

# Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) in an ESL Classroom: The Malaysian Context

Annie Tiong Nii\*, Melor Md. Yunus

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

Email: \*annieanne145@gmail.com, melor@ukm.edu.my

**How to cite this paper:** Nii, A. T., & Yunus, M. Md. (2022). Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) in an ESL Classroom: The Malaysian Context. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 10, 226-240. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.106018>

**Received:** May 24, 2022

**Accepted:** June 25, 2022

**Published:** June 28, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

## Abstract

The change of the English curriculum in Malaysia is no longer foreign and has brought about mixed opinions from different parties. Teachers being the main executor of the new curriculum should be given more channels to have their opinions known. The implementation of CEFR is entering its Phase 3, where feedback from in-service teachers is need for feedback and documentation. Several studies were conducted; however those only covered teachers from West Malaysia. The importance of teachers' voices of English teachers East Malaysia should not be over shadowed. This paper covers the teachers' perceptions on the implementation of CEFR in the Malaysian ESL classroom. This study was conducted among 105 English teachers from Sibu, Sarawak. Sarawak is known for being the largest state in Malaysia. The Questionnaire is used as the tool for data collection with a 6 Likert scale through goggle form. SPSS version 23 was used to analyzed and tabulate the data. The result shows that English teachers are showing positive responses with the implementation of CEFR. However, teachers show challenges encountered during the administration of CEFR, including lack of materials, students' familiarity and new approach familiarity. Suggestions for further research should focus on upper secondary English teachers as it was implemented in early 2020.

## Keywords

Teachers' Perceptions, Curriculum Change, English Second Language (ESL), Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), Secondary English Teachers

## 1. Introduction

English is the official language of the country whereas locally spoken languages, such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil are considered “vernacular” (Manan & David, 2015). The National Philosophy of Education (NPE) is the foundation that bounds the principles and leads the conduct of educational activities in Malaysia. As reported in Chang et al. (2018), the Barnes Report (1951); Fenn-Wu Report (1951); Razak Report (1956); Rahman Talib Report (1960); Education Act 1961 (and subsequent revisions); Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (and subsequent revisions); the New Economic Policy (1971); and Private Higher Education Institutions Act 1996 (Act 555) are among the notable reports, policies and legislation that shaped the Malaysian Education system.

Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM; also addressed as Integrated Secondary School Curriculum) was implemented in 1988 at secondary school level to ensure the progression within the primary school syllabus and curriculum. Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) was implemented in 2017. Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah (PMR) is a diagnostic evaluation and screening of student learning before entering the higher secondary form. This is part of government efforts to restructure and shift the learning system into a more holistic assessment than the conventional examination oriented education (Wahid et al., 2011). PMR was changed to Penilaian Tahap 3 (PT3) in 2013. The main shift of PMR to PT3 was carried out to adhere to the then newly implemented curriculum, CEFR.

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 was introduced in 2013 in hope for improvement in the education system and project to the worldwide standard of education. The curriculum implementation is currently in its third wave at maintaining the best practices. Among the goal set in the blueprint was to produce six keys attributes in each learner to cultivate a competitive nature in one, namely, knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethnics and spirituality and national identity (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013b). Malaysia ranked below the international average for the respective aspects in PISA 2009+ (Programme for International Student Assessment). Reading with a score of 414, Mathematics at 404 and Science scoring at 422 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013c). The Roadmap 2015-2025 was established to ensure the keen monitoring of the implementation.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia has issued the study of Cambridge Baseline report in 2013 before the execution of CEFR. The proposed recommendation of the Cambridge Baseline 2013’s study was formally documented with the involving factors which include teachers’ performances, lesson observation, attitudinal and background factors during the conduct of the study. The recommendations include: 1) providing equal opportunities in acquiring education, 2) learners’ proficiency in the Malay language and the English language, 3) developing values-driven future generations, 4) upscale teaching into a profession of choice and 5) frequent the use of ICT to elevate the quality of learning across Malaysia.

The verdict of replacing locally developed textbooks with imported ones has inevitably lead to divided opinions and in fact, invited much criticism from various quarters among the Malaysian educational scene (Rahim & Daghigh, 2019). Teachers' opinions are not an exception as they are assigned to the honourable role to convey the content of the new curriculum. CEFR has earned immense popularity from policymakers not just in Malaysia, but around the globe as CEFR is branded as the international benchmark of users' language proficiency (Read, 2019). Besides, CEFR focuses more on the communication elements to boost learners' speaking ability. At the end of their tertiary education, learners are not just a master at the writing skills, but expert in all four language skills. The inability to speak the English language will no longer stand in the way of the learners future prospects. Malaysia has to participate by ensuring the human resources it produces are skillful and possesses good command of English to shun from falling behind in terms of economic and education sectors (Uri & Aziz, 2020). The implementation in the classroom has led many teachers to associate CEFR with the framework of proficiency scale, where too much emphasis are shifted onto testing and assessment (Foley, 2019). The philosophy of practicing communicative language competence, inter-cultural awareness, task-based assessment, student-oriented approach, autonomous learning approach and the self-assessments were evident in CEFR (Abidin & Hashim, 2021).

The chronological timeline begins with the implementation of CEFR in 2013. Phase 1 had taken place starting from 2013 till 2015, which focused on improving and assessing the English proficiency of in-service English teachers. Followed by Phase 2, School Based Assessment (SBA) syllabus and curriculum were altered to fit according to CEFR descriptors. The council also chose and selected international CEFR oriented references, resources and supplementary materials. In the later half of Phase 2, School Based Assessment (SBA), syllabus and curricula were sketched and finalized in-aligned with CEFR descriptors. Phase 3 concerns the development of CEFR Malaysia based on the findings of review, re-evaluation of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) and revised processes (Uri & Aziz, 2018). The administration of CEFR was first introduced in primary school then later secondary school. In early 2021, CEFR was introduced to upper secondary form, namely Form 4 and Form 5. The Malaysian University English Test (MUET) is updated according to the band descriptions of the CEFR.

The ELSQC is a body of an experienced panel of English language experts comprising 10 members from universities professional units, and specialist who are experts and practitioners in the development of ELT in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013a). ELER was later formed by the Ministry of Education in preparation to be implemented by 2025 for primary and secondary schools (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). ELER governs and monitors the administration of CEFR in terms of the curriculum, classroom teaching and learning, assessment, and teacher training (Aziz et al., 2018). ELSQC has decided to use the Cascade Training Model for teacher training for the new CEFR-aligned cur-

riculum as the model is the preferred method of dissemination (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). CEFR expert will be trained and later assigned to train younger mentee. Two research questions are formulated in accordance to the objectives of the study, which are:

- 1) What are the teachers' perceptions on the applicability of CEFR into the English syllabus and assessments?
- 2) What are the challenges faced by the teachers during the implementation of CEFR?

## 2. Literature Review

The research by *Ishak & Mohamad (2018)*, was conducted to study the impact of CEFR on the Literacy and Numeracy Screening (LINUS) programme in primary level. The study was conducted involving primary school learners and primary school teachers from a rural school in the district of Langkawi, Kedah. The result showed that pupils find it harder to adapt as the content of the lesson as it differed from the assessment; screening test were unrelated. The pupils poor learning ability makes it harder to get the intended knowledge conveyed. Among the suggestions were proper teachers training related to the psycholinguistic need of the low proficiency learners as their learning ability is below the normal rate.

*Uri & Aziz's (2018)* study concerned teachers' concern and awareness displayed positive reactions as the implementation is believed to be able to benefits the learners in their future prospects. The research was carried out in the central regions manifesting Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Putrajaya schools. From the data collected, teachers are willing to take a step forward in the application of the implementation of CEFR. Challenges are inevitable in the implementation. Some of the listed obstacles are teachers thinking themselves as the setback and the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered classroom causing different opinions as compared to the views on CEFR implementation itself. Among the listed suggestions include increasing the transition period for teachers to familiarize with the new syllabus and curriculum.

The research conducted by *Sidhu et al.'s (2018)* studied the application of School Based Assessment (SBA) in primary school as required in CEFR implementation. The findings portrayed the teachers' acceptance of the new assessment method. The lack of exposure and training ground for the teacher to fully immerse in the new curriculum have left teachers clueless in expanding their methods for revision with the new implementation. Teachers were not able to give corrective feedback and engaging remarks due to lack of understanding on CEFR.

Researchers like *Nawai & Said (2020)*, conducted a study to investigate English teachers' attitude towards the implementation of CEFR in primary rural schools in Sarawak, Malaysia. The teachers believed that the implementation of CEFR benefits learners from rural areas. However, teachers expressed on the is-

sue in lack of exposures and training making it hard for the former to execute the syllabus in an orderly manner. The needs to receive proper training with sufficient preparation period alongside suitable and relevant materials provided were put forward prior to the nationwide integration and implementation of CEFR.

Other than that, [Abidin & Hashim \(2021\)](#) initiated a study on the teachers' perceptions on the plurilingualism in the Malaysian CEFR syllabus and curriculum. The lack of plurilingualism incorporated in CEFR Malaysia had left educators in a difficult position as they lack basic skills to merge and incorporate the needed syllabus into the teaching and learning classroom. Teachers were expected to use full English without assistants from a second language or third language to ease the transition of message and knowledge across students.

Another study carried out by [Khair & Shah \(2021\)](#) covered the research of teachers' perceptions on the implementation of CEFR in primary schools all over Malaysia. A total of 136 teachers responded to the questionnaire. The study gathered a series of answers where teachers were uncertain in respond to the conduct of CEFR in the classroom setting. The challenges include the absence of proper training exposure for teachers to the usage of "can do" statements and unfamiliarity with the framework.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Pilot Test**

Before the research was conducted, pilot test was carried out to test the reliability. A total of 32 pre-service teachers from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) was selected as respondents. The specific respondents were selected due to the exposure received during the tertiary learning and teaching placement. The real teaching scenario during the teaching placement is the practice ground for theory learned during the pedagogy class. They are fresh graduates and have prior knowledge on CEFR and are exposed to it during their teaching practice. A score of 0.957 was calculated using the Statistical Package Social Science (SPSS) version 23. According to [Hinton, McMurray, & Brownlow \(2004\)](#), it is an excellent reliability score if the value is larger than 0.9 The Cronbach alpha value is larger than 0.75 (>0.75), therefore the items are acceptable.

#### **3.2. Participants and Instruments**

The research surveyed a total of 105 English teachers. The location of the study was in Sibul, Sarawak. It was selected as there are limited studies conducted in East Malaysia. Most of the studies conducted in the past covered on primary teachers instead of secondary teachers in East Malaysia.

The study executes the quantitative method. The questionnaire selected is Questionnaire for English teachers by [Uri & Aziz \(2018\)](#). The questionnaire was adapted and adopted according to the need of the target group. An expert review was sought after to ensure the credibility of the questionnaire. A total of 40 items

are included.

The questionnaires are distributed using goggle form as all lessons are conducted virtual platform. Teachers are not physically in school due to the rising daily Covid-19 cases. The data was collected within a duration of 7 days. Phone calls are made to seek permission from the principal of the participating schools. All data collected will be analyzed using SPSS version 23. The descriptive analysis including mean, frequency, and standard deviation will be used as the determining factors for the teachers' perceptions on the applicability of the implementation of CEFR and challenges faced during the administration of CEFR. The second research questions concerning the challenges encountered during the execution of CEFR will be further analyzed using thematic method. The challenges will be categorized under sub-themes as stated, 1) teachers' own personal reason, 2) teachers' adaptability during the implementation of CEFR, 3) students' familiarity during the administration of CEFR, 4) lack of learning materials and 5) the new approach during the execution of CEFR. The calculated mean score will be interpreted based on Pimentel (2019) level of interpretation as followed (Table 1).

## 4. Results and Discussion

The following will discuss on the result concern teachers' perceptions of the applicability of CEFR and the challenges encountered during the administration.

### 4.1. Teachers' Perceptions on the Applicability of the Implementation of CEFR

Despite the curriculum change, teachers were still positive with the new implementation. The new curriculum is believed to bring better prospect for learners in the future. The changes made in the English language curriculum in Malaysia ensure the quality of good English speakers among young learners (Uri & Aziz, 2020). Despite the many challenges encountered, teachers are still adamant in learning and knowing the in and out of the new curriculum. They are on the same page with the Ministry of Education and enthusiastic with the implementation of CEFR. The teachers agreed that the implementation allows to prepare young learners to meet the international demands in the English Language. The teachers also agreed that it is the right time to implement CEFR since it is trending internationally. It helps to speak louder for the English curriculum in the Malaysia Education system. The main aim of the supposed outcome is to be able to produce quality students that are fit for any situations in regards to the English language. Based on the findings from the data collection, almost all English teachers provided positive response through the questionnaire with the implementation of CEFR. This is also supported from the previous findings from Uri & Aziz (2018), Ishak & Mohamad (2018), Sidhu et al. (2018), Nawai & Said (2020) and Khair & Shah (2021) (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Level of mean interpretation.

| Mean Value  | Level of Interpretation |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1.00 - 1.82 | Very bad                |
| 1.83 - 2.65 | Rather bad              |
| 2.66 - 3.48 | Bad                     |
| 3.49 - 4.31 | Slightly good           |
| 4.32 - 5.14 | Good                    |
| 5.15 - 6.00 | Rather good             |

**Table 2.** Applicability of CEFR onto secondary syllabus and assessments.

| No.   | Statements  | SD (%)     | D (%)      | sD (%)     | sA (%)       | A (%)        | SA (%)       | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|-------|---|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------|-------|----------------|
| AP40. | I believe the proposed CEFR levels B1 and B2 for secondary students are suitable.   | 3<br>(2.9) | 0<br>(0.0) | 2<br>(1.9) | 26<br>(24.8) | 63<br>(60.0) | 11<br>(10.5) | 4.70 | 0.898 | Good           |
| AP41. | I believe the proposed CEFR levels B1 and B2 that secondary students should achieve upon completion of secondary school are attainable.           | 3<br>(2.9) | 2<br>(1.9) | 3<br>(2.9) | 27<br>(25.7) | 62<br>(59.0) | 8<br>(7.6)   | 4.59 | 0.958 | Good           |
| AP46. | I believe CEFR is a suitable framework to be adopted for secondary English syllabus and assessments.  | 3<br>(2.9) | 2<br>(1.9) | 2<br>(1.9) | 21<br>(20.0) | 66<br>(62.9) | 11<br>(10.5) | 4.70 | 0.962 | Good           |
| AP47. | I believe CEFR is an applicable framework to be adopted onto secondary English syllabus and assessments.  | 2<br>(1.9) | 1<br>(1.0) | 2<br>(1.9) | 21<br>(20.0) | 67<br>(63.8) | 12<br>(11.4) | 4.77 | 0.858 | Good           |
| AP52. | CEFR is an applicable framework to help Malaysia meet the economy and global demands.   | 3<br>(2.9) | 4<br>(3.8) | 6<br>(5.7) | 22<br>(21.0) | 60<br>(57.1) | 10<br>(9.5)  | 4.54 | 1.065 | Good           |
| AP54. | CEFR should be modified like Japan to ensure its applicability and suitability according to Malaysia context.                                     | 2<br>(1.9) | 0<br>(0.0) | 2<br>(1.9) | 26<br>(24.8) | 61<br>(58.1) | 14<br>(13.3) | 4.77 | 0.846 | Good           |
| AP55. | It is highly recommended to adapt and modify CEFR to fit in the Malaysian context with local touch.   | 2<br>(1.9) | 0<br>(0.0) | 3<br>(2.9) | 21<br>(20.0) | 60<br>(57.1) | 19<br>(18.1) | 4.85 | 0.886 | Good           |
| AP56. | Suitable secondary English textbooks, exercise books and other teaching and learning materials which conform to CEFR levels B1 and B2 are needed. | 2<br>(1.9) | 0<br>(0.0) | 0<br>(0.0) | 13<br>(12.4) | 66<br>(62.9) | 24<br>(22.9) | 5.03 | 0.814 | Good           |

SA = Strongly Agree, SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, sD = Slightly Disagree, sA = Slightly Agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

#### 4.2. Teachers' Challenges and Fringes during the Implementation of CEFR According to Themes

According to **Table 3**, item C62 scored a mean of 3.89. More than half of the total respondents answered "Slightly agree" and beyond, thinking teachers are the obstacles in the implementation of CEFR. A study carried out by Uri & Aziz (2020), teachers having such impression of themselves is due to the lack of time in adapting self with the new implementation. Teachers think of themselves as obstacles during the administration of the new curriculum. The teachers lack of self-esteem due to new implementation as they need a longer adjustment period to familiarize the new syllabus and its marking scheme. Teachers are unfamiliar with the interchange from teacher-centered to student-centered approach (action-based approach). Self-efficacy is important as it "affects teachers' well being in adjusting to new classroom behaviors and preserving their intrinsic motivation as educators" (Rosenholtz, 1989: p. 238). The prolonged scenario would make it harder for teachers to embrace the new implementation if they refuse to make a change and cope with these new challenges (Tai & Kareem, 2017). Teachers who refuse to accept or make a change is due to the reluctance to break away from conventional methods because they rely heavily on the textbooks, books, and the chalk and talk practice (Tofade, 2010).

**Table 4** portrayed the high mean score of all three items. Among the issues highlighted were time constraint, understanding of CEFR descriptors and "can do" task activities as those were the main concerns of the teachers' flexibility in CEFR syllabus. Teachers' adaptability when not build on a good foundation can bring about other issues arising from the new implementation. Teachers should eliminate the negative perceptions that new approach can be detrimental for learners, however build their trust on the potentials benefits (Lim & Yunus, 2021). From the findings above, we can deduce that teachers require more time for them to fully understand, be well-versed with the framework and putting it into good use during the teaching and learning process (Uri & Aziz, 2018). More workshops for reference are needed as teachers lamented on the insufficient training given (Sidhu et al., 2018; Nawawi et al, 2021). Underlying issues such as limited knowledge, minimum exposure and low level of awareness about CEFR among educators might obstruct the smooth running of the whole process according to the timeline given (Uri & Aziz, 2018). A positive mindset helps teachers to channel better either verbally or academically and this indirectly create a healthy learning surrounding (Nii & Yunus, 2022).

**Table 3.** Teachers' own personal reasons.

| No.  | Statements   | SD (%)  | D (%)     | sD (%)    | sA (%)    | A (%)     | SA (%)  | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|------|--|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|------|-------|----------------|
| C62. | I see myself as one of the challenges in the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. | 7 (6.7) | 12 (11.4) | 15 (14.3) | 26 (24.8) | 42 (40.0) | 3 (2.9) | 3.89 | 1.311 | Slightly good  |



**Table 4.** Teachers' adaptability with the curriculum change.

| No.  | Statements  | SD (%)  | D (%)     | sD (%)    | sA (%)    | A (%)     | SA (%)    | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|------|---|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-------|----------------|
| C74. | The length of time required for students and teachers to become familiar with and understand CEFR and its descriptors will be a challenge to integrate and complete CEFR based-classroom activities in class. | 3 (2.9) | 16 (15.2) | 15 (14.3) | 31 (29.5) | 33 (31.4) | 7 (6.7)   | 3.91 | 1.264 | Slightly good  |
| C75. | It will be a challenge to integrate CEFR in teaching if one does not fully understand CEFR descriptor levels and its many dimensions.   | 3 (2.9) | 9 (8.6)   | 10 (9.5)  | 21 (20.0) | 52 (49.5) | 10 (9.5)  | 4.33 | 1.214 | Good           |
| C76. | Teachers' limited understanding of CEFR and a teaching approach based on "can do" tasks will be a challenge for teachers.   | 3 (2.9) | 6 (5.7)   | 11 (10.5) | 25 (23.8) | 49 (46.7) | 11 (10.5) | 4.37 | 1.162 | Good           |

The practice of sharing of information among teachers; Professional Learning Community (PLC) is encouraged. The practice of PLC allows teachers to work collaboratively either in pair or small group to discuss and share their learning experiences from the classroom setting. A group of teachers that master the latest pedagogical method will share their content knowledge on the practice of instructions for technology teaching and implementations of higher order thinking skills (Balang et al., 2020). They are able to brainstorm to get to a solution and put it into application. School Improvement Specialist Coaches plus (SISC+) was born with the intention to assist and guide educators to put a problem to rest. This adheres to the 21st Century principles consisting of communication skills, critical thinking skills, creativity skills and collaborative skills among teachers' learning. SISC+ functions by continuously advocating autonomous assistant to accommodate for educators' need by cultivating teachers' confidence when the latest pedagogy comes into effect (Teemant et al., 2011). This can nurture a conducive and favourable environment for effective education to harness. Mavhunditse (2014) believed that experience is the best teacher as it contributes tremendously into the development of effective teaching. Students are able to learn with the help of textbooks or learning materials, however, students productivity during the teaching and learning can be increased much more if teachers organize students' use of their text books (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015).

Students' familiarity can be rather worrisome in teaching and learning context as students need certain period to be fully familiarized with the syllabus. In **Table 5**, 18 respondents "Strongly agree" to the statement where, students' proficiency level affect the flow of teaching and learning especially when using communication skills. 37 teachers answered "Agree" while 25 teachers gave "Slightly agree". Low proficiency students need extra attention especially in writing skills.

**Table 5.** Students' familiarity in the implementation of CEFR.

| No.  | Statements   | SD (%)  | D (%)   | sD (%)    | sA (%)    | A (%)     | SA (%)    | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|------|--|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-------|----------------|
| C78. | Secondary students' low level of English proficiency will lead to minimal students' involvement in a communicative (action-oriented) approach. | 2 (1.9) | 7 (6.7) | 16 (15.2) | 25 (23.8) | 37 (35.2) | 18 (17.1) | 4.35 | 1.232 | Good           |

The lack of mastery in English demotivates the students to write due to the lack information and the ability for continuity of ideas. When the students do not have prior knowledge of the lesson taught, they found it harder to remember and apply the words in English (Ang & Mohamad, 2018). Cheng et al. (2016) further supported the statement by proving that students do not find meaningful learning when acquiring English as the language itself serves a limited purpose in their daily life. Learners are able to cope with the changing syllabus and curriculum with a better student grouping systems and creating a more favorable learning environment for the teaching and learning process (Zeenat & Aeman, 2011).

Students are rather sensitive to changes when learning and it will be reflected in their grades. The speaking skills of the CEFR align marking scheme requires students to work in pair for their assessment. However, some students preferred to work individually meanwhile some students would monopolize group work causing the other group-mate to remain passive (Murphy et al., 2019). The change of the curriculum from KBSM to CEFR had shifted the spotlight from the writing skills and reading skills to equivalent weightage on all four language skills. Students are required to master writing skill, reading skill, listening skill and speaking skill. The ability to cultivate active engagement among students has a positive impact on one ensuring sustainable learning (Fatin et al., 2019). Another recommended alternative is the flipped learning classroom. The practice of flipped learning is able to measure and distinguish learners' improvement in terms of proficiency and achievements (Rahman et al., 2019). The student-centered method gives positive impacts and help in building confidence during the second language acquisition.

The data presented in Table 6 showed teachers' view concerning the lack of learning materials with the implementation of CEFR. 43 teachers agreed that designing CEFR based classroom activities as time consuming. To add on, 28 teachers stated that it is rather challenging to design classroom activities based on CEFR descriptors and the "can do" statement. The high mean score of 4.28 for item C63 and the mean score of 3.56 for item C68 proved that teachers viewed the foreign textbook as a stumbling block in the As CEFR is a European-based syllabus, the content is very bias and inclined towards the foreign settings instead of local context. Redesigning the classroom activities is very cumbersome. Teachers have to deal with administrative work apart from teaching in the four-walled cell. The lack of materials (CEFR aligned workbook) for exercise

**Table 6.** Lack of learning materials.

| No.  | Statements  | SD (%)  | D (%)     | sD (%)    | sA (%)    | A (%)     | SA (%)  | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|------|---|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|------|-------|----------------|
| C63. | Designing CEFR based classroom activities is time consuming.  | 1 (1.0) | 10 (9.5)  | 9 (8.6)   | 33 (31.4) | 43 (41.0) | 9 (8.6) | 4.28 | 1.114 | Slightly good  |
| C68. | It will be challenging for me to design class activities based on CEFR level descriptors and “can do” statements. | 2 (1.9) | 22 (21.0) | 28 (26.7) | 23 (21.9) | 28 (26.7) | 2 (1.9) | 3.56 | 1.200 | Slightly good  |

and supplementary practice can be detrimental to the teaching and learning context. Teachers are having difficulties to channel knowledge using the textbook even though they are granted the ability to adapt and adopt the content because of the alienated content among the local learners (Ang & Mohamad, 2018). The inability to shower learners with supplementary exercises can cause learners to fall behind and not achieving the expected proficiency. The lack of instructional materials will obstruct effective teaching and learning in the classroom setting (Toyosi, 2018). On the other hand, determining components including foreign elements, and credibility of local textbook writers make it harder for teachers to reach an intermediate by extracting the content of the textbook and still be able to relate it to the local settings (Aziz et al., 2018).

According to Table 7, the practice of the new approach is a challenge in the process of CEFR implementation. 30 respondents “Slightly agree” with the statement, while 36 respondents “Agree” with the statement. The mean score of 4.06 indicated the transitioning gap from the teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. The need to practice the new approach according to the outline of the curriculum is viewed as a challenge to the teachers. The implementation of CEFR is conducted using mostly the student-centered approach. The birth of autonomous students aids in creating a generation of independent learners. The shift of teacher-knowledge based to student-learning based allows more space for learners to explore during their teaching and learning process (Yunus & Arshad, 2015). Passive students will need more practices to work collaboratively in pair, especially in speaking skills to familiarize the learners with the settings. Teachers felt that the change would be a setback to their existing repertoire of teaching strategies and authoritative relationships with their students, therefore, imposing too much flexibility granted to the students when learning (Murphy et al., 2019). Teachers need to look for interesting topics such as technology or IT related topics with the help of teaching aids. Besides, teachers can give warming up during the period through set induction to learners by probing them.

The need to utilise the use of technology in the lesson helps students to boost the urge in leaning. Students feel emotionally connected and excited for the reflections’ sections (Said et al., 2013). The nature of blog brings students to engage actively and pays more attention on their writing and the usage of their language

**Table 7.** The new approach with the implementation of CEFR.

| No.  | Statements   | SD (%)  | D (%)     | sD (%)    | sA (%)    | A (%)     | SA (%)  | Mean | SD    | Interpretation |
|------|--|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|------|-------|----------------|
| C77. | Transition from a more grammar oriented pedagogy to a more communicative (action-oriented) approach is also a challenge in the process of CEFR implementation. | 2 (1.9) | 14 (13.3) | 14 (13.3) | 30 (28.6) | 36 (34.3) | 9 (8.6) | 4.06 | 1.239 | Slightly good  |

(Said et al., 2013). Positive feedback ensure the continuity within a professional community and enable learners to benefit from the mutual support (Yunus et al., 2010). The use of online learning platform increases students' self satisfaction (Yunus & Tan, 2021).

## 5. Recommendations

For future researches, it is recommended to shift the focus to upper secondary English teachers as the implementation of CEFR was carried out earlier last year, 2020. However, due to the raising daily count of Covid-19 cases earlier this year, classes were conducted online. Students were only exposed to the new syllabus and curriculum through online meeting. Besides, exam was only carried out once therefore the suitability and challenges of teachers teaching upper secondary should be explored further.

The use of mixed method can increase the credibility of both the qualitative and quantitative data. The use of the explanatory method is applicable for research in the future. Instead of focusing on just English teachers from Sibul, Sarawak, the researcher can shift the attention to the whole of Sarawak. The study involving teachers from a district cannot speak for the general population of English teachers from a state. Documentation can be a keep safe for the Ministry of Education for references and comparison of data.

## 6. Conclusion

Teachers, policymakers and school authorities need to work cooperatively in making sure the implementation of CEFR really benefits the learners. This enables our learners to be on par with the international requirements of the mastery of the English language. With this, our students are able to compete globally with their foreign peers. In the near future, after the changes were made based on the feedback made from the teachers and other involving parties, another research should be conducted as a follow-up. The long term study on the implementation of CEFR may be a long and winding process, however, it can be a good source of reference for the nation education development and growth.

## Acknowledgements

The corresponding author, Annie Tiong Nii would like to express her immense gratitude towards Professor Melor Md. Yunus for playing the mandatory role as

a supervisor in making this paper a success and published for the good of the teaching industry.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### References

- Abidin, N. Z., & Hashim, H. (2021). Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): A Review on Teachers' Perception & Plurilingualism. *Creative Education, 12*, 727-736. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2021.124051>
- Ang, T., & Mohamad, M. (2018). The Effects of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) towards English LINUS Year 2 Students in Keningau Sabah. *International Journal of Education, Islamic Studies and Social Science Research, 3*, 1-9. <http://ijeisr.net/Journal/Vol-3-No-1-Isu-16.pdf>
- Aziz, A. H. A. A., Rashid, R. A., & Zainudin, W. Z. W. (2018). The Enactment of the Malaysian Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): National Master Trainer's Reflection. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*, 409-417. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v8i2.13307>
- Balang, N. J., Mahamod, Z., & Buang, N. A. (2020). School Improvement Specialist Coaches Plus (SISC+) as a Catalyst for Enhancing Teachers Pedagogy Aspect in Malaysia. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 8*, 306-314. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2020.89024>
- Chang, D. W., Sirat, M., & Razak, D. A. (2018). *Education in Malaysia towards a Developed Nation*. ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, No. 2018-4, 19 p. <http://hdl.handle.net/11540/8901>
- Cheng, L., Yunus, M. M., & Mohamad, M. (2016). Issues Contributing to Low Performance of English in a National School in Song, Sarawak. *Proceeding (ICECRS) International Seminar on Generating Knowledge through Research, 1*, 499-510. <http://ojs.umsida.ac.id/index.php/icecrs>  
<https://doi.org/10.21070/picecrs.v1i1.519>
- Fatin, K. M. A., Natasha, Z. Z., Maslawati, M., & Melor, M. Y. (2019). Benefits and Challenges of Using Game-Based Formative Assessment among Undergraduate Students. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews, 7*, 203-213. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.7426>
- Foley, J. A. (2019). Issues on the Initial Impact of CEFR in Thailand and the Region. *International Journal of Applied Linguistic, 9*, 359-370. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v9i2.20233>
- Hinton, P., McMurray, I., & Brownlow, C. (2004). *SPSS Explained*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203642597>
- Ishak, W. I. W., & Mohamad, M. (2018). The Implementation of Common European Framework of References (CEFR): What Are the Effects Towards LINUS Students' Achievements? *Creative Education, 9*, 2714-2731. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.916205>
- Khair, A. H. M., & Shah, P. M. (2021). ESL Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of CEFR in Malaysian Primary Schools: Issues and Challenges. *Journal of Advances in Education Research, 6*, 31-48. <https://doi.org/10.22606/jaer.2021.61005>
- Lim, T. M., & Yunus, M. M. (2021). Teachers' Perception towards the Use of Quizizz in the Teaching and Learning of English: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability, 13*, Article

- No. 6436. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116436>
- Manan, S. A., & David, M. K. (2015). Language Ideology and the Linguistic Landscape: A Study in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. *Linguistics & the Human Sciences*, *11*, 51-66. <https://doi.org/10.1558/lhs.v11i1.20228>
- Mavhunditse, T. (2014). *Legal Perspectives in Education*. Zimbabwe Open University.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013a). *Cambridge Baseline 2013: English Language in Malaysian Schools*. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013b). *Malaysia Education Blueprint: Annual Report 2013*. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013c). *Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Pre-school to Post Secondary Education)*. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015). *English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025*. Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.
- Mupa, P., & Chinooneka, T. I. (2015). Factors Contributing to Ineffective Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools: Why Are Schools in Decadence? *Journal of Education and Practice*, *6*, 125-132. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079543.pdf>
- Murphy, C., Abu-Tineh, A., Calder, N., & Mansour, N. (2019). Changing from a Traditional Approach to Learning: Teachers' Perceptions of Introducing WebQuests into Mathematics and Science Classrooms in Qatar. *Teachers and Curriculum*, *19*, 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.15663/tandc.v19i1.333>
- Nawai, R., & Said, N. E. M. (2020). Implementation Challenges of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) in a Malaysian Setting: Insights on English Teachers' Attitude. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *10*, 28-41. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i7/7394>
- Nawawi, N. M., Zuhaimi, N., Sabu, K., Mahamud, N. S. R., & Nasir, N. A. M. (2021). CEFR for Languages and Its Effective Implementation in Secondary Schools in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning*, *11*, 63-72. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajatel.vol11.1.6.2021>
- Nii, A. T., & Yunus, M. M. (2022). Teachers' Factors in Autonomous Learning during Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *12*, 1408-1427. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i5/13209>
- Pimentel, J. L. (2019). Some Biases in Likert Scaling Usage and Its Correction. *International Journal of Science: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)*, *45*, 183-191. <https://www.gssrr.org/index.php/JournalOfBasicAndApplied/article/view/9874>
- Rahim, H. A., & Daghig, A. J. (2019). Locally-Developed versus Global Textbooks: An Evaluation of Cultural Content in Textbooks Used in English Language Teaching in Malaysia. *Asian Englishes*, *22*, 317-331.
- Rahman, S. F., Yunus, M. M., & Hashim, H. (2019). An Overview of Flipped Learning Studies in Malaysia. *Arab World English Journal*, *10*, 194-203. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no4.15>
- Read, J. (2019). The Influence of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in the Asia-Pacific Region. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, *12*, 12-18. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1225686.pdf>
- Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' Workplace: The Social Organization of School*. Teacher College Press.
- Said, N. E. M., Yunus, M., Doring, L. K., Asmi, A., Aqilah, F., & Kwan, L. S. L. (2013). Blogging to Enhance Writing Skills: A Survey of Students' Perception and Attitude. *Asian*

- Social Science*, 9, 95-101. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n16p95>
- Sidhu, G. K., Kaur, S., & Chi, L. J. (2018). CEFR-Aligned School Based Assessment in the Malaysian Primary ESL Classroom. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8, 452-463. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v8i2.13311>
- Tai, M. K., & Kareem, O. A. (2017). Measuring Teacher Attitudes toward Change: An Empirical Validation. *International Journal of Management in Education*, 11, 437-469. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMIE.2017.086909>
- Teemant, A., Wink, J., & Tyra, S. (2011). Effects of Coaching on Teacher Use of Sociocultural Instructional Practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27, 683-693. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.11.006>
- Tofade, T. (2010). Coaching Younger Practitioners and Students Using Components of the Co-Active Coaching Model. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 74, Article No. 51. <https://doi.org/10.5688/aj740351>
- Toyosi, O. (2018). Lack of Instructional Materials and Teaching Methods as Factors Hindering Effective Teaching and Learning of Physical Education in Ondo State, Nigeria. *Educational Research*, 9, 157-164.
- Uri, N. F. M., & Aziz, M. S. A. (2018). Implementation of CEFR in Malaysia: Teachers' Awareness and Challenges. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 24, 168-183. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2018-2403-13>
- Uri, N. F. M., & Aziz, M. S. A. (2020). The Appropriacy and Applicability of English Assessment against CEFR Global Scale: Teachers' Judgement. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 26, 53-65. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2020-2603-05>
- Wahid, N. A. A., Hamid, H. A., Low, Y. M., & Ashhari, A. M. (2011). Malaysian Education System Reform: Educationists' Perspectives. In *Proceeding of the International Conference on Social Science, Economics and Art 2011* (pp. 107-111). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241064438\\_Malaysian\\_Education\\_System\\_Reform\\_Educationists\\_Perspectives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241064438_Malaysian_Education_System_Reform_Educationists_Perspectives)
- Yunus, C. C., & Tan, K. H. (2021). Exploring a Gamified Tool in the ESL Classroom: The Case of Quizizz. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 8, 103-108. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2021.81.103.108>
- Yunus, M. M., & Arshad, N. D. M. (2015). ESL Teachers' Perceptions toward the Practices and Prospects of Autonomous Language Learning. *Asian Social Science*, 11, 41-51. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n2p41>
- Yunus, M. M., Hashim, H., Ishak, N. M., & Mahamod, Z. (2010). Understanding TESL Pre-Service Teachers' Teaching Experiences and Challenges via Post-Practicum Reflection Forms. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 722-728. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.12.224>
- Zeenat, I., & Aeman, M. (2011). Student Self Esteem and Their Perception of Teacher Behavior: A Study of Class Grouping System in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2, 103-113.