

Implementation Challenges of Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) in a Malaysian Setting: Insights on English Teachers' Attitude

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by English teachers' regarding the implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Sarawak rural primary schools. It also aims to further identify the extent of their awareness in recognising the government's vision for the framework to take effect. Research data were collected through a questionnaire survey completed by 60 English rural primary school teachers. The findings suggest that most of them have had limited awareness of and exposure to CEFR. Nonetheless, they were optimistic that the framework is essential to improve the level of English proficiency among learners in a rural setting. The major challenges discovered were teachers' attitudes and readiness as well as lack of training provided by the education authorities which formed a barrier to successful integration of CEFR in the classroom. The implications of the study are also discussed by addressing the urgent need for teachers to be rigorously trained with the framework and to allocate ample preparation time and design sufficient relevant materials prior to its nation-wide introduction and integration in the curriculum.

Keywords: CEFR, Rural Primary School, English Proficiency, Education System.

Introduction

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereafter CEFR) was developed in 2001 and publicly introduced in Malaysia in 2013. CEFR is an international standard that is used by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (hereafter MOE) to competent English language users and to create uniformity in educational and cultural matters by providing a general framework that indicates what the language learners need to attain to be able to use English effectively. CEFR, despite being thorough, is general enough to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks in addition to assisting learners, teachers and course designers to connect their efforts when using this standardised framework. CEFR descriptors are used to

grade Malaysian language learners' proficiency level and to compare it with that of international level. There are six levels of language proficiency in the framework: C2, C1, B2, B1, A2, and A1. It begins with A1 and progresses to A2 to indicate basic users, before reaching B1 and B2 to describe independent users and eventually C1 and C2 to represent proficient and highly proficient users. Within the framework, language proficiency contains five communication skills, namely listening, speaking, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing. Learner's language proficiency is measured against these five skills.

The implementation of CEFR affected about 15,000 from a total of 60,000 English teachers in Malaysia who are considered not adequately equipped to teach the subject, a concern raised by the Ministry of Education. Approximately 2/3 of the total number of English teachers in the country has failed. Teachers were unable to reach the targeted proficiency level in English. This suggests a poor performance among them and that they had limited knowledge about and exposure to CEFR. The display of this type of incompetence might hinder the progress of the whole process in measuring and describing language proficiency at different stages of education, and which we are adopting for our schools and universities

The difficulties faced by rural primary school pupils in acquiring knowledge was influenced by their poor learning ability which often thwarts comprehension of important knowledge. The inadequacy among students in learning language skills was also caused by the delay in mastery of reading and writing skills (Nile, 2006). Most pupils were found to be weak in alphabet recognition and writing skills. Through the implementation of CEFR, it is hoped to help in improving pupils' language skills. Awareness of the English language importance at rural primary schools is still low resulting in a difficulty of achieving even the B2 level among the learners.

Super Minds textbook is the main material used in implementing CEFR and the arrangement of the new textbook is not synchronised with the curriculum and scheme of work (Aziz, Rashid, & Zainudin, 2018). The imported textbook was assumed to provide effective result among poor proficiency level pupils. However, the contents of the textbook were not localised when unfamiliar context such as foreign cultural element is introduced. For instance, unfamiliar words that were found to be present in the textbook thus resulting them resulting in their disability to comprehend the text.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to investigate the challenges by the teachers towards the implementations of CEFR in rural primary schools. It also aims to explore the teachers' awareness toward the implementation of CEFR.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question;

- i. what are the challenges encountered by the teachers towards the implementation of CEFR in rural primary school?

Literature Review

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

Despite of the newly introduced CEFR across the world, a handful of CEFR related studies have been conducted by several researchers in and outside of Malaysia. These studies had covered various scopes. For instance, a study conducted by Nguyen and Hamid (2015) is one of the studies that has been carried out outside of Malaysia discovered that the participants gave

positive outcomes instead of identifying the problems in adopting CEFR. The findings argued that the adoption of CEFR is considered as a “quick-fix” solution. This helped in improving the quality of English language education in Vietnam. Another study conducted in South Thailand by Franz & Teo (2017) has reflected that most of the teachers in Thailand do not have good grasp of the English language. Most of them failed to acquire the B2 proficiency level. The result of the first-hand English teachers in Thailand that experienced CEFR somehow did not meet the anticipated result. This is an initiative by the Thailand government to assess the ability of every English language teacher in Thailand Government schools. Furthermore, a study by Wu and Wu (2012) in Taiwan which aimed to discover the effectiveness of the adopted CEFR in the context of its local English tests was able to identify the challenges and responsibilities that are faced by the local exam boards. A study by Zheng, Zhang, & Yan (2016) that was carried out in China showed that CEFR is pointless. China experienced the adoption of CEFR and it served no purpose in enhancing the Chinese English language proficiency. Some effort has been made by translating CEFR into Chinese language. It was published for the purpose of English lesson. However, language educators in the universities did not support the framework. After participating in a series of workshops conducted for the teachers in China, these teachers too perceived CEFR as more scientific. These teachers were only interested in trying CEFR in writing activity as an assessment. Some CEFR related study had mentioned out the pressure of learning English language. A study on the impact of CEFR by Fennely (2016) conducted in Japan reflected that the government had minimal efforts to promote bilingualism. The CEFR has been creating outstanding impact on the Japanese education system. Nonetheless, the result was different to other country such as in Europe due to Japan Geo-politic situation. Teachers had limited knowledge related to CEFR. However, the Japanese language learners had improved their self-awareness of language by using CEFR can-do statement.

CEFR in Malaysia Context

Studies on the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia is still lacking. There are very little studies conducted in this country which relates to the research design. A study by Darmi, Saad, Abdullah, Puteh-Behak, Zakaria and Rahman (2017) was aimed to investigate the English teachers’ perspectives. The study focused on English language proficiency courses in Malaysian local universities which employ the CEFR scales. The data collected has shown different views among teachers towards English language proficiency courses. The study found out that university learners may not necessarily fit into the CEFR standards targets. Uri and Abd Aziz (2017) conducted a study which aimed to investigate the challenges encountered by the stakeholders in the process of adopting CEFR onto the English syllabus and assessments proved that most of teachers in school were unaware of CEFR. The results further showed that teachers lacked interest in adopting the framework for their classroom activities. Another study by Uri and Abd Aziz (2017) showed that teachers were also lacking CEFR expertise. It would be a challenge for English teachers in incorporating CEFR in their teaching since they are not fully introduced to CEFR. Teachers need to be fully equipped and aware on the approaches to fully maximise the use of CEFR textbooks. The adoption of CEFR in Malaysia is necessary. In order to adopt CEFR, more time should be allocated for phase one by the ministry. This is to ensure that all the teachers are fully prepared. It may help the teacher to be familiarised with the framework before it is comprehensively introduced and implemented. A study conducted by Rahman (2013) focused on the instructor’s proficiency

in English. The researcher highlighted the importance of CEFR in improving the quality of Malaysian's teachers. Thus, it is vital for teachers to be mentally and physically prepared.

Methodology

The participants of this study were 60 English rural primary school teachers who taught Year 1,2 and 3 pupils using CEFR. The participants were selected using criterion sampling. They were selected due the fact that they were the person that involved and affected by the implementation of CEFR. A quantitative approach was used as the research design in this study. Survey questionnaires was used to collect the data as this study involved large sample size and to obtain accurate numerical statistical data (Williams, 2007).

A survey questionnaire for teachers were prepared in order to obtain information about the implementation of CEFR after considering the related literature. Survey questionnaires were distributed to the teachers in rural primary school. The questionnaire utilised Likert scale items (1-5 points); (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. Likert scale items were used to evaluate the responses by the teachers. The results of the survey were then illustrated for further discussion. After completing the survey questionnaire, a suggestion section was included towards the end of the survey questionnaire. It was carried out for CEFR teachers to provide their suggestion for further improvement. The suggestion section was conducted for triangulation purposes. This process included identifying the teachers' concern and solution to their concerns.

Result

The challenges encountered by the teachers towards the implementation of CEFR in rural Primary School.

The main findings collected from the survey were aimed to answer the research question; Teachers' knowledge and challenges towards the CEFR implementation

Table 1

Teachers' understanding with CEFR

Statement	Strongly disagree % (n)	disagree % (n)	Neutral % (n)	agree % (n)	Strongly agree % (n)
Teachers' understanding					
I am familiar with the concept of CEFR.	1.67 (1)	3.33 (2)	20.00 (12)	48.33 (29)	26.67 (16)
I know about CEFR through my colleagues.	3.33 (2)	6.67 (4)	26.67 (16)	46.67 (28)	16.67 (10)
I know CEFR through reading (internet, book, newspaper, and article journal.)	3.33 (2)	6.67 (4)	21.67 (13)	48.33 (29)	20.00 (12)
I know CEFR descriptors well.	1.67 (1)	6.67 (4)	21.67 (13)	51.67 (31)	18.33 (11)

I am familiar with the concept of CEFR during my in-service teacher training.	11.67 (7)	21.67 (13)	23.33 (14)	31.67 (19)	11.67 (7)
I know about CEFR during courses, conferences, workshops, and seminars.	0	6.67 (4)	13.33 (8)	40.00 (24)	40.00 (24)
I know that CEFR is implemented in three waves in Malaysia.	1.67 (1)	6.67 (4)	33.33 (20)	41.67 (25)	16.67 (10)
I have read documents related to CEFR (The roadmap 2015-2025)	0	8.33 (5)	18.33 (11)	41.67 (25)	31.67 (19)
I am aware of the CEFR framework through CEFR workshop familiarisation.	0	3.33 (2)	18.33 (11)	50.00 (30)	28.33 (17)
More training and workshop on CEFR is required to help English teachers to fully understand the concept and usage of the framework.	0	3.33 (2)	11.67 (7)	38.33 (23)	46.67 (28)

Table 1 showed that ten items are presented as the first part of the questionnaire. 45 teachers, agreed [16 teachers (26.67%) strongly agree, and 29 (48.33%) teachers agreed] that they were familiar with the concept of CEFR. 38 teachers, agreed [10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 28 (46.67%) know about CEFR through their colleagues. 41 teachers, agreed (12 teachers (20.00%) strongly agree, and 29 (48.33%) teachers agreed] that they knew CEFR through reading internet, book, newspaper, and article journal. 42 teachers, agreed [11 teachers (18.33%) strongly agree, and 31 (51.67%) teachers agreed) that they know the descriptors well. 26 teachers, agreed (7 teachers (11.67%) strongly agree, and 19 (31.67%) teachers agreed] that they were familiar with the concept of CEFR during in-service teacher training.

Also, 48 teachers, agreed [24 teachers (40.00%) strongly agree, and 24 (40.00%) teachers agreed] that they knew about CEFR during courses, conferences, workshops, and seminars. Only 35 teachers, agreed [10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 25 (41.67%) teachers agreed) that they understand CEFR is implemented in three waves in Malaysia. 46 teachers, agreed (19 teachers (31.67%) strongly agree, and 25 (41.67%) teachers agreed] that they have read the CEFR documents; the roadmap 2015-2025. 47 teachers, agreed (17 teachers (28.33%) strongly agree, and 30 (50.00%) teachers agreed) that they are aware of the CEFR framework through CEFR workshop familiarisation. Lastly, the result also showed that the majority of the teachers 51 teachers, agreed [28 teachers (46.67%) strongly agree, and 23 (38.33%) teachers agreed] that more training and workshop on CEFR is required to help English teachers to understand the concept and usage of the framework fully.

Table 2

Teachers' awareness on the concepts of CEFR

Statement	Strongly disagree % (n)	disagree % (n)	Neutral % (n)	agree % (n)	Strongly agree % (n)
The applicability of CEFR					
I believe CEFR able to improve rural primary pupils' level of English proficiency.	3.33 (2)	0	26.67 (16)	43.33 (26)	26.67 (16)
I believe UPSR should revamp to align with CEFR descriptor	5.00 (3)	0	25.00 (15)	41.67 (25)	28.33 (17)
I believe that it is difficult for the teacher to use the CEFR descriptors.	3.33 (2)	28.33 (17)	30.00 (18)	23.33 (14)	15.00 (9)
I can relate CEFR descriptors to year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	1.67 (1)	3.33 (2)	30.00 (18)	48.33 (29)	16.67 (10)
I believe that CEFR is suitable to be adopted onto Year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	3.33 (2)	3.33 (2)	20.00 (12)	55.00 (33)	18.33 (11)
CEFR descriptors are applicable to the Malaysian context.	3.33 (2)	6.67 (4)	26.67 (16)	48.33 (29)	15.00 (9)
Some of CEFR descriptors are irrelevant to rural primary schools.	3.33 (2)	16.67 (10)	25.00 (15)	31.67 (19)	23.33 (14)
It is better to modify CEFR to suit in the Malaysia context with rural primary school.	1.67 (1)	5.00 (3)	23.33 (14)	28.33 (17)	41.67 (25)
Year 1,2,3 English textbooks and workbooks are suitable for the pupils.	1.67 (1)	8.33 (5)	40.00 (24)	33.33 (20)	16.67 (10)
Malaysian made CEFR based workbook, textbooks, and other teaching materials are the most suitable for Year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	3.33 (2)	8.33 (5)	28.33 (17)	36.67 (22)	23.33 (14)

For this section, five items are presented in the second part of the survey. 42 teachers, agreed (15 teachers (25.00%) strongly agree, and 27 (45.00%) teachers agreed) that they familiar with the objectives of CEFR. 46 teachers, agreed (18 teachers (30.00%) strongly agree, and 28 (46.67%) teachers agreed) that they understand the rationale of CEFR descriptors. 47 teachers, agreed 23 teachers (38.33%) strongly agree, and 24 (40.00%) teachers agreed) that they believed that CEFR is able to create a common proficiency standard. 47 teachers, agreed 23 teachers (38.33%) strongly agree, and 24 (40.00%) teachers agreed) that they aim to develop a national and international benchmark. 49 teachers, agreed 17 teachers (28.33%) strongly agree, and 32 (53.33%) teachers agreed) that they believed CEFR provides a comparison of each pupil. In this part, the majority of the teachers are aware of the concepts of CEFR. It showed that 18% to 21% of teachers agreed they know about the idea of CEFR.

Table 3

The applicability of CEFR in rural primary schools

Statement	Strongly disagree % (n)	disagree % (n)	Neutral % (n)	agree % (n)	Strongly agree % (n)
The applicability of CEFR					
I believe CEFR able to improve rural primary pupils' level of English proficiency.	3.33 (2)	0	26.67 (16)	43.33 (26)	26.67 (16)
I believe UPSR should revamp to align with CEFR descriptor	5.00 (3)	0	25.00 (15)	41.67 (25)	28.33 (17)
I believe that it is difficult for the teacher to use the CEFR descriptors.	3.33 (2)	28.33 (17)	30.00 (18)	23.33 (14)	15.00 (9)
I can relate CEFR descriptors to year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	1.67 (1)	3.33 (2)	30.00 (18)	48.33 (29)	16.67 (10)
I believe that CEFR is suitable to be adopted onto Year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	3.33 (2)	3.33 (2)	20.00 (12)	55.00 (33)	18.33 (11)
CEFR descriptors are applicable to the Malaysian context.	3.33 (2)	6.67 (4)	26.67 (16)	48.33 (29)	15.00 (9)
Some of CEFR descriptors are irrelevant to rural primary schools.	3.33 (2)	16.67 (10)	25.00 (15)	31.67 (19)	23.33 (14)
It is better to modify CEFR to suit in the Malaysia context with rural primary school.	1.67 (1)	5.00 (3)	23.33 (14)	28.33 (17)	41.67 (25)
Year 1,2,3 English textbooks and workbooks are suitable for the pupils.	1.67 (1)	8.33 (5)	40.00 (24)	33.33 (20)	16.67 (10)
Malaysian made CEFR based workbook, textbooks, and other teaching materials are the most suitable for Year 1,2,3 English syllabus and assessments.	3.33 (2)	8.33 (5)	28.33 (17)	36.67 (22)	23.33 (14)

For this section, 42 teachers, agreed 16 teachers (26.67%) strongly agree, and 26 (43.33%) teachers agreed) that they believed CEFR able to improve rural primary schools pupils' level of English proficiency. 42 teachers, agreed 17 teachers (28.33%) strongly agree, and 25 (41.67%) teachers agreed) that they believed UPSR should revamp to align with CEFR descriptor. Also, 23 teachers, agreed 9 teachers (15.00%) strongly agree, and 14 (23.33%) teachers agreed) that they believed CEFR descriptor is hard to use. 39 teachers, agreed 10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 29 (48.33%) teachers agreed) that they can use CEFR descriptors to Year 1, 2, and 3 into English syllabus and assessments. 44 teachers, agreed 11 teachers (18.33%) strongly agree, and 33 (55.00%) teachers agreed) that they believed CEFR is suitable to be adopted onto Year 1, 2, and 3 English syllabus and assessment. 38 teachers, agreed 9 teachers (15.00%) strongly agree, and 29 (48.33%) teachers agreed) that CEFR descriptors are applicable to the Malaysian context. Also, 33 teachers, agreed 14 teachers (23.33%) strongly agree, and 19 (31.67%) teachers agreed) that some CEFR descriptors are

irrelevant to the aura primary schools. 42 teachers, agreed 25 teachers (41.67%) strongly agree, and 17 (28.33%) teachers agreed) that modification of CEFR is needed to suit the Malaysia context. Besides, 30 teachers, agreed 10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 20 (33.33%) teachers agreed) that Supermind textbook and workbooks are suitable for the pupils. Lastly, 36 teachers, agreed 14 teachers (23.33%) strongly agree, and 22 (36.67%) teachers agreed) that CEFR workbooks, textbooks and learning materials based on Malaysian context are the most suitable for Year 1, 2, and 3 English syllabus and assessment.

Challenges and limitation of CEFR in rural primary school

Teachers considered implementing CEFR in their teaching as a challenge

Table 4

The challenges and limitations of CEFR in rural primary schools

Statement	Strongly disagree % (n)	disagree % (n)	Neutral % (n)	agree % (n)	Strongly agree % (n)
Challenges and Limitations					
I believe that myself as the challenges in the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia.	1.67 (1)	8.33 (5)	23.33 (14)	50.00 (30)	16.67 (10)
I believe that designing CEFR classroom-based activities is time-consuming.	1.67 (1)	10.00 (6)	28.33 (17)	43.33 (26)	16.67 (10)
My autonomy as a teacher is reduced while using CEFR in my class.	8.33 (5)	16.67 (10)	35.00 (21)	30.00 (18)	10.00 (6)
It is a burden and extra workload to the teachers, especially in rural primary schools.	5.00 (3)	23.33 (14)	33.33 (20)	23.33 (14)	15.00 (9)
I have a vague idea about the details procedures of the implementation CEFR.	5.00 (3)	23.33 (14)	46.67 (28)	13.33 (8)	11.67 (7)
CEFR does not suit my teaching approach.	16.67 (10)	30.00 (18)	31.67 (19)	18.33 (11)	3.33 (2)
I believe that teacher-centered approach is suitable to compare to CEFR.	15.00 (9)	31.67 (19)	36.67 (22)	13.33 (8)	3.33 (2)
I am demotivated in using CEFR in my classroom activities.	26.67 (16)	30.00 (18)	35.00 (21)	5.00 (3)	3.33 (2)
I am hesitant to adopt CEFR since it focused on student-centered approach, which is inappropriate in Malaysian classrooms.	23.33 (14)	35.00 (21)	28.33 (17)	8.33 (5)	5.00 (3)

It is difficult for teachers to integrate CEFR in teaching if they do not fully understand CEFR descriptors.	5.00 (3)	6.67 (4)	20.00 (12)	40.00 (24)	28.33 (17)
Low proficiency Year 1,2,3 pupils will be demotivated, and it will lead to minimal involvement in communicative approach activities (action-oriented).	11.67 (7)	31.67 (19)	20.00 (12)	23.33 (14)	13.33 (8)
I believe that CEFR is only a global language policy adopted by our government and will not contribute to the changes in English proficiency level among Malaysian students.	20.00 (12)	25.00 (15)	30.00 (18)	18.33 (11)	6.67 (4)

The findings indicated that 40 teachers, agreed 10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 30 (50.00%) teachers agreed) that the challenges in the implementation of CEFR is themselves. 36 teachers, agreed 10 teachers (16.67%) strongly agree, and 26 (43.33%) teachers agreed) that designing CEFR classroom-based activities is time-consuming. Also, 24 teachers, agreed 6 teachers (10.00%) strongly agree, and 18 (33.33%) teachers agreed) that teacher's autonomy is reduced while using CEFR in the classroom. 33 teachers, agreed 9 teachers (15.00%) strongly agree, and 14 (23.33%) teachers agreed) that CEFR is a burden for the rural primary schools teachers. 15 teachers, agreed 7 teachers (11.67%) strongly agree, and 8 (13.33%) teachers agreed) that they have vague idea about the details procedures if the CEFR implementation.

In this section 28 teachers, disagreed 10 teachers (16.67%) strongly disagree, and 18 (30.00%) teachers disagreed) that CEFR suit their teaching approach. 28 teachers, disagreed 9 teachers (15.00%) strongly disagree, and 19 (31.67%) teachers disagreed) that teacher-entered approach is suitable compare to CEFR. 34 teachers, disagreed 16 teachers (26.67%) strongly disagree, and 18 (30.00%) teachers disagreed) that they are demotivated in using CEFR in their classroom. Besides, 35 teachers, disagreed 14 teachers (23.33%) strongly disagree, and 21 (35.00%) teachers disagreed) that they are hesitant to adopt CEFR since it focused on the student-centered approach. 41 teachers, agreed 17 teachers (28.33%) strongly agree, and 24 (40.00%) teachers agreed) that they have the difficulty to integrate CEFR in teaching English. Also, 26 teachers, disagreed 7 teachers (11.67%) strongly disagree, and 19 (31.67%) teachers disagreed) that CEFR makes low proficiency pupils demotivated since it mainly on communicative approach activities. Lastly, 27 teachers, disagreed 12 teachers (20.00%) strongly disagree, and 15 (25.00%) teachers disagreed) that CEFR is only a global language policy adopted by the government and will not contribute to the changes in English proficiency level among the Malaysian pupils.

Discussions

The data from the findings revealed that teachers are reluctant to use CEFR in their classroom. These findings is similar to the study conducted by Uri and Abd Aziz (2017) where teachers in schools are found to be unaware of CEFR. This scenario causes them to show a lack of interest in adopting the framework in their classroom activities. In the survey suggestion part, several teachers mentioned that they are not familiar with the CEFR framework. Two major findings

be concluded for this study. First, the results showed the teachers' challenges in implementing CEFR in rural primary schools.

The results showed that the majority of teacher 49 teachers (81.67%) of the respondents who are English majors, and 11 teachers (18.33%) were non-English Major. These teachers were currently teaching Year 1, 2, and 3 in ESL classroom. These non-option teachers mentioned that the textbooks are not useful in rural primary schools. A local study by Aziz, Rashid, & Zainudin (2018) showed that the arrangement of the new textbook is not synchronised with the curriculum and scheme of work. During the course given to English language teachers, they were constantly reminded to be flexible and must be ready to adapt to the needs and situation in their classroom, including how they plan their teaching and learning. However, teachers are not allowed to do so.

Other challenges mentioned by the teachers are lack of workshops, seminars, and training. They suggested that trainings are needed in order to improve their knowledge concerning the implementation of CEFR. A research in Turkey by Sezgin (2007) confirmed that the lack of expertise in CEFR contributed to teachers' worrisome and burden. The study showed that the lack of teacher training was the major problem. There are some teachers mentioned that they have limited knowledge about CEFR. As a result, many teachers complained concerning the preparation of the learning materials is time-consuming.

It was found that teachers are struggling to familiarise with the objective of the CEFR implementation. In the suggestion section of the survey, the teacher mentioned that they were facing problems in assessing the pupils' proficiency. They did not fully understand the CEFR descriptors. Unfortunately, teachers lack readiness although they have attended CEFR workshops, seminars and training. A study by Vallax (2011) found that teachers in France, UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia have not read the CEFR framework.

Teachers' suggestion to improve CEFR in rural primary school

Teachers suggested some suggestion on improving CEFR in rural primary school.

Table 5

Suggestion by English Teachers on how to improve CEFR in rural primary school

Research Participant	Suggestions (obtained from survey)
Teacher A Teacher B	Conduct more training for both option non-option English teachers
Teacher C	Our main problem is the assessment parts
Teacher D Teacher F	We need more assistance in terms of materials and guidance
Teacher E Teacher G	Materials concerned with CEFR such as textbooks and workbooks should be sufficient and ready to be distributed before the beginning of the 1st semester
Teacher H	More seminar or course about CEFR for teachers

Teacher I	All English teachers should attend the CEFR course and get first-hand information
Teacher K Teacher J	Teachers should be given more hands-on practices, teaching materials and guidance
Teacher L	Provide enough facilities and resources for teaching

These 12 teachers agreed that the implementation of CEFR should be enhanced in certain areas. Teacher A and B proposed that “more training is needed for both option and non-option English teachers.” Teacher C suggested that it is vital to improve on the assessment part.” As for teacher D and F, “more assistance in terms of materials and guidance are needed.” Teacher E and G proposed that “materials concerned with CEFR such as textbooks and workbooks should be sufficient and ready to be distributed before the beginning of the 1st semester.” Teacher H stated that “more seminars or courses about CEFR are needed.” As for Teacher I, “all English teachers should attend the CEFR courses and get first-hand information.” Teacher K and J mentioned that “teachers should be given more hands-on practices, teaching materials, and guidance.” Teacher L suggested that stakeholders should provide enough facilities and resources for teaching.” These showed that majority of the teachers agree that more workshops, seminars, and training should be provided in rural primary schools, which will indirectly aid them in implementing the CEFR syllabus.

Recommendation for Futher Study

This study suggests emphasis on some key areas:

- 1) Increase the amount of research participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the area of study.
- 2) Replicate this study using the same research design but with different set of research participants.

Conclusion

This study highlighted teachers’ perceptions and concerns towards the adoption of CEFR in rural primary schools. Most of them agreed to implement CEFR in their classrooms. Although majority of them had attended CEFR workshops, seminars, and training, they still lack in experience and materials in adopting CEFR in rural schools. It is clearly seen that English teachers need more in-service training on CEFR. Some of them even highlighted on the effectiveness of learning materials in the rural primary schools. Some problems identified in this study were teachers’ attitudes, lacking experiences, and knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial to bring in more experts to supply suitable materials to supplement the teaching and learning process in using CEFR aligned textbooks.

From the findings of this study, it is believed that more time is needed and should be provided by the ministry to various stakeholders. The rationale is to ensure that they are familiar with the framework before exercising it throughout the nation. Our education system needs more time and expertise in adopting CEFR in our syllabus. MOE should ensure sufficient material, courses, workshops, training, seminar, and symposiums are provided to all English teachers. Teachers need to fully understand the CEFR framework before implementing it in the classroom.

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