Secondary School Teachers' Perspectives towards the Implementation of CEFR-Aligned English Curriculum

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ABSTRACT
In strengthening English language proficiency among Malaysian students, Ministry of Education (MOE) has integrated the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) into the education system and developed action plans for the systematic reform of English education. CEFR does not only describe on the aspects of English that are commonly learned at each level, but also tells teachers, curriculum developers, course authors and test writers what is appropriate to learn at each level. Hence, teachers must have sufficient knowledge on how to implement CEFR into their teaching accordingly and this is due to the fact that the effectiveness of this educational reform is heavily reliant on them. The methodological framework used in this study is phenomenological study. It is intended to grasp the perspectives on CEFR-Aligned curriculum among English language teachers. Interviews were conducted on 10 English language teachers teaching in five different schools in Petaling Utama district. Purposive sampling was used as the sample method. Data gathered were analysed by using thematic analysis. The result indicates

that there are two major themes that emerged from thematic analysis which are autonomous learning and pedagogical approach. Teachers agreed that awareness of students' level of proficiency is central to CEFR-aligned curriculum not merely due to the fact that it helps teachers to design lessons alone, but because it directly assists the students themselves. Teachers also agreed that the flexibility is a plus point for CEFR-aligned curriculum as it encourages seamless integration of all four skills with communicative competence as the main goal of language exchanges taking place in lessons. However, they were also aware of the fact that appropriation need to be made to ensure meaningful learning take place as some of them voiced concern against the unfamiliar context (culture, received pronunciation, etc.) which may impede the students' comprehension and ability to accomplish the tasks and develop necessary skills and strategies.

Keywords: CEFR, teacher's perspective, English Language

INTRODUCTION

As we are moving towards Industry 4.0, developed and developing countries are competing between one another and it is imperative that Malaysia leverages its strengths to better secure its position in the world economy. Asian neighbouring education systems, for instance in China, Republic of Korea, and Singapore, have been progressively emphasizing on the development of producing proficient students in their national languages and English to maximize their employability rate in the global workforce. To catch up with our developed and developing neighbours, Malaysians needs to be competitive in the workforce sector as well. Consequently, this will increase the society's exposure to the importance of English language, which will improve the quality of English teaching methodology at the same time. According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2015), the aspiration of the education system is to produce students who are proficient in *Bahasa Malaysia* and English. Each and every student will also be encouraged to learn additional languages for independent and self-development skills which are essential in preparing them for job opportunities after graduation. As defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), independent skills demonstrate the competence to grasp their own field in societal discourse.

Moreover, in strengthening English language proficiency among Malaysian students, MOE has integrated the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) into the education system and developed action plans for the systematic reform of English education (Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018). In 2001, CEFR was created and designed to provide international standards for foreign language education to meet the needs of language learners as well as academics and other professions related to language evaluation, teaching and learning. The CEFR carefully describes what language learners need in order to communicate using the language. The implementation of CEFR in Malaysia began with the establishment of the English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) in 2013. The Council provides assistance to the Center for English Teaching (ELTC) to assist MOE in improving English language proficiency among Malaysian students.

A collaboration between Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) and Cambridge English United Kingdom (CE) has been developed to enable the development of the Standard English Language Curriculum (SBELC). The SBELC document combines English Content and Learning Standards mapping and CEFR compliant pedagogical approaches. This framework is also used as a reference to develop the SBELC target skills levels (A1 and A2 or Basic Users; B1 and B2 or Independent Users; and C1 and C2 or Advanced Users). These curriculum levels reflect the expected outcomes at each level of learning from preschool to university level. These target levels will also enable pupils to monitor their own progress and facilitate teachers' ability to measure students' achievement.

A study done by Mohamad Uri & Abd Aziz (2018) on their attempt to examine the views of English teachers and the views of Ministry of Education officials on the implementation of the CEFR in Malaysia exposed that majority of teachers had very limited knowledge, minimum exposure and low awareness of CEFR. However, the teachers were confident pertaining to the idea and believed that the framework was important in order to increase the level of English proficiency among Malaysians. Both concluded that the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia was regarded as obligatory but adequate time should be given by the ministry to make sure that all stakeholders were fully equipped and well-versed with the framework before it was extensively initiated and implemented in Malaysia.

Also, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, Sarjit Kaur, Lee Jia Chi (2018) investigated the implementation of CEFR-aligned school-based assessment (SBA) in the primary ESL classroom. Their findings revealed that SBA implementation left much to be desired and distant from formative assessment. Even though teachers stated positive views of the SBA, they did not fully understand the method and claimed to have limited knowledge of the CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum. Not only that, students were not inspired to make decisions based on the fact that teachers provided little or no feedback on assignments. Teachers reported time constraints, classroom enrolment, heavy workload, and lack of training as their foremost challenges in contradiction to the applicable realization of the CEFR-aligned SBA.

Researchers also go beyond teachers and students' views of CEFR where a study by Nagai and O'Dwyer (2011) conducted in Japan focused on studying how CEFR has been used in language education showed both positive effects and potential problems. About three years later, O 'Dwyer ran another research in 2014 with the aim of providing critical but constructive assessments and discussing the principles and practices of implementing the CEFR in textbooks, curriculum and teaching practices. Gaynor Gaynor, Grave, Hagley, & Johnson (2011) have done a study to analyze the materials used and how these materials were evaluated as well as the formation of e-learning systems based on CEFR.

Based on the issues raised above, teachers' perspectives are critical to the successful implementation of the CEFR. Since the CEFR was only adopted in 2018, only a few studies on the subject have been undertaken. As a result, it is critical to revisit this transition in order to increase students' English proficiency levels. Since such studies have not been conducted yet in

Petaling Utama district, researchers believe that this study should be conducted to determine the perspectives from secondary school teachers.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to investigate the secondary school teachers' perspectives on the process of teaching and learning through CEFR-Aligned curriculum.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for English

Common European Framework of References (CEFR) was developed by Council of Europe in 2001 with the aim of providing a comprehensive framework for languages in respect to learning, teaching and assessment. This framework is not specifically tailored for English but can be adapted for other languages as well. According to Council of Europe, the framework serves as a basis for knowledge and skills that learners have to develop to achieve a certain level of proficiency which is clearly defined at each stage of learning a language. The following are the main objectives of CEFR listed by Council of Europe:

   i.   promoting plurilingualism and diversification in the choice of languages in the curriculum
  ii.   supporting the development and demonstration of the plurilingual profile of individual learners
 iii.   developing and reviewing the content of language curricula and defining positive 'can do' descriptors adapted to the age, interests and needs of learners
  iv.   designing and developing textbooks and teaching material
   v.   supporting teacher education and cooperation among teachers of different languages
  vi.   enhancing quality and success in learning, teaching and assessment
 vii.   facilitating transparency in testing and the comparability of certifications

The flexibility of CEFR allows room for adaptations and improvements to be made to better accommodate the needs and cultural differences for a particular language. This is due to the fact that CEFR is not a ready-made tool for language learners that dictates what needs to be done and achieved but the objectives listed are suggestive in nature, that require careful interpretation and adaptations before it can work as a framework for language learning, teaching and assessments. To better fit the needs of English language, Council of Europe introduced a core inventory detailing guidance for each stage of curriculum planning, teaching, learning and assessments based on detailed key indicators and proficiency levels which are divided into three broad stages: basic, independent and proficient users. These three stages can be further divided into six levels which are 1) basic: A1 and A2, 2) independent; B1 and B2, and 3) proficient: C1 and C2 as can be seen in the figure below:
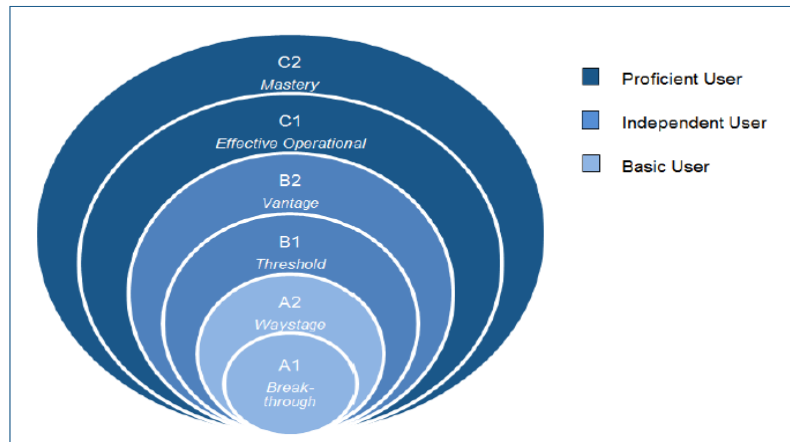
Figure 1: CEFR Levels of Proficiency

Each level is illustrated with key language teaching points, curriculum design and global assessments' standards which help national team of the host country to design a curriculum that satisfies the needs of the learners and meets the required proficiency to prepare the learners with adequate competency for self-survival and employment.

Implementation of Common European Framework of References for English (CEFR) in Malaysia
Common European Framework of References for Languages or commonly known as CEFR has been adopted into many languages in countries around the globe. Southeast Asian countries are not being left behind in implementing or incorporating CEFR into their education system which includes Vietnam and Singapore. In 2013, Ministry of Education (MOE) established English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) to provide assistance to English Language Teaching Center (ELTC) with the aim to help MOE to elevate and improve English language proficiency of Malaysian students. CEFR framework was then introduced onto the education system. According to Hazita (2016), to ensure a systematic reform for English language education, a roadmap was developed to align CEFR against existing national education blueprint. The roadmap is a long term goal and plan which started from 2013 and expected to end in 2025 with the main aim to provide the best language education starting from pre – school up to tertiary education.

The roadmap consists of three phases. Phase 1 had taken place from 2013 to 2015 which focused on elevating the English proficiency of school teachers. In the two-year span, teachers were sent out for training including Professional Up- Skilling of English Language Teachers (Pro-ELT), the Native Speaker programme, the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant programme and the Expanded Specialist Coach (SISC) role for English (Rozana Sani, 2016). The council made preparations such as developing CEFR descriptors, setting target for each educational level as well as capacity building based on the result of Cambridge baseline study conducted in 2013 to examine the feasibility of implementing CEFR in the education system. After appropriate CEFR levels were set up by the council in 2015, phase 2 began in 2016 and the validation for each educational level will be determined in the second part of phase 2. In the first part of phase

2, the council selected international CEFR-aligned textbooks and support materials and aligned School Based Assessment (SBA) syllabus and curricula with CEFR descriptors. Afterwards, second part of phase 2 commenced from 2017 to validate CEFR levels set for each educational stage and this phase is expected to end in 2020 (National Education Blueprint 2013). To ensure that teachers are knowledgeable and competent enough to implement CEFR in teaching and learning process, workshops and trainings related to CEFR are provided from time to time. The evaluation, review and revision on the success of CEFR implementation will be carried out in phase 3 beginning 2021. The evaluation will review the textbooks and materials against the descriptors set in phase 2 and the result of the evaluation, review and assessments will be utilized to develop Malaysia's very own CEFR-aligned curricula, namely CEFR-M.

Teachers' Perspectives on Common European Framework of References for English (CEFR)
One of the challenges in implementing CEFR-aligned curricula in schools is the teachers themselves. Even though CEFR implementation is phased out carefully into three phases from 2013-2025, it will be a difficult journey to fully incorporate CEFR onto the education system if there is mixed understanding and view towards CEFR itself. According a study done by Uri (2018), teachers have limited knowledge and understanding of what CEFR is and how they are supposed to conduct CEFR-aligned teaching and learning due to various reasons. The findings show that only 11.2% strongly agreed that they are very familiar with CEFR, 35% of the respondents slightly agreed, 35.3% admitted they agreed that they are familiar with CEFR-aligned curricula after attending the workshops provided by the ministry whereas the remaining were not familiar with CEFR. The study further revealed that only 10.3% of the respondents agreed that the workshops provided helped them in planning and executing lesson whereas the remaining felt that the workshops are not sufficient to prepare them. Among the reasons listed out by the study are the lacks of CEFR experts in Malaysia that can provide trainings and guidance for the teachers in CEFR-related matters. The experts and materials are mainly brought from United Kingdom and thus it presents a challenge in localizing the content to fit the culture and students' schemata. The teachers also expressed their concern towards the effectiveness of the workshops as it only aims to familiarize them with CEFR but not on how to appropriate CEFR in the materials planning stage and teaching approaches. In light of this, Malaysia need more home-grown experts who are well-versed in CEFR descriptors, curricula planning and local CEFR-aligned materials in order to provide more efficient trainings and workshops to the teachers.

This study was also supported by findings from ELSQC that pointed out most of the schools face issues in conducting the mandated hours of trainings for the teachers. The mandated hours for in-house trainings and workshops are supposed to be conducted for 18 hours. Due to time constraint, most schools are not able to meet the required hours and reduced the trainings to 6 hours instead. This explains why teachers are not well-versed in CEFR-aligned curricula and face difficulty in implementing it in their lesson because they do not have proper understanding and working knowledge of what CEFR really means. Malaysia is not alone in this matter, other developed countries like United Kingdom, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Australia also face issues in incorporating CEFR in their education system. These countries which rank higher than Malaysia in international assessments such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends for International Mathematics and Science Studies also faced the issues of teachers'

lack of understanding on CEFR even though they have already incorporated CEFR-aligned curricula since a long time ago (Uri and Abd Aziz, 2018). It shows that teachers' understanding or views towards CEFR plays a big role in the implementation process because it will determine whether the lessons they carry out is CEFR-aligned or not. Previous researches indicate collective trend which reflects teachers' understanding of CEFR is still at basic level and it raises concern on their capacity as executor of the framework.

METHODOLOGY

Creswell's phenomenological approach is used in this study (Creswell, 2013). The methodological framework for this study is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), as it aims to investigate the perspectives of English language teachers. According to Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio (2019) a phenomenological approach is thought to be the most frequently recommended way for studying perspectives and experiences. The use of IPA in English language education has also been used in Malaysia, such as (Abd Rahman, Chong, Kaman, & Leon, 2020) in which the researchers studied the experience of language lecturers on the newly implemented policy by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. This suggests that the phenomenological framework is an appropriate method for investigating the intertwined concerns of English language education and its reform specifically on teachers' perspectives.

In terms of sampling, purposive sampling was used as the sampling method. It was a form of sampling method used by qualitative researchers to find participants who can provide in-depth and specific information on the topic being studied (Creswell, 2012). Due to the fact that the researchers chose the sample purposively, this technique was able to effectively selecting sample that are experienced in this study area. So, there are 10 teachers from five different schools in Petaling Utama district were selected to participate in this study. According to Dworkin (2012), it is suggested that 5 to 50 samples should be an adequate number of conducting qualitative research. The criteria of choosing the 10 samples are based on the teachers' background. The sample of qualitative part of this study was derived from the teachers who are English-option teachers. They are divided into two groups of five which are senior teachers who have served as an English teacher for more than ten years and novice teachers who have served as an English teacher less than five years (Droogenbroeck, Van, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014).

A series of interviews were used to obtain the data. Interviews were done to learn more about teachers' perspective on CEFR. Upon interviewing the educators, qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in the data. Gibbs (2007) added that, it involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are related by the same theme, thus forming a "framework of thematic ideas" based on related themes. In the context of this research project, the data collected from the interview and observation sessions were generalized through its own theme and the researcher illustrates a conclusion from the thematic to respond to the research questions specified in the research project.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the investigation of English language teachers' perspectives within the domain of phenomenology. English language teachers are teaching the CEFR-aligned curriculum. This study shall elucidate two major themes that appeared from the thematic analysis. These two themes are Autonomous learning and the pedagogical approach.

Autonomous Learning
This first major theme is autonomous learning. CEFR-aligned curriculum shifts the traditional teaching pedagogy which was heavily teacher-centered to a more student-centered approach. One of the recurring themes identified from the interview data suggests that the teachers were in agreement that adoption of CEFR-aligned curriculum advocates for autonomous learning. This is primarily due to the fact that CEFR adoption places a great emphasis on learners' awareness of their own level of competencies. Below are the excerpts from the interviews which show that the teachers believed that CEFR-aligned curriculum allows learners to be more autonomous and actively involved in knowledge construction:

Novice Teachers	*Besides that, they will know their level according to CEFR in ESL and they will work hard to achieve the required level. Moreover, as the four skills are well-addressed, they can also see their achievement in all four skills.* *(Teacher 2)*	*Exc. 1*
	One of the benefits is it is easier for them and the teachers to know their level of proficiency according to the bands so that they can always improve themselves. *(Teacher 9)*	*Exc. 2*
Senior Teachers	*They will get to know their level of proficiency and most importantly it will help them improve their language skills.* *(Teacher 4)*	*Exc. 3*
	Students are allowed to use their different abilities individually, pairs or in small groups, which allows for language integration in a proper manner *(Teacher 7)*	*Exc. 4*

Based on the excerpts above, it can be concluded that the teachers agreed that awareness of students' level of proficiency is central to CEFR-aligned curriculum not merely due to the fact that it helps teachers to design lessons alone, but because it directly assists the students themselves. This differentiates CEFR-curriculum from the previous curriculum which placed all the responsibilities on teachers to determine what the optimal learning for students is. CEFR-curriculum highlights students' participation as equally important as the teachers themselves. When students have awareness of their level and weaknesses, they will be able to make informed judgements on what is considered beneficial for their learning. This is because learning happens in both conscious and subconscious minds. The subconscious awareness that guides students in

their judgements and actions are what researcher termed as meta-knowledge. Educational psychologists refer to knowledge about knowledge as meta-knowledge which drives our actions and behaviours (Bennet & Bennet, 2007).

This process of on-going decision-making by students is one of the benefits of CEFR-aligned curriculum adoption. Morrow (2004) noted that the strength of CEFR lies in the emphasis on what the learners are able to do rather than what they are not able to do, developing learner autonomy and self-assessment, effective incorporation of learning skills and strategies into the CEFR, and promoting language through diagnostic assessment. Similar results were revealed in the study done by Sulu and Kir (2014) assessing CEFR adoption in Turkey education system which reported positive results in terms of students' autonomy and self-assessment, their willingness to learn the language, their self-confidence and motivation, participating actively in the learning process, and learning the target culture.

Similarly, this study also found out that the students' awareness of their level of proficiency is then translated into several channels of actions which are 1) engagement in tasks selection to address their needs and interest, 2) engagement in the selected tasks and 3) efforts to improve their proficiency with or without their teachers' assistance. From the interviews' excerpts as shown below, several keywords such as 'facilitator, 'group', 'pair', 'peers' and 'engaged' further reinforced the autonomy features of CEFR-curriculum:

Novice Teachers	*Students are always welcome to encourage others to speak and speak their own opinions themselves. It can be said that CEFR allows autonomous learning to take place and teachers are only a facilitator during ESL lessons as they only provide prompts and questions.*	*Exc. 5*
	(Teacher 2)	
	CEFR promotes and encourages students' involvement in lessons especially in speaking…	*Exc. 6*
	…the students are always encouraged to question and vocalize any uncertainty regarding the lesson and teachers are expected to spark students' curiosity in learning.	*Exc. 7*
	(Teacher 9)	
Senior Teachers	*Group work activities are mostly emphasised in CEFR classroom (student centred) so feedbacks from peers can actually create supportive environment.*	*Exc. 8*
		Exc. 9
	Yes. Some of the tasks may ask peer feedbacks.	
	(Teacher 3)	
	The students are always to work in partners.	*Exc.10*
	Choose task that we can think it may suit to their level and then ask their clarification in which area that they to improve more	*Exc.11*
	(Teacher 4)	

These excerpts demonstrate the strong presence of collaborative learning taking place in CEFR-aligned curriculum classroom where teachers act as a facilitator and students take control

of their learning. As pointed out, CEFR-based classroom utilizes a lot of pair-work or group work which increases students' active engagement in the lesson. It is interesting to note that these students also try to engage their friends to participate in the lesson and in turn, they are able to develop communicative strategies although some of them are only able to use simple vocabularies only.

CEFR capitalizes on the concept of learners as social agent in which the aim of the curriculum goes beyond merely establishing codes and interactions. According to Käufer & Chemero (2015), learning occurs through "perception in action" as learners view the environment presented before them as an opportunity to take action needed to accomplish the task. During collaborative learning, students develop necessary skills and strategies to accomplish the tasks with prompts and assistance from their peers or teachers. This phenomenon matches with the concept of mediation as proposed by Bandura (2001) in which teachers and students have clear goals and a sense of self-efficacy as the students are collaborating in small groups to achieve the goals of the interaction, which is one of the effectiveness of CEFR-curriculum adoption in language learning (Piccardo, North and Goodier, 2019). The effectiveness of communicative approach in CEFR will be further explained in the next section.

Pedagogical Approaches
The profile of an effective educator does not only require the educator to be an expert in the content knowledge, but an expert in pedagogic and technological knowledge as well. In the context of CEFR-aligned curriculum adoption in Malaysia, teachers' pedagogical approaches play an important part for it to be fully effective in English language education. With respect to this, the analysis on pedagogical approaches will be further broken down as followed:

Communicative Approach to Language Teaching and Learning
As discussed earlier, CEFR views learners as agents in a social context. This explains why communicative approach is at the heart of CEFR curriculum. In late 1960s, the concept of communicative approach was established and started gaining attention in language learning. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an eclectic approach made up from a myriad of methods based on theories and research on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), cognitive and educational psychology (Spada, 2007). As the name suggests, the goal of CLT is to develop communicative competence which shifts the focus of language learning from accuracy to fluency.

Prior to CLT, a few approaches in language teaching were practiced by language teachers ranging from Grammar Translation Method to Audiolingual Method and Situational Method. All these aforementioned methods greatly emphasized in drilling the forms or grammatical structures to achieve near-native accuracy. Owing to this reason, learners of English were lacking in communicative ability which led the linguists to question whether grammar accuracy should really be the top priority in language learning. The debates gave birth to CLT based on the belief that language is a tool to communicate and thus, the priority should be fluency rather than accuracy. The establishment of CEFR occurred at the same time functional/notional approach in CLT was gaining prominence in the west in 1970s and 1980s. From the lens of CLT, language learning is based on three basic principles as listed below:

    i.   Communication principle: Learning happens through activities which promotes real-life conversation

   ii.   Task principle: Learning happens through activities which use language to carry out meaningful tasks

  iii.   Meaningful principle: Learning occurs when the intended meaning is understood

All these three principles are present in the communicative, action-oriented approach for language use model in CEFR based on two key notions which are tasks and interaction. This models views language use as 'purposeful, involving communication of meanings which are important to learners, in order to achieve goals' (Cambridge ESOL, 2011). It is important to highlight that CEFR is not an international standard when it comes to language teaching and learning. It is a framework in which the context must be localized to fit the purpose of language learning. Therefore, the flexibility of CEFR curriculum allows teachers the freedom to design lessons and select materials which they deem fit to help the students develop all four skills through meaningful use of the language. The findings from the interviews also concur with this notion of CEFR as could be seen in the following excerpts:

Novice Teachers	*It can help them to practice English in real life situation like asking/ giving direction or ordering food.*	Exc.12
	(Teacher 1)	
	CEFR carries a guide on how each skill should be executed and the activities are flexible and allow more rooms for students to give in ideas and opinions.	Exc.13
	In my opinion, I think that CEFR-Aligned English curriculum can help learners to use communication strategies…, this allows the students to implement the strategies in real life spoken interaction with a range of topics and settings.	Exc.14
	(Teacher 2)	
	CEFR promotes and encourages students' involvement in lessons especially in speaking. There are many lessons in the curriculum that enhance students taking part in speaking activities.	Exc.15
	(Teacher 9)	
Senior Teachers	*The flexibility. Pupils aren't focused much on forms and rules of English language and they can improve their communication skills better.*	Exc.16
	(Teacher 3)	
	It is due to the fact that CEFR focus more on fluency not on the accuracy. According to the CEFR-aligned curriculum, students are always welcomed to speak and give opinions so teachers may facilitate and guide them to speak confidently.	Exc.17
	(Teacher 4)	
	It challenges students' knowledge, comprehension and abilities as the curriculum's flexibilities allow for different approaches used by teachers in language classes based on Multiple Intelligence's theory.	Exc.18

(Teacher 7)

The excerpts show that the interviewees agreed that the flexibility is a plus point for CEFR-aligned curriculum as it encourages seamless integration of all four skills with communicative competence as the main goal of language exchanges taking place in lessons. However, they were also aware of the fact that appropriation need to be made to ensure meaningful learning take place as some of them voiced concern against the unfamiliar context (culture, received pronunciation, etc.) which may impede students' comprehension and ability to accomplish the tasks and develop necessary skills and strategies. This view was in line with the CEFR document which outlined purposeful communication as one of its basic principle. The need to make adjustment was apparent with regard to listening and writing skills as pointed out by the teachers:

Novice Teachers	*Since the context is not local based, we can always find ways to make it easier for students to comprehend by explaining or relating as well as comparing the context with ours.*	*Exc.17*
	(Teacher 9)	
Senior Teachers	*Some of the topics, especially about culture aren't relatable.*	*Exc.18*
	Some strategies can be adapt according to the level of proficiency (low, mid, high). The activities as to develop listening skills can be according to their levels. For example, like using simpler sentences for low proficiency pupils and provide peer or teacher guidance as to achieve comprehension.	*Exc.19*
	(Teacher 3)	
	…I do believe that the examples used for the audio part of the CEFR book are all foreign to my students, as they are using native speakers of English in their audio transcription. If they were to use a more local example with Malaysian speakers and the context are more "localised", it will serve better for the students.	*Exc.20*
	(Teacher 6)	
	In Pulse 2 for example, they do provide listening audios and texts for students to practice on…However, those with lower activities cannot catch up or comprehend the audios and texts therefore, teachers need to find different audios and texts under the same contexts but easier.	*Exc.21*
	(Teacher 7)	

These findings supported by the finding from Uri and Abdul Aziz (2018) which investigated the teachers' awareness and challenges in the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. The study revealed that one of the challenges was the inability to produce resources with local context which led to procuring of resources from Cambridge English. Due to the unfamiliar cultural context and content, the students have difficulty comprehending the materials as they don't have sufficient schemata and background knowledge to process the content and cultural inputs. Therefore, teachers have to put more efforts to vary their instruction, activities and examples to fit the students' needs.

Another recurring themes that falls under communicative approach is the teachers' reluctance to use first language in ESL classroom. This is an interesting point to note because another key approach in CEFR-curriculum is the plurilingual approach which believes that a language should not be learn in isolation. The Council of Europe developed European Language Portfolio (ELP) in parallel with CEFR to point out the importance of first language in the second/foreign language acquisition. Although there have been debates among educators about the negative transference of first language, a full immersion in second language could also hinder skills and language acquisition if it is not properly facilitated by the learners' first language. In general, learners subconsciously make continuously comparison between their first and second language and these comparisons contribute to the development of both languages (Council of Europe, 2001). This is because learners will transfer their existing linguistic competence to the new language they are currently learning. However, teachers in this research were against first language utilization in second language learning as can be seen in the following excerpts:

Novice Teachers	*...by not allowing them to utter other languages besides the targeted one.*	Exc.22
	(Teacher 9)	
Senior Teachers	*...by emphasizing the rules of only the target language can be used. Also, some prompts and cues will be provided to encourage learners to use the language to settle the activities.*	Exc.23
	(Teacher 7)	

Motivation

Another key element that determines the effectiveness of CEFR-aligned curriculum implementation is the students' motivation to acquire and use the target language themselves. Motivation plays an important part in language acquisition and it can generally be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The following excerpts demonstrate the different methods of utilizing intrinsic motivation by the teachers in order to engage the students to accomplish the tasks or simply use the target language:

Novice Teachers	*Usually I will motivate them to cultivate their interests and/or talents by asking them to read and further delve into their point of interests.*	Exc.24
	(Teacher 7)	
	...I will use different activities to address each listening strategies. Moreover, it'll not bore them as the activities are always different each time.	Exc.25
		Exc.26
	As a teacher, I have to let them known of their achievement and can also provide more activities and wide variety of expressions for them to align with their current level and allow them to aim higher.	
	(Teacher 2)	
	By planning exciting activities that can engage them to use the four skills.	Exc.27
	(Teacher 1)	

> *By relating the context to their life and making the lesson*   Exc.28
> *interesting.*
>
> *(Teacher 9)*

Senior   *...by having them to excel in all four strands of English and understand that*   Exc.30
Teachers   *making   mistakes   are   acceptable   in   learning   a   foreign*
                language.

> *(Teacher 6)*

> *Differentiation strategies can be used. Different students have different*   Exc.31
> *abilities and knowledge, therefore by this method, the higher level students*
> *will be challenged and not be bored, and those of the lower level can push*
> *themselves to do the tasks given.*
>
> *(Teacher 7)*

From the excerpts, it can be implied that the teachers either 1) vary their tasks selection and instructions to attract the students interest to engage in the tasks, 2) relate the context to real-life situation to make the lesson more interesting and meaningful, 3) provide continuous feedbacks on the students' achievement to motivate them to make improvements. The findings point to a general consensus among the teachers that intrinsic motivation work best in order to assist students in achieving self-satisfaction by engaging in the tasks, guided by the 'Can-do' statements. The ELP developed by the Council of Europe facilitates the implementation of the core principles of CEFR: reflective learning, self-assessment, learner autonomy, pluralinguism, and intercultural learning (Council of Europe, 2001), in which the 'Can-do' statements help students to reflect on their progress in developing communicative competence and indirectly achieving the band prescribed to them. This finding matches with a study done in Ontario on the strengths of CEFR-informed instructions among French learners. The study reported that when students are engaged in activities that enable them to see real-life applications of language use, they realize the benefits of second language learning and their motivation increases (Faez et al, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study pictured the perspectives on the process of teaching and learning on CEFR-Aligned curriculum among secondary school teachers. As can be seen from the excerpts above, this indicates that all the respondents who were interviewed can provide ideas that underlie the concept of CEFR and its implementation. However, through the interview response too, there are few emerging themes from the thematic analysis. The first theme that can be seen is autonomous learning. Based on the interview, the teachers agreed that awareness of students' level of proficiency is central to CEFR-aligned curriculum not merely due to the fact that it helps teachers to design lessons alone, but because it directly assists the students themselves. Another theme that emerged from the interview is the pedagogical approaches. Based on the interview, the interviewees agreed that the flexibility is a plus point for CEFR-aligned curriculum as it encourages seamless integration of all four skills with communicative competence as the main goal of language exchanges taking place in lessons. However, they were also aware of the fact that appropriation need to be made to ensure meaningful learning take place as some of them

voiced concern against the unfamiliar context (culture, received pronunciation, etc.) which may impede students' comprehension and ability to accomplish the tasks and develop necessary skills and strategies.

Last but not least, there is also an emerging theme on motivation. Motivation plays an important part in language acquisition and it can generally be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. From the interview, it can be implied that the teachers either 1) vary their tasks selection and instructions to attract the students interest to engage in the tasks, 2) relate the context to the real-life situation to make the lesson more interesting and meaningful, 3) provide continuous feedbacks on the students' achievement to motivate them to make improvements. The findings point to a general consensus among the teachers that intrinsic motivation works best in order to assist students in achieving self-satisfaction by engaging in the tasks, guided by the 'Can-do' statements.

It is hoped that this study will help teachers, especially English language teachers in exploring further and improving their understanding and skills related to CEFR so that the implementation of CEFR will succeed and meet its goals. This phenomenological study concludes that, despite all its inadequacies, CEFR is by far the best and most comprehensive framework for measuring and evaluating language levels.

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