral (see: table 12). In a nutshell, critical thinking is a vital social skill which, according to the statistics, is not reflected in the textbook's activities. Therefore, the textbook goes against the Auerbach's theoretical diagram which focuses on a successful functioning in society such as: agreeing and disagreeing.

### **5.3.10 Question10:The textbook’s role in helping the learners to build their own knowledge**

Fostering constructivist learning helps learners actively construct meaning by building on background knowledge, experience and reflect on those experiences and thus encourage them to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. Based on that, we have forwarded a question for the participants to elicit information on whether On the Move activities help learners to build their own knowledge. In this respect, almost all the informants (75 %) adopted a positive attitude while the remaining teachers (25 %) disagreed on that (see: table 13). From this perspective, we advocate that On the Move activities are consistent with Auerbach’s theory which states that learners should be given a chance to learn and build knowledge themselves to encounter problems in society.

### **5.3.11 Question11: Teacher’s role**

The responses highlight the teachers’ opinion about their role while using the activities provided in the textbook. Statistically, 62.5 % of the teachers have revealed that their number-one role is to facilitate the learning process. In more proper words, they help the students in different tasks such as; correcting their mistakes, guide them, give them autonomy to realize their own goal. However, the remaining informants (37.5 %) have felt that they are only knowledge-providers (see: table 14).

### **5.3.12 Question12:Teachers’ ability to teach under CBA**

The findings show that the majority (56.25 %) of the teachers are unfamiliar with CBA. Some of them have stated that they are trained under communicative approach while

others have preferred to teach using the process approach. On the other hand, 43.75 % of the teachers have replied that they have been trained to teach under CBA's environment (see: table 15).

## 5.4 Summary

After analyzing and interpreting the results we come to understand that the activities suggested in On the Move textbook are designed to fit the requirements of CBA despite the fact that our evaluation and the teachers' responses highlight some shortcomings (See chapter6). Moreover, our study demonstrates that these activities can be relied on to attain the learning objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of Education in terms of three important points:

**.The type of language practice:** On the Move includes enough communicative activities and less mechanical practice. Moreover, social interaction and meaning negotiation are presented through real contextualized activities.

**. Language skills:** The textbook gives more importance to the practice of the four communicative skills (Listening/speaking, reading/writing) than to the study of grammar. The textbook also follows a sequence that moves from receptive skills (reading and listening) to productive skills (speaking and writing).

**. The formats:** On the Move activities focus a great deal on the use of formats that reflect authentic life situations and help students in solving real life problems such as: short presentations, role-plays, small group discussions, and interviews.

## 6. General Conclusion

Competency-based education is perceived by some as the answer to the improvement of education and training for the complex current world. The basic premise behind CBA is to achieve the outcome. Also, the new approach aims to enhance learners' competencies in order to use them in their real life. Moreover, it focuses on learning and pupils' activities rather than on the teacher's role. Algeria has adopted the CBA models to encourage building courses, and learning programmes to respond to the new challenges of contemporary life. Therefore, this research study has attempted to provide a detailed look over whether On the Move activities are designed in accordance with the requirements of CBA. Moreover, it was carried out with the following goals: to identify the extent to which the activities suggested in the textbook at hand respond to the principles of CBA, and to what extent do they go in conformity with the learning objectives set by the Algerian Ministry of Education. To do so, the study started with a literature review relevant to the area of the research, where the researchers have described and covered the most important points related to CBA. Additionally, it was followed by the Methodology section in which the researchers have described the methods and techniques used along the research. Moreover, the collected data have been primarily elicited from our analysis of some of the activities suggested in the textbook as well as with the help of a questionnaire submitted to teachers of English in the Algerian Middle School settings (fourth grade) which plays a vital role in this research study since it sheds light exactly on the teachers' attitudes towards the textbook's activities according to this new approach.

Based on our analysis and the teachers' viewpoints, the findings revealed that the subject and content of the textbook is relevant to the students' interest, needs, and concerns. There is also sufficient variety in the subject and content of the textbook which have been organized in a meaningful way. Besides print, format, and size, the textbook is considered to be in harmony with the aims and objectives of the syllabus and the chapters were arranged

logically. Its exercises and activities involve and encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice. The textbook pays attention to the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Similarly, the content of the textbook is generally realistic, interesting, challenging and motivating with the activities incorporating pair and group work, which all provide the opportunities for communication and develop learners' creativity, intelligence and interest in the English language. Also, a substantial number of teachers indicated that the activities of On the Move motivate students and create a good atmosphere which makes the teaching process easy, smooth, and enjoyable.

However, from a general perspective, the analysis of the findings and their interpretations also indicate that On the Move activities incorporate some shortcomings which must be revised by the authors or textbook designers.

Many of the activities were not designed on the basis of the students' previous knowledge such as: the letter of invitation included in the first chapter of the textbook. In this case, students are asked to write an invitation without any prior knowledge or warm-up instructions about the content and the way of writing it.

Many of On the Move activities do not include the process that should be followed, for instance, in writing and listening. In more proper words, students are not guided to how organize texts, or engage in writing. Similarly, the textbook does not provide any pre-listening processes such as: how to listen, how to scan, and how to skim. Moreover, students, for instance, should first be taught how to read and what are the different techniques to follow to become a good reader, before they are engaged in reading, otherwise, their efforts will be vain.

As Brewington suggests, "Mastery depends on the students having a clear idea at the very outset of each lesson what is they will be learning" (1988, P.25). In this respect, On the Move

does not include this principle and its units do not start with stating the learning objectives. If the students know about the learning objective before they engage in the lesson and activities, they will be more interested and motivated.

In many cases, the selection and gradation of vocabulary items are not appropriate to the learners' level, and they are not mainly on the basis of simplicity and frequency of occurrence. Moreover; the main reading sections have some weaknesses. Then these sections are dominated by straightforward questions requiring just a restatement of facts already given in the main texts, instead of any real comprehension of material.

## **6.1 Implications of the Study**

Despite the fact the textbook theoretically reflects the principles of CBA, there is still an issue which might be challenging, and therefore, it can stand as an obstacle to reach the learning objectives. In fact, our questionnaire included an item which addresses the issue of whether the informants have been trained to teach under CBA's environment. In this connection, most of the teachers' answers have been negative and this may be the case that the teachers are accustomed to the traditional approaches. So, for the fear to have a negative effect on the students achievements, teachers need to attend workshops and training sessions to enhance their teaching abilities and assume their role properly because only in that way that the learning process can be successful.

Since today's students are born into a digital age and spend most of their time in online environments, textbooks alone are not adequate. There is a huge need to combine classroom learning with online learning. However, the Algerian educational settings fail when it comes to the integration of technology into classroom learning. It must not be overlooked that the use of extra-materials in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom such as: constant access to Internet, computers, video and audio tapes, computer software, and visual

aids highly support and influence instruction and procedures of learning. In a nutshell, technology can facilitate implementation of such a CBA to education.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

Since the research could not encompass all areas, and it addresses the issue of implementing CBA in the Middle school textbook entitled On the Move, a more thorough analysis of English textbooks activities could be conducted employing the same kind of tools as used in the study, but on a larger scale and incorporating additions in the questionnaires.

Also, further studies could be conducted on different textbooks in different settings such as: High Schools and using different research methods such as: observations, surveys, and interviews. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the attained results are theoretical, therefore, this cannot make the generalizability of the outcomes possible. So, in order for the learning objectives and competencies to be manifest, there is a need for a general proficiency test which can determine the effectiveness of the On the Move activities in practical terms resulting in empirical data which can then be compared with the theoretical findings.

In the end, with these positive expectations, we largely hope that this humble work will turn to the advantage of other researchers in the future.

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**Questionnaire to teachers**

This questionnaire serves as a data gathering tool. It is a part of a research work that investigates the degree of suitability of the activities suggested in the Algerian Middle School English textbook On the Move to the guiding principles of Competency-Based Approach (CBA). We pledge that both your answers and suggestions will be thoroughly anonymous. Your answers and suggestions are very important in fulfilling our research work.

Note that there are two kinds of questions: direct questions which call for an answer in the provided spaces, and multiple choice questions which require a tick to the answer you think is the most appropriate. Note also that more than one answer can sometimes be provided.

Thank you for your precious help!

Abdellaoui Slimane

Ouazar Lyes

**SECTION ONE: General Information about the informants**

1- Gender:

a. Male

b. Female

2- Age:

.....

3- Teaching experience:

.....

**SECTION TWO: Teachers' attitudes towards the textbook and their evaluation of the activities provided therein.**

**Q1:** Is On the Move textbook well organized in terms of its content?

1- Yes

2- No

3- Not really

**Q2:** How do you consider the textbook in terms of building the necessary skills for your students?

1- Ineffectual

2- Restricting

3- Supporting

4- Indispensable

**Q3:** What would be the prime objective of using On the Move textbook?

1- Having sufficient knowledge about grammar

2- Developing the learners' traditional skills of speaking/writing

3- Being able to use language in unexpected situations

4- Becoming confident users of English language

**Q4:** How far is On the Move textbook motivating students?

1- To high extent

2- To some extent

3- Not at all

**Q5:** Are the activities provided in the textbook facilitating the learning process (for both the teacher and the learner) and why?

1- No

2- To some extent

3- Yes

.....

**Q6:** What type of activities included in the textbook do you find most useful in developing learners' intercultural communicative competence and social skills?

1- Using tasks like "Fill in the gap"

2- Sentence completion

3- Using group discussion

4- Using project works

5- Assigning roles

6. All of them

7- Any other [Mention the activity below]

.....

**Q7:** Does the textbook incorporate individual, pair and group works?

2- Many

3- A few

4- None

**Q8:** Do the language and the activities of On the Move suit the level of the learners and meet their needs?

1- Absolutely

2- Probably

3- Not at All

**Q9:** Do you think that these activities encourage learners to be critical thinkers?

1-Certainly

2- Probably

2-Not at all

**Q10:** Through your experience in using this textbook, do you think that it helps the learners to construct their own knowledge?

1. Yes

2. No

**Q11:** What kind of teacher do you consider yourself when using the activities suggested in the textbook?

1. Information-provider

2. Facilitator

3. Others.....

**Section three: Teachers' practices and training in CBA**

**Q1:** Research shows that assigning teachers to teach courses that they are not trained to teach has a negative effect on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). So, have you been trained for teaching under CBA's environment?

1. Yes

2. No

If no, what is your approach to teaching?

.....