

ESL Teachers' Attitude and Motivation towards CEFR Implementation

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Abstract

The alignment of English language education according to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is important to ensure that the English education landscape in Malaysia is comparable international standard. English language teacher have to constantly adapt and improve their proficiencies in the language accordingly and be mentally prepared to implement CEFR framework in school. Hence, this study investigates the correlation between English Language teachers' attitude and motivation in regards to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) implementation in education policy in Malaysia. A questionnaire which consists of 30 items with five-point Likert scale was administered to 242 primary and secondary school English teachers in two districts of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The relationship between the variables was established using Spearman-Rho correlation and the finding shows that there was a strong positive relationship between English as Second Language teachers' attitudes and their motivation level towards CEFR implementation. Hence, based on the result, it can be indicated that when teachers possess positive attitudes and acceptance to CEFR implementation will directly improve their motivation level thus, becoming a push factor for them in ensuring the positive outcome of CEFR implementation.

Keywords: Relationship, Attitude, Motivation, ESL Teachers, CEFR

Introduction

As Malaysia's Education Ministry aims to raise its English educational standards, the alignment of the education system against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is an important element in the Malaysia Education Blueprint to boost the country's educational level to international standards directly (Azman, 2016). The implementation of CEFR simultaneously shape and modify the education landscape for students and teachers. Hence, English language teachers are expected improve their proficiencies in the language accordingly and be mentally prepared to implement CEFR framework in school to achieve the desired impacts envision by the Ministry of Education in Malaysia.

Teacher's performance will determine the learning outcomes of the students (Radzuwan et al., 2016). Teachers with an advanced level of target language proficiency are more

competent in managing language teaching and provide substantial support for the learners (Canh & Renandya, 2017). This indirectly support the claim that teachers who are highly proficient in English could produce students who are competent in English Language (Sukri, Yunus & Rahman, 2017). This is because according to Malaysia Ministry of Education, it is compulsory for English Language teachers to achieve at least C1 language proficiency level in accordance to CEFR proficiency descriptor. This resulting in increasing teachers' workloads and pressure since teachers also face demands to improve the standards of their own English skills even with the lack of teacher development programmes (Radzuwan et al., 2016). In the aspect of language proficiency, although numerous proficiency test that has been promoted by the government. Yet, there were many teachers who are did not achieved the targeted outcome and some did not even participate in the test. According to Bee and Periasamy (2019), it was found that 66% of English teachers inclusive of teachers from both primary and secondary government schools have not achieved the minimum proficiency level of C1 according to CEFR. Similarly, with Sukri and Yunus (2018) whom stated that two thirds of the Malaysian English teachers were found to be linguistically deficient based on their performance in the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) which is used as a diagnostic tool to measure the English teachers' proficiency level in 2012-2015.

The pressure and demands on teachers' language proficiency may affect teachers' overall attitude and motivation in implementing CEFR in school and vice versa. Hence, this study aims to discover the relationship between attitude, motivation and English language proficiency of ESL teachers in accordance to CEFR implementation in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Malaysia's curriculum reform has adapted all 6 CEFR language descriptors from A1 up until C2 as a guideline use in developing curriculum as well as teaching and learning process and also for assessment (Sidhu et al., 2018). Nurul and Mohd (2017) highlighted that the CEFR implementation will be integrated into teacher education prospects as well. Rahman et al (2021) clarify that focus on teachers' competency and quality started in 2013 until 2015 during the first wave of educational reform which includes training sessions for all English teachers. In terms of assessment, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia has implemented a coherent assessment system for the ESL curriculum which is aligned with CEFR in 2016 (Sidhu et al. 2018). The revamp of the assessment system integrated formative and summative assessment known as School-Based assessment in hope of improving the quality of teaching and learning process in public schools (Sidhu et al., 2018).

Teachers' Attitudes towards CEFR Implementation

According to Zeinivanda et al (2015), attitude is a pertinent factor that impacts and influences individual language in the sense of language growth or decay and language restoration or destruction. This is because attitude has an internal influence in determining individual inclination in orienting their actions (Zeinivanda et al., 2015). Sabokrouh and Varandi (2013) derive the notion that English proficiency and teachers' attitudes toward English can be viewed as a component that can predict teacher self-efficacy. This is because both positive and negative English language teachers' attitudes can determine the success or the failure of language teaching and learning (Darwish, 2017). Siti et al (2021) in their study found that teachers' attitudes are perceived as determinants that impact their functional competency level in the aspect of performing routine jobs and also indicate their personality when

accomplishing the task assigned to them. A competent teacher is vital for the educational field as they will invest effort in improving their self-efficacy to make the aspirations and objectives set of the curriculum a reality. Nonetheless, the implementation of new language policy consequently pressures teachers to meet the demands and to ensure a successful implementation of that educational reforms.

Aside from the continuous increase of workloads especially in clerical work, some reform demands teachers to improve their English language proficiency standards to align their competency with the standard established by the Ministry of education in the new curriculum reform (Radzuwan et al., 2017). Another study by Sidhu et al (2018) focused on a different part of CEFR implementation by highlighting the introduction of School-Based assessments which are aligned with the CEFR component that focused on formative assessment. School-Based Assessments (SBA) are integrated into the assessment system to ensure a more balanced and holistic assessment approach towards students' performance, especially regarding their skill competency. By investigating CEFR-aligned SBA implementation in the primary ESL classroom, evidence in Sidhu, Kaur, and Lee (2018) finding showed that teachers expressed positive opinions towards school-based assessment although they acknowledged that they have an insufficient comprehensive understanding towards the best methods to incorporate in SBA and have overall limited knowledge of the revised CEFR-aligned ESL curriculum. According to the finding, the notable challenges to implement CEFR-aligned SBA effectively encompasses time constraints, classroom enrolment, heavy workload, and lack of training as their main challenges (Sidhu et al., 2018).

Overall, teachers' attitude is a vital component in ensuring the smooth implementation of any curriculum reform. The mixed response in the finding of many research shows that teachers mainly have a positive outlook and attitude towards CEFR implementation. However, all research shows that there are underlying challenges and obstacles that may impact teachers' overall opinions and attitudes towards CEFR implementation. According to Gilic (2016) cited by Yasin and Yamat (2021), teachers are vital shareholders in educational organizations especially as the implementer of curriculum policy in school, thus more sensible consideration should be given towards teachers' thoughts and attitudes to ensure that the purposed curriculum reform can be accomplished.

Teachers' Motivation

Motivation specifies the reason why people decide to do something, how long people are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue the activity (Han & Yin, 2016). Several researchers agreed that motivation encourages individuals to alter their conduct and prompt them to sustain their effort to achieve a significant goal (Boru, 2018). Chen (2014) highlighted that motivation is divided into two parts consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is closely related to the activities undertaken to achieve pleasure and satisfaction for example experiencing a sense of achievement, self-esteem, pride in solving the problem, enjoyment of the class, and one opportunity to use the desired languages. On the contrary extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior as a means to an end and usually involves other consequences of success on the task (Chen 2014). The teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is perceived as a driving force for teachers' performances. However, being a teacher is a long-term career choice, and time co-functions with external and internal factors affect motivation. Many research has pointed out that

teachers suffered significantly higher levels of occupational stress and lower motivation levels compared to other professional groups (Jesus & Lens, 2005; Han & Yin, 2016). Karavas (2010) indicated that teachers relatively possess a higher level of stress and burnout than any other professional group despite the finding that most teachers claimed to enjoy teaching and would not choose to give it up.

Teacher motivation is deemed as an important factor that has a huge impact in influencing students' motivation through the lenses of some educational leaders and managers (Jesus & Lens, 2005). Teachers' internal and external sources of motivation can be determined by assessing the internal and external components of the school which include particular expectations towards teachers' abilities, students' quantities and qualities, the school administrators' aptitude, and education policies (Boru, 2018). Besides that, according to Jesus and Lens (2005), teacher motivation plays a pertinent role in ensuring the advancement of educational reforms because teachers mainly hold the responsibility to execute educational reform and impose progressive legislation while ensuring the success of education reform. Additionally, teachers' motivation also influenced teacher job contentment and achievement. In the aspect of CEFR integrated curriculum reform, Herlina (2011) views any effort of mobilizing and synchronizing student English language competency at par with the international standard of the language as a challenge. Nhung (2017) further implied that not only does a teacher's proficiency impact his or her ability to use the target language in the classroom, but it also influences how confident he or she is in being able to conduct the class effectively. Low proficiency may undermine teachers' confidence, which may in turn affect their pedagogical practices (Canh & Renandya, 2017). Jesus and Lens (2005) also imply that teacher intrinsic motivation is a fundamental core that influences the degree of their self-determination that they are willing to invest and in the aspect of maneuvering their motivational orientation towards the teaching profession.

Methodology

This is a survey study that employed correlational survey design to examine possible relationship between the selected variables in the targeted population. The respondents for this research consisted of 242 (n=242) English teachers from primary and secondary schools in the district of Jelebu and Jempol in the state of Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia. The sample consists of 43 (17.8) male teachers and 199 (82.2) female teachers between the age of 20 years old and above. Selection of respondents follow the criteria set for the study which is: a) English teachers who are actively teaching in school, b) primary or secondary ESL teachers in Malaysia c) ESL teachers who are directly involved in CEFR implementation in their respective school. ESL options teachers from primary and secondary school are selected as the respondents to ensure they have a similar background in terms of English educations. A questionnaire consists of 36 items in 3 sections were distributed to the respondents.

Section A covers respondents' demographic information which also includes all the criteria that they have to adhere to be part of the selected sample. Meanwhile, section B focused on items to identify respondents' attitudes towards the impact of CEFR implementation on themselves as a teacher in terms of self-development and from the point of view of the CEFR implementer at their respective school. To assess teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of CEFR in the curriculum the attitude inventory developed by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2005) is combined with the questionnaire by Yueh (2018) called Stage of Concern

Questionnaire (SoCQ). Then, the questions in both questionnaires are adapted according to the area of this research which is based on CEFR framework implementation. Both of the instruments had been previously validated by the researchers. Section B employs a 5-point response scale ranging from disagreement and agreement – Likert-based questionnaire. The 5-point Likert scales are labelled as 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 =Strongly Agree. Section C which is the last section in the questionnaire includes the effect of CEFR implementation on teachers’ motivational level. A questionnaire by Chiew and Poh (2015) is adapted. The items in the questionnaire cover the elements of teachers’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the impact of CEFR implementation in the school and CEFR Readiness. This section of the questionnaire employs a 5-point Likert scale of agreement that ranges from 1 = Poorly Motivated, 2 = Slightly Motivated, 3 =Neutral, 4 = Motivated, and 5 = Strongly motivated. The relationship between teachers’ attitude towards CEFR implementation and teachers’ motivation level was established using Spearman- Rho correlation.

Findings

To determine teachers’ attitudes, the study refers to the mean score interpretation by Kunwar (2020). Table 4.1 shows English teachers’ attitudes towards CEFR implementation. The overall result revealed that out of 242 respondents (n=242), 0 respondents had a highly negative attitude towards CEFR implementation, 37 (15.3%) respondents were reported to have a negative attitude towards CEFR implementation 95 (39.3%) respondents had a neutral attitude towards CEFR implementation and 110 (45.4%) respondents were reported to have a positive attitude towards CEFR implementation. 0 respondents possessed highly positive attitudes according to the mean score interpretation.

Table 1.0

Mean score interpretation of English teachers’ attitudes towards the CEFR implementation

Description	Mean range score	Attitude level interpretation	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1.00-1.49	Highly negative	0	0
Disagree	1.50-2.49	Negative	37	15.3
Neutral	2.50 - 3.49	Neutral	95	39.3
Agree	3.50 - 4.49	Positive	110	45.4
Strongly Agree	4.50 - 5.00	Highly positive	0	0

To investigate the teachers’ motivational level, the study employed the mean score interpretation by (Kitjaroonchai & Kitjaroonchai, 2012). Table 2.0 shows the mean score of the teacher's motivation level. The overall result revealed that out of 242 respondents (n=242), 3 (1.3%) respondents were found to have a very low level of teacher's motivational level hence they are deemed as poorly motivated, 69 (28.5%) respondents were reported to have a low level of teacher's motivational level (slightly motivated, 70 (29.0%) respondents had a medium level of teacher's motivational level (neutral) another 50 (20.6%) respondents had high teacher's motivational level, which indicated that they were motivated and 50 (20.6%) respondents were reported to have very high teacher's motivational level which showed that they are strongly motivated.

Table 2.0

Mean score interpretation of teachers' motivational level

Scale	Description	Mean score	range	Motivation level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Poorly motivated	1.00-1.80		Very low	3	1.3
2	Slightly motivated	1.81-2.60		Low	69	28.5
3	Neutral	2.61-3.20		Medium	70	29.0
4	Motivated	3.21-4.20		High	50	20.6
5	Strongly motivated	4.21-5.00		Very High	50	20.6

To establish if there is any significant correlation between English Language Teachers' attitude towards CEFR implementation and their motivation level, an inferential statistic was utilized. To complement the categories of the variables in this study which are ordinal variables whilst abiding by the assumption in correlation test, a Spearman-Rho correlation test was employed to establish the possibility of any significant correlation between the two variables. Table 4.3 displays the correlation between teachers' attitudes towards CEFR implementation and motivation level. Based on the data in the table, the bivariate correlation of the spearman rho test shows the value of Spearman correlation coefficient (r_s) is bigger than the p-value and it is proven that the p-value is significantly lower than 0.05 ($p < 0.00$). This indicated a positive and strong correlation between the two variables. Subsequently, this shows that there is a strong positive significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards CEFR implementation and motivation level. Hence, the higher teachers' attitude towards CEFR implementation, the higher the motivation level. The end result of $r_s = 0.994$, $p < .000$ inferred that the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was accepted which indicates that there was a correlation between teachers' attitude towards CEFR implementation and motivation level ($r_s \neq 0$).

Table 3.0

Correlation between teachers' attitude and motivation level.

Construct		Motivation level
	r value	0.0994
Teachers' attitude towards CEFR	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Discussion

Based on the result, the majority of English language teachers displayed a positive attitude towards CEFR implementation. This finding is aligned with the finding from Nurul (2021) that discover teachers displayed positive beliefs towards the adoption of CEFR in the curriculum despite some of the challenges that influenced teachers' beliefs. Kok, and Aziz (2019) had a similar discovery on teacher optimistic view towards the role of CEFR aligned curriculum in improving Malaysian English language proficiency where teacher despite the mixed views the CEFR implementation. Rahman et al (2021) also possess similar outcomes in their finding that indicated language educators in tertiary education shared the same viewpoint as they were mainly positive and were open to the changes elicited by CEFR implementation especially in the domain of English level proficiency. A study by Yasin & Yamat (2020) supported the fact that teacher generally has positive attitudes towards CEFR implementation as the result of

their study highlight that teacher displays a high level of readiness to implement CEFR in the curriculum.

The result for English teachers' motivation shows that most teachers have a medium level of motivation. The findings from Han and Yin (2016) that identified the contributing factors which can be influenced teachers motivational level are educational reform, teaching practices, and teachers' psychological fulfillment and well-being. From the result of this study, the factors that influenced teachers' motivation level adhered to Herzberg -two factors motivation theory which stated the motivator factor holds the role as the motivating factors and the hygiene factors act as the demotivating factors if it is not fulfilled.

Teachers possess very high and high motivation levels due to the intrinsic motivation factors This is relevant to the finding of Boru (2018) which discovered that the most fundamental source of motivation for teachers lies in their desire to be a successful teacher as they presumed to teach as a noble service. Furthermore, Boru (2018) finding also indicated that teachers are not motivated by material. This is aligned with the finding from Rahman et al (2021) indicated that teachers gain self-satisfaction because they can provide knowledge for students that hold the future of the nation. Jesus and Lens (2005) finding also supported the fact that teachers' intrinsic motivation has a significant role in encouraging teachers to uphold and accomplish the task that is assigned to them. However, another factor that possesses an effect in influencing teachers' motivation is the extrinsic factors that can be determined as the hygienic factors according to Herzberg two factor s motivation. The factor of workload emerged as the extrinsic factor that eventually resulted in medium and low levels of teachers' motivation according to the findings of this study. The most prominent factor that generates low motivation levels by the teachers is excessive occupational workload. This is supported by the findings of Sidhu and Kaur (2018); Lee (2018) which identify heavy workload as the main challenge for teachers to implement school-based assessment which is one of the components of CEFR assessment in school. Furthermore, the finding from Matteucci (2008) and Guglielmi et al (2014) also stated that there is excessive work demand on teacher due continuous education reform. This led teachers to experienced exhaustion that ultimately causes individuals to have low productivity and low motivation level on their job performance (Boru, 2018). Hence this supports other findings of Han & Yin (2016) where it is established that teachers experienced more negative impact due to higher levels of stress in comparison to other professional workers.

The result indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and motivation. Hence, it shows that teachers' positive attitude has a strong effect in elevating teachers 'motivation. The finding of this study discovered that there is a positive significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards CEFR implementation and their motivation level in executing CEFR implementation. There is a limited study that explores teachers' attitudes and teachers' motivation simultaneously. However, the finding of this study corresponds with the finding from one of the studies in Malaysia by Bakar et al (2010) whereby it is discovered that a positive significant correlation between students' attitude towards learning and achievement motivation. even though the relationship of both of these variables is established based on a different real realm, it still supports that attitude does have a significant impact on motivation. in this study, attitude is defined as individual emotional and mental preparation resulting from meaningful experienced that is impactful enough to

drive an individual to shift their paradigm and modify their behaviours regarding other matter as well Kartubi (2017) while motivation specifies the reason why people decide to do something, how long people are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue the activity (Han & Yin, 2016) and are affected by the motivator and hygiene factors in Herzberg two-factor motivation theory. Hence, based on the result, it can be indicated that when teachers possess positive attitudes and acceptance to CEFR implementation even though it is a relatively new curriculum reform it will directly improve their motivation level thus, becoming a push factor for them in ensuring the positive outcome of CEFR implementation.

Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to determine the correlation between English teachers' attitudes toward CEFR implementation and their motivation level in implementing CEFR. The most significant finding to emerge from this study is that there is a strong positive relationship between English teachers' attitude toward CEFR implementation and their motivation level in implementing CEFR. As teachers possessed positive attitudes towards CEFR implementation concurrently their motivation level will elevate. Although through the motivation level of teachers towards CEFR is not as pronounced in comparison to their attitude. Hence, to truly elevate teachers' motivation, teachers' attitudes towards CEFR implementation must be ideally positive. The finding of this study has significant implications for the understanding of how English teachers' attitude toward CEFR implementation affects their motivation level in dealing with curriculum reform in terms of CEFR implementation. Ultimately, a positive attitude teacher is motivated to implement CEFR. Thus, in a sense contribute to the success of CEFR implementation.

This work contributes to existing knowledge of education policy reformation especially in the context of CEFR implementation and integration in primary and secondary education domain by providing empirical evidence of the existence of a significant relationship between English teachers' attitude toward CEFR implementation and their motivation level in implementing CEFR. Hence, the outcome of this study contributes to improving predictions of the impact of CEFR implementation on its most significant implementer in primary and secondary education level which indefinitely affect the result of the success rate of CEFR implementation in Malaysia education realm in the long run.

The scope of this study was limited in terms of the generalization of fellow teachers' attitude and motivation as a whole without providing any visible perimeter or between the attitude and motivation level of teachers in primary schools and teachers from secondary school or dissecting in detail the possibility of any existed difference variables that may affect the outcome of this study due to any underlying differences between primary and secondary teachers' demographic. Furthermore, the scope of this study was limited in terms of highlighting the impact of the relationship between teachers' attitude and motivation in CEFR implementation towards pupils and students' performances by CEFR implementation in the classroom. Despite its limitations, the study certainly adds to the understanding of the impact of CEFR implementation on its most vital and valuable implementer that which shapes whether the outcome of its implementation is favourable or not in the long term. Future researchers might explore the differences between the relationship between primary and secondary teachers' attitudes and motivation levels. Besides that, future researchers could

further scrutinize the relationship between teachers' attitudes and motivation levels in implementing CEFR by establishing differences among gender.

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