TESL Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions toward the Implementation of CEFR: Awareness, Challenges, and Solutions

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The aim of this research was to investigate TESL pre-service teachers' perceptions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) implementation in primary ESL classroom. The study explored pre-service teachers' awareness, challenges, and potential solutions to overcome any limitations. The research was conducted in five Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia and involved 203 participants who were majoring in Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) for Bachelor's Degree in Teaching or Program Ijazah Sarjana Muda Perguruan (PISMP). The study employed a quantitative methodology in data gathering, using a set of questionnaires that utilized a 5-Likert scale. The researchers used descriptive statistics including percentage, mean, and standard deviation to analyze the data. The study found that TESL pre-service teachers had an agreeable level of awareness of CEFR (M = 4.12), perceived the challenges in implementing CEFR (M = 3.84), and identified potential solutions to overcome the issues (M = 4.47). The study cast significant implications on stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and the Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia. The research suggests that these stakeholders should provide pre-service teachers with sufficient exposure to CEFR implementation and identify the challenges that they face when integrating CEFR into primary ESL classroom. Overall, this research highlights the importance of investigating TESL pre-service teachers' perceptions of CEFR implementation. Additionally, the study provides suggestions for future research in this area.

Keywords: common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR), perceptions, TESL pre-service teachers, language

INTRODUCTION

The English language is used universally as an international language. In today's era of globalization, having proficiency in English provides a competitive advantage. Many job requirements call for employees with adequate English language proficiency, as communication skills are highly valued by companies under the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). Regardless of the industry, fluency in English is necessary to effectively convey messages and achieve a company's goals and objectives. In essence, according to Don and Abdullah (2019), students must adjust to a rapidly changing world and a job market that demands effective communication skills in English.

Ahmad (2016) asserts that English has become a worldwide language that serves as a connecting link, particularly for modern sciences and technologies, including space science and information technology. Hence, the use of English language in staying informed about current affairs and news is always emphasized. For example, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employs

English to communicate updates about its research and events. Thus, it is crucial for individuals to possess proficient English skills to stay updated and broaden their knowledge. Guan et al. (2020) also note that students must acquire English to easily access electronic media that is available in the language.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken several measures to upgrade the younger generations' English language proficiency to meet global standards. The incorporation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) into the national English curriculum is one such initiative (Chong & Yamat, 2021). The CEFR as an international standard describes a learner's language ability in the English curriculum. However, as noted by Don and Abdullah (2019), there is a wide range of English language proficiency among students, with many having insufficient proficiency upon leaving school. To address this issue, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) was developed to prepare students who are well-equipped with knowledge and skills to compete with their peers on a global platform in the 21st century. The formation of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) by the MOE is to implement the MEB, which includes also The Roadmap 2015-2025. This roadmap is aimed at improving English language education in Malaysia and encourages lifelong learning from preschool to university. The CEFR is adopted in this roadmap as an international standard to measure language proficiency at each stage of education, from A1 at pre-school to B2 or C1 at university (Polat, 2020).

The curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment in Malaysia have experienced changes with the implementation of CEFR (Kaur & Jian, 2022). The pupils are now more able to improve their communication and other language skills through the framework (Council of Europe, 2001). The framework allows pupils to progress from simple to autonomous stage by employing compensating strategies based on their current language skills (Nawawi et al., 2021). The framework emphasizes autonomous learning, which means that students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning instead of relying solely on their teachers (Don, 2016). Communicative and action-oriented approaches in language concepts are the core of CEFR framework (Khair & Shah, 2021). The communicative approach emphasizes the importance of meaningful communication in an authentic context (Sayera, 2019). According to Illés and Akcan (2017), language learning is more effective when the language is used purposefully. For example, pupils can practice question forms by finding out personal information about their friends. Action-oriented tasks involve tasks with purpose and meaning that simulate situations likely to occur in daily life, such as creating a social media account to write about their family and caption the photos accurately to enhance their writing skills and language creativity.

The similarity of all international examination formats is manifested in which they reveal learners' competencies (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2021) and what important is that all these tests are formulated according to the scales of the CEFR (Bae et al., 2019). In line with this, many countries have adopted the CEFR framework to improve their English language education to meet international standards. The Thai Ministry of Education announced the CEFR as a guideline for teachers in primary and secondary schools in 2016 (Charttrakul & Damnet, 2021). In Vietnam, the CEFR was first introduced and adapted by Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg, issued by the Vietnamese Prime Minister on 30 September 2008, to approve a multimillion-dollar national project previously known as Project 2020, later changed to the National Foreign Language Project with a vision from 2017 to 2025 (Nguyen & Hamid, 2021). Malaysia has also incorporated CEFR into its English education program to enhance language proficiency. Afip et al. (2019) notes that the reform agenda was later translated into the Roadmap for English Language Education in Malaysia 2015-2025. The roadmap serves as a guide for curriculum developers and teachers to ensure that students can achieve the targeted English language proficiency levels aligned to the CEFR scales from preschool to tertiary level, as well as in teacher education.

According to Mohammed et al. (2021), this reform provides a structured and clear framework for the development of English language teachers, as well as standardized syllabus components, teaching materials, international assessments, and language objectives and results for all levels, from early childhood education to tertiary education. As a result, teachers play a crucial role in the reform process as they are responsible for implementing the changes in the classroom. Therefore, their feedback regarding the adoption of CEFR should be considered since they are the ones who have experienced it firsthand.

According to Mohammed et al. (2021), the integration of CEFR into the English language curriculum has led to some teachers feeling the need to prepare themselves and be able to implement the revised curriculum effectively. However, this change has also presented some challenges for teachers. One of the main difficulties is that many teachers are worried and uncertain about how to apply the new curriculum since they lack sufficient knowledge, exposure, and awareness of CEFR (Uri & Aziz, 2018). Because of their lack of familiarity with CEFR, some teachers have continued to use a teacher-centered approach and have not focused on fostering pupils' autonomy in learning (Mohammed et al., 2021). This could be due to a lack of effective training or the use of cascade training (Ong & Tajuddin, 2021).

The difficulties faced by teachers in implementing the CEFR syllabus should be alleviated, hence, it is necessary for all stakeholders to collaborate and ensure that the program is executed correctly, in order to improve the English language proficiency of younger generations. According to Uri and Aziz (2018), providing English teachers with sufficient training and deploying them to rural areas after graduation is crucial, as knowledgeable teachers who are competent can lead the success of any initiative implemented from time to time.

Problem Statement

English language teachers face a significant challenge when implementing educational reforms, as they play a critical role in the curriculum implementation. In Malaysia, the CEFR implementation in the English language curriculum is expected to bring about challenges related to teacher readiness, awareness, resources, familiarity, and other aspects of the execution (Mohammed et al., 2021). However, according to Uri and Aziz (2018), the lack of teacher readiness to accept the new framework is a significant challenge for CEFR implementation. Teachers have expressed concerns about their limited exposure to the CEFR framework and its structure, with introductory seminars being too short for them to grasp the concept of it and implement it in the primary ESL classroom (Nawawi et al., 2021).

Despite the challenges faced by teachers, there are few studies that explore the challenges of CEFR implementation in Malaysia (Khair & Shah, 2021). It is concerning that the many English teachers are having proficiency issues in English, as they play an integral role in teaching students effectively (Jalleh, 2012). Approximately 15,000 of Malaysia's 60,000 English teachers are not well-equipped to teach English subjects, with two-thirds of all English teachers failing to meet the minimal proficiency level in English according to the baseline Cambridge English survey (Uri & Aziz, 2018; Yesuiah, 2016). The minimal level required of teachers is C1, which is equivalent to a capable or expert user. To address this issue, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia is constantly striving to improve the competency of English teachers, with new Education Service Officers (PPP) for the English Language option required to achieve C1 level starting in 2022 (Rajaendram, 2022). This emphasizes the importance of teacher proficiency in English to help young learners master the language effectively and improve their level of mastery in English based on CEFR international standards (Saali, 2022).

Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:
1. to determine the extent of TESL pre-service teachers' awareness of the implementation of CEFR.
2. to examine the challenges encountered in integrating CEFR into the primary ESL classroom.
3. to identify possible solutions for addressing the challenges associated with the implementation of CEFR.

Research Questions

The research objectives are as follows:
1. What is the level of awareness among TESL pre-service teachers regarding the implementation of CEFR?
2. What are the challenges faced by English language teachers while implementing CEFR in primary ESL classroom?
3. What are the potential solutions to improve the implementation of CEFR in primary ESL classroom?

Literature Review

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a widely recognized language proficiency framework used in Europe and beyond. In recent years, Malaysia has also embraced the CEFR as a guide to English language teaching and learning. This literature review aims to explore the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia, highlighting its impact on language education and the challenges faced.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has made numerous efforts to align the national language standards with the CEFR. In 2015, the MOE introduced the Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2015-2025, which emphasized the need to enhance language proficiency among students and teachers. The MEB also called for the adoption of CEFR to measure language proficiency levels in schools (MOE, 2015).

There are numerous studies which have shed light on the positive impact of the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia on English language teaching and learning. According to Ariffin and Yusof (2018), the use of CEFR-based materials and assessments helped students to better understand their language abilities and areas for improvement. Additionally, teachers were able to use the CEFR descriptors to provide more targeted feedback and tailor instruction to individual student needs.

A study conducted by Yasin and Yamat in 2021 revealed that most teachers have a high level of readiness in implementing a CEFR-aligned curriculum. Similarly, Nii and Yunus (2022) note that English teachers show positive responses to CEFR implementation. Shukor and Sulaiman's (2022) study employed Spearman's Rho correlation to establish the relationship between variables revealed a strong positive correlation between TESL teachers' attitudes and their motivation toward CEFR implementation. The study suggests that when teachers own a positive attitude toward CEFR and accept its implementation, it can lead to an increase in their motivation level. This, in turn, acts as a catalyst for ensuring a positive outcome for the implementation of CEFR. Kaur and Jian's (2022) findings suggest that most teachers have a positive perception of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. Sandhakumarin and Tan's (2023) study collected data through an online survey, in which 42 primary ESL teachers participated. The results of the survey showed that CEFR can enhance ESL learners' reading skills.

However, there have also been challenges in implementing CEFR in Malaysia. One major challenge is the lack of training and awareness among teachers. According to a study by Khairuddin et al. (2017),

many teachers in Malaysia are not familiar with the CEFR and its descriptors, which makes it difficult for them to apply the framework in their teaching. Another challenge is the limited availability of CEFR-based materials and assessments, which can hinder the effective implementation of the framework (Ariffin & Yusof, 2018). Yasin and Yamat's (2021) study highlighted several factors that pose as challenges in the implementation process, including teachers' training, competency, availability of materials, and school-based assessment. Teachers may face implementation challenges that could hinder their success (Kaur & Jian, 2022). Teachers show that they face challenges in applying CEFR such as lack of materials, students' familiarity, and familiarity with the new approach (Nii & Yunus, 2022). It was revealed that there is a need to adapt and modify CEFR-related reading materials to suit the Malaysian context with a local touch (Sandhakumarin & Tan, 2023).

Despite these challenges, the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia is still considered a positive step toward improving English language education in the country. As noted by Ariffin and Yusof (2018), the use of a common language proficiency framework can facilitate better communication and collaboration among educators, and provide a clearer picture of language proficiency levels across different schools and regions.

In conclusion, the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia has had both positive and negative impacts on language education thus far. While the framework has helped to improve English language teaching and learning, challenges such as the lack of teacher training and limited availability of CEFR-based materials and assessments need to be addressed in order to fully realize the benefits of the framework. In addition, numerous studies were conducted to obtain teachers' perceptions on CEFR implementation, however, few were done on finding out the pre-service teachers' perceptions on the CEFR implementation. Hence, this study aimed to obtain TESL pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR in terms of their awareness, the challenges faced, and the possible solutions for the issues arisen.

METHOD

In this study, the researchers employed a descriptive quantitative research approach to gather data using a survey questionnaire in order to examine TESL pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of CEFR, as well as the associated challenges and possible solutions. Quantitative research, as explained by McLeod (2019), involves gathering and interpreting numerical data in an objective manner, with the aim of describing, predicting, or controlling relevant variables. To answer the three research questions, a survey questionnaire containing 34 items was utilized to collect data, which was subsequently analyzed to provide answers.

Sampling

The study focused on TESL pre-service teachers who completed two practicum phases during their tenure at selected Institutes of Teacher Education in Malaysia. The respondents were sampled from five campuses, including Ipoh, Gaya, International Language, Dato' Razali Ismail, and Batu Lintang campuses. The practicum schools were categorized as urban, sub-urban, and rural, and the respondents had diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, Malaysian University English Test (MUET) qualifications, location of practicum schools, and attendance at CEFR workshops, trainings, or seminars. The researchers used purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique based on population characteristics and the objective of the study. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, with 203 respondents sampled out of a population of 427 TESL pre-service teachers who were of the PISMP June 2018 intake.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a survey questionnaire as the main data collection tool to investigate the TESL pre-service teachers' attitudes and understanding toward CEFR implementation. The questionnaire was created through Google Form and disseminated through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, and Instagram. The survey was adapted from the previous study conducted by Uri and Aziz (2018) and modified to suit the research objectives. The questionnaire included four sections with a total of 34 questions. The first section gathered demographic information about the respondents, and the following sections focused on the TESL pre-service teachers' awareness of CEFR, challenges encountered during implementation, and potential solutions for overcoming them. Likert scale questions were used for the second to fourth parts of the questionnaire to gauge the respondents' attitudes toward CEFR implementation. The questions were designed to be simple and easy to comprehend, using a 5-point scale response ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small preliminary research project aimed to test the research instruments, sample recruitment procedures, and other research techniques before conducting a larger study (Hassan et al., 2006). Its purpose is to detect any potential issues or flaws in the research instruments prior to administering them to actual respondents. For this study, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of 30 TESL pre-service teachers from the PISMP TESL June 2018 intake at the Institute of Teacher Education, Ipoh Campus. The questionnaire was found to have good internal consistency, as measured by a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.86. Following the pilot study, a correction was made to the questionnaire regarding math symbols, changing <3 to >3 to indicate TESL pre-service teachers who attended CEFR workshops more than three times.

Data Analysis Procedure

To analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, the researchers exported the information from the Google Form to be analyzed using SPSS software version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data in order to answer the research questions. The researchers utilized percentage, mean, and standard deviation to analyze the items on the questionnaire. To interpret the mean scores, the researchers used the Mean Score Interpretation table developed by Moidunny (2009). According to Moidunny's Mean Score Interpretation table, mean scores between 0.00 and 2.60 indicate low levels, mean scores between 2.61 and 3.20 indicate medium levels, and mean scores of 3.21 and above indicate high levels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the mean values and standard deviations for the 12 items that correspond to the dimension of awareness of the implementation of CEFR. The results from the survey show that the respondents had a good level of awareness about the implementation of CEFR ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.79$).

Table 1
TESL pre-service teacher's awareness on CEFR implementation

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
1. I am very familiar with CEFR.	0.0	2.0	14.8	46.8	36.5	4.18	0.75
2. I know the main ideas and concept of CEFR.	0.0	2.0	15.8	51.2	31.0	4.11	0.73
3. I know the main objectives of CEFR.	0.0	3.0	15.3	48.8	33.0	4.12	0.76
4. I believe one of the main objectives of CEFR is to establish common proficiency standards or benchmarks nationally and internationally.	0.0	1.5	8.4	48.8	41.4	4.30	0.69
5. I have read CEFR related documents (for instance: Teacher Guide Implementing the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum).	0.5	3.4	14.8	46.3	35.0	4.12	0.82
6. I am familiar with both CEFR global scale as well as "can do" descriptor levels for all four English language skills.	0.5	4.4	19.2	47.3	28.6	3.99	0.84
7. I am totally aware that the Ministry of Education has set CEFR levels A1 and A2 as the target levels for Year 6 pupils to achieve upon the completion of primary school.	0.0	4.4	15.3	42.9	37.4	4.13	0.83
8. I am familiar with the CEFR level A1/A2 descriptors.	0.5	8.4	22.7	38.9	29.6	3.89	0.95
9. Series of trainings and workshops on CEFR are necessary for teachers to fully understand and familiarize themselves with the concept and usage of this framework.	0.0	2.0	5.9	39.4	52.7	4.43	0.70
10. I am well informed about the CEFR roadmap as well as aligning process and its effect on my teaching and learning.	1.5	3.9	17.7	47.3	29.6	4.00	0.88
11. The CEFR descriptors are user-friendly (easy to understand and use).	0.0	3.4	17.7	48.8	30.0	4.05	0.79
12. Adoption of CEFR onto primary school English syllabus and assessments are needed to improve pupils' level of English proficiency.	0.5	2.5	13.8	47.8	35.5	4.15	0.78

The data collected regarding TESL pre-service teachers' awareness of the implementation of the CEFR indicates that pre-service teachers have a high level of awareness. The total mean score for the pre-service teachers' awareness was 4.12 with a standard deviation of 0.79. Mean scores for individual items ranged from 3.89 to 4.43, and standard deviations ranged from 0.69 to 0.95, indicating a narrow dispersion in the data due to respondents mostly choosing "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" options. Item 9, which deals with the necessity of training and workshops on the CEFR for teachers, received the highest mean score of 4.43, indicating that most respondents felt the need for more workshops and training. This finding supports previous studies such as of Shukor and Sulaiman's (2022) that highlights the need for appropriate training structures and resources to boost confidence and increase motivation in order to ensure successful implementation of curriculum reforms. It is recommended that workshops should be held over several days and designed around the concerns of the teachers to ensure effective implementation (Alih et al., 2021; Badugela, 2021; Ong & Tajuddin, 2021; Uri & Aziz, 2018).

On the other hand, item 8, which deals with pre-service teachers' familiarity with the CEFR level A1/A2 descriptors, received the lowest mean score of 3.89. This finding suggests that pre-service teachers require additional CEFR training in using reference level descriptions. One of the main reasons for this lack of familiarity is time constraints, as pre-service teachers are given a short period to complete their practicum, leaving them with limited time to become familiar with the descriptors. The findings suggest that TESL pre-service teachers need more training in using reference level descriptions (Phoolaikao & Sukying, 2021). Faez et al. (2011) also mention that teachers believe that understanding CEFR descriptors can be improved over time and by teaching it to other teachers, which will help them appreciate the quality of the descriptors.

However, there are concerns regarding the effectiveness of the CEFR for assessment, as it lends itself to subjectivity when using "can do" statements and descriptors to assess students' performance. The CEFR written production descriptor has also been found to be confusing and vague due to ambiguous wording, requiring amendment and adaptation for effective use in Malaysian higher educational institutions (Sufi & Idrus, 2021). Some participants also found it difficult to use the new level-based scale and to differentiate between A1 and A2 in the CEFR scales (Kaur & Jian, 2022). These findings suggest the need for further input on the effectiveness of the CEFR level descriptors to be given to both teachers and pre-service teachers.

Table 2 presents the mean values and standard deviations for the 11 items that correspond to the dimension of challenges in the implementation of CEFR. The results from the survey showed a mean value of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 1.01 on this dimension.

Table 2
Challenges in the implementation of CEFR

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
1. I believe that my English proficiency level can affect the content delivery for the CEFR to be well implemented.	0.0	2.5	8.4	36.9	52.2	4.39	.75
2. Designing CEFR based classroom activities is time consuming.	23.6	14.8	23.6	33.0	21.7	3.48	1.18
3. The integration of CEFR into our education system will add more burden and extra workload to the teachers.	5.9	15.8	28.1	27.1	23.2	3.46	1.18
4. I am still not clear about the detailed process of CEFR implementation in Malaysia.	6.9	21.7	19.2	29.1	23.2	3.40	1.25
5. It will be challenging for me to design class activities based on "can do" statements.	5.4	17.7	25.1	31.5	20.2	3.43	1.16
6. It will be difficult to measure pupils' understanding and mastery of grammar items since it is not mentioned at any levels of CEFR descriptors.	4.4	16.7	19.2	34.0	25.6	3.60	1.17
7. Transition from a more grammar-oriented pedagogy to a more communicative (action-oriented) approach is also a challenge in the process of CEFR implementation.	1.0	10.3	15.3	43.8	29.6	3.91	0.97
8. Pupils' low level of English proficiency will lead to minimal pupils' involvement in a communicative approach.	2.5	6.9	9.4	40.9	40.4	4.10	0.99
9. Teachers' limited understanding of CEFR and a teaching approach based on "can do" tasks will be a challenge for teachers.	0.0	2.0	9.4	49.8	38.9	4.26	0.71
10. I am willing to accept the CEFR because this framework emphasizes on pupil centered approach in which I believe is appropriate in Malaysian primary ESL classrooms.	0.5	0.5	12.8	42.9	43.3	4.28	0.74
11. It is difficult for pupils with low proficiency level to understand the content of the textbook.	2.5	6.9	18.2	32.0	40.4	4.01	1.04

Referring to Table 2, it can be inferred that the respondents faced significant challenges in implementing the CEFR, as indicated by the high mean score of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 1.01. The highest mean score of 4.39 corresponds to question 1, indicating that pre-service teachers strongly agree that their English proficiency level affects their ability to teach CEFR aligned lessons effectively. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, while a significant percentage were unsure or disagreed. This finding is noteworthy given that over 50% of the respondents did not meet the MOE's minimum English language proficiency requirement. As Lee (2019) argues, teachers' English proficiency is essential for guiding students to achieve the targeted

CEFR levels. However, as noted by Mohammed et al. (2021) and Yasin and Yamat (2021), teachers' lack of proficiency may lead to a lack of confidence in successfully delivering CEFR content.

In contrast, the lowest mean score of 3.40, with a standard deviation of 1.25, pertains to item 4, "I am still not clear about the detailed process of CEFR implementation in Malaysia." Over half of the respondents were still uncertain about the CEFR implementation, reflecting inadequate training and support in implementing CEFR effectively. As Alih et al. (2020) suggest, pre-service teachers have limited opportunities to adapt the CEFR in pedagogical practice, and this finding suggests that they require further training in all CEFR domains. Zaki and Darmi (2021) also note that teachers' lack of understanding of the CEFR can cause confusion and pressure.

Table 3 presents the mean values and standard deviations for the 11 items that correspond to the dimension of possible solutions in the implementation of CEFR. The results from the survey showed a mean value of 4.47 and a standard deviation of 0.64 on this dimension.

Table 3
Potential solutions to overcome the limitations in the implementation of CEFR

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
1. Extend CEFR training hours to ensure all the teachers are fully prepared and very familiar with the framework.	1.0	3.4	11.8	37.4	46.3	4.25	0.88
2. Trainers who are in charge to deliver the trainings to teachers should be chosen among experts to ensure effective interventions in all stages of the change implementation.	0.0	0.5	5.9	32.5	61.1	4.54	0.63
3. An online portal should be made available to allow teachers from all over Malaysia to support each other on the implementation of CEFR.	0.0	0.5	3.9	36.0	59.6	4.55	0.60
4. Give exposure to pupils on this new change so that they become more receptive and eventually benefit from it.	0.0	1.0	3.4	37.4	58.1	4.53	0.62
5. Create a mentor-mentee that pairs up teachers that the mentor has received enough support in the form of materials and teaching.	0.0	0.5	6.4	36.0	57.1	4.50	0.64
6. English teachers conduct peer-to-peer observations in the teaching and learning of English Language.	0.0	1.5	4.9	34.5	59.1	4.51	0.66
7. It is highly recommended to adapt and modify CEFR to fit in the Malaysian context with local touch.	0.0	3.4	5.4	32.5	58.6	4.46	0.75
8. The content of the textbooks should be localized to accommodate learners' schemata and background knowledge.	0.0	4.4	4.4	33.5	57.6	4.44	0.78
9. Develop other non-textbook materials as supplement for the teaching because the textbook is simply incomprehensible to pupils with low proficiency level.	0.0	4.9	8.9	36.0	50.2	4.32	0.83
10. Consider pupils' multiple intelligences by conducting differentiation techniques in the implementation of CEFR to encourage active participation.	0.0	0.5	3.4	35.0	61.1	4.57	0.59
11. Reconsider the implementation of the streaming system in schools according to learners' English proficiency level to reduce the burden faced by teachers.	1.0	1.0	3.9	35.0	59.1	4.50	0.71

The study reveals that the respondents exhibit a high level of agreement toward the potential solutions to overcome the challenges in the implementation of CEFR, with a total mean score of 4.47 and an average standard deviation of 0.70. The mean score ranges between 4.25 and 4.57, with item 10 obtaining the highest average score of 4.57. The respondents strongly agree with the statement that teachers should consider pupils' multiple intelligences by conducting differentiation techniques in the implementation of CEFR to encourage active participation. Don et al. (2015) suggest that teachers should be proficient in using varied learning approaches to cater to the various levels of English

competence in their classrooms. Alias et al. (2021) also recommend that teachers differentiate tasks and outcomes to control their classrooms better and enrich more advanced pupils. Teachers should identify their pupils' needs by taking into consideration their proficiency level, learning style, multiple intelligences, interests, and engagement.

On the other hand, the lowest mean score of 4.25 with a standard deviation of 0.87 is of item 1. While most of the respondents agreed that CEFR training hours should be extended to ensure that all pre-service teachers are well-prepared and knowledgeable about the framework, several respondents disagreed. Buckland and Chinn (2010) emphasize the importance of teachers being well-trained to adapt and blend into the newly introduced curriculum. However, before extending training hours, stakeholders need to review the effectiveness of the implementation of cascade training in CEFR. Alih et al. (2020) suggest that a trainer who has completed the first stage of training should conduct "in-house training" for teachers in their individual schools on how to implement the CEFR. Kanchai (2019) recommends establishing a peer support network for teachers of English to exchange their knowledge and discuss any potential issues with the CEFR and its classroom applications. Lastly, Alias et al. (2021) and Nii and Yunus (2022) suggest providing an online portal for teachers, more funding and materials, creating a mentor-mentee system, and giving exposure to pupils on this new change to ensure the success of the reform. All in all, the mean scores for the three dimensions were high. this indicates that the TESL pre-service teachers had positive perceptions toward the implementation of CEFR.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study emphasize that TESL pre-service teachers have a good understanding of the CEFR and are familiar with it, but they also face various challenges in its implementation. However, potential solutions were identified to help pre-service teachers, teachers and other stakeholders to overcome these issues. It was found that pre-service teachers were worried about their English language proficiency, designing classroom activities, engaging students, using textbooks, being unfamiliar with the detailed process, and assessing students' proficiency levels. The study identified a lack of CEFR training and support, as well as time constraints, as some of the factors contributing to these challenges. Despite these challenges, pre-service teachers strongly supported the council's framework and plan.

The results of this study indicate that stakeholders should assess the challenges faced by pre-service teachers in implementing the CEFR and take significant measures to solve the issues. Firstly, Institutes of Teacher Education (ITEs) have a responsibility to develop TESL pre-service teachers who understand how to effectively implement the CEFR in the classroom. The Ministry of Education (MOE) can also take steps to enhance the quality of teachers implementing the CEFR by examining the challenges they face and finding solutions to overcome them. Furthermore, it is essential for English language pre-service and in-service teachers to have more knowledge and awareness of the CEFR.

SUGGESTIONS

This article centers on TESL pre-service teachers' awareness, challenges, and possible solutions to the limitations of CEFR. However, there are still various aspects and areas of research that can be explored in the future to further investigate the implementation of CEFR in the curriculum, such as assessments, textbooks, and the pupils' views and beliefs about its execution. By obtaining the pupils' views, researchers can have a clearer understanding of their interests, challenges, and comprehension of CEFR. Furthermore, this study solely uses survey questionnaire as the research instrument, but future studies could include interviews to obtain a more in-depth understanding. Lastly, using actual teachers in the primary ESL classroom is recommended to obtain more precise results since they have already been exposed to CEFR for several years. Therefore, conducting more local studies on CEFR

implementation will improve its execution. Although the implementation of CEFR may be a lengthy and challenging process, with the collective efforts and determination of all parties involved, the framework can eventually be successfully integrated into the curriculum.

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