

The implementation of CEFR in ESL Learning: Why does it matter to the Malaysian Education System?

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Abstract

Implementing the Common European Framework or CEFR in English as a Second Language learning in the Malaysian education system is the focus of this paper. CEFR is a generally established international standard for depicting language proficiency. It is also extensively recognised in Europe and is becoming more widely accepted globally; it is now incorporated into the Malaysian education system. The CEFR provides thorough descriptions of what foreign or second language learners can perform in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at six proficiency levels. Thus the methodology used in this paper is qualitative through review documents specifically on past studies from 2015 to 2021 highlighting CEFR implementation. This study aims to answer two research questions; what are the importance of implementation of CEFR in the Malaysian ESL classroom, and how CEFR can be implemented in classroom assessment in the Malaysian ESL classroom. The findings related to the first aim indicate that the CEFR is important for the needs of the international standard framework, benchmarking, alignment, and calibration. The findings also show that CEFR assists teachers in monitoring students' development in ESL classrooms. This article will also examine the history of the CEFR's implementation in the Malaysian education system and its influence on the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment. Then, the descriptors of CEFR in all four primary language skills, learning, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, will be briefly discussed before moving on to implementing the CEFR in classroom assessment. By the end of this paper, the recommendations for future study in implementing CEFR in the Malaysian ESL classroom will be proposed.

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference, CEFR, Curriculum, Skills, Classroom Assessments.

INTRODUCTION

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) describes how well learners speak and understand a foreign language. The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), and The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines scales are examples of other frameworks with similar goals. The CEFR is not linked to any particular language assessment. The CEFR is a European language proficiency measurement that may be used in any European language. Hence, it can describe English, Spanish, or Irish skills. The aim of CEFR in 1990 was to improve communication among language teachers across Europe. Aside from that, it also attempts to measure language abilities among employees in businesses and students in educational institutions. This framework is meant to be used in the classroom and for assessment purposes. It is mentioned that CEFR is not an examination. Still, it consists of 'can make statements' that explain the functions one will perform in a foreign language at any given proficiency level. For instance, a learner at the B1 level is expected to produce a linked simple text on a general topic or anything related to one's interests. Any foreign language teacher can use this 'can-do statement' to assess learners' competency and create lessons to fill in the gaps in their knowledge.

The CEFR is rapidly becoming the conventional means of characterising a single foreign language competency level in Europe, particularly academic settings. Learners need to get the hang of it after practising it. If a learner, like most Europeans, studies more than one language, the CEFR is a conventional, simple way to list two or more languages on one's Curriculum Vitae (CV). The CEFR is a European-wide standard framework for schools and colleges that can be used without restriction. On the other hand, in the corporate world, CEFR is not well-known. Suppose learners choose to utilise the CEFR on their CV for professional purposes. In that case, they must still include a description of the level, standardised test scores, and examples of how language abilities are applied in the real world, such as studying abroad and working abroad, etc. At the beginning of the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia, there were few misconceptions about the framework that need clarification. First, some argue that CEFR is equivalent to international examinations such as IELTS and TOEFL, implying that it is difficult for an ESL learner to pass. The truth is that those examinations are already linked to CEFR. In addition, the examination scores correspond to CEFR. There is a misunderstanding when the vowels C and E in the CEFR stand for Cambridge English, CEFR English or European English, but CEFR describes what learners can do with a language. Due to this confusion, some educators become hesitant and resentful and can not make heads or tails out of it. Thus, they should not be in the dark about CEFR. Therefore, this paper aims to provide the answer to two research questions; what are the importance of implementation of CEFR in the Malaysian ESL classroom and how CEFR can be implemented in classroom assessment in the Malaysian ESL classroom. As a result, this paper will provide a brief history of the CEFR, and some recommendations for future study in implementing it will be offered towards the end.

METHODS

The methodology used in this paper is qualitative through reviews of past documents. The initial step in answering the objectives is analysing related papers on the importance of CEFR and its implementation in the ESL classroom. Within this process, relevant articles were sought from search engines, including Google Scholar and ResearchGate. Keywords, such as 'the implementation of CEFR in ESL classroom', 'CEFR and classroom assessment in ESL classroom', 'advantages in implementing CEFR in Malaysia' were used in this process. These efforts identified 35 articles; however, only 15 remained after the second stage of the screening process. The articles selected were from 2015 to 2021 since the implementation of CEFR in the Malaysian education system begins in 2016 under the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 and English language education reform (The Roadmap) 2015-2025.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The chronicle of CEFR in the Malaysian education system

The Malaysia Employer Federation (MEF) survey of the Salary Survey 2016 revealed that over 90% of respondents indicated that they needed to improve their English skills to be employed (The Star Online, 2017). This occurrence in 2017 will still be significant in 2021, and it is similar to what has occurred in Malaysia over the last few decades. Unfortunately, there is no way to get out of this dilemma without finding a solution. Malaysian students have an incredible twelve years of schooling plus three years in college or university before graduating with a degree that allows them to work, but this does not guarantee that they have good English language command (Nishanti, 2018). Students meet the job world. English is Malaysia's second language; it is widely used in everyday life and to communicate in specific employment roles. Many school graduates require sufficient English proficiency to obtain a job serving in a business, and graduates must pass an English interview to be considered for a position requiring a high level of English ability (Mohd Don, 2020). The scenario revealed that after Malaysian students graduate from high school, they can not resist using English. As a result of the demands scenario, the Ministry of Education has been compelled to release the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025.

One of the requirements in MEB 2013-2025 is that children should communicate in at least two languages, namely Bahasa Melayu and English. Malaysia's multicultural society makes it an ideal destination for language learners of all levels. As shown in different programs within the Malaysian school system, providing essential resources for language acquisition is critical to achieving this goal (Ministry of Education, 2015). As a result, the English Language Education Roadmap produced by the English Language Standard and Quality Council (ELSQC) prioritises the essential demand to generate English-proficient and self-reliant learners in the future. The Roadmap, which includes a timetable for implementation, will be completed by 2025 at every school level (Ministry of Education, 2015). Ten experts in the English language from universities and professional education organisations make up the ELSQC members (Ministry of Education, 2013). As the first phase of the Roadmap, the CEFR will be implemented, allowing for a global assessment of Malaysian learners' English competency and appropriate targets for the following decade. Second, the CEFR serves as the framework for assessing and aligning English language courses, teaching, and assessment in schools and higher education.

English Language Education Restructuring

There are eleven fundamental shifts highlighted in the MEB 2013-2025 to reform the education system. It is identified that there are seven shifts related to the English language, particularly as in Table 1.

Table 1. MEB shifts association to English Language education development

Shift	Details
Shift 1: Provide equal access to quality education of an international standard	Quality education means associating the English language and teacher education to CEFR; meanwhile, access also provides teachers and students with high-quality textbooks and material in the learning.
Shift 2: Ensure every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English language and is encouraged to learn an additional language	Bilingual education is highlighted by appropriately using Malay and English and always keeping Malay as the primary national language and unity.
Shift 4: Transform teaching into the profession of topnotch	The number of trainees should be matching to the new English required in the education system.
Shift 5: Ensure high-performing school leaders in every school	Quality leadership will lead to quality English teachers.
Shift 7: Leverage ICT to scale up quality learning across Malaysia	To achieve the goal of a link between computer-assisted language learning and traditional language learning in the classroom, ICT must be integrated into English instruction.
Shift 9: Parents, community, and private sectors work together as partners collaboratively	Parents, community and private sectors may assist teachers in language activities and provide platforms for students to practice English outside the classroom.
Shift 10: Maximise student outcomes for every ringgit	The investment in the education of English teachers can be emphasised to those who intend to join the profession and contribute more to the education.

The language education planned by the Malaysia Ministry of Education began in 2010 with Memartabatkan Bahasa Melayu dan Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI) policy (Ministry of Education, 2015). Later in 2013, an inquiry into Malaysia's existing teaching and learning English position was conducted to bring Malaysian English education up to the MEB's outline standards. As a result, various adjustments are required for the Malaysian Ministry of Education to shape the national identity while still maintaining educational standards (Abd Rahman et al., 2021). Azman (2016) has summarised the development of Malaysia's English language education, which is aligned with CEFR as in Table 2.

Table 2. Educational restructuring in Malaysia

Reform	Year	Details
First Reform	1982	The Integrated English Language Syllabus for Primary and Secondary schools (KBSR/KBSM) was introduced in 1982.
Second Reform	1997	The SMART way of teaching Maths, English, Science, and Malay Languages was implemented in 1999.
Third Reform	2012	Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MEB).
Fourth Reform	2015 (started in 2013)	English Language Education Roadmap for Malaysia 2015- 2025, hence the introduction of the CEFR.

The fourth reform includes goals for the most efficient English language development in the Malaysian educational system, which should be implemented cohesively. One of the fourth reforms aims to enhance students' English skills to reach the nationally and internationally acknowledged standard. It is also noticeable that the fourth reform is derived from the third reform as the key text for the Malaysian education system's reformation. Then, the fourth reform contains three main phases summarised (Mohd Uri & Abd Aziz, 2018) in Table 3.

Table 3. The phases of the English Language Education Roadmap

Phase	Year	Details
First Phase	2013-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of English Language Standards and Quality Council (ELSQC) (Nov 2012) • Elevating the English proficiency of school teachers
Second Phase	2015-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set suitable CEFR levels next to each educational level, from preschool to university. • School-Based Assessment (SBA) syllabus and curricula were it is aligned with the CEFR. • Selected the CEFR-aligned textbooks and support materials • Validation of the CEFR levels set
Third Phase	2016 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate, review and revise the implementation of the CEFR in previous phases. • The development of CEFR – M

In the implementation of CEFR, The Roadmap 2015-2025 lists three waves, each of which summarises the flow that must be understood to reach the aim, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Waves of the restructuring

Wave	Year	Details
Wave 1	2013-2015	Training for English teachers Developing the descriptors
Wave 2	2016-2020	School-Based Assessment (SBA) to the CEFR Textbook selection
Wave 3	2021-2025	The CEFR special task team will develop CEFR-M. Examining the textbooks and supporting resources that have been chosen

CEFR plays a vital role in the evolution of English language education to attain the worldwide standards that future generations will face as part of a well-planned roadmap. Since Malaysia's independence in 1957, the English education program implemented by the Malaysian educational system has met the country's needs. However, the situation in the twenty-first century has changed due to globalisation. It is resulting in the modernisation of education through ICT. The growing worldwide mobility, especially ASEAN development, emphasises Malaysia's English education system (Ministry of Education, 2015). The Malaysian Ministry of Education is currently working on a plan to ensure that the younger generations can effectively communicate and overcome employment communication skills issues in a social and professional context. With the introduction of the CEFR into the Malaysian

education system, teachers will be better equipped to produce skilled students in the twenty-first century. The main goal of this approach, rather than passing exams throughout the school years, is the capacity to master the language inside the classroom and use it outside the classroom

To ensure that CEFR is fully spread to all stakeholders, short-term initiatives have been held to support this effort, as in Table 5.

Table 5. Instantaneous initiatives to support teachers and students in teaching and learning English
 (Ministry of Education, 2015)

Teachers	Pro-ELT	The impact is to ascertain by a rigorous evaluation procedure
	Native Speaker Programme	
	Fulbright Teaching Assistant	
	School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+)	
Students	Standard-based Curriculum	
	School-based Assessment	
	Oral Proficiency for Secondary School	
	LINUS 2.0 Year 1- 3	
	Sets for English Learning in Secondary Schools	
	Obligatory pass in SPM English	

The teaching profession will continue to grow because it is the driving force behind education programs like the MEB 2013-2025. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education initiative, teachers are the key movers in ensuring that all programs are completed effectively. There is no amount of educational technology, curriculum, or educational infrastructure that can replace the function of the moving teacher in changing school culture for children. The moving teacher is the spearhead because they are the ones who drive education. Education reform in the country must, in the end, begin and conclude with the teacher who leads academic units and classes. Skilled teachers will generate quality students who are competitive, marketable, and world-class workforce for the country's progress (Borneo Post Online, November 13, 2014).

Therefore, alongside the initiatives supported by MMoE, the language target has also been set up for each education level to ensure a precise target level to achieve later by the young negation as in Table 6.

Table 6. CEFR Targets for Each Stage of Education (Ministry of Education, 2015)

Stage	Level Target
Teacher Education	C1
University	B2/C1
Post-secondary School	B2
Secondary School	B1/B2
Primary School	A2
Pre-school	A1

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, a policy reform plan, stated realistic and achievable goals for the country to establish a powerful and effective education system by 2025, ensuring that the younger generation is proficient in Malay and English. The Roadmap for English Language Education Reform aims to improve English language competency among the new generation to meet current global demand. Malaysia is expected to gain from the standardisation of the worldwide reference tool in its English education system through CEFR, allowing Malaysians to achieve international mutual recognition (Sahib & Stapa, 2021). Therefore, it is also essential to understand the importance of CEFR in the Malaysian education system.

Why does CEFR matter in the Malaysian education system?

The English language was formally introduced to Malaysian students at the primary school level when they were seven. They study the language as a compulsory subject in secondary school until they reach

seventeen, and it can be continued in higher school. Furthermore, Malay has remained the official language and a means of teaching in Malaysian public schools to the present day. Since the country is multiracial, national-type schools can use additional languages as a medium of teaching, such as Mandarin and Tamil. On the other hand, English was formally recognised as a second language and was employed as a teaching medium. According to the Ministry of Education (2015), there are four main reasons for implementing the CEFR in the Malaysian education system.

The needs of the international standard framework

Generally, the previous English language education in Malaysia was not up to international standards. Suppose a Malaysian student has recently completed their Malaysia Education Certificate or SPM and graduated from high school. In that case, no one can guarantee that the student's English language skills are on par with those of students who have graduated from the United Kingdom or Thailand. This situation shows why CEFR matters, as the Malaysian education system needs an international standard framework. With the implementation of CEFR in the Malaysian curriculum, students will be benefited significantly when they want to pursue their study abroad. As the framework is globally understood, so do the students' assessments results.

According to Figueras & Noijons (2009), CEFR has been used internationally instead of in Europe in language learning, teaching and assessments. As CEFR is known widely, it benefits learners in those three areas (Martyniuk, 2010). Therefore, this shows that what has been highlighted by the Malaysia Ministry of Education is globally accepted and beneficial. The CEFR levels are established as language proficiency criteria that can be used for higher education, job employment, and specific professional career certificates (Brunfaut & Harding, 2019).

Benchmarking

CEFR is used in Malaysia as a language benchmark to solve the unrecognised language levels at the international standard level. The benchmarking process involves comparing the different language education systems and assessing each country's language education system compared to the global system (Ministry of Education, 2015). That is one reason why MEB advocated for establishing a benchmark that does not disregard Malaysian identity. As a result, the Ministry of Education has matched all curriculum, tests, textbook requirements, and teacher training to the CEFR standard level. MME must maintain the present materials. The learning standard, or DSKP, was improved, relating to the CEFR level. If the intended level is too high in terms of learning standards, it will be lowered to a more appropriate level based on the CEFR. In the meantime, if the objective is low, the alignment will be done as needed. As a result, the curriculum will be more constant, and there will be no 100 per cent modifications.

In terms of assessment, a significant number of public and non-profit organisations and educational institutions now characterise and report language assessments in terms of CEFR levels such as particular school leaving language examinations or universities and job enrollment matters. To be considered authentic, such links with the CEFR must first go through a formal alignment procedure (Brunfaut & Harding, 2019), as what the Malaysia Ministry of Education is preparing nowadays.

Alignment

Since the objective of the CEFR is to provide a consistent framework that allows everyone to understand one language level, benchmarking leads to an alignment. The CEFR offers a complete definition of the skills and information that language learners must acquire to communicate effectively and a common framework for the explicit description of objectives, methods, and materials in syllabuses and courses (Council of Europe, 2001). For example, if a student states that they can read at the C1 level in English but can only talk at the A2 level, everyone knows their level. Everyone will be able to comprehend if Form Three students aim to reach a B2 when CEFR is adopted as a framework in Malaysian education, specifically in English language development. As a result, the Form Three textbook will be written at a B2 level, and the test will be written at a B2 level. There will be no more issues like the curriculum for Form Three students being developed at the B1 level. Still, the examinations are set at the C2 level, and the textbook is designed at the A2 level. It is common among testing providers nowadays to align the

language assessment to the CEFR through standard-setting procedures (Brunfaut & Harding, 2014; Lim et al., 2013) and also for the national examinations boards (Spöttl et al., 2016).

Calibration

The calibration of the educational system is critical to the creation of parallel academic qualifications across countries. The calibration will allow for grade-level assessments and the interpretation of a transcript that indicates good performance. All countries are permitted to implement their scoring system, but providing their programs and assessments follow the CEFR, their grades can be paralleled on the CEFR scale to produce generally precise equivalents (Ministry of Education, 2015). Furthermore, as one of CEFR's goals is to educate future generations about globalisation, international schools can identify a student's level simply by looking at the documentation used in Malaysian schools when children opt to study abroad or remain abroad with their families. As a result, CEFR facilitates students' mobility and prevents them from falling behind. Regardless of state, the situation is the same in all Malaysian schools. Without having to reassess their students, teachers can readily acquire information about their language levels.

Finally, the CEFR is a non-prescriptive framework that serves as a reference for language levels but does not impose any limitations on teaching and learning. The CEFR gives a thorough explanation of the language education method that language instructors, teacher trainers, and academic management should explore and a set of tools that can be used in language course preparation and delivery (Heyworth, 2004). Furthermore, as CEFR is not a strategy, there is no CEFR approach that teachers must follow. As a result, in Malaysian classrooms, this framework is used to assess students' language levels using various teaching and learning approaches that best suit students' needs and preferences. Teachers can constantly develop and adjust their teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of their students' language levels and learning objectives.

CEFR enhances learners' language skills

The implementation of CEFR in four primary language skills will enhance the language skills of learners. Language ability is divided into six levels, from A1 to C2. All the levels are categorised into three: levels A1 and A2 are under Basic Users, Levels B1 and B2 are under Intermediate Users, and Levels C1 and C2 are under Proficient Users.

Learners improve not only in terms of the languages they know but also in terms of their communication skills. Simultaneously, learners will discover valuable strategies and go from basic to independent categories, allowing them to put their newfound knowledge to good use. Proficient learners will do their utmost to use the language fluently and spontaneously at the highest level possible and use it appropriately in given circumstances. CEFR levels are often utilised in language classes to distinguish between different groups of students. For instance, a Swedish class for B1 learners can be held, assuming that students have learned all or most of the lower level A1 and A2 abilities and should have acquired all or most of the skills taught at B1 after completing the course (Graen et al., 2020).

The CEFR specifies what learners can do in each of the five language areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. There are specific 'Can Do' statements for each of the five competencies at each level. The CEFR divides speaking into two parts, focusing on the learner's production and ability to participate in conversations and discussions. Thus, the brief of the CEFR descriptor based on the global scale standard reference level (Ministry of Education, 2015) is shown in Table 7.

Based on the standard reference level, each language level's descriptors in each skill highlight what learners can do as their strength to reach language acquisition. Meanwhile, the CEFR English language syllabus requires pupils to improve their language skills by acquiring new structures, functions, and vocabulary (Sabbir, 2019). At the same time, language usage, which includes language acquisition, refers to the acts taken by people as individuals to develop various skills, including general and communicative language skills. There are processes learners will experience when they participate actively in language activities. For instance, producing or receiving texts related to themes in specific areas, activating appropriate techniques to accomplish the task, utilising the competencies at their command in various situations, under a variety of settings, and a variety of restrictions. To engage in communicative activities, learners must draw on their proficiencies.

Table 7. CEFR Descriptors

Language Level /Skills	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
A1 Basic User	Can understand familiar words and phrases provided it is spoken slowly and clearly.	Can interact - introduce myself and others and answer questions about personal details.	Can understand familiar names, words, and simple phrases on notices, posters etc.	Can write a short postcard- fill in forms with personal details like name, address, and nationality.
A2 Basic User	Can understand simple information about areas of most immediate relevance (family, employment, shopping)- understand the main points of simple notifications and announcements.	Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a straightforward conversation on acquainted and regular information.	Can find specific information in simple everyday material (timetable, menu etc.)- understand short, simple personal letters.	Can write short, simple notes and messages-write a brief personal letter.
B1 Independent User	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc - understand spoken broadcasts.	Can deal with most situations in the family, leisure, work, travelling, and experiences.	Can understand texts about areas of everyday and job-related language - understand private letters about experiences, dreams, and hopes.	Can produce simple connected texts on familiar topics or of personal interest - describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly explain reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
B2 Independent User	Can understand the main ideas of complex texts on both concrete and abstract topics - understand most TV news, features, and the majority of the film in standard dialect.	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers possible without strain for either party.	Can understand the viewpoint on a topical issue in articles and reports - understand contemporary literary prose.	Can produce explicit, detailed texts on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages.
C1 Proficient User	Can understand figurative speech - easily understand television programs and films.	Can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions- use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes.	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognise implicit meaning - appreciate papers and longer technical articles.	Can produce explicit, well-structured, detailed texts on complex subjects, showing controlled organisational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
C2 Proficient User	Can understand with ease virtually everything I hear, such as colloquial language, the local language, and unfamiliar terminology.	Can express myself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating more delicate shades of meaning even in more complex situations.	Can understand with ease virtually everything I read (manuals, technical articles, literature etc.).	Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation.

Language learning differs from language usage in that proficiency grows over time due to a constant collaboration between the learner's constantly evolving competencies and conversational acts that need them to use the language effectively. Once learners have reached a level of proficiency that contributes to being better as people and societal participants, the target language should be the primary medium of instruction. Learning should be designed to allow them to take both initiating and responding roles. The main features of the CEFR are a positive mindset that focuses on what learners know and can do at each level. The 'Can-Do statements' empower students to take charge of their education by encouraging them to set responsible goals. Even at the most basic proficiency levels, a positive rather than a deficit-based strategy can help learners acquire confidence as they realise their language progress. The linguistic framework also helps parents comprehend their children's language development. The framework allows parents to observe the relationship between a child's classroom activities, and the practice can make statements that identify language ability growth and range at a glance. The framework is a visual organiser designed to assist parents to comprehend that language learning for academic reasons is taking place, and that progress is being achieved in small steps.

The implementation of CEFR in classroom assessment

CEFR has been chosen as a guiding framework for curriculum development, teaching and learning, textbook development, and assessment in curriculum reform. It has been highlighted in MEB 203- 2025 that the CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum in Malaysia is highlighting the importance of formative and summative assessment in teaching and learning (Legak & Wahi, 2020). The use of formative assessment gives more alternatives for teachers to monitor students' development in their ESL learning (Othman et al., 2013). The utmost novel element in CEFR is the action-oriented approach. It featured descriptive statements like "I can/can do" to indicate significant learning or provide an assessment assignment, bringing curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment closer. (Little, 2013). Assessment in the classroom focuses on monitoring learners' development progress and evaluating their learning knowledge. Furthermore, the assessment process determines the language competency level of EFL students (Önalın & Karagül, 2018). The assessment should present the value of the language program to implement CEFR in the classroom. The teacher is the best person to assess students' learning in the classroom (Ministry of Education, 2015). In this case, teachers assist learners in reaching the target set for language learning, such as teachers emphasising classroom assessment in teaching and learning. However, studies show that different teachers practice different ways of classroom assessment and Leung (2004) mentioned that teachers must build a good foundation regarding formative assessment to be used in the classroom.

Thus, classroom assessment and teachers' assessment can be defined as teacher assessment based on a vast amount of data gathered from regular classroom collaborations between students and educators and between students and peers (Harlen & Gardner, 2010). Classroom collaborations involve asking questions and feedback in functional assessment, emphasising self and peer assessment thoughtfully, discussing learning objectives and the criteria for determining whether or not they have been met, and data on learners' continuous production of their work. Self-assessment will encourage learners to share their responsibility as the criteria of assessment propose, and it also brings up broader insights into the learning process (Huttunen, 1986; Oscarson, 1989; Little, 2005). As a result, in student-centred pedagogies designed to enhance learner autonomy, self-assessment plays a critical role in defining and directing the reflective processes that underpin such growth. Learners must develop the potential to actively create learning goals and adapt learning materials and activities (Little, 2005).

The assessment process in the ESL learning and teaching process enables teachers to determine if the instructional process and educational outcome are successful based on the learners' average grades (Putri, Pratolo & Setiani, 2019). The assessment occurs while learners are experiencing their learning. Teachers can apply lots of improvements and adjustments throughout the process to assist the learners before the results come in. ESL teachers can determine the learners' language proficiency level following the assessment procedure. Once the learners' language proficiency level has been allocated, English teachers can decide which learners have achieved and which have not (Gultom, 2016). The classroom assessment helps teachers to focus on the learners individually in the classroom. Learning progress involves one-to-one achievement that teachers can monitor along with the teaching and learning process. By doing so, learners who have not reached the target language proficiency level will

not be left behind. A study conducted by Sidhu, Kaur and Lee (2018) reported that the implementation of CEFR in ESL learning provides an innovative approach in advocating the development of autonomous language learners. It becomes an important transformation from assessment of learning to assessment for learning.

In addition, different English language tests have other grading methods in classroom assessment, but the CEFR scale can compare all well-known ones. The CEFR scale is highly significant in this context since, regardless of the exam students take, they can always explain the results consistently and coherently. It is beneficial when students are applying for jobs or studying at a university, for example. Therefore, it is vital to understand the importance of CEFR in classroom assessment. Furthermore, the disagreement involves teaching, and learning is still possible. A change toward a competence-based approach to foreign language instruction needs a new strategy for assessment, too (Van den Branden, 2009). Working with the CEFR, according to many experienced teachers, entails devoting approximately an equal amount of time to the teaching of various abilities. It is an essential factor to examine since the divergence between innovations and assessment practices may prevent the effectiveness of educational transformation. (Thijs & Van den Akker, 2009; Van den Branden, 2009; Little, 2011).

In addition, Malaysian teachers show positive feedback. They agree with the new policy of implementing CEFR in syllabus and assessment, as shown in Sidhu, Kaur and Lee (2018) study towards primary teachers. Teachers' positive view towards the implementation of CEFR is also supported by the study conducted by Faez, Taylor, Majhanovich, and Brown (2011) that teachers were optimistic about incorporating CEFR in an ESL classroom. The teachers also reveal that they are open to new methods for decisive and student-centred learning. Notwithstanding the various levels of students the teachers teach, they generally agree that CEFR should be used in the ESL classroom (Sabbir, 2019).

Since 2011, Malaysian teachers have been able to open up classroom assessments because of School-Based Assessment (SBA). The use of SBA in the classroom manages to transform the concept of examination-oriented learning into lifelong learning. Even if there are syllabuses that must be followed in teaching and learning, there is no longer a complete concentration on examination questions in the classroom. The SBA is a holistic evaluation that considers cognitive (intellectual), affective (emotional and spiritual), and psychomotor (physical) factors. It is consistent with the philosophy of national education. Central Assessment (PP), Physical Activity Assessment, Sports & Co-curriculum (PAJSK), Psychometric Assessment (PPsi), and Classroom Assessment (PBD) are the four components of SBA. The classroom is a continual assessment that occurs in all subjects throughout teaching and learning. Classroom assessment does not seek to compare one student's level of mastery to that of another; instead, it aims to track students' learning progress while also assisting teachers in improving their teaching. As a result, CEFR is used in conjunction with classroom assessment. Teachers should no longer have any doubts because there has been a five-year assessment process in school and the classroom. CEFR is designed to help teachers, particularly in English classrooms, provide resources and assess pupils using the framework. When the CEFR and classroom assessment are combined, benefits and significance are gained, such as:

- a) Track student progress as a whole. For example, students are generally concerned with mastering the four primary language abilities in language learning. Since CEFR descriptors will assist as a guide and reference, teachers may remember that the aim is met in the students' learning and that none of the skills is overlooked.
- b) Identify students' strengths and weaknesses in learning; Students' strengths will be highlighted more to motivate them, whilst students' flaws will be recognised to improve students' learning by guiding them to focus.
- c) Know the effectiveness of teaching. CEFR supports teachers in determining the most effective teaching and learning techniques that will best fit the requirements of their students in the classroom.
- d) Plan and modify teaching methods. The adjustment in teaching and learning approaches is necessary because the CEFR does not prescribe a specific methodology for teachers; instead, there is always room for improvement.
- e) Take appropriate follow-up action immediately. The necessity of follow-up activities must be emphasised. Teachers might use CEFR and classroom assessment to focus on what students

have not yet achieved or urge reinforcing activities.

As a result, implementing the CEFR in classroom assessment will educate students to meet an international language standard where everyone can accept it. In the classroom, ongoing learning and assessment will be integrated to enable learners to attain meaningful learning. Students become a little more motivated and responsible for their learning as a result of the classroom assessment.

Future study recommendations in implementing CEFR

Future studies could investigate the association between the impact of the implementation of CEFR in each language skill with students' performance. Different skills will face different challenges, and future study is hoped to prepare teachers to implement CEFR in their teaching in the Malaysian ESL classroom. In Malaysia, teachers are believed to have a positive mindset regarding the CEFR implementation; however, they also need to be provided with ideas to help them overcome classroom hinders.

Other than that, future research should further explore whether self-assessment can replace the current Malaysian ESL classroom assessment, which focuses more on teachers assessing the students rather than students assessing themselves excessively. This is because CEFR aims to highlight what learners can do without letting learners weaknesses restrict their capability in enhancing their language. Therefore, if students can be familiar with the framework and apply the CEFR themselves, self-assessment might assist students in their learning to improve language performance. Later in the future, the self-assessment can be one of the classroom assessment features with high validity and reliability.

It is believed that apart from looking for classroom assessment, students performance in the classroom, future research should look for the materials used by teachers by all means. This is because the various resources of CEFR for teaching and learning are still limited, mainly in Malaysia. Rather than teachers rely on textbooks, as Azli and Akmar (2019) mentioned, this issue should not be taken lightly to provide more resources in classroom teaching.

Thus, the implementation of CEFR should be one thing that teachers cannot wait to implement as policy implementers to apply in their teaching. As the benefits vary, as mentioned earlier, CEFR assists teachers in teaching and brings benefits for the future generation. Applying a well-known language framework that can be integrated with 21st-century learning will prepare students to face the real world, especially in job employment. Therefore, there are more to explore regarding CEFR as the global framework of language with undeniable benefits to teachers and learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, implementing the CEFR in the Malaysian educational system will allow students to strive toward their learning objectives. English language education reform in Malaysia is a must for the new generation to be competent and survive in a globalised society. In general, Malaysian students are expected to learn English as soon as possible, and language should never impede their international success. To understand the language, I would like to have another window to view the world, and the Malaysian younger generation requires it as well. In the long run, the CEFR will produce younger generations with a strong command of the English language. The brief history of English language reform in Malaysian education reveals that the well-organised strategy put in place by the Ministry of Education is a reality that requires the participation of all stakeholders. In short, using the CEFR as a framework for the new curriculum, teaching and learning, textbook production, and assessment renders English language development a whole package. The choice of this international framework will assist the younger generation in every way imaginable. Thus, it is never a question of whether or not to apply the CEFR because it matters in the Malaysian education system.

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