

A2-C2 LEVEL CERTIFICATION TESTS. WHERE AND HOW?

Different modalities of language level certification for secondary school students in public schools in the Valencian Community and in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands

PRUEBAS DE HOMOLOGACIÓN A2-C2. ¿DÓNDE Y CÓMO?

Diferentes modalidades de acreditación de nivel de idiomas del alumnado de secundaria de centros públicos en la Comunidad Valenciana y en la Comunidad Autónoma de Canarias.

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Resumen

El artículo trata de las pruebas de homologación de nivel A2 de idiomas en centros públicos y su ordenación en base al Marco Europeo, a la normativa estatal y autonómica que la desarrollan. Regulación que presenta una diversificación que afecta a diferentes comunidades autónomas. Se exponen los descriptores de dicho marco aportando ejemplos. Se realiza una comparativa entre los procedimientos actuales en la Comunidad Canaria y la Comunidad Valenciana. Tras ello terminamos recogiendo las conclusiones pertinentes.

Palabras clave: *Homologación, niveles de idiomas en Europa, descriptores, normativa, pruebas de certificación de nivel A2.*

Abstract

The article deals with the A2 language-level qualification tests in public schools and their organisation base on the European Framework, the state and regional regulations that develop it. This regulation presents a diversification that affects different Spanish communities. The descriptors are presented with examples. A comparison is made between the current procedures in the Canary Islands and the Valencian Community, after which the pertinent conclusions are drawn.

Keywords: Standardization, Europe language levels, descriptors, regulation, A2-level qualification exams.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to shed light on the current system for the accreditation and accreditation of languages at levels A2-C2 by educational administrations, thus contributing to the achievement of SDG 4, Quality Education, according to the guidelines included in the 2030 Agenda.

Specifically, the objective we pursue is to provide greater knowledge of the regulations governing the A2 level tests of foreign languages for students in secondary education, for this we will consider the European, state and regional regulations which, in this case, will focus on two autonomous communities with different models of management of the accredited tests.

I. EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Regarding the situation in the legal framework, we must refer, first of all, to the levels established by the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)** of the Council of Europe, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment, Strasbourg (2001).

These LEVELS are three: basic level, A1 and A2; intermediate level, B1 and B2; and, finally, proficient, or advanced user level, corresponding to levels C1 and C2. In this article we will focus on the attainment of level A2 in public schools providing compulsory secondary education.

Within this framework, the descriptors outlined in Chapter 3. Common reference levels. Presentation of the common reference levels,

as objectives to be achieved for the basic user (A2), are as follows:

BASIC USER A2	NIVEL USUARIO A2
<p><i>Can understand sentences and frequently-used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).</i></p> <p><i>Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.</i></p> <p><i>Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</i></p>	<p><i>Es capaz de comprender frases y expresiones de uso frecuente relacionadas con áreas de experiencia que le son especialmente relevantes (información básica sobre sí mismo y su familia, compras, lugares de interés, ocupaciones, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>Sabe comunicarse a la hora de llevar a cabo tareas simples y cotidianas que no requieran más que intercambios sencillos y directos de información sobre cuestiones que le son conocidas o habituales.</i></p> <p><i>Sabe describir en términos sencillos aspectos de su pasado y su entorno, así como cuestiones relacionadas con sus necesidades inmediatas.</i></p>

CEFR item 4.4.4 Mediation activities and strategies is subdivided into oral mediation activities and written mediation activities. Users of the framework can keep in mind and, if necessary, determine which mediation activities they will have to learn to perform, how they will be trained to perform them or what will be required of them.

Section 4.4.4.1 cites examples of oral mediation activities, simultaneous interpreting: conferences, meetings, formal speeches. As an example of consecutive translation, it cites: welcome speeches, guided tours, etc. Also activities in informal situations, such as, among others, social situations and communicative exchange with friends, family, clients, foreign guests, etc.

On the other hand, section 4.4.4.2, as an example of written mediation activities, mentions the accurate translation of contracts, legal and scientific texts, literary translation, summaries of essentials (articles, newspapers, and magazines, etc.) and paraphrases (specialized texts for laypersons, etc.).

The next level of specificity corresponds to the national legislative framework, specified in this case in the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, 2006, on Education, as amended by Organic Law 3/2020, of December 29 (LOMLOE).

In this normative, the teaching of languages is regulated in the LOE in Title I, Chapter VII, in articles 59 to 62 (not having been modified by the LOMLOE) and its purpose is to enable students to adequately use the different languages outside the ordinary stages of the educational system.

Specifically, article 59.1 establishes that: "The basic level teachings will have the characteristics and organization determined by the Educational Administrations."

For access to this test, the minimum requirements are established in article 61.2: "The educational administrations shall regulate the terminal tests to be taken by the teaching staff to obtain the official certificates of the basic, intermediate and advanced levels."

The subject of correspondence with other teachings is covered in article 62, which under the heading *Correspondence with other teachings*, establishes the competencies and the way in which this equivalence will be carried out. In this sense, paragraph 1 of the article states that: "The Government shall determine, after consulting the Autonomous Communities, the equivalences between the qualifications of Language Teaching and the rest of the qualifications of the teachings of the educational system."

However, what is undoubtedly most relevant in relation to the recognition of qualifications is article 62.2, which establishes that: "Without prejudice to the provisions of the previous paragraph, the educational administrations shall facilitate the holding of recognized tests to obtain official certification of the recognition of the languages studied by students in secondary education and vocational training."

The normative transposition of the CEFR to the Spanish regulations has its first and main concretion in Royal Decree 1629/2006, of December 29, by which the basic aspects of the curriculum of the special regime language teachings regulated by the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education are set, which is currently repealed by Royal Decree 1041/2017, of December 22, which sets the minimum requirements of the basic level for certification purposes, establishes the basic curriculum of the Intermediate B1, Intermediate B2, Advanced B1 and Advanced B1 and Advanced C1 and C2 levels, of the special regime language teachings regulated by the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education, and establishes the equivalences between the special regime language teachings regulated in various curricula and those of this royal decree.

Chapter 2, article 4 of the Royal Decree is to be highlighted. Basic level teaching and certification:

1. *The teachings of Basic level of the languages referred to in article 1.1 shall have the characteristics and the organization determined by the educational Administrations.*
2. *In the determination of the curriculum of the teachings of Basic level and in the regulation of the corresponding certificates of having passed the academic requirements established for this level, the educational Administrations will have as reference the competences of level A of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which is subdivided into levels A1 and A2.*

It should be pointed out that, therefore, it is the public educational administrations that have the power, in the use of their competences, to regulate these accredited certification tests. For this reason, we can find, as in fact happens, totally different autonomous regulations. Especially with regard to the centers in which the tests are carried out and the teachers who correct them.

We are going to make this situation visible in two specific cases that show the disparity of operation in the subject that concerns us: the Autonomous Community of Valencia and of Canarias.

II. THE A2 LEVEL TESTS IN THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES: THE VALENCIAN COMMUNITY AND OF CANARY ISLANDS

In reference to curricular concreteness, we have analyzed the

regulations of two autonomous communities, which carry out the A2 level language accreditation tests in a differentiated manner: the Autonomous Community of Valencia and the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands. Specifically, we will cite the autonomous community regulations, which are listed in the "References" section, ordered according to their legal rank.

Table 1 - Regulations governing approved tests: Autonomous Community of Canary Islands as and of Valencia.

Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands	Valencian Community
<p>Order of February 21, 2017, which regulates the tests for obtaining the certification of special regime language teachings intended for the school population of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.</p> <p>Resolution of November 17, 2023, by which tests are called for obtaining the certification of special regime language teachings intended for the school population of public schools in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, and instructions</p>	<p>Order 34/2022, of June 14, which regulates the evaluation of special regime language teaching and the certification tests of the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in the Valencian Community.</p> <p>Resolution of January 17, 2023, of the General Director of Language Policy and Multilingualism Management, of January 17, 2023, of the General Director of Language Policy and Multilingualism Management, of the call for the accredited tests of level A2 of the</p>

are issued for its organization and application in the 2023-24 academic year.	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for the academic year 2022/2023.
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A – VALENCIAN COMMUNITY

The Valencian Community is regulated by Order 34/2022, of June 14, issued by the Conselleria of Education, Culture and Sports, which regulates the evaluation of the certification tests of the CEFR levels in the Valencian Community. This order is developed periodically by means of a resolution usually published during the first quarter of the calendar year; in fact, as of today it has not yet been published.

For this reason, table 1 shows the last published resolution. **Article 44.1** of this Order establishes that certification tests of the **A2 basic level** of languages may be carried out in the centers of Secondary Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education dependent on the Generalitat Valenciana.

This regulation establishes in its resolution of January 17, 2023, in its article 10 a singularity of the Valencian Community with respect to the rest of the Autonomous Communities, since in the Valencian Community the responsibility for the realization of the A2 level tests is derived to the centers that teach Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Formación Profesional, Formación de Personas Adultas y el Centro Específico de

Educación a Distancia de la Comunidad Valenciana (CEEDCV)¹.

Article 45, Requirements for student participation, establishes the following for participation in these tests: "To be sixteen years of age, completed the year in which the test is taken, or to be under sixteen years of age and be in the fourth year of ESO due to flexibility in the duration of schooling."

The novelty with respect to the way it has been done until now is found in Chapter III, Article 47. Organization and administration of the accredited test, whose paragraph 2 states the following: "The accredited tests will be divided into four parts, which will evaluate the following language activities: comprehension activities of oral texts, comprehension activities of written texts, production and co-production of written texts. A linguistic mediation task will be incorporated in the activity of production and co-production of oral texts or in the activity of production and co-production of written texts.

Mediation is the newest component of our approved A2 foreign language certification tests. On the website of the Conselleria you can find examples of tests for preparatory practice in class. But what does the mediation activity consist of? Taking as a reference the definition of the Curricular Plan of the Cervantes Institute (www.cervantes.es), in didactics of the foreign language, mediation activities are understood as those language activities in which the user does not express his/her own ideas, opinions, thoughts, etc., but acts as an intermediary or mediator between other people who cannot communicate directly, either in oral or written language. It is at this point in the learning process that the mediator resorts to a series of communicative strategies that

¹ Compulsory Secondary Education, Vocational Training, Adult Education and the Specific Distance Education Center of the Valencian Community.

help him/her to create a new text, but with the meaning of the original. The inclusion in the CEFRL of interaction and mediation activities and strategies together with comprehension and expression is a great advance in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Moreover, they encourage dialogue as a tool for communication.

In addition, in the Valencian Community, the aforementioned Order 34/2022, of June 14, states in its article 49, that "the evaluation of the approved tests will correspond to the teachers responsible for the subject during the school year".

The following articles of Order 34/2022, of June 14, are key with regard to the convocation and performance of the tests:

Article 44. Convening of the approved tests

1. The competent general direction in matters of academic organization of special regime language teaching may carry out certification tests of the basic level A2 of languages in the centers of Secondary Education, Vocational Training and Training of Adults dependent on the Generalitat Valenciana.

2. The test will be a single test and will be held on the same day and at the same time in all centers.

3. The announcement will be made by means of a resolution of the Directorate General responsible for the academic organization of language teaching, which will have to include in detail, at least, the following aspects:

a) languages summoned;

b) date foreseen for the celebration of the tests;

c) structure, time distribution and duration of the tests;

d) evaluation guidelines that guarantee the transparency and homogeneity of the process;

e) procedure for the random control of the administration and evaluation of the test.

Article 48. Administration of the approved test

1 The approved tests will take place in the same center in which the student is enrolled. The application of the tests will correspond to the teachers who teach the foreign language that is the object of the test.

2. Once the call for the tests has been published, and prior to its celebration, the centers will inform the students and the families or legal representatives about the effects of passing the test and, especially, about the possibility of obtaining the certification of the level of linguistic competence.

3. The tests will be available in a digital platform so that the educational centers can download them according to the instructions of the competent general direction in the academic arrangement of the teachings of languages of special regime. The management team of the center will collaborate in this process by safeguarding the tests and guaranteeing their reservation until the time of application.

4. The head of department of the summoned language must keep the material of the test administered until the end of the review and complaint procedure of the test.

It is also interesting to note what is established in article 51.4 of the same Order: "Students who do not obtain the A2 basic level certificate may request the issuance of an academic certificate if they have obtained a pass or pass grade in one or more language activities of the approved test."

B – AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF THE CANARY ISLANDS

The Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands establishes in its Resolution of November 17, 2023, the call for tests to obtain the special regime language teaching certification for the school population of public schools. These tests, as in the Valencian case, are addressed to the students attending public schools of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands and can be held in the center where the interested students are attending the formal education, as indicated below.

According to the Order of February 21, 2017, which regulates the tests for obtaining the certification of special regime language teachings intended for the school population of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands.

Article 4.- Administration, grading and evaluation of the certification tests.

1. *The tests may take place in the general education centers to which each call is addressed and may be administered and evaluated by the language teachers who teach general education. Likewise, the support of teachers from the center of other specialties may be counted on for the administration of the tests.*

According to what is stated in the Resolution of November 17, 2023, by which tests are called to obtain the certification of special regime language education for the school population of public schools in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, and instructions are issued for its organization and application in the 2023-2024 academic year, the schools will be responsible for administering the tests to the students. The centers will be attached to a reference EOI, which will be the one responsible for processing the issuance of certificates as indicated in this article.

Article 9.- Coordination of the tests.

9.1. The management of the public schools to which this call is addressed will have the following functions:

a) To ensure that both the students and their families have clear information about the test: deadlines, levels and students summoned, characteristics of the test, etc.

b) Organize the registration process for the students who will take the certification tests.

c) Send the information and data on the number of students enrolled in each of the levels and languages to the General Directorate of Vocational Training and Special Regime Education through an online questionnaire.

d) Receive the printed material for the administration of the tests, which will be provided sufficiently in advance by the General Directorate of Vocational Training and Special Regime Education.

e) Receive the recordings for the comprehension of oral texts, material sent by the General Directorate of Vocational Training and Special Regime Education, download them and check that the recording can be reproduced in optimal conditions.

f) To take custody of the material sent by the Directorate General of Vocational Training and Special Regime Education, with sufficient guarantees of confidentiality, until the day on which the tests are held.

g) To resolve, together with the head of studies and the examining boards, any incident that may arise throughout the process of administering the certification test, always within the scope of its competences.

h) To guarantee that students with disabilities can take the test under equal conditions with the rest of the applicants, compensating for their disadvantages, as stated in Instruction no. 6 of this Resolution.

i) To organize the entry of the scores in Píncel eKade and to ensure that the publication of the provisional and final scores is in accordance with the dates set forth in Appendix I of this Resolution.

j) Ensure that two original copies of the certification test scores are issued and signed correctly.

k) Send an original copy of the signed minutes with the results of the tests to the Official Language School of assignment within the period specified in Appendix I of this Resolution.

l) Resolve the claims presented, motivating this resolution in the report of the corresponding examining board.

9.1. The head of studies of the public educational centers summoned shall have the following functions:

a) Organize the distribution of the spaces for the administration of the certification test.

b) Assign the teachers of the center that will administer the written part of the test and coordinate the actions of these teachers, who will follow

the protocol established by the Directorate General of Vocational Training and Special Education included in the Guide for the Administration of Certification Tests for the school population.

c) Ensure that the teaching staff of the didactic coordination departments of English and French, as appropriate, inform students about the specifications of the test and guide them on the most appropriate level, to promote the success of their participation in the exam.

d) Organize, in coordination with the examining boards, the days and times, as well as the configuration of the grouping of the students, for the administration of the oral part of the test.

e) Ensure that the days and times scheduled for the oral part of the test are published.

f) Ensure that there are technical means for the reproduction of the test of comprehension of oral texts and for the recording of the test of production and co-production of oral texts and oral mediation and that these are appropriate.

g) Provide, if necessary, for teachers to attend to students with disabilities.

h) Organize, in coordination with the examining boards, the schedule for the review of the test after the publication of the provisional grades.

i) To resolve, together with the center's management and the examining boards, any incidents that may arise during the process of administering the certification tests, always within the scope of their competencies.

9.2. The Official Language Schools² will be responsible of processing the issuance of official language certificates, in accordance with the procedure

² Escuela Oficial de Idiomas (EOI).

described below in these same instructions.

The Order of September 15 is specific for the certification of special regime languages, the Order of September 21 regulates the tests for the school population.

Table 2. A2, B1 and B2 level tests. Target students.

Diferentes modalidades de acreditación de nivel de idiomas del alumnado de secundaria de centros públicos en la Comunidad Valenciana y en la Comunidad Autónoma de Canarias.

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Prueba	Alumnado al que se dirige
Certificación de nivel básico A2	Alumnado escolarizado en centros docentes públicos en: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4º ESO - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Básico de Formación Profesional - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio de Formación Profesional - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio de Artes Plásticas y Diseño - Ciclo final de las Enseñanzas Deportivas de Régimen Especial
Certificación de nivel intermedio B1	Alumnado escolarizado en centros docentes públicos en: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4º ESO - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Básico de Formación Profesional - 2º Bachillerato - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio de Formación Profesional - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Medio de Artes Plásticas y Diseño - Ciclo final de las Enseñanzas Deportivas de Régimen Especial - Último curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Formación Profesional - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Artes Plásticas y Diseño - Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Enseñanzas Deportivas - 4º de las Enseñanzas Artísticas Superiores de Diseño o Música
Certificación de nivel intermedio B2	Alumnado escolarizado en centros docentes públicos en: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2º Bachillerato - Último curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Formación Profesional - 2º curso de los Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Artes Plásticas y Diseño - Ciclos Formativos de Grado Superior de Enseñanzas Deportivas - 4º de las Enseñanzas Artísticas Superiores de Diseño o Música

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen through the review of the regulations referring to the accredited tests, it is evident that the autonomous communities of Valencia and the Canary Islands differ in their procedures, which are aimed at the same student profile, which in both cases is extended to students of intermediate level training cycles in the A2 level certification test, as can be seen in the following table extracted from the aforementioned Resolution of 17 November 2023 of the

Canary Islands.

On the other hand, the Canary Islands convenes a single test for which Language Examining Boards are appointed, applying the aforementioned protocol, whose Official Language School of reference is in charge of issuing the certificates. On the other hand, the Valencian Community derives the responsibility for conducting the A2 level language homologation test (including the evaluation) to the public centers of ESO, Vocational Training and Adult Education, including the CEEDCV, establishing through the Order and the annual Resolution that the organizers and evaluators of these A2 level tests will be the teachers of these languages, discharging the task of organizing, conducting and correcting the tests to the teachers of the respective Official Schools of Languages.

In this regard, the model for conducting the accredited tests of the Valencian Community, which has existed since 2011 and was consolidated with the regulations of 2022, is an exception, since the responsibility and execution of the tests falls on the secondary education teachers of the teaching specialties of foreign languages and on the public secondary education centers. The Canarian model seems to be more coherent with the fact that the certifications of the language levels are linked to the official language schools, which are the ones that, as special regime teachings, have the power over these teachings. This does not prevent secondary education teachers from collaborating with the examining boards, which are the ones that in the Canary Islands and in other autonomous communities assess the A2.

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- Real Decreto 1/2019, de 11 de enero, por el que se establecen los principios básicos comunes de evaluación aplicables a las pruebas de certificación oficial de los niveles Intermedio B1, Intermedio B2, Avanzado C1 y Avanzado C2 de las enseñanzas de idiomas de régimen especial.
- Orden de 21 de febrero de 2017, por la que se regulan las pruebas para la obtención de la certificación de enseñanzas de idiomas de régimen especial destinadas a la población escolar de la Comunidad Autónoma de

Canarias.

- Orden 34/2022, de 14 de junio, de la Conselleria de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, por la que se regula la evaluación de las enseñanzas de idiomas de régimen especial y las pruebas de certificación de los niveles del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas en la Comunidad Valenciana.
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