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Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in the Context of Arabic Language Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Scale

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Abstract

This study is grounded in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages updated from its previous 2001 edition. This research aims to explore how sociolinguistic competence and appropriateness are reflected in communicative language competences and signing competences and to contextualize these aspects within the Arabic language. This study employs a descriptive analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume (Europe, 2020). The updated scales in the 2020 edition provide a more robust foundation for developing a comprehensive and responsive competence framework that addresses the contemporary dynamics of society, culture, and technology. This inclusive approach allows for a broader understanding of sociolinguistic competence among diverse learners, including deaf communities. The results of this study indicate that the updates introduced a more inclusive and practical approach, that can be applied to the context of learning and assessing Arabic language proficiency, particularly in speaking skills.

Keywords: *sociolinguistic competence, sociolinguistic appropriateness, CEFR, Arabic language*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini didasarkan pada Kerangka Acuan Umum Eropa (CEFR) untuk Bahasa yang diperbarui dari edisi tahun 2001. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana kompetensi dan kesesuaian sociolinguistik tercermin dalam kompetensi berbahasa komunikatif dan kompetensi bahasa isyarat dan untuk mengkontekstualisasikan aspek-aspek ini dalam bahasa Arab. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis deskriptif terhadap dokumen *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment Companion Volume* (Europe, 2020). Skala yang diperbarui pada edisi 2020 memberikan landasan yang lebih kuat untuk mengembangkan kerangka kerja kompetensi yang komprehensif dan responsif yang membahas dinamika kontemporer masyarakat, budaya, dan teknologi. Pendekatan inklusif ini memungkinkan pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang kompetensi sociolinguistik di antara peserta didik yang beragam, termasuk komunitas tunarungu. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembaruan tersebut memperkenalkan pendekatan yang lebih inklusif dan praktis, yang dapat diterapkan pada konteks pembelajaran dan penilaian kemahiran bahasa Arab, khususnya dalam keterampilan berbicara.

Kata kunci: *kompetensi sociolinguistik, kesesuaian sociolinguistik, CEFR, bahasa Arab*

Introduction

Sociolinguistic competence in foreign language use involves understanding and adapting linguistic variations to diverse social and cultural contexts.¹ It refers to the skills and knowledge required to use language effectively within social context.² It reflects the ability to communicate effectively, considering personal development, cultural awareness, social norms, and the interlocutor context.³ This competence goes beyond language structure, focusing on using language appropriately in various social situations.⁴ Acting as an agent in communication, individuals mediate between language and culture, shaping identity, enriching interactions,⁵ and selecting suitable expressions for each situation.⁶

Achieving sociolinguistic competence requires a language learning process that unfolds within social contexts and involves regular review of social and cultural influences on language, alongside a functional learning approach.⁷ This competence is challenging to attain due to the wide variation in speaking rules across cultures.⁸ However, as language learners progress in understanding and using language variations (horizontal continuum), they enhance their sociolinguistic competence.⁹ The development of this competence relies on factors, such as linguistic markers, politeness conventions, societal wisdom expressions, and variations in registers, dialects, and accents.¹⁰ Additionally, understanding both verbal

¹Raykhona Gulomova, "Sociolinguistic Competence of L2 Students," *TJE - Thematics Journal of Education* 4, no. 12 (2020): 226-232.

²Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2020).

³Dilafruz Muhamadjonovna Sarimsakova, "The Development of Sociolinguistic Competence of Future English Language Teachers through Computer Technologies," *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences* 8, no. 3, part II (2020): 147-150.

⁴Miriam Meyerhoff, *Introducing Sociolinguistics*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2018).

⁵Rémi A. Van Compernelle and Lawrence Williams, "Reconceptualizing Sociolinguistic Competence as Mediated Action: Identity, Meaning-Making, Agency," *The Modern Language Journal* 96 (2012): 234–250.

⁶Jomijea Laroco Martinez and Presley V. De Vera, "Sociolinguistic Competence of Foreign National College Students," *Asian EFL Journal* 21, no. 2.5 (2019): 291–336.

⁷Mohammad Saber Khaghaninejad, *Sociolinguistics and Language Education* (Shiraz: Katibenovin, 2024), 1-134.

⁸Kristoffer Conrad M. Tejada, "Context Analysis of Non-intellective Correlates Affecting Future Educators' Sociolinguistic Competence," *Education Quarterly Reviews* 4, no. 4 (2021): 111–123.

⁹Vera Regan, "Variation in French Interlanguage: A Longitudinal Study of Sociolinguistic Competence," in *Variation in Second Language Acquisition*, ed. D. Preston and R. Bayley, *Studies in Bilingualism* 10 (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1996).

¹⁰Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume*; Nargizakhon Valieva, "Formation of Students' Sociolinguistic Competence at Foreign Language Lessons," *News of UZMU Journal* 1, no. 1.1 (2024): 78–81.

and non-verbal language, along with cultural contexts, is crucial in enhancing this competence.¹¹

The 2020 update of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages introduced key enhancements to make language competence descriptors more inclusive and flexible, covering modalities like sign language and online communication. Notable updates include a new Pre-A1 descriptor, expanded plus levels (Pre-A1, A1, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C1, C2), revisions to A1–C1 descriptors, adjustments at C2, and new scales for pluricultural and plurilingual competence. Additional updates feature scales for online interaction, phonological control, 14 for sign language, 19 for mediation, 3 for creative texts and literature, and descriptors tailored for young learners.

Several studies have criticized the 2001 CEFR version for promoting monolingualism, contradicting its plurilingualism claims, and making it unsuitable for assessing migrants' language competence.¹² The 2001 CEFR was compared to FREPA (A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures), which provides descriptors for knowledge, attitudes, and skills but is inconsistent in promoting plurilingualism.¹³ Additionally, the CEFR was criticized for lacking detailed guidance for syllabi and test design.¹⁴ The 2020 CEFR descriptors are seen as more suited for learning than assessment,¹⁵ sparking ongoing debates about their impact on formal evaluation.¹⁶ Consequently, linking tests to CEFR standards has been challenging,¹⁷ and its implementation has caused confusion among practitioners.¹⁸

¹¹N. O. Fedorina, "Formation of Sociocultural and Sociolinguistic Competence in Primary School," *Lingvodidactics*, (2024): 112-118.

¹²Natalia Wright, "Towards a European Plurilingual Habitus? A Critical Analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and Its Symbolic Power," *Education, Language and Sociology Research* 3, no. 3 (2022): 10.; Stefanie Schneider, "A Critical Analysis of the Role of Intercultural Communication in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Companion Volume (2020)," *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching* 7, no. 2 (2020): 193–199.

¹³Michel Candelier, Petra Daryai-Hansen, dan Anna Schröder-Sura, "The Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures – A Complement to the CEFR to Develop Plurilingual and Intercultural Competences," *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 6, no. 3 (2012): 243–57.

¹⁴Marija Kusevska, "Connecting Development of Pragmatic Competence with the CEFR," *Linguistica* 54, no. 1 (2014): 97–112.

¹⁵Margaret Russell, "Communicating Effectively: A Competency Framework for CEFR (2020) Mediation Skills in Use," *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* 15 (2023).

¹⁶Fergus O'Dwyer et al., eds., *CEFR Journal—Research and Practice*, vol. 4 (Japan Association for Language Teaching, CEFR & Language Portfolio SIG, 2021).

¹⁷Pawel Sickinger and Klaus Peter Schneider, "Pragmatic Competence and the CEFR: Pragmatic Profiling as a Link Between Theory and Language Use," *Linguistica* 54, no. 1 (2014): 113–127.

¹⁸Noriko Nagai et al., *CEFR-Informed Learning, Teaching and Assessment: A Practical Guide*, Springer Texts in Education (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2020).

Studies highlight that the 2001 CEFR falls short in addressing sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence,¹⁹ places little emphasis on non-verbal communication,²⁰ and lacks consideration for intracultural variability²¹ across diverse cultural contexts.²² These competencies overlap with linguistic and plurilingual ones²³ but are often neglected in classrooms, with the CEFR's role in teaching considered marginal.²⁴ Designed for foreign languages, it inadequately accommodates local sociolinguistic contexts.²⁵ However, the 2018 CEFR descriptors²⁶ at C1 have been shown to align with Band 3 in Cambridge's Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) for English.²⁷ Despite these issues, CEFR is positively viewed by teachers and learners,²⁸ particularly for its focus on cultural awareness.²⁹

A study by Rasha Soliman³⁰ explores the application of the 2001 CEFR in Arabic language learning at universities, addressing challenges teachers face in adopting it despite its recognition as a tool for measuring language proficiency.³¹ Soliman notes that the CEFR implementation focuses on building a foundation in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at beginner levels (A1–A2), with dialectal variations introduced at B1 to expose learners to real-

¹⁹Elvira Koran, *Developing Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Competences in English as Foreign Language (EFL) Students at University Language Schools (Iraqi Case)* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Faculty of Education and Humanities, International Black Sea University, Tbilisi, 2016).

²⁰Ivana Sugar, *Analyses of Sociolinguistic Competences in the ELT Textbooks in A2 Level According to the CEFR* (Master's thesis, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, 2015).

²¹Barbara Pizziconi, "5. Teaching and Learning (Im)Politeness: A Look at the CEFR and Pedagogical Research," in *Teaching and Learning (Im)Politeness*, ed. Barbara Pizziconi and Miriam A. Locher (Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2015), 113–152.

²²Mutar Sabeeh Naser and Nor Liza Ali, "Using the CEFR for Improving Pre-service Teachers' Communicative Competence," *Asian Social Science* 19, no. 3 (2023): 15.

²³B. Eizaga-Rebollar and C. Heras-Ramírez, "Assessing Pragmatic Competence in Oral Proficiency Interviews at the C1 Level with the New CEFR Descriptors," *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 16, no. 1 (2020): 87–121.

²⁴Eleonora Maldina, *The Impact of the Common European Framework of Reference on Foreign Language Instruction: The Case of Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Competence* (Master's thesis, University of Toronto, 2015).

²⁵Colette Despagne and John Roby Grossi, "Implementation of the CEFR in the Mexican Context," *Synergies Europe* 6, no. 1 (2011): 65–74.; Arif Humaini and Talqis Nurdianto, "Understanding CEFR Language Levels: A Psycholinguistic Study," *SHS Web of Conferences* 202 (2024): 04004.

²⁶Council of Europe, *The CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (Language Policy Programme, Education Policy Division, Education Department, 2018), in Eizaga-Rebollar and Heras-Ramírez, "Assessing Pragmatic Competence in Oral Proficiency Interviews at the C1 Level with the New CEFR Descriptors."

²⁷Eizaga-Rebollar and Heras-Ramírez, "Assessing Pragmatic Competence in Oral Proficiency Interviews at the C1 Level with the New CEFR Descriptors".

²⁸Katherine Rehner and Ivan Lasan, "Developing Second Language Learners' Sociolinguistic Competence: How Teachers' CEFR-Related Professional Learning Aligns with Learner-Identified Needs," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 3 (2023): 282.

²⁹Ibrahim Halil Topal, "A CEFR-Oriented Probe into Culture: Implications for Language Learners," *Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication* 2, no. 2 (2024): 163-189.

³⁰Rasha Soliman, "The Implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for the Teaching and Learning of Arabic as a Second Language in Higher Education," in *Handbook for Arabic Language Teaching Professionals in the 21st Century, Volume II* (1st ed.; Routledge, 2017), 118–137.

³¹Topal, "A CEFR-Oriented Probe into Culture: Implications for Language Learners," 181.

life communication and enable flexible use in formal and informal contexts.³² However, the CEFR lacks coverage of key Arabic grammatical concepts, such as possessive constructions, making it better suited for European languages and highlighting the need for further research to adapt it to Arabic.³³

This study focuses on the following questions due to the broad scope of sociolinguistic competence, sociolinguistic appropriateness, language proficiency levels, and Arabic language skills: What are the key differences in the scope of sociolinguistic competence between the CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020? How are sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistic appropriateness distinguished in communicative language competences and signing competences? How is sociolinguistic appropriateness applied in the context of Arabic, particularly in speaking skills?

This study is based on the theory that using language appropriately requires understanding the sociolinguistic rules of a community,³⁴ including how language is used in different social contexts, such as formal and informal situations, while considering factors like social status and relationships.³⁵ The CEFR 2001 defines sociolinguistic competence as understanding sociocultural conditions, emphasizing sensitivity to social conventions like politeness, intergenerational and gender differences, social class, group norms, and customary linguistic expressions. CEFR 2020 expands this by defining sociolinguistic competence as a combination of knowledge and skills needed to navigate social aspects of language use, including linguistic markers of relationships, politeness, register differences, dialects, and accents.³⁶ Another study highlights Arabic speaking skills as part of communicative language competences, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, conversational norms, and appropriate speech acts.³⁷ Developing these skills requires both internal factors, such as consistent practice and self-confidence, alongside external factors, including a

³²Soliman, 118-137.

³³Francesco Grande, "Arabic Language Teaching and Valorization of Roots: The Italian Experience," in *Mother Tongue and Intercultural Valorization: Europe and Its Migrant Youth*, ed. Jaap De Ruiter and Massimiliano Spotti (Franco Angeli, 2012), 123–148.

³⁴Dell Hymes, "The Scope of Sociolinguistics," in *Sociolinguistics: A Reader*, eds. Nikolas Coupland and Adam Jaworski (London: Macmillan Education, 1997), 12–22.

³⁵Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 440-446.

³⁶Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion Volume*, 136.

³⁷Muhammad Tunde Yaqub, "Developing Speaking Skill in Arabic Learners: A Proposal for Integration of Product and Process Approaches," *European Scientific Journal* 8, no. 29 (2012): 142.

supportive and enabling environment.³⁸ Considering that Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is predominantly employed in formal contexts, while Colloquial Arabic (CA) is used in everyday interactions, several researchers advocate for the integration of CA into L2 Arabic curricula. This inclusion is proposed to enhance learners' sociolinguistic competence and better equip them for authentic communication with Arabic speakers.³⁹

Method

This study employs the narrative content of CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020 as the foundation for content analysis.⁴⁰ This process extends beyond the act of analyzing itself,⁴¹ it involves several steps, including document filtering, section selection, identification of analytical components, categorization, coding, verification, and evaluation.⁴² Additionally, it may involve defining focus areas, formulating research questions, establishing categories, and presenting results with recommendations.⁴³ A further methodological approach connects research questions to theoretical frameworks, designs the research structure, selects materials, determines methods, and processes findings for discussion.⁴⁴

Focusing on sociolinguistic competence and appropriateness, the study examines the social and cultural relevance of language use in CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020. Using a qualitative approach with a descriptive design,⁴⁵ the updates between the two editions are analyzed. Utilizing updates between two editions are analyzed. The findings are contextualized for Arabic as a foreign language, interpreted based on CEFR descriptors, and developed into sample expressions and questions for assessing Arabic-speaking proficiency,

³⁸Sueraya Che Haron, Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, Arifin Mamat, and Ismaiel Hassanein Ahmed Mohamed, "Understanding Arabic-Speaking Skill Learning Strategies among Selected Malay Learners: A Case-Study at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)," *Contemporary Issues in Education Research* 3, no. 8 (2010): 13.

³⁹Lama Nassif and Khaled Al Masaeed, "Supporting the Sociolinguistic Repertoire of Emergent Diglossic Speakers: Multidialectal Practices of L2 Arabic Learners," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 41, no. 9 (2020): 2.

⁴⁰Mariette Bengtsson, "How to Plan and Perform a Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis," *Nursing & Health Sciences* 18, no. 1 (2016): 14.

⁴¹Stefan Titscher, Michael Meyer, Ruth Wodak, and Eva Vetter, *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis: In Search of Meaning* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000), 55.

⁴²Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, Vetter, *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis: In Search of Meaning*, 58-61.

⁴³Csilla Weninger, "Textbook Analysis," in *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, ed. Carol A. Chapelle (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 1-8.

⁴⁴Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution* (Beltz, 2014).

⁴⁵Bengtsson, "How to Plan and Perform a Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis."; Weninger, "Textbook Analysis."; Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution*; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, Vetter, *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis: In Search of Meaning*.

aligned with the productive skills evaluation framework of the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language.⁴⁶

Result and Discussion

A. Comparison of Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020

1. Comparison of Sociolinguistic Competence Scope in CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020

Aspect	CEFR 2001	CEFR 2020
Definition of Sociolinguistic Competence	Mentioned "expressions of folk wisdom" as one of the important components of sociolinguistic competence.	Omitted the element of "expressions of folk wisdom," focusing instead on linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, register differences, and dialects and accents as the focus of sociolinguistic competence.
Linguistic Markers of Social Relations	Greetings, address forms (formal, informal, familiar, peremptory, etc.), turn-taking conventions, expletives.	In CEFR 2020, this aspect is not explained further, meaning they still adhere to the guidelines established in CEFR 2001.
Politeness Conventions	Positive politeness, negative politeness, using <i>'please'</i> , <i>'thank you'</i> , etc., impoliteness.	In CEFR 2020, this aspect is not explained further, meaning they still adhere to the guidelines established in CEFR 2001.
Expressions of Folk Wisdom	Proverbs, idioms, familiar quotations, expressions of belief, attitudes, or values.	In CEFR 2020, this aspect is not mentioned.
Register Differences	Dealing with differences in level of formality: frozen, formal, neutral, informal, etc.	In CEFR 2020, this aspect is not explained further, meaning they still adhere to the guidelines established in CEFR 2001.

⁴⁶King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language, *Training Module: Evaluation of Productive Skills* (Riyadh: King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language, 2024), 1-100.

Dialect and Accent	Being able to recognize social class, national origin, occupational group, etc., and dialectal features (phonology, lexicon, paralinguistics, etc.)	In CEFR 2020, this aspect is not explained further, meaning they still adhere to the guidelines established in CEFR 2001.
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Table 1: Sociolinguistic Competence Scope in CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020

2. Comparison of Sociolinguistic Appropriateness Scope between CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020

Level	CEFR 2001	CEFR 2020
C2	Highlights the importance of mastering idiomatic and colloquial expressions, understanding sociolinguistic nuances, and mediating cultural differences, emphasizing a deep appreciation of sociolinguistic contexts in native settings.	Retains CEFR 2001 core competencies while adding detail, requiring users to effectively use linguistic variations in complex social functions like persuading, negotiating, and advising, thereby aligning advanced communication with cultural adaptability.
C1	Highlights recognition of idiomatic expressions, understanding of slang, and flexible language use in social contexts, including humor and emotional expression.	Expands on CEFR 2001 by adding descriptors for natural mediation and linguistic flexibility. New abilities include adjusting formality levels, maintaining consistency, interpreting cultural references, using irony, and managing disagreements diplomatically.
B2	Emphasizes the ability to engage in both informal and formal discussions, avoiding inappropriate language, and maintaining relationships with	Includes recognizing sociolinguistic cues and adjusting language use accordingly, along with the ability to differentiate between formal and informal registers, even if not always flawlessly executed.

	native speakers without causing unintentional offense.	
B1	Focuses on using common expressions, following politeness conventions, and being aware of cultural differences.	Retains CEFR 2001 descriptors without further expansion, with sociolinguistic competence focused on basic politeness and a neutral register.
A2	CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020 share similar goals, focusing on basic social exchanges, using everyday expressions for greetings and apologies, and engaging in simple conversational routines.	
A1	CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020 focus on basic social contact, using common politeness expressions like greetings and introductions.	
Pre-A1	CEFR 2001 does not feature this level.	CEFR 2020 recognizes Pre-A1 as a stage but does not provide detailed sociolinguistic descriptors.

Tabel 2: Sociolinguistic Appropriateness Scope in CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020

B. Comparison of the Scope of Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in Communicative Language Competences and Signing Competences

1. Scope of Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in Communicative Language Competences

In the CEFR, communicative language competences are divided into linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences. Sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistic appropriateness in communicative language competences are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2.

2. Scope of Sociolinguistic Competence and Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in Signing Competences

In the CEFR 2020, sociolinguistic competence in the sign language chapter includes various sociocultural elements, as it is challenging to separate linguistic knowledge from sociocultural knowledge. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) descriptors for deaf individuals are referenced in Appendix 9 of the book. Sociolinguistic appropriateness is presented alongside cultural repertoire, with distinctions between receptive and productive competence scales.

Aspect	Receptive Scale	Productive Scale
Recognition of Registers	Focuses on understanding and recognizing different registers in sign language.	Requires the ability to actively use and demonstrate the appropriate registers.
Greetings, Introductions, and Leave-Taking	Emphasizes evaluating and understanding these actions when performed by others.	Involves appropriately performing these actions in different social contexts.
Social Status Consideration	Focuses on recognizing how social status is reflected in the signing of others.	Requires adapting signing to accurately reflect the social status of others.
Use of Signing Space	Involves recognizing the appropriate use of signing space in others' communication.	Requires adjusting signing space according to context and recipient.
Sociocultural Norms and Taboos	Emphasizes understanding sociocultural norms and communication taboos.	Focuses on actively following and respecting sociocultural norms during signing.
Eye Contact	Highlights the importance of recognizing the proper use of eye contact.	Involves actively maintaining suitable eye contact during communication.
Gaining Attention and Giving Feedback	Focuses on understanding how others use methods to gain attention and provide feedback.	Requires the ability to actively use methods to gain attention and provide feedback.
Cultural Landmarks	Involves understanding cultural references in others' signing.	Requires actively incorporating and referencing cultural landmarks in signing.
Deduction of Social Background	Focuses on interpreting the social background, regional origin, or local ties of others.	Involves conveying and adjusting one's signing to reflect social background.

Knowledge of the World	Requires understanding how relevant knowledge is reflected in communication.	Demands actively applying relevant world knowledge during communication.
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Table 3: Receptive and Productive Scales in Sociolinguistic Appropriateness and Cultural Repertoire in Signing Competences

Level	Receptive Scale	Productive Scale
C2	Recognizes nuanced sociocultural features, such as register, politeness, and social status, in unfamiliar contexts, and can describe linguistic profiles of characters in narratives.	No distinct descriptors; it mirrors C1 receptive competence.
C1	Identifies sociolinguistic features in signing: registers, social relationships, status markers, cultural references, and indirect references.	Actively adapts sociocultural appropriateness, by incorporating elements like Deaf cultural jokes.
B2	Understands linguistic register to infer background (origin, occupation), appropriateness for audience, and social status markers, while recognizing and cultural references.	Produces signs in various registers, explains Deaf community facts, and uses social status indicators in signing space, such as higher signing for higher status.
B1	Understands cultural and sociolinguistic nuances, such as the origins of culture-specific signs and the appropriateness of greetings.	Actively uses sociocultural behaviors, such as appropriate greetings, self-presentation, and cultural explanations, while demonstrating social status using non-manual signals.
A2	Recognizes address pronouns, floor-request cues, and register differences, and understands appropriate responses to social expressions.	Maintains eye contact, uses proper address forms, responds to requests, adapts signing space to context, and accounts for environmental factors in communication.
A1	Maintains eye contact and recognizes when to keep it during interactions.	Greets others appropriately, uses eye contact strategies, attracts attention

		for turn-taking, uses fingerspelling, and responds with basic visual feedback in formulaic interactions.
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Table 4: Receptive and Productive Scales for Sociolinguistic Appropriateness and Cultural Repertoire in Signing Competences

C. Sociolinguistic Appropriateness in the Context of Arabic Speaking Skills

1. Level A1

At this level, learners can use basic polite expressions, such as greetings, farewells, and common phrases. Soliman’s study highlights the importance of correct pronunciation, phoneme distinction, and speaking practice on basic topics. When teaching a dialect is not feasible, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) may serve as a substitute. Key dialectal variations include differences in pronunciation, possessive pronouns, greetings, genitive endings (*-eyn, -in*), and common prefixes, suffixes, and negation forms (*mū, mābu, mābiy, mush/mish, mābunāsh*). In addition, expressions for making requests (*mumkin*) and indicating availability (*fih, māfi, māfish, akū, kāyen*) are emphasized.⁴⁷ According to the King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language (KSGAFAL), A1 learners should be able to initiate basic social conversations using polite daily expressions like *min faḍlik* (please), *shukran* (thank you), and *‘afwan* (sorry) in addition to describing their environment and the people they know using simple phrases.

2. Level A2

At this level, learners can exchange information, make requests, and express opinions using simple phrases. They can describe daily routines, politely greet and farewell, make invitations, and apologize. Soliman suggests that learners should distinguish sounds and phonemes while learning dialectal variations like question words, prepositions, and common verbs. They can explore prefixes and suffixes in the future tense, and modal verbs without using gerundival *an* (*an al-masdariyyah*). Common phrases related to time, such as *embāreh* (yesterday), *bukrah* (tomorrow), and *ba’deen* (later), along with variations for giving reasons (*‘ashān, menshān, ‘alā khāter*) are equally important.⁴⁸ According to Salwa Mohamed, learners can engage in simple social exchanges and discuss familiar topics using basic vocabulary, simple grammar, and connectors like *naw al-‘atf* (and), *lākin* (but), *lianna*

⁴⁷Soliman, 129-130.

⁴⁸Soliman, 131.

(because), *mundhu* (since), *fa* (so/then), *fi al-haqīqa* (in fact), *ammā...fa* (as for...then), *li-dhālik* (therefore), *mathalan* (for example), *bisabab* (due to), *hasab* (according to), *lil-asaf* (unfortunately), *battā* (until/even), *ka-anna* (as if), *li-kay* (so that), *tawāla* (throughout), *bad-an min* (starting from), and *bil-nisba li-* (with regard to/relative to).⁴⁹ The KSGAFAL defines this level as learners being able to carry out basic language tasks like sharing information, making requests, participating in short social interactions with polite expressions, and describing family, living conditions, education, and work using simple phrases.

3. Level B1

At this level, learners are expected to use neutral expressions, adhere to politeness conventions, and understand cultural distinctions between Arabic and other traditions. Soliman highlights the importance of clear pronunciation, particularly when reading aloud for religious purposes.⁵⁰ Learners can communicate in a specific dialect on topics, such as introductions, personal details, routines, family, and locations, while expressing preferences, obligations, and needs. They should be capable of engaging in basic discussions, following detailed instructions, and interacting on familiar topics.⁵¹ Egyptian or Levantine dialects are suitable for their broad applicability, while Saudi Arabic or Gulf dialects are recommended for business contexts. According to the KSGAFAL, B1 learners can perform various language functions using common expressions, demonstrate politeness norms, explore cultural differences in language use, behaviors, and beliefs, express experiences, events, dreams, and ambitions, and summarize books or movies with brief reasons.

4. Level B2

At this level, learners can engage in conversations, including fast-paced ones, using colloquial expressions. They can recognize sociocultural and sociolinguistic nuances and adapt their language to formal or informal registers. Learners can maintain a natural flow in Arabic conversations while avoiding impoliteness. According to the KSGAFAL, learners at this level can express themselves clearly, confidently, and politely in both formal and informal settings, adapting to the audience and context. They can participate in group discussions, even when speech is fast or colloquial, and build connections with

⁴⁹Salwa Mohamed, "The Development of an Arabic Curriculum Framework Based on a Compilation of Salient Features from CEFR Level Descriptors," *The Language Learning Journal* 51, no. 1 (2021): 1-15.

⁵⁰Soliman, 135.

⁵¹Soliman, 132.

Arabic speakers without discomfort or differential treatment. Furthermore, they can communicate effectively across various contexts with minimal formulation errors, providing clear descriptions on diverse topics and articulating opinions on factual matters.

5. Level C1

At this level, learners recognize idiomatic and colloquial expressions, understand shifts in speech patterns, and follow films that use slang and idioms extensively, although clarification may be needed for unfamiliar accents. They use language flexibly for social purposes, including emotional expression, hints, and humor, and navigate complex social interactions with cultural awareness, adapting their communication to context and managing disagreements diplomatically. The KSGAFAL defines C1 learners as those who can recognize a wide range of idiomatic and colloquial expressions, understand discourse shifts, and effectively use language for social purposes like expressing emotions, hints, and humor. Additionally, they can offer detailed explanations on complex topics, integrating subtopics and drawing conclusions.

6. Level C2

At this advanced level, learners have mastered idiomatic and colloquial expressions, including their subtle nuances. They possess a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts of Arabic language use and interact with sensitivity to these factors. Learners are capable of mediating effectively between Arabic speakers and their own community (such as Indonesian speakers), skillfully navigating complex social interactions. The KSGAFAL defines C2 learners as individuals who demonstrate a thorough appreciation of sociocultural dimensions and can mediate between communities with proficiency. They handle intricate social situations with ease, take sociocultural differences into account, and provide clear, coherent, and contextually appropriate descriptions that ensure the audience comprehends and retains key points.⁵²

Additionally, the descriptors for each level (A1 to C2) hold significant implications for the Arabic speaking proficiency test as outlined by the KSGAFAL,⁵³ as follows:

المستوى	السؤال
A1	• ما اسمك؟ • من أين أنت؟

⁵²KSGAFAL, 56.

⁵³KSGAFAL, 67.

• ما أهم الأشياء التي في بلدك؟	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ما أهم الأشياء التي تحب أن تشتريها من السوق؟ • صف لنا بلدك من حيث: اسمه/ها، وعاصمته/ها، والعملية، والمناخ. 	A2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • كيف كانت تجربتك في تعليم اللغة العربية؟ • صف لنا موقفا حدث لك في حياتك، وكيف تعاملت معه؟ 	B1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • اختر أحد الموضوعات الآتية، واذكر وجهة نظرك، ووضح مزاياه وعيوبه: • استخدام التقنية في تعليم اللغة العربية. • استخدام لغتك الأصلية عند تعلم اللغة العربية. 	B2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • وضح كيف يمكن أن تستفيد من دراسة اللغة العربية، موضحا أهم الصعوبات التي واجهتك أثناء تعلمها، وكيف تغلبت عليها؟ 	C1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • اختر أحد الموضوعين الآتين: • اختر كتابا قرأته، أو موضوعا استمعت إليه، ولخصه بأسلوبك مع ذكر بعض الأدلة والشواهد التي روجت فيه (في حدود خمس دقائق). • اختر موضوعا جدليا اختلف الناس حوله، وبين أدلة كل فريق، موضحا رأيك الذي تراه في الموضوع مع بيان الأدلة على رأيك. 	C2

Table 5: Arabic Speaking Proficiency Test Items Based on CEFR Descriptors in the Formulation of the KSGFAL

Enhancing Arabic speaking skills requires practical, proficiency-level-specific methods, including leveraging online communication platforms. Test items in Table 5 can be adapted into engaging teaching materials that encourage real-time practice in virtual settings, as illustrated below:

a) A1: Basics and Introduction

- Objective: Build confidence in using basic phrases for self-introduction and describe key elements of Indonesia.

- Activities:
 - 1) Role-Play: Practice *masmuk? min ayna anta?* with responses like: *ismī Ahmad, ana min Indonesia (Andanūsiyā/Indūnisiyā)*. Use video platforms for peer-feedback.
 - 2) Interactive Map: Use online map to describe *min abamm al-ashyā' allatī fī baladī*, using visuals of *Masjid Istiqlal*, Komodo Island, Whale Shark Gorontalo, and Indonesian cuisine like *nasi goreng*, *Rendang*, and *gado-gado*.
- b) A2: Shopping and Descriptions
 - Objective: Describe preferences and share details about Indonesia.
 - Activities:
 - 1) Market Simulation: Use flashcards to practice: *ubibb an ashtariya al-ajbiḡah min al-matajir al-iliktrūniyyah*, or with items like batik, traditional crafts, or Indonesian spices.
 - 2) Presentation: Prepare a mini-presentation: *Baladī: Ismuh/ ha, wa 'aṣimatuh/ ha, wa 'umlatuh/ ha, wa munākhub/ ha*. Introduce Indonesia's history, capital, currency (Rupiah), tropical climate, and cultural heritage.
- c) B1: Experiences and Stories
 - Objective: Narrate personal experiences and events.
 - Activities:
 - 1) Sharing Experience: Discuss *kānat tajribatī fī ta'lim al-lughah al-'arabiyyah...*, referencing Indonesian *Pesantren*, and narrate challenges and successes in 2-3 sentences.
 - 2) Storytelling: Use prompts like: *badath lī mawqif ... fī hayātī, wa ta'amaltu ma'ah* to recount events like celebrating *Lebaran (Idul Fitri and Idul Adha)* in Indonesian culture with sentence starters: *kunt ...*, *thumma*, and *wa akhīran*.
- d) B2: Opinions and Analysis
 - Objective: Express and justify opinions.
 - Activities:
 - 1) Discussion Circle: Discuss *istikhdām at-tiqniyyah fī ta'lim al-lughah al-'arabiyyah* at schools or universities in Indonesia. Highlight pros and cons, using connectors like: *'alā sabīl al-mithāl* and *ma'a anna*.

- 2) Comparison Practice: Analyze *istikhdām lughatī al-aṣliyyah ‘inda ta’allum al-lughah al-‘arabiyyah*. Reflect on differences and similarities between Arabic and *Bahasa Indonesia*, with connectors like: *hunāk farq bayna* and *bitariqah mushābahah*.
- e) C1: Reflections and Challenges
- Objective: Articulate complex ideas and analyze experiences.
 - Activities:
 - 1) Reflection Speech: Address *kayfa yumkin an astafīd min dirāsah al-lughah al-‘arabiyyah*. Explore its benefits, challenges, and solutions in the Indonesian Muslim context.
 - 2) Problem Analysis: Respond to scenarios like: *ahamm as-ṣu’ubat allatī wājabatnī athnā’a ta’allumihā*. Highlight language interference issues, emphasizing solutions using phrases like: *kān min as-sa’b fī al-bidāyah ... walākin*.
- f) Level C2: Advanced Expression and Critical Thinking
- Objective: Present well-supported arguments and summaries.
 - Activities:
 - 1) Summarization Practice: Summarize ideas from popular Indonesian books or articles, providing evidence and examples. Use guiding questions such as: *limādhā? mā al-afkār ar-raṣiyyah?*
 - 2) Debate: Debate a controversial issue among Indonesian youth, presenting arguments for both sides, personal opinions, and supporting evidence. Use phrases like: *a’taqīd anna* and *min al-muftaraḍ anna*.



Image 1: Sign Language in Arabic

Source: <https://www.qfi.org/resources/infographics/arabic-sign-language/>

On the other hand, Arabic sign language is essential for overcoming communication barriers within the deaf communities, but its mastery requires precise finger configurations, fluid hand movements, and appropriate hand positioning in context. Facial expressions and body language further enrich clarity and emotional nuance.⁵⁴ For instance, the positioning of the eyebrow indicates critical thinking if it covers part of the eye, but it shows attentiveness if the entire face is visible. Moreover, advances in deep learning have transformed assistive technologies, with image-based systems and convolutional neural networks enabling gesture-to-text or speech translation. AI-powered tools further facilitate real-time, bidirectional conversion between Arabic sign language and speech/text. Nevertheless, challenges remain, such as differentiating similar gestures for words like *'asharah* and *'amal jayyid*.⁵⁵ By integrating facial recognition, lip reading, and expanded gesture datasets, these systems can be refined, ensuring greater accuracy and fostering seamless interaction and learning experiences for all.⁵⁶

In addition, the integration of sociolinguistic content in Arabic textbooks holds significant importance in shaping language instruction. An ongoing study of *Alif Baa Ilā Hurūf Al-'Arabiyyah wa-Aswātihā*⁵⁷ by the researcher highlights its inclusion of basic expressions in standard Arabic, Egyptian, and Levantine dialects, accompanied by video dialogues on cultural topics, such as polite phrases, religious expressions involving "Allāh," and the traditions of drinking coffee (*qahwa*). The evaluation of sociolinguistic content can be guided by criteria adapted from Atar and Erdem, addressing questions such as: Does the textbook include accents or variations from non-native speakers? Does it promote intercultural communication? Does it consider learners' linguistic ecology and their first language(s)?⁵⁸ Furthermore, incorporating social identity aspects of Muslim communities, particularly through Qur'anic and Hadith dialogues, is essential for Arabic-Islamic sociolinguistics. However, the absence of such examples highlights a limitation in the study.

⁵⁴Souha Ben Hamouda, Wafa Gabisi, & Bechir Zalila, "Towards Bidirectional Conversion between Arabic Sign Language and Speech/Text," in *TACC*, CEUR Workshop Proceedings (2023): 107–219.

⁵⁵Hamouda, et al., 112-113.

⁵⁶Ghazanfar Latif et al., "Communicating with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing through Automatic Arabic Sign Language Translator," *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* 1962, no. 1 (2021): 1-9.

⁵⁷Kristen Brustad, Mahmoud Al-Batal, and Abbas Al-Tonsi. *Alif Baa: DVD for Alif Baa*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010.

⁵⁸Cihat Atar and Cahit Erdem, "A Sociolinguistic Perspective in the Analysis of English Textbooks: Development of a Checklist," *Research in Pedagogy* 10, no. 2 (2020): 406-407.

Conclusion

The key distinctions between CEFR 2001 and CEFR 2020 lie in the latter's expanded, context-dependent framework, which emphasizes communicative language competences and signing competences. CEFR 2001 primarily focuses on idiomatic expressions and sociolinguistic nuances pertinent to native environments, whereas CEFR 2020 prioritizes the adaptation of language use to diverse social and cultural contexts. It further highlights social adaptability in communicative language competences and sociolinguistic appropriateness in signing competences, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4). In contrast, CEFR 2001 places greater emphasis on cultural norms and structural aspects. Within the context of Arabic, examples from Soliman (2017), Mohamed (2021), and the KSGAFAL (2024) provide a progression from basic greetings at the A1 level to complex social interactions at the C2 level.

The findings emphasize the role of Arabic dialectal variations, colloquial vocabulary, and register awareness in language education. In relation to Arabic speaking skills, the study enhances awareness of sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistic appropriateness, while providing practical examples of material development adapted from KSGAFAL test items.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to document comparison, lacking experimental validation of teaching materials and assessments across Arabic proficiency levels. Additionally, it excludes listening, reading, and writing skills. Future research should address these limitations by employing experimental approaches and expanding the scope to encompass a broader range of language skills and diverse learning contexts.

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