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HULU SELANGOR PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE IN CEFR-ALIGNED ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the level of teachers' knowledge in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum. Data for the study were obtained from 50 respondents using a questionnaire. Findings indicate that the majority of English teachers have a high level of knowledge in implementing the current English language curriculum. Yet, there were a few aspects that need to be addressed, specifically regarding teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge on learners' assessment in the CEFR-Aligned curriculum, indicating the need for stakeholders to include more training and modules to assist teachers in successfully implementing the CEFR-Aligned English Language curriculum.

Keywords: *Teachers, knowledge, CEFR-aligned curriculum, implementation.*

INTRODUCTION

The English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap 2015-2025 is the key component of Shift 2 of the Malaysian Education Blueprint, ensuring every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and the English language. In actualising this goal, the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia has adopted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), an international language standard, to benchmark the progress of our students internationally.

In realising the government's effort, teachers must receive training from their master trainers during the introduction of the CFER-aligned curriculum. Despite the government's efforts, teachers have claimed problems in implementing the new curriculum. This reform has introduced several challenges. Some of the challenges are the lack of teachers' knowledge of how the teaching of English now is to be organised, adapted, and represented in their classroom instructions and teachers' knowledge in delivering this new curriculum.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Ministry of Education has conducted several notable English language education reforms in the country. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) sets out a plan for the reform and development of the education system from 2013 to 2025. To achieve the Ministry's goal of ensuring that Malaysian students are proficient in both languages, Bahasa Malaysia and English language, the aspiration in Shift 2 of the MEB 2013-2025, which focuses on developing students who are at least operationally proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English, with the aim for all students leaving the education system to be independent users of the English language, as per the Director General of Education, Dr Khair Mohd Yusof in The Roadmap 2015-2025.

A recent analysis by Lee et al. (2022) shows that Malaysia's CEFR implementation was rolled out in three major phases from 2013 to 2025, focusing on teacher proficiency, curriculum delivery, and evaluation. They also pointed out that although the CEFR offers a structured approach to language proficiency, its implementation in Malaysia has been hindered by top-down policy delivery and insufficient training support. Educational transformation is necessary to compete in the global education system, subsequently improving students' progress and proficiency in achieving an international level of English language proficiency. This study focuses on teachers' knowledge in implementing the CEFR-aligned curriculum in primary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' knowledge in implementing CEFR-Aligned curriculum has a direct impact on students' learning in schools. It is stated in The Roadmap p.18 that the Cambridge Baseline makes it clear that although Malaysia has many high-calibre teachers, the general standard of performance in the classroom, both concerning English proficiency and professional skills, is disappointingly low. Shulman (1987) stated that teachers' curricular knowledge 'underlies the teacher's ability to relate the content of a given course or lesson to topics or issues being discussed simultaneously in other classes.

Teachers' knowledge in implementing CEFR-Aligned curriculum has a direct impact on students' learning situations and outcomes in schools. Ahmed et al. (2023) believe that teachers who possess pedagogical knowledge (PK) are better equipped to influence the classroom where students can develop and learn. The biggest influence on child development and learning is from teachers' knowledge of child learning. Kultsum (2017) commented that teachers must be smart in delivering their lessons, have content knowledge of their subject matter, and be highly creative, creating a conducive learning environment. In the study, they recommend that teachers take steps to overcome their weaknesses in various aspects, such as teaching, assessment, subject matter, or guidance provided to students.

A study by Schmidt et al. (2009) found that quality teachers must know how to guide students and their peers, subsequently accepting the transformation in the education system positively. The research also found that there were changes that affected certain groups while other changes affected the whole educational organisation. Another study by Ahmed et al. (2023) concluded that it is challenging to conceptualise teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge without first understanding basic concepts such as the construction of knowledge, the teaching-and-learning process, and how teachers apply their knowledge in the classroom. Content knowledge is crucial in detecting the level of skills and abilities that students should master before a new lesson is taught.

To teach and deliver curriculum effectively, teachers must be familiar with the body of knowledge taught, and they must thoroughly understand the content of what they teach. Fukaya et al. (2024) believe that it may be beneficial to give teachers a chance to consider not only how to explain particular material but also why they should learn subject instruction and how creating lessons brings them joy as teachers, as a lack of interest in subject instruction may impede the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative research design. A survey was conducted to collect data and information from a small sample of the English teacher population in Malaysia. The questionnaire was adapted from a Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) of English teachers in Pekanbaru (Mahdum, 2015). The instrument consists of 19 items to measure the English teachers' self-assessment of the PCK sub-domains, including Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), Content Knowledge (CK), and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). The survey is designed for English teachers.

The instrument consists of 7 PK items, 5 CK items, and 7 PCK items, to be rated using a five-point Likert scale, which allows respondents to express their level of agreement, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The purpose of the instrument is to measure teachers' level of knowledge based on PCK domains. Moreover, certain questions seeking respondents' demographic information are included in the instrument. The data was taken from 50 primary school teachers in Hulu Selangor district who were selected through non-probability sampling. The instrument's validity and reliability were assessed using verification from a panel of judges and experts to ensure all the items were valid. 0.965 was obtained to test the questionnaire's reliability through Cronbach's Alpha test. The data of this study were analysed descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Questionnaire

Pedagogical Knowledge. Based on the data obtained, the Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) of English teachers in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1.
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge

Code	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	A+SA
1a	I have the knowledge to conduct the teaching and learning process through CEFR-Aligned curriculum.		1	16	23	10	33
	F		2.0	32.	20.	20.	40.0
	%			0	0	0	
1b	I have the knowledge to improve students' mastery based on their English results.		1	12	25	12	37
	F		2.0	24.	50.	24.	74.0
	%			0	0	0	
1c	I can adapt my teaching style to different learners.			15	22	13	35
	F			30.	44.	26.	70.0
	%			0	0	0	
1d	I can assess student learning in multiple ways.			18	19	13	32
	F			36.	38.	26.	64.0
	%			0	0	0	
1e	I can use wide range of teaching approaches in a classroom setting.			12	25	13	38
	F			24.	50.	26.	76.0
	%			0	0	0	
1f	I am familiar with common student understandings and misconceptions.			13	23	14	37
	F						74.0

	%			26.0	46.0	28.0	
1g	I have the knowledge to use various strategies in CEFR-Aligned curriculum.	1	2	21	17	9	26
	F	2.0	4.0	42.0	34.0	18.0	52.0
	%						
	Average of SA+A	450.0					

A total of seven items were used to measure the teachers' pedagogical knowledge in the questionnaire. The data obtained from the English teachers' responses clearly shows that all the items about pedagogical knowledge are supported by respondents. The items relating to the construct received an average frequency of 450.0 among the responses agreeing to the items. Table 3.1 shows that more than half of the respondents (76%) believe they can utilise various teaching approaches in a classroom. Herring et al. (2016) defined pedagogical knowledge as a teacher's knowledge about several applications, strategies, and methods to support students' learning.

Also, more than half of the teachers (74%) believe that they have the knowledge to improve students' mastery and are familiar with student understandings and misconceptions. This indicates that they possess a high level of pedagogical knowledge to manage their students' learning. Sastypratiwi and Yulianti (2019) stated that pedagogical competence is the teachers' ability to manage the students' learning, including the ability to know their students well, design and implement lesson plans, evaluate learning outcomes, and develop students' potential. For item 1a (40%), 'I have the knowledge to conduct the teaching and learning process through CEFR-Aligned curriculum', proves that teachers do possess the general pedagogical knowledge to conduct teaching and learning. However, they have inadequate pedagogical knowledge to implement the current curriculum. Cheah (2010) stated that formal training, such as seminars and workshops, will equip teachers to gain new knowledge in fulfilling the objectives of the new Malaysian curriculum.

Content Knowledge. Based on the data obtained, the Content Knowledge (CK) of English teachers in the implementation of the CEFR-Aligned curriculum is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Content Knowledge

Code	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA	A+ SA
2a	I have the knowledge to use the 2020 Revised KSSR.		1	16	20	13	33
	F		2.0	32.0	40.0	26.0	66.0
	%						
2b	I have the knowledge about the descriptors that are found in the CEFR 'Global Scales'.	1	2	19	20	8	28
	F	2.0	4.0	38.0	40.0	16.0	56.0
	%						
2c	I have the knowledge to analyse students' achievement which has been determined according to the CEFR global scale.	1	2	16	21	10	31
	F	2.0	4.0	32.0	42.0	20.0	62.0
	%						
2d	I have a clear understanding about the band descriptors of Level A: A1 and A2.		2	14	23	11	34
	F		4.0				

	%			28.0	46.0	22.0	68.0
2e	I have the knowledge to analyse the students' achievement band to plan the subsequent teaching and learning process.	1	1	15	24	9	33
	F	2.0	2.0	30.0	48.0	18.0	66.0
	%						
	Average of SA+A	318.0					

Five items were used to measure the teachers' content knowledge in the questionnaire. Table 3.2 shows that most respondents (68%) have a clear understanding of the band descriptors for the CEFR-Aligned curriculum for primary levels. This shows that teachers have a good level of knowledge that by the end of 6 years of primary schooling, pupils should be at least at level A1 before proceeding to secondary level. Hence, with that knowledge, teachers should be able to guide and facilitate pupils in achieving level A1. Shulman (1986) further elaborates that Content Knowledge deals with concepts, theories, ideas, framework, knowledge of proof, and practices, as well as approaches to developing the knowledge itself.

Also, supported by items 2a and 2e, with a percentage of 66%, showed that teachers have a good level of content knowledge specifically in 1) utilising the 2020 Revised KSSR (also known as the CEFR-Aligned curriculum) and 2) possess the knowledge to analyse the students' achievement band to plan the subsequent teaching and learning process. Mishra and Koehler (2006) defined Content Knowledge (CK) as the knowledge about the subject matter to be taught or learned. To summarise, teachers possess a good level of content knowledge in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum, but perhaps more training emphasises the descriptors of the Global Scales to support the lesson evaluation.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Based on the data obtained, the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) of English teachers in the implementation of the CEFR-Aligned curriculum is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3.
Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Code	Item	D	N	A	SA	A+ SA
3a	I can select effective teaching approaches to guide student thinking and learning through CEFR-Aligned curriculum.	2	17	23	8	31
	F	4.0	34.0	46.0	16.0	62.0
	%					
3b	I can prepare a lesson plan including class/school-wide activities with the reference of 2020 Revised KSSR.	3	14	25	8	33
	F	6.0	28.0	50.0	16.0	66.0
	%					
3c	I am able to meet the objectives described in my lesson plan.		11	29	10	39
	F		22.0	58.0	20.0	78.0
	%					
3d	I am able to make connections among related subjects in my content area.		14	22	14	36
	F					

	%		28.0	44.0	28.0	72.0
3e	I have an extensive knowledge on the ways to assess in CEFR-Aligned curriculum.	1	21	20	8	28
	F	2.0	42.0	40.0	16.0	56.0
	%					
3f	I have sufficient knowledge about the assignments that can improve the standards of students' band from time to time.	1	17	25	7	32.0
	F	2.0	34.0	50.0	14.0	64.0
	%					
3g	I can support subjects in my content area with outside (out-of-school) activities.		17	25	8	33
	F		34.0	50.0	16.0	66.0
	%					
	Average of SA+A	464.0				

Seven items were used to measure the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in the questionnaire. The data obtained from the English teachers' responses clearly shows all items concerning pedagogical content knowledge are supported by respondents. The items relating to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge received an average frequency of 464.0 among the responses agreeing to the items. Table 3.3 shows that most respondents (78%) can achieve their lesson objectives.

Therefore, teachers have a high level of pedagogical content knowledge as they are able to plan and deliver their lessons well and can meet their lesson objectives successfully. Mishra and Koehler (2006) stated that pedagogical content knowledge is knowledge of using appropriate approaches for particular subjects. Pedagogical content knowledge also describes a teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught.

Such results showed that teachers have a high knowledge of making connections among related subjects in the content area. At the same time, they could support the content with outside activities referencing the 2020 Revised KSSR. This is noticed with the response to item 3d, with a percentage of 72% and 66% for items 3b and 3g, respectively. For example, more than half of the respondents 72% supported item 3d, 'I am able to make connections among related subjects in my content area,' which reflects their experience in teaching as teachers can leverage resources, ideas, and learning opportunities. Savas (2011) supported that without pedagogical content knowledge, teachers cannot impart knowledge to their students.

These findings imply that teachers have a high level of pedagogical content knowledge, and the respondents have no issues with pedagogical content knowledge but perhaps require more exposure and workshops to improve their assessment in the CEFR-Aligned curriculum.

Table 4.
The Average of The Strongly Agree and Agree Alternatives for the Three Constructs

No.	Construct	Average
1.	Pedagogical Knowledge	450.0
2.	Content Knowledge	318.0

3.	Pedagogical Knowledge	Content	464.0

The present study includes three constructs (pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge). Data analysis shows that the level of teachers' knowledge in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum is relatively high. The study also showed that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge has the highest average score of 464.0, followed by teachers' pedagogical knowledge with an average of 450.0 and teachers' content knowledge with an average of 318.0. This implies that English teachers in the Hulu Selangor district have a high level of pedagogical content knowledge in delivering the CEFR-Aligned curriculum. In a way, the teachers are confident in applying their pedagogical content knowledge in the current curriculum.

Cheah (2010) stated that Pedagogical Knowledge is about the combination of the ability to plan instruction, deliver lessons, manage students, and address individual differences. Perhaps due to teaching experiences. As in-service teachers, they have already taught for years, and having teaching experience is an advantage for teachers to develop their pedagogical knowledge as well as their content knowledge. Mohd Radzuan et al. (2021) supported that lesson planning and preparation is another important element of a successful teaching and learning process.

These findings are consistent with recent the CEFR-related studies in Malaysia. For instance, Yasin and Yamat (2021) confirmed that while many ESL teachers in Johor are ready and supportive of the CEFR curriculum, they often face constraints such as large class sizes, assessment burdens, and the need to modify teaching materials to suit local learners. As Berliner and Calfee (1996) emphasised, teachers must continually assess their actions, seek alternatives, and make informed adjustments to improve future instruction. This reflective mindset aligns with the view that strong lesson planning should include space for evaluating students' understanding and the teacher's effectiveness (Tan, 2010). Further supported by Boud and Molloy (2013), teachers with good knowledge of assessment techniques can better choose relevant foci for feedback. Recent CEFR work at the tertiary level also shows that clearer curriculum design and practical task planning can ease implementation, an approach that could benefit school-level teachers if adapted to their context (Sharifah Shahnaz et al., 2024).

Another study by Salmiah (2011) found that quality teachers must possess the knowledge to guide students and accept the transformation of the curriculum in Malaysia's education system positively. Similar to Cheah (2010, who found that a major challenge to the implementation of the curriculum was the teacher's knowledge to fulfil the objectives of the new Malaysian curriculum.

This suggests that with a high level of pedagogical content knowledge, teachers are more likely to deliver the curriculum more effectively. Lee et al. (2022) recommend that CEFR integration in Malaysia should not be treated as a top-down enforcement. Teachers must be part of the process, and professional development should go beyond technical training to include a contextual and reflective understanding of CEFR. Despite the teachers having a high level of knowledge, however, there is room for improvement as, in the research findings, the lowest average score is on teachers' content knowledge in assessing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The main aim of this study is to determine the level of knowledge in the implementation of CEFR-Aligned curriculum among the primary school teachers of Hulu Selangor. The proposed levels are pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of the current curriculum, the CEFR-Aligned English Language curriculum.

This study was carried out to analyse the level of teachers' PCK in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum. This research was carried out in the Hulu Selangor district involving only the Year 1 and

Year 2 teachers who are currently using the CEFR-Aligned curriculum.

The research instrument was a set of questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale. Items in the questionnaire were adapted from previously established studies. The distinction between pedagogical content knowledge in the implementation of the CEFR-Aligned curriculum can be beneficial for the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), English primary teachers, policymakers and curriculum developers. There is a need for more research to overcome the limitations of this study. It is highly recommended for future studies to include qualitative aspects, as it would allow respondents' opinions and views to be heard.

More data-gathering methods can be included, such as interviews, checklists, observations and document analysis. By considering these aspects, further in-depth understanding regarding teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge in implementing the CEFR-Aligned curriculum can be obtained.

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